PATHS OF AUTHENTICITY: THE STUDY OF TWO PILGRIMAGE ROUTES TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

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Abstract

This thesis analyses how the Camino de Santiago, a modern pilgrimage route of Christian origins can serve as a field for self-authentication for walkers who engage in the quest of constructing their identity, making a bricolage. Through the multiplicity of regimes of validation and the various interpretations of what it means to be a true pilgrim and to walk the way, people are able to validate their experience, find their background of values against which they can be their authentic selves and test it against the surrounding community through fragmented narration and a special kind of engaged but non-consequential interaction. The research combines interviews as well as participant observation in a pilgrim shelter and on two routes, the Camino Frances and the Via de la Plata to explore the intersection of religion and tourism, individuality and community and the production of meaning on the Camino.

In the city, he was homesick for those first evenings on the prairie when, long ago, he had been homesick for the city. He made his way to his professor's office and told him that he knew the secret, but had resolved not to reveal it.

"Are you bound by your oath?" the professor asked.

"That's not the reason," Murdock replied. "I learned something out there that I can't express."

"The English language may not be able to communicate it," the professor suggested.

"That's not it, sir. Now that I possess the secret, I could tell it in a hundred different and even contradictory ways. I don't know how to tell you this, but the secret is beautiful, and science, our science, seems mere frivolity to me now."

After a pause he added: "And anyway, the secret is not as important as the paths that led me to it. Each person has to walk those paths himself."

Jorge Luis Borges: The Ethnographer

transl. Andrew Hurley

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Introduction

On 17 February 2014 I walked out of the Pilgrim's Office in Roncesvalles, Spain, into the cold morning air. The old monk I was sent to from the bar across the street to get my pilgrim's pass, the *credencial*, gave it to me for free and only asked me to pray for him when I get to Santiago de Compostela. After that he wished me a nice journey and went back to the church to finish his morning prayer. I pulled on my gloves as the temperature was around 0 Celsius, and started walking into the direction indicated by the monk. After a few steps I saw the first yellow arrows painted on the trees and the sign on the side of the road: Santiago de Compostela, 790 kilometers. I took a deep breath and felt the familiar joy rushing through my veins: I was on the road again, walking the Camino de Santiago. Any questions regarding my identity as a researcher disappeared: I was simply a pilgrim, like everyone else. I was home.

I've walked altogether almost 2900 kilometers to write this thesis: 1000 kilometers back in 2012 for personal reasons, and then in my research period in the winter-spring of 2014 to write about authenticity, movement and home, tourism and religion, narration and community and how these concepts all come together in the Camino de Santiago, a contemporary pilgrimage route of Christian origins running across different paths in Spain. In my thesis I ask the following questions: why is the Camino becoming increasingly popular in an age that is called simultaneously modernity, super- and postmodernity, or the secular age? What is it in the act of walking and in the community of pilgrims that makes it so attractive and influential for mainly middle-class pilgrims? How do walkers get to feel at home in a world of constant movement and in what sort of interactions do they manage to bricolage and experience their authentic selves? Besides, how do strategies of the construction of authenticity change when the Camino is increasingly becoming a trend or fashion?

People start walking from different geographical and spiritual-philosophical starting points and follow different paths, in the literal and abstract sense, to get to Santiago de

Compostela, where the supposed remains of Saint James the Elder are to be found. I will argue that the Camino de Santiago is an ideal place and space for self-discovery and self-authentication in today's world because of its ambiguous nature: the way people encounter tradition and individualism, community and loneliness, new rhythms and recognized routines. Through the multiple possible and legitimate interpretations of what it means to be on the Camino and the agreed upon rule that "everyone does their own Camino", people are able to construct their authentic selves in narration, putting together bits and pieces of possible interpretations into a bricolage and getting validation through different regimes of authentication.

In the following chapters I will strive to force a linear structure on the multiplicity of interconnected concepts that give the theoretical grid of my research. In the fist, theoretical chapter I move from authenticity in a modern age to patterns of modern religion and tourism. I will introduce regimes of validation in authenticity and move on to theorizing about movement and walking and the involvement of learning in the walking process. Then I will talk about narration and interaction in community and arrive to the paradoxical postmodern notion of home in movement. In the second chapter I will talk about methods and positionality. In the third chapter I show the mechanisms of self-authentication through a selection of portraits of pilgrims on the way: people I've met on the ambiguous and incredible journey to Santiago.

1. **Theoretical background**

> After years of reading and thinking about what, if anything, could still be authentic, I saw authenticity at best as a quality of experience: the chills running down one's spine during musical performances, for instance, moments that may stir one to tears, laughter, elation – which on reflection crystallize into categories and in the process lose the immediacy that characterizes authenticity.
>
> Bendix, 1997:13-14.

1.1 Authenticity

Authenticity, the core concept to my thesis, is discussed not only in anthropology, but in philosophy, folklore and other disciplines as well, being essentially a "modern value" (Cohen, 1988:373). Charles Taylor says that in the modern age of individualist culture of self-fulfillment, values are not absolute any longer and cannot be discussed. For him, there is a "moral force of the ideal of authenticity" (1991:17) – while we are the only measure as to how to live, traditional power-relations concerning values being loosened up, this also comes with a certain responsibility. It is only the individual who can explore what he or she has a calling to do. But as human life is essentially dialogical, authentication happens in instrumental communities and through language. Humans also strive to differentiate themselves from others on their self-definition. Society looked at from the perspective of moral individualism excludes any sort of judgment concerning other people's values, while intimate relationships give the opportunity of self-discovery for individuals. If we follow Taylor's ideas then the Camino also can be looked at as a special tool or landscape where one can discover his or her originality and authenticity within the intimate relationships formed in the moments of communitas (Turner and Turner, 1978). The sentence I heard most frequently on the way, namely that "everyone does their own Camino" seems to reaffirm how judgments of other people's value systems and their constructed authenticity is not to be questioned on the way.

Taylor also articulates how in identity-formation, while dominated by the modern fear of meaninglessness, needs a framework or background, so that based on that one can say something about values. Selves can only be understood against this background, in their constant process of "becoming" (Taylor, 1989:46). The Camino, which offers a traditional background of values that can also be modified seems to be an ideal platform for seekers of a meaningful identity.

Regina Bendix, who mostly talks about authentication in material culture, offers a more phenomenological understanding of authenticity, talking about the experience of the authentic (1997), a culturally informed feeling of immediacy and involvement. The experience of authenticity, especially since in the case of the Camino this is an embodied experience, is an important feature of the construction of the authentic on the way. Fillitz and Saris consider the twin concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity as a "collective effort" (2013:1), the two concepts only being understood in relation to the others, through manifestations in products, activities or objects. They also call attention to the fact, in line with Taylor, that diversity is an important feature of authenticity: people have a drive to "produce a specific particularity, be it at an individual level or at the one of a social, collective entity" (10). The Camino itself, as part of one's identity can be considered as such a specific particularity in middle-class society[1], whereas a parallel effort to be particular and authentic evolves within the community of the Camino itself. Fillitz and Saris compare the authentic commodity to luxury goods which have a certain "social and cultural connotation" (2013:11), however, it is important to note that the mass consumption of luxury goods reduces its symbolic value. Translated to the world of the Camino the question arises: if walking the way has increasingly become a fashion, can it still be used as a tool for self-authentication? While, to quote again Bendix, "the quest for authenticity is a longing for the modern and the

[1] Having done the Camino makes part of one's personal trajectory as a distinctive form of passing leisure time, as opposed to having a typical vacation.

antimodern at the same time" (1997:8), overcrowdedness can cause problems even when an ideal field is found for the process of authentication.

Authenticity, as seen above, can be understood in a constructivist or a more phenomenological, experience-based way – but there is also an emic-etic divide in the understanding of the term: the way pilgrims use the word to refer to their experience and the way scholars analyze patterns of authenticity. Nancy Frey dedicates a section to authenticity on the Camino (1998). As most writings on the way, her work only deals with the French Camino and neglects possible claims of authenticity related to the chosen route, to which I will return later. She understands authenticity, in line with Bendix, as the genuine experience of being a pilgrim. She mentions a basic set of values attributed to the medieval pilgrim: "self-sufficiency, humility, decency, solidarity, generosity, and respect for nature, oneself and others" (1998:125). At the same time she argues that claims of authenticity are subject to debate and a power-struggle is going on to authenticate or inauthenticate the efforts of walkers – by other walkers, *hospitaleros*, or the Church. She emphasizes the required distance from technology, above all motorization. I will also mention the use of devices – Frey's book pre-dates the extensive use of smartphones and other technological tools but their appearance gave ground to new debates on authenticity. She also outlines the distinction between foot pilgrims and bikers or those using cars and buses and calls attention to the supposed "inauthenticity" of new pilgrims who do not know how to behave within the framework of the Camino. While her final conclusion is that "there are many authenticities" (136), she constantly enumerates characteristics, like going alone or walking long-distance, that usually or traditionally qualify as authentic. While I agree that there are certain ways of walking that on principle are considered to be the true ways to be a pilgrim, I will argue that authenticity really depends on prior expectations, the background of values one chooses to follow and the consent of the community. I also want to expand the understanding of the quest for

authenticity and finding one's true self as a life-long journey, within which the Camino is only a chapter.

1.2 Religion and pilgrimage in a modern age

Upon my first Camino in 2012 I was surprised to see that as opposed to my expectations there were not many pilgrims who walked the Camino because of religious motivations. Even though the statistics collected at the Pilgrim's Office in Santiago say that a bit less than half of the people have religious motivations, the nature and way of the question posed predefines the answer. Most people I talked to were seekers or people who wanted to get to terms with their faith. If we consider global tendencies of religion and Christianity, this phenomenon falls into a pattern, as shown by many anthropologists and sociologists of religion. In my work I will focus on Daniéle Hervieu-Léger, who offered an interesting theory in a threefold way.

Hervieu-Léger talks about the reconciliation of tradition and modernity and introduces two religious figures to illustrate the two typical manifestations of contemporary faith: the "pélerin" and the "converti" – the pilgrim and the converted. Both figures share a transitory nature, as opposed to the "pratiquant" who conforms more to a fixed system of practices and norms. The pilgrim is a symbol for Hervieu-Léger to show the importance of voluntariness, autonomy, individuality, the extraordinary in faith and above all, mobility: an inherently modern (post-modern or supermodern) value that can be experienced and exercised on the Camino.

