

Walking to a New Self: An Ethnography of Spiritual but Not Religious Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago

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Abstract

THIS PAPER OFFERS an ethnographic study of pilgrims walking the Camino de Santiago, a historically Christian pilgrimage in northern Spain. Since the 1970s, scholars of religion have written about the increasing number of Americans and Europeans who claim “spiritual but not religious” identities, but the relationship between “religion” and “spirituality” remains contested by academics and non-academics alike. Drawing from interviews with pilgrims, this paper explores the ways that spiritual and religious pilgrims make their own systems of texts, hierarchies, and sacred spaces through ritual creativity on the Camino. In this way, “spiritual but not religious” is not a category diametrically opposed to religion but one with the potential to obscure the creative power of non-religious pilgrims. The Camino is not a conduit through which pilgrims express their beliefs; rather, pilgrimage provides a process of identity emergence through which spiritual pilgrims craft definitions of religion. In this way, the category of “spiritual but not religious” remains an important identity that ought to be taken seriously. But for scholars of religion, it proves a limiting framework for understanding the complex ritual power that pilgrims of all religious identities hold.

Introduction

To find non-religious people, I walked one of Christianity’s holiest pilgrimages: the Camino de Santiago. On a summer evening in 2018, I sat on a pilgrim’s hostel balcony in rural Spain with my blistered feet propped up on the railing. My German friend Sabine, a fellow pilgrim, joined me.¹ Watching the sun sink behind the mountains we’d climbed, Sabine whispered, “It’s like God is creating the world.” Later, during an interview, Sabine revealed that she did not believe in God, and although she had prayed with her mother as a child, she no longer called herself “religious.”² Instead Sabine was one of the many “spiritual but not religious” pilgrims who understood the Camino as a place where there was “some spirit between us all.” When asked if she felt uncomfortable as a non-Catholic walking a Catholic pilgrimage, she replied, “No, no, no. Only few people are [Catholic].” Her perspective aligns with almost all the pilgrims I interviewed—including Catholics—who described the Camino as non-Catholic even though it ends at the body of a canonized saint.

With its most famous path running from the French border to the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela, the Camino is formed by hundreds of footpaths that run across Europe.³ The

¹All pilgrims’ names are pseudonyms in this paper.

²Sabine (German pilgrim), interview with the author, Pereje, Spain, June 13, 2018.

³In 2018, around 327,000 pilgrims walked the Camino, and that number has been climbing steadily over the last decade, apart from a large jump during the 2010 Holy Year. For more detailed data on pilgrims, see Ofecina

cathedral in Santiago houses the body of St. James the Apostle, which washed up on Spanish shores covered in shells after being martyred in Jerusalem.⁴ Although St. James died in the first century, his interred body remained undiscovered until the ninth century, when a hermit walking through the woods followed a star to a Roman-era shrine.⁵ Centuries later, the structure would become a cathedral named after its holy occupant: “Santiago de Compostela” likely derives from “St. James of the Starry Field” in a hybridization of Galician and Latin.⁶ Many of the pilgrims I spoke with believed that the Camino began before St. James’ death, when pre-Christian Celts followed the Milky Way toward the setting sun.⁷ For these Celts, pilgrims told me, the journey ended not in Santiago but at Finisterre (derived from “End of the World” in Latin), a rocky peninsula jutting into the Atlantic Ocean that was once considered Earth’s western-most point.⁸ Although the Catholic Church discourages the practice,⁹ many pilgrims continue walking past the cathedral to Finisterre in part to burn their hiking shoes, a ritual said to stem from Celtic tradition.¹⁰ Through these origin stories, the Camino becomes a space where Christian saints roam alongside Celtic gods.

Many pilgrims who feel drawn to the Camino’s Celtic origins identify as “spiritual but not religious,” a phrase that has become popular on and off the Camino. Spiritual but not religious people often feel disillusioned with the way that the rules of an organized religion can oppress its followers,¹¹ and many create their own “cocktail spirituality” using elements of multiple traditions.¹² In 2007, around half of pilgrims reported that they were walking the Camino for “spiritual reasons,” while only 38% cited “religious motivation.”¹³ According to data from the Pilgrim’s Office, pilgrims seeking an official certificate documenting their pilgrimage are asked to mark their motivation as religious, cultural, or religious and cultural.¹⁴ But when I walked the Camino in 2018, the number of spiritual but not religious pilgrims had prompted the office to add a spiritual option.¹⁵ Despite attempts to demarcate the spiritual but not religious, it is difficult to distinguish between spiritual and religious pilgrims: most pilgrims act like tourists regardless of their motivations.¹⁶ With the exception of a young man I met who wore a cape depicting the Virgin Mary, few pilgrims walk with their religious identity on their sleeve.

del Peregrino, “Informe Estadístico Año 2018,” accessed April 2, 2019, <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/estadisticas/?anio=2014&mes>. [Spanish (Spain)]

⁴John Ure, *Pilgrimage: The Great Adventure of the Middle Ages* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2006), 76. Another account describes St. James’ body floating to Spain in a stone boat with neither sails nor rudders. See Nancy Louise Frey, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 9.

⁵Ure, *Pilgrimage*, 76.

⁶Ure, *Pilgrimage*, 77.

⁷Pablo Alonso González, “‘The Camino is Alive’: Minor Logics and Commodification in the Camino de Santiago,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 91, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 974.

⁸Lucrezia Lopez, Yamilé Pérez Guilarte, and Rubén C. Lois González, “The Way to the Western European Land’s End: The Case of Finisterre (Galicia, Spain),” *Italian Journal of Planning Practice* (May 2017): 4.

⁹Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 171.

¹⁰Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 175.

¹¹Amy Hollywood, “Spiritual but Not Religious: The Vital Interplay between Submission and Freedom,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Winter/Spring 2010, <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/winterspring2010/spiritual-not-religious>.

¹²Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 131.

¹³Lopez, González, and Fernández, “Spiritual Tourism on the Way to Saint James: The Current Situation,” *Tourism Management Perspectives* 24 (2017): 228.

¹⁴Oficina del Peregrino, “Informe Estadístico Año 2018.”

¹⁵According to Nancy Louise Frey, the “spiritual” category was created in the 1990s. However, Pilgrim’s Office data from the past decade does not reflect this change, and so it is unclear for how long the category has existed. See *Pilgrim’s Stories*, 127.

¹⁶Lopez, González, and Fernández, “Spiritual Tourism,” 226.

