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**The Inner Journey:  
Pilgrimage in South Africa  
and the Modern World**

**Beverley Roos**

Supervisor: **Professor David Chidester**

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## INTRODUCTION

It is clear to any of us working in the field that pilgrimage is an enormously wide and complex form of ritual, occurring at all times throughout history and even earlier, and is thriving in the modern world. It is not merely a sub-type of classical religion, but a pervasive human behaviour pattern that continues to take innumerable forms that are found in every society.

Added to the complexity of pilgrimage is the distinction that is invariably made between the “inner” and the “outer” journeys. What we, as scholars or journalists or writers, actually “see” is the exterior version of the single most essential component of pilgrimage, the interior (and therefore invisible) journey. This is inextricably linked to “intent,” or purpose; a tourist stumbling upon a temple is not the same as a pilgrim who has a different mental geography of the same site.

Yet even this distinction can be deceptive without some crucial questions being answered: a tourist may become a pilgrim, moving from observer to participant during the course of a journey, whether planned or uncharted, whereas someone who “looks” like a pilgrim may be engaged in some perfectly mundane or domestic behaviour. There is also the complicating feature that some pilgrims may be travelling for a multiplicity of reasons, some of which may even be competing. Nothing about pilgrimage can be taken for granted by pure observation even though it seems reasonable to assume that people wearing pilgrims’ props and displaying devotional behaviour are engaged in a sacred journey (*see Chapter Three: Authenticity and Pilgrimage*). Even there, people – occasionally - may be participating because of coercion or duty, without much devotional intent.

Some societies that do not make distinctions between the sacred and secular spheres of influence may be less concerned about whether a pilgrim has fervour or not. The *action* of pilgrimage, the completion of proper rituals, is essential for the maintenance of cosmic order, and “intent” is a Western luxury. Yet even these societies admit that the inner journey holds sway over the outer manifestation.

Meaning is negotiable in pilgrimage. Even within single “types” of pilgrimages, such as those of veneration, or healing, or initiation, there are multiple intentions among the participants. And sacred sites can hold a plethora of contested meanings that may result in conflict (Jerusalem) or find a peaceful resolution (Badimong, South Africa). It is

clear, therefore, that power structures, both religious and political, play a role in authenticating or rejecting “real” pilgrims in the continuum we call pilgrimage.

Though there has been much debate on whether so-called “secular” pilgrimages may claim that title, acceptance is today largely the norm. Studies in the last two decades have shown that distinctions between the so-called sacred and the secular worlds are both tenuous and questionable. It makes no logical sense to separate one set of identical or similar ritual action from another on the basis of an ideological construct. Further, as religious attendance is dropping in “Western” countries, an attempt to confine pilgrimage to ritualized behaviour within a formal religious tradition risks ignoring a large body of pilgrimage in an era of self-affirmation. Many people today wish to make a formal distinction between “religious” and “spiritual” behaviour, while others, who vow no allegiance to either, are plainly engaging in pilgrimage; a study of political pilgrimages to and inside Communist countries, past and present, will attest to that (*see Chapter Four*).

Many belief systems specifically include all of living experience as part of a single universe. These may be the ancient (and contemporary) belief systems of the San/Bushmen, Islam, traditional African and Aboriginal worldviews and Hinduism, among others. The “New Age” of spiritual individualism which has sprouted so enthusiastically in the West appears to be, at the very least, an objection to a narrowly prescribed worldview in which materialism occupies much of adult behaviour. This is in part a reaction against religious practice that, to them and others, seems to be squeezed into a few hymns on a Sunday morning and funerals, and which tends to ignore ethical behaviour for much of the rest of the week.

In India, the notion of “pilgrim” appears to be far more flexible and is also considered to be a normal, frequent part of life. Any attempt to describe one pilgrimage as authentic, and another not, would be unthinkable, but then the vast range of options within Hinduism makes provision for almost any combination of ritual and devotion.

