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| Nota di contenuto | Isolarion -- Frontmatter -- Contents -- Acknowledgements -- Introduction -- FIRST PARTITION -- Embarkation -- Purification -- Of Music and Cannibalism -- Doing My Part -- The Melancholy Pilgrim -- Bread and Circuses -- Boucherie Chatar -- Designated Desire-Lines: Planning a New Road -- Further Purification of the Pilgrim -- Enrobed -- Of Love and Jewels -- Behind the Blue Door (Inside the Private Shop) -- From the Literal to the Allegorical and Back -- Wittgenstein's Lion and a Cappuccino Sea -- Virtual Streets and Gateways: The Plans Revisited -- Cosmonauts and Coleslaw -- St. Edmund's Well and a Faded Warning -- SECOND PARTITION -- Making Do and Getting By -- Egyptian Vagabonds, Afternoon Men, and the Malus Genius of Our Nation -- Losing the Key -- Bed-Sits and Birrdari -- What They Think You Can Bear: Football, Religion, and Nightmares on the Cowley Road -- Between Two Fires: Pulling the Dragon's Teeth -- Melancholy, an American Photographer, and the Irish Writer -- Cowley Road Calling -- Just Less Lucky -- Dreadlocks and Rim-Shots: Reggae at the Zodiac -- Of Lepers, Lunatics, and Layabouts -- Dancing Sand and Zum-Zum Water -- Junior Jihad -- Of Books and Bitumen -- Carnival -- Returning to the Source -- THIRD PARTITION -- A Journey in the Hinterland -- Into the Furnace -- Blessings and Tribulation -- A Graveyard Reborn -- Finding a Clue -- Of Bats and Mutton Curry -- Margaret's Story -- A |

Hidden Pool -- The Liquid Kingdom -- The Gateways Close -- Of Robots, Wild Rhubarb, and the New Oxford Way -- Things Fall Apart: An Ending of Sorts

Sommario/riassunto

Through the centuries, people from all walks of life have heard the siren call of a pilgrimage, the lure to journey away from the familiar in search of understanding. But is a pilgrimage even possible these days for city-dwellers enmeshed in the pressures of work and family life? Or is there a way to be a pilgrim without leaving one's life behind? James Attlee answers these questions with *Isolarion*, a thoughtful, streetwise, and personal account of his pilgrimage to a place he thought he already knew—the Cowley Road in Oxford, right outside his door. *Isolarion* takes its title from a type of fifteenth-century map that isolates an area in order to present it in detail, and that's what Attlee, sharp-eyed and armed with tape recorder and notebook, provides for Cowley Road. The former site of a leper hospital, a workhouse, and a medieval well said to have miraculous healing powers, Cowley Road has little to do with the dreaming spires of the tourist's or student's Oxford. What Attlee presents instead is a thoroughly modern, impressively cosmopolitan, and utterly organic collection of shops, restaurants, pubs, and religious establishments teeming with life and reflecting the multicultural makeup of the surrounding neighborhood. From a sojourn in a sensory-deprivation tank to a furtive visit to an unmarked pornography emporium, Attlee investigates every aspect of the Cowley Road's appealingly eclectic culture, where halal shops jostle with craft jewelers and reggae clubs pulsate alongside quiet churchyards. But the very diversity that is, for Attlee, the essence of Cowley Road's appeal is under attack from well-meaning city planners and predatory developers. His pilgrimage is thus invested with melancholy: will the messy glories of the Cowley Road be lost to creeping homogenization? Drawing inspiration from sources ranging from Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* to contemporary art, Attlee is a charming and companionable guide who revels in the extraordinary embedded in the everyday. *Isolarion* is at once a road movie, a quixotic stand against uniformity, and a rousing hymn in praise of the complex, invigorating nature of the twenty-first-century city.
