

What Makes a Field?

Stepping from Pilgrimage to Pilgrimage Studies

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Abstract: How do we decide what the next steps will be in the study of pilgrimage? Answering this question is not just a matter of prediction; it is also about deciding what the field of Pilgrimage Studies is for, and who its audiences might be. Writing as an anthropologist, I examine a number of perspectives and actions that I see as key to helping our field to move forward. These involve 1) understanding pilgrimage's capacity to encompass and inflect wider social trends; 2) taking a critical view of the analytical metaphors that we have used in describing pilgrimage, and developing some new ones; 3) understanding how Pilgrimage Studies might interact with other fields, including those that go beyond religion; 4) speculating that pilgrimage might be considered a form of ethical, self-consciously directed, orientation toward action.

Keywords: Pilgrimage Studies, Anthropology of Christianity, academic fields, tropes, articulation, ethic.

¿Qué conforma un campo de estudio? Pasando de la peregrinación a Estudios de Peregrinación

Resumen: ¿Cómo decidimos cuáles serán los próximos pasos en el estudio de la peregrinación? Responder a esta pregunta no es sólo una cuestión de predicción; también se trata de decidir para qué sirve el campo de los Estudios de la Peregrinación y quiénes podrían ser sus destinatarios. Al escribir como antropólogo, examino una serie de perspectivas y acciones que considero claves para ayudar a que nuestro campo avance. Estos implican: 1) comprender la capacidad de la peregrinación para abarcar e influir en tendencias sociales más amplias; 2) adoptar una visión

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crítica de las metáforas analíticas que hemos utilizado al describir la peregrinación y desarrollar algunas nuevas; 3) comprender cómo los Estudios de Peregrinación podrían interactuar con otros campos, incluidos aquellos que van más allá de la religión; 4) especular que la peregrinación podría considerarse una forma de orientación ética y consciente hacia la acción.

Palabras clave: Estudios de peregrinaciones, Antropología del cristianismo, campos académicos, tropos, articulación, ética.

Que conforma un campo de estudio? Pasando da peregrinación a Estudos de Peregrinación

Resumo: Como decidimos cales serán os próximos pasos no estudo da peregrinación? Responder a esta pregunta non é só unha cuestión de predición; tamén se trata de decidir para que serve o campo dos Estudos da Peregrinación e cales poderían ser os seus destinatarios. Ao escribir como antropólogo, examino unha serie de perspectivas e accións que considero claves para axudar a que o noso campo avance. Estes implican: 1) comprender a capacidade da peregrinación para abranguer e influír en tendencias sociais máis amplas; 2) adoptar unha visión crítica das metáforas analíticas que utilizamos ao describir a peregrinación e desenvolver algunhas novas; 3) comprender como os Estudos de Peregrinación poderían interactuar con outros campos, incluídos aqueles que van máis alá da relixión; 4) especular que a peregrinación podería considerarse unha forma de orientación ética e consciente cara á acción.

Palabras clave: Estudos de peregrinacións, Antropoloxía do cristianismo, campos académicos, tropos, articulación, ética.

This article is my response to a simple but fiendish question²: What might the next steps be for the study of pilgrimage? Generally speaking, predictions are for the brave or the foolhardy, especially when they are put into print. To make matters worse, we can hardly be said to live in an age of stability. The well-known anthropologist Jane Guyer argues that the “near future” in an era of time-space compression³

2 This piece is based on the keynote lecture for the 2022 Fall Symposium of the William & Mary Institute for Pilgrimage Studies. The theme of the Symposium was: “Pilgrimage Studies: Next Steps.” I wish to thank Kay Jenkins, Jim Barber, and the rest of the Leadership Committee of the Institute for Pilgrimage Studies for the invitation to speak, and to participants in the conference for immensely rewarding discussions. Thanks also to anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

3 On space-time compression see Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990.

and numerous environmental and health crises has become increasingly indefinite, so that it is ever more difficult to claim that one can “see [the proximate future] and... actively create a path toward it, based on an understanding of oneself and the terrain ahead.”⁴ For Guyer, locating the precious middle ground between immediacy and more distant, speculative horizons entails “the reach of thought and imagination, of planning and hoping, of tracing out mutual influences, of engaging in struggles for specific goals.”⁵

Despite all these difficulties, I want to take up Guyer’s challenge and search for that middle ground, considering what it might mean to reflect on the near future of pilgrimage and its study. In defending my potential hubris I can at least claim that there are intriguing affinities between pilgrimage and planning, between travel and looking forward.⁶ I also aim to add something to the imagery that Guyer deploys. Her reference to creating a “path” resonates with the notion of next steps, but I also want to adapt her visual metaphor of “seeing” the future. I intend to ask how “steps” link to “sight”—in other words to explore how contemplating the near future of our field involves paying close attention not only to how we perceive pilgrimage but also to how we view ourselves as making up a scholarly conversation.

Given these aims it should be clear that my piece is about the future of Pilgrimage Studies and not just pilgrimage per se. The two are deeply connected yet partially distinct. One might reasonably argue that an academic field is simply the sum of all of its parts. In that sense Pilgrimage Studies would be constituted by all of the work in existence that refers to pilgrimage. However, here I am more interested in the self-conscious attempt to exercise some agency over the proximate future of our field. My proposals do not emerge from a conviction that our research is facing an existential crisis. Generally speaking, both pilgrimage and its study are booming. Interdisciplinary conferences (such as Symposium of the William & Mary Institute, where this paper was originally delivered) are flourishing in many parts of the world. The situation we face is very different to that confronting John Eade and Michael Sallnow over three decades ago when they put together *Contesting the Sacred*,⁷ a volume focusing on the *anthropology* of Christian pilgrimage in part because it proved so difficult to enable ethnographers, geographers, theologians, and

4 Guyer, Jane, “Prophecy and the Near Future: Thoughts on Macroeconomic, Evangelical, and Punctuated Time,” *American Ethnologist*, 34 (2007), p. 377. Compare Guyer, Jane, “Anthropology and the Near Future Concept,” in Roberto Poli, ed., *Handbook of Anticipation: Theoretical and Applied Aspects of the Use of Future in Decision Making*, Berlin, Springer, 2019, pp. 1-17.