Given anxieties about authenticity, some pilgrims are too hesitant to claim such a status for themselves. They may feel not “worthy” enough, or else assume that such a status belongs only to those firmly within a religious tradition. Others, who do not seem to fit the usual categories, are determined to claim the status of pilgrim for themselves. It is worthwhile asking cynics why such “improper” pilgrims would want to undertake such a difficult and sometimes hazardous journey if they did not believe themselves to be acting authentically.

Pilgrimage is part of a process of tried-and-tested ritual action; the heart is seldom reached through the head, but may – oddly, but reliably – be reached through the feet. “Walking meditation” is an ancient Buddhist practice; its counterpart in the West, the action of pilgrimage, is experiencing a triumphant revival. Ritual, reminds Jonathan Z. Smith, is first and foremost a mode of paying attention, a process for marking interest.<sup>1</sup> Both inner and outer pilgrimages are acts of engagement, a way of paying attention to what really matters.

In Chapter Three, a discussion of the many forms and aspects of authenticity is laid out in order that we may understand the “hidden patterns” behind descriptions of pilgrimage, and be aware of the power plays and even biological functions that sometimes exist behind a seemingly bland or innocuous ritual. Further, as a species we seem to place great importance and value on authenticity. Almost all of us are sensitive to outside criticism, and few would want to be accused of undertaking a worthless exercise, especially if it (like a pilgrimage) is costly in terms of time and strength.

If pilgrimage is, as I think it is, a fluid process involving multiple realities and intentions, then we need to take heed of Walter Capps’ suggestion, that “instead of focusing on “arrested pictures” or moments of stopped action, as all past and/or present methodologies seem to do, future approaches must find access to the dynamics of catalytic and kinetic realities.” We must, he says, come to terms with the change factor.<sup>2</sup>

This is one reason that *Chapter Four* attempts to see pilgrimages in dynamic typologies. The other reason is that it seems to me to be a desirable way of engaging in a general study of pilgrimages instead of categorizing them, as has often be done, in terms of their religious tradition. The latter can be a divisive and unproductive way of thinking about essentially similar behaviour, and has led to misunderstandings and disputes. Pilgrimages of healing are uniformly that, whether the pilgrim is Muslim or Christian, Communist or Hindu, venerates ancestors or saints, or communicates with little people from other planets. Ritual behaviours at a healing site may differ somewhat (though usually not a great deal) from one faith system to the next, but they are essentially the same in intention, completion and significance. Furthermore, they have proved successful; most of the varieties of pilgrimage I have included for discussion have ancient roots, indicating sturdy survival.

A chapter on women’s pilgrimages completes this thesis. Certain aspects of female life, such as pregnancy and childbirth, are shared by women alone. Women have

also been excluded from holding powerful positions in many religions and rituals, so some women's pilgrimages are connected to their reclamation of sacred space. The very exclusion of women not content to live out their "ordained" roles in society has often resulted in disempowerment and/or persecution: the stories of Helen Martin, Manche Masemola and Sarah Baartman of South Africa delineate this. Each of the stories about these three women, themselves the subjects of pilgrimage, is also categorised within the typology of pilgrimages in Chapter Four. This underscores the idea that no matter how we divide human behaviour, the similarities are powerful enough to override perceived differences.

At the heart of this thesis lies the argument that pilgrimage is a universal, long-rooted, normal and vital aspect of human behaviour that shows no sign of abating in the modern world; that it is a fluid and flexible process, imbued with a multiplicity of meanings and functions that may fall inside or outside the authentication of large religious traditions and certainly existed before them; that the primary measure of pilgrimage should be that of intent or purpose and therefore pilgrimages can be categorised according to function; and that the inner journey is the most important feature of authentic pilgrimage but does not overrule obligation or traditional practice.

## CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrimage is thriving. All around the world, people are taking part in their sacred or significant journeys. Is it moving towards the popularity it enjoyed in the past – or are we deceiving ourselves that it has ever been in decline? Or is it a problem of definition?

There has been, and continues to be, controversy about what defines “pilgrimage.” As studies on the phenomenon multiply, as they have over the past few decades, we increasingly realize that every definition of “what pilgrimage is” has come up against examples that seem to contradict its terms.

