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IN DEFENCE OF THE REALM:

Mobility, Modernity and Community on the Camino de Santiago

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university.

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Keith Egan

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Dedication

To Mary and Saoirse

Abstract

This study adopts phenomenological, semiotic and symbolic approaches to the study of pilgrimage, following pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago across Spain. My starting point has been to examine pilgrims' construction of a different place, time and experiencing self, while on pilgrimage in the company of others engaging in similar projects of existential re-invigoration. This study asks whether authentic experience can be possible in a world characterised by alienation and fragmentation and what role religion can play in this instance.

By combining classic notions of gift, with contemporary ideas of narrative, community and authenticity, this study tries to highlight the ways in which selves are projects under continual renewal, where the existential ground of meaning and experience is rediscovered through idioms of physical distress and comprehended through the pilgrimage space as a context for therapeutic action.

The basic understanding of pilgrimage that this study employs then is that the pilgrimage site is a privileged arena for the investigation of existential power and for the exploration of more central discursive processes. These processes constitute larger contexts of meaning and belonging through the pilgrimage space for its transient inhabitants, the pilgrims.

In a world and a time where belief might appear to have waned, this study asks what role suffering within a religious paradigm has for making sense of life. Notions of self and other are scrutinised in the face of real attempts by pilgrims to find people to help establish the meaningful grounds of life-projects capable of

retaining momentum and direction. In the intersections between mobility, modernity and community then, are the interstices where pilgrims remake the grounds of experience, coping with loss, grief and regret. The pilgrimage is an arena for experimentation that becomes increasingly available as more institutional formations of sacred travel become backgrounded, freeing pilgrims to achieve crucial personal goals.

As for this myth [of Sisyphus], one sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it, and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain.

It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself! I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step toward the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock...

All Sisyphus's silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is a thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols. In the universe suddenly restored to its silence, the myriad wondering little voices of the earth rise up. Unconscious, secret calls, invitations from all the faces, they are the necessary reverse and price of victory. There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night. The absurd man says yes and his efforts will henceforth be unceasing. If there is a personal fate, there is no higher destiny, or at least there is, but one which he concludes is inevitable and despicable. For the rest, he knows himself to be the master of his days. At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which become his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling.

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.

---Albert Camus---

Introduction

"I came here for the magic": re-enchanting the Camino de Santiago

"It was the rediscovery of a kind of simplicity of life
that's there for the taking, but we never see it in our daily lives
because it's masked out by all of the gadgetry,
media, hectic pace of living, etc."
Kurt, a pilgrim

Do you know that places only yield up their secrets,
their most profound mysteries,
to those who are just passing through?
Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Leaving the old ruined village of Foncebadón on our way to El Acebo, we joined the road from the mountain and were back on our guard for cyclists who would be taking advantage of the decline to speed and push their way on to Ponferrada, probably further still, freewheeling downhill all the way. A few kilometres along, we could hear a bell ringing intermittently in the distance, and soon we came upon a ramshackle building just off the road to the right. It was the famed refuge of Manjarín, a makeshift *refugio* (or hostel) run by an eccentric character by the name of Tomas Martínez, erstwhile middle-aged businessman who had left his life to follow his calling: modern day Knight Templar with his

own homemade refuge clinging to the side of the mountain (see figure 1). Although the local council has for years tried to shut him down for reasons of hygiene and safety, he has prevailed, and is to be seen all year long standing and ringing the bell for every cycling or walking pilgrim. Many stop for the possibility of a *sello* or stamp, which has been the official method used to establish that the pilgrim had travelled that day and would thus qualify one to stay for the night in one of the many low-cost hostels that populate the pilgrimage (in fact, the *sello* has become a way for local establishments to attract pilgrim business as well).

At a refuge like Manjarín, however, most pilgrims stay only for some coffee before pushing quickly on again. Walkers do actually stop in to Tomas, though, if only to satisfy their curiosity. One online reviewer describes the refuge: "I would not recommend staying here because when we stopped for a drink, there were flies everywhere and no washing facilities of any kind" (Camino Santiago Compostela Pilgrimage). Despite quite a few such reviews, the refuge is popular; Tomas dresses in white sackcloth embossed with a templar cross and convenes a daily prayer meeting at 11 a.m., whereupon he begins on a prayer for world peace that epitomises his mission on the Camino. The prayer is part formula, part spontaneous entreaty. Pilgrims stand in two lines holding tiki torches while Tomas prays; his adepts and novices stand with heads bowed and hands clasped (it is easy to pick them out from the crowd of almost thirty people that gather each day), while the rest of us range in reaction from uncomfortable boredom to devout and charismatic engagement. The energy from those who are responding is noticeably different as Tomas's voice raises and falls in tone and pitch in a way reminiscent of a Catholic priest during the Eucharistic anamnesis.

His exhortations are to the warriors of God, His angels, to intercede and bring peace in the world, to Mary to Jesus to heal his people and bring them together in peace. The prayer is rather given to religious obscurantism, with weighty words like forgiveness and peace to add to the effect of the meeting, without, as one might expect, a roadmap to execute an actual *plan* for peace. Yet it does have an effect, and the eye-flash among participants at the end of the prayer tells me that several pilgrims have decided to end their walk for the day and stay there to find out what else Tomas knows.

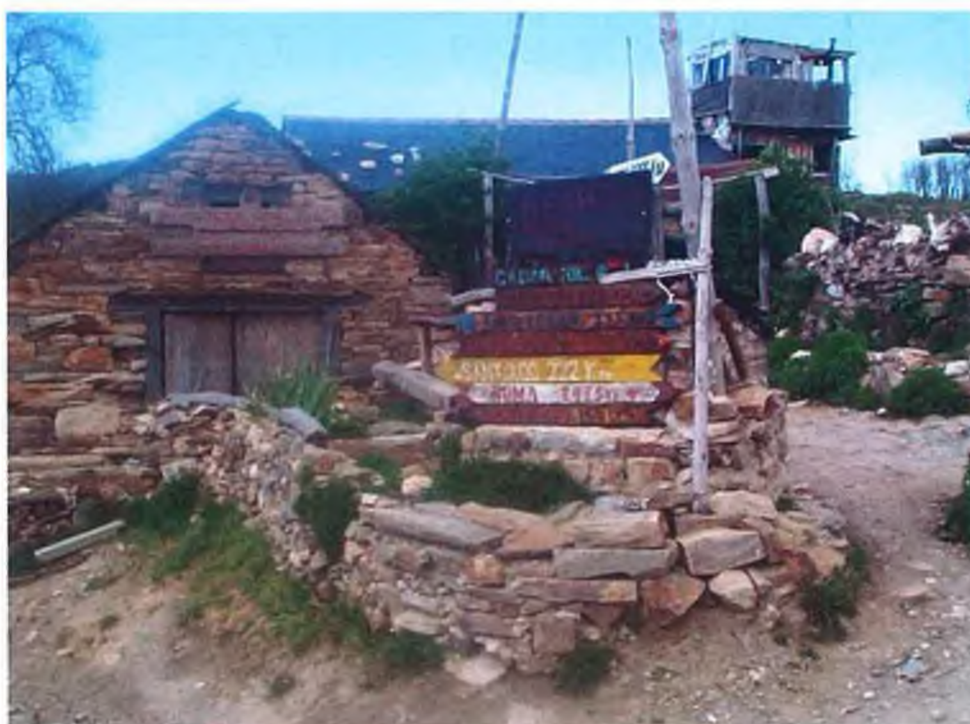

Figure 1 The Refuge at Manjarín

As I left Tomas's refuge and made my way towards Ponferrada, I wondered what some of my fellow pilgrims would make of him. I wondered about John, the Irish pilgrim who was on pilgrimage to commemorate his sister's death on the Camino – I doubted that he would be impressed by the show Tomas

put on. I knew that Robert the young American would revel in Tomas still being here, sounding a note of consistency for his second pilgrimage, and Danny his friend who would at least appear impressed until someone told him otherwise. The American women would find Tomas quaint, and Alex the Swiss convert would keep quiet, smiling enigmatically before continuing on to fulfil his life's dream to walk from Switzerland to the tomb of St. James. I could hear my Spanish companion the philologist from a previous journey rapidly trying to explain the significance of the Knights Templar for the development of the route. Gerry the Irish pilgrim would not have even stopped, instead rushing ahead to Santiago, walking his own personal pre-pilgrimage before living in the Pyrenees for a month; no time for silliness, only Santiago is important. Kurt, the American ex-soldier would sit and soak up the atmosphere, serenely thankful for the unique experience, having to convince his Colombian walking partner Diego not to stay the night with the Knight. I thought of Eva, Michael, Paddy, all the pilgrims I had met, German, French, Spanish, American, Irish, Slovenian (Andrej would have wanted beer to stay looking at Tomas), Czech (Ždenbeck would have been amused by the prayer) and Japanese; pilgrims from all around the world.

Finally I thought about Pepe, the old Spanish pilgrim who left his home and resentful son in Madrid to spend a month on the road, walking with young people who listened to him talk about life under Franco, the gift of being able to walk the Camino and move so freely, speaking so many languages. Not in his day, "don't look at me," he would repeat, until he would turn on his favourite target and begin lambasting me. I would have to sit quietly until he finished his mock tirade at me, his insults flowing like he was trying to sell a mangy cow at market without much conviction. Then I would get up and begin to be

theatrically polite and complimentary to him in English as he continued in Spanish trying to find something nice to say about me, both of us pretending not to understand a word the other said. The crowd loved it every time. He was always did this with me, I supposed I reminded him of the son that he had come to forget for a while. He was a few days behind me when I left Manjarín, however, his feet having slowly fallen to pieces from the walk. It was impossible to watch the man walking, the pain of each step etched unforgivingly across his sweat-soaked face. He had come up with the idea of binding his feet with surgical tape, a move, though not unheard of, that could only spell disaster when his feet swelled up in response. It was a clear sign of a certain lunacy among walkers, and it would not be the last.

Pepe would not stop walking. Every day he would bind his feet and make his pain-filled way to the next refuge, trying to keep up with the group of pilgrims he had found and gathered around him, young female pilgrims who liked his company and his jokes. It was clear that there was a lot at stake for him, not only in walking, but in stopping too. Even in spite of the palpable and excruciating toll that the physical arduousness of the pilgrimage was taking on Pepe, to finish before Santiago would be to return to Madrid and a home situation that had become intolerable. I could not even guess at what he would think of Tomas; would he admire him, for breaking from his previous life and living in this 'wild' place? Would he feel threatened that one of his young companions who had kept pace with me instead of him had opened up and broke down in the refuge of Manjarín, her own problems pouring out before a sympathetic audience of mystics and charlatans? Walking away from the refuge

that day, the ghosts of all my friends and acquaintances of the Camino brought only more questions, and with fewer answers to smooth my way.

Tomas, though, became for me a fascinating creature who seems to capture a lot of what the Camino, with its hybrid historical and religious character, has come to mean. If pilgrimage is a realm of competing discourses (Eade and Sallnow 1991a), then the journey over the Irago mountains brings us face to face with more than a few of them: the history of the pilgrimage, its utility as a marker of European solidarity and pedigree, the many layers of its history all confront the walking pilgrims to different degrees, in Foncebadón, at the Cruz de Ferro and in the refuge of Manjarín. Yet the story of the pilgrimage is primarily a story of pilgrims who walk the pilgrimage into being every year, who constantly re-invent the culture of the Camino, through whispers of stories they have heard or read, through the characters that stay put and through their own innovation. The Camino is the story of tens of thousands of people who walk alone and in small groups, suffering through the pains and ills of their own lives and the physical exhaustion of the daily walk. It is a story through personal torments and lives haunted by years of ill-judged decisions that had left them feeling lost. The Camino is as much a journey of a suffering soul in search of a suffering body as it is about the way of the walking wounded, much more than it could be claimed as a realm of competing discourses (see Frey 1998:45). It is this Camino I want to evoke in these pages.

The theoretical strands that I draw on to achieve the task come from medical anthropology, philosophy, phenomenology and literature. The work of Byron Good relies on Paul Ricoeur in explaining the evocation of complex patterns of giving names and stories to pain to narrativise suffering within

ephemeral groups of fellow pilgrims. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of the 'overman', read partly through Nigel Rapport (2003), gives my work an existential leaning, as I try to capture the physical dynamics of attempting a month-long walk alone to make sense of suffering that refuses to take a name. I draw on Arthur Kleinman and somatisation theory to throw light on the body as the centre of meaning-making in pain behaviour, and use Thomas Csordas (1994, 1997) to sketch the phenomenological roots of culture-making through embodied engagement with the world of the Camino as a different place. The semeiotics of Charles Peirce come to my aid in revealing the body as a complex sign capable of generating a universe of meaning, through states of consciousness that the physical pilgrimage induces in the pilgrim. The ironic impulse of creating open, future-oriented narratives stands as a covert counterpoint to a religious drive that can bind lives. Pilgrims tell stories that help them to see futures not determined by bad past decisions or poorly conceived institutional loyalties. The walk west is a walk towards a freedom of choice and control over the trajectory of one's life.

I draw on Marcel Mauss and Jacques Derrida to enquire upon the possibilities and constraints of exchange practice in creating stable channels of contact and communication between 'strong poets', people who do not suffer under the 'anxiety of influence' from circumstance or discourses that seem to constrict original being and thinking (see Rapport 2003, Bloom 1997). As a counterpoint to strong poetics, the prose of Franz Kafka assists in questioning further a particular sought-after private promontory perspective of the pilgrimage. Pilgrimage seems to offer a quest for a larger vision of the world since, for example, the prototypical meeting of pilgrim and God on the road to

Emmaus, a key textual resource in the development of pilgrimage as a paradigm for the Christian imagination (see Chatty, Coleman & Elsner 2004).[1] In deploying this dialectic of strong individuality and 'minor literature' (see Deleuze & Guattari 2003), I will explore the uses of authenticity as an important rhetorical device for establishing the boundaries by which pilgrims encounter a strong *body* poetics; walking with sincerity and purpose. Thus, through narratives of authentic peregrination, where other pilgrims become key resources in defining the boundaries of the authentic as much as the self, the pilgrimage begins to resemble a charismatic experience. I follow Csordas's (1997) reading of charisma to explore how pilgrims radicalise their everyday lives and construct a charismatic or 'gifted' poetics of self by which the pilgrimage acts to recover the life-project of the pilgrim from stagnation through a rugged individual and intermittently collective outdoors therapeutic idiom.

I try to ask whether pilgrimage is really a realm of competing discourses and if there is any room for people in such a place. I turn to the symbolic anthropology of Victor Turner, the theoretical foil to Eade and Sallnow's social constructionist approach to pilgrimage, to argue that the Camino is indeed a 'different place' (Dubisch 1995), capable of generating a loose sense of spontaneous communitas, which springs up, lasting only days or hours and dies away again. This feeling of community on the move is a crucial dimension of the Camino's draw and points to broader, more central, cultural processes of nation-making. Such processes rely on real individuals to form groups that

[1] We must differentiate between rejecting Christianity on the Camino and holding it at bay, so to speak, while one 'flirts' with spirituality. While it is true that walkers could have walked anywhere and they chose a Christian pilgrimage route, they could easily have explored a more religious motive at home as well. Instead, pilgrims walk for weeks *between* religious places across a more ancient sacred geography.

currently sustain the pilgrimage as a Camino and not simply as a long walk in Spain for vaguely religious motives:

> "It is not simply that in minds of Christians, Muslims or Hindus the cities of Rome, Mecca, or Benares were the centres of sacred geographies, but their centrality was experienced and 'realized' by the constant flow of pilgrims moving towards them from remote and *otherwise unrelated* localities. Indeed, in some sense the outer limits of the old religious communities of the imagination were determined by which pilgrimages people made" (Anderson 1983:53-54, original emphasis).

Foucault's famous statement about man being "a figure not yet two centuries old" points to his conception of human subjectivity being produced in distinct epistemes and constituted as effects of powerful discourses (2002:xxv). In contrast, Orson Welles's character in the film *The Third Man,* Harry Lime, eloquently captures the inherent creativity of man under construction from (and *possibly* determined by) such powerful discourses: "In Italy, for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed – they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock."[2] As a further corrective to poststructuralist faith in the ontological priority of the symbol over the individual, I want to foreground the role of the moral imagination in constituting the individual *qua* moral agent. That is, to the degree that the individual traffics in meanings to effect a modicum of control over the trajectory of his life course, and where there are real consequences for these efforts, individuals have theoretical primacy in my analysis of pilgrimage and the ironic imagination.

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[2] The director Greene admitted this line was not his own, but rather Welles' contribution (the impact of the statement is in some ways enhanced by the fact that the cuckoo clock is actually a German invention).

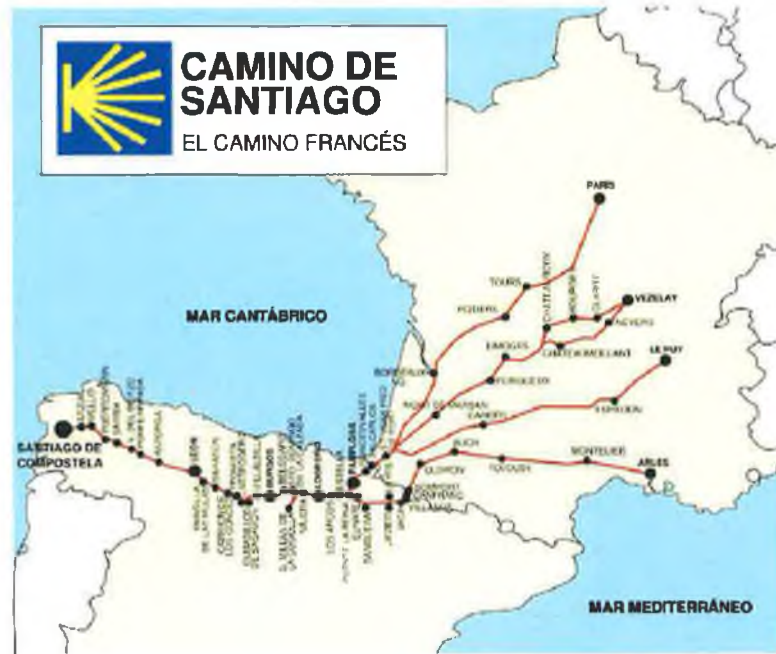

Figure 2 Map of the French Way of the Camino de Santiago (source: http://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Routes_de_St_jacques_de_Compostelle.svg)

My field-site for the project was the pilgrimage route of the Camino in Spain known as the French Way, one of a network of routes that travel west to Santiago (see figure 2).[3] Although the Camino is a medieval religious pilgrimage, it is configured through multiple modern-day discourses and ideologies as well as through contemporary pilgrim interest, a renewed impetus at the levels of both structure and agency. Its place within the world system is an artefact of these processes constituting it, historically, politically and existentially. This is one reason to treat the Camino throughout this work, not as a single homogenous space, but as a series of "discontinuous, multi-sited objects of study" (Marcus 1995:97) that influence, in various ways and by a variety of means, the journeys and purposes of pilgrims (e.g., see Crain 1997).

[3] The other main routes within Spain are the English way south from La Coruña, The Portuguese Way north, the Silver Way north through central Spain and the Northern Way, which follows the northern coastline of Spain to Santiago. For pilgrims who start at Arles and follow the *via tolosana*, through Toulouse to Spain, the Aragonese Way joins the French Way at Puente la Reina (see figure 3).

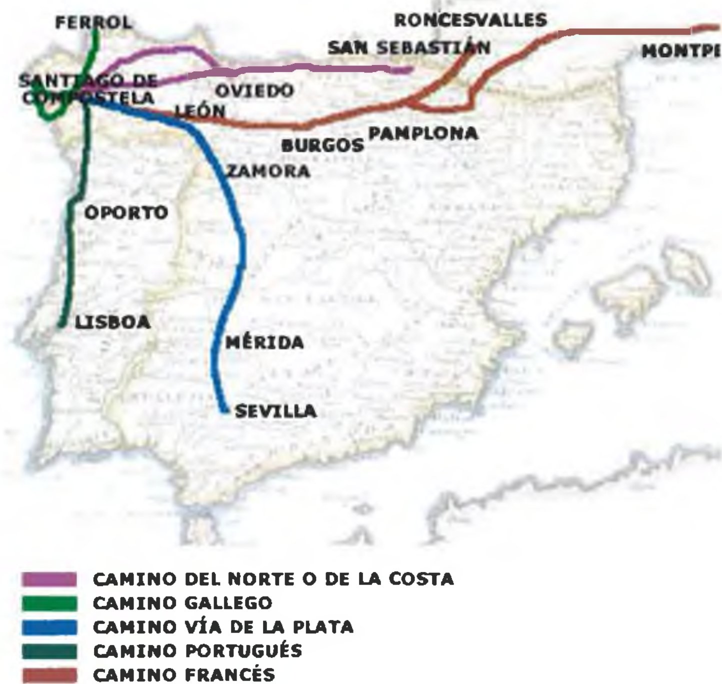

Figure 3 Map showing alternative routes to Santiago (source: http://www.arbolesparaelcamino.org/ximg/ge/mapa.jpg)

I walked three pilgrimages between 2000 and 2004 from St. Jean Pied-de-Port in France, setting out alone with the intention of meeting pilgrims along the way and generating my focus group from ad hoc meetings and informal interviews throughout the five or six weeks the pilgrimage took to finish each time. Having stayed in Santiago for two weeks after finishing, I subsequently followed up with semi-structured interviews via e-mail and phone, travelling to meet pilgrims in Ireland and England, and opening my home to have several pilgrims visit me from Australia, America and Slovenia. I have since made several trips back to Santiago in order to talk to arriving pilgrims. My network of pilgrims grows every month, as more people make connections with ex-pilgrims and I get introductions to walkers and cyclists who have more recently made the pilgrimage. As I write about my fieldwork, I have chosen to assemble

my research into a structure that has the shape and feel of a single pilgrimage. In doing this, I am able to address a range of theoretical issues as they seemingly arise on the path. Each chapter, then, represents a part of the journey west; chapter one covers the pilgrimage from starting out at home to Roncevalles in Spain, chapter two follows the trail from Roncesvalles to Burgos, chapter three moves across the *meseta* from Burgos to León. Chapter four brings us to Astorga, while chapter five remains there and chapter six brings the reader to Santiago. Thus, for instance, I do not discuss the impact of European sponsorship of the route until chapter six where I write about the felt presence of larger institutions as they begin to impinge on actual pilgrims' experiences of the Camino towards the end of the pilgrimage itself.

The fieldsite becomes a more intriguing site for exploring the difficulties and opportunities in a new and emerging mode of ethnographic enquiry. Several pilgrims I refer to in the body of the thesis have become friends, and my fieldwork is accomplished not only through a geographic shift to 'another' place, 'out there,' but through telephone conversations and the internet, preserving the central cognitive displacement crucial for constituting a modern fieldsite. Similarly, though, many of the pilgrims with whom I have contact do not constitute of themselves a coherent social network independent of my research. I am the common factor that links pilgrims over a five-year period of the Camino's history. As I learned about the Camino and its pilgrims, I had to construct the field from my time there, contextualising the relationships within an academic and specifically ethnographic paradigm. As I did so, though, there was no definitive break, cognitively, professionally or experientially, as one period of immersion led to others, where a bar in east London became an extension of the

fieldsite, as did my own home in receiving pilgrims who graciously allowed me to ply them with awkward questions. All three 'fieldsites' constituted a 'unitary field of analysis' to investigate the Camino (Cohn 1996, see also Amit 2000).

Neither do the pilgrims with whom I have contact represent the 'natives' one might normally expect to find 'in the field'. One Irish pilgrim, Gráinne, for instance, who has been travelling parts of the Camino for the past nine years, regularly asks me questions about the pilgrimage; I am her informant. As the pilgrims walk, they must invent the culture that will make the walk into the meaningful social experience of pilgrimage that it becomes. Indeed Andrej's presence on the Camino was at my request, and he did not know very much about it until he flew into Spain. The Czech priest, Ždenbeck, only discovered the Camino while he was at a conference in Astorga, where he cancelled his flight back home and set out to follow the route to see where it led. Two primary-school teachers from Dublin in Ireland had a similar experience, deciding to ask the pilgrims what they knew about the Camino in order to learn it firsthand. The Camino, it seems, appears from the very experience of engaging with it through its participants.

Although I built my fieldsite from the people I met as I walked, with little else to guide me to prospective pilgrim-informants, I did concentrate on speaking to Europeans and North Americans.[4] Spanish people do feature in this account, such as Pepe and Laura, who we will meet in chapter two, but only a few of them feature prominently, for a number of reasons. Firstly, many more non-Spanish spend their time walking the full length of the Spanish Camino, while those I met in St. Jean and Roncesvalles were for the most part walking the second stage of a

[4] Pilgrims on the road to Santiago are predominantly from the US and Europe, with relatively few from South America, the Far East or Africa. In 2005, for instance, Europeans comprised 92.05% of pilgrims, while North Americans made up 4.25%.

Camino that had begun the previous year in León and ended in Santiago. Their Caminos fitted into their lives, and although many were involved in similar life transitions as other pilgrims, their interaction with the Spanish pilgrimage was of a different character. Spaniards spoke the 'local' language, (English, however, was the lingua franca) and interacted with the figure of St. James and the pilgrimage in part through a national consciousness and collective remembering of Spanish history and politics, as 'insiders'.[5]

I became interested in those pilgrims who were inventing the cultural frameworks of their pilgrimage as they walked; the Camino for Americans and Europeans was more of a different place to pass through. At the same time, the recent liberalisation of Spain was an added dimension of the Camino that I felt fell outside the scope of this inquiry. I was struck for instance one day when, as I sat in a bar with a young Basque woman from San Sebastian, two police officers walked in and she fell silent. I had not seen them enter behind me, and asked why she stopped so abruptly. She cautioned me to stay quiet, and we finished our coffee in silence. Outside the bar, she spoke softly saying that she did not like how the police look at her when they hear her Basque accent. Many Spanish pilgrims speak about living under Franco's rule, too, where they lament the loss of freedom and of language; even more pointed as they heard many languages and dialects among the young Spanish pilgrims. Still, I was told one night in Larrasoaña, two days into my pilgrimage, moving around was much easier since Franco's passing, which was why they enjoyed the Camino.

[5] Such a decision to focus on non-Spanish pilgrims has led me to try to represent their perspectives on the pilgrimage over those sometimes of those of the Spanish pilgrims. This is obvious for instance in my exploration of notions of wilderness on pilgrimage that follow a modern, 'outside', as much as a Christian, sensing of such places as desert-like and emptied out rather than as politically contested localities. For an alternative reading of Spanish 'places' and 'local' constructions of placeness that contest 'outside' interpretations see for instance Roseman (1996).

While most Spanish pilgrims tend to walk the Camino as tourists, though, they are looking for a holiday that bestows some spiritual benefits through the Compostela awarded them in Santiago for their efforts. Such a Camino thus represents a very different cultural configuration to be investigated, a different intersection between memory, mobility, emotion and contemporary Spanish identity that is worthy of a separate project in itself.

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My thesis, then, approaches pilgrimage from a phenomenological frame of mind, trying to understand the experience of movement from the perspective of other theoretical positions. For example, if pilgrimage might represent, as an instance of the sacred, a collective representation of group feeling, then when and where do pilgrims identify that feeling? Also, and more modestly, as the Camino can be seen as a continually shifting 'kinetic ritual' (Turner & Turner 1978), can communitas explain the experience of pilgrims moving towards Santiago? I ask whether the Camino is a good example of a rite of passage, whether the pilgrimage can supply pilgrims with an embodied sense of antistructure. How does the pilgrim do work to engender feelings of passage beyond his or her literal movement across a landscape? This concern to read pilgrimage as a collective emotional experience is a corrective to a general tendency in anthropology to rethink over-determined linguistic explanations of cultural processes (Mitchell 2004:32, see also Kwilecki 2004), where postmodern analyses of culture has overlooked the immediacy of meaning as an important focus of research. The emotive and phenomenological shift acts as a corrective to narrow individualising discourses of socio-cultural realities (see Csordas 1994a). In a

sense, then, a pilgrimage is privileged ground for re-making religion, for reconstructing a different time, place and self to re-discover a vision of the world.

Walking the modern Camino

The Camino de Santiago is a thousand-year-old pilgrimage route that stretches westwards across Europe and over the Pyrenees towards the reputed relics of St. James the Apostle in the city of Santiago de Compostela in Northwest Spain. Pilgrims set off from various points to walk between ten and thirty kilometres each day due west.[6] Producing a document called the pilgrim's passport at hostels (the Camino boasts the best network of refuges in Europe), allows cycling and walking pilgrims to stay the night at a reduced cost, about five euros per night (see figures 3, 4 and 5). If the pilgrims have started their pilgrimage over one hundred kilometres from Santiago and have received a *sello* or stamp for each day of their journey, proving that they have continued daily towards the city, they are eligible for a Compostela, the certificate of completion for the pilgrimage, highly coveted even, and probably especially, among 'secular' tourist-pilgrims (see figure 2).[7]

The scarcity of resources available to pilgrims in the face of summer demand has highlighted distinctions between pilgrims, though it is normally only observable later in the pilgrimage, when thousands join the route to walk the last hundred kilometres. The Camino's popularity rises every year, though, and the strain is felt in the 'imagined community' of pilgrims and expressed through the

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[6] There are four main starting points in France, at Paris, Vezelay, Arles and Le Puy.

[7] The Compostela has been awarded to pilgrims since the mid 13th century. The diocese used to require communion and confession too, but these conditions were dropped in the 18th century, when the Compostela took the form it roughly now has. The idea of a plenary indulgence began when they were granted to pilgrims to the Holy Land who died along the way.

idiom of 'authenticity', where the length of time spent travelling and the start point become increasingly effective demarcations of 'authentic' pilgrim and tourist in the face of the Camino's resurgence in popularity.[8] Most pilgrims I have talked to, though, do not extend their definition of the authentic pilgrimage to include the institutional conditions for retaining a plenary indulgence upon their arrival in Santiago, (attending mass and confession) and almost nobody performs the first night vigil required. Those who do attend mass do so as much to meet fellow pilgrims and to observe the Cathedral's famed *botafumeiro* (it takes seven men to swing it) as to participate in a Eucharistic celebration, hardly a sincere religious motive.

In fact pilgrims' constant and ambiguous shifts between secular and sacred modes of travel highlight much of the problem of their attempts to outline coherent, authentic and existential pilgrim identities, as these shifts share much with tourist-pilgrims own flirtations with spirituality. The question of authenticity becomes verbalised and explored through ephemeral pilgrim communities. Key pilgrims become nodal points, iconic figures that exert a centripetal pull for walkers who gather around them and their stories. John, for instance, walked in memory of his sister, and Alex was baptised on Easter and confirmed on Pentecost before setting out from his Swiss mountain monastery to walk for three months to Santiago to complete his conversion to Catholicism.

[8] In the last year, the pilgrim's office in Santiago has begun recording pilgrim motives in only three categories: religious, religious & cultural, and cultural. For 2005, the categories were religious, religious and other motives and non-religious motives. Breaking the figures into three categories, two of which are 'religious' motivation categories, has the effect of significantly boosting the numbers of people who are walking for nominally 'religious' reasons. Given that many pilgrims tick the religious box anyway to qualify for the Compostela, the numbers of religious pilgrims may be artificially high. The figures for 2005 break down as Religious: 35,456 (37.75%), Religious and other motives: 49,977 (53.21%) and Non-religious: 8,491 (9.04%).

Such people do not evince any ambiguity as pilgrims, and therefore become key resources in stabilising a contemporary rhetoric of peregrination.

The Compostela promotes an agenda, of course, that attaches each pilgrim to the official Catholic interpretations of the pilgrimage, where there seems to be no *de jure* difference between the pilgrim who has travelled two thousand kilometres over two months and the tourist-pilgrim who has taken two weeks to travel one hundred kilometres; both are equally eligible for a Compostela. Refuges generate certain moral messages that promote loosely Catholic principles; a refuge in Burgos locks pilgrims in until they have attended a morning prayer-service. The Swiss refuge in Ponferrada separates the males and the females according a Christian ethos of the refuge (the only one to do so). Several prohibit the consumption of alcohol. Many refuges try to hold prayer meetings in the evening and a few have even been known to refuse non-Catholic pilgrims. There are quite a few refuges which have such 'conditions' attached to them, reflecting their vision of a 'purer' path to St. James. In Santiago, the pilgrims' office that issues the certificates of completion has criteria for validating pilgrim status too. In 2004, a man who made the pilgrimage on a unicycle was refused a certificate of completion because his mode of travel was not deemed to constitute a 'sincere' pilgrimage.

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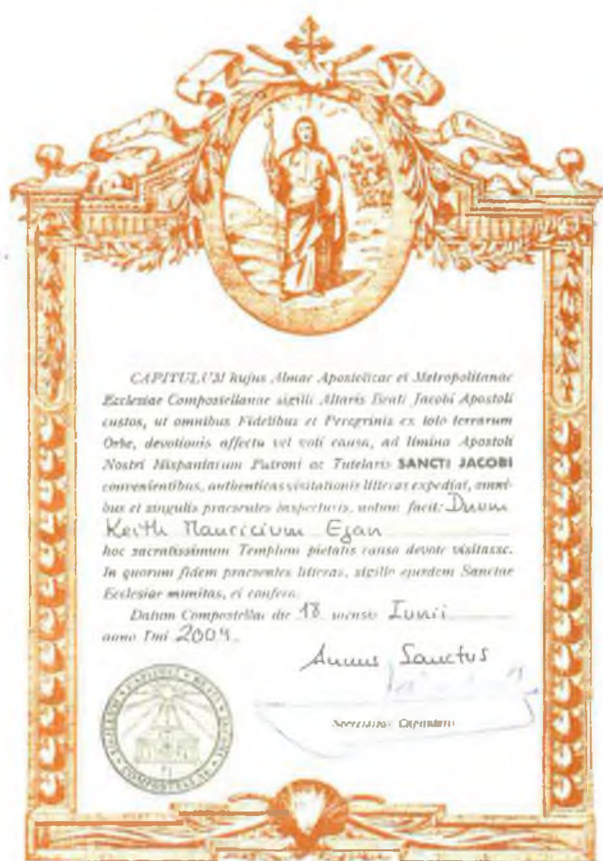
If there are key pilgrims, towards whom other pilgrims who are exploring notions of pilgrimage and authenticity can gravitate, it may be somewhat surprising then that the places through which pilgrims pass do not facilitate a similar condensation of meaning. Many of the Camino's places are new ones,

though, benefiting from recent generous EU patronage of the route, and present an ambivalent encounter with some of the very forces of modernisation that many pilgrims are attempting to leave behind. Pilgrims are not as a rule as enthralled with a vision of the Camino that includes standardised hostel chains. The renewal of Foncebadón in the Irago Mountains, for instance, with its refuge being built through the Leader II European fund, rising out of the ashes of the medieval ruins that surround it on the path, is an example of the Camino's regeneration, its future tied up with that of the regeneration of Europe.



CAPITULUM hujus Almae Apostolicae et Metropolitanae Ecclesiae Compostellanae sigilli Altaris Beati Jacobi Apostoli custos, ut omnibus Fidelibus et Peregrinis ex toto terrarum Orbe, devotionis affectu vel voti causa, ad limina Apostoli Nostri Hispaniarum Patroni ac Tutelaris **SANCTI JACOBI** convenientibus, authenticas visitationis litteras expediat, omnibus et singulis praesentes inspecturis, notum facit: Dnum Keith Mauricium Egan hoc sacratissimum Templum pietatis causa devote visitasse. In quorum fidem praesentes litteras, sigillo ejusdem Sanctae Ecclesiae munitas, ei confero.

Datum Compostellae die 18 mense Iunii anno Dni 2004.

Annus Sanctus

Secretarius Capitularis

Figure 4 Certificate of Completion (Compostela)[9]

[9] The inscription reads: "The Chapter of this Holy Apostolic Metropolitan Cathedral of St. James, custodian of the seal of St. James' Altar, to all faithful and pilgrims who come from everywhere over the world as an act of devotion, under vow or promise to the Apostle's Tomb, our Patron and

As such, the village hostel stands in contrast to Tomas's refugio. His embrace of the Knights of the Crusade as a symbol for peace in the world (a world that has seemingly returned to a 'clash of civilisations' last seen when Templars led the charge) seems inappropriate. The Templars as signifiers of peace are vague and ambivalent, but they do indicate just how powerful (and how long) that religious history is if 21st century pilgrims can connect the Templars with a call for peace in a war against 'Islamic fundamentalism'. There is no clear consensus on that history; it is obviously available for people such as Tomas to claim parts of the Camino for himself and his mission without being obviously wrong to do it. Yet he is only an extreme case of what most modern pilgrims are doing, moving past a signposted future for the Camino to reach into its past to sift through a range of different historical and cultural elements in order to compose a particular pilgrimage that can orient the self and sustain a sense of life-trajectory.

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One problem for me was that much of what happened on the Camino did not fall within the neater theoretical boundaries of anthropological thinking (I suppose if it had then I would not have been doing my job properly). However, issues surrounding pain and the problem of belief took on a new meaning for me with pilgrims struggling with the pilgrimage at a physical, a biographical and a metaphorical level. Elaine Scarry points out that there exists a difficulty

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Protector of Spain, witnesses in the sight of all who read this document, that: Mr. Keith Maurice Egan has visited devoutly this Sacred Church in a religious sense (*pietatis causa*).
Witness whereof I hand this document over to him, authenticated by the seal of this Sacred Church.
Given in St. James de Compostela on the (day) (month) A.D.
Chapter Secretary

'believing' another's pain, simply because if I am in pain, I know it; it is at the centre of what I know about my world (Scarry 1985:3 see also Good 1994:1ff). However if you are in pain, I have only your word for it, for without physical evidence it is solely your testimony that conveys the hurt. One problem with this approach is that it presupposes to a degree that the person being told has never felt pain, that even if s/he had, that that pain is of no value to him or her in comprehending another's pain in such an instance (see Csordas 2002). By this reasoning, pain cannot be useful, only functional (it points to real damage) or chronic (it has outlasted its function in pointing to that damage).

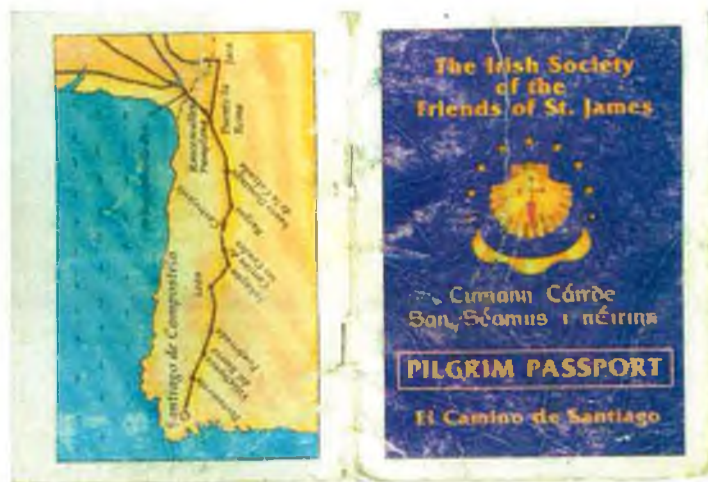

Figure 5 Official Pilgrim Passport of the Irish Society of the Friends of St. James

However, what about the ways in which we talk about pain metaphorically, or allusively? What about the times where language is not only not useful but also unnecessary? Here we have to consider the walking pilgrimage as an experiment in the management of suffering and the body as a space to press pain into work for us. In *Medicine Rationality and Experience* (1994), Byron Good, recalls Lienhardt's description of how Dinka demons are

called out and named, whereby the pain takes up residence in the common repository of language and can be dealt with. Pain has a language all its own, but not always a voice of its own. Pain exists in the realm of the unspeakable, which must often be negotiated in a more subtle manner. It is precisely this kind of 'calling out' that one may wish to avoid; 'pain demons' can be pernicious. How then to deal with the thorny issues without being able to 'talk them out', when words are not always at the centre of pain management; where often they are involved in clearing up the mess, but not in the core work of negotiating the boundaries of the unspeakable? On the Camino, I argue, such a task is usually accomplished in silence, often alone, and the talking only comes later, after the walking work of healing has begun. The Camino provides quite a few pilgrims the space to *walk* them out, herding them into the conscious body to deal with them as one would any other purely physical pain. These 'techniques of the body' (Bourdieu 1977, see also de Certeau 1988:91ff) are employed to salve sores and aches, curing more deeply-felt injuries; they prevent those hurts that have cut to the bone from continuing to command centre-stage in our lives.

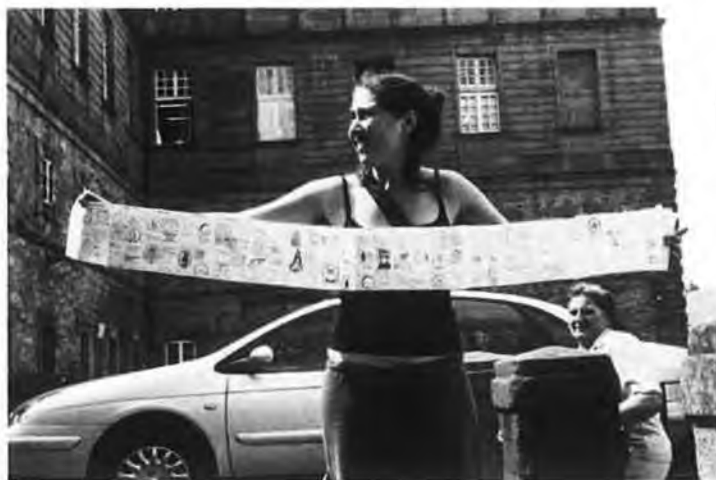

Figure 6 A pilgrim displays her collection of *sellos* in Santiago

Such difficult work, of course, requires special places. The Camino de Santiago is, I believe, one such place, and draws thousands every year, not only to do the work of healing but to witness it too, for most of them, most of us, know the Camino to be a magic place. Its history is steeped in the magic of St. James's miraculous return to Spain, and the miracles are retold in every town. Each *pueblo* has its own miracle, and the Camino is haunted (or protected, depending on your view), by the *Meigas*, Galician witches, by the Knights Templar and even by the spectre of the European Union's patronage. The truly magical presences, though, are the transient pilgrims traipsing across the Iberian Peninsula toward the city of Santiago. These people in this place allow things to happen, things that would remain undone in the ordinary world. So it is for many pilgrims that the world has turned again, from magic, to religion to science and back again, and the pilgrimage can be read as a quest for re-enchantment, to accomplish impossible tasks.

The moratorium that hangs over pilgrims' everyday lives at home can be put to work on the Camino to defer all other decisions and free the pilgrim to get to, in the words of Tim Robbins's Andy Dufresne in the film *Shawshank Redemption*, "get busy living or get busy dying". So people walk, groups form, and the 'craic' (in whatever language) is had; people get better and stronger, sometimes for only a short while and sometimes permanently. The experiences and the memories stand to the pilgrims for a long time after, when the moratorium gives way to the demands of the ordinary and the everyday.

In arguing for the sometimes ragged but constant movement of a few thousand pilgrims towards the shrine of St. James to be evidence of an emerging *European* self-consciousness, though, one nested in the histories of the Camino

and of Spain, one must examine the pilgrimage to the shrine of the Apostle in a different way. The Camino is not so much a coherent small-scale fieldsite, but rather a series of loosely connected sites of pilgrimage construction and contestation (see Marcus 1995), and it is to this Camino we now turn.

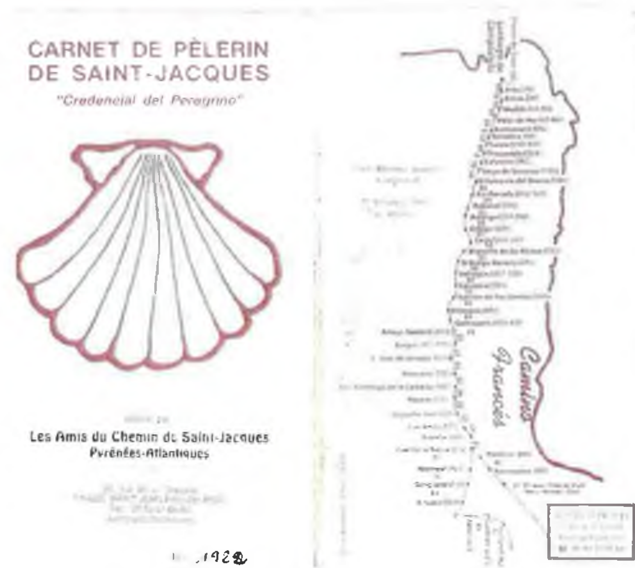

Figure 7 Official Pilgrim Passport of Les Amis du Chemin de Saint-Jacques

The Historical Camino

In attempting a history of *the* Camino, one is already implicated in a kind of convenient fiction, for there is of course no single Camino. We can begin by separating out the different Caminos that belong to each pilgrim who has made his or her way to the shrine of St. James, each pilgrimage varying slightly, from country to country and in the different eras that they have walked, rode, cycled, sailed or driven. In this instance, people really do make their own Camino. However, when we examine the structural elements of the Camino, which stretches across Europe like an ancient web woven across the land by millions of travellers westward, one encounters similar difficulties (see for instance Lefebvre

1991:45). Historically, writes Aviva (2001:xix), the Camino is a palimpsest, composed from quite different and opposing strands of cosmologies; pre-Celtic, Roman, (Gnostic, Arrian, Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic) Christian, Islamic and modern liberal economic constructs of the world have all facilitated the rise, fall and resurgence of the Camino and the fortunes of these ideas have in turn been sustained by the journey. The Camino is a result of a series of discontinuities and disjunctures between and among historical traditions that have drawn on the route as a symbolic resource. This section identifies some of those strands and their role in building a stable route westward across Europe towards Santiago and Finisterre in Spain.

Pre-Christian History

The Camino route is littered with marks and hints at other paths that lay behind the present way. O Cebrero is one legendary resting place of the Holy Grail; there are several towns and trails with the name *calzada* or 'old way'; parts of the route have been restored to their original Roman condition, while others are being replaced by new highways with a narrow sidewalk at the side for pilgrims. Aviva (2001) identifies a mark on a monastery in Carrion de los Condes as the three-edged mark known as "*la pata de la oca*" (the goose's foot), a symbol indicating that the monastery has been built by the Companions, a secret fraternity of masons supposedly responsible for many great buildings including the Great Pyramids of Egypt. Indeed there is a wealth of literature exploring 'hidden' meanings of the Camino, its relevance for the student of the occult being strengthened with newer publications. The many different routes extend as far back as the Atlanteans (Aviva herself was assured by a pilgrim that

Atlantis had sunk off the Spanish coast, that Basques are their modern descendants and that the western town of Noya takes its name from where Noah's ark came to land), while names such as *oca* and *ganso* (goose and gander) in placenames link esoteric points in an ancient sacred geography. This sacred geography extends towards the heavens, as an old name for the Camino is the '*via lactea*' or 'Milky Way'. Shirley MacLaine (2001) made her Camino following contiguous telluric currents across the Spanish countryside.

Even more intriguingly, Aviva (2001:xvff) points to the representations of Santiago in the scallop shell, associated with his first miracle, that hark back to the cult of Venus. The bivalve mollusc is an easily identifiable representation of the female reproductive organs, and this association becomes more interesting when one comes across a representation of the Virgin del Pilar standing on a scallop shell, ostensibly to capture her apparition to St. James. One cannot help but wonder if it does not have a stronger association with the Roman goddess Venus than with the Christian Saint James.

The story of St. James being pulled to his final burial site by bulls given by the local pagan queen, as with the representation of Mary standing on a crescent moon, call to mind the Egyptian goddess Isis (Warner 1976), and Venus (who was also depicted atop a crescent moon). Any association with bulls of course recalls Zeus in the form of a bull stealing Europa away to Crete, thus bringing, in the Greeks' minds, civilisation from the East into the West (Davies 1997:xviii), a theme fully realised in Theseus's slaying the minotaur beneath the city, thus unbinding the miscegenated savage beginnings of civilisation from its animalistic origins. It is not difficult to hear resonances of the earlier primal cults lingering, haunting the modern, more Apollonian, Christian cults.

The Christianisation of the Camino, its routes and places was a process that baptised already appropriated sites into the faith; the Suevi, Romans, Vandals, Visigoths, Jews and Moslems all absorbed these ancient places at various levels into their cosmologies too.[10] The Cruz de Ferro, the last high point on the Camino before one enters Galicia (see figure 6), has a tradition that one drops a stone at the heaped pile as one passes by. It is a tradition that has its echoes in Celtic rituals of placating the gods (Aviva 2001:xvii), one reconfigured when the site was dedicated to Mercury (god of boundaries) by the Romans. The goose's foot is connected to the scallop shell, also, as a symbol of protection; geese are associated with the Roman goddess Juno Moneta. The Holy Grail, Jewish and Moslem esoteric knowledge hidden in Spain, St. James (Boanerge or Son of thunder, from Mark's gospel) as Castor, one of the sons of Jupiter, god of thunder; St. James as fisherman, Castor as patron of sailors, James and Castor riding out on white chargers (Aviva 2001:xv); the pilgrimage has been pregnant with a frenzied layering of meanings for millennia. The links and associations continue ad infinitum.

Early Biblical Kerygma

The story of the Camino is based upon the biblical character of St. James, brother of John, one of the twelve original apostles of Jesus Christ. Following the death of Christ, several of the apostles supposedly undertook evangelical missions into Gentile territory, with, for instance, Thomas heading east into India and James heading west towards the ends of the earth into Hispania.[11] Taking

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[10] Pope Gregory the Great made it a policy to effect the incorporation of pagan sites into the Christian cosmology in the sixth century.

[11] One possible source of the confusion over St. James' presence in Spain arises from an error in copying a list of the apostle's missions, called the *Brevarium Apostolorum*. St. James' was noted

seven disciples with him, James crossed into the Iberian Peninsula where he was met in Zaragoza by the Virgin Mary who, still on earth, was spirited to him in an apparition to bolster the mission. The event is commemorated by the veneration of the Virgen del Pilar in Zaragoza to this day.

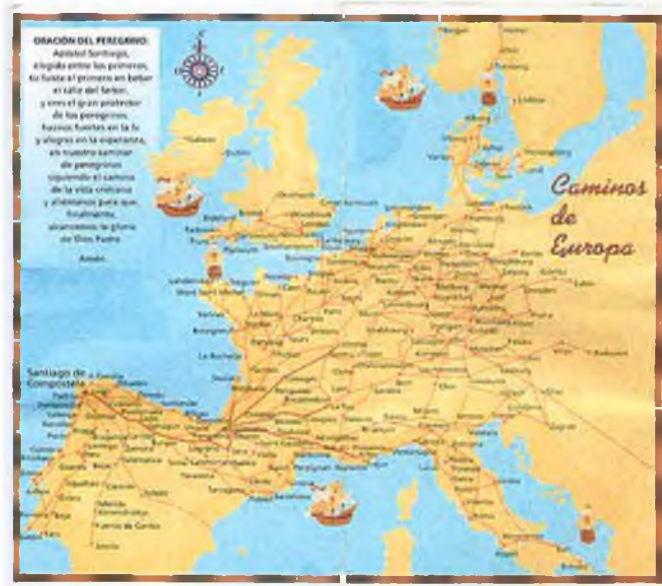

Figure 8 Map from a Pilgrim Passport displaying many of the minor Routes medieval pilgrims used to navigate towards Santiago

In the end, James's mission was unsuccessful; he returned home to be summarily beheaded by Herod Agrippa in 44AD, according the Acts of the Apostles. There the historical record, so to speak, ends and the legend takes off. His beheaded body, head clasped in his dead hands, was taken by two disciples called Athanasius and Theodore, in a stone boat "with neither sail nor oar" that journeyed for seven days to Padrón. Upon placing his body on the land, it was subsumed into the large flat rock upon which he lay. His disciples took the body

as having evangelised *Hispanium* (Spain) instead of *Hierusalem* or *Hierosolyman* (Jerusalem), which had been commonly believed until then (Aviva 2001:266).

to be buried to Queen Lupa, a local pagan queen. She directed them towards a field of wild bulls, wanting them to be killed. They easily tamed the bulls, a miracle that converted Lupa, and the bulls pulled James's encased body to his resting place.

Figure 9 The author atop the Cruz de Ferro on the 'Mountain of Mercury' (Monte Irago)

New Life for James: against Moorish Spain

Until the eighth century, there was not a single scrap of evidence supporting the claim that St. James had ever set foot in Hispania. Further, no writer even seemed to consider the possibility until it was whispered about in the eighth century and mentioned as part of a book of commentaries by St. Beatus on John's book of the Apocalypse. St. Beatus was a local saint who had predicted

that James's remains would be found in Galicia in time to crystallise support against the Moors. He was an influential figure whose calls to prepare for St. James to be found reached to the court of Charlemagne. By the time of the discovery, Charlemagne was near the end of his life and the rout of Islam was already faltering; the Reconquest of Spain had need of a symbol, a patron saint for the peninsula, one which Beatus provided (Ure 2006:76).

The supposed remains of James lay quietly for eight centuries until a local hermit or shepherd (the story varies) called Pelayo discovered the tomb by following a star (or angels singing) to the location, sometime around 814AD. The local bishop, Teodomiro, was called to authenticate the remains, which, after three days alone with them, he did. King Alfonso II of Asturias built the first church on the site of the tomb. The discovery of St. James's remains was a timely one, given the need to mobilise recruits and armies to counter the spread of Islam throughout Spain. Beatus's first intimations of a saint for Spain began a long process lasting two centuries that would culminate in James being declared patron saint of Spain.

The story, of course, is yet more intricate, not the least because St. James began life by laying claim to the cult of St. Martin of Tours, which had been flourishing for three centuries in Galicia (see Ferreiro 2000). The reasons for this are complex: the emerging Spain needed its own saint in the fight for the imagination of its people. St. Martin of Tours, though efficacious in his own right, was a saint of the Gauls. Hispania had ceded some territory already to the Carolingian Empire and needed a patron to define its own long battle with Islam.

There is some debate as to who was actually buried at Compostela, the two leading candidates being a Roman general (Levi 1990), or more likely, a

local renegade bishop called Prisciliano (or Priscillian), the first schismatic heretic beheaded. He was executed in Trier in 385 by Emperor Magnus Maximus for crimes that included Gnosticism, sorcery and midnight orgies (Ferreiro 2000:4, Tremlett 2006:390, Aviva 2001). In a similar vein, there was an opposing tradition that held that St. James's remains were already in the church of St. Saturnin in Toulouse, though this tradition seemed not to remain too vocal in the wake of St. James's miracles and the Reconquest of Iberia in his name. That the discovery was advantageous and coincided with particular political agendas was neither unique nor strange at this time. The battle against Islam was felt to be a battle against Mohammed, and come the time, come the man, St. James was the required saint, not a "saintly holy man at the grassroots level" like St. Martin (Ferreiro 1996:5), who fought Priscilliano's heresies in the fourth century, but one of the Christian God's messengers, the first martyred Apostle.

