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"Love is the mystery inside this walking": Anne Carson on the Road to Compostela

"El amor es el misterio de este caminar": Anne Carson en el Camino de Santiago

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Abstract: This paper explores Anne Carson's "Kinds of Water: An Essay on the Road to Compostela," the author's journal on her pilgrimage to Santiago. Taking water as a metaphor for the Camino, the text reflects the creative dimension of the pilgrimage both from an artistic and personal standpoint. Alternative discourses of the female writer and pilgrim occur in a text that is an essay and a meditation on the forms of resilience put into practice by Carson after facing a series of personal losses. The progressive construction of self-knowledge is seen as an emancipatory act that transcended Carson's mourning period in her experience, which she took as an opportunity to embrace personal transformation. I suggest that my approach can bring useful perspectives not only to further and refine knowledge on Carson in Spain but also for the consideration of resilience as an aspect that contributes to the critical understanding of narratives of individual and social transformation.
Keywords: Anne Carson; pilgrimage; water; resilience; Camino; Santiago de Compostela.
Summary: Introduction. "One by one all took themselves out of my hands": Facing Personal Losses. Narrating the Camino. Walking a Path towards Self-Knowledge. Conclusion.

Resumen: Este artículo estudia "Kinds of Water: An Essay on the Road to Compostela," de Anne Carson, el diario sobre su peregrinación a Santiago. Con el agua como metáfora del Camino, el texto refleja la dimensión creativa de la peregrinación tanto desde el punto de vista artístico como personal. Concurren en el texto discursos diferentes: el de la escritora y el de la peregrina, en un trabajo que es a la vez ensayo y meditación sobre las formas de resiliencia empleadas por Carson tras sufrir una serie de pérdidas personales. La construcción progresiva de autoconocimiento se observa como un acto emancipador que trasciende el período de duelo de Carson, como oportunidad para abrazar una experiencia de transformación personal. Propongo una aproximación a Carson que puede contribuir no solo a conocer

más a la autora en España, sino también a la consideración de la resiliencia como aspecto a tener en cuenta en el análisis de las narrativas de transformación individual y social.
Palabras clave: Anne Carson; peregrinación; agua; resiliencia; Camino; Santiago de Compostela.

How is a pilgrim like a blacksmith? He bends iron. Love bends him.
—Anne Carson, *Plainwater*

INTRODUCTION

The Camino de Santiago has been a point of fascination since ancient times, similar to other pilgrimage routes. Santiago de Compostela is a religious, literary, tourist and cultural destination. It can be reached via different routes from various starting points and attracts tourists and pilgrims alike according to their interests. Contemporary pilgrimages combine the sacred and the profane and influence each other. Anne Carson's *Tipos de agua* (2018) is one of several Spanish translations of her works that have been welcomed in recent years.[1] The chance encounter with this translation led me to the collection *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry* (2000), of which "Kinds of Water" is a part. The collection combines different genres that are a feature of Carson's work, including autobiography, narrative, translations, poetry and essay, which show her interest in formal experimentation (Coles 131; Crown).

In the last part of *Plainwater*, entitled "The Anthropology of Water," Carson speaks of having to come to terms with painful experiences such as the death of her father, of her brother, of her lover, and ultimately of God ("Thirst" 122), which aroused in her a thirst for understanding and acceptance (123). Carson recounts that the specific trigger for her search for clues about the meaning of the events she was going through at that time was her father's death.[2] She does not deny that, as a result of her

[1] *Tipos de agua* was edited by Vaso Roto and it was reviewed by Manuel Hidalgo on 24 January 2019, by Jordi Doce on 18 June 2020, and by Andrés Seoane on 24 June 2020, all reviews written for *El Cultural* magazine. Vaso Roto also published a translation of *Nox* in 2018, which was reviewed by Ben Ratliff on 5 October 2018. For his part, Eduardo Lago published an interview to Carson in *El País, Babelia*, on 5 March 2019.