5 Jane Guyer, “Prophecy and the Near Future”, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

6 My reference to Guyer was partly prompted by a fascinating call for papers produced by the Anthropology of Tourism Interest Group on the near future of tourism, which drew on Guyer’s anthropology and the near future concept. See <https://atig.americananthro.org/near-future-of-tourism/>

7 Eade, John and Sallnow, Michael, eds, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, London, Routledge, 1991.

historians to have fruitful mutual conversations.⁸ A plethora of conversations now exists, leading me to ask whether amid such variety it is possible or indeed desirable to create new approaches and theoretical vocabularies that might, in self-conscious fashion, take our conversations in specific directions.

One reason why these questions exercise me is because they have been central to my academic life as an anthropologist. No doubt like many of those reading this journal, I inhabit multiple academic fields. For instance, when I am not studying pilgrimage I work on Pentecostalism, and I originally came to the study of pilgrimage when seeking an alternative from the narrative styles and ritual registers of Pentecostal ritual. However, what began as a diversion quickly became a dialogue in my mind between two fields of study. Engaging with work around Pentecostalism and the associated Anthropology of Christianity enabled me to see Pilgrimage Studies in a new way, and vice versa. In providing important context I should note that the Anthropology of Christianity emerged around 20 years ago. Many ethnographers had studied Christian groups before, but in the words of Joel Robbins the new approach involved “a deliberate effort to move the study of Christianity closer to the center of anthropological concern.”⁹ This shift in anthropological orientation responded to the spectacular efflorescence of Pentecostalism in public and civic life but it was also impelled by an explicit mission: there was much talk of how studying Pentecostalism forced anthropologists to confront cultural ‘rupture’ and ‘discontinuity’ in ways that they had never done before, and with the result that new debates over the relationships between religion, anthropology, and ethnographic accounts of modernity began to emerge. Of course many ethnographers continued to work on Christian themes and contexts without becoming involved with such questions or conversations, but for a time discussions concerning rupture provided highly fertile and influential talking points within and even beyond the Anthropology of Christianity *per se*.

I provide such background not because I especially wish to promote anthropological theory or its characteristic methods of participant observation and comparativism. For the time being I am more interested in laying out three ways in which my engagement with the development of what became in the early 2000s a self-consciously articulated Anthropology of Christianity has helped me to take a particular perspective on Pilgrimage Studies. I then intend to use that perspective to suggest some ways in which we might view our proximate future as we step forward as a field. My first point is about *focus*. At any given moment a field, if it is to be understood as a relatively coherent conversation, must overlook some things and

8 For a description of the conference see Bowman, Glenn, “Pilgrimage Conference”, *Anthropology Today*, 4 (December 1988).

9 Robbins, Joel, “The Anthropology of Christianity: Unity, Diversity, New Directions”, *Current Anthropology*, 55 (2014), p. 159.

emphasize others. Indeed, the Anthropology of Christianity began with what was from one perspective an outrageous set of omissions: in its emphasis on rupture it focused almost exclusively on Pentecostal mission to the exclusion of other types of Christian practice. Even today it is riddled with gaps, and indeed has virtually nothing to say directly about Pilgrimage Studies. So what are we to make of the omissions evident in any field? Sometimes, they will represent deep breakdowns in our ethical imaginations, failures of scholarly recognition that must be addressed. But we must again remind ourselves that the field of study is not the thing itself: the *Anthropology* of Christianity is not Christianity, just as Pilgrimage Studies is not pilgrimage. The task becomes to identify which gaps are good to think with and fill at any given point in a conversation. The implied question for scholars of pilgrimage is can we—but also should we—assume that our work will self-consciously address a regular set of themes and concerns: if so, what are they, and what might they be in coming years?

My second point is about how scholarly fields *mature*. Sociology of science tells us that a field might change incrementally—a few steps at a time—or more dramatically—engaging in something of a Kuhnian revolution in establishing new frames of thought and inquiry, as steps turn into more of a leap. But I also think here of a piece by the geographer of pilgrimage Noga Collins-Kreiner's that explores the lifecycle of concepts and traces how rapid growth in the scholarly development of an idea is often followed by stabilization and possible subsequent decline.¹⁰ So a concept must respond to changing surroundings to survive. Collins-Kreiner herself locates the beginnings of really intense discussion of pilgrimage around 1990, but also argues that conceptual rejuvenation is currently occurring as pilgrimage itself is losing some unique characteristics, most notably its religious features, "which constituted the original basis of its identity as a distinct type of tourism."¹¹ Collins-Kreiner's analysis has parallels with Joel Robbins's¹² diagnosis of the Anthropology of Christianity as a field that after just 15-20 years learned to adapt, not least by becoming more open to the interests of a maturing second generation of scholars and potentially more likely to be dissolved into wider conversations about religion and culture. Thus the questions I want to retain from Collins-Kreiner and Robbins are: What is the life-cycle of our field?; and, How might it adapt in intentional ways to changing academic, institutional, political circumstances?

My third point revolves around the question of *audience*—who a field is actually for. For good or ill, it is relatively easy for the Anthropology of Christianity (in its

10 Collins-Kreiner, Noga, "The Lifecycle of Concepts: The Case of 'Pilgrimage Tourism,'" *Tourism Geographies* 18 (2016), pp. 322-34.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 328. For her, such renewal is occurring as research on pilgrimage intermingles with other academic interests, mostly notably those of dark tourism.

12 Robbins, Joel, "The Anthropology of Christianity", *op. cit.*, p. 57.

recent, self-conscious articulation) to define the religion it is examining, the methodologies to be used, and its primary audience. In contrast Pilgrimage Studies is oriented around an 'object' of study rather than a single discipline or a method. The lines around that object soon start to blur and shift under the heterogeneous gazes of anthropologists, kinesiologists, theologians, historians, art historians, sociologists, and so on, as Eade and Sallnow originally found to their cost. Often this blurring is deeply creative; but ambiguities over vocabulary and aims may also result in defensive, boundary-raising reactions. So interdisciplinarity does not necessarily just happen—at times it works through analytical metaphors that facilitate exchange of ideas, just as much of the Anthropology of Christianity temporarily crystallized—somewhat ironically—around ideas of rupture and associated questions of conversion.