Within the kingdom of Asturias, the northern region of the Iberian Peninsula that resisted the Muslim incursions, the eighth century saw its leaders, Mauregatus, Alfonso II and Alfonso III search for their figurehead to lead the battle against Islam. The Carolingian empire probed the local Spanish Church about the nature of the newly-discovered burial site of the Apostle, as they too were in need of a patron saint to protect their interests and lead them in battle.[12] With a common patron, St. Martin, church authorities in Spain felt that the increasing Frankish influence on the Asturias-Galician kingdom was becoming overbearing. St. James would unite the two provinces of Asturias and Galicia instead, and the Hispanic church would be restored at the council of Oviedo in

[12] Saints were often paired together in their patronage, a symbolic marriage of divine favour that joined political territories (see Brown 1981).

821 (Ferreiro 2000:14). Thus, while still influenced by the Franks (for instance, most if not all of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* was collected in the French monastery of Cluny), Santiago would come to represent a distinct religious, cultural and geographical region in Hispania.

Since 787, when the second council of Nicaea insisted that churches should be consecrated with relics (and indeed before that, with the rise of the cult of relics from the fourth century), remains of saints were crucial in the establishment of local sites of power. Further, it was not until the 12th century that the Catholic Church became more rigorous about testing miracles and saints (Sumption 1975:64). In fact, several towns along the way to Santiago had quickly established their own local saints and miracles to draw pilgrims, and the situation was becoming difficult for the church to manage. Santiago was one of a spate of mass 'rediscoveries' of relics, from Salerno in Italy to Reading Abbey in England.[13] The host of local saints who owe their veneration directly to James include St. Leonard, St Eutrope and St. Gilles, all created on the way to the Apostle and each of them sustained by being found on one or other of the main trunk roads of the Camino (Sumption 1975:117).

By the time of St. James's authentication by Bishop Teodomiro around 815, the Iberian Peninsula was divided into three regions; to the south was al-Andalus, the Muslim-occupied territory, to the north was Asturias, the Christian stronghold that held out most successfully against the Moors, and between them were *las tierras despobladas*, the buffer zone between the two.[14] As the city of

[13] Salerno is one traditional resting place for the relics of St. Matthew the Apostle. Founded by Henry I in 1121, Reading Abbey had by 1190 laid claim to 242 relics; included in that list were 29 relics of Jesus and 6 of his mother (Sumption 1975:116).

[14] The north held out so well for several reasons, most notably that the Islamic invaders under their general Tariq (from which Gibraltar derives its name) were actually Berbers from the north east of Africa; they abhorred the wetter milder climate to the north and north west and did not

Santiago grew and initial confusion with James, cousin of Jesus, added to the attraction of the site of Santiago Matamoros, the bishop of Santiago, Diego Gelmírez began marketing the pilgrimage across Europe. The scene was set for an explosion of religious sentiment, the continuing re-Christianisation of Iberia through religious devotion and the raising of armies to fight both in the re-conquest of the peninsula and in the Crusades.

The miracles of St. James began at the apocryphal battle of Clavijo, sometime between 834 and 845 (various sources differ remarkably on the date, one even giving 859 as the year of the battle), where, as Ramiro I was losing to the Moors, Santiago rode on his white charger from the skies and slew a multitude of Moors to save the day. It was a feat repeated in 939 at Simancas with Ramiro II and in 1064 with King Ferdinand at Coimbra. Santiago Matamoros, the slayer of Moors, was born. Things did not always go in favour of the saint; Compostela was destroyed by Moorish general Almanzor, who in 997 ransacked the city, save for the tomb. He took the bells of the cathedral back to Córdoba though (where they remained until that city fell to Fernando III in 1236). We can infer that his motives for attacking were not religious;[15] Almanzor ("the victorious") had engaged in a series of fifty-seven raids for plunder throughout his reign, from Coimbra (in modern Portugal) in 987 to León and Zamora the following year. Pamplona fell in 999 and La Rioja was plundered in 1002. Almanzor actually employed Christian mercenaries in these

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choose to press their advantage too far in that direction. Significantly, too, the Berbers were *muwallads*, recent converts to Islam and the reasons for their movement into Spain have seemed as much to do with disciplining the troops as it had to do with bringing Islam to Iberia. This factor led to centuries of turbulence as three successive fundamentalist invasions would occur before the frontier zone had shrunk to cover only Granada in the south (see Fletcher 1992:1ff).

[15] The removal of the bells from Santiago Cathedral is one possible reference to Almanzor's religious inclination, as church bells are forbidden in Islamic law. When he brought them to Córdoba, he overturned them and used them as oil-lamps (Starkie 1957:28, see Fletcher 1992:93). Finding a monk at prayer at the tomb, though, he left it intact and posted a guard (Tremlett 2006:389).

campaigns, and his attacks on churches and monasteries were only to extract their wealth (Fletcher 2001:75). This picture of Islamic conquest complicates our ideas of the religious imperative behind each meeting. Further, while the rate of conversion to Islam was slow, it did occur; as opportunities opened in the courts, Christians embraced Islam as a way of gaining social advancement. Finally, it can be seen from the successive Islamic fundamentalist invasions of the Iberian Peninsula, four in all, that the holy wars were not between Christianity and Islam so much as they were between factions of Islam (see Fletcher 2001:20ff).

By 1126, Santiago celebrated an *Año Santo Compostelano*, a Holy Year that conferred upon the pilgrim to the shrine of Saint James a plenary indulgence. In 1179, Pope Alexander III declared the Holy Year to stand in perpetuity, occurring when the feast of Saint James (25 July) would fall on a Sunday. In this way, Santiago took its place alongside Rome and Jerusalem as one of the great pilgrimages of Europe. Santiago became crucial too as a punitive pilgrimage, either a sentence pronounced by the courts (a judicial pilgrimage), or by the church (a penitential pilgrimage) (Sumption 1975:104). The value of the penitential aspect has always had its opponents though, as not only was the sentence of pilgrimage a thin disguise for a temporary banishment or exile from close-knit communities, but it also set loose on the countryside of Europe and the near East a host of "wicked, impious, sacrilegious, thieves, robbers, murderers …drunkards … jugglers and actors" (cited in Sumption 1975:112). The decline of the sentences by the fourteenth century would also affect the Camino's popularity.

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The First Crusade for Jerusalem was launched in 1095 by Urban II at the Council of Clermont in France. The crusade represented a new theory of warfare, one which may even have been influenced by the Islamic notion of jihad, "the idea that war against the infidel might be work of positive spiritual merit for the Christian knight" (Fletcher 2001:115). The Order of Templar Knights and the Knights of St. John came to Iberia to raise recruits and subsequently stayed to protect the pilgrims and to provide shelter for them. The Order of St. James arose partly from the presence of foreign orders in Hispania and partly in response to these orders' rallying calls against the Moors. The full history is obscured as several provinces claimed that they founded it.[16] The Order quickly became powerful in its own right, though:

> "At its height Santiago alone had more possessions than Calatrava and Alcántara together. In Spain these possessions included 83 commanderies, of which 3 were reserved to the grand commanders, 2 cities, 178 boroughs and villages, 200 parishes, 5 hospitals, 5 convents, and 1 college at Salamanca. The number of knights was then 400 and they could muster more than 1000 lances. They had possessions in Portugal, France, Italy, Hungary, and even Palestine" (Online Catholic Encyclopaedia).

At this point up to one tenth of the population of Europe was on pilgrimage to one shrine or another, and with the flow of pilgrims came the flow of trade. With European pilgrims now cut off from Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela's popularity increased hugely. The Knights Templar became established along the route, setting up what would be the first modern banking system, providing promissory notes for travelling nobles to be redeemed along the route from the Order's considerable wealth.[17]

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[16] The Order's motto is *Rubel ensis sanguine Arabum*—"Red is the sword with the blood of the Moors" and the badge is a blood stained cross set on a scallop shell (Chambers' Book of Days).

[17] A fact that would later be their undoing under Philip the Fair (Philip IV of France) who desperate to continuing waging war with England, prosecuted the Knights Templar for heresy,

The pilgrimage flourished, with many famous pilgrims coming from across Europe; kings and royalty, saints and popes travelled to the tomb. Many sinners walked for the indulgence during the Holy Years, and more than a few pilgrims were sentenced to walk or given the pilgrimage to make as a penance. The pilgrimage entered the realm of literature, a subject for Chaucer and Shakespeare. When Erasmus joined the ranks of writers who took Santiago as their subject, he heralded the incipient decline of the Camino's status. His irreverent style began to pick away at the venerable journey to relics of the apostle. Goethe, in his turn, claimed that to walk the Camino was to come to know Europe.

During the European reformation movements, many pilgrimages, including that to Santiago began to decline in popularity. The English reformers, for instance, took the bones of Thomas Beckett and ground them, scattering them to the winds (see Swatos 2002:94ff), and authorities in Santiago, fearing a similar fate awaited St. James's remains when Sir Francis Drake sailed to Spain in 1589 and sacked La Coruña, hid them from the English. While the response to religious shrines across Europe was by no means uniform at this time (see Spicer & Coster 2005), many previously popular sites of pilgrimage did decline, and the popularity of Santiago, already a dangerous route, began to diminish too.

Modern interest in the Camino

The revival of interest in pilgrimage sites in the nineteenth century was closely linked to industrialising processes that secured from workers regular periods of employment with holidays that provided the time and the money to

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the only crime for which their estates could be stripped from them, thus cutting off England's war loans.

travel. With the democratisation of mass transport and the dependability of the timetables, more and more people sought out further destinations to visit.[18] It is no co-incidence, though, that Thomas Cook, a pioneer in mass tourism was a Baptist minister. On 5 July 1841, he persuaded the Midland Counties Railway Company to run a train for 500 temperance campaigners from Leicester and Loughborough. This 'day trip' proved a success, so the railway began making other such arrangements with Cook providing the passengers. Excursions to Liverpool (1845), Scotland (1846) and the Great Exhibition in London (1851) followed. He also planned outings from Leicester to Calais for the Paris Exposition of 1855, and was soon providing postal services and military transport between England and Egypt (Genuki). In 1872, he organised a round-the-world tour, taking in the Holy Land.

In *Deus Omnipotens* (1884), the recently 're-rediscovered' remains of St. James in 1879, which had been removed and hidden, were proclaimed by Leo XXIII to be authentic and no longer to be questioned by the faithful. Likewise, Lourdes was claimed as an authentic apparition, which set the scene for greater movement of pilgrims towards these shrines and which bolstered the Catholic Church's authority to arbitrate on such matters. The rise in Marian apparitions across Europe, la Sallette, Lourdes, Fatima and Knock over the next decades would also lead to renewed interest in holy shrines. Santiago, though, with its emphasis on avoiding modern means of travel and taking to the road on foot through hundreds of miles alone to reach the far reaches of western Europe, would not become as popular as these other 'religious centres' until the Codex Calixtinus, the Cluniac collection of books that promoted the Compostela

[18] The Duke of Wellington was reported to have remarked that the railroads would allow "the lower orders to go uselessly wandering about the country"!

pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages, would be translated into English in the early twentieth century. St. James, important though he was, as one of the inner circle of Christ's Apostles, remained for the moment no match for the draw of the mediatrix, Mary, Mother of God.

Modern revival

The modern revival of Santiago as a walking pilgrimage did not really take off until local interest revived parts of the route in the 1950's and 1960's. One figure who nurtured the Camino at this time was a local priest in the León province in the 1950s, Fr. Sampedro, who became interested in the old walkways he heard of, followed the route of the Milky Way to Santiago de Compostela. Following some research, he uncovered some of the old tracks and began painting yellow arrows to point the way west for pilgrims. Thereafter he would organise local parishioners to make the journey; the pilgrimage gained popularity and the practice of marking the way with yellow arrows took off.

In 1982, Pope John Paul II, ebullient from his visit to Ireland, had declared a World Youth Day in Santiago, and he went there to say mass in view of the Cathedral from Monte del Gozo, on the hill outside the city where pilgrims gain their first sight of the cathedral spires. The modern route has been adopted as a cultural itinerary by EU and a world heritage site by UNESCO, which has done a lot to promote the shrine and the city around the world.[19] As the pilgrimage becomes implicated in these larger processes of redefining the city and the route as centres rather than edges, the history of Europe seems to

[19] In 2005, people from 63 countries travelled along the route, amassing a total of 93,924 pilgrims.

converge with the modern pilgrim upon Santiago (a point we will return to in greater detail in chapter six) and the trend seems set to continue.

Modern writing on pilgrimage

The bibliography on the Camino is huge, with over 2500 titles in a number of languages published between the authentication of St. James's remains in 1884 and the 1993 Holy Year just over one hundred years later (Davidson and Dunn 1996:xxxv). Between 1993 and the next Holy Year, 1999, easily another 500 titles have been added to that count (ibid.). Since I began my research for the pilgrimage, I have been able to cover dozens of titles, with scores of articles to add to the tally, yet I feel I have barely scratched the surface. Many of these titles are first-person accounts of individual pilgrimages; ethnographies do not abound. It is surprising, especially given that the Camino tends to draw middle-class, educated people to walk and reflect on their journeys, but the majority of the titles cover the historical and archaeological aspects of the Camino.

Coleman and Eade (2004) argue that pilgrimage is not a peculiar phenomenon, an extraordinary voyage, but an aspect of everyday social processes that contributes to an increasing complex modal mobility in contemporary society. Rather than viewing societies structurally as, *ab initio*, circumscribed fields of experience, anthropology has begun to take notice of the processes by which belonging, locality and dwelling are created and reshaped at a pace somewhat faster than that of societal change. The now classic theoretical movement from Turner's notion of communitas to Eade and Sallnow's contestation runs into several problems; for the Turners, the determinism of the

model makes the theory less useful analytically, while their intimation that pilgrimage is a special activity sets up the problem of accounting for how it may then feed into structural change (2004:3). In Eade and Sallnow's (1991a) case, their limitations result from what are place-centred notions of movement, missing the processual character of many pilgrimages.

Coleman and Eade (2004:6ff) move their analysis from ideal-typical notions of the pilgrim, where for instance pilgrimage is viewed as an exceptional event in a person's life, towards a reading of sacred travel in terms of increased global mobility and as a form of movement representative of more everyday social, political and cultural processes in the contemporary world. Movement is central to gathering a range of mobilities under a rubric of 'sacred travel', read partly as sacralising action that appropriates symbols and regions through kinetic rituals. Thus, Coleman and Eade view movement as a further parameter of pilgrimage, adding to Eade and Sallnow's pilgrimage co-ordinates of person, place and text (1991b). Movement is polysemous, incorporating several dimensions of the human condition; as performative action; as embodied action; as part of semantic field and; as metaphor (Coleman and Eade 2004:16).

Looking at the study of pilgrimage today, we may make several observations. Turner's attempt to establish a universal paradigm for pilgrimage as a rite of passage has not been realised; several powerful critiques of his works have reduced the aspirations of the Turnerian model of pilgrimage, such as Talal Asad's (2002) critique of Geertz, which questioned the viability of a universally applicable notion of 'religion', and thus 'pilgrimage' as religious journeying. More directly, Eade & Sallnow (1991a) have relegated Turner's model to *one* discourse of pilgrimage, that, while theoretically influential, did not stand up to

empirical scrutiny (but more of that later). Dubisch (1995) too has questioned our reliance on a universal term for pilgrimage, noting that the Greek language does not have a stable term to delineate the pilgrimage as a specific and set-apart religious activity.

Moving beyond 'mere' contestation (see Coleman 2002), contributions to the study of pilgrimage have increasingly drawn from analysis of a range of mobilities to identify pilgrimage as a core cultural process that annually draws millions of pilgrims across the globe to traditional sites of religious devotion (Rome, Mecca, Jerusalem, Utah or Canterbury) as well as to more complicated sites for the expression of a more humanistic 'sacred' (Star Trek conventions, Graceland, roots tourism in Ireland and Ghana). This new post-religious (and post-tourist [see for instance Urry 2002a]) notion of the sacred is what Durkheim predicted for the rise of the 'cult of man'. We find, then, that the flow of self-ascribed pilgrims to centres of 'spiritual magnetism' (Preston 1992) revolves around a post-industrial quest for authentic experience. These quests must of course be experienced within larger symbolic orders that produce certain meanings and conclusions for pilgrims to continue their magnetic draw,[20] and thus Roseman (2004:70) argues that, "one can find a new co-ordinate can be added to this list – that of culture".

To date, the major anthropologically informed Camino accounts have been personal accounts of the trip (e.g. Aviva 2001, Kerry Egan 2004) while Frey (1998) stands as the most comprehensive account of the Camino. Writing a 'road ethnography' that addresses the problem of the Camino as a rite of passage, Frey investigates the aftermath of the pilgrimages on pilgrims' lives. Have they,

[20] Even the notion of wilderness is a specific one, carefully circumscribed in U.S. law for instance to define particular regions and their rights and entitlements to privileges and protection (Lawrence Taylor, personal communication).

she asks, actually undergone real change? Her contribution to the study of the Camino has shown that the journey towards the Shrine of St. James is only half the trip; returning home represents for many pilgrims a much more complicated process of incorporation. Many feel alienated and unable to integrate lessons learned on the Camino into their everyday lives, while others compartmentalise the experience, with a few maintaining the walking aspect and others returning to Spain several times afterwards. However, Frey's account still represents a distinct moment in time in an ephemeral pilgrimage, and while the stories on the road continue, that pilgrimage structure shifts every year. The Camino is modernising as the route is physically moved back and forth to accommodate new highways under construction, while commercial refuges have begun to spring up in response to the Camino's growing popularity. Starkie's (1957) Camino is more identifiable through the geographic landmarks he mentions, which have stayed stubbornly the same, than his descriptions of the arduous journey and the distinct lack of many other pilgrims. I am sure, though, that my own efforts to capture the experience of pilgrimage will quickly age, too, and faster than either Frey's or Starkie's writings.

Yet, the pilgrimage is not entirely moving on into a more rationalised future; the Camino does indeed represent a return of sorts. Just as Juan, the American pilgrim who provides the title of this chapter, came to Spain to look for magic, old magic, so too do many others. The pilgrimage numbers are not yet rising to the point where the Camino structure could not possibly reproduce an 'Old World feel' that tourist-pilgrims seek. Rather, the numbers of pilgrims are returning to 'normal'; the Camino in the Middle Ages was crowded with pilgrims who sought out hostels run by the Order of St. James, the Order of St.

John and the Knights Templar, all vying to provide pilgrims shelter.[21] The two Caminos leak into each other, and the modern pilgrim has to contend with both, not always according to his or her own romanticising terms. How pilgrims create a world as they walk, and how they draw on the history, geography and morality of this notional 'Camino', and they become connected to the production of an imagined European community, will occupy the remainder of this work.

Visions of a brave old world

If Foncebadón and Manjarín represent two visions of the pilgrimage route today, then the scene that met me in Palais de Rey seems to capture the present reality for pilgrims and tourists alike best. Having set out alone around 6 a.m. from Portomarín that morning, I thought to make it to Melide by evening, a solid forty kilometres walk, but quite possible, given that as a long-term pilgrim I had spent nearly four weeks on the road by then. I arrived in Palais de Rey, about halfway, at around 11.30 a.m. and stopped for some lunch, deciding to see if I could get a *sello* for my pilgrim passport. When I came upon the refuge, the scene struck me dumb. Pilgrims were queuing by placing their backpacks in a line outside a refuge, before noon! This of course contradicted the etiquette of the road; people had left their bags and went away as if they were in school and the bag would keep their place (see figure 7). Previously, if you wanted a place in the refuge for the night, you had to stay at the refuge until it opened to get it or come back when it was open. Queuing was precisely the kind of behaviour that

[21] Such was the competition to get a corner of the burgeoning Camino market, that in the twelfth century, Bishop Gelmirez made the sale of the shell of St. James outside Santiago an excommunicable offence, and the Camino was the first testing ground for the modern banking system, with nobles able to gain credit notes for valuables so they could travel in relative safety among the mendicants, thieves, murderers and other such folk walking their penitential pilgrimage.

pilgrims were avoiding since I had started to walk. What was worse was that these pilgrims had begun walking only an hour or two previously. That was not a Camino, it was a walk; it did not represent hardship to any pilgrim on the road more than a week. If Pepe, the old Spaniard who walked in agony for weeks, would feel any ambivalence in Manjarín, I doubt he would be so forgiving at the sight before me in Palais de Rey.

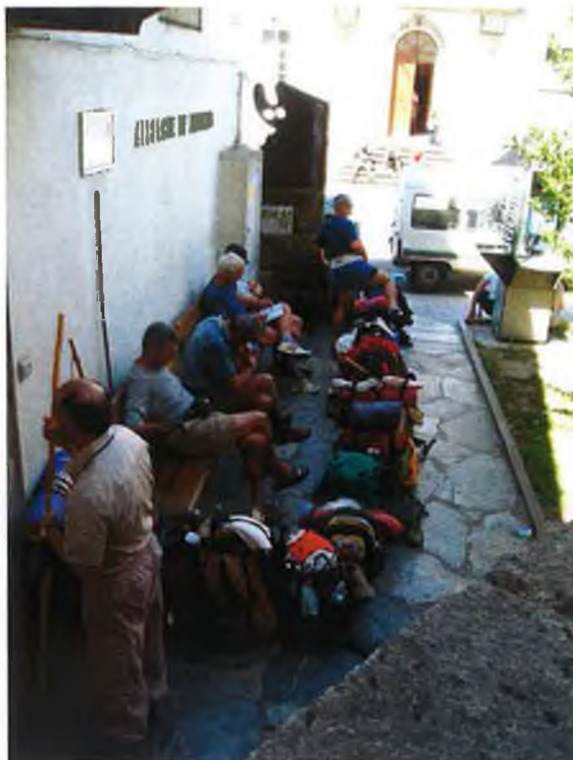

Figure 10 Pilgrims queuing outside refuge at Palais de Rey. Photo taken at 12.30 p.m.

Further, once the refuge opened, some pilgrims started to fight over whether somebody had skipped a place! If there was such a thing as pilgrim etiquette then it was being trampled here. Because the pilgrimage is more well known, many Spanish people take a week and walk part of the Camino,

travelling maybe 15 to 20 km per day before settling down and sightseeing for the rest of the day.[22] As they had started somewhere before Sarria, which is the last point one may start from and earn a Compostela, they were fulfilling the official church criteria to be pilgrims, but they were behaving like tourists, starting on the road after ten, walking only ten or fifteen kilometres each day, stopping before noon. The vast numbers of people who do this swell the official Camino statistics and are able to produce a Compostela for their minimal efforts. The refuges too abandon the strict 10 p.m. curfew that ensures that pilgrims get on the road before dawn. The serious journey becomes even more like a vacation in the presence of these tourist pilgrims, who turn their noses up at walkers who started in France, suffering with the vague odour from a month on the road as well as the stigma of being seen as a kind of primitive tourist by the vacationing tourist-pilgrims. Adding insult to injury then, these tourist-pilgrims fill the refuges by noon each day, and I knew in Palais de Rey that I would have trouble once I reached Melide. All of the wonderful and enriching experiences of generosity and sharing among fellow travellers would be lost over the last few days; my pilgrimage as I knew it was over. I stopped to talk to two English women who had started to worry over where to stay. They had decided to get a bus to Melide and were understandably disappointed, "There are no pilgrims anymore. Everyone is much more suspicious of each other. They are fighting to get into refuges in the *morning* for heaven's sake!" Ultimately, it was not that the pilgrimage had no more pilgrims, but that the pilgrims were becoming indistinguishable from the tourists. The two modes of travel were mingling and blurring the distinctions between the two. Tourists, then, were not greeted with

[22] For instance, the starting points break down this year for May (the last month for which statistics were available) as follows: Saint Jean and Roncesvalles: 2,388 pilgrims (23.91%) with people starting from Ponferrada, O Cebrero and Sarria: 2,174 pilgrims (21.75%).

disdain because they were so different, but because they were not different enough. They heralded the end of the pilgrimage, both in the sense that there were only a few precious days left on the road, and that the Camino as a different place was being eroded, diminishing pilgrims' set-aside status in the process. The fluid, amorphous pilgrimage that had held so many people together was already different, and in a less attractive way. When the pilgrims lined up in the Cathedral in Santiago to follow the tradition of rubbing their head on the bust of Master Mateo, the Cathedral's architect, hoping some of his genius would rub off, they had to do so with those who had arrived on air-conditioned buses and had walked only a few metres to attain an equivalent official recognition for their efforts. Both groups of visitors shifted uneasily in each other's company, the pilgrims unhappy to have to wait in line with 'mere' tourists and the day-trippers somewhat disconcerted by the vague odour emanating from so many scruffy visitors; the only difference between them was the olfactory stimulation the walking pilgrim provided.[23] Other pilgrims sat in the coffee shop opposite the unfolding scene, shaking their heads ruefully, soon to be joined by their fellow outcasts. To be fair, though, many visitors do consider it good luck to meet a pilgrim and have their photo taken together, especially newly-married couples who come to St. James to bless their marriage. At the back door, however, which is open only on a Holy Year, the Camino de Santiago seemed to belong more to the day-trippers and foreign tourists than to the weary walkers of the Milky Way.

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[23] In a Holy Year, the manner of travel to the shrine is not important, only that the penitent enters the Cathedral through the Puerta de Perdón. One of the main differences in a Holy Year is that the pilgrims mostly flow in through the main door, while tourists enter through the back door, which is open only during Holy Years. It is more distressing for walking pilgrims I think when they meet this scene of tourists achieving the same merit as they have 'earned'.

Figure 11 ***Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog*** **(c. 1818)**
by Caspar David Friedrich

When writing about the romance of the Camino de Santiago, Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog* stands out in my memory as it recalls my first morning view of Galicia from O Cebrero Mountain (see figure 21). The quiet confidence with which I surveyed the final leg of my journey to St. James's tomb in Santiago is perfectly evoked by the brooding melancholy hero who stands atop his mountain and looks out over the ranges before him (see figure 8). As we peer out over his shoulder to appreciate the scenery to which Friedrich has guided us, the view catches us and does not allow our attention to waver. Here, in Gothic romantic imagery, I could recall the exhilaration of walking the Camino. In fact, soon after setting out that day, I came across the statue of pilgrim of San Roque, evoking the brooding melancholy stride of the lone pilgrim through the ages (see figure 9). In contrast to much other work from the nineteenth century, Friedrich does not paint nature as a pagan Mother, instead

he evoked the mountain scene as a mystery to be sought out and witnessed, and which does not diminish the spectator but remakes him, holds him high and rewards his efforts with a new confidence. Friedrich's hero is at ease with the scene he surveys, he dominates the foreground, yet he could be any one of us. We cannot tell what emotions the scene evokes for the wanderer, yet we are convinced of his dignity as he looks out. His calm is evident even from our perspective of having so little other information.

All that we can see is visible only at this height, the fog removing the lower levels from our attention. The peaks are what hold us to the picture. Our eyes sail lazily across the sea of fog to the other peaks, imagining ourselves to be on any other one of them, looking out still further. The journey in this painting has just begun. It is timeless. Motion is not a prominent feature here. Even the wanderer's hair is not too disturbed this high up. Stillness overtakes us, freeing our imagination to complete the journey or to remain, the sky seeming closer than the ground.

Of course this painting is evocative too because it calls to mind the great Nietzsche himself, walking the peaks of Piz Corvatsch, near Sils Maria in the Swiss Alps, leather-bound notebook in hand, thinking high thoughts in lofty places. Like Friedrich in his painting, Nietzsche rejected the Protestant condition in his philosophy, setting out to walk a different path than that imagined for him, and while these choices may not have safeguarded either's happiness, it certainly guaranteed both men a place in history for the originality of their lives' work and a dignity in posterity.

I think that Tomas Martínez hopes he is a brooding hero perched on a mountain, accomplished and satisfied with his efforts in this world, while his

audiences are divided with most seeing in him a character who would sit among Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. I suspect that he has been a nighthawk, like so many of those who pass his refuge. Tomas, for all the deficiencies I saw in his stance as I passed through his world, has in fact found a place to stand in the world and carve out his meanings from the raw experience that the world presents us all with. I have to respect his efforts even as I flinch at his conclusions.

Figure 12 The pilgrim of San Roque, Galicia

Whether hell, as Sartre said, is other people or not, we struggle to know, to overcome the meanings or meaninglessness of suffering and we rarely attempt to achieve this alone. When our worlds collapse, then we seek not the world, but the meaning of the world, as that was the first to go in suffering. Too few of us have a Damascan conversion to suffering as St. Paul did, and rather identify with his unnamed thorn in the flesh (2Cor 12:7-10). Only then can we see the world come back to us in a taken for granted way. Yet, it never will be the same again (or at least that is the hope). Nietzsche insisted that we make a hundred sketches

for a novel, using the mountains to symbolise his work, the heady heights to which his thoughts would reach, the struggle for the reader to ascend, to stand between god and man, to be an 'overman'.

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While the Camino seems to reach out through all of Europe and the rest of the Western world, or even whether it seems that Europe is reaching out for Santiago, the direction of the pilgrimage funnels pilgrims into the city where they have to make contact with the religious pilgrimage; place over movement is re-asserted at a structural level. The last feeling of freedom for pilgrims can be experienced watching them run up to Monte del Gozo to glimpse their first view of the Bells of the Cathedral in Santiago; the first one up gets the name "King" (Starkie 1957:305).[24] From there, control over their pilgrimage is gradually ceded; many pilgrims decide to stop in the refuge at Monte del Gozo and finish the last six kilometres the next day, deferring the pilgrimage's end for a final time.

The refuge however is little more than a barracks, designed to accommodate hundreds of pilgrims, and the cosy, strange and downright eccentric refuges of the Camino are replaced by the sterile *déjà vu* of modern logistical demands of pilgrims on the city. The ephemeral pilgrimage is already slipping away before the concrete structures of Monte del Gozo. Freedom as control, control over place, movement and time, diminishes on the last leg of the Camino as pilgrims, in the presence of the refuge, decide whether to stay or make their way through the suburbs of the city into the Plaza de Obradoiro. Locals

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[24] Elyn Aviva suggests that this practice is the origin of the surnames Roy, Leroy and Rey (2001:256).

look at the pilgrims and look away; they have seen these people already, pilgrims are nothing new to them. At the climax of weeks of walking, the whole endeavour finally seems a little foolish. A few people smile, most look on; the pilgrims already feel a little assimilated to their surroundings. The city sticks to them like no other city or town had done before; why had they walked all the way *here*?

It is not uncommon for people to go quiet and try walking in alone, peeling away from their groups, to head down and, for the last time, navigate by the yellow arrows through the labyrinth of Santiago's suburbs before they come out onto the square before the cathedral. The feeling of arrival is often less than enthusiastic. Standing before the great medieval Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, built by Muslim slaves and incorporating the architecture of four hundred years of Spain's ascendancy to world power, the response that one might hope for, a will to confrontation mixed with a feeling of the sublime, of one's place in this world at this point in the world's history, is too quickly replaced as the body re-asserts itself through a need to visit a toilet. The feeling of standing before a monument of the Iberian middle age has laxative properties. "Is that it?" many pilgrims say to themselves and each other as they search out a lavatory in a nearby bar; it may stand as the epitaph for the unknown pilgrim.

At least, it would if that were the whole story, which it so seldom is. Many soon take off for Finisterre, a further 100 kilometres and three days' walk west, others meet family and friends and begin reintegrating, but everyone goes home. The return is the key part of the kinetic ritual, going home means deciding where home is, and what it is and who it is. Having started with almost

nothing and ending with about as much, pilgrims try to preserve that complicated relationship between belonging and travel that they learned *en caminando.*

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I want to represent the pilgrimage, and indeed any pilgrimage, as complex in its particular local, cultural, historical and political character. At the same time, though, it is my intention to reveal a key process that animates the broader hegemonic formations of modern day peregrination, which is humanity's ceaseless restlessness and curiosity, a curiosity that seeks to remove the unutterable into the expressible and from there to make it meaningful and useful.

The history of Europe is a convenient fiction that teaches us to think about the space of Europe in a particular way, to the detriment of other avenues of conceiving our shared social space; we end up then with a white, male, Christian, heterosexual place that admits few alternative legitimate configurations (Goddard, Llobera & Shore 1994). Even these discourses of homogeneity are subject to ironic re-interpretation locally, by cultural entrepreneurs of the Camino and the pilgrims themselves, and thus the institutional story cannot complete its ending in the wake of a peripatetic acephalous community that resists its role in the definition of spaces larger than the Camino. Europe can wait, because for pilgrims, the Camino cannot.

Rather than focussing on aspects of the Camino that deal in concerns to reveal the structure, or deep structure, of the Camino as a cultural artefact, I want instead to frame my treatment of pilgrimage from the perspective of the experience of peregrination. My main concern for doing this is to represent the actual people who have taken the time and trouble to show the pilgrimage to me

and, in the midst of tired days and good-humoured evenings, reveal much more about themselves. While real concrete individuals comprise the momentum of my research, I want also to evoke several experiences of the Camino from a range of possible explanations of what this pilgrimage is and can be about. I am talking about individuals, strong ones, self-selecting ones for my study. Those who are charismatic, who display the qualities of a person who tries to envision a world that is up for grabs. I see them as strong poets, quietly rewriting parts of their lives, looking for answers to unspeakable questions.

This new feeling of 'belonging in exile' manifests most powerfully, I argue, in its impact on the pilgrims' sense of the passage of time, where the march of progress is reconceived as a project of 'being unto death'. Pilgrims reorder the 'now' to reveal a new pattern that enriches and authenticates the experience, a process that is reusable in the pilgrim 'afterlife' back home. This thesis suggests different ways in which modern pilgrims attempt to appropriate symbols encountered on the pilgrimage to their own ends. Whether that symbol is overtly religious, like the cross, or intimate and unique, the sign being their own bodies, pilgrims stumble across powerful signifiers that they put to work to make meaning out of their lives and suffering through the physical act of walking and the subsequent attribution of meaning to that effort. They made the project worthwhile and worthy of my best efforts. I can only hope I have done some measure of justice to them here.

Chapter one:

From Communitas to 'Caminotas':

finding ways of being together

I suppose there is a doctrine to this landscape. Yet having just
Escaped from the truth, the morning is clear and mist,
Which is enough.

Wallace Stevens, *The Latest Freed Man*

If the pilgrimage is not a personal experience, it is nothing;
if it is not communal, it is just a walk across Spain.

Elyn Aviva, *Following the Milky Way*

Before the pilgrimage

The practice for the walk begins and the pilgrim begins focussing on his or her body and all its shortcomings. Every year spent avoiding training and keeping fit is brought to the fore, when promises are silently made as the pilgrim struggles up his or her local trail ahead of the pilgrimage itself. Maps are consulted, routes and itineraries planned. Each day of the pilgrimage is set out, what towns to stay in, what to see along the way. These activities make the trip less daunting, of course, as the pilgrim reviews the itinerary like a tourist, which encourages the belief in how safe it all really is.

Then the time to leave comes about. Pilgrims across the world say their goodbyes and converge on the medieval pilgrimage route to St. James amid promises of postcards and daily phone calls. Friends and relations disperse; only the pilgrims remain, alone with their rucksacks: the reality of the trip moves

a little closer. Their experiences of the world change a little now, as the world shrinks to the size of individual neophyte bodies, in all their fragile potential, their only possessions are those in rucksacks. By the time the physical starting point of the pilgrimage comes within walking distance, resolutions have been made, chins set firm and adrenaline is temporarily replaced by a sense of calm that washes through pilgrims' bodies. There is no little comfort to be had in the aftermath of having made a big decision, and endorphins rushing through the neophytes write the decision to walk into their synapses; pilgrims' bodies are beginning to change. If the pilgrimage may be described as a form of body poetics, then like any work of art, the full impact of the decision to do the pilgrimage will unfold gradually as newer, deeper and more nuanced levels of meaning reveal themselves. For now, though, in St. Jean, the decision feels good, and as we head towards the centre of the town, the walk exists as a time (and a place) of going back to the beginning and moving bravely forward into that time of fragile potential.

Fieldnotes May 2004

Starting from home

My journey from home began at six in the morning, fumbling in the dark for my things with a flashlight before I set out, trying not to wake the others in the room, an activity that would become a commonplace in the following weeks. I felt exquisitely nervous about the journey, though it was not the first time I had left for Spain for such a length of time. This time, however, meant that I would be away from my child and partner, for another five hundred mile trek and several weeks in the old city of Santiago. Before I would return, my daughter

would take her first steps, while her father was so far away. My world began to shrink to the immediate area around my reach, the size of my body, my backpack and the photos I would bring with me.

I began to monitor everything I had packed, running through lists in my mind; everything I wore and everything I had to do over the coming hours. The environment in which I found myself was already becoming quite alien to me; the shrinking boundaries of my sense of self came sharply into focus. Everything else had to be assessed for risk and difficulty to negotiate. My flight took me from Dublin to Biarritz, where I made the connecting train for St. Jean, the walking part of the pilgrimage. I kept to myself and began to engage with my surroundings through my other senses, feeling the warm French sun on my bare arms as I walked to the train station, recording the sounds and smells, waiting to taste the local food with the view that this was part of my re-acculturation to the ways of the Camino. I preferred the route through Biarritz from the other I had tried, which was to fly to Paris and take the TGV down. That was quick, but dizzying, as I stepped from the TGV, sleeping rough overnight in Biarritz, then stepping from the train in St. Jean, slowing down to human speed; the effect was too profound. My sense of time and distance had been skewed too far, and I had been afraid of the cars and trucks on the roads, an almost medieval bewilderment at the modern world. A part of the concern with making an 'authentic' pilgrimage that haunts pilgrims has to do with getting to start of the pilgrimage quickly and leaving on the road even quicker. To feel so confused by modern transport in St. Jean does not count for any essential or essentialised way of engaging with peregrination, though. Rather, I knew that my instincts and senses had to be accommodated to knowing where all my equipment was all the time

and that I could not keep the newness of my surroundings constantly available to me without tripping up somewhere. I had to try to go native while at the same time remembering instinctively that I carried my house on my back, without being discombobulated by the change in pace getting on the road.

Arriving at the train station in Bayonne, I kept myself busy by picking out other prospective pilgrims from the crowd, each one evincing a different level of bemused calm at the journey looming ahead for us in all its richness and possibilities and dangers. While the Camino has been 'cleaned up' in many ways, making the walk safer for the increasing numbers of pilgrims every year, we would still pass new monuments to people who had died en route to Santiago and hear numerous stories of those who had not survived to arrive safely home from the Camino, all sobering reminders that this pilgrimage was not to be undertaken lightly. For that moment though, each pilgrim scanned the crowd for others on the same journey and checked their travel plans once more ahead of the train's departure.

On the train, people began to introduce themselves. We talked about why we had come and what to expect, where my previous experience on the Camino quickly became currency. Contrary to my expectations of returning to the field as a novice once more, I was almost a local expert on the Camino, a position somewhat bewildering, as people wanted to know about the Camino from me even as I asked them about it. The standard model of researcher assuming a position of subordination was difficult to initiate, both because of my previous experience and because my status as academic researcher was recognised and appreciated among an audience that responded to my (perceived) erudition,

elevating me temporarily above the novice crowd. It was one more problem for me to negotiate in the field.

As the train pulled in to the station in St. Jean at-the-foot-of-the-pass, there was already a soft buzz throughout the train, and the plans I had made to stay in the town for a few days, to examine its pilgrim infrastructure, once again quickly evaporated in light of this feeling of having to walk. Although some pilgrims begin the Camino immediately having alighted the train, most find somewhere to stay for the night, to catch up to themselves, buy provisions, examine their plans once more and get ever-newer advice on the trip ahead. Advice is rarely new though, as can be recognised in the friendly and measured monotone in which it is delivered at the registration desk for the Camino on the Rue de la Citadelle. In the absence of a formal ritual to validate our moving into this in-between place and state, pilgrims can struggle through the first hours in St. Jean. While their bodies may be ready for the journey, their minds need some extra training and acclimatising before they begin before dawn the next morning and indeed in the coming days.

St. Jean is the first town where the main routes through France meet up before travelling into Spain, condensing the flow of pilgrims from Paris, Vezelay and Le Puy into the small medieval municipality. It is the oldest capital of the Basque province of Basse-Navarre, and holds together these three traditions of Spanish, French and Basque as easily as any community in these parts. The other French route, from Arles (at one time considered by Emperor Constantine the Great as a site for his empire before he eventually relocated to Byzantium), continues on separately until Puente la Reina in Spain, where the Camino Francés, the French Way becomes consolidated.

Figure 13 The entrance through the Porte de Saint-Jacques via the 15th century rampart to the old town of St. Jean along the French Way

Having made my way towards the registration desk on the Rue de la Citadelle and sorted my details for the journey; *credencial* to allow me access to the refuges along the way, map for the new private refuge chain etc., I set out to walk the town, slowly accommodating myself to its rhythms, to the sounds of the languages, mostly French, Spanish and Basque, sounding out the road signs and taking in the smells of wine, fruit and meats. After a while of soaking in the atmosphere (it is exhilarating every time I arrive), I made my way up to the top of the Rue de la Citadelle to watch out for pilgrims finishing their last full day walking in France, reaching the half-way mark in their journey to St. James.

These pilgrims, mostly lone middle-aged men, came walking in steadily,[25] strongly down into the town. The trip had already taken a lot of the excess from them; the bodies before me had worked hard to get so far. Indeed, I reflected, their condition approximated how I would look when I reached Santiago a month later. It was too soon for such comparisons, though. In the refuge on the Rue de la Citadelle where I stayed, my fellow neophyte pilgrims had already been to the shops and meals were being cooked with invitations for everyone to come and get some. Wine was opened and everyone drank, the first signs of a brief communal feeling were beginning to emerge. We would eat the Camino and drink it as we talked of it, before we would allow it to cradle us while we slept. Pilgrims trickled in, from the trains and from the Camino itself, travellers who had already travelled so far. We were the new ones, all in secret awe at these weather-beaten, hardy travellers, scarcely able to imagine that we would be so windswept and interesting ourselves in a few short weeks. People joined and ate, talked and even sang afterwards, our nervous energy feeding our excitement for the coming day westward bound.

Sitting out in the dusk, sipping our wine and playfully swapping our lies with each other, one could not help but fall for the romantic ideal of the Camino. Everything was in its place, it seemed. In some ways, the Camino lacks that romantic feeling of travelling west that evokes such simple and powerful images of cowboys and cattle drives; its rustic purity takes a different form than a national manifest destiny. Yet that first night we all glowed from the wine and the walk ahead, ready as we could be for the month-long hike through Spain, and

[25] In 2005, over 54.73% of pilgrims were aged over 35 (51,400), with a 60%-40% (55,706-38,218) breakdown male to female. Out the total number of pilgrims (93,924), 10,389 pilgrims, wrote 'pensioner' under profession.

as we slept, it held us in its thrall and its own romantic light while we bided our time to beat the dawn onto the road.

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I awoke easily the next morning, having slept fitfully through the night. In the dark, the other pilgrims in the small dorm had already begun to prepare their bags to leave. We all drifted towards the kitchen where the refuge owner had made some coffee, and had bread and cheese waiting for us. Gratefully clutching at the hot coffee in the cool pre-dawn morning, final checks were made and wills were steeled for the day's walk; a hard one at twenty seven kilometres for the first day across the Pyrenees, with only one water stop on the route. The previous night, one of the pilgrims had fallen over and broken her leg, a sure sign, many said, that this was not her time to walk, but a sign also that the pilgrimage was not to be lightly undertaken.

I am always disappointed by Paulo Coelho's *The Pilgrimage* (1992), a book that does to the history of the Camino what Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* has done for conspiracy (and what Fernandez (2001) calls the paranoid style of "fin-de-siècle rationality"). Coelho writes that he was kept for days running along old smugglers' paths through the Pyrenees as part of a series of tests that would culminate in the modern Knights Templar revealing to him the secret of the Holy Grail, hidden in O Cebrero. My disappointment, with both books, is that the reality of the Camino (and the Catholic Church's history, for that matter) does not lack any element of the dramatic; both works are unnecessary mystifications of their respective subjects. Although I would encounter many instances of the surreal and fantastical along my own path, I

would never need to obscure the experiences any further than I would through my own, at times turgid, prose. The urging of several fans of Coelho to read the book to find the inspiration to walk the Camino brought me only regret and dismay, given that on that beautiful day my rich adventure infinitely surpassed Coelho's fiction.

Ahead of all the adventure of the Pyrenees, though, the first and most important task of the morning after breakfast was to fill up with water. The day would quickly warm and the walk over the mountains exposes pilgrims to the full glare of the sun. Having stocked up with four litres of water I set out for the Route Napoleon across the Pyrenees. The first five kilometres of which are gruelling, a sixty-degree incline with little shade and too much exposure to the cold breeze. Such a tough hike quickly calls into question one's motives from the first step. However, eventually the climb becomes more gradual and it is easier to find an acceptable pace. There is never much shelter, but as long I kept up a decent pace, I would not find the midday sun too much trouble. Of course, I had not anticipated the rain. The downpour, though, was still several hours away, and I settled into the walk and the view, making my way up and vaguely westward for the morning.

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The refuge in Roncesvalles in my experience contradicts the image of medieval hospitality that one might conjure when imagining a network of refuges, in the form of the officious and instantly disagreeable female volunteer who turned up late to open the refuge and register us before allowing us to shower and change. Her late arrival was not warmly received, and many

pilgrims in a half dozen languages loudly reminded her of her duties to the spirit of the Camino, a chorus that fell on deaf bureaucratic ears. Of course, the Swiss hospidaleros who ran the refuge itself were initially equally helpful, insisting on cleanliness and order before showers or sleep for the pilgrims. More than once, pilgrims forgot about humility in the face of downright silliness, one calling out loudly that this sort of officiousness was what he was there to escape.

Having traversed the Pyrenees in the footsteps of Charlemagne, what first strikes any pilgrim is the sheer difficulty of walking at such a steep angle for so long, as if the very landscape was refusing entry to the humble walker. All through the day, weary pilgrims pass each other, barely able to conceive that the walk could be so difficult. The hopes and dreams that had brought them fall away as one leg then the other strains at its turn to pull an entire body and the contents of an over-packed backpack up another part of the mountain. It never seems to stop. Walking as the sun rises means that pilgrims push through the cloud cover and seem to peer down over the world, yet none of this can be appreciated, because salty sweat stings the eyes and panting drowns out the silence. There is no stillness while the heartbeat stays racing at double its normal pace and the thirst, the incessant need for water, is the most advanced instinct most pilgrims can muster on that first arduous trek.

On the first day of the trek, the cyclists and walkers often meet and travel the same distance, to stay at Roncesvalles for the night. Although the cyclists take the main road around the Pyrenees (there are some diehard cyclists who follow the lead of Napoleon and the walking pilgrims) there is a sense of meeting up along the way (walking pilgrims who choose the easier road route see a lot more of the cyclists), acknowledging our being in this in some way together.

Onwards and upwards before finally downwards we all go, into the valley of thorns.

The way in which the hard climb of the pilgrimage affects pilgrims is best captured by examining the first day's walk as a dual semeiotic and phenomenological journey from the category of Thirdness into Firstness (see Daniel 1987).[26] The Camino in its Thirdness represents our imagination of it, based on the totality of our experiences and expectations brought to bear on that imagination. It is the Camino that pilgrims set out to walk on. For those who start in St. Jean, the Pyrenees cease to become a trail on the map and begin to be a brute reality, forcing itself up through your feet into your tired muscles, as you struggle with the pilgrimage's physical presence in your daily experience. Gradually, each ache and pain becomes tangible; you no longer walk through a landscape; it feels as if the landscape forces pilgrims to depend on it. You look for water, for shelter, even for the way forward into greater pain. At some point over the brow of the last hill twenty-four kilometres into the first day, there is a three-kilometre drop down into the aptly named valley of thorns. Far from suffering being avoidable for the average pilgrim, it is a necessity. With the hard walk down, and with each step bearing the burden of every ounce of the body's weight, you press closer still to the monastery in Roncesvalles. In that time, everything disappears, only the next numbing step suggests itself, and on you plod. You are living in a Firstness of experience. Nothing else remains. For the

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[26] It is, I feel, pertinent not to exclude bussing pilgrims from any discussion of experience of Firstness or togetherness that can be generated by journeying among companions. Such a journey is indeed worthy of examination. Here, though, I wish to explore both the impact of the *physical* challenge of pilgrimage, where I focus on walking *Caminotas*, rather than bussing *commutertas* as two (facetiously constructed) species of pilgrimage communitas, and the discourse of authenticity that mobilises the walk as a meaningful choice for pilgrims. The experience of pilgrims who travel by motorised means together lies outside the scope of the present study (although see for instance Dubisch (2004) and Dubisch (2005) for excellent treatments of Vietnam Veterans' Run to the Wall as examples of communitas, hurting and healing among motorised pilgrims).

first week and a half, it will be the daily routine; walk until you can no longer do so. This is a radical prioritisation of pain. Much that had seemed important in St. Jean is discarded in Roncesvalles, from past grudges to spare shirts, in order to finish the day with a modicum of dignity and energy. The first lesson of the Camino is a material and emotional spring-clean.

Daniel writes about his South East Asian pilgrimage to Sri Ayyappan, bathing in the river Ạrudā,

> "for a few moments, which in fact seemed like forever, nothing else existed beside me and the world outside me. This world, however, was not differentiated into pilgrims, a river, trees, stones, huts, campfires, or any other sensation that reached the five senses. The world outside was reduced to a oneness: it was all shit! And I was the only 'other' existing apart from this world, acutely and painfully sensitive to its brutal force on all my senses" Daniel (1987:263).

Later, as he ascends Ạrudā hill on the final stages of his pilgrimage, where pilgrims tend to lose their purpose somewhat, he and the others stagger towards the summit, muttering, "Oh Lord! Oh Lord!" as they unfeelingly feel their way forward on the pilgrims' trail (1987:266). Yet the pilgrim's progress is meant to be a journey towards knowing. Writing about the Tamil pilgrimage process, Daniels states, "as a pilgrim, the discontented person sets himself a new goal, a goal to move away from differentiated knowledge and differentiable substance to knowledge of the undifferentiated substance *atman* in terms of the essential unity of all substance" (1987:237).

For the pilgrim walking through Spain, a similar experience can be observed; a movement towards knowledge, in Peircean terms, towards Firstness. Every night, pilgrims painstakingly pore over guidebooks and route maps in anticipation of the following day's journey, calculating and predicting what could reasonably lie ahead and how to overcome any obstacles (pilgrimage in its

Thirdness). This more rational approach to the pilgrimage, however, is soon replaced with the brute shock of walking for hours under a hot sun, (the pilgrim's experience of the Camino in its Secondness). The pilgrimage continues day after day and the walking takes longer as pilgrims push themselves to walk farther. In the late afternoon, having skipped the siesta, as many northern Europeans and Americans do, pilgrims will drag themselves across the hard, unforgiving meseta with little water, staggering to the next pueblo. Even on the first day, though, with the central meseta still weeks away, the Camino teaches pilgrims a lesson and it will take them up to a week and a half to recover from the initial shock of scaling the Pyrenees in a single day. In this state, the pilgrimage, the pilgrim's reasons for making it and the surroundings themselves fade away. What remains is what Peirce called "a mere sense of quality. It is the sort of quality that makes red such as it is, whatever anything else may be". Daniel adds that if we substitute the word *pain* for 'red', the definition would still hold (1987:269) and it would hold for the Camino too on that cruel sunny day. This understanding of the Camino becomes evident through Peirce's explanation of Firstness as a state of "positive qualitative possibility" and newness, "that which is ... original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious and evanescent" (Peirce, cited in Daniel 1987:239). Firstness also provides the phenomenological basis for understanding how pilgrims can potentially inhabit and sense the pilgrimage world, how they 'turn towards it', to borrow Csordas's term.[27] By day's end, the achievement of

[27] Csordas points out that Daniel's (1984) use of Peircean terminology leads to difficulty in expressing how people can sense their worlds *together*. Despite a brilliant analysis of Siddha medicine, Daniel's conclusion, that suffering becomes shared "in some sense" between patient and doctor, is too abstract, leaving Daniel to employ a neologism, "consubjectivity," to express what Csordas identifies as a "somatic mode of attention" (Csordas 2002:250). Thus, the pilgrimage experience expands beyond the experience of Firstness to take account of, "self processes grounded in embodiment ... [as] the starting point for analysing human participation in a cultural world" (Csordas 2002:4, 244). The bodily effort required to finish the pilgrimage lies beyond the physical limits of many pilgrims, and in transcending certain physical horizons;

such a distance, and in such a taxing manner, becomes an immediate and bodily signal of the possibilities of the Camino for the next month. Pilgrims are already different as the pilgrimage begins to break them open. The innocence of the previous night in St. Jean has been replaced with a more determined introspection. The following morning, when the body's aching inertia refuses to begin the task of preparing for another day's walk so soon, the pilgrim's mettle will be tested further as putting on one boot feels as insurmountable a task as the previous day's twenty-seven kilometres.

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Sitting on a bunk in a hostel in Roncesvalles in the evening, the necessary experience of other pilgrims as "leaky subjectivities" (Holliday and Hassard 2001) was a visceral one. People all around me oozed and sweated. Several pilgrims took needles and thread dipped in iodine and inserted them through the blisters on their feet. I could see them blotting what seeped from the blisters. I winced as I watched pilgrims limp painfully to their bunks. I never quite got used to seeing the purple threads hanging from each side of a blister, but when pilgrims began using duct tape on their blisters, I felt faint. People were rubbing each other, massaging sore limbs, worrying with each other about tendonitis. Yet it was all curiously quiet, everyone muttering in a low voice (the loud and ribald exchanges between pilgrims and groups was another week away). In Roncesvalles, on the second night of the pilgrimage, everyone negotiated the public privacy of the open plan room with over a hundred pilgrims stripping and

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pilgrims tap into the horizons of *emotional* possibility for their pilgrimage experience. Daniel argues that the South Asian, unlike the idealised Westerner, is "loosely and openly constituted, a 'dividual' embedded in the flux of transactions and process. To be bounded, to be static, and to be individuated is to be dead" (1989:90).

changing for bed. It would get easier and soon we would barely notice who was half-naked or bursting their blisters (see figure 11). The smell of tinctures and ointments would hardly raise an eyebrow in a few days. Soon we would make our rounds, enquire about each other's ailments and exchange advice on cures or palliatives, but on night two, the immediate effect of these sore and broken pilgrims impinged on my senses, and sense of myself as a private person. It was an illusion that had had its time, as Joyce Rupp (2005:109) evocatively captures, writing about her experiences in the Camino refuges,

> "there is no privacy anywhere in refugios, no place where one can really be alone because they are packed with pilgrims... Nothing about the body is very private when you are a pilgrim. Besides changing clothes in front of everyone and sharing bathrooms, there is illness. There's talk about sore throats and phlegm, vomiting and diarrhoea, constipation and bowel movements. When one pilgrim starts coughing and has a cold, you can be pretty sure the rest of the pilgrims sleeping in the same area will end up with a similar virus".

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While stories of 'authentic' pilgrims become important to orient most pilgrims' thrust into the experience of the Camino, it is their confrontation with the physical pilgrimage and its assault on their plans and expectations for their time in Spain that is most central in forcing them to identify with authenticity as a key rhetorical device. Through the physical pain and emotional suffering of the pilgrimage authenticity is felt to take up residence in pilgrims and to interpret suffering *meaningfully*, orienting them bodily, spatially and existentially within the pilgrimage context. The pilgrim's body and the space of the Camino do not remain separate, as the boundaries between the two become more porous. The body blisters and bleeds from the effort of covering the distance and the monuments marking dead pilgrims effect condensations of meaning and emotion.