Observing this individualistic, event and involvement focused turn in modern religion Hervieu-Léger coins the term "bricolage" (1999:18): the idea that religious people in modernity select bits and pieces of teachings of different churches and denominations to create their own, individual faith. Individualism in believing and "á la carte" believers (22) are more the rule than the exception in modernity. I believe that in the spiritual environment of the Camino people work in a similar way: through a process of learning about the several

interpretations and ways of thinking about the meaning of the Camino as well as their own position as pilgrims, walkers select interpretations, metaphors and meanings that can play a role in their own self-authentication. The observations of Hervieu-Léger, in line with the Taylorian idea of identity-formation (1991), do not only address contemporary developments in religion but they can be used in a wider sense, saying something more fundamental about humans of today. The Camino is an ideal field for seekers of identity and authenticity precisely because it offers an environment where interpretation and the individualist production of meaning is a legitimate process: "you have to find your own way".

Hervieu-Léger's theory of regimes of validation takes us one step further in understanding the modern, mobile identity. She argues that in the individualistic quest of piecing together their beliefs people need points of reference to reaffirm the constructed, experience-based systems of belief that are also informed by cognitive notions of religion. She identifies four ideal-typical regimes, the traditional-institutional, the communal, the mutual and self-validation, each bringing in a different point of reference to confirm beliefs (2001). I believe that on the Camino there is a mixture of all these levels of validation of authenticity and pilgrims can fine-tune their understanding of authenticity through the interplay of the various regimes of validation: the Church, the different Associations of the Friends of the Camino, the community of pilgrims and individual companions on the way add to the process of self-validation. This is what I will explore at length in my thesis.

1.2.1 Pilgrimage in modernity

The fact that the Camino de Santiago attracts a rapidly growing number of pilgrims each year, reaching, from 93924 in 2005 to 192488 pilgrims in 2012 (Pilgrim's Welcome Office, 2014) captured the attention of several scholars as well as graduate and undergraduate students. However, pilgrimage became a popular anthropological subject much earlier, with the 1978 groundbreaking work of Victor and Edith Turner on *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian*

Culture. The Turners are responsible for setting the scene of much academic debate and for introducing fundamental concepts on the study of pilgrimage. They were talking about pilgrimage as a "liminoid phenomenon" (1978:1), using one of three phases of Arnold von Gennep in describing rites de passage: separation, liminality and aggregation. According to the Turners, liminality, where the subject becomes ambiguous since he or she is between two sets of rules for two different cultural categories, can be applied to all kinds of situations of cultural change. Liminality for them includes "transition and potentionality" (1978:3). In the case of Christianity, a typical manifestation of voluntary liminality is incorporated in pilgrimage. They argue that "Pilgrimage provides a carefully structured, highly valued route to a liminal world where the ideal is felt to be real, where the tainted social persona may be cleansed and renewed" (1978:30). They understand liminars as being of a "homogeneous social state" and excluded from their social structure of origin – secular powerlessness is rewarded by sacred power. Another important concept is communitas which is a "relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion […] which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations and circumstances. [It] combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity and comradeship. […] communitas is an essential and generic human bound, […] it has something magical about it" (1978:250-251).

As opposed to the above understanding of culture and community on Christian pilgrimages, Eade&Sallnow (1991) think about religious shrines as places of contestation: they say that different groups of pilgrims offer "discrepant discourses" of pilgrimage as such and thus places of devotion become "empty vessels" that can be filled up with different meanings. To bring together these two understandings of pilgrimage, I will show how people on the Camino consciously want to break free from their home structures and norms, including the structuring of time. As opposed to finding an antistructure, the Camino itself also has its structure, formed by the different and sometimes clashing opinions and

interpretations of pilgrims and institutions. While in my understanding the experience of communitas is not a constant quality of the Camino, there are moments and events that are lived through by pilgrims in a group that are important in the process of self-authentication.

In my argument I will focus on the notion of contested meanings on the Camino de Santiago concerning the identity of the pilgrim and what pilgrimage as such means. Even though the Camino has Christian-Catholic origins, a significant percentage of actual pilgrims on the way do not fit into the category of Catholics or even religious people. Seekers of an authentic identity are ever-present among walkers who through the process of walking and talking with other pilgrims share the moments of communitas. While Chemin (2012) explains that pre-tailored academic dualities such as tourist and pilgrim or religion and secularism go against a better understanding of pilgrimage in modernity, through examining the process of authentication one can see that pilgrims use such oppositions in defining themselves and others.

1.2.2 El Camino de Santiago

The first comprehensive anthropological work on the Camino was done by Nancy Frey (1998). While her work focuses more on motivations and the processing of experiences on the way, my central topic, authenticity on the Camino also appears in several places. Being a proper pilgrim is a recurrent topic among walkers, and, as Frey puts it, it is also an "attitude" (1998:51). In Frey's opinion, the identity of pilgrims is "socially conferred and personally created" (1998:63) while one's perception of one's own body changes (1998:112). New pilgrims have to get immersed to the "culture of the Camino" (1998:133) – I will elaborate more on that through the phenomenological interpretation of the process of learning. Frey also joins in the chorus of those critiquing the concept of communitas – she rather argues, using the term coined by Benedict Anderson (1983) that there is an "imagined community" on the Camino, formed by the bodily involvement of generations of past, present and future pilgrims

(Frey, 1998:207). While she also mentions the danger of becoming a perpetual wanderer, part of my thesis will show how the recent economic crisis has affected the scenery of the Camino, with many people deciding to live on the Camino. Frey also engages in discussion over the "reaffirmation of values and parts of personality" on the way (1998:225), in line with Taylor's idea of needing a background of values to acquire authenticity, while she also mentions a parallel fear among walkers of having too many inauthentic pilgrims (1998:222).

The work of Eduardo Chemin (2012) focuses more on the religious-secular-consumerist face of the Camino. Drawing a lot on the anthropology of tourism – and with it, considerations of authenticity and modernity – Chemin explores the false dichotomies of communitas vs. competing discourses, movement vs. roots, religious vs. secular and tourist vs. pilgrim. In his concluding remarks he says that searching for a pilgrim ethos is a futile expedition due to the diverse discourses and actors in producing meaning. While I agree with Chemin in that there is a multiplicity of interpretations of what constitutes the ethos of the pilgrim and how a true pilgrim, true route or true Camino-experience is, the important thing for me is to see how these conflicting views live together and interact in the frame of the walking community of the Camino.

1.2.3 Tourism, movement and authenticity

The tourist as the secular counterpart of the religious pilgrim in search for authenticity is an important figure of the contemporary scenery of a mobile world – some even refer to the tourist as someone who takes part in a sacred journey (Graburn, 1977) or who substitutes the religious with a secular pilgrimage (MacCannell, 1976). The tourist, who is "travelling for self-identity" and is "looking for the authentic self-image" finds an "alternate identity" (Johnson, 2007:155) while being a tourist, that becomes incorporated into the self. Though to be called a tourist, as opposed to the noble connotation of being a pilgrim, is not desired (Feifer, 1985), their experience not being deep enough (MacCannell, 1976), we can see that a

similar vocabulary is being used in the discussion of pilgrimage and tourism. The additional notion brought in by the anthropology of tourism is in defining a point of saturation for shrines in the quest for authenticity. As Graburn puts it: "If Nature is curative, performs magical re-creations and other miracles otherwise assigned to Lourdes, God, or gurus, the medicine is weakened by the presence of other humans. To share is to lose power" (Graburn, 1977:31). This notion that goes against the fraternal view of communitas is in line with the individualist search for the exclusive and exceptional experience on the Camino.

Tourism also brings into the picture the financial means of traveling. If we use Bourdieu's scheme of the conversion of capital to understand people's investment in acquiring cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) on the Camino, we can get closer to understanding the middle-class pilgrim's quest for authenticity. Especially for non-Spanish walkers, the pilgrimage requires significant financial sacrifices, through staying away from work for several weeks and investing in the equipment as well, not to mention travelling costs and daily expenses. While some pilgrims want to appear authentic through the showing off of appropriate, expensive sportswear, others choose to refer to the historic pilgrim value, poverty. Still, the fact that an average pilgrim spends daily 20-25 Euros to gain access to the social capital of relationships and networks of pilgrims, the embodied and institutionalized cultural capital of new rhythms of walking and receiving the certificate in Santiago, and the symbolic prestige of having walked the way indicate that the Camino is inherently a middle-class phenomenon[2] (Chemin, 2012).

[2] Perpetual walkers, people living on and from the Camino are an exception to this. They also walk in different rhythms, adjusting to the availability of shelters that operate on a donation basis, and the benevolence of people offering them food and/or money.

1.3 Modes of experience and sociality – walking, talking, resting

1.3.1 Body and movement

"When did our walk begin? When will it ever end? We cannot remember, and will never know. Walking, in this regard, is much like talking, and both are quintessential features of what we take to be a human form of life" (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008:1) Walking and talking are also two fundamental activities and experiences on the Camino, so a special attention should be paid to them. Ingold and Vergunst think about walking as a "profoundly social activity" (2008:1), the "accomplishment of the whole body in motion" (2008:2). However, their framework also includes thinking and feeling as "ways of walking" (2008:2): an important notion on the Camino where many people come to piece together their lives through and to the rhythm of walking. Patterns and ways of walking need constant readjustment to synchronize bodily changes and the outer surroundings. On the Camino, where a big bodily effort is necessary each day, this fine-tuning between body and environment has a crucial importance.

The rhythm of walking gives the rhythm of talking and vice-versa: Camino-friends, a special sort of connection between walkers, are able to bond because of similar walking-rhythms and engage in discussions through impulses given by the difficulties of the way and the adjustment of the body to the landscape. On the other hand, the rhythm of walking adjusts to the rhythm of talking: I cannot even count the number of times I had to stop walking because my pilgrim-friend and informant, Markus, an experienced Austrian mountain hiker (40) became too excited by what he was telling me and stopped walking without even noticing.

Movement also gives an unusual background to the types of interactions people have. On the Camino, the path of intersecting journeys of walkers, people share their stories with an openness and immediacy. They are able to expose themselves fully in interactions because of

the ambiguity of encounters: the first name basis, or even nameless discussions encourage opening up while there is no obligation to stay together with anyone for a longer period of time. This full involvement followed by complete disattachment is made possible by the diversity of ways of walking: no one can be obliged to give up his or her rhythm. While there is a certain impersonal responsibility to the fellow walker, it is only by conscious choice that people commit to one another on the long term.