Our search for mutual consensibility means considering how to frame not just our vocabulary but also our inquiries in ways that register across different approaches. One of the things the philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood taught us is that posing questions and finding answers are “inseparable phases of a single activity.”¹³ Or the same point can be made through borrowing from that popular sage Douglas Adams, author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*¹⁴. A famous scene from the Guide occurs when people ask the mega-computer Deep Thought to find the ultimate answer to the “Great Questions of Life, the Universe and Everything.” After seven and a half million years ‘Deep Thought’ declares that the answer is ‘42’—an apparently meaningless response. The trouble is that no-one understands because they are not too sure what the question was in the first place or what it really implied for them. To adapt the *Hitchhiker's Guide* for us, how do we decide what a mutually satisfactory answer would be to a question about the next steps in Pilgrimage Studies? What criteria might we agree on as members of a common field? Who are we trying to persuade that our questions, and not just our answers, are interesting and significant? We might be content to say that we should simply see what ideas emerge and prevail. Yet, in invoking a free market of ideas we must remember that a market is never truly free.

Given these reflections on analytical focus, conceptual maturity and scholarly audience you might have come to the conclusion that what an anthropologist does when faced with any inquiry is to deconstruct the question rather than providing a straight answer. However, I now want to use these opening thoughts on the formation of scholarly fields to provide a more concrete response to that central question of next steps—a response that reflects on internal and external pressures on our field, that acknowledges that our perspective is always limited, but that despite Jane

13 The citation is from Bérci, Margaret and Griffith, Bryant, “What Does it Mean to Question?”, *Interchange*, 36 (2005), p. 405.

14 Adams, Douglas, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, London, Pan, 1979.

Guyer's relative pessimism retains faith in the possibility of finding a middle ground of planning between immediacy and a distant horizon. I propose four perspectives that I see as key to helping our field to move forward, and I suggest that they all find a way to link steps with sight. In other words, they all ask us to consider the relationship between where we want to go, and how we see both pilgrimage and ourselves.

1. Pilgrimage in the World
2. Tropes through Time
3. Alchemy: On Mixing Disciplines
4. A Pilgrimage Ethic?

Pilgrimage in the World

I noted that the rise of the Anthropology of Christianity was intimately linked to the global spread of Pentecostal mission. Similarly, one of the reasons why this journal and such institutions as the William & Mary Institute for Pilgrimage Studies exist is that pilgrimage is a hugely significant catalyst of human mobility across the world, with between 300 and 400 million people going on religious journeys each year, at least pre-Covid. Thus when in 2014 George Greenia noted that Pilgrimage Studies had emerged as "a new field of inquiry arcing well beyond former definitions that had boxed sacred travel into religious or historical paradigms"¹⁵ he was showing how a more inclusive scholarly framing reflected expansions in pilgrimage-related behaviors in an increasingly interconnected and ambiguously post-secular world. Such developments justify the vibrancy of our field but provide one of the reasons why we have such difficulties defining pilgrimage: we see it responding all the time to shifts in the means and media through which not just religion, but also human sociality, are formed. In this sense pilgrimage is not separate from the world, but deeply entangled with it. And such responsiveness to wider developments constitutes what I think of as pilgrimage's 'adjectival' qualities, by which I mean its capacity to encompass and inflect wider social trends. Much current work deals with the classic pilgrimage theme of healing yet also translates that theme into discussions of mindfulness, well-being, wellness, therapeutic landscapes, revealing a close indexical relationship with contemporary concerns. In a similar vein, studies that link pilgrimage to current debates over environmental futures, disputes over Indigenous landscapes, questions of mobility, data security and surveillance, ongoing debates over gender and ethnic identity, have emerged

¹⁵ Greenia, George, "What is Pilgrimage?", in Lesley Harman, ed., *A Sociology of Pilgrimage: Embodiment, Identity, Transformation*, London, Ontario, Ursus Press, 2014, p. 8.

and are likely to increase in the middle-range future. A more open question is the extent to which contemporary social, cultural, or economic shifts have an effect on historical work—on the theoretical frames and analytical lexicons that historians of pilgrimage take back to their materials.

The point I want to explore further in this section is, however, a slightly different one. It remains focused on the question of how external factors encourage us to alter our perceptions of pilgrimage, but it places the link between steps and sight in particularly stark relief. I mentioned above that from the perspective of the early 2020s the Covid pandemic—an intrusion of the world if ever there was one—has fragmented our lives, including our habits of practicing and studying pilgrimage. The argument I propose here is not that Covid as crisis has changed pilgrimage forever; instead I suggest that the pandemic has allowed us to perceive already existing pilgrimage in a new way, encouraging forms of heightened recognition that we might be able to draw on for future research. In Jane Guyer's terms, the immediacy of the pandemic as a time of urgent crisis might be translated into a more considered, medium-term perspective. In defending this assertion I note that pilgrimage and the pandemic exhibit striking similarities as well as deep antagonisms. Both ask questions about the powers and perils of hosting, the intersections between personal crisis and collective ritual. Both also direct attention to the identities, mobilities, and relationalities of human bodies—whether bounded or porous, proximate or distant, engaged in visible or invisible forms of exchange. It should therefore be no surprise that classic anthropological theory of pilgrimage draws on imagery that shows affinities with these anxieties. Victor and Edith Turner's famous depiction of the I-Thou relationship of fellowship that manifests in *communitas* points to risky if creative engagement in unmediated intimacies between unguarded persons,¹⁶ while Eade and Sallnow's influential depiction of shrines as empty vessels, ready to be filled by the assumptions and the bodies of pilgrims, emphasizes the social and political significance of practices of ingestion and absorption.¹⁷ Intimacy, porosity, proximity and distance, hosting and absorbing: these terms constitute language applicable to the pandemic but also to pilgrimage.

We can also discern how looking closely at the pandemic might influence our future perceptions of pilgrimage by giving us fresh lenses through which to see. Here I turn to the analysis of bodily proxemics in the era of Covid provided by sociologist of mobility and architecture Ole Jensen,¹⁸ Jensen refers to the ways in which taken-for-granted dimensions of personal space have become newly visible during the

16 Turner, Victor and Turner, Edith, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978.

17 Eade, John and Sallnow, Michael, "Introduction", in John Eade and Michael Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 1-29.

18 Jensen, Ole, "Pandemic Disruption, Extended Bodies, and Elastic Situations—Reflections on COVID-19 and Mobilities," *Mobilities*, 16 (2021), pp. 7-8.

pandemic, even as they have been newly problematized. The now familiar queuing stickers that extend social distances and diffuse human interaction introduce calculative reason to, but also highlight what he calls our inherent forms of “portable ambience”¹⁹—those areas around our bodies full of flows of microscopic materials but also symbolic meanings. Jensen’s work poses awkward questions about the intimacies of air as a disputed form of commons,²⁰ but—translated back into the concerns of our field—also foregrounds mutual porosities and proximities that are evident everywhere and are frequently given particular shape, form, and value in pilgrimage contexts, and which I think repay much closer study.

