

The Pilgrim-Writer: The transformative potential of the language arts and pilgrimage – an embodied investigation of self, drawing on theory and practice, including my own direct experience of contemporary pilgrimage and ‘linguaging’.

By

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Abstract

This thesis explores the transformative potential of the language arts and pilgrimage. The writer presents an embodied investigation of herself, drawing on theories of pilgrimage and writing, and her own direct experience of identifying as a pilgrim-writer. The thesis is firmly located in Canterbury, a historic and contemporary pilgrimage centre, and home to Canterbury Christ Church University, on the site of the Anglo-Saxon St Augustine's Abbey, and uses the Via Francigena, a pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome first documented in the tenth century as an example of a historical pilgrim route in contemporary use.

Making a direct connection between the specific and material, and the esoteric and spiritual is a theme of the thesis. Setting pilgrimage in context of pre-modern, post-modern and contemporary practice, she examines notions of healing, ritual, transformation, transcendence, deep ecology and modern gnosis as mechanisms for personal change.

As well as drawing on her own experience, she interrogates five published pilgrimage memoirs of the Via Francigena as exemplars of narratives of personal transformation through pilgrimage. She explores memoir alongside other kinds of personal writing such as diaries, journals, poetry and fiction, as documents of transformation.

The thesis acts as a metaphorical pilgrimage, taking the reader and writer on an autoethnographic journey through questions of the symbolic and literal aspects of what it means to walk through a landscape to a place of sacred significance.

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Table 1: A Taxonomy of Pilgrimage

1. Introduction

1.1 The Pilgrim-Writer – examples of writing

Why narrative? What kind of narrative? And whose narrative? This question underpins my inquiry into stories of pilgrimage, writing and transformation.

I begin with this justification from Laurel Richardson (1990, p.65) who was one of the first to include poetry and story in academic research.

Narratives exist at the everyday, autobiographical, biographical and collective levels. They reflect the universal human experience of time and link the past, present and future. Narrative links sociology to literature and to history. The human experience of stability and transformation becomes sociologically accessible. Narrative gives room for the expression of our individual and shared fates, our personal and communal worlds. Narrative permits the individual, the society, or the group to explain its experiences of temporality because narrative attends to and grows out of temporality... Narrative is the best way to understand the human experience because it is the way humans understand their lives.

Key concepts here are ‘the human experience of stability and transformation’, ‘personal and communal worlds’ and ‘experiences of temporality’.

By way of example, there follows an extract transcribed from one of my journals, written in Rheims in France, on the last day of a walking pilgrimage towards Rome.

Unedited diary entry – Red Notebook – Thursday 25th July 2019

St James!!

Sitting in the aircon at Rheims Station. HOT sweaty night but fun evening – late supper at Gaulois Brasserie – niçoise for me, E. moule frites, walk to Porte

de Mars – enormous – then via grand streets back to the cathedral – great light spectacular – then TacoShake – ice cream/milkshake – bed, music around 11.30 – fractured sleep – fan annoying but essential – till 9am dozing.

DREAM Nata and Charlotte. Nata very fat in bed/hospital but then eating cherries in a messy way leaving a pile of stones which I tidy up.

Shower, pleasant breakfast, cooler out of our room. Cathedral again – lots to ponder esp. analogy of architecture with dreaming and personhood – the cathedral never fully built but now – permanent restoration project.

Dangerously hot in the sun - instant sensation of baking alive – waiting for the Paris train.

READ Ilya Kaminsky POETRY b. 1977

plus article Guardian: Poetry interview

Friday 19th July 2019

(Brezhnev died and Elvis in 1977)

Poems aren't just about an event.

They become an event themselves.

Just a few words.

Lorca Santiago poem

Rilke ALL

There now follows an expanded version in which I explore the raw data of my journal and attempt to give it some context. The raw journal entry is written for myself as a record and aide memoire, whereas what follows has the sense of what Celia Hunt (2013, pp.31-33) calls 'an imagined reader'. In this case, my imagined readers include myself and my PhD examiners.

Expanded diary entry – Thursday 25th July 2019 revised 10th January 2022

This was the end of our attempt in 2019 to walk from Canterbury to Rome as pilgrims. It was the festival of St James, to whom the shrine in Compostela is dedicated. Record-breaking high temperatures had made walking dangerous. We had bailed out of our walk in St Gobain on Monday 22nd July continuing by public transport to Leon and Rheims, and then onto Paris and the Eurostar. The temperature in Rheims on the 25th July 2019, when I wrote that entry, was 41 degrees Centigrade and I remember feeling dizzy and nauseous walking across the shadeless square in front of Rheims station. Officials were handing out plastic bottles of water in the waiting room. Later that day, walking the short distance from the Gare de 'Est to the Gare de Nord in Paris, there was a sense of something apocalyptic in the deserted streets. The effects of climate change felt undeniable and terrifying. The buildings shimmered in the heat, and we walked deliberately and slowly. I was tearfully relieved making it into the shade of the station and onto an early train back to London. There were rumours that the heat would make train travel impossible, rails buckling in the extreme temperature.

We planned to resume our pilgrimage in spring 2020. Family responsibilities meant my husband spent March 2020 in Amsterdam. I went to join him there for a few days from the 9th March. We visited a deserted Rijksmuseum the day before it (and restaurants, sex shops, coffee shops and other public places) closed and I returned to Canterbury on the train, on the 15th March 2020, with stockpiled paracetamol and sanitiser.

Back to the diary entry.

The dream concerned two women friends and colleagues – the simple interpretation begins with the assumption they both represent aspects of myself. Cherries = indulgence, virginity, delight? Making a mess of my life?

Typically, in this entry, I'm thinking about poetry as well as pilgrimage and the interface between writing and pilgrimage is a topic of this thesis. Here is a link to the interview I must have read online and noted:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jul/19/ilya-kaminsky-interview>

And this is the quotation from Ilya Kaminsky in the interview, talking about his book, 'The Deaf Republic':

“I am a lyric poet but I wanted to tell a story, so I had to find a way to do it. It had to be this minimalist telling of a large story. I think great poems are like spells. They’re not just about an event. They become an event themselves. Even without wanting to, you remember them.” (Guardian, 19th July 2019)

This thesis is both a piece of writing and an event. Re-reading the interview, I also note:

He [ie Kaminsky] still cleaves to his teenage belief that poetry is a private language, but happily it is one that contains an existential paradox. “Every real poet is a private poet, but if they are a good poet their language will be powerful enough to speak privately to many people at the same time.” (Guardian, 19th July 2019)

The conflation of Brezhnev and Elvis puzzles me. In the Kaminsky interview, Ilya dates his deafness, at the age of four, from complications following mumps, to the day Brezhnev dies. He recalls an altercation on a trolley bus in Odessa, where the family still lived, that he was unable to hear, and people dressed in mourning clothes. Brezhnev died on 10th November 1982. Elvis died 16th August 1977 and my father in May 1977 – my dad and Elvis were both born in 1935. I can’t recall why I put those two thoughts together – although perhaps a version of me as a fatherless child, analogous to Ilya-as-a-deaf-person, was ‘born’ in 1977.

I’m also unsure why there’s a reference to Lorca – he is one of my favourite poets. He wrote 6 poems in Gallego (Galician) including a Madrigal to Santiago in 1935.

1.2 What is a Pilgrim-Writer?

The above diary extract and commentary, I hope, set the scene for my interests and the scope of this thesis.

I consider myself to be a pilgrim and a writer. In an article for the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome Newsletter, I wrote (Field, 2021, p.22) ‘It’s definitely pilgrim-writer rather than pilgrim/writer as the two roles, when I’m happiest, are fused rather than distinct.’

This thesis explores the meaning of that identity in the context of the increasing popularity of pilgrimage in Western Europe, in its many guises, in the early twenty-first century. My research includes and draws on my own writing in a variety of forms, including raw diary entries, as above, and more formal pieces such as published memoir and poems. Recursively, in keeping with the nature of the entire thesis, I am, because the thesis is written by me, one of the pilgrim-writers under consideration.

How we choose to write raises two metawriting issues: guiding metaphor and narrative voice. Our choices are simultaneously political, poetic, methodological, and theoretical. (Richardson, 1997, p.17)

I would like to add, 'situational' to the adjectives listed by Richardson. At the risk of yet more circularity, the writing of this thesis has been a surrogate pilgrimage. My intention to follow the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome, as action-research in parallel with my studies, was first stymied by the dangerous heatwave of July 2019 and was subsequently curtailed by the pandemic. I began my PhD studies in October 2019 and as I complete them in September 2022, I hope to resume my walking.

A pilgrimage and a text are typically linear. Pilgrimages and texts are also iterative in that they may be undertaken repeatedly. A pilgrimage may include diversions and involve walking there-and-back. As I have edited, reordered, and revised the contents of this thesis, a recurring image has been that of a nautilus shell, a spiral form which conforms to the rules of sacred geometry. In a dream, early in my research, I was inside a giant nautilus shell, feeling its satin surfaces as I searched for a handhold. Three years on, I am still grasping for purchase in this exploration of pilgrimage and language. The handholds remain elusive, but the patterning of the ever-circling shell is more apparent, and still more compelling. Research is a dynamic interaction between travelling inwards to the core of something and spiralling outwards to infinity, and so is pilgrimage.

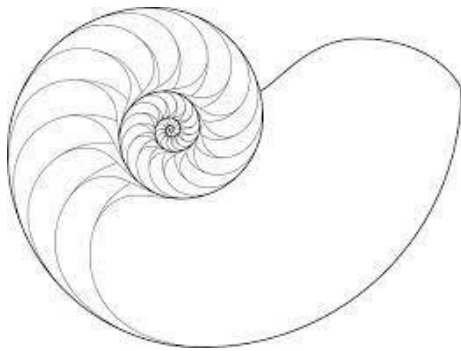
Gert Biesta (2013, p.xi), best-known as a writer on education, describes the push-pull between linearity and arguments that are, in his words, 'more kaleidoscopic than linear', as follows:

... any act of creation (including education) is at best a dialogue between one's intentions and the material one works with, and thus a process in which both have a voice, and both have a role to play. (Biesta, 2013, p.xi)

A dialogue suggests a to-and-fro, a twoness, a binary. As I have discovered through my interrogation of the pilgrim-writer, at the heart of this endeavour is a move towards holism, a realisation that intentions and 'material' cannot be divided. Here, I used 'heart' is a metaphor. I also considered 'core', 'centre', 'root' as alternatives and each would give a different impression and raise different questions. Biesta above uses 'material' as a metaphor, amplified by the verb 'work', which suggests an agent acting on a substance, that is working material. The other metaphors in this short quotation include the visual image of a kaleidoscope, the aural image of the voices in dialogue and finally the word role invokes the theatre where motivations and subject matter are part of a drama. All these metaphors apply to my thesis. In addition, I am dissolved by pilgrimage, enlarged by walking in landscapes, crushed by recent events, and simultaneously and paradoxically, fully embodied as I arrive at a sacred destination. One theme of this thesis is how pilgrimage and writing are enactments of metaphors.

A shell, unlike a dialogue, is a material object, with archetypal and totemic qualities. The nautilus has a line or thread spiralling to the core of the pilgrim-writer, which also expands outwards and merges with the world. At the centre, it is infinitesimally small, at the opening it becomes one with everything. A shell is home to a sea creature, a dwelling place and home is what the pilgrim leaves and returns to. The word 'nautilus' is the Greek for sailor which has personal associations with my late merchant-seaman father. The giant nautilus shell is often transformed into a decoration, adorned with jewels and precious metal. A shell is a carapace which begs the question, (not addressed in this thesis) of what is being hidden or protected by my pilgrim-writer identity. In this formulation, it is me, my whole self, that is the nautilus, not just my research.

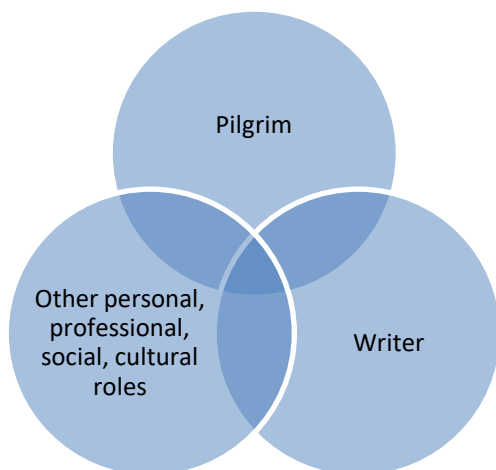
Figure 1: **The Nautilus Shell as Pilgrim-Writer**



(Source: istockphoto.com)

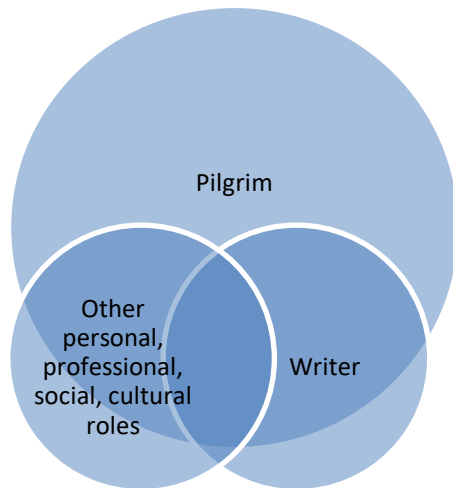
Rather than choosing an object, and possibly over-stretching a symbol or metaphor, it is possible to present the questions more schematically. There are intersecting 'ways of being' or dimensions of the self that can be represented as Venn diagrams or concentric circles, that is, in an abstract rather than concrete form. For example, Figure 2 shows an overlap with myself as Pilgrim-Writer and the other roles I play in the world.

Figure 2: **Pilgrim-Writer as intersection of distinct roles**



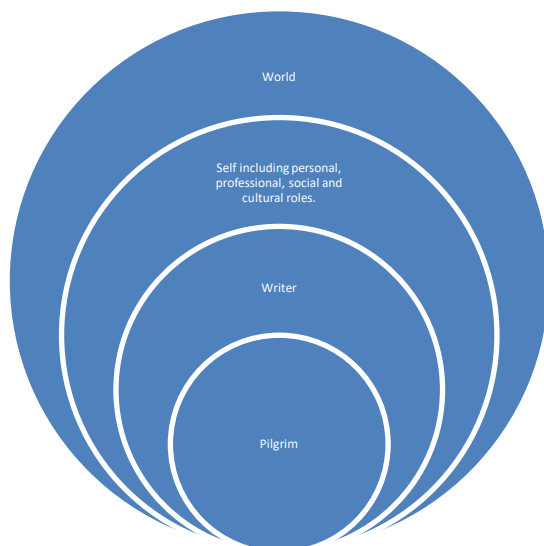
But it could be argued that my role as a pilgrim informs the other two domains as in Figure 3. The relative size of the circles and the intersections can change over time.

Figure 3: **Pilgrim as primary identity**



Finally, Figure 4 shows how these personal roles are subsumed one into another, and finally into the world at large. This suggests a hierarchy from the very specific, rippling outwards to the world and oneness. Read in the opposite direction, it gives a sense of going inwards towards a core identity.

Figure 4: **Nested identities of pilgrim and writer**



1.2 The question of time - Event = pilgrimage = thesis

Temporality is a theme throughout this thesis. As can be seen from the diary entry, and the subsequent expanded version above, written 'material' evolves, changes, is edited, rewritten, and reordered, before being presented at a specific point in time

Central to narratives of pilgrimage and/or transformation are notions of time. According to philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, the universality of narratives reflects a universal human tendency to set subjective experience into a temporal context. In my own examples above, I describe feeling x, seeing y, reading z on specific days, and relating x, y, and z to other times in my life. Ricoeur (1984, p.52) sees a narrative as a 'transcultural form of necessity'.

However, our subjective perception of time does not easily sit with a linear narrative. Phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl (1964) described how our present moment is imbued with an extended awareness of the past, or many pasts, and imagined futures. Richardson (1997, p.29) describes Husserl's position as 'an extended awareness of the past and the future within the present' and notes that a sense of discordance occurs when 'regret about the past or fear of the future impinges on the present'.

However, this extended awareness need not be discordant, but may be simply interesting. In the diary extracts with which I opened this section, I describe reading a newspaper interview with the poet Ilya Kaminsky in July 2019. I reread the interview in January 2022 as I worked on this thesis. As I read, I was catapulted (metaphor of movement) into events of 1977. And then, as I revised these chapters between March and September 2022, the war in Ukraine, meant that I had started following Kaminsky's Twitter feed, and reading his journalism. What Jung termed 'synchronicity' (Main, 2004, frontispiece), is a characteristic of the three years I have spent exploring the pilgrim-writer. The idea of ruptured time is a theme of

pilgrimage and writing. Jung specifies religious experience in the following quotation and I would generalise this to include other transformative experiences.

Religious experience is numinous .. and differs from all others in the way it transcends the ordinary categories of space, time and causality. Recently I have put a great deal of study into synchronicity (briefly, the 'rupture of time') and I have established that it closely resembles numinous experiences where space, time, and causality are abolished. (from Jung's 1952 interview with Mircea Eliade in W. McGuire and R.F.C.Hull, C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters, quoted in Main, 2004, frontispiece)

Richardson (1990, p.22) argues that different kinds of narrative access and codify our relationship with time in different ways. She identifies five 'sociologically significant' presentations of a narrative, namely: 'the everyday; the autobiographical; the biographical; the cultural; and ... the collective story' (Richardson, 1990, p.22). These categories overlap, and all can be both spoken or written, private or published and offer the writer (or speaker) ways of organising experiences of daily time that explain and justify sequences of events. The continuum from individual narratives to those that are cultural or collective can drive social cohesion and social change. Shared narratives are ultimately what constitutes history. Evolving collective narratives can lead to consciousness-raising and ultimately transformation in society or constituent groups. These different kinds of narrative have different relationships with time.

As Alhadeff-Jones (2017, p.17) states, 'time' is a 'familiar stranger', exemplified by the much-quoted lines in Augustine's 'Confessions': 'What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.' (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, p.17).

Alhadeff-Jones (2017, pp.17-18) goes on to explore a series of so-called 'aporia', irreconcilable truths or perceptions about time. These include the cosmological and physical natures of measurable time, and the allocating of numbers to concepts like 'before' and 'after', set against the capacity of an individual to order their subjective experience 'according to an internal notion of time grounded in the present, and

linked to past and future'. The question remains whether external or cosmological time can exist without a 'psyche' or rational soul to perceive it, Conversely, can internal time be perceived independently of changes in the external world?

French philosopher, Henri Bergson (2007, p.4) distinguished between 'temps' and 'durée', 'temps' referring to spatial time and 'durée' or duration, the subjective experience of moments which cannot be measured or pinned down. He uses a variety of metaphors such as a continually unspooling thread of life as we move towards death, alongside another rolling up our memories, and elsewhere, a spectrum of colours that mingle and merge with a line of feeling running through it. Ultimately, though, 'durée' is an inexpressible, qualitative, multiplicity, analogous to Biesta's kaleidoscope.

These aporia persist in the writings of subsequent philosophers and Alhadeff-Jones cites phenomenologist Edmund Husserl's consideration of the contradictory metaphors we use to conceptualise time, including 'flow, emergence, impregnation and creation' and the unresolvable paradox of our sense of being 'surrounded by the vastness of an eternal time'. That is, we are 'in it' and yet experience it intimately as being in our internal consciousness. (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, p.19).

One often-reported aspect of the pilgrimage experience is an altered sense of time. Sonia Overall (2021, p.161) in her account of a 'secular pilgrimage' from Canterbury to Walsingham, describes having to stop walking when she suffers an infected foot. Her memoir is called 'Heavy Time' and a concern with the subjective experience of time is a motif throughout. In the following quotation, time assumes a material reality and she uses the metaphor of time as a liquid that cannot be retrieved.

A hiatus. Days wash in and out. My foot is elevated, seeping, throbbing.
Time, precious and trickling away, becomes soupy with lack of movement...
I delay cancelling stops until the last, willing the foot back into wholeness,
desperate to recover plans. But there is no undoing what is done. I have to
swallow my defeat and wait, wait, wait.

The dynamic between specific measurable chronological time and the Alhadeff-Jones' idea of the 'vastness of an eternal time' can be characterised as Chronos vs Kairos. Chronos is measurable, daily time and Kairos is the opportune moment, the window into eternity. I have alluded to dreams and the synchronicities that underly superficially objective endeavours. My pilgrimages, my work as a pilgrim-writer, and this thesis, aspire to enter the realm of Kairos. The acknowledgement of different kinds of narratives, I suggest, permits an inter- and intra-subjectivity which underlies my approach. Professor Jeffrey Kripal (2016, p.6), J. Newton Rayzor Chair in Philosophy and Religious Thought at Rice University, expresses this position as follows:

Reality is not just made of numbers, it turns out. It is also made of words and narratives. We are not just living in a gigantic machine. We are also living in a whirl of stories and dreams. It is not 'just a story' either, as the story always tells us something about the story-teller just as the dream always tells us something about the dreamer. The project then becomes not simply one of measurement, but also one of meaning. The question becomes not 'How can we measure or prove the dream?' but 'What is the dream trying to tell us?'. We are not after explanation here. We are after understanding, wisdom, gnosis.

In the final months of revising this thesis, April-September 2022, I suffered a series of eye problems requiring several surgeries. I also caught Covid for the first time and had a bad reaction to a Covid booster. In July 2022, Canterbury endured an unprecedented heatwave, reminiscent of the one in France, described in my 2019 journal. During this time, I reread Arthur Frank's classic text on illness and narrative, 'The Wounded Storyteller' (1995). Like Laurel Richardson, quoted at the top of this chapter, Frank (1995, pp.xii-xiii) unpicks motivations for telling stories. He too moves from the individual to the collective.

In wounded storytelling the physical act becomes the ethical act. Kierkegaard wrote of the ethical person as the editor of his life: to tell one's life is to assume responsibility for that life. This responsibility expands. In stories, the teller not only recovers her voice; she becomes witness to the

conditions that rob others of their voices. When any person recovers his voice, many people begin to speak through that story.

On reading this, the work of the pilgrim-writer took on a new dimension for me. I was literally wounded by surgery, but more significantly, felt the woundedness of the earth speaking through me in the fires, the dying trees, the dried-up rivers. I felt rage and grief at what has been squandered, the resulting social injustice and the seemingly unstoppable despoilation of our beautiful world. Pilgrimage became one of the voices that needs to speak and being a pilgrim-writer began to feel like a vocation.

1.3 In search of a form - structuring pilgrimage and this thesis

Having set the context, I will now explain the structure of my thesis, and the challenges and assumptions implicit in perceiving extant structures, or imposing arbitrary ones, in both writing and pilgrimage.

Many theorists of pilgrimage have divided the pilgrim experience into stages. These stages are essentially descriptive. For example, Phil Cousineau in *The Art of Pilgrimage* (1998), suggests seven stages are involved in making a pilgrimage. Namely:

- The Longing
- The Call
- Departure
- The Pilgrim's Way
- The Labyrinth
- Arrival
- Bringing Back the Boon.

A booklet sold in Canterbury Cathedral gift shop, *Pilgrim's Guide and Journal* (Kihlstrom, 2009), lists six stages as:

- The Yearning
- Preparation
- The Journey
- The Arrival
- The Sacred Experience
- The Return

These struck me as analogous to the 'journey' of undertaking of research into the pilgrim-writer and I used them as a frame to structure my own thinking and theorising. The seven sections I chose were:

1. The Longing
2. Call to Action
3. Departure
4. The Journey and Transformation
5. The Metaphorical or Inner Pilgrimage
6. The Arrival
7. The Return or Boon

A typical PhD in Education or Social Sciences includes the headings Literature Review, Methodology and so on (Chris Beighton, October 2019, CCCU Researcher Development Programme). These can be mapped onto the stages of pilgrimage. For example, The Longing, whether to research a topic or undertake an actual pilgrimage, includes reading and taking decisions about what to include (on paper, or in a rucksack), is analogous to the Literature Review. The Call to Action requires a Methodology, both on the path and in the choice of theoretical frames through which to interrogate a research topic. After taking the Journey, The Arrival is an examination of findings, discoveries, and conclusions. Finally, the Return or Boon, is a reclaiming and rediscovery of the researcher, in this case, myself as a pilgrim-writer, and a rekindling of the Longing to research further.

Of course, these stages are arbitrary, and it would be possible to condense or expand the pilgrimage experience, and by analogy, this thesis, into any number of different stages. I will now look at some different approaches to narrative structure.

The basic narrative structure of 'beginning, middle, end' goes back to Aristotle's analysis of Tragedy in Ancient Greece and can be further elaborated as 'complication, change, denouement' or 'introduction, rise, climax, return or fall, and catastrophe' (as cited in Alison, 2019, p.10). Using this structure, the three stages, or 'Acts' in a pilgrimage, can be characterised as Departure, Journey, Return. This could be expanded into a Five-Act structure, consisting of, for example, Preparation, Departure, Journey, Arrival, Return. This breaking-down of stages into ever smaller ones can go on indefinitely. The pilgrimage experience could be framed as a seventeen-stage 'Hero's Journey' first expounded by mythologist, Joseph Campbell (1949), a concept that is used in many contexts.

Campbell (1949) describes the Hero's Journey as a 'monomyth', a term he borrowed from James Joyce's 1939 novel 'Finnegan's Wake'. He claimed that the Hero's Journey qualifies as a monomyth because its story structure is common to narratives in all contexts across all cultures. This idea has been embraced by screen writers (such as John Yorke and Christopher Vogler), novelists and oral storytellers. It has also been incorporated into mythopoetic approaches to psychotherapy, such as the Men's Movement, especially by writers such as Robert Bly (2001, originally published in 1990). The Hero's Journey has strong links to Jungian psychology and archetypes, including what we might now see as dated, essentialist views on sexuality and gender. Campbell's monomyth has been critiqued for being sexist, ethnocentric, and selective in its use of examples excluding those narratives which do not fit the pattern. It is worth noting that Cousineau (1998), whilst best known for his writing on pilgrimage, has also edited Joseph Campbell's works (Campbell, 2003) so there is a direct concordance with his pilgrimage stages and the Hero's Journey.

Alternative Approaches

As I explore in this thesis, and as is suggested by the diary entries quoted at the top of this section, notions of one coherent narrative, linearity, and a definable sequence

of events, do not reflect my subjective experience, of pilgrimage nor of this research project.

Written accounts though can resist notions of linearity, monomyths and a universal dramatic structure, both in raw forms (splurging in a journal) or when edited, such as modernist novels and poetry. In her book, 'Meander, Spiral, Explode', Jane Alison (2019, p.12) debunks the idea of Aristotle's analysis of dramatic tragedy being universally applicable to other forms, especially the novel. She quotes Terry Eagleton:

'The point about the novel ... is not just that it eludes definitions, but that it actively undermines them. It is less a genre than an anti-genre. It cannabilizes other literary modes and mixes the bits and pieces promiscuously together. You can find poetry and dramatic dialogue in the novel, along with epic, pastoral, satire, history, elegy, tragedy and any number of literary modes'.

Alison employs Aristotle's concept of 'hylomorphism', the idea that both artefacts and living beings are comprised of matter and form. She equates form with the soul and matter with the body. If the body is a piece of writing, that is 'matter', then its soul or 'animating shape' corresponds to form and 'should seek to approximate the shape of our experience'. These forms reflect organic shapes, in keeping with Aristotle's view of 'art forms as organic beings' (Alison, 2019, p.15). As well as the classic 'arc' described above, she suggests the following shapes and patterns as being applicable to a piece of writing. This is from the Contents (Alison, 2019) page of her book:

PRIMARY ELEMENTS

1. Point, Line, Texture
2. Movement and Flow
3. Color

PATTERNS

4. Waves

5. Wavelets
6. Meanders
7. Spirals
8. Radials or Explosions
9. Networks and Cells
10. Fractals
11. Tsunami?

All these patterns can be applied to the experience of pilgrimage whilst acknowledging that pilgrimage, like a work of literature, is a holistic experience that loses meaning when subdivided. The stages I listed can occur simultaneously and iteratively. For example, the Longing, which encourages someone to begin either research or a pilgrimage, does not disappear as they undertake the Journey and may increase. A haiku by Japanese pilgrim, Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), expresses this well:

In Kyoto
hearing the cuckoo,
I long for Kyoto (Bashō, trans Jane Hirshfield in Hirshfield, 1997, p.87)

To use Alison's analysis, the reoccurrence of Longing in different forms during a pilgrimage is an example of a fractal pattern where the same form repeats itself on a different scale. Pilgrimage, and writing, are full of these: a day's walk is a microcosm of the entire pilgrimage Journey. Every day consists of a series of Arrivals before the final Arrival, after many days' walking, at a shrine. Such fractals can also form a spiral, reflecting the nautilus shell referred to earlier. However, it is possible to have cyclical patterns (the day, the year) within a linear structure as Wooding (2020, p.34) describes.

A monastic theologian would find in this a symbolism of the liturgy of hours. Each day is a cycle of prayer from the morning to the night office—a pattern of prayer that marks the passing of the day. But if each day is a cycle, in Christian theology life on earth is not a cycle; it begins with birth and it ends

with death, symbolized in the liturgy by the anniversaries of Jesus's birth and death.

A metaphor for holism is that of a tapestry in which the pattern depends on different coloured threads coming together to comprise an image. The transformational qualities of pilgrimage, examined at length later, are related to aspects of deep ecology (Abram, 1996, 2010). Specifically, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), sees the world as a system in which life forms are woven together, the various threads all being essential to the whole. This approach is described in detail by Kimmerer (2020) in her book 'Braiding Sweetgrass' which explores TEK using the central image of weaving. The process of writing and editing this thesis is a form of braiding and weaving where threads re-emerge in different guises throughout.

This idea of two different ways of viewing the world, one linear and the other holistic, reflects the theory of a divided brain, and by extension, mind, put forward by Ian McGilchrist. In his 2010 consideration of neurological research on the two different hemispheres of the human brain, 'The Master and His Emissary', he lists numerous studies in support of the claim that we have two brains in one. Whilst it could be argued that McGilchrist's insistence on neurological evidence for his arguments is reductionist, the metaphor allows for a powerful exploration of how, as a single individual we have distinct ways of experiencing that world. McGilchrist argues that, because of language, the 'Master' (that is, our holistic brain) has become subservient to its 'Emissary' (the analytic, language-based brain), his choice of terms suggesting that this is a reversal of how things should be. Here, 'brain' is synecdoche for self. One of my hopes in this research is to offer a more nuanced approach so that the holistic experience of pilgrimage and pilgrim-writing is as important as an analysis of its constituent parts.

However, others have argued that rather than possessing two distinct experiential modes of being, our subjective experiences are complex, interwoven, and holistic, and often anomalous (for example, Kripal, 2010, 2017). Audrey Borenstein's (1976, p.287) gnomic observation that 'There is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others' is apposite. The key here is the idea of the self as multiplicity, just as pilgrimage is also 'a multiplicity'. Theories of story, such as

Campbell's, and analyses of pilgrimage, such as Cousineau's, are useful as a ladder, a series of handholds, or a way-marked path, but linearity may be an illusion.

This use of a linear structure as a scaffolding that may be later abandoned is true of creative writing. On my 2009 pilgrimage to Santiago, I abandoned several physical items. The following poem uses these real and figurative objects as a metonymy for my changing views of what constitutes a self, both generally and personally, during the writing of this thesis.

Camino

after 'Forgetfulness' by Billy Collins

The red vest was the first to go
followed obediently by the black one,
abandoned with a soap box and the fourth pair of socks.

Colloquial Spanish, the daffodil-yellow paperback
I'd carted with me for decades since school,
was given to a friend on the path.

Then, I lost the friend, somewhere near Astorga.
I left the front door key to the house I'd abandoned,
and a worn-out heart, high on the Cruz de Hierro.

In Sarria, I posted home my camera. Unburdened,
I walk more freely. Someone I used to be dawdles behind,
lost in the rainy woods, wondering at the eucalyptus.

(Victoria Field, January 2022, unpublished)

The notion of heroes and heroines as a narrative frame is increasingly questioned. For example, Kripal (2014, p.122) argues that the Hero's Journey is 'the male body talking' and is an account of the development of male sexuality. As my poem suggests, a self may be fragmented, and continually reinvented along the pilgrim

path. One of my findings is that a central theme of the pilgrim identity is also paradoxically, a loss of self, or a *kenosis* which is central to many rituals of transformation (Turner and Turner, 1974).

Arguably, there is a middle ground between the holistic and the linear. This is true of different literary forms. Whilst most narratives are linear, and in the West, we read left-to-right and down the page, poems move towards a more holistic presentation, where the shape on the page and the relationship between image, metre, rhyme, and structure are intertwined. Similarly, with pilgrimage, the boots on the path move in a line through the landscape, yet recollections may be holistic and out-of-time and place. This is reflected in the dream I described of the nautilus shell which still resonates as a fitting metaphorical structure for both this thesis and a pilgrimage, that is, a solid shape that contains a spiral.

The Ghazal

One specific structure that has informed my thinking about how to present my research is a poetic form, the *ghazal*. The ghazal has its roots in Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, and Hebrew literature and has been adapted by writers in English. In some ways, a ghazal is the opposite of a Hero's Journey. Even as it allows for forward progression, the poem has no interest in getting anywhere specific. The ghazal repeats sounds and images in a series of half-rhyming couplets, but the poem itself never reaches a conclusion nor resolution. It resists narrative structure and comes at its subject from different angles and perspectives. The Poetry School online guide to poetic forms comments:

Writing a ghazal is like looking in a broken mirror. The refrain determines the subject, but each couplet is like one of the shards of glass... The ghazal undoes the unities of voice, narrative, and argument that we are used to in the West. It frees you up to approach the subject from different angles, from different places. You can build up without having to stay in line. You can approach from as many angles as you want. It makes experimentalists of us all. (The Poetry School, 2021)

Given that I am drawing on many different disciplines and epistemologies, there may be a sense that I am undoing some of the 'unities of voice, narrative and argument'. Certainly, the image of looking into a broken mirror resonates with my own experience as one that is non-linear and at times fragmented, even as I attempt to impose a narrative structure on this thesis.

Like many researchers, I find a tension between structure and freedom, convention, and experiment. The domain of pilgrimage is full of paradox and contradictions. I attempted to follow the stages suggested by Cousineau (1998), whilst simultaneously acknowledging that what is presented may be more like a collage or a bricolage. Rather than my mirror being simply cracked, it has also been dropped so I am looking at a fragmented reflection of reality in the shards on the ground. The thesis may be seen as an exercise in re-assembling and reparation. As mentioned, in the summer of 2022, my sense of self, mediated through vision, fragmented literally. My view of pilgrimage as part of an urgent impulse to re-assemble the self and the world also began to crystallise.

So, to conclude, I have adopted a structure, adapted from Cousineau and others, which is loosely based on pilgrimage stages such as The Longing, The Call to Action, Departure, The Journey and Transformation, The Metaphorical or Inner Pilgrimage, The Arrival, The Return or Boon. However, the thesis does not follow a strictly linear trajectory, and themes and motifs appear and reappear, as they might in a *ghazal*. I have discovered that the pilgrim-writer is a dynamic entity and constantly changing.

2. Preparation - Call to Action

2.1 Towards A Theoretical Framework

Pilgrimage is a practice that can be documented. Pilgrims can be counted. They can be interviewed. The results can be presented as social science, sociology, anthropology, or tourism studies, drawing on positivist ideas of knowledge. The history of pilgrimage relates to religious studies and theology. My thesis draws on findings in these areas but my specific angle, and contribution to knowledge, is to investigate how the writing of pilgrimage narratives contributes to meaning-making, and my own subjective discoveries through that process.

The idea that any kind of writing can ever be objective has been challenged over the past several decades. In her monograph, *Writing Strategies: Reaching Diverse Audiences*, Laurel Richardson (1990, p.16) discusses the modernist belief in the transparency of language. Richardson (1990, pp.15-16) argues that 'rhetorical practices' exist 'in all the sciences but vary throughout the centuries' citing the difference between Charles Darwin's private diaries and his published works as an example of how convention can demand the adoption of a 'prescribed style'.

Styles of writing science are not fixed or neutral but reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms ...articles have become increasingly narrow in scope and focused on little bits of knowledge – as though knowledge 'really' were a bin of bits.

Richardson (1990, p.17) takes a polemical stance when considering prescribed writing formats in the social sciences, arguing that these are not neutral but reflect a certain set of values at a certain time.

How we are expected to write affects what we can write about. The referencing system in the social sciences discourages the use of footnotes, a place for secondary arguments, novel conjectures, and related ideas. Incorporated into the text, albeit in parentheses, are the publication dates for citations, as though this information counts the most. Knowledge is

constituted as focused, problem (i.e., hypothesis) centred, linear, straightforward. Other thoughts are extraneous. Inductively accomplished research is to be reported deductively; the argument is to be abstractable in 150 words or less; and researchers are to identify explicitly with a theoretical-methodological label. Each of these conventions favors – creates and sustains – a particular vision of what constitutes sociological knowledge.

I have already looked at questions of linearity in my Introduction. In the three decades since Laurel Richardson and others in sociology began to challenge the idea of knowledge as ‘linear and straightforward’, there has been a move away from the illusion of scientific objectivity to an acceptance that this is one ontological frame among many. I will now look at the work of three contemporary thinkers – Donna Haraway, Jeffrey Kripal and David Abram - who offer flexible frameworks through which I will consider the ‘pilgrim-writer’.

Donna Haraway and tentacularity

There are ways of presenting knowledge that allow for ‘novel conjectures.’ One such writer is philosopher of the post-human, Donna Haraway (2016, p.12):

It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make stories.

Haraway’s books and articles on science, the more-than-human, feminism, and her focus on the specific had an increasingly powerful influence on my thinking about pilgrimage. Initially, despite many people recommending her, I found her writing difficult, sometimes impenetrable, on the page. It was through listening to audiobooks that her thinking crept, rhizomatically, into my understanding of the world. Language at the speed of speech is analogous to walking by foot on a pilgrimage rather than flying or driving. Every step, every word, takes the time it takes. It’s impossible to skim an audio book or to skip ahead. Slow. Human time.

Lederman (2002, p.164) in a book review, wrote of Haraway:

A most surprising influence is the Catholicism of her upbringing—she was schooled by nuns and considered becoming a medical missionary. Although she no longer adheres to the tenets of the religion, Haraway attributes her linking of the figurative and the material to an indelible impression of the Eucharist. Place has also been defining Denver, where she grew up, as a borderland; California, as a blend of agriculture and technology, populated by “Californios”, as the location of the history of consciousness program of the University of California at Santa Cruz, where she was appointed to the first position in feminist theory in the United States and where she has trained multitudes of students, both graduates and undergraduates.

I resonate with this linking of the figurative with the material through an embodied practice (in Haraway’s case, the Eucharist and in mine, pilgrimage), alongside the defining influences of place.

Creating a narrative, whether a book-length memoir or a PhD thesis, is a form of ‘poesis’, that is, it is a creative endeavour, in which something new comes into being. In Haraway’s framing above, it matters what methodology makes my methodology. When considering the pilgrim-writer, I alluded above to the ‘ghazal’ form in poetry, where each stanza is like a shard of glass from a single broken mirror, differently reflecting the world. Haraway (2016) makes the case for what she calls a ‘tentacular’ approach to poesis, one that acknowledges interconnectedness and intra-subjectivity. ‘Tentacularity’ for me has the added resonance of a living being in motion.

Pilgrimage is a ‘tentacular’ practice, embedded within, and growing out of, other practices and traditions. It is embodied, ensouled and leaves traces in the world. Haraway distinguishes between ‘autopoiesis’ and ‘sympoiesis’. Autopoiesis is creating as an individual, and sympoiesis is creating ‘with’ or ‘together’. She (Haraway, 2016, p.33) sees autopoiesis as aligned with cybernetics and information sciences but as insufficient as a model for ‘living and dying worlds and their critters’ with its emphasis on ‘bounded (or neoliberal) individualism’. Autopoiesis is similarly

insufficient for understanding pilgrimage or the pilgrim-writer as these cannot exist outside of our 'living and dying world', and ourselves as 'critters' in the world.

In contrast, sympoiesis recognises that the notion of 'independent organisms in environments, that is interacting units plus context/rules' is no longer tenable in philosophy nor biology' (Haraway, 2016, p.33). When writing about my experience of pilgrimage, and pilgrimage generally, I am always aware of this entanglement. Haraway (2016, p.33) characterises our epoch as the Chthulucene and describes it as follows:

The Chthulucene does not close in on itself; it does not round off; its contact zones are ubiquitous and continually spin out loopy tendrils. Spider is a much better figure for sympoiesis than any inadequately leggy vertebrate of whatever pantheon. Tentacularity is symchthonic, wound with abyssal and dreadful graspings, frayings and weavings, passing relays again and again, in the generative recursions that make up living and dying.

The coinage 'symchthonic' (that is, 'being with the underworld') speaks to me of the unconscious forces and motivations for pilgrimage. Chthulucene is 'the time of the thick of now' when the inter-relatedness of everything is not just acknowledged but lived, and the hierarchical, anthropocentric ways of seeing the world no longer apply (Haraway, 2016, p.173).

The writing of this thesis has been a process of 'graspings, frayings and weavings' filled with 'generative recursions'. And, even as I complete this edit, I feel a desire to 'spin out loopy tendrils' (Haraway, 2016, p.33). Thank you, Donna.

Jeffrey Kripal and the new gnosticism

One of the challenges of understanding contemporary pilgrimage is finding a framework for the underlying currents of spirituality, religious belief, New Age practices, and intimations of the transpersonal, all of which may be unarticulated and often unconscious.

A framework which appears to offer a way forward is the idea of contemporary Gnosticism, as articulated by Jeffrey Kripal (2001, 2007, 2010, 2016) and others such as Voss (2017). This offers a way of incorporating the findings of psychology, the social sciences and anthropology whilst acknowledging mystery and concepts of the divine (recognisable to individuals but problematic for academia) and creative not-knowing.

Gnosticism has its roots in the ancient Greek mystery religions and, especially the diverse practices of the many sects of early Christianity. Whilst difficult to pin down a single definition, it is identified with mysticism, esoteric knowledge, direct encounters with the divine, and as religious practice at odds with the increasing dominance of the Roman church, and so seen as heretical. Within that broad-brush description, there is no one unifying definition. It goes beyond the dualism of faith and reason but does not reject them. Rather, it moves between them, drawing on both, and integrating their distinct perspectives. Kripal (2010, p.53) refers to this integration in his definition of an 'author of the impossible':

An author of the impossible is someone who has gone beyond all of the dualisms of right and left, mystical and rational, faith and reason, self and other, mind and matter, consciousness and energy, and so on. An author of the impossible is someone who knows that the Human is Two *and* One.

Gnosis, as developed by Kripal, offers a frame for considering pilgrimage and transformation that moves away from binary distinctions. Kripal's (2007, p.23) metaphor of a 'third classroom' is a psychic space where it is possible to reconcile different kinds of knowledge. Voss (2019, p.20) describes this as a reflexive lens enabling students to 'turn the spotlight back on themselves as it were and critically assess their own assumptions, agendas, beliefs, and understandings'. This space can also accommodate the kinds of knowledge gained through embodied experiences that might not be easily conveyed in language. As Kripal (2007, p.23) writes:

Let us never forget, however, that many gifted individuals are quite capable of deriving reason from faith, and of fusing faith and reason into a deep

gnosis that appears to be much more radical and potentially transformative than any social-scientific or purely rational method. Perhaps, then, we should enact a third type of classroom alongside the classroom of sympathy and the classroom of doubt. Perhaps we should imagine a new classroom of gnostic epiphany.

The link Kripal (2001, p.5) makes between 'transformative' and 'soteriological' takes us into a mode of understanding that is beyond so-called everyday reality and opens us to the idea of pilgrimage as a way of re-sacralising the world.

[There] are types of understanding that are at once passionate and critical, personal and objective, religious and academic. Such forms of knowledge are not simply academic, although they are that as well, and rigorously so. But they are also transformative, and sometimes soteriological. In a word, the knowledge of such a scholar approaches a kind of gnosis.

Kripal (2007, p.xi) argues that whilst the early Gnostics 'lost their own cultural wars and were effectively suppressed by the orthodox churches into near oblivion', their approach to 'thought and spirituality continued to arise throughout Western history, as Christian heresy, as various forms of esoteric practice and philosophy'. He includes Theosophy, the New Age, the poetry of William Blake, existentialism, nihilism, Jungian psychology, and science fiction (Kripal, p.xii) as examples.

The opening of his discussion of the Genesis myth has many echoes of my own experience of pilgrimage and writing. Kripal (2007, p.1) writes:

I take the ancient gnostic myth as a powerful and ultimately positive parable for all of us who would wish to 'grow up', leave the garden of our sexual and religious innocences (and the two, I will argue, are almost always connected), and venture forth into larger, if admittedly more ambiguous, visions of the world, ourselves and the divine.

My own experience of both engaging in deep personal writing and going on pilgrimage is akin to eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Not only do both practices

demand we leave our comfortable gardens of innocence, but they also remake the world as more uncertain, more ambiguous, and certainly more interesting.

Here it is appropriate to recall the letter from Rainer Maria Rilke in response to a young poet asking for advice about love.

... I should like to ask you, as best I can... to be patient towards all that is unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms, like books written in a foreign tongue. Do not now strive to uncover answers: they cannot be given you because you have not been able to live them. And what matters is to live everything. Live the questions for now. Perhaps then you will gradually, without noticing it, live your way into the answer, one distant day in the future. (Rilke, 2004 p. xx)

Gnosis is a way of loving the questions whilst remaining open everything experience can offer us. Conversely, 'loving the questions' is a way of embracing gnosis and valuing the rich ambiguity of experiences which cannot be theorised easily with recourse to simple appeal to reason, rationality nor faith. Kripal (2007, p.13) moves beyond the sterility of either-or categories with a model that sees reason and faith as 'poles of a deeper unity' and goes on to write:

... we can detect within certain moments of the (post)modern study of religion a certain explosive fusion of faith and reason, a kind of mental matter and anti-matter, if you will that produces a distinctly third realm of knowing that resembles but cannot be reduced to what has traditionally been called gnosis. As I will use the category here, then, gnosis is a triple-edged word, implying at once a privileging of knowing over believing, an affirmation of altered states of consciousness and psychic functioning as valuable and legitimate modes of cognition and a critical-but-engaged encounter with the faith traditions themselves.

Leaving the Garden of Eden

His description of the Adam and Eve myth as 'unusually plastic' (Kripal, p.2) can also be applied to descriptions of both pilgrimage and expressive writing.

Neither pilgrimage nor personal writing are 'one thing'. Both operate outside of boundaries of institutions, religions, and academic disciplines. Both have developed as a bottom-up, seemingly spontaneous practice which people have later attempted to codify. Kripal takes his book title 'The Serpent's Gift' from R.C. Zaehner and quotes him (Kripal, 2007, p.16), saying:

'The serpent,' Zaehner wrote, 'is the spirit of rationality, the immanent will inherent in the evolutionary process, if you like, which urges the human race to grow up.' ...It is to accept as mature adults, our individual existences as both finite and mortal, even as we intuit our deep hidden communion with the universe.

Pilgrimage is a journey away from home, from the garden of innocence into a world that is unpredictable where our traditional modes of being will be challenged. Personal writing similarly requires us to depart from our outward-facing, socially oriented ways of being into a private and shifting space. Both highlight our finite and mortal selves and simultaneously bring us into communion with something larger which could be characterised by 'the universe'. Solnit (2004, p.80) in her discussion of the stultifying effects of contemporary paradise (discussed at greater length later), notes that some Christian sects worshipped Eve as the one who liberated us from the confines of the Garden of Eden.

In pilgrimage, this encounter with the divine happens alongside others in a collective activity. Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.xxi) discuss how the social and the sacred are intertwined in the pilgrim experience and a parallel sense of a transforming identity.

These transformations of identity occur at many levels, and with reference to several 'others'. Pilgrimage commonly offers a reference to the sacred past where models of the self are expressed in deeply embedded cultural traditions ... The bonding with others that occurs in pilgrimage provides mechanisms for transformation of identity, a result of experiencing one's individual identity in relationship with others.

It is worth noting here the role of love in this act of bonding with others, that is a kind of communion, is vital and extends also to this thesis. As Simon Wilson (2020, p.1) has claimed:

The primary meaning of study, then, has to do with going out of the self, abandoning it for another; it has to do with desirous and pleasurable longing. Properly understood, at the heart of study is love. Thus Dante, who was well aware of the implications of the word, could write in his *Convivio* that true study is 'the application of mind to the thing it is in love with' (quoted in Frisardi, 2015, p.10). The first English writer to use the word in this sense was Chaucer in about 1374, and the last was Dryden in 1697 (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, p. 979).

Here we have echoes of a dark night of the soul where the travelling soul, and by extension, the pilgrim, sheds their sensory and spiritual selves to move, transformed, towards the light. This kind of experience is unlikely to be supported by so-called normal life but both traditional and contemporary forms of pilgrimage can facilitate Wilson's (2020, p1) 'going out of the self'. Pilgrimage can literalise this shedding. Gilmore (2005, p.xxi) describes the Burning Man Festival in Nevada as a kind of pilgrimage, arguing:

The remote destination requires a reorientation in time and space that permits a release of aspects of the self. This is both a letting go of 'baggage' – the things no longer desired – as well as a form of radical self-expression, that is a manifestation of core aspects of the inner self not supported by ordinary social contexts.

David Abram and Deep Ecology

Pilgrimage is a going-out, a going-away from everyday life, and paradoxically, a going-in to the self. Writing too follows an inner-outer momentum.

Wilson (2020) draws on Eastern Orthodox theology in his consideration of studying and love, offering analogies with love between human individuals. He quotes the

Russian priest and polymath, Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) who captures the sense of reciprocity in study and describes how 'subject' and 'object' are in relationship with each other.

Knowing is not the capturing of a dead object by a predatory subject of knowledge, but a living moral communion of persons, each serving for each as both object and subject. Strictly speaking, only a person is known and only by a person (Florensky, 1997, pp.55-56).

There is a wider question here of how 'knowledge' relates to 'wisdom' but I want to highlight my sense that my study of pilgrimage is one of love and reciprocity, and that over these years, my 'subject' has become increasingly alive for me. Florensky's statement about persons may, in line with current thinking, now be seen as not necessarily anthropocentric but as acknowledging the personhood of non-human or more-than-human creatures, and by extension, features of the landscape such as rivers and mountains. The term more-than-human was originally coined by David Abram in his seminal book, 'The Spell of the Sensuous', originally published in 1996, where he used more-than-human in place of the problematic term 'nature' and ideas. Donna Haraway (2016) describes this dissolving of barriers between various kinds of entities as 'making kin' and sees it as the urgent task of our time.

My purpose is to make 'kin' mean something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy. The gently defamiliarizing move might seem for a while to be just a mistake, but then (with luck) appear as correct all along. Kin making is making persons, not necessarily as humans or as individuals. (Haraway, 2016, pp.102-103).

One theme of this thesis is the extension of 'personhood' to the landscape of pilgrimage which is a form of 'making kin' in the sense described by Haraway. Pilgrimage, I suggest, is a way of making kin in many senses, including with each other, the more-than-human and with our cultural and ancestral roots.

The relationship of body to mind has long been an issue, and academia until the late twentieth century, in the most part, maintained the fiction that thought, and ideas can

exist independently of the body, a view usually attributed to French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650). However, there have always been challenges to the Cartesian world view that mind and body are separate (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2001). The Dutch philosopher, Bento Spinoza (1632-1677) argued that rather than mind and body being two 'substances' they are in fact two expressions of the same thing, that is God, or nature, or the divine, expressed through a human person (or, any object or entity). This radical idea has been taken up by ecologists such as David Abram as a way of framing what he sees as the undeniable interconnectedness of the material world, and the intelligence and sentience of everything (Abram, 1996, pp. 118-119).

... the heart of Spinoza's intuition remains prescient. For once we acknowledge that our awareness is inseparable – even in some sense indistinguishable from our material physiology, can we really maintain that mind remains alien to the rest of material nature? ... The human body is not a closed or static object, but an open, unfinished entity utterly entwined with the soils, waters, and winds that move through it – a wild creature whose life is contingent upon the multiple other lives that surround it, and the shifting flows that surge through it.

David Abram (2010, p.6) discusses the estrangement from the body, and our impulse to seek refuge in language in his second book, 'Becoming Animal'. He begins by saying:

Corporeal life is indeed difficult. To identify with the sheer physicality of one's flesh may well seem lunatic.

And then lists the many ways in which our bodies are vulnerable and prone to uncertainty, whether through aging, illness, accident, grief, or dismay. He (Abram, 1996, p.7) describes the contemporary impulse to retreat from the 'harrowing vulnerability' of bodied existence:

Small wonder then that we prefer to abstract ourselves whenever we can, imagining ourselves into theoretical spaces less fraught with insecurity, conjuring dimensions more amenable to calculation and control.

Two of the common ways in which people in Western industrialised countries abstract themselves into spaces which are literally less fraught with insecurity, are by travelling by car, instead of walking, and looking at screens instead of at multi-dimensional world. Abram devotes a whole chapter to 'Depth' (Abram, 1996, pp.81-101) in which he explores the debilitating effects of experiencing the visual world mediated by screens. In contrast, when we walk, the changes in the landscape are created by our motion and the relationships between our body's movements and the visual quality of the world are clear. As a practicing magician, Abram links illusions of depth with sleight-of-hand magic tricks. A typical example is when what sounds and initially looks, like a plane, turns out to be a fly, or what we perceive as wind in the trees, a band of foraging monkeys. (Abram, 2007, pp.88-89).

Such perceptual transformations are endemic to a reality that exists only in depth – a reality that discloses itself to us only by holding some part of itself in the uncertain distance, a world that we encounter only in the tension between the nearby and the yonder. The dimension of depth is ruled by Proteus, the shapeshifting god, whose dominion over sensory experience teaches us to stay loose, to invite magic, to expect metamorphosis.

Deep ecology, like post-humanism, decentres the human from considerations of how the world 'works'. Pilgrimage, I argue, decentres the individual from their own everyday life. Pilgrimage, and by extension, the sacred, can be viewed from the varying perspectives of the real, the symbolic and the imagined. Social constructionism would argue that all of it is imagined, whether we label it as such or persist in the illusion that there is a 'real'. Deep ecology (for example Abram, 1996) argues that language is a barrier to experience. As soon as we are mediating our thoughts through language, then we are distanced from, and are distorting reality. He uses a poem, called 'Quadratic Equation' by Robert Bringhurst as an epigraph to his second book, 'Becoming Animal' (Abram, 2010) which reverses the usual relationship between language and experience by giving non-material entities (ie voice, thought, birdsong, speech), concrete form.

Voice: the breath's tooth.
Thought: the brain's bone.
Birdsong: an extension
of the beak. Speech:
the antler of the mind. (Bringhurst, 2007, back cover)

Such paradoxes are also characteristics of pilgrimage.

2.2 A Methodological Trinity

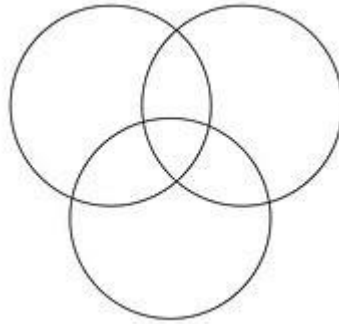
The danger with a wholly tentacular approach is the impossibility of finding threads (to mix metaphors) to follow within the subject matter. I have therefore decided to opt for 3 inter-related methodologies with which to interrogate the question of the pilgrim-writer, namely:

- Critical realism – for examining contemporary pilgrimage
- Auto/biography – for a consideration of the identities of the pilgrim and the pilgrim-writer
- Creative/ Autoethnographic approaches for looking at published memoirs and my own written response as a pilgrim-writer

All of these are qualitative and move from a more distanced, analytical stance to an openly subjective one. Another framing is that they move from the traditionally scholarly to the more artistic, from the constrained and bounded to the loose and digressive.

There follow three visual representations of these methodologies:

- i. This merging of the scholarly self and the subjective/artist could be seen as a *Venn diagram*, the three circles representing Critical Realism, Auto/Biography and Creative/Auto-ethnographic approaches, with their points of overlap:



- ii. Another way of presenting the three methodologies graphically is a three-way ying-yang symbol. In this representation, the methodologies do not overlap but share borders and each one contains the other two:



- iii. Finally, the three can be represented as a linear progression from objective to subjective:



Critical realism<> Auto/Biography<>Autoethnographic/Creative

I will now look at these methodologies in greater detail.

Critical Realism

My exploration of pilgrimage, the pilgrim identity and the pilgrim-writer, is based on a literature search that is both cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary, drawing on the various traditional academic disciplines, such as anthropology, history and sociology, as well as more recent areas of scholarship such as pilgrimage studies, tourism and walking studies.

Realist approaches assume that there is a world independent of our own influence that can be observed and documented. A naïve realism assumes that such a world is not influenced by the prejudices, disposition, or social milieu of the researcher. Naïve realism can longer be considered a useful position and would be especially difficult to maintain when discussing a subject like pilgrimage which draws simultaneously on traditional, modern, and post-modern discourses. Pilgrimage as a concept is largely socially constructed, especially when viewed through the lens of post-modernism. However, there are, nevertheless, manifestations of pilgrimage that exist in the world about which we can have stable knowledge.

As a pilgrim-writer myself, I have examined some of the literature on writing and transformation, including the work of Celia Hunt, especially her book *Transformative Learning through Creative Life Writing* (2013). Hunt (2013, p.xiii) describes adopting a methodological position she calls an 'embodied critical realist paradigm' which ultimately translates into a 'bio-psycho-social conceptual framework'. She writes:

Critical realism argues that, whilst our theories will always be fallible, through our research we will progressively develop better interpretations of reality that are not so much true as 'practically adequate' ...that is adequate to explain the way the world works in practice.

She then draws on Lakoff and Johnson (1999) to examine critical realism through the 'converging evidence' that comes from an acknowledgement of the reality of our

embodied selves. This evidence may be drawn from cognitive neuroscience or from first person phenomenological research. Hunt (2013, p.xiii) conceptualises her research on transformation through creative writing in education as follows:

Thus an embodied critical realism with a stratified ontology fits well with my bio-psycho-social conceptual framework and my quest to understand not only psychic mechanisms involved in individual change but also mechanisms at work in the learning environment out of which that change emerges.

This formulation is one that applies equally to the mechanisms at work in the transformations experienced by pilgrims on their pilgrimage, as to individuals in an educational setting and has the potential to illuminate both the general research on pilgrimage and the individual accounts. Hunt's (2013, p.xiii) 'stratified ontology', is usually taken to refer to three overlapping domains of the Real, Actual and Empirical. As described in my exploration of theoretical frameworks, I include the inexplicable and transpersonal in our apprehensions of the world. If we see a fly or wind in the trees, we see them through the evidence of our senses, even if later we learn they were in fact, an aeroplane or monkeys foraging (Abram, 1996, pp.88-89). As well as the physical and empirically verifiable aspects of pilgrimage, there is also the religious dimension, including elements such as relics, shrines, saints and transcendence. The realm of magic and dreams is also part of the 'reality' of a pilgrim-writer.

Sayer (2000, p.21) argues that critical realism can be applied both extensively (that is to the general accounts described above) and intensively (that is to the individual pilgrim experience).

Extensive research shows us mainly how extensive certain patterns are in a population, while intensive research is primarily concerned with what makes things happen in specific cases.

An emphasis on specificity is important to me. Whilst post-modernism has led to a move towards the so-called 'death of the author' and a dismantling of the distinctions

between fact and fiction, I believe it is possible to maintain a critical realist perspective when exploring transpersonal, spiritual, and other highly subjective experiences, and generalising from them. Just because 'all knowledge is partial and situated', 'it does not mean that there is no knowledge, or that situated knowledge is bad.' (Richardson, 1990, p.27). The idea of situated knowledge is helpful conceptually when considering pilgrimage, an embodied practice in the landscape. The pilgrim is always 'somewhere' and the pilgrim-writer is a specific person. The concept of pilgrimage depends on the uncountable individual experiences of pilgrims over many centuries, in many specific times and places.

Critical realism is, to use Sayer's (2000, p.21) term, 'extensive'. That is, it offers a positivist, generalisable and data-driven approach to pilgrimage, determining what might be true across groups or populations, what the patterns are across history, and describing some of the broad cultural forces determining and underlying the behaviour of pilgrims. I will now present two complementary, 'intensive' approaches: auto/biography and autoethnography.

Auto/biography

Auto/biography and narrative approaches, like the social sciences, look at cultural forces and attempt to determine patterns. However, they base their conclusions and assumptions on the idiographic narratives of individuals. Such narratives may be collected orally or be written, such as the raw diary entries at the top of my thesis. Memoir is a literary form and there are pitfalls in using extant texts as opposed to the auto/biography and narrative research techniques of sociology. Whether looking at memoir or other sources of data, as Merrill and West (2009, p.2) emphasise, there is always the sense of an 'I' who is doing that looking.

Feminist writer, Liz Stanley coined the term 'auto/biography' (pronounced 'auto-slash-biography') with the publication in 1992 of 'The Auto/Biographical I'. Her rationale, in a subsequent article (1993, p.101), speaks to the question of subjectivity outlined above.

'Auto/biography' disrupts conventional taxonomies of life writing, disputing its divisions of self/other, public/private, and immediacy/memory. Relatedly, 'the auto/biographical I' signals the active inquiring presence of sociologists in constructing, rather than discovering, knowledge.

The key word here seems to be 'disrupts' and she claims (Stanley, 1992, p.4) that as a 'feminist sociologist', her concern is not just to 'critique' but:

to re-make the discipline of sociology from the standpoint of feminism: no critique this, but a thoroughgoing top to bottom and inside out revolution. It involves a feminist praxis in which 'theory' as conventionally seen is rejected, as is the quite extraordinary elitism of scientific – scientific in Habermas's term - views of social *science*.