1.3.2 Process of learning

While techniques of walking, as seen above, have a distinctive social and even narrative element, it can also be interpreted as an individual process of learning. As Dreyfus and Dreyfus explain (1999), the process of human learning in phenomenological terms can be understood to work on five stages: the novice first learns the rules independent from context and tries to act in accordance with them. To give an example, before my first day of walking, on a freezing February evening in Roncesvalles, in the shelter, a young Chinese woman told me I was wrong not to start walking 25 kilometers earlier, in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, just on the other side of the Spanish-French border. Claire, who was just at the beginning of her novice-phase on the way, having walked her very first day on the Camino, tried to categorize people on the basis of the few "rules" she learned already. According to some people and tradition, "true" pilgrims start by climbing the Pyrenees – based on these rules, I was disqualified to be an authentic pilgrim.

The second phase in the scheme of learning is advanced beginner. He or she already gains experience from real-life situations and so judgments are made through a combination of situational and rule-based considerations. The next step, that of the competent performer, implies that the actor is able to prioritize in the procedure of decision-making: the wider picture is considered. The proficient performer is already on a more intuitive level of acting, while a reflection is needed at the end to consult guidelines in the assessment of outcomes.

The expert, being on the top of the learning-scheme, sees and knows immediately what to do and how to do it: he or she acquires an instinct to act. While I do not think that stories on the Camino should be categorized in such a nuanced manner, it is important to see that there is a trajectory of developing an instinct to how to do the Camino. People fall into a routine on the way, learn to be a pilgrim and to walk with new rhythms. Returning pilgrims, such as myself and some of my long-term informants, fall back into this pattern of walking: the "expertise" developed on the Camino returns even after years of being at home.

1.3.3 Movement and home

"Beautiful, welcoming home away from home. Best night's sleep I have had all Camino – my soul feels rested. THANK you! Sophie xx", reads an entry from the pilgrim's signature book in the pilgrim's shelter of Granon. It seems a paradoxical notion to find home away from home, when one is constantly on the move, as a rule sleeping every night in a different shelter. However, since this entry is typical of the hundreds of entries I read and pilgrims often referred to finding home on the way, it is worth investigating how the concept of home is explained in post-modern terms. Coleman and Eade (2004) introduce the concept of home to the discussion of pilgrimage and movement, drawing on the work of Rapport&Dawson (1998) and think about home more as "routine sets of practices rather than fixed places" (2004:5). They emphasize the importance of movement as a performed and embodied action.

Marc Augé introduced the concept of non-place to describe the fundamental experience of contemporary humans of being "always and yet never 'at home'" (1995:108). The concept of home changes with modernity from a fixed geographical location to something more fluid and flexible that is intimately linked to identity and movement. Rapport and Dawson talk about home as an analytical construct (1998) and use Berger's definition of home being a "repetition of habitual interactions, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried around in one's head. People are more at home nowadays, in

short, in words, jokes, opinions, gestures, actions, even the way one wears a hat" (1984:64). I find this definition useful because it describes the fundamental experience of pilgrims on the way: building up new routines, going through a learning-process with the ever-changing community that sometimes feels like family, sharing stories and emotions in the shaping of identity. For Rapport and Dawson, home "brings together memory and longing" (1998:8) and is "where one best knows oneself" (9) – a sensation experienced and articulated by pilgrims on the Camino.

1.3.4 Narration and identity

"It is in and through various forms of narrative employment that our lives - … our very selves – attain meaning. […] the telling […] of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed – the story or plot of a narrative" (Kerby, 1991:1, 39). People on the Camino constantly narrate their lives and experiences: they use it as a tool in search for identity and authenticity, in a way of moral storytelling. By distinguishing between right and wrong, dos and don'ts, people draw a map of their lives with an assessment of what they did and why they did it. Looking at these evolving, sometimes contradictory, conflicting and, due to the rhythm of walking, by nature fragmented narratives can shed light to claims of authenticity on the way.

Olwig claims that "home is a more abstract entity that is primarily expressed through various types of narratives and other forms of symbolic interchange" (1998:235). If we now bring together claims of authenticity as knowing one's true calling (Taylor, 1991), the shaping of one's system of beliefs into a bricolage (Hervieu-Léger, 1999) and the search for identity through narration and the postmodern conception of home (Rapport&Dawson, 1998) in the special community of the pilgrimage, it can be seen how the Camino de Santiago is an ideal field for the quest for authenticity, where one can find home on the way and in oneself.

2. Methods

Anthropology should be seen as a collection of travelers' tales.

A. R. Louch, 1966:16

2.1 Previous examples

Previous anthropological works on the Camino have primarily used the method of participant observation, though different researchers took a different stance. I combined the method of Frey (1998) and Chemin (2012). Frey decided to walk the Camino Frances and conducted unstructured interviews with her fellow pilgrims, not even recording the discussions, claiming that it would have ruined the spirit of the pilgrimage. However, she exchanged addresses with the pilgrims she met and later corresponded with them in order to explore the aftermath of the Camino (Frey, 1998). Chemin, on the other hand, decided to become a volunteer at various shelters during his research and made semi-structured interviews with British pilgrims who passed by, recording the interviews and using them within the framework of grounded theory (Chemin, 2012).

For my research, I found both methods useful. In order to observe how the community or communitas (Turner, 1978) evolves – I found it necessary to participate in the pilgrimage also as a pilgrim, not only as a researcher. Drawing from my previous experience on the Camino I thought that people's relations on the road change significantly over time and thus it was advisable to walk both the Camino Frances and the Via de la Plata, taking part in the pilgrimage together with the same people, instead of only having a glimpse of them when they pass through a village and stay at a shelter. On the other hand I found it useful to also have a picture of how pilgrims and hosts as well as locals relate to each other, how the image

of the pilgrim is constructed through locals[3]. This is why I chose both walking the Caminos and volunteering in a shelter.

2.2 Research outline

2.2.1 Preparation: interviews

As part of my preparation for the fieldwork, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with 13 Hungarian pilgrims between September and December 2013, in Budapest. These interviews, apart from bringing me closer to the language used by pilgrims on the Camino and showing how people interpreted their journey after their return, also called my attention to an important phenomenon: when asked about what it means to be a true pilgrim or what is not allowed for a pilgrim to do, my interviewees could not give clear answers. I had to realize that questions of authenticity, precisely because they can only be interpreted against some background of values (Taylor, 1991), can be addressed in situations and interactions. Instead of looking for definitions or forcing informants to come up with a formulation of what it means to be a true pilgrim, it is better to look at stories on the Camino and search for interpretations among the participants and observers of the situations.

2.2.2 On the field

My fieldwork had three major parts. I arrived in Spain on 11 January 2014 and after spending two weeks in Santiago de Compostela studying Spanish I went to Granon, a small town of 300 inhabitants, located on the French Camino, to volunteer as a *hospitalera*[4]. At the end of my volunteer period I participated in a three-day training ("*cursillo*") for prospective *hospitaleros*, organized by the Volunteer's Association through which I got to volunteer. In the second part of my research, between 17 February and 13 March I walked the Camino

[3] In addition, due to the conditions of traveling on the Camino (bringing only the absolutely necessary objects in a backpack and carrying it all the way to Santiago) it would have been difficult to properly record and store the interviews or carry a laptop with me.
[4] The person who looks after a pilgrim's shelter.

Frances, covering nearly 800 kilometers. Then, as the final part of my fieldwork I walked 1000 kilometers on the Via de la Plata from Sevilla, between 16 March and 17 April.

2.2.2.1 Being a *hospitalera* in Granon

I chose the church-owned *albergue* in Granon because interviewees and former pilgrim friends as well as guides referred to it as an "authentic" shelter with a strong atmosphere which left many pilgrims lasting memories of the "true Camino experience". I worked as a volunteer, cleaning and cooking in the *albergue* and looking after pilgrims. I also got to know the local community and the other *albergue* in the village, this way getting an insight into what position an *albergue* and pilgrims have in a community. Apart from participant observation I also used the guestbook as a source of data, looking at typical topics mentioned and how self-narration evolved in a written form – guest-books being frequently used as journals to express opinions and record experiences.

I also participated on the training for future *hospitaleros*: a group of 30 former pilgrims who were trained by members of the Association of the Friends of the Camino. The three-day event gave an insight into how this organization works as well as how norms and meaning concerning the pilgrimage and pilgrims is constructed.

2.2.2.2 Walking the way: El Camino Frances and the Via de la Plata

My original plan of walking these two ways was triggered by the commonly known differences between them: the Camino Frances being the most well known, popular and infrastructurally developed way, while the Via de la Plata requires more physical efforts and is more deserted. I walked the Camino Frances from mid-February when the face of the Camino is radically different and much more deserted than in the summer scenery. I found a "sleeping" infrastructure on the way: in a village with five or six *albergues,* public and private alike, only one would be open, the crowd was different from my previous summer experiences, and the walking was physically more demanding due to weather conditions.

However, the fact that there weren't so many people enabled me to engage with pilgrims in a deeper way – similarly to the Via de la Plata where even at the peak time (March-mid-June) there are not many people. At the end of my second way I got to Santiago just before Easter which meant that I got to meet those pilgrims who embarked on the one-week journey of the last hundred kilometers to the city of Saint James – an interesting contrast to how long-distance pilgrims walked the way.

2.3 Stories in interaction

The stories I collected were either told by my fellow pilgrims or observed during walking or the afternoons and evenings spent in the towns and shelters of arrival. Through these stories I will try to show moments of spontaneous communitas (Turner, 1978) while I argue in line with Eade&Sallnow (1991) that pilgrimage shrines are in fact places of constant debates and conflicts of interpretation. A considerable difficulty in recording these stories was that they happened or were told precisely at a time when I could have advanced with my field notes: a lot of times I had to decide if I want to sit alone and write up yesterday's stories or wanted to observe new ones evolving. Though I tried my best to write as close an account as I could, there is a chance that due to the delay of recording some data is not so precise.

2.4 Positionality

From the first to the last moment of my research the question of my position in the field was a central one. At the start, I was seen as legitimate to conduct interviews in Budapest because I was a former pilgrim myself. I could see how my pilgrim-identity was important for my interviewees: they referred to knowledge commonly known on the Camino about hardships and joys and some of them even asked for advice on some issues regarding the pilgrimage. One of the young women whom I interviewed and who still had a tan from walking in Spain asked me at the end of the interview about how to deal with the "post-Camino blues", as she called it: the depressed feeling that overcomes many people after they return to their home.

She asked a fellow pilgrim, not a researcher. I found it later on too that it was extremely difficult to identify myself as an anthropologist among pilgrims: people, locals and walkers, simply made assumptions about me being a pilgrim and they accepted my plan of writing a thesis as a motivation for being a pilgrim. Other times I simply felt like no researcher at all: at certain points it did not make any sense that I was walking 1900 kilometers only to write a paper at the end.