An iconic image of what I mean became a virtual meme of pilgrimage during the early stages of the pandemic. As the performance of the Hajj took place in the summer of 2020 we saw pilgrims engaging in Tawaf, the traditional circumambulation around the Kaaba.²¹ But instead of displaying a multitude of people swirling around a central point, the image took on an uncanny quality by showing how normally enmeshed bodies were shifted into stately perambulations performed by individuals whose separate profiles could easily be discerned. There are many ways to interpret such an image; but one is that in breaking down Tawaf into calibrated and newly visible parts it demonstrated for us the sheer bodily labor, the complex choreography, always involved in more regular gatherings, even as it laid out very clearly the minimum levels of ritual relationality needed to produce something that could still officially be classified as Tawaf.

Tropes through Time

If an academic field is to be more than the sum of its parts then it might be imagined as an ongoing conversation that has certain characteristic directions, which often crystallize around tropes—in other words recurring analytical metaphors that facilitate exchange of ideas. With the Anthropology of Christianity we saw how, at least for a time, ‘rupture’ proved a resonant term for specific reasons: it permitted easy comparison across cases and offered a double mode of address: both capturing the disruptive dimensions of Pentecostalism and challenging anthropological ways of thinking about time.

This question of the scholarly life of tropes is something I also examine in my book *Powers of Pilgrimage*, where I discuss the relationships between three analytical metaphors that have helped to animate and crystallize many studies of pilgrimage,

19 *Ibidem*, p. 13

20 *Ibidem*, p. 4

21 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSuP6OhSEng&ab_channel=NBCNews

within and to varying degrees beyond anthropology.²² Each has its own complex genealogy, and each can be shown to have been influenced by wider intellectual, religious, and social circumstances. *Communitas*, so often linked with the Turners, emerged from a rich history of scholarship ranging from European folklore, African rites of initiation and reconciliation, Roman Catholic liturgy, post-Second World War urban planning, and much else besides. *Contestation*, originally associated with John Eade and Michael Sallnow, displayed a range of influences including Foucauldian sociology, post-modernism and reactions to the aftermath of Vatican II. It can also be said to have derived some of its force from its presentation of such a stark alternative to the fellowship celebrated in more spontaneous, idealized forms of *communitas*: in contrast, the ‘contestation’ model emphasized the need to see shrines as made up of, and subject to, competing ideological discourses and both material and political interests. In this sense, larger pilgrimage shrines could be seen as remarkable less for their contribution to unity and more for their capacities to house discrepant and even incommensurate points of view. The more recent and extraordinary influence of *Camino* as trope cannot be associated with a specific scholar but it has united a number of referents—a geographically and historically locatable tradition of pilgrimage; a logistical model of journeying that has been picked up by many other pilgrimages and tourist ventures across the globe; and an analytical term frequently oriented toward exploring combined questions of mobility, spirituality, and authenticity. More than *Communitas* or *Contestation*, it granted analytical recognition to travelers unattached by conventional religious institutions, while distinguishing them from casual tourists.

Although such tropes have different backgrounds and orientations and cannot be said to be mutually articulated with watertight logic, they have formed interconnected and mutually defining threads of discussion that have propelled parts of our field and the questions we have asked. When it first appeared, *Communitas* marked out a distinct sociality and temporality that appeared to define the center of pilgrimage practice. Just over a decade later *Contestation* flipped the intensity of *Communitas*’s anti-structure into discussions of equally forceful arenas of argumentation and competition. *Camino* has since helped to shift scholarly focus away from the primacy of sacred destination and over-arching religious tradition. Out of the mingling of this trio of tropes, pilgrimage emerges as a kind of dance made up of recurring but inconstant partners. *Communitas* and *Contestation* sometimes come together in retaining the importance of a ritual center. At other times *Contestation* and *Camino* unite in acknowledging the significance of a plurality of perspectives. But then *Camino* and *Communitas* join hands to emphasize

22 Coleman, Simon, *Powers of Pilgrimage: Religion in a World of Motion*, New York, New York University Press, 2022.

the positive links between pilgrimage and the co-presence of initially anonymous others. These tropes have promoted certain commensurabilities of vocabulary and concern across many of the case studies that have helped to constitute our field, particularly though not exclusive those oriented to social scientific perspectives, and even now they retain much intellectual energy. For instance an emergent issue with great potential is the question of how we might expand the associations of the Camino as trope, taking into account how apparently anti-structural freedom of mobility is itself dependent on considerable infrastructural development of, and labor within, rural landscapes. Yet as we look to the near future and seek intellectual rejuvenation we must continue to ask whether these analytical metaphors have directed our scholarly attention in certain directions at the expense of others. All have tended to promote the idea of pilgrimage as temporally and spatially enclaved, discrete activity, often playing down more complex blending with other behaviors. None has prompted a really systematic account of how pilgrimage activities relate to forms of mobility beyond tourism, moving for instance toward migration and refugeehood. Admittedly this latter subject is something that has been discussed by Thomas Tweed in his deployment of metaphors of crossing and dwelling, but Tweed's work has operated in ways largely separate from the tropes I am describing.²³ I suggest that one potentially fruitful pathway that remains in dialogue with previous conversations is also one that shifts our steps and our sight toward a much wider range of scales and spatialities than have attracted attention so far. I mean more here than examining home as well as shrine, journey as well as arrival, and also go beyond acknowledging that social media has rendered the enclaving of space, time, sociality, and the sacred much more challenging. I refer rather to work that broadens the physical and temporal dimensions of our field by finding new ways not only to link pilgrimage with wider political and economic contexts, but also to explore intensified sets of connections between and across sites.

