

# PILGRIMAGE AND PILGRIM HIERARCHIES IN VERNACULAR DISCOURSE: COMPARATIVE NOTES FROM THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO AND GLASTONBURY

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## ABSTRACT

This article is based on my fieldwork conducted in two important destinations in the spiritual landscape of European vernacular religion – the Camino de Santiago (pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela) in northern Spain, and Glastonbury in southwest England. In this comparison between modern expressions of pilgrimage, I look into the power relationships that exist on the pilgrimage, describe how hierarchies of pilgrims are created and maintained, and reflect on the meaning of the words pilgrim and pilgrimage. The co-existence of the different belief systems of Christianity and New Age and the conflicts and tension between them will be explored. I will also examine discourse around competing male and female energies.

KEYWORDS: Camino de Santiago • Glastonbury • pilgrimage • pilgrim hierarchy • energy

## LOCATING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO AND GLASTONBURY: FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

This article\* is based on my fieldwork conducted in two important destinations in the spiritual landscape of European vernacular religion – the Camino de Santiago (the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela) in northern Spain and Glastonbury in southwest England.

The Camino de Santiago, also known as the Way of St James, is one of the most important modern-day pilgrimage routes in the Western world and the largest Christian pilgrimage in Europe. For over a thousand years there has been pilgrimage to the

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city of Santiago de Compostela in the northwest corner of Spain, where the remains of martyred apostle St James the Greater are believed to rest. Although the Santiago pilgrimage has a religious foundation based in Catholic doctrine, it is not walked for only religious motives; travelling the Camino can be a vacation, a physical adventure, therapy and much more. Santiago de Compostela has become an immensely popular goal for religious as well as non-religious people from all over the world. Many people walk the Camino in search of inner meaning and hope for transformation and personal growth. The route is marked with yellow arrows and scallop shells. By walking, cycling or riding along the ancient pilgrimage route, people are replicating an ancient ritual; almost everybody carries their backpack, scallop shell<sup>1</sup> and pilgrim's passport. (See, for example, Coffey et al. 1996; Frey 1998; Dunn, Davidson 2000.)

When writing about the twentieth-century revival of the Camino, Nancy Frey noted that the pilgrimage has not become reanimated as a strictly religious journey but has been interpreted as an ideal way to enjoy "leisure with meaning" (Frey 1998: 254). Because hundreds of thousands of people from more than sixty different countries<sup>2</sup> walk it every year, the Camino de Santiago has sometimes been called the *Calle Mayor de Europa* (Main Street of Europe). Ten years ago, when I was preparing for my first Camino, few Estonians had heard of it. Now the Camino de Santiago seems to be in vogue in Estonia, as well. There is a Facebook community, *Eesti Jaakobitee palverändurid* (Estonian Santiago Pilgrims), which unites former and would-be pilgrims. That group was started by Epp Sokk and Jane Vain, who belong to the Pärnu-Jaagupi congregation. Every summer they organise a 3-day pilgrimage in Estonia, starting on the weekend closest to July 25, St James's Day. Filmmaker Andres Sööt made a documentary (2011) about his journey on the Camino; Maarika Traat's journey on foot from Tartu to Santiago de Compostela in May–December 2012 received plenty of media coverage; and there are now even organised tours to the Camino.

In order to add a comparative perspective to my research, I started doing fieldwork in Glastonbury – a town of c. 9,000 inhabitants situated in the south west of England. Marion Bowman has observed that whatever the prevailing myth or worldview, Glastonbury somehow claims a central place in it (Bowman 2007: 295).

Many people think of Glastonbury as the legendary Isle of Avalon where King Arthur is said to be buried. Glastonbury Tor – the hill believed by many to be imbued with sacred properties – is often described as the door to the underworld. Some argue that Glastonbury was venerated as a sacred place in Britain before Christianity and was the site of the first Christian community, reputedly founded by Joseph of Arimathea.<sup>3</sup> On his arrival in Glastonbury, Joseph is said to have thrust his staff into the ground on what is now known as Wearyall Hill, and according to legend this staff blossomed into a thorn tree. There are also legends about Jesus himself visiting Glastonbury as a child; some people claim that he was also buried there (Mannaz 2007). Glastonbury was an important pilgrimage destination in the Middle Ages but this ceased with the brutal destruction of the Abbey at the Dissolution in 1539. The Abbot Richard Whiting, a frail old man, was dragged to the top of the Tor together with two monks, where they were hanged. For many people Glastonbury is an ancient cultic centre of Goddess worship and a Druidic centre of learning; Glastonbury is considered to be the heart chakra of the world and a place with special energies (see Prince, Riches 2000; Bowman 2008).



*Photo 1. Glastonbury Tor, December 2011. Photo by Tiina Sepp.*

Today, Glastonbury attracts huge numbers of spiritual seekers. According to Adam Stout (2012: 266), they may disagree on every other aspect of belief, but they all agree that Glastonbury is in some way different. Stout suggests that Glastonbury's biggest miracle is that it has managed to stay special to such contradictory creeds since the Reformation (*ibid.*).

I have heard from many people that in Glastonbury the veil between this world and the other world is very thin, and that Glastonbury has some very strong energies.<sup>4</sup> On my first arrival in Glastonbury in June 2011, some people suggested that I should take a break from Glastonbury as often as possible, preferably every week. They said it would be good for me because otherwise Glastonbury might become too intense.

Apparently, people from all faiths and denominations can go on a pilgrimage to both Santiago de Compostela and Glastonbury. On the homepage of Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre (PRC)<sup>5</sup> the following is written: "Open to all people on all paths providing support and information on your journey." Part of the pilgrim's blessing read every night at the mass in Roncesvalles, the most popular starting-point of the Camino de Santiago, reads: "The door is open to all, sick or well. Not only Catholics, but Pagans also. To Jews, heretics, idlers, the vain. And, as I shall briefly note, the good and the worldly, too."<sup>6</sup>

People on varied spiritual paths narrate how they feel "drawn" or "called" to Glastonbury (see Bowman 1993; 2007; Prince, Riches 2000; Howard-Gordon 2010). Many

people believe that there is a numinous presence in Glastonbury that has called people for centuries (Cousins 2009: 3). According to Barry Taylor, the co-founder of Glastonbury PRC and author of *A Pilgrim in Glastonbury* (2010), there are 9,000 people in Glastonbury, and 3,500 of them have been called there. I have heard the same from some Santiago pilgrims – the Camino de Santiago was ‘calling’ them.

Based on my fieldwork I suggest that the main reason for the growing popularity of both Glastonbury and the Camino de Santiago is the fact that they mean so many different things to different people. This is best expressed by the observation made by John Eade and Michael Sallnow:

The power of a shrine, therefore, derives in large part from its character almost as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices – though of course the shrine staff might attempt, with varying degrees of success, to impose a single, official discourse. This, in the final analysis, is what confers upon a major shrine its essential, universalistic character: its capacity to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses, to be able to offer a variety of clients what each of them desires. The sacred centre, then, in this perspective, appears as a vessel into which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers and aspirations. (Eade, Sallnow 2000: 15)

Both Glastonbury and the Camino have links to the Celtic past, and several people go there because they want to connect to their pre-Christian roots. Marion Bowman (2012: 328–348) has written how beliefs about Arthur and Bridget, two significant figures connected with Celtic myth, have been revived, recycled and manipulated in Glastonbury. Nearly all the people I interviewed in Glastonbury pointed out the importance of Glastonbury as a former centre of the Celts. There is evidence of Celtic occupation throughout Galicia (the region where Santiago de Compostela is situated). Nancy Frey has written about the people who extend their Camino from Santiago to Finisterre:

Pilgrims oriented toward this search for Celtic influences imagine what would have appealed to Celts in the past and drawn them to this jut of rock: the position of the sun, the proximity to water [...]. Linking of heaven and earth via the ocean leads pilgrims to envision a Celtic past living in harmony with nature and being part of a holistic system. (Frey 1998: 175–176)

Frey quotes a pilgrim:

I arrived yesterday in time to watch the sun falling into the sea and to marvel at the whole system of things as the ancient Celts must have when they too undertook this road under the Milky Way, which actually does go over this place (ibid.).

Dion Fortune, one of the Avalonians and author of one of the most influential books about Glastonbury (*Glastonbury: Avalon of the Heart*) has said that there are two Avalons, Christian and Pagan (Fortune 2000: 59). This is a sentiment echoed by others, for example by Stout (2007). Several people have told me that the question “Who owns Glastonbury?” has been asked at least since Dion Fortune was there.

The definition of pilgrimage has been hotly disputed by several scholars (see, for example, Margry 2008). In the Call for Papers for the symposium *Pilgrimages Today*, held on 19–21 August 2010 in Turku, pilgrimage was defined as “a journey undertaken

by individuals or a group to a place, which for the single individual or the individuals in the group is of great importance because of something they have learnt and experienced in the culture and religion which they have grown up within" (Ahlbäck 2010: 5). Peter Jan Margry argues that the term pilgrimage is in need of re-evaluation and in spite of the decades-long academic research, there still is not "a fully crystallized academic picture of the pilgrimage phenomenon" (Margry 2008: 13).