Her project is to bring auto/biography into sociology. At the time she was writing, autobiography and biography were seen as part of literature with their 'close if closet relationship to fictional ways of writing lives'. She notes that there was some interest in auto/biography from scholars in anthropology (Stanley, p.4). However, neither the literary establishment nor anthropologists were engaging from a feminist perspective. She (Stanley, 1992, p.5) argues that this needs an explanation.

This is particularly so given that the major epistemological issues of our time are raised in connection with the nature of 'selves', how to understand and how to study them under what kind of intellectual conditions and limitations.

My concern with pilgrimage and transformation has parallels with Stanley's position. To bring perspectives of deep ecology, the transpersonal, and narratives of transformation into the discourse, it is not enough to stay with the traditional academic disciplines of the social sciences and humanities. A new synthesis is required and creative use of narrative, alongside new theoretical frameworks such as those offered by Haraway and Kripal described above may be helpful.

Stanley's (1992, p.61) description of the writer of auto/biography foregrounds the idea of the multiplicity of the writer which creates a rich instability in terms of identity:

The writer of auto/biography has, at the 'moment' of writing, an active and coherent 'self' that the text invokes, constructs, and drives towards. Nevertheless, there is also textual recognition that 'the past' is indeed past and thus essentially unrecoverable – that in Barthes' (1975) terms, 'the self who writes' no more has direct and unproblematic access to 'the self who was', than does the reader; and anyway 'the autobiographical past' is actually peopled by a succession of selves as the writer grows, develops and changes.

(Another way of looking at the 'self who writes' is that the writer is adopting one of many possible 'I-positions' which I describe in the chapter on pilgrim identity where I apply Dialogic Self Theory to pilgrims.)

One of Stanley's (1992, p.163) chapter headings asks whether biography is a microscope or kaleidoscope. She derides the notion that the task of a biographer is to develop 'efficient ways of reducing complexity to manageable proportions' advocating instead firmly grasping 'the cup of plenty that a person's life and their contemporaries' views of it represents'.

She makes five points (Stanley, 1992, pp.164-165):

- No difference between auto and biography – no 'real X' to be revealed
- Richly complex – and-and
- Make visible 'what is conventionally hidden to readers: the shifts, changes, developments, downturns and upturns in the way that the biographer understands the subject with which she deals (p.163)
- Don't stick to 'right on' subjects – need the challenge of 'making sense of the right-off'
- Feminist biography shows that 'power and powerlessness are complex matters, most certainly not two poles of a dichotomy but often co-existent in the same piece of behaviour done by the same person in the same moment in time'

Stanley's concerns with feminist auto/biography are a subset of a more general move towards biographical methods of research. In his 2002 book 'Biographical Research', Brian Roberts (2002, Chapters 2, 3 and 5) offers an analysis from the point of view of sociology and rehearses arguments going back to the 1970s for using life stories and auto/biographical methods in the social sciences. In the following, Roberts, (2002, p.168), quotes Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

What is apparent is a network of tensions within and between traditional academic disciplines and competing voices calling on the social sciences and the humanities to be 'sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom and community'

Roberts (2002, p.169) locates the interest in biographical methods in the broader terrain of qualitative research and concludes that there needs to be an openness to past approaches and a resistance to dismissing them in response to contemporary intellectual fashion.

Roberts (2002, p.169) introduces the concept of 'autoethnography' as growing out of an increased awareness of 'the place of the researcher and connections between the composition of the text and the auto/biographies of researcher and researched' in traditional ethnography. Whereas ethnography focuses on the 'other', autoethnography acknowledges the role of the self in relation to the subject. Here it is relevant to consider the agency of any subject, including the more-than-human (Abram, 2010, 2017), the landscape (Eade and Stadler, 2022) and 'critters' of all kinds (Haraway, 2016).

Personification

Relating this to pilgrimage, I am prompted to personify 'pilgrimage' as my subject and to give it (or her, or him, or them) its own subjectivity as the object of my research. Pilgrimage might itself have an auto/biography that interacts with my own. A personification of pilgrimage has analogies with biographies of other non-human entities, for example Peter Ackroyd's 'London: The Biography' (2000) and John Gribben's 'The Universe: A Biography' (2009). In my own pilgrim memoir (Field, 2016), I placed the account of a walk to Santiago alongside my reflections on my first

marriage, using pilgrimage as a way of suggesting and illuminating the questions I had about my relationship with my then husband and subsequent divorce. This is a common device in memoirs. For example, 'H is for Hawk' (2014) by Helen MacDonald is an account of grief told through the frame of training a hawk. The idea is that one theme may illuminate the other. Ackroyd (2000, p.2) comments that setting two narratives (or auto/biographies) alongside each other can be illuminating:

If the history of London poverty is beside a history of London madness, then the connections may provide more significant information than any orthodox historiographical survey.

Hence, a straightforward travelogue of a pilgrimage is limited to details of topography, accommodation, food, and encounters. A biography of pilgrimage, or a personal memoir will select and illuminate themes and build connections that might not have been apparent at first. This may happen in a linear fashion. In my memoir, the account of the walk is chronologically forward in time, and the story of the marriage is told in reverse (Field, 2016). In contrast, Martin Amis' memoir, 'Experience', (Amis, 2001), the writing of which was prompted by the death of his father and the discovery that a cousin had been a victim of Fred West, is presented as a collage fashion and includes seemingly random themes such as smoking and Amis' dental work.

Roberts (2002, p.162) quotes Judith Okely, a pioneer in integrating anthropological and biographical methods, especially with her ground-breaking research on gypsy and traveller experience. Her statement below (Okely, 1994, pp.31-32, quoted in Roberts, 2002, p.162) resonates with my own sense of being both a pilgrim, subject to various projections, and a researcher into the pilgrim identity.

As a woman researcher, I learned also through personal experience about non-Gypsy projections. To outsiders learning of my research, I was sometimes seen as a 'Gypsy woman', with all the fantastic stereotypes ... Thoughts came at unexpected times: on a walk, in the night, not necessarily when seated with pen and paper at a desk. After the broad schema of ideas was set down, I could look back for some exact details, incidents and

statements in the chronological field notes. That is, the ideas and theories having fermented in the subconscious, emerged by free association from unspecified experience. Only then was empirical evidence instrumentally sought as confirmation or elucidation ... I now responded entirely to intuition and elusive memory before grounding myself in the recorded notes.

Allowing the emergence of ideas and theories from unspecified experience and responding to intuition and elusive memory, whilst not a conventional methodology, nevertheless makes sense to me.

Autoethnography

A distinct methodological approach is autoethnography. Autoethnography is often described as a practice and, in research terms, it has much in common with so-called 'arts-based research' and 'practice-based research'. As a creative writer, I practice my art and as a pilgrim I practice walking to sacred sites, so this methodology will inevitably acknowledge my immersion in these activities and will use some of the data emerging as a source of information to theorise 'pilgrim-writerhood'.

Carolyn Ellis is considered the doyenne of autoethnography and is author of numerous books and papers. Whilst she approaches the practice from a variety of perspectives, the following paragraph (Ellis 2009, p.13) summarises the reflective and reflexive nature of autoethnography.

As an autoethnographer, I am both the author and focus of the story, the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed, the creator and the created. I am the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller.

Tessa Muncey (2010, p.148) has suggested that an autoethnography is characterised by the following:

- identification of a meaningful experience that you are prepared to share
- an engagement in an iterative relationship between your research and your personal experiences
- a selection of creative means to transform the experience
- showing, not telling
- an expectation of criticism and the ammunition needed to counter it
- recognition of the role of synchronicities in steering the development of your work
- immense satisfaction from the personal growth that ensues.

For me, autoethnography requires looking inwards at my own processes as a pilgrim and pilgrim-writer. Part of the purpose of the reflective and reflexive writing that emerges is to observe that gaze. The terms reflective and reflexive are metaphors of vision and as they apply to the self, reflect the individual, idiographic and subjective aspects of autoethnography. In Appendix 5, I give an account and example of my autoethnographic explorations.

Another metaphor of methodology is that of a field of study. Laurel Richardson (1997, p.185) writes:

‘The Field’ metaphors a place – out there – where we go, as temporary, itinerant crop pickers. By ‘going into the field’, we reify the duality, ‘me-field-worker’ and ‘them-crops’. The metaphor also separates ‘writing/ analytical mind work’ from ‘data gathering/ body work’... by naming ourselves ‘participant-observers’, we alienate ourselves, hide, obfuscate, and scientize. ‘Exiting’ and ‘entering’ the ‘field’ conjures a bad Pinter play, not an engaged life.

Clearly, as I am literally ‘a Field’, I cannot easily exit or enter myself, and the insider perspective is a given.

Merrill and West (2009, p.2) give an account of the trend towards using biography in social science, seeing it developing in parallel with the general cultural shifts towards

sharing personal narratives evinced by, for example, gossip magazines, reality TV, websites, podcasts, biopics, biodramas and celebrity biographies.

There can be sensitivity towards the uniqueness yet also the similarities of lives and stories, like the snowflakes referred to above. Biography enables us to discern patterns but also distinctiveness in lives. The relationship between the particular and the general, uniqueness and commonality, is in fact a central issue in biographical research.

This quotation articulates the tension between individual and general, uniqueness and common ground that exists in any consideration of human endeavour. There is research showing that pilgrims tend to do this and that but in any gathering of pilgrims, the experiences described are idiosyncratic and often unpredictable. The snowflake reference comes from Audrey Borenstein (1978, p.30) who advocated bridging the gap between the social sciences and literature.

From the outside looking in, an observer might see a 'common' condition: a son is killed in Vietnam, a daughter's mind is destroyed by LSD, a woman is divorced, a man becomes subject to a mandatory requirement, there is a divorce. Yet, in interior life, what happens to one is unique. Life histories, like snowflakes, are never of the same design.

Another way of articulating the creative tension between the individual and the collective is that of forging micro-macro connections. In her book on Arts-Based Research, Patricia Leavy (2015, p.3) sees this as one of the roles of literature in the social sciences:

Sociologists and other social researchers working from critical theoretical positions are often interested in making micro-macro connections; that is exploring, describing, or explaining (theorising about) the connections between our individual lives and the larger contexts in which we live.

She (Leavey, 2015, p.3) goes on to describe how it was through writing a novel that she 'carved' a new way of conveying her research and offers a visual metaphor for ARB (Arts-Based Research).

We need to be able to see in different shapes and to produce knowledge in different shapes ... Arts-based researchers are not 'discovering' new research tools, they are *carving* them ... a space opens within the research community where passion and rigour boldly intersect *out in the open*. Some researchers come to these methods as a way of better addressing research questions while others quite explicitly long to merge their scholar-self with their artist-self. In all cases, whether in the particular arts-based project or in the researcher who routinely engages with these practices, a *holistic, integrated perspective* is followed. (Leavey's italics)

In his influential book, 'The Master and His Emissary', introduced in my introduction, Ian McGilchrist (2012, p.460) argues that our intellects (which, as a neuroscientist, he conflates with our brains), are structured in a way that reflects the universe, an assertion he describes as 'profoundly true', continuing:

By 'profoundly' I meant not just true by definition, as would be the case for those who believe that the universe in any case is a creation of our brains. I think it goes further than that. I believe our brains not only dictate the shape of the experience we have of the world, but are likely themselves to reflect, in their structure and functioning, the nature of the universe in which they have come about.

This position seems to me to be another version of Leavey's assertion in favour of arts-based and creative research, that is, subjective experience and outside reality are constantly co-creating each other. McGilchrist (2012, p.460) goes on to quote Karl Popper in support of the idea that it is important to allow the possibility of leaps of thought in order to get new insights.

As Karl Popper put it, 'bold ideas, unjustified anticipations and speculative thought, are our only means for interpreting nature: our only organon, our only instrument for grasping her.' Or, perhaps, reaching out a hand to her.

Douglas and Carless (2013, p.85) describe four key moments in their own relationship with autoethnography as a methodology, namely:

(1) an initially ill-defined sense or awareness that *something was missing* from the academic literature we were studying and accessing; (2) a significant exposure or *encounter* with autoethnography which signalled the possibility of a different way of working; (3) the *doing* of autoethnography, with reference to some of the practical and ethical challenges that can arise; and (4) navigating others' *responses* to autoethnographic scholarship.

They continue with a series of stories exemplifying these four moments which they also characterise as 'epiphanies. The growing use of autoethnography, which I see as a more creative, literary and exploratory version of auto/biography, has provided me with a methodology that is a useful complement to embodied critical realism.

Kim Etherington

Kim Etherington (2020, pp.78-79) argues that reflexivity 'opens up a space between subjectivity and objectivity where the distinctions between content and process are blurred'. She claims:

This kind of transparency adds validity and rigour by allowing the reader to see how the contexts and culture in which the stories (data) are created and located ...shape the knowledge that is created'.

I find this a compelling idea and yet I am challenged by it. I am not convinced there is a 'space' between subjectivity and objectivity, nor even that there is any such thing as 'objectivity'. I also question the distinction between content and process. The content of research is largely determined by the process (or processes) of framing questions and accumulating data.

Perhaps what reflexivity offers is a way of experiencing multiple subjectivities. When my research is conveyed in language, and one of my techniques is 'writing-as-inquiry', I am so immersed in the medium of language, it would be presumptuous to assume I can step outside it. Once again, I am drawn to interrogate the metaphor I used instinctively to see whether it can illuminate my question. I am 'immersed' in

language, and it is the sea in which this thesis swims, and it is questionable whether a marine creature like a fish would have any notion of a non-sea. Where then is the objectivity? Or to highlight another verb that has appeared, perhaps the different subjectivities are differently 'illuminated' by different approaches to reflexivity.

'Transparency' is also a challenging word in this context, suggesting that there is some reality which exists beyond the language that is used to describe it. It also claims that language itself can become invisible, so that we can see through it to the world, in the same way that we can look through a clean window. My take on this is that transparency in language is illusory, that we are always creating a reality rather than 'seeing' it.

Whilst reading 'Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life' by Laurel Richardson, I repeatedly mis-parse a sentence where she writes of standard social science practice 'loosening their hold on our psyches'. I read it as 'we need to hold on to our psyches'. I even make a note of the phrase, only to be unable to find it again. As Freud taught, parapraxes, like dreams, are a source of information from the unconscious, and I take this as an important message, especially the original meaning of psyche as soul. (Diary entry, November 2020)

Etherington's statement describing reflexivity in writing contains binaries: subjectivity vs objectivity, content, and process. One of my intuitions about the meaning of contemporary pilgrimage is that it transcends binary distinctions. Pilgrims in twenty-first century Europe are post-Enlightenment human beings living in a rational, material world, yet they are engaging in a medieval practice. My sense is that these two modes of experiencing the world are not in conflict, but rather offer a third way of being. This is analogous to Jeffrey Kripal's (2014, pp.366-392) description of 'reflexive rereading' of religious, anomalous, or esoteric material, where instead of taking a 'faithful' reading (that is, an account is literally 'true') or a 'rationalist' approach that reduces the material to coincidence or anecdote, there is a third

approach that acknowledges both, but allows for 'more'. This can be challenging – 'we need to hold on to our psyches'. As Kripal (2014, p.368) elaborates:

We might recall here our initial definition of the humanities as consciousness studying consciousness in the reflecting mirror of culture. With reflexive re-readings of religion, we are still very much looking into that human mirror, with all the light-bending, mind-bending effects that this act involves, but we are also catching glimpses of the final source of those constantly receding reflections, the looker. The results of 'looking into the looker' can sound utterly outrageous to the faithful believer *and* to the pure rationalist.

On a pilgrimage, there is no distinction between content and process: a pilgrimage only exists through the process of making it. I am looking for a concept that might take us beyond reflexivity to the next level, or, to use a different metaphor, into a different space.

Richardson and Etherington are social scientists and therefore, even whilst admitting subjectivity, are concerned with the so-called real world. More challenging is the view that such a world cannot exist without a perceiving consciousness. This idea is part of New Age thinking which, in its most developed form argues that there is no such thing as reality, or, that reality is subservient to consciousness. Exponents include Eckhart Tolle in, for example, *A New World* (2005) who claims that there is nothing other than consciousness. He cites Albert Einstein's assertion that our sense of selves, as individual egos, is 'an optical illusion of consciousness' (Tolle, 2005, p.28). This idea is not new and can be traced back to the Platonic idea of an *animus mundi*, a 'world soul' that existed before matter, and in which we participate, but which does not denote an individual's own egoic existence. The paradox of the one and the many applies to all human endeavour as well as our conceptual take on the world.

Concepts such as soul and spirit sit uneasily in the realms of social science but, especially in its earlier, medieval form, these ideas surely have some relationship with the practice of pilgrimage. Conscious of my own uneasiness

at invoking the word 'soul' in my thesis, I decide to check the index of several general books on pilgrimage on my shelf.

Permit, Invite, Incite.

The word 'soul' doesn't appear in any. (Diary entry, November 2020)

My concern with creative writing, narrative inquiry and autoethnography as vehicles for transformation lead me into the realms of the transpersonal where the frames for processing experience acknowledge the non-material, the esoteric and the mysterious. However, there is a shared concern still with narrative and the kinds of reflexivity described by Richardson and Etherington.

Epistemologically, the exploration of narrative locates their work and my concerns in a post-structuralist context. Written accounts of pilgrimage, my own or those of other writers, have meanings which are co-created in the moment and are open to multiple interpretations. Kim Etherington (2020, pp.75-76) links post-structuralism to social constructionism and writes that 'realities and selves are socially constructed and continuously reconstructed in response to those lived experiences.... These views challenge the notion of the 'autonomous bounded self'.'

Etherington's embracing of post-structuralist and socially-constructivist lenses through which to explore writing and narratives speaks to my own subjective experience of being unbounded and porous as a pilgrim, a self among a multiplicity of selves, human and non-human (for example, [Field, 2016, p](#)) Such post-modern approaches allow for a multiplicity of 'truths' when examining accounts of personal experience. Pilgrimage, as a diverse, simultaneously individual and collective, codified and uncoded practice, demands an openness in interpretation that may shift according to culture, demographics and other contexts. Etherington (2020, p.86) suggests thinking in 'stories' rather than in 'information' and 'culture and society' rather than 'systems'. Haraway (2016, p.12), as previously quoted, puts it pithily: 'It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with ...'.

Another approach is to look at what possibilities are afforded by different genres of writing. An example of this approach, especially from the point of view of academic reflexivity, is outlined by Laurel Richardson, especially in her book 'Fields of Play – Constructing an Academic Life' (1997). Here, she experiments with writing sociology as 'drama, responsive readings, narrative poetry, pagan ritual, lyrical poetry, prose poems, and autobiography' (Richardson, 1997, p.3) and calls this a new synthesis of sociology and literature. She writes:

Fields of Play repositions them as convergent genres that, when intertwined, create new ways of reading/writing that are more congruent with poststructural understandings of the situated nature of knowledge making. In the new convergence, we become writers, tellers of stories about our work – local, partial, prismatic stories. Writing is demystified, writing strategies are shared, and the field is unbounded. (Richardson, 1997, p.3)

It is worth emphasising that Richardson is describing the process of 'writing sociology' and using literary genres to do this. This is certainly a way of extending and blurring the boundaries of a discipline with the creative possibilities that offers. At some point though, there is the danger that an 'unbounded' field will merge into wilderness. Richardson's strikes me as a strongly poststructural position which may be 'true' in that everything that we take to be 'knowledge' is a 'local, partial and prismatic' story. However, I believe it is helpful to step back from this general assertion to explore what different kinds of writing, creative or academic, can offer. These are not 'silos': poetry merges with prose, memoir with autoethnography, drama with liturgy, and so on. Nevertheless, each form has its own ontology, function, and place as a means of imaginatively representing and recreating experience.

This process is analogous to different ways of investigating pilgrimage. Pilgrimage can be, and is, studied through its visible 'form' in the world. It is also possible to focus on the 'invisible', that is, the intentions of its pilgrims and the meanings they ascribe to pilgrimage. Dubisch and Winkelmann (2015) adopt this approach in their edited volume on pilgrimage and healing. 'Writing' too can be categorised by both

form and intention. We may be simultaneously 'making something' and 'making something up'.

Literary writing has artistic aims and is read, at least partly, for pleasure. Therapeutic or expressive writing benefits the writer primarily and is often purely personal although in the examples of Richardson (1990, 1997), and Carolyn Ellis (2009, 2010, 2013) to follow, there has been a powerful move within social sciences to merge personal with academic writing. I suggest there is a continuum from first-person autoethnography through memoir to fiction, depending on the kind of 'truth' being conveyed. Fiction may then morph into poetry where the use of image, metaphor and absence of chronology create what might be termed a mythopoetic approach to capturing experience.

2.3 Different kinds of data

As described above, methodologies and 'stories' move from the more objective to the subjective, even as each may continue to contain elements of the other.

Memoirs

I have chosen five extant published pilgrimage memoirs for close reading. A published memoir is a piece of work that has undergone a series of processes before it is considered finished. The writing may be based on journals written at the time of the experience, or on recalled memories. The chronology of events may be accurate, or deliberately changed to fit a narrative. The writer, probably at a later stage in their writing process, has paid attention to voice, pacing, and the fabric of the language in order to create an artistic whole. Memoirs are a subset of narratives in general. Laurel Richardson (1990, p.20) defines narrative as follows:

Narrative displays the goals and intentions of human actors; makes individuals, cultures, societies and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes, humanises time; allows us to contemplate the effects of our actions and to alter the directions of our lives.

Richardson (1990, pp.20-21). then lists examples of narratives, saying that 'narrative is everywhere, present in myth, fable, short story, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, painting, dance, stained glass windows, cinema, social histories, fairy tales, novels, science schema, comic strips, conversation, journal articles.'

Underlying the definition and the list of examples, is the way in which narrative makes meaning through connection. Conventionally, the episodes of a narrative follow the action of its protagonists (which need not be human 'persons' but must have agency) over time. A perception of connection, or underlying logic, gives coherence to a narrative and some narratives (such as post-modern novels) may subvert this convention whilst still acknowledging it.

For Richardson (1990, p.21), 'narrative is both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation' and is complementary to, and entirely distinct from a logico-scientific representation. The latter, she argues, looks for 'universal truth conditions' whereas 'the narrative mode is contextually embedded and looks for particular connections between events.' Narrative, then, is a process of integration, whereas the logico-scientific model is one of atomisation. Richardson (1990, p.21) comments though, that both approaches to knowledge are framed in metanarratives such as science, the enlightenment or religion.

I chose memoirs to complement the more discursive and positivist research on pilgrimage earlier as I believe that when we invoke the imagination in order to tell a story, the narrative is embedded in the writer (and possibly the reader) in a deeper way. Social constructionism teaches that memories are constructs, created from a mixture of external evidence (that can be corroborated), wishful thinking, artifice, and a desire to tell a particular story. The editorial process leads to the selection of one specific narrative that is only a partial reflection of the experiences and memories that inform it. Writing, editing, and publishing are all forms of transformation of a narrative that may contain narratives of transformation within it. To quote Richardson (1990, p.23):

People organise their personal biographies and understand them through the stories they create to explain and justify their life experiences. When people are asked why they do what they do, they provide narrative explanations, not logico-scientific ones ... Experiences are connected to other experiences and evaluated in relation to the larger whole.... The experience of renarrativizing – like the experience of biographical time itself – is open-ended and polysemous, where different meanings and systems of meanings can emerge.

So, when reading memoirs for evidence of pilgrim identity or narratives of transformation, it is important to remember that the writers have selected and shaped the material they are presenting. Clearly, that is also the case in a social science interview when individuals are questioned and offer verbal accounts of their experiences to an interviewer. Whilst for a published work, there may be an 'imagined reader' as described by Celia Hunt (2013, pp.31-33), this is not one single identifiable person.

In an interview setting, the interviewer is embodied and specific in terms of age, gender, class, and personality. These qualities have an inevitable impact on the interviewee, both consciously, and through unconscious processes such as projection or transference. Just as the interviewee may try to please (or shock or displease) the interviewer, an interviewee's responses may be shaped by encouragement or discouragement from the interviewer. The ensuing narrative is thus co-constructed.

For a written memoir, there is an unidentified public who is being addressed. The word 'publication' is related to 'creating a public' (Miller, 2021) whether that is in book form or in social media or blog posts. Whilst the 'imagined reader' or readers (Hunt, 2013, pp.31-33) are always present in a writer's mind, for any piece of writing, including diary entries, and can shape the narrative, these are part and parcel of the writer's imagination. Once a book is published, however, there are in addition to the writers' imagined readers, many real readers whom the writer will never know or be able to identify.

As Freeman (1993, p.7) writes about reading memoir:

Although I have said I will be enquiring into *lives*, in a certain sense this is not quite right. For what we will have before us are not lives themselves, but rather *texts* of lives, literary artefacts that generally seek to recount in some fashion what these lives were like. In this respect, we will be – we must be – at least one step removed from the lives that we will be exploring; we can only proceed with our interpretive efforts on the basis of what has been written, by those whose lives they are.

As he continues, the term ‘text’ can apply to transcribed interviews and to observations of human action. In all these cases, there are likely to be constellations of meanings which will appear differently to different ‘readers’. Such text may form the basis for what is ostensibly fiction. Donna Haraway was asked in an interview with LA Times (Paulson, 2019) whether there was a clear line between fiction and nonfiction or whether they merge. She replied:

It doesn't so much merge together as foreground and background differently. I think the care and feeding of facts is a really important craft skill. Facts are made in human historical circumstances, but not made up. Fiction is more like a *gerund*, a making. Fiction's imaginative boundaries are quite different. Its narrative rules are differently configured than the narrative rules in, say, evolutionary and ecological science, but there are so many contact zones. So I'm interested in the play, in the Cat's Cradle game, between science fact and speculative fiction.

I find this idea of foreground and background a useful way of allowing ‘fact’, fiction, and literary forms to coexist in the same frame. One way of looking at the world can enter the foreground, whilst others do not disappear but provide background. Memoir sits between fiction and nonfiction as it is based on facts (Haraway's ‘human historical circumstances’) and yet is crafted, shaped and edited to tell a pleasing or interesting story.

Memoir writers can be said to be attempting to ‘language’ their experience. This poses a question about the limits of language, especially when it comes to

describing experiences that appear beyond usual reality. Rather than assuming that a text is simply a window on the world, Freeman (1993, p.8) argues it is more accurate to see the world as essentially other 'texts' in a chain of intertextuality, and that there is no such thing as a 'life' outside of 'this infinite play of language itself'.

Although not ostensibly a pilgrim memoir, Robert Hamberger's 'A Length of Road: Finding Myself in the Footsteps of John Clare' (2021), is an account of a significant journey on foot. He describes coming to terms with his various identities as a son, husband, father, and gay man, whilst walking the route poet John Clare took when he absconded from an asylum. The slipperiness of the relationships between of the narrator of the book, the subject of the book and the author, is exemplified in Hamberger's (2021, p.xii) Preface:

Memoir's a baggy, commodious form and there's chutzpah in using what Clare called *that little personal pronoun 'I' ... such a presumption ambitious swaggering little fellow*. But if I don't respect my story enough to claim and share it, who else will. I tried to write previous drafts as if I were Adrienne Rich or Mark Doty, until I hit upon the revolutionary idea to write as myself.

Hamberger here is alluding to the perhaps obvious fact that a memoir is written by one unique individual about that same one unique individual, which differentiates the form from biography or sociological study. This setting-apart of oneself is central to Richardson's (1990, p.23) understanding of narrative as autobiography. She claims:

Narrative functions at the autobiographical level to mark off one's own individual existence from all others by its finitude. One's life is separable from others; it has its own beginning and its own ending. But because of that separation, one can be an integrated whole – a being with its unique past, present and future. Narrative thus provides the opportunity for the individual to make existential sense of mortality ...

As well as the limitations of language, memoirists are also subject to the constraints of memory. Foucault (1968) introduced the idea of 'discourses' being a way in which human beings infer meaning from the world, and essentially construct the world they

are attempting to describe. This has grown into a general theory of social constructionism (Burr, 2015). It is worth looking at these concepts in the context of reading and writing memoirs.

It could be argued that just as pilgrims create contemporary pilgrimage through their engagement in the social practice of pilgrimage, pilgrim-writers are fixing these discourses through their capturing of their experience in language that is shaped, permanent and public. Book-length pilgrim memoirs have a different and longer life than blogs and newspaper articles which are ephemeral and typically brief. In a memoir, a writer will have developed a stance, a voice and imposed a narrative arc on a sequence of events. Burr (2015, p.91) discusses the Foucauldian idea of discourses at length, particularly how dominant discourses can marginalise certain voices.

Discourses make it possible for us to see the world in a certain way. They produce our knowledge of the world. If we think of knowledge as one possible account of events, one that has received the stamp of approval, then to the extent that this version brings with it particular possibilities for acting in the world then it has power implications.

In the face of what Foucault terms 'totalising discourses', personal memoirs give an opportunity for the individual writer to resist both 'sovereign power' (that of institutions) and 'disciplinary power' (the kind of self-monitoring of what is acceptable in our culture).

I would like to add that as well as resisting 'sovereign power', some memoirists, myself included, are also engaged in an act of restoration or restitution. My own pilgrimage memoir (Field, 2016) was in part motivated by a desire to pay witness to a brief marriage that would otherwise be literally written out of history. (My former husband wrote a memoir about events we jointly experienced without acknowledging my role.) Robert Hamberger (2021, p.xii) delayed finishing and publishing his memoir of walking and male identity for twenty-four years. He justifies this delay, and his use of John Clare's walk as a frame for his own book, by saying:

My hunch is that there are thornier hedges to jump, unique barriers of doubt, questioning and even self-erasure for working-class writers, which is one reason why Clare's example is so remarkable. I feel sure those obstacles added to the twenty-four years, alongside facing the unhappy man I used to be and letting him speak freely. It became a sacred duty to myself, to face the past and find words for it.

As I read both pilgrimage memoirs and analogous travel memoirs in the light of theories of discourse and social constructionism, I had a sense of the fluid and personal worlds evoked by different writers. However, there was still some sense of stability and coherence in the accounts of walking journeys, whether the Via Francigena or other quasi-pilgrim routes. It is impossible to say definitively whether or not this stable notion of pilgrimage was 'socially constructed' (or in Marxist terms, that the writers suffered from false consciousness).

Evidence that there is usually an underlying discourse of a quest and transformation in these accounts, comes from a counter-example, that of a pilgrim memoir that uses a different, non-linear frame. Jay Griffiths (2017) in 'Tristimania: A Diary of Manic Depression', describes a chaotic experience of walking the Camino to Santiago following hospitalisation for a manic episode. The structure, tone and content of this memoir is very different from any other I have read. Unusually, it both describes and includes the poems she wrote during her breakdown and has changes of voice throughout, giving a fragmentary impression.

Diaries

The use of personal diaries as data has established credentials in research areas such as autoethnography, auto/biography, practice-based research in the arts and reflective practice in healthcare and education.

However, there is a difference between diaries that are private and those written with a reader in mind although Hunt (2013, p.31-33) suggests that there is always an 'imagined reader. There is also a difference between diaries that are written spontaneously and those which are solicited as part of a research project. Once

again, I am walking a path between the social sciences and a personal, semi-literary, evocative approach to research. I have found little published work on the use of spontaneous diaries in research. Even those researchers interested in the 'diary method' seldom 'theorise' diaries. For example, Bartlett and Milligan, 2015, include a single paragraph on personal/spontaneous diaries in their book 'What is Diary Method'. They cite works by Pepys, Anne Frank, Dorothea Crewdson and Martha Ballard as famous published unsolicited diaries and note that 'there are countless other examples ... written by ordinary people' without interrogating the significance of publication or the relationship of these diaries to unpublished works or the solicited diaries of social science researchers.

My own 'Red Notebook' quoted at the top of the thesis is private and spontaneous. I have always had the habit of documenting my life in a variety of ways, keeping a reading diary of books, scrapbooks of images, notes about films, shows and exhibitions I have seen, recording my dreams, totting up the mileage on my walks. Alongside these various lists, I keep a daybook which is a mixture of a private diary and an aide-memoire. The thin Red Notebook in which I documented my pilgrimage on the Via Francigena is a small, portable version of my usual daybook. As well as a dated record of day-to-day impressions, it includes an account of expenditure, miles walked, and food eaten. This is how I have always documented my travels but only now (January 2022) am I interrogating this spontaneous practice in the context of diary research and method.

Philippe Lejeune (2009, p.127), a French philosopher of diary-writing explores 'writing while walking' as subset of diary-writing and notes of a nineteenth century diarist:

His minute-by-minute diary from the Pyrenees in 1800 has one feature in common with the anniversary diary he kept from 1811 to 1844: the practice of writing as a spiritual exercise, whose purpose is to place you on the point of the moment—the attention paid to the present, the desire to leave a trace of it by placing those traces in a series, and to grasp something connected with eternity.

He later observes that writing a diary entry captures the 'mystical vibration of the present' (Lejeune, 2009, p.128). Here once again we have the paradox of writing which aims to capture the eternal sensed in a single moment outside time (*kairos*), and alongside the linear nature of diary-writing (literally *chronological*) as the traces of this sensing are recorded in a series.

There are two agendas underlying my Red Notebook in which I documented my pilgrimage. One is a general one, that I have a compulsion to digest my experiences into words behind me as I live my life, perhaps like an otter marking territory with scat, and as a solitary person to bear witness to my life. The second one is a vague idea of writing something public and coherent about my experiences at a later stage when I will be using the diary as a prompt. Its skeleton of places, dates and names, act as a frame on which I can hang more formal writing. But neither of these consciously inform my diary writing which I experience as spontaneous and natural. Here I concur with Popkin's (2009, p.5) analysis:

This, for Lejeune, is the essential attraction of diary writing: it is a realm of freedom, whose practitioners can decide for themselves how to behave, and then change the rules as they please. Diarists can, like Lejeune himself, start and stop keeping their journals. They can write about anything they want. They can keep their texts to themselves, share them with intimates, aspire to see them published, share them with the world on the Internet, or destroy them. They can think of themselves as authors in training and use the exercise of diary writing to polish their skills, but they can also ignore all the requirements of literary style, which can be as confining as the rules of moral and religious propriety. In Philippe Lejeune's embrace of the diary, we see echoes of the spirit of adolescent rebellion so eloquently evoked in his essay.

My diaries, many dozens of notebooks of various shapes and sizes, are piled in an inaccessible cupboard. I intend to re-read and cull them but sense I may never get round to doing so. I have left instructions for them to be destroyed after my death.

The reason for writing a personal diary, in my case, is not about generating data, although of course I do. That the relationship between a spontaneous diary entry and

later research is never clear-cut is vividly exemplified by Alexander Masters' (2016) 'A Life Discarded: 148 Diaries Found in a Skip' in which the author pieces together the life of someone whose diaries were apparently thrown away. The conflation of the physical notebooks with 'A Life' in the title of the book demonstrates the porous nature of what is written and its relationship to a specific individual. In this case, a typical diary entry (Masters, 2016, frontispiece) reads:

A nice day in general; just enjoying myself. No particular thoughts, except perhaps I'd like to change my life.

Over the many decades of the diaries, the subject matter changes from concern with relationships, jobs, unrequited love, and physical ailments until, when the diarist is eventually identified, still alive, and still writing, she is mostly writing thousands of words a day about television programmes. According to Masters (2016, pp.250-251) she holds the Guinness Book of Records as the most prolific diarist in history.

Now, she says, she no longer writes to relieve frustration, hide love, provide protection or to exhaust her teeming mind.

She keeps going simply because 'I like the sound of the pen on the page'

The closing chapters of Masters' book have a defeated air after the humour and buoyancy of his earlier investigations. He (Masters, 2016, p.243) concludes:

I had been a gossipy god looking through solid walls at a person's privacy.

And what had I seen? The muffled violence of an ordinary-extraordinary mundanely outlandish, limp and taut life called Laura Francis.

This description could, I suggest, apply to my own and others' pilgrim-writings.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig published (an edited) diary of the two weeks he spent in May 2001 in a Colombian town taken over by paramilitaries. He knows Columbia well, is a regular visitor and yet the violence he witnesses is puzzling and mystifying. As well as documenting the events and his response, he also reflects on 'the very idea of a diary and its relation to violence' (Taussig, 2005, p.xi). I found

analogies here with my own small Red Notebook which similarly documents a few weeks in a familiar terrain (walking footpaths in France) but through a particular lens (being on a pilgrimage).

Taussig (2005, p.5-6) explores the impulse to make sense of the seemingly random violence:

Why has this been done? Who has done it? You are meant to figure it out for yourself like the crossword from the crisscrossing clues because this puzzle could one day mean your life. Like inkblot tests each person reads a meandering logic into the event in their own way. Might we say, might we conclude, therefore, that there are no explanations? Just notes?

This similarly applies to the 'conversion' of diary entries into creative non-fiction or memoir where each writer, or the same writer at different times, might read 'a meandering logic' into their experience of pilgrimage. The impulse to impose a narrative is difficult to resist but may, ultimately be arbitrary as Taussig (2005, p.4) reflects:

Isn't it possible to get caught up in events and react without knowing why? Later on you look back and find a reason, if you want to, but that rarely does justice to the way you got caught in the first place. To write a diary is to scuttle between these two phases, action and reflection, without quite reaching either. A diary is unstable. It unseats its own judgments because it lives on times traveling edge, lingering where meanings congeal in case they dissipate.

This account of diary-writing is notable for its metaphors of motion – scuttling, unseating, traveling and lingering. The idea of meaning is conveyed through the metaphor of substance – congealing or dissipating.

A diary is both a temporal and a thematic document, which means it can be read and analysed in at least two distinct ways.

Poetry as data or methodology

Roy Bayfield (2010, Introduction), a regular walker, was diagnosed with heart disease requiring a bypass operation that led him to reconsider all aspects of himself, as a person and a walker. His volume of poetry 'Bypass Pilgrim' has the following justification:

I decided to set it all down in a book, doing some breaking open and slicing up of my own to make, as best I could, a gift, love-letter, apology, self-portrait, account, waystation on a journey towards writing other things, and escape plan.

It can be argued that poetry as a form uniquely lends itself to being all those things which Bayfield lists because it is inherently 'richly ambiguous' (Chavis, 2011, p.40). Poetry lies in the realm of the imaginal, the symbolic and the metaphorical. As a writer of poetry, I am aware of the reflective and reflexive processes involved, as well as the instinctive leaps. For me reading, writing, researching, and going on pilgrimage, are all reflective and reflexive processes and there is original work to be done on unpicking these relationships. Unpicking (a metaphor from sewing) requires the destruction of a garment, or at least the removal of an earlier bringing-together. That might lead to a new synergy, to create a garment as yet unimagined.

Jane Speedy (2008, pp.88-89) discusses how presenting transcripts of therapeutic conversations as 'poetry', that is by arranging the words on the page in lines and stanzas, offers a different way of representing a voice to that of typical prose transcription. She writes:

I later came to consider the possibility of a poetic documentation as more of a generative and transformative than a representative space ... (Speedy, 2008, p.88)

She discusses the idea that a poetic transcription allows for a sensibility to 'the gaps and pauses that are evocative of meaning' and 'in this way evokes richer and more accessible meanings' (Speedy, 2008, p.89).

This highlights a contested aspect of narrative inquiry, between those who view language, storying and/or discourse as *representative* of meaning, and those who view language, storying and/or discourse as *constitutive* of meaning.

Speedy finds support for her idea that simply re-presenting verbatim transcriptions as poetry transforms the text into something rich and more meaning-laden from feminist thinkers such as Helene Cixous. The fluidity, ellipses and spaces enable 'reaching towards a place where knowing and not-knowing touch' (Cixous, 1993, p.38).

'Poetic inquiry' as articulated by, for example, Owton, 2017, involves the writing of original poetry in order to gain insight into a topic or concern. This poetry, like that in texts by sociologists such as Speedy and Etherington, often feel to me, non-literary (seeming like prose with line-breaks) and, from a more positivist viewpoint, as too idiosyncratic to be useful. These issues were explored in an online conference organised by the Oxford Centre for Life Writing in August 2021, under the title 'Is it shame or is it water? Poetry and research in conversation'. The conference publicity (Oxford Centre for Life Writing, 2021) reads:

For poet and classicist Anne Carson, creative and academic practices are 'not that different'. Both approaches represent an attempt to understand the world and their methods can, therefore, quite happily 'permeate one another'. Following these and other examples, many researchers now 'use' poetry as a method of inquiry or as a means of dissemination. Many poets conduct research as part of their creative process. Often poets and researchers collaborate. Naturally, critical questions about poetry as a research method have been posed, some relating to the literary or artistic merits of the poetry researchers write, others about the risk that novelty and the desire to break taboos may come at the expense of substance. Sometimes poets feel as if they might have been brought in to 'sprinkle pixie dust' over a research project, or to increase its impact, without having the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry itself.

The idea of poetry as 'pixie dust' sounds both unduly dismissive and offers a clue as to its inherent power. For me, the use of poetry as research is a way of bringing sharp focus onto an idea or image and approaching it, as I would a dream, by interrogating it from a variety of angles. The resulting poem is a compression of ideas in intense, musical language which paradoxically opens new imaginative spaces in the reader. Paul Stevens (2017, pp.274-275) describes how poetry and metaphor are experienced bodily, and how lineation slows the reader down and even induces an altered state of consciousness.

All of these approaches move us deeper across the mind-surface taking us away from the social-oriented right side to the body-oriented left side. The words themselves remain on the right but the tones and rhythms in which they are spoken go deeper; they mimic the older, deeper 'language' of the body... Reaching below the cognitive centres of language processing to resonate in the deeper limbic structures of emotion, memory, needs and desires, patterns that existed before we ever learned to speak or read.

Walking pilgrimages are also linked to rhythm and altered states, and a slowing down (Solnit, 2001, p.50) and lineation in poetry might be reflection of taking strides. Here then, poetry-as-inquiry rather than aspiring to literary merit, is accessing Stevens' 'deeper language of the body' as a way of illuminating ideas and questions. My inclusion of poems at points in this thesis are gestures towards 'deepening' and an acknowledgement that pilgrimage and walking speak beyond conventional language.

Jane Hirshfield (2008, p.46) explores this deeper language using the idea of 'presence' and reciprocity. She writes:

It is of course, we who house poems as much as their words, and we ourselves must be the locus of poetry's depth of newness. Still, the permeability seems to travel both ways: a changed self will find new meanings in a good poem, but a good poem also changes the shape of the self. Having read it, we are not who we were a moment before. Awareness matters if this reciprocity is to happen, and art's first seduction is the summoning and instigation of presence.

Pilgrimage, as well as poetry and other literary writing, summons and instigates presence.

2.5 A Note on Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

It is axiomatic in the social sciences that reliability is easier to achieve when sources of data or variables are tightly defined, so that the same results are achieved by different researchers asking the same question. Validity refers to the requirement that the data collected is a true measure of the phenomenon being investigated. An example from pilgrimage studies is that the number of pilgrims collecting a Compostela (certificate of completion) in Santiago is a highly reliable measure. However, the validity of definitions of a pilgrim is likely to be questionable as these can vary. For example, do pilgrims to Santiago have to be practicing Roman Catholics and if so, what constitutes 'practicing'?

Ethnography is characterised by more or less formal ways of collecting data and the less formal, the less reliable such data is likely to be. My own autoethnographic approach, is inherently unreliable as it foregrounds and embraces subjectivities, but that enhances its validity.

The Ethics requirements for my studies stem from my discussion of pilgrim-writers whom I have met and their right to privacy.

3. The Longing – What is pilgrimage?

*Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially fram every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.*

Geoffrey Chaucer (1387–1400)

3.1 Towards a Literature Review

This section explores what is meant by pilgrimage and ‘a pilgrim’, looking at definitions, motivations, and questions.

I have opened with the first eighteen lines of The General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (2022 [1387,1400]). Whenever I hear, or read the first two lines, I feel a quickening and a rekindled desire to walk. I have a sense of at-oneness (such as described by Taylor, 2017. p.144) with the English landscape, especially that of East Kent where I grew up and returned live to live in 2011, after working away for thirty years in several different countries.

Like Bashō in the haiku quoted in my introduction (Hirshfield, 1997, p.87), and Simon Wilson (2020, p.1) on study, Chaucer writes of 'longing' (*Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages*). What informs this longing?

This is a poem so the literary devices are relevant. These eighteen lines personify aspects of the spring, that is, Chaucer gives agency to abstract and non-human entities in a way that echoes Abram (2017, 2010). The month of April is piercing the dry ground with his sweet showers. The wind, Zephyrus, is inspiring the crops to grow. The sun is running through the sign of Aries, and nature is pricking the hearts of potential pilgrims. Chaucer invokes the world as a community coming together to instigate pilgrimage. His world is alive.

According to Chaucer's Prologue, the impulse to make a pilgrimage is mediated by time, astrological forces, rain, and wind. Time, the cosmos and weather, are, if we dissolve all barriers, our extended family as suggested by Abram (2010, 2017) and kin as suggested by Haraway (2016, pp.2-3). There are echoes of St Francis of Assisi's 'Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon' (Ignatian Solidarity Network, 2015) where the speaker's 'Lord' works in the world in the persons of Sun, Moon, Water, Fire, Earth and Death, not as inanimate elements but as our brothers and sisters.

My own relationship with *The Canterbury Tales* as a seminal piece of pilgrimage literature began when studied them in Sixth Form in 1978-1980, at school in Ashford, a market town near Canterbury, and they were presented as the 'beginning of English Literature'. Perhaps because Middle English bridges Anglo-Saxon and contemporary English, Chaucer is often claimed to be 'the father of English poetry', or even of English Literature in general (for example, Johnson, 2019, p.2), *The Canterbury Tales* representing a step-change in language, style, and content in the history of writing in English.

This fictional work, alongside the material history of medieval pilgrimage in Canterbury, is part of the popular mythology, or mythologies, that have grown up around pilgrimage. For example, in his memoir of the Via Francigena, Guy Stagg

(2018, p.4) describes in his own Prologue how he was drawn to walk to Canterbury from London as he recovered from a mental breakdown:

One year on, the fear was lifting. In early summer I was taken off antidepressants. As the days, got warmer, I wanted to go outside, and that June I decided on a walk. Canterbury was a whim – the walk at the beginning of English literature.

This mythopoetic 'beginning of English literature' has taken material form. There is a statue of Chaucer in the middle of Canterbury at the corner of Best Lane and the High Street, unveiled in 2016 by the then Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, and since 2019, Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage. The bronze likeness, by sculptor Sam Holland, stands two metres high (life-and-a-quarter). The plinth is sculpted in bas-relief by Lynn O'Dowd with portraits of local people who donated money towards the statue's £200,000 cost. Their faces are superimposed on the thirty pilgrim characters in the Tales. The statue was commissioned by the Canterbury Commemoration Society (whose earlier project was the statues of King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha on Lady Wootton's Green) and took ten years from conception to completion (Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society, 2021).

Myths and their geographical context are in a constant state of flux. In January 2021, the Chaucer statue stood next to Patisserie Valerie, opposite The West Country Pasty Shop (closed) and across from what was the old Post Office and subsequently Prezzo (temporarily closed), and an independent café, Boho (closed). The building next to Boho is the medieval Eastbridge Hospital, where pilgrims stayed, and was home to Canterbury's Anglican Franciscan Friars. A few streets away is the converted St Margaret's Church which housed The Canterbury Tales visitor attraction, where costumed staff introduced animatronic dummies 'performing' five of the tales. The attraction closed in 2020 after 35 years in business, according to a 'shock announcement' (Kent Online, April 2020).

It is not clear whether Geoffrey Chaucer even visited Canterbury. Foreville (1958), cited in a Canterbury Christ Church University Library (2020) blog, suggests Chaucer may have attended celebrations in July 1370 for the 150th anniversary of the

translation of Becket's remains from his tomb in the crypt to the ornate shrine in the Trinity Chapel. Whilst actual pilgrims came to Canterbury in their hundreds of thousands in the time between Becket's murder in 1170 and Henry VIII's banning of pilgrimage in 1538, in Chaucer's unfinished fictional *Canterbury Tales*, the pilgrims only make it as far as Harbledown, a village to the north of Canterbury.

I have spent some time describing this statue and related aspects of the city of Canterbury as these details exemplify some of the salient features of the discourse around pilgrimage, its anomalies, fantasies and mixture of fact, fiction, touristic concerns, and projections. An example of this mixture of fact and fiction from popular culture is the Powell and Pressburger 1944 film, *A Canterbury Tale* which uses the frame of pilgrimage to highlight the wartime destruction of Kent, especially the damage caused to Canterbury itself. The social construction of an idea of place, refracted through literature, the arts and tourism, applies not just to Canterbury, but to pilgrimage routes in general, and the cities along those routes. Di Giovane (2019) uses the term 'hyper-meaningful' to describe the ways in which a journey or a place, such as Canterbury, may manifest as sacred, religious, or carry of a freight of meaning through other channels.

'Pilgrimage' in contemporary, secularised Western Europe often seems anachronistic. Its heyday belongs to the past, specifically pre-Reformation and Medieval Europe. In contemporary practice, it is central to religious life in non-European countries and cultures, especially in observances such as the Hajj for Muslims, visiting Amritsar for Sikhs or the numerous Hindu and Buddhist pilgrim traditions (Harpur, 2016, pp.147-169). For Christian 'believers' in Western Europe, niche Roman Catholic sites such as Lourdes or Walsingham are still visited as sites of miracles where saints might intercede and facilitate the healing of physical complaints. This activity seems to be specific to observant Catholics or people with serious illness. Such pilgrimages are not seen as central to cultural life in the UK, with its established church and secular society, nor in firmly secular Republican France or other nominally Catholic countries (Harpur, 2016, pp.147-169).

Pilgrimage as a concept, then, is problematic and problematised. It highlights clashes between past and present frameworks for understanding the world, and

simultaneously presents challenges to traditional faith, Enlightenment rationalism and contemporary spirituality. And yet pilgrimage in a more elastic form, detached or semi-detached from formal religion, is increasingly visible in contemporary consciousness, evinced by newspaper articles, books, websites, and a proliferation of pilgrimage organisations.

The paradoxes in the study of contemporary pilgrimage may be attributable to the way, especially in Western Europe, we live in traditional, modern, and post-modern times simultaneously. There are sometimes moves towards modernising. For example, in spite of English Literature being purported to 'begin' (Johnson, 2019, p.2) with Chaucer's fictional work about pilgrimage, in January 2021, the University of Leicester made headlines when it announced Chaucer would no longer be taught to English Literature students. And yet, residents of Canterbury in the early twenty-first century were prepared to fund a statue to commemorate Chaucer and conflate their own identities with fictional medieval pilgrims. Contradictions abound. For every assertion there is a counter-assertion. Ideas bump against other ideas, sometimes creating bruises, sometimes new connections.

As described, in my Theoretical Frameworks, Donna Haraway's (2016, pp.2-3) 'tentacular thinking', described in her book 'Staying with the Trouble', offers a way of engaging with paradoxes, that is 'staying with the trouble' of understanding contemporary pilgrimage.

I try to follow the threads where they lead in order to track them and find their tangles patterns crucial for staying with the trouble in real and particular places in time. (Haraway, 2016, pp.2-3)

3.3 Definitions

There are two ways of approaching definitions: descriptive and ontological. Descriptive accounts bring together different dimensions of pilgrimage across time and cultures (for example, Cousineau, 1998, Harpur, 2016) whereas ontological accounts (for example Turner and Turner, 1978) theorise pilgrimage through the language of anthropology or psychology.

Narrow definitions may be helpful for researchers but will miss the reality of human engagement in a practice which is often personal and idiosyncratic. Loose definitions (as I discuss under the heading of 'The Subjective Turn') run the risk of being too general to be useful. Keeping this tension in mind, I will explore a number of current definitions.

It is often said and written that pilgrimage is common to all human cultures. This may be superficially true if we see pilgrimage as an abstraction, or simply a significant journey. However, the cultural contexts of, say, a First Nation Walkabout in Australia, the Haj in Saudi Arabia and a coach trip to Canterbury Cathedral are clearly different. Victoria Preston (2020, p.2), in her survey of global pilgrimage, writes:

Its very ubiquity as an expression of human society means that there is no single definition that adequately encapsulates the rich variety of the practice. So where are the edges? (Preston, 2020, p.2)

Even if pilgrimage in its outward form seems to be ubiquitous that does not mean that all pilgrims assign the same meaning to their activities, even if they are from similar demographics, engaging in the same pilgrimage. Preston's notion of 'edges' is helpful when delineating what is, and is not, pilgrimage.

The challenge of 'delineating' (a metaphor of drawing in two dimensions) these 'edges', makes the elasticity of the term 'pilgrimage' apparent. The word pilgrimage is applied to inner journeys as well as outer ones. Pilgrimages can be secular or sacred, or a combination of the two. They can be described in terms of historical engagement or contemporary practice, or a mixture. The motivations for embarking on pilgrimage, like pilgrims, are individual and yet the practice has a strong collective component.

The full Oxford English Dictionary definition lists four main meanings of the word 'pilgrimage'. Three of them contain the idea of a *journey* and the fourth, that of a *destination* (my emphasis).

1. a. A journey (usually of a long distance) made to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion; the action or practice of making such a journey.
- b. In extended use: a journey undertaken to a place of particular significance or interest, esp. as an act of homage, respect, etc.
2. gen. A journey; a period of travelling or wandering from place to place; (in early use) a period of exile, a foreign sojourn. Now literary.
3. *figurative*. Originally in religious contexts: the course of life, esp. mortal life as a spiritual journey leading to heaven, a future state of blessedness, etc.
4. A shrine, holy city, etc., to which pilgrims travel; a sacred place.

Three of these definitions refer to 'the sacred' or 'religion', one of them generalises this aspect of pilgrimage to 'homage' or 'respect'. Distilling these gives us the essential characteristics of pilgrimage, that of a *journey* (whether literal or metaphorical) and the *sacred* (which can be generalised to mean significant).

The first three definitions of a 'pilgrim' (Oxford English Dictionary) are as follows:

1. A person on a journey, a person who travels from place to place; a traveller, a wanderer, an itinerant.
2. a. A person who makes a journey (usually of a long distance) to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion.
- b. In extended use: a person who makes a journey to visit a place of particular significance or interest, esp. as an act of homage, respect, etc.
3. *figurative*. Originally and chiefly in religious contexts: a person travelling through life, esp. one who undertakes a course of spiritual development leading towards heaven, a state of blessedness, etc.; a person who experiences life as a sojourn, exile, or period of estrangement from such a state.

(Other meanings and usages relate specifically to pilgrims in the sense of immigrants to other countries, particularly those fleeing persecution and sailing for the United States, as in The Pilgrim Fathers.)

There are interesting concordances and discrepancies between the definitions of pilgrimage and pilgrim. The figurative meanings of pilgrimage and pilgrim concur, but the definition of 'pilgrim' is more open than that of 'pilgrimage', relating as much to journeys in general as to those to specific sacred sites.

If the key elements of both pilgrimage and pilgrim, are ideas of the *journey*, and of the *sacred* and both are necessary elements, all pilgrimages involve *going* somewhere that has been imbued with sacred significance, even if, paradoxically, the 'sacred' can include secular sites. In which case, it could be argued that pilgrimage sacralises the secular.

There is a distinction, and also an overlap, between 'walking pilgrimages' and 'place pilgrimage'. For example, in Canterbury, pilgrims arrive and depart on foot and bicycle (for Rome or Winchester) and also arrive by public transport or in organised groups. Simon Coleman (2015, p.104) has carried out an in-depth study of pilgrims at Walsingham, traditionally 'place pilgrims' who arrive by car or public transport, and then visit the various shrines. He writes:

For example, going on pilgrimage to either Walsingham or Santiago requires the pilgrim to get away from their normal lives. But for Santiago, the walk there is an 'essential authenticating part of the spiritual experience' whereas at Walsingham, walks around and within the site are significant, especially the physical contact with places and objects of sacramental importance.

Harpur (2016, p.5), an established documenter of pilgrimage, identifies these elements slightly differently:

For thousands of years the notion of pilgrimage has been inextricably associated with both a physical journey and an expression of faith.

Note the word 'both'. For Harpur, both a physical journey and an expression of faith must be present. For pilgrimage to 'occur', it is not enough for a religious person to visit a local shrine, nor for 'atheists, skeptics and agnostics' to travel to 'such sites as St Peter's in Rome or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and not feel a

spiritual dimension.’ (Harpur, 2016, p.5). The two elements of Harpur’s definition reflect the inner and outer aspects of pilgrimage. It is possible, as many people do, to undertake a pilgrimage without any religious faith, by going a physical journey to somewhere significant. However, Harpur adds ‘expression of faith’ as an inextricable element.

This begs the question of what is meant by ‘faith’. In Harpur’s schema, it seems tied to a specific religion and his own research elaborates ideas of pilgrimage within Christianity. Whereas in Cousineau’s (1998) exposition of pilgrimage, looking at sacred travel worldwide, if the *intention* of the pilgrim is spiritual, then the journey automatically becomes a pilgrimage. If a person of faith visits a shrine without a conscious identity as a pilgrim, that could arguably become a pilgrimage ‘in the moment’.

From the above discussion, I have distilled a list of five criteria that together form an emerging definition of pilgrimage:

- Place – shrine, church, holy well, memorial site
- Person – the visitor, whether tourist or self-defined pilgrim
- Intention – to venerate, be absolved, answer a personal pressing question
- Journey – a pilgrimage involves leaving home to travel to a place
- Temporality – a beginning, middle and end

And finally, there is an over-arching narrative that relates to the non-tangible elements such as changes in identity formation, transformation, feelings of transcendence, serendipity, or their absence. These dimensions of pilgrimage are unreliable, subjective, subject to revision and also, for me, the most interesting.

Another approach to definitions is to begin with the pilgrim experience. McIntosh et al (2018) have formulated pilgrimage as a philosophical construct as a subset of contemporary travel practices. They propose a four-quadrant model of pilgrimage narratives which merges inner and outer experiences:

- Hardship, challenge, isolation, immersion
- Landscapes (includes all that is material and immaterial)
- Dreamscapes (landscapes of mind and psyches where dream images occur)
- Personscapes (the human component of landscapes)

Wooding (2020, p.25) in the following paragraph traces a thread from tourism initiatives, through 'contemporary spiritual and social needs' to the individual's need to find meaning. The openness of pilgrimage as a concept means that it is possible for people to join a collective activity for their own individual reasons.

Local projects in infrastructure for pilgrimage tourism are underway in many parts of Britain. Heritage authorities increasingly include pilgrimage as a factor in the interpretation and preservation of churches. Alongside such indicators of economic significance, we can also connect pilgrimage to contemporary spiritual and social needs. Some of these reflect perennial themes, such as journeying to mark transitions in life, or to reflect on society from a liminal space. Other trends arise from more modern or postmodern circumstances. Joining pilgrimages can be a fresh expression of faith, a search for an alternative community, or it may substitute for participation in a declining model of parochial worship. Pilgrimage, being primarily a physical expression of spirituality, can be an inclusive vehicle for social as well as religious investment, as it allows people of diverse motivation to find their own meanings in the same activities.

Religion, spirituality and the subjective turn

Spiritual practice can be a traditionally collective endeavour (such as going to church or attending organised retreats), collective yet private (such as private prayer or meditation practices in religious traditions) and simultaneously a practice that is personally meaningful with no need to invoke divinity, nor even a sense of the numinous. This is increasingly addressed head-on in pilgrimage ventures such as the Kent Pilgrim Festival (2022) publicity with its by-line 'All and no-faiths welcome' and the British Pilgrimage Trust's (2022) tag, 'Bring your own beliefs'.

This more personal position is becoming common in media and lifestyle articles on pilgrimage. It is exemplified in an article by Guy Hayward of The British Pilgrimage Trust in the Guardian, published in January 2021 with the standfirst:

The co-author of a book on Britain's pilgrimages reveals the benefits of structuring a walk around a purpose that is 'determined by your heart' (Guardian, 13th January 2021)

The implied definition of pilgrimage here still includes the physical journey ('a walk') but the destination and intention are personalised, ahistorical, and individual rather than collective. What makes a pilgrimage a pilgrimage is 'determined by your heart'.

This approach not only ignores the historic roots of pilgrimage in religious observance, but also any more general or collectively acknowledged spiritual dimensions. 'The heart' is the seat of the emotions and can be synecdoche for wisdom, compassion and spirituality (Livingstone, 2022) but is individual and independent of organised religion. Guy Hayward's article also suggests that the collective and historic dimensions of pilgrimage are irrelevant. The only element that is consistent with definitions explored so far is 'purpose', generated by the individual, specifically, their heart. The motto of the British Pilgrimage Trust when marketing their organised pilgrimages is 'bring your own beliefs', again a foregrounding of the individual's meaning-making and relegating ideas of a collective endeavour to the background. This idea that pilgrimage 'can be whatever you want it to be' has become known as the 'subjective turn' in definitions of pilgrimage.

British Pilgrimage Trust

The British Pilgrimage Trust is a distinct example of the 'subjective turn' in definitions of pilgrimage above. This is a membership organisation (British Pilgrimage Trust, 2021) whose stated aims are:

The British Pilgrimage Trust: a charity, formed in 2014, dedicated to renewing pilgrimage in Britain (Registered Charity 1176045).

Our core goal remains to “*advance British pilgrimage as a form of cultural heritage that promotes holistic wellbeing, for the public benefit.*”

‘Holistic wellbeing’ includes physical, mental, emotional, social, community, environmental and spiritual health, and we aim to make these benefits accessible to wide new audiences. Pilgrimage has the potential to promote community and diversity in Britain’s spiritual landscape.

This statement does not define pilgrimage but frames the charity’s purpose in terms of outcomes. ‘Public benefit’ is a required criterion for any organisation to achieve charitable status. However, the mission to promote ‘holistic wellbeing’ and ‘community and diversity’ is an ambitious one. It is not clear what would constitute ‘Britain’s spiritual landscape’ although most of the website refers to historical Christian sites, whilst also highlighting natural and possibly Pagan places of veneration such as wells and rivers.