[2] The text has been considered to be "a long poem [dated] 1987" ("Anne Carson"). For this article I have used the 1995 edition (reprinted by First Vintage Contemporaries, March 2000).

father's Alzheimer's disease, she became aware of the rage that had existed between them. Carson wishes we could "be gentle when we question our fathers" (122), despite of the fact that after her father's passing she had to face a crossroad of contradictions between love, rage, guilt and penance. The negotiation of her relationship with herself was compromised. She had to face a test, like one tests "the depth of a well" (122). It was then when Carson started walking the Camino de Santiago and the narration of her pilgrimage along the Jacobean route.

My purpose in this article is to further the current knowledge of Carson's work by focusing on "Kinds of Water: An Essay on the Road to Compostela" (hereinafter, "Kinds of Water"), which is one of the seven pieces that make "The Anthropology of Water" in *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry*.[3] Following a line of work centred on resilience that can be traced in Carson's writing and also in critical contributions about other English-speaking female writers, such as Kate Atkinson's *Life after Life* (2014), Joy Harjo's *Crazy Brave: A Memoir* (2012), and Catherine Bush's *Minus Time* (2000), among others,[4] I will argue that the account of Carson's pilgrimage, written as an autoethnographic and autobiographical travel journal, is not only the narration of a journey through new geographic areas, contexts, cultures, history and languages, but it is also an approach to the potential management of personal and intimate risks that Carson underwent at a specific time in her life after suffering a series of personal losses. My hypothesis is that the construction of self-knowledge is an emancipatory act that transcended Carson's mourning period in her experience as an actual pilgrim, seen as an opportunity to move forward by embracing transformation and personal change. Carson's purpose was accompanied by her commitment to search for ways to manage the tensions that challenged the constellation-like structures of rage, guilt, desire and love in the text. In particular, she approached guilt by raising the need to question her temptation to apply a "self-imposed penance and sacrifice," to be able to

[3] "The Anthropology of Water" is divided into seven sections, the titles of which lead from one to another, like aquatic dominoes: "Diving: Introduction to the Anthropology of Water," "Thirst: Introduction to Kinds of Water," "Kinds of Water: An Essay on the Road to Compostela," "Very Narrow: Introduction to Just for the Thrill," "Just for the Thrill: An Essay on the Difference Between Women and Men," "The Wishing Jewel: Introduction to Water Margins," and "Water Margins: An Essay on Swimming by My Brother."

[4] See the studies by Domínguez García, García Navarro, and MacKinnon.

bear the pain caused by irretrievable losses ("Kinds of Water" 171). The emancipatory act was found by Carson remaining true to the narrative potential she explored, which expressed a pact of self-love and love for others. In line with Cyrulnik and Ungar, to do so, personal resilience was used as a driver for support and for individual and social transformation by creating restorative processes to previous traumatic events.

1. "ONE BY ONE ALL TOOK THEMSELVES OUT OF MY HANDS": FACING PERSONAL LOSSES

Anne Carson (Toronto, Canada, 1950) is a poet, translator, essayist, researcher, and professor of classical languages at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In addition to *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry*, she is the author of other works of poetry and poetic prose, including *Eros the Bittersweet* (1986), *Short Talks* (1992), *Glass, Irony and God* (1995), *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (1998), *Economy of the Unlost: Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan* (1999), *Men in the Off Hours* (2000), *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos* (2001), which was awarded the T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry, *Red Doc* (2013), a verse novel that was a sequel to her 1998 text; then came *The Albertine Workout* (2015), and *Float* (2016), a set of small pieces to be performed on stage (Carson, in Kellaway). As an editor, Carson put together a series of essays, along with Louise Bourgeois, Hélène Cixous, Roni Horn and John Waters in *Answer Scars*, the second volume of the four-part work *Wonderwater (Alice Offshore)* (2004). Other collaborative projects by Carson include translations and public readings made with her husband, Robert Currie.[5]

As an English translator of classical works in Greek and Latin, Carson has also published *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho* (2002) and *An Oresteia* (2009), a trilogy on revenge based on *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, *Elektra* by Sophocles and *Orestes* by Euripides. In other translations, Carson adds recreation and fiction to the translation. This is