What separates the spiritual from the religious? This question has captivated scholars since the phrase “spiritual but not religious” began to flourish in the 1970s.¹⁷ While some scholars have sought ways to separate spirituality from religion,¹⁸ more recently the discourse has moved to emphasize their entanglement.¹⁹ Arguing that the spiritual and the religious are inseparable, Robert Orsi²⁰ and Amy Hollywood²¹ explore the ways that the label “spiritual but not religious” can expose common assumptions about religion. As Orsi puts it, the phrase turns religion into “a bad word” by assuming that religion operates solely as a tool for oppression.²² For spiritual but not religious people, religion involves external rules while spirituality pertains to personal experiences.²³ Although this focus on the spiritual but not religious has led to great insights regarding assumptions about religion, attempts to look beyond the category are limited. With a few exceptions, explorations of spiritual but not religious identities are seldom ethnographic²⁴ and rarely studied on the Camino.²⁵

By exploring the meaningful work that pilgrims of all religious identities can do, this paper seeks to show what happens beyond the divide between the spiritual and the religious. To answer this question, I walked 200 miles of the Camino, interviewing pilgrims along the way.²⁶ These conversations showed that spiritual and religious pilgrims alike make their own systems of texts, hierarchies, and sacred spaces through ritual creativity on the Camino. “Spiritual but not religious” is not a category diametrically opposed to religion but one with the potential to obscure the creative power of non-religious pilgrims. Most pilgrims do not walk the Camino to express prior religious fervor; rather, the pilgrimage provides a process of identity emergence by which pilgrims sort out their relationships with religion. They define themselves as well as religious discourse as they walk. In this way, “spiritual but not religious” remains an important identity that ought to be taken seriously. However, it proves itself a limiting framework for understanding the complex ritual power that pilgrims of all religious identities hold.

¹⁷Joseph O. Baker and Buster G. Smith, “The Nones: Social Characteristics of the Religiously Unaffiliated,” *Social Forces* 87, no. 3 (March 2009): 1251–1263.

¹⁸Zinnbauer et al.’s “Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzing the Fuzzy” provides a content analysis of interviews with spiritual and religious people and specifies the different traits that separate the two groups. See *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (December 1997): 549–564. Lopez, González, and Fernández apply this strategy to the Camino by arguing that since the 1980s, pilgrims have shifted their focus from pilgrimage completion (which they characterize as religious) to pilgrimage experience (which they claim is more spiritual). See “Spiritual Tourism,” 226. For further examples, see Dewsbury and Cloke, “Spiritual Landscapes: Existence, Performance, and Immanence,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 10, no. 6 (2009): 695–711.

¹⁹Nancy Ammerman, “Spiritual but Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52, no. 2 (2013): 258–278; Marler and Hadaway, “‘Being Religious’ or ‘Being Spiritual’ in America: A Zero-Sum Proposition?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no.2 (2002): 289–300.

²⁰*Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 188.

²¹“Spiritual but Not Religious.”

²²*Between Heaven and Earth*, 188.

²³Hollywood, “Spiritual but Not Religious.”

²⁴Two exceptions are the extraordinary ethnographies by Anna Fedele on neo-Pagan feminists walking pilgrimages for Mary Magdalene and by Courtney Bender on spiritual practitioners gathering in Cambridge, Massachusetts. See Fedele, *Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative Pilgrimage and Ritual Creativity at Catholic Shrines in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the New American Religious Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

²⁵Exceptions include Lopez, González, and Fernández, “Spiritual Tourism”; Buetta Warkentin, “Spiritual but Not Religious: The Fine Line between the Sacred and the Secular on the Camino de Santiago,” *Social Work and Christianity* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 109–121.

²⁶I interviewed 13 pilgrims and had the opportunity to walk alongside five pilgrims. For more detailed descriptions of their demographics as well as my methods, see Table 1 in the Appendix. See Table 2 for a list of questions that I used to guide our interviews.

The Camino as a God

When I met Kim on the Camino, she said that she was walking for one reason: “to spend time with [her] sister.”²⁷ She was not, she assured me, walking with a religious purpose. Kim was in her fifties and wore her hair in messy pigtails. We sat at a long table in an *albergue* (pilgrim’s hostel) where we had just eaten our beef and potatoes with the fervor of people who had been walking all day. “I am a Roman Catholic,” Kim said in her Canadian accent. But later, when I called her Catholic, she responded, “Uh, no. I would call myself agnostic.” The only reason that she was not an atheist, she said, was because of “spooky action at a distance,” a phenomenon in quantum physics in which the act of observing one particle causes another to change properties.²⁸ Kim’s religious identity involved being Catholic, not being Catholic, and quantum entanglement. She seemed unconcerned with any conflict between these three elements. Despite Kim’s agnosticism, she said that the Camino had the power to guide her life. The Camino was “taking care of [her]” by telling her where to walk. She said, “I don’t want to say that that’s God or not God, but it’s the universe. . . spooky action from a distance. So that’s how I’ve felt, that the Camino is letting us know where we’re supposed to be. I trust in that.”

Kim was not alone in talking about the Camino as if it were God: almost every pilgrim I interviewed, including religious pilgrims, ascribed agency to the Camino. One spiritual but not religious pilgrim said that after she reached the rainy mountains of Galicia, the Camino sent her a warm sleeping bag by leading her to a camping supply store.²⁹ Alex, a Mexican pilgrim who described himself as “very religious,” told me that the Camino was guiding him, saying that “the Camino helps you to get lost to find your way.”³⁰ Although many pilgrims expressed “trust” or “belief” in the Camino, none could articulate what the Camino was. In her ethnography of neo-Pagan pilgrims walking Catholic pilgrimages, Anna Fedele finds similar trends: pilgrims asked permission before entering spiritual sites, but it was unclear from whom.³¹ If spiritual but not religious pilgrims discuss the Camino in ways that mirror how religious pilgrims describe God, then what does it mean to believe in God? What is the difference between God and the Camino?

When asked what it means to believe in God, pilgrims tended to consider the answer either obvious or impossible. One man, an American Anabaptist named Mark, patted the couch cushion beside him and said, “I know God is present right there. He’s sitting right there, and he likes to lie down, whatever. He’s with us.”³² For Mark, God is rooted in place and location. But most pilgrims described God as abstract and universal. Shannon, a spiritual but not religious pilgrim, said, “I don’t think you have to think of God as a man or a woman or a person that you can imagine, but I think that to believe in God in a *spiritual* sense would be to believe that we’re connected and there’s something greater than us.”³³ Shannon’s idea of God as “something greater” is often expressed by spiritual but not religious pilgrims. This more generalized approach to God can easily transform God into “the Camino,” a universal force that guides all pilgrims.