The BPT has been active in inventing and rediscovering pilgrimage routes, often blurring the distinction, and been commissioned by organisations such as English Heritage to create pilgrimage routes to connect. Here, ‘pilgrimage’, I argue, is acting as a kind of branding mechanism for what might simply be ‘walks’. An alternative reading is that they are one of the drivers bringing pilgrimage back into the landscape and discourse of churches and shrines in Britain from which it has been absent for several centuries. The following was posted on the British Pilgrimage Trust Facebook (British Pilgrimage Trust, Facebook, 24th February 2021) page:

Thanks to Westbourne Church, West Sussex (on our Old Way from Southampton to Canterbury) for this synopsis of our short article 'how to turn a lockdown into a pilgrimage', which they published in their church newsletter. Nice and short.

"British Pilgrimage Trust challenges us presently to turn our daily lockdown walk into a micro-pilgrimage.

Briefly, you are advised to do three things: 1) choose a destination (somewhere holy) - maybe one of our two churches in the parish; or a place that you appreciate and revere out in the open air. 2) choose a purpose or task: something which you'd like to achieve or answer in your heart. 3) do

the walk: and in doing it, be 'present' to all that you encounter. We would be fascinated to have feedback from any of pursue this and find it of profit."

This an example of the subjective turn and what it contributes to contemporary understanding of pilgrimage. It references the creation and recreation of pilgrim routes. The 'Old Way' from Southampton to Canterbury is a series of linked footpaths which have been mapped and documented by Will Parsons, the co-founder of the British Pilgrimage Trust, who is now working independently.

However, the 'Old Way' is branded as a product of the BPT and downloadable details are a benefit to members. In this post, ownership of the 'Old Way' is implied by the word 'our' and both the BPT website and FB pages regularly announce new pilgrimage routes. To date, I have not seen any other organisation refer to a traditional, extant pilgrimage route as 'our'. The synopsis of the BPS webpage in the Westbourne Church newsletter emphasises again the subjective turn in the choice of pilgrim destinations. Pilgrims can choose between the two churches which are 'holy' (in the sense of being sanctified by official religion), and a place 'that you appreciate and revere in the open air'. Here, notions of 'holy' as well as pilgrimage are individualised and completely subjective. There remains a 'journey' and 'an intention' and many references to sacred places but always with the caveat that you can, ultimately, choose your own personal place.

The motivation here seems to be a reaction to a perceived exclusivity perpetrated by organised religion. On the official BPT webpage quoted above, it is claimed:

The BPT believes that pilgrimage in Britain today should not attempt to imitate medieval forms of religious exclusivity. Instead, the tradition can be renewed to fit with modern needs. To this end, the BPT aims to help pilgrimage become a spiritual activity that is Open to All, whatever your beliefs, background, age or physical ability. (British Pilgrimage Trust, 2021)

It is not clear what form religious exclusivity took in medieval times when pilgrimage was undertaken by people from all kinds of backgrounds, and alternatives to the Church were not, in pre-Reformation times at least, an option. The BPT statement is

also somewhat at odds with the emphasis on the Christian sites that the BPT prioritises in its routes and the £60 per day charged per person for guided day pilgrimages.

Other non-religious pilgrimages

This subjective turn in pilgrimage is not entirely recent. As early as 2005, Dubisch and Winkelman wrote:

Indeed, almost any journey may be termed 'a pilgrimage' these days, its meaning defined by inner feelings and motivation rather than by external institutionalised forms. (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xviii)

Nevertheless, in their volume looking at the healing power of pilgrimage, the pilgrimages that Dubisch and Winkelman include tend to have at least one of the traditional criteria (such as collective endeavour, traditional religion, historically established) alongside subjective characteristics. For example, Jill Dubisch in the same volume describes the annual 'Run for the Wall' pilgrimage undertaken by Vietnam War veterans who ride motorcycles across the United States before gathering at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This national memorial in Washington, D.C. occupies a 2-acre site and is dominated by a black granite wall engraved with over 58,000 names of men (and eight women) who died as a result of their service in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Dubisch (2015, p.144) writes:

We are sometimes asked why we refer to the Run for the Wall as a 'pilgrimage'. The simplest answer is that this is the term the participants themselves use. At a deeper level, however, the term pilgrimage is justified by the inclusion of many, if not all, of the elements characteristic of any 'classic' pilgrimage. At the heart of pilgrimage, after all, is the idea of a journey, and at the heart of the journey is the idea that travelling to a different or special place will bring about a change in one's life, in one's viewpoint, in one's state of being.

Although it is outside organised religion, the Run for the Wall pilgrimage focuses on a specific 'shrine' and is undertaken by a group of people with shared experience, if not necessarily shared beliefs. The veterans on this pilgrimage are looking for healing from 'wounds' sustained during the war and are bonded by the slogan, 'not all wounds are visible'. Dubisch (2015, pp.148-9) lists PTSD, effects of Agent Orange, addictions, guilt, anger, loss, grief and relationship breakdown as some of the manifestations of woundedness. When these men arrive at the Wall, she describes a powerful 'ritual catharsis' that is both 'individual and collective'.

Pilgrimage scholar, Anne Bailey (2022) explores a recent kind of ritual catharsis in the queue to view the coffin of the late Queen Elizabeth II lying in state, and gives examples of how commentators and private individuals in mass and social media called it a pilgrimage. Bailey (2022) identifies three aspects congruent with pilgrimage:

Three aspects of the queue chime with my research: the sense of camaraderie felt by participants, the valorisation of physical hardship, and the idea that the journey is just as important as the destination.

The queue was not religious, nor tied to miracles, a saint or shrine, and the distance walked was short. However the creation of a *communitas* (Turner and Turner, 1978), albeit in a one-off event, is characteristic of pilgrimage. Bailey (2022) suggests that the framing gives the mourners a way of connecting this experience with wider concerns and sees the queue as analogous to the new pilgrim routes being developed in the UK and beyond.

The rise in popularity of these new pilgrimages has prompted the idea that we are living in a post-secular age with many people searching for meaning through alternatives to institutional religion... Today, the revival of an the ancient descriptor 'pilgrim' – and a British public ready to describe themselves as such – can help us better understand this deeply felt moment in history and shared human experience.

To conclude, definitions of pilgrimage range from narrow to entirely subjective, sometimes coalescing around agreed collective endeavours with a faith or healing component, at other times their meaning being totally dependent on the individual.

Pilgrimage as re-enacted narrative

For Coleman (2015, p.106), it is the practice of pilgrimage as a narrative that evokes the sacred, rather than the belief system of the pilgrim. Rather than the place or the individual's belief system determining a pilgrimage, it is the ritual enactment that is crucial. He defines pilgrimage as a means of

coming close to divine figures and re-enacting a sacred narrative in the present through sacramentally charged movement.

In this definition, the existence of an extant pilgrimage narrative enables the contemporary pilgrim to encounter the divine in the present. In Coleman's definition, the movement of the pilgrim is 'sacramentally charged'. This implies that there is a power in the use of ritual and belief existing outside the individual, but which nevertheless infuses the individual's experience. As he continues (Coleman, 2015, p.106), this power is not dependent on an individual's religious conviction.

Physical engagement with the place can apparently have effects that extend sacramentalism and healing into more apparently secular realms.

I am struck here by Coleman's use of the word 'apparently' twice. This is a reminder once again that pilgrimage is a highly subjective notion, even when researchers are watching pilgrims 'on the ground' as Coleman does in Walsingham. He (Coleman, 2015, p.109) makes a leap from observing twenty-first century pilgrims engaging in religious rituals and what may be called religious tourism, to speculating that what is in fact happening, is the need for Catholics to reassert legitimacy after the depredations of the Reformation. For me, that says more about Coleman's concerns than those of the pilgrims.

Pilgrimage combines a series of sacramentally charged behaviours that invoke the physical but also the social bodies of those who come, appealing to the sociocultural concerns of Catholics – of both persuasions – who feel the need to assert their legitimacy within English Christianity.

Kripal (2007, p.71) provides a useful caveat to any account of religious experience, reminding us that 'common sense' for centuries assumed that the sun moved around the earth and that human beings occupied the centre of a universe created by God.

The 'facts' of religious experience, in other words, prove nothing except the fact of experience itself. In this, they are rather like the facts of common sense in that they involve not the objective nature of things, but rather what a particular culture or time will allow human beings to think, believe, even feel. This is what later sociologists of religion would call the social construction of knowledge and the phenomenon of plausibility: human beings are simply deluded if they think they are free to think anything. In truth, they cannot think anything, for their cultures and languages determine largely the boundaries of what is permissible, what is believable, what is plausibly 'real'.

Usually, when defining pilgrimage, there is at least a nod to a religious or spiritual dimension to pilgrimage and in this framing, a secular pilgrimage is an oxymoron. For example, in her survey of pilgrimage worldwide, Victoria Preston (2020, p.2) describes and then dismisses purely secular pilgrimages (such as to the Jimi Hendrix nightclub behind the London Library) and decides that for her own inquiry:

I have focused on journeys which have a spiritual, religious or philosophical purpose and are directed to a place of shared meaning. With this in mind, the definition which kept me on the straight and narrow path is 'a ritual journey to a place of shared spiritual meaning'.

The purpose then can be 'spiritual, religious or philosophical' but for Preston, the word 'shared' is central. Unlike Hayward's purely personal purpose, her definition highlights the significance of the 'place' or destination having 'shared spiritual

meaning'. However, the meaning that is shared at sacred sites, may not be the same for every pilgrim.

This raises the question again of the external nature of pilgrimage as opposed to the internal, subjective experience of the pilgrim. Greenia (2018, p.12) lists seven aspects of the experience of being a pilgrim which, he argues, help to define what pilgrimage is 'in the face of runaway metaphorical extensions that usually only manifest a few of the constituent aspects of travel for transformation'. These are located both within and outside the pilgrim:

1 the value of transcending both self and community; 2 the engines of memory; 3 timelessness imagined; 4 the effacement of self; 5 performance without pretence; 6 body centeredness; and 7 'openendedness'

Each of these aspects is rich in resonances and possibilities and a useful delineation when the pilgrimage label is being applied to any significant journey, or 'travel for transformation'. The definition does, though, allow for pilgrimage outside of a religious or spiritual tradition, so-called secular pilgrimage.

Example of a secular pilgrimage to a 'shrine'

Here is an example of a journey from *The Art of Pilgrimage* (Cousineau, 2006, p.49) which describes a pilgrimage combining veneration at a secular shrine with New Age practice and symbolism:

Brenda Knight is a Chaucerian scholar and author who moved to San Francisco from New York in the late 1980s. Soon after she arrived, she made the requisite literary pilgrimage to City Lights Bookstore. Her visit ignited her passion for the Beat Generation poets. One night she consulted her Tarot cards and up came the Fool, the card of the pilgrim. She felt she had to hit the road, follow the thread of this fascination back to New York. 'I felt called to make the pilgrimage back to the source of the creek, 'as she puts it, 'the place where it all began for the Beats. How else are you going to know about them unless you go?'

'...I kept up my research especially into Kerouac. He was truly the one. I believed there was some kind of fate which threw us together. Walking in his footsteps through Greenwich Village was like going to the Holy of Holies – you don't need to go to church when you can go to the source of great literature.'

This is a journey that has elements of the sacred, for Brenda at least, and includes travelling a significant distance, partly on foot, and the sense of an intention. For many people, the places where important individuals have lived and worked have what might be called an 'aura' for visitors, hence the prevalence and popularity of house museums of writers, composers and artists, and the pleasure derived from, for example, English Heritage's Blue Plaques in London. Brenda's journey has a religious dimension, at least in her vocabulary, in that Greenwich Village is called the 'Holy of Holies'. Her reference to walking to 'the source' has resonances with a pilgrimage journey on foot. However, the individual nature of Brenda's journey differentiates it from the collective practice of traditional pilgrimage over centuries.

Places associated with famous people are analogous to the shrines of saints. These include the 'house museums' of writers and composers (especially popular across Eastern Europe) and the thanato-tourist attractions of graves, concentration camps and accident sites. Thanato- or 'dark' tourism or pilgrimage has become an area of study in its own right. Using the epithet 'heritage that hurts', Stone (2019, p.xiii) argues such tourism has emerged from pilgrimage but is secular.

As such, dark tourism involves what some might call secular pilgrimages to sites of atrocity or disaster and, in so doing, witness traumascapes that haunt our contemporary imagination. In other words, a journey to visit the touristified or memorialized dead involves contemporary travel that has emerged from the act of traditional pilgrimage

In contrast religious shrines are imbued with powers derived not just from individuals (such as saints and martyrs) but from their role in wider religious traditions.

Alongside the growing interest in pilgrimage to traditional shrines in established Christian traditions, there is a parallel revival in visiting sites associated with Pagan and Celtic Christian practices. One example is the renewed, or invented, practice of venerating wells in the British Isles. Often these are named for Christian saints but the neo-Pagan practices of tying ribbons on trees nearby or leaving votive offerings, seem to have been invented, or re-invented, in recent decades. The tradition of putting 'love locks' on bridges allegedly began with a jilted Serbian woman who died of a broken heart in World War I but began in earnest in 2000, causing aesthetic and structural concern worldwide as bridges are covered in thousands of padlocks (Day, 2016). Whilst this is ostensibly a very different practice from a typical walking pilgrimage, it is an example of the way tradition, collective impulses and embodied and symbolic practices can proliferate without individuals necessarily paying conscious attention to their origins and meanings.

There is arguably a continuum from traditional pilgrim destinations of, for example, the shrine of St James in Santiago or St Peter's Basilica in Rome, which have had significance from before the Middle Ages, through complex land-based holy sites that draw on a mixture of prehistory, Pagan and New Age practices, to the secular sites of, say, Jim Morrison's grave in Paris. More locally, in January 2017, I attended a Wassail on the campus of Canterbury Christ Church University that included ceremonial drumming, a procession led by the Chaplain and Assistant Chaplain in their clerical robes, offering of bread to the birds by pushing pieces into the crevices of apple trees to encourage pollination, and the singing of 'All Creatures of Our God and King', an Anglican hymn first published in 1919 with words based on those of St Francis of Assisi (hymnary.org). I found the event an enjoyable mash-up of traditions, or, alternatively, 'modular spirituality' in action. A wassail, like pilgrimage, is an example of a folk revival that has its origins in the collecting and performing of traditional practices, music and songs and has since broadened to include the revival of rituals, as documented by Geoff and Fran Doel (for example, 2009).

Attributing places with significance may involve 'sacralising' them, especially if they are sites of loss or death, such as the underpass where the car carrying Princess

Diana crashed, or concentration camps open to the public such as Auschwitz. Di Giovane (2019) writes:

The great scholar of comparative religions, Mircea Eliade, argued that sacred sites are *axes mundi*, centers of cosmological perfection that 'irrupt', or poke through, the messiness of secular life. Humans, to Eliade, are drawn to recapture such perfection amidst the chaos of profane existence, and often seek to recreate it in the forms of special buildings, shrines, and markers.

In this framing, the profane refers to the ordinary, the sacred, to the special, that 'pokes through' secular life. Visits to such sites are sometimes considered pilgrimages or, alternatively a form of Dark Tourism or Thanato Tourism. In both cases, there is a sense that the 'shrine' is worthy of respect. It can also be argued that sites for secular pilgrimage (such as the homes of famous artists or celebrities, Ground Zero or the Paris underpass where Princess Diana died) have become 'religiously charged'.

Visitors – or rather, pilgrims – to these sites are typically motivated by worship, adoration and/or commemoration. Sacrilisation is further manifest in the pilgrim's use of explicit religious modes of expression, such as the laying of devotional objects, kneeling and praying. (Schnell and Pali, 2013)

A more bottom-up concern with place developed in England in the 1980s with the work of the charity Common Ground. Their stated aim was:

To promote the importance of common plants and animals, familiar and local places, local distinctiveness and our links with the past; and to explore the emotional value these things have for us by forging practical and philosophical links between the arts and the conservation of nature and landscapes. (Common Ground, 2021)

As well as promoting what is already there, the approach of the charity was to use the arts to *make* places more distinct and important. This 'creating of significance' is

exemplified by a project in March 2021 to place art works along the Via Francigena between Canterbury and Dover. The public art commission for three works for the so-called 'Via Francigena Arts Trail (VFAT)' includes the following criteria:

The artworks should incorporate an opportunity for rest and contemplation, as well as highlight the natural landscape and inspiring views. They should provide a reason to visit, pause and appreciate each specific location while encouraging interaction from visitors.

Each of the installations should adhere to these three overarching criteria:

- Genuine Authentic Kentish provenance; rooted in real research, heritage, pilgrimage, and landscape
- Contemporary relevance; speaking to the modern world and local communities
- World class artistic quality; ambitious in quality (Curator Space, 2021)

This is an example of pilgrimage as a concept being co-opted by voluntary and statutory organisations, but being subsumed by other concerns. The route is 'an opportunity for rest and contemplation' and appreciation of the 'natural landscape and inspiring views'. Whilst the artworks are aimed at engaging visitors rather than enhancing the experience of pilgrims, there is still a reference to authenticity (with an upper-case 'A' for Authentic), augmented by the related words, 'rooted' and 'real' and 'genuine'. Although the arts works are to be placed on the Via Francigena, there is no sense that they are part of the pilgrimage agenda of a shared journey in search of the sacred. Pilgrimage is only one of four domains cited alongside Kentish provenance, heritage, and landscape. The mention of 'real research' begs the question of what constitutes 'unreal' research and what it means 'authenticate' the art works.

The 'subjective turn' can be observed in idiographic accounts such as the example of Brenda above where one individual has devised and executed a purely personal pilgrimage whilst drawing on a common cultural reference (Beat poets in Greenwich Village). The VFAT initiative is an example of an organisation using an extant

pilgrimage route for related aims, in this case, to promote visitor engagement with the countryside. In the same way, that Common Ground constructed a view of localities through artist engagement, VFAT is reconstructing the narrative of what pilgrimage offers.

Religious Creatives

The notion of a 'religious creative' may offer a useful middle ground for understanding the draw of pilgrimage for those who are not conventionally religious nor wholly secular.

Deana Weibel (2015) characterised two kinds of pilgrims at the shrine to the Black Madonna at Rocamadour. She found that as well as those professing a traditional Roman Catholic faith, there were pilgrims with a tendency to 'religious innovation and the development of new religious syntheses' (Weibel, 2015, p.112). She writes:

Many had a decidedly New Age interpretation of the site, one in essential conflict with the way the site is understood by its more traditional Catholic pilgrims.

Weibel goes on to explore the ways in which New Age practitioners overlap, or do not, with those with traditional, church-based religious beliefs and practices. She coins the phrase 'religious creative' to describe the pilgrims at Rocamadour who are drawn to the shrine of the Black Madonna for a variety of reasons that lie outside of conventional Roman Catholicism. Typically, these 'religious creatives' believe in earth energies (for example, ley lines) and see 'holy places associated with any tradition as worthy of creativist attention' (Weibel, 2015, p.114). Rather than a Black Madonna being specifically Christian, Weibel (2015, p.117) argues that religious creatives see her as one example of a female deity.

Moreover, any site dedicated to a divine female figure, whether Athena, Isis, Kali or the Virgin Mary is considered an appropriate place to worship the Goddess, since all female divinities throughout history have actually just been different manifestations of the Goddess.

As with the Oxford English Dictionary definitions, there is a symbiotic relationship between the intention of the pilgrim and the practice of pilgrimage. However, according to Weibel, religious creatives prioritise individual authenticity and novel experiences when engaging in traditional practices. Believing that 'all religions are true', they feel 'free about picking and choosing among spiritual structures as though they were modular structures capable of being taken apart and reassembled in pleasing new forms to accommodate individual, personal values' (Weibel, 2015, p. 114). 'Modular spirituality' may be a defining feature of contemporary pilgrim identity.

In our definitions then, there appears to be a continuum from conventional religious pilgrimage, through to the religious creative approach to pilgrimage. Another dimension appears to be journeys that are defined by individuals that do not follow prescribed routes, through to traditional pilgrimage which follow historical routes to established shrines. There is the third category of those who follow the historical routes but do so alone, often in an idiosyncratic way. For example, Ursula Martin (2021) blogging as 'One Woman Walks' walked from Kiev arriving in Santiago de Compostela in March 2021. She hitchhiked to the Ukraine to begin her pilgrimage after walking the length and breadth of Wales as part of her healing from ovarian cancer. In her pilgrimage practice, there is a mixture of being a traditional pilgrim (Santiago, sleeping in hostels, visiting churches) and the idiosyncratic (starting in Eastern Europe, walking alone). She fits Weibel's (2015, p.120) description of the 'religious creative', that is a person who tends not to identify with any one particular group.

Creativist groups do exist but the typical creative has an individualised, self-oriented kind of spirituality, linked remotely or not at all to any institutional base. Thus, a religious creative is less inclined than a Catholic, for instance, to feel himself or herself part of a larger group.

The term 'secular pilgrimage' falls outside both of these dimensions. As suggested, a secular pilgrimage may be ultimately oxymoronic, but another reading is that it decouples the pilgrimage and the pilgrim. A religious person may undertake a

'secular pilgrimage' to a non-sacred site (for example, a previous family home) and a non-religious person may walk to a sacred site (for example, Santiago or Rome). Either could be described as a 'secular pilgrimage' but I suggest that word 'pilgrimage' implies at least an acknowledgement of the 'sacred' whether this is located in the route, destination, or person. Even if a specific religious dimension is not specified (as with the British Pilgrimage Trust's (2022) Events strapline of 'bring your own beliefs'), it is nevertheless evoked by the mention of beliefs and the assumption that participants have some to bring along.

Outsider-Insider

Examples such as the British Pilgrimage Trust are evidence that we need a flexible approach to definitions of pilgrimage. One way forward is to use a post-modern framework which dispenses with the idea that religious beliefs are fixed and/or essential in understanding pilgrimage. Collins-Kreiner (2010) sees postmodernism as a useful way of approaching research in the overlapping fields of pilgrimage and tourism studies. Collins-Kreiner's (2010, p.441) emphasis on 'shifting boundaries' feels central to my own experiences and research where there is evidence that pilgrimage is made and re-made in the moment, as well as in later reflections.

[Research on pilgrimage] ... also points to discrepancies between the 'old' paradigm, predicated on the assumption that religious elements lie at the core of pilgrimage, and the results of more recent studies of secular models of travel, which show that post-modernism furnishes an alternative and complementary approach to explaining the shifting boundaries between the post-modern tourist and the post-modern pilgrim.

Post-modernism is, of course, a catch-all term that has been applied to fields as varied as architecture, literature, social sciences, fashion, and technology and is arguably too general to be helpful, so it is useful here to list what Collin-Kreiner (2010, p.442) sees as salient features for pilgrimage studies.

One characteristic of the researchers who employ this approach is the tendency to challenge existing theories and reject the clear-cut divisions

within the prevailing scholarship. This article shows how the trends of deconstruction (or of breaking down existing theories), the prevalent tendency to emphasize the subjective over the objective, and the increasing attention paid to individual experiences are all consistent with the new post-modern approach to pilgrimage research.

To paraphrase, in looking for definitions of pilgrimage, there are no clear-cut divisions between the study of pilgrimage and other kinds of journeyings (such as walking or tourism) and there is no grand narrative or over-arching theory. There is though, an increasing interest in prioritising subjective over objective data, and the use of individual accounts of experience. Ultimately, though, this subjectivity can become so purely personal, that pilgrimage is indistinguishable from a walk, as in Guy Hayward's (2021) statement:

So, walking can be reframed without needing to mention the word pilgrimage. But some kind of defining characteristic of pilgrimage is useful – structuring a walk around a unique purpose, determined by your heart and activated by your feet. All of us usually have at least one question we want answering, something we want to bring into our lives, or let go of. So choose one “intention” from your many options and dedicate your journey to that purpose.

Moving away from dualism

I have foregrounded some of the theories from deep ecology in order to frame my own experiences and those documented by other pilgrim-writers. Definitions of pilgrimage can encompass the idea of ‘a geography of spiritual power’, as suggested by walking theorist, Rebecca Solnit (2001, p.50):

Pilgrimage is premised on the idea that the sacred is not entirely immaterial, but that there is a geography of spiritual power. Pilgrimage walks a delicate line between the spiritual and the material in its emphasis on the story and its setting: although the search is for spirituality, it is pursued in terms of the

most material details – of where the Buddha was born or where Christ died, where the relics are or the holy water flows.

A 'geography of spiritual power' allows for a concern for what might be considered, if not exactly religious, numinous, transpersonal, and an approach that moves beyond the materialist when defining pilgrimage.

However, statement suggests a binary split between the material and the sacred. It can be argued that pilgrimage does away with the distinction between the spiritual and material. In this way, the material business of walking and the immateriality of spiritual observation are merged. Walking facilitates the 'movement of thoughts' as a person moves through a landscape. On a pilgrimage route, even a contested, revised or invented one, the journey has the potential to become, to paraphrase Solnit above, 'a setting for a story' (Solnit, 2001, p.50). The more walked a route is or has been, the closer the story and the path become in another example of the merging of the material and the meanings attributed to it. Pilgrimage does not walk Solnit's 'delicate line between the spiritual and the material' but rather imbues the material with the spiritual and simultaneously gives the spiritual a material and embodied expression.

Instead of walking a line between 'the spiritual and the material', pilgrimage creates a new territory in which the spiritual and the material are integrated and co-create the other in both directions. Extended walking in a landscape as a means of encountering the divine is a way of using material means to facilitate a spiritual experience. The existence of shrines and churches in Western Europe speaks to the ways in which places, part of our built material environment, can become 'sacred' through tradition and cultural practices.

For many indigenous cultures (see, for example, Abram, 1996, and Kimmerer, 2020), the entire environment is ensouled and therefore sacred. In that schema, Solnit's definition would be meaningless and an example of a Cartesian way of splitting the world. Not only is there no line, delicate or otherwise, but the idea of a 'search for the spiritual' is redundant in a world where everything is sacred.

This can lead to a circular definition of pilgrimage as exemplified by the subtitle of Phil Cousineau's (2006) popular text, 'The Art of Pilgrimage' which reads, 'The Seekers' Guide to Making Travel Sacred'. This turns pilgrimage on its head – rather than the route being a given and followed because of the thousands of people who have walked it before, it is something that can be created in the moment by someone with pilgrim intentions. The pilgrim in this conceptual framework doesn't follow a pilgrimage route but turns their ordinary travelling into pilgrimage by 'making it sacred'.

Altered states and drug-induced 'pilgrimage'

Another 'edge' in definitions of pilgrimage is the use of the term to refer to drug-induced inner journeys, especially those where shamans or other designated individuals organise facilitated drug experiences for groups of people. Dubisch and Winkelman (2015) include accounts of shamanic rituals in Nepal, peyote 'pilgrimages' in Mexico and the use of mescaline in their edited volume on 'Pilgrimage and Healing'. I see these as a distinct subset of pilgrimage in that the journeys undertaken are neither metaphorical nor literal but into altered states of consciousness. I know from my own direct experience that it is possible to cultivate an altered state of conscious while walking, especially alone for long distances, without taking any consciousness-altering substances.

Martineau (2021, pp.55-56) in his book *Waypoints* about walking across Africa, argues that the conflation of drug-induced pilgrimages with the altered states induced by long walks has its roots in the Mystery Religions of ancient Greece. The so-called Eleusian Mysteries were allegedly practiced for 2000 years and involved ceremonial processing and the use of a ritual drink with psychoactive properties, and participants were sworn to secrecy about the climax of the ceremony.

... the format of the Mysteries seemed structured to facilitate the onset of altered states. The pilgrimage from the cemetery, the burning torches at Demeter's sanctuary, the singing and dancing, the acting out of ancient stories; all were a sequence that could help carry the participant to a place where attachment to their self and normal state of consciousness fell away.

Martineau (2021, p.56) distinguishes the effects of the ritual drink, *kykeon*, from other aspects of the ritual, stating that the physical activities of 'chanting, dancing, drumming – can all be portals into an altered state of consciousness'. He concludes:

And as I've begun to see, walking too can be a way into trance.

I will come back to trance states in pilgrimage later when considering pilgrim narratives of transformation and change.

Summary

The challenges around finding a definitive definition suggest that 'pilgrimage' can be seen in Foucauldian terms as a 'discourse' in which notions of identity, subjectivity, personal and social change may all have an influence. Burr (2015, p.91) quotes Foucault's definition of discourses as 'practices which form the objects of which they speak' and continues:

This apparently circular statement sums up the relation between discourses and the world of 'things' that we inhabit. A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of presenting it in a certain light.

As we have seen, there are multiple discourses around pilgrimage that, in turn, incorporate discourses around concepts such as the sacred, history, and the significance of place. Language is the medium for the creation of these discourses and offers an almost infinite number of possibilities for alternative versions of events, experiences, and ideas. The idea of pilgrimage is reflected in, and created by, those elements of discourse listed by Burr (2015, p.91), each as he says, offering a way of 'presenting it [for my purposes, pilgrimage] in a certain light'.

- Meanings

- Metaphors
- Representations
- Images
- Stories
- Statements
- And so on ...

In this thesis, meanings, metaphors, representations (in writing) and stories (specifically first person written accounts) are drawn on to explore the topic, however, those verbal manifestations of the pilgrimage discourse are informed by images (for example on websites or in books), spoken stories and statements.

I have attempted the following taxonomy of pilgrimage in order to address Preston's (2020, p.2) concern with 'edges'. These categories are not exclusive, and a typical pilgrim can embody all four types, sometimes simultaneously. Similarly, a pilgrimage destination can be 'related to the sacred' under all four headings, depending on the individual who is visiting the destination.

Table 1: A Taxonomy of Pilgrimage

	<i>Conventional Religious</i>	<i>Religious Creative</i>	<i>Secular</i>	<i>Subjective</i>
<i>Examples of Destinations</i>	Rome Santiago Canterbury Walsingham Lourdes	Glastonbury Rocamadour Iona Men-an-Tol Sedona Stonehenge	Graceland Althrop Battlefields Concentration camps Ground Zero	Family home Romantic haunts Places where ashes scattered Significant childhood sites
<i>Reasons for pilgrimage</i>	Healing Miracles Thanksgiving Penance	Earth energies	Pay respects to significant figures / events	Personal remembrance rituals
<i>Relation to the Sacred</i>	Shrines of saints	Pagan, goddess, sacred geometry	Respect for individuals' achievements (eg artistic) or suffering.	Purely personal
<i>Relation to group</i>	Strong sense of communitas (Turner, 1974) Institutional	'Individualised, self-oriented spirituality, linked remotely or not at all to any institutional base' (Weibel, 2015, p.120)	Member of sub-group – eg music fan, war historian, thanato-tourist – distinct from religious belief.	No public affiliation beyond personal.
<i>History</i>	Tied to the history of Christianity and lives of saints.	Draws on pre-Christian belief Pagan Neo-pagan	Typically, recent, and idiosyncratic	Located in a single lifetime

Having argued that pilgrimage has certain essential qualities, I will now look at the idea that pilgrimage can be constructed post-hoc according to individual narratives, or discourses.

3.5 Social constructionism as an informing principle.

Pilgrimage operates outside of, or in parallel with institutions such as organised religion and, to a great extent in opposition to what can be called the neo-liberal values of late capitalism. In some ways, it might be seen as a bridge between the material and the spiritual.

The characteristics of large institutions, such as those of organised religion, can include an emphasis on boundaries, rigidity, hierarchy, and a flattening of individuality. These might be conceptualised as the Jungian 'shadow' of more desirable qualities such as structure, strength, holding, and collectivity. These characteristics are common to large institutions on both the left and the right of politics. Rigidity of thinking can be found in individuals of different political and religious persuasions. Fundamentalist religion and atheism are both examples of bounded thinking that excludes the possibility of an 'and-and' mentality. On the other hand, a breakdown in traditional structures and thought systems can threaten social cohesiveness. As the idiosyncratic needs of the individual become paramount, traditional structures can seem irrelevant and there may be a perceived loss of communal values. This loss and an atomistic sense of the individual in society may be the price paid for individual freedoms.

The 'light' side of this, and one which I personally benefit from, is freedom of self-expression, especially in sexual politics, individual creativity and mobility. The notion of a light and shadow side can add nuance in a culture of binary judgements. Light, dark, and in between still suggests a continuum and as I shall discuss later, it may be helpful instead to introduce concepts such as 'panspiritism' or deep ecology that propose organising and informing principles that, like the mycelium in the forest floor, are invisible or treated as metaphor.

Burr (2015) argues that social constructionism grew out of post-modernism and pluralism. Postmodernism, he writes:

...rejects the notion that social change is a matter of discovering and changing the underlying structures of social life through the application of a grand theory or metanarrative. In fact, the very word 'discover' presupposes an existing, stable reality that can be revealed by observation and analysis, an idea quite opposed to social constructionism. (Burr, 2015, p.14).

As we have seen in the 'subjective turn' in definitions of pilgrimage, pilgrimage is constantly being invented and reinvented. Social constructionism would argue that the idea that twenty first century Westerners are 'rediscovering' the medieval practice is a myth. What is in fact happening, is contemporary pilgrimage is being freely constructed out of the narratives of the past. These narratives are also socially constructed, according to the values and interests (and funding sources) of academics studying medieval pilgrimage. Contemporary pilgrims pick and choose from those in order to construct their own narrative of their individual pilgrim experience.

As Burr (2015) claims, we operate in a world where material reality and concepts are perceived simply to exist. 'Pilgrimage' exists but on closer examination, it is not one thing, but rather a series of narratives that have coalesced around a human practice in a loosely codified fashion. Burr (2015) examines Berger and Luckmann's (1966) assertion that:

Human beings together create and then sustain all social phenomena through social practices. Berger and Luckmann show how the world can be socially constructed by the social practices of people but at the same time experienced by them as if the nature of their world is pre-given and fixed. (Burr, 2015)

What strikes me here as relevant to an epistemology of pilgrimage, is the collective nature of social practices. Pilgrimage is predicated on individuals buying into either the 'pre-given and fixed' pilgrimages or creating their own à la Guy Hayward and the British Pilgrimage Trust. A perceived pre-given pilgrimage might include a place pilgrimage to somewhere like Lourdes or Walsingham or a walking pilgrimage to Rome or Santiago. A self-created pilgrimage might consist of lighting a candle in a

place of special personal significance. Both of these can be argued to be socially constructed.

When we consider the pilgrim-writer, the role of social constructionism becomes more obvious. Not only has the writer created and sustained the social practice of pilgrimage by undertaking a social practice as an individual, but they have also contributed to the 'given-ness' of the practice by fixing the experience in language. This enables the reader to re-experience the writer's own pilgrimage, which in a positive feedback loop, contributes to the social construction of the practice.

These paradoxes include the way pilgrimage is embodied and material as well as 'spiritual', how it is a path through a landscape but that the path depends on linking urban areas and buildings of cultural, religious, and architectural significance.

There is a tension between what happens as an individual constructs their own idea of pilgrimage, and what might be termed the social construction of pilgrimage. It is impossible to have one without the other.

Everyone construes the world in their own idiosyncratic way, although by virtue of being a member of a society, culture or social group much of our construing is inevitably shared by others. (Burr, 2015, p.22)

The extreme, or 'radical constructivism' position would be to say that the so-called real world is a different place for each of us. Burr (2015, p.21) argues that this 'assumes a Kantian distinction between an individualised phenomenal world and an unknowable real world'.

Here, there is no room for an essentialist or traditionally psychological understandings of either people or practices. A more nuanced, but still socially constructivist view of pilgrimage would be to see the individual pilgrim as an agent in the construction process alongside social forces which may be either structural, or interactional, or both.

None of the above is to deny the material reality that comprises pilgrimage but rather that, as Burr (2015) describes:

real phenomena, our perceptions and experiences, are brought into existence and take the particular form that they do because of the language we share. (Burr, 2015, p.105)

Although, typically, the pilgrim walks alone and undergoes a personal inner journey, a pilgrimage route is created through collective endeavour. The social constructionism perspective would argue that the 'individuals' who engage in pilgrimage are socially and culturally constructed.

To give a specific example, Sonia Overall (personal correspondence, January 2021) was surprised at the number of organised church groups undertaking pilgrimage to Walsingham. I attribute this to the fact that Walsingham is a site typical of 'place pilgrimage' where pilgrims visit shrines specifically for healing, rather than undertake individual transformational journeys as they do on the Camino to Santiago or the Via Francigena. On traditional long walking pilgrimages, there is a great preponderance of single pilgrims and couples, perhaps reflecting the logistical challenge of walking in a large group for more than a couple of days. Nevertheless, organisations such as the Churches Conservation Trust which allows 'champing' in their churches have a charging structure that benefits groups rather than individuals.

The British Pilgrimage Trust also markets group pilgrimages but explicitly outside organised religion, and these, as I have argued earlier, may be more accurately seen as 'walks', given spiritual legitimacy by the branding of pilgrimage.

Social constructionism argues that our world is construed individually but always in a social context. This construing may make use of historical or invented social contexts. Simon Coleman (2015) has written extensively about the pilgrimage destination of Walsingham as an example of the way in which a narrative can be retrofitted to a place in such a way that legitimises the practices that occur there. In this way, various mythologies can be used as both an explanation and inspiration for pilgrimage.

According to Coleman, Walsingham's history is based on a fifteenth century 'document of dubious reliability' telling how in 1061, a pious widow was given three visions of the Virgin Mary and instructed to build a copy of the Holy House where the Annunciation had taken place. She did this and angels subsequently moved the house two hundred feet and miraculous cures began to be reported. Walsingham was a premier focus for Marian pilgrimage in England from the twelfth century, especially for women, and the shrine claimed to possess the relic of a few drops of the Virgin's milk. It was a prime target for the Dissolution under Henry VIII and disappeared until it was reconstructed in the late nineteenth century in the context of a Roman and Anglo-Catholic revival (Coleman, 2005, pp.97-98).

The destination of Walsingham then served two distinct purposes at different times. In Medieval times, it was a place where women especially sought miracles. In the nineteenth century, its reconstruction was part of a movement to reconcile Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism. Coleman sees the use of processional routes around Walsingham as one of the ways these two functions or purposes are connected. When pilgrims follow these routes and experience a sense of presence and closeness to Mary, they express 'the conviction that one is following directly in the footsteps of pre-Reformation Christians' (Coleman, 2015, p.104). Coleman sees this as a kind of restoration, 'symbolically and materially re-establishing a 'presence' that has been lost, thus reversing the theological errors evident in iconoclasm'. (Coleman, 2015p.104)

I have included this example as way of showing how pilgrimage is socially constructed, not just in the present moment but also in relation to history, or ideas about history. It is clearly fanciful that present-day pilgrims can reverse the destruction wrought by the Reformation, but perhaps symbolically this is possible. It could be argued that what happens in any healing ritual, whether walking, pilgrimage, or writing, is a symbolic restoration a lost whole.

Once again, we confronted with the non-linear nature of time and experience in the face of imposed linear narratives. Coleman concludes his reflections on Walsingham by saying that:

...journeys made at the site provide the opportunity to engage in acts of restoration that orient the person spatially, making history come alive through ritual and formal movement. When pilgrims perceive that Mary or Christ truly are present in a landscape that combines personal memory, English identity, and biblical resonances, they are also confronted with the possibility that history need not run on purely linear lines, that the true miracle of the sacramental present is that it can heal the destructive mistakes of the past. (Coleman, 2015, p.110)

This rather extraordinary conclusion clearly does not apply to all pilgrims and Coleman does not provide evidence of whether or how pilgrims at Walsingham actually 'perceive' Mary and Christ in the landscape of Norfolk. However, Coleman's delineation of three distinct influences on the pilgrim's social construction of their experience seems generalisable to journey pilgrimages as well as pertaining to the specific place pilgrimage destination of Walsingham. To take each in turn:

- 'Personal memory' – clearly every pilgrim is an individual with their own specific experiences which interface with the current pilgrimage and inform subsequent narratives;
- 'English identity' – this can stand for identity generally and may include demographic factors such as class, gender, age, education, religious background and also more changeable characteristics such as political orientation, all of which will impinge on the current pilgrimage experience.
- Finally, 'biblical resonances' speaks to the history and mythology of pilgrimage and idea of authenticity being mediated through stories told about a particular place or route.

However, Coleman asserts that these are, in fact, present 'in a landscape'. This is a powerful idea and one that speaks, probably inadvertently, to the concept of deep ecology that gives me, as a pilgrim-writer a frame for understanding my experiences (Abram, 1996, 2010). There are two readings of Coleman possible here – the first is that the landscape itself is socially constructed by the pilgrims' projections onto it of

Englishness, biblical significance and their own 'stuff', or that the landscape itself is somehow imbued with these qualities. If the latter, then these qualities are confirmed and enhanced by the pilgrims' projections, and, in a positive feedback loop, mean that the pilgrim is more likely to have a transformational experience in that environment.

4 Departure – contexts

4.1 Pilgrimage Studies

The empirical study of pilgrimage and theorising about the practice have relatively recently come together to form so-called 'Pilgrimage Studies'. In academia, 'pilgrimage studies' cuts across traditional disciplines, as Eade (2000) describes:

The study of pilgrimage is inter-disciplinary, typically drawing on anthropological, historical, sociological and geographical sources (Eade, in Eade and Sallnow, 2000, p.ix).

Pilgrimage also relates to non-traditional areas of study, including government policy such as town planning and the management of tourism. It is also often used as an umbrella term for New Age or esoteric practices involving travel or ritual, such as the 'Full Moon Pilgrimages' offered by the Gatekeeper Trust (website, accessed 22nd March 2020). In addition, there is the significant and all-embracing use of the term to refer metaphorically to aspects of 'life's journey'.

Since the late 1970s the field of 'pilgrimage studies' has rapidly expanded through lively theoretical debate linked to empirical research undertaken around the world. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have contributed to this expansion, e.g. religious studies, anthropology, ethnology, geography, tourism studies and history. (Eade, 2020)

Within these traditional academic disciplines, Eade identifies emerging themes which are now being explored as part of pilgrimage studies, such as:

gender, ethnicity, globalisation, performativity, memory, landscape, globalisation [sic] and various hybrid forms of pilgrimage characterised as alternative or spiritual. (Eade, 2020)

These can be seen as cross-cutting themes which have resonances in sociology, performance studies, psychogeography and transpersonal psychology, blurring traditional disciplinary boundaries. Rather than being clearly located in academia, 'Pilgrimage Studies' has a protean quality, and the challenge is to acknowledge this, whilst finding a working definition for this thesis. Like psychogeography and walking studies, pilgrimage studies is an emergent area of interest to people of different disciplines and affiliations.

There are also some important omissions from Eade's list. Heather Warfield (2013) described a conference at Roehampton in 1998:

Present at the conference were anthropologists, geographers, historians, theologians, priests, and pilgrims--appropriate due to the volumes of data that have been published from these sources. However, absent from the conference were representatives from the domains of psychology and counselling. One explanation for this absence is that little research has been conducted to ascertain the psychological and emotional implications of pilgrimage on individuals. (Warfield, 2013)

There are other dimensions that are peripheral to 'Pilgrimage Studies'. For example, John Eade (2015) and others have criticised research on contemporary pilgrimage for its reliance on Anglophone sources. There are other unheard or marginalised voices. Whilst gender and ethnicity are on Eade's list of themes, first person voices such as those in Cadogan's (2016) essay 'Walking While Black' are not often heard.

4.2 'Walking Studies' and Psychogeography.

As pilgrims typically travel on foot, there are obvious connections with walking, whether recreationally or as part of a psychogeographic investigation of the world. There is already a well-documented literature on the relationship between walking and writing. Harpur (2016, p.10) comments that the 'secular pilgrim can combine the roles of pilgrim, hiker and tourist at the same time'. I would argue

that any pilgrim can merge or move between those identities. As with the pilgrim-writer, these identities might be hierarchical, alternating, or nested.

Rebecca Solnit's 2001 book, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* includes a chapter specifically on pilgrimage as a subcategory of walking. The chapter's title 'The Uphill Road to Grace: Some Pilgrimages' conveys certain assumptions, namely, pilgrimage is difficult ('uphill'), for religious purposes ('grace') and not a unitary phenomenon (her use of the plural 'pilgrimages').

Pilgrimage is one of the fundamental structures a journey can take – the quest in search of something, if only one's own transformation, the journey towards a goal – and for pilgrims, walking is work. (Solnit, 2001, p.45)

She elaborates on the idea of 'work', relating the etymology of travel to 'travail' which means not just work, but also 'suffering and the pangs of childbirth'. She notes that the penitential aspect of pilgrimage common in the Middle Ages persists in certain cultures.

As well describing pilgrims in the far East, who travel sometimes thousands of miles by prostrating themselves repeatedly, she also describes how pilgrims in Ireland still climb Croagh Patrick barefoot on the last Sunday in July and that 'pilgrims in other places finish the journey on their knees (Solnit, 2001, p.46). When considering pilgrimage as a specific example of walking, its salient characteristic for Solnit is the idea of 'travail'. Pilgrimage is deliberately arduous. This is reflected in the narrative definition of pilgrimage, already cited, by McIntosh et al (2018) where 'Hardship' is one of the four defining characteristics.

This contrasts with other kinds of walking. Solnit categorises her history of walking as follows:

- I. The Pace of Thought
- II. From the Garden to the Wild
- III. Lives of the Streets
- IV. Past the end of the Road (Solnit, 2001, prelims)

The chapter on pilgrimage appears in the first section, alongside chapters on how walking relates to thinking, what it means to be bipedal, the embodied self, and 'walking into the realm of the symbolic'.

Section II concerns walking, the countryside and Romantic tradition and Section III covers urban walking, especially in the tradition of a flâneur or flâneuse. Section IV looks at walking as art, especially against the backdrop of a contemporary 'suburbanised psyche', epitomised by people driving to gyms to walk on a Stairmaster, which she call 'a Sisyphean contraption' which 'keeps them from going anywhere at all' (Solnit, 2001, p.264).

Walking, in our current age then can be an act of resistance, especially towards the restrictions of urbanisation and industrialisation. In England, the mass trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932, had two roots: in the desire of working-class ramblers to have access to the countryside for health and recreation and, as a protest against land ownership that excluded them (Guardian, 1932). The 'right to roam' is an ongoing debate in most European countries. Pilgrimage is not an organised act of protest, but it can be argued that it is an act of resistance.

In many ways, walking culture was a reaction against the speed and alienation of the industrial revolution. It may be countercultures and subcultures that continue to walk in resistance to the post-industrial, postmodern loss of space, time and embodiment. (Solnit, 2001, p.267).

The idea that walking is counter-cultural perhaps dates from the arguably misplaced optimism of the Futurists and other Modernist projects, that speed would be the defining feature of a truly modern world. Even now, it is seen as eccentric to walk more than a mile or so, when driving or cycling would be quicker.

Psychoanalyst Josh Cohen (2018) suggests that walking may be an active resistance to our work and productivity-focused culture:

In today's accelerated culture, most of daily life is experienced in drive mode, seeking the fastest and most direct route from one task to the next (though it's worth recording that driving often gets mired in congestion). (Cohen, 2018, p.187).

He continues by paraphrasing the French, so-called, 'Professor of Walking' (Cadwalladr, 2014), Frédéric Gros:

Walking, suggests Frédéric Gros, is a kind of non- or even anti-work. Work privileges doing over being, the single-minded action over a more diffuse receptivity. One works to produce, whereas in conventional economic terms, walking is 'time wasted, frittered away, dead time in which no wealth is produced'. (Cohen, 2018, p.187, quoting Gros, p.89)

This once again suggests a binary that pilgrimage resists. Is a pilgrimage work or anti-work? The formulation offered by Cohen and Gros sees 'being' and 'doing' as opposites and work as synonymous with productivity. Walking for walking's sake may be wasting time, but walking as pilgrimage is walking with a purpose, and (if it involves transformation or spiritual growth) a productivity that is not measured in economic or material terms.

Solnit (2001, p.267) argues that contemporary 'walking culture' draws from ancient practices (including peripatetic philosophers, the Romantic poets, Buddhist walking meditation and flâneury) but with the exception of the 'new realm of walking [which] opened up in the 1960s, walking as art.'

Just as deep ecology and contemporary pilgrimage are not regressive ideas and practices, but a new synthesis of premodern and post-modern ideas, I disagree that 'walking as art' is completely new, and only dates from the 1960s. The explosion of new art forms in the 1960s could be said to begin with the Futurists and other movements emerging from the Russian Revolution and the experimental theatre of that time. Or even, that the earlier practices of pilgrimage, Romantic poetry and flâneury are, to some extent, always performative, and therefore 'artful' if not specifically art.

Pilgrimage, as we have seen, eludes precise definition and has fuzzy and moving edges. Similarly, there is ongoing work defining and redefining psychogeography and walking studies. Psychogeographer, Phil Smith's *Walking's New Movement* aims for 'an unravelling of psychogeography from its early roots, assessing its contribution to the state of the walking arts, and looking forwards/around to what might come next' (Triarchy Press, 2021) suggesting that there is always evolution and change in any human endeavour.

Yet the change and expansion is neither even nor simple. The performances of radical walking inside the expansion are shifting. Contradictory currents cross the zones of change. Some shifts begin as something simple and accumulative (more people doing certain things) and become changes of quality (all that extra doing changing the things done). General flows and tides emerge to show themselves: an increasing multiplicity of styles and means orbiting around a variety of ideas that together form and re-form approximate coherences; the growth in the number, visibility and influence of women walking, which in its turn exposes other and continuing absences; art and performance practices dispersing across the field; the return of romanticism and the attraction to 'new nature writing' within the prospect of an ecological catastrophe; the exposure of semi-hidden places of violence, intensification of the invasion of the subjective, the return of repressed legacies of psychogeography including iconoclasm and the occult; a renegotiation of the relation of theory to practice and the fraying at the edges of epic and sociable walkings. (Smith, 2015, p.9)

Phil Smith's psychogeography merges into so-called 'mytho-geography' with its emphasis on imbuing everyday landscapes with significance. This has echoes of the work of Common Ground described above. However, one criticism of the general approach of psychogeography is that its proponents are overwhelmingly male, white and largely academic. In contrast, initiatives such as Sonia Overall's 'Women Who Walk' and her suggestions for 'derives' sent by Twitter offer alternative spaces for women (Women Who Walk).

Sonia Overall brings together psychogeography and pilgrimage in her book *Heavy Time: A Psychogeographer's Pilgrimage* (2021), an account of a secular walking pilgrimage from Canterbury to Walsingham. Rather than travelling as a religious pilgrim, she identifies as a psychogeographer as evinced by the subtitle of her book. Her practice reverses the hierarchical nature of pilgrimage where relics are housed in shrines in grand buildings, by re-visioning relics as the usually unremarked detritus of modern life. The publisher's website (Penned in the Margins) reads:

Vivid in her evocation of a landscape of ancient chapels, ruined farms and suburban follies, Overall's secular pilgrim elevates the ordinary, collecting roadside objects — feathers, a bingo card, a worn penny — as relics. Facing injury and interruption, she takes the path of the lone woman walker, seeking out 'thin places' where past and present collide, and where new ways of living might begin.

There is a playfulness and inventiveness to her journey as well as the arduousness characteristic of conventional pilgrimage. An infected foot means that her walk has to be paused, and a year later she continues in the company of her parents. She writes:

These two days feel very different to last year's journey alone. Is this what it's like to pilgrimage in a group? Or has this become a walking holiday, a sightseeing tour? It's convivial. There is much talking, which means less noticing perhaps, but also a shared sense of what is seen and passed through, a sounding board for observation. But it does not feel like psychogeography: I'm looking, and recording, but I'm not sensing those unseen vibrations of place. (Overall, 2021, p.201)

For her, solo walking is essential to the work of a psychogeographer, and she compares walking in company with pilgrimaging in a group, both of which dilute the possibility of a deeper experience. She also, *pace* Harpur, distinguishes this from the desire of a hiker to complete certain distances.

I'm getting there – checking off the distances, filling the gap – but this walk isn't about getting it done. There's some of that: certainly: a determination to complete, to assuage my feelings of failure. But I'm also longing to get back to the liberty of solo walking. It's time to feel like a wandering hermit again, stepping out on the unravelling ribbon-way of pilgrimage. (Overall, 2021, p.203).

4.3 Tourism and the quest for the authentic

Tourism, like pilgrimage, is multi-faceted and difficult to pin down. Some pilgrims may also be tourists, some tourism, as in the example of Brenda, above (Cousineau, 2006), has elements of pilgrimage. Collins-Kreiner (2010) has proposed a post-modern perspective on the relationship between pilgrims and tourists. She observes that the field of 'tourism studies' did not exist until the 1970s and that until then, religion and tourism had received little interrelated or comparative treatment.

This is surprising considering the fact that the development of leisure, and therefore tourism, is incomprehensible without an understanding of religion and the practice of pilgrimage in ancient times ... Initial dedifferentiation between tourism and pilgrimage began to emerge in the 70s, when MacCannell (1973) argued that the tourist as pilgrim was searching for something different, for authenticity. (Collins-Kreiner, 2010, p.442)

The idea of the 'tourist-as-pilgrim' suggests its converse, 'pilgrim-as-tourist'. I would argue that it is possible to move between these identities. On my solo walk to Santiago in 2009, I did not engage with any traditional tourism, seeing it as a distraction. I ignored most historical sites as I focused on completing as much distance as possible and only entered churches to receive a stamp or shelter from the rain. Until I reached Santiago, I stayed in hostels and ate from the pilgrim menus, even though I had budgeted for an occasional hotel.

On my current walk to Rome in stages (begun in 2019 and suspended due to the pandemic), I still identify as a pilgrim rather than a tourist. However, I am walking

with my husband, staying in bed and breakfasts and small hotels, and we are deliberately allowing time to visit and explore historic sites along the way. At those points, I consider myself to be a 'pilgrim-as-tourist'. However, when I described our walk to date to a veteran pilgrim in Canterbury, she immediately exclaimed, 'that's tourism, not pilgrimage', as if there is a clear binary (personal conversation, March 2020).

LeSueur (2018, p.16) articulates the differences between pilgrimage, adventure tourism, cultural tourism and the 'sun holiday' by employing two axes, as follows:

A model is presented that consists of horizontal and vertical axes creating four quadrants. The horizontal axis represents a continuum between hardship, risk and privation on the right; and ease, comfort and abundance on the left. The vertical axis represents a continuum between immersion in a local culture at the bottom of the diagram, and the choice of isolation from the local culture at the top. The upper-left quadrant represents the traveller who seeks primarily an experience of comfort and rest. This is the realm of the sun holiday, Club Med and cruise ships. The upper-right quadrant represents the realm of adventure tourism where one primarily seeks experiences of risk and adventure in a particular geography. The lower left represents the realm of cultural tourism where the principle aim is to 'see sites', learn history and encounter the local culture, but also be back at a pleasant hotel by 5 o'clock for cocktails. The lower-right quadrant expresses the intent of pilgrimage: one elects to enter an experience of risk, challenge and even hardship over a sustained process of walking, in anticipation of the unknown, but ready to be changed.

Collins-Kreiner (2010) alludes to 'dedifferentiation' to explain the process by which definitions of tourist and pilgrim have become increasingly blurred. The concept of dedifferentiation is rooted in systems theory and biology but can also be defined as move towards the post-modern, whereby the 'pure harmonised concepts governed by reason' of modernity are seen to be a myth, are de-differentiated, 'reflecting the unsustainability of rational order. It emphasises the messiness, contrariness, ambiguity and incoherence of social life.' (Collins Dictionary of Sociology, 2000). She observes that this dedifferentiation began in the 1970s:

Later that decade, Graburn (1977) characterised tourism as a kind of ritual, suggesting the existence of parallel processes in both formal pilgrimage and tourism that could be interpreted as 'sacred journeys.' These journeys, he contended, are about self-transformation and the gaining of knowledge and status through contact with the extraordinary or sacred. Since then, research has been dealing with the complicated economic, political, social, psychological, and emotional relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. Since then, theories have concentrated on different typologies of tourists and pilgrims as part of the differentiation between visit-related experiences and real life. (Collins-Kreiner, 2010, pp.442-3)

'Religious tourism' includes visiting sacred spaces, for example, shrines and cathedrals, but may lack the element of effort or a journey on foot. The motivation of pilgrims may vary so that even on a pilgrimage, they may be more like tourists. An example from my direct experience came from talking to a *hospitalero* on the Camino to Santiago who described how in the summer, there were more tourists, compared to the numbers of real pilgrims in the winter. This difference can be quantified as in Spain, pilgrims are asked to declare whether they are walking for religious or 'other' reasons. The *hospitalero* told me that the proportion of those staying overnight in his monastery in winter were nearly all pilgrims with religious intentions whereas in the summer, they were tourists or walking 'for sport'. (Field, 2016, p.73-74).

This complexity is reflected in the following statements on the webpage for the Routledge Studies in Pilgrimage, Religious Travel and Tourism which I will quote in full:

The public prominence of religion has increased globally in recent years, while places associated with religion, such as pilgrimage centers, and famous cathedrals, temples and shrines, have attracted growing numbers of visitors and media attention. Such developments are part of a global process where different forms of travel – physical movement such as labor and lifestyle migration, tourism of various forms, the cultural heritage industry and pilgrimage – have become a major feature of the

modern world. These trans-local and transnational processes involve flows of not just people but also material objects, ideas, information, images and capital.

The public prominence of religion aligned to the modern growth of tourism (sometimes now claimed as the world's single largest industry) has created a new dynamic relationship between religion, travel and tourism. It has been mirrored by expanding academic research in these areas over the last twenty years across a range of disciplinary areas, including anthropology, sociology, geography, history and religious studies alongside emergent areas such as tourism and migration studies. Such studies have also expanded exponentially in terms of the geographic spread of places, religions and regions being researched. (Routledge Studies in Pilgrimage, Religious Travel and Tourism, 2021)

The Routledge series provides a new forum for studies based around these themes, drawing together research on the relationships between religion, travel and tourism. These include studies from global and cross-cultural perspectives of topics, such as:

- commoditization and consumerism;
- media representations of religion, travel and tourism;
- heritage, tourism and the cultural politics of religious representation;
- gender, sexuality and religious movements;
- religion and travel writing;
- ideological and violent struggles over religion and resistance to tourist intrusion;
- inter-religious engagement;
- religion, tourism, landscape and performance; and
- thanatourism and pilgrimage to sites of suffering.

All the topics listed above have relevance to the establishing of a pilgrim identity and What is especially relevant to this research, with its emphasis on reflexivity, is the idea of 'flow' as described in the preceding paragraph:

These translocal and transnational processes involve flows of not just people but also material objects, ideas, information, images and capital (ibid.)

This is describing the broad territory of 'pilgrimage, religious travel and tourism' and can be specifically related to 'deep ecology' as one of the threads in my research and approach.

Such flows can also happen in a transpersonal realm. My own experience is that pilgrimage made me increasingly 'porous', to the point of feeling a sense of merging with the landscape, comparable to the altered state Martineau described when walking (Martineau, 2021, p.56). Such sensations are not specific to pilgrimage and religious tourism. They are often elicited by the natural world, for example, when looking at a spectacular landscape, or watching a sunset. Steve Taylor has documented such experiences in his book 'The Leap' (2017), and characterises them as a feeling of flow leading to a sense of oneness, or 'awakening'. Taylor does not specifically discuss walking or pilgrimage as routes to awakening and distinguishes the contexts in which these can occur as within or without spiritual traditions, and gradual or sudden. I would argue that there is more complexity in that a spiritual tradition (such as meditating or going to church services) can cultivate an openness to experiences of oneness, which makes them more likely to occur spontaneously.

To return to more material 'flows' of people, translocally or transnationally, these are clearly 'multiply-determined' (a term from psychology meaning that there is never a single variable to account for behaviour). A series of reports from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2017) from a research project, 'Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals, Past and Present' explore the complex motivations and identities of visitors, tourists and pilgrims who were interviewed at Canterbury, Durham, and Westminster cathedrals, all of which house significant shrines or locations of shrines. Their self-definitions and articulated motivations are set alongside the impressions of staff and volunteers who engage with them. One finding is that, as Schnell and Pali (2013, p.890) describe, visitors to sacred sites can approach them with 'a multitude of motives – which might even change during the journey'.

Both tourists and pilgrims can shift easily from the role of tourist to devoted pilgrim and vice-versa in an articulation of identities. In both roles there exists an aestheticization of the world, and a search for authenticities.

A key word here is 'authenticities'. The desire for an authentic experience is common to both tourism and pilgrimage and applies to other areas of human concern, such as consumerism, the arts, and impacts on the meanings we attribute to our experience. What it means to have an 'authentic experience' as a tourist has been debated for the past four decades with a move towards subjective definitions of 'authentic' (Belhassen et al, 2008, p.668). However, by focusing purely on the subjective, there is a danger then that the shared meanings which pilgrims and tourists ascribe to the places they visit might be lost. As Belhassen comments:

There is much merit in this conceptual shift, especially insofar as it highlights the individual and various manifestations of tourists' lived experiences. However, the tendency to approach authenticity exclusively through a subjectivist lens is also problematic as it obscures the influence of real physical places, with shared, collectively authored meanings.

One of the main journals for the study of pilgrimage, the 'International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage' makes clear the symbiotic relationship between pilgrimage and religious tourism. The closeness of the relationship can be problematic for those with a purest take on pilgrimage. Weibel (2015) when interviewing pilgrims at Rocamadour found that 'religious creatives' objected to 'secular tourists' visiting the shrine.

While prayer and meditation hasten the process of transformation, creatives claim that merely visiting a site is enough to bring forth positive changes to one's spiritual, mental and physical core. One creative pilgrim I interviewed at Rocamadour, for example, complained that the site's secular tourists were weakening the shrine because they absorbed energy while visiting, but gave nothing back in return. (Weibel, 2015, pp121-122).