Hugh McLeod brings out the three essential aspects of pilgrimage: a concept of the sacred; a belief that the sacred is to be encountered most readily in certain places, often the place of birth, death or burial of exemplary individuals; and the journey to these places (McLeod 2012: 188). He distinguishes between pilgrimages where the destination is all-important and the journey and modes of travel are of minor significance and those where this order of priorities is reversed (ibid.). Of the places where I have conducted fieldwork, the Camino de Santiago is an example *par excellence* of the latter – an overwhelming majority of Santiago pilgrims say that the journey is more important than the arrival, and Glastonbury qualifies as the former. It does not matter in the least how one travels there, all that counts for most people is experiencing the powerful energy of the place. Another difference between the Camino de Santiago and Glastonbury is that in Glastonbury people are moving in a myriad of different directions, on the Camino everybody (except for the very few pilgrims who are walking back home) is moving in the same direction. Santiago pilgrims usually have a clear focus and well-defined destination, in Glastonbury the focus may be either the Abbey, Tor or a number of other sites.

I would like to point out that the 10-year process of my fieldwork and research directly (and unintentionally) reflects the history of pilgrimage studies (see, for example, Hermkens, Jansen, Notermans 2009). When I started doing fieldwork on the Camino, one of the first things that caught my attention was *communitas*. I had not read Victor Turner (1974, 1989) or Victor and Edith Turner (1978) yet and was not aware of their approach to pilgrimage as the liminal phase during which *communitas* may occur (the Turners were drawing on Arnold van Gennep's threefold structure of rites of passage). Even without knowing the theory, these were the things that I first noticed and at the beginning of my research I was focussed on the *communitas* and liminality of a pilgrim: I noticed in others and experienced myself an intense sense of intimacy and equality with others; I saw people from different levels of society and walks of life form strong bonds. About two or three years later I started to pay more attention to the power relationships and pilgrim hierarchy: I started to see pilgrimage as a "realm of competing discourses" as suggested by John Eade and Michael Sallnow (2000: 5).

According to Eade and Sallnow, social distinctions are in fact reinforced in the pilgrimage. However, the notion of pilgrimage is debated not only in scholarly writing but in vernacular discourse, too. I have heard many heated discussions over the meaning of the words pilgrim and pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago as well as in Glastonbury – people often like to analyse what it is that they are doing.

I have been doing fieldwork on the Camino de Santiago since 2003 and in Glastonbury since 2011. I have walked the Camino de Santiago (either entirely or partially) in June–July 2003, November–December 2004, May 2005, November 2007, April–May 2008, and April 2010. In October 2008 and March 2012 I worked as *hospitalera*<sup>7</sup> in the pilgrims' refuges. I got the idea to extend my research from the Camino to Glastonbury

from Marion Bowman, a distinguished scholar of the New Spirituality movement from the UK, who has conducted fieldwork in Glastonbury on a variety of phenomena since the early 1990s (Bowman 1993; 2000). She told me about the newly opened Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre and suggested that a field trip to Glastonbury could help me contextualise my previous pilgrimage scholarship and expose me to new nuances of pilgrimage studies and discourse. During my four field trips to Glastonbury between the years 2011 and 2014 I interviewed the people working or volunteering at the PRC and also several other local people and asked them about different aspects of Glastonbury pilgrimage. I found the contemporary religious pluralism in Glastonbury very intriguing and unlike anything I had experienced before.

My fieldwork methodology involves participant observation and conducting open-ended interviews. I have found that just 'hanging out' in Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre was very useful because it was an ideal place for not only interviewing the staff and volunteers but also for meeting pilgrims and visitors and talking to them. The same can be said for pilgrims' refuges on the Camino de Santiago, where I have spent innumerable hours as a pilgrim as well as an *hospitalera*.

My research has been carried out in the broad framework of *vernacular religion*. Vernacular religion is a term introduced by Leonard Norman Primiano (1995) who suggested this instead of folk religion. Primiano defines vernacular religion as "religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret and practice it" (Primiano 1995: 44). What makes vernacular religion conceptually valuable, is that it "highlights the power of the individual and communities of individuals to create and re-create their own religion" (Primiano 2012: 383). The focus of study is people, not 'religion' or 'belief' as abstractions (ibid.: 384). According to this approach, it is wrong to perpetuate the judgmental idea that there is real religion and then there is what people do, in other words, people getting the official religion wrong. Scholars of vernacular religion are interested in the phenomena that result from belief, regarding them with equal weight, whether institutionally 'authorised' beliefs like the Resurrection and Immaculate Conception, or personal interpretations of institutional views.

I find the concept of vernacular religion very suitable for my research. It has always been difficult for me to understand why for many people church dogmas are on a higher level than the expressions of religion by 'simple folk'. I like to study religion as it is lived and prefer not to think in the categories of high (official) and low (folk) religion. For me the beliefs of priests are on the same level with those of the other people I have interviewed on the Camino and in Glastonbury. None of them carry more weight or should be taken more seriously than others – they are all expressions of vernacular religion and of equal importance for my research. Primiano (2012: 390) has pointed out ambiguity, power and creativity as the qualities that are very important to lived religion and these three seem to be central in my research, as well.

#### DOES THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO BELONG TO THE CATHOLICS ONLY?

At the beginning of the daily pilgrims' mass in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the priest welcomes all those who have arrived on that day, reads out the pilgrims'

countries of origin and points of departure, and then stresses that they all have walked the Camino de Santiago in one spirit and with one goal – to venerate St James. When I attended that mass after completing my first Camino in 2003, I thought that the priest must be rather out of touch, as many of my fellow pilgrims had definitely not walked the Camino with that goal.

On the Camino de Santiago one is occasionally made aware of the conflict between Catholicism and New Age. People from both ‘camps’ sometimes show suspicion of each other. Already on my first Camino I heard people talk about the *via de las estrellas* (the road of the stars – also known as the Via Lactea, the Milky Way), which is said to parallel the physical, terrestrial Camino in the night sky. For example, Nancy Frey has pointed out that some pilgrims believe that the Milky Way is a celestial reflection of the earthly path taken by medieval pilgrims which later became the Way of St James: “The stars of the Milky Way can also be interpreted as a path of dead souls; the light they produce helps the lost wandering soul to find its way to paradise once believed to exist off the land of the earth” (Frey 1998: 35).

I have heard from several people that it is not St James whose remains are kept in the silver embossed casket in the crypt below the main altar of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. On hearing that I was researching the pilgrimage, quite a few of my fellow pilgrims suggested that I should focus on Priscillian. These people claim that the remains attributed to St James in fact belong to Priscillian, the charismatic bishop of Avila, who was accused of witchcraft and heresy and tortured and beheaded in 385, thus being the first person in the history of Christianity to be executed for heresy. Since Henry Chadwick suggested in *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic of the Early Church* (1976) that it may have been Priscillian whose body is kept in the Cathedral of Santiago, there has been extensive academic research on this subject (Ferreiro 2000; Sánchez Dragó 2004). This subject has also given material to fiction, like *Pilgrimage to Heresy* by Tracy Saunders (2007), for example. It is interesting to note that both Priscillian and St James were decapitated. People who have told me about Priscillian’s remains in the Cathedral have sometimes lowered their voice before breaking the news.<sup>8</sup> It is also not uncommon to encounter a certain degree of gloating. For example, a young pilgrim told me: “Just imagine that millions of people have walked the Camino to venerate Saint James, and in fact they have knelt in front of the man whom the church had beheaded for heresy.” Pilgrims sometimes speak disapprovingly of the Church: “They think they own the Camino”.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, some people find ‘New Age zealots’ annoying. New Age is undeniably very popular among many Santiago pilgrims and several people decide to walk the Camino after reading esoteric Camino books, for example *The Camino: A Journey of the Spirit* by Shirley MacLaine (2000) or *The Pilgrimage* by Paulo Coelho (1987). I came across the following text in the Camino de Santiago Forum, posted by user kerrysean on 30th July 2009; the thread was titled ‘New Age’ bores on the Camino:

Did anyone else find like me, that whilst the camino was a wonderful and hugely rewarding spiritual experience, that it was marred at times by having to listen to an emerging ‘new age’ orthodoxy on the camino... Was anyone else bored rigid by people who felt it their obligation to bang on about their ‘past lives’, stone placing, ley lines, shamanism, seeing symbolism in anything at all we came across, ‘the

nature', 'the universe', and a plethora of esoteric quasi-religious beliefs that one was obliged to indulge whilst on the Camino. (Camino de Santiago Forum 2009)

On my field trips to the Camino I have met several people who have made it clear that they are definitely not on a religious pilgrimage. Some have recounted how difficult it was for them to convince their friends and family that even though they were going to walk to Santiago de Compostela, they had by no means suddenly been converted. Nevertheless, both religious and non-religious *peregrinos* (pilgrims) usually want to take part in the following activities and facilities on the Camino that are offered by the Catholic Church: attending the pilgrims' mass (*misa del peregrino*), enjoying Church hospitality and obtaining a *credencial* (so-called pilgrim's passport) and a *compostela* (a document certifying the completion of the pilgrimage).