The crosses and statues become nodes for generating collective memories and the stories of these pilgrims provide a structure to imagine and integrate an unfolding sense of the authenticity of the pilgrimage, outside of the context of motive alone (see figure 12).

Figure 14 A typical blister for pilgrims

Let us look at E. Valentine Daniel's (1987, 1989) discussion of Peirce's categories of interpretants to see what they can reveal about authenticity[28]. An interpretant is "not an interpreter. Instead, it is the particular thought, action, or feeling, which interprets the sign. The formation of interpretants constitutes an interpreter, which in some cases is a person" (Short, quoted in Daniel 1989:84). Interpretants can be immediate, dynamic or final (Daniel 1989:85). If I point to the sky at night, and you look at the star to which I am pointing, that would characterise an immediate interpretant. Looking at the sky in general is the concrete semeiotic effect of the sign as a dynamic interpretant, whereas the final

[28] Frey argues that the authentic is minimally established through the travelling choices that codify pilgrims; the willingness to walk at human speed produces three categories of pilgrim along a spectrum of authenticity: non-motorised (walkers), semi-motorised (cycling and by horse) and motorised. More importantly, she raises the question of who has the power to authenticate and draws out the manner in which pilgrims are authenticated: credibility, genuineness, originality and certification (Frey 1998:126, see also Bruner 1994).

interpretant results in seeing the star to which I point and understanding that the star is Alpha Centauri, which is the "best interpretant of [the] sign, given [the] goal of interpretation" (Short, quoted in Daniel 1989:85). These interpretants can be further classified into emotional, energetic and logical. The emotional interpretant is what Peirce called "a mere quality of feeling" (cited in Daniel 1989:85). The energetic interpretant is characterised by the expenditure of energy, either by "engaging the outer physical world in muscular effort or the inner world in dialogic thought" (Daniel 1989:85).[29]

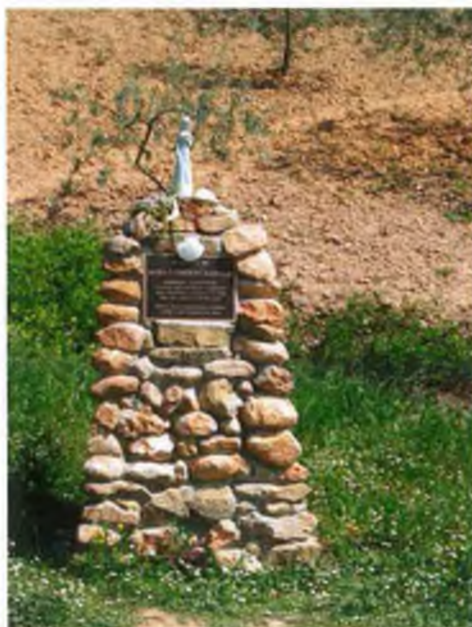

Figure 15 Monument outside Estella to a Canadian pilgrim who died on the Camino in 2002.

Authenticity as an interpretant, then, moves between the immediate emotional state and the dynamic energetic state, between potentiality and

[29] The pairing of these two levels of interpretant throws up natural groupings: emotional with immediate interpretants; energetic with dynamic interpretants and; Final/normal with logical interpretants (1989:89). The immediate/emotional interpretant presupposes "nothing but itself on the one extreme, and on the other, the Final/ Normal logical Interpretant [presupposes and contains] within it every other class of interpretant (ibid.).

actuality. It does not enjoy a life whereby its proper significant effect is imperative, merely suggestive of a state of genuineness for the pilgrim. 'Authentic' pilgrims are those who are viewed as the ones with direction and momentum that reflect their charismatic personalities. (Charismatically) attractive pilgrims, for instance, are referred to as authentic pilgrims. The authenticity of 'authentic' pilgrims (the grounds upon which their sense of themselves as authentic people doing authentic things is felt to *be*, in a taken-for-granted way, authentic) springs from consciousness in its Firstness, or primisense.[30] It reveals the peculiar interpretability of the interpreter insofar as he is implicated in the process of signifying 'authenticity' as a semeiotic object. Myra, a pilgrim who passed away in Santiago upon her arrival, was spoken of as an authentic pilgrim (her story spread far and quickly on the Camino); one who walked a pilgrimage to her death. Her way of walking was implicated positively in opening a door for another profound realm of experience: she became a measure of what was at stake on pilgrimage. While everyone is potentially capable of becoming an authentic pilgrim, and being recognised as being so, the rhetorical apparatus for being so exists at different levels of intersubjective contact; different pilgrims explore the authentic pilgrimage in a variety of ways. It always helped, though, to have a story like Myra's on hand as a litmus for one's own idea and ideals of pilgrimage.

Danny was a young Californian who was looking for adventure along the Camino. He took notes of any books anyone recommended and sought out the hardcore pilgrims, the ones who had been walking for a long time, pilgrims who

[30] Primisense is a "quality of feeling" in Peirce's taxonomy of consciousness, writes Daniel (1989:92). Primisense slowly but surely becomes meaningfully constituted through an "indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world" (Csordas 2002:241).

would walk at night too. He often took detours to look for any manner of experiences, with women, with drugs, and really failed to represent himself to his fellow pilgrims in such a way as to endear himself. Consequently, several pilgrims found excuses not to walk with him or go for drinks when he was present. He reminded people too much of what they were trying to leave behind, he was young, inexperienced, over-confident and tried to be cool.

The physically exhausting walk provides an opportunity for the mind to do other work at a human pace that matches one's step. As de Botton (2002:20) discovered on Barbados, when he had inadvertently brought himself along, the temporary annihilation of a self that continually complained of heat and boredom, hunger and anxiety, was a welcome reprieve from his unwelcome guest, his own company. The physical ritual provides a rhythm that allows pilgrims over time set up a routine for the day, of thinking while they walk. "Journeys are the midwives of thought," writes Alain de Botton,

> "Introspective reflections which are liable to stall are helped along by the flow of the landscape... Thinking improves when parts of the mind are given other tasks, are charged with listening to music or following a line of trees. The music or the view distracts for a time that nervous, censorious practical part of the mind which is inclined to shut down when it notices something difficult emerging in consciousness and which runs scared of memories, longings, introspective or original ideas and prefers instead the administrative and impersonal" (De Botton 2002:57).

The care by which a pilgrim learns to maintain his body goes a long way to teaching a basic routine of listening for the problems *within* (or upon) one's body and addressing them with routines of care. These routines form a template (cf. Geertz 1973) that teaches pilgrims how not to succumb to the adversity of the day, and those who learn this second lesson: keep walking. The others go home early, limping. At another level, the body becomes the means by which

ills are treated. In the pilgrimage space, when the body feels strong, then it is capable of feeling deeper suffering that emerges, and address it. As the days go by, people do become stronger as they watch each other become stronger too.

It is no accident that the presence of others becoming better at walking encourages one's own efforts. The Camino does not really represent a realm of competing and isolated individuals solving the problem of walking by themselves like good little Cartesian *cogitos*. Merely to see other pilgrims is positive reinforcement, and to talk to others is to discuss days that have a lot in common and experiences that can reach closer to each other than may have previously been possible in other worlds. "No matter what, everybody walked that distance today and they deserve credit for that," I was told; the idea that a basic positive regard for another, (no matter how annoying the other might have been), was being touted as another lesson. So as we acclimatised to our journey, empowered ourselves and slowly changed, bodily, emotionally and existentially (see Csordas 2002:5), others appeared more human and humane, and through strong bodies and powerful experiences of the road, that regard was not a naïve one, but one grounded in difficulties 'shared' among pilgrims.

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A fascinating aspect of walking among pilgrims is how the shared difficulties of the first days become shared resources that help gather groups from among the many private individuals. A simple and yet profound example of sharing can be found in the new Roncesvalles refuge, in a section for abandoned equipment, left for any pilgrims who might need a pair of shoes, a torch or other such equipment, either forgotten, lost or damaged having traversed

the Pyrenees (see figure 13). Instead of carrying the material to a post office where they may post it to themselves in Santiago, or post it home, pilgrims offer what they can no longer carry to the 'next pilgrim', who may not be as well prepared as they are. Roncesvalles is not the only refuge either; along the way, the refuges that seem to best embody what some pilgrims call 'pilgrim spirit' have similar sections for discarded equipment too.[31]

What these ways of moving objects between people do is to change the way people think of themselves, connecting people in new ways and altering their perceptions of the Camino as a particular type of place, of their time there, of how time works, and their own self-understanding too. The Camino is a place that attenuates an everyday (Western) ideology of specificity in discrete rational relationships between individuals. In contrast, this anonymous donation of equipment is evidence of the spirit of the gift (see Coleman 2002). At the same time, where the spirit is evident, the reciprocal obligation to engage in a dyadic transaction is absent. Pilgrims often bemoan the impersonal methods of people with each other in contemporary society, from the unsmiling shop-girl to the widespread increase in the use of personal stereos and mobile phones in public spaces to create a sense of personal distance between individuals that are geographically nearby.[32] To be sure, this freer flowing exchange of these goods, objects and stories is never fully achieved, as 'competing discourses' (Eade &

[31] While walking for a few days with a Basque man called Alberto, my companions and I became embroiled in a friendly type of agonistic exchange, racing with Alberto to get the bill for breakfast or dinner. Alberto refused to have anything paid for him, saying that he was glad to pay for all of us and that money should not stand in the way of pilgrims sharing food or beer.

[32] A friend of mine worked in a cinema a few years ago and every night he would only serve people who looked directly at him. The job did not last long as he spent a lot of his time waiting for someone to look. Such disengaged people live and work on the Camino too. Once in a small bar restaurant, because the restauranteur did not have a vegetarian option, I argued with her that the fish she wanted to serve as vegetarian was an animal. She did not seem to care, as it was the only place serving food in the village.

Sallnow 1991) continue to compete, but they compete with ephemeral communitas.

The space of the Camino, if you plan your pilgrimage correctly, allows you freedom from too many other people while you search for the special few who will add to your time on pilgrimage. Alex, the Swiss convert, increased his walking time to leave France, and the ad hoc group he found himself with, behind so that he could find time alone, without the group that had adopted him as an authentic pilgrim, and which interfered with his pilgrimage as they reserved beds and told other pilgrims they met who he was and why he was walking. He was one of the few authentically religious pilgrims to walk the pilgrimage. He had decided to pretend not to speak Spanish so that he could spend time alone and by the time I met him he was ready for company again. This time, though, he sparingly told his story for fear of a repeat of his experience in the French leg of his journey.

What was wonderful about Alex's company was that he was an accomplished chef, and would regularly cook for the refuge he stayed in. He would spend the afternoon combing the town for special ingredients (he kept some saffron tucked away in his backpack with his bible), and then prepare the most wonderful meals for pilgrims that night. He would not accept anything in return, simply asking that people buy some wine to share among everyone. Of course, that condition was happily met and we all shared in the festivities together until lights out at 10 p.m. Food was quickly taken up as a way to initiate contact, with offerings of nuts and fruit along the road, or cherries, bought during the day's walk from local vendors, becoming the emerging group's bounty. It did not seem to matter whether there was any reciprocation; taking the weight

from the pilgrim carrying an overly generous bag of cherries or strawberries was thanks enough it seemed. Soon, everyone was looking out for opportunities to stock up and distribute little tokens among the daily caravan of walkers.[33]

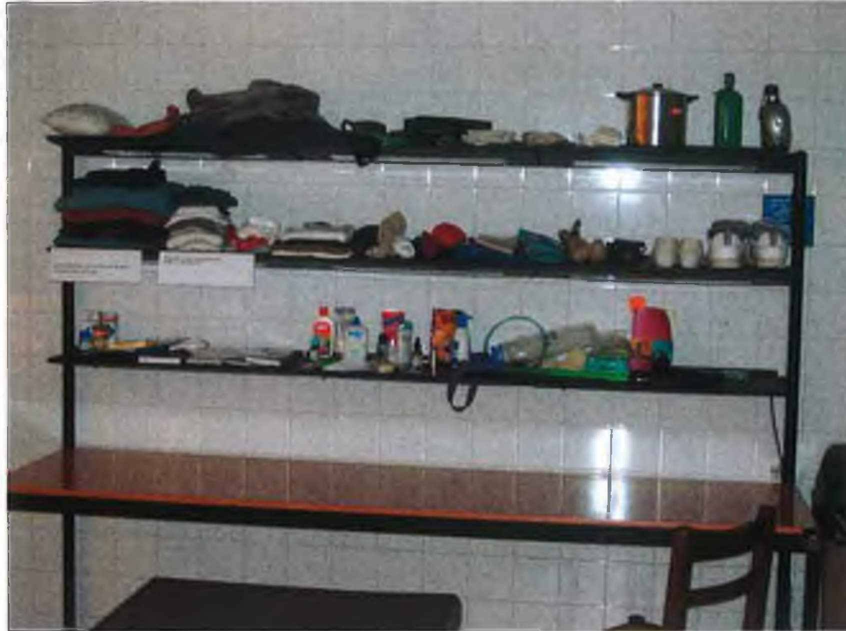

Figure 16 Shelf for discarded pilgrim items in Roncesvalles. The sign reads "leave here what you do not need anymore. Take whatever you need".

Giving things and receiving them plays out a contrasting ideology of giving to achieve merit, representing "a soteriology, not a sociology of reciprocity" (Parry 1986:462). The detached mode of giving, to everyone and no one, further deploys a deep cultural logic where a returnable gift belongs to the world before the pilgrimage, the profane world, while the unreciprocated gift belongs to "a quest for salvation from it" (ibid.). Were people still putting the ideology of the plenary indulgence to good practice, achieving an authenticity

[33] Only once did I encounter a negative experience in the giving of food, when an Englishman I had previously met offered me a slice of orange, as, raising his eyebrow with a sly smile, he said "an orange, from an Orangeman?" I was genuinely shocked at the inference that there could be an important division between us and that he could utter it there, on the Camino.

through reciprocity that helped them accrue the merit they sought? Back home, people would generally not want to spend time haggling for an item; instead they have implicitly agreed to a specific price by the time they enter a premises and goods and money quickly change hands. They meet their friends for lunch for an hour, sixty minutes of leisure governed by the immediate return to work. Time is tied and waits for no man.

At the other end of the exchange continuum, pilgrims tend to think of the Camino in terms of the day being the basic unit of time, where exchanges are far less specific between pilgrims. Clock time remains at the margins of the pilgrimage experience, resurfacing at the edges of the day through the regimented time of the refuges. The dominant presence of specific time on pilgrimage lies in the refuge itself, where there is a curfew for entering and leaving in the morning. By putting off the opportunity for specific rational reciprocal exchange, the nature of exchange is transformed into largesse, gift-giving that, while it communicates some obligation to return the gift, communicates *how* that gift is to be returned as well. It implies a different moral order,[34] one that identifies those who are to receive the gift as those in need. The pilgrimage space is therefore an exercise in utopian thought, an appealing competing discourse to that of (capitalist) modernity. In attempting to enter a series of exchanges so complex, the person is trying to become a 'pilgrim,' to

[34] People do make the extra effort to repay money directly. I have loaned money on occasion to pilgrims caught between ATM's (although that is less common now), and they have made good as quickly as they could. Nobody who has done this has insisted on being repaid straight away, although David Gibson (2002) writes about how irate he became when the envelope he was promised with the money he had loaned a young girl was not at a particular refuge as agreed. He quickly found that he had missed the envelope and felt quite sad that he had also missed an opportunity to experience his generosity 'untainted', it seemed, by trusting another pilgrim; he had applied the logic of home and felt ripped off.

assume a new calculus that will affect how he is perceived as a particular kind of person and as part of a particular kind of group.

Talk on the Camino often revolves around terms such as about 'spirit' or 'authentic', two phrases that evoke both aspiration and fear in the context of 'pilgrim'. While people aspire to the 'authentic pilgrim spirit', they must acknowledge that they might not possess it yet, and that this lack has not been their choice. Therefore, they are able to perceive the unintended consequences of the trajectories of their lives and their own power to alter those trajectories. The rise of the discourse of the 'authentic pilgrim' is evidence of the dilution of the category of pilgrim as the prevailing discourse of movement in the Camino space.[35] It represents a response to what Crain (1997) has called the 'worlding' of pilgrimages, a complex process of disembedding pilgrimages from local, historical and cultural processes and reconfiguring them as consumable images within broader, globalised contexts. Thus, in many cases, the very people who worry about their authenticity are the people who represent the erosion of the grounds for the Camino's claim to that authentic label.

In writing about Swedish evangelical groups and their adoption of American televangelical methods of preaching, Simon Coleman examines the relationship between capitalism and exchange behaviour, filtering his fieldwork through the writings of Mauss and Weber. He argues that, rather than focussing on the aspect of donations where televangelists 'rip off' an unsuspecting and gullible public, the donation of money becomes implicated in the construction of a 'charismatic' self, that the flow of money to a spiritual fund re-designates the world and its fruits as being for God once more. The gift of money is spiritually

[35] The reason people talk about authentic peregrination so much is, I believe, because of its elusiveness, a result of fewer opportunities to enter uncritically into such a state of mind and movement.

charged with a sense of solidarity in, "an anonymous morality of the market" (Coleman 2004:421). Instead of cash donations signalling a lack of authenticity in both preacher and the mission, Coleman argues that they point to the meaningfulness of donations for the donor.

For Coleman (2004), a 'charismatic' self sees the entire world as being consecrated for God. Csordas (1997) argues that, in any charismatic movement, charisma as felt by the believer becomes routinised, settled and that the quest for the spiritual or charismatic self is a struggle in a taken-for-granted world, where what is needed is what he calls, "the radicalisation of everyday life" (Csordas 1997). The gift provides a means to do this, for it can be implicated in re-establishing a charismatic sense of self and world, while at the same time, the gift can be a signifier of belonging among charismatic selves. This sense of radicalisation of the self through the gift is accomplished via the risk involved in giving; "the [radicalisation] of the charismatic self is rendered dynamic not only by the element of risk, but also by that of increase [...] Thus a human gift becomes translated into a divinely charged contribution to the self" (Coleman 2004:432).

In charging God with the responsibility, then, to 'return the gift', the element of risk invoked moves the gift into "a charismatic landscape that lies far beyond everyday life" (Coleman 2004:434). The deferral of an immediate specific exchange gives the whole transaction an aura of aspiration. As the delay in return is left to God to find a way to repay the donor, the anticipation of reward achieves three qualitative changes in the nature of the gift; first the gift becomes both 'free' and 'interested' (Coleman 2004:432), no human will repay the gift except as an unwitting messenger of God. Second, the gift is partially

de-commoditised as it opens up the opportunity for what Coleman calls "a disciplining of the doubtful self" (2004:433). Finally, rather than the denial of materiality being a pre-requisite, the relentless series of transactions that partially constitutes the relationships between preachers and their donor congregations shows how material relations can create a sense of belonging, of solidarity, through the effective use of goods, money and other exchanges:

> "In the contemporary group, a sense of being in touch with the transcendent emerges not from the denial of commodified expressions of generic spirituality but from the ability relentlessly to deploy such expressions in ways that suggest mobility, the transcendence of distance and 'reception' by multiple, even imagined, others" (Coleman 2004:438)

Watching the flow of goods between Camino pilgrims evoked a similar series of conclusions for me. Pilgrims are in search of a charismatic self too, although on the Camino it is more often called the 'authentic' self. There are many similarities, though, such as the element of risk (whereby people set off walking alone) and the open generosity of many pilgrims who expect no direct return. Pilgrim see themselves as contributing to the collective's fund of power, changing the walk from an arduous solitary venture into a meaningful and authentic experience, predicated on a more ambivalent relationship to the material world. It seems that the metaphor of authenticity does not point to an original way of moving across the authentic (or charismatic) landscape. Rather, 'authenticity' references a distance from the everyday world left behind and a re-configuration of the meanings and practices of that world, evoking an authenticity based not so much on originality or on a return to the original way (however that may be imagined) as on a subjective experience that is both good to think with and powerfully felt.

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Where these ideas of exchange begin to intersect with those of temporal practices and time as socially produced are in the ways that the flow of goods on the Camino, whether ostensible commodities, ideas, water, or first aid supplies, to take but a few examples, could be implicated in broader processes of social practice and production. Quite a few important exchanges among pilgrims were one-sided, favours that people did for each other where there were few opportunities for the favour to be returned. In effect, gifts took on a sense of temporal directionality that reproduced the linear aspect of the pilgrimage, directing the obligation to reciprocate forward in time. As people moved towards Santiago, so did the gifts. The opportunity for a balanced reciprocal exchange rarely remained viable for long and this form of 'deferred reciprocity' crystallised for many the special nature of this pilgrimage. I suggest that, unsurprisingly, such forms of generosity are constitutive elements of the pilgrimage, 'total social facts' that inform norms and rules governing peregrination.

Rethinking the nature of time and exchange, both at the level that starts to affect the Camino as a particular kind of place and the pilgrims who transiently inhabit that place, opens up some interesting possibilities for those pilgrims in terms of a congruent sense of open-endedness that becomes characteristic of their trip. The payoff for this project of rethinking is not an immediate one. Instead, in deferring the completion of the exchange forward in time (and space) to new and different circumstances in order to 'complete' the meanings of a whole *series* of exchanges, the future begins to seem replete with opportunities for displaying authenticity through largesse. The double payoff is that this largesse, when displayed, will already have been reciprocated, thus establishing a network of

forward-thinking gratitude that can imaginatively empower the imaginations of those who have received such gifts in the past. This effect of colonising the future with the possibility of repaying debts of kindness is one antidote for a pilgrim's personal feeling of lack of 'flow' in their lives. Even in towns, when people looked for small food items that could be easily shared, they were searching for ways to make networks of friends, to put into practice new ways of caring for their fellow walkers. It may be a short-term solution to the variety of reasons that draw pilgrims, distributing food or unwanted items of clothing and equipment, but quite a beginning in the move towards revitalising a life-project through engaging with a discourse of an 'authentic pilgrim spirit'. Nevertheless, time, exchange relations and self are drawn together and intersect to produce authentic pilgrimage experiences.

On the Camino, then, what may be read at first as an abandonment of reciprocity as such, giving freely without expectation of return, may in fact feed into a discourse of 'authentic' peregrination.[36] There are a number of ways in which pilgrims can establish a certain 'flow state' (Csikszentmihalyi 2000) among each other; through sharing, gift giving, borrowing and, at a different level of interaction, through commodities and even through stealing. Each mode of transferring goods[37] attempts to establish a particular relationship and cultural logic between pilgrims. The flow of goods in a particular direction (in the act of giving for instance) is in one way an art of persuading another to see the world as you do. In Roncesvalles, the section given to discarded items represents an

[36] It is possibly even a trace of the Catholic notion that one's reward awaits in heaven, which is pressed into service as a remedy to a capitalist logic of specific reciprocal exchange. Such a move fetishises the commodity instead of communicating the spirit of the act of giving.
[37] By goods, I mean here anything that can be transferred, from material objects to advice, ideas and company, from biographical details to simple hellos between two or more people travelling on the Camino up to and occasionally including money.

ecological approach to unwanted equipment. It is evidence of more than convenience; it is a first sign of a different way of thinking about the experience that lies ahead for pilgrims, beginning a new expectation of meaning, where pilgrims will become connected to a different group of people in a different place heading along a different trajectory. This sense of difference, left by the traces of other people and their equipment, hints at an emergent cultural logic. It is not uncommon to find pilgrims picking through the items, wondering about who left them; why, when they could have simply posted the items ahead to Santiago; and who else might use those things. They walk slowly by the shelves looking at different items, holding them, examining them, as if they were relics, as if the item in their hands could reveal a secret, of what was to come. They are examined, these gifts, given to those who follow behind, as signs of encouragement, of teaching and socialisation, urging other pilgrims to follow suit. These generous pilgrims are all the more mysterious because they remain anonymous; how can they ever thank the giver?

For our purposes, then, as well as addressing the question that Mauss posed: *why* must gifts be repaid, another equally pertinent question arises: *how* can the gift be repaid? In the Camino setting, where pilgrims often meet for a short time, they feel a spirit of generosity that leads them to share and give items and stories to others. Before a gift can be repaid properly, though, the pilgrims quite often have parted company. With reciprocal relations deferred, the mode of giving back has to be indirect and generalised, with the pilgrim in debt seeking out opportunities to meet his obligation through other pilgrims. Pilgrims' worlds become more populated by potential opportunities for unreciprocated gift-giving; the 'reality' of the pilgrimage has altered. This common interplay is self-

sustaining too, as the next pilgrim does not 'owe' his 'helper' anything, being merely implicated in the repayment of a debt. He, therefore, must likewise look for another pilgrim and so the cycle continues forward.

Reciprocity and ephemeral 'communitas'

In order for pilgrims to share in the pilgrimage together, they must begin to make connections that require reciprocation but which are loose enough to allow bonds to break easily, given the pace and distance that will move them between ad-hoc communities on a daily basis. To make sense of generosity as a mode of loose engagement, we return to some classical thinking on the nature of gifts. For Mauss, the Maori gift was 'alive', imbued with the spirit (hau) of the giver, which strove, "to bring to its original clan and homeland some equivalent to take its place" (Mauss 1969:9). Despite some shortcomings of his analysis, in effect that "he was right where anthropologists have generally thought him wrong, and wrong where anthropologists have generally thought him right" (see Parry 1986:453), Mauss did establish certain key ideas about exchange. The logic governing gift exchange was not, for Mauss, an economic calculus or simply materially self-interested exchange.

Parry argues that Mauss was not in fact trying to universalise a specific ideology of the gift. Rather, Mauss was suggesting that in the "progressive rupture" (Parry 1986:458) of market exchange, we have a theory that the gift should be free, or 'pure'. There is a convergence, then, in Mauss's thought with Marx's project revealing the alienation of property that opposes persons to things, interest to disinterest and, ultimately, gifts to exchange (ibid.). Parry in fact goes on to argue that because of Ian Cunnison's translation of Mauss's *Essai*

sur le don in a Malinowskian vein, emphasising economic *self*-interest, balancing of exchange relationships and playing down *supernatural* sanctions (1986:454), theorists have been led to find all the wrong problems with Mauss[38]. Mauss's notion of the *hau* (the spirit of the gift) is the least problematic, while the role of obligation is most troubling (1986:463). Thus, Parry concludes, "the ideology of the pure gift may … itself promote and entrench the ideological elaboration of a domain in which self-interest rules supreme" (1986:469).

Despite these limitations in the translation of the Mauss's text by Cunnison, which seem to establish a rational motive of self-interest for exchange behaviour, Parry argues that Mauss was concerned with a more complex interplay of interest and disinterest from individuals. What is central to understanding Mauss's framing of the problem is that, "it is not individuals, but groups or moral persons who carry on exchanges. The individuals of modern society are endowed with interests as against the world. The persons who enter into the exchanges which centrally concern Mauss do so as incumbents of status positions and do not act on their own behalf" (Parry 1986:456). In talking about deferred reciprocity, then, we see how people begin to act consciously as part of groups, where the return is indirect, but to that imagined group.

Parry (1986) makes two points about Malinowski's own writing on exchange: that his thinking evolved from the classic *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) to *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (1926), where he rethought his original scale of transactions from pure gift to real barter,

[38] "So elliptical is his writing that Mauss himself does not always seem to be their [undergraduates'] side. Nor is the translation [Cunnison's], which is both carelessly inaccurate and in unconscious mirror of the prejudices of its own period…the textual notes are often elided or even suppressed. But what is more relevant here is that I believe that Cunnison's text both reflects and has helped to perpetuate, a 'Malinowskian' reading of Mauss's original" (Parry 1986:455).

withdrawing the pure gift in favour of promoting the canny self-interested individual engaged in dyadic exchange relationships. Secondly, Parry remarks that Malinowski feels that obligations were kept in exchange because the series of exchanges were of benefit (that they were of course functional). To speak of the 'pure' gift, Weiner argues, is to maintain the status of 'primitive' because the primitive has some other, (pre-capitalist) idea of exchange (cited in Parry 1986:454). Parry concludes that, although Mauss and Malinowski may be read as "joint progenitors of the anthropological understanding of exchange", Malinowski's notions of the gift have been read into Mauss's contribution, distorting his contribution; indeed, Mauss's works would have been a target for Malinowski's writings, rather than being a complementary text.[39]

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In his paper on Kaluli modes of exchange, Schieffelin (1980) revisits Mauss's seminal question, "why must a gift be repaid?" and tries to provide an answer that might sidestep the problems Mauss struggled with by focussing on the internal symbolic structure of the gift in Kaluli society. In doing so, Schieffelin arrives at several conclusions that bear directly on our understanding of 'generosity' on the Camino. He shows that the logic establishing that a gift must be repaid in Kaluli society is grounded in broader understandings of the flow of material goods through ecological, social and invisible/supernatural channels. Reciprocity is therefore one manifestation of a cultural logic that assembles a range of activities and cultural categories, from prohibitions and

[39] "Though Malinowski and Mauss are commonly twinned it is as well to remember that the Durkheimians were one of Malinowski's main polemical targets in *Crime and Custom*. Yet paradoxically Malinowskian premises are only too often read into the Maussian text, which is unconsciously processed through a theoretical filter borrowed from his distinguished contemporary" (Parry 1986:455).

sharing to magic and prestation, into a social construct that the Kaluli understand as configuring reality.

The flow of goods in exchange relationships can be more easily grasped by relating the internal structure of the back and forth of exchange to wider cultural assumptions about the "contexts and significances" (Schieffelin 1980:503) of prestations, in order to establish the implications of their particular movements. There has to be a logically prior cultural template to establish what it means when one gives something (to somebody) that is built into the form in which that something is given. While the general cultural question comes from Mauss, "why should people feel obligated to reciprocate what they have received?" (Mauss 1969:1), the more specific question is how to read the giving of gifts, the transfer of 'goods' among people in the Camino, as instances of the 'total social fact,' "enlivening human relationships to their ethical concerns within a given situation… the act of secular humanists" (Sykes 2005:74). Taking Marilyn Strathern's observation that, given that people are fundamentally social rather than psychological beings, we can conclude that we are moved to keep relations rather than things (cited in Sykes 2005:74).

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The difference between what is borrowed, shared, given or sold (or stolen) establishes particular relationships between people. Let us split the relationships into two sets of relationships to deal with them more analytically. In the first set, gifts and commodities diverge, setting up different kinds of possible relationships from these exchanges. In the second, borrowing and

sharing[40] can be understood in the context of two other categories of interaction along a spectrum of exchange; taboos (non-interaction) and magico-religious exchange (supernatural exchange – prayers or rituals that involve pleading for or coercing a desired relationship with 'invisible' forces). By examining the common structure of sharing, taboos and magic/religion, we may understand the structure of the gift more fully and approach a tentative answer to the question "why must the gift be repaid?"

In his explanation of the metaphorical structure of the Kaluli logic of exchange, Schieffelin (1980) opposes taboos to magic, "if… prohibitions and taboos are a strategy for preventing mediation, then magic is its structural opposite: the deliberate forcing of a mediated identification upon something or someone… Magic works by coercing a mediation of the type that a taboo would prohibit" (1980:510). By associating a particular quality of the magical act (words of a spell, a substance used in the spell etc) with the gift, an identification is forced.[41] By forcing a relationship that is forbidden through taboo, new associations and identities are formed. To think about the act of sharing as an intermediate between the structural extremes, then, according to Schieffelin, asks us to consider,

> "whether social reciprocity is related to magic and taboo at some deeper level, and if so, what this relationship might reveal about … the management of distinctions and identifications in the delineation of social bonds and in the resolution of problematic situations" (1980:511).

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[40] Borrowing is differentiated from sharing by, respectively, the absence of the lender and the presence of the sharer.

[41] As we will see in the following chapter dealing with the development of a hybrid historical counter-discourse on Europe by Laura, a young refuge worker who takes on the role of St. James for a popular ritual performance called the *conxuro de queimada*; imbibing the *queimada* drink at the performance is an ingestion of syncretic, interrupted and conflicting messages from the Camino by spectator pilgrims.

The conclusion we may draw then, as with magic and taboo, is that sharing establishes a connection, an identification between things (Schieffelin 1980:511) and in this case, people. By sharing a meal, by eating the same food, or sleeping on the same mattress, applying the same ointment to one's sore soles, the identification is applied, embodied and ingested.[42] If sharing establishes a mutual identification, then gift-giving establishes a connection in an opposite fashion, through the establishment of an opposition that remains unresolved. In sharing, we each take half; in the gift, the donor does not take his half. The process is only half-complete; "the recipient had already eaten his share and made his movement towards identifying with the donor, but the donor has not been able to make a similar move and worse, has sustained a loss" (Schieffelin 1980:512).

Through this situation of unbalanced reciprocity, the recipient has to offer an equivalent counter-gift (in Kaluli the *wel*) to redress the balance.[43] Schieffelin goes on to argue that, because the gift is similar but not the same (in his example the same piece of meat), a 'social middle distance' is established between the taboo (which negates active identification and relationship) and a mutual identification that is dangerously close (as in magic relations). Thus, the complex methods of redress that the opposition created in prestation helps to manage the range of Kaluli relationships. I would go further though. What is available for Camino pilgrims is the possibility of connection with another; 'undiluted' or phatic connection through gift giving, expressing sociability rather than any particular meaning. Exchange is a cultural artifice in each instance, one

[42] It is no surprise, for instance, that sharing of the body of Christ in Catholicism, which confirms the congregation as participating in and constituting the body of Christ, is the key ritual for the Catholic Church.
[43] It is important to remember that in both cases of the Kaluli and pilgrims on the Camino, agonistic exchange is not practiced; people are not trying to outdo each other.

that restrains the phatic through rules and deploys it as a social connection, where these connections can be read as a means of accruing social capital. We play a game because the game has certain rules and from those rules, we may anticipate particular outcomes. By giving freely, people can feel empowered to receive and more importantly, to establish a temporary yet intense connection established through the gift. At another level, the fact that in many instances what is given is not directly returned, for instance the massages in refuges across the Camino, creates the opportunity to seek out others who would benefit from the reciprocation, who would in turn experience it as a *free* gift (rather than merely as an unreturned one). This set of exchanges regularly begins a further chain of interactions based on deferred reciprocal relations among a group of people identifying themselves and each other as 'authentic' pilgrims; tourists would never touch the filthy, open-sored feet of pilgrims.

The potential to connect with another person through the exchange of goods in sharing and deferred gift giving is a potential at an existential level. It is the possibility of short-term concentrated contact that quite often is lacking in the everyday of the pilgrim 'back home'. This phatic connection, one of imagined undiluted contact[44] (which Durkheim might have recognised as bringing to bear a feeling of connectedness to something larger, an experience of the Camino as a collective effervescence in a simpler, more existentially immediate, form). For Turner, this kind of exchange might represent a moment of spontaneous communitas,[45] whether through the exquisite relief felt through the touch of a masseur or standing before a shelf full of gifts left to meet

[44] Without a feeling of the overt linguistic mediation of words getting in the way, important in a multilingual ad hoc community composed of several linguistic communities.

[45] Although these initial experiences can be quite intense, the memory of the gift as an instance of the charismatic character of the Camino regularly gives way to a ritualisation of the event. This ritualisation is what establishes the social 'middle distance'.

another's need. These gifts contain a charism, a spirit of giving that addresses the possibilities for a different way of being together. Often masseurs will have not given a massage before the Camino, but will practice to improve, and other pilgrims will pay attention to what is sold in villages or on the side of the road in order to share it further on. Fresh bread, still warm from the oven, ripe cherries, the gentle touch of a novice masseur, all these tokens evoke the pilgrimage as a collective experience, tokens that remind pilgrims that they require the support of their companions ('those who share their bread') to make it to the finish.

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By the end of the first day, it becomes clear to most pilgrims that the people they have been passing will for the most part constitute the people who will share the remainder of their pilgrimage with them. Once the day's toil was finished (washing, showering etc.), pilgrims enthusiastically sought each other out by presenting themselves gathered in the only local bar and restaurant for drinks and a meal. I found myself at a table with two Irish Johns, one living in England, the other in Canada, a Donegal lad, a Dutch man who had lived in Ireland for years and myself gathered around a table and a bottle of *vino tinto*. A *frisson* of being together loomed in the restaurant, emerging from the hum around the room as we sat together, different nationalities gathered around tables; stories, lies and tall tales brought us closer while the night was warmed with Spanish wine. It felt like the first day of school, with all the new people and the journey implicitly set out (at least in principle) ahead of us. The wine and the jokes flowed, underwear went missing and food was devoured hungrily and gratefully. The only sober point was the arrival of a woman in her thirties down

from the mountain at seven thirty, a woman who walked with a colostomy bag and who had struggled so much over the entire twenty-seven kilometres. It gave us pause to consider the benefit of our own health, until, pathologically Irish; we set about killing more brain cells and fooling each other.

CHAPTER TWO:

Rites of Massage: feeling pain in new places

Every day he gets beaten into a servile pulp

By his own mechanical reflexes,

Which are constantly busy registering and reacting to

To the violent stimuli which his big, noisy,

Kinaesthetic environment has provided for his

Un-reflective perception

Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*

Ideologies separate us.

Dreams and anguish bring us together.

Eugene Ionesco

The first sensation that welcomes the pilgrim in Roncesvalles as he or she awakes is that of the intractable pain remaining from the effort of surmounting the Pyrenees the previous day. The feeling of flow, and the communitas that fostered it, has already faded – the all too ephemeral sense of shared momentum is replaced by each person's bodily hurt that pins everyone to the bed. The rustling of the plastic bags, however, and the quiet furtiveness of those who arose earlier eventually urges the others out.

Communitas has a dialectic quality, waxing and waning with the mood and the group, where at times only the group stands between finishing the day and falling short. Some companions provide the much-needed encouragement to find the mettle to make one more step, while other companions are so far removed from each other's motives for being in pilgrimage that those

relationships become dangerously close to sabotaging the entire enterprise for everyone involved. Most of the time, though, there is another impending experience that will re-enchant pilgrims, such as the *conxuro* I will discuss later in the chapter. But before the *conxuro,* one often has to endure the equally ephemeral tensions of the Camino and its other pilgrims. The difficulty of starting out with the wrong people can really impinge on the possibilities of the Camino. the hoped-for habitual blurring of boundaries between self and world can become interrupted by the presence of an irreducible and unshakeable 'other' pilgrim who really is on a different pilgrimage. From my fieldnotes, I recall my first days with a Colombian pilgrim called Diego,

> "Apparently I snore a lot. And loud. My bed mate, Diego told me first thing. Still somewhat sleepily bemused by my location in the pre-dawn light, I shrugged off his comments and went groggily about my morning routine; dressing, packing, washing and looking for breakfast. I presented myself to 'jefe' the local bar owner who fed me with a stale *bocadillo* and charged handsomely for the privilege.[46] I sat back in the twilight air of early morning and considered my day. If I do more research in the vein of last night, then I will have to consider paracetamol becoming part of my first aid kit. For this young moment in the day though, not even stale bread could bring me down. I bought a *bordón* (staff) for the princely sum of ten euros and began my stretches before setting out.
>
> "It was a while before the uncomfortable feeling presented itself to my nearly conscious mind. Diego was stretching a little bit away and looking nervously at me. He was at least six two and stocky for his height, so the expression was immediately disconcerting. I decided that my stretches were done and I began walking. Unfortunately, he did too. Naturally, I realised that I should retie my shoelaces, slowly, until he passed. Then it dawned; he wanted a walking partner and was not quite able to ask to walk with anyone. I tried some more stalling techniques but apparently I had imprinted on him and I wasn't going to get away. The awkwardness of the whole situation could have cut like a hot sledgehammer through butter. I eventually introduced myself to him though and we began walking. The rest of the Irish had pushed on, further than my stopping point for the day, I later found out, so Diego was to be my companion. I couldn't have wanted it less."

[46] The bar owner, cleverly pretending not to understand anything but fluent euro, apologised for the heavy prices to his captive and starving audience, calling everyone who complained "jefe" (boss), while intimating that he would be spitting in their soup. I can understand how one pilgrim had thought of walking the pilgrimage without once eating. Some pilgrims though do so simply to get into the Guinness Book of Records.

I was still in the formation period of the Camino and such interruptions are difficult to get past as the days go by. Often, though, despite the great intentions to do a solitary pilgrimage, the long periods of being alone can lead not only to loneliness but also to downright boredom, and the abundance of nature can become tedious for those cursed with a modern tourist appetite for sights and sites in quick succession. When coupled with the awkward loneliness of realising that all the pilgrims could very easily walk to Santiago sharing only the physical direction, any discourse of rugged individualism behind one's motives becomes severely tested, especially in a restaurant eating alone, for the third or fourth night in a row. For that reason, pilgrims quickly tend to form loose groupings around a common language pool, a series of caucuses composed of fellow travellers that last for a few days. The flow of conversation, the give and take between pilgrims and between groups, transforms a courageous solitary experience into a more 'cultural' one, connecting people from different parts of the world together through a developing sense of shared meanings and symbols. Most groups form quickly enough and can tend to last for a great deal of the journey, although should they form too soon, they can be marked by infighting and resentment.[47] It is not dissimilar, I imagined soon after, to getting married too young and subsequently discovering the hedonistic swinging sixties.

As we walked, I told Diego of my project and we set about getting to know each other, like one of those young couples who meet on the day of the

[47] Pam, an American woman with whom I walked for several days, was determined to walk with people other than those she had come to the Camino with. Rather than continue among their own group of American friends, who had not managed to engender a pilgrim spirit among everyone in their group, they agreed to split up according to the agendas that kept them walking. What resulted was that all four women seemed able to make better quality contact with the larger 'imagined community' of pilgrims, and each woman was thoroughly satisfied with her pilgrimage when they all met up in Santiago, the difficulties of trying to keep their friendships tension-free alleviated through splitting up.

wedding, resigned to our fate. The walk into Puente la Reina brought us to the first commercial refuge along the way, Hotel Jacobeo, where many of the modern facilities we were trying to leave behind were available; washer, dryer, hot showers, good meals, nice beds. Sadly, being a traditionalist, Diego dismissed my softly-softly approach to entering the spirit of the Camino, insisting on staying at the older refuge, where pilgrims scrub their clothes and sleep on less comfortable beds. It was difficult, too, to argue with the logic of self-denial on this path, so I grumpily agreed.

My time with Diego was fraught because of the divergent motivations that had brought us on pilgrimage. As a member of a deeply conservative charismatic prayer group, Diego was told upon his departure that he had been given the sword of St. James. Secretly I had worries of living out Camus' novel *The Outsider* through the possibility of witnessing of a remorseless slaying of a moor, which one might expect in company of Santiago Matamoros's sword, but he seemed not to know what his prayer-leader's revelation meant, so I felt safe enough.

Diego suffered badly with blisters and so we walked quite slowly and only covered short distances each day. As Andrew Irving comments about being engaged in "walking fieldwork" with an informant suffering from AIDS, "the limits of his body became placed upon my actions and by doing these things in his company I partially inhabited his world" (2005:323). More and more pilgrims were passing us by, and I could have no time to walk or talk with them. With the gift of my company turning into a poisoned offering, I rankled at the thought of six or seven weeks chained at his side, unable to free myself. Of course, I only had to say that I was leaving and would not have had to give him

another thought, but my escape into the larger 'imagined' community would be tainted every time somebody would ask where he was, and why we had parted. Thus, one way or the other it seemed, I risked breaking down the fragile connections I was trying to build with my ephemeral fellow pilgrims.

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For every young Danny there is a Kurt, for every pilgrim who walks to accumulate life-experiences there is a pilgrim who walks to accommodate a life transition. Kurt was an ex-Vietnam veteran who had retired from the army to set up a successful dot-com business. He walked the Camino with the lightest backpack due to having a cancerous trapezius muscle removed. He was a hardy man and would figure prominently in Diego's Camino, as I gently passed over to his companion for the day, Robert. Frankly, although glad to move ahead a little, I met up with other pilgrims and had to endure quizzical looks, even suspicious questions as to where Diego was. Had I just walked ahead without him? I recall the feeling of relief, sitting out on the first-floor veranda of the Logroño, watching the rain come down, having had a cold shower, so I was not happy with my time on pilgrimage thus far, but still; I sensed that this Camino had just begun:

> "Needless to say it rained. It poured in fact. Kurt was fascinating company, but already I could see that I would not be missed should I move off by myself. Maybe tomorrow. Diego had, I think (and everyone else agreed), found part of what he sought on the Camino; Kurt was a gentle yet strong walking companion, looking for grateful company to share his stories and wisdom, and the two had an instant rapport. But still it rained. The frustration of seeing those we had walked with for part of the day having already arrived, showered and about to head out for dinner, was too much for me. I was determined to cast off by myself for the next day. Because we had arrived so late, about 6.30 or 7pm, most of the hot water was gone and the good beds taken. We had to sleep in the loft, the warmest place in the refuge. By the time we would have changed etc., we would have

little time to grab some food before bed. An absolute waste of a day that was supposed to be about doing research and had, I realised, little to do with loftier motives of self-improvement or pious peregrination. Still, I didn't get to the Camino very often."

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Predisposed to walk

The commitment to walk the Camino for up to eight weeks is a distinct decision in a person's life. It involves a substantial personal investment at many levels. Pilgrims put their everyday lives at home on hold, tie up loose ends, very often leaving jobs behind or sacrificing quite a lot of holiday time to begin an 'existential sabbatical' that will draw them across the Spanish countryside for up to thirty kilometres every day on foot. For younger pilgrims, the journey is an adventure, a voyage of discovery that very often frames a major change in their lives, while for older pilgrims, the Camino often marks their retirement, mimetically and metaphorically embodying travel towards two different 'wildernesses'; the wilderness inherent in peregrination ('travelling to pathless places') and their journey towards the end of their lives.

Kurt had recently retired, as had Leonard, from Sweden; both in fact walked a Camino that spanned those retirements. Experienced walkers both, they were making sense of retirement through the pilgrimage. Kurt was looking for a new project and was considering learning Spanish with his wife and travelling Latin America. The Camino was an ideal test for the plan as he was able to strike off on a simpler adventure, heading West, in the great tradition of the American Wild West.

Leonard's choice for walking was to spend his holidays before and after retirement walking parts of the Camino. Ending his working life would not be what marked this year; he had decided to fill the time with weeks of vigorous and

meaningful exercise. The associations were much more positive for him, and his boots, which were thirty-five years old, worn, but in great condition, proudly displayed his passion for hiking. Both men were touching examples of the very best people one can meet on pilgrimage, quiet, funny, unexpectedly energetic and willing to share their time and stories among their new friends.

Other older pilgrims walk with slightly different objectives though; a Norwegian couple turning 70 walked slowly for the third and last time "to do it for the last time," they told me. I encountered an old Spaniard who, dying of cancer, wanted to die walking rather than wait around for death. He kept moving on slowly at a reduced pace, until he would pass away. It was not a religious sentiment that motivated him; rather it seemed that he was slowly trying to keep ahead of death until his time came. Like so many other fleeting encounters, I do not know what ever became of him. In both these cases, preparation for the Camino was a preparation for a radical break with, and from, respectively, life, as they could know it. These examples of older pilgrims are a little extreme, but highlight the point that the decision to walk is rarely taken lightly. Why subject oneself to a difficult, possibly painful, trek at what seems to be a vulnerable time in one's life?

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If culture is, in an immediate sense, a kind of semiotic give-and-take between its members, 'strokes' in the language of Transactional Analysis, 'signs' in semiotics, or 'reciprocity' in more classical anthropological language, then consider the plight of the person who does not feel to be 'in the way' of that give and take. In such a case, the rise of modern man conjures only consuming

individuals in anonymous crowds, "from a rural society [at the beginning of the nineteenth century] of face to face intimacy to an urban society of 'atomistic' individuals moving frantically about but never really meeting" (Watson 2000:27). This distancing of self from society (and world), is anomic; and in the language of semeiotics, such a person can be considered a Second (Daniel 1989:91). In modern society, we are faced with a dearth of opportunities to experience 'passage', a movement through life stages that are clearly delineated from each other. As these passages become increasingly voluntary and individual (no less needed though), the Camino harks back to an archetypal threshold experience. Rather than enduring an existential discontinuity, then, where patterns of the everyday are fissured, where reciprocity produces no pleasure, it is possible to induce this state of disconnectedness oneself, on one's own terms, for the purpose of examining the underlying conditions producing it (see for instance Glucklich 2001). Pilgrims starting out are quite often guarded about their walking time, and push away from other pilgrims, resisting the formation of groups until they find their own rhythms. The pilgrimage can and does act as a process that induces an anomic feeling (of Secondness), pushing the pilgrim into a state of Firstness, a state most often felt near the end of a long day walking, endured as pilgrims collapse exhausted into cots, shaky and done-in from the effort. Far from being an unwelcome state, though, the Camino's central draw is this orientation, felt and immediate, towards what Turner (1978) called 'antistructure'. The Camino provides a contrast with everyday life as pilgrims begin to drift between one spontaneous communitas and the next. Anomie can be shared; few pilgrims yearn for a speedy return home (although many French pilgrims loudly declare such a desire upon tasting Spanish

cuisine!). The movement into pilgrimage is a movement from what Turner called the 'ergic' into the 'ludic' (1974:221-223) and back again, a movement that Daniel (1987:243) characterises as a shift into Firstness and back into Thirdness (without the resistance of Secondness).

Where Firstness can be described by a sense of possibility (Daniel 1987:239), Kurt certainly found himself walking in Firstness, falling back on his military training to feel his fatigued way blindly forward through rain and mud on several occasions. He recalled his time in Vietnam, both through talking about his experiences there and through a body that was in remission from cancer even as he could feel other tell-tales signs of aging impinging on his physical prowess. He smiled quite often, relishing the difficult challenge of the walk. Walking in Firstness creates the opportunity of ecstatic experience, the subjunctive, a world of possibility, even magic, where an entire life project can be reinvigorated, one step at a time.[48]

Primisense is a phenomenological state that permits engagement with the world of the pilgrimage that proceeds from the 'body organism' (to use a Foucauldian term); beyond exhaustion, pilgrims reach out into a world where their bodies act as the existential ground of that world (Daniel 1989). The goal for any pilgrim, then, is for the signs that constitute a meaningful world to be

[48] If we consider Firstness as being a quality of feeling, that (strictly speaking), has no interpretability (in that state of Firstness) from the "lack of background" (Daniel 1989:88), then we may consider it an emotional interpretant: Firstness is a moment of experiencing, in Csordas' terms, the 'radicalisation of everyday life' (1997:100 ff). Secondness is brute reality and has a transitional quality to it; everyday life is thus experienced as charismatic in its actuality, through the effort to bring about a radicalisation that allows emotions (as dynamic interpretants) to emerge. The transition is effected to Thirdness, to a generalised reality and the ritualisation of charisma. Thirdness mediates the agony and the ecstasy by bringing each step to bear on suffering; congruising an inner condition with an outer state. Thought is a signifying process that binds the two states and produces experience as a culturally coded one. The result here is that the semeiosis that characterises human creativity is properly open and unending (1989:90). Thirdness is the state of being that concerns itself with planning, general laws and predictability. This predictability, I argue manifests as a reinvigorated life project with momentum.

"interpretively triangulated into meaning" (Daniel 1989:91), which allows the greatest freedom for the sign and the human interpreter. In the case of our, at times hapless, pilgrims, they are walking 'Seconds', hitting off the world, experiencing discontinuity and strife. The shift towards Firstness in walking, in its "vagueness and virtuality" (we may even consider this virtual vagueness or vague virtuality as postmodern forms of alienation) is a move closer to the bare thread of life itself and a move towards a fate that can snip it (Daniel 1989:90). Frustration with life trajectory and modern society (self and world) represents "the non-actualisation – even the non-actualisability ...and the immediacy of an entropic black hole" (Daniel 1989:93). The story of this journey happens after the bodily idiom moves from potential to actuality, when the pilgrim writes himself back into culture through the give and take of an economy of narrativity. The Peircean perspective has to run from its Thirdness to Firstness through the days and back as pilgrims meet the challenge of the Camino breaking them down and helping them back up again. Pilgrims find contexts for suffering and find that suffering does not necessarily occupy the centre of their worlds.

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"What's your question?" Two American women who had sat down by me by Alto del Pérdon asked me straight out. "Everyone has a question, what's yours?" I honestly did not know. "This is just one Camino you know, you have to find your own, somewhere along the way, then you'll know what your question is!" Of course, I had to ask them about their questions, and one of the women wanted to know if her faith was personal, or something she did, ethically, for other people. The other woman wanted to know if she had anything to prove

in her life, a common theme. "Am I who I think I am?!" I loved the question. How do pilgrims carve out the meanings of the pilgrimage to find the space in which they ask the relevant questions for their own lives? How does the Camino become the context for a pilgrim's quest for a satisfying narrative or at least some satisfactory answers?[49] What we can take from Ricoeur, then, to address this 'search for a plot', is the idea of a creative imagination in pursuit of meaning, sense and structure in a series of life events, construed through relational and temporal properties of agency, which both compose it and inhere in it, within its internal (psychological) and external (historical) limitations. Instead of examining this worldly (and world weary) stance from a hermeneutical and textual perspective though, we want to draw out the deeper existential underpinnings of irony and its usefulness for understanding the motivations of modern walking pilgrims in search of 'good questions' or to borrow from Dorothy, to find out there is no place like homelessness.

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Every refuge governed by officious bureaucracy produced a swell of resentment, from the English refuge worker in Rabanal who made everyone he met feel uncomfortable with his nasty remarks, for instance, "if I knew you were American I would not have wasted my time talking to you about hygiene" ("he shouldn't be allowed on the Camino!") to the Estella refugio where the hospidalero refused to allow pilgrims not registered for the night into the refuge ("it's not the pilgrim spirit!"). In these instances, the basic breakdown in any

[49] This is not such a tenuous connection. Many pilgrims tried to identify features of the landscape from the film *Wizard of Oz*, such as the yellow brick road and the poppy fields and the cathedral in Santiago as the model for the Wizard's Emerald Palace. I have not been able to establish the connection.

sense of generosity towards pilgrims was deeply felt by all who witnessed them. This rupture highlighted a 'pilgrim spirit' that was what Turner (1970) called the "dominant symbol", which served to explain events in terms of how all those associated with the pilgrimage should act. The madness of attempting to give freely was experienced as a lynchpin of the Camino. When those present in Estella talked about what had happened, the camps divided into those who felt that it was only safe and rational to prevent access to those who were not staying the night and those who felt that the hospidalero's attitude was 'crazy', and dangerous on the Camino, a 'symptom' one woman called it, of the changing Camino. So, this conflict was understood in terms of a sickness, a madness or a rational response to those 'outside' the refuge structure, the skewed rationale extending to the money box, labelled 'donativos' or donations, but where the hospidaleros point-blank refused to let anyone stay until they had 'donated' at least two thousand pesos. It seemed like madness to insist on compulsory donations that were not fees, "in no way" (I asked). The man refused actual hospitality, though, even as the wall behind him was decorated with images of his Camino, his gratitude for the experience evident from his expression in many photos. In a simplified world of daily walking, one cannot take such contradictions in one's stride so easily.

