

2017

Introduction: Walking the World

Dane Munro

Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture (ITTC), University of Malta, danemunro@me.com

Lucinda Mary Carspecken

Indiana University - Bloomington, lcarspec@indiana.edu

Ian S. McIntosh

IUPUI, imcintos@iupui.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp>



Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Munro, Dane; Carspecken, Lucinda Mary; and McIntosh, Ian S. (2017) "Introduction: Walking the World," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 5: Iss. 2, Article 2.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/D7RM6H>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol5/iss2/2>

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](#).

Introduction: Walking the World

Dane Munro*, **Lucinda Carspecken**** and **Ian McIntosh*****

*University of Malta

** Indiana University, Bloomington

*** School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI)

dane.munro.00@um.edu.mt / lcarspec@indiana.edu / imcintos@iupui.edu

Overview

This collection of essays revolves around one of the oldest traditions of the world: pilgrimage. From five continents writers have contributed to the very much alive phenomenon of pilgrimage in a number of contrasting and interdisciplinary aspects, ranging from traditional religious to modern atheist practices. As one of the oldest externalisations of religion, from the mist of times, humans, have walked long distances to sacred caves and landscapes to honour the gods and to regulate our relationship with natural and supernatural forces. In the modern context, we still engage in pilgrimages, although the traditional religious aspect may also be replaced by reconciliation, peace, dialogue, social commentary or self-therapy. From five continents, the modern approach to an old practice is brought to you by a perhaps unusual mélange of writers and researchers who are involved in Walking the World.

Introduction

A woman carries a vial of water from the St Lawrence River to help transport herself back there in imagination; an African American preacher travels to England in the middle of the nineteenth century; an Indian poet uses nonsense language to turn his readers' perceptions of the world upside-down. An exploration

Dane Munro is Neo-Latinist and Historian. He lives and works in Malta where he is based as an independent researcher and research focuses on the history of the Order of St John and pilgrimage. He is also a visiting lecturer at the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture at the University of Malta. His lecturing topics are tourism and pilgrimage.

Lucinda Carspecken is a Lecturer in Inquiry Methodology at Indiana University. Her research interests include life stories, community cohesion, dementia care and the anthropology of literature. She is the author of *An Unreal Estate: Sustainability and Freedom in an Evolving Community*, and editor of *Qualitative Research: A Reader in Philosophy Core Concepts and Practice*. She is currently writing a book on ethnography and love.

of the varieties of pilgrimage is itself a kind of journey - a journey that is rich and unpredictable.

Pilgrimage studies as a discipline has changed and moved over time. Its early focus tended to be on pilgrimage as a religious or at least sacred rite. (see: Turner and Turner, 1978; Van Gennep, 1961; Eliade, 1961). More recent work has focused on the difficulty of drawing boundaries between pilgrimage and other types of travel, like tourism, inward journeys and political protest. (see: Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Ebron, 1999; Eade and Sallnow, 1991). Other recent scholarship combines these two approaches by expanding and exploring the definition of 'pilgrimage' to incorporate secular experiences and yet still, find some common elements (see: Cohen, 1992; Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Greenia, 2014).

In this edition of the *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, we share essays and stories from around the world in the hope of continuing the scholarly journey; re-framing the conception of 'pilgrimage' as a means to understand areas as diverse as literature, religion, identity, landscape, art, movies and leadership, looking at its changing forms in a global context and drawing out new insights from and for the field.

We have organized these papers around three themes, although there is much overlap between them. The first is an exploration of the dividing line between 'pilgrimage' and other kinds of movement through space. Some journeys are sacred in the popularly understood sense of this word, and yet throw light on the elusive boundaries of what 'sacred' means. The second is pilgrimage as a means to personal empowerment. The third is pilgrimage as metaphor.

Ian S. McIntosh is an adjunct professor of anthropology and religious studies at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). He is also the director of international partnerships at IUPUI, and the associate director of the Confucius Institute in Indianapolis.

I. The Pilgrimage Tradition Revisited

Pilgrimage studies has long been concerned with the question of what can, or should, be perceived as sacred. In the early twentieth century Emile Durkheim famously distinguished between 'the sacred' and 'the profane', associating the former term with religion (Durkheim, 2008), but the demarcation between the two was later questioned by those, like E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who had more experience with non-European cultures, and could see that what was considered sacred changed according to context (Evans-Pritchard, 1968). Several of the authors in this Journal issue note the way what is called 'pilgrimage' shifts, by attending to intention, preparation and historical change.