In this way, pilgrimages that were defined as to a “centre out there” were illuminated by examples of pilgrimages made to places just around the corner. Pilgrimages to a sacred site or space are countered by pilgrimages on which the route is more important than the arrival, the *Camino*, for example, or, like those early Irish pilgrims called *gyrovagus*, who had no destination at all. Are sacred spaces uniformly affirmed, or are they contested? Pilgrimages that are defined by their permanence are set against pilgrimages which are temporary, in response to specific fleeting moments in history. Some pilgrimages are liminal, and others are decidedly mainstream. While some pilgrims have traveled on a physical journey, others have found merit in staying still. Is the inner journey, or the outer quest, more important? Is the individual more important than the *communitas*? Is the method of travel more important than the intent?

Many earlier academic studies of pilgrimage were bound up in attempts to find adequate definitions of pilgrimage, and were hampered by narrowness of example. This was obviously not intentional, and were genuine attempts to find a way of describing pilgrimage without it being too slippery a concept. Altogether too much energy has by now been spent on these debates. At the time they were inevitable as part of academic scrutiny, but while some bickering continues, most scholars have simply moved on, to investigate, describe, experience, analyse and ponder pilgrimage in our contemporary world as faithfully as possible. The past may give us some clues about what is going on. But it is the present that we need to investigate, if we are to build up a global picture of what pilgrimage means.

There have also been suggestions, especially from within some religious circles, that a different, replacement word should be used to describe activities outside the “traditional” rendering of pilgrimage, specifically pilgrimages that do not fall under the

umbrella of major religious traditions. To agree would, I submit (as others have done), be a mistake. How precisely would we distinguish what is a “genuine pilgrimage experience” from one that is not? And who should be the judge? Any attempt to disqualify a journey of deep significance as a pilgrimage would, necessarily, have the effect of diminishing that experience in the judgement of the outside world. We would be left with an understanding of pilgrimage that excluded significant and similar tracts of human behaviour.

At the heart of this particular debate is the tendency, prevalent since at least the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe, to distinguish between the “sacred” and the “secular” worlds. This, says Jean Comaroff, is a conceit of modern liberalism. “Underneath, we have always known that there isn’t a division.”<sup>1</sup> In any case, many ideologies and worldviews do not make the distinction at all – and some, including those of Islam, indigenous religions and Buddhism, would positively reject such a notion. This view is shared by many scholars today, and the result has been a fruitful examination of the powerful journeys made by those outside explicit religious traditions, including Jill Dubisch’s motorcycle pilgrimage of Vietnam veterans known as the “Run for the Wall,” the Anfield Pilgrimage, made by fans after a football disaster and examined by Grace Davie, and the several studies made of the pilgrimage to Graceland, home of “The King,” the late, now semi-deified (by his devotees) Elvis Presley, all of which will be referred to later.

It became clear to me in examining South African pilgrimages, that very many, if not the majority, fall outside the ambit of “major world religions,” either because they fall into a smaller, or little-recognised religious tradition (African Independent Churches, indigenous religions, New Age movements) or because they are related to past and present occurrences in our history (veneration of ancient and Iron Age sites, and various struggle sites including not only African but also Afrikaner icons). Yet these pilgrimages are earnestly pursued and are profoundly important to their adherents.

There is therefore a need to find a way of describing pilgrimages that is not faith-based – or, in describing those so-called “secular” pilgrimages, in a way that is not in “opposition”, or contrasting, to faith-based pilgrimages. It is for this reason that I began a search to describe pilgrimages in a way that would be inclusive, rather than exclusive, and which would describe what they have in common, rather than their differences. This is why I have drawn up a typology of pilgrimages based on their functions. All belief

systems have pilgrimages of healing, of veneration, of loss and of regret. Most include pilgrimages of initiation and of “barter,” that is, requesting a blessing or boon. Nearly all cultures have traditions of pilgrimage involving saints and/or heroes, and all make journeys to pay respect to the dead. It is more efficient and accurate, and less divisive, to examine pilgrimage in their functional context than it is to carve them up into faith-based divisions, such as “Christian,” or “Muslim” or “Hindu” or “New Age”, categories that exaggerate the differences and help to obscure fundamentally similar behaviour.