Thankfully, such bureaucracy does not find its way among pilgrims and it is easy enough to join a group or move between them, as there are no strict rites of passage to undergo. One way is to buy a bottle of wine and offer it to the table at a refuge, but I have also seen pilgrims offer massages (as I have), where the pilgrim receiving the massage can map major and minor ills onto the contours of his or her body. Those who seek out such contact do so to capture the day, to

contextualise the day's events, but also to address the broader issue of what the day may mean in the larger context of their reasons for walking in the first place. The work of building new perspectives, of releasing the imagination to soar on the Camino to look for other trajectories is neither accomplished in 'space' nor alone; the pilgrimage place, with the everyday of back home attenuated, stretches the minds of the pilgrims too. The significances of this place cannot be, or at least habitually not, sensed alone, but together. Establishing even a tenuous sense of 'us', an inchoate 'we' (Fernandez 1991) a network of group beliefs is crucial to bringing places into the social imaginary to do the work that had drawn these pilgrims. Exchange is a crucial means of establishing contact, and as I have argued, establishing a particular mode of contact, where the Camino can actually be 'placed' and 'sensed' together,

> "When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the latter may lead is anybody's guess.... The ethnographic challenge is to fathom what it is that a particular landscape, filled to brimming with past and present significance, can be called upon to 'say' and what, through the saying, can be called upon to 'do'" (Basso 1996:107, 75).

Returning to the field, I realised the premium that existed on good masseurs, that I could offer my hands to pilgrims, massaging their tired muscles to help them prepare for the following day. Becoming attuned to the pains inflicted on pilgrims, I spent several occasions with a pilgrim who had been struck down with suspected tendonitis of the knee. On one occasion, a woman I had met that day walking into Logroño had such a bad crick in her neck that she had begun to sob, until I worked the tension out with some light massage. Effectively it meant that she could keep walking. Through my time and effort, I was able to help her continue, but it also achieved a change in my status too,

because I had massaged her in the main hall, other pilgrims saw me and took me to be more of a pilgrim than they had previously believed. I was perceived in a different way as I performed the service sporadically for others as a way to talk to them for longer periods.

Quite often, priests I met who were walking the Camino seemed to suffer a similar issue of finding the right niche for themselves, often taking a back seat, declining to 'identify' themselves as religious specialists in such an arena of open experimentation, amidst an atmosphere of 'flirtation' with spirituality. Often, it was medical professionals coming to my attention first, acting on another's behalf, trying to ease the tension and the pain of the day's walk on the freshly erupted blisters and aching joints. I once had to avail of the services of a refuge worker who massaged life back into my leg, which had cramped so badly that I had had to limp for over an hour to reach the refuge. The refuge worker's tireless efforts on my behalf were all the more remarkable as not only did he forego any food until he had my leg functional again, but, as I told others of his good deed, no one seemed surprised. My story was further evidence of the spirit of the Camino. I had learned a lesson about generosity and in my turn helped to massage others, telling them of my motives, in part to repay in some way the refuge worker's favour to me. Thus, both our deeds became woven into a mythology of the spirit of generosity on the Camino.

Pilgrims' hands on pilgrims' bodies, although initially suggestive of more purely sexual liaisons, evoke a liminal state that challenges bodily boundaries, pushing through the skin and penetrating into the deep tissues of pilgrims. Similarly, as the body erupts and pain pours out as bodily fluids (blood, pus etc.) the body becomes the site for liminal experience through transgressed and

grotesque carnality. Pilgrims must accept the touch and allow the motion to ease the pain in their limbs, while often the limbs themselves are ravaged by the walk, leaving the masseur to struggle with awful outbreaks on the pilgrim's skin. Yet the act of touch, at once a gesture of sensitive compassion and tacit, sensuous affirmation of the wound and eruptions, gives voice to a series of crucial contexts for the weary pilgrim. When the refuge worker massaged me, and after, I massaged the woman in Logroño, each context leaked into each other. All three bodies, linked in a chain of remaking bodies in a context of becoming that characterised Camino pilgrims (constantly in the act of practising peregrination), perform the lessons of the Camino, giving and receiving as forms of leaky exchange. Equally, though, the lesson is not a purely intellectual or even wholly emotional affair; it is pressed into the pilgrim body, as when the hospidalero forced my leg to relax and I urged the woman's neck to ease. Given the proscriptions that dictate the terms of the Western body-beautiful "thin, clean and hairless" (Molé 2004), each lesson was delivered on 'grotesque' pilgrim bodies, a didactic (as much as therapeutic) 'act' that was not "a momentary happening, but a certain nexus of temporal horizons, the condensation of iterability that exceeds the moment it occasions (Butler, cited in Molé 2004). Indeed, both that woman and I went on to massage others in the same spirit of the Camino that we had learned. At the very least, our carefully circumscribed 'civilised' bodies entered in a flow of becoming in breaking down; the grotesque body "is continually built, created and builds and creates another body... This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows own self, transgressing its own body" (Bakhtin, cited in Molé 2004).

While giving massages was one way of becoming closer to informants, others suggested themselves more forcefully, as when I often found myself in the first days having to acclimatise quickly to overcrowded rooms stinking with warm sweat and 'Deep Heat' muscle relaxant. Surrounded by literally hundreds of semi-clad, dripping and 'leaky' subjects, whether stepping out from a much-needed hot shower or stepping in from the belting rain, some form of polite exchange was mandatory to achieve even a modicum of normality in this new and confused environment. Such times reveal the intersecting malleable and incontinent co-ordinates of selfhood that are available to begin a process of effecting existential change for Camino pilgrims. As people change and adapt with and sometimes, given the resistant to such conditions, in spite of, each other, these scenes are normalised and tolerances become much higher for such things as dirt and half-naked peregrinations across the room to one's bunk.

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I have heard pilgrims say that their first-aid box belonged to everyone else. It has happened that pilgrims have injured themselves while walking during the day and as they sit and rest, tending to the injury, which may be a cramp, a blister, fatigue or dehydration, other pilgrims passing will stop and check that they are okay and whether they need anything like plasters, needle and thread (for the blister), food or water. Quite often, having received these things, they will not see their benefactors again. Instead, they expect to come to the aid of other pilgrims further along the road. In my case less than half of what I used in my first aid box, I used for myself. Plasters, dehydration medicine and paracetamol were given freely to those who needed it. In turn, I had several

times to avail of other people's generosity along the way. It is easy to see that temporary bodily damage can act as a primitive rite of passage to initiate pilgrims into the culture of the Camino; it takes the acknowledgement of another to affirm the transition. The exchange of goods, skewed as it is, bestows a responsibility onto the hurt pilgrim to continue the practice of care. Thus, incorporation through porous boundaries into an ad hoc group that is any given week's complement of pilgrims is partly accomplished through rupturing one's own bodily boundary and having that eruption validated through witness and exchange.

Turner (1982) has pointed out that many rites of passage have become individualised, that they are a matter of choice, individual quests undertaken rather than an obligatory ideal imposed by the community. There is a quality of passage in pilgrimage, a movement from one time and place, what we will call the everyday, (roughly equivalent to what Turner (1978:3) calls the "secular paradigm"), to another time and place, one which attenuates the draw of the everyday on the effort and attention, indeed life, of the pilgrim. Turner points out that the pilgrim's movement is not a straight structure to anti-structure transition, to a mirror image of the everyday, but rather, "a liberation of human capacities [...] from normative constraints" (1982:44). What is striking about Turner's characterisation of this liberation is his insistence on people's liberation from roles played with flexibility and imagination (1982:46); that there are clear distinctions between people and the roles they play and that these distinctions are worthy of our attention. Although we can use our cognitive and emotional resources to play the game, there is always other work to be done. He takes into account the presence and influence of culture or society in the guise of

competing discourses (1982:49), but ups the ante with our desire for communion, for real contact with other, concrete, individuals.

Turner also stresses that liminoid phenomena exist in a space that accentuates creativity and imagination, that ambiguity plays an important part in keeping the constraints of the everyday stretched in pilgrimage space, so that alternatives can be explored, models created and decisions made, "liminoid phenomena develop apart from central economic and political processes, along the margins [...] they are plural, fragmentary and experimental in character" (1982:54). The essential ambiguity of the liminoid state is the very stuff of the pilgrims' search for authenticity. Authenticity in this sense is not just a sense of the 'really real' that Geertz (1978) wrote about, an escape from the everyday, but a 'deeply playful' and viable alternative quest for a sense of authorship that can stand up to an everyday feeling of being authored.

Thus, in the place of a straight and simplistic sense of anti-structure, Turner proposes a kind of communitas 'flow' that is concrete and individual, yet shared and open-ended. I would propose that such a state invites other contested discourses to control the powerful possibilities that are emergent in such an arena of and for imagination. Instead of signalling communitas' lesser importance, I would suggest that such contestation could be an indicator of communitas' central importance in sparking such opposition. The struggle between these two centrifugal and centripetal discourses of pilgrimage is real though. Andrew, an Australian pilgrim, told me straight one day, angry at having missed out on a bed in a fabulous refuge cut into the side of the mountain (adjacent to the famed Monastario de Santa Maria el Real) in Nájera, "you can put this in your thesis,

there's no fucking way I'm not gonna miss out on another bed in a refuge, I don't care what I have to do to get it, fuck 'em all."

The notion of site vs. non-place

One weakness in Turner's model of pilgrimage (and Eade and Sallnow's too) is that it is site-centred. The Turners' notion of pilgrimage does not emphasise the 'kinetic ritual' (Turner 1978:xiii) of movement *towards* a shrine, rather it is focussed on mobility in terms of *place*, at the expense of more, "fluid physical and social processes" (see Coleman and Eade 2004:2); communitas is sought out at shrines in modern industrialised societies. The Camino in contrast is at best site-oriented socio-geographically. Rather than viewing societies structurally as circumscribed fields of experience, anthropology has begun to take notice of the processes by which belonging, locality and dwelling are created and reshaped somewhat faster than the pace of societal change. Ultimately, both the Turners' limitations and those of Eade & Sallnow result from what are place-centred notions of movement, and the paradox must be resolved elsewhere. Coleman and Eade suggest that, despite the Turners' acknowledgement that pilgrimage is a "kinetic ritual" (Turner & Turner 1978) that can be representative of a larger world religious experience rather than as a circumscribed and purely extraordinary activity, they have not sufficiently examined the avenue of movement as constitutive of social processes (as a way of furthering their theory of pilgrimage) (ibid). Thus, Coleman and Eade argue for the proposed inclusion of movement as a co-ordinate of pilgrimage (along with Eade and Sallnow's inclusion of person, place and text) to broaden the focus on pilgrimage, away from its expression of a particular religious discourse and to

read the act of peregrination as one mode of sacred travel (2004:6). Coleman and Eade move away from ideal typical notions of the pilgrim in favour of a reading of forms of movement as more everyday processes that are thriving in the postmodern condition. They argue that pilgrimage is not a peculiar phenomenon, a mistake that anthropology has made in the past, but an aspect of everyday social processes that contribute to an increasing complex modality of mobility in contemporary society (2004:3).

In addition, Sallnow has argued that Turner's zero-sum conclusion for pilgrimage, where the more antistructure the less structure is possible and vice versa, is analytically too inflexible (see Coleman & Eade 2004:4). Indeed, many pilgrims find themselves at home, so to speak, with technology that allows them to maintain an "intermittent co-presence" (Urry 2002b) with their families and friends while they make their pilgrimage. The presence of stifling figures of authority tends to increase oppositional feelings of communitas among pilgrims.

Graffiti outside Nàjera states, "La meta no es Santiago, la meta es el Camino," placing emphasis on the *journey* to Santiago instead of the *shrine* of St. James. By the time pilgrims arrive in the city, the pilgrimage is over for them. Standing before the cathedral in Santiago, many pilgrims feel a sense of anti-climax as much as a feeling of the crescendo of completion. The sense of pathos that colours pilgrims' arrivals one way or the other is a good rough indicator of the difference between the existential pilgrim and the more (discursively) religious pilgrim. One of the main reasons Turner used 'communitas' rather than community, was that he felt that 'community' unhelpfully evoked a sense of place and stability, while communitas was indeed useful in calling up a transitory

sense of place-in-movement and that a sense of (existential) stability is actually a central experience available to pilgrims.

Conjured imaginations

Stopping in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, I found myself in a charming little refuge run by two volunteers, a young Spanish woman, Laura, and an older German called Wolfgang. The two were very generous with their time, spending every moment caring for pilgrims by massaging their feet or fixing up their worn and bleeding heels, foregoing meals to do so. When I was checking in, I asked to buy a scallop shell as I felt that I was missing out on a central experience of the pilgrimage, being identified easily as a pilgrim through the material culture of the pilgrimage, for instance, by the traditional means of displaying the shell (see figure 19). Laura expressed her disgust at the fake shells she had seen, the ones that had cord and had St. James's red cross painted on it. She told me only to buy a real shell, a natural one, fit for a pilgrim. Her concern with the authentic experience of the Camino did not stop though with her care for pilgrims and opinions on the material artefacts of the Camino. Later that night she offered to perform the *conxuro de queimada*, a Galician ritual exorcism performed as a tourist attraction along the route. I had not previously heard of a woman performing the rite, so I was intrigued. What happened that night did not disappoint.

The ceremony takes place after sunset in near total darkness, where a ritual incantation is spoken over a pot of burning spirits. The incantation is playful, with phrases in Galician such as 'sinning tongue of the bad woman married to the old man' and refers to 'bodies mutilated by the indecent farts of

the infernal arses!' The whole spell is written in what Bakhtin called ''grotesque realism,' a language of critical deformation; 'a special genre of billingsgate'' (Gilmore 1995:563). *At the end of the prayer, the master of ceremonies, Laura, distributes the transformed substance to the audience whereby we drink, having uttered the words, 'Meigas fora!' ('Witches out!'), thus effecting an exorcism for the imbiber by replacing one form of spirit with another. The flame from the burning alcohol serves to gather the ceremony, cloaking it in an older light and throwing the nominally Catholic surroundings into relief.*

After everybody drinks, the lights are switched on and the atmosphere of the ritual dissipates into the warm Galician night. We are left dazed and a little groggy, smiling coyly to each other and moving into groups to discuss what we had witnessed. After a few minutes, Laura, who had taken off her costume, asks everyone to go to bed, as we would have to be up early the next morning to continue on our way to Santiago.

The *conxuro* is a purported pre-Christian rite of exorcism, now framed and performed as a contemporary tourist spectacle. One must consider the performance as a framed performative discourse, visually more available to its audience (as a spectacle) than verbally through the complex messages of the rite itself (which is itself a local contestation of the more systematic (and dogmatic) Catholic interpretation of the Camino through its appropriation of a variety of ritual forms and contexts). Local cultural specificities can be elided by the pilgrims, who do not always engage in a complex fashion with local cultural forms. The conxuro remains, in this context, 'untranslated', a fragment of the local culture that can be viewed without establishing a ground for its understanding. Yet these local cultural forms continue to provide 'evidence' for

such notions as 'authenticity', where what Laura performed was as authentic as it was incomprehensible (and probably *because* it was incomprehensible) from a considered historical or political perspective. The performance's content, spoken in Galician, is secondary to the more easily accessible ritual form, which is abstract enough to remain useful for pilgrims without being hindered by the subject matter's impenetrability. [50]

To consider the *conxuro* as a framed cultural performance, let us first define some terms. A frame is a 'defined interpretive context providing guidelines for distinguishing between orders of message (e.g. insinuation, joking, imitation, translation and quotation)' (Bauman 1977:9). This framed performance is accomplished through an ironic imagination of both the iconography of St. James the pilgrim and the representation of an imagined archetypal witch figure performing a rite that negotiates a position of power for the performer. The ritual is an example of Bakhtinian carnivalesque, a 'transgressive carnality', employed here by the performer as a critique of power, religiosity and historical discourse in modern Spanish society.[51] The use of irony in the *conxuro* creates what Taylor (2001:75) calls, "a dramatic situation of conspiracy between the ironist [Laura] and the audience [spectator-pilgrims] at the expense of a third party [the Catholic Church]".[52] What does the performance actually try to teach the spectators, and how do they receive its

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[50] It is possible to read the visual aspects of the performance being more effective because the images are iconic (they re-present an iconic image of St. James in the attire of the speaker) and indexical (making the potion indexes the transubstantiation of wine into the blood of Christ). The rite itself is spoken in Galician, which even most Spanish participants are not able to speak or understand.

[51] See St. John (2001) for an excellent discussion of 'transgressive sensuousness' and 'carnal sociality' in liminal spaces.

[52] One of the more interesting aspects of the *conxuro*, although one not fully pursued here, is that while the spectators joined the performer in a 'community of opposition' (Taylor 2001:75) created by the performance, each person I talked to following the performance seemed to have his/her own idea of what was happening during the performance.

message and come to understand it? How does the institutional material culture, the markers and signposts, delineate the pilgrimage and in doing so offer pilgrims a particular version of it.

What are the specific relationships between the modern pilgrimage as a series of composed existential experiences, the ongoing stewardship of the pilgrimage route by various Church and secular institutions, and the EU's patronage of the Camino? My argument is that the institutionalisation of the Camino may diminish its particular power of attraction, its charisma (Csordas 1997, Weber 1963), for the sake of promoting particular discursive versions of the pilgrimage experience.[53] Csordas states, "charisma is a self process, the locus of which is not the personality of a charismatic leader but the rhetorical resources mobilised among participants in ritual performance" (1997:xviii). Thus, people are drawn to walk by the stories of pilgrims who have gone before them; the power of the medieval *religious* pilgrimage to Saint James's relics has significantly diminished in the wake of the route's modern revival.

These newer discursive versions of the pilgrimage, centred on the religious, historical and heritage aspects of the Camino, are paraded as 'recoveries' of an 'authentic' ancient route, time and way of life, and resonate with recurring themes of re-enchantment in modern society. Each institution produces its own version of the 'true' pilgrimage and establishes a repertoire of pilgrimage experiences that standardises and rationalises the journey in an attempt to guarantee customer satisfaction. They ritualise the charismatic potential of the pilgrimage within their own orthodox frames of reference. At the

[53] I am drawing this notion of charisma from Csordas (1997), which highlights the individual creative agency of the pilgrim as the locus of charisma, rather than the institutional interpretations of the pilgrimage.

same time, pilgrimage discourses are deployed in the service of more conservative self-interested agendas.

The Conxuro de Queimada

The *conxuro de queimada* is a traditional ceremony of exorcism presented to pilgrims as a performance of a local Galician ritual. It is sometimes performed all along the route (depending on the individual characters who take up residence to perform it in a given year), but can be seen more frequently in the villages in Galicia on the last days of the Camino, from O Cebrero to Santiago. The image of the witch that is both the narrator and the target of the ceremony is popular in Galicia, and witch dolls can be bought in tourist shops along the Camino, much in the same way as the image of the Leprechaun is available in Ireland. I have attended three *conxuros*, two of which were very touristy affairs, held in the open air and performed by men dressed as St. James. The third was the ceremony that took place in the refuge in Santo Domingo.[54]

If there were a degree of efficacy in this "ritual", it would indeed seem to be more political than spiritual. Rather than exorcising spirits, the conxuro "conjures up" a version and vision of and for the Camino, Galicia, Spain and Europe. The *queimada* is a concoction made by burning strong spirits called *aguardente* with citrus peel, coffee beans and plenty of sugar. I will refer to the *queimada* increasingly as a potion however, to indicate that in the experience of those attending the ceremony something may indeed have happened to the drink.

[54] By ceremony, I refer in this instance to a spectacle for an audience of Catholic pilgrims with political potential rather than as a quasi-religious exorcism. By ritual, I refer to a performance having a degree of efficacy, although for reasons that I will show, this efficacy too is more political than sacred today.

This belief is predicated upon, and framed by the audience's engagement with the Catholic belief in the transubstantiation of liquids into something else through ritually efficacious prayer.

Although the *conxuro de queimada* can quite easily continue as a tourist attraction, the ceremony contains an implicit critique of 'high' religious forms that can be seen when it is performed in places that are not as appropriate, such as in Catholic refuges (see figure 14). A more fundamental debate, central to the meaning-making process of the pilgrim experience is uncovered, a debate surrounding the power of an actor, or a religious system, to offer 'other' interpretations to pilgrims. The 'authentic' can contribute to understanding, whether through a rite of exorcism that represents itself as a 'return to nature' or an exposure of such an endeavour as a source of mockery (cf. Bruner 1994:410). Indeed, by extension, the entire process of pilgrimage becomes vulnerable to such derision. While observing Laura's *conxuro*, histories and discourses intertwined in interesting ways, providing a compelling political performance and moral commentary on the hybrid historical formations that have produced the present-day pilgrimage. Cosmologies, discourses, and other things in history provide interpretations, but they also compete with each other as they lay claim to a contested epistemological space. Such a contestation maintained through the ambiguity of a performer, Laura, who is able to negotiate new understandings of what it means to be young, female and Galician on the pilgrimage route to St. James in Santiago.

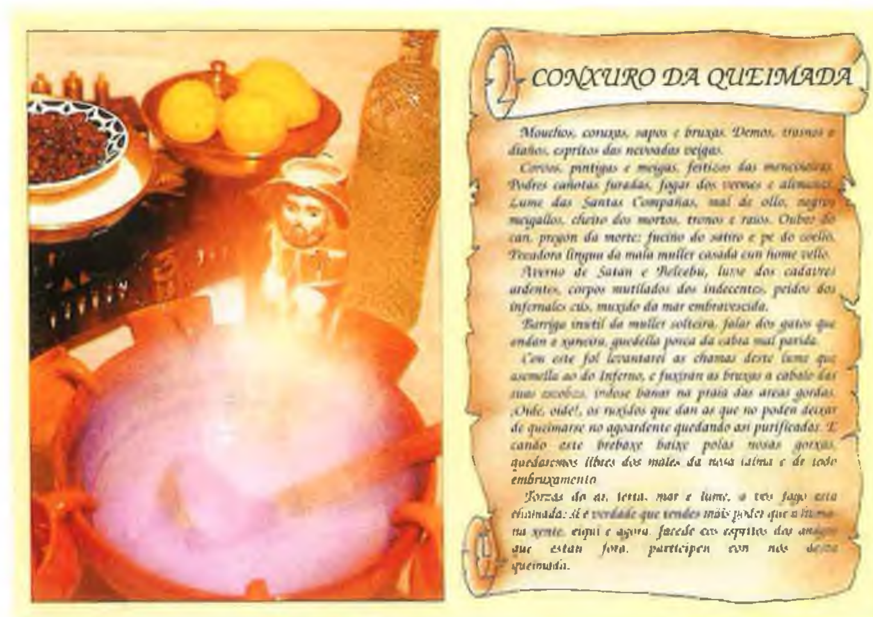

Figure 17 Postcard displaying the material culture of the *conxuro de quiemada*

How did Laura, play the role(s) she played, how did she lay claim to power in order to effect the performance and some of the broader frames (Galician, Spanish, European, female etc.) that both give meaning to and are affected by her performance? Laura acts as what Levinson terms the 'ordinary speaker' in this context, which, 'is a participant holding responsibility for several different aspects of message production simultaneously: for motivating it… and for actually transmitting it,' though not for supplying its form (cited in Irvine 1996:133). Laura is a young girl, which represents an inversion of the age role that can be considered an appropriate index of the social right to perform such acts as spells.

In one sense, Laura was imitating her grandmother, who she said had taught her the spell, and from whom the authority for her performance ultimately derives. At the same time, her youth allowed her to avoid claims that it was a 'serious' ritual she performed, because, after all, she is only a young girl. This

indeterminacy in her role as speaker, due to her youth, is one aspect of the performance that kept it a spectacle for tourists. Equally, though, the performance retained an efficacy through the promise of the 'present absence' of Laura's grandmother; the *conxuro* became populated with several such ethereal characters.

The speaker was female and claiming some sacred power within a religion that operates in part by withholding that voice from women. Her performance could thus be read in the context of an ongoing debate within the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, among lay-people who discuss the possibility of women priests being ordained. All through my fieldwork, many issues, such as the role of women in the Church, were debated vigorously, each pilgrim adding his or her own image of Church to the conversation. In Iberian and Mediterranean societies, though, the public voice of the female is heard most commonly in lament (Gilmore 1995:561), and Laura's performance, if read as part lament, was as much a cultural form being called here to affirm her identity as speaker, as an ironic nod in the direction of an institutional requirement to remain silent. The refuge is a (Catholic) sanctuary from primal 'elements' and feral 'exotic' Spain, yet these elements and the country's feral power were being invoked in the ceremony and sought by the pilgrims. Thus, through Laura's claim to power, through her knowledge of 'witchery,' both her gender and the subject of her incantation placed her outside of the refuge's 'official' power structure and brought her audience with her.

Staking a claim for 'male' power too, Laura embodied the image of St. James through her costume, which acted as a social skin to suspend the normal male/female dichotomy, or, to follow Turner, at least to take the sting out of it.

This indeterminacy of age, meaning and gender was maintained through her parodied embodiment of multiple ambivalent representations i.e. St. James as pilgrim saint, an imagined context of James as being in contact with witchery, a witch, the speaker's grandmother and the speaker's here-and-now (suspended) social role as 'refuge worker'. The fragments of other voices point to Laura's inhabitation by other 'persons.' While at one level her performance was legitimated by these voices, at another, Laura's social self, framed by her modern sense of selfhood, became decentred through that inhabitation, which, through 'local' understandings, can be seen as a form of 'possession.'[55]

Through Laura's embodiment of two imaginations of religion or, more generally, the 'sacred,' we begin to establish some parameters to understand these broader cultural processes at work. The ceremony, as a mode of performance can first be thought of structurally as mimetic behaviour, 'the process of transforming raw experience into palatable forms' (Schechner, cited in Beeman 1993:2). In this way, as a set of basic forms of human interactions, performative behaviour is 'socially co-created, with continual evaluative feedback… [E]valuation of … the audience is crucial for the continuance of the communication' (ibid.). The ceremony served to provide both 'raw material' made palatable and a latent critique to a group of pilgrim-spectators, later transformed through practiced discussion within 'ad hoc communities of interpretation' (Taylor 1995) that fluidly spring up and fade away on a daily basis in the pilgrimage. Entering the flow of the ceremony, the audience entered a 'transitional state' (Turner 1982:33ff) where they chose to explore new

[55] It is possible to imagine possession as a two-way process here; Laura was as much a social actor making a powerful claim as possessor, when she appropriated high and low religious forms for the ceremony, as a 'medium' to explore broader cultural processes.

interpretations of their ‘raw’ experience of pilgrimage. As such, the ceremony was multiply framed, as a ritual enacted as a performance of (and as an embodied commentary on) institutional interpretations of sacred movement, Galicia as a source of local ‘difference’, and the pilgrimage itself. The performance offers a range of interpretations, and as I talked to the audience afterwards and in the following days, the responses ranged from a belief that they had witnessed something of the ‘genuine’ Galician culture, to one man who thought that it showed how contrived a lot of the pilgrimage had become.

Performative behaviour strives ‘to affect human affairs, leaving the individuals involved in the performative act in a changed state’ (Beeman 1993:3). From this aspect of performance, I take it that the latent political effect of the ceremony was to offer to pilgrims a ludic or playful reading of the pilgrimage as a site of cultural resistance, not sacred contestation. Laura was, it seems, able to perform her ‘recovery’ of old fragments of Galician culture because she understood the ceremony, not as religiously efficacious, but as culturally significant. Purifying pilgrims through the potion (casting out spirits) paradoxically ‘corrupted’ the pilgrims with the local (read: pagan) culture. This reading of the ceremony rests on pilgrims’ continuous and ambiguous movements between ‘official’ Church structures (e.g. daily mass, Church-run refuges) and finding a sense of (personal) spirituality in the Spanish countryside. The performance thus lies not only within the frame of the ceremony itself, but in the interpretations that abounded afterwards, serving to re-frame the *conxuro* as an appropriated or recovered ‘knowledge’ within the pilgrims’ social memory of a ‘real’ Spain, so serendipitously ‘discovered’ in Santo Domingo.

If St. James can be understood as an archetypal or iconic embodiment of Roman Catholic presence in Spain, and pilgrims have travelled the pilgrimage route to re-enact mimetically James's journey, then a *parodied* embodiment of the saint, mixed with an *unknown* witch, embodying a *fragmented* sense of Galician culture, takes on new significance. Iconographic representations of St. James abound along the route, from statues of Santiago with a red bandana in the Basque area (claiming a distinctly Basque nationalist interpretation of the saint as a symbolic resource) to Laura herself. They serve as sites, "for philosophical meditation, where force and image lock together" (Taussig 1997:166), they provide pilgrims with saintly imaginations that suggest a doorway into an authentic 'return to nature' in the form of the original pilgrim (the quest for many pilgrims to Santiago). In Laura's case, the ephemeral unknown witch she conjured interrupted the completion of this saintly imagination as humble pilgrim to his shrine, preserving the threshold experience.

This embodiment as mimetic function, to use Taussig's phrase, shows us a figure that, "provides both ineffability and representational space, by which she existed not so much as a figure but as the possibility of figuration [and re-configuration]" (Taussig 1997:169). The grotesque, syncretic body that Laura displayed for her audience not only, "presse[d] close to [her] object, as if through touching, smelling, tasting, [she] wanted to transform [herself]" (Taussig 1993:2), but also parodied her audience's efforts to achieve the same ends: their self-transformation into original pilgrims. Through the 'ancestors' she mocked, Laura was granted the power "to shake the foundations of institutions" (Hoem 1998:25). Saint and witch 'leaked' into each other (Irvine 1996), maintaining the power of the performance, and keeping her role as speaker ambivalent. Her

clowning empowered her through her irony and self-irony, drawing her audience into a carnivalesque mimicry that reshaped their experience of the pilgrimage. Taylor (2001:185) notes that this power of self-irony is the ability to make a 'pre-emptive strike', a warning as much as a story being retold. Those who come looking for a 'simpler,' rural, and nostalgic connection with their faith had better be careful! In the end, though, Laura could and did laugh at the romantic tourist-pilgrims' reactions to the ceremony.

We can express this performance as a 'carnivalisation' (Irvine 1996:13) of the Catholic pilgrimage. It reveals how in one way the performance is removed directly, though not entirely, from its Catholic frame, in order to release it to expose the cohesive and subversive potentialities of pilgrimage. 'Laminating' together (Coleman 1997) pilgrims' imaginations of sacred power, present in the ceremony, through multiple framing, allowed for Laura's equal appropriation of the 'low' form and the 'high' form of sacred power through their contiguity. These diverse images were not presented nomothetically, rather they pressed close and leaked into each other, "endangering the sacred" (Sibley in St. John 2001:56). In effect, the performance reconfigured Laura's body as a portal, a sign-in-motion between two imaginations. The blending of Laura's 'corrupted' image and the pilgrims' ideal-type image, of sacred movement, created a journey for the participants that became a mini-pilgrimage within the larger context of their pilgrimage wanderings.

Structural aspects of the conxuro

Laura's *conxuro* exists at many levels in the life-worlds of those who observe and participate. The ascription of a threshold status to the audience is contingent on a deferred interpretation that occurs after the event. For several days after, I found pilgrims discussing the performance, lamenting with pilgrims who had not stayed at that refuge and seeking out other *conxuro* rituals. The ceremony transmits an idea (Laura's) of Galician culture, as well as negotiating a space for Laura's flirtation with a sense of the interpellation for her Galician identity. The creation of a multiply framed and liminoid pilgrimage space is sustained through Laura's ambiguous ceremonial role, which presents, through her parody of St. James, both an entertaining tourist spectacle and an efficacious alternative of the 'pilgrim experience'. Her ironic performance is thus both spectacle and a potentially efficacious alternative construction of the pilgrimage experience beyond a more hegemonic Catholic interpretation.

There are conflicting ideas of the performance that make it difficult to have a clear sense of the irony invoked. However ambivalent and potentially subversive this "transmission" of culture may be, though, its multiple meanings all depend on the overarching structure of Spanish Catholic pilgrimage. This appropriation and re-invention of tradition relies on Laura's re-imagination of central elements of older forms for its logic and legitimacy, through the recovery of culture constructed as local and the historical stress in Spain on public displays. As Turner argues, society presents the pilgrims with alternatives that

emphasise both the potential for change and the structure that makes that presentation meaningful (cited in Beeman 1993:11).[56]

The pilgrimage space as, ‘a realm of competing discourses’ (Eade & Sallnow 1991b:5) plays out in Laura’s performance too. In as much as she re-presents Catholic discourse and its potential for mediating personal change (metanoia), Laura also embodies an uncomfortable vision of mixing local and Catholic forms of religious experience.[57] The parody of a costumed St. James, offered in Santiago as a ‘genuine’ artefact of the experience of religion and worn here by a young girl incanting ‘powerful’ spells, is unsettling.

In one sense, St. James’s transformation is effected through a protean performance that creates a hybrid image in the half-light, devoured in the gaze of each spectator. If, in performing, as Turner says, we are revealed to ourselves, then this re-presentation of embodied religious discourse in Laura must surely not be very palatable. And, yet, the cameras flashed and the pilgrims drank the potion happily to make themselves as ‘pure’ as the speaker before them did (and as the spell had promised). It was so strange to discover that almost no-one found the ceremony too offensive or distasteful, running counter, I thought, to mainstream liberal Catholicism and to the faith of individuals making an arduous journey of devotion. Was Laura so able to predict the right people being in the refuge that night? It was precisely this ambiguity, though, this syncretic image of saint and witch (and priestess), that held their fascination. When asked, they

[56] The danger of too much irony, of course, is that the ironist can end up simply re-presenting the religious form that, in this case, she is attempting to disarm.

[57] Biblically, metanoia represents a basic change in belief and practice, while תול (tuvel) refers to a syncretic moral and religious situation, most associated with proscriptive practices such as the mixing of two contradictory cosmologies, or more literally with the injunction that ‘man shall not lie with beast’ from Leviticus which contextualises the term as ‘abomination’.

talked about it being 'real' or 'magical.' One Spanish man told me that I had seen something of Spain that most tourists did not see!

The modern *conxuro* these days is, it has to be said, a 'local' tourist attraction. It is performed in several places, quite often for the benefit of tourists. One such place is O Cebrero, located on the Galician border and one of the oldest Celtic villages in Europe, and according to Coelho (1992) one legendary resting-place of the Holy Grail. While the ceremony is a cultural tourist event, though, I argue that other factors contribute to it being more. It is a different kind of 'back-space' (MacCannell 1976). O Cebrero for instance, provides a setting where the ceremony can be consumed as a tourist spectacle rather than as a pre-Christian ritual in a Catholicised space, a space that retains its mystic character, relegating the ceremony to the status of a 'superstition' and can be viewed without any real sense of being able to contaminate spectators. I met and talked with Ždenbeck, the Czech priest, who saw the ceremony as evidence that these superstitions had all but died out. They were performed for tourists, he felt, and so were a bit of fun.

When one observes the *conxuro* in O Cebrero, one feels that it is a ritual of times gone by. When the ceremony I attended took place in a refuge, however, we found ourselves drawn into the myth and magic of the performance in a different way. While the setting of the *conxuro* in O Cebrero emphasised the 'otherness' of the rite of exorcism, the setting of the ceremony in the refuge laid emphasis on the contact between two cosmologies. Something else was happening in Santo Domingo. The ceremony at the refuge represents a history of discourses and a form of subversion, a discourse on histories, high and low. The audience witnesses, evaluates and participates in a framed expression of a

religious and cultural history of the region and the pilgrimage space. The broader social drama of the Catholic Church's presence is framed and offered to the pilgrims, politicising their religious experience. At the same time, the presentation of this history is a situated one, contingent on a *particular* reading of 'history' and enacted as such.

As a pre-Christian ceremony, mixing the *conxuro* with the cult of St. James at a local level is not easy. The efficacy of the ceremony as a site of resistance is diminished, as it becomes a spectacle for transient pilgrims. The ceremony, though, is also an enactment of an element of another system of religion in a space that is nominally defined as 'Catholic' space; the spectacle does resist Catholicism. The *conxuro* is only performed, so the two *hospidaleros* (refuge workers) told me, when they are 'sure' of their audience. By making a claim for the space here, then, the *conxuro* takes on new efficacy with potential for offering new interpretations of the pilgrimage experience. The *conxuro* presents an opportunity to look at the resultant meeting between two cosmologies in apparent conflict, offered as new ways for the spectators to re-imagine pilgrim identities. This re-imagination is powerful if we notice that the 'low' (local, ghostly) cultural form has appropriated the 'high' (hegemonic) national religious form, producing a sub-cultural moral system that 'protests the iniquity of power' that has subordinated the low (Gilmore 1995:574).

When I attended the ritual of the *conxuro de queimada,* it was striking that many stories comprising modern Europe were represented; Christian, Islamic, national (Spanish) and local chauvinist (leading to centuries of war) stories, and the story of Europe as a modern, yet august, economic phenomenon. The story of abductions and unnatural hybrid creatures resonated with a curious

performance of 'recovered' Galician culture. This particular *conxuro* then, suggested a range of issues that guided my study of the Camino de Santiago. Most notable was that the Camino is not a single homogenous space replete with culture, waiting to be discovered by me (see Amit 2000). The mutability of the pilgrimage maintains a need for creativity, for locals to 'conjure' the pilgrimage. The Camino offers people two kinds of opportunity, the opportunity to evoke the historical and cultural richness of the pilgrimage in the many cultural forms available and the opportunity to construct a version of that history and culture for their own purposes. There is no *one* history or culture; instead, we find a constant, (sometimes dismal) production of a series of contacts between cosmologies and histories. For many 'cultural entrepreneurs',[58] pilgrimages represent the ripest of conditions for staking a claim for their version of the world. Many such entrepreneurs, while establishing their version in a 'wilderness', have tended not to be so inaccessible as to deter followers.[59]

While Laura is engaged in a personal project of cultural entrepreneurship, others like Tomas, the modern Templar who runs the hostel in Manjarín and whom we met in the introduction, is a much more fully developed cultural entrepreneur. Tomas draws together Christianity and Islam, fighting the local Xunta (who regularly try to shut his refuge down for health and safety reasons), setting himself up in his own little castle, weaving grand historical narratives into the lives of the people before him every day at 11 a.m., when he recites his daily prayer for world peace. It is a much more ambitious project, one that convinces many people of his unique vision of the world. Laura's personal project

[58] See Becker 1963 for the basis of 'moral' entrepreneurship and labelling theory that informs part of my argument for cultural entrepreneurship in this chapter.
[59] See for instance Adler's (2002) analysis of "stadiums in the wilderness" that housed early medieval ascetics along major trade routes.

resonates more closely with projects under repair by pilgrims who witness her claim to power and validate it and themselves through an act of complicit participation in her very 'local' ritual with its cosmopolitan audience.

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San Juan de Ortega is little more than a church and refuge where the hospidalero, Fr. Jose Maria Alonso Marroquin, makes a garlic soup that is the talk of the Camino. San Juan de Ortega, St. John of the Thistle, started the refuge in the twelfth century to fulfil a promise to St. Nicolas de Bari, whose relic saved him once at sea. San Juan was a gifted builder, having worked with Santo Domingo to construct bridges and paths for pilgrims in Nàjera and Logroño. The left transept depicts the annunciation and at the equinoxes, a ray of sunlight focuses on it at twilight, highlighting Mary's acquiescence to Gabriel's news.

The little village is a popular stop for both pilgrims and tourists. I have never stayed at San Juan, always pushing on to the city of Burgos instead. Along the way, one passes Atapuerca, where a proposed missing link between Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*, *Homo antecessor*, has been excavated. Why I remember this journey though, is that it was where, for only the second time on pilgrimage, I lost control of my body. The journey down into the valley of thorns, where Charlemagne's general Roland lost his life, was the first time. Several years earlier, my legs simply refused to move then, and I lay down on the ground, unable to remove my rucksack, so that I looked, for all the world, like a turtle on its back. I did not care though; the pilgrimage had disappeared along with the will to finish the walk. I lay impassively for nearly an hour until my

legs gave up their resistance to my will and agreed to walk for another few minutes. Either way, I thought, I did not really have to arrive at Roncesvalles; I had lost any ambition to take another step. Many pilgrims describe the last mile of each day's walk as the hardest part; knowing that they were minutes away from finishing increased their suffering. They could no longer hold off from wanting the trip to be over, and their world fell in. One man stopped by the side of the road and rubbed his ankles wistfully, "It's the last mile, when you know it's [the refuge] just over the next hill or around the next corner. It's like the last half hour and you know you're finishing, that's when it's hardest. You try to forget the refuge and concentrate on the walking, but it gets too hard and the pain is worse. Every time your foot hits the ground, it shoots up your leg and you want to give up. Some days I stop even feeling the pain, and I trudge on but my feet are killing me." The first time my body surrendered, I was in the valley of heroes and I was too apathetic even to feel like a fraud.

The second time in my life my body quit me, approaching the outskirts of Burgos, a huge blister had taken over my left heel and with each stride more and more of the pilgrimage evaporated; there was only the pain of my left leg on the ground, giving way to a rhythmic throbbing that approximated what I thought could be steps. The searing sun and the hardness of the concrete squeezed me between them until I relented, half-staggering after the other pilgrims in my party, vaguely following the sounds of their voices. I was on fire and fighting every step, when I stopped struggling and let the pain and incipient dehydration take me. Before long, the pain would return, and I cycled between suffering through each step and meandering forward with numb intent. All of the pilgrimage was washed away; only a warm, dull anaesthesia sustained me.

Within this cycle of pain and numbness, I began to feel that I was less than a person: my motives for being on pilgrimage, where I stood on the earth, even my need to interact with my walking companions all but vanished. I simply staggered on. It is a common feeling for pilgrims to have. Kerry Egan (2004) describes it,

> "the heat, like a brick, would drop into the middle of a thought, cutting it off and leaving me confused and dizzy. It was as though the ability to think was leaking out through my pores along with sweat. At that point, I watched my feet ... after exhaling, there was a long and peaceful pause when it felt as though everything had gently stopped. It wasn't at all how I thought breathing worked. ...I just walked and breathed and listened to the sounds. I wasn't deep in thought, I was deep in non-thought... Breath is a miraculous thing when you have five weeks to notice it for several hours a day" (2004:78).

Chapter three:

Into the West: contours of pilgrim narratives

The past is not for living in,

It is a well of conclusions,

from which we draw in order to act.

John Berger, ***Ways of Seeing***

We have nothing of our own except time,

which even the homeless can experience.

Baltasar Gracián, ***The Art of Worldly Wisdom***

Having limped as far as I could towards Burgos, and then opted for a taxi, I left many of my friends who wanted to preserve the experience of the pilgrimage by walking into the city the following day. It would be a hard monotonous trek through the industrial estate into the city, I had done it before and I did not intend limping heroically for a day to do it again. I decided instead that I should take a taxi with three other pilgrims to Burgos and take a day off walking to allow my body to heal. It was the first time I had done it and I thrilled at the prospect of seeing more of Burgos than the overcrowded bunks at the far side of the city that took in most pilgrims. We found a little hotel and booked into a proper room with a proper bed and, because things rarely change too much on the road, with a proper pilgrim sharing my room. Nevertheless, I could not have been happier; when normally I would have been in a bunk at a refuge, I sat

down to a feast in a restaurant that only began serving after ten in the evening and followed it with a delicious sleep.

As I awoke in Burgos, I delighted in taking my time, getting up at my leisure, taking a more substantial breakfast and donning my tourist demeanour to see the city. Rather, I accentuated an already instantiated tourist habitus and let my nosy self run free over the cityscape. I had taken a day off! The obvious sight was the cathedral, a 13th century Gothic creation of Fernando III that has expanded to include most major innovations in building for hundreds of years (Plateresque, Baroque and Rococo). It still dominates the skyline, and one cannot help but be drawn towards it. My companions, however, were anxious to make their own way through the city on their own so we split up after breakfast and tried to walk off in different directions.

The aimlessness of the modern tourist pilgrim is something sad to behold. The body no longer acts as any kind of anchor, instead the journey through a random (contingent on history) collection of buildings and places, called sights. Their nomenclature as sights highlights the lack of sensory engagement the average tourist has with these places, relying on the objective and too often untrained eye to attempt some kind of distant summarising of the view before this cultural voyeur. In fact, the self-conscious tourist can often feel a little sleazy, groping for some aspect of the culture before them ("built in 1270!" or "housed Hemmingway for two months") to gain purchase. While the beauty of many of the monuments is apparent, their meanings are not. I became disoriented walking the streets, an outsider in a city that seemed not to care. The only relief came in the guise of other pilgrims, equally bemused, tilting their head up in recognition and reprieve from the unyielding architecture and

unconcerned local folk. At last, a foothold in the composition of this vista, fellow wanderers sharing, at least superficially, some history and a similar trajectory across this Cultural Itinerary; we allowed each other to feel 'at home'. A paradoxical experience within other paradoxical experiences; to different degrees we came here to lose ourselves in order to find ourselves again, in effect a modern re-telling of the Christian eschatological promise; dying to self to be reborn. Maybe we were not so revolutionary after all.

Following the itinerary of a travel guide around any city is problematic. The route is arbitrary, drawing unsuspecting tourists around and across a cityscape according to the hegemony of particular, unhelpful ideas of what a particular city is and should be. While the more interesting minutiae can be said to occur in the interstices of the city among the monuments and sights to see, the biographical impact upon the soon-weary traveller is one of unwelcome bewilderment. One is never prepared for a city, its stories have to be discovered when one is ready for them. Nietzsche wrote once that, "no one can extract from things, books included, more than they already know. What one has no access to through experience one has no ear for". Thus, the map and the guide achieve their contrary effects upon the urban wanderer; s/he suffers metropolitan *dis*location: "The scopophilic traveller's powerful position of voyeur" (Zilcosky 2003:59) becomes "the long lonely absurd walk home" (Zilcosky 2003:61).

In exploring a recovery of the authentic in modern(ist) modes of travel, set within the broader framework of travel literature, Kafka is an anomaly of sorts, for, once he began to write, he stopped travelling. The *submerged* theme of travel therefore draws one's attention to the inner themes of his works, from the claustrophobia and stasis of his characters to his expression of turn-of-the-

century motivations for travelling, routed in modern man's ills "alienated from his labour, his gods, his home and himself" (Zilcosky 2003:7). Travel thus provided a panacea, "locating an 'authentic' sense of both self and home" (2003:7), in newly discovered and freshly represented exotic places, places which offered a return to the beginning for the petty-bourgeois distanced from himself and his home. The exotic called to the angst-filled city dweller, whispering a promise of renewal, health and recovered innocence. The age of travel was part return, then, and part rejuvenation, where accidental tourism sought the real in other places rather than in the expanding and increasingly dystopian European cities, where the tropics themselves become a series of tropes (see 2003:15): "for moderns, reality and authenticity [become] thought to be elsewhere" (MacCannell, quoted in Zilcosky 2003:204n23).

While other writers, (from Conrad to Joyce), explicitly structured their works around journeys, Kafka's characters seem only tangentially to have moved. Yet, this literary movement, towards a recovery of a self headed for and through existential crises, evokes the modernist attempt to base its inspiration on the awe that held the attention of the Romantics. Ideology tends towards the sublime, but modernism, in the form of colonial and capitalist expansion, failed to elicit much more than the silent scream that permeates Kafka's work and indeed most other writers of this era. The point for Kafka though was to frustrate any discovery of a true self in order to effect a more fruitful exoticisation of self. For Kafka, in his own life, maintaining a relationship of exoticisation of self was, he felt, crucial to his creative spirit. As a result, of course, Kafka travelled less and less as he explored his literary voice, deferring any journey that might put an end to his will to write. For the pilgrims who leave behind the claustrophobic,

the stagnant and the quotidian, in search of a voice that can even express the inchoate angst of the modern, however, travel is the means by which articulation becomes possible.

Kafka maintained an interesting relationship with the travel guide. In a way that reflects the wandering and wondering that characterises the modern pilgrim, Kafka uses the guide as a literary device to throw into relief the two meanings of *verfahren*, guided proceedings and errant motion, Kafka highlights the problematic relationship of the two notions of movement, one official, sanctioned and safe, the other wayward, irrational and without approval. The travel guide, while promising real and efficient contact with a place, negates 'real' travel through its itinerary. By being liberated from strangeness, the traveller is made to feel at home in a foreign place; the guide fills in the history that the traveller lacks, orienting him in the city. By orienting him, the traveller is kept strange until he relinquishes his guide. Ultimately, the guide promises a fusion of signs and meanings that for Kafka is always dangerous (Zilcosky 2003:92).

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Augé tells us that places are concerned with or created by a concern for identity, relations and history (Augé 1995:52). He talks about place as:

> "the layout of the house, the rules of residence, the zoning of the village, placement of altars, configuration of public open spaces, land distribution, [which] correspond for every individual to a system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social. To be born is to be born in a place, to be assigned to residence. In this sense, the actual place of birth is a constituent of individual identity" (Augé 1995:52ff).

A place's historicity occurs, "from the moment when ... it is defined by a minimal stability ...the inhabitant of an anthropological place does not make history; he lives in it" (Augé 1995:54). Augé sees the "presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but still lays claim to it" as being "the essence of modernity" and, quite simply, what 'place' is. In an age of supermodernity (where supermodernity is an intense and more concrete form of the postmodern spectacle [see Debord 1992]), a saturation of meaning lays claim to the individual through a daily assault, a semiotic war of attrition, and the pilgrimage space, particularly the Camino, can become powerfully attractive.[60] In contrast, the difficulty of the walk necessarily eclipses the landscape as 'seen' and privileges the body as locus of experience and the individual, who cannot be ignored.

It is more helpful, though, to view the Camino as a series of non-places. Pilgrims roam like ghosts across Spain, spending each night in a different place, migrating wearily towards the city of St. James, the great exorcist of Iberia. They are not tied to the land, to its history or its meanings; the most concrete monument passes quickly into memory, a mere spectral presence among a host of recollections of a hard day's walk. As nomads, pilgrims do not relate to the land in the same way, theirs is a "fully reconciled alienation" (Rudolph 2004:34). The landscape pushes up through their feet into their bodies, and fades, mile after mile, each step bringing forth a new transgression past the soles of their feet (and for many pilgrims into their souls). Rudolph writes about his physical passage through Spain,

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[60] The origin of the word 'pilgrim' came from the popular descriptions of the penitent on the road to Santiago, walking to the end of the earth as a peregrino, a wanderer in a pathless place. Similarly, pilgrim to Rome became known as 'romeros' and those who went to Jerusalem, 'palmers'.

> "It was more as if the landscape very slowly passed us by than we it. Sometimes, it seemed as if we became part of landscape [sic], like the herds of auvergnat sheep – or a medieval peasant...the pilgrimage acts like a mental sauna, sweating out the stress of daily life as you sit and watch the clouds move slowly across the land, pass gradually over the hill, and silently cross over the stream, the cows, the low stone wall, and, finally, you" (2004:36).

Augé tells us that in the accidental traveller we find the prophetic evocation of spaces in which neither identity, relations nor history make any sense; "spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesise the existence of past and glimpse the possibility of a future" (1995:87). The abolition of place and the establishment of 'non-place' is the consummation of the journey (1995:87); only the traveller survives the journey. This abolition represents the struggle of the traveller as hero, conquering the places in his imagination. The traveller turns back on himself, the vision of the flâneur's reflection of himself as he surveys the world, striking the pose as a spectator of the real, joining the old and the new in one rhetorical space of the imagination, as recorded in the text (see Urry 2000). The double aspect of modernity at work here is the "loss of the subject among the crowd, or inversely, absolute power, claimed by the individual consciousness" (Augé 1995:92).

The word 'non-place' draws out two aspects of relationship, the first that of spaces to their ends and the second that characterises the relationships people have with these spaces (Augé 1995:94). Because pilgrims move through spaces rather than stop and reside there for any length of time, the term 'pilgrim' is part of that constitution of the non-place, it relates the pilgrim as wanderer to the landscape or indeed any of the towns along in a position of non-dweller. The

pilgrim validates the pilgrimage even as the pilgrimage returns the favour. Imagination, "the only weapon in the war against reality" (as the poet Pierre-Jules de Gautier wrote), seeks to ironise the relationship between pilgrim and place as problematic and fluid, asking the question, "does it present a world you choose to live in?" (White 2005:182). Imagination seeks to effect, "a maximum intensification of a transformation in progress" (Derrida, cited in White 2005:182).

Kafka never offers us a place that we can view and comprehend from a promontory perspective; he shatters the structures of a city, of a country, through a myriad of disorienting perspectives instead, replacing the panorama with a dizzying myopia that affects the boundaries of self, world, and home. It is therefore less possible to create the possibility of an "uncanny return to origins… a voyage to a refuge" (2003:66). Making contact with the other loosens the integrity of the Westerner traveller. This deconstructive loosening is what Kafka seeks, what Derrida (2002a:249-250) calls a "privileged instability". In fact, Zilcosky cites Laurence Rickels's deconstructionist reading of the Hunter Gracchus as an (possibly over-interpreted) example of Kafka's exploration of an "endless delay of meaning in language. K.'s perceptual travels, in Rickels's reading, correspond to the 'process' of eternally deferring signification through reading and writing" (Zilcosky 2003:72), which highlights the non-mimetic nature of Kafka's travel motif.

Emerging as a rich theme in Kafka, the crisis of language (*Sprachkrise*) foreshadows the twentieth century obsession with the slippage between sign and meaning. In *The Trial*, this ongoing slippage becomes for K. a matter of life and death, "if … a judge eventually attentively reads K.'s documents, a fusion of sign

and meaning will result: the files will merge with the verdict (denoting literally, "true meaning)" (Zilcosky 2003:85). The yellow arrows that point the way for the pilgrims always point to somewhere else, never to the space itself. These arrows become the most real aspect of the surroundings, the most informative part of the environs. At the same time they also constitute the prescription (go this way) and the proscription (do not deviate) that diminish the surroundings further. Thus, the landscape and the town are both concealed as much as they are revealed to the traveller; notes and signs draw pilgrims along a line while throwing anything beyond the proximate surroundings into relief (Augé 1995:97). For Augé, who sees motorways as the real non-places of supermodernity (1995:96), the ever-expanding reality of a medieval pilgrimage route that travels beside a road is as ironic as it is to be expected. The road as text then, does form a textual assault on pilgrims' motivations for walking, an ironic commentary that said, as I was told many times upon explaining that I walked across Spain, "you should have taken the bus!"

Whatever the possibilities of uncovering the 'authentic' on pilgrimage, it is difficult to remove the pilgrim's orientalising gaze.[61] Pratt (1992) identifies three features of the orientalising gaze on the landscape "the landscape is aestheticised; density of meaning is sought and; a relation of mastery is constructed between seer and seen. Aesthetics and ideology thus combine to create what Pratt terms, "a rhetoric of presence" (cited in Zilcosky 2003:210n25). The intent ultimately, argues MacCannell (1973), is to 'disprove' the seer's alienation from his post-industrialised world. Therefore, the authentic being

[61] Such attempts to locate the authentic for instance involve a secular engagement with religion that stretches back two thousand years, through contact with a land (and landscape) that reaches even further into a darker past, or via a very modern longing to move behind what MacCannell (1973) calls the 'front spaces' to experience the 'real'.

sought can be said to be an unmediated experience of the self. What we will find is that the physicality of the pilgrimage offers a way out of a surface reading of travel by foot as a form of discursive engagement with the exotic. Instead, it reveals a process that breaks down the searching self and actually permits some experience of a self characterised by effort and reflexivity; it is the basis of an encounter with one's own existential potential.