Such work is already emerging in different ways. Kathryn Barush's recent book, *Imaging Pilgrimage*, wonderfully invokes but then radically expands the implications of *Communitas* by extending her purview across spatially, socially, and temporally extended pilgrimage environments.²⁴ Barush combines ethnographic with Art Historical and Material Culture Studies, and such strategic methodological pluralism is also evident in another recent work dedicated to widening perspectives, for instance Marc Loustau and Kate DeConinck's criticism of "singularism" in *Pilgrimage Studies*, by which they mean the tendency for many researchers to focus on individual shrines, sites, or routes as their unit of study.²⁵ Our field contains important work

23 See e.g. Tweed, Thomas, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006.

24 Barush, Kathryn, *Imaging Pilgrimage: Art as Embodied Experience*, London, Bloomsbury, 2021.

25 Loustau, Marc and DeConinck, Kate, "Editors' Introduction", *Journal of Global Catholicism*, 3 (2019), pp. 13-25.

looking at regional pilgrimage complexes, whether in medieval Europe or Indian pilgrimage traditions; but Loustau and DeConinck shift analytical perspective in a way unfamiliar to ethnographers, if a bit more common among some historians and geographers, to ask “what it means, for both individuals and communities, to encounter different pilgrimage sites over time.”²⁶ While they focus on Roman Catholics, their arguments have wider application as they examine how pilgrims “juxtapose multiple pilgrimage sites in and through culturally, socially, and institutionally mediated stories, memories, objects, and spaces.”²⁷ Their approach is partly based on observing that the habit of visiting numerous shrines is growing in popularity in new ways around the world, and it resonates with the research I am currently doing at the English pilgrimage site of Walsingham. Even as they recount their experiences at the site many of my Catholic interlocutors refer to a much wider set of locations. Shrines across Europe are compared, framed in relation to each other, visited serially in sequences that may have deep personal significance. For the scholar of pilgrimage, the pivot from focusing on discrete places or landscapes to more spatially complex and temporally extended pilgrimage narratives of mobile persons can push the field in provocative ways: so I find that when I am studying Walsingham I am also, in a sense, studying Lourdes, Knock, and the Camino—chains of pilgrimage encounter that create connections, frictions and complementarities between and across experiences of shrines.

Clearly, such an ‘anti-singularist’ approach runs the danger of highlighting certain perspectives while excluding others: it may isolate any given site from its immediate context in order to focus on other kinds of connections. Nonetheless, it remains one powerful lens through which to broaden our view. Taking this point a step further, we might say that developing ways to examine not merely individual shrines but also broader shrine-scapes involves learning how to cultivate ramifying, perspectives on material, logistical, spiritual, or imaginative threads that both link pilgrimage sites with each other and connect such sites with other regimes of movement.²⁸ In Chapter 8 of *Powers of Pilgrimage* I discuss work that gives us some clues as to how this approach might work. For instance Elaine Peña’s ethnography of pious devotions performed by Latinx Catholics, *Performing Piety*, traces disparate locations to tell a powerful story of multi-sited connectedness that lays out an interwoven Catholic and migrant landscape of mobility and dwelling.²⁹ Peña’s analysis brings together the famous Virgin of Guadalupe shrine in Mexico City, founded in

26 *Ibidem*, p. 14.

27 *Ibidem*, p. 13.

28 This is more than a mapping exercise: it is asking questions of how we might see pilgrimage landscapes as multi-sited, composite, capable of moving up and down scales of operation and imagination in ways that we have still not examined in much detail.

29 Peña, Elaine, *Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011.

1531; its replica in Des Plaines, Illinois, established in 2001; but also a vulnerable sidewalk shrine produced in 2001 by Mexican nationals in the Rogers Park area of Chicago's North Side. My deployment of her work then asks what happens when we extend still further the spaces and places she covers, juxtaposing it for instance with Patricia Ruiz-Navarro's work that is also on the Virgin of Guadalupe but which focuses on *Antorcha Guadalupeana*, a relay run that conveys a torch from the shrine in Mexico City to St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.³⁰ Staged over two months and concluding on December 12, the Feast Day of the Virgin, the run commemorates migrants who have died attempting to cross the border to the United States. It combines a ritualized crossing of the border with a march-cum-procession in New York and a spectacular occupation of the interior of St. Patrick's Cathedral through dance, prayer, and song. We could go on, piecing together an ever larger and more composite, more variegated landscape of places, mobilities and sometimes frustrated mobilities, but the overall aim should by now be clear: asking what happens when we direct our gaze towards a much wider set of complex linkages—between sites deemed sacred but also including those that help us juxtapose piety with political economy. Adopting this approach is certainly not the only way in which we might take our next steps in Pilgrimage Studies, but it has the virtue of moving our analytical gazes up and down different scales to examine what happens when we lay less emphasis on pilgrimage as *sui generis*, and instead position it on a more horizontal analytical plane, interacting and entraining with, both constituting and being constituted by, other localities, mobilities, sensibilities.

There are still other ways of extending the scope and scale of our horizons beyond representing pilgrimage as enclaved activity. In my ethnographic work on Walsingham as well as on English cathedrals I have become interested in a constituency of people whom we often ignore in pilgrimage as well as ritual studies, or whom we perhaps label with the blanket term of tourist—those who happen upon a site or perhaps are taken by friends and relatives, and who wish to engage with a degree of seriousness without quite knowing what to do. Similarly, I am interested in those ritual activities that take place adjacent to, but not quite in the center of, shrines. Here, I mention two interconnected concepts I have developed to try to capture such apparently trivial yet widespread activities.³¹ One is the notion of the penumbra, a region of partial shade that is cast by an object and whose outer edges cannot be determined with any certainty, which if translated from the language of physics into that of ethnography suggests the presence of an undetermined zone of activity that blends and blurs with wider, everyday social, ethical, and cultural environments, but

30 Ruiz-Navarro, Patricia, "New Guadalupanos: Mexican Immigrants, a Grassroots Organization and a Pilgrimage to New York," in Glenda Tibe Bonifacio and Vivienne S. M. Angeles, eds., *Gender, Religion and Migration: Pathways of Integration*, Lanham, Lexington, 2010, pp. 237-55.

31 Coleman, Simon, *Powers of Pilgrimage*, *op. cit.*, chapter 6.

which depends for its existence on its continued connection with a more defined and public ritual center. At Walsingham for instance the penumbra's spatiality consists of streets and lanes, gardens and courtyards, tea shops and parking lots, all of which act as stages for people to copy, experiment with, even parody official pilgrimage rituals. While I use the penumbral as a term to describe the spatial qualities of spaces operating to the side of ritual centers, I use a different term, laterality, to describe the behavioral dimensions of action often carried out at one remove from ritual action while being partially oriented toward such action. Thus for instance when a group of theology students decides to perform the stations of the cross not in the grounds of a shrine church but in the leafy lanes just outside the village, they are performing self-consciously lateral action in a penumbral space, with intentions that may vary from seriousness to satire.