In interviews with religious and spiritual people alike, pilgrims tended to characterize religion as human nature. Shannon said that “different religions are just different forms of saying the same thing.” “I’m Catholic,” reflected another pilgrim, “but there’s Buddhism, there’s Judaism, there’s Islam, there’s everything. But we all arrive at one thing, and it’s God. It could be many Gods,

²⁷Kim (Canadian pilgrim), interview with the author, Santibáñez de Valdeiglesias, Spain, June 9, 2018.

²⁸Gabriel Popkin, “Einstein’s ‘Spooky Action at a Distance’ Spotted in Objects Almost Big Enough to See,” *Science*, April 25, 2018, <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/04/einstein-s-spooky-action-distance-spotted-objects-almost-big-enough-see>.

²⁹Interview with Sabine.

³⁰Alex (Mexican pilgrim), interview with the author, La Faba, Spain, June 14, 2018.

³¹*Looking for Mary Magdalene*, 101.

³²Mark (American pilgrim), interview with the author, El Acebo, Spain, June 11, 2018.

³³Shannon (Irish pilgrim), interview with the author, Triacastela, Spain, June 16, 2018.

hundreds of Gods, but [we are all] searching.”³⁴ Just as the many paths of the Camino unite in Santiago, every pilgrim is focused on the same fundamental force. Frustrated after listening to his friend Glenn discuss religion during an interview, one pilgrim interrupted to demand that we stop talking about religion, because humankind *is* the religion.³⁵ Agreeing with his interrupting friend, Glenn said, “I think all religions have the same spirituality. It’s just the fundamentalists that will try to separate that.” This evocation of the us/them dichotomy between “fundamentalism” and “acceptance” is important in creating the community of the Camino, which pilgrims see as rooted in acceptance.³⁶ In part, this perennialist attitude is tied to the Camino’s cosmopolitanism. As sociologist Courtney Bender describes, spiritual practitioners in Cambridge express “a particular kind of *American* cosmopolitanism, one that drinks deeply from transcendental wells, where the American and the Universal are culturally tied in powerful ways to evocations of universal energy.”³⁷ Although the Camino is distinctly Spanish in many ways, it is infused with broader Euro-American values, including perennialism and cosmopolitanism.³⁸ Like cosmopolitans calling themselves “citizens of the world,” pilgrims often feel that everyone is connected as “a being in the Universe.”³⁹

Describing the Camino as a universal force makes room for pilgrims to describe their beliefs without evoking what they see as the loaded language of religion. Kim, the Canadian pilgrim who had become an agnostic, was one of many pilgrims I met who had turned away from Catholicism. Kim’s sister Beth “fell away from the Catholic Church” and into Native American religion after she married an indigenous man, and she began encountering priests who felt uncomfortable with their family’s mixed religious heritage.⁴⁰ Beth describes herself as “a huge control freak,” but on the pilgrimage, she says, “[I] totally let the Camino guide me rather than trying to control the Camino. Because you can’t control the Camino.” Through this language, Beth can reflect on the spiritual realities of her life without explicitly evoking the name of God, which carries traumatic undertones for her. For pilgrims like Beth, the Camino provides a comfortable space in which engaging with multiple religions is not only permitted but encouraged by fellow pilgrims. Through the Camino people of all worldviews become united through their new identity as “pilgrim,” which can be far simpler than the hyphenated religious identities that they carry.

For many spiritual but not religious pilgrims, ascribing agency to the Camino allows them to define their beliefs. Many seem hesitant to refer to the fate-like forces they feel on the Camino as a product of “God,” yet they feel a yearning to express those feelings without evoking what they see as problematic religious language. Imagining the Camino as a powerful being transforms the pilgrimage from a path in Spain to a pluralistic ground through which pilgrims craft their identities.

³⁴Interview with Alex.

³⁵Glenn (American pilgrim), interview with the author, Camponayara, Spain, June 12, 2018. Unfortunately, the interrupting friend did not want to sign a contract, so I am unable to quote him here.

³⁶To reinforce this dichotomy, many pilgrims were careful to define themselves as religious, but not “overly” religious. See Ciara (Irish pilgrim), interview with the author, Triacastela, Spain, June 16, 2018.

³⁷*The New Metaphysicals*, 180.

³⁸Although the Pilgrim’s Office tracks the nationality of each pilgrim who applies for a *compostela*, they lack data on ethnicity. However, in my albeit flawed observation, pilgrims who were neither Hispanic nor Latinx appeared to be overwhelmingly white. This demographic aligns with the often claimed “spiritual but not religious” and “cosmopolitan” identities that are particularly suited for and crafted by white people. Further work is yet to be done on the way that the “universal” nature of the Camino remains inaccessible to people of certain identities.

³⁹For more on how cosmopolitanism grapples with overlapping religious identities, see Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 172.

⁴⁰Beth (Canadian pilgrim), interview with the author, Santibáñez de Valdeiglesias, June 9, 2018.

Religious Certificates for the Non-Religious

Near the end of my pilgrimage, I trudged into the *albergue* at Lavacolla, the last town before I would reach the cathedral in Santiago. As I stretched out on my top bunk, a woman burst into the room, unhooked her pack from her shoulders, and let it crash to the floor. “I could go for something really dodgy right now,” she said in a posh British accent. “Order a pizza with me?” A phone call later, Jane and I sat behind the *albergue* with a pizza and a bottle of wine between us.

Before walking the Camino, Jane had worked as a teacher but had since decided to quit her job to expand her holistic healing practice. “To me, God means garden of delight,” she said. “It’s all about nature, the universe. Not this big bearded man. . . I think it’s everyone and everything. The essence of us all.”⁴¹ When asked about the difference between religion and spirituality, Jane responded, “Money. . . I see religion as organized money-making with lots of conditions.” She called Catholicism “the richest organized crime syndicate in the world.” Jane’s views towards religion reinforce Robert Orsi’s argument that the category “spiritual but not religious” is used to separate “good” from “bad” religion.⁴² Orsi explains that spiritual but not religious people understand spirituality as “rational” and “respectful of persons,” with “no hierarchy in gilded robes and fancy hats.”⁴³ To them, “true” religion is “a reality of mind and spirit rather than body and matter.”⁴⁴ For Jane, spirituality represents the “silver thread” running through every being. Religion, on the other hand, is a corrupt manipulation of universal love, the true God. Any fulfillment that religious pilgrims feel on the Camino does not stem from religion, but rather the spiritual force connecting all people.⁴⁵

