

Restorative Rituals,

*a new/old conception of
spiritualism-in-practice*

*Case Study: Pilgrimage Along the
Camino Santiago, Spain*

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Research Purpose

- In this paper I would like to outline preliminary avenues for what I am calling “restorative rituals,” life practices or rituals that are performed to restore mental health and equilibrium that also act as catalysts to spiritual/psychic transformation and enhanced social communion. I am particularly interested in restorative rituals that derive from Christian mysticism.
- As a visual anthropologist, I am also looking to locate visual exteriorizations of psychic states of transformation, visual metaphors for the contexts of restorative rituals. I am attempting to locate the visual analogues and signs that prompt and help to explain—in phenomenological terms—the psychological processes that people undergo during such rituals.
- To foreground this research, this past summer I travelled to the city of Lourdes and the Pyrenees regions of France and Spain and walked a portion of the *Camino Santiago*, exploring the iconography of pilgrimage, and to locating meaning and context in this transformative peregrination as a large-scale restorative ritual.
- <https://youtu.be/ZE2w4KDOrgM>, Llibre Vermell to Montserrat

Orienting Questions

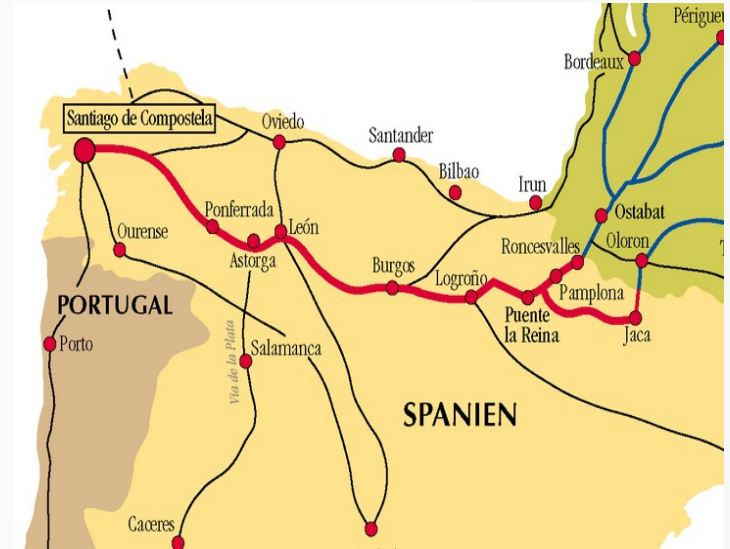
- The numbers of the people who undertake the *Camino Santiago* and who participate in *Taize* in France, particularly under the age of 30, continues to grow every year, even as secularism among younger generations is also growing. Why is that?
- There is a continuing emergence of syncretic rituals and new age/old age spiritualism in the SF Bay Area, particularly in my own city of Petaluma. Why are these rituals, many of which reference medieval Christian mysticism, becoming more popular?
- What do visual symbols in religious iconography, tourism, and topography reveal about the deeper meanings and contexts of restorative rituals?



Orienting Frameworks

My orienting research frameworks derive from:

- Van Gennep's notion of liminality & Victor Turner's concept of the *Liminoid*
- The embodied psychological/physical processes of walking
- Through the lens of spiritual tourism
- The research of pilgrimage—as earlier traditions in all three monotheistic faiths—but particularly pilgrimage derived from Christian mysticism as a direct experience of the numinous unmediated by church hierarchy.
- Restorative rituals as a New Age Spiritualism—syncretic religious/therapeutic ritual practices gaining traction in the U.S. and around the world.



Framing the Passages of the *Camino*

Through Van Gennep's stages of Liminality

Arnold Van Gennep coined the term *liminality* in his "Rites de Passage," a work that explores and develops the concept of liminality in the context of rites in small-scale societies.

The three-fold structure, as established by van Gennep, is made up of the following components:

- *Separation* (first stage)
- *Liminal rites* or initiation (second stage)
- Return or *reincorporation* (third stage)

Turner's Concept of the *Liminoid*:

- In 1974, Victor Turner coined the term *liminoid* to refer to experiences that have characteristics of liminal experiences but are optional and do not involve a resolution of a personal crisis. (A graduation ceremony might be regarded as liminal while attending a rock concert might be understood to be liminoid).
- The liminal is part of society, an aspect of social or religious rite, while the liminoid is a break from society, part of "play" or "playing." Turner stated that liminal rites are becoming diminished in industrial societies and 'forged the concept of "liminoid" rituals for analogous but secular phenomena' such as attending rock concerts and other rituals forged for the purpose of personal growth or shared experience.

Camino de Santiago

Visualizing the Transformation of Body, Mind, Spirit

The Body (1st stage) becomes fatigued from the trail over the low point of the Pyrenees at 3000 feet from St. Jean => Pied do Port over the hills to Roncevalle, Spain. The body is test.



The Mind (2nd stage) is tested from in the plains and on the grand trails and roads from Burgos, to Leon. The pilgrim => goes inward at this point to try and reconcile mindfulness with horizons and distances.