First, many (regardless of motivation) attend the pilgrims' mass, especially the evening mass given in Roncesvalles – the most popular starting-point of the Camino – where all pilgrims receive blessing for their journey, and the midday mass in Santiago de Compostela, where pilgrims are greeted and welcomed. In both of these masses, pil-

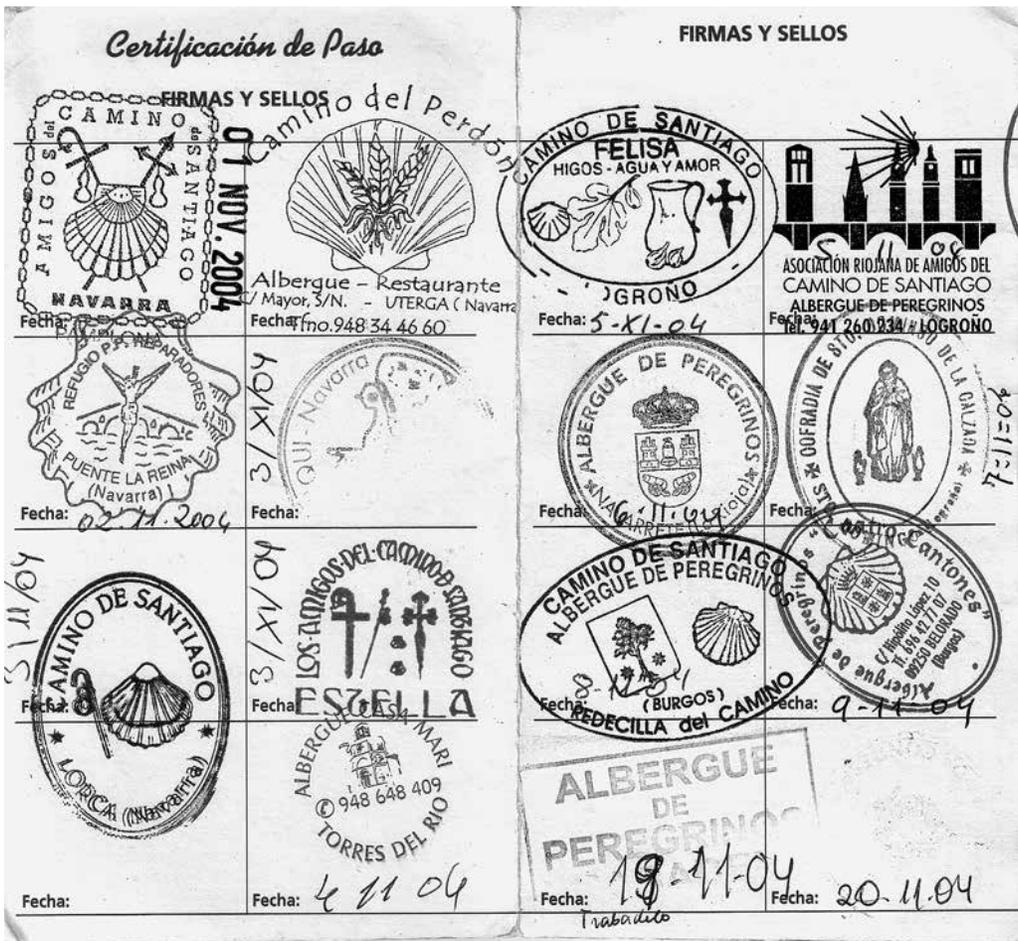


Photo 2. The author's pilgrim's credential of her journey to Santiago de Compostela in November 2004.

grims' countries of origin are mentioned, and this tends to make people quite emotional. Apart from Roncesvalles and Santiago, there are numerous bigger and smaller churches on the Camino that celebrate pilgrims' mass; in nearly all pilgrims' refuges you can see notices with the place and time of the mass and *hospitaleros* often point it out to arriving pilgrims. Priests sometimes emphasize that all pilgrims, their confession notwithstanding, are welcome to go and receive a blessing. One Estonian pilgrim, who is not religious, told me that she enjoyed going to the pilgrim masses and receiving the blessing. "I feel good when the priest blesses me and wishes me a good *camino*. In Carrión de los Condes the priest wished us not only good Camino de Santiago but good Camino of Life. I liked it very much."

Secondly, many pilgrims' refuges are run by the Church.<sup>10</sup> This goes back to the Middle Ages – the Church's hospitality was particularly important for travellers when hermitages or monasteries were built in areas where there were no other habitations (Ohler 2010: 82). Benedict of Nursia founded a monastery at Monte Cassin in 530, whose Rule 816 was applied to all monasteries in the Frankish kingdom, and thus norms were set for hospitality in the centuries which followed (ibid.). Benedict gave the monasteries the mission to receive the poor and pilgrims as they were receiving Christ himself – to honour Christ in every stranger. According to Section 53 of the Rule of Benedict 816:

All guests, who come, must be received as if they were Christ; for He will say: "I was a stranger, and you took me in". [...] Show especial and particular care in the welcome given to the poor and to pilgrims, for in them you receive Christ in the truest sense: for the imperious bearing of the rich compels respect of its own accord. (Ibid.)

The most popular refuges on the Camino de Santiago seem to be those that are run by the Church. For example, the refuge of Granyon in La Rioja is situated in the same building as the parish church. Pilgrims can stay over, have dinner and breakfast for a donation and on the donation box that is always open there is written in several languages: "Leave what you can or take what you need". Before communal dinner a prayer is (usually) said, and there is a voluntary evening prayer. Granyon is in many ways a religious place. Yet I have never heard anyone criticise it, not even those people who accuse the Catholic Church of owning the Camino. On the contrary, it is legendary, probably the most popular refuge on the whole Camino. Quite a few refuges have been set up in the buildings of monasteries, for example Samos, Leon, Santo Domingo de la Calzada.

Thirdly, before starting the Camino, people need to obtain a *credencial*, which is issued either by the Church or associations authorised by the Church. This document is stamped daily and gives the right to stay in pilgrims' refuges. On completing the Camino, pilgrims are awarded a *Compostela* issued by the Pilgrims' Office of the Santiago Cathedral. However, they only get it if they have walked at least 100 kilometres (or cycled 200 kilometres) and if they say they did the Camino for religious or spiritual motives.

Interestingly, many local people who live along the Camino, especially in smaller places, seem to assume that every *peregrino* is on a Catholic pilgrimage. They sometimes ask pilgrims to pray for them in Santiago or 'give Santiago a hug for them', as they are too old or unwell to go themselves. While walking the Camino, one is constantly aware of St James. There are many churches and chapels dedicated to the saint, and many



Photo 3. The Compostela awarded to the author after completing the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in June 2010.

statues depicting him; you will hear about him at mass and read about him in pilgrim guides. As there are crosses, *cruzeiros*, churches and chapels everywhere on the Camino; the visual effect of being on a Christian pilgrimage is very strong. Many non-religious people who walk the Camino take part in all the above-mentioned activities. Pilgrimage is an ancient ritual; its heyday was in the Middle Ages. While walking the Camino, pilgrims perform this ancient ritual and many of them thus accept everything that comes with it, including Catholicism. For many people it is like going back in time to the Middle Ages – this is how some pilgrims have solved the dilemma of being either agnostic or atheist outside the Camino and yet attending a pilgrims’ mass and sleeping in a church while on the Camino. One informant offered an alternative approach to the ‘Camino-time versus ordinary life’ discussion where one of the aims is to reconcile one’s conscience about being anti-Church in ‘real life’ and enjoying the benefits offered by the Church while doing the Camino. He suggested that instead of think-

ing about Camino-time as medieval times we can think of it as eternal time. While in the liminal stage of pilgrimage (as opposed to the profanity of everyday life) we become one with the eternity. Inma Tamayo, a co-ordinator of the Pilgrim's Office in Santiago de Compostela, told me that while walking the Camino people can "allow themselves to believe in God – allow themselves to be who they want to be". She said that the Camino helps people to believe whereas when off the Camino being religious may seem to be something unusual, even ridiculous. Journalist Jessica Reed, who walked the Camino de Santiago and experienced "a small betrayal of almost all her atheist principles", suggests that walking pilgrimages or any endurance feats take such a physical and mental toll on the participant that "when bizarre thoughts start popping up in their heads, they tend to take them very seriously" (Reed 2012).

While writing this, I realise how complex my own attitude towards the Camino Catholicism is. I am not religious and I do not approve of several aspects of the Catholic (or indeed any) Church, and yet I am immensely grateful for what the Church has been doing for pilgrims. Anna Fedele (2013) has described the sense of attraction and repulsion towards Christianity felt by Mary Magdalene pilgrims visiting holy shrines in France, with respect to the tension between their attraction towards the power related to Christian churches and their rejection of some basic principles of Christian doctrine. It seems to me that many Santiago pilgrims share similar ambivalent feelings.