Despite Jane’s rejection of religion, she engaged with Catholic rituals and sacred spaces with pleasure on the Camino. “I go into every church that I can,” Jane said. In fact, the structure of the Camino as dictated by the Church encourages non-religious pilgrims to enter Catholic churches. When a pilgrim begins her Camino, she must first obtain her *credential*, or “pilgrim’s passport.” At every church, restaurant, and *albergue* she visits along the way, she must collect a stamp. The passport becomes more than a keepsake: it is essential in order to navigate the Camino’s institutional structures. To stay at pilgrim-only hostels, which are often the only available lodging, every pilgrim must present their passport to prove their engagement with local economies. On the Camino, pilgrims often argued over how many stamps they were required to get, and some asserted that stamps from churches were necessary to stay at certain *albergues*. Before stamping a pilgrim’s passport, many churches request a small donation. In this way spiritual but not religious pilgrims like Jane end up filling the coffers of churches across Spain with the very thing that they see as antithetical to spirituality: money.

Most pilgrims also use their pilgrim’s passport to have their pilgrimage certified by the Pilgrim’s Office, which operates as an extension of the Church.⁴⁶ The certificate, known as the *compostela*, is a Latin document only given to those who complete the Camino by walking at least the final

⁴¹Jane (British pilgrim), interview with the author, Lavacolla, Spain, June 22, 2018.

⁴²*Between Heaven*, 188.

⁴³Orsi, *Between Heaven*, 188.

⁴⁴Orsi, *Between Heaven*, 188.

⁴⁵Anna Fedele reaches similar findings in *Looking for Mary Magdalene*, 18.

⁴⁶According to their website, the Pilgrim’s Office is “run by the Cathedral church of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela,” and “the director of the Pilgrim’s Reception Office is traditionally a Canon of the Cathedral.” See Ofecina del Peregrino, “Pilgrim’s Reception Office: Information,” accessed April 6, 2019, <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/pilgrims-reception-office/>.

100 kilometers⁴⁷ to Santiago.⁴⁸ To achieve the *compostela*, a pilgrim must walk “for religious or spiritual reasons”⁴⁹ which the Pilgrim’s Office defines as walking “in a Christian sense.”⁵⁰ As of the late 1990s, it was technically necessary for pilgrims to present a letter of certification from their priest in order to receive a pilgrim’s passport in the first place.⁵¹ However, the desire for the *compostela* is by no means an exclusively Catholic phenomenon. When I first met Jane, she said that she would not try to get the *compostela* because it was “a religious certificate.” But over time Jane and I became what pilgrims call “Camino family,” and we spent a week traveling together. When we arrived in Santiago, Jane and I waited in line for almost an hour to get the *compostela*. She then asked me to take a picture of her smiling outside the Pilgrim’s Office as she held up the certificate. Jane ended up engaging in a religious ritual toward which she had previously felt disgust. What does it mean when “non-religious” people like Jane and I participate in “religious” rituals? If they share the same practices, what differentiates the experiences of religious pilgrims from that of spiritual pilgrims?

Carrying Stones of “The Victim Self”

On the Camino, there is no sharp line between the rituals of religious and non-religious pilgrims. When spiritual but not religious pilgrims share rituals with the religious, their experiences become not only parallel but intertwined.⁵² One such shared ritual involves carrying a stone to represent the burden of sin, or as one pilgrim interpreted it, the stone becomes “someone that you’re saying goodbye to.”⁵³ Pilgrims often leave their stones at La Cruz de Ferro, an iron cross that protrudes from the pile of stones, shells, and bricks that pilgrims have carried (Figure 1). Patricia, a religious pilgrim, said that leaving her stone at La Cruz de Ferro was one of the most important moments of her pilgrimage. She remembered:

So much of my journey and healing my marriage had to do with my father and letting my father go. So I left the dark heart of my victim self, which is really the darkness I still carried around my dad and my marriage, and I left a photo of my dad. And I stayed there until I knew that truth was in me. And that was a really symbolic moment.

Despite the importance of faith in Patricia’s life, she never mentioned God in her account. The act of setting down stones involved her relationship with her father and her ex-husband rather than God directly.

Patricia’s experience echoes that of Jane, a spiritual but not religious pilgrim who carried stones to heal from her divorce. After ascending the mountain to La Cruz de Ferro, Jane set down stones for her children and mother. She reflected:

⁴⁷The number 100 kilometers is an arbitrary number chosen by the Church, in part because it causes pilgrims to feel an adequate amount of pain to warrant official recognition. This observation illustrates the ways that the Church has attempted to control definitions of pilgrim authenticity, a project which remains quite successful. See Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 22.

⁴⁸Ofecina del Peregrino, “The Compostela,” accessed January 27, 2019, <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/pilgrimage/the-compostela/>. [Spanish (Spain)]

⁴⁹Ofecina del Peregrino, “The Compostela.”

⁵⁰Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 67.

⁵¹However, very few of the municipal albergues distributing pilgrim’s passports abided by this rule. See Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 67.

⁵²Anna Fedele writes that, “Even if the [neo-Pagan] pilgrims tried to distinguish and even oppose their own theories and rituals to those of Christianity, they often ended up reproducing discourses and practices observed in contemporary Christian movements.” See *Looking for Mary Magdalene*, 89.

⁵³Patricia (American pilgrim), interview with the author, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, June 24, 2018.



Figure 1: La Cruz de Ferro

It was really reverential. It was really quiet... in a special way I can't describe. It was just a special moment. And I put my stones down, and I put a photograph, and I stayed for a little while. And then I walked on... I was walking above the clouds... It was Sunday morning, and it was a beautiful day. I felt like I was walking on air. I felt like I had taken stones—literally taken bricks out of my rucksack. But it was like a real heaviness had lifted. And I felt better. And I've felt better since. I just feel a bit indifferent about [my ex-husband], whereas before I would have seen him struck by a bolt of lightning. I don't know. I just feel like I wish him well—get on with it.

Despite Jane's disgust toward organized religion and Patricia's commitment to it, they both described their ascent to La Cruz de Ferro as one of the most emotional moments of the Camino. Although Jane did not relate these observations to religion, she described the moment's ineffability with the term "reverential," a word loaded with religious significance. The ritual pushed Patricia and Jane to confront their relationships with humans rather than the divine alone. Through this Camino ritual, these spiritual and religious pilgrims became united in their experiences.