[5] For further information, see King. Some interviews with Carson have been published as scholarly contributions. One was conducted by John D'Agata and came to light in *The Iowa Review* in 1997. Then Peter Constantine published "Ancient Words, Modern Words: A Conversation with Anne Carson" in 2014. The third one was carried out by Peter Steckfus and is entitled "Collaborating on Decreation: An Interview with Anne Carson," as part of a volume of essays on Carson's work edited by Joshua Marie Wilkinson in 2015.

the case with *Decreation* (2005), *Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides* (2006) and *Nox* (2010). Carson published *Antigonick* (2012) as a translation of the work by Sophocles, a new version of which was published as *Antigone* (2015) and brought to the stage in the same year by the Brooklyn Academy of Music under the direction of Ivo van Hove.[6] Carson was awarded the Inga Maren Otto Fellowship in 2018 and the Princesa de Asturias Award for Literature in 2020.

Judith Butler writes that in Carson's *Antigone*, classical Greek and conversational language coexist in a text that is "a prolonged scream or cry [where] rage [comes] forth from grief." Arguably, both versions address Antigone's disbelief and pain when she heard that her brother had died, and her desperate demand that he be buried. Nevertheless, Antigone found no solace to her grief. This was the starting point for *Nox*, a work about the death of Carson's brother, which occurred in 2000. *Nox* is based on her reading and translation of poem 101 by Catullus on the death of his brother. In the words of Joan Fleming, Carson's dialogue with Catullus results in an art object made up of a set of fragments of translations, biography and poetry, "and a therapeutic biography" (64), in which mourning is expressed through a female voice that is desolate over this loss (Marsden 189). For Carson, this pain connects with the suffering previously experienced upon her father's death. At that time, in order to face the facts, reason was compelled to obey the mandate of an irrevocable fact, but Carson wondered if that was "the way it should be" ("Diving" 117). It is then worth asking whether Carson's texts lean towards accepting and understanding the meaning of pain in general, and death in particular, as reflected in its counterpart: the consciousness of being alive. As Ungar argues (18), resilience can lead to the processing of both pain and trauma, transforming the experience and strengthening the individual through personal narratives of self-affirmation and self-support that contribute to reconstructing their identity. The resilience aspect can be aided by writing, as Fleming (65) and Marsden (192) state, a resource that may help facilitate the expression of grief and integrate the loss. Resilience, then, can become crucial for recovery, as it can provide support and sustenance in the grieving process and renew hope for both present and future life.

[6] Carson's words about this production and its translation can be listened to at *The Guardian*'s podcast by Tania Ketenjian "Beyond Antigone."

As said, her father's illness, his death and her reflection on their relationship were the main reasons why Carson undertook the Camino, a decision encouraged by her need to reconsider her life path up to that moment: "I was a locked person. . . . Something had to break" ("Thirst" 122). It is hardly surprising, then, to find a personal, autobiographical claim at the beginning of "The Anthropology of Water": "father, brother, lover, hungry ghosts and God, one by one all took themselves out of my hands" ("Diving" 117). This contrasts with a previous statement about the autobiographical nature of her writing, in which she pointed out that the autobiographical self is only part of the events that make up the world: "I'm a set of facts . . . and just use them all in some kind of democratic fashion. I don't know how autobiographical I am" (D'Agata and Carson 18). The elusiveness of her answer may be inconsistent with those who have argued that Carson incorporated the autobiographical element more and more throughout her successive publications (Merkin 12). Recently, Carson has referred to the same point again in *The Albertine Workout*, where she says that "it is always tricky, the question whether to read an author's work in light of his life or not" (Streckfus and Carson 38).