The experience of being on the road, together with all these people who are supposed to be "research subjects" but really were more like friends or even family, was overpowering. Making formal interviews for example seemed like an inappropriate intrusion interrupting the flow of walking the way. This is one reason why I decided against forcing interviews in my research, instead opting for informal walking interviews. On the other hand, I found that words such as "pilgrim" and "tourist" do not have a fixed meaning in people's heads. They function more as tags people put on others in certain situations, and their meaning varies from situation to situation. This is why it made more sense to simply be a pilgrim and collect these stories: some were told, in others I also participated as an actor. The way people later gave an interpretation of such stories and events made it possible to see how the concept of authenticity emerges.

Due to my full involvement in the field as a pilgrim, my person as a prism through which events and stories are filtered through became very important. My characteristics influenced my findings, simply because they gave access to certain people and situations as opposed to others. I was the young Hungarian woman, in the winter scenery the Camino with mostly middle-aged or older male pilgrims, who was Catholic and went to church as opposed to the majority of walkers. As I speak several languages I could interact with most people, including locals. I have already done the Camino and thus developed a certain rhythm, going through a process of learning about how to walk the way and constructed my own ideas of

how to be an authentic pilgrim. Because of these characteristics people used a specific way of addressing me and after a while, like all other pilgrims, I had a certain reputation that followed me. I was the young girl who spoke many languages and so could translate from German to Spanish while ordering in a bar or could arrange an agreement on what to cook for 15 people from 6 different countries and languages. On the Camino Frances, in the winter, I was also one of the youngest who had to be "taken care of"[5]. My position as well as my habitus, to use the term of Bourdieu, could not be left behind as I entered the frame of the pilgrimage and it stayed with me as I struggled my way through being a researcher. This always has to be considered when I look at my data: the stories shared with me or the ones in which I participated.

2.5 Research ethics

I already mentioned my struggles concerning my identity as a pilgrim and as a researcher. When talking to people I did not always push forward my researcher-side (on my two-month journey I met so many people for only a very short period of time that this could not have been possible), but my long-term informants or pilgrim-friends all were familiar with my project. Some of them explicitly asked me to use their real names (only first names will be used in the text, just like on the Camino), others will have randomly selected names to protect their identity. Typically I will introduce a new character with his or her name, age (if known) and nationality, as done by Frey (1998) and Chemin (2012).

[5] Andreas, a 50-year old German pilgrim, in spite of the fact that he did not speak Spanish, made several phone calls to some *albergues* to figure out where I was when I didn't arrive to a certain city: a thing that wouldn't have happened if I had not been the only "young girl". I was also offered all the medical supplies of 5 pilgrims at an *albergue* at the sight of a single blister.

3. El Camino de Santiago: portraits of people in interaction

in vain you bathe your own face in your self,
it can be cleansed only in that of others.

Attila József: "No Shriek of Mine"[6]

3.1 Pilgrims? Walkers?

The word "pilgrim" is used on the Camino in a double way. On the one hand, people walking towards Santiago with a pilgrim's pass (*credencial*), issued by the Catholic Church, carrying their gear on their backs and sleeping in pilgrim's shelters are recognized and considered to be pilgrims. In this sense people with a certain appearance and a certain, though always changing geographical position are by definition pilgrims who use an infrastructure of shelters, pilgrim's menus, etc. designed especially for them. On the other hand there is the figure of the pilgrim, loaded with historical, religious or spiritual, symbolic and normative meanings. If someone on the way says that a fellow walker is not behaving like a pilgrim, he or she is referring to the second meaning, namely that the person in question is not a "proper" pilgrim. The violation against the "code" of being a pilgrim can be claimed based on both meanings of the word. For example, if someone takes the bus from one *albergue* to another, that is a violation of both meanings of the word pilgrim.

It is also important to note that some walkers consciously dissociate themselves from the second meaning of being a pilgrim. As Lucas, a nonreligious Austrian man (30) told me, he just wanted to get away from home for a while to think about his life and was using the infrastructure of the way, but he did not identify with being a "pilgrim". While his search for himself, his questions about his career and family "qualified" him as being a pilgrim in the second sense, he didn't want to be included into the religious-spiritual frame of the pilgrimage. Another young English man (26) whom I met on the French way, a few days before reaching Santiago, was walking away from Santiago in the direction of France. He said

[6] Translated by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth.

that he saved up the past few years to make a 6-month hiking trip across Europe – he was an experienced hiker – and decided to walk on the route of the Camino Frances because it was the most convenient way to get to France.

Another example of the ambiguity of the word "pilgrim" could be seen when on my way to Palas del Rei I met two women in their twenties from Denmark travelling together. We started talking about their motivation to walk the Camino and I brought up the question if they considered themselves to be pilgrims. One of them said:

> We've both lost our jobs – we were caring for ill elderly people and before starting to work again, we wanted to have some time off. We originally wanted to swim across the International Date Line, but that turned out to be too expensive, so we decided to come here. Anyways, this is also a sort of line that we are crossing, just like the Date Line. […] Are we pilgrims? Yes, yes, I think so. Well, I don't exactly know what that means. It should have some religious connotation, and I'm not religious… But yes, I still consider myself a pilgrim.

This is a fine example of how uncertain the meaning of the word "pilgrim" is for people walking the Camino. For these two girls the Camino was a similar adventure to crossing the International Date Line – only a bit cheaper. Their connection to the religious-historic connotation of the way was not important for them, their performance and experience of the authentic and the exceptional (Bendix, 1998) weighted much more. What I want to note here is that it makes more sense for a researcher to look for situations where the word naturally comes up to see what role of legitimization or authentication it actually has.

3.2 Granon revisited: the Camino in a microcosm

I had been walking for a week, just getting to know my fellow pilgrims – Lucas, the troubled Austrian man I've been walking together with the day before; Giovanni from Italy, who walked the Camino Frances for the second time, saying he didn't find what he was looking for the first time; Stephan and Geri, childhood friends now in their 40s who wanted to have some time off from their families and enjoy walking and cracking open a beer every now and then;

and Andreas (50) from Germany who decided to walk after getting fired from his job. I had been seeing the group on and off at the different shelters and expected them to turn up again in Granon for the evening, after a nice but windy Sunday walk through the vineyards of La Rioja. For me, arriving at Granon was like coming home: I'd spent two weeks as a *hospitalera* in the *albergue parroquial*[7] and even though I didn't know the new volunteers who replaced me, I was greeted with hugs and huge smiles by the two Spanish men caring for the shelter.

The *Albergue San Juan Bautista* of Granon is considered to be a special one among all the shelters on the Camino Frances. It had been built by volunteers, as it is recalled at the dinner table almost each evening to show pilgrims something of the "spirit of the Camino". This is the only *albergue* that doesn't ask for the presentation of the *credencial* and doesn't have a stamp – as I read it in the handbook prepared for the volunteers, making pilgrims feel welcome, without any sort of bureaucratic procedures, is of utmost importance. The pilgrim who enters the huge wooden door of the *albergue* of San Juan Bautista first reads a sign at a dark corridor, written in several languages: "please take a piece of wood upstairs". Then she continues climbing a seemingly endless flight of stairs to get to the second sign saying "leave your boots here!", again written in more than 20 languages. After climbing the last set of stairs one gets to the *albergue* itself: at first one passes a table with a book to sign your name and date of arrival ("if the *hospitalero* is not here, sign your name, take a mat and make yourself comfortable"), a guestbook for pilgrims to write a note if they feel like it, and a wooden box for donations, with the sign: "take what you need and leave what you can". These signs already indicate the set of values cherished in the *albergue*: helping the community through being involved in chores such as lighting the fire, giving to those in need and having autonomy to act and find your way around in the *albergue* alone. As you progress

[7] Pilgrim's shelter belonging to the Church.

forward, you pass the kitchen to your right and get to the fireplace at the other end of a huge room filled with two tables and comfortable chairs arranged in a semicircle around the fire. The fireplace and the walls are decorated with scallop shells and different reproductions of the image of Saint James. Pilgrims sleep on the gallery, reached by a second set of stairs.

I could have found my way up to the *albergue* even with my eyes closed, as I spent so much time scrubbing floors and cleaning bathrooms in the first half of February being a *hospitalera*. I could fully understand inscriptions in the guestbook talking about Granon as a "beautiful, welcoming home away from home": as my fellow pilgrims arrived and gathered around the fire to discuss the day, tend their blisters and dry their shoes, there was already a familiarity of knowing how Andreas would take out his detailed guide and discuss the kilometers and altitudes waiting for us tomorrow, as he did every single evening. If we recall Berger's understanding of home as a well known set of practices, where jokes, ways of interactions and "the ritual of regularly used personal name[s]" (1984:64) are at work, one can understand how one week on the Camino already makes it possible to feel at home in Granon.

When I first got there, at the end of January, I met Nicolas, the *hospitalero* before me. He explained to me how important it was to receive pilgrims with a hug and listen to them. I was told to try and learn the names of every one of them, so that they can feel at home. Nicolas also told me to invite pilgrims to participate in the communal cooking in the evening, after explaining to them that they can join the evening mass and that after dinner there is a little meditation or prayer in the chorus of the church. This effort to call people by their first names, and invite them to the daily routine of the *albergue* accommodated the feeling of being at home. All volunteers who participated in the preparatory *cursillo* were warned that they should not act as arbitrators of who has a nobler quest as a pilgrim: we were taught to accept everyone, may they be "*turistas*", "very religious", a large group, bike pilgrims, *deportistas*, former *hospitaleros*, retired or any other "type" of pilgrims. The *cursillo* called

attention to the fact that we as pilgrims tend to categorize and have assumptions about our fellow pilgrims but as a *hospitalero*, listening instead of assuming, in line with the Christian social teaching, is crucial in making people feel at home. The reason I was given for this was the historical legacy of hospitality on the way: the Association of the Friends of the Camino claimed to be heir of the tradition of caring for pilgrims, an ethically and morally constructed activity defined by members of the Association –former pilgrims themselves.

As a *hospitalera* I also experienced how this construction of home, which had to be made rapidly due to the fact that as a rule pilgrims only spent one night in Granon, was valued and appreciated by pilgrims. My fellow volunteer Alma and I organized the evening meditations in the church, making a little ritual of our own. After thanking pilgrims who volunteered for washing up after dinner we went to the gallery of the church and lit some candles. Then we asked pilgrims to silently reflect on their day and then, if they wanted, to share some thoughts in their mother tongue. As a Hungarian who didn't really have the chance to talk in Hungarian I knew how important it could be to speak in your own language. Then we would ask if someone had something to sing and if not, we took turns with Alma to sing, choosing a mix of religious songs, songs about walking and wandering, or folksongs from our country.