For if there is one thing about pilgrimages that seems clear, it is that they are part and parcel of long-standing, integrated and entirely normal human responses to our experience of life and the world around us. Pilgrimages are not oddities of human behaviour, nor are they exceptions to the rule. They *are* the rule. They have existed as long as recorded history can track them, and much further back into our unwritten past. They are widespread, universally undertaken, recognised, and in fact flourishing in the modern world. Belief systems may come and go (and have done so), but pilgrimages have remained. Furthermore, they seem to be on the increase, not diminishing, both in the number of pilgrimages and the number of pilgrims.

At face value, all this may seem a little odd. Modernity, after all, is based on inventions that save us the bother of effort and hard work – modern transport, swift communication, labour-saving household equipment, mass entertainment inside our homes. It is easy *not* to move (a feature of modern life that has caused alarm to health specialists). Yet, in the same way that joggers and hikers haul themselves off the couch and into an exercise programme for the good of their physical bodies, so rituals such as pilgrimage have been embraced by those who are conscious of their spiritual and emotional wellbeing (as well as those who are frank about the fact that they have no idea what they’re doing, though they may not be quite as confused as they imagine).

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to regard pilgrimage as solely for personal welfare, although that is certainly part of its contemporary allure - one of its functions is that of healing, and not just physical healing; it may also “restore the incomplete and painful ruptures of the past, healing the wounds of bereavement, loss and disruption, and making the participant(s) whole,” observes Ian Reader.<sup>2</sup>

There is frequently a deep and driving *volition* to pilgrimage, he notes, that urgent need that will not be still or go away.<sup>3</sup> Scholars who have interviewed pilgrims are familiar with the phrase, “something made me go,” or “I felt I had no choice.” This

*driving need* to make a pilgrimage, either an inner journey or an outward quest, is so commonplace an experience that it demands to be seriously considered. Though there is not the space to do so here (nor do I feel qualified to do so), I have nevertheless attempted, further on, to give some sense of this need being rooted in our human condition, part of our pre-historic past. Whatever the initial impetus, it turns out that such “journeys with a profound sense of purpose” have passed the basic evolutionary yardstick of survival. Somewhere, somehow, they have been successful; if not, they would have disappeared.

For the moment, though, let us return to the nomenclature of pilgrimage. Languages that have more than one term to describe different varieties of pilgrimage have managed potential conflict better, or at least contained it. In Afrikaans, the word *bedevaart* is used when discussing a “religious” journey, often to a sacred site where prayer will ensue. Other lesser, or “lighter”, or more “secular” pilgrimages are referred to as *pelgrimstog*.<sup>4</sup> Yet this immediately raises the difficulty of hierarchy; are some pilgrimages “better” than other pilgrimages – and who is to decide?

In the case of India, such entanglements are avoided by ranking pilgrimages according to whether they are *yatra*, places of power such as the Ganges, or *jatra*, meaning a trip to one of countless shrines, usually local.<sup>5</sup> *Jatra* involves lesser deities many of whom have once been mortal and who may be susceptible to devotion and barter. A third term, “pressing down the pebbles,” refers to a journey somewhere between the two, which may be undertaken for pleasure and happiness once all duties and vows have been fulfilled. Rather than think of them as polarities, they are better characterised as a continuum, suggests Ann Gold.<sup>6</sup>

This wide *range* of potential pilgrimage experience is also reflected in the various words Muslim travellers have for their significant journeys. *Hajj* is the main pilgrimage to Mecca; *rihla* is used for travel to experience and learn, including sacred texts, and *ziyara* means a visit to a shrine. This approach challenges the notion of pilgrimage being an “exceptional” experience, as pointed out by Simon Coleman and John Eade.<sup>7</sup> It reflects a more nuanced understanding of a life-enhancing activity.