This observation articulates the sense that many visitors have of significant places being spoiled by the presence of too many tourists. I have experienced this myself in places as different as St Ives, Iona, the centre of Amsterdam, Canterbury Cathedral and the Duomo in Florence and questioned my reactions. It is not simply that these places are overcrowded but something closer to the idea that tourism is a form of desecration. The 'creativist pilgrim' interviewed by Weibel above proposes that secular tourism actually 'weakens the shrine' by their absorption of energy whilst giving 'nothing back in return'. The corollary here is that genuine pilgrims might strengthen a shrine, either through their devotions or through the effort they have invested in their pilgrimage journeys. Such an idea, whilst seemingly far-fetched, sits well with the reciprocity described in deep ecology (Abram, 1996).

So, what does it mean to be an authentic pilgrim rather than 'just' a tourist? Wang (1999, p.352) has proposed a taxonomy of three types of authenticity in tourist experiences.

Object-related Authenticity: Object authenticity refers to the authenticity of originals. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are equated to an epistemological experience (i.e., cognition) of the authenticity of original.

Existential authenticity refers to a potential existential state of Being that is to be activated by tourism activities. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are to achieve this activated existential state of Being within the liminal process of tourism. Existential authenticity can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects.

Constructive authenticity refers to the objects by tourist or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc. There are various versions of authenticities regarding the same objects. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism and the authenticity of toured objects are constitutive of one another. In this sense, the authenticity of toured object is in fact symbolic authenticity. (Wang, 1999, p.352)

Clearly, tourism and pilgrimage overlap and inform each other. Schnell and Pali (2013) note that:

Christian pilgrimage has been associated with purification, penance, worship, and healing; but even in times of exclusively religious connotation, pilgrims were known to be driven by more secular desires, such as *wanderlust*, pastime, curiosity and exploration, (Schnell and Pali, 2013, p.890)

One way in which the tourist industry is using (or exploiting) the growing interest in pilgrimage is by 'packaging' pilgrim routes. In my discussion of the 'subjective turn', I explored how organisations such as the British Pilgrimage Trust appear to be 'branding' walks as pilgrimages, and Kent County Council, using pilgrimage as one thread in its promotion of the outdoors. The motivations may be various. At the most instrumental, branding enables the British Pilgrimage Trust, for example, to market and sell its expertise to organisations like English Heritage through guided pilgrimages. A more subtle take is that use of the word pilgrimage adds an aura of historical authenticity to walking or hiking.

On a less material level, there is the question of whether increased participation in pilgrimage reflects a developing, new consciousness. Certainly, there is a sense that pilgrimage lifts and legitimises travel beyond tourism, especially when it is allied to green values, international cooperation, and ecological awareness (see for example, the European Green Pilgrimage Network). It could be argued that organisations are capitalising on the perceived value-driven and environmentally-friendly activity of pilgrimage.

Weibel (2015, p.123) suggests that pilgrimage offers participants a chance to demonstrate 'the desirable personality traits of open-mindedness and adventurousness'. She argues that for many, visiting somewhere as a pilgrim rather than as a tourist marks the individual out as somehow superior, or at least concerned with higher matters than the average tourist. This attitude is amplified and reflected by the ways in which pilgrimage infrastructure is developed alongside that designed to facilitate tourism.

Religious creativism, like religious fundamentalism, is a style of religious belief. Creatives' syncretic notions about healing and the way the universe works appear to be spreading and becoming more mainstream as time passes. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the practice of pilgrimage has also responded to the impact of creativism , and that pilgrimage sites around the world have begun to be increasingly used as places for prayer and healing by people with creativist tendencies. (Weibel, 2015, p.134)

This accommodation is apparent at sites like Canterbury Cathedral where the staff and clergy have to balance the requirements of being a working church at the apex of the Anglican community with being a major tourist attraction charging visitors a substantial entry fee. Pilgrims until recently were admitted free-of-charge but since 2019 have been expected to make a minimum donation.

The vexed relationship between pilgrimage and tourism contains many overlaps and contradictions and the already-cited work by LeSueur (2018, p.16) on the dimensions of hardship-comfort and isolation-immersion is far from categorical. Once again, pilgrimage demands to be viewed holistically and its contradictions embraced.

5 The Journey - Becoming a Pilgrim-Writer

5.1 Narrowing the focus – Via Francigena

For the purposes of this thesis, I decided to focus on one exemplary pilgrimage route, that of the Via Francigena. Here I will say something about my positionality.

I am a white British middle-aged woman writer, living in Canterbury in the United Kingdom, in the twenty-first century, with direct experience of local pilgrimage routes, the Camino Frances to Santiago and part of the Via Francigena to Rome. I have engaged with various pilgrim organisations and, as a volunteer at Canterbury Cathedral, in conversations with visiting pilgrims. As the author of a published pilgrimage memoir, I identify with the term pilgrim-writer. I even, I believe, coined it!

In this respect, I am what Taylor (2011) terms ‘an intimate insider’, defined as someone:

working, at the deepest level, within their own ‘backyard’; that is, a contemporary cultural space with which the researcher’s personal relationships are deeply embedded in the field; where one’s quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; where the researcher has been and remains a key social actor within the field and thus becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation to some degree and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomenon being studied. (Taylor, 2011, p.9)

I am conscious of my inevitable Eurocentric and Anglophone bias, as I draw chiefly on accounts of contemporary pilgrimage in the Western world, especially the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome. Using the Via Francigena as a case study gives me the opportunity to draw on lived experience. I have walked the section in East Kent several times, and assisted the Confraternity of Pilgrims to

Rome, and as a pilgrim walking it in stages. It is for these reasons, my chief exemplar.

As explored in my Introduction, questions of authenticity bedevil the study of pilgrimage. The Via Francigena can be said to date from Archbishop Sigeric's journey at the end of the 10th century, or its formal designation by the Council of Europe in 1994. The route, or routes, though date back to Roman and Celtic times (Trezza, 2012). A summary of its history is at Appendix 1.

5.2 Ideas of selfhood

Before examining what it means to be a pilgrim-writer, or to identify oneself as being either a pilgrim or a writer, it is important to examine what is meant by the idea of a 'self'.

This philosophical question underpins all the social sciences, and arguably is at the heart of the very question of what knowledge consists of and who 'has' it. Elliott (2014) in his concise survey, *Concepts of the Self*, offers a vignette of fifteen minutes in the life of a corporate lawyer who gets up, consumes her coffee whilst checking social media, and then reads a newspaper. That she could be living in any major city indicates the mobility of a certain demographic and its detachment from traditional communities. Her consumption of media, online and in print, both reflects and creates a version of her ideal self in a reflective and recursive way which is highly individualised. The vignette suggests that the self is created as a post-modern, symbolic project (Elliott, pp.1-2, 9, 10). A vignette of a contemporary pilgrim on a path, or a writer working on an extended piece of prose, would exemplify other questions, which may include aspects of a more collective sense of self that incorporates elements of the pre-modern.

Elliott suggests that late capitalism and its emphasis on consumption, is a driving force in the creation of a post-modern, individualised self:

Selfhood is flexible, fractured, fragmented, decentred and brittle: such a concept of individual identity is probably the central outlook in current social and political thought. As the pace, intensity and complexity of contemporary culture accelerate, so does the self become increasingly dispersed. Displaced and dislocated within the wider frame of post-industrial capitalism, the individual self turns increasingly to consumption, leisure and travel to give substance to everyday life. (Elliott, 2014, p.8)

He continues by acknowledging that this view is disputed, and that there are also forces at work which motivate people to develop a coherent sense of self in order to make sense of lives which are often confusing and arouse feelings of ambivalence. This sense-making he refers to as 'the arts of self' and references the 'key sociological tradition that ... the self is a *symbolic project* that the individual actively and creatively forges.' (Elliott, 2014, p.9). He dismisses, as I would, the possibility that we can meaningfully consider the self as an object without reference to the multiple interpretations individuals make about themselves and the world.

I take this to mean that selfhood is a process and, in many ways, a performance. Elliott quotes Charles Taylor on this:

To ask what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations, is to ask a fundamentally misguided question, one to which there couldn't in principle be an answer ... We are not selves in the way that we are organisms, or we don't have selves in the way we have hearts and livers. We are living beings with these organs quite independently of our self-understandings or interpretations, or the meanings things have for us. But we are only selves in that we move in a certain space of questions. (Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990, p.34, quoted in Elliott, 2014, p.9)

I find the idea of moving in 'a certain space of questions' an exciting one for considering the idea of a pilgrim-writer identity. The idea of a 'space' is developed by Hermans (2012) in his Dialogic Self Theory which I consider later. This formulation allows for the paradox of a sense of continuity of the self and our identity, alongside the multiplicity of identities we have in our various social roles and

relationships. As Pablo Neruda (1990 expounded in his poem 'I am many', most of us are conscious of the 'and-and' nature of our personal characteristics and our propensity to be inconsistent. The self is both constant and constantly changing.

One of the preoccupations of sociologists looking at the self is the relative importance of 'identity politics' (especially with regard to gender identity), the 'new individualism' (a term coined by Elliott) 2014, p.177) and its related phenomena of 'reinvention of the self' and global mobility: 'physical, communicative, virtual and imaginative' (Elliott, 2014, p.177).

Pilgrimage appears to be moving counter to these trends, or to be a reinvention that harks back to earlier ideas of what it means to live in the world. Typically, individual pilgrims subsume their individual identities to the collective endeavour. In terms of mobility, even though pilgrimage is predicated on moving, it is usually on foot, slowly and 'in real life' rather than virtually. This mobility is different in kind and significance from the mobility offered by electronic communications and air travel. In the following quotation from Elliott and Urry (2010, p.8), a life on the move is explored in relation to the metaphorical question of where our lives are going.

Mobility now provides the overarching narrative, depicting the relation of each life 'on the move' to the microelectronics, software-operated communications and mobility systems. And the story it tells is mesmerising, split as it is between intoxicating possibility and menacing darkness. Intoxicating because the rises of an extensive and intensive mobile society has provided one powerful answer to the question of where are our lives supposed to be going? That answer has come in the form of 'going elsewhere' and being somewhere else. Yet the idea of fulfilling one's personal dreams and professional ambitions through trying to be elsewhere – jumping as it were, a series of hurdles in order to reach some final destination – has proven to be the flip side of something darker and more menacing. The emptiness of this vision and its costs for personal lives, for those excluded, and for the planet have meant that the experience of a fulfilling life remains a distant chimera.

However, some of the propositions offered by Elliott and Urry (especially in their book *Mobile Lives*, 2010) to interrogate the effect of mobility on the self are relevant to pilgrimage, namely:

- Portable personhood (identity is recast through capacities for movement)
- Shrinkage of the degrees of separation – richer connections
- Self-choosing – the capacity to be ‘elsewhere’ and its shadow side of forced mobility for refugees and displaced people
- Separation from family and neighbours
- Social division – the mobile lifestyle depends on immobilisation of low-paid workers like baggage handlers and hotel cleaners
- Miniaturized mobilities – e.g. music libraries on a phone
- Transformed sense of self as result of miniaturised mobilities
- Traces of mobile life, diminished privacy

Philosophers such as Roland Barthes, Foucault and Deleuze (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2021) would argue that the self as an individual bounded entity, is always in flux and is constructed by the kinds of meanings imposed by others. Similarly Elliott (2014, p.10) argues the creation of the self is recursive (Elliott, 2014, p.10). Another way of expressing the socially constructed self is that it is the product of narratives, or fictions told by the self about the self. Narratives evolve over time and there is a tendency to impose a coherence on our personal stories which may or may not have been a characteristic of actual events.

Earlier, I have used the frame of social constructionism to examine both essentialist and subjective definitions of pilgrimage. The same questions apply to defining the self and specifically, a pilgrim identity. The idea of a single, unitary identity, which pertains independently of our social milieu is impossible to sustain in a post-modern world. Instead, an individual is seen as a ‘fragmented and changing, socially produced phenomenon who comes into existence and is maintained, not inside the skull but in social life’ (Burr, 2015, p.122).

In social constructionist terms, whilst it is not possible to talk about a fixed personality, it is possible to accept the concept of an identity formed of different discourses which fluctuate over time or are constituted and reconstituted in different settings. We may take up certain 'subject positions' drawing on different discourses, some of which may be in conflict with each other. I will look at some of the subject positions possibly taken by 'pilgrims' and the discourses they draw on.

The Dialogic Self

Hubert J.M. Hermans invented a new method for investigating the self which he calls 'Dialogic Self Theory'. This approach rings true for me as a creative writer and particularly through my work in therapeutic and expressive writing where consciously looking for fresh perspectives and alternative narratives is central to the practice. Hermans (2012, p1) writes:

I became more and more involved in the further development of this theory because it enabled me to see my own self and that of others as a space – an internal, metaphorical, imagined or virtual space – that can be entered and explored like you enter, explore and travel through a real landscape that exposes its unexpected vistas as far as its shifting horizon permits. Some of the regions in this space are clearly visible and enlightened, while others are darker and unexplored.

Hermans' image of the self as a space provides a potent parallel to the literal reality of the pilgrim moving through a landscape. A space is encountering a space and at times these spaces become indistinguishable. Hermans proposes that our sense of self is created by the narratives we create about 'destabilising events'. Such events 'are loaded with strong positive or negative emotions. They reside in our memories for a long time and retain a certain vividness, even in their details'. (Hermans, 2012, p.1). Such events are not necessarily traumatic but are formative and contribute to our sense of self. As more such events occur in our lives we have a context in which to understand and integrate them. Pilgrimage can be seen as a 'destabilising event' in that pilgrims report being change by the experience and ascribe to it a variety of personal meanings.

In Hermans' conception, the person is permanently in a state of becoming and is 'not only an *object* of study, but also a *subject*' capable of actively exploring themselves and 'a *project* which is developed over time. The self has no autonomous existence but is a 'society of mind' or 'an extended space' which participates in and responds to changes in the social environment or society at large. Dialogic Self Theory 'does not assume that the self is unified and centralised on *a priori* grounds, but rather multi-voiced and dialogical'. (Hermans, 2012, p.3). Long before I came across this theory, I experienced this sense of a disunified self and attempted to convey an instance of this which occurred on my pilgrimage to Santiago in the final chapter as I observed myself behaving irrationally in Madrid airport (Field, 2016).

I would argue that every pilgrim at points on their journey has a sense of more than one self. There is a self which is motivated to walk and to reach the destination, and another that sees the futility of the undertaking and would like to stop. A third self might intervene and bargain with the previous two. Hermans calls these *I-positions* and argues that we all have several of these, some of which we are more aware of than others. He describes how in his own life, he unexpectedly fell in love and left a long marriage and reads this as a reversal in the dominance positions of aspects of himself, arguing that before the *I-position* that fell in love came into awareness, he had been in a state of what William James (1902) called 'unstable equilibrium'. The idea that some of our *I-positions* are not visible to us and yet can cause tension or pressure and suddenly move into the foreground, taking precedence over the previous *I-positions*, has analogies with the notion of repression in psychoanalysis. However, DST with its multiplicity of selves is more like a dance than a steam engine and offers a more dynamic and potentially creative way of exploring the self.

In the pilgrim-identity, there will be an *I-position* that embarks on pilgrimage that at some point has become dominant over other positions. It could be argued that *I-positions* are also related to meaning-making and that a dialogic self is responding to the destabilising event of a pilgrimage and the tensions it creates by reasserting and rearranging these positions to reflect new structures in the self.

Contemporary pilgrim identity

The contemporary Western European pilgrim in many ways seems to be between worlds. (Here, I am discussing pilgrims engaging in walking pilgrimages, typically walking to Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago, rather than pilgrims participating in place pilgrimage such as organised tours to healing shrines such as Lourdes and Walsingham.)

The idea of a pilgrim identity based on an unmediated contact with the divine is one that potentially unites pilgrims from a variety of cultures. In South America, pilgrims are often from the most marginalised communities and pilgrimage can be an act of rebellion and protest, creating a sense of empowerment and creating a resistance to 'rigidly defined social roles and expectations' (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p. xxii). In Western Europe, pilgrims are more likely to be relatively affluent, and free of caring responsibilities in that they are able to take several weeks out of normal life. They may undertake pilgrimages before embarking on careers or family life, or, typically, in middle-age, when they may be newly free of commitments or facing major life challenges. For contemporary Western European pilgrims, the 'rigidly defined social roles and expectations' are not economic or gender subjugation but the more subtle pressure to succeed professionally in a late capitalist culture.

Once again, when considering the individual pilgrim identity in supposedly secular, or secularising countries in Europe, the paradoxes around religious identity become apparent. Schnell and Pali (2013) allude to the 'muddled middle' between the religious and secular and refer to Implicit Religion as a way of conceptualising the meaning-making that pilgrimage appears to offer those outside of traditional religious structures.

Implicit Religion was first described in the 1960s (Bailey, 1998, 2006) and whilst the concept is still 'complex and opaque', it encompasses 'beliefs, acts and experiences associated with personalised avenues to the sacred' and this includes the practice of religious rituals which may result in the 'generation of meaning' (Schnell and Pali, 2013, p.888).

Deanna Weibel's notion of 'religious creatives' with their modular approach to spirituality, suggests that for some people going on a pilgrimage is a way of engaging with religion but outside of what might be seen as the oppressive nature of organised church-based religion.

Because of their focus on experience, open-mindedness, and responsiveness, the notion of going on pilgrimage is very appealing. The term *pilgrimage* is of course associated with the undertakings of more established religious traditions and it tends to lend some credibility to religious creatives' often less-than-orthodox spiritual voyages, adding an affirming air of legitimacy. (Weibel, 2015, p.115)

Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.xxvii) list some of the motivations that might apply to a contemporary pilgrim from the US or parts of Europe as 'the search for psychic healing, cultural healing, self-fulfilment, and spiritual identity (rather than the healing of a specific ailment)'. In the academic literature on pilgrimage, there appears to be a divide between the traditional pilgrimages (based on medieval beliefs in the power of relics) practiced in Latin America and countries such as Nepal and Ireland, and the less faith-based pilgrimages undertaken by older, affluent, Westerners influenced by Enlightenment and New Age thinking. To quote Weibel again:

...my religious creative informants sometimes seemed to participate in pilgrimage to emphasise that their spirituality was legitimate and involved the same kind of activities, such as pilgrimage, conducted by members of more traditional religions. Because the New Age movement is often questioned, derided and criticised for its lack of serious religious foundation, creatives occasionally turn to pilgrimage not only as a way to evolve spiritually and enact healing, but also as a way to validate their unorthodox spiritual beliefs by demonstrating that they do things that members of other, possibly more legitimate, religious groups do. (Weibel, 2015, p.122-123).

Schnell and Pali (2015) theorise that pilgrimage is premised on a search for meaning or a desire to engage in activities that are meaningful. Many pilgrimage memoirs, including my own, include narratives of a loss of meaning which the pilgrim feels may be regained by going on pilgrimage. Schnell and Pali (2015) have devised, and

tested questionnaires designed to elicit sources of meaning and degrees of perceived meaningfulness or crises of meaning. Their research suggests that meaningfulness and crisis of meaning are only moderately inter-related, suggesting that variation in one does not necessarily imply a reciprocal variation in the other.

Meaningfulness is defined as a fundamental sense of meaning, based on an appraisal of one's life as coherent, significant, directed and belonging. A judgement of one's life as frustratingly empty, pointless and lacking meaning amounts to a *crisis of meaning*. A combination of both dimensions allows for an identification of a third quality of meaning, existential indifference: it represents those who neither experience their life as meaningful, nor suffer from a crisis of meaning. (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.892).

In their exploration of the pilgrim identity, they set up a number of testable hypotheses relating to the theory that pilgrims are engaging in a personal ritual that reflects their personal sources of meaning and/or the presence of a crisis of meaning. If the latter is present, the pilgrim hopes the pilgrimage will help with the re-acquisition of meaning.

Whilst my thesis is more concerned with idiographic and subjective accounts of pilgrimage, I think it is worth describing Schnell and Pali's findings in some detail as they will illuminate the individual pilgrim narratives I explore later.

Their *Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire* identifies five dimensions of sources of meaning as well as scales for Meaningfulness and Crisis of Meaning. The dimensions are as follows:

- *Vertical self-transcendence* – comprising Religiosity and Spirituality
- *Horizontal self-transcendence* – comprising Social commitment, Union with nature, Self-knowledge, Health and Generativity
- *Self-actualisation* – comprising Challenge, Individualism, Power, Development, Achievement, Freedom, Knowledge and Creativity
- *Order* – comprising Tradition, Practicality, Morality and Reason

- *Well-being and Relatedness* – comprising Communion, Fun, Love, Comfort, Care, Attentiveness and Harmony

Their sample comprised 126 pilgrims travelling to Santiago, 2 on bikes, the others on foot, a variety of ages, nationalities and distances travelled. Some of the salient descriptive statistics include:

General commitment to religiosity is low – only 15% can be classified as religious or strongly religious and yet, as the next paragraph demonstrates, 39% identified their motives for undertaking a pilgrimage as Spiritual.

The pilgrims could identify their motives from a list and make multiple responses. The most frequently reported motives were Clarification (66%), Athletic (44%), Spiritual (39%), Religious (31%) and Cultural (21%). Through their analysis of these responses alongside the meaning questionnaire Schnell and Pali suggest that on a continuum from Quest to Conviction, the pilgrims' religious motive 'ties in well with current conceptualisations of spirituality – in contrast to religiosity – as a quest and search for meaning' (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.896).

The identification of Clarification as a motive was associated with the presence of a *crisis of meaning* and correlated with low *meaningfulness*. *Crises of meaning* were significantly higher amongst prospective pilgrims than among the general population. An increase in *meaningfulness* and a reduction in *crises of meaning* were significant immediately after the pilgrimage and at follow-up four months later, even though the sample size reduced.

I will return to the evidence for transformation, but in this consideration of the pilgrim identity, would like to highlight two more findings from this study. Schnell and Pali distinguish between setting out on a pilgrimage from the positions of conviction or quest. If the pilgrim is already religious (Conviction) then the pilgrimage is experienced as a religious journey, perhaps not surprisingly. For the others, the majority, looking for Clarification, it takes on the role of a Quest and that is where there appears to be the potential for personal transformation.

Those pilgrims motivated by Athletic reasons scored low on both Vertical and Horizontal Self-transcendence and also on *meaningfulness*. The researchers conclude:

Undertaking a pilgrimage for athletic reasons might thus be interpreted as an attempt to cope with a (covert) existential vacuum by taking on an extreme physical challenge. (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.899).

I find this a fascinating insight into pilgrimage and the narratives that pilgrims tell which may sometimes be at odds with their behaviour. Guy Stagg (2018) in his pilgrim memoir *The Crossway*, repeatedly emphasises his lack of religious conviction and yet, throughout the book, he describes engaging with monks and nuns, and at one point considering staying on in the monastery on Mount Athos. When I think ahead to my own walk to Rome, I am aware that I am preoccupied with the crossing of the St Bernard Pass and feel apprehensive. I am not entirely sure what my (covert) fears are in this case. I would like to have taken Schnell and Pali's questionnaire myself, as a naïve subject, to understand more of my own levels of *meaningfulness*, which dimensions constitute them and how these relate to my motives.

Whilst Robert Martineau's pilgrimage across Africa (Martineau, 2021) does not follow a traditional walking pilgrimage route, he alludes to the desire for meaning and how it takes him a while to move from his ostensible intellectual and cognitive motivations to what is happening at a deeper, more emotional, level.

Even in my own mind, I buried these reasons beneath alternatives: Ben Okri's books, 'the landscape', ancient mysticism, 'ways of seeing' that have died out where I'm from. These are half-truths. At home before I set out, they worked. But as I've walked, they've not been enough... And the miles I've walked have gradually worn them away, until they've crumbled, leaving bare reasons that are harder to say: I'm afraid of being nothing. I'm trying to become a man. I want to live up to my father, to go beyond him. (Martineau, 2021, pp.136-137).

Katharine Norbury (2015) in her memoir of healing resolves to follow rivers to their source, and in particular, a river described in a novel, 'The Well at the World's End' by Neil Gunn. Gunn begins exploring the rivers of the Highlands after his only child was stillborn and Norbury begins her narrative with her loss of a child to miscarriage. Her Quest is born of the coincidence or synchronicity of reading the novel, but the motivation remains obscure.

And the more I thought about it, the more I became determined to undertake Peter Munroe's journey, although I couldn't have explained why. I, too, had reached the end of my youth. I, too, had lost an unborn child. These were, possibly, the only points of connection between me and the fictional hero; but maybe that was enough. I certainly shared a sense that there was something beyond my grasp, something out of reach, and perhaps the idea of a secret well was as good a way of expressing it as any. (Norbury, 2015, p. 12)

The reason for including this example which does not directly relate to pilgrimage is for it to serve as a reminder that our motivations are multiply determined and not always apparent to ourselves. As Main (2004) expressed it:

The existence of such 'meaningful coincidences' requires, in Jung's view, a fundamental revision of the prevalent scientific, religious and common sense views of the world ... synchronicity suggests that there are uncaused events, that matter has a psychic aspect, that the psyche can relativise time and space, and that there may be a dimension of objective meaning accessible to but not created humans. (Main, p.2)

Travel writing and the pilgrim

Narratives of pilgrimage can be seen, and are usually shelved in bookshops and libraries, as a subset of travel writing. Travel writing plays with the interface between expectation and experience. In an interview with veteran traveller writer, Colin Thubron, Maggie Fergusson quotes him on the conflation of the significance of the writer with the significance of the place:

‘A traveller needs to believe in the significance of where he is, and therefore in his own meaning,’ he writes in *In Siberia* (1999), as he chugs by train towards the Arctic Circle. ‘But now the earth is flattening out over its axis. The shoreline is sinking away. Nothing, it seems, has ever happened here.’ (Fergusson, 2018)

Later in the same interview, he comments on how an individual is inseparable from their culture:

Crucial to this is the fact that Thubron is always travelling alone: ‘If you’re on your own, you’re the oddity, and you are forced into understanding other people. I like to think I’m transparent. Of course I’m not. I carry my culture around like a pilgrim’s sin on my back . . .’ (Fergusson, 2018)

What does it mean to leave home?

Sara Maitland (2021), a contemporary hermit, compares the freedom afforded by staying in one place (as a hermit or anchorite) compared with the freedom to roam. As discussed, going on a pilgrimage could be seen as deliberately inflicting a ‘destablising event’ (Hermans, 2012, p.1) on oneself. Any adventurous travel might be similar but the frame of pilgrimage suggests a move towards transformation.

However, it could be argued that sometimes it is more challenging to stay put. Tanya Shadrack (2022), in her memoir written after a near-death experience, describes her counter-cultural pull to stay put.

Our tales of awakening - told across the centuries – so often hinge on severance that it's hard to imagine lasting change without it. Castaway, cast out, or parting from a place and people, our heroes are enlivened by *leaving*. They set out, sail away, seek the wilderness. We are taught that only by freeing ourselves from constraints, or forgoing loving closeness, do we become tested and testament. True to ourselves, example to others. Fully awake to our life and times. (p.111)

Shadrick (2022) experiments with staying put as a way of transforming herself. This idea and her memoir, suggested to me a whole new set of questions about transformation for further research. Here, though, with pilgrimage, departure is intrinsic. John Berger (1984) draws on Mircea Eliade to explore what is being left behind when someone sets off on a journey.

Originally home meant the center of the world—not in a geographical, but in an ontological sense. Mircea Eliade has demonstrated how the home was the place from which the world could be *founded*. A home was established, as he says, "at the heart of the real." In traditional societies, everything that made sense of the world was real; the surrounding chaos existed and was threatening, but it was threatening because it was *unreal*. Without a home at the center of the real, one was not only shelterless but also lost in nonbeing, in unreality. Without a home everything was fragmentation.

I would suggest that going on pilgrimage is a way of welcoming fragmentation, but within a structure, and one that has a meaning which can facilitate an enhanced way of being, a destabilising that ultimately leads to more stability. Berger (1984) continues:

Home was the center of the world because it was the place where a vertical line crossed with a horizontal one. The vertical line was a path leading upwards to the sky and downwards to the underworld. The horizontal line represented the traffic of the world, all the possible roads leading across the earth to other places. Thus, at home, one was nearest to the gods in the sky and to the dead of the underworld. This nearness promised access to both.

And at the same time, one was at the starting point and, hopefully, the returning point of all terrestrial journeys.

I would argue that this way of being at the crossroads of sky and earth applies not just to being at home, but being on the path and that by walking outside, where the sky is visible and contact with the earth is unmediated by floors and foundations, makes that more apparent than being at home, especially a modern home insulated against wind and weather. Also, when we walk we are vertical, like a tree, connecting heaven and earth.

Pilgrimage makes a virtue of moving on. Moving on is what it does. (Field, 2016, p.tbc).

However, for many who may have experienced early insecurity, there is value in being settled. D.J. Waldie, a cultural historian of suburbia, describes how, for his parents who had experienced the Second World War and the Great Depression, a home in the newly-built suburbs springing up across the United States in the middle of the twentieth century, gave them a sense of luck.

More men than just my father have said to me that living here gave them a life made whole and habits that did not make them feel ashamed. They knew what they have found and lost... Daily life here has an inertia people believe in. (Waldie, 1996, pp. v-vi, 11)

The above is quoted by Robert Martineau who identifies two other kinds of inertia in his memoir of walking across West Africa. He notes the apathy of poverty that can lead to either despair or revolution and contrasts this with his own experience of inertia.

It's spending too much time sat down, watching TV, doing the same thing over and over, often without knowing why ... too many hours in the same office, the same vehicle, the same living room. Partly it's having so much choice you freeze. More and more people seem to be losing belief in this way of life. At its worst addiction, depression, loneliness arise from this inertia. (Martineau, 2021, p.48)

He continues, perhaps with post-hoc justification about his own trip:

Walking is at least moving. I was nervous when I walked for the first time with my pack to the bus stop, but I knew I needed what was coming.
Walking is a way out of inertia. (Martineau, 2021, p.49).

Leaving home, walking and moving are central to pilgrimage. And walking requires a body.

5.4 The Embodied Pilgrim

What is Embodiment

Relating to both love and the body are discourses around the heart. Louise Livingstone (2022, p.22) has argued for the re-examination and restitution of the heart in academic discourse. She counters arguments that this is sentimental, attributing such accusations to Enlightenment thinking that is uncomfortable with bringing emotions into so-called rational discourse.

That is, as we in contemporary society have moved our perceived capacity for rational decision-making into the brain/head, we have abandoned our feeling, sensing, emotional bodies (and consequently our hearts), to a way of seeing that states the medicalised, material, objectified body/heart are the only reality, the way they are, the only heart and body that there is ... a trivialised, sentimental heart is unable to gain traction at socio-political levels in current discussions about sustainability – despite multiple calls from numerous scholars across many disciplines for another kind of heart beyond the biological pump of science.

Livingstone argues that there is an urgent need to reinstate a different attitude to the heart in order to address, among other challenges, the climate crisis. I found myself drawing on similar arguments and thinkers in my examination of the meaning of pilgrimage, which like 'the heart' is prone to accusations of being a backward,

sentimental, and nostalgic way of framing 'a walk'. I similarly concur with her and Simon Wilson (2020, p.1) that the heart in its broadest sense underlies meaningful academic endeavour.

Ronald Pelias, in his book *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life*, writes:

I speak the heart's discourse because the heart is never far from what matters. Without the heart pumping its words, we are nothing but an outdated dictionary untouched. (Pelias, 2004, p.7)

Pilgrimage is, as we have discussed, an elastic term that encompasses a multitude of sometimes contradictory practices and motivations. The idea that it is simultaneously pre-modern and post-modern underlines the potential of pilgrimage to contribute to more holistic world views. The pre-modern and post-modern versions of pilgrimage have much in common, however, the post-modern, contemporary practice is informed by, and to some extent operates in opposition to, Enlightenment and modernist concepts of the self. One aspect of the modernist project was to detach the mind from the body. Elaine Graham (2002, p.231) describes:

... modernism's attempts to impose a taxonomic 'purification' on the world, by segregating matter and spirit, secular and sacred. Yet the boundary between material and spiritual is as much a construct as that between humans, animals and machines ...to interpret 'transcendence' – and by implication, any evocation of religion and the sacred – as inevitably implying the worship of incorporeality, immortality and immateriality, is to collude with its ideological usage and fail to analyse the very constructedness of such a notion. To equate a drive for transcendence with an abandonment of physical worlds is, therefore, to extrapolate a particular religious symbolic system peculiar to Western modernity – which represents only specific social, gendered and cultural interests into a universal human essence.

Graham continues by suggesting that there are other models of spiritual practice that persist, even as our daily life is enacted more and more through technology:

...those that celebrate the potential of immanence and embodiment and seek to sacralise the known world and infuse material experience with the possibilities of divinity. These represent wholly different relationships with the material world (including birth, embodiment and mortality), a greater tolerance for human contingency and non-human nature – and potentially, an alternative symbolic system of religion, culture and gender...

My dissatisfaction with assertions of ontological hygiene, therefore, has been in the name of the interrelatedness of things, the vitality of matter and the irreducibility of the other. (Graham, 2002, p.232)

As we have seen in the discussion of the British Pilgrimage Trust and the 'subjective turn' in defining pilgrimage, it is likely that contemporary practices are instrumental in leading to new definitions. Guy Hayward's (2021) premise that any walk can be turned into a pilgrimage appears to have grown out of the increased participation in walking as a pastime during the lockdowns of the pandemic of 2020.

Nevertheless, it has always been the case that travel, mostly on foot, is central to traditional pilgrimage along established routes, whilst less so for 'place' pilgrimage to healing shrines or religious tourism.

Arguably in the 21st century, it is because most Western Europeans are sedentary and travel by car, that all kinds of embodied practices are growing in popularity, from running to yoga to walking. 'Embodiment' is term which is used in a variety of contexts. For example, there are courses in becoming an 'embodied practitioner' (which begs the question of what it would mean to be a disembodied practitioner) and Embodiment YouTube channel, both of which advocate a greater awareness of signals from the body. Körner et al (2015) argue:

Research on embodiment is rich in impressive demonstrations but somewhat poor in comprehensive explanations. Although some moderators and driving mechanisms have been identified, a comprehensive conceptual account of how bodily states or dynamics influence behavior is still missing.

They claim that there are three independent mechanisms at work, namely:

direct state induction, which influences how humans feel or process information, unmediated by any other cognitive mechanism; *modal priming*, which changes the accessibility of concepts associated with a bodily state; *sensorimotor simulation*, which affects the ease with which congruent and incongruent actions are performed. (Körner et al, 2015)

The contention that language can influence or even determine bodily sensations and, reciprocally, that a bodily state can lead to cognitive changes, could potentially account for many aspects of pilgrim experience. Calling an arduous walk a pilgrimage, may make it more attractive. Being exhausted, and so in a semi-altered state, may account for some of the more transcendental or transpersonal experiences pilgrims describe.

Körner et al (2015) elaborate their descriptions of the three mechanisms underlying embodiment:

Specifically, we argue that sensations or actions can have three qualitatively different effects on the mind.

- First, they can directly alter a person's state of mind, feelings, or information processing (direct state induction).
- Second, they can change how readily specific information comes to mind, thus influencing the mental contents instead of the mode of operation (modal priming).
- Third, they can lead to compatibility effects with concurrent automatic simulations, changing, for example, fluency and preferences (sensorimotor simulation). (Körner et al, 2015)

Because of the perceived lack of 'embodiment' in most of contemporary life, it has been argued (for example, Dubisch and Winkelmann, 2005) that one of the reasons for an increased participation in pilgrimage might be the attraction of an embodied practice.

An additional attraction, especially in the West, may be the fit that pilgrimage enjoys with the desire for more participatory, somatic forms of religious practice. (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005)

In her account of the Run For The Wall motorcycle pilgrimages, Dubisch notes that as well as rituals including morning prayers drawing Native American and New Age spirituality, it is the embodied practice of riding a motorcycle that mediates some of the healing experienced.

...motorcycle riding is an intensely physical and absorbing experience ..,in which the pilgrim's body becomes the means and locus of both pilgrimage and healing, and may be subject to hardship and sacrifice in the process. (Dubisch, 2015, p.147)

It is not just the walking that involves the body. Arrival at the shrine for medieval pilgrims involved touching, kissing, seeing and holding objects that were believed to have prophylactic power.

Simon Coleman, discussing the Walsingham and the Reformation, argues that there are parallels between the body as 'powerful natural symbol' and the physical environment as reflection and container of such power' (Coleman, 2005, p.96). He uses the term 'restoration' as it can apply to the individual body, to spiritual wellbeing and to the environment. The idea that something which has been lost can be 'restored' by pilgrimage and mediated through bodily experience is, he argues, one of the mechanisms by which pilgrimage fuses the physical and the moral.

Data from the body

Pelias (2004) argues for acknowledging the embodied self in academic and daily life. This feels appropriate when considering an activity as embodied as making a walking pilgrimage. I am researching the pilgrim-writer and I also embody an example of the subject of my research. Pelias' description of arts-based research in

social sciences invokes bodily sensations. He describes the texts that emerge from such research as:

...methodological calls, writings that mark a different space. They collect in the body: an ache, a fist, a soup. (Pelias, 2004, p.11)

I selected a trinity of methodologies as discussed above (critical realism, auto/biography and autoethnography) and underlying all of them, and pilgrimage and this 'body' of work, is/are human bodies. Pelias' evocation of 'an ache, a fist, a soup' leads me to think of my methodologies in terms of walking metaphors. A starting point is 'a map', there follow 'suggested routes' and setting out is, metaphorically at least, a 'walk in the dark'. Critical realism is cartography, yielding a map of the territory of pilgrimage. The examination of the pilgrim memoirs using auto/biography and narrative techniques is a series of suggested routes for my thinking and walking. My own creative and autoethnographic explorations are, at the time of their conception, a walk in the dark. Three approaches to methodology: Map – Routes – A Walk in the Dark.

The act of walking can also facilitate new ways of thinking. Robert Martineau's 2021 memoir, 'Waypoints' documents a thousand mile walk across West Africa when he was twenty-seven and needed to find a sense of meaning. He does not include any sense of resolution in the account, but we learn, as he does, that as well as the sense of disconnect he experienced as a young lawyer, he is also still mourning the death of his father. This is something that he describes as being facilitated by the daydreams engendered by long-distance walking.

I didn't come here with these things in mind. They are memories I haven't thought of in years. But as I walk, they are there, and they come up. In them, I see the void I've never been able to fill. (Martineau, 2021, p.52)

Walking both facilitates memory and as Martineau (2021, p.213) describes, allows memories to be processed.

Walking, I've thought back sometimes to those moments, as old feelings and memories I didn't know were there have washed up in my steps. Now, nearing the end, I try to visualise whatever was painful from that time drifting out of me, scattering to the road behind.

In my own memoir of pilgrimage (Field, 2016) I noted a heightened awareness of my body when walking.

5.5 Pilgrimage as Ritual

First, I will give some context to ritual as a concept. Schnell and Pali (2013, p.888) write:

Rituals are behavioural scripts, describing a sequence of acts to be followed in a certain situation. But they are more than that. Action in modern terms, is understood as intentional and aimed at a specific goal. A ritual in contrast is not instrumental in the sense of targeting an immediate goal. It has a surplus of meaning, tapping and evoking a reality *beyond*.

This definition begs many questions as ritual is a term applied to many kinds of human behaviour. It could be argued that with the demise of organised religion, many social rituals have disappeared from Western society. However, these have been replaced with personal and idiosyncratic rituals in many cases. For example, a traditional Christening of a baby may be replaced by a Baby-naming Ceremony and funerals by celebrations of the life of the departed and both may draw on the skills of humanist or inter-faith ministers to devise appropriate, personal rituals. The term ritual is also used in Freudian psychoanalysis to denote meaningless repetitions of actions as part of obsessive-compulsive behaviour. Conversely, Jungian analysts might take a more positive view, seeing ritual as a therapeutic activity, transforming libido into mental energy and conducive to meaning making.

Returning to Schnell and Pali's definition above, pilgrimage is a ritual that may have some instrumental aspects (for example, getting fit by walking or being immersed in the countryside or historical sites) but does not 'tackle an immediate goal'. There

may be intangible goals – such as coming to terms with a life-change or looking for meaning – but the fulfilment of these cannot be guaranteed.

Pilgrimage, too, has a surplus of meaning and this meaning is likely to be different for different pilgrims and to change over time for the same pilgrim as they reflect on the experience. The meaning is not in the ritual itself but is created by the ‘actor’s subjective ascription of meaning’ which can change over time. Schnell and Pali (2013, p.890) continue:

As a consequence, traditional religious rituals can be experienced as evoking a vertical transcendence (God or the numinous); they can be imbued with personal meaning of any kind (*communitas*, growth, relaxation), or they can be completely meaningless. Likewise, apparently secular personal rituals can have explicit religious meaning.

In other words, as explored with pilgrimage specifically, the meaning of the ritual cannot be determined from outside observation. In fact, pilgrimage is a powerful exemplar of a contemporary ritual, based on a medieval ritual, which has no fixed prescribed or proscribed meaning.

Rituals are central to human life and meaning making, whether in culture, social life, therapy, or pilgrimage. According to Schnell and Pali (2013), rituals are related to the trend at the end of the twentieth century to ‘a return of apparently archaic, but obviously deeply human modes of thinking and acting’. They see pilgrimage and the rise in interest in ritual and myth in popular culture, therapy and personal life as a ‘challenge to the polarities of reason or faith, of rationality or irrationality, as they had been set up in modernity’ (Schnell and Pali, 2013, p.888). This is reminiscent of the ‘third space’ proposed by Jeffrey Kripal which moves beyond such polarities to enable the meanings of such rituals to exist with reference to both reason and faith, or, for the irrational to have a place within the rational, and vice versa (Kripal precise ref needed).

In a culture where the individual and self-determination are seldom challenged as driving forces, pilgrimage acts as a counter-cultural force, harking back to collective

and mysterious rituals no longer given status or credence. Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.xx) claim that ritual is an essential component of pilgrimage as a healing or transformational process.

This primordial effort to establish a relationship with a 'sacred other' is a healing process, a dynamic of self-other relations that has developmental and healing implications. These processes combine personal identity within symbolic and historically situated social reference systems that contribute to a reformation and assertion of the sacred self.

Similarly, Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante (2005, p.22) see ritual as the healing agent for those who go on pilgrimage for healing purposes. They postulate that ritual creates an Altered State of Consciousness (ASC) similar to that experienced under hypnosis and note that in Brazil, a country with a high engagement in pilgrimage, people have a high degree of suggestibility which correlates with being easily hypnotised (Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante, 2005, p.22).

As we have seen, definitions of pilgrimage vary from prescriptive lists of qualities, to the subjective, 'it can be anything you want it to be'. Similarly, the positioning of the pilgrim as someone 'anti-modern', traditional or post-modern depends on the framework chosen. Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.xvi) claim:

The belief in the healing powers of pilgrimage and shrines contrasts with science, rationality and the modern 'disenchanted' world. At the same time, pilgrimage can be seen as a ritual form particularly suited to the postmodern era. As institutionalized forms of spirituality have waned, pilgrimage accommodates itself to individual spiritual searches and individual needs. (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xvi).

Here I would take issue with the binary distinction between belief in the healing power of pilgrimage and shrines on the one hand, and science and rationality on the other. However, a key word in this statement is 'disenchanted'. It could be that the pilgrim is seeking to 're-enchant' the world through the act of pilgrimage, and this can be a motive independent of any belief system or dogma. Post-modernism is often

described so vaguely that it is merely the cultural air that we breathe in our current era, and so lacks explanatory power. However, if we take it in the sense suggested here of an individualised spiritual search, based on the individual pilgrim's needs, then this offers some clues to the pilgrim identity.

One theory is that the pilgrim is someone looking to re-enchant or re-invent their spiritual practice outside organised religion. Here, a pilgrim may be a person with spiritual leanings or needs who is reluctant to have these articulated or enacted in a hierarchical and possibly rigid-seeming structure. There are echoes here of the New Age practices of resurrecting and reinventing supposedly Celtic festivals and devising rituals around them. It has been argued that such festivals, whilst they existed in some form, are in fact modern inventions, a syncretism of Neo-pagan, early Christian, Roman and even Neolithic customs, repackaged for the twenty-first century. Again, like the revival of pilgrimage, these might be in reaction to the perceived lack of relevance and authority of organised religion alongside the bleak materialism of much of modern life. According to Post et al (1998, p.1) this trend has been apparent for at least the past twenty years:

Unexpectedly and often outside the sphere of the organized church, there is an enormous interest in rituals and symbols... In many places, there is a flowering of rituals, public and private, which also includes rituals from popular religious culture.

Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.xviii) document a number of ways in which pilgrims structure their pilgrimages to meet individual needs, sometimes in defiance of religious and other authorities. They give examples of pilgrims seeking direct access to shrines and locations, unmediated by priests, or venerating (especially in Brazil) sites that are not sanctioned by the Catholic Church. They suggest that there is an individualistic, creative force at work and that whilst pilgrims may be engaging with shrines of various religions, they 'assign their own meaning to the shrines and the experiences' (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p. xvii).

Schnell and Pali (2013) discuss the meaning-making potential of ritual in their consideration of contemporary pilgrimage. They discuss a 'putative spiritual turn' in

Western countries, especially North-Western Europe and discuss the paradoxes at work here. For example, the churches' loss of influence on society and individuals suggests secularisation and yet self-ascribed religiosity is increasing and they see pilgrimage as one manifestation of this phenomenon.

Over and above the self-description of religiosity, people who are not explicitly religious often think, act and feel religiously in explicit ways, by employing modes of expression typical for explicit religion. One prominent example is pilgrimage on the Road to Santiago. An increasing number of individuals who undertake this ancient Christian ritual is either not religious or only moderately religious and participates in the pilgrimage for non-religious reasons. (Schnell and Pali, 2013)

This data is readily available as when obtaining a pilgrim's passport for the Camino, pilgrims are explicitly asked whether they are undertaking the pilgrimage for religious or other reasons. However, the word 'religious' is, like 'pilgrimage', an elastic term. Anecdotally, I have heard people describe how they move in and out of seeing themselves as engaging in a religious or spiritual practice whilst walking and as we have seen in the discussion of the differentiation of pilgrim and tourist, pilgrimage as a ritual has secular and sacred dimensions simultaneously.

Simon Coleman (2005) argues that the rituals undertaken at the popular pilgrimage site of Walsingham, involve a 'multivalent set of associations and effects' (Coleman, 2005, p.94). Walsingham has both Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic shrines. Its roots as a place of pilgrimage include early medieval and twentieth century developments. It is in England, a long way from the Holy Land but combines Biblical and national identities in its sobriquet 'England's Nazareth'. Not surprisingly, any pilgrim rituals involving walking to Walsingham or engaging with the shrines, will have 'a multivalent set of associations'. The effects too will be subjective and vary from pilgrim to pilgrim.

As Schnell and Pali (2015) state:

Personal rituals have been defined as a *formalised* pattern of action, pointing beyond the actual event a particular meaning imbued by the actor. (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.891)

One way of characterising the pilgrimage ritual is that it is a rite of passage with the intention of facilitating transformation.

6 The Journey and Transformation

6.1 What is meant by transformation and healing?

Transformative Learning

Transformation is a capacious concept which is difficult to define precisely. Collins' Thesaurus offers the following synonyms and cognates for 'transformation': change, conversion, alteration, metamorphosis, transmutation, renewal, and revolution. These yield further synonyms such as 'rebirth' or 'transmogrification'. Whilst these are subtly different, all suggest that there is something different between the 'before and after' of some process.

The word 'transformative' has been widely used in educational settings to describe some of the deep and lasting changes in a sense of self, experienced especially by mature students. Once again, we are confronted with the problematic notion of 'self'. In order to experience deep and lasting changes in a sense of self, there needs to be a sense of what that self was before and after the educational experience.

Here, it is helpful to cite Aristotle's concern with 'hylomorphism', the idea that everything is comprised of matter and form, first mentioned in connection with writing (Alison, 2019, p.15). When change occurs, it is the form that changes. Aristotle's own example is of bronze which can be made into a statue or some other artefact, but could not, for example, be made 'into butter or a beach ball' (Shields, 2020). So, in any transformation, something is different, and something persists. Central to this argument is 'potentiality'. Bronze has the potential to be a statue. All human beings self-evidently can change and transform whilst still, in many or most respects, remaining the same. The differences evinced by people who have undergone transformation may be characterised as psychological (cognitive, attitudinal and so on) or transpersonal (including spiritual and religious experiences), or some kind of combination.

Transformation is usually linked to some kind of liminal experience which might be a course of study, a pilgrimage, or as Taylor (2017, pp.129-156) documents, a precipitating event which leads to a change in consciousness. Sometimes such an event is a process (including such activities as meditation, the experience of illness, breakdown, or pilgrimage), sometimes it is sudden and unexpected. These are often whole-body and emotionally loaded experiences.

In contrast, Hunt (2013) locates the change in a more cognitive space. She notes that 'transformative learning' in the US and Canada was not specifically arts-related, nor aimed at 'helping people acquire profession-specific skills, although some of this work was taking place in a professional development context' but rather 'the focus was on facilitating a kind of learning that gave rise to a deep transformation in participants' frames of reference for engaging with the world'. (Hunt, 2013, p.9). 'Frame of reference' is a spatial metaphor that refers to beliefs or ideas. We use such frames to make sense of perceptual data in our immediate world as well as secondary data such as what we read or see in the media. Such frames also act as schema in which we can story our experiences.

Mezirow (2003) argues that there are more or less desirable frames of reference. He writes that transformative learning:

... transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mind-sets) – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames of reference are better than others because they are more likely to generate beliefs or opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (Mezirow, 2003, p.58)

The above assumes that transformative learning always leads to positive change, but that is not necessarily the case. Formenti and West (2018) use pilgrimage as a metaphorical frame in their book of dialogues, 'Transforming Perspectives in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education'. They draw on theorists such as Mezirow and others, as well as their own autobiographies. They describe how the kind of transformation experienced through education, can be, for a particular individual, 'at best,

emancipatory, driving deeper life changes, or else simply confusing.’ (2018, p.161). Emancipation and life changes bring challenges and loss, as well as freedom and new experiences. For many, change can be a mixed blessing and lead to a state of confusion. There is often a breakdown in relationships as a result of deep personal change. On the positive side, a state of confusion, when old certainties are challenged, can be a creative space in which to reassess one’s life and potentially ‘transform’ oneself. Popular spiritual texts such as ‘Living with Contradiction’ (Waal, 2007) in the Christian tradition and ‘Comfortable with Uncertainty’ (Chödrön, 2002) in the Buddhist tradition, reflect the conflation of confusion with the potential for personal transformation. However, confusion can also be uncomfortable and, if it continues, unproductive or even catastrophic.

Formenti and West (2018, p.161), write that a person may be moved to ‘re-organise the whole personality for better or worse’ sometimes becoming ‘another, as in psychosis, conversion, art, mysticism, or deep healing’. They assert that these outcomes are rare and ‘burn much energy’. Here they are discussing transformation in educational settings which are usually only part of an individual’s daily life, even if the effects impinge on other activities. The classroom is typically a disembodied space. In contrast, a walking pilgrimage is an immersive experience, involving a complete detachment from everyday life and can only be achieved through bodily engagement. In these respects, pilgrimage is different from a typical university classroom. I would argue that ‘the burning of energy’ is an intrinsic part of the process of pilgrimage, literally, in terms of calories expended, and metaphorically in the possible rearrangement of cognitive, emotional and spiritual dimensions of the self. One common outcome of a pilgrimage, to use Bateson’s (1964) phrase, is ‘a profound redefinition of the self’.

Jane Hirshfield (2008, p.46) explores how art can mediate transformation and notes, that we use the metaphor ‘moved’ to describe an emotional response to a poem, song, play or painting.

The feeling of passage undertaken and alteration undergone is foundation rock for an inhabited, first-hand existence. If art is constructed experience aspiring to the weight of the real, one touchstone of what we feel real, rather

than imagined, is this sense of transitive physicality: of our own embodied, altering and participatory presence.

Formenti and West (2018) are writing from the disciplines of sociology and education. Yet by using pilgrimage as a frame, they are demonstrating an accommodation with spiritual perspectives on transformative learning. In the case of Formenti and West, this is by using pilgrimage as a metaphor for their own life-journeys in education and references to classic texts by writers such as Dante and John Bunyan. They (Formenti and West, 2018, p.241) reflect on the 'marginalisation of the spiritual and transcendent, as well as the idea of the sacred, from discourses of adult education and transformation', saying that this 'leaves a troubling vacuum'. In a consideration of the role of *mythos* alongside *logos*, they argue for a more open dialogue on how *mythos* (including literature and story) 'can open new windows on the auto/biographical, cultural, epistemological, therapeutic, and political spirit of learning'. (Formenti and West, 2018, p.250).

Elizabeth Tisdell is another writer on transformative learning in education and explicitly uses her own walking pilgrimages as a way of interrogating wider questions of meaning in life generally as well as educational settings. She has researched how spirituality informs adult educators over a number of years, particularly their teaching in areas of social justice and diversity. She notes how 'a focus on spirituality can be a career-limiting move in the secular spaces of academia' (Tisdell, 2020, p.2). She uses an autoethnographic approach to answer the question 'what form transforms'. She concludes that every transformative experience in her life has a spiritual dimension, and that this is the case in her own study of 31 adult educators. Whilst most of her subjects were no longer practicing the formal religions of their childhoods, most 'continually spiralled back to reclaim images, symbols and music' from those traditions. (Tisdell, 2020, p.3)

However, both of these perspectives, for me, skirt the central issue of how contemporary pilgrims, whether metaphorical or actually walking, see themselves in relation to the 'divine'. The experience of travelling on foot, with its physical and psychological demands, to a shrine, acts as a frame for both social and spiritual transformation in ways that allow for individual and collective meaning-making. Here,

I am emphasising 'allows for' as 'meaning making' is a subjective and not necessarily a universal motivation or by-product of pilgrimage (see for example, Schnell and Pali, 2013).

However, someone who calls themselves a pilgrim is operating outside the trappings and markers of social and familial status and adopts a single, specific identity, that of 'pilgrim'. They are also undertaking what is essentially a ritual journey, even if this is individualised in certain ways. Rather than a personal, or purely sociological 'journey', the pilgrim is part of a complex larger narrative that blurs other identities. Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.xx-xxi) write of the ritual journey that it is:

A journey in which not only is everyday life left behind, but also in which the only status that counts (ideally at least) is one's status as a pilgrim. This social recognition provides validation that reinforces completion of a new identity that incorporates a sense of sanctity, or at least a new sense of 'wholeness'.

This emphasises the way in which the pilgrim is perceived by the outside world and locates the mechanism for healing at least partly in the social recognition the pilgrim receives. My own experience in Northern France of being recognised as a pilgrim, either when checking into accommodation or getting into conversation on the path, where my interlocutor visibly changed their reaction to one of respect, confirmed to me the power of being seen in someone else's eyes as purely pilgrim. Questions of nationality sometimes followed but seldom any enquiry into other aspects of identity such as occupation or markers of social class. It is as if the pilgrim identity is out-of-time, and me as an individual was placed in a continuity of practice. As (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xxi) describe:

Pilgrimage can place one in the context of traditions that provide a historical and sacred context for identity and transformation, balancing the relationship of self to society and cosmos, and consequently, integrating self into community.

Heather Warfield (2014) has written on pilgrimage and transformation in the context of therapy and counselling and advocates pilgrimage as 'a component of a client's therapeutic process' and sees it 'a meaningful intervention in which the journeys could occur during life transitions such as a career change, divorce or part of the grief process (2014, p.871). Pilgrimage on prescription!

There is evidence, anecdotal and otherwise, that embarking on a pilgrimage is an intentional act, which the pilgrim hopes will lead to 'transformation'. In its simplest form, this can be expressed as the idea that the pilgrim will return 'changed' by the experience. When Schnell and Pali (2015) looked at the locus of meaning in the lives of pilgrims, the main motivation for pilgrimage was a search for Clarification. When surveyed on their return from Santiago, the majority 'experience life as significantly more meaningful, and crises of meaning have been overcome' (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.899).

Independently of the original motives, the majority of pilgrims experience the journey as transformative in a constructive sense. Apart from the increase in a fundamental sense of meaning, pilgrims also report an intensification of specific commitments after the journey. (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.899)

They found that there was a strengthening of *vertical self-transcendence* (defined as an orientation towards an immaterial, supernatural power) and an openness to the numinous, not just immediately after the pilgrimage, but demonstrable four months later. They also observed an increase in *horizontal self-transcendence* (defined as taking responsibility for worldly affairs beyond one's immediate concerns) which includes a sense of *unison with nature* and commitment to *community*. These effects appeared to be less long-lasting but still show a significant difference before and after pilgrimage. The exception appears to be *community* and Schnell and Pali suggest that returning pilgrims' commitment to maintaining their new priorities are likely to be frustrated by demands of reintegrating into their previous social, occupational, and economic structures (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.900).

The above study is a snapshot of a relatively small sample (126 individual pilgrims, not all of whom were followed through the entire study) but it nevertheless gives

some pointers towards the underlying mechanisms for transformation and how these relate to meaning-making in an individual's life.

One question raised by the Schnell and Pali study is the longevity of the transformations experienced by pilgrims. Their follow-up stopped at four months but anecdotally, pilgrims talk about the ongoing life-changing nature of a pilgrimage, often becoming members of pilgrim organisations and engaging with pilgrimage even when no longer walking. A phenomenon during the pandemic has been people reliving their pilgrimages of past years on social media. However, this may just be the visible tip of the iceberg and possibly the majority of pilgrims would report transient or zero experiences of transformation. There could also be a researcher-effect that if pilgrims are being asked to reflect on their experience, they are more likely to evince some of the hypothesised changes.

A personal exemplar of this difficulty in clarifying the locus of transformation is the way in which I was profoundly changed by my walk to Santiago in 2009. Like Elizabeth Tisdell (Tisdell, 2020, p.5), I too 'walked the Camino to Santiago ... by myself following a divorce. I wanted to walk myself into a new way of being.' Two friends, a couple, who walked the same stretch as I did, were neutral about the experience. Enthusiastic long-distance walkers, and foodies, they enjoyed the hiking and the Spanish delicacies but felt as an experience, the Camino fell short of, say, the West Highland Way. (Personal communication). They would perhaps fall into the category of 'tourist' or perhaps, are analogous to the pilgrims in the Schnell and Pali (2013) study who walked primarily for 'Athletic' reasons and neither sought nor found *meaning* in the experience. The fact that I was seeking 'a new way of being' was perhaps instrumental in finding it.

Clearly, transformation, like pilgrimage, is not a unitary phenomenon, nor necessarily desirable. For the pilgrim, it may be the purpose of their journey, or an unexpected consequence.

Pilgrimage as Transitional Object

I have considered Transformative Learning and Pilgrimage-as-Rite-of-Passage, and, in my introduction, discussed the idea of personifying pilgrimage.

Another concept that I have found helpful is Winnicott's (1953) much-cited idea of a transitional object (or TO), originally elaborated in psychoanalysis. The word 'transition' denotes change, and a pilgrimage might be said to be a transitional process or transitional space analogous to an object that is temporarily important to a growing child (Abram, 1996, p.3). The TO is typically a soft toy or comfort blanket which provides solace in the absence of the mother or caregiver. It has been theorised (Abram, 1996, p.5) that the TO facilitates a sense of ego development and a sense of the self and encourages physical and emotional development in the child. I suggest that undertaking a pilgrimage might have a similar effect on adults by offering a 'transitional space' which may operate in a similar way to Winnicott's TO.

This assertion begs the question of what, if pilgrimage is a TO, it 'stands in' for. Some of the possibilities suggested by my research include:

- Life's purpose
- Daily routine
- Work
- Worship /Liturgy / Daily Offices
- Dying
- Community independent of place

If pilgrims are typically middle-aged then the need to become independent of their families is clearly very different from that of a growing infant. However, according to Jungians especially, middle age is often a crisis time in terms of individuation and personal growth, and analogous processes may be at work. If the task for a child is to develop their ego strength and subdue their id, the task for someone in middle age is dissolve the ego in preparation for the end of life.

A walking pilgrimage can be holding in the same way as a loving parent, or in the absence of such a parent, the comfort blanket or teddy. The pilgrim has to leave the family environment and journey alone and the challenges of a long walk across the landscape can cultivate individuation in a way that is very different from the ego-bolstering rewards we typically seek in our societal roles.

However, the spiritual dimension of pilgrimage raises questions about 'parents' and perhaps the independent nature of a walking pilgrimage mitigates against ideas of God as a punitive, primitive father figure and facilitates a flexible and more nature-based religious perspective.

Pilgrimage as Ritual or Rite of Passage

A pilgrimage can be thought of as a 'rite of passage' in the sense outlined by the French anthropologist and folklorist, Arnold van Gennap. He coined the phrase 'rite of passage' in 1909 (van Gennap, 1960) and it has been widely adopted in both anthropology and popular discourse. He argued that in nearly all human societies, significant life events, such as bereavements, births or changes in status, are marked by specific rituals which enable the individuals involved to move from one kind of being to another. Through 'rites of passage', identities change or are changed, and the accompanying rituals are public signifiers of the move from one identity to another.

Although the rituals may be different in different cultures or eras, van Gennap argues that the relevant stages are universal. He identified these as 'separation', 'transition', and 'reincorporation' and claimed they were distinguishable and consecutive stages which both shaped and reflected the ways in which a person is changed or transformed by experience. This maps on to the stages of a pilgrimage which can be conflated to 'departure', the 'journey' and the 'return'. In my Introduction, I discussed and challenged the universality of these stages when I considered Joseph Campbell and the story-structure of the Quest (Campbell, 1949) as it applies to

pilgrimage. It maybe that these stages are circular, iterative, digressive and simultaneous rather than linear, singular, purposeful and sequential.