The Spirit (3rd stage) reawakens in the rolling hills from Leon to Santiago Compostela as towns and population become part of the trail again, a reincorporation =>

The landscapes mirror psychological processes of transformation and liminality.



Preliminoid Phases

Taking Personal Inventory While Creating a Hiking “Inventory”

This stage involves a metaphorical "death", as the initiate is forced to leave something behind by breaking with previous practices and routines.

- Travel to a foreign location, and orientation processes
- Contested quote: “Pilgrims rarely engaged in conversations where personal histories were discussed” (Salvin 2003:12).
- Ethnographers need only look for subtext and intertext within the pilgrim’s motivations for doing such a walk.



Preliminoid to liminoid

Walking & Exercise as a Means to Open and Sustain Psychological Space

Walking as

- The technique by which to bring oneself back to the present moment
- “A method of [re] establishing rhythm, a kind of ‘being-in-the-world’” (Csordas 1994:9-10).

Labyrinth Walks

- Various labyrinth patterns have been found all over the world from Iceland to Mexico, with the earliest European labyrinths possibly dating from 2000 BC. Many cultures have seen in the labyrinth a metaphor for life itself, filled with twists and turns but leading to one end.
- The Chartres labyrinth was placed in the Cathedral at the dawn of the 13th century. It was a pathway of peace and reconciliation during a time of war and enormous conflict. For centuries, Chartres was a place of pilgrimage. Travellers on the road from France to Spain would stop there to use the labyrinth as part of their journey to Santiago Compostela.
- During the French Revolution, the Chartres labyrinth was covered with chairs and fell out of use until Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress and Dean Alan Jones of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco arrived and began to revive the ancient practice of walking the labyrinth. Dr. Artress launched Veriditas, the home of the global labyrinth movement that trains facilitators around the world and hosts yearly pilgrimages to Chartres Cathedral.



Liminoidal Rites

Running of the Bulls Pamplona as Metaphorical Death

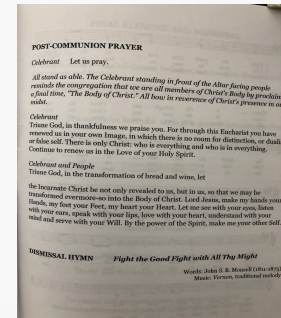
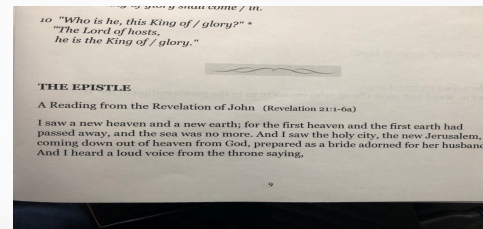
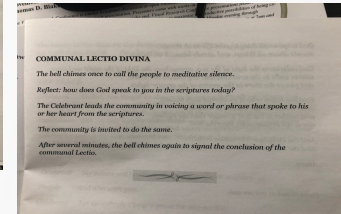
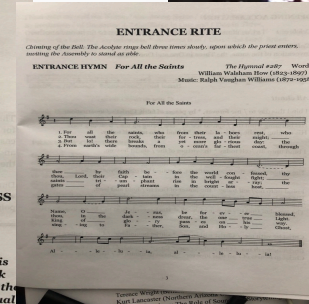
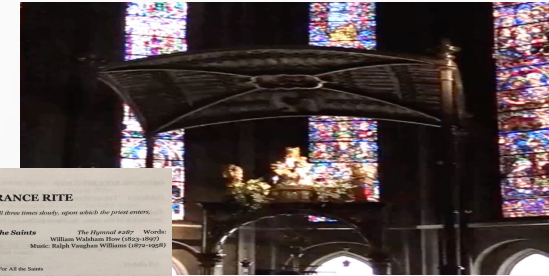
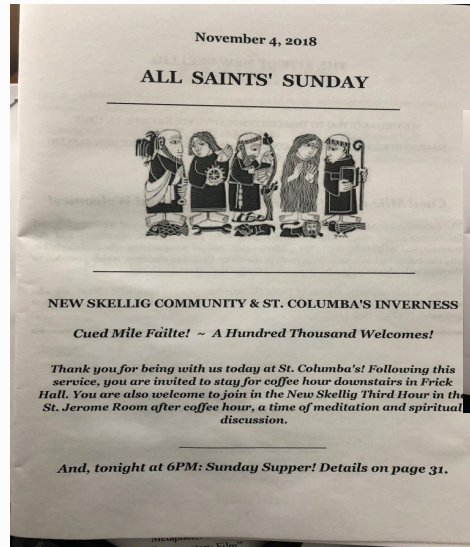
- First, the rite "must follow a strictly prescribed sequence, where everybody knows what to do and how".
- Second, everything must be done "under the authority of a master of ceremonies." The destructive nature of this rite allows for considerable changes to be made to the identity of the initiate.
- This middle stage (when the transition takes place) "implies an actual passing through the threshold that marks the boundary between two phases"



Liminoïdal Ritual

The Architecture of Syncretic Religious Service as Restorative Rituals

- Saint Columba's Episcopal Church (Inverness, CA) offers a Celtic Christian Service once a month with a liturgy that so many religions services is formatted around a liminal process whereby there is an (1) entrance rite (first stage), scriptural readings that are meant to invoke transformation and (second stage), and reincorporation and *communitas* (third stage).
- Yet in the Celtic liturgy, there is a downplaying of moralizing, and an emphasis of the everyday sainthood or parishioners.