Megan Harvard is pushed into probing the boundaries between sacred and mundane motivations for travel as she is tasked with compiling a packing list for students about to walk the Camino. She notes that it is not so much the artefacts themselves that make this distinction as the spirit in which they are carried; some students looking for their own grit to sustain them, as in a long distance hike, shored up by the appropriate supplies, while others trust more in the grace and chance encounters associated with a spiritual pilgrimage.

Goodnow and Bloom explore the features that modern travel and pilgrimage have in common. They see travel narratives as part of the 'quest genre,' where travellers go through four stages - a call, a preparation, a journey and a return. At each stage, the authors find examples of the twelve features of the sacred identified by Mircea Eliade in his book *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Eliade, 1961). Telling the tale of their journey after returning home, for example, can raise the story to the level of myth, shaping memories that may be passed down through the generations.

Dane Munro traces the way pilgrimage has changed and adapted over the millennia. He begins with pre-history and moves forward in time to the present. Malta, his home, offers a unique perspective. It is like a miniature time capsule, attracting people who hold both ancient and modern beliefs. Catholic pilgrims from the Marian and Pauline traditions come to the island, alongside seekers from New Religious Movements, who, paradoxically, look back to Neolithic times for a mother goddess thought to pre-date Christianity.

II. Pilgrimage and Empowerment

The second section of this issue covers a number of contributions to pilgrimage research which relate to personal empowerment. Notwithstanding the large amount of papers written every year on the pilgrimage to Santiago, Suzanne van der Beek's view on personal and ritual identity is innovative in the sense of constructing and deconstruction one's authenticity while distancing one's self from daily life in a bubble of contemplation along the Way, as the Camino is referred to. She notes the difference between the idealised and true self to which pilgrims aspire and their everyday identities, and she sees an implied cultural critique of those aspects of social life which get in the way of authentic selfhood. The Camino is walked for many reasons other than religion but the goal of emotional healing is one of those quintessential aspects of pilgrimage.

Lesley Harman's view on healing, concerns women and empowerment, her subjects are not on a pilgrimage abroad to bring about change, but, make an annual journey home, by boat, for the confirmation of their 'selves'. These journeys take place to the islands of the Thousand Island region at the St Lawrence River, between Ontario and upstate New York. As much as the Camino on foot, these women all experience something which is called 'ensoulment', brought to them by the River, a spiritual body which also provides them with opportunities for healing. For the sake of scale, proportion and interdisciplinarity, we would suggest the reader to get a feeling of the Camino and the Thousand Island region by exploring them via Google Earth.

Margaret Cullen respectively gives prime samples of cross-cultural and multi-cultural interdisciplinarity through pilgrimage. Cross-cultural and cross-religious ideas dominated the journey of an unlikely pilgrim, as described by Margaret Cullen: A preaching pilgrimage to Britain in the 1840s of an African American woman, preacher and slavery abolition activist, named Zilpa Elaw. This is an episode in social criticism, of empowerment of free African American women preachers, originating from a very egalitarian and republican society of the United States and directed at changing the very rigid and hierarchical Victorian society of the Britain. The case of Elaw was seen by herself as a metaphor of St Paul, in this case, a calling by God to improve Christianity in Britain and promote the abolition of slavery. In this she identified with St Paul who had an equally large task ahead of him. In the end, it turned against her, not unusual in the course of St Paul's life too, as the British were not as receptive to

her mission as she was accustomed to in the United States. Nonetheless, her failure to change a nation during a single trip through a thousand sermons had the desired outcome of all pilgrimages: her personal change, where failure was her personal gain.

III. Pilgrimage as Metaphor

What identifies pilgrimage is not a place, nor the movement towards that place, but a realization. The goal of pilgrimage is to take the pilgrim beyond physical space and beyond what is usual in day-to-day experience. It may involve coming into contact with some exceptional quality, like leadership or self-knowledge, or with an extraordinary moment in time. Pilgrimage, then, is as much (or more) a metaphorical process as a physical one.

In the Old Testament and in the works of St Augustine, 'pilgrimage' is used as a metaphor for human life itself, which is described as a journey (a painfully distracting journey), towards the divine (Saint Augustine, 2009). Some religious traditions, in fact, take pride in the fact that they emphasise the symbolic aspects of pilgrimage over actual physical journeys. Reformers in Christianity, from Lollards to Protestants, emphasised the inner, metaphorical or ethical aspects of pilgrimage over its outer expression. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a perfect example of this, with the characters and locations along the protagonist's route standing in for moral principles, failings, dangers and temptations (Bunyan, 2003). Early Christian reform movements regarded themselves as going against the grain of their times, casting inner explorations and transformations in a more favourable light than actual journeys, which they saw as more worldly in nature.