In any case, while her personal search was in progress, Carson learned about the Camino de Santiago from someone who asked her: "How can you see your life unless you leave it?" ("Thirst" 122) and indeed, from the introduction, "Kinds of Water" expresses the need to search for answers, with a purpose to be open to a more insightful and meaningful appreciation of the experience of pain and loss. Not surprisingly, the quote that heads the first entry of the journal includes two lines by Antonio Machado: "*the good thing is we know* / *the glasses are for drinking*" ("Kinds of Water" 124),[7] which allude to how using different instruments can make the actual search more bearable. In a period of inevitable grief, Carson finds a space to explore herself, seeking personal transformation without automatically disregarding or setting aside the pain that comes with it. Like Catullus, Carson the pilgrim confesses that she has come "through countries, centuries of difficult

[7] In English in the original text. These lines are part of poem XLI by Machado, included in his book *Campos de Castilla*, section "Proverbios y cantares." It reads: "Bueno es saber que los vasos / nos sirven para beber; / lo malo es que no sabemos / para qué sirve la sed" (226). Another quote from Machado is used at the head of the 26 July entry of "Kinds of Water" (183).

sleep and hard riding and still I do not know the sense of things" ("Kinds of Water" 124–25). To substantiate this purpose, Carson began by leaving her house and her country, crossing an ocean and reaching another continent. Once in Europe, she allowed herself to be guided by her travelling companion, whom she calls "My Cid," an essential character in the story's development. Taking the above said, I suggest the reading of "Kinds of Water" bears in mind Carson's statement of intent and rule of thumb when undertaking any journey: "Don't come back the way you went. Come a new way" (123).

2. NARRATING THE CAMINO

The Camino de Santiago is a pilgrimage route where motivation has been regarded as fundamentally religious in nature. It is frequently experienced as a rite of passage and a transformative experience. Although there has always been a significant economic component to the Camino from early times, sometimes the motive for engaging in the pilgrimage is closer to tourism, as the pilgrim and tourist find common goals and feelings for their journey (Collins-Kreiner 437). In general terms, pilgrimage is associated with travelling to places that are considered sacred. This displacement can also be associated with a personal desire to search for meaning in one's life course (Frey 17). Pilgrimages today also reflect an interest in the search for different forms of spirituality due to the attraction of the sacred aspect of pilgrimage centres (Nilsson 2). This character of a place of pilgrimage is constantly in construction and offers a variety of discourses (Eade and Sallnow 3) that intersect with the socio-cultural representation that it has acquired over time.

As noted above, in Carson's experience of her journey, the autobiographical component appears in superimposed planes in the narrative with other components, such as the essay, or the Ariadne-like thread of questions, as a continuous riddle game that leads Carson's pursuit from the beginning to the end of the text. In the second entry of the journal, Carson proposes the game: "What is it others know? Pilgrims were people who loved a good riddle" ("Kinds of Water" 125), to be followed all the way through the rest of her diary. All the journal entries show the place where the narrator was, the day, the month (not the year)

and some lines by different Japanese poets,[8] except for the two entries headed by Machado's words.

One of the narrative merits of Carson's journal is that it connects with the basic purpose of all narration, namely, that someone tells someone about an event that has happened. This purpose brings back recollections of traditional pilgrimage accounts and their motivations. It is linked to a genealogy of women who undertook one or more pilgrimages, whose texts have come down to us in the form of autobiographies, travel books or, as in Carson's case, with the appearance of a travel journal. Indeed, one of these female narrators was Margery Kempe (1373–1428), who was a pilgrim to Santiago in 1417, as noted in her autobiography, *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Kempe used different strategies to quench her thirst for knowledge and God, as when in lines 274–76 she says that she "gafhir to gretfastyng and to gret waking of the clok / and went to cherch and was ther in hir prayers onto type of noon and also / al the aftyrnoon." Similarly, Carson first attempted to quench her thirst for knowledge by fasting and reading saints' lives.