Nancy Frey has noted that even though the Church has made it clear that 'esoterics' and 'gnostics' are not pilgrims, it hesitates to put strict limits on the pilgrimage: "A specific goal of the Church is to use the current popularity of the Camino to evangelize and convert European youth" (Frey 1998: 127). On 22–24 April 2013, the first international conference dedicated to Christian welcome and new evangelisation on the Camino de Santiago was held in Santiago de Compostela. Among the speakers there were scholars as well as clergymen, pilgrims and *hospitaleros*. In a paper given at this conference, Francisco Javier Luengo asks where else we have a phenomenon like this, where thousands of people voluntarily travel on a typically religious route: "Aren't we sighing for more young people in our parishes, movements and associations? Well, here we have them in hundreds." (Luengo 2013: 239–240) He adds that not only are there huge numbers of people, but that these people are also involved in the search for something and therefore this is good ground for evangelisation.

To conclude, even though many of the Santiago pilgrims are not (practicing) Catholics or even Christians, the 'official' religion of the Camino is still Catholicism. In the words of one Camino sceptic, the Camino belongs to the Catholics because it was them who "created the trademark and most of the clients are still Catholic".

#### GLASTONBURY – PILGRIMS WITHOUT PILGRIMAGE?

According to Marion Bowman, Glastonbury is one of the most popular and multivalent pilgrimage sites in the UK; it is an example *par excellence* of a contemporary pilgrimage centre (Bowman 2008: 241; 2012: 12, 21). She writes:

Because a variety of people come to Glastonbury with assorted interests, aims and expectations, a spectrum of pilgrimage activity can be seen here, from more traditional Western Christian models, through interfaith pilgrimage, Goddess pil-

grimage, Celtic calendar-related activity, conference/symposium attendance, earth energy-inspired journeying, one-off instances of spiritually significant co-presence (which may or may not be considered pilgrimage), and virtual pilgrimage (Bowman 2008: 241).

I went to Glastonbury with the same aim with which I had gone to the Camino de Santiago: to interview people about the meaning of pilgrimage and their supernatural experiences. During my fieldtrips to Glastonbury, the focus and main site of my research was the Glastonbury PRC, so in a way my 'quest' for the Glastonbury pilgrimage can be viewed as a case study of the PRC. Located very centrally in High Street, this was the place where I conducted many interviews, and the founders of the centre, Barry Taylor and Morgana West were my key informants. I asked my interviewees the same questions that I had asked the Santiago pilgrims – that is what the words pilgrim and pilgrimage meant to them and what their motives for pilgrimage were.<sup>11</sup> Contrary to my expectations, it was not easy to find pilgrimage in Glastonbury. Instead, several people pointed out to me that Glastonbury no longer has a well-defined pilgrimage. I was not disappointed because I thought that a 'non-existing pilgrimage' could offer as good food for thought and material for research as an existing one. A similar thing happened to my expectation of hearing pilgrims' stories about their encounters with the supernatural – they did not have much to tell me because, according to Barry Taylor, they do not use the word supernatural in Glastonbury, they prefer the word spiritual.<sup>12</sup>

Like Santiago de Compostela, Glastonbury was a major pilgrimage centre in the Middle Ages (see, for example, Carley 1988; Bowman 2004; 2014; Hopkinson-Ball 2012), and fell into oblivion after the Reformation. However, while the Camino began to be rediscovered in the 1980s – and it is now walked by increasing numbers of pilgrims every year –, Glastonbury pilgrimage *per se* has not enjoyed the same popularity. One of the reasons for this can be found in the completely different historical context: in England, traditional Catholic pilgrimage activity ceased with the Reformation.

In 2011, Barry Taylor told me that their mission is to define pilgrimage in Glastonbury. He said that when the Santiago pilgrims reach their destination, most of them perform rituals that mark the end of their pilgrimage – they attend the Pilgrims' Mass in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and give a hug to the statue of St James; in Glastonbury, however, no such ritual or ceremony is recognised as completing a pilgrimage. In the light of Barry Taylor's words it is interesting to note that since 1924 there have been annual Anglican pilgrimages to Glastonbury. For various reasons I have not been able to attend an Anglican Pilgrimage to Glastonbury. During my first field trip in the summer of 2011, I could not attend the Anglican Pilgrimage because it was cancelled. A pilgrimage that can be cancelled must have a totally different meaning than for instance the Camino de Santiago, which is walked or cycled during all seasons even by people who are unwell or have the most modest means.<sup>13</sup> I did some research into why the Anglican pilgrimage had been cancelled and got three different answers. According to the most widespread version it was cancelled due to the high cost of petrol. The second version was that it was cancelled because of the conflict between the two wings in the Church of England over the ordination of women – the organisers of the pilgrimage were against it. I was told that the local church of St John no longer offered hospitality to the pilgrimage for that reason. According to the third version, the pilgrimage had in fact not been cancelled but merged with another pilgrimage – that of



*Photo 4. Morgana West in front of the Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre, February 2013. Photo by Tiina Sepp.*

Our Lady of Walsingham which took place in Exeter at that time. One man told me that it was decided that instead of going to Glastonbury and Exeter, they just went to Exeter. The members of St John's congregation told me that Glastonbury people feel that the Christian pilgrimage is not part of the town. One woman told me that at one point town people no longer felt they were part of the pilgrimage: "Glastonbury is just used as a site for it". She said that about twenty years ago the High Street was full of people during the Anglican pilgrimage; they were singing hymns and joining the procession. "Now you hardly notice there's a pilgrimage", she told me. She also said that the main reason why St John's congregation had pulled out of the pilgrimage was that Anglican pilgrimage organisers do not let ordained women in.<sup>14</sup>

I got the impression that the Anglican pilgrimage is like a foreign body in Glastonbury – even the local Christian community is not interested, let alone the alternative community. Some of my interviewees with a Christian background warned me against using the Christian pilgrimages as an indicator of the state of Christianity in Glastonbury. One man said: "You shouldn't think to yourself, oh there is this Anglican pilgrimage, and only sixty people turned up to walk on High Street, this means that the Church is in bad condition". He pointed out that the Anglican pilgrimage has always been politically charged within the Church and the state of the Anglican pilgrimage does not in any way reflect the state of Christianity in Glastonbury. For several years Anglican and Catholic pilgrimages to Glastonbury Abbey took place on one and the

same weekend – the Anglican pilgrimage on Saturday and Catholic on Sunday, thus creating a Christian pilgrimage weekend. This has apparently been changed – in 2013 the Anglican pilgrimage took place on the 15th of June and Roman Catholic pilgrimage on the 7th of July. Interestingly, as pointed out by Marion Bowman (2004), both the Anglican Pilgrimage and the Catholic Pilgrimage refer to themselves as “The Glastonbury Pilgrimage” (Bowman 2004: 279).

I was wondering if people working for the Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre tell their visitors about Christian pilgrimage. Are there hand-outs and leaflets about those? I found out that there are no leaflets to be distributed about these pilgrimages because, according to Morgana West, the co-founder and manager of the PRC, Christian pilgrimages do not produce any publicity. Add to this the fact that pilgrimage is not a natural part of Protestantism (pilgrimage was banned during the Reformation) and that the Anglican Church still has ambivalent feelings about the Abbey (Ashe 1976), and the low-key nature of the Glastonbury Anglican pilgrimage becomes quite understandable. One man told me that Catholic pilgrimage has grown and Anglican pilgrimage has become smaller mainly because many Anglicans have become Catholics. He said that nowadays Catholic Glastonbury pilgrimage gets thousands of people; Anglican pilgrimage is a much lower-key event with a maximum of two hundred people. The Catholic Church in Glastonbury is designated a shrine and sees itself as the rightful successor to and continuation of the medieval pilgrimage. The people at the Roman Catholic Church maintain the shrine (with its tapestry of the Glastonbury martyrs) as successors of the Abbey and its Marian devotion (see Bowman 2004; 2014). Pilgrimage is a live concept for some.

The Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre was founded in 2007, and on their door there is a sign saying: “We are a non-denominational centre open to all people on all paths”. Volunteers at the Glastonbury PRC told me that one of their aims is to give support and spiritual guidance to those who have become lost. Initially the PRC was meant for people going through a spiritual crisis. If necessary, these people were advised to see a psychologist, Christian priest, Wiccan or some other person considered suitable to help in a particular situation. Many people are attracted to Glastonbury for its healing (see, for example, Prince, Riches 2000: 92–98; Bowman 2008). Analysing new forms of pilgrimage, Hugh McLeod (2012: 201) points out healing is something that has remained constant: pilgrimage is centrally concerned with healing, but the healing that is sought, is now more often psychological than physical. This observation has been confirmed numerous times during my fieldwork on the Camino: I have met many pilgrims who set out in order to find alleviation to the pain and suffering caused by the loss of someone close through death, divorce, etc. For example, one young woman who had been recently abandoned by her husband walked the Camino carrying her wedding dress in her backpack. When she arrived in Finisterre, she burnt the dress in the hope of leaving the past behind and moving on with her life.