The space of the church, lit only by the flickering light of the candles, framed this semi-religious, semi-secular ritual of ours that changed day by day based on what the actual pilgrims wanted to add. They were not all religious, but this mixture of the sacred, the spiritual and the personal was attractive even to people who usually wouldn't even visit churches. To show an example of the "full, unmediated communication [that has] something magical about it (Turner and Turner, 1978:250), one evening when we were hosting Carla, a woman from the Netherlands who was a longtime pilgrim and came on the Camino this time to prove that she recovered from a long illness, and Pierre, a Frenchman who chose the cold

month of February to be alone, we ended up singing "Frere Jacques", a children's song available in all of the languages we knew. After Alma, I and the woman all sang something in our mother tongues, Pierre told us that he was a bit ashamed that "Frere Jacques" was the only song he knew. By the end this song, by no means a typical choice in a church, four different people from four different countries could unite in a moment of "communion": it led to the "highly valued route to a liminal world where the ideal is felt to be real, where the tainted social persona may be cleansed and renewed" (Turner and Turner, 1978:250). This experience of sharing was recalled by our two pilgrims with gratefulness: Pierre was happy not to be excluded from the shared experience of singing, while Carla told us how she appreciated "giving back" in this ritual after she "selfishly" and without a second thought accepted so much help and kindness on the Camino. The two pilgrims experienced the values stressed by this particular *albergue* through our ritual and verbalized them in the moments of reflection, thus including these new elements of their authentic pilgrim-selves into their chain of narration.

Thinking about the practice Alma and I worked out, I was curious how Leonardo, the new *hospitalero* was going to conduct the evening ritual. After dinner I was washing dishes while Lucas, Geri and Stephan were having a glass of wine at the table. Earlier all of them said they were going to join the ritual in the church, even though by then I knew Lucas didn't have any connection to religion, Geri and Stephan barely went to church and Andreas and Giovanni had problems with the idea of institutionalized religion. When Leonardo called us to join him, the three men at the table were so immersed in discussion that they didn't come at once, so the rest of us followed Leonardo, leaving them behind. When I wanted to go back for the three of them, the younger *hospitalero* stopped me: with their choice of drinking they lost their opportunity of joining the evening prayer. From Leonardo's gestures it was obvious that

to participate you should show an inclination to growing silent and contemplative: all pilgrims had the right to stay at the *albergue* but not all pilgrims could participate in the ritual.

Leonardo switched on some classical church music from his iPhone, lit the candles positioned on the handles of the chairs of the chorus and distributed pieces of paper that had sections from the Bible related to walking and being guided by God, in Spanish, German and Italian. He asked Andreas, Giovanni and the other *hospitalero* to read one section each in their mother tongues – I got to say "The Lord's Prayer" in Hungarian – and then he lit one more candle. After the prayers we were asked to pass around the candle "that went through the hands of thousands of pilgrims before us" and say something if we want, in our language: it could be a prayer, a song, or simply silence. I was the only one who understood what people were saying in Italian, Spanish and German: for the rest of the pilgrims, sharing their innermost wishes, uncertainties and questions, as well as their thanksgiving was an intimate act that remained their own. Others could guess by the tone of talking to what each pilgrim was saying, but the specifics remained secret: a powerful mixture of the public and the private in the ritual directed by Leonardo. As a closing act he explained to us that there is no stamp in this *albergue* because they find it more important to "carry a stamp of love in our hearts". Then he put the music back on and switched on the lights to illuminate the golden altarpiece. Pilgrims immersed in the experience without words, feeling the exclusiveness of these moments: being a pilgrim, accidentally spending the night in a tiny village in Northern Spain, together with this particular group of people in this particular church. The ritual closed by everyone hugging everyone: one of the essential tools of the volunteers of the Association of the Friends of the Camino to make pilgrims feel at home. The authentic experience (Bendix, 1997) was produced through involving different senses: hearing, seeing, touching, while the passing of the candle indicated the historical continuity between all pilgrims who share an inclination to contemplation using a Christian space and vocabulary.

Granon manifests to many pilgrims the historical-spiritual essence of what it means to be on the Camino and in the community of the way. In the guestbook, walkers call this experience, matching up to or transcending their expectations as a "sense of family", a "mystical experience of [their lives]: rare, pleasant and profound", "the real pilgrim-feeling", where they "really feel the unique Camino-spirit". Background values (Taylor, 1991) are also indicated, such as "charity", "hospitality", "love in community" "with people you barely know", as well as "generosity" and "sharing". Especially for people on their first Camino, experiencing the atmosphere of Granon, produced by the physical space and the joint efforts of *hospitaleros* and pilgrims was an important step in the process of learning (Dreyfus&Dreyfus, 1999) how to be a pilgrim. This one-day experience can work as an meaningful point of reference: being included in the sharing of food, rituals and a quickly established community can reaffirm one's authenticity.

3.3 Losing rhythms, finding rhythms: Sebastián

On my second day on the Via de la Plata I decided to stop at Castilblanco de los Arroyos. It was already dark and Tobias, a German pilgrim from Berlin (48) and I were cleaning up after a communal dinner that alternated communication in German and Spanish when a new pilgrim arrived. Sebastián, a strongly built Spanish man in his early 40s, carrying a small backpack, could hardly walk when he entered the *albergue*: he flew in from Barcelona to Sevilla by noon and walked 45 kilometers in the burning sunshine, with only a half liter of water. He had a heat stroke on the long way to Castilblanco and was lucky that he met a local man who had some water. Sebastián told us this was his 5th Camino and he decided to walk the 1000 kilometers to Santiago in 30 days, this is why he had no time to lose. He perfected the content of his backpack so that he didn't carry anything unnecessary and was proud to say that he only had 2.5 kilograms on his back. He has been "quitando peso", getting rid of weight, all the time, leaving behind an energy bar here and an unnecessary scarf there.

Sebastián was the typical figure whom many pilgrims would call the "performance walker" or "*peregrino deportivo*": he was counting kilometers, height levels and calories all the time. Sebastián looked the complete opposite of Tobias, with his skin-tight running shorts, synthetic t-shirts and bright red Salamon shoes: he obviously invested quite some money into his gear, despite (as it later turned out) his precarious situation as an unemployed person. Francisca, a Swiss pilgrim who spent only one night in the same *albergue* with Sebastián told me with a forgiving smile that Sebastián was really sweet but he was missing out on a lot of things because of so much running; however, it was "his own Camino" so he did as he pleased.

In order to understand Sebastián's motivations on the Camino one needed to keep up with this rhythm, which was not an easy task. On the Camino, information about personal matters flows in a fragmented, circular matter: pilgrims say goodbye and then occasionally meet up again to continue conversations left in the middle. I travelled "together" with Sebastián for a couple of days and step by step got to know his story. He lost his job two years ago and went through a divorce shortly after that. He first decided to walk the Camino Frances in January 2013 because he was told by former pilgrim friends that that is the "original way" to walk, the authentic path millions of pilgrims have been following since thousands of years. Then he did a shorter but much more demanding path, the Camino Primitivo, three times, finding his own way of expressing originality because he felt that the Camino Frances was overly popular and too crowded. He told me he was doing his Caminos for exercise and challenge: first he did a vegetarian Camino, then he decided to walk the Via de la Plata, the longest of them all, in only 30 days. Through the constant retelling of the story of how he has lost weight thanks to the Camino and how he now lived more healthily, independently and more happily then before when he had his work and family but didn't have time to himself he also strived for self-authentication: he was proud of his body and his

achievements as well as his perfectionist way of packing only the most necessary things in his bag. Even though through this he actually risked his health (not carrying enough water in the extremely hot region of the Extremadura put him into real danger), he was constantly getting rid of unnecessary things and enumerated, even without anyone asking, each item he carried. With his insecure background due to unemployment, he found a new standard to make himself a true, authentic person. He even planned to permanently stay on the Camino, the antistructure as opposed to the life he lived before (Turner, 1978), wanting to install himself as a long-term *hospitalero* on the Camino Primitivo:

> I have everything figured out. There is this shelter, I could live there, cook for the pilgrims, set up a small shop with bread, milk and the most necessary things… My daughter could visit me there. In the winter and summer I would be a *hospitalero* but in the spring I would keep on walking. […] Of course I always carry with myself my references for work [he worked at constructions] in case someone might hire me – you never know. But I will start organizing being a *hospitalero* when I get back. Next month will be the last when I get money from the government.

Sebastián made a bricolage of his own selection of values on the Camino: self-sufficiency, strength, not being mislead by other sights or goals such as touristic endeavors, just walking towards Santiago, in the constant search of new challenges and overcoming oneself. He enjoyed the freedom of walking – he even had a tattoo after his first Camino announcing "Free Soul" – or, as he kindly translated it to me to Spanish on several occasions: "Alma Libre – this is what I find on the Camino". For Sebastián, finding a group of reference or validation on the Camino to whom he could explain his achievements was essential: he told me proudly that on the Camino Frances, due to his speed he belonged to three groups on the way, going with one group, then speeding up to get to the next one. Because of language barriers his access to community was limited – he spoke only a few words of English apart from Spanish in the international crowd of the Camino and felt a bit sorry that on the Via de la Plata it was harder to find people to connect to.

Sebastián left behind his old rhythms and family ties to find a new structure on the Camino. His decision to settle on the Camino can be understood by the way this field accommodated his need to be challenged and accepted at the same time. Though Sebastián's interpretation of the way and the authentic pilgrimage was not shared by everyone, he constantly sought a reference group to reaffirm his bricolage of identity.

3.4 Not like sheep: Francisca

I first talked to Francisca (62), the Swiss pilgrim in Aljucén. She was lying topless on her bed with the window open to soak up some sun and was explaining to me how she came to the Camino to give "thanks to the universe for all the lovely things she received in her life". She and her Italian friend, Caterina walked for two weeks, taking it slowly, progressing some 15 kilometers a day. Francisca said she had pains in her knee and didn't want to over-exercise them. "I don't care what others think. I don't have to prove anything to anyone. I enjoy walking and I want to keep it that way. Others are so stressed out about getting to Santiago *on time*. It would be nice to get there, but if I have to stop, I will." This was her first Camino and decided to walk the Via de la Plata instead of the "crowded and overpopulated" Camino Frances because she was repulsed by following any kind of fashion. She wanted to walk her own way, not the same as everyone else, like "brainless sheep". She wanted to step out of the stressed caused by time-pressure, adjusting the time of walking to personal needs instead of outer expectations. She told me she also learned to use alternative ways of healing, acupressure and homeopathy in order to become independent from the medical regime of the Western world.