The concepts of penumbra and laterality, in common with many social scientific terms (including the tropes I have mentioned above) are derived from a variety of intellectual, social, and observational sources. Clearly, laterality should be understood in part as alternative to the more spatially and temporally delimited notion of liminality. It should also be understood as a complement to the idea of the penumbral, since both point our gaze toward relatively less marked or highlighted forms of activity. In addition, these terms resonate with other work that is blurring the boundaries around shrines, not just challenging sacred-secular divisions but expanding our fields of study into multiple realms of activity and sociality. I think for instance of Katherine Rousseau's partly ethnographic, partly art historical study of spatial interaction and memory in Marian pilgrimage sites where she emphasizes "the varied potential for porous boundaries at pilgrimage places, where heterogeneous audiences engage with the pilgrimage environment and its interpenetrating devotional, cultural, and commercial aspects."³² For Rousseau, the balance between porosity and boundedness differs according to the type of pilgrimage involved. She argues for instance that the Gothic Cathedral of Chartres is relatively self-enclosed, though "devotional and commercial place interpenetrates as the cathedral houses its own shop and the city leverages the place as part of an overall urban development strategy."³³ In contrast, Medjugorje in Herzegovina, where apparitions of the Virgin have been claimed since 1981, displays more "dramatically and spatially porous boundaries"³⁴ whose dynamism reflects the newness of the pilgrimage, its relative lack of recognition (and control) by church hierarchies, and the complex recent history of the collapse of the Yugoslavian state. Medjugorje but

32 Rousseau, Katherine, "Pilgrimage, Spatial Interaction, and Memory at Three Marian Sites," PhD Dissertation, University of Denver, 2016, p. 23. See also Rousseau, Katherine, *The Limits of Pilgrimage Place*, London, Routledge, 2021.

33 *Ibidem*, p. 76.

34 *Ibidem*, p. 9.

also its surrounding landscape are permeated by signs of Marian devotion, so the location “problematizes the notion of a spatially centered and clearly bounded site, in physical and conceptual terms.”³⁵

By now I may seem to have strayed quite a long way from talk of tropes that can crystallize conversations making up scholarly field, but I hope we can see how apparently disparate talk of expanded shrine-scapes and political economy on the one hand, and of lateralities, penumbras and porosities on the other, is united by the desire to extend the places and the scales where we might look for and step toward pilgrimage-related activity. This is an emergent lexicon that works not through formal and complete logic (social science is not mathematics) but by encouraging a widening of the analytical and methodological gaze. Pilgrimage behavior is often enclaved but it is not only enclaved; viewed across different scales of analysis, it must be seen as both anti-structural and infrastructural, just as it is frequently manifested through widely different registers of intensity and focus. The organizing trope I use most often to describe such complexity in *Powers of Pilgrimage* is that of “articulation”—adapted from a variety of theorists but most obviously Stuart Hall³⁶— to describe pilgrimage as readily entangled with and constituted through other behaviors. Tracing varieties of articulation might involve highlighting certain connections unnoticed or not overtly expressed by participants, such as the influence of the larger political economy of mobilities within which contemporary pilgrimage practices are enacted. It might equally involve looking at strategic attempts by people to deploy a pilgrimage idiom in carrying out some other action such as a public protest, a family gathering. We can debate whether all of these are ‘real’ pilgrimage; but it seems to me that they all form part of the overall field of Pilgrimage Studies, and that they should form part of our future.

Alchemy: Mixing Disciplines

Alchemy was a medieval practice dedicated to the transmutation of matter into valued forms such as gold or silver, achieving transformations through mixing elements. For my purposes it points to what happens when we combine Pilgrimage Studies with other fields. This mixing has been inherent in much of what I’ve been saying so far—Kathryn Barush refers for instance to theoretical approaches from Material Culture Studies, research on synaesthesia, and so on, in her case studies.³⁷

35 *Ibidem*, p. 138. The apparitions are mobile, occurring in hillsides, chapels, the local church, even in other countries where the visionaries have traveled.

36 See for instance Grossberg, Lawrence, “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10 (1986), pp. 97-106.

37 Barush, Kathryn, *Imaging Pilgrimage*, *op. cit.*

In a similar vein, I see Kathleen Jenkins's book *Walking the Way Together* as a work of alchemy, combining work on family and kinship with observations on the Camino as pilgrimage to deeply productive effect.³⁸ Numerous other examples could be cited, but my point is that we do not just need to think of applying other theoretical or methodological frames *to* pilgrimage; the influence can go the other way. One advantage of developing a self-conscious identity for Pilgrimage Studies is that it gives us intellectual agency in not merely borrowing from other fields, but also attempting to influence them.

Here I explore one example of what this intentional alchemical approach might look like, and in the name of encouraging conversation I take as my theme a topic that Daniel Olsen discussed with great insight in a plenary talk he gave to the 2021 William & Mary Annual Symposium on Pilgrimage, called "Globalization, Glocalization, and Changes to Modern Pilgrimage in a Post-Secular World."³⁹ Writing as a geographer, Daniel sketched out an argument resonating well with what I have been saying. He pointed out that while recent work on pilgrimage has often been carried out on micro scales, important questions remain concerning wider issues of transnationalism, commodification, the power geometries of space-time compression, and so on. He listed numerous ways in which pilgrimage has been changed under circumstances of globalization—becoming democratized, medicalized, technologized, spectacularized, transplanted. My question relating to alchemy becomes the following: what happens if we flip our perspective so that instead of analyzing pilgrimage as object of other sociological and material processes we turn the tables and self-consciously view such processes through a pilgrimage lens? In saying this I do not mean to construct an essentialist argument about the agency or identity of sacred travel, but rather to suggest that if Globalization Studies inflects our understanding of pilgrimage, then how might Pilgrimage Studies inflect our comprehension of globalization? The expanded pilgrimage landscape that I have been sketching here, drawing on my own and others' work, is one that potentially encompasses the globe but does so through creating a composite field that complicates common assumptions of easy mobility—it highlights granular and not always predictable articulations between varieties of space, mobility, horizon, and so on. It is true that pilgrims tend not explicitly to perceive 'the globe' as their prime context of operation. But study of pilgrimage as expanded field is nonetheless exceptionally well equipped to examine the nuances of co-occurrences of, and connections between, diverse though interlinked experiences of location, mobility, and rhythm; as space-time compression and decompression are smoothly or frictionally conjoined within the totality of a given journey or set of journeys that form the pilgrim's

38 Jenkins, Kathleen, *Walking the Way Together: How Families Connect on the Camino de Santiago*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021.