The Road to Santiago has been compared to a river by Frey, who writes that the Camino "is fluid, like a river with tributaries entering and leaving the main flow" (28). In Carson's text, thirst and water are omnipresent. The narration begins with a description of Carson as "someone thirsting for God," in which she does not recognise herself, as in the poem that she wrote at the time, "I Am an Unlocated Window of Myself" ("Thirst" 122). She also sought knowledge, which, for her, is accessed by focusing on things that are happening and cannot be ignored, as "doors that no one may close" (123). Water is a guiding element, a saving grace that bolsters the need to enliven one's ability to understand, while also encouraging the reader to flow with the events narrated along the way. Carson does not mention any dates, but she refers to herself as "a strong, stingy person of no particular gender—all traits advantageous to the pilgrim" (123). Carson's trait is noticeable because it implies that, in this spiritual pursuit, no sexual hierarchies are identified with the thirst for knowledge, God, and the redeeming quality of the path. This pilgrim-

[8] The poets are: Matsuo Basho, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Gensei Sugawara, Kan-ami Kiyotsugu, Mukai Kyorai, Oshikochi no Mitsune, Ueshima Ontsura, Masaoka Shiki, Izumi Shikibu, Kokan Shiren, Kan Shobaku, Takayama Sozei, Mizuta Masahide, Iio Sogi, Socho, Mibu no Tadamine, Tanizaki, Ki no Tsurayuki and Zeami Motokiyo. Most of these Japanese poets lived between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and wrote poems in the form of haiku and tanka impregnated by Zen Budhism.

narrator allows herself to be guided by her male companion, My Cid, eventually revealing her authority to challenge the scope of their relationship. Interestingly, sexual heteronormativity is questioned again when Carson insists that she has "no gender, something everybody strives for these days" (Carson, in Tenenbaum). As a pilgrim, Carson did not keep vows or promises to be made when reaching the finish, but the determination to acknowledge herself as "a strong soul" ("Thirst" 123). There is no record in the text of her using a staff (or walking stick) to help her in her walking or her wearing the scallop shell, two elements customary to pilgrims on the Camino. Carson did not use any maps either, arguing that she "c[ould]n't read maps" (123); she would be walking with her Cid as an expert guide through the Road.

A wide range of references are made in the text to the states and uses of water, the nature of which is manifested in its ability to drown us and become a grave. In some cultures, "true and false virgins are identified by ordeal of water. [For example,] a woman who has known love will drown" ("Diving" 117). One may also fall "at the edge of the water, knocking back and forth slightly in the force of the waves" so that one may wonder what is it that water is saying to oneself ("Kinds of Water" 187). Carson warns: "Clothe yourself, the water is deep" ("Diving" 118), referring to the need to find support to stay afloat as we try to flow with the watercourse. In the first entry in her journal, Carson depicts herself as an observer sitting on the terrace of the hotel in St. Pied de Port, where she is staying at the beginning of the Camino. She is watching a waterfall that rushes down the rock and sees that in the pool where the torrent will stop, an inert lump reveals the shape of a drowned dog: "I stand, mind burning, looking down. No one is noticing the dog . . . I do not know the word for drowned" ("Kinds of Water" 124). As Frey remarks, the journalistic nature of pilgrims' diaries makes it possible for people to express themselves freely about private matters that provide insightful glances to their experience as pilgrims (44). In this regard, the narratorial voice of "Kinds of Water" offers an intimate quality to the text when Carson writes about the drowned dog as a metaphor of her suffering, followed by a rhetorical question that serves to express a feeling of disbelief, maybe of disassociation: "Am I on the verge of an ancient gaffe?" ("Kinds of Water" 124). In the journal, water may also be a river (124, 132), the ocean (167), the sea (181); it surrounds islands (166); may be contained in a recipient (130) such as a jug (146), an *odre* (148), a fountain and a well (162); it can run through pipes (128) or aqueducts

(128, 138); water gives towns their names either implicitly, as in the case of Puente la Reina, or explicitly, as in Villamayor del Río (140), and to rivers too, like the River Odra (148), as well as religious images, such as The Virgin of the Trout (161).[9] The power of these types of water is not subject to interpretation because they also come with "various dangers [as, for example] lashing rain [and] storms" ("Kinds of Water" 158); and part of their nature is, as it happens with a poem, a text or a path, that of pointing in a direction that we are invited to follow. On the shore of the ocean, Finisterre is the westernmost town on the Peninsula and the end point of the Camino. Carson refers to Finisterre when she speaks of this pilgrimage as a "downstream to the ends of the earth . . . the end of the world" (158). The metaphor of the wet dog is repeated in Finisterre (187), as will be seen below. As Carson says, alluding to the finishing line to be reached, "you can lead a pilgrim to water" ("Kinds of Water" 157), or as Foucault writes, a direction that invites one "to undertake an enquiry" (98; my translation).