Post Liminoidal Rites: Taize & Finisterra

“During this stage, the initiate is re-incorporated into society with a new identity, as a ‘new’ being”

- A Catholic Priest, Brother Roger risked his life aided Jews during the roundup Jewish citizens in France in WWII, after the war he received special permission to invite the German POWs into his home. He wanted to find a more inclusive way for people to find communion after war, destruction, and religious division. To that end, he set off for Taize, a tiny village in the Burgundy region of France where he wanted to establish a "Parable of Peace."
- Taize is a simple, stripped down version of a religious service composed of chants and singing, a Kirtan for lay Christians and agnostics. Taize in a very real sense assumes the seeker or practitioner has already experienced a negatively liminal experience from war or sorrow, and that simple reincorporation is required as a quintessential ritual and practice. At some points in Taize there are meditations, or "inhabited silences," inviting parishioners out of isolation brought upon by loss, or sorrow.
- Now, every day, busloads of people from all different nationalities and religions pour into this bucolic French village to sit in silence, light candles for peace and sing together in a plethora of diverse languages.
- And Taize is beginning to be practiced in Petaluma and San Francisco in varied incarnations.
- Worn shoes on the coast of Spain represent the identity that the pilgrim of the Camino Santiago leaves behind. =>

Ubi caritas

U-bi ca-ri-tas et a-mor, U-bi ca-ri-tas De-us i-bi est.

-Silent meditation -

O Divina Mater, da nobis pacem Catherine Braslavsky
Braslavsky Ensemble

Kindness Naomi Shahib Nye
Larry Robinson

Peace I Leave You Taize
Peace I leave You, Peace I give
Let your hearts be free from fear, peace I leave to you



The *Camino* Through a Contested Lens

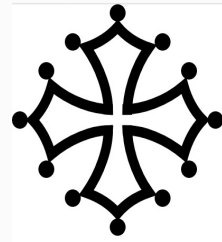
Spiritual Tourism Research

- A spiritual tourist, according to Alex Norman, is a “tourist who undertakes a spiritual practice or seeks spiritual progression in the course of their travels, usually with the intention of gaining ‘spiritual benefit’ “ (17) as “ongoing projects of self-improvement” (207). I agree more strongly with Norman’s assessment of Camino walkers are motivated by a “suite of liminal, meditative, Romanic-inspired life changing processes and practices” (181).
- To suggest terms like “pilgrimage” have been “appropriated to any kind of journey that has abstract dimensions” is to nullify that pilgrimage has always been a communal event and a personal transformative process which well qualify so many seemingly ubiquitous liminoidal events where travel is concerned.
- Camino as a double entendre, as “road” and as a “way.” *Buen Camino* then translates to “have a good walk,” “find a good path (psychological) forward”
- The research of spiritual tourism may be overly reductive in many ways, but right on the mark in other observable ways.
- “Pernicious banality” of marketing of spiritual tourism, whereas pilgrims commonly seek a momentary and voluntary simplicity to their thoughts, and presence in their actions. *Picture of black madonnas in rows sold at Montserrat =>*



The Visual Christian Mystical Continuum

- While the roots of pilgrimage lie in the ancient past of Druidic, Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Celtic traditions, in our postmodern era, pilgrimage is being claimed as a restorative ritual unencumbered by dogma that appeals to the religious and non-religious seeker alike.
- There is still a need to explore is the resurgence of interest in heretical and persecuted variants of Christianity including Catharism, which are emerging in Southern France, Spain and the United States as a new age/old age spiritual practice in stark contrast with traditional hierarchical forms of Christianity such as Catholicism.



Preliminary Findings

- Though the *Camino Santiago* can be understood in the broader context of spiritual tourism, I would also suggest that this pilgrimage derives much of its visuality from deep connections to European mysticism, practices that were counter-hierarchical in their day.
- “New age/old age spiritual practices like Taize, Evensong, Labyrinth walks, or yoga practiced in Cathedrals have deep roots in counter-hierarchical traditions such as the Christian Gnostic practices like those of the Cathars.
- The new syncretic Christian practices are increasingly inter-faith, anti-dogmatic, finding “Christ” in all of us, eschewing sternness and morality, embracing poetry and “journey”—becoming far more accessible to a lay Christian or agnostic audience
- The new syncretic practices are far more focused upon psychological and communal renewal—less patriarchal, far more inclusive of women as leaders, and more celebratory of the joy of being.
- The popularity of new/old restorative rituals may well derive from what theologian/scholar Olivier Clement has stated in *Taize” A Meaning to Life* has found in his research as a need in this current era for:
 - Knowing ourselves with senses pacified and transfigured
 - Enhancing trust in the social communities in which we live
 - A rediscovery of the “joy of being”

Orienting Theory and Literature

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