39 <https://www.wm.edu/sites/pilgrimage/annualsymposium/fall2021program/>

spiritual biography, or that link identity as pilgrim with identity as migrant. So this is globalization, but not as we conventionally describe it, and recognizing it depends on our having a strong sense of the kinds of questions our field might be equipped to pose not only about spirituality, but also about wider and inter-connected forms of mobility, identity, sociality, spatiality.

A Pilgrimage Ethic?

My final suggestion about next steps for our field is more of an extended inquiry than anything else. I want to ask whether one of our next steps might be to examine a Pilgrimage Ethic emerging in contexts of sacred travel. I am conscious that in *Image and Pilgrimage* Victor and Edith Turner stated that while a Protestant Ethic has often been linked to capitalism, what they see as a “‘Pilgrimage Ethic,’ with its emphasis on ‘holy travel’ and the benefits flowing from such travel, may have helped to create the communications networks and contractual relations that later made mercantile and industrial capitalism a viable national and international system.”⁴⁰ This is an important point, which goes beyond the commonplace observation that pilgrimage sites attract markets, but it is not what I mean to explore here. Nor do I directly address the question of how travel can be made ethically sustainable in a context where climate change is already an all-too present reality. Rather, I turn to the broader sociological and philosophical understanding of ethics as “eminently practical, intimately bound up with everyday social and political life, and directed toward action.”⁴¹ My aim is to explore another dimension of how pilgrimage might indeed be “directed toward” and even interweave with more obviously mundane activities. In doing so, I draw on the ways in which ethical practice overlaps with but maintains an identity distinct from religion: both are typically concerned with self cultivation and questions of moral accountability, but ethics as I understand them here are distinguishable from overt expressions of belief in the divine or broad pronouncements concerning cosmology.

The anthropology of ethics has taken a number of directions in recent years, but interest has been drawn particularly toward virtue ethics and the complexities of cultivating positively valued social behavior without assuming a static, deontological adherence to commonly shared rules.⁴² Such work has highlighted different dimensions of study. Michael Lambek, for instance, lays analytical stress on the operation of

40 Turner, Victor and Turner, Edith, *Image and Pilgrimage*, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

41 Mattingly, Cheryl, “Defrosting Concepts, Destabilizing Doxa: Critical Phenomenology and the Perplexing Particular”, *Anthropological Theory*, 19 (2022), p. 426.

42 For a summary of anthropological approaches to ethics see Laidlaw, James, “Ethics,” in Janice Boddy and Michael Lambek, eds., *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*, Oxford, Wiley, Blackwell, 2013.

“ordinary ethics,” embedded within behaviors that take place without drawing attention to themselves and typically inhabit a realm between the spoken and unspoken, while “trying to catch the leap between the ostensible and the subjunctive, the is and the ought.”⁴³ In contrast, Jarrett Zigon highlights the importance of examining instances of moral breakdown, where ethics are “performed” and subject to explicit articulation in moments of disagreement or encounter between different moral orientations.⁴⁴ Webb Keane mediates somewhat between these two positions in noting that: “If the ethical life centers on the tacit competences of the individual embedded in a social world, under certain social circumstances that individual undertakes explicit deliberation and justification.”⁴⁵ Drawing on his fieldwork among the Sumbanese of Indonesia, Keane also emphasizes the ways in which ethics take on certain discernible “semiotic modalities,” so that for instance gift exchange is made to stand out from market transactions through behavioral formalities that frame the event and signal the moral values that it represents. Thus while people’s behavior may not be governed by strict rules, they are still choosing to enact a kind of disinterestedness through gift-giving, a public signaling of ethical intent that is a material expression of social accountability.

These reflections on ethics may appear to be taking us far from the study of pilgrimage, but in their most basic form they are asking us to reflect on the grounds on which ethical choices are made, and the means through which ethical intent might be expressed and sometimes made public. Explicit articulations of principles or justifications may indeed result from dilemmas and moments of disagreement, as Zigon suggests, but may also entail situations involving more positive decisions to frame action in a particular key or tone—much as formality, in Keane’s terms, can lend a certain ethical quality to human transactions. My suggestion is that—among many other things—pilgrimage has the capacity to act as just such a positive frame, and one that takes on particular associations in contemporary contexts. In making this point I juxtapose my brief discussion of ethics with the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s famous if idiosyncratic use of the term “pilgrim.”⁴⁶ For him, modernity originally gave the metaphorical figure of the pilgrim new prominence as it came to signify a seeker for identity, yet Bauman saw contemporary life as favoring more playful, less culturally grounded, figures, such as the stroller, vagabond, or tourist. As modernity shaded into postmodernity, Bauman’s *pilgrims* therefore became particular kinds of *tourists*. His depiction of the traveler no longer able systematically to build identity is not so far from Jane Guyer’s sketching out of a medium-term future that cannot

43 Lambek, Michael, “Introduction,” in Michael Lambek, ed., *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2010, p. 6.

44 Zigon, Jarrett, “Moral Breakdown and the Ethical Demand”, *Anthropological Theory*, 7 (2007), pp. 131-50.

45 Keane, Webb. “Minds, Surfaces, and Reasons in the Anthropology of Ethics,” in Michael Lambek, ed., *Ordinary Ethics...*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

46 Bauman, Zygmunt, “From Pilgrim to Tourist,” in Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Los Angeles, Sage, 1996, pp. 18-36.

plausibly be planned; but my fieldwork tells me a slightly different story, which brings a renewed understanding of the relevance of pilgrimage together with a sense of ethics as orientation toward action and identity. What I think of as a contemporary Pilgrimage Ethic is present in the quality of seriousness, even earnestness, with which some interlocutors with greater or lesser degrees of self-consciousness come to frame certain of their activities, whether or not they see the latter as obviously religious. Pilgrimage takes on a metaphorical quality in such instances but it is also something more: a means of reconstituting and lending new ethical value to action—of many different kinds—through a pilgrimage idiom.