One difference, though, between the traditional cultures studied by anthropologists and contemporary Western culture is that walking pilgrimages in Europe are a voluntary activity in which pilgrims are typically deliberately separating themselves from everyday life, travelling and then returning. This is different from the 'haj', which is a religious obligation for observant Muslims. And the rituals around a voluntary pilgrimage are different again from the imposed social rituals around, say, a bereavement.

It could be argued that the diminishing of rites of passage in secularised, post-industrial, late-capitalist countries has left people impoverished in terms of outward, symbolic markers of personal change. This may be one factor in the increased popularity of pilgrimage. For example, recently bereaved friends of mine in the UK have sometimes said that they wished they were still expected to wear black as a symbol of mourning. This would be a marker to the outside world that they were not able to participate fully in 'normal' life. As it is, most bereaved people are expected to carry on as normal after a very short time. Pilgrims, engaging in the rite of passage of walking to a shrine often have markers (such as rucksacks or staffs) to indicate that they are not in their usual milieu. They can be said to be in a new 'habitas' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.77) in that they have assumed the daily practices of particular group, that of pilgrims.

Both van Gennap (1960) and Victor Turner (1974) invoke the Latin word, for threshold, the *limen*, as a metaphorical descriptor of a rite of passage. The separation occurs from the 'pre-liminal' or ordinary life. The transitional phase is 'liminal', and the coming back, or reincorporation into ordinary life, is the post-liminal stage (van Gennap, 1960, Turner, 1974). A pilgrimage is a liminal space in which pilgrims have shed the responsibilities and social ties of their everyday lives and are constantly on the move, sleeping in a new place every night. Just as our dreams offer a glimpse into a liminal space between waking and sleeping, being on pilgrimage enables the pilgrim to exist between an old self and an as-yet unknown future self.

I have examined something of the relationship between pilgrimage and walking studies and it has been suggested that walking can facilitate a sense of liminal space, especially when combined, as on a walking pilgrimage, with the loss of the usual markers of social and professional status. Schnell and Pali (2015) outline some of the ways in which walking on a pilgrimage can create conditions conducive to personal transformation.

Repetitive movement supports the synchronisation of perception, cognition and action, thus facilitating experiences such as: experiences of loss of self, space and time; experiences of unity; heightened awareness; sudden insights, and revelations. (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.892)

They note that whilst walking pilgrimages are a social and collective activity in that many people are walking the same route which can be, especially on the Via Frances across Spain to Santiago, busy and crowded, a pilgrimage can also be solitary with large distances are walked alone and in silence. They see this silence as a kind of sensory deprivation which, together with the repetitive movement of walking, can lead to altered states of consciousness. This is certainly something I have personally experienced and continue to experience, especially on long flat featureless stretches of path where there is little need to worry about where to place my feet, and it is possible to walk at speed.

Walking in silence is therefore conducive to self-exploration or more subconscious forms of re-arrangement of priorities; it gives access to other modes of being and seeing the world and, as a consequence, can result in the acquisition of 'new' meaning, in clarification and a change of perspective (Schnell and Pali, 2015, p.892).

I would argue that this re-arrangement of priorities constitutes transformation. However, the form of words used here suggests that the individual remains intact in some way. The new meaning is 'acquired' by the pilgrim, as if it is some entity outside of them and their inner life is rearranged and clarified. My own subjective experience is that during long periods of silent walking in landscape that does not

rapidly change, there is a disappearance of the self, a sense of boundarylessness and a porosity that does indeed suggest 'other modes of being' which are distinct from the daily, non-pilgrim self.

This liminal space may also characterise some secular pilgrimages which do not involve walking long distances. Lee Gilmore (2015) has investigated narratives of transformation at the Burning Man Festival, which takes place annually in a temporary city erected in the desert in Nevada. Participants known as 'Burners' are typically young, affluent creatives, prepared to live in an alternative temporary community (Gilmore, 2015, p.xxi). The temporary city is geographically a liminal space away from any urban centre, and Gilmore argues that it shares all the characteristics that Turner and Turner (1978, p.34) identify as characterising liminality in a rite of passage, namely:

Release from mundane structure; homogenisation of status; simplicity of dress and behaviour; *communitas*; ordeal; reflection on the meaning of basic religious and cultural values; ritualised enactment of correspondences between religious paradigms and shared human experiences; emergence of the integral person from multiple personae; movement from a mundane centre to a sacred periphery which suddenly, transiently, becomes central for the individual, an *axis mundi* of his faith; movement itself, a symbol of *communitas*, which changes with time, as against stasis which represents structure; individuality posed against the institutionalised milieu; and so forth.

So, pilgrimage can act as an agent in transformation through various kinds of subjective experience. Some of these experiences consist of a new way of perceiving so-called everyday life, others might be more religious experiences or experiences of the divine, or a sense of the transcendent. In such cases, we can see again the idea of an altered state of consciousness. Typically, these might be seen as experiences located in individuals but Kripal (2007, p.65) turns this idea on its head.

...religious doctrines, rituals, visions, and ecstatic states of consciousness possess immense potentials for the thinker concerned with studying human

nature, since all of these phenomena, as psychic projections, allow the human mind to examine the contents of its own unconscious depths ... Religious phenomena are certainly not literally true, but they are often necessary and effective 'detours' through which an individual can pass into fuller consciousness and being. In Hegel-on-his-head terms, religious ideas and experience are not how God wakes up in history and culture; they are how *we* wake up from the abyss of nature and the dream-illusions of religion. They are the substance of the serpent's gift.

In this framing, consciously or unconsciously, pilgrims are enacting a religious ritual, over a long period of time, in an embodied way that may be a journey towards an awakening. It could be argued, using Kripal's analysis, that any religious experience on a pilgrimage, is not from the divine but is generated by the awakening of the pilgrim, allowing him or her to apprehend a world beyond the immediate material. I would differ from Kripal in that rather than such experiences allowing 'the human mind to examine the contents of its own unconscious depths', they facilitate what Taylor (2017) calls a 'leap', a change in consciousness from before to after.

Healing as a specific form of transformation

Healing can be seen as a special case of transformation. The undertaking of a pilgrimage with the intention of facilitating healing is more characteristic of so-called 'site pilgrimage' (Eade, 2020) where the shrine rather than the journey is the focus of the pilgrimage. These pilgrimages tend to be located more firmly in a religious context and pilgrimages are often organised, with those seeking healing arriving in buses, staying in hotels, and having a programme devised around the healing potential of the site. Examples of Roman Catholic shrines which attract visitors in their thousands specifically seeking healing are Lourdes in the South of France, Fátima in Portugal, and Walsingham in England. Here the rituals enacted at the site, near the shrines with their healing potential are more significant than the journeys undertaken to reach them. 'Site pilgrimage' contrasts with the 'journey pilgrimages' or 'walking pilgrimages' made on foot over several weeks to places such as Canterbury, Santiago de Compostela and Rome, which are the focus of this thesis.

With regard to healing, site pilgrimages locate the source of the healing agency in the shrine itself, whereas on a walking pilgrimage, transformation can occur at any point on the journey and, as we shall see later in this chapter with regard to the Via Francigena to Rome, arrival at St Peters can be an anti-climax or the beginning of another journey.

Healing is arguably a form of transformation, and relates to 'wholeness', whether physical, psychological or social. Site pilgrimage to healing shrines such as Lourdes may be motivated for a desire for miracle cures for conditions that are either chronic or beyond current biomedical reach. In parts of the world where access to biomedical interventions is limited, such as Brazil or Nepal, a pilgrimage to a shrine is more closely tied in with a desire for physical healing than in the West where tourism, religious tourism and emotional healing are in the mix (Peters, 2005, Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005)

Eade (2020) argues that pilgrimage itself creates the healing potential of a shrine. The sacred charge of a site is constructed by participation in the ritual and this may true of somewhere like Lourdes, as well as on the kind of pilgrimages organised by the British Pilgrimage Trust which include engaging with trees, rivers and prehistoric remains, as well as churches and cathedrals.

Pilgrimage has been interpreted as a kinetic ritual where people engage with a landscape's immanent features and aura. Such an approach can lead to an analysis of how mobile practices help construct apparently sacredly charged places, the power of place, and the role of landscape aesthetics in the spiritual magnetism of pilgrimage sites. (Eade, 2020, p.2)

Just as 'journey pilgrimage' overlaps with walking as a pursuit, there is also a growing number of pilgrimage sites that owe their significance to secular happenings. As Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p.vii) point out, there is a parallel secular thread in pilgrimages undertaken for healing. Dubisch and Winkelman include places of disaster, such as the World Trade Centre in New York and the Federal Trade Building in Oklahoma as well as the Burning Man Festival

held in the desert in Nevada. They argue that these are all 'sacred sites' in that they have the potential to meet our 'personal, social and spiritual needs' including needs for healing.

Dubisch and Winkelman (2005) use Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Lock's 1987 term 'biopsychosociospiritual' to describe the healing effects of pilgrimage. They distinguish the following healing elements of pilgrimage:

1) a physical journey with social, symbolic and physical effects; 2) an act of personal empowerment; 3) an assertion of the individual's identity in relationship to 'sacred others' that integrates self within collective models; 4) the particularising of individual suffering within broader frameworks that provide meaning; 5) a sense of social solidarity from an active connection with a community of fellow pilgrims; and 6) alteration of consciousness, eliciting psychophysiological dynamics conducive to supporting a range of bodily healing responses. (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.x).

One of the challenges in identifying the agent of healing or transformation is that pilgrimage is a holistic experience where it is impossible to isolate single variables. As Dubisch and Winkelman suggest, it is the 'totality' of an event that accounts for its efficacy, not just its intention. They give the example of seeking healing by visiting a doctor compared to seeking healing from a pilgrimage. Each of these 'rituals' has its own total form which relates both to the individual and the wider social and cultural contexts (ibid, p.xv).

It is clear that any single label – whether 'traditional', 'modern', or 'post-modern' – distorts or obscures pilgrimage's complexity and flexibility. The multiple possibilities, the flexibility of pilgrimage ritual, and the powerful effect of both the journey and the arrival at a special place give pilgrimage wide appeal in the contemporary world. (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xvii)

One theory of how pilgrimage might be healing relates to the creation of a structure that may allow for a narrative. That this structure can be experienced as a coherent narrative may also facilitate healing. Events that are difficult to relate in words, and

traumas that have been repressed may re-emerge in the symptoms of PTSD, being frozen or volatile (van der Kolk, 2015). In his work on trauma, Bessel van der Kolk argues that healing from trauma begins in the body, as when words are inaccessible, sensations can take over. A physical journey is an embodied process and a pilgrimage, with a beginning and a destination, rituals, and repetition, may offer a symbolic ordering of sensations that is conducive to healing. Jill Dubisch (2005) suggests that this might be the case for veterans participating in the Run for the Wall which entails a motorcycle journey across the US to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. The fragmentation and lack of coherence in narratives around the Vietnam War, along with isolation, contributes to veterans' ongoing distress. The journey of the Run for the Wall, with its collective purpose, and rituals of restitution (for example, hospitality along the way) and the 'shrine' at the end are, apparently, profoundly healing (Dubisch, 2005, pp.150-154). This healing may be personal but there is also a collective dimension in that the narrative of the war, where returning veterans were often demonised, is to some extent healed in a social context.

As already noted, the discipline of 'pilgrimage studies' grew largely from anthropology, whilst drawing on related fields of study. Dubisch and Winkelmann (2005, p.vii) in their edited volume on pilgrimage and healing, note that the focus on healing makes contributions not only to medical anthropology but also to religious studies and social movements, women's studies and contemporary spirituality. It could be argued that a pilgrimage can in some way heal history. For example, the effect of the Reformation on the fabric of everyday life in England was a violent ripping apart of rituals, festivals, observances and iconography. The embracing of pilgrimage as a bottom-up, individually conceived activity by established authorities such as Canterbury Cathedral could be interpreted as a healing of historical wrongs.

Just as the studies in this area are eclectic in terms of discipline, so too are the motivations and experiences of pilgrims. It is possible for an individual to draw simultaneously on pre-modern, modern, and post-modern frameworks in their accounts of the pilgrim experience. I believe that the contemporary pilgrim is 'inventing' or 'reinventing' pilgrimage, or to put it another way, all pilgrims, whether pre-modern, modern or post-modern in outlook, co-create pilgrimage through their

participation and also in the stories they tell of their experiences. Similarly, they are co-creating the stories of transformation.

Non-pilgrimage healing narratives

Katharine Norbury explores the vexed issue of women and nature in the Introduction to her curated anthology with the, perhaps deliberately provocative, title, 'Women and Nature'. She takes issue with the idea that women are closer to nature than men, aligning herself with the 1978 feminist polemic 'Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her' by Susan Griffin which disputed the 'patriarchal and somewhat patronising position that women are intuitive, closer to nature ... and therefore inherently wild or volatile and in need of taming or civilising' (Norbury, 2021, p,4) A complementary and equally patriarchal and patronising position is that women are vulnerable and in need of protection. Both points of view can lead to restrictions on women's rights to wander the world without being accosted or censured.

Norbury reflects that the influential nature writers as she was growing up were Bruce Chatwin, Roger Deakin, Robert Macfarlane and Peter Matthiesen and that the genre overlapped with travel writing (something I discuss later in the thesis).

A writer goes out into a landscape and records what they see. Yet this kind of endeavour, writing that is born out of a journey, has often been undertaken, for sound cultural and economic reasons, by men who for one reason or another have had the time and resources to do both the travelling and the writing. (Norbury, 2021, p. 4)

She contends that women's nature writing is distinct from men's in that it is not, to the same extent, conflated with travel writing. She also notes that many the most eminent women nature writers in English are from the North America, namely Annie Dillard, Greta Ehrlich, Rebecca Solnit, Terry Tempest Williams and Robin Wall Kimmerer, noting that writers from the 'eastern Atlantic archipelago' have had different formative influences, although she does not identify what these are. As the anthology progressed, drawing on extracts, short pieces, prose, memoir, poetry and fiction, she noticed that for these women writers, the natural world is conflated with being outside.

There is an emphasis on the lived experience of 'being outside', rather than on the elusive term 'nature'. (Norbury, 2021, p.6)

My impression of the anthology is one of thematic incoherence in relation to 'nature' but I would agree that there is theme of being outside and also of being solitary, whether it is Nicola Chester's account of the clear-felling of her local woodland (pp. 95-98) or the 1436 account by mystic and pilgrim, Margery Kempe of a storm at sea (pp. 212-214).

Anita Sethi's (2021, p.48) memoir *I Belong Here* describes a solo walk through the Pennines after she was racially abused on a train.

What do we spend our lives watching? And what is watching us? How much do we really hear and listen, and what is listening to us? Those dragonflies' eyes, those starfish eyes, those honeycomb moth ears and dolphin ears, what is it they can see and hear of humans and how we are hurting each other, the world and its wildlife. (p.48)

I felt a strong need to fully bear witness to what had happened, commit it to paper in a way the world could see, and continue my journey through the North, my home, asserting my right to travel through it – bearing witness to what I saw along the way through the writing of this book, laying bare all the pain and hope, the brutality and beauty, of this existence.

Sethi compares walking in the countryside with Refugee Tales and political demonstrations and calls all of these a 'journey of reclamation' describing the etymology of reclamation as a 'cry of protest' (2021, p.61), and notes Martin Luther King described his 1965 walk from Selma to Montgomery as a 'pilgrimage'.

Sethi describes getting depressed and angry (2021, pp.63-64):

I knew that to stop the anger consuming me, corroding me, I had to channel it, and I felt putting one foot in front of the other in my own form of protest was a powerful way I could do so. Walking was not only a way of alleviating anxiety but anger too, of channelling and managing such emotions if not

eradicating them ... I had to let the clarity of hope win out. I had to keep walking through the world.

Later (2021, p.91), she reflects on racism:

It is walking that is giving me perspective; walking through this landscape frees my mind to reflect on my place in the world and on how deep systemic unbelonging is. (p.91)

Clearly, Sethi's walk is not able to heal 'systemic unbelonging'. However, if healing is taken in its broader sense, to make whole, then walking enables her to get 'perspective' which I interpret as seeing her own experiences as part of a greater pattern, or whole.

Fragmentation as opposed to healing

In considering narratives of healing, it is important to consider shadow or counter-narratives. Often, practices, especially those with a spiritual dimension, are storied as panaceas, as facilitating meaning-making and healing in the sense of being 'made whole'. This may reflect a general 'positivity bias', which extends to the scientific world. For example, a 'publication bias' means that the results of drug trials showing beneficial effects are published and those showing none, inconclusive or deleterious effects are not. The transformational effects of pilgrimage may be over-reported whereas the negative or neutral outcomes, less often documented.

Harley Rustad (2022) has researched so-called 'India syndrome', a term coined by a French psychiatrist, Régis Airault, who was charged with taking care of French visitors to India who had become 'disoriented and confused or had found themselves in manic and psychotic states'. Some recovered but for others, 'India syndrome' was all-consuming, leading to a complete detachment from reality' and those patients came to be called 'the travellers who were lost forever'. Although this phenomenon is most marked in India, Rustad notes that the syndrome has also been observed in Jerusalem (among religious tourists) and in Florence (in response to the city's art collections). Airault posed the question of whether India itself brought forth these

transformations or whether people went there determined to be transformed.
(Rustad, 2022)

The same question can be posed of pilgrimage. A pilgrim who embarks on a pilgrimage with the intention or hope of being transformed may be more likely to experience transformation than someone walking for recreation or touristic purposes. It is possible to read the following as applying to pilgrimage:

India has a way of stimulating the imagination and stirring intense aesthetic emotions which can at any moment plunge the traveler into utter anxiety. For this reason, our 'experience' of India can be somewhat ambivalent." This depends on each person's personal history, their 'impulse to travel' and past traumas which have been buried deep inside," he [ie Aurault] wrote. "The subconscious has a way of bringing us face-to-face with them at certain times of our lives. Because India speaks to the unconscious: it provokes it, makes it boil and, sometimes, overflow. It brings forth, from the deep layers of our psyche, the buried." (Rustad, 2022).

At a time when pilgrimage is marketed as a panacea for the need to create meaning, it is important to note the counternarratives. Jay Griffiths' (2017) account of her manic-depressive breakdown, includes a description of her chaotic walk to Santiago, characterised by mobile phone calls home and a resumption of smoking, as well as a need to exchange poems with friends and acquaintances which creates a fragmentary experience at odds with other pilgrimage narratives.

7. An examination of pilgrim-writers' accounts of personal transformation

7.1 Introduction

This section introduces five pilgrim-writers who have published book-length memoirs about their experiences of the Via Francigena. Previous chapters have explored research into pilgrimage and made generalisations about pilgrimage and transformation.

Now we move to examining specific first-person accounts which have been 'transformed' into published memoirs. These five pilgrim-writers have informed my explorations of myself as a pilgrim-writer as well as acting as exemplars of some of the ideas already articulated.

These writers have engaged with the *craft* of writing as well as conveying content. They are writers who have put that writing as a product into the public domain in book form. Their memoirs are 'literary' and, in the wider context of 'creative non-fiction' could also be classed as 'travel writing'. The relationship between the experience being documented and the final book is a murky and contested one. The 'documentation' of the pilgrimage, for example, my own red notebook quoted at the beginning of the thesis, could be seen as the pure pilgrim, creating an aide memoire for their own purposes. However, if the pilgrim is a pilgrim-writer, they will always be conscious of an 'imagined reader' (Hunt, 2013, pp.31-33). As journal entries and notes are shaped into a publishable narrative, the accuracy or truth of the account may be set against the desire to create a readable story. As the author of my own published pilgrim memoir (Field, 2016), I know from creating several distinct drafts that the final product is a compromise, just one of the many 'true' stories that could have been written. There are at least two identities here: pilgrim and pilgrim-writer.

Fiona Sampson (2006) describes such writing in terms of 'the reflexivity of remembering' (Hunt and Sampson, 2006, p.112). She unpicks the paradoxical proposal attributed to Rousseau (1712-1778), that 'a writer can achieve disinterested inquiry – what we think of as something like omniscient narration – *by looking at himself*' (Hunt and Sampson, 2006, pp.112-113, *her italics*). She argues that memory and history are essentially stories of reflexivity, especially as it relates to time.

Autobiography says both 'I am here' and 'I was there', Its temporally bifurcated narrator stabilises him or herself by 'having a foot in' *both* these moments of narrative time. (Hunt and Sampson, 2006, p.114)

This blurring of temporal realities and the way memoir and travel writing are read as more closely related to experience than fiction, challenges notions of the 'truth' of such accounts. Mary Karr (2015) attempts, in a tongue-in-cheek and simultaneously serious account of the genre, to defend memoir, once seen, she writes, as 'the province of weirdos and saints, prime ministers and film stars' (Karr, 2015, p.xiii). She continues:

Partly what murders me about memoir – what I adore – is its democratic ... anybody-who's-lived-can-write-one-aspect. You can count on a memoirist being passionate about the subject. Plus its structure remains dopily episodic. Novels have intricate plots, verse has musical forms, history and biography enjoy the sheen of objective truth. In memoir, one event follows another. Birth leads to puberty, leads to sex. The books are held together by happenstance, theme and (most powerfully) the sheer convincing poetry of a single person trying to make sense of the past. (Karr, 2015, pp.xiii-xiv)

The episodic form can be disrupted as my own pilgrimage memoir demonstrates. In 'Baggage: A Book of Leavings' (Field, 2016), I tell the story of my pilgrimage forwards and that of my marriage backwards. As Karr concedes, 'Memoir done right is an art, a made thing' (Karr, 2015, p.xvii). However, the author of a memoir is always present to the reader which can blur the distinction between 'testimony' and an artful piece of literature. Sampson asks:

Does Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* move us so much because we know it was written by a young person who didn't survive the events she writes about or because of the clear yet intimate prose in which it's written? (Hunt and Sampson, 2006, p.122)

For me, that is a false binary. Content, style, and context, including knowledge of the author's circumstances cannot be meaningfully separated from the experience of reading a text, as the rest of this chapter will demonstrate.

7.2 Choice of pilgrim memoirs

I am using the Via Francigena as an exemplar of a long-distance, multi-country, walking pilgrimage route for this thesis. So, the memoirs I have chosen to explore are accounts of experience of the Via Francigena rather than other pilgrimage routes. This helpfully limited the pool of texts I had to draw from. The website www.goodreads.com, (an ostensibly reader-led forum, but in reality, an off-shoot of Amazon) generates useful lists of books in the public domain (that is, not academic) on specific topics. It lists only fourteen books in English specifically about the Via Francigena (including guidebooks) whereas for the Camino de Santiago, there are 1102 (search made 9th July 2022). The Via Francigena therefore offers a smaller sample size enabling me to treat each pilgrim-writer and their text as a case-study, and to make comparisons between them.

I excluded self-published e-books and selected those which have a life in the public domain, as evinced by publisher, reviews, profile, and longevity.

All five of these books have the same essential structure, that is a first-person account of walking from Canterbury to Rome. They have a stable idea of the Via Francigena and include at various points, potted histories of the route and places along the way. These histories, like that of Canterbury and Chaucer examined earlier, may be a mixture of established historical record and fantasy. They can be seen as contributing to what Foucault (1968) called a 'totalising discourse' around the subject of the Via Francigena and pilgrimage generally. That is, these historical

facts exist independently of the individual writers (who are likely to be drawing on the same sources) and contribute to the mythology of the Via Francigena. Another conceptualisation is that this recapping of history constitutes a metanarrative against which these writers' individual stories will unfold. Here, the individual pilgrim memoir becomes an example of what Lyotard (1984, p.60) calls '*petits recits*'. A '*petit recit*' is a small narrative that disrupts and leads to a disintegration and detachment from a so-called grand narrative.

These are the five contemporary memoirs of the Via Francigena I selected for close reading:

'A Long Way for a Pizza' by Brian Mooney (2012)

Brian Mooney (born 1949) is a former Reuters journalist and enthusiastic walker who stayed in smart hotels and had regular massages *en route* to Rome in 2010. He published a follow-up account of walking back from Rome to England in 2012, 'The Wrong Way for a Pizza' (2013).

'An Accidental Jubilee' by Alice Warrender (2012)

Alice Warrender (born 1983) walked the Via Francigena after recovering from a serious accident. She is a devout Roman Catholic.

'Like a Tramp, Like a Pilgrim – On Foot Across Europe to Rome' by Harry Bucknall (2014)

Harry Bucknall (born 1965) is a former military man, and a bachelor. The title references the classic walking book 'A Time of Gifts' (1977) by Patrick Leigh Fermor which gives an account of walking from the Hook of Holland to Istanbul in 1933 in which he characterises his younger self as 'like a tramp, a pilgrim, or a wandering scholar' (REF)

'The Crossway' by Guy Stagg (2018).

Guy Stagg (born 1988) walked to Rome and then onto Jerusalem after recovering from a breakdown. He is deeply curious about religious faith, claiming to have none, but is drawn to churches and monasteries.

'From Here to Eternity – From Canterbury to Rome in Search of a Faith' by Timothy Egan (2019).

Timothy Egan (1954) walked to explore his Catholic identity as a secular US citizen of Irish heritage, whose family was affected by clerical child sex abuse.

7.3 Auto/Biography and Narrative Research

As a pilgrim-writer investigating the notion of the pilgrim-writer, I am reading these books reflexively, that is looking at myself as I read. This is consistent with the 'turn' towards using biographical methods in research projects in sociology, psychology, and education and has been extensively described by Merrill and West (2009, p.3).

Sociologists typically collect their data through interviews. This may appear in the form of case studies or move towards a more positivist generalising across populations. A published memoir, though, is different. It is a literary form so there is no need to argue for non-numerical data or large sample sizes. The data is prose and the sample size, in terms of the teller of the story, is one. Arguably, the reader is also singular, although there is an infinite number of nuanced 'ones' who may read a particular book. The reader is different on different days and from moment to moment. One characteristic of a literary work is that it rewards re-reading as the reader is likely to notice or respond to different features each time. Thus, a book is always new (Knights,1995), and is recreated on each reading.

Although sociology is not the frame for my analysis of these memoirs, I found it useful to draw on the arguments of Merrill and West (2009) in their co-authored *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research*. At times, they speak with one voice, at others, they distinguish their approaches to their subject. Barbara Merrill explores the costs and benefits of using coding to generate data 'which have to be systematically compared for similarities and differences' and 'endlessly worked and

reworked, constructed and reconstructed in what seemed an endless play of possibilities.’. She concludes that this approach ‘carried a danger of losing some of the contextual meaning or wholeness of the material’ and ‘while legitimate, risked losing some of the individual significance of the experience and its biographical poignancy’ (Merrill and West, 2009, p.136).

Linden West goes on to describe how he addressed these dilemmas in his own research into teachers’ experiences.

I developed a proforma as an analytic space through which to understand more the whole, including the relationship in the here and now, which might provide clues to how a life had been lived. Use of the pro forma was rooted in an intense immersion in transcripts and in listening to recordings as well as considering the auto/biographical resonance of particular stories. (Merrill and West, 2009, p.137).

The advantage of this proforma is that it offers a way of recording key issues in a standardised way that enables them to be shared with others who may be working with the same raw data.

West offers four headings, namely: Themes, Process, Ethnographic and Gestalt (Merrill and West, 2009, p.138). I find these a useful way of conceptualising my approach to the pilgrim memoirs, that allows for my own subjective responses which may change over time, alongside the evidence of the extant text.

As I read West’s account of interviewing a teacher called ‘Anna’, I resonated with the idea of personal feelings influencing and informing the research. Although the interview is ostensibly about her professional life, West writes that he has a strong response to her descriptions of her family’s expectations, seeing echoes of his own experience. He also notes he has paternal feelings towards Anna (Merrill and West, 2009, p.141). In the background is his knowledge that the research itself is controversial, given the business-oriented culture of Teach First which did not, in his view, sit comfortably with the ethos of the university providing the teacher training. I had analogous responses to the five pilgrim memoirs which reflected my own life

history and judgements about the pilgrims in question, especially related to age, gender, social background and style of writing.

There follows West's description of his proforma, which includes details specific to his research on teachers. (The italics are West's.)

The themes: these surround initial impressions; interactions with schools including colleagues and pupils; interactions with other trainees; processes of managing changing identities; the interplay of the personal and the professional, past and present etc. It should encompass significant moments of learning in the broadest sense, which can include very informal processes....

The *process* of the interview and observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power, defensiveness etc

The third, more *ethnographic* dimension, centres on the circumstances of the interview, including interruptions, and general impressions of the setting and what might have been happening in and around it.

The fourth examines, over time, the sense, if any, of *an emerging gestalt* in the material: are there patterns in learning, and /or in managing change and transition, as viewed from a biographical perspective? (Merrill and West, 2009, p.138).

Applying this proforma to the pilgrim memoirs, I have already experienced how they read differently over the three years of my PhD studies. Reading a memoir is different from conducting an interview. There is no face-to-face interaction but there is a sense my own biography (or sense of self or imagined self) meeting that evoked by the text. In terms of ethnography, I have, for example, noted my dreams and changing mood over the period of research. The idea of a *gestalt* is emerging in my sense of 'quest narratives' and resistance to them (Alison,2019) and my sense of pilgrimage as a transformational process rooted in deep ecology.

Professor West (2021, personal communication) kindly shared with me examples of his approach using the pro forma which I have drawn on in this chapter:

Auto/Biographical Narrative Interview Proforma

The intention behind this proforma is to develop a way of recording and reflexively considering key issues in interviews, in relation to a particular person, in a more standardised format (without jeopardising the flexibility of the whole process i.e., more open-ended forms of interviewing and bringing different and diverse interpretations into play, including our differing perceptions of material). It is crucial to immerse ourselves in the material and to allow it to work on us and we on it. The basic idea is to explore, iteratively, key themes, and any interpretative and conceptual issues raised, alongside bringing into play relevant literatures, and auto/biographical resonances. Research diary material can also be woven into the text. Issues not understood and needing to be explored further should also be included. The point is to be inclusive and to use the document as an evolving, living text, seeking to create understanding of the material as a whole and the potential inter-relationship between different parts of the narrative.

This exposition moves towards a 'relational' approach, rather than an interpretive or representational one, and is characterised by the use of 'evolving, living' as attributes of an inanimate document. In the academic pilgrimage literature, a similar shift has occurred with a move from traditional anthropological analysis to a 'new animism' where all aspects of an experience are in relationship (Eade and Stadler, 2022, pp.139-140). West (2021, personal communication), continues:

The focus is on four main aspects:

The themes, which seem important, such as key stories and moments in a life. Explorations of all aspects of a person's life history, including family, educational, formal and informal, and how these have been experienced; processes of managing situations and different identities in play; the interplay of the socio-cultural and psychological in experience and in learning from it; the interplay of past and present as well as future; the role of significant others etc etc. This section could include a summary of any themes to be explored further with the participant in the next cycle of interviews. It might include reflections on how the narrative is structured (is there a sense of drawing on some larger narrative e.g. of the heroic figure in adult education, on a linear journey from darkness to light?); or to what

extent is there evidence of being storied as against storying a life, or, connectedly, senses of agency in a life?)

The second aspect has to do with the process of the interview and observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power and possible unconscious processes. What is not being said, and how can this be understood? It includes any reflections on the quality and richness of the narrative material. It is important to include any auto/biographical resonance, and to document any thoughts and feelings as they arise, even from dream material or free association.

The third, thinking more ethnographically, is about the circumstances of the interview, including interruptions, and general impressions of the setting and what might have been happening around it.

The fourth is concerned with any sense of a gestalt or overall form and patterning in the material: might there be an emerging theme around the meaning of participation, or to do with the resources a person is drawing on, connecting past with present and possible futures? This is to be done tentatively, more a play of ideas and potential interconnections, as a basis for shared reflection

Please cut and paste relevant (and brief) extracts into the proforma and add any thoughts on content, process, context and 'gestalt'. And weave into the text reference to wider reading and insights from the literature. At an appropriate stage, produce a pen portrait of the person, in a new section before the themes, which acts as a kind of introduction while the themes will provide, over time, a way of structuring the refinement of a case study.

(Linden West, personal communication, April 2021, original formatting)

7.4 Catergorising Pilgrim Writers

Freeman (1993) argues that the process of 'rewriting the self' can act as 'a kind of limit case' for a hermeneutic and phenomenological investigation into the use of 'interpretation' in human psychology (Freeman, 1993, pp.5-6). In 'Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative', he uses five case texts as exemplars of writing can yield insights into selfhood. These are: St Augustine's *Confessions*; Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life*; Jean Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea*; Philip Roth's autobiography, *The Facts*; Sylvia Fraser's memoir of childhood sexual abuse, *My Father's House*; and

Jill Ker Conway's *The Road from Coorain*, which describes a move to independence from an outback farm in Australia. Freeman argues that the writing of these memoirs (and the autobiographical novel by Sartre) is an act of 'rewriting the self' and that personal transformation and identity-formation can emerge from the writing. He likens the writing to archaeology, in that what has gone before, even if it might be subject to repression in the Freudian sense, has an impact on what follows. These processes are not necessarily linear as our understanding of the events of our lives consists of essentially retrospective 'historical knowledge' and are 'formulated prospectively, with what happens earlier determining ... what later will be' (Freeman, 1993, p.23).

Freeman quotes Bakhtin (1986):

The better a person understands the degree to which he is externally determined, the closer he comes to understanding and exercising his real freedom ... (Bakhtin, 1986, p.139)

And, specifically on writing the self:

It consists in forcing the *thinglike* environment, which mechanically influences the personality, to begin to speak, that is to reveal in it the potential word and tone, to transform it into a semantic context for the thinking, speaking and acting (as well as creating) personality' (Bakhtin, 1986, p.24)

Here, I would query the idea of the forces being necessarily 'thinglike' or 'mechanical' as this suggests the kind of materialist, positivist approach to psychology that Freeman is arguing against. The idea of 'forces' is also reminiscent of Freud and his era of rapid development in engineering and industry and may be a redundant metaphor for human motivations. However, it is worth unpicking the statement to see how it relates to memoir. First, there is the idea that the environment influences (in multiple and holistic ways, not just mechanically) the personality. By 'environment' I include the personal and historical events of a life, its socio-cultural and educational context as well as geography and topography. Once

the environment begins to 'speak', that creates a semantic context. This semantic context includes the subtle and personal ways in which we make sense of life events by imposing narrative structure and meaning. Such narratives and meanings can change over the course of a life and as a consequence of the process of 're-storying' material in written memoirs. The process of writing enables 'the personality' to think, speak, act, and create.

Writing can be provisional, and narratives can be re-written just as verbal stories about events are told differently at different times to different audiences. However, once a memoir is published in book form, it is fixed and here it would be correct to say that the writer of the memoir has thought, spoken, acted, and created in the past tense.

7.5 Demographic factors

The pilgrim-writers I am using as exemplars have much in common in terms of their socio-cultural 'environments'. They are white, Western, educated, affluent, interested in, and capable of, walking long distances, with life circumstances that enable them to do so. They have the time and inclination to write book-length accounts of their walks and to find ways of publishing them. The main point of difference is chronological age. As their publicly-stated dates of birth indicate, the oldest of the five is almost forty years older than the youngest.

Brian Mooney born 1949

Timothy Egan born 1954

Harry Bucknall born 1965

Alice Warrender born 1983

Guy Stagg born 1988

To use the popular sociological terms for demographic cohorts, Guy Stagg and Alice Warrender are 'Millennials', Brian Mooney and Timothy Egan, 'Baby Boomers'. Harry Bucknall was born on the cusp of being a Baby Boomer and Generation X. Although these may seem like arbitrary categories, many researchers claim that identities across large populations reflect the political and cultural milieux in which each generation came to adulthood.

It has been argued that different age groups essentially belong to different cultures. I was born in 1963 at the tail-end of the Boomer generation. Global events such as the Cold War, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, and the collapse of the Soviet Union act as punctuation points in my adult lifetime, and impact on my understanding of politics and personal responsibility. For my younger friends and relatives, these events do not have the same significance. For my parents' generation, the Second World War and the social changes of the 1960s loom large.

Millennials are part of the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in history and were instrumental in electing Barack Obama (Dimock, 2019). Millennials in the West generally have entered their young adult lives during a time of economic recession. When looking at the pilgrim identity, broader cultural contexts may be more relevant than political or historical events.

Technology, in particular the rapid evolution of how people communicate and interact, is another generation-shaping consideration. Baby Boomers grew up as television expanded dramatically, changing their lifestyles and connection to the world in fundamental ways. Generation X grew up as the computer revolution was taking hold, and Millennials came of age during the internet explosion. (Dimock, 2019)

This generational difference is exemplified by Dan Hitchens in Spectator (2016) article about the British Pilgrimage Trust. William Parsons, previously of the British Pilgrimage Trust and now working independently is a Millennial and pro-technology. As someone at the tail-end of the Baby Boomer generation, I would concur with the journalist, preferring to read paper maps and ignore my phone.

Perhaps, then, pilgrims should leave their smartphones at home? 'No, no!' Parsons is emphatic. 'We think that modern pilgrimage requires modern technology to make the most of it.' Phone maps are better than a fold-out when you're lost in a wood. The BPT plans an app to link pilgrims with accommodation spots — churches, fields, village halls.

As well as these broad-brush approaches, there are specific cultural norms impacting on different generations. Relevant to pilgrimage are changing attitudes to religious authority. Timothy Egan as a second-generation Irish immigrant to the US describes his mother's reverence for the priesthood (p.7). It is likely that her date of birth places her in the so-called 'Silent Generation' characterised by respect for authority, tradition, and the value of hard work. With the revelations of clerical child sexual abuse and the subsequent cover-ups by the Church hierarchies, that automatic respect for the priesthood has been shown to have been misplaced, with devastating consequences for the individuals who were disbelieved or felt unable to speak up. (As an interesting aside, the two front-runners for the Democratic nominations in the 2020 US Presidential elections were both 'Silent Generation').

This consideration of generational differences raises the question of to what extent an individual pilgrim memoir is a personal, local phenomenon and to what extent it stands for a greater whole, and to what extent pilgrim-writers have a homogeneity distinguishing them from other memoirists or travel writers.

Freeman (1993, p.27) argues that the concept of the self we ourselves hold is to some extent culturally bound and concurs with American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1979, p.229, quoted in Freeman, 1993, p.27) who writes:

The Western conception of person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organised into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures. (Geertz, 1979,).

This suggests that the self which is created by a writer on the page is an expression of human culture at a particular point in time, rather than conveying something essential about human nature in general.

7.6 The Pilgrim-Writer and the Journey

The idea of the journey, as we have seen, implies progress and a destination, or a *telos*. Aristotle saw the purpose, or goal, of a life as inherently entwined with a person's potential or *raison d'être*. In memoirs of pilgrimage, and travel writing generally, there is a sense that the destination and the journey are mutually dependent, that it is impossible to have one without the other. Western culture is predicated on ideas of progress and improvement, both in terms of society and individuals. The term 'growth' is applied to whole economies and also to someone's personal development. The word 'progress' is a noun and verb meaning to 'move forward' and is a metaphor of time and place.

There is a sense of cultural pessimism in Western thought, that this grand narrative of 'moving forward' and continual growth no longer applies, especially in the face of climate change and increasing social inequalities. Yet, despite this, metaphors of 'progress' and the journey, with its implied destination, are still ubiquitous in English.

Accounts of pilgrimages, by definition, describe an *outer journey* which is mirrored by the inner journey of the pilgrim-writer. On the Via Francigena, the pilgrim progresses from Canterbury to Rome, walking through England, France, Switzerland, and Italy. Sometimes published accounts of a pilgrimage focus exclusively on this outer journey and are, in my view, 'chronicles' describing accommodation, food, weather and landscape and rarely, if at all, disclosing something of the inner life of the writer. A recent 'chronicle' which I reviewed for the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, is *Sigeric and his journey to Rome: The Via Francigena, 990AD. In his footsteps, 2019AD* by Cecelia Weston-Baker (2021) which is unusual in including a fictionalised account of Sigeric's journey. There is plenty of detail about the author's 2019 journey but virtually nothing of her inner life.

The premise of a pilgrimage *memoir* is that there is an inner journey alongside the outer journey.

It is interesting to consider to what extent this inner journey documented in these memoirs maps on to an idea of progress, and to what extent the pilgrim is transformed by their journey. Freeman (1993, p.9) when writing about memoirs in general, offers a variety of metaphors for the inner journeys typically described:

Many autobiographical texts, particularly those that document 'coming of age' in one form or another, are tales of progress and growth or of 'seeing the light' or, more generally of coming to understand who and what the writer might conceivably be. From the present moment of writing, in other words, one gazes back upon the past and charts that 'upward' trajectory, whereby one has managed, despite the trials and travails that have come one's way, to prevail, to come into being.

The tone is somewhat ironic here yet published memoirs or autobiographical texts that do not follow this (metaphorical) 'upward' trajectory are rare. I can think of only two. The 'Diary of a Nobody', a fictional autobiography by George and Weedon Grossmith, first published in 1892, is unusual enough to be considered a classic. More recently, 'Misadventures' (2001) by Sylvia Smith, who was described in her New York Times (2013) obituary as a 'memoirist of the life banal', divided opinion between those who found her subversion of the memoir form hilarious and meaningful, and those who thought it a hoax. It is no coincidence that both books are comic (or perhaps tragi-comic). Apart from rare examples such as these, the 'upward' trajectory appears to be intrinsic to the memoir form.

Any memoir of a walking pilgrimage has an actual or implied destination and the exemplars I am using for this thesis are all accounts of walking to Rome, and in the case of Guy Stagg, onwards to Jerusalem. There may also be a figurative destination in that the pilgrim hopes to answer a pressing personal question or, to use a metaphor of space and travel, to find direction their life.

To compare and contrast these memoirs and to look for narratives of transformation, I decided to use the headings suggested by Linden West described above. First, I culled the books for statements relating to identity, motivation, transformation, numinous and transpersonal experiences. I then considered these under Themes, Process, Ethnographic and Gestalt (Merrill and West, 2009, p.138).

With regard to the upward trajectory, I also experienced what might be the opposite when reading these memoirs in order of publication. Jung characterised journeys of personal transformation as a *nekiya* or a *katabasis*, a travelling into the dark or depths. The earliest memoir, Brian Mooney's (2012) 'A Long Way for a Pizza' was the 'lightest'. It has a jokey title and a bucolic paragraph near the beginning sets the tone for the writer's frame of mind as he leaves his home in Essex (Mooney, 2012, p.13).

My mind slowing in time with my step, I settled into the equilibrium of thinking and walking at three miles an hour ... I soaked up the simple pleasures of nature; the bluebells carpeting the woods and the white parsley blossom billowing from the hedgerows in the same carefree abandon as the children I passed in Terling, fishing in the ford with their home-made rods.

Alice Warrender's memoir, also from 2012, begins with the low point of her accident and doggedly ends up in Rome, that adverb applying to my sense of her as a pilgrim, and to the tone of the book. Harry Bucknell's (2014) 'Like A Tramp, Like A Pilgrim' maintains a neutral attitude to himself, his environment, and his pilgrimage. The two more recent books, Guy Stagg's 'The Crossway' (2018) and Timothy Egan's (2019) with their accounts of personal struggles set alongside historical accounts, include such topics as suicide, mental collapse, addiction, and clerical sexual abuse. The seriousness of these issues and their implications for individuals, including the writers, raise the stakes of what pilgrimage might mean. As well as describing their outward trajectory of reaching Rome, Stagg and Egan also offer us an account of a soul-journey to deeper, darker places.

Themes relating to transformation:

I have considered some of the characteristics of these writers demographically, especially in terms of their dates of birth and life stage at the time of writing. In this section, I will work backwards from the themes relating to transformation I have identified in their narratives.

However, before examining these narratives of transformation, it is important to look at what 'form' each pilgrim-writer adopts in order to 'trans-form'. Sometimes this is clearly stated. Alice Warrender is recovering from a serious accident and Guy Stagg from 'a nervous breakdown' (Stagg, 2018, p.2). The subtitle of Timothy Egan's book includes the words 'In search of a faith'.

Brian Mooney (2013, p.13) describes the disjuncture of before-and-after at the beginning of his follow-up book describing the walk back from Rome to England.

A taxi was waiting for me at the exit to the Arrivals Terminal, my name on a printed sheet between the raised hands of the driver. He was to be my last link with executive life – a final indulgence before I took to the road and became once more, in the eyes of many who would pass me, a tramp and a mendicant.

He continues, 'The transition was more than symbolic' (Mooney, 2013, p.13) as he describes sitting on the verge before getting into the 'air-conditioned limousine' to put on his boots, pack away his fleece and apply sunscreen ready to walk. I note the use of 'transition' rather than 'transformation' suggesting a movement between two states of being rather than a fundamental change.

Motivation for undertaking the pilgrimage

All the writers give examples, usually multiple, of their motivations in undertaking the Via Francigena.

- Sudden impulse to walk to Rome (*Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall, Guy Stagg, Timothy Egan*) vs longstanding (*Brian Mooney*)

- Freedom from the everyday (*Brian Mooney, Harry Bucknall*)
- Desire for a simple life (*Brian Mooney, Harry Bucknall*)
- Liminal experience (*Harry Bucknall*)
- Connection with past pilgrims (*Brian Mooney, Harry Bucknall, Timothy Egan*)
- Being different, special (*Harry Bucknall*)
- Looking for forgiveness of sins (*Harry Bucknall*)
- Chance for spiritual reflection (*Harry Bucknall, Timothy Egan, Guy Stagg*)
- To be unknown (*Alice Warrender*)
- To take full responsibility for oneself (*Alice Warrender*)
- Looking for meaning (*Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall*)
- Understanding faith (*Timothy Egan, Guy Stagg*)
- To rekindle wonder (*Timothy Egan*)
- Reading Hilaire Belloc (*Brian Mooney*)

Brian Mooney describes his pilgrimage as 'unfinished business', inspired by his living in Rome at the time his mother was dying and where, coincidentally, he was reading Hilaire Belloc's 1902 book, 'The Path To Rome'. When his father died thirty years later, it was a book he would rediscover on his father's bookshelves (Mooney, 2012, p.11).

Alice Warrender repeats her desire to be alone and taking responsibility for her life following her recuperation from a serious accident (Warrender, 2012, p.12, p.13). She (Warrender, 2012, p.14) reports feeling emotional on leaving.

I never imagined I would not enjoy the first day. Leaving home was tearful but I was longing to be free of the past, unencumbered with labels, and with a future ahead of me. I felt elated by being my own responsibility. I was independent, unfussed and free.

Some of these motivations are repeated. For example, Harry Bucknall opens his memoir with reference to 'a chance to break free once more from the chains of reality' (Bucknall, 2014, p.1), an image he returns to. He frames his exploration of his motivations in terms of escape, rather than a pull to pilgrimage, desire for healing or interest in religion:

It was the sense of a future that made the idea of pilgrimage so exciting – a chance to shake free once more from the chains of reality: offices, meetings, budgets, in short the everyday bureaucratic theatre that we all get caught up in, which seems so important, yet, more often than not, is so very unimportant. Or was it perhaps the last hurrah of youth? One final carefree outing before I finally gave in to the serious business of middle age and set course for my twilight years.

He expands on this theme of escaping when he describes his preparations at some length as he 'pared down to a time-liberated and materially limited existence' (p.4). Like Alice Warrender, he (Bucknall, 2014, p.5) expresses ambivalence when he writes:

But ridding myself of everyday adjuncts and comforts that could reasonably be taken for granted was painful and loaded with emotion; it felt like I was tearing the skin from my back.

Guy Stagg (2018) frames his pilgrimage as a healing journey. At the beginning of the book, he has recently come off anti-depressants after a nervous breakdown at the age of twenty-three, which kept him confined to his room. Suddenly feeling the need

for fresh air, he describes embarking on a walk from London to Canterbury as 'a whim' (Stagg, 2018, p.4). 'Everything went wrong' for him, including losing his way, getting soaked and sun-burned and having to trudge along the A2. However, on arrival, he (Stagg, 2018, p.4) describes a moment 'like healing' which inspires him to walk the Via Francigena.

When I got to Canterbury my heels were bruised and my socks clotted with blood. Yet I do not remember the pain. I remember lying on the grass beneath the cathedral, watching the daylight last into night, with a sense of relief so complete it was like healing. For a long time my world had been closing in, smaller and smaller, until it was no bigger than a cell. Walking made the world wide again

Having made the decision to walk to Rome and on to Jerusalem, Guy Stagg finds that he (Stagg, 2018, p.5) justifies this to friends by claiming an interest in the crisis in Christianity across Europe.

I told them I wanted to explore the major crises in Christianity; the collapse of belief in Western Europe and the exodus of Christians from the Middle East.

He then comments, 'It was true, but it was not the truth. It was not reason enough to wander out of my life.' (Stagg, 2018, p.6). This statement is an important one as it is a reminder, again, that narratives are constructed for certain reasons. The paradox is that Guy Stagg (2018, p.6) then goes on to tell his reading public the reason for his pilgrimage is 'one I kept to myself'. Somehow, it is easier to confess publicly in writing what he was unable to say to his friends. Or perhaps, having completed the walk and the book, this pilgrim-writer is able to place his motivations in a wider context. He recalls:

That time of unhappy confusion was over, but I was not better. Or rather I was better, yet less, much less, than I had once been. Brittle now, and hollow too, and knocked down by the slightest of blows. I thought the journey might build me up again. I walked to mend myself. But this reason I was ashamed to admit. I do not believe in God, do not believe in miracles,

and do not believe a sacrament can cure a sickness. Therefore, when friends asked about the journey, I said that I needed some exercise, that I could not drive, that I didn't own a bike and was afraid of flying

This diffidence at discussing the spiritual aspects of pilgrimage with friends is also present in Harry Bucknall's (2014, p.4-5) memoir.

At a friend's dinner party later in the week, I announced my news. There was an awkward silence.

'Have you got God?' someone asked.

No, I replied, I was walking to Rome for the hell of it. No cars, no taxis, no buses. I would do it the old way, on foot. But, I added, that I didn't believe anyone could embark on an undertaking of such length and be at the behest of one's own devices for so long without some form of spiritual reflection either.

Timothy Egan's subtitle 'in search of a faith' is ambiguous, suggesting that he is looking at Christianity as a whole as well as interrogating his own beliefs. He (2019, p.7) describes how there were conflicting experiences of religion in his family.

One member of my family was nearly destroyed by religion. The men of faith in our diocese committed a monstrous crime. Another sibling was made whole by religion, after losing a son to murder and finding that no one but God could salve her wounds. There are no clear lines in our clan, only a muddle – rage mixed with redemption. (Egan, 2019, p.7)

That is the background to his pilgrimage. The need to make sense of his religious heritage becomes urgent when his dying mom, 'a well-read, progressive Catholic, a mother of seven' appeared to lose her faith 'just as the cancer was 'closing in' (Egan, 2019, p.7). This, combined with a fortuitous encounter with the idea of the Via Francigena, prompts his pilgrimage.

I am a skeptic by profession, an Irish Catholic by baptism, culture and upbringing – lapsed but listening like half of all Americans of my family's faith. I'm now longer comfortable in the squishy middle; it's too easy. I've come to

believe that an agnostic, as the Catholic comedian Stephen Colbert put it, 'is just an atheist without the balls.' It's time to force the issue, to decide what I believe or admit what I don't. (Egan, 2019, p.7)

There is an echo here of Brian Mooney connecting his pilgrimage with the deaths of his parents, even though Brian Mooney (2012, p.12) identifies Rome as the connecting thread, rather than faith.

Moments of perspective change

Once these pilgrim-writers are on their pilgrimages, much of the writing is documentary, a chronicle of daily happenings. However, in each book, there are times when the pilgrim writer steps out of the everyday to reflect on how the pilgrimage is changing their perspective. These moments are prompted by the following:

- Receipt of hospitality (Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall, Guy Stagg)
- Sense of focus (Harry Bucknall)
- Being in a church or cathedral (Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall)
- Providence (Harry Bucknall)
- Supernatural encounters / visitations (Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall, Timothy Egan, Guy Stagg)
- Insight into self (Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall)
- Kinship with other pilgrims (Harry Bucknall, Guy Stagg – although ambivalent too, p.114)
- Solitude (Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall, Guy Stagg)

- Loneliness (Alice Warrender)
- Sense of being guided (Alice Warrender)
- Deepening faith (Alice Warrender)

Summary statements by the writers

These are statements that suggest something of transformation, or insight into the pilgrimage process, either *en route* or at the end of the pilgrimage.

Brian Mooney:

The final chapter of Mooney's book interweaves his experience, after walking alone for a long time, with serendipitous meetings with two Dutch pilgrims, with whom he rehearses questions such as the difficulties of 're-entry' into normal life after the intensity of walking. He also reflects again on Hilaire Belloc's 1907 account of the walk. However, the main transformation is a physical one when he writes:

... I spent the afternoon in wanton self-indulgence. First a haircut, then my eyebrows plucked, and a complete manicure and pedicure, and finally a full body massage. I rewarded the new streamlined Brian Mooney with a bottle of red wine from the nearby Alban Hills and a hefty dish of pasta and prawns, and went to bed well content. I was ready – in body, if not in soul – for Rome. (Mooney, 2012, p.244)

He describes the anti-climactic walk into the city, again setting it against Belloc's and his joyful reunion with his wife. The final lines, though, are the somewhat redundant punchline, his wife's comment 'That's a long way for a pizza.' (Mooney, 2012, p.247). There is no reflection on how he may have changed emotionally or spiritually.

Alice Warrender:

I believe inner happiness comes by remaining on one path and once the hard part has been conquered you reach a blissfully rewarding stage that you did not know was ahead of you. Trying to identify that path is difficult. This pilgrimage is essentially a very selfish time for me to look at where I have gone wrong in the past and work out what it was I kept running away from. I knew the only way I could achieve this was by being alone which is why from the very beginning I was not afraid, as it was time for me to face my own thoughts. The physical challenge of the journey is a way of validating my theory that unknown happiness comes from sticking on the same path. Whatever it takes I must get to Rome. (Warrender, 2012 p.129-130)

The above is a typical piece of personal reflection in Alice Warrender's memoir. Whilst she is a devout Catholic and her faith does not waiver, she has an idiosyncratic personal theology that keeps her motivated on the path. She experiences some low points, especially towards the end of the walk but even though completion seems daunting, her self-talk keeps her going. She describes arriving in St Peters Square:

As the pavement came to a crossroads the green man lit up again and again as if there was someone else wanting me to get there as quick as I possibly could. My feet and my mind felt detached from my body ... I walked as if I had on earphones shut off from the world. I was living the best feeling you could possibly imagine. I was weightless, I could see nothing but St Peter's, I could feel nothing but my pounding heart and a desperation to get to the square and see some people I knew, some people who knew me, some people who had also lived every single step. (Warrender, 2012, p.201)

Her final reflection is quite naïve in tone. She has done it, completed the walk but it is not clear what has changed as a result.

All day I felt on the edge of losing it. I was completely and utterly happy from the very centre. I walked with peace in my heart and belief in my soul. (Warrender, 2012, p.202)

Harry Bucknall:

The end of Harry Bucknall's pilgrimage suggests a diffidence about transformation. He gives an update on some of the people he encountered including mention of a healing occurrence. There's then a throw-away comment about his attitude to life and then an immediate suggestion that the pilgrimage is not complete.

St Spyridon of Corfu worked his charms for Carol Thomson at Martigny; she beat cancer and is now making a full recovery...

When I eventually returned home, some people asked if I had changed at all. Changed in what sense I wondered? I am still 15 minutes late for everything, if that was what they were asking, but perhaps I do feel a little more content to let the wheel of life turn at its own pace. ...

But returning to that map in the *ostello* at Costa Mezzano and my conversation with Oliver, the trattoria owner in Chapter 17 – what I didn't tell you was that the dotted line continued south from Rome through Corfu, Crete and Rhodes to Cyprus, Acre and ultimately Jerusalem. So I apologize, dear reader, for while I may have reached my stated destination, ever since that moment I have had the worrying notion that possibly this is the story of a journey only half-told. Maybe, who knows? (Bucknall, 2014, p.245)

We have already seen that both Guy Stagg and Harry Bucknall admit to telling different stories about their motivations for pilgrimage to their friends, strangers, and themselves. There is a key moment when Harry Bucknall surprises himself in a conversation with another pilgrim. This strikes me as central to understanding how our own narratives about ourselves can be mysterious until revealed inadvertently.

And then Philippe asked: 'Why are you going to Rome?'

The question hit me like a boxer's jab. For a split second I faltered. Caught off guard, my response was murmured and without recourse to thought.

'I want to put some meaning back into my life.'

No sooner had I shut my mouth than, shocked by my own frank revelation, I knew I had to bring our meeting to a swift conclusion. Until then, my journey was still the romantic jape I had always conceived it to be. No longer. In that swift reply, it had, I realised, taken on a greater import than ever I had

intended or could have imagined. It was as if I now acknowledged that the sum of my time on earth so far was nothing more than a carefully constructed veneer, which, standing for little, risked at any moment crashing to the ground ... Panicked, I sought the comfort of the road; I needed to be alone where I could trouble no one – except myself. (Bucknall, 2014, p.85)

It feels as if there is important back-story here that does not appear in the memoir. Bucknall is admitting that his whole sense of self is in peril, or even, in some sense, it does not exist, being little more than 'a carefully constructed veneer' (Bucknall, 2014, p.85). The detail of being where he 'could trouble no one' also suggests some significant life events which are not disclosed in the memoir.

Guy Stagg:

Guy Stagg's pilgrimage extends from Rome onto Jerusalem. As I describe below in the section on Gestalt, he has a frightening experience in Rome which leads him to leave the city as soon as possible. When he arrives in Jerusalem, he has been walking for 300 days and in a poetic paragraph rich in imagery and metaphor, he seems to conclude that, by not taking his own life, he has avoided 'the gravest sin' and, simultaneously, that there is no need to believe in the resurrection with its trappings of religion.

The light is failing and the cave beginning to simplify. Watching the valley fill with shadow, I remember that murderers once walked to Jerusalem as penance for their sins and that suicide was once the gravest sin of all, for it meant despairing of God's grace. After death the body of a suicide was an unclean thing, buried at a place where two roads meet. Buried beneath a crossway. Standing there, watching darkness pour into the valley, I wonder whether a life could be emptied out like the desert. If fear is the shadow the past casts upon the future would consolation with the past set us free from fear? Is that how it feels to be saved? In which case, resurrection needs no miracle – the dead need not rise, nor Creation burn – only a moment of gladness for the things we have suffered. (Stagg, 2018, p.405)

This is a very different style of writing and summary paragraph from those considered above. Guy Stagg is setting his own experience against a mythopoetic account of valleys, death, light and dark. I found myself reading and rereading this paragraph as the reference to the body of a suicide being buried at a crossway, buried as it is in the middle of the paragraph at the end of a long book, seems like a hidden key to Guy Stagg's pilgrimage. This seems to be the final statement about what he has done by walking to Jerusalem as the subsequent three paragraphs which close the book are written in the future tense where he writes of how he will encounter a stranger who asks about his route and bids him 'Speak' (Stagg, 2018, p.406). This has echoes for me of Derek Walcott's famous poem 'Love After Love' in which the person addressed in the poem rediscovers himself (Walcott, 1976).

Timothy Egan:

This time around passing through San G. as a Via Francigena traveller, I feel lighter than I did at the start of this pilgrimage. I don't expect a miracle cure for my wife's cancer-tortured sister, but I've found that wishing for one is the most humbling form of prayer. I may never understand the randomness of cruelty, but it's futile to expect an ordered design to events. Not everything has a rational explanation. I may not get a moment with the pope. I may never forgive his church, and his church may never be mine again. Still, the closer I get to Rome, the less cluttered my thinking. (Egan, 2019, p.276)

At the end of his book, Timothy Egan is still assessing the value of his pilgrimage and the possibility of forgiving the abusing priest who devastated the life of his brother. He listens to the Pope extolling the value of the forgiveness and remembers reading about a victim of clerical abuse who 'chose to forgive as a way to free himself from the chain that bound him to his tormentor' (Egan, 2019, p.327) and writes:

On impulse, I offer up my absolution to the faith for the crimes against my family, riding a Roman breeze ... I can't speak for my brother.

After this moment, there is a closing paragraph in which Timothy Egan lists some of the memories and moving moments he has experienced on his pilgrimage. This implies that he has not experienced a major transformation, rather a series of small insights.

The Via Francigena is a trail of ideas, and it helps to walk with eyes open – otherwise you miss the breadcrumbs of epiphany along the way. (Egan, 2019, p.327)

He notes that he is still haunted by his experience of the uncanny when he sees the eyes move in an effigy of a saint in Montefiascone, and then makes a series of resolutions ranging from the philosophical ('Nor will I belittle a given day, no matter how boring or wasted') to the tongue-in-cheek practical ('I will never hike without blister medication or take another shortcut') before concluding:

Beyond that is a conviction, this pilgrim's progress: There is no way. The way is made by walking. I first heard that in Calais, words attributed to a homeless man, the patron saint of wanderers. I didn't understand it until Rome. (Egan, 2019, p.328)

This is a slightly gnomic statement and I also find it puzzling. The well-known saying about 'the way being made by walking' comes from a much translated and often quoted poem by Antonio Machado (1912). It seems odd to me that as a journalist, Timothy Egan was not familiar with it. It is also not clear what the phrase means to him. I suggest that perhaps he is saying he needed to walk the Via Francigena in order to understand the nature of pilgrimage. And yet, his epiphanies were 'breadcrumbs' (Egan, 2019, p.327).

Process

I read and re-read these books over a longish period so my encounters with the authors and relationship to them, are different from a single timed and recorded interview in typical social science research. My perceptions of these writers and their

experiences are mediated through crafted, edited, and published works, not recorded speech. However, Linden West's suggestion to examine 'process' by making observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power and defensiveness, is helpful. What follows is a personal and subjective reflection on my reactions to these five pilgrim-writers.

Personal encounters with authors

Knowing an author makes a difference to the process of reading and I have met both Brian Mooney and Guy Stagg.