The very diversions of meaning that establish the non-place make it more available to pilgrims. Pilgrims do not travel the Camino simply to see Spain or even just to walk it. If anything, and I know that it formed part of my motivation, many pilgrims seek to 'eat' the Camino, 'drink' it, sleep it (some even manage to sleep with it!). The power of the textual diversions of non-place are somewhat offset then, as the body does more than respond to the frequent places through the gaze. The whole sensorium is implicated in an attempt to generate alternative "possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts" (Augé 1995:52); freed from everyday lives 'saturated' with meaning, pilgrims experiment with new forms of the everyday. These new 'arts of doing' (see de Certeau 1984:19ff) recreate the non-place as a kind of ephemeral, yet existentially stable, space. Each day is begun anew, with new ideas and expectations. Fernanda, a Brazilian pilgrim, told me how she found a new Camino every day, "what I miss most is waking up and starting to walk everyday like a routine ... Every day was a new learning about my limits ... from body to soul ... every day a different place to know ... a different face to meet ... more knowledge ... so, I miss everything ...". It is this ephemerality, coupled with the possibility for a ground of experience, that draws pilgrims. The results of these experiments survive only in the pilgrim/experimenter, and are not inscribed anywhere else but on the body

of the pilgrim in the gruelling walk that structures the greater part of the pilgrim's day. "The Camino's a life within a life, a laboratory" became a theme I constantly encountered. The liminoid space the pilgrim encounters, and contributes to maintaining, attenuates his or her everyday lifeworld on the Camino to permit its remaking.

The communitas of the Camino moves in and around the hegemony of Catholic, Spanish nationalist and European discourses of the pilgrimage, where people are free to move in and out of these constructions of the Camino. The very attributes of supermodernity, movement and continuous ephemerality, are used here to the advantage of the pilgrims, should they so wish. Many do. Moving between towns and refuges during the day, pilgrims are free to do their own work, 'make their own Camino' as they see fit. While the route itself is being replaced with more modern constructions, and the pilgrims must trudge along main roads instead of through the 'wilderness' they had imagined awaited them. Pilgrims remain fiercely determined to feel as if they had in fact been travelling ancient roadways. For many, the sadness that accompanies the disappearance of the older route is offset a little with the idea that this older Way simply remains only partially hidden, and will not disappear completely while pilgrims walk the route. As Augé puts it, "[places are] never completely erased, [non-places] are never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten" (Augé 1995:79). For anybody, but especially pilgrims, I think, the possibility of homelessness may not be unwelcome. By interrupting formerly stabilising categories of 'home' and 'away' through the "temporal and topographical errancy" (Zilcosky 2003:82) of peregrination, walking in wild places, it is

possible for the pilgrim to attempt a "symbolic restoration of innocence and timelessness" (ibid) upon his return home. Whether this return is directed towards the womb or, as Freud suggested (2003), ultimately back into death, into "a mystical moment before conception during which the organism paradoxically existed albeit before time and animation" (Zilcosky 2003:83), the model resonates with pilgrims' ambivalent reconnection to vitality and bodily degradation through the hardships of the Camino's physical challenge. While most of life, according to Freud, was composed of a series of detours postponing the realisation of one's death (ibid), pilgrimages tend to face the reality of mortality more directly. Indeed, in the monuments commemorating past pilgrims who have died along the way, one is faced with possibility of imminent death (see figure 18).

Other rare pilgrims become ephemeral monuments themselves to pilgrims who have passed away. John, who commemorated his sister's journey and life by following her, too late, across Spain, talked about her often and so kept that ghostly trace of her alive and moving towards Santiago. His physical walk became a condensation of memory, emotion and forgetting that marked her presence on the Camino. He made a point of checking every refuge guest book for signs of her, and then brought the book to those who knew his story and showed them. It was proof, proof that she had been there, proof that she had passed through, and proof that she had died.

A world characterised by a jaded homogeneity also provides the opportunity to resist succumbing to alienation, "in the world of supermodernity, people are always and never at home: the frontier zones or 'marchlands' … no longer open on to totally foreign worlds… Words and images in transit through

non-places can take root in the – still diverse – places where people still try to construct part of their daily life" (Augé 1995:109). The struggle for the modern pilgrim is to experience these non-places together, to defeat any totalising discourse that may try to individualise him or her completely. The feeling of coming together that pilgrims experience in these non-places makes the event all the more capable of generating communitas, as non-places "do not contain any organic society" (Augé 1995:111). This may be as close as we can get to a utopia of full, unmediated contact, where pilgrims contend with society (to a lesser degree) 'on the road' (or beside it), but it already seems much closer to the pilgrims' experience than a pilgrimage defined through a site invested with competing discourses. If that space does not function well as a non-place for the pilgrim, the beauty of Camino is that the next day brings another walk.

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It was ten a.m. before Andrej, Grainne and I started walking from Burgos. My eyes had migrated to the back of my skull, mostly in fear of any more Slovenian 'spring' water being produced to celebrate Andrej's arrival on the Camino. Mile after difficult mile the three of us walked in a warm daze until late enough into the evening. Our destination for the day, Hontanas, could only be a hope we harboured, not a real town we could reach; the pilgrims Hontanas-bound plodded their weary way, as Thomas Gray might have written of us. Step for step, it was the worst day. Complete silence for ten hours of walking in the hot summer sun. Only one town stood between Burgos and Hontanas, but we picked up sticks from there and walked another ten kilometres to our destination for the night. A sign promised 500m to go and soon the town appeared as if

pushed up through the very earth itself to catch us (see figure 15). We fell in the door half-dead and more than half dehydrated. What insanity pushed us that hard across the first day of the meseta, that unforgiving dustbowl that would last for another six days?

The answer sat in the restaurant eating a strange soup: John, a pilgrim I had met on my first day and found again the previous day in Burgos. John had told me in Burgos why he was walking the Camino; his sister Myra had done the pilgrimage in 2003. When she arrived in Santiago, she took an afternoon nap. It was then that a previously undiscovered tumour took her life. So John, in an effort to honour his sister and mourn her, walked each stage as she had the year before, almost daring fate, I thought, to take him too.

When she got to Burgos, she took the bus across the meseta to avoid the hassle, so this part of the walk for John was free of his reason of walking for his sister. It was to be his part of the Camino, the first chance to try and experience life without her, I suppose, while he drew ever closer to the point he would join up with her Camino and walk to her death. We were quietly determined, Grainne, Andrej, Pam (who had walked with him) and I, that this part of the Camino would be for *John, and about him. It would prove to be the best week of our lives in many ways. Walking carefree and unrestrained by most requirements of the pilgrimage, except the one requiring us to walk every day, we spent seven hard days drinking and laughing, crying and re-hydrating, but all the time looking after each other, making each other better, and stronger, on our way to St. James's remains.*

Fieldnotes June 2004

This week was a powerful one. As any ethnographer can tell you, most time spent in the field can produce a variety of experiences and emotions from strenuous boredom to bodily damage (e.g. Barley 1983). This week, however, felt like a break, both from the six-week walk across Spain and from my need to generate pilgrim interviews and catalogue events, places and other details of interest. When I first read back on my fieldnotes from this time, I thought that what was most interesting about these few days was the way in which it seemed to challenge traditional notions about participant observation; what I was doing was closer to 'observant participation' (Dubisch 2004:113). At the beginning, travelling together was still highly undesirable for the moment; each walker was settling into the routine of the days to come and we were all hungry loners searching for our particular ideas of a successful walk. The idea, it seemed, was that it was best not to share too much too soon. It was strange later when I met up with some walkers from the first days and they were able and willing to share their stories and reasons for walking.

By the first week, everyone had more or less settled into the rhythms of the day, telling pieces of themselves as they walked. On day two of the pilgrimage however, pilgrims had shuffled off uncomfortably on their own, jealously guarding this unique opportunity. The boundary between my role as researcher and pilgrim-walker remained unclear, and the mantle of researcher had never protected me from the aches or the pains, the uncomfortable nights or the hot days. This week, though, became for me more about how people of different ages and from different countries became so close so quickly, as well as the ephemerality of that closeness. In the group I walked with, there were three Irish, an American woman and a Slovenian friend of mine, our ages ranging from

25 to 45. Despite these differences, though, we found little difficulty establishing common ground for the short time we spent together.

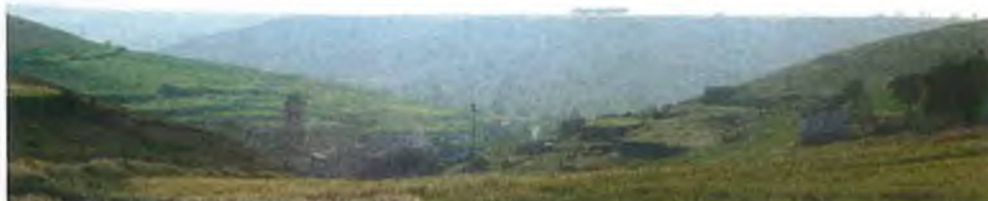

Figure 18 The town of Hontanas, rising out of the ground after a 30 km hike.

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As I began to sort through and make sense of my notes for that week on the meseta, I was drawn back to Turner's writing on communitas to see if that could shed light on the developing sense of comradeship that began in Roncesvalles and grew into the six-day hike that brought us between Burgos and León. What I found was that, given certain adjustments to Turner's assumptions about where and how communitas might happen, the theory of communal feeling that he explored may still have relevance for researchers today, in spite of strong criticisms of his work (see especially Eade & Sallnow 1991a, but also Sallnow 1981 and St. John 2001). Augmented by contemporary theories, communitas can account for our innate desire to discover like-minded people, to share a brief time and then move on and away, refreshed for the experience. In a world characterised through speed and movement, the slowing down to 'human' pace to discover different daily rhythms can provide a sense of stability lacking in the

normal, quotidian life of the pilgrim at home. Our best chance for happiness, and possibly our greatest need, is to be among other people and feel cared for and even inspired by them, often when we are more exposed than usual. Mary, an American woman I met intermittently, wrote to me recently in response to my question about what her best memory of the Camino was:

> "The camaraderie among the pilgrims. Age seemed irrelevant. We were pilgrims. Some conversations, especially with a language barrier, were superficial, but there was something intense we shared that could make the conversations feel quite intimate...
>
> The incredible view from O Cebrero. Standing above the clouds and looking down on the most amazing vista. However, it was in O Cebrero in one of those funny huts that I checked my email and realized from my sister's email that my father was dying. I came back to the *auberge* and Nancy hugged me. Still, I was and still am somehow comforted that this information came to me when I was, literally it seemed, on top of the world..."

The conditions of possibility

How may we better understand the conditions for 'strong poetics' of pilgrimage? Csordas (1997:43) argues that there exists a postmodern condition of culture, characterised by a free play of signifiers, a decentring of authority and the globalisation of culture. The effectiveness of Turner's (1970) dominant symbol to organise the meanings of the pilgrimage into a coherent stable structure is not secure in Csordas's scheme. At the same time, the bodily breakdown that almost all pilgrims endure (to different degrees) means that their own bodies become decentred conduits of disordered experience (see Good 1994:116). This disordered experiencing, though, is part of the pilgrimage's draw – the human speed, human time and human effort (in other words, 'flow') that represent the beginning of the pilgrimage as a 'charismatic' experience (see Frey 1998:74, Csordas 1997). None of these categories of movement or

togetherness are available 'out there' to be discovered; they are written from the very motivations of the pilgrimage, the reasons that push pilgrims across the difficult days to journey's end.

Although people walk the Camino for many reasons, Church guardians of the Camino have traditionally gathered them under five categories: religious, cultural, spiritual, physical and other. What the Camino means to any individual person largely depends on the kind of walk he or she has accomplished each day, his or her own expectation of the meaning of the Camino and the collective reflection on individual efforts as pilgrims form yet another ad hoc community of interpretation. These ephemeral groups help pilgrims rework their biographical narratives, both as pilgrims and in the wider sense of identifying motivations, direction and life-choices. As my group walked between Burgos and León, we oriented our pilgrimage to share John's 'holiday', 'his' Camino away from 'the' Camino, while he found another way of knowing that pilgrimage, apart from mourning for his sister. No authorial explanations of the Camino, as penance, as contact with sacredness, nature or Church, held much sway over us. As a multicultural grouping, drawn from the United States, Ireland and Slovenia, we had a much broader range of experiences with which to construct a shared sense of togetherness that resembled Turner's notion of communitas.[62]

The feeling of belonging, of being-with, is central to the pilgrim's lifeworld. This belonging is generated and maintained through certain dispositions: spontaneity, intimacy and control (see Csordas 1997). These dispositions are orientational devices, deployed for instance through generosity on the Camino, where gifts of equipment, advice, healing, stories, news and

[62] In this case, 'communitas' is perhaps a trope of the group's own discourse – a conscious experiential goal and a crucial element of shared expectation.

histories are passed around and on throughout the pilgrim communitas. There are areas where pilgrims shed excess equipment at refuges, leaving them for other pilgrims who may need them. Local histories and pilgrim stories are shared over beers and meals where it can be difficult to know who has bought what (as well as inappropriate to ask). This fluid, amorphous and often anonymous movement of goods, lost items, stories, bodily contact etc. is essential, because through these acts of generosity the pilgrimage takes on the shape of a moral community, what Taylor (1995) has called an "occasion of faith" (which for our purposes represents a merging of discourse and reality in experience).

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Figure 19 A pilgrim desperately approaches a water reservoir in search of water.

Imagine the day: walking since dawn, the temperature rising steadily, single-mindedly, towards the high thirties, water running low, fourteen kilometres down and three to go. Hardly any human feature for the entire day; it

was the day we had been warned about, in guidebooks, on the road, at the last refugio. We would find out later that Robert, a young American pilgrim, had taken the uncommon step of covering this ground by night. It's a long road that has no turning. Try a road with no end, though, stretching ahead disinterestedly, not caring (as if such topological features could feel for us or against us) whether we continued or lay down, surrendering to our fate, tragically, heroically or stoically. One guidebook tries to defend the flat, treeless slog by reminding the reader of an old Spanish saying, "the landscape of Castile is in her sky" (Gitlitz and Davidson 2000:223), a vista that takes time to appreciate.

The Camino is a Christian pilgrimage, however; sometimes it seems like it is a pilgrimage for those who dimly remember a Christian past. Nobody would die that day; we can fool ourselves about the heroism, but not the tragedy. There was always a way out, an answer that was always there, just at the horizon. Deus ex machina: god from a bottle of water. Faith? Fate? It seemed not to matter. That day was not so bad; we had kept enough stores to keep us fresh for the walk, and we supped readily at each other's supplies; water, oranges and chocolate for energy. The local Xunta had provided a stopping point, which it must be said gave little shelter, more a suggestion of a place to rest, but not to stay. Their intention was for us to continue, a metonym of the larger pilgrimage that housed us on our walk and framed the journey; in essence, I reflected, the bench was just another yellow arrow pointing the way to Santiago. Neither was there water, only the poisoned "*agua no potable*" that fed the surrounding fields on either side of this lonely path. The silence was profound too; even with six people, we could almost hear ourselves perspire (the women of course glowed). There was no doubt though, but that we were ready to finish the day.

As I sat under the meagre shade of a small tree, looking back over the road we had covered, musing something about the value of silence as a phatic 'soundscape' or some other such abstract theory, I saw an umbrella approaching along the road. At that angle, the rising water vapour obscured the scene, so I stood up to see a woman leaving the path for one of the agricultural fountains. Rapt at the unfolding scene, it became quickly clear that the woman was looking for water, and that she was considering drinking from the contaminated font (see figure 16). Even later that day I could not be sure if we had signalled to her or if she saw us and headed our way, but there she was in our midst, barely able to ask for water. To be honest, everyone else seemed to react much quicker, providing water, salts and a piece of orange, while I still stood, incredulous, thinking, "how could she not know?!" We nursed her along, this poor French lady who mistook her days and travelled into the meseta with no supplies, only an umbrella for protection and her husband waiting at the end of the day for her, unaware of how ill she had become under the afternoon sun. We walked out the rest of the time together, we stunned at her narrow escape, she simply stunned.

Sitting in the bar close to our hostel that evening we saw her again with her husband, having shaken herself free from her greyness, smiling and thanking us for our gifts and the time we took to walk the final few kilometres with her. She thanked us and went back to her small meal. We denied that we had done much, both to her and after between ourselves, that we were happy to have been there to offer what little we had at the time. A few of us met up with her once more in Sahagún at a local fiesta, where we ate food offered us by the local people and danced through the night. Then, as is so often the case, we never saw each other again. Our time began with gifts of food and drink and ended with

them, the entry and the exit equally abrupt, the time of our contact leaving us sensing the serendipity and the salubriousness of our chance encounters. After, we picked up our bags and walked on.

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What can be gleaned from that woman's misfortune that can reveal something about the human condition or the conditionality of humanity? A literal reading of this short tale shows that we can find ourselves lucky to be in a position to be generous, to give life and share it; it tells us about the possibility of giving, freely, without need of repayment. The story even permits us opportunities (gives us leave) to feel good about ourselves, for first giving water, then for receiving food, for receiving the story in the present moment, for identifying with values hidden in the story, hidden in our hidden expectation of its meaningfulness.

There are several other threads in the story, though (and in the chapter), that seek to comprehend this story and others like it, threads that are weaves of time, 'gift', a certain kind of being and being-with on the road. Let us explore the possibility of the gift, or rather, following Derrida (1992), the possibility of the impossibility of the gift (of time). How will that change our understanding of the story? What kind of time are we able to speak of in giving, if what we give is time (what we give must be *in* time)? We gave our time to Genevieve, we gave it in time, and we gave in time, before it was too late. But Derrida asks, can we really give *time* (1992:3)? How does time actually *belong*? Really, then, we give time metonymically, in that when we speak of time, we rarely if ever do so as 'Time'; instead, our references are to the *contents* of time, and how we fill

'our' time. By giving in time (temporally), then, and in time (in a timely fashion), 'Time' is neither given nor received, it is the contents of time that are *exchanged* (Derrida 1992:3). Does this possibility of the gift bring us closer together, as my story has cleverly suggested, or has it created a rupture in time (a rupture of time)? Has it confirmed what we might have expected about generosity or did our gifts (what we gave, what we were given) ultimately take time?

Generosity is not the form of the gift, and neither is the gift evidence of a disinterested timeliness nor mere chance. Rather the game of giving and taking that seems to be innocent instead involves pilgrims in complex webs of exchange that are in part responsible for a different experience of the pilgrimage, from one of individualistic rugged movement to that of a series of collective projects of travelling together. To talk about time and the gift, Derrida suggests, is a 'laborious artifice', "as if for the sake of economy, one sought to treat two subjects at once. And that is in fact the case, for reasons of economy. But economy here is the subject" (1992:6). The theory of the gift explored here exposes the ways in which our sense of the flow of different kinds of time creates "fields of temporal practice" (Perkins 2001) that govern our understanding of ourselves in the world.

Another thread that weaves through the story is that of madness, through Genevieve's frenzied search for water under the midday heat, through our foolish wandering across Spain in search of ourselves, through the absurd ways pilgrims encounter each other. Madness is part of this story, not just through its

etymological connections with wandering,[63] but also as part of the exchanges pilgrims undertake, as denials or dissimulations of economic rationality. Any other economy has to be (by definition) a-rational or irrational: mad by any other name, whether the madness be part of a pre-capitalist heritage, the remnants of a Dionysian abandon within Spanish culture, or whether what is irrational is of our own imagination.

'Pure' gifts, as acts of generosity, partake in a rational economy even as they deny it, positing the possibility of exchange and rupturing that suggestion of being unreturnable. The gift cannot be returned, the recipient (Genevieve, who received the water) must deny the gift as a gift in order to receive it as a gift. The giver, for his part cannot countenance a return, lest the gift be rejected or cancelled out. The gift in short becomes 'aneconomic', "if the figure of the circle is essential to economics, the gift must remain aneconomic. Not that it remains foreign to the circle, but it must *keep* a relation of foreignness to the circle, a relation without relation of familiar foreignness. It is perhaps in this sense that the gift is impossible" (Derrida 1992:7). Indeed, Derrida goes on to argue, wherever time is circular, the gift is impossible. The moral value of the gifts in Genevieve's tale, the requirement to read our gifts as 'gifts' is exposed as a critique of economic reason as she reaches in her thirsty madness (her mad thirstiness) for the poisoned present, the remedy (or *pharmakon*, see Derrida 1991:124ff) of the water. Our denial that we had done anything is a further instance, a continuation of her madness: 'forget it!' Forget the gift? Such a negative command is impossible to obey, having to keep in mind what it is that we must forget, like Genevieve remembering to forget that one should not (she

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[63] See for instance Zilcosky's excellent examination of the relation between the German *fahren* denoting a particular mode of travel, here rejected by Camino pilgrims, and the reflexive verb *sich verfahren* to lose one's way (Zilcosky 2003:74), as read in the works of Franz Kafka.

should not) drink undrinkable water. A similar madness pervades; in order to preserve a relationship enacted through gift-giving, it is imperative to deny the possibility of that gift being actually returned, to return exactly that gift, or an exact equivalent is to deny the trace of obligation that sustains relationships.

What is given then? If the gift is not a gift then what has happened to the gift event? Derrida proposes that though the phenomenon of the gift remains, as event or as simulacrum (the phantom of a gift), what are really given are the contents of time (1992:41). What moved between us was not only the time to continue sheltering from that hot day, but also the time of our next meeting, on the streets in Sahagún, dancing and celebrating the Camino, and the gift as non-gift. In my madder moments, I imagined the fiesta, as a potlatch counter-gift, the whole village killing us with kindness for the time that we gave to Genevieve (giving Genevieve time to recover herself), where we gave and forgot. For the gift of time (the time of the festival, shared with us, ephemeral pilgrims) that we got and forgave (so intoxicated did we become), as we received the local generosity. Our denials of any gift having taken place were met with a measured non-reciprocation that both signalled the gift had been received gratefully and that eliminated the possibility of generosity having taken place. The gift, its impossibility and its challenge to pilgrims instead opens into an economy of meaning that orients them (or rather faces them *west* instead of east) and ruptures the circularity of the implied exchange and its dissimulation in both cases, in the 'wilderness' and in Sahagún afterwards (always for Derrida afterwards).

The larger point for me was how time may have been given, taken or otherwise made available in certain forms and through specific actions that created the conditions of a different, new or necessary time, to be deployed for

the good of pilgrims, by their own hand or through the interventions of others. The economy of exchange, the interruption and suspension of a rational economy by the madness of impossible gifts, reveals the possibility of possibility in the impossible economy of gift exchange. How can one exchange gifts without destroying the idea of the gift, by returning or by replacing it? I think also of gifts left in the refuges, the equipment not yet given, evoking the possibility of givenness, while their very presence suspends their givenness as event. How does one interrogate the conditions of this madness, this forgetting and the forgetting of forgetting that destabilises the possibility of the gift, producing in its wake a time out of time, a non-place outside the circle of exchange, "an atopic and utopic madness, *perhaps*..." (Derrida 1992:35)? No wonder the Camino began life as a passage to a 'wild' and 'mad' place.

Yet pilgrims' quests tend to be about something different, other than either economy or salvation, while always being about some kind of salvation, salving, healing, rejoining, and a return to innocence. This economy of salvation suffuses pilgrims' time, the already (as return to innocence; see Heintz 2005:178), the right now (walking in grace) and the not yet (the Last Days), bending temporalities even as they play their parts on the pilgrimage, walking and talking as pilgrims, secretly agreeing that talk is just that, and the walk, well that is always something else. It is a madness of ambivalence, not quite a "schizopathogenic double bind" (Derrida 1992) with our bound god (in his box, waiting for his cue), but a facing and forgetting (in the sense of overcoming) our reasons for being in these 'wild' places.

A friend of mine once commented that when you read Derrida, you end up feeling as if you have been given nothing. What can we take from his insights

on giving and time that helps us understand pilgrim behaviour? Andrew Irving (2005:323) argues that at particular points in a person's life, one needs to creatively engage with self, other and world through activities such as walking "where intentions, desires, eyes, lungs and legs coalesce into an unconscious habitual activity", allowing for a different 'social density' that alters the 'character, mood and possibility of [a] place:

> "people learn to test out their bodies at strategic times within different contexts for different purposes, thereby recalling the etymological origin of 'experience' wherein *ex* signifies 'out of' while *peira* means 'attempt, trial, test'. As Edward Casey suggests, 'places, like bodies and landscapes, are something we experience ... and to have experience is to make a trial, an experiment, out of living. It is to do something that requires the proof of the senses, and often of much else besides'" (Irving 2005:323).

Exchange activity changes the character, mood and possibility of a place, but it does so because of the necessary fictions of what a gift is and can be, who 'we' are and how that 'we' might connect to a larger world. We might connect, in not only a present-centred sensing, but as part of and imagination of who 'we' have been as part of a collectively remembered grouping and who 'we' imagine ourselves becoming, further on into the future. Dilley (2005:236) argues, though, "forms of social memory can also be read as genealogies of power," where "time is a system of power in itself". Thus Derrida's examination of the group activity and the generation of a timeline is a warning not so much of the evil of exchange as the danger of power and our constant vigilance against what fictions we acquiesce to in our efforts to find new forms of being.

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Many layers of time and timing intersect and diverge in such places as the Camino. The daily quotidian trudge westwards produces many temporalities; the

regimented refuge time (refuge from what, when the hostels are stark places of contact with what pilgrims are trying to outrun), time shared (given amongst each other, another madness: time becomes a meagre ration among refugees, seeking refuge from the refuges; the angel's cloak become the iron cage of 'rational' irrationality), rhythmic time (the clack of walking sticks on the road, the steady pace, and easy rhythms of the walk), syncopated time (of the new and the unanticipated). Time out of time (holidays within holidays, a day extra in city, a detour), ruptures exchange's circularity to give a different linearity to time, a linear being as being-there, being-for-itself, a choice between loss of faith or loss of bad faith (as many pilgrims are lost as are saved on the Camino). Here the rupture is greater: madness and faith are closer together, both in a figure of otherness to any *economy* of reason as to an economy of salvation.[64] Time takes temporal form, new time that is a break, to be sure, but from what? The past? For what? The future? Is there circularity in the gifts from the start of the story to those at the end, from need to freedom?[65]

The pilgrimage can act then, to promote a fresh time, between temporal fields, a time distant from the temporal "unidirectional vector" (Hsu 2005:159) of the everyday, a phenomenological temporal rupture, what Schutz spoke of as "unifying inner durée and outer (social) 'cosmic time' within a 'vivid present'"

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[64] See Derrida (2002c) for his exploration of the confluence of knowledge and faith "at the limits of reason alone" in modern Western 'religious' economies.

[65] Maureen Perkins locates modern understandings of time as products of 19th century industrialisation, a struggle "to confirm historical optimism as the foundation of social and economic behaviour in nineteenth century Britain" (2001:5). By replacing or relegating 'older' beliefs to the category of superstition, reformers throughout the industrialising countries of the Western world made a case for labour as a means of self-improvement and of civilising popular culture in the new industrial age. As a result, older ideas of superstition as an erroneous religious belief were replaced with the notion that it was an incorrect and unfruitful means by which to make predictions about the future. Thus, a confluent process of colonising the future, using rational thought to define the horizons of progress, took over from a strictly religious interpretation of superstition and its folksy bedfellow, magic. Perkins argues, "in appropriating the previously magically functions of prediction, modern forecasting has become a powerful means of excluding alternative interpretations of the future" (2001:6).

(see Good 1994:126). Thus, the Camino approaches the structural conditions of a rite of passage, whereby the pilgrim is integrated into an emerging temporal logic while travelling. Mills (2005:351) states that time fractures when the self is most susceptible to fracturing, "moments of social death, radical personal transformation and generational transition."[66]

It is not simply a case of validating a particular temporal logic, but, "it is the particular act of integrating the individual into a general time scheme, rather than the acceptance of that scheme as a general abstract model that marks the moment of real ideological hegemony" (Mills 2005:350). This process of integration is made 'culturally loud' (Parkin in Hsu 2005:168n2) through the progressive percussive incorporation of pilgrim into pilgrimage. The daily walk, the constant rhythmic clack of the pilgrim's bordón on the road, the bells of the cows at dawn and of the churches at noon (the Camino Santiago Compostela Pilgrimage website in fact provides a range of sounds from the Camino in MP3 format), the regular bar-stops and the habituated movements in line with the rhythms of the towns and cities that pass by; siesta, lunch, refuges closing exactly at ten in the evening, all these timings percussively mark the now and the inchoate 'we' (Fernandez 1991) walked into being as pilgrims travel along the French Way.

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The story that surrounds our walk in the meseta could not be more different, yet the story is archetypal, echoing a human need, a search for

[66] Thus, he reminds us, we find the explanation for the tradition in England of stopping or covering up clocks upon a death in the family.

revelation and relationship in pathless places. It is the story of Yahweh and his chosen people, of gifts in the desert and the exodus (from the Greek *ex hodos*, pathless way). That story still draws people to seek out a wilderness today. The Hebrew people took their god's (Yahweh) promise "I will be who will be [*ehyeh asher ehyeh*]" (Ex. 3:14) to underline the instability of the present moment and the impossibility of its capture in language; Ancient Hebrew had no use for a present tense. In the language of the Covenant, it was a new future that would hold the revelation of the Jewish people as 'people of God'; the exchange between God and Israel defined a Jewish way of life and eschatology.

When new modes of exchange are introduced, what we might call reality (or 'being') itself is affected by an altered sense of temporality, the changing of what Schutz called the "common sense perspective" of "shared time" (see Good 1994:124), remade according to the logic of a new mode of exchange. Such a change however is not altogether to be feared, as in the case of the Camino, where these changes can open new fields of opportunity for pilgrims, breaking the habitual, suffocating sense of the present moment. An ironic stance towards one's pilgrimage is of greatest value. Within this new and thoroughly modern frame of time, pilgrims can explore their ability to act on their own behalves at the edges of structural constraints on their lives.

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In order to develop a cogent approach to time as an anthropological category of experience, then, we must unpack notions of time that orient us, the covert cultural logic of time as passage, duration and progress to reveal it as social praxis, as apprehension of self, other and world through particular cultural

forms. We must consider the ways in which time may be something other than a universal march of seconds in the history of progress. In an article for the Sunday Tribune, Stephen Collins (2005) writes about the importance of 1916 for Ireland. Not, as you might imagine, that 1916 marked the first revolutionary steps to realising the dream of an Irish Freestate. Rather, in 1916 standard time was introduced to Ireland, with Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) replacing Dublin Mean Time (DMT) in that year. Before that, Dublin ran behind London by a good 25 minutes. Because Ireland was supposed to run on Dublin Mean Time, as set out by the Time Act (1880), did not mean that many places 'outside the pale' actually did. Time was standard only for the running of the trains, while in many parishes, the local parish priest judged the arrival of the sun directly overhead and proclaimed noontime. Of course, Belfast could not conform to DMT and the Albert Clock, Belfast's Big Ben, ran on local time until GMT was rolled out. These examples show that not only is time malleable in the social imaginary, but that it is a political animal too. In the march of progress, "the dictatorship of time" as Collins calls it, marked out the gentleman as one who could tell time without having to resort to his watch.[67] This was also Jules Verne's opinion on the matter, where punctuality consciously became a measure and a mode of civilisation.[68] This points to the necessity for a particular idea of

[67] Apart from the use of watches and clocks as visible and tangible symbols of nascent civilisation in industrialising nations, the calendar has also played a key part in laying the psychological foundation for the "Lockean promise" (Perkins 2001:29) of individual opportunity, collective progress and national pride. The calendar in fact has been an effective barometer of cultural change, from dense eighteenth century texts, crowded with ecclesiastic and historical days of remembrance, to a near blank document where the dates represent *tabulae rasa*, blank spaces where appointments and dates of more immediate importance can be recorded and recalled more easily. The new calendars linked ideas of progress with the flow of time itself (Perkins 2001:25), resisting the more traditional forms of marking time that recalled the past in favour of establishing a bright future for the calendar's owner.

[68] "Clocks and watches, 'the glamour technology of the eighteenth century', were eulogised as expressions of order and dependability" (Perkins 2001:12). Temporal politics began to be important in instantiating a narrative of progress in the West; the establishment of Greenwich as

time, a constant, measured succession of seconds and minutes to be internalised by the aspiring gentleman to engender a kind of temporal habitus in him.

Where have we arrived at in this march of time? Ciaran Carson provides a rich perspective on time as he unpicks a clever advertising campaign for Guinness. In his book on Irish music, food and time, *Last Night's Fun*, Carson (1996) masterfully captures the moment in which both the time as a commodity that is spent thriftily and its converse, the time that constitutes the remnant of capitalist time, what Guy Debord (1992) called 'everyday life', can be understood as produced by a capitalist temporal logic. Between the two halves of an American football game, Carson's eyes fix on an advert for Guinness on the television. This advert has the camera follow the gaze of the man waiting for his pint, focussing in on the settling bubbles in the TV pint and spinning in to reveal a series of "microscoped and magnified" (Carson 1996:34) ephemeral worlds available within the Guinness. Having completed the zoom into the pint (of Guinness), the camera zooms back out to reveal the slogan "There's no time like Guinness time". Therefore, Carson concludes, "the inbuilt design flaw in Guinness – its reluctance to be poured and settle instantly in consumer-friendly fashion – is made into an ally. The act of waiting becomes an adventure; it is quality time, where the world is on pause" (Carson 1996:35). Of course, the real sleight of hand played on the consumer is that the modern recipe for Guinness does not require a 'second pour'; the pint can be poured in one go. The old method of having to pour a little black and put the head on separately has long since been done away with. It no longer takes any time to learn to pull a pint, only to wait for it and pay for the experience. Guinness time is sold as a brief

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the temporal centre of the world in 1884 put Britain at the forefront of any measure of civilisation and progress in the rest of the world. Likewise, attempts to retain local time were seen as challenges to England's temporal power and vision of progress.

interlude from consumer time, time spent waiting is actually sold back to the customer with the drink as a gift from the brewer. That is the genius of Guinness; capitalising on time as a rationalised commodity. Time is money, but it can also make money, if consumers are willing to buy time.

Moving from the pub to the pilgrim (not a long journey at all), the pilgrimage holds a special kind of time, a time out, a time away from time. A good analogy is from the movie The Matrix, where the hero has sufficient control over the passage of time that he may slow it in order to examine more closely events happening around him.[69] This form of cinematic time has become known as 'bullet time'. Biographical time on the Camino can be considered as a form of 'bullet time', where biographies can be re-imagined and life decisions re-configured (see Ricoeur 2002). One's everyday life can thus be put on hold insofar as that life signifies a remnant of Western time overly portrayed as necessarily progressive and utilitarian. Conversely, people can waste time on the Camino, creating a more conscious idea of time as composed (composed for instance of a 'before', a 'during' and an 'after' the pilgrimage).

The morality of our actions is somewhat different in pilgrimage spaces, to take Kleinman's (1997) heuristic definition of the moral, shows us that something more is at stake; that the very trajectory of our lives is under scrutiny. Therefore, the choices that have carried us along a particular path must be put on hold for our lives to be examined.[70] Only after the pilgrimage will this experience of 'Camino time' become historical and moral. By this I mean that the conclusions of time spent will thus begin to take on consequences in

[69] I feel less conscious of including Hollywood in my body of sources since having read the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's book on the WTC bombings, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real,* a title taken from the same movie!
[70] The concern for remaking narrative on pilgrimage represents a modern deployment of the pilgrimage. I have discussed the medieval pilgrimage more fully in the introduction.

everyday biographical time and which in turn takes its place within the lifeworlds of those others who surround the returned pilgrim; a biographical time *within* a world system (cf. Marcus 1995).

This kind of pilgrimage time is open-ended and undecided. The physical aspect of passing time, spent in a search for a new experiencing body as much as new experiences, takes on different connotations for people who previously would have spent their time at work, as Belmonte (1989) argues, added on to the end of the production process, just one more cog in the wheel. These same people then spend their leisure time in gyms and on other equipment adding themselves to the capitalist mode of leisure production (consumption *as* production), plugged in instead of turned on. On pilgrimage, they find themselves stretching that process, making contact with an imagination of nature apart from a controlled environment, that is open ended, where the value of this experience is as-yet-undetermined, until the 'after', the pilgrim's structural re-incorporation into 'everyday' life.

When John, my Irish fellow pilgrim, walked between Burgos and León, he departed from his sister's Camino, as she had taken the bus to bypass the meseta. As a result, his mimetic repetition of her final journey was suspended even as he had calculated that he would take up the trail in Burgos exactly one year later. His 'mini-Camino,' as he called it, was not a departure from the Camino as much as an anticipatory refocusing on the last leg of the pilgrimage. The qualities of this week between cities permitted an engagement with the present among that group of pilgrims as the impending reconnection to the more apparent pilgrimage structure lay ahead, deferred and different from the character mood and place of this betwixt and between Camino-within-a-Camino. This was

after all, John's part of the pilgrimage. Later, in León, our group would be ordinary pilgrims again, but John's mimetic walk was able to push past common ideas of walking into the past that is a common theme among pilgrims, the theme of recovery of an idea of a better age. His walk could not contain any recovery, for the only recovery desirable would have been that of his dead sister. Instead, the past that he walked into being became part of "an extended flow of human action," (James & Mills 2005a:2) whereby his mourning for his sister pressed close to her final days and her passing the previous year became synchronous with his mourning in the present (see Dilley 2005:243).

Apart from a continuous present offered in the Western world, the pilgrimage space can offer, through the actions and mutual participation of so-called pilgrims, a sense of time and life as, respectively, tensed and mortal. Pilgrimages offer the opportunity to experience a radical break with everyday life and everyday time, where pilgrimage time becomes more than the constant accumulation of seconds, minutes, hours and days. Time in fact can shrink to a single moment of excruciating pain in a day's walk, or expand out to encompass a month's worth of slow progress across the Spanish countryside as called to mind (and body) from the comfort of a café in Santiago at the end of the pilgrimage. In fact what begins to become apparent to the pilgrim who takes the time (it almost sounds as if one is stealing time from "the West"!), is that time is not simply a measure of units passing us by as we passively spectate. Time itself is motion, flow, movement. Time (and length as well) are measured in motion, (the motion of a Caesium atom in Paris). Time spent in Spain on pilgrimage is time spent on the move, not from one place to the next with Santiago firmly in mind, so much as a deeper level of movement between places and 'occasions of

faith' (Taylor 1995) in the company of others, real (colleagues) and imagined (pilgrim ancestors).

Figure 20 The Camino follows the road into León

CHAPTER FOUR:

Changes and other improvements

"there are many Caminos in the course of your life,

you can use them as a guide or you can use them to enslave you"

written in a guestbook in Villafranca del Bierzo

I have given a name to my pain, and call it dog.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

I had spent a week following John, Pam, Andrej and Gráinne through the meseta, but after León the group was no more, as each pilgrim peeled off to follow his or her own itinerary, whether speeding up, slowing or finishing that leg of the pilgrimage. I found myself alone once more, and I began to seek out others I could walk with and talk to. While walking with a small group of pilgrims, the conversation turned to the story of John's sister Myra who had died while making her pilgrimage the previous year. The narrative of her pilgrimage and sudden passing in Santiago had been retold repeatedly through the networks of pilgrim communities. My three walking companions discussed what the story meant in terms of the Camino. They agreed that she was an 'authentic' pilgrim, a pilgrim who had walked in sincerity and had lost her life on pilgrimage. There was no doubt that one could not be a more serious pilgrim. I found it difficult to accept that the tragedy of her death could be conceived of as evidence of authenticity, though. I could not see how her end could become such an intrinsic

criterion for identifying her status as an iconic pilgrim. Yet, people agreed, her pilgrimage was a committed one, and proved that she was a true pilgrim.

In order to understand the dynamics of authenticity that made Myra's story useful for pilgrims, it is helpful to consider Myra as an example of a charismatic pilgrim. Her story, a gift (a charism) that put a biography and a face on the unknown pilgrim who gave and received goods and equipment in refuges since Roncesvalles, became a central example to think about the pilgrimage as an authentic experience. Just as Csordas (1997) draws out the rhetorical dimensions of charisma that mobilise it as a resource within a community attempting to achieve a consensus on how the world is constituted, so we find that the authentic pilgrim tells us how the pilgrimage as a life within a life is made. Stopping at the growing number of monuments marking the death of pilgrims, for instance, condenses narratives of authenticity and genuine motive into a nodal moment that underpins and transcends the stories that weave the pilgrimage into a meaningful worldview. People gather quietly around these memorials and remember together. By retelling Myra's story, we not only established a mobile centre around which we could gather as an imagined ephemeral community of pilgrims, but we could also begin to explore the possibilities of our Caminos. Monuments became places for a few moments as pilgrims spoke about loss and grief, imagining their pilgrim ancestors and the harshness of times past and the pilgrimage that had cost them their lives.

In the retelling of Myra's story, we can begin to distinguish between the historical fact of Myra's death and its reconfiguration as mythic reality that highlights the pilgrimage's possibilities. Firstly, the event is used by those who hear her story to evaluate their Camino, as an ideal pilgrimage ending, having

braved the month-long journey to die in a state of grace.[71] The story thus displays very attractive dramatic possibilities, where the event becomes useful because Myra becomes a heroic and charismatic pilgrim, persuading those who hear the story about the way the world is constituted. The story was always told, and I heard it retold seven or eight times, to highlight the special circumstances of her passing and the boon of accessing spiritual graces to have died in that manner, peacefully in her sleep, having spent her last weeks on the trip of a lifetime. Myra thus displays special qualities, those of the real or authentic pilgrim, in the retelling. Any evidence to the contrary is ignored; that she travelled the hardest part of the Camino by bus, for instance, did not seem to matter. Instead, the story brings the values of the Camino into focus in one pilgrim's mythologised experience, in her supposed willingness to die on the road, to have prepared for one's death and to walk towards it unknowingly, with neither regret nor tragedy. This surrender to the road and the caprices it can bring, even in such a simple time in a pilgrim's life (simplicity is the most valued experience of all the pilgrims I know) is one of the key themes of her story.[72]

As well as informing an individual sense of value, bestowing the qualities of simplicity and authenticity upon larger-than-life pilgrims, stories such as Myra's, and there are many, facilitate the incremental advance of pilgrims into an imaginative territory that teaches them *how* to walk as well as how to walk right (see Basso 1996). Such stories are orientational devices that become sedimented into the ritual knowledge of the pilgrim community, points of contact in the collective history of an imagined community (see Csordas 1997:117, see also

[71] This state of grace is part of the plenary indulgence granted pilgrims; should they die on the Camino, they die with their sins expiated.

[72] In the moral career of Myra's story, we see that morally death trumps everything and John's walk was crucial for this interpretation; it did not matter that Myra had taken the bus; she died on the way.

Halbwachs 1992) through ongoing interactions between pilgrims meeting everyday, pooling their stories and the meanings they produce from them. My conversation with these pilgrims out of León was one such occasion.

The story is rhetorical, an interaction between teller and audience that reproduces charismatic feeling with every telling. The interaction bestows charisma upon the hearers as part of a collective self-process, producing a group through sharing stories that elucidate a common experience, in this case, that Myra's story belonged to all pilgrims. This was one reason, John told me, that he was sharing the story in the first place. Myra enters the collective as a shared symbol, a means to say meaningful things in particular places at special times, capable of elaborating notions such as sacrifice and authenticity. She became a "communal symbolic resource" that created a particular "genre of ritual language" (Csordas 1997:141), creating expectations around the fate of the community and its members, urging us to care about other pilgrims while we travelled. Most often, I would hear her story as I walked; it formed a commentary on our efforts to finish that day as well as an orientational device to bring about a sense of "callisthenic spirituality" (Csordas 1997:153). The dual activity of retelling a powerful story and walking through the day's increasing heat served to orient the journey morally for pilgrims, so that they could, and did, evaluate the day's efforts in terms of such stories. "A distinctive sacred reality" (Csordas 1997:163) is constituted in the performing of the story as mythic charter. Passing monuments to pilgrims who had passed away before they reached Santiago represented other key moments for pilgrims, and I often saw pilgrims stop for a while at the crosses and statues to imagine the pilgrim who had died and attempt a prayer for him or her, even though most pilgrims were

avowedly walking with non-religious motives. By talking while walking, the lessons of the Camino were received and inculcated as part of the lesson of these special stories, like Myra's, constituting a privileged realm of ritual knowledge that identified initiands; when people offered opinions on the matter, they were implicated in the community of walkers at an ever deeper level. The escalation of the pilgrimage through such stories, the ongoing retelling and rethinking of the other's stories and one's own in company, brings about a phenomenological shift in the way pilgrims experience the Camino. Standing outside a bar in Burgos, John told me about his sister for the first time. I was shocked that his was the story I had been hearing, and began to realise how important Myra had become to the present group of pilgrims I had been walking with. What was even more of a shock was that I had moved quite close to the story, and that it was beginning to have its impact on me too. Myra as an imagined pilgrim became part of my intimate everyday group, as more of her life was told, as we walked, as we sat over meals. There was never a time that John was not allowed to talk about her, never a moment too light that he could not include her by mentioning her name. She became important to that new group, as we would push across the meseta in the coming days.

What does Myra's story as a mythic parable reveal about our argument for the existence of charisma on the Camino? Charisma exists between people, in interactions, not in certain qualities of people. Csordas theorises that charisma is a self-process (1997:133), moving charisma away from Weber's concept that located it as a quality of an individual personality (1997:134). Csordas argues instead, following Sapir (1924), that charisma, like Sapir's concept of culture, may not so much reside in the relationship between leader and followers as

among them. "Could charisma not be a product of the rhetorical apparatus in use of which, leader and follower alike, convince themselves that the world is constituted in a certain way?" (Csordas 1997:139). This refocus on the dimension of charisma as intersubjective and orienting (instead of essential), then (1997:135), accomplishes a range of purposes.

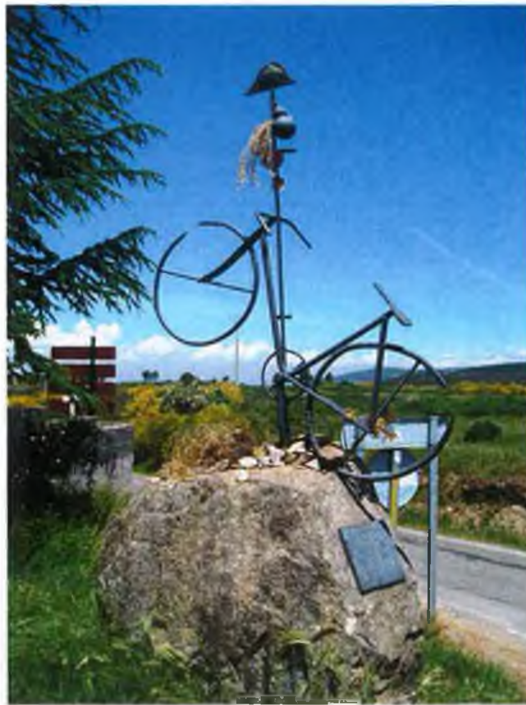

Figure 21 Monument to a German cycling pilgrim outside El Acebo

Csordas characterises the postmodern world that forms the context of human orientational being-in-the-world of the contemporary charismatic movement, as composed of free-floating signifiers in a globalised cultural context that do not cohere under a central authoritative discourse (1997:43). Thus, pilgrims stand before the dual and opposing images of St. James as humble pilgrim and as righteous slayer of moors, side by side in churches from Logroño to León and into Santiago without feeling that any cognitive accommodation

needs to be made for the contradiction in the saint's iconography that these juxtaposed images might propose. St. James as a symbol is powerful and ambiguous because the pilgrimage lacks the discursive means to establish a single interpretation. For the same reasons, though, the pilgrimage tends to be able to stretch across the lives of more pilgrims, accommodating and orienting even non-religious travellers along the way; the symbols are more available because they are less determined. In such a situation, the opportunity for radical experiencing is heightened. While walking the Camino, pilgrims who search for simplicity and authenticity can experience a more democratic form of charismatic experience, a form of leaderless charisma. Thus defined then, charisma is not a quality residing in particular individuals who can be said to be charismatic personalities or 'gifted' people. Instead, charisma is rhetorical (1997:140), and the object of charisma is the self and its orientational being-in-the-world (1997:135). Moreover, there is no "nominal charisma," only charismatic *action*, and that is "a rhetorical process" (1997:145). John is a great example of charismatic action; his daily routine of walking was such that he practically ran the day's journey, but in a relaxed manner, often finishing a full twenty kilometre walk by 11 a.m., far ahead of everyone else. His day's journey was dictated by his retracing of Myra's trip the previous year, and he stayed at the same hostels. The pilgrimage did not wear him down physically at all, and his exploits were legendary, with previous trips to the Himalayas and Kilimanjaro under his belt forming part of his apotheosis among admiring pilgrims. As people kept up with his schedule, they found themselves walking Myra's journey too, and so were implicated in his recreation of her Camino. The special opportunity that sharing his journey involved instilled in pilgrims a sense

of the deeper hidden meanings of the Camino, not the least of which was the constant danger of the body's betrayal at the apex of its achievement. But the outcome of these days for pilgrims who joined for a while and left again, having heard the story of John's sister, was that Myra, as a shared symbol among pilgrims allowed them to share in John's mission. As Csordas emphasises, this somewhat charismatic sense of duty to a mission does not lie in the qualities of a leader; it is part of the rhetoric impetus of charisma as a transformative self-process (1997:151). John was not a leader of pilgrims, rather in the performance of his sister's Camino among other pilgrims, the possibility for re-orientation and transformation, both of self and world, was facilitated. Charismatic action as displayed in stories of great pilgrims allow for "interpretive gaps" (1997:198) that reorder the present reality into a distinctive sacred one constituted through, for instance, the re-enactment of Myra's journey (1997:163). Thus, the charismatic impetus lay among participants in his Camino, not in his pilgrimage as an essential aspect to be gained or lost, a triumph of embodiment over the unhelpful paradox of both being a body and having one.

Charisma can establish a community and a world, orienting lives towards that world. It is located in embodied processes, revealing the hidden presence of the pilgrim body through the repetition of mythic stories (and given behavioural substance through ongoing habitual exposure to the physical pilgrimage). Charisma is persuasive, a discourse of communal orientation, where the constant reforming of nascent groupings around new people and different stories strikes a note with Turner's notion of communitas. The rhetorical impetus of charismatic action is based in charismatic mission of openness to intimacy on the road and

spontaneity, the constant call to continue walking (the discipline of the daily plod) and experience simplicity.

Because charisma can be read as a rhetorical process, participants can be seen to possess varying degrees of rhetorical skill (Csordas 1997:141), deployed within and among others who are attempting similar projects of sensing what Rapport (2002:4) talks about as *machtgefuhl*, or feeling of power. Drawing on a Durkheimian reading of charisma, then, means that a leaderless charisma represents "the empowerment of individuals drawing on the collective force of the group" (McGuire, cited in Csordas 1997:140). The manner in which the degree of skill varies within groups emphasises the group dynamics oscillating between what Alberoni characterised as 'nascent' states and 'institutional' states (cited in Csordas 1997:140).

Charisma can be located in the ritual performance of the pilgrimage, the daily walk, where walking is the mode of engaging the pilgrimage and its mystical qualities, mining self and route for hidden meanings, and where the walking brings individuals into groupings. Walking as rhetoric and talking as performance form two aspects of a process-based theory of charisma. Walking provides what Csordas calls the ritualisation of charisma, while talking provides the basis for the radicalisation of everyday life. These two processes are complementary; different terrain brings new challenges, and the constant movement between groups allows pilgrims to adapt their own stories under reconstruction. By reading the (charismatic) self as, "an indeterminate capacity for orientation in the world, rather than an integral entity that can be lost and found" (1997:151), we begin to see how pilgrims who have begun the effort of

generating meanings grounded in the body can reflectively deploy this new bodily rhetoric within ad hoc groupings of nascent communities.

Using charisma as a tool to think about the mechanics of the pilgrims' process is helpful because charismatic movements do not talk about charisma *per se* anyway. Also, the form of spirituality that takes shape is similar in some ways, that through a spontaneous walk through Spain one can marshal one's circumstances and gain deep friendships with others who share the walk and emerge stronger personally through the physicality of the walk and the shared experiences with other walkers. The stronger body engages the Camino more and the array of interactions reorients the pilgrim in the world and reconfigures his/her imagination of how the world is constituted.

Empowering experiences

Quite a lot of the pilgrimage is tied to a proprioceptive experiencing of the Camino, through pain, through raw, pre-linguistic engagement with the brutal reality of the walk. I was amazed when, having asked one pilgrim why he had walked for two months to Santiago, he fixed me with a stare and replied, "I wanted to feel the Camino in my legs". Such a journey is not only a solitary slog across Spain, though, but a collective enrichment of the experience with other suffering walkers too, as the same pilgrim asked me to consider if I had one word each day what would that word be. I took the hint, put my head down and followed him into León.

So far, I have been charting how pilgrims become 'authentic' travellers through the physical experience of walking over a period of weeks. On the Camino, the pilgrim's body is foregrounded as the foundation of experience to

rebuild a life, a world and a trajectory. How do pilgrims use their bodies to give expression to the blocks that have restricted their life-choices, to the afflictions, whether physical, emotional or mental, that have prevented these pilgrims from feeling that their lives belong to them?

Nicholas Luard walked the Camino in stages over several years, and while his main reason was to allow the Camino become a way for him to cope with the incipient death of his daughter from AIDS, the pilgrimage route provided a context for him to journey back to her youth, being raised in Spain, a time before she had been diagnosed. The Camino became a means to express his utter despair as her death approached. "Faith is no help," he writes; the journey did not resolve the difficulties between the two, "Francesca won. She defied analysis and reconciliation... I can do nothing about her, now or then. Father and daughter did not make their peace" (1998:xi). There is a lot that is touching about Luard's story but when he describes the moment of clearest denouement for his grieving the description is striking. Overwhelmed by the fading, dazzling light of the Spanish sunset as he stood with his two companions outside León cathedral, Luard walks away, goes inside and lights every candle he can find:

> "I emptied the candle box ... and lit every one. Then I knelt and prayed. Take the girl, I said in my mind: you, the carpenter's son, are welcome to her. Welcome to her dark eyes, her tempestuous rages, her boldness and her brilliance. Take the woman off my mind and out of my hair. What do I need a daughter like that for? Far too fierce, far too dangerous. She's yours... But please just take her away, I want no more business with her. And then, as so often, I cried" (1998:193).

I cannot even transcribe the text without attending to the moment of his suffering with my own emotional response. Here we encounter a man who has not had any talking cure, no words to capture his grief, only the experience of that grief as the epitome of, rather than a resolution to, the situation of his

daughter's death. There are other less extreme examples of somatising the unspeakable, for instance when Kerry Egan found herself lost in laughter on the Camino one day, she immediately associated it with a constant feeling of numbness that had subtly plagued her for months (2004:47). In both cases we see emotional expression, grief and laughter respectively, as unlocking deeper states of being; mourning (Kerry Egan's chronically ill father had recently passed away). I want, therefore, to focus below on the possibility of physically expressing these deeper sufferings through bodily afflictions that manifest as injury of some kind from walking the Camino in order to better circumscribe the territory that the term somatisation lays claim to.