The Camino, be it a dirt path, a paved road or a watercourse, challenges both the pilgrim and the ability of the narrating voice to investigate and flow, to try to see beyond that which is apparently obvious and eludes understanding ("Diving" 117; "Kinds of Water" 123). Water embodies fear, promise, goal, the potential for encounter; it breaks resistance. Carson affirms that in the Greek lyrical tradition, this metaphor expresses a change in one's state where a loss gives way to an experience of transformation, which contains dynamics of assault and resistance of the self against the world (*Eros the Bittersweet* 39). The experience as a pilgrim carries a form of sensuality that threatens to dissolve the order of things, thus the individual's resistance to this dissolution (9–41).

3. WALKING A PATH TOWARDS SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The use of the word "essay" in the subtitle of "Kinds of Water" is rather striking, given that formally it is a travel journal. This word also appears in other works by Carson, as seen above. In the interview with D'Agata in 1997, Carson says that an essay is "an attempt to reason and tell, to have something to say and to do so" (16). D'Agata mentions that Michel

[9] Odra is the name of a river that flows through the province of Burgos. The Virgin of the Trout is the name of "a twelfth-century statue" ("Kinds of Water" 161).

de Montaigne described the notion of essay as "an attempt . . . or experiment. Which makes the essay a process rather than a product" (16). At this point, Carson explains her choice of both the term and the essay style of her texts:

> When you write an essay you are giving a gift . . . . A gift shouldn't turn back into the self and stop there. That's why facts are so important, because a fact is something already given. It's a gift from the world or from wherever you found it. . . . [T]hen you take that gift and you do something with it, and you give it again to the world or to some person, and that keeps it going. . . . Because [the ancients] have this word for grace, *charis*, which means grace in the reciprocal sense of coming and going. It's both a gift given and a gift received. . . . [T]hat reciprocation keeps going and makes culture have substance. (17)

Carson points to the opportunities provided by the intertwined acts of giving and taking, as they can facilitate the reception of the facts and their expression through words, embodied in text through *charis*. In a world that attaches value to the "outside," the Camino is a space and a time where the sense of continuity and reciprocity are affirmed. One has to think of Carson's agreement with Simone Weil when Weil writes that one cannot reach God without giving something back, which partly involves "an undoing of the creature in us—that creature enclosed in self and defined by self" (Carson, *Decreation* 202). This return of the writer, this giving of herself in writing, emerges from her desire to communicate and allows her to engage in exploration in essay form. Carson's text can be deemed to be a need and a practice, that of narrating the Camino's events and experiences to interpret one's own experience, taking into account that the act of narrating is fundamentally about cultivating a sense of the possible both personally and socially (Meretoja 2, 11–12).

In the journal, one of the characters is the self that narrates the pilgrimage, and is also a writer and a reader, as Hume explains (53). This multiple self shares the journey and the narration with a speechless male character to whom some emotions are attributed (instead of them being expressed by him). This Camino companion is never mentioned by his given name, as, for example, Chaucer did for some pilgrims in the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*. In "Kinds of Water," My Cid is "one 'who in a happy hour was born,' as the famous poem says" (126). A tension/relaxation dynamic is established with My Cid throughout the

text. Carson constructs a character that accompanies her and plays a seemingly secondary role moving throughout the pilgrimage in a symbolic space where opposing forces coexist that put the narrator "back and forth across the edges" (*Eros the Bittersweet* 108). Their relationship is unclear (is he a lover, a friend, both?); however, My Cid is a "You" from whom Carson does not hide her frailty. This is illustrated, for example, when she meditates before the grave of *El Cid*, who, along with Jimena, "rests in an eternal conversation . . . What is the conversation of lovers? Compared to ordinary talk, it is as bread to stones. My heart gets dizzy" ("Kinds of Water" 142).