### *Domain of the Name*

Naming something gives us power over it. It gives us the ability to scrutinize that “thing”, to objectify it, to analyse it. We are able to separate it out from all other “things” and regard it in its isolation. Yet no “thing” is in reality isolated from anything else in this world; categorisation is therefore a handy tool for definition and study, but there is always an overlap into other areas and groupings.

Furthermore, refusing to name something is even more powerful. This is the ultimate tool of disempowerment, and has been used with great effect throughout human history. Refusing to name certain groups of people as fully “human” has led to genocide, and dispossession, in our own living memory. A refusal to “name” is a rejection; if a person, or object, or process is denied access to a particular name, there can be no participation, or at least none that is recognised as fully such.

We are inclined to forget that naming is an artificial process. This is one of the reasons why sacred texts give the function a divine status; the names given by gods, or God, are quite literally sacrosanct. The consequence may be that everything that has been named is frozen in time. There can be no rethinking or alteration. This gives a pleasing sense of orderliness and of control, a sense of security in a seemingly random world. But it is not a flexible system. And if mistakes of taxonomy have been made, there is often enormous resistance to corrective action.

In this particular case, the term “pilgrimage” is under scrutiny (and for that matter, “pilgrim”). As we shall see, it has meant many different things at different times, but it may be useful to examine its common meaning as we have inherited it.

The word “pilgrimage” implies journey, though this may take many forms, including those journeys that are metaphorical and do not include physical motion. Its stem is the Latin *peregrinari* (sojourn or travel abroad) from *peregrinus* (foreign). A peregrination still means the action of travelling, either to foreign places, or from one locality to another, and since 1615 has also come to include “a journey” of life. The English form of the word, *pilgrim*, is from Middle English *pilegrim* via the Provencal *pelegrin*, via the Italian *pellegrino*. In each case it is one who travels, usually a long distance.

In every era, an understanding of the term pilgrimage has been culturally determined, and may change from time to time. Mention of it in Exodus 6:4 (King James

version) has the Lord saying: “I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.” In the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, it is used only a handful of times and exclusively in the sense of “strangers and pilgrims” (see Hebrews 11:13). Rather than referring to a specific sacred site, as the term is often used today, its usage refers to a sacred geography, to be adopted as God-given by those same “strangers and pilgrims”.

The early Christian church recognised at least two forms of pilgrimage. The first was *ambulare pro Deo*, or “to wander for God” in imitation of Christ or of Abraham, who left the city of Ur and lived in a tent.<sup>8</sup> The Prayer for the Pilgrim, uttered at Roncevalles for those walking the *Camino* to Santiago de Compostela, is still recited:

Oh God, who led your servant Abraham from the City of Ur,  
guarding him during all his pilgrimage, and you who were the  
guide of the Hebrew people through the desert, we ask you to  
protect this your servant who, for the love of Your name, journeys  
to Compostela.<sup>9</sup>

It was felt that by detaching oneself from the routine, domestic life, and submitting to hardship and uncertainty in a “strange land”, the pilgrim is thrown into a state of intense introspection and reflection. This is the Wayless Way of Meister Eckhart, where one loses oneself and at the same time, finds oneself.<sup>10</sup> It was a tenet of the medieval church to imitate the Lord’s journey “through the wilderness.”

The second important form was the “penitential” or “judicial” pilgrimage, in which criminals guilty of serious crimes (*peccata enormia*) were ordered to take a hat, purse, staff and badge, and work out their salvation on the road. The idea that walking “dissolved” crimes of violence may be an echo of the wanderings forced on Cain to atone for murdering his brother. “Judicial” or “penitential” pilgrimages were commonly prescribed for murder or heresy, and eventually for lesser crimes such as adultery or disturbing the peace, and were not only punishments but also forced exile at a time when prisons were few. These have survived in modern form in the Belgian and Dutch juvenile penal systems and, since 1982, a nonprofit group called Oikoten (from the root meaning “home”) has used the *Camino* in Spain as a path of rehabilitation for young offenders (*see Penitential Pilgrimages*).<sup>11</sup> Britain attempted this experiment in 2004, sending youths convicted of crimes on secular, “wilderness” pilgrimages, in an innovative attempt