Vinod Verma gives us a new lens on the poems of Kabir, where pilgrimage is most frequently referred to in terms of metaphor - as a journey towards and beyond the self and as a series of shifts in perception. Going beyond the usual in time and space can allow the pilgrim to see his or her mundane life from a new perspective, and to notice the absurdities in beliefs and power structures of a given society. Verma writes about the subversive nature of Kabir's poems and the way they question the hierarchies of their time, turning expected relationships upside-down to show their arbitrary nature. Kabir's use of *ulatbanis*, or nonsense phrases, subverts logic and rationality themselves, pushing the listeners to question their assumptions about the world.

Pilgrimage as metaphor clearly has an application to secular as well as religious discourse. Jane Cruz shows us the ways that pilgrimage offers an apt metaphorical

framework in organization studies, describing the life routes taken on the way to developing desired characteristics. Willingness to step beyond the known and usual into the unknown is an important aspect of developing leadership, just as it is an important feature of pilgrimage. She shows that the important changes are internal rather than geographical and that the path towards leadership falls somewhere between journeying and staying still.

Journeys of pilgrimage often go beyond normal understandings of time as well as space, and in these instances the inherently metaphorical aspect of pilgrimage comes into focus again. George Greenia describes pilgrimage as an opportunity to step outside of historical time (Greenia, 2014). Alison Smith attends explicitly to this phenomenon as depicted in cinema, noting the ability to resist time shared by both cinema and pilgrimage. She discusses two films which are also memoirs, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* and *The Milky Way*. Luis Buñuel's *The Milky Way* jumps between the fourth, the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries in a miraculous, playful journey along the Camino. Jean-Dominique Bauby's film, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* involves what he calls 'a journey of immobile travel'. The protagonist has been paralysed by a stroke, so his travels, including a visit to Lourdes, are based in memory and imagination.

Many of the papers in this volume note the power of pilgrimage to shore up community among or between various groups around the world. Pilgrimage is a good example of the kinds of symbolic rites of passage explored by Edith and Victor Turner, and, earlier, by Van Gennep - where the shift from one state of being to another is marked by an external ritual or journey. Among the people they studied, going through such a ritual tended to cultivate enhanced experiences of what the Turners called *communitas* - a dissolution of the boundaries between individuals. Physical synchronicity of movement and shared struggles along marked routes can be components of this, as in the literal sense of the word 'pilgrimage', but they are not necessary components. Metaphors of synchronicity in poetry, song and film, even in solitary movement and reflection, can serve the same goal; breaking down barriers between past and present, self and other, creating solidarities among individuals in different places, reviving memories of people who suffered and overcame in exemplary ways. There may be practical obstacles in the way of the human community physically walking the world together. But, the metaphor of a shared journey has its own unifying power.

Bibliography

- Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. New York: Dover, 2003.
- Cohen, Erik. 'Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence'. *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, edited by A. Morinis, 47–61. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992b.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. 'Researching Pilgrimage.' *Annals of Tourism Research* 37 (2010): 440–456.
- Durkheim, Émile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Eade, J., and Sallnow, M. J. eds. *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Ebron, Paula A. 'Tourists as Pilgrims: Commercial Fashioning of Transatlantic Politics'. *American Ethnologist* 26 (1999): 910–932.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.
- Elsner, Jaś and Ian Rutherford, Introduction to *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, by Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford (eds.), 1-40. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward. Evan. *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Digance, Justine. 'Religious and Secular Pilgrimage'. *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, edited by D. J. Timothy & D. H. Olsen, 36–48. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Greenia, George. 'What is Pilgrimage?' *A Sociology of Pilgrimage: Embodiment, Identity, Transformation*. edited by Lesley D. Harman, 8-27. London, Ontario: Ursus Press, 2014.
- Naiden, Fred. 'Hiketai and Theoria at Epidauros'. *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, edited by Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford, 73-96. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Sharpley, R., & Sundaram, P. 'Tourism: A Sacred Journey? The Case of Ashram Tourism, India'. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 7 (2005) 161–171.
- Turner, Victor and Edith. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Van Gennep, Arnold., *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.