For Francisca, not having expectations and very fixed plans on the way – as in life – was essential. "You should accept everything as it comes and say thank you, instead of saying me! me! me!" She also told me I probably got ill (I had a terrible flu she has been curing with homeopathic pills and propolis) because I didn't pay attention to my own rhythm, over-

exercising myself. In her opinion, listening to the body and not rushing were the keys to do the Camino – she used metaphoric wisdom regarding life to make her guidelines of how to do the Camino, offering her life-experience to me. Though I might have been a more experienced Camino-walker, in her eyes I was a young girl who had seen fewer things in life.

One day the three of us were walking together, in the direction of Alcuescar where we were to sleep in a monastery where monks were dedicated to care for elderly, disabled people and allowed in pilgrims as well. The tiny frame of Caterina moved in front, crossing the still misty fields of the Extremadura, followed by Francisca in her checked man's shirt borrowed from her husband and long, partly braided gray hair. Francisca stopped every now and then to make faces and imitate the voice of the young bulls and herds of Iberian swines – she was living and walking in a spontaneous way, not giving a second thought to potential outside observers or opinions. In her case, the Camino was an affirmation of an authentic way of life shaped throughout a lifetime: walking and meeting new people was just another form of expressing the bricolaged mixture of beliefs she tested against a multiplicity of backgrounds and regimes of validation while traveling and living in different countries and cultures. Francisca could enjoy the Camino the way she did because of years of self-fashioning and self-authentication: she did the Camino to fully embrace her achievement in becoming authentic.

3.5 The gatekeeper to authenticity: Felipe

The *albergue* of Alcuescar was run by Felipe, a Spanish member of the Association of the Friends of the Camino in his sixties. He walked his first Camino in the 1970s and told me he developed an instinct as a *hospitalero* to see which pilgrim is a troublemaker, who is a tramp, who snores badly and who is it who just wants to have fun. Felipe had a strict idea of how a true pilgrim should behave and sent Sebastián away from the shelter the night before because

he wanted to watch the "El Clásico" in a bar and get back to the *albergue* after closing hours[8]. Felipe, as the gatekeeper in the actual and the figurative sense as well, the spokesperson for the institutional regime of validation (Hervieu-Léger, 2001) told him this was not a hostal and that if he wanted to drink beer and party he had to walk on. This left Sebastián with having to walk a further 15 kilometers to the next *albergue*. Shelters that are said to have a special atmosphere (told by pilgrims and noted by guides), like Alcuescar on the Plata, or Granon and Villafranca del Bierzo on the Camino Frances, have a stricter understanding and more frequent references to who the true pilgrim is, stirring controversies at times – they also have a more structured timetable for pilgrims to conform to.

Felipe and Francisca engaged in a long discussion about the decay of basic values: decency and true dedication of pilgrims who earlier were like "family". These days, according to Felipe, pilgrims were more interested in their planned "*etappas*", the prescribed kilometers for the day, than sharing and community. He told us that today pilgrims steal each other's food from the fridge – "not that they didn't have money, they just want to save where they can". He also lamented the fact that the *albergues* that used to work at a donation basis have to be closed down slowly because people were not willing to pay; they just accepted the "services provided". Here in Alcuescar the *albergue* offered dinner for pilgrims, and "some well off pilgrims didn't bother to think about who pays for that, they leave 50 cents in the collecting box!" Francisca and he agreed that there was a lack of charity among "these people", the narrative was framed by how values in our modern world were disappearing and giving way to selfishness, appearing even in the "pure world" of the Camino.

[8] For Sebastián and many other Spanish pilgrims, especially those from Barcelona, the football match between Barcelona and Real Madrid is a really important event one must pay attention to even during the Camino. From Felipe's perspective, this didn't fit into the frame of the Camino.

3.6 What is Christian? Interpreting an evening at Alcuescar

Though Francisca and her Italian friend defined themselves more as spiritual pilgrims and apart from Patrick, a retired German lawyer, none of that day's pilgrims in Alcuescar were religious, all of them joined Felipe who accompanied us to the neighboring church to participate in the evening mass, together with the community of disabled people. After the service the old priest gave us a lengthy welcome in Spanish. He served in this monastery most of his life, caring for the disabled, each day explaining to the constant flow of pilgrims from different parts of the world how much pleasure there is to be found in caring for those in need and how great it is that we, pilgrims were able to embark on the adventure and sacrifice of going to Santiago. His juxtaposition of moving and staying affirmed the transitory nature of being on a pilgrimage while through his position of authority his interpretation of the pilgrimage as "sacrifice" could not be contested at the moment.

The communal dinner that followed the evening service offered an interesting clash of interpretations of how to be a true pilgrim and how to accept what you receive with gratitude: the supposed guiding principle of an *albergue* with Christian spirit. Francisca and her friend, Patrick, two French women and an English couple, John and Julie, all of them retired, were seated around a table while Felipe served us a dinner of paella, meat with pepper and fruit and cakes at the end. Then he asked us to help with the washing up – earlier he explained to Francisca and me how important it is for pilgrims to get involved instead of being served all the time, so that they "learn" how to be pilgrims. Francisca and I occupied the sink, while Felipe, to my surprise, was throwing away the leftovers of the dinner: whole pieces of meat and pepper. Shortly John and Julie arrived with plastic boxes and asked if they could take the leftovers with them. After they left, Felipe turned to Francisca, upset, saying that these well situated people are the ones who want to grasp every opportunity to have more and more and

more, the kind of people who didn't help when it was about washing up but took other people's food from the fridge.

A day later, in Valdesalor, I got a different perspective on the story from Patrick, the German pilgrim who has been travelling together with John and Julie since Sevilla. This was his third Camino and he told me how shocked he was as a Christian to see perfectly intact food being thrown away in the monastery where so many people live in need and poverty: for him Felipe's actions were inconceivable. "Luckily John and Julie came just in time to save at least the meat: it would have been such a waste to throw everything away". From these two, opposing interpretations of the same actions, both referring to Christian principles, one can see how the stereotypes of Felipe built up from years of experience of one day glimpses to the motivations of pilgrims. This led him to deem John and Julie inauthentic from his power-position as gatekeeper-*hospitalero*. At the same time Patrick, who had spent already two weeks travelling with the British couple, saw the traditional, authentic motivations in the actions of John and Julie. These opposing interpretations never actually clashed, due to the different rhythms of the participants of the story: Felipe remained in Alcuescar, looking after a new crowd of pilgrims each day, while Francisca, Patrick, John and Julie walked on, slowly drifting apart due to their different speed.

3.7 The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Camino: Tobias

On 5 April 2014, Markus, a fellow Austrian pilgrim (40) and I were walking from dawn, covering 35 kilometers from Fontanillas de Castro. We had a difficult day, struggling through kilometers of rain and muddy highway-construction works which made the yellow arrows indicating the way to Santiago completely disappear. We were understandably cheered up by the afternoon sunshine as we got closer to Tábara, our stop for the day. As we turned into the street of the *albergue* of Tábara, to our great surprise, a car pulled up next to us and out climbed Tobias, our on-and-off fellow German walker and notorious hitchhiker, with his

backpack and a huge smile. We left him behind a few days before and didn't think we would ever in our lives see him again. Markus and I had a mixture of incredulity, real joy and joking frowns on our faces: I knew Tobias from my first day on the Via de la Plata, we met in Seville, and the three of us shared some heavy rains and happy evening cookings as well as listened to Tobias's deeply personal confessions about his life-story.

Walking is considered to be the fundamental activity of pilgrims, based on both understandings of the word[9]. The Church, *hospitaleros* from the Associations of the Friends of the Camino and the walkers themselves, these different actors for validating authenticity, all think of walking as a key to be an authentic pilgrim: moving in space in a self-sufficient way, carrying all your belongings with you are considered a must – unless you are ill or have some outer, pressing circumstance hindering you from doing so. In this sense Tobias's way of doing the Camino seems inauthentic: he broke the "normal" rhythm of walking and sped up his journey, using motorized vehicles that are also looked down upon. Nevertheless, Tobias was heartily welcomed in the *albergue* run by the Adrián and Ariana, who decided to invest efforts into bringing back the "authentic spirit of hospitality" to Tábara. This "spirit" prescribes the acceptance of any pilgrims who arrive to a shelter without judging their way of doing the Camino. It was interesting to see how the expectation of authenticity as a host also accommodated Tobias's process of self-authentication.

For Markus and myself, walking was essential. Our understanding of the authentic way of being a pilgrim was enduring whatever comes, be it rain or sunshine. While we, as well as other walkers, respected Tobias's decision to hitchhike, saying "everyone does their own Camino", Markus repeatedly said "this would not be for me. And I know it wouldn't be for you either." Markus and I functioned as mutual reference points of validation: we had been walking together for almost three weeks and 600 kilometers on the Via de la Plata and

[9] In my thesis I don't focus on pilgrims on bikes or horseback but their case is similar: taking a train with the bike is not typically accepted as authentic.

shaped and formed each other's understanding of how to be a pilgrim. Still, our interpretations of how to do the Camino were not at all forced on Tobias. The three of us shared the same shelter and cooked together several times before arriving at Tábara. The preparation and sharing of food is a routine valued and practiced by pilgrims. People united around a table share not only their food-culture but also the experiences of the day before: the difficulties encountered, the thoughts that were running across one's mind. One evening Tobias, Markus and I were sitting around the table in the garden of the *albergue* of Puebla de Sanabria, watching the sun go down against the silhouette of the castle on a hill. There was a quality in the sharing of silence and knowing each other that gave a sense of familiarity or even family. These memories tied us together in spite of our different understandings of what it means to be on the Camino: the shared experience and mutual acceptance made us validate each other's experience as authentic.

For Tobias this was not the first time on the Camino – he knew about the ethos of the pilgrim. He simply decided not to care about it. For him, a different regime of authenticity (Hervieu-Léger, 2001) was important, namely self-authentication. His journey on the Camino was part of his general soul-searching: he deeply believed in healing through self-analysis and was going into detailed dissection of his traumatic childhood memories of sexual abuse in order to understand and start to love himself. He made a point of expressing that institutions such as the Church meant nothing to him. He did have a *credencial*, in order to be allowed into *albergues*, but didn't want to get the pilgrim's certificate in Santiago. For him, walking the entire way was not a precondition to be an authentic pilgrim – this didn't even really interest him. He wanted to be an authentic person, though paying close attention to what he needs at a certain moment: walking, because the weather was nice and he felt like it, or sticking out his thumb because he was tired. As we can see, the Camino, as well as the shrine

of Santiago de Compostela does function as an "empty vessel" (Eade&Sallnow, 1991): walkers fill it up with the meaning that suits their own, individual quests.