In "Kinds of Water," the Camino teaches Carson that there are various types of love, of anger, of doubt, different forms of facing silence or solitude and of embracing desire. The presence of Eros in all orders of life, and the tension caused by its influence as a threatening and liberating force, pervades the story as the trail of water that guides the thirsty. This brings to mind Sappho's verses in *Eros the Bittersweet*: "Eros—here it goes again!—the limb loosener / whirls me, / sweetbitter, impossible to fight off" (119). Carson wonders about the possible relationships between walkers who undertake the pilgrimage together. Sometimes a form of symbiosis is established between them, like animals that need and support each other,

> rid[ing] on top of one another . . . ensnar[ing] themselves in plants and tendrils. These are two motifs that may be seen repeatedly in reliefs and other works of art along the pilgrim's route. . . . I want to ask how is it this man and I are riding on top of one another, and how ensnared, for it is not in the customary ways. We take separate rooms in hotels. Carnal interest is absent. . . . A pilgrim is a person who is up to something. What is it? ("Kinds of Water" 145)

In the quote, the affirmation allows the question to emerge. Eros again, the "unmanageable creature" ("Kinds of Water" 130), makes the narrator regard her pilgrimage as a love story between the pilgrim and the path, whose culmination is reached step by step, and eventually upon reaching the destination (154). Nevertheless, the path is not the goal but the process, as Carson now knows, adding that the path "asks only one thing. Which happens to be the only thing you long to give. You step forward. You shiver in the light" (154). Towards the final stages of the Camino, in Galician land, the fear that the pilgrim might be subject to

penance after so many losses is present (169). Not surprisingly, the entrance into Galician territory through O Cebreiro is made through a steep gravel path that demands both physical and mental fortitude. Here, the pilgrim's Cid tries to elicit a response from her in this regard: "but what is the definition of penance?" (169). On the ascent to O Cebreiro, penance appears (169), as it does in the following entry, "To Samos" (171). The discussion opens the next entry again (172). Having walked from St. Pied de Port for more than a month, in the necessary coexistence between the two walkers, the recognition of not only emotional pain, but also physical and sensual pain, filtered through the narrative act, is present and entails possibilities to see some painful parts of human experience differently, thus taking on a new meaning.

The presence of Eros as the creator of resilient possibilities of interaction is not easy to avoid and attests to the expectations of the pilgrim, who wakes up in the middle of the night in the bedroom of a hostel on the Camino. In the same room, the cry of another female pilgrim is heard. The narrator opens herself up to a kind of paradox that encourages her to take sides, to do something for the other who is crying in the shared space. For the person crying, she softly hums a song from the Spanish Civil War learnt from her mother: "as each hour passes, Miguel my love, / you grow more dear: / is that the reason, Miguel my love, / you are not here?" ("Kinds of Water" 171). The crying stops and silence reigns. There has not been a requirement of any competence on the part of the receiver: we do not know if the other female had to fill any cultural, language or physical gaps to receive and shelter Carson's intention. The code here is the recognition of the other's suffering and the proactive input on our pilgrim's part. As Carson says when the other woman stops crying, "sometimes it is enough just to recognise a *camino*. Your bitter heart heals my heart" (171; emphasis in the original). An unexpected form of solidarity condensed in a moment of empathy gives breath to all the potentialities of human love, signalling a desire to understand differences and legitimise them (Shuman 158). As seen, recounting her anger and her desire allows the narrator to negotiate the boundaries of her experience, but also to go beyond herself and legitimise her and other people's sadness. As Carson explains, referring to Sappho's lines once more, Eros weaves stories by linking the opportunities of desire to those of openness and creation (*Eros the Bittersweet* 170). The Camino knows nothing about borders, rather it dissipates them, allowing for new ways of being. In other words, the