Although Jane began the Camino carrying a stone for her ex-husband, she lost it before she reached La Cruz de Ferro. As Jane understood, she "kept hanging on to [the stone] and not putting it down, and so the universe just decided it was time to let it go." To replace the stone, she bought a padlock to attach to something along the pilgrimage. She ended up locking it to a chain-link fence that had sticks woven through it to form crosses. This fence extended for nearly a mile along the path, creating a long display of cross after cross added to by pilgrims as they passed through. After walking away from the padlock, Jane "felt like [she] was leaving the marriage there." When I asked Jane why she had chosen a place so imbued with Christian imagery, she seemed inquisitive at first. "It's interesting, isn't it?" she said. But then she admitted that she had chosen the spot because it was the only good place to leave a padlock: all the other fences on the Camino were wooden. Jane's choice was of sheer convenience rather than symbolic power.

As Anna Fedele argues, spiritual but not religious people like Jane often adopt Christian rituals because they are pre-made and easily available.⁵⁴ Spiritual pilgrims who affix shells to their backpacks, leave their walking sticks at their final albergue, or burn their clothes at the pilgrimage's end do so in part because the economy of these rituals has already been formed. Similarly, spiritual pilgrims who characterize the Camino as a being with agency may borrow from familiar Christian ideas of God. Despite Jane and Patricia's differences, both participated in the stone-carrying ritual because, as Jane put it, they "wanted to do something significant" with their time on the Camino. Yet as Jane's choice to put her padlock on the nearest chain-link fence shows, some rituals are about practicality just as much as meaning making. For both pilgrims the choice to engage with those rituals seemed isolated from "identity" or "belief." By engaging in this economy of rituals, the experiences of spiritual pilgrims become entangled with the religious.

Churches as Spaces of Ritual Negotiation

Spiritual pilgrims do not just mimic Christian rituals; instead, they bring their own identities to practice, reaffirming ritual as a creative process rather than a repeated event. These dynamics become clear through pilgrims' interactions with Catholic churches that line the Camino, churches that pilgrims must enter to collect stamps for their pilgrim's passports. In fact, the Camino is so imbued with Catholic presence that one Mexican pilgrim argued that *all* pilgrims were walking the Camino for religious reasons. He reflects:

[Walking the Camino is] a hundred percent cultural and a hundred percent religious, because [St. James] was a pilgrim, so it is logical that if you only have one percent of [religious motivation], it's enough to say that [your Camino] is religious, because you're walking through the steps that religious people have been for centuries. In the roots it's a religious purpose. It has evolved to a cultural experience or sports thing, but the roots are religious.⁵⁵

Even non-religious pilgrims interact with the centuries of Christian history that envelop the pilgrimage. In this way, history is not imagined as a series of one-time events but rather an ongoing process that includes non-Christians. This pilgrim's opinion ties to Courtney Bender's research, which argues that the spiritual is "deeply entangled in various religious and secular histories, social structures, and cultural practices."⁵⁶ For Bender, spirituality is not just focused on the individual, but rooted in a long history entangled with "traditional" religion. In the same way, the Catholic history and infrastructure of the Camino prompts spiritual but not religious people to engage with the one building that epitomizes organized Christianity: the church.

Although the Camino's "religiousness" may seem inescapable in this regard, spiritual but not religious pilgrims still attempt to isolate the spiritual aspects of sacred buildings. In this way, churches become tools with which spiritual pilgrims draw the line between "good" and "bad" religion. Many pilgrims define their relationship with churches by the emotions absorbed within their walls. One pilgrim reported experiencing a "nauseating feeling" when she saw people praying in churches because she could see "sadness behind their eyes."⁵⁷ Jane, who called Catholicism "the biggest organized crime syndicate in the world," loved entering churches despite her aversion to organized religion. To her, the small churches in Spanish villages are "completely separate to that money-making organization [the Catholic Church]" because they have "soaked up all those years of spirit" from "the people that have lived there and passed through those doors." Jane elaborates:

⁵⁴ *Looking for Mary Magdalene*, 182.

⁵⁵ Interview with Alex.

⁵⁶ *The New Metaphysicals*, 182.

⁵⁷ Interview with Nicola.

What I've got a problem with is when you're sat inside a church and there's some people looking at you like you shouldn't be there because of what you're wearing or because of where you come from. That's not love. To me, God is love. That's what it's all about. And that's not love—it's hypocritical.

For Jane, “good” religion flourishes through love, but “bad” religion involves judging others. This tension became most palpable to Jane when she entered churches. Later, when we attended the Pilgrim's Mass together, it became clear why she wanted to separate herself from religion.



Figure 2: The statue of St. James that pilgrims can hug.
(Photo by Luis Miguel Bugalla Sánchez.)

When pilgrims reach Santiago on their final day of pilgrimage, they often rush to attend the daily Pilgrim's Mass in the cathedral that houses the body of St. James. Pilgrims begin lining up about an hour before entering the cathedral, when the church asks all non-pilgrims to leave.⁵⁸ Despite this enforcement of the tourist/pilgrim divide, many pilgrims behave like tourists in the space: they wander around the cathedral wearing fanny packs and flashing pictures despite the prohibition of photography.⁵⁹ Other pilgrims descend to the crypt to kneel before the body of St. James. Religious and non-religious pilgrims alike line up to hug the statue of St. James that stands behind the altar, and throughout the service one can see the arms of pilgrims wrapping around his jewel-encrusted shoulders (Figure 2⁶⁰). When Jane and I attended the Pilgrim's Mass, almost a dozen priests from around the world gave the service in the language of their home country. The only woman to enter the sanctuary was a nun with an ethereal voice who led us in song. Later, Jane would tell me that the nun's singing was the only part of the mass that she appreciated.⁶¹ It disgusted her to see the long line of priests in the cathedral, their maleness reasserting the patriarchal structures of religion. When the priests asked that only practicing Catholics take communion, Jane gave me a knowing look as we stayed behind in the pews with around half of the other pilgrims.

⁵⁸The Church has a fraught history of attempting to distinguish authentic from fake pilgrims. Nancy Louise Frey reports that in the late 20th century a French gatekeeper at St. Jean Piet-de-Port refused to issue pilgrim's passports to pilgrims she deemed tourists, causing some pilgrims to leave her office in tears. See *Pilgrim Stories*, 69.

⁵⁹Cathedral de Santiago, “Permisos,” accessed February 3, 2019, <http://catedraldesantiago.es/permisos/>. [Spanish (Spain)]

⁶⁰Luis Miguel Bugalla Sánchez, *Catedral de Santiago de Compostela*, from Wikimedia Commons, accessed 27 May 2019, https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Santiago_Catedral_060510_001.jpg.