In Glastonbury, the word pilgrim is perceived differently than on the Camino. On the Camino, everybody wants to be called a pilgrim, no matter if they call themselves religious, spiritual or neither. The minute one starts the Camino, one becomes a pilgrim (see Frey 1998; Sepp 2012a). In Glastonbury, however, this is far from clear and there is an on-going debate about these words. According to Barry Taylor, pilgrims are “any visitors who come to Glastonbury for what they see as the special spiritual energies of



*Photo 5. Glastonbury Abbey, February 2014. Photo by Tiina Sepp.*

the place. These pilgrims are of every faith, denomination and belief. The term may also be used for pilgrims<sup>15</sup> who have settled in the town.” (Taylor 2010: 18) However, some PRC volunteers told me that people in Glastonbury often do not want to admit that they are pilgrims. Morgana West said that 75 per cent of the people are not aware that they are pilgrims. In 2011, talking about the negative sides of that term, she pointed out its ambiguity, and said that some people feel uncertain about the PRC: “Pagans think we are Christian, Christians think we are pagan”. Some of my informants told me that they did not like the name of the PRC because in their opinion the words pilgrim and pilgrimage had overly strong Christian associations. They said they thought of themselves as spiritual seekers rather than pilgrims and would prefer the name of the PRC to be changed accordingly. Here we can see the difference between self-identifying as pilgrims, and others designating people as pilgrims. Marion Bowman (1993) has written about the different types of Glastonbury pilgrims, for example perpetual pilgrims and conscious and unconscious pilgrims.

Barry Taylor has nothing against the use of the words pilgrim and pilgrimage, and during our interview in December 2011 he gave me this definition: “Everyone who goes to Glastonbury is on a pilgrimage, except for those who go on the pilgrimage to Glastonbury”. By “those who go on the pilgrimage” Barry meant people who attend Christian pilgrimage in Glastonbury. He said that the alternative community do not count Anglican or Catholic pilgrimages as a genuine spiritual pilgrimage mainly because they

do not honour others. He said: "The Anglican Church will not accept women as priests. We all have our spiritual paths, but we honour all others." When I interviewed Barry two years later, he used the words pull and push to describe the attitudes of the people

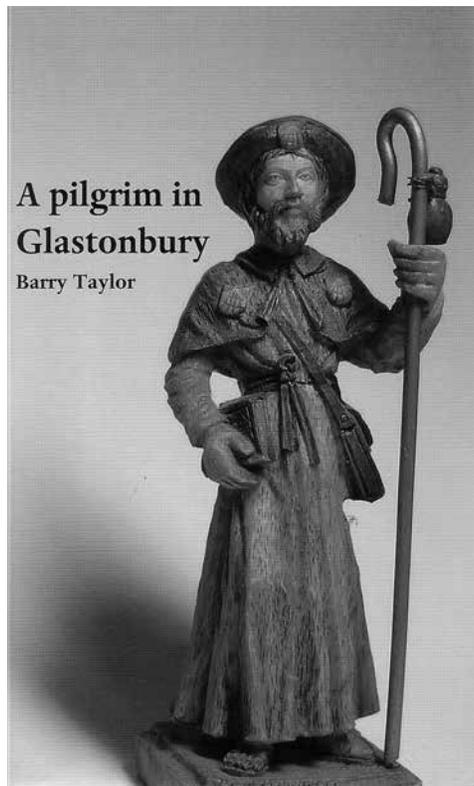


Photo 6. The book cover of *A Pilgrim in Glastonbury* by Barry Taylor (2010).

who go on pilgrimage to Glastonbury. He said: "Christians go because they're being pushed, we are being pulled". In his book *A Pilgrim in Glastonbury* (2010) as well as in his interviews, Barry has emphasised the need to define the pilgrimage in Glastonbury. I must admit I am very curious to see what the well-defined Glastonbury pilgrimage will be like.

Glastonbury resident Jon Cousins, whom I met at the PRC, has proposed a very interesting form of pilgrimage. He is the author of *The Glastonbury Documents*, in which he writes about Richard Whiting (the last Abbot of Glastonbury), and the two monks who were ritually killed in 1539. Cousins' research has led him to conclude that the key to Glastonbury's "perpetual chaotic dismemberment" ("it is a town divided") is exactly that ritual murder of the Glastonbury Three (Cousins 2007: 5; 2009). Cousins emphasises the need for a large non-denominational Service of Remembrance for Richard Whiting, held at Glastonbury Abbey. The service would begin with the synchronised arrival of four Pilgrimages – one from Bath, one from Wells, one from Ilchester, one from Bridgwater – symbolically bringing the separate parts of Richard Whiting back together (Cousins 2007: 25).

(After being hanged, Whiting's body had been quartered and displayed in Bath, Wells, Ilchester and Bridgwater.)

Glastonbury pilgrimage seems to be rather heavily contested. Pilgrimage is a very ambiguous term to begin with. There are some pilgrimage-like activities in Glastonbury apart from the Anglican and Catholic pilgrimages. The most conspicuous of those would be the Goddess Conference, which takes place every summer. According to Marion Bowman, the Goddess Movement "contributes to some of the most high-profile pilgrimage activity in contemporary Glastonbury" (Bowman 2008: 257). She writes:

[...] the Goddess community is fighting patriarchy with pageantry, self-consciously using the procession as a means of repossessing Glastonbury for the Goddess, re-asserting 'Her' presence in the town. In producing practically a mirror image of the Christian pilgrimage processions, with images of the Goddess, Goddess banners, processions, chanting and ritual, the Goddess community is physically encompass-

ing Christian Glastonbury and spiritually reclaiming aspects of the Christian tradition there, such as devotion to the Virgin and St. Bridget. It is undoubtedly the form of pilgrimage in which contestation for and of Glastonbury is most marked. (Bowman 2008: 258)

When I told a man, who is training to be a Goddess priest, that I do research on Glastonbury pilgrimage, he said that attending the Goddess Conference could be viewed as going on a pilgrimage, but he added that for him it is more of a calling than pilgrimage. My other informants pointed out that the relatively high participation fees of the conference distract from its likeness to a pilgrimage: "You can't join it unless you pay". They also pointed out that it is called a conference (that has a procession as a part of it), not a pilgrimage. It seems that a few years ago the element of pilgrimage in the Goddess Conference was much more emphasised than it is now. I suggest that the virtual abandonment of the concept of pilgrimage from the Goddess Movement is connected with the decline of the importance and high profile nature of the Anglican and Roman Catholic pilgrimages in Glastonbury: there is no longer a need for a 'counter-pilgrimage'. However, considering that the trappings and the route of the Goddess procession are directly influenced by the Christian pilgrimages, the undeniable influence and inspiration cannot be downplayed; just because contemporary attendees are not aware of it does not mean it was not important and part of a larger 'pilgrimage picture' in Glastonbury (see Bowman 2008).

The ruins of the former Benedictine Abbey are sacred to people of different spiritualities. Since 1924 there have been annual Anglican pilgrimages to Glastonbury; the first post-Reformation Roman Catholic pilgrimage took place in 1895. The processions of the annual Anglican and Catholic pilgrimages end in the Abbey with celebration of a mass. Marion Bowman (Bowman 2004: 279) has referred to the processions of the Glastonbury Christian pilgrimages as "a means of Christianity reasserting its claim on Glastonbury". It is believed by many that the Mary and Michael lines run along the Abbey church. In 2011, I noticed a sign in the Abbey museum saying that dowsing on the Abbey grounds is only allowed with permission. To me this implies that the Anglican Church wants to maintain control over what is happening on its premises but at the same time they are willing to make a concession, perhaps fearing that banning dowsing might lead to unwanted problems. The Abbey's present status seems to be a little unclear: although the Abbey grounds are set up as a heritage site rather than a religious site (it is only on certain occasions that the Abbey grounds are set up for a mass, the rest of the time the Abbey is administered as historic site), in its deeds is a clause stating that nothing injurious to Anglican religion can occur there, which is why non-Christian rituals are not allowed. This has occasionally led to confrontation. One man who used to work for the Abbey museum, told me that some of his ex-colleagues were 'anti-weirdos' and felt they had the moral authority to dictate visitors behaviour. He told me about the clash of ideology within the Abbey staff and asked: "Who has the authority to forbid people from dowsing on the Abbey grounds?" The documentary *Chenrezig* (2013) made by Glastonbury filmmakers Tim Knock and Kevin Redpath, follows the visit of eight Tibetan Buddhist monks from India to Glastonbury and the step by step creation of a sand mandala dedicated to Chenrezig, the Buddha of Compassion. The film features a scene about the monks paying a visit to the Abbey. At the reception they are told that they are welcome as long as they do not pray.