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Talking about chronic illness, Arthur Kleinman says that meanings are created "by the sick person and his or her circle to make over a wild, disordered natural occurrence into a more or less domesticated mythologized, ritually controlled, therefore cultural experience" (1988:48). There are ills, though, that do not have a biological referent but which cry out for 'domestication'. There are other, less visible, less nameable, (unspeakable, one might say), ills that visit us without leaving a mark. These problems remain half-hidden, unexplored and festering for years, even decades. Such problems are not mere puzzles, willing to give up their secrets to a simple rational analysis. They hold more in common with the mysterious mask of pain behind which they hide, beyond our conscious grasp. "Pain … is not a simple, static, universal code of nerve impulses, but an experience that continues to change as it passes through the complicated zones of interpretation we call culture, history, and individual consciousness" writes

author David Morris (1991:269). Furthermore, Morris states, "We should not doubt our (unconscious) ingenuity in producing whatever pain we need in order to give expression to woes of the spirit that may be explicit or highly inexplicit" (1991:276).

Pain is much broader than the physical basis of its manifestation. It is more fertile and more insidious in its role in our lives. As we shall see, such pain, while providing us with information that is played out in illness behaviour that, following Kleinman (1997:96), can be read as both moral commentary and political performance, must be enlisted more efficiently in order to release its full semiotic potential. Expressing 'woes of the spirit' in and through the body is a first step, but it is not enough. By inscribing pain onto the body though, we let its "essential aspects" emerge, and like any problem, mysterious or otherwise, "by knowing its character, we remove, if not the problem itself, then its secondary, aggravating characteristics: confusion, displacement, surprise" (de Botton 2000:58).[73]

Broadly, then, somatisation involves the communication of personal and interpersonal problems in a physical idiom of distress and a pattern of pain behaviour that emphasises the seeking of medical help. Somatisation is a,

> "sociophysiological continuum of experience: at one end are cases in which patients complain of bodily ailments in the absence of any pathological bodily process – either as a conscious act (malingering, which is unusual and easy to detect) or as an unconscious expression of life problems (so-called conversion, which is more common); at the other end are cases in which patients who are experiencing the disordered physiology of medical or psychiatric disease amplify beyond explainable levels their symptoms and the impairment in functioning those symptoms create, usually without being aware of their exaggeration" (Kleinman 1988:57).

[73] Here de Botton is not simply writing about factual problems, but about a deeper, existential dread permeating our modern world. Like Morris, de Botton seeks to understand the ingenuity of our spiritual woes in resisting our knowledge of them and persisting until they truly manifest similarities to chronic pain. The authors, however, share another belief, that pain has its uses.

Because we are talking about 'woes of the spirit', not medical or medicalised problems, or pain that began as a physical symptom, we must be careful to clarify somatisation further, though. Kleinman and Kleinman state that somatisation is a phenomenon found more among people of lower socio-economic background, rural, traditional (1985:434); it is not a surprise to me then to find more urbane, educated people deploying a greater cultural and economic capital to express their malaise in a more 'exotic', romantically engaging, Arcadian arena. Such problems do not readily yield to the rational gaze of a medial professional anyway. Somatisation lacks study that shows its "normative and adaptive aspects, nor have [such studies] detailed its function as discourse strategies to open up behavioural options (e.g. time off work, change of jobs, marital separation)..." (1985:475). I agree with Kleinman and Kleinman, though, that somatisation represents the transformation of social activities and problems "either in or out of awareness, into bodily experience" (1988:58). Somatisation does share some characteristics with medicine, though, as both have been produced by the psychologisation of the person, his\her transformation into a subject position and the rationalisation of medical knowledge and skills over the last two hundred years (see Foucault 2001:115, 1989).[74]

A discourse of authenticity, the return of the repressed as a return to the 'real,' precedes the traveller's contact with the pilgrimage but continues to inform its meanings through an attenuating tourist mentality. This mentality vies

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[74] Psychologisation and rationalisation are processes within Western modernisation that have led to an interiorisation; the bodily sensorium and its affective experiences have been afforded "a 'deep' inner meaning and rationalised into discrete categories of emotion" (Kleinman and Kleinman 1985:434). To the point where this psychologisation does not produce a satisfactory 'local cultural setting', then, somatisation is an ironising alternative, expressed within a discourse of a 'return to nature' that the Camino partly relies on to shore up its promotion of 'real' Spain. This 'real' Spain stretches back through a thousand years of history and religion and is available to the walking pilgrim for less than 20 euro a night.

with a locally constructed moral world that the traveller, like so many others, has come to find and which helps move him through his own biographical time. This rationalised and psychologically informed bodily experience of pain, then, is laden with meanings to be explained and understood:

> "In anthropological perspective, somatisation includes interpretive schema for making sense of life problems, rhetorical devices for controlling local relationships by persuading others to provide greater access to scarce resources and empower the somatiser, and symbolic forms that constitute and express salient modes of life in particular cultures" (Kleinman and Kleinman 1985:474).

Walking meaning into being and other fictions

One central role of religion in the life of the pilgrim attends to the question of suffering and its meanings. The question of course is not 'why,' or even 'why suffering'. Instead, the key religious question to be asked and answered is 'why am *I* suffering, here, now?'[75] Why, asked Paul Simon, am I soft in the middle now? The kind of suffering that is most pernicious is one that admits of no cause (immediate or proximate), no reason, and no sign to reveal its intent. Indeed, mental and spiritual anguish resist form and identification quite easily. Scarry (1985:5) calls to mind Woolf's smitten schoolgirl who has Keats or Shelley at her disposal to provide the means and the form of expressing her nascent feelings of love, yet for the man in pain, his only recourse in that moment is to an inchoate scream to do the work of revealing and structuring his suffering.

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[75] See Klass (1995) for an excellent treatment of the pragmatic issues that govern seemingly metaphysical religious questions: "in all societies the pragmatic issues – why *this* specific disaster occurred now, to *us* – must be addressed continually. It is the need to ask such questions, deriving as it usually does from nonhypothetical anguish and fear, that tends to precipitate trepidation, awe and uncertainty" (1995:57, original emphasis).

In a world that can be characterised by the loss of central authority, and the disembedded, free play of signifiers (Csordas 1997:43), the scream is not so dramatic a device for self-expression.[76] Pilgrims scream. They do it as they travel over the wide dustbowls of the central meseta, often, and even together. The feeling of standing small in a wide world under the open sky calls for the pilgrim to connect, to reach out and make contact. So they scream, they roar and they shout. It achieves many simple ends. Walking with a layer of dust in the heat and the stench of one's own body, pilgrims (and I have witnessed this) goad each other to roar and laugh together at the release of hormones and voice, highlighting a disconnection between words and meanings even as the body is provided or 'given' a voice. Screaming is intensely private and yet profoundly public – in the presence of a screamer, one shares the intimacy from 'outside'; it means everything and nothing.

Munch's painting of the Scream is a striking study of such an encounter. The Scream is silent, as if frozen, yet its full meaning may be that the figure in the frame is merely witnessing the scream, coming from a nearby asylum. Thus the background, previously thought to be the cause of the figure's existential crisis, provides a moral commentary and structural counterpoint to the conditions giving rise to the terror of the unseen inmate, the unthinkable freedom of nature, the chaos symbolised in the dark swirls in the background, and the distorted figure as mediator between scream and viewer. In fairness, I may be pushing the Scream a little beyond its intention as a work of art, but the setting for the painting was close to Oslo's largest abattoir, and the site of the asylum where Munch's sister was interned. Thus, the combined screams of the animals and the

[76] The following short section is based on Csordas' (1997:55) analysis of Pentecostal glossolalia, where I am positing connections between spontaneous expressive and inchoate shouting on the Camino and the 'natural' and impromptu divine utterances of charismatics at prayer.

inmates of the asylum were said to be quite frightening. This outside-frame context is what Barthes called a picture's *punctum*, which provides the energy of the image. The energy of the Scream is not the scream itself though; it is the "energetic interpretant" (Peirce 1932:5.476) that the hidden scream produces in the visible figure. Thus, the Scream is not about one dialogic interaction between an inside and an outside; rather it is a meditation on a series of possible interactions. Is the scream emanating from the visible figure, a violent exteriorisation of his (her?) inner state, or are we witnessing a different exteriorisation of the inner state of the inmate by the witness; are we witnessing one scream or two? The continuing dialogic production of the promise of sound and the delivery only of images, construct a series of sound-suggestions, sounds in their Firstness, inchoate screams that name the inner state as at least at that moment unnameable. However, that 'unnameable' quality is the beginning of a process of naming, of acknowledging disordered inner experience through bodily manifestations and gestures: Munch's screaming figure holds his/her head in his/ her hands, mouth and eyes wide open. The pregnant potential of the painting is that it underscores that certain experiences are indeed unnameable, that the expression of meaninglessness is of key importance.

Nevertheless, meaning must be made, and the death of language is but a moment in its transmigration to another form; the world is unmade and made again in the body in pain (Scarry 1985:5). Constantine Constantius (one of Kierkegaard's *noms de plume*) sums it up, "a speck in one's eye, believe me, is enough to collapse an entire worldview". Religion and myth, as we have seen, are well equipped to begin the work of making sense of such meaninglessness in suffering, a fact not lost on the philosopher of Christianity. The entirety of

culture, according to Scarry, is charged with the task, but for our purposes, we will attend to the role of religion and myth as two aspects of broader cultural processes engaged in the same endeavour.

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The pivotal moment in the Christian narrative of suffering is the agony in the garden, an agony that stands in contrast to Greek ideas of *agonia*; preparing to be a victim. Taken literally, it is the moment of the apotheosis of innocent suffering and the suffering of innocence, conjoining the heroic and the stoic. The Christ of the Gospels prepares to suffer for all those condemned; he begins his *agonia*, a process of psyching himself up for the coming day, to augur in a new world order.[77] The power of religion is that it characterises a relationship with a god who is capable of being swayed by supplication,[78] where the effort of the pilgrimage can be an instance of a Machiavellian power play or a Nietzschean 'will to power' being acted out. Whether or which, religion does begin the task of sense-making and encoding experience through mythic narratives, rituals and symbols, a task that is especially potent for the peregrino, the wanderer on the pathless trail to Santiago (the ironic pilgrim to his own shrine and Janus-like slayer of Christianity's enemies). Religions provide a starting point for modern heroes to conquer their own suffering, to know and make peace with it. Religion, however, does no more than suggest the destination; possibilities that are more magical abound for the concerned and ironic pilgrim.

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[77] The evangelists can only guess of course what may have happened, but then the gospels are not history so much as mythic charter, outlining an ideology of meaningful pain and right suffering.

[78] To pray, Ambrose Bierce tells us, is "to ask the laws of the universe be annulled in behalf [sic] of a single petitioner confessedly unworthy".

Suffering collapses the lifeworld into sufferer's body, reducing the ability to act as an agent on his or her own behalf (see Good 1994:124ff). The Greek heroes embodied it and the Christian martyrs relied on it; in Oedipus's broken feet and Saint Sebastian's upturned eyes. Both cosmologies have informed our sense of suffering. Morinis testifies to its power: "Life is hard, uncertain, fearful. I suffer. I am incomplete. But I have heard tales ... legends ... scraps of stories ... where all answers abide and problems dissolve ... I set out ... to tap that boundless power that will save the dilemma of my life" (Morinis 1992:28). It all depends, though, on asking the right questions; in *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Stanley Tambiah (1990) has a beautiful anecdote about Meyers Fortes requesting a demonstration of a rainmaking ceremony (for a price), whereupon the rainmaker replied, "don't be a fool, whoever makes a rain-making ceremony in the dry season?"

Let us consider the relationship then between bodily suffering and religious discourses of pilgrimage that may inform meanings emergent from that painful experience of walking the Way (see Glucklich 2003:37). Beyond the figure of Christ (or indeed our hero, Santiago), the history of Christian hagiography is peppered with figures available for us to consider this relationship, from Saint Sebastian to Teresa of Avila (see Morris 1991:126-134). Each saint provides an example of suffering unto death (martyr) as a sign pointing beyond itself, providing a bodily text, too, by which suffering may be read, not merely as a sign, but as a witness (*martus*) to the total impact of suffering. Sebastian, for example, brings together the arrow as symbol of pain inflicted, as ecstatic and agonising penetration, and (divine) healing in the form of Apollo (who has been partially subsumed by the cult of Saint Sebastian).

Recall in fact that 'toxin' comes from the Greek word for arrow, 'pain' from *poena* (penalty), 'agony' from *agonia* (a test), and *hamartia,* the New Testament term for 'sin,' is an archery term (meaning roughly to 'miss the mark'). Catholic mythology and English language are rich with such associations capable of evoking and comprehending a more profound experience if only we knew of them. "I might repeat to myself," said Dorothy Parker, "slowly and soothingly, a list of quotations beautiful from minds profound, if I can remember any of the damn things".

Teresa had her own peculiar relationship to pain, too; she wrote that her 'divine rapture' was the result of her heart being pierced with the angel's arrow, an encounter that echoes classical erotic meetings with the divine, so common in Greek mythology (and in the annunciation as conception through the ear)! Kerry Egan (2004) describes Teresa's propensity to suck the pus from the wounds of others, in order to press close to their pain in ways that were not possible through words alone.[79] Images of rapture like these take the body's carnality as granted and rework them into another context that, in drawing the sufferer into a world filled with pain, attempts to signify a world imagined without suffering (in the Christian sense of a world *after* pain). In Saint Sebastian's case, it was via his upturned eyes (the only consistent feature of his representation), in Teresa of Avila's, the internal castle of her soul.

Whatever the merits of the theology, the point is that pain in the Christian imagination has been something to be faced, embraced and employed to press closer to (heavenly) rewards through denying the body in pain, rather than in numbness. "I'd rather face my punishment in this life than in the next",

[79] Teresa's own vision of the agony of the garden was centred on the moment when Jesus asked for his cup to be taken from him: because it was full, he wanted another, empty one to bring to his crucifixion.

Catherine of Siena told her doctor when he warned her of the dangers of her bulimic behaviour. In contrast, our modern 'culture of painlessness' denies that pain is really a part of the human condition. Modernity reverberates with fascinating examples of this aspiration to narcotisation, from the Boston Gardens monument commemorating the first surgical use of ether and bearing the inscription from Revelations "and there shall be more pain," to the 'revelation' that worldwide consumption of aspirin alone was over thirty thousand tons as we entered the eighties (Morris 1991:61ff). The potential of religion to frame a discourse of suffering within a meaningful narrative, while attractive, does not allow us to hit bedrock in this discussion, though; we must delve deeper. It is helpful for us to think of pain not as a strictly biological or religious phenomenon, then, but as pain behaviour that can be learnt and unlearnt (Jackson 1994:216). Habits of pain felt and not felt (ignored or numbed) have to be relearnt, and to relearn them one has to remake one's world to accommodate new repertoires of pain behaviour in new arenas. "It is not necessarily at home that we best encounter our true selves. The furniture insists that we cannot change because it does not; the domestic setting keeps us tethered to the person we are in ordinary life but who may not be who we essentially are" (de Botton 2002:59).

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Oliver Sacks (1985) describes the case of Christina, "The Disembodied Lady", a 27-year-old female who was admitted to hospital to have gallstones removed. Complications led to her subsequently describing a situation where she felt that her body had disappeared. The neural fibres in Christina that had provided proprioceptive information to the parietal lobes had, permanently as it

turned out, ceased to function because of an infection. Her body had ceased to automatically orient itself in space, and so she found herself floundering, having 'forgotten' where she had put her hands or feet.[80] The pre-cognitive and unconscious spatiotemporal orientation, which forms part of our common sense perception of shared space and single sovereign body (see Good 1994:124), had been taken away in Christina. Sacks points out that what Wittgenstein states is true for epistemology, "if you do know that here is one hand, we'll grant you the rest" (cited in Sacks 1985:43) may hold for physiology and psychology as well (1985:42). From an Archimedean beginning in thought, Wittgenstein held that the unquestionable nature of the body, its proprioceptive certainty, provides the bedrock of common sense experience. It quickly becomes clear though that this may be a troublesome starting point as he concedes that there may be *no* grounds for doubting the body's existence. His book on the matter, titled *On Certainty*, Sacks concludes, might have been entitled *On Doubt*, for all the doubt that pervades the book. Wittgenstein worries if that bedrock of certainty may be removed in particular situations, whether the body might fade from certainty into a fog of radical doubt. It is at this point that Sacks, with his 'disembodied lady'; begins his case history and exploration of the uses of doubt through the onset of pain to engage with a world (and a body) that has become disengaged from the person.

The case of 'witty ticcy Ray' (Sacks 1985:87ff), too, reveals the difficulty of easily locating the 'true' person and the 'afflicted' person, as Ray moves from being a Tourette's sufferer during the week, where he takes medication to treat his Tourette's, to being *liberated* by his Tourette's on the weekend, where he is a

[80] The three control aspects of spatial orientation are the proprioceptive, the labyrinthine and the visual, working together to produce an internal picture of the world and our place and position in it (Sacks 1985:71).

drummer in a jazz band. As Nietzsche said, "I have traversed many kinds of health, and keep traversing them... And as for sickness, are we not almost tempted to ask whether we could get along without it? Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit" (cited in Sacks 1985:96). Are we to understand that affliction is not something to be avoided; rather that through pain lays a greater freedom?[81]

So why do we give pain names, if not to bring the condition into culture. Naming draws the immediacy of the experience of hazy numbness into Secondness, revealing it as information to be coded culturally. This information often takes the form of emotions, which are first felt in their immediacy, anchored in the body as the ground of experience and culture, then expressed as "hypotheses of affect" (Daniel 1989:93), the first step in building a sense of reality and continuity. Using our bodies, we bring *unwanted* Firstness into consciousness, into Secondness to ground it. Emotionality emerges as a simplifying hypothesis that can be brought into the realm of the generalised Final/Normal Logical Interpretant and thus addressed, (if not finally and logically).

The individual can actually be considered a 'dividual' (Daniel 1989:90), as an open-ended leaky (multiple) subjectivity engaged in similar semeiotic activity, "embedded in the flux of transactions and process, [for] to be bounded is to be static, and to be individuated is to be dead" (1989:90), a phenomenological

[81] "To be ourselves," Sacks writes, "we must have ourselves, and the question of possession becomes foremost, whose narrative is this?" (Sacks 1985:105). For Korsakov's patients, this loss of narrative continuity produces a psychosis by which the invention of a narrative, to replace what is lost, becomes paramount and occupies their full attention. Narrative's crucial component is its enlisting dramatic structure to 'subjunctivize reality'. "To be in a subjunctive mode is to traffic in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties" (see Good 1994:153). What Sacks is sketching in his book then is a phenomenological and narrative approach to healing that can highlight what has failed us in our bodies and our lives; "the narrators, the person with an illness, family members participating in their care, medical professionals – are in the midst of the stories they are telling" (Good 1994:153).

self process, built up more out of the work of signs than by any implicit sense of boundedness or sovereignty (see Eriksen 1997). The self then is multiple and selves need self-talk, a kind of narrative reciprocity that gathers the self's voices towards a diffuse coherence to maintain a sense of identity. Thus, the narrative (as a Third) represents a giving and taking that comprises a self; an economy of narratives established through an ecology of affect.[82]

Narrativity establishes a network of meanings that communicate laterally, forming plots out of non-linear events. Ricoeur famously said that lives are lived and stories are told, but what if the opposite was also the case. What if lives were told and stories were lived? This kind of narrativity then, as a form of creative negotiation, producing self-talk within a community of meanings and interpretations, works from a different trope than that of the commutative language and logic of nation-state and body-self. The trope of economy here plays into Peirce's notion of transactions of signs comprising the self. The self in this trope is seen as constantly engaged in a series of intersubjective moments to maintain the nucleus of the self as a meaningful, creative, experiencing subject.[83]

Sacks (1985) gives a fantastic treatment of our need for narrative to constitute us as individuals; for instance, given that, biologically, we share a sense of commonality at a species level, our narratives distinguish us. What is

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[82] What then can we say about humanity? Daniel, following Peirce, states that man is, "a symbol, enjoined by a Final/Normal Interpretant. This does not mean that men and women as humans *qua* humans are to be emotionless or incapable of unreflective action. It means that a fully human person has emotions and actions that are already contained or evolving towards containment by the mediating acceptance of a Third, viz. culture, with its complex web of meanings and habits of thought and action" (1989:91).

[83] Likewise, to use a notion of ecology of affect is not to essentialise the feeling subject; each human subject is essentially relational. The locus of affect may be in the individual, but the individual is a "leaky subjectivity" (Holliday & Hassard 2001), and even the most biological of emotions are not completed so to speak until they are revealed within cultural codes. "Bodily suffering distorts the landscape of thought, rendering our previous construction incoherent and incomplete" (Kirmayer, cited in Low 1994:143). Therefore, we have to examine the production of affect, of sentiment, of emotion and of feeling within the context of behavioural environments, rather than as Cartesian subjects,

fascinating about the 'disembodied lady' is how, when her proprioception is completely removed through illness, she sets about creating a 'natural' way of being that is positively theatrical, robbed as it is of a pre-cognitive relaxation into habit that guides the rest of us. "Being natural is the greatest pose I know," said Oscar Wilde, and for this woman the only one she can know.

There is however, a great lesson to be gleaned from Christina's medical history. It is one to help us understand the possibilities for the pilgrim's progress, as movement backwards, to re-learn (and re-educate) the body. The body can be the ground of knowing, as a starting point for what Schutz (see Good 1994:124) called the "common-sense reality" of knowing self, other and world existentially, immediately and confidently, and sustained by a taken-for-granted natural attitude.

This natural attitude is the focus of Alfred Schutz's phenomenological inquiry into the social world. Schutz identifies and unpacks aspects of the common, taken-for-granted consciousness we hold about the world we inhabit. We share a sense of common time perspective, common space (in that we share a common world with others) and a sovereign self in charge (see Good 1994:124ff). While the argument in most literature is that this breakdown of the common structures of the everyday is something that happens *to* us in acute and chronic illness, such pain does have its uses too. Disintegrating the bonds that maintain a chronic way of life, through entering altered states of consciousness, is not a new or unusual phenomenon. Indeed, what may be unusual is the absence of such a strategy in today's world. But then, maybe, it is not absent; rather it lacks the social and cultural recognition to frame these activities in positive ways,

> "The biggest obstacle to understanding the value of sacred pain is not its feel but our insistence that pain can signify a medical problem only. This is not an intellectual failure or a poverty of the imagination, but the amnesia that descends with the emergence of a radically new world-view. (Glucklich 2003:7).

Unstable narratives have to be reconfigured and strengthened, which is difficult given the subtle ways in which self-talk may be skewed and given that narrative is the form of consciousness (Rapport 2003:29), therefore disqualifying it from engaging fully and critically with itself to bring about fundamental change. Better to start from the beginning again, then, in order to free oneself from the habits of a disordered everyday, by finding a different quotidian to bring about radical self-transformation and social reproduction. Simply put, change is possible and need not entail further alienation. By turning this disengaged traffic in meanings to their advantage, pilgrims discover and create a whole new 'laboratory world' by which to play out the other possibilities and creatively reason new alternatives for the betterment of self and world. Life is a reasonably written play with a disastrous third act, wrote Tennyson, and it is in this respect that the pilgrimage becomes a kind of existential sabbatical from everyday life in order to tinker with the play's structure. In more pressing terms, the pain of the pilgrimage lays aside many old assumptions about what had been necessary about life. The pilgrimage experience unmakes predispositions, engendering a new linguistic and bodily habitus and, at the world's unmaking, the world is at the same time reborn, where the pilgrim can use this moment, as the natural phenomenologist that he or she is, to have a greater say in its upbringing.

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The draw of nature for post-industrial workers allows the soul to expand into the landscape, filling it as the body leaks out into its environs. Sweat, blood, tears and long-silenced stories gradually find their outlet and spill over. I have stood alone on the path and roared as loud as I could, feeling an immense power emanate and, frankly, return to me. The feeling of being so small is not overbearing on the Camino; this place was not built to contain me, as we have not yet built the Camino to contain us. This acquiescence to a feeling of the sublime that so inspired Caspar Friedrich's work is still available to the modern walking pilgrim. The behavioural environment of the Camino allows for the seepage of the pilgrim into it, and the process of finding a space to hold all of our stories, to effect a spring-cleaning of the self, to reinvigorate self and world, to rediscover one's life-project creates the possibility of possibility once more. We walk beyond our own stifling habits past the conventions of a world built in Thirdness to the inchoate Firstness that signalled for Peirce the moment of (re)awakening. We awake to our bodies, the ground of our worlds, and we come to a realisation of what Richard Zaner calls the body's "intimate alien-ness that is strangely mine" (cited in Csordas 1997:152). This realisation brings with it two things: the possibility of renewed relationships with self, other, world and the potential relinquishing of a search for certainties, in the face of one's own feeling of charismatic power. Show me that you know your body, and I'll grant you the rest.

Chapter Five:

Negotiating Old Territories of the Unspeakable

The most painful state of being
is the state of remembering the future,
particularly the one you can never have.
Søren Kierkegaard

Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis
Ralph Waldo Emerson (attributed)

Michael's story

> *I'm sitting on a bench along the promenade, looking south over Astorga's medieval battlements. There are a few scattered locals walking their dogs and the local council workers are busy tending to the grassy verges of the promenade. It's nearly 9 a.m. and the day is almost half over for the walking pilgrim, but I haven't begun my day's journey yet. I'm sitting listening to Michael tell his story; he called me aside this morning to have a 'chat'. We walked around a little until we found this spot, innocuous enough and public enough to allow Michael to set the pace of the conversation. Right now, there's a lull, as he prepares to shift gears and reach the hub of the matter that has brought us here. I wait patiently, not giving much indication of wanting to leave or stay, leaving it instead to him to direct the course and pace of the next hour and a half.*

Michael and I had been walking loosely together in a group for a week when he had approached me. The days walking had been filled with much talk about the Camino from the whole group. I had taken to my role as researcher with some relish, pontificating about every thought half-baked from the Spanish sun, for the consumption of the others. I was arguing that we were becoming healthier people only to give it all up upon our arrival in Santiago. The studied ways in which we had come to know our new bodies were thus filled with a kind

of desperation, a neurosis surrounding our upcoming demise as pilgrim-travellers. The ephemeral nature of this pilgrimage, then, was all that we would recall, and it provided the pathos and liberating irony of the journey, if only we could come to see it as such. That was my argument and it was, I admit, designed in part to make myself sound crazy enough to be trustworthy. It worked, and better than I thought.

My strategy at the time was to emphasise my role as researcher for large parts of the day as I found it encouraged people to relax when I stopped talking and asking questions. This gambit, I have to say, was remarkably successful, and provided many insights when pilgrims would comment *sotto voce* on the topics and issues I had raised during the day, beginning their commentary with *"I know you're off- duty but..."* or, *"you can write this in your thesis..."* Exposing myself in this way made people aware of the fiction of my status as researcher, a minor yet significant victory. From the beginning of a pilgrimage, I would regularly have pilgrims 'outing' me as a researcher when I met someone new along the way. By the third week of walking, I was considered part of the landscape:

> *Michael begins by saying that he had been thinking about some of the things that I had been mulling over with the group as we walked, that he wanted to tell me about the decision that had brought him to Spain. For years, he thought about a trip to Spain as a way to spend a good deal of time in the country with a purpose, not just aimlessly following a tourist itinerary from city to city, but a chance to practice his Spanish and get to know the 'real' Spain. He had studied Spanish in college and had kept it up a little, so the Camino was a good refresher course for him. As he laid his plans to walk, he was joined by several other friends and the group soon set out for St. Jean. Quickly though, Michael split from the others, firstly because of frictions within the group, but now, in Astorga, I hear that it is because this trip is about much more than making friends and maintaining a fragile group harmony. Michael feels that he had come to accomplish something that would require him to walk alone or at least with*

other people. As he talks, he begins to centre on the reason why he feels that he has to talk to me. There is a cloud that has been following him for years, a drain on his happiness and sense of contentment with his life. And he has a right to feel content; a successful lawyer, married with children, he has recently gone into semi-retirement in his forties. He has loved his life, his work and his family and yet has never fully felt in the right place. This move into semi-retirement frees up the time to think about this feeling of lack (or lack of feeling) and it has brought him across Spain, here to this bench.

As he speaks, he falters, unsure of what to say next. This lack of sureness is all the more difficult as he has obviously practiced much of what he wanted to say up until now. I fill the silence by asking some questions to fill out the picture; how long has he felt this way; can he remember the first time, has it been constant or varying in intensity over the years? Gradually it becomes clear that he has a kind of relationship with his cloud, a malingering rapport that defies any conscious explication even now. Words fail in the face of a decades-long relationship with an unuttered, and seemingly unutterable, creeping dread. Again, silence descends. I look around, trying to fix the scene in my mind, the innocence of the passing morning, the queried looks of passing Spaniards; sure that Astorga should be empty of pilgrims at this time of the morning. The low buzz of the council's lawn mowers has grown closer and louder, and the lines of a Hothouse Flowers song about the smell of fresh-cut grass vie for my attention.

I seize on a thought. Turning to Michael, I tell him that what he has told me is important and that he has trusted me to talk about these things as best he could with me. I ask him if he feels up to trying something with me to resolve the impasse. He agrees. I ask him to imagine this cloud, to give it form in his imagination. Slowly, I get him to trace its outline in his mind, to give it shape, colour, texture, weight, solidity. This is at first counter-intuitive as the last thing he wants to do is give this burden even more of a basis in reality, but I ask him to continue and he does. After a few minutes of shaping, I ask him to describe the physical appearance of his burden, and he tells me that what he sees is a jet black stone, several pounds in weight and about the size of a large egg, so quite dense. I ask him what he wants to do with it and he replies that he would like to get rid of it. I enquire gently as to how he might do that and he realises that if it has a form that is external to him, explicit and sitting, as it now is, in his hands, then all he has to do it throw it away. Slowly we both get up and move to the battlements overlooking the hinterlands. Michael takes a step back and 'hurls' his burden far away from him. A place has been made after all, and having spent so long feeling dis-placed, Michael has stumbled into the fluctuations of non-places and the way in which we can inhabit places we simply move through.

At this point, he physically relaxes, his shoulders release their tensions and he sits down on the parapet, drained. "I've been carrying that for twenty years!" He asks me to take a photo of the spot where we sat and I ask him to fix the place in his mind for himself as well. After a long hug, we get up and begin to walk out of the city. Within a couple of days I will say goodbye to him and that will be the last time I will see him before we meet in Santiago. After that, I don't think we'll ever meet again. For now, however, the air is clear, the day cool, and our backpacks don't seem as heavy as we head west for the city of St. James.

Fieldnotes June 2002

It is a truism, as John Lennon said, that life is what happens when you are busy making plans, and for so many pilgrims who travel Spain each summer, the Camino presents a singular opportunity for evaluating more explicitly the distance between a pilgrim's life and his or her plans for it, between life-trajectory and life-project. Pilgrim accounts of their Camino testify to this reality. Some pilgrims begin to acknowledge the wandering spirit within them, to give room for the "undeveloped self" to grow (Rupp 2005:19). Others encounter reasons to keep on the road long after their initial motivations to walk have become routine; for Nancy Frey, the Camino was a catalyst for her divorce and moving in a different direction in her life (1998:195). For some, the inner motivation to walk is not clear until they take to the road. Donald Schell, who walked with his daughter Maria and published the letters they wrote to each other as they walked along, was not entirely sure why he was there, except that he had to "walk out of a depression" (Schell & Schell 2001:1). For others the pain and difficulty is all too real and literal; Nicolas Luard (1998) took to the road over a number of years as he tried to cope with the loss of his daughter to AIDS, while Kerry Egan (2004) walked in part to mourn her father's death from a long-term illness.

Almost nobody I met on the road walked simply to be travelling on foot across Spain. The ones who did, like Gerry, an Irish pilgrim from Dublin, often moved off ahead at an accelerated pace. Even though Gerry had left his job to walk the Camino, and was going to live in the Pyrenees for several months following his pilgrimage, he saw little benefit from walking, outside of the physical preparation for the Pyrenees. "People like that" John told me, "cycle the Camino on foot." Almost everybody had work to do there, it seemed, and this 'wild' place was where to do it. To that end, I hope that Michael's story helps set the tone for just what may be at stake when we find ourselves in such a 'betwixt and between' place.

Narration as, "the form of human consciousness" (Rapport 2003:29), has guided each pilgrim's life-project; the Camino is a "dangerous opportunity" (Frank 2002) to examine the accommodations of one's life trajectory, to examine the grounds of daily entropic compromises that drain the life-project of its existential power.[84] The dramatic structure of narrative relies on anticipation; the story of our lives points towards to a range of possible endings. The issue of the individual life-project, then, is fundamentally one of control. Control, following Rapport, refers to both objective individual action and subjective creation of meanings and interpretations (Rapport 2003:5). Every person has a life-project, though; no matter how loosely that project has been conceived, each one of us attempts to 'sense' our lives in terms of its velocity, direction and momentum. We outline goals for our lives, and feel disappointment when we feel that those objectives have passed us by.

[84] Drawing from Frankl (1984:123) I am using the term 'existential' here in three ways: the first refers simply to existence as such; being human; the second connotes the *meaning* of existence and; third the "struggle to define a concrete meaning in personal existence" or the *will* to meaning.

Pilgrims stand in a distinct position of suspending the everyday activity of home life to assess and examine the path borne of a 'lack of fit' between what had been hoped for and what has resulted: in short, where the compromises have been made and what happens next. While on pilgrimage, the opportunity to ironise and re-energise this life-project becomes available. The sheer physical struggle to walk the pilgrimage, sharing each day with others engaged in a similar activity; the invigorated will to continue on, to think actively in one particular direction (see Rapport 2003:6), opens a conversation with the religious character of the pilgrimage as an 'occasion of faith' (Taylor 1995) to create a powerful, existential and ironic 'occasion' of being faithful to one's journey. While the religious aspects of the Camino provide the setting for the pilgrim journey, they are overwhelmingly not the sole or main reason for the large majority of pilgrims to travel. Religion may form the backdrop to the pilgrimage, but what is foregrounded is often of far greater concern for the contemporary pilgrim, not the least of which can be the struggle to re-define a more personal sense of spirituality in the face of collective and institutional narratives of religious peregrination.

First impressions

This 'impressionistic tale' (Van Maanen 1988) of my time with Michael helps to frame several issues in this chapter, the first and most obvious being that of the rehabilitative possibilities of pilgrimage, specifically that of this walking pilgrimage. The sustained physical effort required to accomplish the task of walking 500 miles due west over a month is not a journey undertaken lightly. Few pilgrims, in fact, have simply chosen to walk purely for leisure, not the

entire breadth of Spain.[85] One indication of this is the time and space needed from one's everyday life in order to do the pilgrimage. Pilgrims are leaving behind jobs, family and friends to walk. Many pilgrims are older[86], and the journey is not an easy one by any account. We can assume, therefore, that sheer leisure is not the overriding attraction for these pilgrims.

A basic premise of my project highlights pilgrims' reasons for walking as multiple, complex, layered and pressing. The pilgrimage is a performative frame that contextualises these reasons, allowing them to play out in the rhetoric of pilgrims' own representations of their biographies, as well as (and equally importantly) through the existential immediacy of actually physically walking the distance to Santiago. The encounter I describe above is not the only one I had, nor is it the only one I heard of from other people. These impromptu counselling sessions are something of a daily given for the pilgrims who are open to them, and many stories have been shared, examined and evaluated on park benches and roadside stops along the way. The particular character of these meetings is the existential impetus the daily activity of walking provides for ironising covert ills and issues, so that the energy and determination required to reveal, as well as to bear witness to, these hidden motives (for pilgrimage) are acquired.

Such an impetus highlights a paradox of the pilgrimage: that as the body breaks down it gets stronger. The impact of the walk on the body is such that aches and pains are part of the everyday experience of the pilgrim. Even as the

[85] Statistics from 1997 show that only 24% of respondents who walked the Camino did so for spiritual reasons, 18% to make contact with nature (Frey 1998:258). It seems that since 1997 the motives have been recorded according to three categories, religious, religious & cultural, and Cultural. I have discussed these statistical categories further in notes 4 and 8.

[86] In 1997, ages 41-50 counted for 13% of pilgrims and another 13% were 50+ years old. In 2005 the figures were broken down as ages 35-60: 43.63%; 60+: 11.08%.

body suffers, it gets stronger with each passing mile. Physically and symbolically, the broken body is a fitter body and the determination to finish the walk is a determination to overcome limitations of the 'bodily sensorium' (Fernandez 1991). Overcoming these limitations provides fertile ground for nurturing more ambitious aspirations, too, and completion of the walk helps to consign one aspect of the pilgrim's life to the past, which we may call the 'lack of fit', and clear the ground, so to speak, for new challenges. The body, therefore, having begun the pilgrimage filled with limits and problems, emerges stronger for having being hurt and more capable for having healed.

Non-verbal cures

A deeper layer in this story explores how, in coming to a resolution in this encounter, Michael did not 'name' his burden: he did not weave it into existence through a talking cure. Instead, he employed a more 'natural' tool, one he had been training in Spain: his body. Creating an imaginative gap in his own suffering, he gave form to his ills, freeing himself up to come face-to-face with them, to literally grasp their meaning, whereupon he discarded them, without finding a way to 'call them out'. I was not an observer in these proceedings though; I participated fully in them, leading Michael through them and, it appears, out the other side. For several days, I became his confidante, helping him to assign meanings and interpretations to what had happened. The resolution of his crisis was and remains inexorably bound up with my project and my interpretation of the pilgrimage experience. I became involved in a 'walking fieldwork' (Irving 2005:323), where, in the following few days (before we parted company), Michael and I started to discuss what he thought the object may have

been. As we walked together, he began to unravel an unnamed and unnameable source of anxiety that had followed him through twenty years of decisions he had made about the course of his life. Talking was after the fact of the experience of this subliminal dread and his release from it, after appreciating its reality and its meaning for him and his life project, however dimly aware he had previously been of it. If I talk of pilgrims being ghosts, then Michael represents a ghost who re-possessed his life and dipped back into the flow of life and experience, where a fundamental temporal fallacy of believing that what existed in the past was what was real had been corrected. His unfinished business was addressed, and the 'fragile reality' of his life became obtainable again, as Merleau-Ponty wrote, "always further on" (cited in Irving 2005:327).

There is a methodological issue that arises here; 'culture' is not passively waiting to be 'discovered', the field that I investigated was one that I constructed from my time there (see Amit 2000:6). While at one level I do feel a conflict that this would not have happened without me, it is characteristic of an ongoing therapeutic dynamic that I did not create, but contributed to. These kinds of intense interactions are what make up the "messy qualitative experience" (Marcus & Fischer, cited in Amit 2000:7) that leaks between the different roles the ethnographer takes on in the 'field'. It is quite common for ethnographers to be implicated in the politics and poetics of a field that they must construct around their own experiences, where the social group may be centred on the fieldworker rather than as an autonomous social entity (Amit 2000:14). The ethnographer can make a contribution to the field that circumscribes it in a new way, as when Keith Basso began mapping the land of the White Mountain Apache Tribe (1996:xv), at the request of its chairman and partly in response to the decline of

such local knowledge among younger Apaches. Anna Tsing (1993), in her fieldwork, became woven into her informant's evolving local cosmology, her presence being announced as the return of the 'Diamond Queen', a move that effected enhanced status for her informant, Adang.

Byron Good gives an example of how the researcher is never passive in his investigations. He describes the experience of Jeanne Favret-Saada, a researcher studying witchcraft in France in the 1970's. The researcher is deeply implicated in the ongoing cultural processes that she is investigating, as her informants attempt to enlist her to help against attacks from witchcraft, because, her informants felt, "only the powerful would dare to ask such questions" (Good 1994:13). It applies to me here, too, I think. My questions and opinions exposed me as a resource for others in my field, where pilgrims, as natural anthropologists themselves, are creating their own fields of meaning and networks of informants in loose environments, a situation quite different to that of Lourdes, for instance, with its more structured contexts and itineraries leaving little room for an extended self-project to be explored. In the case of the Camino, I alternated between being a 'gifted' amateur (informant) and a nosy outsider, between being necessary on the one hand for, and wholly irrelevant on the other, to the pilgrim's progress. This periodical movement between 'useful' and 'busybody', and I am sure I spent more time in the latter category, framed and coloured my own research interests and field data. In the end, though, it does not preclude the data, but rather enriches the experience of 'deep hanging-out' that many researchers, including myself, try to validate as a wholly 'successful' affair!

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How do ills and burdens, too subtle to be named and resistant to be localised, become embodied and addressed on pilgrimage? Existential problems can be accessed through the body where felt pain may be too understated or nuanced to succumb to any simple talking therapy. I am suggesting then that this approach rejects an analysis predicated on a Cartesian mind-body dualism in favour of one that explores the existential immediacy of an afflicted situation in the world. This process of making pain 'real' i.e. felt and verifiable, is what I have called 'somatisation' (Kleinman and Kleinman 1985). Kleinman and Kleinman define somatisation as "the expression of personal and social distress in an idiom of bodily complaints and medical help seeking" (1985:430). There is an important qualification to the term as used here though, as the occurrence of somatisation on the pilgrimage is not presumed to be an indicator of underlying psychiatric distress, rather it is a symptom and a symbol of a socially embedded malaise (see Kleinman and Kleinman 1985:434, 452).[87] This process of somatisation, I have argued, can lead to an authentic renewal of the pilgrim's life and his or her trajectory. Somatisation can be understood as a performance of political and moral distress that seeks new paths, other than 'medical help seeking' out of that distress. These performances are caught up in a broader discourse of authenticity that is tied to an explanation of healing, "healing at its most human is not an escape into irreality and mystification, but an intensification of the encounter between suffering and hope at the moment in

[87] A Spanish couple walked the Camino to find answers to the problem of their son molesting their daughter. They needed the neutral territory and the time away from the situation they found themselves in to come to terms with what had happened and to understand what options they had to deal with the problem.

which it finds a voice, where the anguished clash of bare life and raw existence emerges from muteness into articulation" (Csordas 2002:11).[88]

The pain felt may not be, *in strictu senso*, the manifest pain of a specific suffering. Instead it 'stands in' as an arbitrary signifier in motion, a polysemous referent, capable of evoking or 'speaking for' several pains that have been acting, so to speak, as an itch which cannot be scratched. Such existential issues as angst, which defy medical explanation, are accounted for by pilgrims and addressed within other framing discursive practices: pilgrimage is an ideal forum for such work to be accomplished.

Pilgrims are not closed off subjectivities, where bodies are only grounds for symbols, and therefore people are not reducible to signs. If pilgrims are in *some* sense symbols, though, they are leaky ones, oozing fluids and meanings. Pilgrims' secretions and secrets are caught up in the webs of other pilgrims, where afflictions of all sorts become grounded and expressed in non-verbal (but not pre-cultural) forms. The ordeal leaves pilgrims stronger, more adept at being hurt and being healed, integrating the experiences into their lives and dealing with the import of their afflictions. The rhetoric of healing that joins pilgrims together underscores the importance of intersubjective moments for individual pilgrims.

[88] If we move away from a notion that is in some way a structuralist model of pain for a moment, where ills are always assigned a pain to represent it to the wider world, we can begin to appreciate just how subtle this process of making suffering manifest can be. What terms do we have that can help us refer to this phenomenon of pain produced of existential suffering felt in the body? One such term I have suggested is somatisation, (the other, psychogenic pain). The first refers to an embodiment of suffering; the second to the biological basis of felt pain that does not seem to have an immediate organic cause. Is it so hard, Morris asks, "to imagine that the same brain capable of turning the face blush-red at an indecent joke – the same brain that creates not only its own opioid analgesic but also the infinitely more bewildering product known as human thought – might on occasion fill the hand or foot or lower back with pain? [...] [P]ain generated or sustained by the mind needs the body mainly in order to give suffering a location" (1991:157).

Pains and difficulties experienced through intersubjective milieux constitute and cultivate a use for pain, whereby sufferers become stronger for having felt pain; recall Kerry Egan's revelation that her laughter on the Camino stood in stark contrast to previous months of numbness. When Gráinne first met John, he was grieving for his sister, and as she and her friends told me the story, it was obvious that the encounter had influenced their reasons for doing the pilgrimage. The strength revealed through 'somatic modes of attention' (Csordas 2002) to self and other pilgrims can be deployed along the route as a means to continue on, in strength, modifying the underlying motivations and constructing new ironic possibilities for the journey.

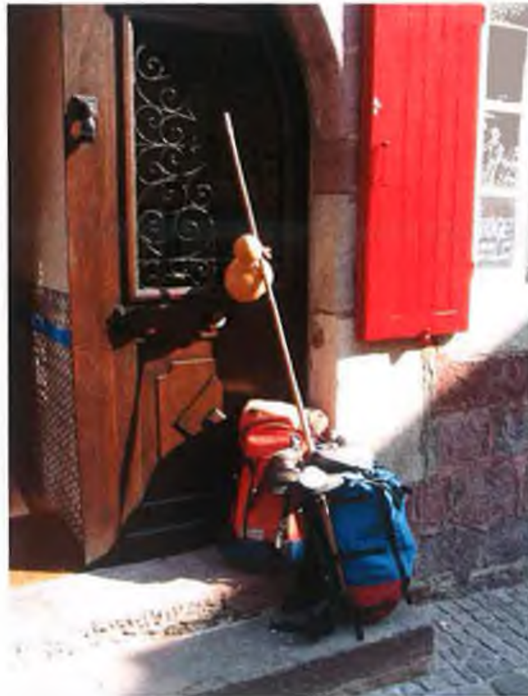

Figure 22 The accoutrements of the modern pilgrim: backpack, scallop shell, wine gourd and bordón that identifies them.

Lived stories and storied lives

How can we make sense of Michael's story and experience in terms of his perception of his life's course, the meaning he had imbued that life-trajectory with and the possibilities he encountered to effect a change in his life-trajectory? Let us begin by taking from Ricoeur a central aspect of man's existence: life as an activity and a passion in search of a narrative (1991:29). Our tasks, then, are to think about what a narrative might be in the context of man's lifelong search for meaning, to consider what value such a narrative may have and how that value is accessed.

Narrative for Ricoeur follows in the Aristotelian tradition of being a story that emplots a series of incidents. Identifying three elements to this emplotment: "the mediation performed by the plot between the multiple incidents and unified story, the primacy of concordance over discordance and the competition between succession and configuration" (1991:22), Ricoeur sees great stories having both moral and didactic elements. In the relation between innovation and sedimentation, the new and the habitual, the creative imagination seeks to explore possibilities, keep dramatic tensions open and engage in a poetic subjunctive that configures from a succession of events and that do not communicate any necessary meaning or sense in and of itself. It is in this sense that Weber's dictum, that man suspends himself over webs of meaning he has woven for himself, becomes useful, for, as Ricoeur (1991) states, man is at the same time entangled in other 'narrated webs'. Man's mediation of the text of his life, viewed here as a two-part Jungian structure (the first half being 'text' or configuration and the second half being 'commentary' or refiguration) is an

ongoing process between self and world, between selves as well as an interior journey into the self.

However, we must not overstate the textual priority that Ricoeur subscribes to: we are interested in developing a broader understanding of the 'activity and passion' of the life-quest, or life-project (*lebensentwurf*), one which is not simply rhetorical or textual, but which is founded on an 'irony of commission'. An 'irony of commission' (Lambek 2003) is a moral and political stance grounded in a Socratic reflexivity that seeks to explore the limits of agency and knowledge; in short, the inadequacies of our existence, the alienation that gnaws at us like the eagle on Prometheus's liver.[89]

In a post-religious context of world pilgrimage, the final destination of the pilgrim must be constantly invoked and deferred; the directionality and intentional momentum of the pilgrim and the traffic of meanings marshalled to the goal of arrival cannot be left to their own devices. Santiago, for instance, as a goal for the pilgrim, becomes unstable, and arrows point out the way that the traveller moves along even as signs direct meanings, all towards the city, the end and the death of pilgrimage itself. Evoking the Camino as a stable signifier of temporal consistency, the continuous birth of modern Europe from such places as the pilgrimage grates on pilgrims. EU-sponsored signs, more permanent, more solid, effect a semiotic inversion in the experience of the weary walkers as they pass by. The stability of signs is their death; they conjure headstones marking the end of the Camino. The very first person I spoke to about the pilgrimage, at a

[89] A French woman explained to me in Santiago that the reason why the Camino must have inspired L. Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz* because as the story shows us, "we walk to save ourselves". I wonder though, whether it is more like Sisyphus' rock, our fate in our own hands, struggling against the absurdity of our existence? In either case, irony, emerging from the Greek sense of *eironeia* ('feigned ignorance' from *eirein*: 'to say') in its tragic and sceptical forms, urges us to carve out for ourselves some knowledge of the world by which to create a place in it.

conference in 1999, warned me of the replacement of the painted arrows by markers that are more permanent. They no longer pointed to Santiago; instead, they marked out the EU's encroaching presence. The alternative to such a situation, argues Zilcosky, is both unsettling, "we are all homeless in language" and exonerating, "everyone is linguistically dislodged, regardless of their actions" (2003:176). This alternative is a mark of authenticity, a kind of privileged instability, as Derrida put it, challenging stable ideas of arriving in favour of epitomising movement as linguistic, existential and geographical flux. In other words, constant movement is valued for knowing one's location, on the Camino and in life. The goal of the Camino is to inhabit indeterminacy rather than abolish it. The material culture around the pilgrimage may partially frame that indeterminate existence, but it fails to circumscribe the experience. One's arrival does not occur in a geographical location, in the city. The return to a state of Firstness, to "anorganic stasis" (Zilcosky 2003:177) is as much of a return to origins as is possible.

Religious rhetoric on a sign in a pilgrim refuge in Mansilla de Las Mulas distinguishes between tourists (who complain) and pilgrims (who do not); the material culture that marks out the route (refuge notices, metal signs and painted arrows that point the way to the pilgrim) is deeply involved in building up a sense of the institutional and discursive contexts of the pilgrimage beyond the personal meanings that pilgrims accumulate en route. The route acts to usher pilgrims in a particular direction, both geographically (where to walk) and morally (how to walk). Newer metal signs, sponsored by the EU, are often placed over older, locally maintained, painted signs, as more permanent markers of the Camino (see figure 20). This ensures continuous marking of the 'correct'

direction for the pilgrim, but it also fixes an interpretation of the Camino in the context of the EU's presence on the pilgrimage as benefactor. These markers cover over the pilgrim's self-searching with its own meanings. These signs and arrows are multiple, overlapping and 'leaky' signs that comprise palimpsests, communicating with each other and revealing an intertextual commentary on pilgrimage discourses ('local' and 'EU' configurations of pilgrimage) that both intersect and constitute the Camino. The new roads physically cut across the pilgrimage route, replacing it, as the signs that point the way along those roads do the same semiotically.

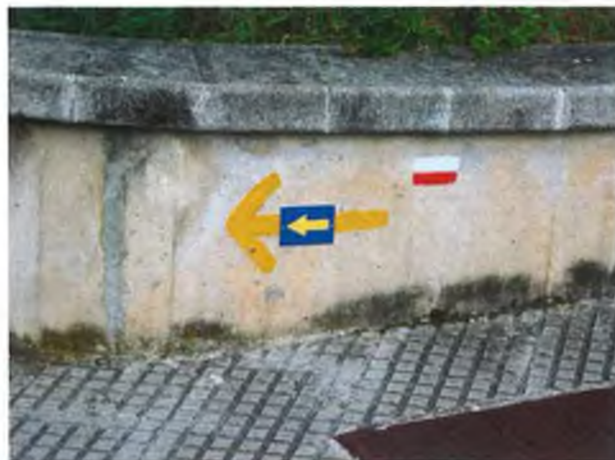

Figure 23 Multiple Signs indicating the French Way, a European Cultural Itinerary and GR95.

It is the presence of pilgrims, though, their movement, pace and distance travelled, as well as the length of time they spend on pilgrimage, that give rise to 'time-shapes' (Dilley 2005) that characterise the mood and character of each individual pilgrimage. Different 'social densities' (see Irving 2005:323) arise from these characteristics as groups of pilgrims constellate over the first hundred kilometres or so that shape both the mood and character of the groups and of the

physical opportunities the pilgrimage could provide. Within a week or so of walking, groups form around dinner tables and over conversations in bars along each day's walk. A Spanish woman approached my group in a bar one night outside León and asked if she could walk with us. She had been travelling with other Spaniards whose pilgrimage brought them from bar to bar and often left them almost stranded, struggling to find beds for the night. Her journey was being destroyed by their daily routine, and so she sought out other groups who seemed to be enjoying the Camino differently.

The point that Zilcosky makes about a permanent impermanence in his reading of Kafka's eponymous character, *The Hunter Gracchus,* is that Gracchus is a religious hero for modernity. Gracchus's "residual religious desire" (Zilcosky 2003:178), cannot allow him to accept the truth that 'God is dead'. Instead, he is unable to settle into this post-religious world, where in the absence of clear transcendent goals, he retains faith in salvation, "Gracchus still requires the theological grammar of grace and divine retribution" (2003:178). The uneasy tension between a discourse of religiosity and the subjective experience of the existential pilgrim is part of the pilgrimage, this wrestling with a logic of grace while sweating through the daily grind of making and unmaking your world is an admission of the gap left by the decline of religion, for all its faults. Thus, instability is desirable to allow for the greatest movement in cognitive categories as well as for epitomising a certain post-religious flux in meanings. The value of such instability is highlighted in Gracchus's dilemma; given the base challenge of relocating his *Heimat* (sense of home-ness) without the transcendent goal of religion forming the ground of his home, Gracchus, modern hero that he is, "attempts to find it along 'earthly waters'" (Zilcosky 2003:181). His "irrational

imagination" (ibid) resonates with the escape from the rational quotidian that motivates many modern (hero-) pilgrims, "with God now dead (and heaven undone), Europeans try, like Kafka's Gracchus, to reach *Jenseits* (the other world) by ship. Exoticism thus takes up religion's broken promise" (Zilcosky 2003:183).

Kafka himself had at one time dreamed of immigrating to Spain (Zilcosky 2003:191). Between his earlier dreams of Spain and his later unfulfilled wish to travel to Palestine, between his creative procrastinations, Kafka understood and realised his desire to rest between home and homelessness, unable to discard either notion, opting instead for a 'borderland', "between community and isolation, life and death, nostalgia and nomadism" (Zilcosky 2003:184). Kafka (both the writer and his literary alter-egos), prefigures modern secular Camino pilgrims in this idea of a 'negative' nostalgia: "Just as faithless subjects cannot finally shed their hope in the existence of a God, deterritorialising moderns cannot ultimately discard their belief in a territory that, in its perfection, would be both a place and a not-place (a u-topia) (Frank, cited in Zilcosky 2003:258n34).

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Stories on and of pilgrimage are involved in a broader economy of narratives, as well, a redaction process of producing the best possible narratives given the conditions of living (a kind of narrative as final interpretant). This economy of narratives is a collective process of remembering and forgetting, foregrounding and annihilation, of reconfiguration of self (biography), other (collective memory) and world (history) in order to find a story (or stories, where

a multiplicity of tales may do the work of one master narrative) that is effective and that enmeshes the lifeworld in a process of active re-configuration. It is important to emphasise existential immediacy as the source of power for the narrative, the anchor that validates this new configuration (no matter how seemingly shallow one's story might appear to be in the end!). This existential immediacy is grounded in the body and grounds 'culture' as a system of meaningful and meaning-making thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are enmeshed in a self characterised by its efforts and its ability to reflect on that effort (see Csordas 1994b, 1997).