conflict that originally moved her to engage in her pilgrimage is not set aside at any point, despite circumstances common to her and her Cid. The Camino draws a weave of resilient fibres to be taken by the person; it extends the scope to different possibilities which are contained in the nature of the journey. In the end, "love is the mystery inside this walking. It runs ahead of us on the road like a dog, out of the photograph" ("Kinds of Water" 145), even though sometimes it seems blurred (or out of the "photograph" focus). An epiphany of salvation is glimpsed after the narrator's arrival in Finisterre, which symbolises the culmination of the cathartic process that the pilgrimage is. In an attitude of contemplation, there is no fear, no failure, because a resilient person has mobilised resources to move on and has emerged from the experiences lived in the Camino, "tak[ing] hold of my paws and cross[ing] them on my breast: as a sign that I am one who has been to the holy city and tasted its waters, its kinds" ("Kinds of Water" 187).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has studied Carson's story-telling process and practice of the Camino de Santiago. As a contribution to the existing knowledge of the Camino by an author whose text defies the conventions of the travel narrative, in "Kinds of Water" we are invited to plunge into the conditions under which the story about the Camino is told by Carson, the questions that arise in her quest for answers, and the negotiation of love, be it erotic desire or not, as tropes through which they are narrated and may disguise deeper contexts of female resilience.

Using the journal technique, Carson narrates a personal experience sparing no effort to engage in the essayistic style, giving rise to an artistic creation that summons the voices of past and contemporary authors, avoids essentialist claims, exploits experimentation, and offers different textual discourses, establishing in so doing links between contemporaneity and the Ancient World, passing through the Medieval World. The Camino, in its historical dimension of universal value, facilitates an immersion experience from a personal, environmental and linguistic viewpoint that also touches on an interest in tourism. The text, therefore, takes the opportunity to invite pilgrims to participate in a permanent cross-cultural dialogue between past and present, calling on languages, names, and places.

In a world characterised by the convergence of multiple communication platforms, "Kinds of Water" probes how ancient modes of exploring and narratives might be reclaimed today to allow for the complexity of experience to be expressed in pursuit of transformative personal change. In such a school of itinerancy, Carson explores her capacity as a resilient entrepreneur. Initially mobilised by the death of her father and her thirst for knowledge about her losses, Carson manages to work through her grief, to make way for her own restructuring. According to Carson's narration, the Camino is a proposal for pilgrims to learn how to dispose of the unnecessary, promoting the mobilisation of resources that foster the ability to quench one's thirst for answers, even though they may not necessarily be found. The traveller drinks from the Camino, a path-river of experiences.

It can be said that the account of the narrator's doubts, fears, questions, desires and emotions, and of those attributed to her travelling companion, is not a religious account with pedagogical or moralising purposes. Carson is not only concerned with facts, but also with the exchange processes of giving and taking, and the personal and social wealth that they generate. This is reflected in the broad flow of Carson's narrative production, full of dialogues between different cultural traditions, authors and modes of representation. For this reason, her mission in this narration on the Camino de Santiago is to gradually gain a type of knowledge that allows her to walk the path of openness to observation and resilient love and claim it for herself. She dares to embrace the forms of resilience emerging from the encounters between herself, others, and the text. The narrator is, therefore, a self that undertakes the pilgrimage not by conforming to any standards, but by making room for the new nuances of experience, as well as for the weakened part of herself, allowing for new resolutions to arise. The last question of the text can now be answered:

> Why does it enrage an animal to be given what it already knows? Speaking as someone who is as much in love with knowledge as My Cid is in love with the light . . . , I would say knowing is a road. The metaphor is unoriginal but now you may . . . see what it means to me ("Kinds of Water" 164–65).

As seen, the resilient texture permeates and traverses Carson's text, focusing on the tensions, contradictions and silences of the female

pilgrim and her male companion, in a journey where there is a willingness to ask some questions, be the answer more or less obvious.

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