at rehabilitation. The Labour Government was heavily criticised for the waste of public money. South Africa, too, has in a very limited way used this option.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, Irish monks embraced pilgrimage as a random ascetic exercise based on the idea (from Hebrews 11:13 and from Peter 2:11) that Christians are “exiles” in this world, and therefore deserve the term *gyrovagus*, or wanderer. They became *perpetual pilgrims*. Then the Benedictines decided – especially as Europe was in chaos during the “dark ages” – that the mark of a monk was his *stability*, and that he should not be a religious roamer. Not for the last time would such “vagrant” behaviour be seen as difficult to control, and therefore threatening to that much-treasured virtue of being stable (*stable* being a word pregnant with meaning, delineating the home, or stable, of a horse, as opposed to that creature’s characteristic of roaming far and wide).

So the *gyrovagus* was replaced by the *anchorite*, whose “isolated cell became the scene of his continued exile”: though he (usually male) remained a “stranger and a pilgrim”, now the land he traversed was an internal geography.<sup>12</sup>

After the Reformation, the term “pilgrim” came to be suspect in Protestant communities and fell into abeyance for the most part, except when referring to the past, particularly with reference to the Medieval world in which Christianity had been a political as well as spiritual force. “Pilgrim” was transposed into the idea that life itself is a pilgrimage, exemplified in John Bunyan’s work *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a best-seller in its day that had a profound impact in Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Religious institutions have traditionally been the custodians of “spiritual” terms. But now the word *pilgrimage* is being, with increasing authority, used in other instances of significant personal journeys which fall outside the ambit of traditional world religions or any perceptible religious orthodoxy at all: so much so that the Internet can now feature excerpts from “The pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson”, and so-called “secular” sites as varied as sports stadiums and shrines to art. These are not terms used frivolously (for the most part) but are profound journeys for those participants – certainly no less so than for many travelling to Jerusalem or Rome.

South African author Guy Butler suggests that the word pilgrimage may puzzle some (in the sense he uses it in his narrative poem, “Pilgrimage to Dias Cross”); neither the destination nor the pilgrims described therein are “typical.” But, he attests, pilgrimages of any “restless mind” to its own historical shrines may serve similar

liberating and creative functions,<sup>14</sup> as does the pilgrimage today to the grave of Hector Petersen, the thirteen-year-old schoolboy who was killed by police in Soweto in 1976.<sup>15</sup>

Like many words, the definition of pilgrim has changed over time. Since 1815, the word *pilgrim* has also been used to define an original settler (either U.S. or colonial), and the term *Pilgrim Fathers* refers to those (men and women - there is no equivalent term for *Pilgrim Mothers*) who travelled a long distance to get to their destination. This evokes, once again, the idea of “strangers and pilgrims in a foreign land”. Or, from a frequently held American perspective, it can refer to those who have arrived, with the underlying assumption that they have reached their “sacred” goal.

So from a European perspective, the Pilgrim Fathers *left*, while from an American perspective they *arrived*. This difference in emphasis may or may not be significant, but it serves to highlight the difficulty of authentication: any definition and description of “pilgrimage” will depend at least in part on the vantage point of the observer, or whether the observer “sees” the pilgrimage at all.

We may note that there is a narrow difference between a pilgrimage and an exodus. Both are presumed to be journeys with spiritual content, such as the Israelite’s Exodus from Egypt, and both may have a degree of danger involved, always a meritorious element in spiritual matters. An exodus also has a political aspect – but so can pilgrimages as we note with the example of the *Jerusalem-gangers* fleeing British rule (*Chapter Four: Political Pilgrimages*). What is the difference? An exodus may involve little or no degree of choice, and voluntary action is usually assumed to be a component of pilgrimage (although as we have already seen, penitential pilgrimages were usually involuntary).