⁶¹Jane also enjoyed the swinging of the Botafumeiro, the cathedral's giant censer. The Botafumeiro is a massive censer swung over the pilgrims' heads during mass. The incense inside costs around 500 euros, and so it is only lit on special holidays or when enough pilgrims donate to cover the costs.

I didn't know it at the time, but one of the people staying in the pews was Patricia, the pilgrim who had left her father's photo behind at La Cruz de Ferro. Patricia was a 60-year-old American with a divinity degree and a southern accent. She was raised Methodist but says that she "cherish[es]" Catholicism. Her many references to God during our conversations made the importance of religion in her life clear. She works as a holistic healer and had come to walk the Camino to practice "living fully alive." We chatted by the door to the *albergue* near a television around which Spanish men gathered to watch soccer. Patricia seemed to recognize every pilgrim who passed, and she kept stopping the interview mid-sentence to gush over them. "*Buena vida* [have a good life] if we don't meet again!" she called out to one pilgrim. "Did you sleep well?" she asked another. I sipped my lemonade and smiled during these interactions, happy to be in Santiago at last and away from the heat of the trail.

Earlier on the Camino, a priest had refused Patricia communion by simply shaking his head "no" when she approached. Patricia felt sure that she'd done something to give away her Protestant background. "While I didn't take it personally," she said, "it hurt my feelings. It was this whole notion of, 'Excuse me! You don't have jurisdiction over me accepting the body of Christ into my being.'" With this experience in mind, Patricia did not rise to take communion during the Pilgrim's Mass in Santiago. "I sat in the pews," Patricia said, her voice dropping to a whisper as she continued:

I was completely with God. There is no question in my mind that [staying in the pews] was communion, and it was a whole new level of taking into my body and being the body of Christ, and accepting and knowing that I am Christ. And that's what this whole trip has been about. [Patricia smiled and began brushing away tears.] That joy, that depth and fullness of joy... to discover it here in Santiago, at this last moment, in the soul of celebration, and the fullness of light and love and God-ness, has just humbled me beyond my wildest.

In Patricia's initial attempt to take communion, she was barred from participation by a priest, the robed figure whom many spiritual but not religious pilgrims view as the embodiment of "bad religion."⁶² Yet in her own way she managed to take communion, which to her is "symbolic of living fully alive." She reached the goal of her Camino—to find the fullness of joy—in a deliberate space beyond the lines of organized religion.⁶³ This communion allows her to say, "I am Christ," and yet her experience "humble[s]" her. As a religious person, Patricia experiences "religion" as something that appears to limit her but ultimately frees her to reach her own new level of "Christhood-ness."

In this act, Patricia breaks down the divide between religious and spiritual pilgrims, showing that the religious can experience complex relationships with religion just as much as the spiritual. Like the many spiritual but not religious pilgrims I met, Patricia loved the cathedrals along the Camino because of the human emotions that went into building them. "Imagine the piety," she said. "Every corner of this huge space is art... What went into that creation? Who created that? And what devotion, what commitment, what love, what heart? And to me, you can't but love it." For Patricia, churches carry darkness because of their humanity. But in her healing practice and on the Camino, it saddens her that people feel the need to call themselves spiritual but not religious. She explained, "To me, religion is an institution. It's a human-made thing, with shadow and light that seeks to convey the heart and truth of God, and I think it falls short sometimes. And I also think there's a lot of baby to hang onto with the bathwater."

⁶²Orsi, *Between Heaven*, 188.

⁶³Whether or not she knew it, Patricia's behavior mirrors the Catholic practice of spiritual communion. Ironically, by subverting the will of the priest who had refused her, Patricia ended up enacting official Catholic doctrine. See John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharista*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, April 17, 2003, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharista_en.html, sec. 34.

Ritual Mastery of the Seasoned Pilgrims

By the time I met Patricia in Santiago, I felt like a well-worn traveler. I'd spent almost three weeks on the trail, walking around 12 miles a day in often mountainous terrain. I developed tendonitis, and my pack became like an extension of my body. Near the final days of my Camino, I met a group of elderly Australian pilgrims traveling by bus who couldn't believe how far I'd walked. Yet to pilgrims who started walking at the French border town of St. Jean Piet-de-Port 500 miles away, I was a novice.



Figure 3: The Camino near León, about 240 km (150 miles) before Santiago. A solitary pilgrim can be seen in the distance.

When I settled down to talk with Glenn, an American pilgrim who walked around 60 kilometers (37 miles) a day, he emphasized that he was walking the Camino as his “off year.” An avid hiker, Glenn had completed a 2,000 mile through-hike of the Appalachian Trail the previous summer.⁶⁴ He said that he found it “kinda aggravating” to see “taxi pilgrims” on the Camino who “jump from one place to another or don’t really do the whole thing.” Taxi pilgrims become far more common after passing the town of Sarria, which is a few days’ walk away from Santiago. Because Sarria is the closest town within the minimum distance required to receive a *compostela*, it is the most popular starting point of the pilgrimage.⁶⁵ After a pilgrim passes through Sarria, the Camino’s atmosphere changes to what Glenn calls “Disneyland.” Unlike previous parts of the Camino where I could walk for hours without seeing another person (Figure 3), after Sarria I could have reached out and touched the pilgrim ahead of me (Figure 4). Some Sarria pilgrims also ship their bags ahead of them, which is more difficult to do on earlier parts of the Camino where infrastructure is scarce. Although Sarria pilgrims walk a substantial distance, pilgrims making enormous treks like

⁶⁴Appalachian Trail Conservancy, “Thru-Hiking,” accessed February 5, 2019, <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/home/explore-the-trail/thru-hiking>.

⁶⁵Ofecina del Peregrino, “Informe Estadístico Año 2018.”



Figure 4: The Camino after Sarria, about 100 km (62 miles) before Santiago.

Glenn tend to look down on them. As I walked, I passed graffiti on a stop sign that said, “Stop fake Sarria pilgrims” (Figure 5). Another read, “Jesus didn’t start in Sarria!”