Brian Mooney is a former chair of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, a Trustee, and an elected member of the City of London. I heard him speak at the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome AGM in 2017 and met him at a Trustee meeting of the Confraternity in 2019 before reading his book. We have both subsequently attended Zoom pilgrim social events.

I heard Guy Stagg speak at Waterstones in Canterbury on 4th July 2018. The reading was full to capacity, and there was a definite buzz about his book. I had heard the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral preach on it soon after publication. Later that year, I chaired a session in which Guy participated in Wye Church as part of the Pilgrim Festival in September 2018. He read extracts of 'The Crossway' alongside Katherine May reading from 'The Electricity of Every Living Thing', and me from 'Baggage: A Book of Leavings'.

I have never met Alice Warrender, Harry Bucknall, nor Timothy Egan.

Personal and biographical responses to these authors

My response to Brian and his book owes much to my younger years, mid-twenties to late thirties, when I worked 'Overseas' for the British Council and first encountered a culture dominated by powerful, public-school, Oxbridge-educated, socially confident and, as we might say now, largely 'unreconstructed' men. Growing up with a single

mum and sister in a village, and, after university, teaching in a Further Education College in Chester and Ellesmere Port, meant that I had never previously mixed with that kind of demographic. I confess to mixed feelings. Part of me admires their can-do mentality and dedication to public service alongside their privilege. Part of me rails against what I perceive as an unquestioned sense of entitlement. When I first read 'A Long Way for a Pizza', I was shocked at the regular 'massages' Brian received along the way, which seemed at odds with pilgrimage. In retrospect, perhaps I am more shocked that he should write about them so openly. But why when I profess to a live-and-let-live attitude to what constitutes a pilgrim? This is perhaps an element of defensiveness in me. There are other strands in my response to him. Prior to being elected to the City of London, Brian was a Reuters journalist, as were close friends of mine. I experienced that world as different again from the British Council or pilgrimage. My personal experience is that journalists working for the national press, or a big news agency have a sense of adventure and curiosity, and, also, a steeliness that enables them to report with detachment. There are probably father issues that come into my responses as well. Brian was born in 1949, so is half a generation older than me. I should add that I enjoy Brian's company, and, also challenging him.

I had already read 'The Crossway' before meeting Guy Stagg and had been moved by the book. I was also saddened and distressed by what I perceived as his unconscious death wish when he appears to court danger on his walk. He only just makes it through the snow on the St Bernard Pass, is nearly killed by a train, drowned in a river, is in danger of dying of thirst, and goes on an alcoholic bender in Thessaloniki. Born in 1988, he seems, in the flesh, even younger than his years. At his Waterstones reading in July 2018, he was sensitively interviewed by Martin Latham, the then manager of the Canterbury branch who drew parallels between their respective yearnings for 'spirit', both literally and metaphorically (Latham, 2018).

Like Brian Mooney, Guy Stagg is Oxbridge-educated. At Wye Church in September 2018, he chatted to me about visiting Simone Weil's grave in Ashford on his way to the festival. Simone Weil is a writer I admire but she also brings up feelings of sadness when I think of her courage, fragility, and early death. Guy probably elicits maternal feelings in me, along with admiration for his tenacity and writing talent. I

also have an element of impatience with his dilemmas around religion. He is clearly powerfully drawn to holy places and people and yet, rather than embracing this impulse and going into the experiences, he repeatedly (protesting too much?) asserts his lack of faith.

Alice Warrender is twenty years younger than me and, like Guy Stagg, a so-called Millennial. My personal reaction to her and her memoir was a strong impulse to guide her or mother her. The memoir opens with her in hospital after a serious accident when she was cycling and was hit by a car. As a cyclist myself I am very aware at how easily that could happen. She has a kind of 'awakening' that she has to take responsibility for her life, and that walking to Rome would facilitate that. On her pilgrimage, she is harassed, she becomes ill, her feet are painful, and she often has a negative reaction to the places she passes through. But she has a dogged determination that impresses me and, to some extent, reminds me of my younger self who lived adventurously and often riskily. The book feels under-edited, and I was slightly irritated to see a puff by Sara Maitland on the back when Sara had refused to give one for my own pilgrimage book! Alice is a friend of Kate Middleton and was a wedding guest at Prince William's wedding, so another upper- class pilgrim-writer.

Harry Bucknall (Harrow, Sandhurst, Cold Stream Guards) is my contemporary and his background reminds me of some of the military attaches I met in my British Council days, another subset of people who typically come from a background of privilege and Establishment values. My personal experience was that these men were often outsiders to some extent, with the highly structured military life offering a kind of guaranteed support or camaraderie and *modus vivendi*. I have no idea whether this is the case for Harry Bucknall. I have read online that he is an energetic fundraiser for charities for former veterans and was curious that he appears to be unmarried. This was the only memoir to state explicitly that the writer was looking for penance, among other motivations.

Another compelling reason for anyone to go specifically to Rome was the reward of forgiveness from all sin; this sounded particularly attractive to me – the chance to wipe the slate clean after a not entirely angelic 42 years on this earth had a special appeal all of its own. (Bucknall, 2014, p.3)

Of the five writers then, Timothy Egan is the only one not from an upper-class British background. Egan is Irish American, one of seven children, a journalist for the New York Times, active on Twitter and author of several books which have a social justice agenda. Born in 1953, he is ten years older than me, like many of my friends, so also a baby-boomer. His history includes discovering that a respected priest, and friend of the family when he was growing up, was a serial child abuser. Timothy Egan was not personally abused by the priest, but one of his brothers was, and he discovers that a friend who was victim of clerical sexual abuse was driven to suicide. This story is revealed part-way into his memoir but is one of the driving forces for his pilgrimage, especially his need to reconcile what remains of his Roman Catholic heritage with the growing scandal of clerical abuse. I felt in good hands with this writer who was thoughtful, mature, and able to weigh up his reactions and responses in a less naïve way than the other four. Sometimes, I felt impatience with his readiness to jump into taxis or hire a car on his pilgrimage and sensed that I was thinking ‘typical American’ which of course is judgemental and biased on my part as, again, why shouldn’t he?

Ethnographic considerations

As I write this, I am aware that the four British pilgrim-writers are all from highly privileged backgrounds, and the American, a well-established professional journalist. Clearly, in order to walk for three months from Canterbury to Rome, pilgrims need financial means and the freedom from regular employment or family responsibilities. However, through my membership of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, I have met many pilgrims who have travelled on a shoestring, or taken time out from ‘normal’ work, and appear to have modest lifestyles. Perhaps there is a social class difference between pilgrims who write memoirs and those that do not.

Gestalt

Gestalt is a German word meaning ‘whole’, ‘pattern’ or ‘form’ that is used in English to characterise an holistic way of viewing that yields a sense of ‘something that is

made of many parts and yet is somehow more than or different from the combination of its parts' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), first used in this sense in 1922.

I find the *gestalt* a useful concept in thinking about pilgrimage and one which enables us to move beyond the either-or binary thinking that bedevils attempts at categorical definitions. McGilchrist (2012) in his exploration of the two brain hemispheres and their different modes of apprehending the world, cites a number of thinkers who assert the 'divided nature of mental experience' (McGilchrist, 2012, p.462) including Goethe (in the voice of Faust), Schopenhauer, Bergson, Scheler and Kant. He claims that it is no coincidence that the human brain has two, analogous, modes of being. He lists some of these dichotomies as 'alienation versus engagement, abstraction versus incarnation, the categorical versus the unique, the general versus the particular, the part versus the whole, and so on' (McGilchrist, 2012, p.462). However, as several critics of McGilchrist have claimed NEED REF, we do in fact, have one brain and the neurological research comes from contrived, laboratory experiments or studies on a small number of people with brain damage, and our consciousness tends to be unitary, or at least that is most people's subjective reality. The use of the *gestalt* enables us to dispense with the word 'versus' and to acknowledge that we, for example, are walking our unique pilgrimage at the same time as being part of a pilgrimage tradition, or that a leg of pilgrimage is particular whilst still being part of a whole.

Merrill and West (2009, p.138) describe this fourth dimension of their pro forma as follows:

The fourth examines, over time, the sense, if any, of *an emerging gestalt* in the material: are there patterns in learning, and /or in managing change and transition, as viewed from a biographical perspective?

I am aware of an emerging *gestalt* in the individual pilgrim memoirs I have read and analysed, and also in the genre as a whole. Each of these pilgrims exemplifies the Quest narrative as described by Joseph Campbell (1993), in that they have a goal, the *telos* of reaching Rome in order to answer certain personal questions. Their accounts include significant moments of insight or personal challenge as well as the

background of changing landscapes, variable food and accommodation, issues of health and fitness and encounters with other pilgrims. This undulating pattern of progress and frustration is one of the general emerging gestalts in pilgrimage memoir.

However, within this, each of these pilgrim-writers has their own gestalt, as I perceive it from their writing, which sets them apart from the others. This leads to different groups (the Venn diagram or Ying Yang symbols) according to the dimensions I perceive. I list these as follows:

Self-sufficiency, solitude, loneliness, aloneness:

This was the gestalt I felt most strongly from Alice Warrender. If memoirs are about relating inner and outer worlds, hers was almost exclusively inner. There is little historical background in her account and when she does allude to history, it's often from a highly personal perspective. For example:

Therouanne, Amettes and now this place, all belonging to one of the most fought-over regions of Europe, have an historically corrupt air to them. There seem to be a lot of unsettled spirits around and I don't really like it. (Warrender, 2012, p.25)

As well as taking a personal perspective throughout her memoir, Alice Warrender also explores the benefits of walking alone.

This pilgrimage is essentially a very selfish time for me to look at where I have gone wrong in the past and work out what it was I kept running away from. I knew the only way I could achieve this was by being alone which is why from the very beginning I was not afraid, as it was time for me to face my own thoughts. (Warrender, 2012, p.129-130)

I also experienced this with Guy Stagg. Although his book is well-researched and he includes a large amount of context for the places he visits, my image is of a young, physically slight, vulnerable person crossing the continent of Europe, essentially

alone with his thoughts and concerns. Guy also seems concerned with not spending too much money (although there seems to be a hint that he has received a grant, either to walk or write his book), which again contributes to a sense of his aloneness and vulnerability. He writes of the push and pull of the desire for solitude.

Departing from Canterbury, I thought I was leaving the world behind. At first the solitude was exhilarating because I did not know how I would cope alone. Walking in the Alps seemed heroic – the first winter pilgrim to cross the pass in decades – but the Appenines spoilt any sense of adventure. In the rain that same solitude was punishing, an empty space where my doubts could amplify and I began to feel trapped by the very isolation I once sought. (Stagg, 2018, p.106)

The converse is true of Brian Mooney, Harry Bucknall and Timothy Egan. Although like all pilgrims, they are walking alone for much of the time, they regularly connect with others, including friends with whom they stay, and, in the case of Timothy Egan, being joined part of the way by his grown-up children. Their background knowledge, journalistic curiosity, and contacts with others, have a worldly feel which perhaps is a function of their age as pilgrims.

Engaging with religion and spirituality

It could be argued that the fact of 'doing a pilgrimage' is engagement with religion and spirituality. Here, though, I am considering the evidence in the written accounts that the pilgrims have chosen to make public.

Here, my personal gestalt groups Timothy Egan and Guy Stagg together as two individuals who are wrestling with religious belief personally, and who set those struggles in the context of their walk. Interestingly, both of these men evince what might be described as a hunger for something they think pilgrimage may offer. Their thinking is often put in a theological context even as they express reservations about, or irritation with, organised religion.

I am clearly not a theologian ... The dancing-angel-counting on that head of a pin will continue until end times, preferably far out of sight. But if there are a small number of hardened truths to be found on this trail, let the path reveal itself. I feel driven by something I read from Saint Augustine during my prep work: 'Men go abroad to admire the heights of mountains, the mighty waves of the sea, the broad tide of rivers, the vast compass of the oceans, the circular movement of the stars, and yet they pass over the mystery of themselves without a thought,' We are spiritual beings. But for many of us, malnutrition of the soul is a plague of modern life. (Egan, 2019, p.7)

As his walk progresses, Timothy Egan works hard at disentangling the dogma of the Roman Catholic church from what might be alive today, in spite of feeling 'spiritually, I haven't gotten very far' as he admits to 'doubts and disgust at so much of the history.' (Egan, 2019, p.113-114). He quotes Steve Jobs' definition of dogma as 'living with the results of other people's thinking' and describes Roman Catholic curia as 'geological compression of other people's thinking, settled over centuries.' (Egan, 2019, p.114).

He is, however, heartened by the current pope and, in spite of frustrations and disappointments on his pilgrimage.

I take to heart the pope's recent advice. 'Allow yourself to be amazed' ... That, in essence, is the great challenge of Christianity in the Western world, to prove that it has a beating heart and not just a dead past. To that end, I will try to be more understanding of faith as a living thing, evident in the everyday along the Via Francigena. But for now, I'm making very little forward progress. (Egan, 2019, p.115)

He also describes a desire to regain some of the 'magic' (my word) of religious experience which his mother has described to him and which was destroyed by the revelations about the criminality of the family priest.

Wonder is a simple virtue. Like childhood, it's grounded in innocence, taken for granted until it's impossible to reclaim. One of the reasons I'm on the Via

Francigena is to see whether I can maintain my wonder of what could be, while never forgetting what was. (Egan, 2019, p.161)

Of the others, Brian Mooney does not mention his religious beliefs, Harry Bucknall offers a throw-away comment close to the beginning of his book, and Alice Warrender acknowledges a Roman Catholic faith that remains consistent throughout the memoir.

Stepping outside modern life

This gestalt applies to all of the five pilgrims.

One characteristic of modern life that pilgrims wish to escape is the impulse to be constantly online and the anxiety generated by so-called FOMO when we are not. Timothy Egan writes:

In truth, I am trying to go on a digital cleanse. One of my goals of this trip is to cut down on the amount of useless information I consume. Easy access to a world of tempting crap has clearly not been good for me. My attention span has shrunk. Sustained, deep reading and thinking are more difficult. I'm punch-drunk from the unrelenting present, the news alerts and flashes, all the chaos without context. (Egan, 2019, p.54)

Harry Bucknall observes:

I looked at my phone and switched off the data. No more emails. I was gradually being drawn into a secret pilgrim world, exclusive to but a select few, a special place far removed from the fetters of time and the everyday (Bucknall, 2014, pp. 24-25)

Mezirow – disjunction

The healing journey

Warrender and Stagg are both walking after significant health issues, Warrender after an accident and Stagg after a breakdown. My sense is that perhaps both were delaying their entry into the adult world or rejecting modern life in some way.

Timothy Egan has a wider healing motive in that he is attempting to come to terms with the effect of clerical abuse on his family.

The uncanny

The final gestalt that I have gleaned from these five memoirs is a sense of a purely rational approach to the world becoming nuanced as the result of events and experiences. Timothy Egan offers a journalistic, broad sweep of an explanation for why these experiences might accrue, one which suggests that the agent of transformation is the culture of the country. There follows his reflection on crossing from Switzerland to Italy.

Mysticism grows well in the southern sun. From here on, no village is without a shrine to the inexplicable. If England is the reason-based start of this Christian trail, and France the cynical centre, Italy is soaked in the supernatural near the finish. (Egan, 2019, p.285)

In the same chapter, he describes an event which then haunts him for the rest of his pilgrimage. He visits the Cathedral of Santa Margherita in Montefiascone and, without giving any specific reason, heads straight to the crypt of Saint Lucia Filippini, an eighteenth-century woman who did good works but nothing ostensibly miraculous. She was beautified after the incorruptibility of her body was confirmed to a pontifical commission.

I walk past a knee-high gate and inch my way towards the body. I expect something hideous. She is lying on her back head turned to the side, wrapped in black. The face is visible, and though alabaster pale, it is clearly fleshy and not decayed. She's 285 years dead and she looks, well – extraordinary. The skin is not dark or mottled, but is somewhat smooth. The eyes appear to be half-open. *Half open*. I take another step and start to reel

off a series of pictures. When I zoom in, I observe a slow but discernible movement: the eyes are opening wider, to a half oval. *This can't be*. It jolts me. I feel a direct connection to the corpse, this saint, and maybe her link to God. For a long moment I am frozen, and look around for other witnesses. I take dozens of pictures. I want proof. And then I back away, very slowly, behind the gate, out of the door, hastening up the stairs, trotting back toward the hotel through the rain. (Egan, 2019, p.293)

As this is such a key moment for Timothy Egan, I have quoted the paragraph in full. It has the quality of a story which has been rehearsed and clearly the writing is designed to convey the mystery and excitement of what was witnessed. When he visits the shrine again the following morning with his wife, the saint's eyes are closed. His photographs are inconclusive. He then interrogates why he might have been witness to this particular sign and concludes that it was in order 'To get me to believe.' (Egan, 2019, p.298). This question is one that he carries with him for the rest of the pilgrimage. It also becomes a hook for some theological discussion with his wife, who is Jewish, which enables Timothy Egan as writer to introduce different perspectives on, for example, the afterlife.

Guy Stagg has a panic attack when he is standing in St Peters Square waiting for a papal blessing on Easter Sunday. The square is filling with people and after so long walking alone, it becomes overwhelming.

Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, more people than I had seen in the past three months put together – and then something split. I could feel the weight of the sky and the texture of the air. I could feel the morning on my face, but harsher now, as if a layer of skin had been sliced from each eye. The people near me were swarming, jostling, wrestling. They were pressing at my mouth, dragging at my throat. We were too many. We were too close. (Stagg, 2018, p.135-136)

He finds himself having difficulties breathing and then running away. Throughout this experience, Guy Stagg conflates his own feelings of being over-crowded with historical events of 1450. That was a Jubilee year, a time when Rome was recovering from the plague and millions of pilgrims came to Rome for indulgences.

The over-crowding culminated in a crush on the last Sunday of Advent when two parties heading for a papal blessing crossing the Sant' Angelo bridge in both directions were trapped by the crowds. Two hundred people and three horses died, either from suffocation or drowning. These events are described by Guy Stagg in the present tense and at length, as if he is hallucinating the tragedy.

When I closed my eyes, I could hear it too ... Hear flesh pressed into flesh, hear skin beginning to burst. Hear collarbones popping, ribs cracking ... Men throwing themselves off the parapet, their arms wheeling, their legs flailing, round and round and – smash! – against the water. (Stagg, 2018, p.137)

Such descriptions carry on for several paragraphs and Guy Stagg leaves central Rome, saying that as he was 'moving away from that monstrous pageant, I felt hollowed out by its history' (Stagg, 2018, p.138). This seems like an extraordinary reaction and in contrast to the sense of satisfaction or mild let-down described by most pilgrim-writers on reaching their destination. I was struck, too, by the use of the word 'hollow' as this occurs on p.6 where Guy Stagg describes the aftermath of his breakdown. As he arrives in Rome, he is once again 'hollowed out', this time by his conflating a contemporary gathering in St Peter's Square with one of centuries earlier.

7.7 Religious experience and transformation

As we have seen above, pilgrim-writers may struggle to articulate their religious experiences or intimations of transformation when on pilgrimage. This can be partly explained by the way in which the 'truth' of what happened can be conveyed in writing in a number of different ways. Walter (2021) when considering poetry suggested the following list which applies equally to memoir. 'Truth' can be:

1. Factual
2. Intellectual
3. Historical
4. Emotional
5. Spiritual (eg awe, sense of majesty)
6. Imaginative (Walter, 2021)

The pilgrim memoirs discussed above all contain versions of the truth which can be categorised under the list 1-4, in varying degrees. My gestalt reading of them would suggest that Brian Mooney's and Harry Bucknall's memoirs are mostly factual, intellectual and historical. Alice Warrender's writing is more emotional and spiritual. Timothy Egan uses all of the first five. Guy Stagg (2018, p.137) is the only one to employ specifically imaginative writing, although of course, any memoir is an imagining, or reimagining, of experience.

Additionally, a text can be 'religious' in a variety of ways:

1. Content – what the book is about
2. Reflecting religious affiliation
3. Advocating a religious position
4. Questioning religion
5. Using religious material to inspire writing (Walter, 2021)

If we take pilgrimage to be intrinsically religious (as evinced by the qualifier 'secular pilgrimage') then all five texts qualify as 1. and 5. None of them fit 3. as none of the writers advocate a religious position. Timothy Egan's and Guy Stagg's memoirs are the most questioning of religion, that is 4. Timothy Egan and Alice Warrender write as Roman Catholics. Brian Mooney and Harry Bucknall either ignore or dismiss religion.

However, there is often a difficulty conveying the truth of religious and other transcendent or transpersonal experiences . Taylor (2017). David Abram's (2017)

assert that it is language that limits our experiences, as well as our attempts to articulate them.

It is important to distinguish between pre-verbal, non-verbal and what we might experience as 'beyond words'. The formal theological term for unknowing is 'apothatic' or the Via Negativa. This is not a lack of knowledge, but rather the paradox of knowing in a way that is beyond words and images. Such unknowing is characterised by silence. Such a silence is a full or pregnant space of immanence and possibility and can be cultivated and experienced by long periods of walking. Silence is seldom literal, as there is always background noise, and even if that is minimal, we hear our own heartbeat, footsteps and breathing. It may be simply a lack of talking and a sense of stillness. It is usually considered as the opposite of the 'kataphatic' way, or the Via Positiva where experience is couched in words, concepts, and images. Clearly, to function in the world, we need both kinds of knowledge but has been argued (for example, McGilchrist, 2010) that our non-verbal (or to use McGilchrist's terminology, right brain) thinking has been made subservient to verbal, left-brain thought.

As we have seen, pilgrimage largely operates outside organised religion and one aspect of its appeal is that there is no need to pin the experience down in words, that there is no one accepted way to be a pilgrim. In other words, it avoids the dogma of what has been termed 'Churchianity' (Urban Dictionary, no date) a tendency to proclaim certainties and be intolerant of nuance and silence.

A more secular framing, although he was a religious person, and one which dispenses with binaries, comes from poet Les Murray. He distinguished between the body, the intellect and 'the dreaming self'. The dreaming self is not entirely apothatic but works in ways that do not follow linear, rational thought. His poetry, and notably a 10,000-line poetic autobiography, he claims emerged from that 'dreaming self' (Wroe, 2010).

The binaries of theological thought and left-brain-right-brain analysis, and Murray's tripartite model of human experience, all convey an idea of constant motion and creative tension.

John Keats' (1899, [1819] p.277) idea of negative capability and the much-quoted injunction from the poet Rilke 'to love the questions'. That these two ideas have achieved the status of memes in Western Anglophone culture suggests that they are speaking to a widely felt need to step out of the certainties that dominate most cultural discourse. Pilgrimage offers a framework in which questions can be foregrounded. The absence of dogma and agendas can facilitate personal transformation.

Sue Monk Kidd (1990) has written about the typical loss of certainty many people experience in mid-life. It is perhaps not a coincidence that many pilgrims are middle-aged. She uses the idea of an active waiting as a way of creating the conditions for change and creative ways forward:

What has happened to our ability to dwell in unknowing, to live inside a question and coexist with the tensions of uncertainty? Where is our willingness to incubate pain and let it birth something new? What has happened to patient unfolding, to endurance? These things are what form the ground of waiting. And if you look carefully, you'll see that they're also the seedbed of creativity and growth—what allows us to do the daring and to break through to newness ...

Creativity flourishes not in certainty but in questions. Growth germinates not in tent dwelling but in upheaval. Yet the seduction is always security rather than venturing, instant knowing rather than deliberate waiting. (Monk Kidd, 1990, p.25)

Monk-Kidd's suggestion that growth requires upheaval rather than tent-dwelling is arguable. However, pilgrimage has the possibility of answering both needs. Although it is a 'venturing' out into the world, it also has the trappings of a retreat, that is a retreat from daily responsibilities and pressures and a retreat from the modern world of consumption and achievement.

When discussing Pilgrim Identity, I introduced Hubert Hermans' DST (Dialogic Self Theory). He has argued that one of the central themes of contemporary life is 'coping

with the experience of uncertainty' (Hermans, 2012, p.4), not least because we inhabit a world which has simultaneously traditional, modern and post-modern values and that it is a challenge to the psyche to accommodate these contradictions. Hermans lists five responses to uncertainty, namely: retreat, opposition, conformity, intensification and 'dialogicality', all of which can be seen manifesting in social and political arenas. He suggests that uncertainty can be both a burden and a gift but ultimately, it is a necessity, especially in the realms of the arts and sciences, and that a tolerance of uncertainty is key to personal development. On a pilgrimage, uncertainty is a given. However much a walk may be planned there are always unforeseen circumstances.

It is important here to acknowledge the role of personality. In my observations of pilgrims, I have noted a dimension which might be labelled Planning-Providence. At the Confraternity to Rome AGM on the 11th March 2017, held at Southward Cathedral, two speakers exemplified this dimension. At the Planning extreme, a pilgrim who blogs as 'The Man in the Blue Blazer' (2022) described reserving all his accommodation in advance and walking to a timetable. In contrast, Anja Bakker, blogging as 'The Flouting Harper' (2022), a Dutch woman resident in Ireland, walked from her home to Rome with her harp, trusting to providence, never booking anything and receiving hospitality when it is offered. This tolerance or preference for uncertainty is probably related to personality and is characteristic of everyday life as well as pilgrimage.

In Hermans' list of reactions to uncertainty, undertaking a pilgrimage could be seen as an opposition to the status quo. It could also be an intensification for individuals for whom walking provides solace and meaning. And walking can act as a retreat, a way of doing nothing whilst doing something, or creating a space in which transformation might occur.

As I have discussed in the context of 'walking studies', writers such as Solnit (2001), Gros (2015) and Cohen (2018) suggest that walking acts as a form of waiting in that it 'makes nothing happen' and is a kind of 'anti-work' (Cohen, 2018). The quotation from Monk Kidd above, is full of verbs of motion even though she is discussing 'the ground of waiting'. She uses the metaphor of plant life to convey the upheaval,

breaking through, venturing, incubating, and giving birth that may lead to a transformation of some kind.

If it die poem?

So far, I have looked at religious experience from the point of view of the person who is looking to create, understand and frame what might be ineffable. It could be argued that such experiences are entirely constructed and do not in any way reflect a reality that is out there. The converse would be to argue that there is a 'divine other' and that the purpose of pilgrimage is to cultivate the circumstances in which this is most likely to be encountered.

Pilgrimage involves a movement into sacred space, symbolically, socially and physically. In this respect, pilgrimage can restore one's relationships with aspects of the sacred, illustrating how pilgrimage is an inherently healing (whole-ing) process. (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xx).

I considered the idea of healing-as-transformation above and how the word 'healing' is cognate with whole. There are differences though between 'healing' and 'whole-ing'. For me, whole-ing suggests an accommodation with wounds or conditions that may never be susceptible to conventional healing. It would be possible to restate Dubisch and Winkelman's (2005) opening sentence by replacing 'involves' with the verb 'to be', saying, pilgrimage **is** a movement into sacred space. In such a space, 'wholeness' is intrinsic and exists in an eternal moment (*Kairos*), hence the sense of healing.

Include something here on each writer and their relationship with the divine.

For Timothy Egan (2019), the desire healing went beyond the personal to include his own family and the Roman Catholic Church in general where recent revelations have led to disillusion and fury. One of the paradoxes of walking pilgrimages is that they appeal to 'religious creatives' and those with no professed religious beliefs and yet purport to follow religious routes, connecting churches and shrines. One way of conceptualising the religious experience of pilgrimage in those who are not

comfortable with traditional institutionalised religion is to see pilgrimage as a way of bridging a gap.

It could be argued that there are two prevalent negative attitudes to religion in contemporary Western culture. One is that it represents an irrational superstition and the second, that it requires obedience to unfounded authority which has, especially recently, been shown to be morally dubious. Pilgrimage operates in 'the space between' as what Coleman (2005, p.97) terms 'a beneficial medium'. In my view this medium can exist without reference to either the irrational or to an unfounded authority, but, depending on the pilgrim, acknowledge and draw on both.

In the Middle Ages, there was a tradition of buying and selling indulgences. This practice was seen as corrupting and part of the stated motivation for the Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries. It was possible to pay someone to undertake a pilgrimage on your behalf and to accrue the same kind of spiritual benefits for the afterlife.

At the 2018 annual conference of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, I entered into conversation with the self-styled pilgrim and blogger, 'The Man in the Blue Blazer' (2022) mentioned above. He told me that twice on pilgrim routes in Portugal, he had met walkers who were walking on behalf of other people, on a paid basis, to give thanks for healing received. The idea that the transformation of the individual can somehow transform other people in their orbit, even remotely in the case of the paid pilgrims, is a seemingly non-rational idea but one that applies to pilgrimage in different cultures.

Dubisch and Winkelman (2005, p. xxiv) give examples of how in Brazil there is a tradition of bringing home 'milagres' (ex votos) and holy water from shrines, in Nepal, pilgrims talk of 'bringing healing back to the community' after their shamanic journeys. The Run for Wall pilgrimage of Vietnam Veterans has the slogan 'We ride for those who can't' linking the political and spiritual agendas of the participating motorcyclists with both living and dead veterans. Gilmore (2005, p.xxi) describes how attendees at the Burning Man Festival see themselves as carrying 'the culturally transformative power of the event home with them'.

To conclude, the transformative potential of pilgrimage therefore spreads beyond individuals to whole communities. It can be conceived of as a mythopoetic practice that is personal and collective.

8 The Metaphorical, Mythopoetic or Inner Pilgrimage

8.1 Mythopoetic and Symbolic Pilgrimages

Here, I explore how the boundaries between objective and subjective can move further outwards, from the personally subjective into the realm of the imaginative, the mythopoetic, the transpersonal, and the metaphorical. As well as the embodied boots-on-a-path aspects of pilgrimage already considered, with the subjective turn, we have seen a growing concern with tinner pilgrimage and pilgrimages of the imagination. By writing about boundaries, I am already employing one of the so-called 'Metaphors We Live By' as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1989) in these statements about this thesis and its subject matter. In this case, the metaphor is 'Life is a Journey' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1989, p.222) by extension, Life is a Pilgrimage, an area of knowledge is a terrain with paths to follow, obstacles to encounter and there are borders to cross.

Mapping the Terrain

There are different ways of representing this widening sphere of concern visually. One way would be three concentric circles. This could be done in two ways:

- In the first, the inner circle A represents what we see and quantify with regard to pilgrimage (objective, positivist), the middle one, B, represents what is said about it in personal accounts (subjective, autoethnographic), and the outer one, C, consists of knowledge of pilgrimage that is speculative, metaphorical and imaginative. Here,

C is the larger, with the largest circumference. The outer circumference may not even be fixed as it is impossible to delineate in any meaningful way unconscious, mysterious and contestable experiences. From above, these three circles might look a like a Norman castle with its keep and inner and outer defences, or a medieval walled citadel, with open countryside beyond.

- However, these terrains could be seen to operate in reverse. In which case, the outer circle, C, is the reality of pilgrimage in the world, its outer circumference forever extending as more people participate, write about and re-invent the practice. The edge merges with tourism, walking and psychogeography. The middle circle, constrained on both sides, comprises the individual subjective personal accounts of pilgrimage. The smallest, inner circle, A, here I would say, is in fact in three dimensions, a hole or a mine-shaft of infinite depth, like the unconscious mind or the imagination of an individual. Clearly a phrase like 'the unconscious mind' begs numerous philosophical questions to which, at this point, I would like to offer a poetic answer. Walt Whitman in his poem 'Song of Myself', said, 'I am large, I contain multitudes' (Whitman, 1855, section 51). This speaks not only to the mutable aspects of our so-called selves, but applies to anyone who reads books or remembers their dreams and has a sense of these being somehow inside the container of ourselves.

So, returning to ii. above, this small circle of the imagination, when seen from the surface, or this hole of infinite depth, when peered into, contains multitudes, many of which are hidden or occluded. When we consider the pilgrimage of the imagination, metaphorical and inner pilgrimage, not everything is visible nor as it seems. Poet, Jane Hirshfield (2008, p.12) argues that 'hiddenness' is a quality that pervades the natural world as well as the arts.

To plunge one thing into the shape or nature of another is a fundamental gesture of creative insight, part of how we make for ourselves as world more

expansive, deft, fertile, and startling in richness. The borrowing of attributes found in lyric image, metaphor and parable is also one of the principles of sympathetic magic, a way to attempt to nudge the hand of chance or fate.

When we consider pilgrimage as a mechanism for transformation, I would argue that its hidden qualities and metaphorical resonances are as important as those aspects we can see or count. However, talking about 'hiddenness' is also metaphorical, reflecting a conflation of seeing with understanding. Hirshfield continues:

'Our seeing is a mirror or a sieve' wrote Zbigniew Herbert in a poem meditating upon the sense of touch. The statement is eight words long, yet to unfold its two alternative metaphors fully would require passage through neuroscience, epistemology, personal psychology, and the grief of the self's inadequacy before words. (Hirshfield, 2008, p.13)

The above is an example of how metaphor can distil meaning and complexity into single images in a way that is impossible to unravel (another metaphor) but is experienced instantly, and sometimes viscerally as true or apt. This is perhaps analogous with the way some pilgrims know instantly that pilgrimage is what they need or want (for example, Warrender, 2012). Hirshfield explores the relationship between metaphors and riddles and concludes:

A metaphor simultaneously creates and solves its own riddle, and in that tiny explosion of mind is both expansion and release. (p.13) ... Riddle-mind, whether spiritual, psychological, or secular awakens a long-strided intelligence, breaking thought loose from the habitual and the stolid. (Hirshfield, 2008, p.15)

Her own use of metaphor and imagery to describe the liberation of thought into a wider world creates the sense of excitement and freedom engendered by taking long strides across the landscape and is something that pilgrims might recognise. Taking the decision to set off on a pilgrimage might also be experienced as a 'tiny explosion of mind' leading to 'expansion and release' and these correlatives are reflected in the language used to describe the experience.

8.2 The specific role of metaphor

As Lakoff and Turner (1989, p.1) state, 'Metaphors are so commonplace we often fail to notice them.' They argue that the ubiquity of metaphor means that we are usually unaware of the extent to which our thought processes are determined by the human tendency to think about something in terms of something else. Once we pay attention, metaphors are everywhere, and this thesis is riddled with them. 'Riddle' itself is a metaphor, the verb coming from a device used to riddle grain from chaff and, by extension, to make holes in something. A riddle of course, is also a puzzle. The image of the hole or mineshaft occurs once again, as a metaphor of depth and potential. Whilst pilgrimage can be conveyed as a single line across a landscape, its psychological hinterland goes down and up as well as along.

The way metaphors pass unnoticed is especially true in everyday or positivist thinking. Laurel Richardson expresses this metaphorically:

Metaphor is the backbone of social science writing, and like a true spine, it bears weight, permits movement, links parts together into a functional, coherent whole – and is not immediately visible. Without metaphor, writing is spineless. But due to the logico-empiricist beliefs about writing, we often do not recognise metaphor's role in social science analysis. (Richardson, 1990, p.18).

She continues by giving examples of metaphors that are used when discussing research, writing and academic endeavours. Many of these work with the metaphor of knowledge as a structure or building: theories require foundations, support, buttressing and are constructed and deconstructed. Academic arguments can be grand, shaky, falling apart or in need of shoring up. Empirical research, argues Richardson, relies on three primary metaphors which go unchallenged: that of independent subjects and objects, that language is a 'tool' which downplays its influence on how we think and what we can think about, and finally, the use of

management and manufacturing metaphors for manipulating variables, designing research, testing models. According to Richardson:

The three metaphors work together to reify a radical separation between subject and object and to create a static world of 'things', fixed in time and space. In this world the 'knower' is estranged from the 'known'; intellectual inquiry becomes a matter of precise observation and measurement of what is objectively out there. (Richardson, 1990, p.19)

In contrast, in poetry and imaginative writing, language calls attention to itself through the use of original or unexpected juxtapositions. When reading or writing poetry, especially, our awareness of metaphors is extended and challenged. Outside of the literary arts, we tend to ignore how much of so-called 'reason' is based in metaphorical thinking and we are usually oblivious to the extent to which metaphors are culturally determined.

Here, we are in the domain of the cognitive and the idea of thought being dependent on language. Sensation may bypass language entirely or only subsequently given a form of words. It could be argued that a person as a body moving through a landscape, on a walking pilgrimage, does in fact experience the world directly and non-verbally through spatial cues such as Up-Down, Near-Far or In-Out.

Ian McGilchrist (2012), who argues that our understanding of the world is mediated differently through the two complementary, and sometimes opposing, ways of processing of our left and right hemispheres, describes metaphor as the domain of the right hemisphere and more logical language as belonging to the left (McGilchrist, 2012, p.116). Interestingly, he uses a metaphor of location to distinguish these kinds of language use.

At the 'top' end, I am talking about any context – and these are not by any means to be found in poetry alone – in which words are used so as to activate a broad net of connotations, which though present to us, remains implicit, so that the meanings are appreciated as a whole, at once, to the whole of our being, conscious and unconscious, rather than being subject to

the isolating effects of sequential, narrow-beam attention. (McGilchrist, 2021, p.116).

I would argue that the word 'pilgrimage' belongs at this 'top' end in that it is a broad and elastic concept, activating a net of connotations. Language used in this way is akin to the idea of a *gestalt* explored earlier.

McGilchrist continues:

At the 'bottom' end, I am talking about the fact that every word, in and of itself, eventually has to lead us out of the web of language, to the lived world, ultimately to something that can only be pointed to, something that relates to our embodied existence. Even words such as 'virtual' or 'immaterial' take us in their Latin derivation – sometimes by a very circuitous path – to the earthy realities of a man's strength (*vir-tus*), or the feel of a piece of wood (*materia*). Everything has to be expressed in terms of something else, and those something else eventually have to come back to the body. (McGilchrist, 2012, p.116).

The definitions of pilgrimage explored at the beginning of this thesis relate to the so-called bottom end, identifying the characteristics of the journey and its destinations. As we continue, however, it will become apparent that the embodied experience and the connotative metaphorical cloud around pilgrimage are impossible to separate. One theme that my research has suggested is that pilgrimage as a practice resists dichotomies and binaries – top and bottom exist simultaneously both in the metaphor and the experience. We /our bodies/ our *materia* walk in a landscape and this process effects an intangible spiritual transformation. This holistic apprehension is also accepted by McGilchrist when he writes:

A metaphor asserts a common life that is experienced in the body of the one who makes it, and the separation is only present at the linguistic level. Our sense of the commonality of two ideas, perceptions or entities does not lie in a *post hoc* derivation of something extracted from each of them, which is found on subsequent comparison to be similar ... but rather on a single,

concrete, kinaesthetic experience more fundamental than either, and *from* which they in turn are derived. (McGilchrist, 2012, p.117)

He goes on to explore how, when we use the word 'clash', of cymbals, arguments, swords, or colours, all of those are 'felt in our embodied selves as sharing a common nature' (McGilchrist, 2012, p.117). Similarly, when we talk about a journey, whether a actual one, on a bus, say, from Canterbury to Dover, or through, say, cancer or a PhD, the common characteristics of a journey means we apprehend it in an *embodied* way even when the word is used metaphorically. McGilchrist sees embodiment as essential to our cognitive understanding of the world and claims that it is because of the cultural dominance of left-brain thinking that linguistic theorists have tended to disregard the physical and material substrates of language. When citing McGilchrist, I have deliberately skirted around his use of neurological research and was amused that the final words of his book accept that left and right brain may indeed be 'just' metaphors for ways understanding the world (McGilchrist, 2012, p.462)

The Metaphorical Body

In their ground-breaking book, 'Metaphors We Live By', Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that there is no experience which is purely a direct consequence of a having a body in the world. In fact, even the notion of 'having a body' can be seen as metaphorical.

It can be misleading, therefore, to speak of direct physical experience as though there were some core of immediate experience which we then 'interpret' in terms of our conceptual system.... Cultural assumptions are not a conceptual overlay which we may or may not place upon experience as we choose. It would be more correct to say that all experience is cultural through and through, that we experience our world in such a way that our culture is already present in the very experience itself. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.57)

Post-human philosophers argue that direct physical experiences are common to all 'critters', the word that Donna Haraway (2016) uses to include everything with which we have a reciprocal relationship (animals, plants, microbes). Critters are both us and other-than-us. In the human realm, I would argue that a very young baby has direct, non-cultural, non-metaphorical experiences based on the spatial qualities of the world. However, without language it would be impossible for the baby to have a *concept* of, say, 'Up' or 'Down'.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.58) concede that there are emergent metaphors which grow out of our bodily experiences and become part of our conceptual structures. These include our concepts of emotions, that happy is 'up', progress is 'along', sad is 'down'. We can describe ourselves as up-beat and walk with our heads held high, the metaphor and the being in the world coinciding. Our concept of emotions also includes our sense of selves as entities, 'containers' that are boundaried. This notion of a boundaried container is projected onto other entities or concepts which can act as a 'spatial container' including ideas such as being 'in the forest', 'on a pilgrimage', or 'in love'. This reflects our general tendency to see non-physical concepts in terms of physical metaphors. That these are metaphors, rather than reality, is confirmed by the post-human acceptance of the idea that we are in fact ecosystems, communities, or so-called 'holobionts', a concept developed by evolutionary biologist, Lynn Margulis (1991) but with its roots in the Aristotelean idea of 'holism'. Recent research on, for example, the gut demonstrates that as a human being, we are not singular but rather an inter-dependent ecosystem of millions of organisms which live in us or on us. There is no easy way of determining the extent of this system.

Yogic philosophers describe the *yamas* as a series of concentric selves beyond the boundary of our skin. Is the air that we breathe or the electrical field we generate, part of 'us' and if someone thinks about us, is that us or them? The answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this thesis! One way of conceptualising this broader question is to think about, for example, a tree. We are literally dependent on trees for our inspiration, so where do we begin and where does the tree end? If our embodied selves have fuzzy boundaries, how much more so our conceptual selves. It is impossible to separate literal from metaphorical thought.

This framing of ourselves as ecosystems challenges the received wisdom that we exist as a self-as-entity or self-as-boundaried-container. In the formulation of selves-as-ecosystems, the pilgrims walk the path, and the path walks the pilgrim, they blur into each other and are mutually changed by the encounter. Or, to put it another way, that the pilgrim, the path, and the wider system of pilgrimage, are essentially one holobiont.

A metaphor brings together two conceptual domains which map onto each other. Usually, one domain is a large, general, abstract, non-physical concept, such as TIME, LOVE or LIFE and the other is smaller. The smaller domain typically provides the metaphor, and is specific and concrete, such as 'time is a thief', 'love is fire' or 'life is a burden'.

The larger domain can afford a nearly infinite number of precise metaphors from smaller domains, some personal and individual and some in such general use that, as stated above, we do not even realise they are metaphors. So, for example, LIFE can be experienced as variously, a journey, a bowl of cherries or a vale of tears, in which we make progress, for which we have an appetite, or where we suffer.

Appendix 3 gives a list of the larger domains about which we tend to think in metaphor as outlined by Lakoff and Turner (1989, pp.221-223). It is clear how each of these domains can generate specific examples of metaphors. Many of those listed relate to ideas of life as a journey, and progress as a destination, metaphors that apply to pilgrimage, as a particular kind of journey and frequently used metaphor for experience.

So, how do these domains and their metaphors relate to our concepts of the world around us and specifically to pilgrimage? I will first look at some philosophical positions.

In philosophy, discussion of metaphor has typically taken a position along the continuum from the belief that metaphors are a literal reflection of reality (for example, 'time moves' or 'excellence is high') to the belief that there is no reality and truth is an illusion.

Lakoff and Turner (1989) attribute what they call the 'No Concepts Position' (that is that metaphors are literally true) to philosopher, Donald Davidson who adopted:

...a version of the literal meaning theory in which 'metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more' ... meaning is based on truth, but not conceptual understanding. (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.281)

This is a circular argument reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty who argued as follows:

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all." (Carroll, 1871, p.124)

Underlying the playfulness here is the question of whether language determines our thinking or vice versa, and how much of our linguistic-conceptual world is idiosyncratic and how much held in common with others. Wittgenstein (1953) would argue that language, and by extension, metaphor, works because of the common understanding of what words and sentences denote. However, this common understanding is often stretched as we have seen with the definitions of pilgrimage and the move from a specific kind of journey to a shrine, to many more flexible definitions.

The so-called Dead Metaphor Position holds that metaphors which are firmly established in the language and used so often and repetitively, are no longer really metaphors as they have become completely detached from their origins. This argument, which Lakoff and Turner attribute to philosopher Richard Rorty, suggests that the symbols and images in the original metaphor have become so meaningless that they are not registered when we come across them. Figures of speech such as 'all in the same boat' or 'green with envy' then simply denote a group of people

facing a common challenge, or someone who is covetous (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.281). I find this unconvincing from a number of personal perspectives.

As a practicing poet, a trained poetry therapist and a psychology graduate, I know that unconscious thought processes are often revealed and illuminated by the specific metaphors we use. And, as an individual who records her dreams, I am often struck by how a dream will convey a concept through a literal manifestation of a metaphor. So, for example, concern with a family under stress might emerge as a dream narrative of the individuals in question sitting 'in the same boat'. Even if not consciously apprehended, I believe the symbolic nature of the metaphor is registered in the psyche. [Alan would like more here.](#)

At the furthest extreme from the literal position is the idea that there is no reality, simply a shifting sea (note the metaphor) of language through which we perceive and/or create an illusion of a world 'out there'. This is articulated in the following quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche:

What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses ... (Nietzsche, 1873, quoted in Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.218)

This quotation exemplifies the common positivist metaphor of argument-as-battle highlighted above where concepts themselves behave as a 'mobile army', as if they have agency independent of the human beings who hold them. Reading this, I wondered how the argument would unfold if the concepts were not soldiers, but instead pilgrims on a path looking for healing or some idea of the truth.

A social constructivist position would concur that all cognitive schema and structures are illusions in that they have been created as a way of organising and conveying our sensory experiences, and have no *absolute* basis in any kind of truth. A realist

approach would assume that the truth does exist and whilst it may be obscured by the language used to describe it, it can theoretically be found. Returning to Celia Hunt's 'embodied critical realist paradigm' (Hunt, 2013, p.xiii) examined at some length earlier, she argues that any frame for looking at the world should be 'practically adequate'. This practical adequacy allows the paradigm to be a fruitful source of insight and allows the researcher to investigate both the psyche within and the external world without. The reference to embodiment and sense perception is, for me, a vital strand which is often omitted in the kind of theorising about metaphor I have described above.

However, 'practical adequacy' might be setting the bar too low. It is possible that by employing metaphor, we are accessing a wider, deeper and more interesting world than that of the purely practical. Hirshfield (2008, p.12), quoted in full above, suggested that metaphor follows 'the principles of sympathetic magic', and can be 'a way to attempt to nudge the hand of chance or fate.'

This awareness can lead to a more capacious paradigm than one which is simply 'practically adequate'. I believe that an acknowledgement of the metaphorical, symbolic, and imaginative realms alongside 'critical realism' can be fruitful, especially when examining such a multifaceted endeavour as pilgrimage. The term 'sympathetic magic' was first explored in the classic *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer, first published in 1890, and subsequently in both multi-volumed editions and several single volume abridged versions. In summary, 'sympathetic magic' is the way in which a ritual or object that resembles another, or is a part of another (such as hair or finger nails) can be manipulated to invoke that other, and, in an unspecified or 'magical' way, analogous to homeopathy, effect transformation (Frazer, 1890, p.38). Frazer argues that this is a universal belief across cultures, even if in our Western one, the idea is relegated to the irrational. Walking pilgrimages could be seen as a form of sympathetic magic acting through an embodied metaphor, so that by successfully making a journey through a landscape to a sacred destination, pilgrims might succeed in changing the course of their 'life's journey' or change it for the better.

Acknowledgement of these symbolic, or even, magical, realms do not preclude an exploration of the role of sensation and embodiment in pilgrimage. Hirshfield suggests that metaphor has a physical quality, even as she describes the experience of metaphor as being 'in the mind':

A metaphor simultaneously creates and solves its own riddle and in that tiny explosion of mind is both expansion and release. (Hirshfield, 2008, p.13)

Our bodies and our senses are the filter (Kastrup, 2021) through which our experiences are conveyed from the world to our 'selves' (a contested idea). Kastrup (2021) continues to describe the tension between two positions. The first is that 'we are just our egos, (no other, no daimon) and the other extreme, is that we 'allow nature to act through [us] without reflection'. Metaphor, I contend, offers a bridge between what Kastrup characterises as 'two dangers', as it is both felt and embodied, and open to change and nuance through the imagination. Pilgrimage is enacted bodily in the world, the environment, on the path and whilst transformation might be spiritual or transpersonal, its embodied nature in the individual is crucial.

Whilst embodiment is not explicitly mentioned, Lakoff and Turner (1989) cite the philosopher I.A. Richards as positing an Interactionist Theory of metaphor, where there is a dynamic interaction between the object or concept in its literal sense and the metaphorical image that conveys it. Lakoff and Turner, however, dismiss this idea and argue (1989, p.132) that metaphors work in one direction, from the larger domain to the smaller one, not vice versa. The large domains are concepts like 'Life', 'Death' and 'Time' (see Appendix 3), each of which can generate smaller domains.

They give the example of someone discussing a journey and how that might 'activate' the 'Life is a Journey' metaphor, 'resulting in an effortless and virtually unconscious mapping of aspects of the journey under discussion onto aspects of one's life' (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.131). This appears to be characteristic of pilgrimage which to an increasing extent acts as a large domain so that the queue to see the Queen lying in state (Bailey, 2022) is characterised as a pilgrimage or, detached entirely from a physical journey, the writing of a book (for example, Formenti and West, 2018) is described as a pilgrimage.

This idea of 'activation' can be extended to say that such metaphors are facilitated by the sensory aspects of being on a walking pilgrimage. Here, the enactment of the pilgrimage in its many and many and varied physical and concrete dimensions can activate the Life is a Pilgrimage metaphor in different ways. This activation might be experienced as a series of 'tiny explosions of mind' to paraphrase Jane Hirshfield (2008, p.13) above, as memories and insights arise seemingly randomly and are experienced as an expansion of consciousness and release of tension. As the pilgrimage progresses, my personal experience was that these tiny explosions coalesced into a coherent personal narrative concomitant with the walking (Field, 2016).

This phenomenon of memories surfacing is also described in Robert Hamberger's (2021) walking memoir, in which he traces a route taken by John Clare. The book itself was not completed until twenty-four years after the walk.

The past often feels present, elbows its way through like the immediacy of grief – so I wanted to honour the man who followed Clare's walk and make his experience present on the page, having Clare as my elusive torch-bearer guiding my path. (Hamberger, 2021, p,xiii)

This single sentence shows how language adds layers of complexity to our understanding of events in three distinct ways. It uses the metaphor of the past being a person and this personification of time is characterised by a highly physical experience, that of being elbowed. Secondly, it shows the reflexivity of personal writing in that 'the man who followed Clare's walk' is the writer himself writing about his own experience in the third person. Finally, it invokes a long-dead writer, Clare, as a torch-bearer and the path which is being illuminated could be read as the literal one Hamberger followed, his writing journey, or more generally, the path could refer to his entire life. Amazing!

8.3 The journey as a foundational metaphor

My subheading above uses the metaphor of 'building' as I develop the idea of the metaphorical pilgrimage.

As a personal aside (22nd June 2021), I have been writing for the past year on the 3rd floor of Augustine House, overlooking the construction of a new student hall of residence. This has provided me with a visual metaphor for the 'building' of this thesis. When looking at the meaning of pilgrimage, there is no doubt that the metaphor 'Life is Journey' is part of the foundations, a metaphor that carries us along horizontally, making progress. It is not a metaphor working in the Up-Down dimension although we might use metaphors of Up-Down to describe elements of the pilgrimage that are 'highlights'. For example, for me arriving in Santiago, seeing the giant censer being swung in the cathedral was the 'icing on the cake' (Field, 2016, p.176) and for others, reaching Rome after three months of walking might be 'a crowning achievement'.

Interestingly, the next sentence in the paragraph I quoted above from Robert Hamberger's walking memoir combines the metaphor of building-with-words with an Up-Down metaphor. His 'building' 'deepens' his understanding:

Building the house of the book one brick, one word at a time deepened my understanding of my life and the people in it, as well as giving me longer to consider the meaning of my walk and the significance of Clare's writing. My lines weathered with the years taken to write them. I couldn't have written them any other way. (Hamberger, 2021, p.xiii).

In contrast to 'highlights', part of the transformational experience of a pilgrimage relates to feeling 'down'. Whilst the journey is essentially horizontal, feelings of despair, futility and meaninglessness are often expressed in metaphors relating to Down. Stories of transformation often describe descents and returns, going down, underneath the earth. These include Greek myths, such as the stories of Orpheus and Persephone and have their modern equivalents in, for example 'Soul Descents' in the United States (Plotkin, 2021) where participants are literally led down into canyons to facilitate personal growth.

The descent is often equated with darkness and night. St John of the Cross (1542–1591) wrote a poem in the voice of a soul journeying towards God, through three stages (St John of the Cross, 1964, pp. 315-456). The first two purgations involve shedding sensory ideas of God, then spiritual ones before a final illumination. He uses the ‘The Dark Night’ as the title for a book of commentary on the poem. Interestingly, the subsequent use of ‘Dark Night of the Soul’ as the title for the poem has now entered popular speech as a shorthand for the experience of loss of direction, purpose, values and faith that most people experience at some point in life. The desire to find or impose meaning on such an experience may well be the motivation to undertake a pilgrimage.

So, the metaphor of Life is a Journey can operate in one spatial direction, that is, the horizontal, whilst still accommodating experiences that are metaphorically Up or Down.

‘Life is a Journey’ has become widely embedded in our culture as a metaphor. It acts as what Lakoff and Turner define as ‘a semantically autonomous conceptual structure’ (1989, p.113) based on our shared common understanding of what a journey is. This includes attributes such as a starting point and a destination, travel along paths, roads or tracks which connect places, plus related aspects such as maps, guidebooks, a compass, new landscapes, companions, provisions, accommodation, luggage, delays, obstacles, changes of plan and so on, all of which have their own metaphorical potential. There are attributes of journeys specific to travel on foot or on various forms of transport, and public transport differs from the private car. Travel on foot is usually on a path. In our conceptual metaphorical structures, the ‘path’ often denotes aspects of life beyond the material, such as ‘a spiritual path’ or ‘the path to enlightenment’. This is evident in the following quotation from Jungian James Hillman (1997, p.3) where the path metaphor is paired with that of a ‘calling’ or ‘vocation’, both of which have spiritual or artistic connotations.

There is more in a human life than our theories of it allow. Sooner or later something seems to call us onto a particular path. You may remember this “something” as a signal moment in childhood when an urge out of nowhere,

a fascination, a peculiar turn of events struck like an annunciation: This is what I must do, this is what I've got to have. This is who I am.

'The Call to Action' is one of the stages of pilgrimage discussed in the Introduction and the metaphor of a calling conflates inner motivation and an imperative from outside (that is, someone speaking loudly) to make a journey in a particular direction.

At what point does the action turn into a metaphor? 'The Fish Ladder' (2015) is a memoir by Katharine Norbury in which healing from a miscarriage and exploring her birth family are combined with a series of journeys following rivers from their sources to the sea, mostly in the company of her daughter, Evie. During this period, she also faces a diagnosis of breast cancer, and the illness of her adoptive mother. Towards the end of the book, she writes:

Evie and I decided to make a pilgrimage to the source of the River Severn. What had started as a holiday project now lingered as a habit. It was two years ago that I had followed the Dunbeath Water, No longer just a reason for a journey, the rivers had evolved into a metaphor. Each body of water plaited with the next, twisting first into a bubbling thread and then into a silver rope. When viewed on a map of Britain and Ireland these ropes formed a net, or a ladder, (Norbury, 2015, p.241)

Here the writer is suggesting that by turning the rivers into a meaningful metaphor, ('rope', 'net', 'ladder'), her experience of the rivers is more than a journey, but a way of bringing together disconnected elements into something coherent. The images of rope, net and ladder all connote connection and these objects are also a means of going from one place to another, and in the case of a ladder, up or down. She continues:

When I was out walking, the waters marked a border between different states of being: solid, liquid, air. And they kept moving, were – quite literally – defined by their movement. Heraclitus said that 'no man ever steps in the same river twice, because it's not the same river, and he's not the same man'. Woman. Wherever I went, I sought them out, and it seemed fitting that

the longest river in Britain should rise just a few miles from my birth mother's house. (Norbury, 2015, p.241).

This is the central metaphor of the narrative, focusing as it does on the search for the sources of rivers alongside the search for her birth family, but she invokes other metaphors too, for example when describing a breakdown following the death of her adoptive father.

My own beautiful mind was beginning to shift. It was a tent in the desert, full of lovely things but the sand was getting in as the wind tore at the pegs, loosening the ropes. (Norbury, 2015, p.176)

The tent as a structure contrasts with the idea of the river as an ever-changing, mutable entity. When she continues that subsequently 'her life began to come apart' (Norbury, 2015, p.176), the structural metaphor is applied to the whole of 'life', just as 'tent' was applied to 'mind'. Life can therefore be both a thing and a process.

However, if we also consider Hirshfield's (2008, p.12) 'hiddenness' as a factor in how metaphors operate unconsciously or subconsciously, we find that one metaphor often occludes, or subtly suggests another. Life is a Journey maps onto Life is a Day with its corollaries of Death is Night and Old Age is Evening. Another dimension of the 'hiddenness' in language lies in the often-unremarked etymologies of words. For example, journey comes from the French word 'journée' meaning 'day' which brings the metaphors of Life is a Journey and Life is a Day into closer proximity. A hidden dimension in my own psyche is that my maternal grandfather, whom I never knew, was an itinerant who worked as a 'journeyman carpenter', meaning he travelled and was paid by the day.

Another common metaphor related to Life is a Journey is the idea that Purposes are Destinations.

When we think of life as purposeful, we think of it as having destinations and paths towards those destinations, which makes life a journey. We can speak of children as 'getting off to a good start' in life and of the aged as being 'at

the end of the trail'. We describe people as 'making their way' in life.' People who 'know where they are going' are generally admired. (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.3)

There are numerous other Life is a Journey / Purposes are Destinations metaphors such as 'coming to the end of the road', 'not knowing which way to turn', and even simply using the single word 'arrived' as a description of success in life. A list (which I have adapted, extended and elaborated, from Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.3, with more inclusive language) includes:

- A person leading/following a life is a traveller
- Their purposes are destinations – they want to 'get somewhere'
- The means of getting somewhere are routes, which may be mapped
- Difficulties in life are impediments to travel such as obstacles, breakdowns, losing the way, feeling lost, not knowing which way to turn
- Friends and advisors are guides, showing the way
- Progress is the distance travelled, there is a long way to go but we'll get there
- Progress is gauged by landmarks
- Choices are crossroads
- Material resources and talents are provisions
- Difficulties are burdens or baggage, a heavy load
- Life is not a walk in the park
- We can follow a Via Negativa or a Via Positiva

All of these journey metaphors apply to pilgrimage. However, pilgrimage brings in the added resonance of the destination being a sacred place. In the case of a walking pilgrimage, the pilgrim is making a specific journey along a historic path which has been sanctified by it having been walked by pilgrims over many centuries. However, as we have seen, the idea of there being a single 'Way' is contestable and may be part of the fantasy side of pilgrimage which attributes an authenticity to a route which is not justified by historical evidence.

If we take the metaphor of 'Life is a Pilgrimage', the list above becomes more nuanced. The journey is not any journey, but it is one with personal, spiritual, and collective significance. The way, or Way, is laid out and mapped, so there are constraints that may not apply to other journeys. It is also expected that a pilgrimage will be challenging, involve discomfort and a shedding of the conventional, societal self. 'Life is a Pilgrimage' is different from 'Life is a Journey' towards material comfort and ease.

Solnit (2004, p.80) explores this in her collection of essays on activism, arguing that 'Paradise is not the place in which you arrive but the journey toward it' and that crises can be paradoxically enlivening as they remind us that we have a soul. Solnit (2004, p.80) focuses on political crises and describes the energising effect of demonstrating against the Iraq war but there are individual parallels in pilgrims undertaking their pilgrimage in response to personal losses, illness or life changes. She quotes Keats' calling the world 'this vale of soul-making'. That pilgrims actively walk away from comfort, and embrace physical challenges, makes sense in this context.

The industrialised world has tried to approximate paradise in its suburbs, with luxe, calme, volupte, cul-de-sacs, cable television and two-car garages, and it has produced a soft ennui that shades over into despair and a decay of the soul suggesting that Paradise is already a gulag.

She continues by describing the 'politics of prefiguration' (Solnit, 2004, pp.80-81) claiming that:

... the idea [is] that if you embody what you aspire to, you have already succeeded. That is to say if your activism is already democratic, peaceful, creative, then in one small corner of the world these things have triumphed. Activism, in this model, is not a only a toolbox to change things but a home in which to take up residence and live according to your beliefs, even if it is a temporary and local place, this paradise of participating, this vale where souls get made.

This framing offers a way of seeing pilgrimage both as metaphorical embodiment of what a way of being in the world could be, and a political prefiguration of light (in the sense of being light-on-the-earth) and meaningful living. At the risk of making a jump here, I sense that the increase in the West in undertaking pilgrimage is partly, if unconsciously, inspired by a desire for soul-making, and partly as a way of prefiguring a response to the climate emergency.

Returning to a specific metaphor, the characteristics of Life is a Pilgrimage are given in an exaggerated form in the exposition of the metaphor by Deanna Weibel (2015). She characterises the embodied act of going on a pilgrimage as a metaphorical enactment of the life of a religious person.

Pilgrimage is a metaphor for human life, with the pilgrim making his way on foot through bad weather and worse roads to his ultimate sacred destination, an image that is usually seen as a symbol for the good Catholic steadfastly enduring life's tribulations until finally reaching heavenly reward. (Weibel, 2015, pp112-113)

Contemporary walking pilgrims who identify as 'good Catholics' may now be outnumbered by secular or spiritual pilgrims (ref) however, it is likely that many aspects of the above will at least resonate with their experience. Pilgrim destinations have personal, spiritual, and collective significance, although for individual pilgrims the balance will be different and for the same pilgrim, different at different times.