“Pilgrimage” is a word which tends to lend a degree of authenticity, even respectability, to actions which do not always meet the approval of those outside (or even sometimes inside) the tradition. Yet Sax notes that in the politically charged atmosphere of Britain’s colonial rule over India, the entries in the India Office in London under “processions/pilgrimages” and “Hindu-Muslim riots” were perfectly interchangeable.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Niebuhr called pilgrims “persons in motion, passing through territories not their own – seeking something we might call completion, or perhaps the word clarity would also do; a goal to which only the spiritual compass points the way”. Hence, he suggests, we must all become what Melville’s Ishmael calls “*Isolatoos*”, islanders,

creatures perpetually searching for passages that promise approach to another shore, one that will complete us.<sup>17</sup>

When fretting over the problem of how to contain such traditional terms as pilgrimage within some acceptable framework of understanding, it is worth remembering that nothing, not even the word “God”, is immutable. Karen Armstrong points out that it contains a whole spectrum of meanings, some of which are contradictory or even mutually exclusive.<sup>18</sup> Had the notion of God not had this flexibility, she suggests, it would not have survived to become one of the great human ideas. When one conception of God has ceased to have meaning or relevance, it has been discarded and replaced by a new theology.

Avoiding a “fixed” definition, Ian Reader has suggested a useful way of thinking about pilgrimage; a common strand in all the different uses of the term, he suggests, is the “idea of quest, of seeking something that lies outside the accustomed patterns of everyday life, and that hence requires a process of movement from the everyday.”<sup>19</sup> This is carefully worded, and does not exclude a “process of movement” to the *inside*, the inner journey, an important aspect of all pilgrimage.

### ***The Inner Journey***

The longest journey  
Is the journey inwards  
Of him who has chosen his destiny,  
Who has started upon his quest  
For the source of his being.  
(Dag Hammarskjöld, “*Markings*”, 1961).

The notion of an inner spiritual journey has long been part of the discourse of pilgrimage, even though it may appear contradictory to the entrenched notion that a physical journey should be involved. Yet the contradiction is not as great as it may initially seem. Part of the purpose of “going on pilgrimage” may be to separate oneself (as far as is reasonably possible) from everyday concerns.<sup>20</sup> This was done no less by the anchorite than by the *gyrovagus* who wandered at random in the world or the pilgrim with a fixed destination in mind.

In the end, as is frequently pointed out in nearly all traditions, pilgrimages are inner journeys, whatever the geographical direction of the pilgrim. Just as the points of

the compass are also directions, so is the inner journey.<sup>21</sup> The Sufi mystic al-Hallaj asserted that pilgrimage could be undertaken by simply staying at home, because “the true sanctuary lay within the heart”. This suggestion, though, has not always been well received (al-Hallaj was executed for his insight).<sup>22</sup>

Some just disapproved of pilgrimage altogether. Protestants saw it as part of Catholic “corruption” in which salvation, or the absolving of sin, was “paid for” by the efforts of the pilgrim (as opposed to salvation being obtained “by Grace alone”). Luther wrote that “all pilgrimages should be stopped. There is no good in them”. He saw them as “works”, attempts to *earn* God’s grace rather than to accept God’s love and acceptance as a free gift (ironically it is now possible to make Luther pilgrimages to the various sites that were significant in his life).<sup>23</sup> Calvin, supporting the Reformation’s rejection of pilgrimages, also campaigned against them saying that they “aided no man’s salvation”.<sup>24</sup> Detractors of pilgrimage were also fond of quoting St Augustine, who said that “not by journeying, but by loving do we draw closer to God: to Him who is everywhere present and everywhere entire, we approach not by our feet, but by our hearts.”<sup>25</sup>

Gautama Buddha shared this mistrust of pilgrimages. He advised his followers not to go on pilgrimages, describing them as meaningless ritual. “If the waters of the Ganges could truly wash away sin then all fishes would go straight to heaven.” Yet, paradoxically, among his last words were: “Walk on!”<sup>26</sup> Buddhist pilgrimages thrive today as they have in all periods of Buddhist history (*see Chapter Two*). Sikh Guru Nanak denounced the use of pilgrimage to sacred places, arguing that genuine pilgrimage is a kind of internal journey (a persistent theme), a matter for the heart;<sup>27</sup> this has not detracted from Sikh pilgrimages.