3.8 The flood: Markus

On 29 March Markus, Tobias and I walked out of the *albergue* together, into a steadily dripping rain. It was supposed to be a long day: either you walked 17 kilometers or did 40; there was no other option. Markus and I wanted to go on, Tobias bailed out at the "point of no return". He was badly equipped for rain, walking in jeans and hoodies and not having a proper rain-poncho. For him this was one of the key elements of self-authentication: not spending money for "fancy equipment". Jeans are thoroughly impractical for walking the Camino, but for him they symbolized his independence from trends and fashions and thus made him authentic.[10]

However, this meant Markus and I continued on our own, with rain pouring down harder and harder. In a few hours we were thoroughly soaked; I could – and did – literally pour water out of my boots when we had a lunch break on the floor of the welcome center of the ruins of a Cáparra, an ancient Roman city. Being a tourist made much less sense than eating our bread with cheese in a place that wasn't completely wet and exchanging nods, smiles and "*Buen Camino*"-s, the customary greetings on the way, with a retired French couple who also took a short break. Even though we only knew each other for 3 days, Markus offered me his spare pair of shoes, which I gladly accepted in spite of the fact that our feet were not of the same size. It later turned out that for Markus, this act of kindness was the basic rule of conduct: being raised in a Catholic family of 6 siblings, in a small Austrian town, helping others without thinking was something he always did: the question was not *if*, but

[10] On the other hand conversations in the winter scenery of the Camino Frances indicated another interpretation of having the adequate equipment: I listened to long discussions between Lucas and Tim, two pilgrims in their 30s who were going into detail of how much rain their trousers could endure and for what temperatures were their sleeping bags designed – this happened with a precise indication of the prices paid for the items. Authenticity, validated individually, as in the case of Tobias, or mutually and in a competing way, like for Lucas and Tim, could be found in fairly different, even contradictory actions and interpretations.

how. For him, being a pilgrim was only a change of rhythms, not of different behavior: he came on the Camino to have a "vacation". He told me he worked so much in the past few years, building a house, caring for his land and 18 cows and working also as an interactive board installer that he needed some time off, or rather, a different way of spending differently structured time. As opposed to Tobias – who came to the Camino because he didn't have anything else to do and didn't belong to any fixed societal structure – Markus took part in and lead a variety of *Vereins*, voluntary civil associations for some good cause and was active in his family, work and the public life of his town. For him, the principal group of reference was his home community. Even though he didn't bring a mobile phone, wanting to break away from the stressfulness of being connected through devices, he took hundreds of photos to be able to show them at home, adding to his voice as a narrator. He told me he was satisfied with his life, with where he started from and where he got, making peace with his weaknesses and working for others.

Markus brought his attitude towards people in general with him and incorporated it to his attitude as a pilgrim (Frey, 1998). After resting our legs we soon got to a creek that we usually could have passed by jumping from stone to stone, but because of the rain, Markus had to bring some bigger stones and help me through the creek. As we got through, after a 20-minute logistic break, we saw 5 people coming from the opposite direction: the French couple and another elderly couple from the Netherlands, from earlier, and a retired Spanish pilgrim. They told us that the next creek has become a wide river that was absolutely impossible to pass – but in the meantime, the first creek was so swollen that we were stuck between the two.

The events to come were narrated later on as the "true Camino experience" by every participant and pictures and video-recordings were shared with those pilgrim friends who were not present: devices were close at hand even in a situation of crisis. Markus first took off his shoes and took them along with his backpack to the other bank, walking up to his thighs in

the cold water. Then he carried our backpacks and then us as well, one by one, on his back, to the other side of the flooded creek. Though we didn't know even the names of the other pilgrims, this event made a sort of fellowship out of us for the afternoon, everyone helping everyone in getting up our gear and walking back to the asphalt road to look for directions to get to Aldeanueva. The spontaneous offering and acceptance of help, values we as a group shared, put each of us on the same level: the situation made other differences in interpretations and goals on the Camino irrelevant.

After a while a truck came along and the driver offered to take us to Aldeanueva, saying that the way on the asphalt was going to be a much longer one than planned. The older Spanish man, Markus and I looked at each other and decided that even though there was no question about how no-one would claim us inauthentic if we took the car – we still had a vivid memory of the experience of the authentic for the day – we knew that we have a stricter definition of how to be a "true" pilgrim. And so the three of us walked another 20 kilometers in the pouring rain, occasionally stopping to share some hidden chocolate from the bottom of our backpacks in the relatively dry shelter of a bridge. Our Spanish companion told us about a new *albergue* in Aldeanueva with a washing machine and a dryer and invited us to come with him – an offer we accepted with gratitude, being completely soaked. This kind of transmission of information was made possible because of the crisis lived and solved together: it founded our relationship and urged our companion to help us further on our journey – making him authentic while bringing us along to testify for it.

By the time we got to the shelter, everyone knew about Markus and his heroic act, including Tobias, who at the end decided to hitchhike in order to stay together with us. The mediated experience was faster than us and many knew and remembered Markus based on this mediation of authenticity – one that he reaffirmed by finishing the day with walking. His actions did not disauthenticate those who walked less on that very day – "everyone does their

own Camino" – but he did gain an honorable reputation among the small community formed by the shared experiences of the day. He got this position not only by his actions but also by his attitudes: as the Frenchman we've met framed it: "We pilgrims smile, no matter if it rains or snows or the sun shines or the wind blows. We just keep on walking and smiling. And some people think we are crazy for that". For this French pilgrim, walking the way did work as an antistructure (Turner, 1978) or rather a different structure as opposed to the "normal" world, a structure in which Markus fitted in ideally.

The story has become a good anecdote even for those who were not present and it also grounded the friendship and mutual validating of authenticity for Markus and me. We got to know the other's standards of behavior and expectations towards ourselves: expectations that met up as nicely as our rhythms. However, the turning point from being fully present in the moment of interaction to the declaration of commitment, was a further step and a couple of days away, when the two of us calculated the days remaining until Santiago and called an *albergue* to make reservations for the two of us for Easter. This conscious step of coordinating rhythms and committing to one another was something that happened more often on the Via de la Plata, a longer and more solitary route, than on the Camino Frances: even though people started out alone, they seldom finished that way – simply because physical difficulties could be tackled more easily if not alone. While there were only a few people on the move, after a while they tended to move together.

3.9 A home of memories: Brigitte

As it often happens on the Camino, due to gossip travelling among pilgrims (Frey, 1998), I knew much about Brigitte even before I'd met her. Since people's main activity, apart from walking, is talking, pilgrims who cross each other's way carry information about fellow walkers they leave behind, giving descriptions and sharing stories about them. I heard there was this Austrian-German writer, a woman who walked the Via de la Plata each year to

update her book on shelters on the way: I've even used the book to call a taxi for a German couple who didn't want to walk 15 kilometers on the asphalt and opted for a motorized solution. Markus and I first met Brigitte in Aldeanueva del Camino, on the day of the flood. She planned to walk as usual, but because of her knee-problems she was forced to take the bus this year or ask *hospitaleros* to take her from shelter to shelter.

Brigitte walked the Plata with her husband three times, when the route was not yet infrastructurally developed and shelters were more difficult to find – they chose this way to find the untainted, authentic face of the Camino that was being "lost" on the Camino Frances. After her husband died she was asked by a German publisher to edit a volume on shelters on the Via de la Plata. Brigitte told me she was first paralyzed by the pain of loss, the entire path being filled with memories of her and her husband walking together. But later on she managed to look at the Camino as a way of remembering and of self-curing where she could be a member of ever-changing Camino-family. She knew local bartenders by name, saw the yearly changes on the route and used this social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to convert it into a way of gaining a living. Her appearance communicated this strong attachment: she wore weather-beaten hiking trousers and t-shirts and accessorized her look with a necklace and earrings of the scallop-shell, the symbol of the Camino. Even though she emphasized the importance of having a "real home", they way she interacted with people living on and of the infrastructure of the Camino indicated a strong attachment and a set of known routines, gestures and attitudes (Berger, 1984). For Brigitte, the way did bring together "memory and longing" (Rapport and Dawson, 1998:8), a mixture that made her feel at home.

As we had breakfast in Aldeanueva, Brigitte and Markus often switching to their shared Austrian dialect that was hard to follow, Brigitte was telling us about her controversies with the German-speaking Camino-walkers. She recalled how "terrible" German pilgrims can be, forcing her to be a translator all the time and acting as if the Camino belonged to them.

For Brigitte, the autonomy of pilgrims and the autonomy of the way were of utmost importance: she perceived the violation of her independence as an intrusive action of her fellow countrymen. She mentioned that she just met an East-German couple who started shouting at her when they heard she was writing a book about the Camino: "how can you know what it is to be on the Camino if you don't walk the way? How can you write a book about the path you didn't walk?" The couple was also upset by how badly signaled the routes were, due to the highway construction works, and according to Brigitte they not only held her responsible but questioned her right to use the shelters and to call herself a pilgrim. Brigitte rejected these accusations on the basis of her expertise as a long time pilgrim and of her medical condition, referring to the "traditional" excuse of not walking because of injuries. The way Brigitte framed the story, the behavior of the German couple was typical and territorial: this was the reason why earlier she often hung a Spanish flag on her backpack to hide the fact that she spoke German. She didn't want to be used as a translator or guide, identities she felt were forced upon her.

Brigitte's mixed motivations of walking the Camino, as a way of remembering and of gaining a living, though supported by most members of the infrastructure of the Camino, were debated by some pilgrims, especially since her medical condition prevented her from "authentic" walking. She met criticism from people who spoke her mother tongue: a link binding together people in a foreign country. Brigitte often explained how this group membership was a burden to her because German pilgrims could not break free from their home structures and attitudes, fully embracing the pilgrim-attitude. Brigitte felt that her expertise being a pilgrim could validate her opinion or preconception of German pilgrims – even though it was only in tense situations, like the one with the German couple, that she gave voice to these opinions face to face.