One of the first occasions I reflected on the possible existence of such a dimension of pilgrimage occurred in the 1990s when I was interviewing a group of nurses from a Roman Catholic parish in the North of England who regularly visited Walsingham. When I asked them whether they ever felt the experience of having been at the shrine remained with them once they returned home from Norfolk, one of my interlocutors surprised me by mentioning not her life in church, but her everyday role as a nurse. For her, the sense of spiritually charged touch that she so often experienced while on pilgrimage at Walsingham (through interacting with holy objects as well as fellow travelers) was occasionally replicated as she came into physical contact with patients on the ward, as if the ritual practices of a habitual pilgrim might recall, but also inform, the healing actions of a trained hospital worker. Such correspondences across contexts had not been sought or deliberately cultivated by her, at least originally, but they hinted at the capacity of pilgrimage to reach out toward, and indeed to reframe, the significance of her working day.

Other examples of ethical entanglements between pilgrimage and other forms of activity take on more intentional qualities. Paul Basu's work on North Americans who travel to their ancestral roots in Scotland provides a good illustration of a pilgrimage idiom deployed as a claim to seriousness as well as script for action.⁴⁷ For instance, Basu records his initial surprise at the earnestness of a middle-aged couple from Arizona who carefully drink and then devotedly collect spring water from an old well that they find in the ruins of an abandoned highland settlement. Gradually, he comes to realize that they are engaging in a process of converting an historical site into a personal shrine. Indeed, the so-called genealogical journeys marketed as niche tourism by the Scottish Tourist Board are translated by many of Basu's interlocutors into another kind of journey, and one that is sometimes overtly proclaimed to be a pilgrimage. Such a designation does not concern belief or the divine in any obvious sense; rather, it asserts the possibility of accessing and inhabiting a resonant moral geography that links travelers' lives with those of their ancestors. To say "I think of

47 Basu, Paul, "Route Metaphors of 'Roots Tourism' in the Scottish Highlands Diaspora," in Simon Coleman and John Eade eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 150-74.

this journey as a pilgrimage” under such circumstances is to speak metaphorically but also to engage in a performative utterance, declaring one’s journey to a shrine, a family home, a place of significant memory, to be full of focused and ethical intent. *Contra* Bauman, in such contemporary contexts we might see the possibility of movement not merely from pilgrim to tourist, but also from tourist to pilgrim.

If Basu describes negotiations between family travel and an idiom of semi-improvised, secular pilgrimage, it is also possible to find contemporary examples where more overtly and self-consciously “religious” pilgrimage activity is allowed to reframe and lend justification to actions that might have more mundane connotations. In fact, I have already provided an illustration of this point earlier in this article. The *Antorcha Guadalupana* as described by Patricia Ruiz-Navarro is a relay run that replays the frequently fevered experience of migration across the border separating Mexico and the United States, but it reconstitutes such experience into a ritualized journey whose progress cannot be blocked, and ends in a cathedral in New York. Once again, a pilgrimage idiom enables an ethically loaded suturing of apparently distinct worlds, though in this case in a very public, deliberately spectacular context, unlike the personal, private journeys Basu recounts. In both cases, however, we see the idiom acting as a semiotic modality in Keane’s terms, allowing relatively mundane action that might be interpreted otherwise—casual visits to Europe, slipping across a heavily policed border—to be reconstituted, cloaked in ethical intent.

My final example of pilgrimage as ethical frame is still more concerned with the everyday, as it forces us not so much to ask where pilgrimage ends and other activity begins, but to realize that any attempt to separate the two would be to displace the ethical value that emerges precisely from pilgrimage’s ability to lend a different moral register to ostensibly other practices. This final case study is also useful as it takes us away from the Christian, broadly Euro-American contexts I have been discussing so far. In his piece “A Watchful Presence,” Jason Daneley traces the development of a small neighborhood watch scheme that also takes on the form of a pilgrimage in an area of Kyoto, Japan.⁴⁸ As Daneley—an anthropologist of ageing and care—explains, his analysis begins with tracing how activities of walking through the neighborhood, involving older people looking out for the safety of children, come to have value not only for the young people but also for their subtly present, self-appointed carers, who are afforded a sense of civic engagement that helps mitigate the social marginality of older people. At the same time, the scheme compels him to explore the “regimes of value that emerge when these practices are placed within the cultural frame of...pilgrimage.”⁴⁹ Daneley shows how a programme of watching and walking is realized through wandering (purposefully) through the streets while visiting community-managed roadside shrines.

48 Daneley, Jason, “A Watchful Presence: Aesthetics of Well-Being in a Japanese Pilgrimage”, *Ethnos*, 82 (2017), pp. 165-192.

49 *Ibidem*, p. 166.

The urban area becomes reimagined as a moral landscape by walkers who nonetheless do not stand out from others on the street: the transposability of pilgrimage as idiom and ethical action permits it to become embedded in everyday practices of caring for others in the civic domain.

The examples of ethical action that I have provided in this section have taken very different forms, but all have involved the deployment of a pilgrimage idiom to lend seriousness and moral weight to practices not conventionally associated with sacred travel as such. As a “semiotic modality,” this idiom proves sufficiently flexible and transposable to form an ethicalized dimension of human action without engulfing that action entirely: Japanese pilgrims are also observers of children; North American visitors to Scotland are also attempting to rediscover their roots, and so on. The ways in which pilgrimage becomes entangled with such actions are both varied and flexible: we see how a nurse comes to discern connections between a shrine and a hospital that she had not been consciously seeking (though of course the links between shrines and hospitals are long-standing); in other cases, pilgrimage provides a form of distinction (*not* mere tourism) or legitimacy (*justified* crossing of a border); or it works through playing on the mutually resonant, parallel embodiments of both walking through streets and visiting roadside shrines. The adaptability of such pilgrimage as semiotic modality may rely on the ways in which many of its physical actions come so close to everyday activities: touch; the gathering of water; running; walking; watching. In a sense, such actions provide us with another version of what I have been calling laterality: for much of the time, they are removed from formal ritual action yet retain a trace of, an orientation toward, its behavioral formalities and ethical depths.

Of course the theological legitimacy of such practices might be debated, but such is not my aim here. Rather, as with all the other sections of this article, my purpose has been to ask how we seek new but coherent paths through an already flourishing and diverse field. My final reflections on ethics are of a piece with my presentation of pilgrimage as expansive and not merely enclaved category of action, and one that, to recall George Greenia’s words, can acknowledge but also take us beyond previous paradigms. In doing so I invite you to join with me as we direct our sight and steps toward the precious, proximate middle ground in the conscious, ongoing, and collective reworking of our field.

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