As Marion Bowman has noted, things move fast in Glastonbury, so “one can see things develop, change or disappear” (Bowman 2009: 4). Based on my (time-wise rather limited) fieldwork I suggest that even though some people in Glastonbury do think of themselves as pilgrims who were called and stayed, thinking of Glastonbury as a site of pilgrimage is not very common among Glastonbury residents at the moment – the word pilgrimage does not seem to be in vogue. During my field trip to Glastonbury in February 2014, I heard that the Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre was being restructured and was about to reopen as the Glastonbury Reception Centre. They were going to keep their motto “Inspiring Unity through Diversity”. That new Centre will also house a sanctuary, because, according to Morgana West:

Whilst many of Glastonbury’s indoor sacred spaces afford an open door policy towards people from differing beliefs, they all have their roots in their own faith or spiritual practice. Our plans to offer ‘a sanctuary’ in which all beliefs can come together within their own framework, is unique in that we will be offering a sacred space from a starting place that is not from any one set of religious beliefs. This place of origin is not to suggest we feel all faiths and paths are the same, nor that they ‘should be’, but that each and every one has a valuable place in modern-day society. We also offer our acknowledgement that spiritual beliefs and practices can present complex and difficult challenges between different groups creating gaps that are sometimes difficult to bridge. However, rather than focus on differences and discord, our intention is to create a space in the heart of the town where tolerance, understanding and co-existence can be found demonstrating how together, we can live well in Glastonbury, whilst remaining different.

I asked Morgana why they had dropped the word Pilgrim from their name. This is what she said:

Over the years, the title Pilgrim has been hotly debated. Whilst there are those comfortably identifying with it, a higher proportion of those visiting Glastonbury follow a contemporary spiritual path and feel it is something they are unable to connect with, perceiving it as being associated only with Christianity. The idea of secular pilgrimage is unknown to them and if stretched, their only other means of identification might be with the Muslim Hajj. On the opposite side of the coin, many of those of the Christian faith perceive our Centre as being of the New Age and by default, Pagan. As a consequence of these perceptions, encouraging people to come to a wider awareness of pilgrim and pilgrimage has been challenging indeed and our new identity gives us a welcome opportunity to appeal to a wider sector of those on a spiritual journey. However, the processes within pilgrimage are such that almost all spiritual seekers to Glastonbury find themselves encountering and we shall continue to openly acknowledge and highlight the stages and experiences of this ancient way, reflective of our historical past in a congruent manner appropriately mirroring Glastonbury of the 21st century.

Nancy Frey has pointed out that discontinuities in definitions of pilgrims and pilgrims' behaviour among participants reveal a "level of unresolved tension regarding the changing nature of pilgrimage and leisure activities in Western European society" (Frey 1998: 69).

The hierarchy of pilgrims in vernacular discourses is a complicated subject that has been studied rather thoroughly (for example, Frey 1998; Mendel 2010). The first division is between human and motor-powered travel – motorised pilgrimage is not regarded as pilgrimage by those who walk or cycle to Santiago. For many people real pilgrims are only those who go to Santiago under their own power. Those who go by bus, even if religiously motivated, are inauthentic, that is, tourists (Frey 1998: 18). There is a further distinction in the group of foot or cycle pilgrims that exists at both official and unofficial level. On the official level, in several pilgrims' hostels foot pilgrims are allowed to check in from 2 or 3 p.m., cyclists only from 7 p.m. The logic behind this is that cyclists move faster and are supposed to find a new bed more easily if the hostels fill up. By the unofficial distinction I mean that foot pilgrims tend to look down on cycle pilgrims; nearly all foot pilgrims that I interviewed told me that cycle pilgrims (often called *bicigrinos*) are not proper pilgrims.

Tommy Mendel (2010), who has written a comparative article about foot pilgrims to Santiago and backpackers, refers to the validity of Turner's *communitas* theory for his own research. He brings out two points: first, it is very easy for pilgrims to meet, re-meet and spend several days or weeks on the road with fellow travellers, and secondly,

[...] during the experience of this liminal and unconventional time of the journey a particular identity among like-minded people can develop, overlapping social strata and nationalities. [...] [O]ne of the core factors making this kind of journeying so exceptional are the mutual feelings of solidarity, togetherness, security as well as the community spirit. (Mendel 2010: 294)

Hierarchical distinctions may occur (ibid.: 294) but they manifest on a different level to everyday life, for example in the foot-pilgrim's or backpacker's "road status" (ibid.: 307). Mendel writes:

Road status is multifaceted, consisting of the number of the journeys already undertaken, the duration of the trip, the distance of the route, the speed at which the distance is covered, the hardship and the difficulty of the routing and the optimizing of a minimal budget (ibid.: 307).

When I started doing fieldwork on the Camino, some pilgrims suggested that I should only interview 'real' pilgrims – those who started walking alone from home. Pilgrims with road experience are deeply respected. In 2004 I met a Lithuanian pilgrim who had already walked to Rome and Jerusalem, and was about to complete his third pilgrimage to Santiago. His fellow pilgrims obviously looked up to him. However, the line between people like the Lithuanian pilgrim and vagabonds seems to be very thin and therefore someone who is regarded as a pilgrim *par excellence* by some people may be held in suspicion by some others. I have sometimes encountered marginalised pilgrims – those who are often seen as 'wrong-uns'. They do things that are not expected from the San-

tiago pilgrims, for example they do not leave the pilgrimage destination as soon after the arrival as possible. Those pilgrims who walk back home rather than using public transport are sometimes held in suspicion as well. They are apparently too close to vagabonds for the liking of some others.

People, whether they think of themselves as pilgrims or not, undertake the Camino for various reasons, religious and non-religious. In the Middle Ages, the reasons for undertaking the pilgrimage varied wildly, just as they do now. Already in the Middle Ages one of the common motives for pilgrimage was the wish to travel and see the world, as well as the opportunity to escape from the grey mundane world of everyday life and the duties therein. Pilgrimages have sometimes been called medieval tourism – they offered the chance to get away, meet new people, experience new cultures and witness places that previously they had only ever heard about. Pilgrimage has always been viewed by the Church with some ambivalence.

Pilgrimage was given a major boost in 1095, when Urban II introduced the practice of indulgence. Affective piety, with its focus on the humanity of Christ, fostered the desire to see the places associated with his life; and by the fourteenth century, pilgrimage to the three major sites of Christendom – Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela – had become a virtual package tour industry. (Voaden 2004: 181)

It is widely believed that although many pilgrims were devout, many more were seduced by a desire to see the world, and pilgrimage became increasingly secularised, epitomised by the dubious piety of most of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims (*ibid.*). Therefore, anxiety that pilgrimage might be undertaken by the "wrong people and for the wrong reasons" was felt from early times (Webb 2002: 72). Pilgrimage provided an excuse for travel for a wide variety of people, from monks and nuns who should have stayed in the cloister to fugitive serfs, beggars and vagabonds (*ibid.*).

Apparently, not much has changed in this respect and people are told to be aware of bogus pilgrims nowadays, as well. In a book issued by the Diocese of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, three categories of bogus pilgrims are highlighted: the hikers, whose aim is to promote walking for exercise and to get to know the country; the initiatory groups who use the Camino as a means of initiation interpreting it according to the ideas of the different sects which are basically gnostic, esoteric etc.; and those who aim to live off the pilgrimage and seek to make use of the Christian hospitality of the Camino at no cost to themselves or as a cheap form of tourism. (Garcia Rodriguez 1999: 74)

On a number of occasions, both as a pilgrim and an *hospitalera*, I have been warned against people who pretend to be pilgrims but in fact only want to use the pilgrims' refuges and sometimes also steal from good pilgrims. When I was working as a voluntary *hospitalera* in a pilgrims' refuge in Granyon, we sometimes had pilgrims stay with us whom the local people warned us against. One was said to be a fake pilgrim who was in fact a homeless drunk trying to get free beds in refuges. A man who called himself Michel arrived in the morning and said that he was not going to stay; he just wanted to heal his blisters. After a while he said that the blisters were too bad and he would stay overnight. He told me that he had started to walk from Belgium in memory of his father, who had always wanted to do the Camino. Michel also mentioned that it was his birthday. Together with the other *hospitalero* we decided to buy a cake for him and have

his name written on it. Later that day, we heard from the village people that our Michel was not a proper pilgrim – he was a vagrant taking advantages of pilgrims’ refuges and had already been to that particular refuge a few times before, every time under a different name. One of the men, who was renovating the parish church, told us to keep an eye on this ‘birthday boy’, for fear that he stole something from the pilgrims. Another time, a ‘suspicious’ pilgrim was described as a criminal by one local person who ran in to warn me and the other *hospitalero*. He told us to tell the pilgrims to keep an eye on their purses, and that we should watch the wine bottles.

I suppose that even though everyone who has walked the Camino has probably met at least one pilgrim-vagabond, they are still relatively rare. This cannot be said about the other subgroup of pilgrims, *turigrinos*, who are apparently abundant and seem to form an integral part of the Camino. That Spanish word, which refers to someone who is the opposite of a real pilgrim, is formed from two words, *turista* (tourist) and *peregrino* (pilgrim). *Turigrinos* are accused of being demanding and superficial, and taking advantage of the Camino infrastructures for cheap holiday-making; instead of walking they use a support car or take the bus.<sup>16</sup> “We can never get rid of *turigrinos*”, is a sentence that is said over and over again. Some say that compared to the present-day *turigrinos*, past *turigrinos* seem almost like real pilgrims. However, using the support vehicle is not the only ‘sin’ that is attributed to *turigrinos*. Sometimes they wake up too early for the liking of ‘real’ pilgrims – at 4 or 5 a.m. – allegedly with the aim of reaching the next refuge in time to get a bed. I suppose it is safe to say that *turigrinos* are those who do certain things differently from those regarded as ‘real’ pilgrims, and the list of these things is endless and constantly changing.