3.10 Some animals are more equal than others: Hans and Lisa

Markus and I instantly recognized the "East-German couple"[11] Brigitte was talking about ("she is a tiny woman with spiky gray hair") as we turned into the main square of Tábara, on the day we met Tobias again. The two of them were sitting on a bench, soaking up the evening sun and tried to convince us to go to the local hostal instead of the *albergue*, because it was cheap and really nice and we "didn't have to put up with all the other pilgrims, like that woman who calls herself a writer – did you hear?". Later we spent together more time with Hans and Lisa, since the distances between the *albergues* gave us no other choice. The *etappas* regulate rhythms of pilgrims and structure time spent together with some people without considering personal sympathies.

For Hans and Lisa who already "did" the Camino Frances and the Camion Norte, collecting one after another, in a particular, authentic order, walking was the fundamental value as means of authentication on the Camino. On our first longer conversation in Calzadilla de Tera they "measured" my authenticity by asking not only which Caminos I walked but also how many days I needed to do them. When it turned out that I walked faster Lisa quickly added that of course I am younger, so that is normal: she framed their "achievement" in relation to mine to show how their efforts remained authentic. We spent time together in *albergues* where employees of the town hall gave us the key and didn't engage in much discussion with pilgrims, so they sought communal validation (Hervieu-Léger, 2001) from people, like Markus and myself, who spoke their language.

However, when they had the chance, the couple stayed in hostels. They told us they needed to rest properly, due to their age as well, and they didn't want to share a bathroom with all the other pilgrims all the time. Their need for privacy and being used to setting their own rules also showed in the way they got up early in the morning and switched up the lights

[11] This term sounds curious after 1989, but it was the expression used by Brigitte – a way of signalling an attitude belonging to people living int he historic East-Germany.

in the sleeping hall, not considering other pilgrims who wanted to rest for a bit longer – they even complained when someone turned off the lights again. For them, this was the "right time" to get up and other people caused them a problem with hindering them in their preparation to set off for the day's walking. They didn't explicitly claim that others were inauthentic, the issue being more about violating individual freedom to get up at the right time – as authentic pilgrims should. On the other hand, other pilgrims seemed perplexed that Hans and Lisa, even though this was their third Camino, didn't learn to respect others and get up and leave quietly: behind their backs there was a narrative of consensus about their inauthenticity, missing out on the essence of what it means to be on the way.

Perhaps Brigitte was the most outspoken on the issue, being recognized by fellow pilgrims as some sort of an authority, due to her great experience as a pilgrim on the Plata: she told us that if Hans and Lisa are complaining that they will never come to Spain if people like her are also here, perhaps they really just should stay in Germany and let "us pilgrims" be. The main debate between Hans, Lisa and Brigitte can also be understood as a debate on whom to accept as a representative of a regime of authentication: was the historical image of the pilgrim more important or the experience of an "expert" on the Via de la Plata who didn't do the Camino as it "should be done".

Looking at this story we can see how Hans, Lisa and Brigitte selected bits and pieces of accepted meanings of the Camino to construct their bricolage of authenticity. The two accounts shared some elements, but the conflict lay in the differences: Hans and Lisa defined their authenticity through the exclusion of others, being better and truer pilgrims than the rest, and felt that their own achievements as pilgrims were lessened if "such people" as Brigitte were also accepted as pilgrims. They sought for validation in the community, apart from their regime of mutual validation, with the constant juxtaposition and measuring of their pilgrimage, compared to others. Their confrontation with Brigitte was due to the fact that she

felt she was a strong enough authority and regime of validation in herself that she could not be "bullied" by some less experienced pilgrims. Where others would have used the general rule of everyone doing their own Camino, Brigitte stood up against the German couple, also claiming an identity of protecting the ethos of the pilgrimage.

3.11 Those last hundred kilometers

As Markus and I were getting closer and closer to Santiago, more and more pilgrims were on the way. As gatekeepers of authenticity, the Catholic Church and the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela only issue the pilgrim's certificate to those walkers who complete at least 100 kilometers on foot – a rule easily understood and followed by "novices" on the way. Many people, especially Spanish pilgrims decide to walk the Via de la Plata from Ourense to receive the certificate, and thus on the last couple of days there is an interesting mixture of pilgrims who have been walking for weeks and weeks, slowly becoming experts (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1999) on walking with the attitude of the pilgrim (Frey, 1998) and those who are still in the novice-phase, trying to apply rules on how to do so, discussing ways of tending blisters or enduring terrible pains in their shoulders and legs.

Two days before getting to Santiago Markus and I were in one of the newly built Galician *albergues*. I was passing a group of pilgrims who were recognizably "novices" – they could easily be spotted by the unfaded, bright colors of their newly bought Quechua sportswear and fresh sunburns they were proudly wearing. A group of 8 were gathering around the shelves for boots and were discussing how it was almost impossible to distinguish whose shoes belonged to whom. I joined in saying that I could tell which one was mine out of a million – I already had huge tears on the sides of my shoes and was praying that they would hold together on the last few days until Santiago. As the group got to know how far Markus and I had walked, many of them completing their first or second day, some dropped their jaws and suddenly I was flooded by questions of what creams to use on their feet and what brand

of band-aid to buy for blisters. Without any intention to be looked at as one, I was taken for an expert on Camino-issues and had to escape from the middle of the quickly forming circle of novices who were eager to learn and bricolage their own ways to be an authentic pilgrim – rules of behavior one really could only worked out for oneself, through walking, as there is no general rule as to how many times one should stop to eat or whether Voltaren was the best solution to all muscle pains. Stepping from stage to stage in the scheme of learning cannot be sped up by the recording of more and more rules: they must be lived and practiced to get "the hang of" being a pilgrim.

The investment of time is an important factor in forging authenticity: on the one hand the process of learning takes time. On the other hand it is through getting out of the structured time of one's home environment and learning the new structure of time on the Camino that authentic experiences can be lived. Still, the authentic quantity of invested of time did not have absolute benchmarks: it depended on the home structures themselves. A Spanish man from Granada whom I met shortly before Ourense told me he only had one week to walk because of his work and family. "I cannot be so selfish as to take away all the holidays from my family. I always take a week before Easter to do the Camino, I think it is magical. My greatest dream is that after I retire, I walk the entire way from Granada, from my doorstep." For him, walking only a part was a constraint, not a comfortable or lazy decision. His devotion to the Camino was shown by the tattoos he decided to get at the time of his first Camino: a line of arrows climbing up his leg, full arrows indicating the times he got to Santiago and empty ones showing the times he didn't. For him the Camino was a lifetime enterprise, a process of long term learning and construction of authenticity.

3.12 Fragmented portraits to grasp the full picture?

In Chapter 3 I have sketched some of the people I met on my journeys to Santiago de Compostela. This was a hard task not only because I had to step back to look at the people

who filled my life for almost three months: I also had to produce coherence and find meaning in a picture that is by nature fragmented. Of the many people and stories I encountered I selected these not because they show ideal-typical pilgrims. On the contrary: there were as many ways in which they were united as in which they were separated, by the act and rhythm of walking and the incredible richness of motivations and individual life-stories, told and retold on the way. I navigated between these similarities and differences in order to show how modern pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago find ways of self-authentication through different regimes of validation, making a bricolage of systems of belief and choosing points of reference that help them in constructing themselves as authentic people. This of course does not happen solely on the Camino and people's self-fashioning does not end in Santiago: the flow of self-narration and remembering continues as pilgrims leave new-found routines of their Camino-home for the old ones. The people I keep in touch with from the pilgrimage are constantly rearranging and reinterpreting their identity found on the Camino, adjusting to their home environment and community: memories change by each retelling.

Conclusion

Se la vita é un viaggio, viaggiare é vivere due volte[12].

Omar Khayyam quoted by an Italian pilgrim in the guestbook of the *albergue* of Granon

At 3 pm on 25 April I was sitting in a café at the international airport of Madrid, on my way home, after a long journey across Spain. The airport: a typical non-place (Augé, 1995), with people drifting from the outside world through security control to the insignificant and transitory space of the terminal, looking but not seeing, thinking about the place they are about to leave behind and the one they are going to. An airport could be the symbol of the modern fascination with movement and dynamism, similarly to the Camino. The one, very important difference between the two is that people on the Camino are not as interested in origins and destinations as in being on the way.

It is not by accident that movement and authenticity are becoming core concepts in the study of anthropology, religion, tourism and philosophy. The moral obligation of finding oneself and ones calling is a hallmark of the age called modernity, postmodernity or supermodernity. Authenticity and movement are united in the figure of the pilgrim. Religious or secular, pilgrims express the attractive mixture of the modern and the antimodern, the traditional and the individualistic. The Camino de Santiago, with its different paths, traditions, authorities and narratives, offers an ideal space for seekers of identity to immerse in the solitary, yet social quest of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims or walkers are able to construct their own understanding of what the pilgrimage stands for and who they are on the way. They can also find and select the structures that reaffirm their ideas: as everyone does their own Camino, interpretations are to be respected, yet always contested. Pilgrims who learn to walk in very different ways are united in the rhythm of walking through the Spanish landscape, marking the road while at the same time also being marked by it. At the end, on the Praza de Obradoio,

[12] If life is a journey, than travelling is to live twice.

in front of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the empty vessel to be filled with meaning, all these constructed identities fit together.

In my research I was interested in the "culture" of the Camino: what it was in the stepping out of home routines and time and building up new routines that made people find a home on the move. I found that there are different interpretations of meaning transmitted in the twofold process of learning. This process is made up by the experience of walking and the fragmented interactions with fellow pilgrims ranging from novices to experts. Through the acceptance of some opinions and the rejection of others, walkers make a bricolage of pieced together identities and meanings, for which they need regimes of validation apart from their own self-authentication. Pilgrims to some extent can select which authority to accept as validating: institutions such as the Church or pilgrim's organizations; communal validation within the group of pilgrims or mutual validation by pilgrims selected through personal sympathies and matching rhythms. Walkers take home this new-found and reaffirmed authentic identity incorporated in shared experiences and refine and adjust them to their home audiences and community, making the Camino part of their life trajectory.

Pilgrims are easily recognized after they finish their journey. As I was sitting at the airport, I noticed a woman in her 50s accompanied by a younger man who was around my age. Their faces and arms were tanned, their shoes worn out and covered by a layer of dust. There was no need to talk; we knew where the others came from: in fact probably we knew more about each other than any other person would know about any stranger at the airport. We, familiar strangers, smiled and nodded at each other; then I took my bag filled with the beautiful scallop shells I collected at the End of the World, in Finisterre, and went to find my gate. Exhausted from my three and a half months long journey in Spain I was more than happy to go home and return to my old routines, family and friends. Still, if someone would have asked me I would have said: I was definitely coming back.

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