The Camino is not primarily a talking therapy, though; it represents a non-verbal somatic mode of healing, exorcising the demons (trickster gods?), as Godfrey Lienhardt describes one way of doing it (see Good 1994:128-130), but that seems to be characteristic of a society where the person involved is more deeply integrated into the social fabric. The individuals who largely compose the Camino are not so integrated, certainly not in their 'questing'. The collective public rituals in which they engage along the route only loosely produce pilgrim individuals and pilgrim society. The idea of naming ills and setting them forth into a diffuse semiotic chain of worldly discourses seems almost to set them free, without proper charge of them. Marshalling the body and marshalling the suffering that emerges from a strong body is something that the hero can do; s/he suffers in silence until s/he is marked by illness, then be freed to take his or her place in the world, for better or worse. Odysseus and Oedipus are two such archetypal protagonists. While I do not want to characterise pilgrims with the kind of hero discourse that has haunted anthropologists in the field (and so tar myself with that old brush), I do think it is a brave thing to walk and discover

new things about yourself, some of them nice, some of them not so much. Then, keep walking.

It is Nietzsche once again who has shown us the relationship we may have with pain and suffering. His affliction is not afforded a status equal with himself; rather, as 'dog', it occupies a place reserved for "pets, servants and wives" (1974:249-250), a place where the master is in control. He does not call it by name, but identifies its essential relationship to him. Such a relationship is enviable, where pain can be appreciated as faithful, entertaining, clever and in turns scolded when the master is irritable. Pain too often lacks such a clear role in our lives.

To be in pain is often to be in a state of crisis, a state in which we experience far more than physical discomfort. Pain has not simply interrupted our normal feeling of health. It has opened a huge fault or fissure in our world. We need answers. We want to know what all this, "torment in our bones – the disarrangement of our personal cosmos – adds up to. What does it mean?" (Morris 1991:31). It is sometimes precisely the "fault or fissure" of suffering we require to clear the imaginative and narrative space in order to make sense of the burning questions that have brought us to an imagined wilderness for answers. The pilgrim's expectation of meaning can be represented as the wish for alternatives, for a healthy sense of a world capable of being less plastic, to know that we do live in a world that moves on. Through such a realisation one may expect that this problem too will pass. When suffering had a much larger mental component than a physical one, the wilderness was always where the great mystics went, to connect the two, to know their suffering better. Existential suffering without a real physical basis for expression falls prey to doubt and

scepticism. The pain in the mind, as Good (1994) argues, is less believable than pain that has a purely physical causation.

While it is a key aspect of healing to have a narrative that helps us live our lives, to make sense of them and deal with the curveballs, so to speak, the first requirement of healing is to engage with our own experiences. Experiences therefore cannot always be taken for granted. They must be marshalled for an authorial self to be at the helm. Most of the time that is not difficult (habit actually helps with the everyday things), but what has slipped by must be rediscovered, reconceived, and reintegrated within the self. Places outside of the everyday habits and constraints are required, where we have to rethink even the very acts that have been natural for us: walking, breathing and sleeping. By going back to the beginning, we begin to remake our world at its roots. Perhaps the role of religion in 'rejoining' man's dual nature (most prominent on pilgrimage in the two-headed Saint James, the pilgrim and the slayer), is important, but it is not intrinsic to the battle for control 'proper'. The myth of Theseus is a classic psychological template of labyrinthine wandering, until he slays the primal beast within (grandson of Europa), so that whatever is civilised emerges at the death of the Minotaur, a fairytale as relevant for the modern pilgrim as it is for an emergent 'Europe'. First, though, the injuries of the fray separate us from civilisation to fight that fight and free us from being, as Woolf said, "soldiers in the army of the upright" (cited in Lambek 2003:9).[90]

[90] So how do we 'go back,' so to speak? Well, it is a form of lay-phenomenology, I think. In phenomenology, experiences are stripped away to reveal the nature of the world as it appears to our consciousness. The world is experienced and the birth of language is attended by the phenomenologist. As the body breaks down, the essential ways in which we experience the world and ourselves are found again for the first time. With such powerful experiences, answers may emerge. We must ask the right questions first, though.

Most theories have pain in control, a trickster god like Pan or Loki, running about the edges of our perception, refusing to be named, to be called out and exorcised from our dis-eased experience. Agency is disordered and pain rules the roost, using us for its own unknown ends. Pain, as mystery (which Morris defines as whatever refuses to surrender all its secrets to common sense [1991:52]), and myth, is a veiled truth that refuses, "to yield every quantum of [its] darkness to research or to bright ideas. Instead [it] introduces us to unusual states of being which, for a time, we enter into and dwell within" (Morris 1991:24). Pain opens pilgrims up to the possibility of irony as a form of "magical thinking," a state of problem-solving that does not resolve suffering as such but invites the possibility of possibility itself to be rediscovered along the road and in each weary step to Santiago. The mystery interrupts taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works and points to the veil that hides the truth of the matter while at the same time, as Heidegger wrote, makes the mystery visible.[91]

Consider Victor Frankl as an example of the meaning made of suffering through the search, "if there is meaning in life at all, then there has to be meaning in suffering" (cited in Morris 1991:171). His is an existential vision of life where pain is an inescapable, brute fact of life that must be addressed and meaning construed. His experience of hell in Dachau and Auschwitz, where the daily grind of bodily degradation and humiliation gave Frankl a unique and intimate understanding of suffering, brought to the fore an emphasis on individual freedom, but not as an abstract philosophical puzzle. The search for meaning, for every individual in the death camps, and indeed for each of us today, was an

[91] As the philologist and historian Umberto Eco writes, "Truth is a young lady as modest as she is beautiful, therefore she must always appear cloaked."

assault on suffering without hope, a refusal to allow the world to collapse into a realm of pain where the person is annihilated before being destroyed. A different morality emerges in such extreme situations (Frankl admitted to stealing food in the camps), a morality that stresses what is at stake in suffering. This morality, which is not a concern of universalising philosophies, considers the expression of individual will and freedom as one of, "the deepest level of our beliefs, beliefs we may not even know we hold or be able to put into words ... [man's] unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden" (Frankl, cited in Morris 1991:172).

Pilgrims provide much needed distraction for each other, so that such work does not have to become so serious; they can help each other in private moments and celebrate each other in more public moments. They provide words, themes and experiences that all help to make sense of the pilgrimage and their lives before each other. That is when the words are important, and it helps that a lot of the day was the same for each of them, at least on the surface.

As the world fades, pilgrims return to their 'everyday' everyday lives, and the bodily reality of the Camino fades, replaced by other things and people, it is easy to see how pilgrims see the return as starting a new Camino, one that stretches on until their deaths. Many take the opportunity and make radical changes, others realise what they already have and find an enduring sense of peace in their lives that had been elusive. My ethnography is about those people, not the ones who took a walk, but those who took a chance and tried, whether they succeeded or not.

In some way, I see pilgrims looking for magic; maybe we have moved from magic to religion to science and are moving back to magic at the edges

(Arthur C. Clarke said that at their best they may be indistinguishable). The world seems so safe and unsafe, so planned and chaotic at the same time, that it can be hard to conceive of rational alternatives to the choices that fuel our life trajectories. Yet magic happens when the amazing becomes commonplace.

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I found myself alone one day in Astorga a few years ago with a lot of time to do some sight-seeing. Astorga was the place to do it; being a smaller city than Burgos with a history stretching back to the 3rd century, it is one of the best historical examples of multiculturalism in Spain and was the *de facto* capital of Asturias for centuries. Astorga had at its height 21 hospices, rivalling those of Burgos. The bishop's palace, one of Gaudi's few designs outside of Barcelona, was holding an exhibit entitled *Las Edades des Hombres* (The Ages of Man). As I entered the exhibit, I started talking to a fellow pilgrim, who, it quickly emerged, was a philologist without any English. His knowledge of medieval Spanish art was sweeping, though, as we walked around. We made do with the Spanish and French that we shared amid his explanations of the various movements and influences that had produced centuries of paintings and sculptures. He remained patient, jovial and generous in his account of the exhibit, and I walked entranced and a little vertiginous as I took a master class in art history over two hours, even as I had to piece together his excited description of each piece. It was a whirlwind, two pilgrims wandering through history, both grateful for each other (he, to put his knowledge to use before a willing audience, and me, to have so much made clear) during the entire time. As we exited the museum, the sun called me out of my daze and I thanked the man as sincerely as

I could muster (I was still gasping for breath after the dizzy heights of the tutorial) and he barely nodded, smiled and left. I did not see the man again, and I do not imagine I ever will now. These short intense meetings were becoming commonplace, but I could not help but feel that I had lost a great deal already in his departure. He had changed my Camino subtly and profoundly, the art and the architecture were opened more to me, and I began to examine my surroundings for the clues he had taught me, to know what it was I was seeing. I felt more like a pilgrim, and I missed a man who I had known for two hours; I could swear that we had spent weeks together.

Pilgrims, even solitary ones, imagine themselves involved with other pilgrims, real contemporaries and past pilgrims who have travelled the same path and form part of a pilgrim's community of fellow travellers. They do not, however, imagine static relationships. Rather, these relationships are in a constant state of flux and modify with the mood, experiences and abilities of pilgrims as they walk, calling on them for assistance or to witness the same sights (the first sight of Santiago's cathedral from Monte del Gozo or the spectacles of sunset and sunrise over the mountains of O Cebrero). As pilgrims meet others on the road, there is some negotiation between them to see where each other fits 'on the road'. By this, I mean that each pilgrim has the opportunity to act as a representative of his imagined community of travellers in his contact with another pilgrim. Any act of exchange, from nods of recognition to medical supplies, can be suffused with political and ethical concerns, to establish that a pilgrim is a part of the Camino, that he acknowledges that other pilgrims are part of it too. If a pilgrim shows any sign of needing help then an 'authentic' pilgrim gives this help. If he requires advice for instance, 'tacit'

knowledge that identifies every 'insider', then that pilgrim has been drawn into a personal relationship but also into his advisor's community of travellers. John's story was another such shibboleth. In my case, having left the museum in Astorga, over the following days, I could not help but reveal fragments of what I had learnt and could remember from my serendipitous meeting with the philologist. I pointed out features of buildings to companions and explained how I had come to know such information.

It does not always take a two-hour trip around an exhibition to achieve a sense of belonging though. Kerry Egan (2004) writes about a monk who had seen how badly her heel was torn up from walking and brought her to affix a Compeed, that wonderful invention of the hydro-seal cure, a bandage that covers a blister and gradually drains it while providing cushioned support for the aching walker. The exchange value of Compeed plasters on the Camino would be something similar to cigarettes in prison. Unfortunately for her, the Compeed had not been applied properly and this revelation slipped from her heel, leaving her exposed to the road once more. But the impact of the gesture had been made, "a bit of spiritual healing in the kindness of someone who noticed my gauzed-up heels and tried to make it better" (2004:42). Sometimes the angel does not walk with you, but the point is made, if you are a pilgrim in need and receive the help.

Acts of reciprocity thus happen at two levels, on the level of dyadic relationships, where two people can exchange meals, stories etc, which solidifies their relationship and provides satisfaction for both. On the level of the group, the initial obligation has not been fulfilled until a commensurate act of generosity has been completed. The life of the transient pilgrim community is thus preserved in the experience of the pilgrim who has been helped. Where the

recipient of an original (spontaneous) act of generosity later finds an opportunity to be of help to another pilgrim, he then is acting on the deferred meaning of the initial act of generosity. Even if he does not, his anticipation of such an event colours his moral imagination of the Camino experience. This act of generosity can thus be considered a gift from the 'group', and serving to reproduce the group in the act. Exchange of goods, ideas etc. operates to instantiate a series of acts to initiate, socialise and aid pilgrims.

If we return to practice theory to read the giving of 'gifts' as exposing, "the human subject's agency as aspiration that is demonstrated in hopeful social action" (Sykes 2005:113), the gift suggests a social structure. Indeed it creates a dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside' for ad hoc pilgrim groupings, who read themselves as composing the current incarnation of the pilgrim community. In what Strathern (1988) calls 'knowledge practice', gift giving is pressed into service to simultaneously create relationships and reproduce social structure. The structure being reproduced in the Camino is not that of everyday society, but a collectively imagined and constantly evolving (within exigent circumstances and tests) sense of communitas: society minus structure. The value of Turner's theory, then, is that communitas is not a static formulation; people fluidly reorganise themselves, minimising the problematic reproduction of everyday social structure. Thus, communitas can be read as 'aspiration' for pilgrims as much as it can be searched for, by pilgrim and ethnographer alike, as instantiated reality. Communitas is an ideal state that orients the ideological pronouncements of the Camino and orders pilgrimage meanings under a coherent master symbol, generating a range of meanings to be expected from being on this pilgrimage. The social and collective memory of the Camino lives on through the living

memory of the pilgrims and through their writings, even as they allow for the Camino to assume a different character over time, as the people (pilgrims, refuge workers, locals etc) themselves move on and the Camino becomes modified by larger discourses of Spanish and European formation.

These insights give us some clue as to how we may talk about the Camino as a cultural place, composed of individuals and groups. By focussing on the relations that animate the flow of goods among people on the Camino, whether stationary, like refuge workers and local people, or transient, like pilgrims and tourists, we can notice how the gift illuminates the total social fact of the Camino society. This societal structure, although composed and animated by transient participants of the pilgrimage, is maintained by those who stay put too. Many refuge workers are ex-pilgrims themselves, and while they may not feel equal to the challenge of walking again very soon, they often return to work for the benefit of pilgrims. Most do so with little compensation. The Refuge in Rabanal for instance is one such place. It is run by the English Society of St. James, by volunteers who have previously walked the Camino and return to the refuge for a month. Its most famous custodian is Alison Raju, who has written a popular route guide and, as a language teacher, is able to accommodate most European pilgrims in their own language.

Other characters, like Tomas in Manjarín, the old man who makes staffs past Santa Irache and the old lady who stamps pilgrim's passports on the way into Logroño (although she has since passed away, her daughter has continued the tradition), provide a yearly sense of stability or measure of the Camino. The woman outside Logroño kept pilgrim guest books for decades, and I have been told that your Camino is less if you do not at least experience the distinctive

contribution such people make, idiosyncratic as those contributions may be. Having crossed over into Ponferrada one time, I was offered a massage by an old man who waited all day for pilgrims in the mountain. I was struggling to get to the refuge by nightfall so I declined, feeling a little uncomfortable anyway. Later, I asked if anyone had met the old man and found out that he was more than a little familiar with the pilgrims who had accepted. That is not, as one television character succinctly put it recently, how they do pants. Still, though, I subsequently found out that he was a legend on the Camino and many people stopped for the massage. Strange, unique, wonderful in their own way. Having encountered such people, pilgrims usually feel as if they have been in the presence of a Camino institution and a distillation of the Camino message through new and peculiar experiences and people.

In this sense of staying put, the Camino is probably more plastic than one might imagine, which allows the pilgrimage to outlast *particular* interpretations from pilgrims. At the same time, those who remain do not determine its meanings either, as the processes that pilgrims instantiate on the walk do follow particular cultural logics that evade such stationary hegemonic meanings in favour of more fluid, relation-centred and process-centred meanings.

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One woman told me a story that explores the power of the Camino to confirm one's life trajectory or transform it. Resting for the night at the newly-built refuge in Foncebadón in the Irago mountains, the woman was dismayed to find once more that the beds were dirty, the shower was cold and the village without many resources. Upset and increasingly frustrated, she rang home to talk

to her husband, whereupon her mother who was visiting answered. "It's too far, it's too long, and I can't do it, mom," she cried down the phone. "You listen, honey, you're an American woman with a credit card, there's nothing you can't do!" her mother replied. The lady took her mother's advice and went immediately to the nearest hotel and checked in for a warm bed and a hot shower, convinced of the power of her life and cultural values, even more in this backward, difficult place than at home. She told the story with gusto, seeing the irony and the fun in the tale while learning the lesson that her life in the US was what was real and rational. For her, the Camino confirmed her ideas of her life and its trajectory and she personally became convinced of herself, not unjustly, as an exemplar.

Pensions and hotels offer a different quality of engagement with the authentic on the Camino. Accessing comfort seems to go against the lessons of the Camino, where the pilgrim endures and the tourist reveals himself by indulging. However, it is difficult for pilgrims to renege on the entirety of their economic power (it is a form of power after all), especially when the most lavish hotels on the Camino are renovated Parador refuges from the medieval pilgrimage. To stay in the Parador is to stay in an authentic Camino artefact as a tourist. Thus, these 'refuges' represent a more ambivalent engagement with modernity in a romantically imagined Camino idyll. For my American friend, the value of the lesson was that her stay in a hotel was anything but ambivalent; in fact, it resolved her ambivalence about the rest of her experiences. She was living in the right age and inhabiting the appropriate life to maximise her benefits in this life. If the pilgrims a thousand years ago could have stayed in fancy

hotels, she argued, they would have. In one way, she may have been more authentic than the rest of us.

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Having delved deep into the convolutions of our human limits to effect change, the notion of 'control' periodically returns throughout this chapter. How do we take note of our lives as moving in one direction and not another? What can we do to correct our course? Can we ever, as Nietzsche did, call ourselves more than mere men; can we truly say we are dynamite? The absurdity of our efforts to make more of ourselves leads us into a classic existential quandary, where we become the tragic and absurd heroes of our own stories. Rather than settle for the way we find ourselves 'to hand', though, we can actually suffer the consequences, but on our own terms. We can partake of an ironic perspective that frees us from the necessities of exigent circumstances when we find places between 'reality' and 'magic', such as the Camino.

The Camino is not magical in the same way that imagination is not a flight into fantasy; rather it is the possibility of possibility itself on this pilgrimage that can effect a transformation of the lifeworld. The pilgrimage exudes an aura of contingency and partialness characteristic, not only of the ironic gaze, but also of its own history, a history composed of failed over-literalisations of irony and suffering and the failure of Christian suffering as great tragedy. Contemporary pain is pain, "that cannot be enfolded within a single overarching metanarrative or system of explanation. It is a pain that has recovered or discovered its multiple voices" (Morris 1991:283). The pilgrimage rings out with the glossalalia of countless voices and their stories bringing the

Christian edifice into ruin while edifying the pilgrim's search for meaning, for direction and momentum, for control.

How does this help to make sense of Michael's journey through Spain and through his own biography? Was Michael an ironic pilgrim? For all our discussion of control and momentum, Michael found himself in a situation in his life where both seemed to be missing. It is always possible that the compromises we make in our everyday lives, the small defeats of the quotidian over the heroic wishes of individuals for their own lives, paint us into a corner where we find ourselves powerless to make changes for the better. Addiction and abuse are two such situations that permit such a state of affairs. The instinct for survival, however, though fragile, is quite difficult to kill off. In the face of a numbed existence, some, like Michael, think about their dreams, hopes and desires for the lives they wanted and try to find a way back through the labyrinth of a thousand everyday life-decisions to those wishes.[92]

"Every true affliction of the soul roots itself in the pain-filled human body;" (Weil, cited in Morris 1991:247) the physical pain of walking the pilgrimage gave way to the covert suffering of the reasons that made the pilgrimage a necessity. By making manifest what had ailed him, Michael made possible a cure. The walking pain "spills over the divides between the areas of our lives" (Kleinman 1991:133). Suffering often defeats our attempts to call it into *conscious* cognisance, but we have a repertoire of tools at our disposal, among them the ability to ironise our troubles, to reconsider their import and narrate and overcome them on our own terms, once we have the opportunity to engage them with our full attention. By writing stories that recast our

[92] Granted, though, it was easier for Michael as his wishes were tied up in the experience of a foreign country.

biographical journey to fit closer to our life-project, narrative can therefore re-constitute our sense of our place in the world. While irony, tragedy and redemption are available as resources on pilgrimage, they remain often muted, translated and even betrayed by the Christian discourse of salvation. The entry point for religion into the lives of pilgrims is supplication. The power however, rather than the fault (highlighting as that term does a faulty relationship between suffering and agency), lies not in our stars but in ourselves.

Figure 24 Sunrise over Galicia

CHAPTER SIX:

Economies of Salvation: individual and institutional stories

The idea of Europe was formed on the road to Santiago.
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Every institution is the lengthened shadow of one man
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings*

There are many advantages to staying in Jato's refuge in Villafranca del Bierzo. It is has a makeshift feel to it, as if it gradually grew up around and changed in response to pilgrims' needs, but it also has a lot of character to it. The best roasted peppers I have had in my life I ate in Jato's restaurant; such a refuge seems eminently capable of caring for the tired pilgrims that arrive at its doorstep. Jesus Jato himself is famed on the Camino for his generosity and the character of the refuge. He does not really stand out, though, among pilgrims; he exists in his reputation as much as in the simplicity of the accommodation he provides for weary travellers.

As well as good food and great 'craic', Jato provides a ferry service for pilgrims' backpacks ahead of the next day's climb up O Cebrero Mountain into Galicia, the last region as pilgrims move ever closer to Santiago. Having spent a comfortable night, the pilgrims leave their bags and bring only water, their load lightened for the day as they strike onwards and upwards over the last great

geographical barrier to their pilgrimage.[93] Although the climb is not as challenging as the Pyrenees, its reputation is greater, for the most part, because Spanish pilgrims who had traversed O Cebrero in their first week (walking from León) found it incredibly hard. These pilgrims returned the following year to walk the first half of the Camino (Roncesvalles to León), warning people that however difficult the Pyrenees seemed, O Cebrero would be tougher. Its mythology does not stand up however, to the scrutiny of walkers three weeks or more on the road.

The journey towards the mountain does bring some foreboding for first-time walkers, as anticipation of the climb bears down. While O Cebrero impinges somewhat on pilgrims as they begin the ascent, the entry into Galicia presents other, more pressing, constraints. Walking past the village of Ruitelán ahead of the climb, the first highway between the mountains looms high above the pilgrims. The idyll of the Camino is companioned with concrete modernity. An hour or so later, certainly sooner than anyone had anticipated, we cross into Galicia, and the moment is marked with a stone monument signalling the beginning of the end of the pilgrimage. Stones placed by the local Xunta thereafter mark off the distance remaining to Santiago in half-kilometre stretches (see figure 22). Just as the EU-sponsored markers have diminished pilgrims' conscious self-removal from society (acting as constant suggestions to experience the grateful support of the European Union in building the pilgrimage into a modern walking miracle), so too do these stones encroach upon the

[93] Leaving one's bag is not a simple matter; it is a powerful symbol for the pilgrim, and many pilgrims face near-ethical dilemmas as to whether to take the day off or not. Personally, I have always felt sufficiently aware of the backpack as a marker of pilgrim status that, as a relative outsider on the Camino, I have not yet risked walking O Cebrero without my backpack.

pilgrimage as they augur a slow, inexorable countdown to the end of this Camino.

In fact, the closer one gets to Santiago the more constrained the pilgrimage experience becomes. These stones initiate a pilgrim's re-entry into normal society, measuring out with exactness the demise of this newly-acquired and practiced wanderer identity. In the same way that pilgrims took time to feel they had begun the pilgrimage in St. Jean only a month previously, before they were prepared for the journey, they are thrown into finishing before they are ready to stop walking. With time running out, many pilgrims tend to hurry the journey, a tactic I have always found myself taking, others slow down, which throws up the added problem of walking at the pace of the dreaded tourists.

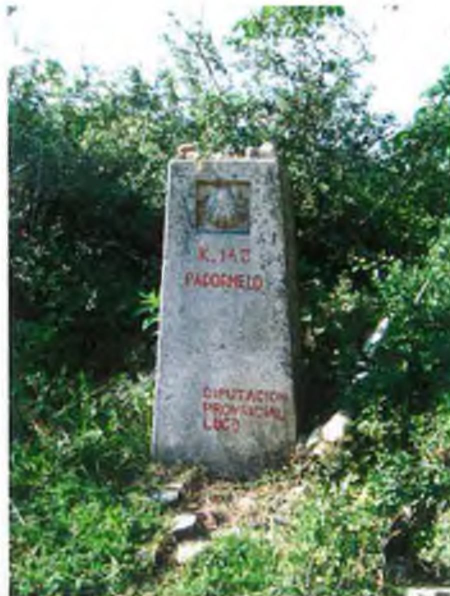

Figure 25 These markers are situated every half-kilometre in Galicia, marking off the distance to Santiago

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When I walk into Melide, there is a little bar a few kilometres outside the town that I stop at, where I sit and remember an encounter with a wonderful German lady I met the first time I was there. She was walking, much in the same way as John was, in memory of her husband who had died in South America a few years previously. She was doing the pilgrimage with her daughter and smiled when I told her I was researching the Camino. She told me that when she was my age she moved to Argentina with the man who would be the love of her life, "and this," she said, putting her arm around her daughter, "is the proof." It was touching to watch the two leave the bar arm-in-arm, ambling on to Melide, and more so since then, as I have become a husband and father myself. I saw her story from the perspective of my life, but I am no longer necessarily a part of it – so to speak; it could be my wife and daughter remembering me in a similar fashion. Thus, in such an unexpected way, I am confronted by my own mortality in a place where I never felt more alive. Such are the lessons of the Camino.

The contrast when I arrive in Melide is profound. The refuge in Melide has gained the reputation of being one of the best on the Camino. It is not really deserved, or rather, because the refuge is no longer such a well-kept secret, many of the tourist-pilgrims stay there (Melide is one of the last larger towns before Santiago too, and so there is more to do there and thus the refuge's standards have slipped). In a similar fashion to Palais de Rey, the refuge is at capacity by the time long-term pilgrims arrive late in the afternoon. I stopped there once for the *sello* before I sought out a pension for the night, and as I queued, a young couple, smiling a little patronisingly at me, pointed out that their bags were in front of me and that as there were only a couple of spaces left that they should keep their place. They had, they told me, walked twenty kilometres that day. In

a quiet fury, I pointed out that I had walked over forty kilometres the same day, that I was only looking for a *sello* and that if they were 'real' pilgrims they would not behave so poorly towards another pilgrim. I surprised myself with the extent to which I felt *personally* slighted by their lack of protocol. The story only elicited clicks and knowing nods from other pilgrims when I recounted it in Santiago a couple of days later. At times, there were definite differences between the pilgrims, we had our groups and the others (tourist-pilgrims) had theirs, it seemed and ne'er the twain would meet.

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The importance of small communities in circumscribing the moral character of pilgrimage experiences should not be understated. When every day is spent on the move from one place to the next, people are all you have; places do not mean as much (and more importantly, pilgrims are the 'objects' most often talked about!). When places become 'dangerous' though, 'polluting' the last days with an undifferentiated co-existence in the presence of tourist-pilgrims that blur the boundaries of the 'authentic' and 'touristic' pilgrimage further. In such instances, the centrality of communitas becomes important as a common resource to judge these arenas for competing official (religious) and non-official (secular) discourses.

A clear exploration of such issues is found in Taylor's (1989) description of Conny's funeral in Donegal, where we see a local priest engaged in interpreting what the local community should be and how it should grieve. Contestation over different forms of ritual mourning, and ultimately over Conny's remains, plays out as part of an official discourse, the 'civilising

process' (Elias 1982) that the priest undertakes. What is at stake is the meaning of the local man's death for the local community and his continued role as a socialised member of that locality. Within the constraints of the funeral itself, we see the priest claim Conny for the communion of saints and the next life (a kind of normative communitas itself), imposing a sense of duty on Conny's family and friends to honour him as such. This diminishes their claim to mourn and make sense of or to interpret the meaning of his death for themselves. The priest is also attempting to remove their *right* to do this work by claiming Conny for himself and the Church in the name of civilisation and respectability. However, what is actually being contested? I would submit that an idea of communitas that unites the mourners is being fought over, that what the priest initiates is an institutional response to an existential crisis, the death of a local. Names, stories and locality come together to create the topographical, geographical and symbolic landscape that orients individuals and communities (see Saris 1996) and he who controls the meanings of names and stories controls the meanings of those places.

Taylor (2001) picks up on such points of contestation when he talks about ironic communities, communities who define themselves in opposition to and against official discourses (the common begrudgers!). Here we see that, instead of a multitude of discourses diminishing a communal feeling, this feeling is really accentuated by using other discourses to help define a communitas. In effect, the community becomes a communitas for a short period. The communitas becomes what it beholds, quite able to pronounce its own interpretations of what has gone on in its own space. Such uses of irony to establish subversive narratives can lead to a "fertile ambivalence" (Taylor

2001:174) that is eminently useful to these 'strong poets' on the Camino, to fashion and structure meanings from and for their pilgrimage within temporary communities of equals.

The utopia of communitas is not achievable; it is the presence of alternatives in while being together that tends to diminish the creative capacity of real people. The mistake is not that we have believed that discourses are real, but that they are more real than actual people are. Jackson (2003:xii) states unequivocally that the symbols that hold our attention are empty ciphers, being filled with our creative capacity for connection and communication: "social and cultural macrocosms have no reality except through the energy, creativity and will that individuals impart to them". Daniel (1987:288), too, argues against academic over-emphasis on symbols and the systematicity of culture, which denigrates the value of indices and icons in the analysis of cultural contact.

It is the fragility of the communitas that is relied upon and celebrated, through drinking and laughter, philosophies espoused in the heat of the moment and forgotten the next day (as I read Taylor's account I imagine blasphemies and denunciations were involved as well!). The paradox of the communitas' robust ephemerality allows people to do their work, to claim Conny and the community, to suspend, temporarily, other problems in order to answer the deeper existential call of lives with purpose and direction, poetry and, that most fragile of human qualities, hope.[94]

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[94] There are situations that can overshadow pilgrims' striving for communitas, as when in 2004, when President George Bush's daughter, Jenna, walked the Camino from Sarria. She was protected by the Secret Service that overwrote any romantic, nostalgic or personal interpretation of the Camino with an intrusive entourage of bodyguards and SUV's; world politics became the topic on everyone's mind. The fragile groupings became even more tenuous as fights broke out among pilgrims who felt that her presence was at the least unwelcome (at the most vulgar) and ardent supporters of U.S. foreign policy.

Two English ladies I talked to in Melide had been focussed on the 'original' route of the pilgrims, moving town to town, looking for signs that they were mimetically reproducing the pilgrimage as closely as possible, even down to the fear they had of dogs attacking, "dogs have probably been attacking pilgrims since they starting coming here, it's the reason they brought walking sticks. I really felt as frightened as those first pilgrims … Those feelings are the important ones, the ones that let you know you are doing it right." Everyone has his or her own measure of the authentic on the Camino; in that sense, it is truly a democratic journey.

The pilgrim weaves a different time, a time-in-action (time experienced both as duration and as passage), to walk, rather than an inactive time, for instance, that can rule one's time at home where one endures the day until rest and mind-numbing non-activities can take over. Neither part of the day is can truly be said to be productive. To be sure, those rest-times are sought too on pilgrimage, but the *Homo viator* (Tomasi 2002), the wandering man, has more reason to celebrate at the end of a pilgrimage day. Over there, between places, the day has been active and directed, creative and successful. One might even say 'timely'. What is important is the deferral of everyday life (and jaded life trajectory, where the call is "Lord give me rest, I'll do the time"). While in such places, one may explore and to contribute to the postponement of meanings and consequences until another time, which is a kind of Faustian bargain, "Lord give me time, I'll do the rest." It is in this sense that pilgrims talk about pilgrimage as a mini experiment in living.

The Camino pilgrimage is a series of places that can permit the attenuation of fields of temporal practices that have governed pilgrims' daily lives at home; 'real time' (where 'real life' happens at home) is put on hold. On pilgrimage, time and life are, potentially, something else. The sense that we have today of the trajectory of our lives, and the extent to which we can conceive of that trajectory as a project at least partially within our grasp to influence and change, is a product of a recent sense of historical optimism. With a new concept of time and history comes a new idea of identity (Davis, cited in Dilley 2005:245). The pilgrimage space of today provides implicit political and moral commentary on the effects of capitalism and industrialisation on modern people who choose to go on pilgrimage. This choice to walk is partly due to the failure of progress to live up to its promise of a future filled with potential, instead establishing existential restrictions on life-choices within the lifeworlds of those pilgrims in other places. As Foucault has argued, any consideration of place is a consideration of power (Foucault 1984:252) and thus, any consideration of different places is a consideration of different configurations of power. This choice also reflects the fact that the *doctrine* of progress that underpins the Western *idea* of progress has only partially succeeded in staking a claim on our imaginations (see Perkins 2001:11).

One of the more obvious signs of the romantic idea of the Camino, then, is the fact that many people consider their time on the pilgrimage as 'time out'. This marked sense of timelessness would connote that time is less knowable and predictable on the pilgrimage; it is a time that, although replete with history, would seem to lack any measure of progress (a functionalist approach whereby, as the Camino can be viewed as a bastion against progress, any progress would

be a loss both of route and 'Way'). In essence, of course, such a position exoticises and stills any voices to the contrary. Perkins (2001:84ff) argues that temporal consciousness was necessary for the delineation of a sense of the (timeless) other and for the creation of European identities. Ironic, then, those similar attitudes are still found among European countries today. Of course, I am not arguing for a neo-colonial reading of the pilgrim's presence in Camino, which would comprehend him or her through an economic model of pilgrimage as mode of tourism, and religion as consumable Christian commodity (see for example Miller 2004), available for other purposes too, e.g. boundary definition within Europe. Rather, the necessity for sharp identity boundaries means that pilgrims can resort to similar strategies to come to know themselves. At the same time, they can easily fall into the trap of reinforcing their own status as middle-class 'high' Europeans and Americans. While this reinforcement of cultural values and standards does not preside over the experience, it does become the basis for unpacking some of the unhealthy habits that pilgrims have learned in their lives.[95]

Two American pilgrims in Melide responded with giggles when I asked them if they had noticed how well people looked, with only days left before our arrival. The two women, in their fifties, had been keeping an eye out for the more attractive younger men and admiring the developing bodies around them, including I have to say their own. The levity of the moment was tempered though as we talked further and one of the women told me about her news that her father was dying. The Camino was, for her, a means of reliving younger

[95] At its weakest, seeing the Spanish custom of siesta becomes a better way to spend the day with the full intention of returning to the clock at home, providing pilgrims with a space (and time) for temporary physical and moral rejuvenation.

feelings even as she had to put her incipient grief for her father on hold with everything else in her normal life, a task neither easy nor enviable.

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Upon reaching the outskirts of the Santiago, Monte del Gozo is a barracks designed to receive the pilgrim and remind him of his unexceptional status, housed and re-disciplined before entering the city. Del Gozo stands as the new Lavacolla, the old town where prostitutes would wash and pilgrims would clean up before entering Santiago. Now, pilgrims prepare for an institutional experience of the city, without the protection of the pilgrim mantle. Instead, they become simple tourists in the city, reintegrated into the world-system. To the degree that they refuse, resist or miss that transition, many pilgrims will struggle with their time in Santiago. Others travel the older road to the end of the earth, the pre-Christian route west beyond the city. In addition, the endpoint of the journey becomes more important as it is here that pilgrims 're-join' society. The availability of technology and infrastructural support in Santiago, coupled with a dearth of suitably 'spiritual' resources, erodes the pilgrimage experience as one of human speed, time and effort (see Frey 1998:219), standing in contrast to the offer of the *conxuro* and *queimada*, for instance, as more natural 'discoveries'. However the erosion is never fully accomplished, place and non-place continually write and rewrite over each other and these reminders, the betwixt and between places, can remain hidden from institutional view for another while.

Figure 26 Stopping for a cold beverage halfway up O Cebrero Mountain.

However, what future does it show us? The Camino will eventually become less of a pilgrimage and more a showcase for Spain and Europe in the guise of the EU and its beneficence towards local cultural renewal. More of the original route is disappearing as the highways are built, and pilgrims now plod for several weeks beside those highways instead of travelling in the wilder places they had imagined. The spontaneity of the journey is replaced by standardised hostel chains, from the expensive Parador hotels (set in old hostels), to the new Four County pilgrim hostel chain, infrastructure designed for modern pilgrims and their needs. Nowadays pilgrims can expect washing machines at the end of the day and soft drink vendors in the mountains (see figure 23). Technology competes for the gratitude of pilgrims with the nature that seemed poised to bring them to an experience of the sublime that was supposed to be on offer. Unpredictability is slowly and inexorably giving way to the very controllable walk in Spain, and the pilgrimage is eroded by the Way: a plotted, planned, safer

Mc Pilgrimage™ (see figure 27);[96] as Lourdes has become.[97] Nevertheless, that may not be the whole story. Meaningful journeys can be made in the midst of such advancement, though it is difficult to escape the feeling that walking into Santiago means walking into Europe once more.

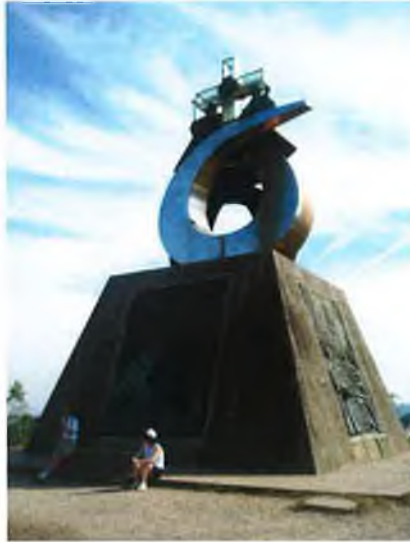

Figure 27 Statue commemorating Pope John Paul II's visit at Monte del Gozo

The commemorative statue in Monte del Gozo (see figure 24) is a major religious marker that, along with the barrack-like hostel, reproduces a certain vision of disciplined pilgrims. It marks Pope John Paul II's visit in 1981 for the World Youth Day. It has replaced the last contact with 'nature' before the city with a permanent high religious context that overshadows the pilgrim's first sight

[96] For an excellent overview of the processes of disenchantment in modern society [efficiency, calculability, predictability and control], see Ritzer (2000).
[97] See, for instance, Eade 1991, Taylor 1995 for discussions of the discursive petrification of various religious sites, where the charismatic experience in Marian shrines like Lourdes is mediated through lists of itineraries, religious objects and rotes of prayer that compete to control the meanings of the pilgrimage. Taylor writes, "the church instructs the people on the power and significance of such prayers, or rituals like extreme unction, as part of a more general plan that includes more strict adherence to a moral law and observance of all sacramental duties" (1995:199). See also McKevitt 1991 for an exploration of how the power of 'saints' can be dissipated geographically through monuments built in their name, as in the case of Padre Pio.

of his objective (the local Xunta cut down the surrounding wood to provide a space for the Pope to celebrate mass). It is a further example of the erosion of the 'return to nature' dimension of the pilgrimage in favour of a more overtly institutional religious meaning being assigned to a Camino landmark (see figure 25).

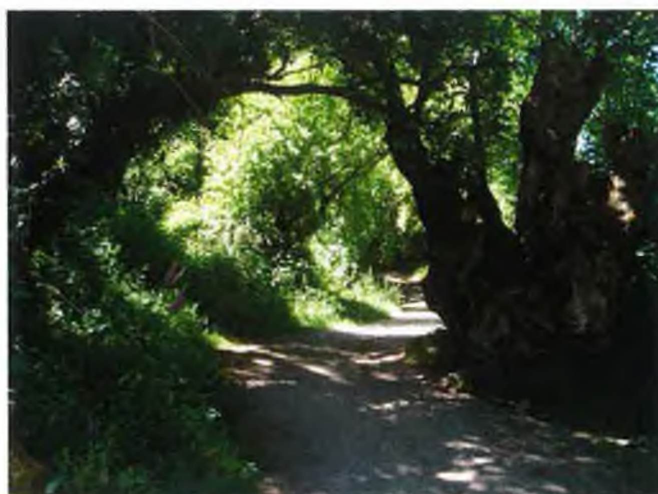

Figure 28 Part of the path in Galicia, which soon opens out onto a Eucalyptus forest, a very different experience of the Camino in the final days of the pilgrimage.

The Camino is a historical monument to the Christianisation of Europe at the expense of Islamic civilisation too. Through the Crusades and the eventual expulsion of Islam, Europe began to conceive of an identity for itself in explicit terms as a Christian Empire for the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire centuries earlier. The Camino provides one important and concrete sign of that re-imagining of Europe as a potentially single homogenous entity again. At the same time, the Camino commemorates a particular historical continuity while lacking any moral commentary on the religious intolerance that would have characterised the Reconquest of Iberia. This can be observed for instance in the

easy co-existence of Santiago Matamoros (the patron of the Islamic expulsion) and Santiago peregrino (the simple pilgrim to his own shrine)

At the broader institutional level, the EU's structural improvement programs build an increasing number of highways alongside the traditional Camino, resulting in the submergence of the old route. This requires the pilgrim to literally and figuratively walk alongside the paths of modernity that link every place (and no place, as they tend to divert pilgrims from many towns and other places of interest) across Spain (see figure 17). The EU's felt presence on the Camino is actually replacing the pilgrimage path; less of the 'original' Camino remains every year. Many 'real' places that pilgrims search for are being bypassed. The Camino vies for space with road routes across Spain, as the Camino is often 'redirected' to make way for roads. As pilgrims searching for authentic pre-modern experiences find themselves increasingly shadowing what Michael Taussig (1997:149) calls the most concrete representation of modernity; concrete. The institutionalisation of the Camino becomes a depressing daily reality as these 'alternative' routes (where no other real choice may exist if one is committed to following the yellow arrows) push their unrelenting reality into the hopes of pilgrims searching for a kind of virgin territory.

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We find a certain alienation occurring through the bodily sensorium breaking down to uncover a newly re-oriented trajectory that has to be 'moved along': in effect, after the positive disillusionment, the laundry.[98] On pilgrimage,

[98] Over-literalisation is in effect a stabilisation of meanings, where the significatory power of signs becomes decided. When signs stop 'moving.' they stagnant, and when that sign is a person, that person 'dies', a point that, Zilcosky argues, was a chief concern of the novelist Franz Kafka (see Zilcosky 2003:72ff). In *In the Penal Colony*, the manner of execution is precisely this

such an encounter with 'zero irony' (Friedrich 2001) can be a daily occurrence. It may be brought on or induced by contemporary pilgrims to experience and make meaning out of their feelings of alienation. That is, not to be alienated by alienation, but rather to put it to work for them, to bring about the possibility for an ironic reading of self, other, world, life-trajectory and ultimately life-project among anonymous communities of intimates (Rapport 2003, see also Daniel 1989:90ff). Mary, an American pilgrim in her fifties, wrote to tell me about sitting at an outdoor restaurant in Santiago drinking sangria, "We said to each other, 'We fucking walked across Spain.' The expletive seemed necessary to express the intensity of our amazement." Neither she nor her friends believed that this journey was possible, that they were able, until they had finished. Now Mary continues to walk at home because, "walking allows me to feel more human, more peaceful, more accepting and tolerant".

What are the possibilities for irony itself in the life- projects of modern walking pilgrims? Good irony is capable of being grasped easily enough to prevent further "demolitions and reconstructions," and it humanises, where inclusive understandings stand a better chance of building a "stable moral community" (Booth, cited in Fernandez 2001:96n15). Thus there is little conflict between notions of authenticity and irony; the capacity for irony is that capacity to "practice individuality" (Rapport 2003:48) with authenticity. In a modern age of neo-liberal late capitalism, where, it has been claimed, there is no such thing as society, just a collection of individuals, there is more than a little irony in such a life-project.

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merging of the criminal's crime with his body, written repeatedly until his death, "the body is bound or held down, and the signs that surround it are stabilised as a verdict that activates the punitive apparatus. The cementing of sign and meaning thus leads to a multiple and final arrest" (2003:85). The central difference for pilgrims is that they strive for this cementing 'on the move'.

'All roads lead to St. James' or the many histories of the Camino (a city of two tales)

In a newly-published book on the legacy of the Spanish civil war, *Ghosts of Spain*, the author Giles Tremlett asks why, in a country of "talented if sometimes incontinent talkers" (2006:ix), is Spain's history, "perforated with holes of silence and forgetting" (2006:3)? Even at an institutional level, it seemed that historians and other academics recorded the events of Franco's regime *en la intimidad*, bound in silence through a pact of forgetting (2006:xvii). Under Franco, Spain stopped, frozen in silence and time, unable to keep up with the rest of Europe. Žižek (2002:8) comments on the Cuban political ideology of the revolutionary event being defined in terms of its leader Fidel Castro: the country had to remain faithful to its own castration. It is not difficult to imagine a similar state defining Spain; the Christian iconography that Žižek sees in Cuba suggesting the symbolic logic of an intervention of the Eternity ("Apostles of the Revolution", the apotheosis of Che Guevara as "*lo Eterno*") that halts time has its corollary in the marriage of Catholicism to Spanish politics under Franco's direction.

Particularly in Spain, it must be said, Catholicism became under Franco an extension of state power. Franco repealed all the legislative changes effected under the previous Republic (1931-1936), such as secular education, divorce and separation of Church and State. The resulting rejoining of Catholicism and *patria* under Franco effectively made religious rites into, "the rites of statehood, on both national and local levels" (Behar 1990:87). The Francoist style of worship concerned itself with public displays of faith, such as, "processions,

solemn masses and elaborate ceremonialism reminiscent of the Counter-Reformation Church" (1990:86). National Catholic ideology valorised the local, but only as evidence of Castilian identity equated with a Nationalist Spanish culture.

After the second Vatican Council (1955-1963), the situation changed dramatically. The Catholic Church in Spain began to distance itself from Franco, criticizing the relationship between Church and State with its 'National Catholicism' (a critical term coined by the liberal, reforming priests produced after Vatican II). With many priests resisting political and religious orthodoxy, a special jail was built to hold them in Zamora (in Castile y León). In the post-Vatican II and post-Franco era, the Church's monopoly over Spain waned and, in the spirit of, "an open market for religious beliefs," the rationalising reforms of the Council symbolised an effort, "to divest Catholicism of much of its mystery and mysticism, thereby stripping away the ritualistic accretions that concealed the pure faith" (Behar 1990:80). But if this was the case, then the need for mystery and mysticism still existed at local levels, a fact that gave rise to what Behar quotes the (then) Bishop of León calling, "post-Christian paganism" (ibid.). I suggest that such a 'paganism' refers not only to the Church's need to re-evangelise Catholics in Spain or indeed Europe (through imagining them as pagans and so needing to hear the Gospel), but to the need of those Catholics to re-engage, rename and reclaim the mystic elements of Christianity.

In the recovery of local rites such as the *conxuro,* though, the Galicians found much more than a mystic revival. The ironic play with forms, as in Laura's case, drew on the public formal religion that clashed with the spirit of new ideas emanating from the Church post-Vatican II. The historical

suppression of all things Galician under Franco thus lends to the modern ritual a power born of its purported survival from this time. The very utterance of the Galician language in post-Franco Spain was a declaration that Franco's time had passed, as well as a de-petrification of the 'sacredness' of National Catholicism into the rite of exorcism. Thus such rites could also be seen to call out the spirits of pre-Christian Hispania from the images of (National) Catholicism, and through the *queimada*, the *conxuro* continued to pour 'real' spirits into the pilgrims, who, not being mindful of what they received, drank heartily.

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While European powers had initially needed to conceive of an idea of Europe that could circumvent the religious divisions that had antagonistically governed many countries' foreign relations within 'Europe', there have been several recent attempts to relocate an idea of a 'Christian' Europe, including an EU-sponsored 'Soul for Europe' competition.[99] The evidence that the Camino presents points to the pre-existence of the EU, a convenient conflation of a newly (re)defined geographical area with a recent super-state apparatus (or post-state federal apparatus). The Camino represents a celebration of 'local' and 'European' diversity under a cultural rubric that promotes non-state national consciousness. At the same time, this new consciousness militates against

[99] Emma Hartley (2006) argues that the 12 stars of the EU flag are representative of the Virgin Mary, designed for the Council of Europe in 1955 and adopted by the European Community in 1984. The head of the flag committee, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi was a devout Catholic who originally suggested the emblem of a cross for the flag (which was vetoed by Turkey). The following year the Council of Europe gave a stained glass window to Strasbourg cathedral detailing the Virgin Mary with the Crown of twelve stars, and the EU's official Christmas card has a detail from the ceiling of the Palazzo Barberini, showing the central figure about to place a crown on the head of "the Woman of the Apocalypse from the Book of Revelation [12:1]" (Hartley 2006:74). The association of the flag with Catholicism could not really be accidental, she opines.

resistance, to the processes forming a newly imagined European citizenry, from nation-states.

The process of Europeanization as a way of thinking about the geographic peninsula west of Asia is relatively a modern one. Historically, the Roman Empire ruled 'Europia' as a collection of provinces. When Rome embraced Christianity as the religion of the state, it saw its concerns encompassing both the Western Europe centred on Rome and the Eastern region centred on Constantinople. In fact, the Church saw its remit as the entire world, seen at the time as almost coterminous with the Roman Empire (Banville & O'Donnell 2005:110). With the rise of Islam, partly into the power vacuum left by the fall of the Roman Empire, Christendom emerged as a key symbolic resource establishing European boundaries. It is from this notion of Christianity that the more recent idea of Europe is derived. In the succeeding centuries, the rise and fall of Islam in Europe served to shore up notions of a common Christian heritage, renewed and strengthened in Charlemagne's accession as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, identifying (European) geography and (Christian) religion even further until the final expulsion of Islam from Europe in 1456. The ensuing decay of this identification through various Reformations led to centuries of sectarian violence.

From the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, through to the post-Enlightenment era, Europe had seen several hundred years of religious wars and eventually, "it became an embarrassment for the divided community of nations to be reminded of their common Christian identity; and 'Europe' filled the need for a designation with more neutral connotations" (Davies, cited in Banville & O'Donnell 2005:110). Europe's Eastern boundary was from the second century

considered to extend as far as the Don River to the East of Ukraine. Phillippe Strahlenberg, a Swedish officer in the Great Northern War (1700-1725), geographer and sometime ethnologist (he recorded the manners and rituals of many Siberian tribal groups) drew up extensive maps of Russia, suggesting a definite border between Europe and Russia that formed along the Urals. Accepted by Tsarina Anna I, the modern idea of Europe from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals came into being.

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In the period following WWII, the engine for European unity has been motivated by a desire to avoid any further war between European nations, a desire that gave birth to the Coal and Steel Agreement. From the start, there were problems. De Gaulle in the 1960s refused to negotiate for Britain's entry into the Community, and later, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's fiery rhetoric in the early 1980's on the issue of farming subsidies threatened to stall the process of enlargement, as did two recessions following the global petrol scare in 1973 and the worldwide recession in the early 1990's. The inception of the European Economic Community by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 brought the EU a step closer. Notions of a European Union, with 'Europe' as its geographic concomitant, became increasingly accepted, a process helped along by the fall of communism and applications from former Eastern European countries to join the EU, making the term 'Eastern Europe' an anachronism. The European dream slowly took shape until it reached its present form: a single currency for twelve members; a unified policy on foreign aid (contributing half of the world's aid); interest rates; foreign and defence stance; agreements on human rights issues;

democratic requirements and legal structures within its member states; and the largest single market in the world today. Today the EU represents a certain reading of diversity and equality based on the nearly 'invisible hand' of the European Union (Leonard 2005:9), its presence felt only indirectly as a mode of persuasion regarding the pragmatics of unity and safety in numbers and couched in the rule of law (see Leonard 2005:42).

The very real problem of creating a new kind of patriotic chauvinism permits borrowings from social theory and institutional investment in concepts like 'culture'. In 2002, for instance, the prime minister of Spain, José Maria Aznar, praised Jurgen Habermas's notion of constitution-patriotism: "a patriotic attachment not to one's ethnic roots, but to the state's democratic constitution, which covers all citizens equally" declaring that he should be adopted as Spain's official state philosopher (Žižek 2002:123). Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space has been put forward in a recent book reflecting on Ireland's role in the evolution of the EU (Hourihane 2004a). The larger problem, it seems, is not the political will from countries broadly within reach of the 'Eurozone' but what is referred to as the 'democratic deficit', the perception among European citizens that the institutions of the EU are not sufficiently accountable to the plebiscite.[100]

Lefebvre argued that "as the product, the child, of a space, the state turns back toward its own historical conditions and antecedents, and transforms them"

[100] It is on this plane that the EU faces its greatest challenge. When, for example, in 2001, Ireland was required to ratify the Nice Treaty by referendum, the Treaty was rejected. Ireland was one of the few countries to do so, and standing as one the great beneficiaries of EU money since it joined in 1972 (in excess of 15 billion euro to date in grants and funding), Ireland's low turnout (34% voted) and narrow rejection of the Treaty sent shockwaves through Europe and Brussels. The problem was clear; in the face of a vastly complex institutional system with few real effects felt on the ground among electors except the erosion of individual states' power (60% of Irish laws passed each year are ratifications of EU directives and laws), the EU had to become relevant to the electorate. It is in this context that sites such as Cultural Itineraries and Cities of Culture have become one crucial resource in the battle for the imagination of a European citizenry.

(cited in Hourihane 2004b:xvii), a process he sees occurring in the Camino's part-constitution of Europe as a cognitive space (Lefebvre 1991:138). Thus the identification of places and localities that have existed as centres of power, and which build particular ideas of place, community and nation is required to construct a sense of material reality around the idea of national sentiment, of shared connectedness to such a larger (yet skeletal) entity as the institutional EU.

Hourihane quotes Lefebvre's argument that the production of space occurs in three stages; in the formation of the Irish nation-state, for instance, a geographical space must be,

> "mapped, modified and transformed [into] the national territory. Secondly, the production of a social space based on hierarchically ordered institutions, of laws and conventions [must be effected]. Thirdly, the production of a mental space that includes the representations of the state that people construct – confused or clear, directly experienced or conceptually elaborated" (Lefebvre, cited in Hourihane 2004b:xviii).

The production of Irish space, for example, then, according to Hourihane, is completed through Ireland's membership in the EEC and thereafter in the EC and the EU.[101]

Terry Eagleton has argued that in academic circles post-colonial theory shifted the focus from class and nation to ethnicity, "this meant ... that the distinctive problems of post-colonial culture were often falsely assimilated to the very different question of Western 'identity politics'. Since ethnicity is largely a cultural affair, this shift of focus was also one from politics to culture" (2004:12). I suggest that a concurrent move has occurred within Europe, from speaking about national interests towards a focus on cultural distinctiveness and local

[101] Cronin, in the same volume, notes that Irish people are in a "rootless modernity", caught between the instantaneous time of modern life and the durational time of Irish (read European) heritage, searching for ties with the past, "the difficulty in both our private and political lives in Ireland is to create a culture that will accommodate both [temporal] possibilities of living in late modernity" (Cronin 2004:21).

difference, celebrated within the European territory and supported by EU funding through the programmes of Cities of Culture and European Itineraries. These rhetorical programmes tend to downplay any political component in a discursive formation of sites of culture within the gazes of the EU and local institutions seeking funding. Yet celebrations of local diversity do present problems, from State rejection of multiculturalism in France, in favour a centrally-organised secular 'French' state, to moves within Spain for autonomous regions to have their own local institutions and governance (from Catalonia to the Basque separatist movement), to the rise of the British National Front (BNF) in mainstream English politics. Local difference is very much a political issue, one that organises particular visions of European modernity and national interest.[102]

Eagleton makes the point that human history is now for the most part post-collectivist and post-individualist, "and if this feels like a vacuum, it may also present an opportunity. We need to imagine new forms of belonging, which in our kind of world are bound to be multiple rather than monolithic" (Eagleton 2004:21). These multiple modes of belonging may yet serve the purposes of those who drive the unification of the EU as a common 'social' space, constructed from a limited imagination that excludes many others within 'Fortress Europe' (Hitchcock 2004:433). The Camino is appropriated as such a social space for 'remembering' Europe and making visible the instrument of European will (the EU) through the material culture around the pilgrimage. this appropriation occurs at several levels, from the application for status as a European City of Culture to the re-routing of the pilgrimage route itself

[102] One could reverse the common proverb and say that all local politics is 'Politics'.

according to local interests (road-building, inclusion of new towns on the pilgrimage path) and signs that convoke the EU and St. James.