Although many spiritual pilgrims dislike religion because they believe that it perpetuates social hierarchies, the spiritual landscape of the Camino includes a strict hierarchy that designates experienced pilgrims as ritual masters.⁶⁶ On the Camino, almost all pilgrims say “*buen camino*” [have a good Camino] while passing each other. Before I reached Sarria, this practice was ubiquitous. Calls of “*buen camino*” in the Spanish countryside sounded as natural as chirping birds. On the early morning that I left Sarria, it was still dark, and a thick mist rolled between the trees. As I passed the first pilgrim I’d seen that day, I turned to her and said, “*Buen camino!*” She looked at me with total confusion: it was likely her first day walking. Because I understood the tacit norms of the Camino and knew how to use them to my advantage, I had become a ritual master. In this way the Camino’s most concentrated area of ritual expertise does not exclusively live in the bodies of the priests in the cathedral in Santiago. Instead, ritual mastery is mapped on to the geography of the Camino, with its more concentrated areas being in the sparsely populated countryside.⁶⁷ Ritual power dwells in the bodies of the pilgrims themselves.

Along the Camino, *albergues* become the loci of ritualization for pilgrims. Pilgrims comply with several tacit rules: a pilgrim who places their pack on their bed, for example, will face admonishment from the other pilgrims for risking the spread of bed bugs. My first day on the Camino, I brought my dirty clothes into the shower thinking that I could wash them there. When an angry pilgrim banged on the bathroom door, I discovered that showering longer than five minutes is a serious Camino foul. Despite the experienced pilgrims’ knowledge of these ritual practices, they still answer to one person: the *hostelero*. As owners and managers of the *albergues*, *hosteleros* have a unique

⁶⁶For a thorough definition of ritual mastery, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 127.

⁶⁷For more on the entanglement of spirituality and geography, see Dewsbury and Cloke, “Spiritual Landscapes.”



Figure 5: “Stop fake Sarria pilgrims.”

position in the pilgrim hierarchy: they reinforce these tacit rules, and sometimes turn them into written ones. As mostly middle-aged Spanish men, they match the demographics of the Catholic ritual masters (priests) with which so many spiritual but not religious pilgrims take issue. The ritualized way of life on the Camino allows for exchanges of power between *hosteleros*, experienced pilgrims, and those new to the Camino.

In order to gain ritual knowledge, experienced pilgrims must sacrifice their own comfort: pain acts as spiritual currency on the Camino. Although many pilgrims walk the Camino to seek relief from pain (be it physical or mental), they often end up on the side of the trail nursing their blistered feet. When I talked to Glenn, the pilgrim who had walked the Appalachian Trail, he showed a mixture of compassion and irritation towards taxi pilgrims. “We all do our own journey, and the good thing is they are all doing it,” he said. “That’s the positive aspect of it, even though we wish they would walk more.” The taxi pilgrims face their own difficulties on the Camino, but they are often portrayed as inauthentic because they are thought to feel less pain than more experienced pilgrims. Camino scholar Nancy Louise Frey describes:

The authentic pilgrim is implicitly understood to be the one who most closely represents the iconographic image of the medieval pilgrim who walked to Santiago with staff, cloak, scallop shells, felt hat, and small pouch.⁶⁸

According to many experienced pilgrims, inauthentic pilgrims invalidate their journey through modern conveniences designed to alleviate suffering. Those who ship their packs or ride in tour buses dwell within the boundary between pilgrim and tourist (Figure 6). Real pilgrims limp around on swollen feet, while tourists sleep in single occupancy rooms and enjoy the luxury of wearing flip-flops. Once, while trying to shower in a dingy *albergue*, I felt a twinge run up my arm when I tried to turn the metal knob. I pulled my hand back, thinking I had injured myself from swinging my walking stick. But when I tried to turn the knob again, I realized that it had been electrified from faulty wiring. When I told a fellow pilgrim, she replied with the Camino proverb “a tourist demands; a pilgrim thanks.” My willingness to accept discomfort transformed me from entitled “tourist” to martyred “pilgrim.”

⁶⁸Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 125.

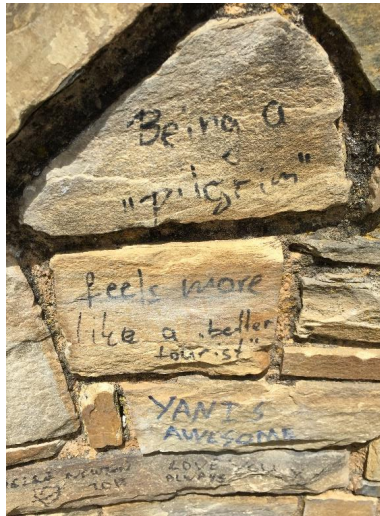


Figure 6: “Being a ‘pilgrim’ feels more like a better tourist.”

Despite experienced pilgrims’ ritual mastery, all pilgrims both empower and limit themselves through pain. In this way, pain becomes seen as the most efficient way to develop spiritually on the Camino. The valorization of pilgrims who start walking at St. Jean Piet-de-Port coincides with the assumption that their experience is more transformative, in part because they suffered. Injury is no longer a negative side effect of walking for eight hours a day but instead a “spiritual powerhouse”⁶⁹ that leads to intimacy with God.⁷⁰ Most pilgrims seemed aware of this fact: one pilgrim told me that her “deepest thoughts” came to her on the Camino when she was “in a lot of pain.”⁷¹ Pilgrims access more complex levels of self-development through asceticism. Through pain, the pilgrimage offers a balance between freedom and discipline. On one hand, the pilgrim leaves her daily life to walk the open road, free to roam wherever she’d like. On the other, rules control her new life: every day she must wake before dawn and walk for miles on her blistered feet.⁷² Perhaps the Camino attracts so many spiritual but not religious walkers because it exists at the intersection of self-discipline and freedom. For people feeling disillusioned with organized religion but interested in some spiritual structure and community, the Camino provides an ample garden for self-growth.⁷³

⁶⁹For more on Catholic ties between pain and spiritual development, see Orsi, *Between Heaven*, 28.

⁷⁰Orsi, *Between Heaven*, 40.

⁷¹Interview with Shannon.

⁷²In a parallel way, Amy Hollywood argues that during the recitation of psalms, monks do more than recite dry text through rote memorization. Rather, the monks’ engagement with scripture is so personal that “the intensity and authenticity of one’s feeling for God is enabled through communal, ritualized prayer.” See “Song, Experience, and the Book in Benedictine Monasticism” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 65.

⁷³Likewise, Courtney Bender observes that spiritual practitioners in Cambridge, hungry for the social connections that a religious organization might otherwise provide them, seek out each other to form spiritual communities that mirror that of organized religion. See Bender, *The New Metaphysicals*, 23.