The question of what an ‘authentic pilgrim’ is inevitably leads to the next question: who has the power and authority to determine who is a real pilgrim? Interestingly, during my first field trips between 2003 and 2005 when I conducted tens of interviews no one challenged my questions (Do you consider yourself to be a pilgrim? What distinguishes a pilgrim from a tourist?) in any way. It was not until October 2008, when I was working as an *hospitalera* in Granyon, that that problem was rather clearly brought home to me. I was talking to one Catalan man about my research (not interviewing him) and he pointed out quite passionately that no one has the right to judge him and decide whether a poor drunk like himself is a real pilgrim or not. He said that he would rather be called a *penegrino* (from *pene* ‘penis’ and *peregrino* ‘pilgrim’).

As shown above, on the Camino de Santiago there exist different kinds of hierarchies – a technical one in several pilgrim hostels distinguishing between cyclists and foot pilgrims; a hierarchy created by pilgrims and *hospitaleros* themselves, who judge each other based on various factors – road experience, behaviour (for example, a real pilgrim is expected to be humble and live by the motto “The tourist demands, the pilgrim appreciates”); and finally, a hierarchy imposed by outsiders from ‘above’, according to which proper Catholics have better informed, more valid, superior knowledge. We can say that there are two kinds of rhetoric here – the one from above and the one from below. The one imposed and the one developed out of what you see around you and why or how you view it in a particular way. It is useful to look at how they are linked and at what drives both. I will now describe the hierarchy imposed from ‘above’.

When doing fieldwork in Santiago de Compostela in spring 2010, I once got into trouble with the municipal police because, according to them, I was in “undesirable”

company (Sepp 2012b: 42–46). The police strongly recommended that I found myself better and more appropriate subjects than “those drunkards and fake pilgrims” I was conducting interviews with. One of the people that the Santiago police told me to keep away from was José, a Catalan painter who started the pilgrimage from Barcelona in order to pray for his terminally ill mother. When he reached Santiago de Compostela, he decided to stay there for a while before starting to walk back to Barcelona, and earn his living as a street artist, painting the cathedral (ibid.). Among other things, José told me about the function of the *botafumeiro* (the incense burner) that is swung during the mass at the Cathedral of Santiago. According to him, it is important that they use *botafumeiro* in the Cathedral: “Thanks to the *botafumeiro* they haven’t blocked the cross in the cathedral. *Botafumeiro* saves the cross.” He explained that thanks to using the *botafumeiro* they keep the cross-part of the cathedral unblocked, whereas in many other churches they have destroyed the cross by putting an organ or chairs in that part, thus making it possible for the devil to come in (ibid.: 45).

When I discussed this belief with my contact from the University of Santiago, he said that José sounded as if he was mentally disturbed, most probably an alcoholic and therefore an unreliable interviewee. An interesting side topic of this approach is the medicalisation of people who have unconventional beliefs. Ülo Valk (2012: 363) has noted that medical discourse represents the authority of science and offers strong arguments against a supernaturalist worldview. In the case I am discussing, not only was a psychiatric interpretation of my informant’s beliefs offered, but also a critique of that person’s non-Catholic views: my Spanish contact emphasised that José’s beliefs do not generally reflect the Catholic belief system, thus José was not an appropriate person for me to talk to and advised me to interview ‘proper Catholic pilgrims’. Even if I had tried to take his advice to interview only proper Catholic pilgrims, I would probably have had difficulty finding them. Where could I have met a ‘real Catholic’ – pure, untainted, not influenced by any vernacular beliefs or personal interpretations of institutional views? As I said, José’s communication with the divine was criticised by a Catholic scholar with theological education. At the same time, José was a practicing Catholic who had started his long pilgrimage from Barcelona to pray for his mother. Many people would say that, because of starting the pilgrimage from his home and having a religious motivation, José was an authentic pilgrim *par excellence*.

So far I have had my choice of interviewees criticised by two scholars. I already mentioned the first incident that happened in Santiago de Compostela when my Spanish contact did not approve of some of my informants’ beliefs and rituals because according to him they were not characteristic of proper Catholicism. By recommending that I speak to proper pilgrims instead of the likes of José, my contact was creating a hierarchy of pilgrims, differentiating between proper pilgrims and others. My fieldwork in Glastonbury, especially my choice of interviewees, has also received some criticism. According to one historian, the people I have interviewed in Glastonbury – among them the founders and volunteers of the Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre – “can’t understand the term ‘pilgrimage’, probably for a lack of religious formation: it seems that many of them are really pagans”. This implies that in his opinion only Christians with religious education can have a valid opinion on the topic of pilgrimage.

Leaving aside the question of whether the above-mentioned people spoke as scholars or representatives of the Church, these incidents have led me (again) to ask who has

the right to decide who is and who is not a proper pilgrim; who *can* understand the term pilgrimage; and from where have they received that knowledge? Is it only Christians who hold the key to matters concerning pilgrimage?

René Gothóni (2010: 60–61) notes that our preconceptions determine our interpretation and understanding of the subject matter. He writes:

The word ‘pilgrim’ from Latin *peregrinus* (*per ager*) denotes ‘walking’ and within the Roman Catholic theology identification with the sufferings of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) through physical hardship. Hence our – i.e. the Westerner’s – preconception of the word ‘pilgrimage’ is that a pilgrimage is about walking, which means that the pilgrimage is conceived of from a limited horizon of understanding. (Ibid.: 61)

Gothóni insists on calling the *proskynima* to Mount Athos a pilgrimage simply because he is not prepared to “give a monopoly to the Western scholarly and Roman Catholic interpretation of what pilgrimage is or should be all about, both as a category and a word” (ibid.: 68).

## ENERGY

The concept of energy is widely used in New Age discourse (see, for example, Prince and Riches 2000; Kivari 2012). I have heard several discussions about it on my field trips to Glastonbury and the Camino de Santiago.

One of the most significant sacred sites of Glastonbury, the Chalice Well with its red waters (which some associate with the Grail and the blood of Christ and others with the menstrual blood of the Goddess), is situated at the foot of the Tor. Opposite the Chalice Well is the White Spring with its white and supposedly healing waters. Marion Bowman (2007: 306) has noted that for some people the proximity of the red and white waters indicates the balance of male and female energies (red representing blood, white semen) associated with the Michael and Mary ley lines which are believed to intertwine at the Tor.

Several people are convinced that Glastonbury is the greatest British centre of ley lines – mysterious lines of force, which can somehow be tapped into, yielding great powers for good or evil. For many people, Glastonbury is an “extremely deeply spiritual place full of tangible powerful energy” (Cousins 2007: 1). Jon Cousins writes:

There is an energy at work here that is extremely powerful, tangible, and present. Deserving both grave respect and constant awareness. If it touches you, it cannot be ignored. It shakes, and pulls, and reveals. It truly affects people in profoundly challenging, sometimes shockingly damaging ways. The oddest thing is that this energy particularly seems to affect those that are called here, while it *seems* to have little or no affect whatsoever on many of the long-time locals. (Cousins 2007: 6)

The Camino de Santiago is believed to have preserved the energy of all the people who have ever walked it. It has been called a “power walk”. I have seen pilgrims refuse to stay at certain refuges because of the “dark energy” of those places. A Catalan pilgrim told me:

The energy that came from the Estella church – an energy of darkness, where many people had been attacked. I could feel the fear. I decided I couldn't stay there. I don't want to sleep in this area, I don't like this energy. [...] Of all the places on the Camino, the wine fountain<sup>17</sup> is here.

Another place on the Camino that is believed by some to be full of negative energies is the final destination – the city of Santiago de Compostela itself. I have heard from several people about the oppressive feeling that they get in Santiago, and one pilgrim also offered an explanation:

When people arrive in Santiago they are filled with their troubles and worries; on finishing the pilgrimage and leaving the city they also leave their burden behind, thus adding to the city's accumulation of negative energy.

The Camino (*el Camino*) is a masculine word in Spanish, and several pilgrims have compared the Camino with a man – friend, lover. To illustrate this, I will quote a few lines from a poem written by a Brazilian pilgrim Antonella Zara:

I love you!  
With your welcome and generosity I entered your forests, your  
Valleys, your fields and your long long trails.  
And, little by little, I began feeling the sensitivity and the art  
With which you entered my veins, my bones, my blood, and the  
Magical recesses of my very being.  
Today you and I are lovers, and our love is forever, as all true  
Love must be.

However, one Belgian woman said she could not think of the Camino as having male energy because of the connection with the earth, which is very feminine.