8.4 Research as pilgrimage

I have already referred to the metaphor of 'building' an argument or a body of academic work and it is worth noting that some academics, such as Linden West (2018), Elizabeth Tisdell (2020) and Laurel Richardson (1990, 1997), have chosen to use pilgrimage as a metaphor for their research, often as a way of challenging the Academy.

Metaphors actively forge connections between our inner, personal meanings and the outer contexts in which we live our lives. It could be argued that by consciously choosing and changing our metaphors, we can influence both our inner and outer worlds. I note here that the metaphor of 'forging' connections is one based on fire and metal, and that an alternative metaphor might use a water metaphor to talk about the flow of meaning between inner and outer.

Laurel Richardson (b.1936) has specialised in qualitative and gender sociology and sees metaphor as central to the ways in which we frame our research. She states: 'We become the metaphors we use. We construct worlds in our metaphoric image' (Richardson, 1997, p.185).

She writes that she wants 'to create alternative metaphors for ethnographic practices' in contrast to those in common use which reify duality by, for example, referring to 'the field' and using terms such as 'participant-observer' which objectify the process of research and perpetuate the myth that it can exist 'outside the self' (Richardson, 1997, p.185).

When describing her 'spiritual turn' (p.184), after years of marginalisation as a woman academic in the 1950s and 60s, she advocates using 'sacred spaces' as a metaphor for 'life-affirming, sanctifying practices' in research.

Instead of 'going into' the field we might embark on a 'pilgrimage' or imagine ourselves 'walking with' people. In 'walking with' we are embodied, self-consciously reflexive, partial knowers, convenors, ministers, - not 'insiders' or 'outsiders'. (Richardson, 1997, p.185)

Richardson uses the term 'sacred spaces' when thinking about academia and identifies four distinguishing characteristics. She specifically states that sacred spaces are not 'innocent space' but:

a space where, minimally, four things happen: (1) people feel 'safe' within it, safe to be and experiment with who they are and who they are becoming;
(2) people feel 'connected' – perhaps to each other, or a community, or

nature, or the world they are constructing on their word processors; (3) people feel passionate about what they are doing, believing that their activity 'makes a difference'; and (4) people recognise, honor, and are grateful for the safe communion. (Richardson, 1997, pp.184-185)

All of these are characteristics of pilgrimage.

Much has been written about the nature of the quest, and 'metaphors of travelling and exploring have long underpinned the discourses of adult education and lifelong learning' (Hunt, 2004, p. 303 quoted in Fraser, p.19).

It could be argued that the use of narratives to understand our experiences is essentially metaphorical. Instead of experiencing life as a series of unrelated episodes, we tend to see a narrative thread. Another way of putting this is that we invent and impose coherence in order to shape our memories. This enables us to tell stories about our lives to each other and make meaning. These stories are all provisional and as the art of memoir teaches, it is possible to create and recreate multiple versions of our life stories.

In terms of epistemology, a metaphor might offer a means for thinking about a topic which moves it from the literal to a more archetypal plane. For example, Stefan Alexa's (2019) thesis on terrorist-learning uses pilgrimage as a framing metaphor. He has his subjects and theorists gather around his Grandma's table, drawing on Ionesco's Theory of the Absurd. (Alexa, 2019).

Laura Formenti and Linden West

Laura Formenti and Linden West (2018) open *Transforming Perspectives in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education* with a dialogue around the question 'what do you see?' when looking at a postcard of Michelangelo's *Pietà* in St Peter's in the Vatican. Looking at the postcard, Linden connected with memories and emotions, Laura to thoughts about politics and the church (Formenti and West, 2018, pp.27-34). What the individual pilgrim 'sees' will always include inner, individual perspectives, set in the context of geography, time and culture. Once again, the

word, 'see', a metaphor for understanding, is an ambiguous, partial representation of human experience.

Elizabeth Tisdell

Elizabeth Tisdell also works with adult education and educators, in her case in the US, and her research has focused on the role spirituality plays in that world (Tisdell, 2020). However, she uses the frame of pilgrimage more personally, and globally, to process her experiences of the deaths of her parents and colleagues, and aligns pilgrimage with other practices that involve 'turning towards the light' such as 'gratitude practices, loving kindness meditations, or other forms of prayer, mindfulness, or meditation that helps one cultivate radiating light with intention'. (Tisdell, 2020, p.7).

Tisdell identifies three ways in which 'living a life of pilgrimage' has enabled her to reframe aspects of contemporary life. The first is her attitude to death and dying. She uses metaphor as she describes 'walking the journey of death with each of my parents and a couple of close friends' (Tisdell, 2020, p.7) and concludes:

Amidst the love and death of those who birthed me was transformation. I realized it is possible to live *life as a pilgrimage* by acting in spite of fear, turning toward the light, and fiercely embracing both love and death as part of life rather than being terrified of it. (Tisdell, 2020, p.7)

The second aspect of pilgrimage that Tisdell identifies is 'movement and spending time in nature' and states:

... my Camino journey of almost 500 miles ... altered my sense of self. Such sustained exercise, particularly with spiritual intention, makes one ripe for having a spiritual experience. (Tisdell, 2020, p.8)

She finds corroboration of this in her research into adult educators and particularly one subject who engaged in slow, mindful walking whilst receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer. Finally, the third component is 'wisdom' and cites the work of Wilma

Fraser (2018) on connecting wisdom with developing spirituality and a deeper sense of self. Here, Tisdell cites another of her research subjects who emphasised the importance of love in scholarship and suggests that love might in fact be the crucial factor.

Wisdom for Anna means seeing the connection of everything but doing so with love. While it is probably impossible to cultivate wisdom by pursuing it directly, one can love with intention and walk with spiritual intention. This is part of living life as pilgrimage, and perhaps wisdom is its by-product.

(Tisdell, 2002, p.9)

This approach differs from Formenti and West's described above in that Tisdell conflates her academic research and personal philosophy of life in ways that make them indistinguishable, and probably, challenging to the academy as I will discuss at the beginning of Section 6. Some of what I have described above seems vague and also more about 'self-talk' than necessarily relating directly to pilgrimage. However, it is clear that for Tisdell, invoking the metaphorical frame of 'living life as pilgrimage' enables her to process and incorporate life experiences such as bereavement, as well as finding links between her own life narratives and those of her research subjects.

A personal perspective – pilgrimage as activism

Finally, in this chapter where I am discussing the idea of pilgrimage as a frame for understanding some aspect of life, I will describe some events from November and December 2018, when I was 'possessed' by an uncharacteristic impulse to organise a public demonstration against the building of a multi-storey carpark in Canterbury. I presented an autoethnographic account of this at the ESREA (European Society for Research in the Education of Adults) conference in Canterbury UK in February 2019.

In his book, *The Art of Pilgrimage* (1998), Phil Cousineau outlines the stages involved in making a pilgrimage, from the initial longing to a call to action followed by the eventual departure and all that entails. I can be argued that research and

activism follow a similar arc. All three endeavours – pilgrimage, activism and research – can be a struggle for what is good and beautiful.

In 2009, I made a pilgrimage to Santiago which resulted in a book-length memoir in which I documented and processed the events of my first marriage (Field, 2016) using the frame of pilgrimage. Both the walk and the subsequent writing-as-inquiry were focused on my own self-knowledge and self-healing. However, pilgrimage can be seen as a form of activism (acknowledging that this is a contentious term) in that it is non-consumerist, counter-cultural and has a minimal environmental footprint. Whilst it may not directly address damaging political processes, it is clearly related to 'doing', and is, in the same way as people eschewing flying and private cars, a positive move towards building community. On the level of deep ecology, the pilgrim's unmediated bodily engagement with others, including the putative 'persons' of paths, plants and non-human creatures means that it is impossible not to live as part of an interconnected system. (Here, it may be relevant to explore the concepts of 'passive activism' and slacktivism which have both positive and negative connotations.)

In November and December 2018, I became, to my own surprise, an activist in a more clearly defined and public way. I initiated a demonstration, found support from local groups, printed fliers at my own expense and leafleted hundreds of homes in Canterbury. I wrote to Prince Charles and public figures soliciting support and on the 29th December, found myself standing on walls and benches near St Dunstan's Church and Canterbury West Station, addressing a crowd of three hundred people through a megaphone. Significantly, for me, I framed this activity as a pilgrimage and felt a need to embed our individual, local concerns (specifically for better air quality in Canterbury and against the building of the £10 million multi-storey carpark) in a spiritual and historical context, as well as one concerned with environmental and social justice. Whilst many of my friends have participated in Extinction Rebellion protests, I have found myself unable to do so, seeing them as nihilistic, performative and vague.

This experience predates my becoming a PhD student investigating pilgrimage but I question whether it was part of the growing impulse within me. Some

autoethnographic questions remain: Who is this self that I find able to commit fully to one kind of activism, and not to another, and what does this have to do with pilgrimage and research?

9 The Arrival

9.1 Introduction – Moving from the symbolic to the sacred

I have described the ways in which common metaphors are often so embedded in our understanding of the world that they pass unnoticed. Such common metaphors underpin our so-called ‘scientific’ understanding of the world (note the use of a ‘building’ metaphor here for understanding). Arguably, the continued use of these metaphors (for example, that of ‘building an argument’), creates our understanding and that a conscious challenging of them might lead to a different way of looking at the world and experience.

I also explored how, at the other extreme, novel metaphors and new elaborations are part-and-parcel of poetic, imaginative and creative ways of engaging with experience. Specifically, I considered how metaphors of journeys inform our understanding of pilgrimage and, conversely, how the framework, or over-arching metaphor, of pilgrimage, enriches our understanding of human life and endeavours.

Metaphor acts as a bridge from the literal into symbolic and poetic thinking. The imaginal world, notions of the sacred, and experiences of the numinous present challenges to positivist ways of understanding the world. Much as pilgrimage has been secularised (for example, Hayward, 2021), it still has its roots in religious observances (for example, Harpur, 2016). The idea of ‘the sacred’ will be explored in some detail and form the basis for considering the relationship of the experience of a walking pilgrimage to deep ecology.

I am aware that this is contested territory, especially within conventional academic settings. It is not an exaggeration to say that in academia there is a distrust of the idea of the sacred, just as there is a coyness about discussing love and eroticism in learning (see for example, Wilson, 2020).

When considering narratives of transformation, I described the thinking of US-based educationalist, Elizabeth Tisdell and her adoption of the metaphorical frame, ‘living

life as pilgrimage' (Tisdell, 2020). She uses this framework to process her own experience, and also that of the adult educators who comprise her research subjects. As an academic, she has specifically looked at spiritual dimensions of Transformative Learning and comments that the literature on TL 'is exceedingly thin on discussing the Big Questions of life – who we are and what we are doing here, and the meaning of life, love and death.' (Tisdell, 2020, p.2). She continues by describing her growing interest in 'spiritual pilgrimage' and how it developed alongside her research into adult educators' commitments to teaching about social justice, diversity and equity issues. She chose to do this from a 'critical spirituality perspective', saying:

I was hesitant to do so at the time because a focus on spirituality can be a career-limiting move in the secular spaces of academia ... Nevertheless, my passionate questions about the role of spirituality in fueling (sic) social justice commitments were enough to pursue such studies. (Tisdell, 2020, p.2)

Later she writes:

While having done studies of spirituality and culture might not have been the most career-enhancing move for an academic, it has been the most life-enhancing work I have done. (Tisdell, 2020, p.9)

As I move into this section, I am aware of the difficulties in writing about the ineffable, the numinous, the transpersonal and the sacred, and I am grateful for academics such as Formenti and West (2021), Tisdell (2020), Wilson (2020) and Haraway (2016) for creating a culture of permission in their own writing.

Once we include the imaginal, the frame for looking at pilgrimage becomes deeper and wider. Methodologically, the edges become blurred as definitions are no longer about excluding material, but rather, acknowledging that pilgrimage is infinitely capacious and can contain paradoxes and contradictions in a way that honours 'and-and' rather than 'either-or'. One of the dangers of this deeper and wider frame is that it can be hard to find handholds in order to move forward. Here, I am back to the

image of the nautilus shell where it is impossible to see the whole when one is within the structure. Nevertheless, in this section, I will persevere.

I have discussed the way contemporary pilgrims in Western Europe are engaged in a practice that belongs, simultaneously, to medieval, modern, and post-modern world views. Arguably, to some extent all three positions are in opposition to Enlightenment values. In the twenty-first century, pilgrims in Western Europe live in a culture that has a Christian history and includes the practice of other world faiths, especially Islam. There is a burgeoning interest in Buddhist practice of various kinds amongst the Western European intelligentsia and this is often seen to sit more easily than Christianity alongside secular values. Within faith positions, including atheism, there is a widespread acceptance of Eastern practices such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness, sometimes as part of a New Age perspective on life and sometimes detached from any spiritual orientation.

So, a consideration of the 'sacred' in relation to contemporary pilgrimage requires a tolerance of fuzzy boundaries and acceptance of the difficulties in pinning down definitions and motivations. The Buddhist nun, Pema Chödrön advocates a need to be 'comfortable with uncertainty', the title of her book. This position has been advocated in many contexts, including recently, by Ian McGilchrist (2012, p.460) in 'The Master and His Emissary' in which he describes the way in which so-called left-brain thinking has dominated Western discourse. (It is possible to see this as metaphor as well as possibly based in organic brain structures.). He writes:

I would also like to put in a word for uncertainty. In the field of religion there are dogmatists of no-faith as there are of faith, and both seem to me closer to one another than those who try to keep the door open to the possibility of something beyond the customary ways in which we think, but which we would have to find, painstakingly, for ourselves. Similarly as regards science, there those who are certain, God knows how, of what it is that patient attention to the world reveals, and those who really do not care because their minds are already made up that science cannot tell them anything profound. Both seem to me profoundly mistaken. Though we cannot be certain what it is our knowledge reveals, this is in fact a more

fruitful position – in fact the only one that permits the possibility of belief...
Certainty is the greatest of all illusions: whatever kind of fundamentalism it
may underwrite, that of religion or science, it is what the ancients meant by
hubris. (McGilchrist, 2012, p.460)

Because the practice of pilgrimage in Western Europe has its roots in the medieval and pre-modern world, as pilgrims, even metaphorical ones, I will argue that we are going *down* into our collective and cultural histories, consciously or unconsciously. Thinking about contemporary pilgrimage holistically, symbolically, and subjectively also connects us with practices in other cultures. Some of these practices may be documented in other countries (such as those described in the Islamic world, Nepal and Latin America, see, for example Preston, 2020), others hidden in plain sight in our own (such as, for example, the venerating of wells in Cornwall and Wales) and these may be seen as forging *horizontal* connections. Once we factor in personal experience and subsequent narrative accounts, the world / terrain/ concept of pilgrimage becomes multi-dimensional and outside linear time.

9.2 Narrative and symbolic turns and sacred spaces

One of the threads of this thesis is that pilgrimage mediates healing, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. When considering the pilgrim-writer, there is also a move towards healing in the sense of ‘making whole’ by creating a shape (in a poem) or discovering or imposing a narrative structure. A narrative structure, like a metaphorical frame, is a way of organising our experiences into a coherent story.

Some experiences, for example the Vietnam War, are inherently incoherent and this lack of meaning can exacerbate trauma in veterans. According to Jill Dubisch, one reason the Run for the Wall pilgrimage undertaken by Vietnam War veterans is so powerfully healing is that the journey across the US by motorcycle offers participants a narrative structure (Dubisch, 2015, p.152). She writes:

A pilgrimage offers a symbolic order in which a narrative can be created,
and in which experience can be articulated and reclaimed. (Dubisch, 2015,
p.153)

The idea of a 'symbolic order' seems intrinsic to pilgrimage and also to an understanding of the sacred. Jane Speedy (2008, p.11), one of the pioneers in the use of narrative inquiry, uses a journey metaphor to describe the appeal of the 'narrative turn':

... this is a multidisciplinary and very busy crossroads in several dimensions. My overarching description of this crossroads would be the place where the 'narrative turn' (a turn towards 'story' as a metaphor for how humans make sense of their lives and their world) meets the postmodern condition of uncertainties and incredulities towards universal truths.

The concept of a journey implies an end destination, and traditionally for pilgrims, these are sacred spaces, whether personal or collective. In the latter instance, such places, which may be shrines, cathedrals or secular sites, are a complex entity where history, geography, topography, faith, personal experience, and local custom coalesce to facilitate highly individual experiences. This definition (source tbc) makes the pilgrim the passive recipient of the forces acting on the place or entity. It contrasts with this sensory account of the root of the word 'temple' from philosopher and theologian, Henri Corbin (1903-1978):

It is significant that the Latin word *templum* originally meant a vast space, open on all sides from which one could survey the whole surrounding landscape as far as the horizon. This is what it means to *contemplate*: to 'set one's sights on' Heaven from the temple that defines the field of vision ... The term was actually used above all to designate the field of Heaven, the expanse of the open Heaven where the flight of birds could be observed and interpreted ... The temple is the place, the organ, of vision. (Corbin, 1986)

This moves the sacred space from being simply a complex entity to becoming part of the one doing the contemplating, in this case the pilgrim. As Collins-Kreiner points out 'No place is intrinsically sacred' (Collins-Kreiner, 2010, p.444). Perceived sanctity is a function of belief, convention, and consensus. It changes over time and is perceived differently by different people.

It is also important to acknowledge how culturally specific encounters with the sacred can be. In the secular cultures of twenty-first century Europe, hearing voices or seeing visions is usually taken to indicate pathology and a need for medical intervention. Greenfield (1991) contrasts such a Western perspective with that of Brazil:

Children (and adults) who claim to see the Virgin Mary, Saint Francis or some other saint, or supernatural being not only are not punished or taken to a therapist ... but are rewarded and held up for praise. Those who claim to 'receive' a spirit, whether a doctor from the past ...or a deity from Africa ... or the spirit of a former slave ... or an Indian ... not are only believed, but their help is sought by others who treat them deferentially, and with respect. (Greenfield, 1991, quoted in Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante, 2005, p.22)

One of the challenges for research is that individual experiences of the supernatural are seldom shared in our culture for fear of the reaction (Taylor, 2017) and there is evidence that when people are interviewed directly, such experiences are more common than generally thought.

In general, there has been a move away from religious sanctity to a sanctity that is conferred by the use of a place for veneration. A case in point might be the graves of famous musicians. In parallel with this has been the invocation of the sacred in the environmental movement where the abuse of the planet has been seen as 'desecration'. As long ago as 1990, a book called 'Dharma Gaia' edited by Allan Hunt Badiner identified the ecological crisis as a spiritual one and quotes Carl Sagan addressing scientists saying that 'efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred'. Badiner (1990, p. xviii) continues:

The ecologists and Buddhists in this book recognize that our environmental problems are rooted in a spiritual crisis. We seem to be awash in a great sea of duality between our own aliveness and that of the planet, between mind and body, and between masculine and feminine ... We are challenged to understand with our intellect, our heart, and with every molecule of our being, the seemingly ironic state in which we are both uniquely different

from everything else *and* intrinsically inter-connected with each other and the entire living cosmos.

I think here, by 'ironic', Badiner means 'paradoxical' and this certainly applies to pilgrimage. A pilgrim engages in a practice that is simultaneously sacred and secular, individual and collective. It is pertinent to mention that at the time of writing (October 2021), the British Pilgrimage Trust is using the term 'holistic' places to refer to churches, rivers, springs that may be sacred in specific traditions and also speak to someone's need to be 'spiritual but not religious'.

This difficulty in substantiating experiences of the sacred extends to the consideration of sacred places. There is the option of adopting a phenomenological idea that the place has intrinsic attributes, or to take the position that a pilgrim site or a pilgrimage route is *socially constructed* as sacred. It is possible that in any one individual's experience, the route or site may be simultaneously sacred and secular, or one or the other at different times.

In the Preface to her book on representations of the post/human, Elaine Graham (2002, pp. ix-x) describes how the 'cathedrals, canals and computers' in her own city of Manchester are 'a living witness to the close interaction between technological and cultural change':

In the Victorian age, the material circumstances of economic transformation were symbolized in the towering gothic buildings erected as secular cathedrals to civic pride ... Times are changing, and economic and social reconstruction now rests on post-industrial activities such as sport, heritage and leisure. The familiar cathedrals, canals and factories have been joined by shopping centres, café-bars and concert halls.

This description echoes my discussion of the Pilgrim Identity, There, I considered the notion of 'implicit religion', which occupies a third space between the sacred and the secular (Bailey, 1998, 2006). Implicit religion allows for experiences of immanence and transcendence to be considered without necessarily invoking the dogmas of traditional religious or faith practices. In a typical city, such experiences may occur

as often in concert halls as cathedrals. Rituals around shopping, nights out and drinking may constitute a form of 'secular spirituality'. Concepts such as 'secular spirituality', 'sacralisation of the profane', 'transcendent immanence' and 'immanent transcendence' can seem oxymoronic but are characteristic of many people's subjective experience, including that of pilgrims (Bailey, 1998, 2006).

There is a received wisdom that Western society has become increasingly secular. An alternative view, advanced by Eugene McCarragher (2005), is that, in fact, the sacred has not been *reduced* to the secular but operates within it. He argues that a critique of capitalism must also acknowledge the role still played by the sacred and that capitalism is 'perversely sacramental' (McCarragher, 2005, p. 431). Whilst acknowledging that they have 'provided invaluable tools', he claims 'Weberian, Marxist and psychoanalytical traditions' have limited explanatory power, saying, 'they also point to unresolved and irreducibly religious concerns which can be obscured no longer.' (McCarragher, 2005, p.430).

The idea that the sacred may be invisible but still present is for me a powerful one and reflects the thinking of phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty (2004). Western pilgrimage, especially on the, now highly commercialised, Camino de Santiago can sometimes seem divorced from its religious roots. However, theories such as McCarragher's 'Enchantments of Mammon' move us away from the binaries of secular vs spiritual towards something more interesting and complex, but difficult to pin down (McCarragher, 2005).

Pilgrimage is founded on the idea of pilgrims moving from their homes on journeys towards a shrine, from a secular domestic space to a sacred space that has 'both temporal and spatial dimensions' (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xx). The pilgrim's own understanding of themselves in relation to a sacred space will be a combination of adherence to certain ideas and resistance to others.

Pilgrimage typically implies a temporal reorientation involving a multiplicity of relationships to the past, a form of reference to historical, prehistorical, and imagined traditions of the sacred ... These relationships to the past often

express an adherence to tradition, as well as entail a resistance to current hierarchy, orthodoxy and power.

It is not only pilgrimage as a practice that requires reorientation to the past, but the individual pilgrims themselves who must accommodate the idea that certain places have the potential to manifest aspects of the spiritual. Another way of expressing this is that sacred places are also part of a non-material world because of their association with certain events or figures from the past.

Here, I am concentrating on walking pilgrimages where the *journey* is as important as the arrival at a shrine. These are distinguished from 'place pilgrimage' where pilgrims may arrive by bus, often in organised groups, specifically for healing. In place pilgrimage, the rituals at the shrines are likely to be embedded in traditional Roman Catholic liturgy and undertaken in groups. Walking pilgrims, arriving at their destinations are more likely to be independent, to 'dip into' the religious rituals, or to create their own idiosyncratic engagement with the sacred site (Coleman, 2005) .

Sacred Feminine

There may be a gender dimension here too. The two 'classic' European walking pilgrimages, to Santiago and to Rome, are both to shrines of male saints. Interestingly, so-called place pilgrimage to Christian sites for healing tends to focus on shrines to Our Lady in places such as Fátima in Portugal, Lourdes and Rocamadour in France, and Walsingham in England. Marian sites are also prevalent in Greece. As well as organised pilgrimages for healing to these sites, there is also a burgeoning interest in the sacred feminine and new practices that include mixtures of pagan, Christian and New Age traditions. Lena Gemzöe (2005) argues that the idiosyncratic rituals that women create at Marian shrines are often in opposition to the male clergy at the sites who 'seek to combat these forms of religious expression and urge the pilgrims to offer monetary donations instead' (Gemzöe, 2005, p.39).

As we have seen in studies of women pilgrims to shrines such as that of the Black Madonna of Rocamadour (Weibel, 2015, p.112), there is a thread of 'goddess feminism' within contemporary pilgrimage. Like pilgrimage itself, this is not a unitary phenomenon and engagement with the sacred feminine can take many forms. Graham (2002, p.212) uses the term 'thealogy' to embrace practices as diverse as veneration of prehistoric goddess figures and the idea of 'goddess energy' being a source of creativity, integrity and power. She explains that proponents of theology see such qualities as having been suppressed in many women as a result of their experience of living in a patriarchal, misogynistic world. Some of those engaging with ideas of the goddess come from alternative, New Age, or esoteric backgrounds but many of those drawn to ideas of the goddess or the divine feminine may have come via traditional Judaism or Christianity (as exemplified by Sered, 2005, quoted above) and the term 'thealogy' reflects that pathway.

I see parallels here with contemporary pilgrimage. The earth-based practice of pilgrimage, its links with landscape as well as sacred built environments, its harking back to imagined or re-created simpler times, and its distanced relationship to the hierarchical and patriarchal structures of traditional religion echo much of what is written about 'thealogy'. Andrew Kelly of the Augustine Camino comments that the majority of pilgrims booking his guided walks through Kent, are middle-aged women, another parallel with the goddess movement (private conversation).

At pilgrim sites dedicated to Our Lady (such as those discussed at Lourdes, Walsingham and Rocamadour), as well as traditional Catholic rituals, there are those initiated by and participated in by women which both reflect and co-create the sacred space. Graham (2002, p.213) suggests that women-initiated rituals reflect a preference for *orthopraxis* over *orthodoxy*, that is ritual practice over doctrinal teaching. She writes that such practice:

... renders goddess spirituality necessarily concrete, immediate, embodied and material. It is less about worshipping an object limited to a particular place and time, than affirming the immanence of a sacred power whose energy animates the entire cosmos.

She then goes on to quote Carol Christ (1997, p.160):

To include women means to recognise the physical contingency of all thought and all creation ... When theology becomes theology, the metaphysical comes home to the physical. (Christ, 1997, p.160)

Once again, there are powerful resonances with pilgrimage which is a practice, not a doctrine or belief, and is manifested in the physical presence of feet on a path, moving through a landscape, and cannot be detached from the physical. However, I would challenge Christ's contention that the metaphysical necessarily 'comes home' to the 'physical' as it is often through the physical that I as a pilgrim report 'coming home' to the metaphysical. Another caveat (Christ, 1997, p. 213) is that theology and the related goddess movement is not necessarily liberatory and may reflect essentialist attitudes to gender. Similarly, pilgrimage might be seen as conservative and 'anti-modern'.

Another example which substantiates the idea that women might use shrines and pilgrimage as a way of resisting emancipation, comes from Susan Sered (2005) who describes the cults of 'three Rachels', Jewish saints from different eras whose shrines are sites of healing in Israel. She argues that the women who venerate Rachel are marginalised or subordinate individuals in society and that they lead a 'double cognitive life' in which they have internalised patriarchal ways of thinking and yet are able to acknowledge experiences and perceptions which deviate from these (Sered, 2005, p. 88). Many of the illnesses for which the women pilgrims seek healing may be attributed to their sense of exile and disempowerment. Sered sees the comfort and solace the women derive from their pilgrimages not as liberatory but ultimately confirming the women's alienation.

Shrines and Relics

The relationship of pilgrimage to the material world is particularly complex when we consider the role of a shrine and especially, the idea of relics. Relics raise the question of the nature of life and death and their relationships to the material 'stuff' that comprises bodies and objects. According to Arnold Angenendt (2011, p.19):

To understand the Christian veneration of relics, we must look far back into the history of religion, where it is consistently clear that the dead are not actually dead ... Just as the life force of the ancestors lives on in their graves, so it lives on in their legacies, including their garments, symbols of office, staffs, or ceremonial weapons, as well as the dishes out and bowls out of which they ate and drank, and of course especially in the elements of their bodies themselves, their nails and hair, their teeth, and above all their skulls.

To what extent, contemporary pilgrims believe that 'the dead are not actually dead' is difficult to quantify. However, the monetary value of objects in the secular world, such as clothes or musical instruments, owned by significant people suggests that, in some way, there persists a belief that 'the life force' lives on through material items. A desire to look at *original* objects in museums and art galleries, which I share, is probably also related. This may be an aspect of deep ecology. David Abram (1996, p.67/) writes about our relationships with other persons and then continues:

Each of us, in relation to the other, is both subject and object, sensible and sentient. Why then might this not also be the case in relation to another, nonhuman entity – a mountain lion for instance? ...Once I acknowledge that my own sentience or subjectivity, does not preclude my visible, tactile, objective existence for others, I find myself forced to acknowledge that *any* visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me.

Abram argues that both ancient Hebrew and Hellenistic cultures sowed 'the seeds for our contemporary estrangement' from the 'nonhuman world' and that European civilisation was responsible for what he calls 'nature-disdain' (Abram, 1996, pp. 94-95). A quarter of a century later, I would argue that the revival of pilgrimage, and its connection to relics, is linked to the growing realisation that we cannot separate ourselves from the so-called 'environment'. Pilgrimage is necessarily intimate with

the landscape, and as I will demonstrate, pilgrims report direct experiences of the reciprocity Abram describes above.

As Harpur (2016, p.3) writes, medieval pilgrimage was predicated on:

fundamental concepts ... such as heaven, hell, purgatory, and indulgences; the importance of relics; and also the practicalities of making a journey to a shrine.

There was also the belief that holy relics and the tombs of saints had some kind of 'divine energy' that could be somehow absorbed by the pilgrim.

The rationale for this was that the godliness exhibited by certain individuals during their lives could be transmitted through their relics and be of benefit to those who came to see and touch them. This idea in turn presupposed that inanimate objects could generate or transmit divine power. (Harpur, 2016, p.22)

The veneration of relics was banned in England at the same time pilgrimage was outlawed and the Dissolution of the Monasteries enacted under Henry VIII in the mid-sixteenth century. However, in parallel with the increased participation in pilgrimage, there has been an increasing awareness of and interest in relics in contemporary England. Here are four examples from 2010 onwards which suggest that the individual bottom-up impulse to go on a pilgrimage, is reflected in the increasing (and surprising) institutional interest in and acceptance of the idea of relics:

- A British Museum exhibition of reliquaries from across Europe in 2011 called 'Treasures of Heaven', bringing together 'for the first time ...this collection of objects of unequivocal beauty that express the rich tradition of relic veneration in the Christian church (MacGregor et al, 2011, p.vi).
- The visit to London, Rochester and Canterbury on 28th May 2016 by a delegation from Esztergom, Hungary, bearing a reliquary containing a piece of

the elbow bone of Thomas Becket. The delegation was received by the President of Hungary, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and the Anglican Bishop of London, as well being hosted by the Speaker of the House Commons (Butler, 2019, p.6).

- The project to bring a tunic stained with the blood of Thomas Becket from the Vatican to Canterbury Cathedral as part of the abandoned Becket 2020 celebrations. It was anticipated that many thousands of people would visit the relic and there was an extensive training programme for staff and volunteers (Becket, 2020, flier produced by Canterbury Cathedral).
- The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge (run by Canterbury City Council) planned an exhibition called 'Thomas Becket: World Celebrity Healer' to coincide with the visit of the relic which eventually took place in summer 2021. (Becket 2020, flier)

This interest in relics parallels the revival of other pre-Reformation practices such as lighting candles in churches, and increased prevalence of processions and feasts which suggests that the interest in pilgrimage, whether secular or religious, is part of a wider phenomenon.

Because pilgrimage is unregulated and ill-defined, precise statistics on numbers walking traditional routes are difficult to come by. Much as individual pilgrims have different constellations of reasons for undertaking a pilgrimage, so do the organisations concerned with promoting or documenting pilgrimage. For example, the Green Pilgrimage Network, the network founded in Assisi in 2011, emerged from asking the question: 'Why are the world's holiest places not the world's cleanest and most cared for places?'

Its members were drawn from 28 sacred places around the world, from Amritsar, India, for Sikhs and Assisi, Italy, for Catholics to Haifa, Israel, for Baha'is; Kano, Nigeria, for Islam's Qadiriyyah Movement; and Louguan, China, for Daoists.

[SO More on Green Pilgrimage Network here?](#)

Ex-Votos

The mirror image of relics, those 'things that do things', are the ex-votos, or the offerings made at shrines in fulfilment of a vow. I have personally seen these in 2019 at the shrine of St Erkembode in the cathedral at St Omer. St Erkembode was renowned for making long journeys on foot and his cult centred on the healing of children who cannot walk. The tomb in the cathedral is covered in children's shoes, many of which look as if they have been placed there recently.

The ex-votos are traditionally left in thanks for healing received, the petitioner or pilgrim making an offering in gratitude. This may seem to be a vestigial practice of little relevance to contemporary life, likely to die out as societies modernise. However, Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante (2006) point out in their studies of shrines and pilgrimages in Brazil that modern biomedical interventions can exist alongside religious practices aimed at healing, with those that can afford drugs and surgery still promising to undertake a pilgrimage alongside those who cannot afford modern medicine. They describe a study classifying more than 80,000 ex-votos at Brazilian shrines which found that fewer than 14% were unrelated to bodily healing and the remaining represented body parts that had been healed, such as wounds, protuberances, skin disfigurements, breaks, fractures and deformities (Barreto, 1988, quoted in Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante, 2006, pp.75-76).

Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante describe the proliferation of shrines in Brazil and the regular creation of new saints, often not sanctioned by the Roman Catholic church and locate Brazilian pilgrimage in the context of asymmetrical power structures and oppression, and describe how this has evolved and changed with evangelical conversions and US-based 'prosperity gospel' preachers demanding not ex-votos, but money from the poor (Greenfield and Mourão Cavalcante, pp.83-84). This makes sense in the context of a country like Brazil but does not explain the persistence of ex-votos in secular twenty-first century France.

The natural environment – pilgrimage as ‘natural’

A walking pilgrimage typically involves a journey on foot to a holy city or a shrine, for example, Jerusalem, St Peter’s in Rome, or the Cathedral dedicated to St James in Santiago de Compostela.

However, I would argue that one reason pilgrimage is enjoying such a renaissance is that the walking itself, following, mostly, footpaths, between towns and villages, brings pilgrims closer to the sacred as evinced in ‘nature’.

Schnell and Pali (2013) identified ‘horizontal self-transcendence’ alluded to by pilgrims who felt at one with nature as they walked, as one of the meaning-making mechanisms of pilgrimage.

Whilst the idea of a shrine speaks to a medieval or pre-modern sensibility, the idea of venerating nature, or coming into closer proximity with it, is arguably post-modern or post-human. Just as for the medieval pilgrim, the presence of the divine and the powers of the church were a given, until recently ‘nature’ was something taken for granted, exploited, and not seen as worthy of special attention or reverence. Now that so much of what we value is under threat, there is a new urgency in our relationship with the world around us.

Rachel Carson, whose prescient work ‘The Silent Spring’, published in the mid-1950s was one of the first popular books to predict environmental catastrophe. She (Carson, 1965, p.56) argues that it is the emotions that drive our interests and concerns.

It is not half as important to know as to feel. Once the emotions have been aroused – a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love – then we wish for knowledge about the subject of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning.

There is always a danger of romanticising 'nature' and many now argue that the term is meaningless, in that the world is irretrievably changed by human and technological interventions. Even that statement suggests that there was at some point a world that is pristine and unsullied, a kind of Eden myth from which we have fallen. However, even if that was never the case, the prevalence of the myth means that the idea is somehow feeding our contemporary consciousness.

Arguably, there is no way of separating the 'biological' and the 'technological' dimensions of human existence. For contemporary pilgrims, this might be exemplified in the use of smartphones for navigation, booking accommodation and logging miles, a practice that only dates to the past decade or so. A pilgrim dependent on their phone could be defined as a cyborg, a term first coined in a paper published in 1960 by aeronautics experts, Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline, (cited in Graham, 2002, p.201). This idea can be provocative and subject to the idea that everything in the world, manufactured or not, is natural, or, to give an example, GPX / GPS on a mobile phone is not intrinsically different from a paper map and traditional compass. I think it is possible to accept both premises and still see contemporary pilgrims as cyborgs, that is humans whose performance and abilities are technologically enhanced. They have been characterised by Graham (2002, p.202) as:

A fusion between the human and non-human animal, the human and the mechanical and the organic and the fabricated [rendering] transparent the 'leakiness' of modernity's boundaries between species and categories.

Graham quotes Donna Haraway's 'The Cyborg Manifesto' as she continues:

The cyborg tells of 'the inextricable weave of the organic, technical, textual, mythic, economic and political threads that make up the flesh of the world' (Haraway, 19995, p.xii). Thus the cyborg is a symbol, a metaphor – maybe even the prime representative – for post/human metamorphosis in a techno-scientific age. The cyborg also promises a renewal of relationship between

humanity and what have been characterised as nature and technology, a greater intimacy and complicity with environment and artefact, in which human nature is no longer characterised through mastery and exclusion of its designated others... It serves as metaphor for the deep dependence of Western culture on technologies, the increasing significance for late capitalism of the processing and circulation of information rather than production and consumption; and the malleability of human genetic constitution. (Graham, 2002, p.202)

This reference to 'the inextricable weave' of the elements that make up human existence and its dependence on multiple 'threads' echoes the interconnectivity of existence discussed in the section on metaphor. The pilgrim can also be seen as 'a symbol, a metaphor – maybe even the prime representative' of a way of being in the world that is in effect post-cyborg, or even post/cyborg. The pilgrim can serve as metaphor for the opposite of what Graham is describing – a move away from dependence on technologies, a rejection of capitalism (whether based on production of goods or information) and a re-embracing of our embodied souls.

In her *Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway (1991, p.181) famously stated:

Cyborg imagery is a way out of the dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the super-savers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, spaces, stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.

As Graham (2002, p.211) discusses, the opposition of cyborg and goddess reflects Haraway's secular feminism in which religion is identified as an 'oppressive and diversionary school of patriarchy'. Graham unpicks the dualism which sees cyborgs as having the 'virtues of immanence, bodily and technoscientific hybridity' in contrast to the 'Goddess's putative transcendence, immateriality and disengagement' (Graham, 2002, p.211). Graham (2002, pp.213-214) goes on to argue that second wave Christian feminism, goddess feminism and so-called 'thealogy' embraces the

divinity of the whole ecosystem, locating and affirming experiences of the divine in the body and senses.

By associating goddess spirituality with embodiment, earth and nature, theologians embrace a materialist reading of divinity and transcendence but in their appeal to an unreconstructed 'nature' and 'women's experience' they fail to address the very constructedness of these categories.

So, the dualism of cyborg (hybridity) vs goddess (essentialist) is replaced in theology by the old-fashioned gender divide where the sky-god is contrasted with the earth-mother. For me, hybridity better fits my identities as a pilgrim-writer, pilgrim, writer, woman, Christian, feminist, non-mother, environmentalist etc with an aversion to dogma.

When considering the pilgrim-cyborg, walking with their GPX, or the natural pilgrim with their paper map, it is important to bear in mind that this is not a binary. The tendency to see what Graham (2002, p. 230) characterises as 'technophobia' and 'technophilia' as being at opposite ends of a continuum, omits the important observation that human beings are often motivated by the same impulses even if their stated solutions are different. Graham writes:

I suspect that ... such uncritical embrace of technological omnipotence, omniscience and immortality betrays not so much a love of life as paradoxically, a pathological fear of death, vulnerability and finitude. Aspirations toward a digitalised post-biological humanity often reflect the desire for a spiritualised, non-corporeal body as the fulfilment of a disdain for the mortality of the flesh. Technophobia, ostensibly, seems driven by denial of progress, fear of change, loss of control; but the evidence suggests that so-called technophilic attitudes are subtended by similar projections, valorising technologies as protections against fears of vulnerability, contingency, impurity and mortality. (Graham, 2002, p.230)

I have to look up 'subtend' and see that it is a term from geometry referring to the point at which two lines or arcs meet which is an appropriate image when discussing pilgrimage. Popular psychologist, Dorothy Rowe, argued in 'Beyond Fear' (1987),

that behaviour is motivated by our need to address the existential fear of our own annihilation and insignificance and that subsidiary fears are in service to that fundamental one. This framing supports Graham's contention that both the desire to carry a GPS /GPX device (my example) and the desire not to, stem from the same need to address the central issue of our own mortality through the practice of pilgrimage. It could also be argued that the desire to produce book-length accounts of pilgrimages also stems from the same desire to address our 'fears of vulnerability, contingency, impurity and mortality' (Graham, 2002, p.230).

So far, I have described pilgrimage in terms of how it manifests as a phenomenon. Theories of pilgrimage tend to have their roots in anthropology and most notably through the already-discussed work of Turner and Turner who wrote a series of seminal anthropological works (see for example, Turner and Turner, 1974, 1978). Central to their thinking is the idea that a pilgrimage is a 'rite of passage' (van Gennep, 1960). Pilgrims leave their so-called ordinary lives in order to undertake a journey to a significant place for some kind of healing, whether of self, family or a more general kind. The journey then becomes a liminal space in which the normal societal constraints of social and economic participation are removed so that the individual may change and transform. In the light of the hybridity discussed in this section, I would argue that pilgrimage facilitates this transformation through the dual processes of increased awareness of the body and simultaneously transcending it.

The related concepts of complexity theory, the 'more than human', deep ecology and psychogeography, speak to pilgrimage as an instrument of transformation of the individual human being in the world.

The role of beauty

One characteristic of pilgrimage is that it is a journey through landscapes of natural beauty and the shrines, cathedrals and churches along the routes are considered to be of architectural beauty. Beauty is a complex subject but may be one of the mediators of transformation when on a walking pilgrimage.

In her polemical text, 'The Fight for Beauty', former Director of the National Trust, Fiona Reynolds accepts the instrumentalist position that beautiful places make us healthier and can bring economic benefits, but also argues that there is an intangible and unquantifiable dimension to beauty (Reynolds, 2017, p.311).

But beauty is more than a service to us. It fulfils something in us that other things cannot and it enriches our lives in all kinds of unexpected and vital ways. Because beauty is a perspective, not a transactional experience. As Keats said: 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all Ye know on earth, and all Ye need to know. It is a way of looking at the world. Of valuing things that are priceless: the inspiration of a work of art, a swallow in flight, breaths of fresh, clean air. In a world where most of us are realistic enough to know that we are unlikely to get much richer, beauty drives the experiences we seek out: the places we go to, the things we surround ourselves with, and the values that make our lives worth living. We live in an era where fewer of us are driven by religious imperatives, but we are not lacking in spirituality, nor the capacity to be moved to strive for better things. Beauty can give shape to that yearning, and as Ruskin intimated, ultimately a search for beauty also helps us to respect the needs of other people and other inhabitants of the earth, today and in the future.

Reynolds (2017, p.xii) identifies specific points in history in the UK when 'beauty' made its way onto the political agenda.

The first time was in the high Victorian era when the calamitous consequences of industrialisation clashed with human and social needs with devastating consequences ... The second time was in the aftermath of the Second World War when the government's post-war reconstruction plan committed, alongside jobs, housing, the NHS, the welfare state and the universal right to education, to 'preserve and enhance the beauty of our countryside'. (Reynolds

She identifies a rare mention of the importance of beauty in a political speech going back to 2005 when Oliver Letwin was talking about climate change and she (Reynolds, 2017, p.62) quotes him as saying:

...discussion of the environment has remained resolutely mechanical, There is the science of far-off events – admittedly of colossal significance, but none the less technical for that ... the language of politics needs to reflect the felt experience of the environment as sensations and impressions that are capable of moving us to delight and awe ... we need to conduct politics as if beauty matters

This seems still an extraordinary statement with its move towards the nebulous in words such as ‘felt experience’ and ‘delight and awe’. However, even seemingly concrete terms such as country, countryside, landscape and land are not straightforward. Haraway (2016, pp.26-27) in discussing a particular habitat, writes:

This colonised area along the Yarra became a wasteland, sewage dump and site for cargo and rail transport, destroying the wetlands (Anglo scientific term) and destroying country (Anglo-Aboriginal term for multidimensional and storied place). Wetlands and country are as alive and as different as cat’s cradle, *jeux de ficelle*, *na’atl’o’*, and *matjaka-wuma*; for staying with the trouble, the names and patterns are necessary to each other but they are not isomorphic. They inhabit linked, split and tangled histories.

This paragraph speaks to my own experiences as a walking pilgrim. Often, the path leads through suburbs, industrial areas, degraded landscapes and places where beauty feels absent. And yet. Pilgrimage, and pilgrim-writing is an integrative activity where pastoral beauty may be followed by, for example, the mining areas of the Pas-de-Calais, or the touristic delights of Canterbury by the squalor of parts of Dover. What both Reynolds and Haraway are pointing towards is complexity, subjectivity and relationship. Haraway (2016, p. 28) goes on to write of the relationships within these places as a network of ‘response-ability’.

Response-ability is about both absence and presence, killing and nurturing, living and dying – and remembering who lives and who dies and how in the string figures of natural-cultural history.

For the pilgrim-writer, this acknowledgement of the shadow is always present, especially in the embodied metaphor of Life is a Pilgrimage. As playwright Lucy Prebble (2022) tweeted about the pseudo-pilgrimage of queueing to view the Queen's lying in state:

In a way we're ALL in a massive queue leading to a coffin.

9.5 Deep ecology as a frame for considering pilgrimage.

One of my theoretical frames for understanding my experience as a pilgrim writer is the kind of deep ecology espoused by, among others, David Abram (1996, 2010). Here, just as with 'beauty', terminology becomes complex. Katherine Norbury (2021, p.3) when compiling an anthology of women writing on nature, even as she uses that term, makes the argument for not doing so.

My real issue with the word 'nature' is that it is implicitly anthropocentric. It is by definition, 'them' and 'us'. The philosopher Timothy Morton prefers not to use the word, favouring 'ecology' instead. Ecology ... is 'the branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings'; or to put it another way, we too are part of the whole.

She continues (Norbury, 2021, p.3) by acknowledging the limitations of the term ecology too:

And yet even the term 'ecology' takes no cognisance of a spiritual or other-than-physical aspect that we are seeking to describe. The unseen, the unquantifiable, and the sublime slips through the net. How many of us respond to something mysterious about the natural world?

This something mysterious might be characterised by ideas of the ‘imaginary’. I have already explored this to some extent in terms of literature, memoir and poetry. The Martinique writer, poet and philosopher, Édouard Glissant developed a, for me useful, notion of ‘the Imaginary’. His translator from the French, Betsy Wing (Glissant, 2010, trans Betsy Wing, p.xxii), writes in her Glossary:

Imaginary: Glissant’s sense differs from the common-sense English usage of conception that is a conscious mental image. Furthermore, the now widely accepted Lacanian sense in which the Imaginary, the order of perception and hallucination, is contrasted with the Symbolic (the order of discursive and symbolic action) and the Real (not just ‘reality’ but what is absolutely unrepresentable) does not apply. For Glissant the imaginary is all the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world. Hence, every human culture will have its own imaginary.

It is worth emphasising Wing’s negative here (I originally mis-read the sentence) – she is saying that for Glissant, the imaginary **cannot** be broken down into perception and hallucination, **nor** considered separately from symbols and reality, rather it is holistic and comprises everything. This is characteristic of deep ecology and pilgrimage too. This rings true to my experience as a pilgrim-writer, where the metaphor, narrative, my book-length account, poems and memories are all part of my ‘Imaginary’.

Glissant uses another word which does not easily map onto English: *errance* which Betsy Wing (Glissant, trans Wing, 2010, p.211) translates as ‘errantry’.

While *errance* is usually translated as ‘wandering’, ‘errantry seems better suited to Glissant’s use of the word, and there is precedence in translations of Césaire. *Errance* for Glissant, while not aimed like an arrow’s trajectory, nor circular and repetitive like the nomad’s, is not idle roaming, but includes a sense of sacred motivation

The concept of 'errantry' therefore has an overlap with 'pilgrimage' and it is this concept that Glissant explores, relating errantry to ideas of exile and the journeying of people as connected with colonialism, displacement and identity, powerful themes on the island of Martinique which is still a French Departement and affluent compared to its independent neighbours, but at a cost. Errance, and pilgrimage include a 'sense of sacred motivation. As Overall (2021) comments (personal communication) there are:

Interesting potential palimpsests of meaning here - errantry in English suggests waywardness, straying and wandering. That certainly fits with pilgrimage as a 'going away from' society (social expectations and ontracts).

Glissant sees both errantry and exile as related to rootlessness and discusses the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari who proposes the rhizome as a more apt metaphor for the organisation of thought and societies. I would argue that pilgrimage is a rhizomatic phenomenon, rather than a rooted one. The experience a pilgrim may have of connectedness and permeability, concurs with what Glissant (2010, trans Wing, p.11) calls a Poetic of Relations.

The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it. In opposition to this, they [ie Deleuze and Guattari] propose the rhizome, an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.

Glissant sees errantry as a correcting force against totalitarianism.

Errantry, therefore, does not proceed from renunciation nor from frustration regarding a supposedly deteriorated (deterritorialised) situation of origin; it is not a resolute act of rejection or an uncontrolled impulse of abandonment. Sometimes, by taking up the problems of the Other, it is possible to find oneself... That is very much the image of the rhizome, prompting the

knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation... The tale of errantry is the tale of Relation. (Glissant, 2010, p.18)

Once again, we are in the realm of paradox as writing on contemporary pilgrimage seems to exclude consideration of traditional religious concepts. Rather than disappearing though, such ideas surface in new forms in the realms of deep ecology as well as in New Age thinking. This reflects Haraway's (2016, p. 28) identifying of both absence and presence as co-creating the pilgrim experience.

However, it is possible to reclaim traditional religious concepts from a different perspective. For example, David Abram (2017), in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, reframes the idea of the soul in the context of reverence for the air which he claims is 'held sacred *throughout* native North America' (Abram, 1996, p.230, his italics). He writes (Abram, 1996, p.231) that only recently, the Navajo idea of 'the Wind within one' has been re-interpreted by anthropologists who have been able to break out of the interpretive blinders imposed by the Christian world view in order to recognise that the powers attributed by Western culture to a purely internal soul or mind are experienced by the Navajo as attributes of the enveloping Wind or Atmosphere as a whole.

The 'Wind within one' is in no way autonomous, for it is in a continual process of interchange with the various winds that surround one, and indeed is entirely a part of the Holy Wind itself.

This passage startled me as it describes a world view that is very different from current social science writing. The description of the Navajo experience of the wind has echoes in our culture in the etymology of words like 'spirit' and 'animus' and their cognates. However, such a world view is largely alien to our Western, individualistic, materially based ways of being.

Abram (1996, p.234) goes on to describe the complicated creation myths involving different manifestations of the wind which leave their traces physically (for example, whorls on our fingertips) as well as enabling speech, which depends on wind as

breath. This formulation (Abram, 1996, p.234) has echoes of the Platonic *animus mundi*:

Finally, and most profoundly, this invisible medium, in which we are bodily immersed, is what provides us with the capacity for conscious thought.

There are parallels in accounts in pilgrim memoirs of losing a sense of autonomy and experiencing what might be summarised as a kind of immersion in another medium. It could be argued that at these points, pilgrims are in an altered state of consciousness or mode of being. Sonia Overall (2021) alludes to a sense of immersion and merging with the landscape in her own pilgrimage memoir 'Heavy Time'.

It feels important to examine these alongside any 'blindness' that might or might not be unconsciously present in my judgements. For example, Harry Bucknall (2014) experiences presences and guardian angels (Bucknall, 2014, p.80, pp.87-88), Alice Warrender (2012) describes a sense of possession (Warrender, 2012, p.201) as she walks into Rome, and Timothy Egan (2019), a lightness and release from grudges as he places a stone 'in a large metal bowl filled with assorted talismans' (Egan, 2019, p.310).

Of course, pilgrimage is not unique in facilitating such experiences, nor do all pilgrims have them. Personal crises, LSD, time alone in nature, meditation, close encounters with animals, engaging in artistic pursuits and reading certain texts all have the potential to facilitate transformative experiences and, as Steve Taylor has documented, sometimes such experiences arise unbidden in everyday life (Taylor, 2017). Defining and categorising them is a challenge. It could be argued that one reason these are not often discussed or given credence, is this difficulty in naming them alongside a reticence in disclosing them. Taylor (2017, p.2) argues for detaching the experiences from religious traditions in order to research from a psychological and experiential perspective (Taylor, 2017, p.9).

The natural world and experiences of oneness

'Being in nature is often a catalyst for transformative experience or 'leaps' to use Steve Taylor's phrase (and the title of his 2017 book exploring such experiences). There follows an account by Helen Thomas, wife of the early twentieth-century poet, Edward Thomas, about how she experienced a growing sense of oneness with the world after some years living in the countryside (Thomas, 1972, p.97-98, first published in 1926):

So for the first time in my life I saw and felt and knew the coming of spring. Every day some new flower was found of which I did not know the name, and which David had to tell me a dozen times until I was sure of it. I became familiar with trees, and began to recognise their bark and shape and slowly unfolding leaves, and each took its place in my heart forever – the oak flinging its limbs about in the ecstasy of its strength; the tall guardian elms, so strong and tender; the witchy ash with beckoning claw-like twigs, who puts out her leaves so grudgingly and lets them fall so soon; the feminine beeches whose new-born leaves are downy like a baby; the old mysterious yews, whose wood when it is cleft is red like blood, and which in the spring give up their pollen in clouds of golden incense. All these I became familiar with – and the hedges too, with their hollies the hedger always spares, though he trims the elder and dogwood and flaming maple. I became aware in reality, as in imagination I had known, of the living earth out of which all comes, and to which all goes. My spirit was filled and satisfied as never before by a bare field of red earth, over which the teams of plough-horses toiled, or the glow of a corn field, or the smell of hay, or wet woodland, or by the beauty of a tree or by the variety of the tiny details of a hedge bank. I was aware of a deep joy and excitement as if I was a part of the stirring vital earth. Each season became dear to me, and their slow inevitable cycle- the fecundity of spring, the grateful sacrifice of autumn, and the lovely secret withdrawing of winter. With what eager love we searched for the first violet and were waylaid by primroses! How our hearts stood still when the first cuckoo called, and the coming of the first swallow made the day holy!

Abram (1996, pp. 239-260) turns this assertion around by suggesting that it was the move towards conveying knowledge, especially sacred knowledge, in written form, that has led, not just to our detachment from the notions such as 'air-as-spirit', but also to our willingness to pollute and desecrate the earth. The use of language has

contributed to, if not actually caused, this disjuncture. It is possible to leave aside ideas of a spirit and souls and still acknowledge that there is a non-material dimension to pilgrimage, one that resists the frames offered by the social sciences. Again, it might be language that constrains us when thinking about so-called 'reality'. In other words, we know more than we can put into words.

Dutch computer scientist and philosopher, Bernardo Kastrup aims to transcend the distinction between science and other ways of knowing. He throws down an intellectual gauntlet when he claims that 'our reasoning and our language overlap and codefine each other' and that the challenge is to move beyond this circularity (Kastrup, 2016, p.39).

...we have now become so accustomed to judging reality linguistically that we assume all relevant truths to be amenable to direct representation in language. In other words, we assume that if something cannot be unambiguously *said* then it cannot be *true*. We often judge people to be wrong simply because they cannot articulate their position coherently in words. How open are we, really, to the idea that there are essential aspects of reality that cannot be unambiguously represented in any language?

Deep ecology as exemplified by David Abram (2017) aims to do the impossible by using language to define what is beyond language. As Barnhill and Gottlieb (2001) have argued, there is no agreed definition of 'deep ecology'. They suggest a cluster of qualities that characterises deep ecology. They (Barnhill and Gottlieb, 2001, p.6) list ten of which I suggest the following five apply to pilgrimage:

- an emphasis on the intrinsic value of nature ...;
- a focus on wholes ...;
- an affirmation that humans are not separate from nature (there is no ontological gap between humans and the natural world);
- an emphasis on interrelationships;
- a spiritual orientation that sees nature as sacred;

Gottlieb (Barnhill and Gottlieb, 2001, p.17) argues that the 'sense of reverence and sacredness, insight and inspiration that is found in ... 'the more than human' world' is not 'a movement *outside* of world religions' ... but 'occurs *within* the discursive, emotive, cognitive, and at times even institutional space of world religions themselves'. And, I would argue, in religious practices such as pilgrimage occurring outside institutional religious spaces.

Deep ecology, as noted above, emphasises interrelationships and resists anthropocentric ways of viewing the world. This suggests personal transformation, whether through pilgrimage or other means, cannot happen without reference to an ecology of influences. Gregory Bateson's work is helpful here, drawing on systems theory, complexity theory and cybernetics, reflecting the scientific preoccupations of his time and celebrating 'the pattern which connects' (Bateson, 1979). This means that pilgrimage is not just an individual activity, nor a purely social one but exists in an ecosystem of influences, of the organism and its environment. Such a system is not divisible into its constituent parts.

The individual, the social practices in which they engage, the social structure in which they live and the discourses which frame their thought and experience become aspects of a single phenomenon. (Burr, 2015, p.212)

From these disciplines Bateson has developed what Formenti and West (2018) call a 'sensitising concept' which has the potential 'to interrogate a range of epistemological issues in our culture.' (Formenti and West, 2018, p.153). Rather than transformation happening within an individual organism, it necessarily involves:

significant and proximal webs of relationships, groups and organisations; as well as changes in the broader society and ecosystem. (Formenti and West, 2018, p.153).

Formenti and West (2018, p.153-154) continue:

Acceptance, surrender, wisdom are key words in the systemic vocabulary; it is an invitation to celebrate interdependence, uncertainty, human fragility and imaginative hope.

Although Bateson's ideas are usually applied to learning, I believe they are generalisable to any human endeavour concerned with transformation or identity formation. In formal education, there is a tendency to side-line, ignore or diminish bodily and emotional learning, in favour of a linear progression of the acquisition of skills and knowledge from teachers or curricula. A pilgrimage is typically self-generated, embodied, holistic and interactive and the learning, or personal transformation, likely to occur unexpectedly.

Ecology as a subject of study has always drawn on systems theory but typically sees 'the environment' as distinct from human beings. So-called 'deep ecology' introduces more moral, ethical and less anthropocentric ways of viewing the world. I believe pilgrimage is a way of practicing deep ecology in that the pilgrim's movement is unmediated by mechanical means of transport and is less exploitative of resources than that of Western humanity in their everyday environment. In his consciousness-changing book 'The Spell of the Sensuous' (2017, p.14), David Abram outlines his notion of the 'more-than-human' when he describes the notion of 'spirits' in Balinese culture:

Moreover, it is not only those entities acknowledged by Western civilisation as 'alive', not only the other animals and the plants that speak, as spirits, to the senses of an oral culture, but also the meandering river from which those animals drink, and the torrential monsoon rains, and the stone that fits neatly into the palm of the hand. The mountain too has its thoughts. The forest birds whirring and chattering as the sun slips below the horizon are vocal organs of the forest itself.

As the pilgrim memoirs demonstrate, most pilgrims at some point experience a merging of themselves with their environment, or a realisation that the path is an entity in its own right, or that the weather is somehow communicating. This can

lead to the kind of experiences that lead to perspective-shifting that Bateson (1979) described, and potentially transformation.

Anita Sethi's book 2021, 'I Belong Here' about walking the Pennine Way after being verbally abused by a racist on a train, makes no reference to notions of divinity or deep ecology. However, she (Sethi, 2021, p.170) reports this sense of merging after a period of walking alone.

I am the river and the river is me. I feel myself falling away, the shell between the self and world dissolving as I walk. I am unsettled from my burdensome mind and settle into the sounds and sight of the river and its wildlife ...

I walk on through moorland, loving being alone now and not a bit lonely. Walking alone like this allows me to totally lose myself in the landscape, to watch and listen to it, breathe it in. On my journey I have not wanted to 'find myself' but lose myself, have the self dissolve into and perhaps be transformed by the landscape.

She (Sethi, 2021, pp.170-171) continues:

I want to empathise with the river, get beneath its skin and surface, to imagine what it would be like to be the river.

And later:

There has been so much longing in my search for belonging, so much yearning, but by following 'desire paths' I have reached a place beyond desire, where for these moments, I want for nothing more than where I am, here, now. I have moved from longing to belonging. I have also, somewhat miraculously, reached a place beyond pain – for now at least. Here in the wild, I feel settled.

Abram (1996, p.286) addresses the charge that this may be simple projection, citing James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis, that the geological and climactic modulation of the world is inextricable from its organic components. He quotes Lovelock's poetic summary that we inhabit 'a world that is the breath and bones of our ancestors.' (Abram, 1996, p.286). This statement resonates with pilgrimage both on the material level of the world around us as we walk but also culturally. Pilgrims following paths that were walked for the same reasons a thousand or more years ago, are often moved by the idea of breathing the same air as earlier pilgrims. And of course, the relics that are the goal of pilgrims are likely to be pieces of bone. This profound interconnection is common to both deep ecology and pilgrimage.

The roots of Abram's deep ecology are in phenomenology and he argues (Abram, 1996, p.33) that purely material science or a value-free objectivity are logically impossible.

The scientist does not randomly choose a specific discipline or specialty but is drawn to a particular field by a complex of subjective experiences and encounters ... The scientist never completely succeeds in making himself (sic) into a pure spectator of the world, for he cannot cease to live in the world as a human among other humans, or as a creature among other creatures, and his scientific concepts and theories necessarily borrow aspects of their character and texture from his untheorized, spontaneously lived experience.

Rather than see this as a limitation in epistemological terms, I experience this as a liberation. Abram cites the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) as a way of linking our subjective experiences with the embodied self. Abram summarises Husserl's idea that our 'subjective field of experience, mediated by the body, opens onto other subjectivities' by distinguishing between our internal world (thoughts and daydreams) and the external one of landscapes, by denoting the latter as 'intersubjective' (Abram, 1996, p.38). This is a useful frame of reference for thinking about pilgrimage because it dispenses with an aspiration towards objectivity in favour of describing the world as 'an intertwined

matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles.’(Abram, 1996, p.39).