Construction of pilgrimage site as witness to Europe and reality & relevance of EU

St. James has long been involved and invested in a project of producing a homogenous cultural space called Europe. From Santiago's symbolic beginnings as a rallying point against Islamic invaders (living in relative peace along the Mediterranean coast for a couple of centuries until then), the Camino went on to help define 'Europa' (see Llobera 1996) as white and Christian (see Goddard, Llobera and Shore 1994). The pilgrimage route has therefore been a part of the developing consciousness of Europeans for many centuries, contributing indirectly in many ways to the construction of Europe, as we know it today.[103]

The idea of Europe, however, is an idea that dates back to the Greeks, beginning with the abduction and rape by Zeus of a Phoenician princess called Europa.[104] The archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans coined the term 'Minoan' to capture the civilisation that began the story of Europe. In the Minoans, we find the origins of religious thought and the most effective bureaucracy in antiquity. The philosopher Slavoj Žižek comments that the story of Europa serves as a "true picture of Europe" (2002:143), that Europe is a product of two abductions,

[103] One notable example is that of the Song of Roland (which recalls the defeat of Roland, one of Charlemagne's generals, by the Basques, who are later recast as Muslims), arguably the oldest French epic poem and thus a major step towards a standard form of modern 'French' poetry and language.

[104] In the myth, Zeus takes the form of a white bull and removes Europa to Crete. There, she bore him three sons, Sarpedon, Rhandamanthys and Minos, who would become the mythical king of Crete. Minos took the throne when, having prayed for a divine gift from Poseidon to prove his claim to the throne, Poseidon sent him a white bull for sacrifice, thus proving his right to the throne. However, Minos refused to sacrifice it in return. In revenge, Poseidon caused Minos' wife Pasiphae to fall madly in love with the bull. She produced a child with the bull, the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull whom Minos imprisoned in a labyrinth under the city.

the first occurring as the Romans took the "eastern pearl" of Greek thought and vulgarised it, the second when the "barbarian West" did the same with Christianity. "No wonder," he comments, "that her name means 'the dismal one'" (ibid.).[105]

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In constructing a view of the pilgrimage as evidence of the historical continuity of Europe and the possibility for its taken-for-granted reality in an emerging European super-state, it is important to trace the flow of money into the region from the EU, and the dialogue between the local institutions and the EU. This already-given status is visible in several ways: the unity of the geographical area, both culturally (in an instrumental sense) and in a (recovered) religious sense. Pilgrims provide a great degree of continuity by which the pilgrimage emerges as a site for study, whereas the material culture surrounding and partially circumscribing the pilgrimage route is less convincing as the basis for delineating the field. It is more fruitful, therefore, to follow pilgrim biographies, under reconstruction, both in a ludic manner and with serious consequences, through a series of contested spaces, where identities are created and destroyed in a single day, sometimes, as we saw in the *conxuro*, in a single performance.

The Camino is illustrative of some of the core cultural processes by which the EU tries to become an everyday felt presence in the lives of its citizens. The EU space itself is hazy, defined through places and centres, rather than through edges, a situation which is apparently deliberate, a product of Jean Monnet's idea for a workable future for the EU, "we hope vaguely but we fear

[105] Through its inception via a double abduction, then, the 'idea' of Europe has much in common with the imagination of the Camino, suffering as St. James did with two abductions, in the first century and the sixteenth, from the respective clutches of Herod Agrippa and Sir Francis Drake.

precisely" (cited in Leonard 2005:9). The EU's diffuse boundary allows it to expand its borders as part of a stabilisation policy designed to stultify its neighbours' belligerence with the kindness of club membership. This peripheral ambiguity is an interesting cultural process that joins specific geographical linkages of the EU's skeletal structure to a space that consciously lacks definite geographic boundaries. The Camino is thus deeply involved in the EU thinking about itself and its own project; defining itself as a real geopolitical presence on the world stage in the twenty-first century, a power bloc the equal of the US, China and Russia. The EU can therefore show off its own pedigree by pointing to the history of sites such as the Camino as being its own history, proved by the flow of money and the dialogue between the local Juntas and the EU that allows the pilgrimage to be co-opted by these bodies.

According to Leonard, the EU is concerned with free trade and other issues around movement rather than necessarily fixing static boundaries to achieve coherent self-identification (see Leonard 2005:32, 42, 88), therefore the actual constitution of 'Europe' is something that member states (existing and prospective) can fight over slowly until a consensus is reached. Nevertheless, this space has to be collected under a history that *results* in the EU for the identification to be worth anything. Unless the efforts and the mistakes of Europe's own history can be written into (and out of) the successes of the EU, then the EU remains an abstraction for European citizens.

The model of the EU that seems to be touted, at least in Leonard (2005), that of 'Network Europe', as against 'Fortress' Europe, seems to be manifested quite interestingly in the Camino in its role as an austere and highly-developed European network. As a trope, the network has the dual benefit of evoking both

the interconnectedness of the EU states and places, and of having a dynamic, outward looking (networking) feel to the idea of Europe.

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One characteristic of a modern transient population seeking new and life changing experiences on the Camino is that they drop below the radar; it is one of the few occasions where such a mass movement of people on foot is allowed in Europe, let alone encouraged. It is striking to consider pilgrims' stories as ghost stories, that, as these pilgrims cross Europe, they do not confirm its identity, but haunt it with a presence that is spectral at best, floating along day after day towards the end of the earth. Derrida would recognise in these ghostly presences (and absences) something like kindred spirits (Derrida once claimed in an interview that he too was a ghost!).[106]

The presence of secular European and American pilgrims on the Camino represents an erosion of traditional values and local cultural logics that make sense of the pilgrimage in particular social milieux. It is important not to fall into a trap where the Camino becomes an artefact of a discourse of 'authenticity'. Such an ideological move can have the unintended effect of freezing the pilgrimage in time, in the past, where the journey is an imagined one backwards towards that mythical time. The pilgrimage, the regions around the pilgrimage and indeed Spain itself, can become identified, in such an instance, as backward

[106] Ghost stories, to follow Derrida, are remnants of other ways of being, suppressed by national just-so narratives. Phantoms linger on to haunt the nation-state and other institutions as present-absences, traces, "of those who were not allowed to leave a trace" (Labanyi 2002:1). In fact, the cultural expression of postmodernity itself may be interpreted, "in the spectral form of the simulacrum, [as an acknowledgement of] modernity's ghosts" (Labanyi 2002:2). As the 'original' Camino becomes less visible and available to pilgrims, the route may well become such a present-absence across Spain, and the *idea* of the Camino will be more available to the many 'cultural entrepreneurs' who will have their own meanings in mind as they help pilgrims find their way to Finisterre.

and lagging behind the rest of Europe as the EU modernises, globalises and homogenises (see Roseman 1996). The irony is that the very traditional structures that draw people to the Camino become inverted signifiers, indicating a lack of progress towards an ill-conceived harmonisation in these regions, a lack of concurrent historical time with the rest of Europe.

How can we say, then, that the Camino de Santiago is implicated in the process of bringing Europe into being as the historical and geographical ground of the EU? Sharon Roseman (2004) examines Santiago de Compostela's bid in 1995 to become a European 'City of Culture' in the year 2000. To argue for the city's candidacy, officials in Santiago put together, "an elaborately argued bid for bureaucrats of the EU" (2004:68), which deployed notions of Santiago de Compostela, pilgrimage, culture, and Europe. In doing so, the bid exceeded popular ideas about culture that implied bounded homogeneity to employ an anthropological sense of the term that emphasised diversity, heterogeneous processes of negotiation and the construction of heritage and cultural tourism (2004:71,75). The bid also underlined the historical Europeanization of the pilgrimage that resulted from the convergence of medieval pilgrims from all over Europe towards Santiago. Moving from previous explanations of Santiago's draw, located at the remains of St. James in the city, to an argument highlighting the route's involvement in a continuing historical process of Europeanization, the bidders created a subtle document seemingly in line with many ongoing debates on the nature of culture within anthropology as a discipline.

In doing so, the very processes that are of benefit to pilgrims, the freedom to walk imaginatively backwards and forwards through both historical and (their own) biographical time become interrupted by globalising forces. Competing

discourses about modernity and its consequences establish a sense of ambivalence on the Camino that can be read through the prevalence of local and transient pilgrim discourses of authenticity. It is not hard to see how these ways of talking about Europe and the Camino can be constantly on the minds of pilgrims, as there is such a great degree of contact between pilgrims from all around Europe on a daily basis. What Europe means to each pilgrim becomes visible as they try to interact with their surroundings and other pilgrims either as Europeans or as national chauvinists.

According to Bourdieu (1977), culture can be conceived of as a socially constructed phenomenon, built as a series of 'structuring structures' that mutually reinforce other processes, conveying both a sense of materiality and of meaningfulness that constructs a felt sense of something 'naturally' cultural and culturally natural. Acknowledging our places in the world as social beings, we look to others to help us sense that place in the world. Basso (1996:104) argues that we need to have others present (even if it is in an ephemeral sort of way) in order to do the work of what I am arguing is a type of self-actualisation through sensing place and our place in it. It is together that we locate ourselves as embodied selves, and begin to sense our potential and limits. As social beings, we experience the flow of sociality back and forth between each other through a myriad of specific exchanges (though of varied degrees of self-consciousness). We move between innovation and sedimentation, what Csordas (1997) talks about as the radicalisation of everyday life and the ritualisation of charisma. Pilgrims experience the newness of the Camino,[107] but quickly begin to do the

[107] And its ancientness too; it is possible that the new quality it represents is that of its immanence, its physical insinuation into pilgrims through walking it as a means of communicating and evoking the Camino. Its ancient quality is that of its felt transcendence,

work of culture, creating patterns of interaction and experiencing, filtered through the covert logics of their own cultural backgrounds.

Thus, a locomotive habitus begins to structure their experiences in order to make sense of them. The wonderful and fresh Camino quickly becomes structured and 'known' or 'learnt' through a series of bodily techniques that allow pilgrims to weigh the day in terms of success and failure, of progress and stagnation. The path travelled becomes mimetically contiguous to the life trajectory, experienced as a trail without other distracting 'potential' journeys (which would deviate from the path and the goal of walking the Camino). The discipline to maintain a trajectory westwards is a kind of cultural and cognitive template that provides an internal bodily experience of tenacity and endurance that is applicable in more diffuse, existential problems and issues. The Camino space quickly becomes a moral space, providing lessons on the right and wrong ways of doing important things in one's life. With easy markers, one can quickly assess the correct thing to do; indeed pilgrims can generate a field of actions that they can collectively sense together as being within the moral reach of the Camino to judge. The foregrounding of pertinent actions, feelings and thoughts also implies backgrounding other forms of being and knowing, where the excessive drinking and the formation of easy liaisons between pilgrims become less open to moral scrutiny. What matters is whether one is trying to walk 'rightly'.

Of course, because there is no final judgement as to the right way to do things, only collective sensing of rightness among groups of pilgrims (despite the presence of more official discourses and requirements for correct or appropriate

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which tends to produce context rather than alienation, for the transcendence of the Camino over the life of the pilgrim is an immanent one; it is there and will continue to be there.

peregrination from Church and State); different groups have varied ideas of right and wrong. This disparity sometimes makes for a fraught pilgrimage space, especially between cyclists and pilgrims (for instance, cyclists think nothing of speeding past walkers at high speeds on narrow downhill paths with little more than a warning shout as they pass), but more often serves mostly to shore up the diffuse boundaries between these ad hoc, accidental groups.

The shift of focus from St. James's remains to the movement of pilgrims shows how the Camino corresponds to two other co-ordinates of pilgrimage, movement and culture (see Coleman & Elsner 1995 and Badone & Roseman 2004a). By moving at a 'human speed' (Frey 1998), pilgrims establish a continuity with a medieval way of moving and this continuity is transferable to the pilgrimage itself, i.e. many pilgrims choose to walk as the first pilgrims to Santiago did, so the pilgrimage remains essentially unchanged. The Camino is a tangible (indeed sensuous) symbol of Europe today, and this consistent choice to travel 'at human speed' (on foot, but also by bike, horse and even with a donkey [see Moore 2004]) points to a continuity of meanings preserved in the presence of pilgrims who have been 'walking Europe into being' since the route's inception a thousand years ago.

As a corollary to this point, the historical continuity of the pilgrimage implies its cultural continuity too. The convergence of cultural traits and behaviours are clearly represented within the bid, which goes beyond mere high cultural forms, fine art, classical music, museums and monuments to represent a *turismo integral:* "multi-faceted tourism" that comprises, "particular ways of life and worldviews" (Roseman 2004:73). In expanding such ideas of culture, Roseman argues, these cultural entrepreneurs have exceeded essentialist

primordial notions of culture that have been under attack within anthropology as well (see Abu-Lughod 1991, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986).

By emphasising ideas of culture that emerge from contact between diverse European constituencies, Galicians (and indeed other Spanish regional officials, through the local autonomous government and through the efforts of Xacobeo to promote the pilgrimage) relocate the Camino and Galicia within Europe rather than within Spain itself (Roseman 2004:74). Through this reconsideration of the collective project of rethinking culture, the grounds of culture definition moves beyond a 'limited imagination' of nation-state ideologies as collective sentiment within sovereign territories (Anderson 1983). It is clear therefore, argues Roseman, that these ideas of culture more closely approximate current postmodern theories of culture that focus on, "plurality, multiple subjectivities, transformations and crossing of borders" (Roseman 2004:75). This discourse of pilgrimage is not new, though. The Camino has, ironically, been sold as an example of Christian community, tolerance and unity from its inception under the guidance of figures such St. Beatus, Bishop Teodomiro and Bishop Diego Gelmírez, as well as through the later efforts of Archbishop Suarez de Deza to establish the jubilee in Santiago.

The establishment of Santiago's credentials as a European City of Culture by the EU represent part of a process of creating a shared social space that began in medieval times. Establishing Santiago as a sacred centre is important for the EU's efforts to be more than a distant and skeletal network of bureaucrats in Brussels and Strasbourg, struggling to overcome a democratic deficit. Creating spaces and events that 'name' and explore ideas such as European solidarity in

specific locales are crucial if Europeans are to develop, "meaningful identities as members of a unified, multistate political union" (Roseman 2004:81). Locally, such solidarity is felt first among the pilgrims, experienced as something that I have argued closely resembles Turner's notion of 'communitas'. It is from such experiences that the EU can argue its roots lie, through, "plant[ing] in the European cultural consciousness the valorisation of difference … to mobilise … processes leading toward [relations of] solidarity with others" (Concello de Santiago, cited in Roseman 2004:82). The Camino as a massive flow of real people descending on Santiago (up to 9 million during a Holy Year) facilitates a re-organisation of constituencies beyond the old model of European nation-states, one which, "accommodates a political agenda that promotes a fluid and emerging supranational European unity" (Roseman 2004:84). We can link this history of the Camino to the pilgrimage's strategic placement in the imagination of a different notion of 'Europeanness', borne from a need to reconfigure relationships between European entities beyond bellicose religious affiliations. Further, through UNESCO's adoption of both the old city of Santiago and the pilgrimage route as World Heritage Sites,[108] the Camino has become more available to what Mary Crain calls the 'worlding' of pilgrimages (Crain 1997). When pilgrimage sites are 'worlded', they become marketed to the widest possible range of people, with an attending erosion of the locality as a meaningful base for understanding the pilgrimage.

[108] At present UNESCO has adopted thirty-six sites in Spain, including the old city of Santiago and the Camino de Santiago de Compostela.

Friends for the last time: leaving Santiago, bringing the Camino

From Derrida's work on the 'play of differance' (2002b), we can conclude that the *import* of the act of exchange becomes deferred, that the semiotic inferences such a transfer of goods instigates need to play out, deployed in a field of social relations. Why is this sense of deferral important here? One way of thinking about it is that the sum of the pilgrim's different temporal practices comes into focus upon reflection in Santiago, at the demise of the pilgrims' practiced ways of 'being' on pilgrimage. While walking, pilgrims think about the time of arrival in Santiago and the conclusion of the pilgrimage. Upon arrival, they look back at the experience of the pilgrimage. Daniel (1987:298) writes that as *differance* admits a temporal aspect to experience, it "insists upon an openness of the world, especially the world as constituted by man", therefore both categories of world and person cease to be concepts, but instead represent "the possibility of conceptuality" (Derrida, cited in Daniel 1987:298).

Once pilgrims start to recede from a source of experience at the end of the pilgrimage that comes into focus as the locus of memory for the walk, this previously embodied knowledge can be made available to assess actions and exchanges among pilgrims over previous weeks and months from the vantage point of Santiago. It is fascinating to watch pilgrims who had spent a good deal of time together and shared profound experiences flounder as they meet up in Santiago. Suddenly, it seems they have little in common and they have to begin to be re-acquainted with each other through piecing together their memories; previously suspended social differences creep back in, and pilgrims no longer make the effort to understand other language groups as patiently. A sense of

being present and sensing place together, so powerful on the Camino, is often missing in Santiago. The Camino ceases to represent an iconic exploration of life and aspirations, instead becoming an indexical reference between ex-pilgrims who invoke past experiences that recall content rather than context.

In a sense then, the limited time pilgrims have on pilgrimage allows them to accumulate a reservoir of experiences and memories in a newly-conceived place to be re-examined in Santiago and after. The Camino as a collective remembering has allowed pilgrims to assume a greater sense of openness to anticipated meaningful experiences while walking. It has also allowed them to trust that pilgrims either have experienced generosity or soon will, in effect interpreting both the experience of generosity and its absence.

That said, pilgrims might also come to see that the Camino might be too transient a place to rely on reciprocal exchanges that promote *permanent* relationships between specific individuals; intensity of contact substitutes for permanence. It may, argues Simon Coleman (2004), actually be a condition of it. Attending a televangelical meeting, Coleman was offered money by a woman who insisted on the gift without need of any return, "If I had then entered into a long-term and binding relationship with the woman, the symbolic power of the gift – arising from its participation in an unrestrained spiritual imaginary – might even have been diminished" (Coleman 2004:434). A series of deferred reciprocal exchanges that pilgrims can use to make a different texture of contact with other strangers is a much more useful strategy. Structurally, these patterns of exchange create a diffuse sense of obligation to return gifts in a place that is composed of transient strangers. This sense of obligation thus creates and maintains a grammar of give and take among a diverse and constantly evolving/

moving population, required to begin making the pilgrimage space something more than an empty self-centred space and more of a node of cultural activity where, "the hope of agreement is never lost as long as the conversation lasts" (Rorty, cited in Daniel 1987:296).

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We all felt lonely when, sitting in a bar in Santiago at the end, we said our goodbyes. Diego, Kurt's travelling companion, quickly made his excuses and left the table. With hardly a word, they both said their farewells and Kurt, to his credit, allowed his tears to fall. We knew then that the pilgrimage had irrevocably finished.

Camino as way and Camino as wandering (for who knows where the pilgrim may end up...). It seems sad to say that the wandering is being replaced with predictability; the tourist paradigm of itineraries and route maps informs modern pilgrims' journeys more than any idea of respect for preserving the pilgrimage even in its present, modern form, before it changes too much. Watching tourists line up for a plenary indulgence it seems that the authentic is more readily available than having to hike for a month. Such a realisation only compounds pilgrims' ambivalence towards the day-trippers who take their places side-by-side with them; in the eyes of the Church, there is no real distinction.[109]

The modern pilgrimage is a new invention, tied to the rise of technology and means of transport. While it can be of use, such usefulness diminishes as the road disappears and is replaced, updated. The imagination of the pilgrimage as

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[109] Even worse, pilgrims who do not tick the 'spirituality' box on the application form for a Compostela are being given 'simpler' Compostelas to reflect that their journey did not conform to the Church's requirement that the pilgrimage be a spiritual of religious one. Thus, to add insult to injury, the Catholic Church seems to be unwilling to distinguish between the day-trippers on a Holy Year and pilgrims.

virgin territory is part of a discourse of the Camino had always been quite heavily populated. With up to one-tenth of medieval Europe on pilgrimage at any given time, the roads to St. James would have been very busy indeed, as evidenced by the prolific presence of hostels in every town. The rugged individualistic outdoors therapy is new, set in an old, old pilgrimage, but even that is under threat now. The power of the pilgrimage will ultimately, I feel, be found in the people walking to Santiago, with institutional elements of the Camino following after, trying to justify their existence by their association with the pilgrimage as its protector, drawing out the 'true' power and 'relevance' of the Camino in their patronage.

Conclusion:

Mobility, modernity and community: finding home

Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.

Without her you would not have set out.

She has nothing left to give you now.

C. V. Cavafy, *Ithaka*

These things they go away,

Replaced by everyday.

REM, *Nightswimming*

I have only ever been to Finisterre, the most western point in Europe, once, and that was by bus in 2004. Having finished another trek across Spain, I joined up with several fellow tourists (as we had become since finishing the Camino) and we made our way, for the last time, to the local bus station in Santiago to travel out to the end of the earth, some seventy kilometres beyond. The journey was a difficult one for us. Having spent a month on the move by foot, the bus was further confirmation that we were no longer simple pilgrims, but fully modern tourists, speeding past the vast eucalyptus forests that had so delighted only days earlier upon our approach to Santiago. On the bus however, we skipped through the countryside to get to our destination in a day. Many of the others were leaving the following day and this would be our last time together. Neither were we following the path of St. James any longer. As the bus devoured a journey that would have taken us three days, we settled in to tell

the stories of the Camino for the final time, the characters, the people we had in common and the new pilgrims we had met separately; each of us had a few tales.

The fishing village of Finisterre was a typical small hamlet, and the lighthouse and the edge of the world lay a further three kilometres. I could not walk very well by then as my knee had swollen somewhat, so I settled into a bar with a *cerveza* and waited for my companions to return and describe the sight of the sea and the feel of the proof that we were who we had been once more, even if who we were had changed. It was difficult not to feel uneasy about what the weeks in Spain meant, and for most of the group, it would take much longer to make sense of the trip. For myself, I felt happy enough not to see the Atlantic Sea; it meant that I would have to come back again. For that moment, though, I sat looking out at the fishing vessels, wind bracing and seagulls screaming overhead, I smelt the fresh briny sea air and tasted a welcome beer. Life was still good.

As my friends returned, exuberant and sad, we all felt that something was still lacking from the experience. We needed a ritual. We slunk off to the edge of the marina where each of us selected a memento and placed it in my hat. Then, with great occasion, we set fire to my hat and tossed it gently in the sea, watching it quietly float away on the waves with our pilgrim selves, sinking below the surface, taking tokens of our time together with it. The wind seemed to penetrate us a little further, or maybe I just felt a little more vulnerable at that moment, so far from anything like home. It had been a long while since I had felt myself to be in really familiar territory. I would spend several more weeks in Santiago, watching fewer pilgrims I knew arrive, the landscape and the city strangely familiar and intimately alien, just as my own sedentary body would

become as I began the task of picking apart my time in Spain. Once again, my pilgrimage, my Camino, seemed like an awesome task. And then the hat disappeared completely.

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For Kafka, as for the journey of the pilgrim, life and death do not remain so far apart; neither are they antagonistic, so much as complementary processes, mutually informing each other's horizons. The goal of the pilgrim remains ultimately to continue the journey, never settling on one set of meanings or another. To do so, as in K.'s case in *The Trial*, is to meet death. Signified and signifier must continually 'slip', storied lives and lived stories must constantly fail to 'arrive'. A pilgrim in Santiago is a tourist and so he keeps moving or becomes a ghost, hovering in a pale city that does not recognise him, until he can move on. Leaving a trace can sometimes mean merely to haunt, as many pilgrims discover when they find themselves wandering disconcertedly through Santiago's streets in the following day's pre-dawn, looking for arrows, any sign of a subsequent journey. Little wonder that more than a few 'serious' pilgrims make their way to the end of the earth, in the form of Finisterre, to burn all signs of the journey, clothes, maps and sticks, before plunging into the ghostly Styx of the Atlantic Ocean, only too aware that, as Kafka knew "bodies … can continue to create meaning long after they have 'died'" (Zilcosky 2003:195). Kafka, too, ordered his writings to be burned upon his death, to free himself of a ghostly literary afterlife. At the point of submergence, though, the peripatetic meanings cease to wander, becoming condensed in the water; the pilgrim's body emerges as something else, a person who has to return home to take his or her place

among the quotidian and the everyday. The sea is the final monument to the journey and epitomises it. The meanings that remained elusive and vital to the pilgrimage have penetrated inside, and the wet, laughing pilgrim turns around and walks back onto the shore. The pilgrimage is complete, the bonds that have sustained the pilgrim dissolved, only the return to the city beckons.

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When I began thinking about how to orient my project both within the field of anthropology and from within a world that often seems to escape much of anthropological writing, leaving it to play out within a hermetically insulated world of social scientific thinking, I thought about Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* (see figure 26). Despite the fact that these days *Nighthawks* is something of an overproduced cliché, having Hollywood icons replace Hopper's mysteriously melancholic characters in recent years, this painting captures much of what I sought to find and account for in my fieldwork.

Hopper's people are people caught in a pensive mood, with expressions both secretive and open to interpretation, inviting us to imagine, unwittingly, the losses, the betrayals, the tiredness, the very loneliness that holds them in the frame. The scene moves the observer through several stages. The open empty spaces invite us closer; nothing much seems wrong there, the surrounding gloom pressing the viewer closer to the all night speak-easy. It is then that we notice there is no way in, or, for that matter, out. Then we begin to see the predicament of the people inside, trapped, it appears, in a coffee shop. The gloom outside pushes in with darker foreboding, yet the characters are not occupied by this gloom, but rather with their own, more private thoughts. The characters seem

sad. This sadness is the subject of much of Hopper's painting, finding places that hold anonymous people who are passing through, held by their emotions and their need to feel lonely amongst other lonely people. While this painting is about sadness, though, it is not a sad painting.[110]

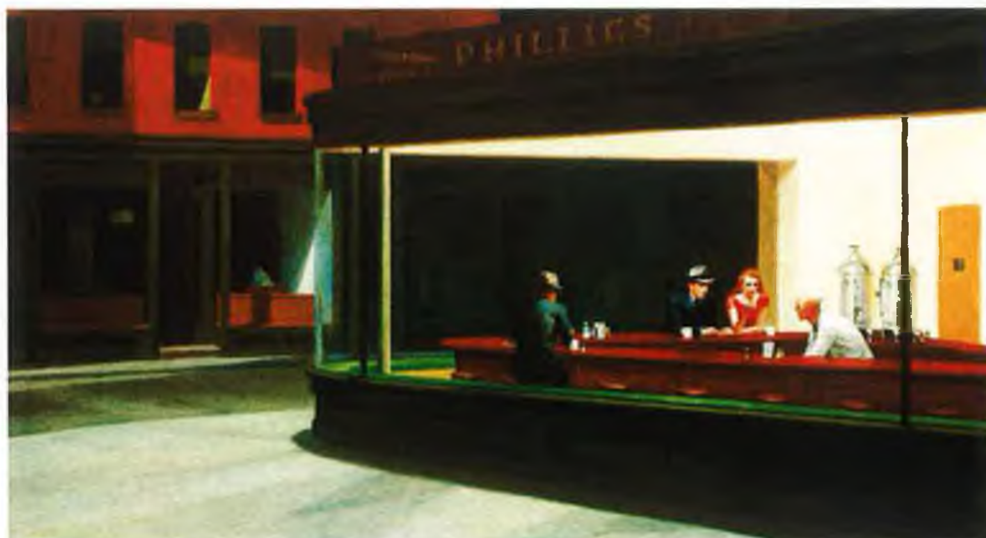

Figure 29 *Nighthawks* (1942), Edward Hopper

The image of the *Nighthawks* conjures majestic birds, soaring in secret; hawks under cover of night. The everyday life that the everyman discards as he or she falls wearily to sleep becomes the refuge for those who feel more keenly the difficulties of such a life. So this portrait is one of hope, one that holds an implicit promise to the observer that such refuges exist and that they are not empty places, but populated with those who secretly wish to find a way up and out of their lives as they live them, if only for a short time. There are other barstools there, waiting for others to find a way in and an empty glass, hinting at

[110] Hopper provides us with clues to other ways of reading the painting, the door behind the teller provides a way for the most permanent of the characters on the canvas to escape, the subtle manner in which the man and the woman seem to reach for each other covertly and the title of the piece itself, *Nighthawks*, suggest other routes as well.

the possibility of there really being a way out, or inviting the observer to join them for a moment's respite. So it was with my broader project that I sought out such places to talk with the people there, to find out what brought them there, how the place helped them and how they would leave.

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We are all functionalists; each morning we wake up and expect the world to be the same. However, our world as a place we meaningfully inhabit neither relies solely on discourses nor simply on habitual activity. It is a place we have to believe in, to some degree together, in order to negotiate the innovation of the coming day. On the Camino, such habits of mind and body are called fundamentally into question: as pilgrims walk, they bring a repertoire of cultural skills to bear on the fragments of other cultures and people they encounter, pass by, or join, beginning with simple exchanges and ending with swapping addresses, stable signifiers of a (temporary) transience. Over the course of the walk pilgrims interfere with and interrupt habitual ideas of time, self and community (ideas steeped in grander narratives of progress). They intercede on their own behalves to find a way of moving in their own way. Most importantly, their bodies become their only possessions in the changing fortunes of a pilgrimage; the muddy waters of their daily lives settle to the steady pace of human speed. The traffic of meanings that had been a limitation is quelled and bodies walk into creativity and find that the body is an existential ground for self

and culture and the means of interrogating and mastering cultural forms and social practices.[111]

As individuals think along a straight line, they test out these new conclusions, these emergent individual cosmologies, about life as process among others, identifying the fluctuating fields of personal limitations and moving beyond them, where selves remain thankfully unfinished projects, open symbols and leaky subjectivities, all in a ragged line on a long day's walk. The personal stories that drag the walker forward in search of resolution remain of greater importance than the constraints of the pilgrimage, which have to be negotiated (but are rarely introjected); religion is for people who fear hell, spirituality is for those who have been there (or maybe just walked there for a while). Each pilgrim receives more officious interpretations of the walk in his or her own way, and most make those stories more palatable over dinner and while travelling among companions, picking away at the edges of less engaging institutional configurations of the Camino's possible and permissible meanings for pilgrims.

Ultimately, each pilgrim becomes willing to suffer the pilgrimage to walk the Camino, learning an obstinacy that fits into a backpack and refuses to fit anywhere else. The irony of the Camino, the profound humility of walking in a straight line, is how infiltrated the trajectory becomes by valuable detours into the self through the corpus of stories (religious, national, familial, biographical)

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[111] This creativity is something less than making one's life one's art, but still able to approach the new, closer to what Walter Benjamin called 'non-auratic art', a form of creative engagement with the world that is not only more easily achievable but lacks the aura of artistic attempts to move towards the 'divine'. Nooteboom opines, "The advantages of the free-floating spirit are clear. I am entitled to combine the Holy Virgin with Homer, the dead author Borges with random sums I make in my head, a recipe for dried cod with a treatise on heresy and that is precisely what I intend to do, I have a room and a typewriter at my disposal" (1997:208). Suffice it to say that, while most pilgrims may not achieve the great heights of art in their lives, they do move beyond merely reconfiguring 'subject positions' and are capable of a strong poetics in their lives (for a discussion of the difference between flattening of distinctions between art and creativity and the determinism of the language of 'discursive formations', see White 2005:14ff).

that maintain uneasy and indistinct (ill-defined) relationships with pilgrims. In the end, pilgrims become unstable signifiers deferring life and pilgrimage on a step-by-step basis. All of this happens as part of a system that highlights, to borrow from Foucault, that the modern pilgrim may be an invention hardly one hundred years old. We are each new and none of us simply represents the same story being retold over again. Each pilgrim, too, takes his or her space and claims some (often shifting) ground to make a fresh kind of sense of the world. Even as the broader discourses of what a pilgrimage should be, and should be doing (where a series of loose routes westwards is enlisted to evince an idea of age, a provenance for something new), pull on the pilgrims, the pilgrims put their heads down and one foot forward where these stories diminish to a whisper, for a while. The air is punctuated by a steady rhythmic clack from the pilgrim's *bordón* on another new road over the old route, the palimpsest of place and non-place begin another dance as the pilgrim moves off (one can even conjure a sunset). It's almost romantic.

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The history of the Camino is slowly receding in the wake of sincere attempts to modernise and market the ancient pilgrimage route. The accretion of meanings and stories that have framed and stabilised the Camino throughout its history corresponds to what Foucault (2001) called an, 'archaeology of knowledge'. In the modern episteme of the Camino, the previous meanings and interpretations lay hidden beneath the shiny new roads that redraw the path of the Camino once more. Yet its histories are not lost, and its pilgrims travel in search of something magical in the Camino's history, a move that is both counter-

hegemonic in its thrust and existentially powerful in its intent. I asked the question whether such questing was a romantic folly or more realistic as a means of overcoming a deeply-held sense of existential inertia through refusing to accept the conditions of living that stifle so many in modern societies. The pilgrimage, I argue in response, is a practical means by which the lives of those who travel to St. James, and their circumstances, can be surmounted for the better.

What emerges also, then, is the possibility of studying pilgrimage according to parameters, lest by applying the *nomenclature* of 'pilgrimage' to a pilgrimage, we sign its death warrant in terms of trying to comprehend the complex processes that enliven and sustain any mode of travel to particular destinations. Instead, we can identify structural parameters of travel: person, place, text. To that list, we can apply processual parameters as well: movement and culture, by which we can open theoretical agendas for the study of societies in motion. To this list we might even imagine a sixth parameter, time, or the particular field of temporal practice inherent in any destination, as an imaginative or metaphorical journey back to a particular age and which locates a shrine's/site's spiritual magnetism (Preston 1991) as the embodiment of a particular moral order preserved in a spatialised social memory. Examples abound from Graceland (Gitlitz & Davidson 2002) to Star Trek conventions (Porter 2005) as sites and occasions for remembering the sixties morality of tolerance and innovation, to pilgrimages to Walsingham as embodied reflection that replicate forms of movement assumed to have been established in the past (Coleman 2004:54). Santiago, too, can act as an arena in which pilgrims can embody and explore a post-industrial nostalgia for a medieval past (Frey 1998).

These sites are also 'sights', glimpses of innocence, of a particular configuration of the 'past', which are construed and interpreted through concerns about a present age taken to be one of rational thought that struggles to conceive its own meanings as the product of history.[112]

Non-places exist to be passed through (Augé 1995:104) and therefore they are measured in time units. In this space trapped by time, there is nothing actually to see; the spectacle is reduced to a word or a text that *stands for* the spectacle. This rupture between the real, the imagined and the represented creates a particular kind of situation, one where the spectator is lost, yet never completely so, where home is achievable in such non-places, where the nearest McDonalds can act to validate a sense of home that has slipped from one's sight; the yellow arches invoking familiarity in a strange (non-) place (1995:106). Thus the non-place can become a 'rhetorical country' (1995:108) or rhetoric-scape, for the traveller, "in the rhetoric of the people with whom he shares life. The sign of being at home is the ability to make oneself understood without much difficulty, and to follow the reasoning without any need for long explanations" (Descombes, cited in Augé 1995:108). People are thus "always and never at home" (1995:109).

Irony is deeply implicated in pilgrim self-talk through the preceding quotidian cleaving of the actual from the aspired-for, through identifying the distance between the two and drawing them together into relationship. Irony and authenticity, therefore, act in concert; true irony, humble irony is liberating when, upon arrival, what one intended and what is the case enter that harmony of

[112] However, de Botton (2003) points out that quite often even when we stand before the 'authentic' place, we are not ready for it; our curiosity dulled and our orientation fuzzy. We only remember the positive imagined aspects of that bearing witness (2003:12). The tourism literature evokes this quite successfully too; the photos of faraway places speak to the tourist-anticipator of himself only (2003:8).

anti-climax of standing in the Plaza Obradoiro in Santiago. Simply, the hoped-for goal of arrival as metaphorical of destruction is realised in Santiago at the same moment that the pilgrim's new identity is extinguished upon incorporation. The world becomes all that is the case.

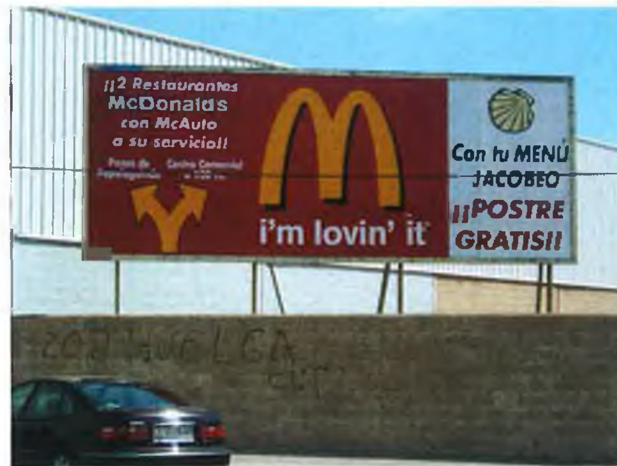

Figure 30 León McDonalds offers a free dessert in solidarity with pilgrims. Many pilgrims find solace in familiar food after weeks of rich Spanish fare.

In non-places we find ourselves confronted with texts instead of real places, 'instructions for use', as Augé puts it (1995:96). Motorways, for instance, avoid the places they bring us to, commenting on them as we pass by. Drivers on the motorways of France are urged, Augé tells us, to pay attention to surrounding sites and sights,

> "the return of a culture into a nature which is concealed but still talked about … the landscape keeps its distance, but its natural or architectural details give rise to a text, sometimes supplemented by a schematic plan when it appears that the passing traveller is not in a position to see the remarkable feature drawn to his attention, and thus has to derive what pleasure he can from the mere knowledge of its proximity" (1995:97).

Laura is a cultural entrepreneur of the Camino who has attempted to make sense of the pilgrimage and its heritage and culture through an imagination

of its defining characters rather than its places, the local Galician witches and the national Catholicising saint, James. However, she also reveals pilgrims to themselves through her performance, a performance that to different degrees as it is performed along the Galician route achieves a similar task: to show how such attenuated mimicry is ultimately a performance, one role, which does not recapture a past waiting to be resurrected. Instead, such characters show a less comfortable vision of the layered accommodations to history that pilgrims make, as they equivocally walk in the steps of two visions of St. James, the humble silent pilgrim and the Bacchanalian genocidal exorcist. All the while, other exorcised spirits find a way through, and into, her conjuring, leaving the audience to complete the performance by spectating in as tourists at an uninterrupted discourse of society about itself (see, for instance, Debord 1992).

The traveller's anonymity is granted only after he has proven his identity. Thus the elsewhere he seeks, the alibi that confirms his existence also confirms his innocence before the institutions of the non-place. The stamp of the refuge, as if the pilgrim is on the run, is the stamp of non-place: there is no case to answer, no grounds for prosecution (in French: *non-lieu*, Augé 1995:102). Only the truly innocent can say that (although words mean less than actions on the road). One wonders at the resistance of the pilgrims to give up their pilgrimage to the questions and the regimes of the *hospitaleros* in such instances!

Augé tells us that the criteria of innocence are none other than those of the badges of official(ised) identities, stored in passports (pilgrim and national ones), credit cards and the like. In these places that are not really places, these passageways of the supermodern, the ancient returns as a spectacle and spectre; the radical 'environment of the moment' (1995:103) un-anchors the neophyte:

the pilgrim exists in a ghostly present tense, inhabited by these powerful forces who have established him as the innocent vagabond without history or hope. This 'gentle form of possession' affords the pilgrim "the passive joys of identity loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing" (1995:103). Precisely at such a time, in the temporally unmoored ecstatic existence, the pilgrim becomes able to play new roles and reclaim a rhetorical territory for his own trajectory across time and space.

By heeding the warning of Laura's performance and avoiding the kinds of structural changes that the European Union's presence heralds, the pilgrims slip by and into the non-places of the Camino to continue their own work. They seek remnants of the new and the meaningful as they continue past the great medieval city until there is no more road, where the very world itself seems to demand of them to stop and return. Moreover, they do return, in their droves, hardly changed in the sense of the original pilgrims who could have undergone a spiritual transformation. Few modern pilgrims are seeking this kind of *metanoia* today, but, existentially modified and stronger for the experience of "the quest for oneself in an uncertain and insecure world" (Voyé 2002), they are more able and more adept at living, for another while, until they need to go back once more. There is a certain dissociation of the spectator traveller and the spectacle (especially the authentic spectacle, such as the 'real' Spain on pilgrimage). Quite often in such events, the spectator becomes his own spectacle (Augé 1995:86). The difference between the two visions of the world, of modernity as a willed coexistence of two different worlds and that of supermodernity, is that history itself is implicated in the view as a spectacle, often only referenced in signposts

as one passes by, instead of constituting a meaningful detour to be experienced directly.

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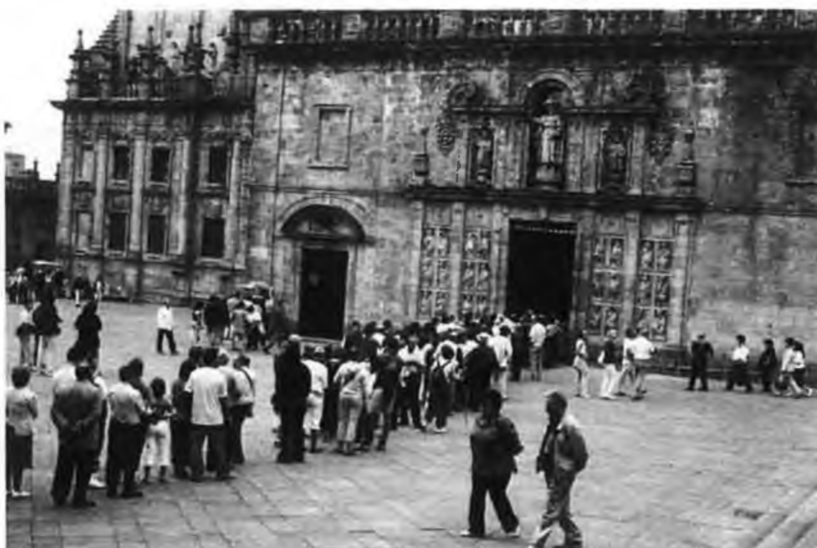

Figure 31 Tourists line up to enter the Puerta de Perdón of the Cathedral in Santiago in a Holy Year. Note the absence of pilgrims in the queue.

The archetypal Christian narrative does not fit comfortably with this ancient route, a dramatic tension that exists for any pilgrim who walks the Milky Way and avoids the Christian Way of St. James. This becomes most obvious when pilgrims keep walking to Finisterre, despite the Pilgrim's office periodically reminding pilgrims that the Christian route ends at Santiago. For those who stop in the city, their contact with nature has been overwritten by a thousand years of history, warfare and tourism. Those who do continue, finish up at the Atlantic Sea, burning their possessions and jumping naked into the water. I met two men, a Mexican and a Spaniard, who talked up the idea of doing this so much that they began to walk around the clock until they reached

the sea and fulfilled their new dream. Reports filtered back of their primitive abandon weeks later.

When I have stayed in Santiago, on the other hand, the emotional response is entirely different. One Australian man described to me his feeling of becoming a ghost as he walked the city, watching more of his fellow travellers leave. The substantiality that he had accrued was dissipating, and he had to leave before he 'forgot' the pilgrimage. He promised he would return once more as a pilgrim though.

The pilgrimage is much more a journey through gifts, possible and impossible, through mad wanderings and strange times, searching for a direction, a story that has a trajectory and a timing and that can open the pilgrim up to the world. In the holy years of 1999 and 2004, the Puerta de Perdón on the east side of the Cathedral in Santiago was opened and bussing pilgrims queued to receive the same dispensation (see figure 28), by walking through the door, that walking pilgrims had had to earn through a month's walk. While most walking pilgrims saw the hypocrisy and contrivance of the crossing of the threshold, they equally felt shut out of the proceedings, as they would not queue and felt it to be inauthentic. This ambivalence towards the mainstream interpretations of the pilgrimage can be encountered in every group of pilgrims.

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This thesis attempts a phenomenological, anthropological and existential investigation of modern pilgrim practices on the Camino de Santiago. As such, this thesis hopes to contribute to an understanding of pain and pain behaviour that shifts the focus of enquiry from pain as something that is indicative of

something wrong or dysfunctional in the body to understanding pain behaviour as a coherent strategy for reconfiguring self and its relationship to the world. This shift can be completed through engaging with controlled excursions into territories of pain in order to overcome feelings of crippling loss or disempowerment. It contributes to understanding techniques of the body as processes for meaning-making in the modern world. It takes the view that meaningfulness can be made, not *in spite of* a globalised postmodern world of slippage in meaning and loss of authority, but *because* of it. It critically re-examines symbolic theories of cultural processes and establishes a means by which theoretical notions such as the *limen* and *communitas* may become useful for anthropologists again, given that the Camino in a postmodern age calls for such notions to account for the activities of its pilgrims. Thus, far from being a medieval pilgrimage, the Camino today has been remade as a *modern* pilgrimage.

This thesis then has examined from an experience-near approach the impacts of the various levels of the Camino de Santiago on the lives of the people who choose to loosely identify themselves as pilgrims and begin walking towards the shrine of St. James and past it towards Finisterre. The analysis has identified three modes of engagement, at the level of the individual, the level of the immediate community of pilgrims that comprised many of my informants' everyday experience of the pilgrimage and the various imagined (political, religious and pilgrim) communities that informed the choices of these pilgrims and their journeys. Using theoretical approaches from phenomenology and Peircean semeiotics, I have attempted to show how the power and dignity of the individual, if lost, can be uncovered once more through an ailing body within a

situational idiom of therapeutic distress. I have argued that this personal sense of *machtgefuhl* is good for the pilgrim but also forms the context by which the power of the pilgrimage is derived. I have tried to prove how charisma is observable in the person of the pilgrim before it can be claimed by any interest group as a product of the pilgrimage structure. The requirement of people to re-interpret their lifeworlds as an ongoing process is fundamentally necessary and possible through a more Protean engagement with the pilgrim path, rather than through a docile self-ascription to a set vague repertoire of nominally 'authentic' pilgrim choices and habits. The body is deeply implicated in this process of sustaining a perduring 'pilgrim' *habitus* of meaning production.

While theories of embodiment will account for much of the existential power of the pilgrimage, pilgrims do not walk in a vacuum. They bring with them a variety of imaginations about a 'pilgrim' Camino, Spain, Europe and world that help them to structure their perceptions of their walk as a physical challenge rising out of history and the earth by which to make new circumstances that will assist them negotiate the rest of their lives. Thus, the many histories of the Camino, the pre-Christian, Christian, Islamic and political stories all have some place in their daily walk. The Camino, though, is not a repository for these historical discourses; rather it is a product of them.

***

"Eat drink and be merry", was the slogan of the Epicureans, though, and we managed to continue late that night to find our amusement in the city of St. James. Its subtlety was that Epicurus did not advocate a normless hedonism (that was Aristippus); he lived simply enough as a vegetarian and teetotaller. Instead

his philosophy says that we have to understand that our motivations towards satisfying our need to experience pleasure are limited, and that by understanding *why* we want what we do, we can settle for simpler pleasures and achieve what we *really* want, which is happiness (Rowlands 2002:230). The problem that most of us encounter today is *how* to be happy, a problem compounded in societies of affluence where happiness is even more elusive (see for instance de Botton 2002, also cf. Holmes 2000). What can one do with(in) these societies and their seemingly false promises of samsara, nirvana or some other kind of paradise? An answer emerges as one encounters Camino pilgrims drawing from their everyday culture; films and songs (the radio that played 80's music was quite popular), where what had been excess becomes raw material, disembedded, fragmentary and available to structure the pilgrimage experience.

The pilgrimage, a distinct, but not extraordinary experience (in Turner's sense), becomes reinterpreted alone and among groups, and, in doing so, this raw material provides instead tentative links, anchors their experiences in the everyday of the pilgrimage on their own terms: the old is not being discarded, but is instead reinvigorated (nobody wants a really *separate* 'pilgrim self'). Pilgrims become adepts at creating memories from experience, integrating experience into the surrounding ephemeral fabric of the pilgrimage everyday and into their own biographies. The ambiguity of the place, its open-ended character with few rules and many long hours filled with a sense of the new and the not-yet, with joy and patience, teaches the pilgrim to confront other experiences, experiences that were not left behind, but which emerge with the pains of the day. These experiences are discovered and interpreted, sometimes even dealt with, without ever having a name, simply, asymptotically, revealing their presence and allowing other balms

to soothe these unspeakable ills. And that's magic: ambiguity facilitates such salving by not having to nail the problem, only the relief.

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For all the talk of transition and movement, have any of my fellow pilgrims moved on? The extended ritual of walking in one direction for a month or more cannot help but impact on every pilgrim to some degree. The possibility of this effect feeding into structural change has been questioned (Eade & Sallnow 1991, Frey 1998) but there are cases for it. The Belgian court system still has pilgrimage to Santiago as a sentence for juvenile offenders, and the organisation Oikoten takes these convicted minors on the road.

At a more personal level, the Camino does affect individuals and communities. When one person makes the journey and talks about it home, then others decide to go too. Joyce Rupp (2005) spoke about her Camino and it took the shape of a book. Instead of preparing for her own eventual death, the journey was a bitter-sweet shared experience with her walking companion and friend, Tom, who, within months of returning from the Camino, had passed away. Mary, the American woman who began to deal with the loss of her father on the Camino, spoke at length to her Church group about the experience. The burgeoning internet weblogs where pilgrims record their journeys as they do it receives increasing attention. Others feel that they have not left Spain behind; John, who mourned his sister's passing on the Camino, has purchased a house on the Camino del Norte, and regularly offers a lift or shelter to pilgrims as he comes across them. He still feels the surge of the walk in his body when he sees a yellow arrow by the local train station. Kurt too, the American Vietnam

veteran, has his eye on a place in South America, and is busy learning Spanish ahead of a buying a holiday home below the border.

For many others, the journey in Spain is the precursor to a larger move; Andrew left medicine as planned and, having finished his time in Europe, moved back to Australia where he enrolled in university to become a writer. Alex, the Swiss pilgrim, moved to Africa as a hydrology engineer. Robert lived in Morocco for a year among a Muslim family to learn Arabic. I still get lengthy e-mails about his travels. Others, like Pam, have changed their lives in small ways to continue the spirit of giving back by (to quote the Hollywood movie) "paying it forward":

> "I have two part time jobs for businesses selling fairly traded handicrafts from developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. My daughter claims I am saving the world one sale at a time. Probably we are just feeding it. In January, I'm going on a mission trip to Honduras with some high school students."

Michael, from Astorga, has settled more happily back into his life; in each case, the Camino has represented a process of moving into change or into a sense of satisfaction with the range and direction of life-choices for the pilgrim. Returning to the "world of choices and decisions" (Nooteboom 1997:16), many pilgrims suffer with the change of pace though, and find themselves at a loss to recreate the simplicity and tranquillity of the Camino. Most of my informants still try to walk every day, to keep the feel of the Camino with them, as well as to keep the lessons of the road alive.

It is difficult to see the Camino as a straight rite of passage, travelling as we did every day as pilgrims, not ever really recapturing that nostalgic feeling of a previous authenticity. For the pilgrims I talked to as I walked with them, and many others too, the Camino was an experience that made difficult decisions

easier. The impetus and motivation for change or acceptance was always a part of the 'before' of the pilgrimage, but found an outlet in the challenge of completing the trek. Whatever the quest, however the call found everyone, we made a pilgrimage, and we made it out of the land, out of our efforts, our blood, sweat, breath and tears. Because we travelled there, together for a while, life seemed more possible.

Looking up at the statue of Daniel over the portico de la Gloria of the Cathedral in Santiago, Cees Nooteboom is struck by his smile, frozen for eight hundred years, wondrous and ironic, marking "the transition to the psychological"; it is said that he is smiling at Esther across the way, a distinctly this-worldly answer admitting no mystical explanation (1997:337). As we discard the mythic markers of our origins, having plunged deep into ourselves, we search for a life and mortality that elude us and confound us.

And so in the traveller's deepest brooding melancholy, torn between loving the places you find on the road, and loving the road that has brought you to such places, only the road remains real, the places continue without pity for the brief visitor, they, "simply went on existing without you" (Nooteboom 1997:334). The road we followed has already faded; the feet of a few hundred thousand pilgrims made sure of that. Our places are memories. The friendships and decisions that brought us home, however, preserve us from a life of sedentary meaninglessness. We await the next adventure, "*Ultreya y suseya*," always further on.

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What are we left with? Two things, first the particular point is that what is at stake in the giving of gifts is the possibility of relationships, that we give not because we are generous, but because we are fundamentally social beings, not psychologically isolated, rationally calculating individuals (Sykes 2005:74), an assumption which has been with anthropology since its inception (Sykes 2005:111). The larger point relates to the structuring of our relationships through the gifts we give and our expectations of what can be returned. For this, we broadened our focus to look at the structural relations of temporality. Perkins (2003) has shown that our views on time as a 'field of temporal practice' have been shaped by larger processes in the preceding centuries. These processes, failing to provide the promise of a new future, compel people to search other places, compatible with a nostalgic re-imagining of our relationships through gifts as breaking the circle of specific exchanges that have characterised our lives to date. The gift represents the possibility of other possibilities, new ways of being together by sharing impossibly with each other. In the realm of the impossible, it seems that all things are possible, for the figure of the impossible becomes an everyday reality.

We have charted some of the ways that modernity has convinced us to think about our lives and their direction. Ultimately what is at stake is the sense of futurity that is maintained through a subjunctive wishing-for, a series of anticipatory thoughts, feelings and behaviours that become co-opted by the structural constraints of capitalist modernity. Western society tells us what to wish for, our jobs show us what to hope for and the commitments we make remind us what we should want. In rediscovering a repertoire of subjunctivising behaviours, thoughts and feelings, pilgrims rediscover their own life-projects for

themselves. They begin a process of re-enchantment through a healthier re-insertion into life and world upon their return.

In a sense, then, a pilgrimage is one arena for re-making one's relationship to religion (either positively or negatively), for recommitting oneself to a vision of the world. The road to Santiago however is not the road to Damascus. There are few truly revelatory moments for most pilgrims. The modern pilgrimage remains within the poles of experience, one representing a flirtation with spirituality, the other a search for belonging in exile. Yet even now, as I set out on foot, I can feel the whispering traces of a time and a place and a more determined pilgrim who walked hundreds of miles to a 'wild' place to know what it was to struggle and overcome in the company of intimate strangers. Whether what we did was authentic or not, it came with its costs, and we have never, not one of us, regretted the journey. It was a simpler time, a better place; at times a strange confrontation with God, authenticity and self, and, even today, every step continues to be a triumph.

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