Conclusion

As we were wrapping up our interview, I asked one pilgrim if she had anything else to add. “I just hope that your Camino experience will change you in the way that you want it to,” she said. “Besides your research, I hope you get something out of it... Research yourself as well.”⁷⁴ When I became the interviewed rather than the interviewer, I felt it impossible to sort myself into categories. It also became harder to think critically about those groupings. Was I a scholar researching pilgrims? Or was I a pilgrim myself? What did I *believe*? Although I understood lived religion to be more focused on practice than belief, I still felt a halting urge to sort myself based on conviction rather than behavior. My shock and embarrassment toward this intimate comment snapped me into another level of thinking about the spiritual/religious divide.⁷⁵ In many ways, I fit the demographic of the spiritual but not religious pilgrims: I am exactly the kind of “free-spirited” young person who would walk the Camino. If I were not, as a student of religion, so acutely aware of the assumptions in and history behind the phrase, I might call myself “spiritual but not religious.”

When interviewing one pilgrim, I asked whether she would check the box describing her experience as religious, cultural, or religious and cultural when she was applying for her *compostela*. She said, “It think it almost makes it unimportant what you pick when it’s such a narrow three choices.”⁷⁶ Although this project began within the scope of the phrase “spiritual but not religious,” this category has limited value for understanding religious nones. Like any label, the phrase “spiritual but not religious” has the power to reveal some dynamics and conceal others. On one hand, it can serve as the foundation for problematizing ideas of religion as dogmatic, impersonal, or oppressive. But scholars have missed too much by focusing on the divide between the spiritual and the religious. To understand religious dynamics on the Camino, it is helpful to go beyond imagining spirituality and religion as entangled. The most revealing perspective seeks to understand the way that pilgrims use ritualization to define themselves, their power, and their relationships with religion. This perspective neither affirms nor denies the legitimacy of “spiritual but not religious” claims; rather, looking beyond the divide reveals that ritual practice both transcends identity and provides the tools to create it.

⁷⁴Interview with Beth.

⁷⁵Robert Orsi expresses similar sentiment when a St. Jude devotee asks him, “Have you ever prayed to St. Jude?” See *Between Heaven*, 148.

⁷⁶Interview with Shannon.

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- In this article, Ammerman explores accounts of spiritual but not religious experiences to show how binary divisions of spiritual, religious, both, or neither fail to capture the complexity of people's beliefs and practices. Scholars should not make assumptions about how a spiritual but not religious person might behave, because their worldviews cannot be confined to the individual or to a specific set of actions. Instead, as this paper also argues, scholars must enact a broader definition of religion to include the many possible behaviors of spiritual but not religious people.
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- Bender provides an ethnographic exploration of spiritual but not religious people in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She investigates the "entanglements" of the religious and the spiritual, arguing that "the spiritual" is not a new category in the history of religion. Instead, every claim to the spiritual is firmly rooted in long traditions of religious innovation. In a similar way, pilgrims who hold spiritual but not religious identities are not just expressing an anti-religion "fad." Their rituals are entwined with the long history of ritual on the Camino, be it Catholic, Celtic, spiritual, or otherwise.
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- Fedele's ethnography follows three groups of neo-Pagan feminists who walk Catholic pilgrimages to sacred spaces associated with Mary Magdalene. These women exercise ritual creativity to form alternative narratives of Christianity that they see as focused on the feminine. Fedele's work aligns with Bender's *A New Metaphysical* in that it displays spirituality as rooted in history and community. Fedele ascribes self-awareness to the pilgrims that she writes about, and she portrays them as fully aware of the history of any ritual they may practice, as well as what that ritual is doing.
- Frey, Nancy Louise. *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Of the many studies of the Camino de Santiago, Frey's provides the most in-depth study of pilgrims' experiences. She focuses not only on the personal transformation that pilgrims experience while walking, but also the ways that they carry their journey with them when they return home. Taking on the ways that tourism has transformed the Camino, Frey challenges the notion that the Camino is becoming increasingly desacralized. In many ways, this paper serves as a partial answer to the questions that she raises about pilgrim authenticity and identity formation.

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Hollywood examines the assumptions about religion implicit in the phrase "spiritual but not religious." In a careful and profound treatment of religious practice, Hollywood explores the way that monks experience personal connections to the divine through recitation, which some would dismiss as inauthentic. Hollywood proves that spirituality and religion can never be separated, and that religion is not a matter of emotionless doctrine.

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The image has been resized, but is otherwise unmodified.

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Appendix

Table 1: Pilgrims Interviewed

Name	Country of Origin	Age	Relationships with Religion
Alex	Mexico	22	“Very religious,” Catholic
Beth	Canada	50	Catholic, Native American spirituality
Ciara	Ireland	19	“Quite religious,” Catholic
Deborah	USA	63	Member of an Anabaptist church, former member of an Assemblies of God congregation, becoming a spiritual director
Glenn	USA	66	Agnostic, raised Lutheran, grandson of a “fanatical” preacher
Jane	UK	53	Spiritual but not religious, holistic healer
Kim	Canada	50	Roman Catholic, not Catholic, agnostic
Leah	Ireland	20	“Relatively religious,” Catholic
Mark	USA	64	Member of an Anabaptist church, former member of an Assemblies of God congregation, raised Catholic
Nicola	UK	38	Spiritual but not religious, Alcoholics Anonymous member
Patricia	USA	62	Religious and spiritual, has a divinity degree, works as a physiotherapist and spiritual counselor, raised Methodist
Sabine	Germany	59	Mother was “very religious,” comes from a protestant family, does not attend church, spiritual but not religious
Shannon	Ireland	20	Non-practicing Catholic, spiritual but not religious

Interview Methodology: Each interview lasted 20-50 minutes. Although half of the people walking the Camino are Spanish, most Spaniards do not begin their pilgrimage until the very end of the Camino, because the pilgrimage’s proximity allows them to walk it over a week. Because foreigners must travel longer distances to reach the Camino, they are more likely to walk for weeks or even months. I walked for three weeks, so I met a disproportionately large number of non-Spaniards. I was also more attracted to interviewing and walking with women because of my own identity, and more likely to connect with native English speakers because of language barriers. The interviews were conducted in English, recorded in audio, and focused on religious identity and Camino experiences. I conducted almost all the interviews in *albergues* (pilgrim-only hostels) along the Camino. I also spent time walking with five of the pilgrims whom I interviewed.

Table 2: Guiding Interview Questions

- Where are you from?
- How old are you?
- How did you first hear about the Camino?
- Why are you walking the Camino?
- Would you describe yourself as religious?
- Would you describe yourself as spiritual?
- Can you talk about your relationship with religion throughout your life?
- Were you raised in a religious tradition?
- Can you describe how your experience on the Camino has made you feel?
- Has anything surprised you about the Camino?