Abram describes how Merleau-Ponty’s elaboration of Husserl’s phenomenology moves towards a poetic and even animistic take on the world (Abram, 1996, p.56).

Descriptions of the pilgrimage experience also move in that direction. For me as a pilgrim-writer, whilst I have written prose on the subject (Field, 2016) my recent work (especially for the Kent Pilgrims’ Festival in September 2022) has been poetry as that is where an animistic or transpersonal voice is more easily adopted. Mark Oakley, a priest and poetry critic argues that poetry is increasingly necessary in an age ‘where shallow literalism is on the prowl’ (Oakley, 2016, p.xxxiv). During the Festival, two audience members, on different days, shared experiences of visitations during the performances of music and poetry on the pilgrimage theme, one of whom was moved to tears by an unexpected presence. These matters are mysterious but contemporary philosophy through the work of phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, has attempted to theorise them.

In his final work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), Merleau-Ponty moved into what might seem quasi-mystical territory, describing an elemental power that Abram claims ‘has had no name in the entire history of Western philosophy’, that of the collective ‘flesh’ denoting both our own human bodies and the mysterious matrix that ‘gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its own spontaneous activity.’ (Abram,2017, p.66). ‘Flesh’ does not feel entirely comfortable as a translation to me, especially in the disembodied world of philosophy, but does feel appropriate when considering pilgrimage. The elemental power in the collective process of pilgrimage is related to the individuals’ embodied practice. In his editorial notes, to a selection of Merleau-Ponty’s work in translation, Baldwin (2004, p.247) explains how Merleau-Ponty’s choice of the French word *chair* (ie flesh) came from his conception of the body as a *chiasm* or crossing place, denoted by the Greek letter *chi* or χ which ‘combines subjective experience and objective existence’. The immaterial or transpersonal is not separate from the material but the two are integral. Merleau-Ponty (1968, p.215) writes:

Meaning is invisible but the invisible is not contradictory of the visible: the visible itself has an invisible inner framework, and the in-visible is the secret counterpart of the visible.

For me, the concept of 'flesh' as a mysterious matrix or crossing place is a powerful way of understanding how the pilgrim relates to their pilgrimage and the pilgrim-writer to their written accounts. The echo in 'The Crossway' as the title of Guy Stagg's (2018) memoir is probably coincidental but perhaps speaks to this invisible interface. The concept of pilgrimage similarly denotes something material – that is bodies moving through a landscape – and a mysterious matrix in which the individual pilgrim is both creating and perceiving pilgrimage simultaneously.

Walking through a sacred or re-sacralised world as a way of developing a sense of an interconnected self can be seen as an act of remembering in the sense of re-remembering our human connection to Abram's more-than-human world. In the Covid crisis of 2020, there have been several examples of collective behaviour towards the more-than-human world, such as the increased interest in walking locally, listening to birdsong, putting images of rainbows in windows and, perhaps as a corrective, the desecration of beauty spots with litter and public defecating.

It is important here to acknowledge the critiques of deep ecology, especially when it comes close to 'eco-romanticism' and seems to 'encourage the regression of consciousness to premodern stages' (Zimmerman, 2001, p.266).

It can be argued, for example, as in one contemporary pilgrim volume, that the motives and benefits of pilgrimage are utilitarian and related to social wellbeing (Preston, 2020, various). Clearly, our contemporary consciousness is different from a premodern one and it is impossible for us to inhabit a pre-Enlightenment or pre-Reformation Europe, even if it were desirable. However, rather than seeing deep ecology as a regression, it is more a 'remembering' in the sense of reclaiming lost

knowledge. This knowledge may be sought out and cultivated, or shifts in consciousness arrive unbidden, as described in my exploration of extant pilgrim memoirs.

A recurring theme in pilgrimage studies is whether the contemporary revival is a harking back to a pre-Enlightenment way of being in the world, or a new synthesis of post-Enlightenment and New Age philosophies. Deep ecology is a contemporary concept reframing ancient ideas of animism. There are echoes of this process across all scientific disciplines. For example, in a critique of Neo-Darwinism, Taylor (2019) writes:

My view here is based on a philosophy I have developed called 'panspiritism,' the basic idea of which is that the primary reality of the universe is a fundamental consciousness (or spirit) which gives rise to material forms and living beings, and pervades them. I believe that fundamental consciousness (or spirit) has an innate tendency to expand and intensify itself. Once spirit becomes canalised into material structures, and makes them alive, it impels those structures to become complex and highly organised, so that they can support more advanced forms of mentation, greater degrees of sentience, and more intensified and expansive forms of awareness. (Taylor, 2019, p.4)

Here, Taylor similarly conflates material forms and living beings in the same way that Abram, twenty years earlier, proposed sentience in mountains and rivers. However, Taylor's panspiritism links evolution to an increase in complexity and more expansive forms of awareness. It is a leap to say that pilgrimage, an abstract concept, is also subject to the same impulse to expand and intensify, but with the caveat that we are in the realms of new knowledge, it is a possibility.

There is more to say on deep ecology but for now I would like to use this quotation as a bridge into looking at the vexed question of what a modern pilgrimage means in terms of religious or spiritual practice. Devall and Sessions (1985), in one of the earliest texts on deep ecology claim:

Deep ecology is radically conservative in that it articulates a long-established minority stream of religion and philosophy in Western Europe, North America and the Orient. It also has strong parallels and shared insights with many religious and philosophical positions of primal peoples ... In a certain sense it can be interpreted as remembering wisdom which men once knew. (Devall and Sessions, 1985)

The paradox they describe is one that applies to pilgrimage which is similarly, and simultaneously, radical and conservative. I take 'primal peoples' to refer to First Nation or indigenous people, many of whom were nomadic. Deep ecology and pilgrimage, I argue, tap into a wisdom that lies outside any specific religious institution and beyond the received neoliberal values of contemporary Western countries. Revisiting Taylor's (2019, p.4) assertion that 'spirit' may be an engendering force in evolution, it struck me that there may be elements of a collective unconscious motivation to engage in what might be seen as the opposite of rational, consumerist twenty-first century behaviour. The growing impetus to pilgrimage in the early 21st century could be seen as evolutionary in Taylor's (2019, p.4) sense of panspiritism.

In other words evolution is a *teleological* process – that is, it moves in a certain direction with a certain purpose. At the same time, this impetus means that living systems have an inherently dynamic quality which enables them to respond to challenges with creative flexibility.

There are forces that are beyond the individual, and their communities that do not easily fit rational analysis and may manifest in individual or collective behaviour where the motivations are often mysterious to the individuals themselves. As mentioned earlier, human behaviour is multiply-determined.

The following quotation from novelist DH Lawrence (1931, p.147) from his posthumously-published papers, brings together the ideas of animism and deep ecology with a sensuous, embodied approach to religion:

In the oldest religion, everything was alive, not supernaturally but naturally alive. There were only deeper and deeper streams of life, vibrations of life

more and more vast. So rocks were alive, but a mountain had a deeper, vaster life than a rock, and it was much harder for a man to bring his spirit, or his energy, into contact with the life of a mountain, and so he drew strength from the mountain, as from a great standing well of life, than it was to come into contact with the rock. And he had to put forth a great religious effort. For the whole life-effort of man was to get his life into contact with the elemental life of the cosmos. mountain-life, cloud-life, thunder-life, air-life, earth-life, sun-life. To come into the immediate felt contact, and so derive energy, power, and a dark sort of joy. This effort into sheer naked contact, without an intermediary or mediator, is the root meaning of religion.

Notably, this passage was written when D. H. Lawrence was living in Mexico and so was displaced from his native England to an unfamiliar environment. Pilgrimage involves a departure from the familiar which can lead to a heightened sensory awareness, not least through being outside for most of the daylight hours. What Lawrence calls 'felt contact' is a hallmark of pilgrimage, practice that requires effort, religious or otherwise. It is also a gateway into 'deeper and deeper streams of life'.

Pilgrimage can be part of many spiritual or religious practices such as retreats. It can be seen as a kind of moving retreat in that pilgrims have removed themselves from the modern world and its demands and paraphernalia and are typically immersed in the so-called natural world. However, rather than meditating in a room, they are walking. There are connections with the use of 'Camino', the Spanish word for 'path' or 'way' as a synecdoche for pilgrimage and the Eastern idea of the 'Dao' or Tao which is translated as Way.

I have already discussed the issue of the limitations of language in deep ecology and this theme recurs in Buddhist thought:

They passed eons living alone in the mountains and forests; only then did they unite with the Way and use mountains and rivers for words, raise the wind and the rain for a tongue, and explain the great void. (Dogen's *Shobogenzo*, quoted by Badiner, 1990, p.xiii).

Badiner goes on to say that 'Buddhism has been called 'the religion before religion' which means that anyone of any faith can practice' (Badiner, 1990, p.xiii). In some ways, it may also be the religion after religion in that, in the post-Christian West, many people have adopted Buddhism or secularised aspects of Buddhist practice such as meditation or loving-compassion (Farias and Wikholm, 2015)). Here, I can see parallels with pilgrimage as a practice that has its roots in organised religion but has proliferated into an individualised, spiritually-creative endeavour.

This permissiveness and detachment from dogma, may allow for a childlike apprehension of the natural world reminiscent of William Blake's Songs of Innocence.

Only too soon is the child's clarity of vision obscured by a host of encrustations intrinsic to cultural conditioning – firm views, judgmentalism, and denial. (Badiner, 1990, p. xiii).

Pilgrimage, then can be a way of de-encrusting ourselves of some of what is obscuring our clarity of vision. There is a literal shedding of baggage on a typical pilgrimage, where clothes and other trappings of social status are kept to a minimum. Consumption is limited to food to be eaten immediately (or carried a short distance) and so there is a limit to how much money can be spent or seen to be spent. The Burning Man Festival (Dubisch and Winkelman, 2005, p.xxi). deliberately forbids certain ordinary practices of society, such as buying and selling goods as participants build a temporary city in the desert where all are equal.

These forms of psychological release are healing, a release of those tensions created in ordinary life by the lack of a supportive and accepting community for self. The opportunity to engage in a process of self-reflexivity, combined with a connection with kindred spirits, promotes the assertion of true identity, enabling an integration of self in the processes of connection and renewal. The rituals of the 'burning man' provide a symbolic release and purification. One can leave the old self and its constraints and be reborn with a new socially accepted identity.

Chthonic ones are beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the-minute. I imagine chthonic ones as replete with tentacles, feelers, digits, cords, whiptails, spider legs, and very unruly hair. Chthonic ones romp in multicritter humus but have no truck with sky-gazing Homo. Chthonic ones are monsters in the best sense; they demonstrate and perform the material meaningfulness of earth processes and critters. They also demonstrate and perform consequences. Chthonic ones are not safe; they have no truck with ideologues; they belong to no one; they writhe and luxuriate in manifold forms and manifold names in all the airs, waters, and places of earth. They make and unmake; they are made and unmade. They are who are. No wonder the world's great monotheisms in both religious and secular guises have tried again and again to exterminate the chthonic ones. The scandals of times called the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene are the latest and most dangerous of these exterminating forces. (Haraway, 2016, p.2)

A new Gnosticism is a way of bringing together depth psychology, the current practice of religion and esoteric knowledge updated to include deep ecology and relational views of the world. The holistic practice of pilgrimage fits this frame in keeping with its pre-Enlightenment origins, offering both a literal and metaphoric experience which is embodied and requires practical engagement with the environment, imagined and real. Proffo (1973, p.13) describes this paradoxical holism as follows:

There is a dimension of human experience that is not external to us in the sense that it can be directly and tangibly grasped. Rather it is within us, but the word within must be understood metaphorically. It reflects a depth in us as human beings and also a depth of the universe. Perceiving one, we perceive the other.

Eade, J. and Stadler, N. (2022) have published an introductory paper looking at the role of animism and agency in pilgrimage and introducing the ideas I have discussed above into anthropological studies of pilgrimage for the first, I believe, time. Ideas

such as the 'continuity of souls and discontinuity of bodies' (2022, p.140) and an embracing of a relational approach to how humans interact with their environment is timely and fully aligned with my own thinking.

10. The Return or 'Boon'

10.1 The Boon

At the beginning of the thesis, I introduced the idea of pilgrimage stages, giving examples such as the seven suggested by Phil Cousineau in *The Art of Pilgrimage* (1998). Whereas others have identified 'the Return' as the final stage, he writes of 'bringing back the boon'. The etymology of 'boon' is given by etymonline.com as follows:

boon (n.)

late 12c., bone "a petition, a prayer," from Old Norse bon "a petition, prayer," from Proto-Germanic *boniz (source also of Old English ben "prayer, petition," bannan "to summon;" see [ban](#) (v.)). The sense gradually passed from "favor asked" to "thing asked for," to "a good thing received, a benefit enjoyed" (1767).

The word 'boon' itself has made a journey from its twelfth century roots as something requested, to its eighteenth incarnation as the something bequeathed. This reflects the reflective and reflexive natures of writing, the to-and-fro exchange of receiving-expressing, requesting-bequeathing. A return or a bringing-back is contingent on the outward journey and only makes sense when that has been completed.

The iterative and subjective nature of pilgrimage, writing and research is exemplified by the way in which writing this last section has led to revisions and re-ordering of earlier sections.

Boon is also related to bones – those things that are hidden – 'esoteric' in the sense of being within us. They are deep inside us, occulted, invisible. A best-selling book on personal writing is called 'Writing Down the Bones' (Goldberg, 2005) and has the subtitle, 'Freeing the Writer Within' suggesting the liberating potential of engaging with these secret places. Bones or the boon are all that will remain of us and of course this is closely related to relics and shrines and pilgrimage.

10.2 Writing, language and love

What follows in this section (10.2) was mostly written in 2019 and early 2020, in what I have come to refer to as 'the Before Times'. I edited it out of this thesis and now decide to edit it back in. This experience is analogous to walking a path again after a long period, and in a different season.

The subject that fascinates me, in all its manifestations, is pilgrimage. The background hum, though, is 'language', which has been my calling since the age of four, and in recent decades, my professional focus as a writer and poetry therapist. As we have seen in the consideration of how pilgrimage relates to embodiment and deep ecology, there are aspects of experience which resist being pinned down in language. Even though I might want to 'walk' my data or present my data as a map or a shrine, in this context, a UK university in 2019, I have committed to presenting a thesis in the form of a series of chapters on which I have imposed a to some extent arbitrary order.

As mentioned before, a pilgrimage, like life, offers the illusion of linearity but is also experienced iteratively or holistically and the limitations of language do not allow these to be easily conveyed.

So, whatever methodologies I use, the data generated, and my findings and conclusions will be conveyed in language. Specifically, the creations of pilgrim-writers in the form of my own explorations and extant published pilgrimage memoirs, are formed of language.

Language and pilgrimage, pilgrimage and language. In the middle, there's a 'me', both frame and content, a 'pilgrim' and a co-creator of that concept. Laurel Richardson begins her book *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life* by asking how what we write affects who we become (Richardson, 1997, p.1). Later, she (Richardson, 1997, p.89) asserts:

Language is not the result of one's individuality, but rather language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific.

I decide to experiment with that sentence frame and rewrite Richardson's assertion as follows:

'Pilgrimage is not the result of one's individuality, but rather pilgrimage constructs the individual pilgrim's identity in ways that are historically and locally specific.'

On reflection, it becomes apparent that this is a two-way process, that the pilgrim constructs pilgrimage at the same time pilgrimage constructs the pilgrim. The construction is mutual and simultaneous, even as both pilgrim and pilgrim bring their individual and collective histories to any given moment. Language, too, both shapes and is shaped by its user, whilst, simultaneously, the subject being evoked is shaped by language. Reflexivity is paramount.

Pilgrimage manifests as my subject of inquiry and yet, it, like the putative 'me', is co-created by multiple writers and researchers. Pilgrimage as a practice is co-created and re-created by innumerable pilgrims every time they walk. There is an increase in media coverage on and off-line and popular books proliferate. Every article, every book, including academic and first-person narratives, contribute to the forming of a pilgrim identity. Laurel Richardson (Richardson, 1997, p.89) again:

Knowing the self and knowing 'about' the subject are intertwined, partial, historical, local knowledges. Post-structuralism, then, permits - nay, invites - no, incites us to reflect upon our method and explore new ways of knowing... First, it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; and second it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone.

Permit.

Invite.

Incite.

I write these words on Post-it notes and put them on my screen. They are transitive verbs of which I, the writer of these words, am the object. Who then is the subject? Who is granting permission, issuing an invitation and inciting this research?

The delineation of the self in such exchanges is contestable. Every individual self (and here I include more-than-human beings as well as inanimate objects) impinges on the world. Salman Rushdie's novel, 'Midnight's Children' repeats the image of 'swallowing the world' to convey a sense of the impossibility of delineating a singular experience. The novel is constructed as a faux autobiography in which the central character turns out not to be who he thinks he is. Identity is a theme of the novel, including personal, national, ethnic, social and religious identities. Rushdie (2010) writes:

Who what am I? My answer: I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each 'I', every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow the world.

The question of 'who' can refer to concepts as well as people. This connects to Donna Haraway's tentacularity (2016). Pilgrimage also contains multitudes.

For Richardson above, it is the philosophical concept of post-structuralism. For me, it is pilgrimage and my love of language that permits, invites and incites me to commit to this project of investigating pilgrimage and writing. Those twin topics also excite me. I have an embodied response when I work on this. I experience a quickening and a heart-felt engagement, just as I do when I look at maps and plan a walk. This excitement feeds the permission, invitation and incitement to do this research.

Alhadeff-Jones (2012, p.180) writing about transformative learning, argues that there are at least three intertwined levels at work:

The first level is conceptual and theoretical. It involves reconsidering one's understanding of transformative learning based on a renewed vocabulary (including chaos, disorder, emergence, nonlinearity, self-organisation and systems). The second level is epistemological. It requires one to revisit the way one conceives scientific activity and the processes through which knowledge is produced through the inclusion of a set of assumptions legitimising innovative logics and methodologies (for example, complex causalities, dialogical principle). The third level requires researchers and practitioners to reflect more systematically on the personal and institutional dynamics shaping the way research is conducted and knowledge created.

This analysis takes us beyond the simple binaries of subjective-objective and therapeutic-intellectual into more interesting, nuanced terrains. But the lack of precise reference points can be challenging.

As I explore my own experience of developing a pilgrim identity and of transformation, it feels as if I am an artist with a bewildering choice of materials, whether paints, brushes, canvases, papers, walls in public places, found objects as well as subject matter and styles, whether to be naturalistic, symbolic or abstract. As a writer in many different genres, as well as a practitioner in therapeutic writing, I am able to stand outside both my material and my writing to some extent but also, coming at this from an academic perspective, acknowledge that any objectivity is ultimately illusory. (Field, journal entry, November 2020)

10.3 Next steps

Where next? Typically, the pilgrim returns home and instantly wants to plan the next walk. Similarly, as I make final revisions to this thesis, I am thinking about what I would have done differently and where I want to 'go' next in my writing.

I am writing this conclusion after spending a week performing as part of the Kent Pilgrim's Festival

I have cited Kastrup's 2016 book, 'More than Allegory' and its title suggests to me the next research question: in what way is pilgrimage 'more than allegory'? This thesis has considered some of the many ways pilgrimage is an allegory (as well as reality for actual pilgrims) but my thinking and reading would now move more towards the poetic, the mythical, the magical.

Kastrup in a lecture (2021) claimed:

Materialism is a deprived myth, it is its own meaning, doesn't accept that there is a truth beyond, 'the world is its own meaning' – but others would say the world itself is a myth – it is imbued with symbolic meaning eg flames are images of combustion, even though some elements combust without flames – everything we call material is an image, is mythological – the world is a set of images that beg for interpretation. Materialism is a deprived myth, flattening the world.

He moves on, later in the lecture (Kastrup, 2021), to describe so-called UC, Universal Consciousness:

Mind-at-large plus the minds of all living beings = universal consciousness. Mind-at-large is what's left when we exclude the minds of living beings. UC is personal subjectivity once personal narratives have dissolved. Universal consciousness is once everything has gone, there is nothing, no reference points, can't move ... because it's empty, it's not even spatial. The 'other' rises from the intuition that there is more than the ego 'there is someone else at home' – literalising them as angels, daimons, spirits, is a slippery slope – we all have forces driving our actions – these have different agendas – in contrast to the ego which is based on self-preservation.

In what might seem a jump from this thesis to a future enquiry, I would like to explore how pilgrimage might be a manifestation of UC, a force compelling people to walk even as they rationalise their motives in what might be egoic terms (for example, Wooding, 2020, p.25, Dubisch and Winkelman, various). In the following poem, I drew on this idea.

Claimed

You don't become a pilgrim
pilgrimage claims you

You don't walk a path
the path unrolls itself

a green carpet of welcome
taking you well-ward

Who is this you
you think you are?

She's walking beside you
behind you
beyond you
through you

Listen she's speaking
in the wind's murmur
the sun's touch

And there's a bigger You
He's spreading the cloths of heaven
over your head

inviting the light to speak
in the fields of stars
not letting you sleep
more than a wink

(unpublished at the time of writing)

In an instance of Junigan synchronicity (Main, 2004), an article appeared in *The Psychologist* (September, 2022, pp.25-28) discussing 'the post-qualitative turn' in research. Sutton (2022, p.25) quotes Brendan Gough saying that the post-qualitative turn is:

... a timely and sobering injunction for qualitative researchers to rein in any pretensions concerning researcher expertise, to take care in offering knowledge claims, and to incorporate into their analyses corporeal [material] dimensions as far as possible.

I concur with the injunction to rein in pretensions about expertise. One of my personal discoveries in doing this research is a deepening apprehension of the mystery of pilgrimage and what it represents.

Sutton (2022, p.25) then quotes Michelle Fine, an academic in South Africa who positions herself as 'a narrative doula in revolting times ... bringing narratives into a world that is ready to cannibalise, criminalise and commodify them'. Pilgrimage narratives are gentle but, I would argue, powerfully subversive and as I have mentioned, for me, connected with the deep ecological questions of how to live on a compromised and abused planet. The answers, because pilgrimage is predicated on an apprehension of the sacred, however defined, do not fit easily into a rational, positivist academic framework. Narratives concerned with reverence, transcendence, and meaning beyond the material reality of an individual life, may also be cannibalised or commodified as we have seen with the co-option of pilgrimage into tourism.

Terry Tempest Williams (2002, p.383) reminds me of the importance of the emotional aspects of research and how it relates to action in the world:

If I choose not to become attached to nouns – a person, place or thing – then when I refuse an intimate's love or hoard my spirit, when a known landscape is bought, sold and developed, chained or grazed to stubble, or a hawk is shot and hung by its feet on a barbed wire fence, my heart cannot be broken because I never risked giving it away.

But what kind of impoverishment is this to withhold emotion, re restrain our passionate nature in the face of a generous life just to appease our fears? A man or woman whose mind reins in the heart when the body sings desperately for connection can only expect more isolation and greater ecological disease. Our lack of intimacy with each other is in direct proportion to our lack of intimacy with the land. We have taken our love inside and abandoned the world.

So in terms of next steps, first a walk and then, an unbraiding and a rebraiding of this material (Kimmerer, 2020) to understand more of the mystery of myself as a pilgrim-writer in this beautiful, compromised world.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – History of the Via Francigena

History of the Via Francigena by A. Trezzini from *Grove Dictionary of Art* at Oxford Art Online <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T2217239>

Ancient road system and pilgrimage route linking Rome and the North Sea. This backbone of the Western European road network was developed by Julius Caesar in 58 BC and partly overlaps the Celtic Tin Route, which connected Cornwall with Switzerland and Marseilles. The Italian section of the Via Francigena comprises mostly the Longobard Routes which connected Pavia, the capital of the kingdom, to Rome, Benevento, and the Sanctuary of San Michele del Gargano. Following the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem (AD 640), Rome remained the main destination for Christian pilgrims until the veneration of St James the Greater at Santiago in Galicia in the 10th century.

Known as the *Iter Francorum* during the Early Middle Ages, it was called the Via Francigena (*via francesca*) for the first time in 876. It has had other names through the ages: the Via Francigena-Francisca in Italy and Burgundy, *Chemin des Anglois* in the Frankish Kingdom (after the evangelization of England in 607), as well as the more general name, *Via Romea*.

In 1154, the Icelandic monk Nikulas de Munkathvera recorded Franks, Germans, Scandinavians, Flemings, and Englishmen in Vevey heading for Rome. The Via was also used by popes, emperors, bankers, merchants, and highwaymen. From 1300, with the proclamation of the Holy Years, it was travelled by thousands of wayfarers, but fell out of fashion as a pilgrimage route around the 17th century.

However, in preparation for the Jubilaum in 2000, the itinerary described in 990 by Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury (*reg* 990–94), who travelled to Rome to receive the pallium from Pope John XV (*reg* 985–96), was retraced. In the oldest known diary of

the Anglo-Saxon pilgrim, Sigeric described the 80 stages (*submansiones*) of his route back to Canterbury, the fixed points on the network of roads that has become known as the Via Francigena. In 1994, the Council of Europe designated the route of some 1900 kilometres as a European Cultural Route. The existing Roman and medieval remains in Italy, Switzerland, France, and England are an integral part of Europe's artistic and economic history.

Appendix 2 – Books relating to the pilgrim-writer

In this appendix, I have compiled lists of books which relate to the pilgrim-writer.

Pseudo-pilgrimage

The first list is of what I term 'pseudo-pilgrimage memoirs. – ie those books describing a walk with the intention of healing, or interrogating experience, or to effect transformation.

Hamberger, R. (2021). *A Length of Road: Finding Myself in the Footsteps of John Clare*. London: JM Originals.

Martineau, R. (2021). *Waypoints*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Norbury, K. (2015). *The Fish Ladder: A Journey Upstream*. London: Bloomsbury.

Overall, S. (2021) *Heavy Time: A Psychogeographer's Pilgrimage*. London: Penned in the Margins.

Sethi, A. (2021). *I Belong Here: A Journey Along the Backbone of Britain*. London: Bloomsbury.

Psychogeography titles

Psychogeography books cited by Smith (2015), p.66

Things are very different now from the days when the Psychogeographical Associations (the first 'new psycho-geographers') relied on thirty-year-old SI texts long divorced from practice. Today, there are numerous handbooks and accounts that can be sifted for tactics, complementing the assemblies of

radical walkers and opportunities to engage with a wide range of ambulatory practices. Exemplary publications include

- Tim Brennan's numerous short books on his 'manoeuvres' (1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2011)
- Simon Pope's London Walking: a handbook for survival (2000)
- Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks's Theatre/Archaeology (2001)
- Stuart Horodner's walk ways (2002)
- Francesco Careri's Walkscapes (2002)
- Jim Colquhoun's A Company of Vagabonds pamphlets on walks to St Peter's Seminary, Lennox Castle Asylum and other sites (2003)
- the Mis-Guides to Exeter and Anywhere created by Wrights and Sites (2003, 2006)
- Anna Best's Occasional Sights – a London guidebook of missed opportunities and things that aren't always there (2003)
- Tim Edensor's Industrial Ruins (2005)
- Carl Lavery's 25 instructions for performance in cities (2005)
- Townley and Bradby's Sweep and Veer (2005)
- Simon Whitehead's Walking to Work (2006) and Lost In Ladywood (2007)
- John Davies's Walking the M62 (2007)
- Tamara Ashley and Simone Kenyon's The Pennine Way: The Legs That Make Us (2007)
- Michael Bracewell and Linder's I Know Where I'm Going (undated)
- the 'Place: the place of self' chapter in Dee Heddon's Autobiography and Performance (2008, 88-123)
- Walking, Writing and Performance (2009) edited by Roberta Mock
- The Geography Collective's Mission: Explore (2010)
- Bypass Pilgrim by Roy Bayfield (2010)
- Smith, P. (2015). Walking's new movement. Triarchy Press.
- Harriet Hawkins and Annie Lovejoy's insites – a notebook (undated)
- Tom Stone's Where to? From what? A (non, un, mis)Guide for Escape(ism) and Distraction (2011)
- my own handbooks (Smith 2010a, Crab Man 2012a, Crab Man and Signpost 2012, Smith 2014a)
- Walking With Cthulhu by David Haden (2011)

- Manual for Marginal Places by Emma Cocker, Sophie Mellor and Simon Poulter (2011)
- Nick Papadimitrou's Scarp (2012)
- Jess Allen's tilting@windmills (2012)
- Brandon LaBelle's Handbook for the Itinerant (2012) Bryan Sonderman's Walking Games (2012)
- Tina Richardson's Concrete, Crows and Calluses (2013)
- Simone Kenyon and Neil Callaghan's instruction cards for Lincoln Dances 2013
- Karen O'Rourke's Walking and Mapping (2013)
- the chapter "'Three miles an hour': Pedestrian Travel" in Fiona Wilkie's Performance, Transport and Mobility (2014, 18-41)

Smith (2015), pp.66-67

Appendix 3 – Index of Metaphors

INDEX OF METAPHORS – from Lakoff, G. and Turner, M. (1989). *More than Cool Reason: a field guide to poetic metaphor*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Bad is black

Being controlled is being kept down

Birth is arrival

Change of state is change in location

Control is up

Counsellors are guides (see Life is a journey)

Death is a devourer

Death is an adversary

Death is a reaper

Death is darkness

Death is deliverance

Death is departure

Death is going to a final destination

Death is loss of fluid

Death is night

Death is rest

Death is sleep

Death is the end of life's journey

Death is winter

Difficulties are burdens

Difficulties are impediments to travel (see Life is a journey)

Dispassionate is cold

Divine is up

Dying is losing a contest against an adversary

Essence is central (see Important is central)

Events are actions

Form is motion

Freedom is up

Generic is specific

Good is white

Great chain metaphor

Habitual behaviour is an attribute

Human death is the death of a plant (see People are plants)

Imperfect is irregular

Important is big

Important is central

Knowing is seeing

Less important is peripheral (see Important is central)

Life is a burden

Life is a cycle of the waxing and waning of light and heat

Life is a day (see Lifetime is a day)

Life is a fire

Life is a flame

Life is a fluid (see Death is a loss of fluid)

Life is a journey

Life is a play

Life is a possession

Life is a precious possession

Life is being present here (see Life is presence here)

Life is bondage

Life is fire

Life is fluid in the body (see Life is a fluid)

Life is heat

Life is light
Life is presence here (see Birth is arrival)
Lifetime is a day
Lifetime is a year
Light is a substance
Light is a substance that can be taken away
Love is fire
Lust is heat

Machines are people
Mind is a body moving in space
Mind's eye metaphor
More is up
Mortal is down

Night is a cover

Passionate is hot
People are machines
People are plants
Perfect is regular
Progress is the distance travelled (see Life is a journey)
Properties of people are plant parts (see People are plants)
Purposes are destinations

Seeing is touching
States are locations (see Change of state is change of location)
Staying alive is a contest

Time is a changer
Time is a destroyer
Time is a devourer
Time is a healer
Time is an evaluator

Time is a pursuer
Time is a reaper
Time is a runner
Time is a thief
Time is something moving
Time moves

Understanding is grasping
Understanding is seeing

Lakoff, G. and Turner, M. (1989). *More than Cool Reason: a field guide to poetic metaphor*. London: University of Chicago Press. pp.221-223

Appendix 4 - Ethics

Ethics

In Section 7, where I discuss the five pilgrim memoirs, I include personal impressions of two of the writers whom I've met personally, drawing on information not in the public domain.

As agreed with the Ethics committee, I wrote to Brian Mooney and Guy Stagg and sent them copies of the relevant parts of this thesis, giving them the chance to review and request changes.

Brian Mooney responded 28 July 2022:

Dear Vicky

As you know, I am a libertarian as well as an anarchist – so please go ahead and publish whatever you so wish.

Best wishes

Brian

Guy Stagg responded 26 September 2022:

Hello Vicky,

Apologies for the delay getting back to you on this. No objections to what you've written!

Good luck with finishing and submitting. Best wishes,
Guy

Appendix 5 Evocative Autoethnography – exploration and example

'Making something' vs 'making something up'

The theory and practice of 'evocative autoethnography' have been most clearly articulated by Art Bochner and Carolyn Ellis in their book of the same name (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). As described above, Bochner and Ellis are social scientists who have advocated for the value of the subjective, the personal and the use of stories in social science research. Carolyn Ellis recalls how a negative review of one of her articles encouraged her to stop attempting to make the case for the use of personal stories in the social sciences. Rather than defend her approach in the face of objections from those who favoured positivist approaches in sociology, she embraced what is now the well-established methodology of autoethnography:

I didn't need to invest so much effort into being 'let in' to sociology. Instead, I might concentrate more on using my own lived experiences to write in ways that spoke to others about their human experiences. That review contributed to a transition I was undergoing: to trust that doing work that gave meaning to my life, and had the potential to offer meaning to and evoke meaning in others, was important, no matter what academics called it or who rejected it. (Bochner and Ellis, 2016, p.30)

For me as a creative writer, the move has been in the opposite direction. My main literary 'output' is poetry which is deliberately 'richly ambiguous' in that, however literal on the surface, a poem, like a dream is inevitably metaphorical and symbolic. Fiction is clearly consciously crafted and memoir requires the selection of material to tell a specific story. Academic writing has been in a completely different category for me, this excursion into 'evocative autoethnography' is a way of creating a bridge between that and my creative self.

In the same volume, Art Bochner discusses his impulse to encourage researchers to 'move closer to our subject matter' and into 'new, more catalytic avenues of enquiry'. He wanted researchers to form what he calls 'warm ideas' and asks, 'How could I

make my academic house a place in which to dwell more comfortably?’ (Bochner and Ellis, 2016, p.34). One way in which Bochner and Ellis do this is by foregrounding the subjective, the digressive and the evocative and seeing these qualities as rich, generative and opening rather than as limitations. This does not mean that autoethnography is not rigorous but that it accurately mirrors the complexity of experience. When I attempted to write about the beginning of my walk to Rome, I began by transcribing my notebook as it was written and then expanded on it, drawing on memories, associations and ideas.

Thinking of myself as the writer of what follows, I drew on Carolyn Ellis’s description of herself given below. Whilst she approaches the practice from a variety of perspectives, the following paragraph summarises the reflective and reflexive nature of autoethnography.

As an autoethnographer, I am both the author and focus of the story, the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed, the creator and the created. I am the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller. (Ellis, 2009, p.13)

The idea of an ‘intersection’ is a powerful metaphor as it contains the idea of choices of direction as well as a place where we can look in different directions, and from where we will depart. The metaphors of place and journey are also highly pertinent to pilgrimage. As Ellis (2009) frames it above, the autoethnographer is reflective, observing themselves, and also reflexive, observing themselves observing themselves.

Beginning – an attempt at evocative autoethnography

Expanded journal entry:

1st December 2018

I'm excited at this new pilgrimage. Canterbury to Rome is my secret hope. But first, we are going to walk from our home in Canterbury to Dover, 20 miles away. Two very old friends who are keen long-distance walkers have come for the weekend to join me and my husband.

Over breakfast, we peer out at the darkening sky and as we prepare to leave, huge raindrops start to splash and bounce against the windows.

We trot downhill and soon cover the mile from our home to Canterbury Cathedral. We are drenched in the first ten minutes.

The obligatory photographs next to the stone marking the beginning of the Via Francigena show us smiling and laughing in spite of the rain. There is a huge restoration project in progress at the cathedral and we pose against colourful hoardings showing Chaucer's pilgrims on their way from London.

We cross the ring road to St Augustine's Abbey, up past the Old Sessions House, then cross the road opposite the prison, now being converted into a student union.

Old Canterbury is now behind us as we continue past the bungalows and disused school, out into open farmland, walking a track in parallel with the New Dover Road out of Canterbury and then towards the A2.

Patixbourne is one of the chocolate-box villages along the North Downs Way to Dover but we can't see much of it in the driving rain. The church is locked but there's a number on the noticeboard for a churchwarden. Within five minutes she comes along with her dog to unlock the church and is friendly

and welcoming. We chat, look briefly at the church's interior, stamp our pilgrim passports, adjust our wet weather gear and head on.

The next section of the path is through a tunnel of small trees and scrub, with a field on one side and a fenced-in drop down to the swishing cars of the busy A2. We plod doggedly, heads down against the relentless rain, not laughing as much now.

Then the path moves inland, and we cross one flinty ploughed field after another. I know there are beautiful views to the south across the Elham Valley as I've walked here on a hot summer's day. When we all catch up at a gate, I point in the direction of the views for the others and tell them what they would be seeing if it weren't for the thickening downpour. They don't seem to share my enthusiasm.

In Womenswold, the church is open. We stand around in the cold nave, eating energy bars and shivering.

At Shepherdswell, we miss the train back to Canterbury by about 30 seconds and decide to share a steamed-up minibus taxi home with a couple who also missed their train.

We all drink too much at dinner and for the rest of the evening, my husband and friend argue about Brexit. They agree it's a bad thing, both are internationally minded and liberal, but the argument goes on and on.

Wha-wha-wha-backstop ... (for some reason, Tim is very exercised by trade and Ireland)

Wha-wha-wha-trouble-with-this-country ... (My husband is Dutch and is fascinated and appalled by the backwardness of the UK)

Backstop ...

Trouble-with-this-country ...

Backstop ...

Trouble-with-this-country ...

The argument gets louder and louder. The two men are enjoying it. It's gladiatorial somehow. There is no progress, just the same battering rams against the same doors. Tim's wife, Jane interjects every so often, attempting conciliation, but her voice isn't heard.

I try to change the subject and fail. I go to bed early.

.... Backstop ...

... Trouble with this country ...

In the morning, our friends decide that one day's walking was enough and go home to Sussex.

Unedited Journal Entry

2019

Monday 1st April

Left 10.30am – bumped into Marcus at the end of the footpath under the train, then Nessa on Stour Street, through Dane John, on the station – a garrulous Yorkshireman talking about something Arctic in the Hague ... 15 minutes to Dover then leisurely walk through town – a first – popped into St Mary’s Church – no stamp but friendly – open for cruise ships, down to the sea front, colder wind, but sunny, a silver sparkle between the great arms of the Eastern and Western docks, followed the promenade – some exquisite terraces hard against the white cliffs, some renovated, others derelict ... footpath to the passenger terminal – bit bleak, just a Costa, no papers etc

All the old trips coming back, the feeling of freedom, the love of the pack, the openness of the world with no car.

Providence: trains from Canterbury cancelled from 11.50 due to person on the line at Rainham.

Ferry: big lip-shaped lips,

Reading ...

LOST already my water bottle.



Calais 4.30pm local time –

Skyline of industrial estates, flats,
greyness, sandy beach

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem Natúre in hir corages,
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

(copied out from [Canterbury Tales, General Prologue by Geoffrey Chaucer - Poems | poets.org](#))

Chaucer 1340-1400

Yevele 1320 – 1400 – did they meet?

~

Harbours like arms, verticality, lighthouses, sloping lines of cranes with beaks pointing down,

Expanded Journal entry

Crossing

Monday 1st April 2019

We left the house at 10.30am, walked in our-walking-to-France gear down towards Canterbury East. After walking through the little tunnel under the railway track, we bump into Marcus coming the other way.

Marcus is a priest of sorts – Eduard’s Zen teacher, and speaking to him felt like a benediction on our walk.

Is blessing important – whether actual or imagined? Has the entire route been blessed because of the number of people walking it with religious intention?

Thinking too of Chaucer – in April with his shoures soute ...

Then further into town we met Neasa, activist, political journalist, an inspiration of all kinds... another sign which felt positive.

Does pilgrimage imbue everyday experience with significance?

At the station, a Yorkshireman, garrulous and keen to engage, telling us about his visits to The Hague and keeps bobbing up from the seats in front to talk.

Just fifteen minutes by train to Dover, in parallel with the path via Shepherdswell, the churches visible over the fields, that sense always, we walked that, we’ve had this journey under our feet, a combination of gravity, weight coming down and the earth coming up to meet it.

It’s the first time I’ve walked all the way through Dover. What a sad place, the High Street as denuded and dismal as any I’ve seen, so many boarded up

shops, a desultoriness of shoppers, especially the oldies wondering what happened to their world of connection and conversation.

As we walked down through the town, hit a party of cruise ship people coming the other way, also I sensed, although perhaps projection, lost and unhappy at how Dover, oh Dover with its cliffs and castle, could have changed so much. The old shops have names like people and in some ways were shrines to kitchenware and pick-and-mix, pillowcases, and hosiery. Now nothing but the most basic chains, a plucky little Boots and coffee shops and pubs offering deals on mediocre food and drink.

There was a sign outside St Marys declaring it open and visitors welcome. We entered with our Compostela and asked if there was any chance of a stamp. No, they weren't geared up for that.

I know St Edmunds Chapel was a place of pilgrimage and resolve to return one Saturday for a Mass and a stamp. Why is the stamp important? Is it the same as an Instagram post – yes, except it's private, no one to like it. Memories of my first passport and travelling to Eastern Europe and the visas and entry and exit stamps

Down to the sea front – magnificent buildings and the buffet and blue of the sea, a net of sparkle draped between the Eastern and Western Docks.

We followed the promenade past some beautiful eighteenth century terraces, some restored, and some turned into hotels that make your heart sink at the thought of what is likely to be inside. YouTube videos bear out the grimness of hotels in Dover. Some of the houses are derelict, the twin invaders of buddleia and Russian vine pulling them down towards the earth.

Along Marine Terrace we see a St George's flag hanging out of one window and next door, a house with a banner saying Cancel Brexit.

Is pilgrimage always a pull to the earth?

Arriving at Dover these days as a foot passenger is like being on a train in America – only odd people with odd reasons choose not to travel by car or air. The path filters us across the queueing cars, round various functional buildings to the check-in where the person behind the counter sits mostly waiting for the dozen or so maximum people pulling suitcases or carrying shopping or dragging the huge bags that characterise people moving around in Eastern or Southern Europe.

There's a Costa and we buy coffee and pastry at a price that could feed a family for a day but are grateful it's there and open given the tiny numbers.

I'm transported to Inter-rail days and the freedom of trips and the open road. What is this feeling of freedom? It's something to do with looking forward all the time to something new and unfamiliar – rather that experience always being a variation of what's around. We know what's in the kitchen so what we might eat or how the coffee will taste but even fetching up in Dover passenger terminal we won't know what will be on offer or whether even it'll be open.

Pilgrimage and providence – we read on our phones that there was someone on the line at Rainham and trains after ours are delayed or cancelled. We're here, on our way.

A bus takes us to security and off we get to put our rucksacks through the x-ray in a big cold shed.

Later, I realise I've already lost my water bottle, dropped in the security area. This is to be a theme of the trip. Losing my water bottle.

The white cliffs drift into grey at the back of the boat and the skyline of Calais with its industrial buildings, blocks of flats, vast beaches, and belfry, comes into focus at the front. I lounge and read on one the big lip-shaped sofas, ideal for snoozing and feet up.

We're used to this crossing by car and speeding out of the docks through a tunnel of barbed wire and high fences. Always there's sadness and a sense of unease at how easily we come and go, thanks to accidents of birth and the right kind of passport and how desperate life was in the Jungle and is now in the parks of the city and the outskirts of Dunkerque.

The harbour's arms embrace the boat, the cranes list at different angles like giant beaks pointing down at us. We're dwarfed by the size of the docks, so different from Sigeric and Thomas Becket washing up on the beach at Wissant where I imagine there was just a line of fishing huts.

We disembark around 4.30 local time via the skywalk, a staircase appended to the side of the boat, short bus ride to the terminal and then up and down a staircase of hard white wire, with a sloping top to prevent anyone climbing up, over and in. Down the other side, through a one-way gate and onto French, not soil but concrete and there in the concrete, metal pilgrim signs point the way into town.

Calais has made a virtue of fences. Not the walls of Berlin or Jerusalem or Trump's vast project along the border with Mexico, but white, elegant, impenetrable, rigid wire structures through which we can see the ferries, the churning sea of the channel and in the distance the vague luminosity of the white cliffs on the skyline. These fences are like veils in a way – between one world and another. We can inhabit both sides of this veil, for others, there are worlds of Good and Evil and immense travails across continents to reach them. We though live as if there's no veil there but for pilgrims perhaps it's the veil between the material world of everyday existence and this walk to what ...

What are we walking towards?

DREAM

I am chairing a meeting and someone else connected with pilgrimage (Mefo?) takes over and has to be quietened. There's some kind of Japanese game being played and outside there are fields, a formal garden and a bird, a gull, is singing a Handel aria. Did you hear that? I ask someone and yes, they did. Then I'm in a red car with an attractive younger man, driving on the right and going too fast. The car is silent, and I'm not frightened, and we brake behind some other vehicles. The area is very rural, and the man is talking about doing up a house and how he and his wife have spent £100k on a new kitchen. We drive into 'Shaftesbury', a lovely city with beautiful, big timbered houses.

This feels like a pilgrimage dream – travel, a quest, a collective endeavour, a destination, spending money ...

We are happy, we've arrived – our packs snug on our back, our boots moving along the pavement, following the gleaming arrows and the white veil of the wire fence.

The pilgrimage like a long necklace, each arrival, a bead, or perhaps a rosary so that once the beads of arrival are counted, we've reached a beginning, not an ending.

What are the metaphors of pilgrimage?

We move towards Calais and the city (or town?) begins to reveal its different faces. Near the port, there's a residential, provincial feeling, small houses, family hotels, wide pavements. A few buildings in brick with a Flemish feel and then post-war hastily erected residential streets, the bar-tabacs and bakeries mostly closed. We'll traverse and re-traverse this stretch on our comings and goings.

Suddenly there's a different atmosphere in the vast square near the Guet Tower and an awareness of the impact of world wars on this corner of Northern Europe. It's always a surprise, like a scar on a friend's face or the potent absence of someone who used to be present at family events.

Here there's a horizontal feel to the post-war buildings only a few storeys high, surrounding the over-sized public space – disproportionately distant from each other and in contrast to the medieval tower and statue of General and Mrs de Gaulle, around ten feet tall, smilingly striding towards the town, reminiscent of the Soviet statues of old.

Why am I so interested in horizontal and vertical vis a vis pilgrimage? Need to look at Bachelard.

We walk on through human-scale shopping streets with pretty boutiques and cafes then once again the town breaks into a kind of rift cut through by main roads, the railway and the river. We learn there were always two Calais / Calaises ...A business end and then the Calais of the bourgeois, the administration, the opera, the beautifully planted parks.

Town Hall, Rodin, Burghers of Calais

Back to the unknown – that is an element of travel – not being able to imagine what's happening next but more so with pilgrimage as there's constant movement so you don't sleep in the same bed twice, nor return to a pleasant restaurant. We are walking towards our night stop, address, image online but we really don't know what it will be like.

We pass the Opera House, public library and shopping arcade. I had been nervous of coming to Calais, imagining the dual nature of a small French town and the migrant population pulled towards it as if by a magnet, hoping to make what must seem like a small jump across the English Channel. But it's peaceful and there's no sense of menace. There are a few African and Middle Eastern faces, chatting outside a mini-market, buying a loaf of bread but no sense of the crisis reported daily in newspapers and on television.

Our B&B is further than we expect but eventually we see the understated sign for the Clé d'Opale on a tall townhouse. Everything is grey, elegant, chic and tall, including the patronne who explains the keys in great detail, which doors to leave open, which to lock, how and when.

We eat in a bar called La Chalice. We are in France and the place gradually fills with regulars, men in pairs and small groups. The TV is on, mostly football and local politicians. We eat moules frites and drink beer.

Back at the Clé d'Opale, we take a slipper bath and pull down the roller blinds so that the room is pitch black. Reading the news on our phones, we learn that Parliament has voted against the latest proposed deal with the EU.

Shoures Soute

Tuesday 2nd April 2019

We open the blinds to a grey sky and a seagull crying.

Breakfast is elegant on pretty china with everything smaller than you'd expect, right down to the silver salt and pepper pot, barely bigger than a fingernail.

We walk back through the town, stopping for a pilgrim's stamp at the Town Hall but they don't have them. In the square near the Guet Tower, we pose for photographs, the oversized statues of M and Mme de Gaulle like parents embracing their children.

Back up to the coast, the grey mist on the sea's face is slowly lifting as we get closer to the ragged coastline of blocks of flats, old fortifications, the remnants of summer visitors in the form of car parks and snack bars.

(Edward III again)

We immediately miss the path that goes slightly inland and end up walking almost four kilometres along the beach, hard work underfoot and mysterious in the grey mistiness. A few dog-walkers emerge from the dunes and head off in different directions, a scatter of sanderlings scurry along the strand.

The breakwaters loom like armies marching in one direction and then the other, they swing past us in formation as in the absence of other features, and the walk becomes an exercise in motion parallax.

The scatter of sanderlings becomes a flock spilling black over the grey sand and ferries loom suddenly in the mist seemingly in the air in the absence of a visible horizon.

Eventually we see a lighthouse with a couple of workmen fixing the sea wall and come up off of the beach to the path we should have taken, the sea wall refreshingly unyielding after the squish and squash of the sand.

Sangatte is frustrating. We overshoot the centre and traipse up and down looking for a coffee shop and a bakery. Eventually we find ourselves in a bar near the town hall next to a restaurant where almost three years previously we'd eaten when coming back by car from Normandie to get the ferry home.

(What happens when paths are repeated, or people re-enter buildings years later. Do they hold the traces of earlier visits where the air was breathed and subtly altered by someone's presence? How is that when travelling, especially through France with its twentieth century wars of unprecedented destruction, we can go into a church and sense immediately that it's mostly restored? What is in the stones? What are the layers and accretions that make us know we've stepped back in history?)

That summer, the Brexit vote had taken place when we'd been staying with a British couple in their gîte complex when we'd seen the results on television the morning of the 24th June 2016. That evening I went with Sylvia to a folk-night in a village where the local restaurant offered fish and chips to lure in more expats. There must have been around forty people, mostly middle-aged British couples, affluent clearly but not flash in any way, looking glum or shell-shocked at the result nobody expected.

Almost three years later, we'd got used to the comings and goings and impossibilities of resolving the wha-wha-backstop among other things and the postponement or cancellation of the envisaged March departure from the EU, made this April trip seem timely.

Everyone had been planning their travels either with chaos in mind or, showing the kind of sang-froid that the British are famous for, a total disregard for what might happen post-Brexit. Dover of course being the pinch-point with its ten thousand lorries a day hurtling through Kent and down the steep hill to the docks.

Over the years, as well as driving to and from Normandie, I'd also made winter day trips by car to the North French coast when the ferry companies offered return trips for ten pounds, including a half-case of wine. Lunch at Wimereaux and a blow along the cliff tops, the elation of driving along the empty ribboning coast road from Calais to Boulougne made for a fun and energising day out.

But always Calais held the sorrow of the migrants and before that Sangatte had the distinction of the detention centre that sits like a big square biscuit tin

beside the pretty village, holding who knows what misery. And Sangatte now sits on top of the Channel Tunnel, the Eurotunnel Terminal a few miles inland.

Having driven past it many times, it felt strange to be going at three miles an hour, the Detention Centre's presence still powerful and heavy, walking back up the village street as we left the bar after our inky black coffees.

We bought apple flans and mandarins in the little grocery shop with its small selection of goods. We look inside the church, eat our over-sweet makeshift picnic, then head inland away from the sea wall, the heaving grey waves, turning our backs towards Britain, the El Dorado of the migrants, the Brexit-voting masses and the outraged Remainers.

We're headed to Cap Blanc Nez, visible for miles, a twin of the White Cliffs of Dover – and indeed connected before the British Isles were separated from mainland Europe by the Channel in XXX BC. The wind becomes wilder, gusting at us on the exposed cliffs as we emerge from a gentler ascent through tunnels of hawthorn and blackthorn, their little white flowers like constellations against the black hedgerows.

Below us is a large reservoir in a landscape created from the debris from the Channel Tunnel. Like Samphire Hoe in Folkestone, it's a nature reserve in a totally artificial landscape, one that's made from turning the earth inside out.

There are coaches here and teenage school parties, their leather jackets and long hair flapping in the wind as they too make the ascent, gripping their phones as if their lives depend on them.

At the top, once again Britain is on the horizon as a hazy grey line as we listen to their earnest teachers explaining about the patrols of the First World War. The twenty-metre-high obelisk commemorating British and French co-operation is in keeping with this vast open landscape of land and sea.

Walking down from the Cap is a delight underfoot, the short, cropped grass of the path undulating and gravity pulling us down. The path is reminiscent of a racetrack and we gather momentum, all the time seeing our destination of Wissant further along the coast. The big vistas are thrilling.

At the bottom we find ourselves re-joining the beach and here the chalk cliffs give way to sand and along the miles to Wissant, we see old military installations, garden sheds and whole houses that have toppled over the years as the sand cliffs erode and collapse.

We trudge along enjoying the strange perspectives where a ruined breakwater, turns into a person and then a lump of concrete before revealing itself as a large piece of driftwood stuck in the sand. I start to sing into the empty air – a spontaneous outpouring that happens when I've walked a long way, as if a switch is turned and music bubbles up from my feet.

Then a black cloud breaks the grey sky and a storm breaks just over our heads. We've almost reached the town, so we put on our waterproofs and up the pace. The rain turns to icy sleet so a family walking a pug begins to scream and run, the little dog running in circles trying to avoid the sharp stabs of the needles coming down from the sky.

Walking so fast with our heads down, we overshoot the road from the seafront to the town centre, following the logo of the Grandes Randonnée's

instead of the Via Francigena. A mile or so later, we've reached the end of Wissant and realise our mistake and make a big loop back inland past comfortable houses with leafy gardens.

Our room is above a restaurant (closed that night) called Le Vivier and is small and basic but boasts electric heaters in the bathroom and bedroom, so we strip off and begin an elaborate drying procedure with dripping coats and over-trousers, socks and boots.

Downstairs, the deserted restaurant's music system is on a permanent loop. The tinkle of disco goes round and round and it's clear it will continue into the night. I sneak into the reception area looking for a switch but there's none, so we call a number and watch from our window as a man pulls up in a car enters downstairs and creates silence.

It's quiet in Wissant but we find a bar serving food, basic and cheerful, soup and omelettes, cooked fresh and a carafe of red. The woman behind the bar is having an intense, emotional conversation with a man in a suit who either was or wants to be her lover.

We wander around the pretty town, trying to imagine it in the summer with everywhere open and the holiday homes occupied. I receive a text from a friend in Canterbury showing a rainbow over St Nicholas Church in Harbledown, the village pilgrims walked through just outside the city, and mentioned in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. At the same moment, a huge rainbow materialises over the hills beyond Wissant.

Flanders

Wednesday 3rd April 2019

DREAM

I am walking with Irina down Hales Place and I have a ticket to travel to Nottingham but it's been used – there's something complicated going on. There are autumn leaves everywhere and a van parked with rings on the side for children to ride hanging on.

The night was disturbed, noisy neighbours and the room feeling small. We have a good breakfast, just one of two couples in the restaurant and Eduard talks to me of the notion of a sacred marriage between Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May as the old symbol of the EU falls apart.

The church in Wissant is dedicated to St Nicholas and a plaque commemorates the sailing of Thomas Becket back to Canterbury after exile in France. He sailed on the 1st December 1170, to be murdered in an act of bloody violence before the end of the year. Wissant was also the landing place of Archbishop Sigeric heading to Rome to claim his pallium from the Pope in 980. This little seaside town was once a place of note, an accident of tides and currents making it more accessible than Calais for those crossing the Channel.

We head out of the town across fields and past farms and up onto Mont le Couple. Looking back, the regained height once more yields a panorama of the long coastline with its two great caps – Cap Blanc Nez with its obelisk and Cap Gris Nez further south before the coast swings round to the Baie de la Somme. It's still windy and the scudding clouds create slabs and blobs of silver light on the water and far away ferries play tricks with perspective.

Two hares lope across the skyline, skylarks lift themselves vertically into song, a blackbird every so often clatters its warning cry from a taller tree. Cowslips give splashes of buttery yellow as we head up to a high ridge. It starts to rain.

Not in my diary but I remember that this vast view is a false landscape created from the earth excavated from the Channel Tunnel digging – the mirror of Samphire Hoe near Folkestone

Sudden memories of the book of Long Walks that Janet gave me for Christmas in my teens and hearing Adam Thorpe speaking at Kent University last year.

I was shocked at how he'd aged and obviously Alex Preston, who was introducing him, was similarly disbelieving looking at the flyleaf author photograph in my old book of a skinny young man sprawling on the grass with his collie. (And now, writing this in Rotterdam Central, November 2021, waiting for Eurostar, I connect that picture with Will Parsons and his, sometimes desperate-seeming posts re Wayfaring on Social Media – with the collie – and remembering Janet's several generations of collie dogs.)

Fragments

Tim and the South West Coast path in Cornwall.

Lake District, 17, hadn't a clue.

Adrian, Moel Famau.

Eduard speaking about old Dutch and a poem about spring:

The birds are nesting,
why not you and me?

Carol and Alkalik – diary entry I think I mean Aralik – not sure

Everyman - no idea what that refers to

Expanded journal

We climb to a main road along the ridge and find a bar-tabac, dispiriting, empty and a woman comes out from the back to serve us coffee. It's all dilapidated but there's a lit wood-burning stove where we can once again dry out.

We come to appropriately named Hautville and a cheerful boulangerie, with bread made in a *feu de bois* and an array of pastries, different grains of bread, fresh pastries and a bubble of *bonjour, bonjours* as people come in and out. The woman serving is assisted by a girl of around eleven, both of them with huge, icy blue eyes, like Viking goddesses. Everything is done carefully, the putting of bread into bags, cakes into boxes, every connection is made beautifully and imbued with meaning.

We left into a world where the rain had stopped and a world of concrete works, railway tracks and a big factory producing SCORALITimothy Egan and a small village with a vast Maison de Retraite, partly derelict. I have an urge to photograph myself and see a cascade of orbs in the image.

The path took us up to a ridge of electrical pylons singing with the crackle and force .

A heron flew over us. Re-reading this 20th November 2021, Rotterdam Station, thinking about the heron I photographed yesterday in Haagse Bos – also connecting that with the heron I wrote about in a poem about the woman Laura who died young in Cornwall, and Mary Oliver's heron like a

clergyman in his grey clothes. Yesterday's heron made itself smaller as I approached to photograph him, hunching his gorgeous neck into the folds of his lifted wings, wary at my intrusion. Why this urge? Why not just let things be?

And down to a farm – entered the Forest of Guînes and got lost of course – carpets of wood anemones, cowslips, new leaf ... eventually we double-backed to walk to Guînes along the road.

Auberge Colombier – castle, restaurant, fellow pilgrim *Macdonald from Farnham – HUGE dinner! **lurid paintings – Big complex 198 campsites 25 rooms etc – but just us and one other pilgrim in the restaurant ... goat's cheese in a hot tomato, huge salad of fruit, leaves, nuts, cod with rice, ratatouille, salad, choc pud 21euros menu, probably walked 30km today including doubling back etc

▭

Tarot: Queen Cups + Emperor
7 cups, wands, Page Wands ...

Thursday 4th April 2019

DREAM: Alyson Hallett and Causley – I have a position with them – AH unsure – some anxiety – a dark-haired official woman – I'm a bit unsure at being on AH's patch.

▭▭▭▭▭

Up at 8am – delicious sleep on good quality linen ... b'fast – antique farm tools and mouse trap – bread, granola, 2x pan au chocolat, yoghurt, juice ...

Frost on the lawns behind the 'castle'. Walk in Guines, tractors and agricultural lorries thundering past ... destroyed castle, moats – turned into a duck pond with plastic swans – bakery – busy with the whole village shopping – rows of sticky cakes, baguettes coming out of an eyelevel oven ...passed a gaggle of lads with a boombox (Calais fourteen year old lads doing wheelies). Turned up a lane towards the Column Blanchard, over railway track to the car park we'd left yesterday – Blanchard crossed Channel in 1785 – Louis XVI ... with a British companion ... God of Travelling – prescient as revolution coming.

(Fear of loss of the UK – the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom – neither the left nor the right ...)

Guînes – Field of the Cloth of Gold

Salt water meets fresh – in England

PORTS Sangatte / Wissant

What is a country?

Who is this Dutchman.

Language.

Men: E. Francis I, Henry VIII

Walk old beech trees, birdsong, plantation, quiet ...

Came out and met Ms Macdonald, SYNCHRONICITY – missing her turning ... looking in a mirror

Guy Stagg – power of books to turn a life

Walked and talked up onto a high ridge and a new valley – a straggle of houses, sterile lawns, a tree pruned and painted white – a big furry back – rat/beaver disappearing into a pool ...

A notice saying please don't touch dying animals – tualery disease ...

Our companion left us at the top of the descent to Liques ...

Huge abbey church dominating the village – austere and unappealing (Pope first appearance faded photo ROME) – a small chapel to Our Lady Big square Salle de Fetes, straggle of shops and out on a path past a school to Audrefort.

Turned down by a farm and then into a cul-de-sac – down to the river – very scruffy, almost derelict-looking mill with a restaurant extension ... check-in at 4pm, only 3.30pm so we sat at the riverside – got slightly chilled – our room overlooking the mill race – a hot bath, then lolled on the lumpy bed – the light glinting on the long leaves of the willow outside the window – the old fence falling down.

Dinner (served between 7pm and 8pm)

The dining room filling up – set menus – a Regional one and one for Plaisir ...
we went for salad, E had chicken then me trout with mustard and honey
sauce ... the solo waiter ultra-efficient serving 22 people..

Climax-Anticlimax – people saying it was .. E challenging me about this belief
– that I've raised this idea to something evident. BUT how can I know??
Telling other people ...

My trout – cauliflower, 1.5 brussels sprouts, half-endive, half tomato, potato
dauphinoise -