Already on my first trip to Glastonbury I was told that places can have male or female energy. During my interview with Barry Taylor at the PRC, he came to the conclusion that the Camino as a Catholic pilgrimage has strong male energy, Glastonbury has strong female energy and it would be wonderful if these energies could be united. He suggested that I should be the bridge-builder and unite these two energies. However, Barry pointed out that in Glastonbury there is one site with strong male energy – the ruins of the Benedictine Abbey.

Many people believe that Glastonbury was once a significant site of Goddess worship and is now first and foremost a centre of Goddess spirituality. According to nearly all of my informants, Glastonbury has a strong female energy; there is a strong emphasis on the divine female. James, who has been to Glastonbury several times, told me about energy as a “gender based identity”. He said:

Glastonbury is very strong and dominantly female. It has long been the pagan area for witches, female healers, etc. and they still dominate. All around Glasto you will find 'Earth mothers' – healers, herbalists, wise women. Glastonbury draws women of all ages to herself as this is a spiritual 'womb' for matriarchal society.

The Belgian woman, whom I mentioned earlier, said that what makes Glastonbury feminine is the fact that Anna, the mother of Mary, has been buried in the green tomb near the Tor. Some Glastonbury residents have expressed concern about the unbalance of

energy in Glastonbury – the male energy is supposedly very weak. Brian, a resident pilgrim with a shamanic background, said that after arriving in Glastonbury a few years ago, random people approached him in the street and told him that he had to settle the unbalance of Glastonbury's male-female energy.

A young Spanish pilgrim said that the reason why the Camino has a strong male energy is because the Catholic Church has always suppressed women. The discussion about energies seems to reflect the competition between different spiritualities. Several people have told me that the divine female and the presence of strong female energy in Glastonbury is a natural reaction to the centuries-long male domination and oppression of women by the Church.

## CONCLUSION

The notion of pilgrimage is debated not only in scholarly writing but in vernacular discourse, too. I have heard many heated discussions over the meaning of the words pilgrim and pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago as well as in Glastonbury. In European vernacular religion the terms pilgrim and pilgrimage are rather ambiguous and it seems unlikely that a definition will be coined that everybody will agree with. The usage of the words pilgrim and pilgrimage sometimes reveals the tension between different discourses and religious systems. In this article, I have tried to analyse these concepts and explore the contradictions and complexities that they involve. Some people would go as far as say, that any significant journey can be described as pilgrimage; some others claim that pilgrimage made by (for example) Pagans is not a pilgrimage. I have observed how in statements like "These people are not real pilgrims" and "Their pilgrimage is not a true pilgrimage" the words pilgrim and pilgrimage are used to establish authority and create hierarchies of people and activities. Due to the ambivalent nature of these terms, they can be used as a means to convey very different messages. I have observed the use of the words pilgrim and pilgrimage on two levels – scholarly and vernacular. Occasionally these two levels overlap, as was the case with the Catholic scholars giving me advice on whom to interview – implying that only Catholics are proper pilgrims.

While Santiago de Compostela is much more than a Catholic shrine, the spirit of Catholicism is very strongly present on the Camino. It prevails not only on the pilgrimage route but every now and then finds its way to the academic world, as well. The fact that many people find it necessary to emphasise that in spite of doing the Camino they are by no means religious, shows how strong the influence of the Catholic Church on the Camino is. The Catholic Church uses the popularity of the Camino to carry out the work of evangelisation.

I have also looked at different, competing narratives about pilgrimage in Glastonbury. Based on my (time-wise rather limited) fieldwork I suggest that thinking of Glastonbury as a site of pilgrimage is not very common among the residents at the moment. It seems to me that just recently the word pilgrimage had a wider scope of meaning than now. It is possible that with the dwindling impact of the Christian pilgrimage there is no longer a need for an 'alternative pilgrimage' or counter pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is a contested category to begin with, and it seems to me that Glastonbury pilgrimage has been so heavily contested that at a certain point it got lost in the process. When analys-

ing the terms pilgrim and pilgrimage, Morgana West pointed out their ambiguity and the uncertainty that some people feel about the PRC. I think I can say the same about my 'quest' for Glastonbury pilgrimage: whenever I said I researched pilgrimage, people invariably asked me which pilgrimage. Many (including several Christians and 'New Agers') added that they do not think of Glastonbury as a place of pilgrimage. Certainly some would argue that the unifying thing is simply people being drawn to Glastonbury but even then some of them added that the term seeker might be more appropriate. In Glastonbury some visitors self-identify as pilgrims, some residents self-identify as pilgrims, and some designate all who come to Glastonbury as seekers or (in some cases) pilgrims. This debate is further complicated by the different levels of designation – self-designation, designation by others, designation according to different theological positioning, designation according to different scholarly models, etc. (see Bowman 1993).

As there are topical legends and topical jokes – narratives that appear immediately after some event and disappear when the event has lost its significance – I suggest we can also talk about the topicality of pilgrimage. When Anglican pilgrimage was popular and well-attended, the Goddess Conference organisers started the Goddess Procession, which could be seen as a counter-pilgrimage (see Bowman 2004). Now that the Anglican pilgrimage is on the decline, the Goddess Conference no longer emphasises its resemblance to a pilgrimage. We can say that people in Glastonbury use pilgrimage as a vernacular tool when they need it and leave it when it becomes superfluous. The fact that the Glastonbury PRC has dropped the P from their name, further reflects the confusion created by the word pilgrim, and also its irrelevance in contemporary Glastonbury. It seems that the existence of the annual Christian pilgrimages to Glastonbury challenges people's perception of pilgrimage in its broader, non-Christian meaning.

The discussion about energy seems to reflect the competition between different spiritualities – talking about energy can be seen as another means of establishing power. Several people have told me that the divine female and the presence of strong female energy in Glastonbury is a natural reaction to the centuries-long male domination and oppression of women by the Church. Strong female energy in Glastonbury seems to refer to the ending of male domination and the 'revival' of Glastonbury's pre-Christian nature.

'Question everything' seems a good approach to me, and hierarchies, including the hierarchy of beliefs are something that I think need to be challenged. For me, the beliefs of priests and scholars are on the same level as those of the street artists and ex-pilgrims that I met in Santiago de Compostela. None of them carry more weight or should be taken more seriously than the others – they are all expressions of vernacular religion. However, my own attitude to these two 'sides' can vary. I would never ridicule or speak sarcastically about the beliefs or stories of any of my interviewees. At the same time, I sometimes feel the need to challenge the condescending attitude shown by those in power, those representing what used to be called high, institutional religion.

## NOTES

1 According to legend, one of St James's miracles was saving a drowning horseman who then resurfaced covered in shells. The scallop shell is worn to identify one's status as a pilgrim and as such is a good marker of continuity from the medieval pilgrim tradition. It is worth noting that a medieval pilgrim usually received the shell on arriving in Santiago; contemporary pilgrims acquire it at the beginning of their journey.

2 For statistics, see Walker 2014.

3 Joseph of Arimathea is the man who provided a tomb for Jesus after crucifixion. According to another version of the Glastonbury legend, Joseph brought with him the chalice used at the Last Supper.

4 When no specific reference is given for a quotation, it comes from my fieldwork notes or recordings.

5 In April 2014, the Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre changed its name to the Glastonbury Reception Centre.

6 This blessing is based on a poem in Latin composed at the end of the 12th century, praising the refuge in Roncesvalles.

7 A voluntary host at pilgrims' hostels. Depending on the place, the *hospitalero's* task may include checking the pilgrims in, cleaning, cooking, and helping to organise prayers.

8 The subject of the Camino and heresy was dealt with in the Luis Bunuel's (1969) film *The Milky Way (La Voie Lactée)*.

9 Whenever I use 'Church' I mean the Catholic Church.

10 Several hostels are run by municipalities and confraternities of St James, but there are also many private hostels. They all charge a small fee or ask for donation. As a rule, only pilgrims who have the *credencial* (pilgrim's passport) have the right to stay there.

11 As important destinations on the spiritual landscape of European vernacular religion, both the Camino de Santiago and Glastonbury have attracted considerable academic attention and naturally every researcher comes with his or her own background and expectations. I would like to emphasise that before going to Glastonbury I had been conducting fieldwork on the Camino for eight years, so it was there that my ideas about pilgrims and pilgrimage were first formed.

12 Interestingly, as if to make up for the lack of pilgrims' stories about their encounters with the supernatural, I had that encounter myself (see Sepp 2012b).

13 St James's Day (25 July) is a special pilgrimage time for Santiago, and many pilgrims try to arrive in the city on that day. However, the overwhelming majority of pilgrims do not arrive on that day; the Santiago pilgrimage can be started and completed at any day of the year.

14 This was particularly significant for the period when St John's had a woman priest.

15 Bowman (1993; 2008) has written about the belief among some in town in unconscious pilgrims, and the terminological difficulty of a pilgrim who stays.

16 Researchers of tourism (Buzzard 2001; Bendix 2002) offer several examples of the traveller who tries to distinguish him/herself from the tourist, even though they are involved in the same activity.

17 About two kilometres from Estella is the former monastery of Irache, on the wall of which a wine fountain was built in 1991. The fountain delivers free red wine to everyone who passes by.

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