Such reservations about pilgrimage by some of history’s most exalted spiritual leaders may have stemmed from their suspicion that it may be less demanding to go on a pilgrimage than it is to confront that which really ails us in our spiritual lives. (We should admit that it might be easier to go on a physical journey than to achieve a spiritual discipline, says Holm, wryly).<sup>28</sup> Yet the call of pilgrimage has manifested itself when life seems very difficult indeed. The power of that impulse, that volition, to go on pilgrimage may leave them feeling that they have little choice to do so, for as we shall see in some of the following chapters, pilgrimage is rooted very deep in human history. The great stone circles of the Celtic world as well as Stone Age sites such as Driekopseiland in South

in South Africa represent significant sacred sites to which our long-distant ancestors made their essential journeys.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Outer Quest*

In the Middle Ages, as the Holy Roman Empire entrenched its hold and peace was a more certain commodity, Europeans considered pilgrimage to be a normal, though infrequent, devotional journey, often to a sacred site, especially if a *relic* was involved. As the power of the Christian princes grew, and travel was safer within the loose borders of Europe than it had been during the unstable days of the Dark Ages, pilgrimage flowered. During the Middle Ages, Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain saw literally millions of visitors, including large numbers of medieval celebrities. It was a fêted phenomenon.

The Crusades were seen as, among other things, pilgrimages to the “Holy Land” and were called *peregrini*. Called by Pope Urban II at the Synod of Clermont in November 1095, they were advanced to ensure that the sacred travel of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem was safeguarded. (At least that was the reason given, in his famous speech *Deus lo volt* – “God wills it!”). No matter what the murkier reasons were for crusading, particularly among the nobility who were on the lookout for fresh lands and spoils, there is no doubt that the majority of the ordinary people who joined them did so in a spirit of pilgrimage.<sup>30</sup>

Mircea Eliade believed that a pilgrimage is a journey to a “sacred centre” from the profane space surrounding it, where heaven and earth intersect and where time stands still, where there exists the possibility of breaking through to the realm of the transcendent. This is at face value a useful description. Whenever the pilgrim “arrives”, at a distant site, or in her own backyard, as did Helen Martins with her Owl House,<sup>31</sup> or inside the mind of an anchorite, that “place” tends to be thought of as a meeting-place between the pilgrim and the longed-for destination, just as the mountain-tops of the Himalayas or the great pilgrimage mountains in Japan or certain places on the Ganges (*tīrthas*) are seen as places where the earth and “heaven” intersect (*see sacred geography*). Moses climbed a mountain to receive the stone tablets – by so doing, he was “closer” to Yahweh.

However, a definition of pilgrimage that insists on a “sacred centre” is insufficient. There are many pilgrim journeys which may involve no particular destination, including those of *perpetual* pilgrims, such as the *gyrovagus* and the motionless anchorite, pilgrimages of *protest* as well as some *virtual* pilgrimages (see *Chapter Four*), and other pilgrim journeys such as the *Camino* in which the route itself is stressed. The journey to a central meeting point of heaven and earth must at best be considered “one” type of pilgrimage.

In their landmark study of pilgrimage in 1978, Victor and Edith Turner attempted an anthropological approach to defining pilgrimages. Their work raised the topic of pilgrimage to a “serious” status but also tied up the definition for generations of academics with some frustrating results.<sup>32</sup> One problem lies in their remark that pilgrimage “has long stood for voluntaristic mobility in a rooted system.”<sup>33</sup> But non-rooted nomads and gypsies make pilgrimages, as Jennifer Lash so eloquently describes (see *Chapter Two: Two Marys*). Pilgrimages are certainly older than “rooted systems.” And it may not always be voluntaristic; penitential and initiatory pilgrimages are often not.

Also problematic is this definition: “the holiest pilgrimage shrines in several major religions tend to be located on the periphery of cities, towns or other well-demarcated territorial units. Peripherality here represents liminality and *communitas*, as against the sociocultural structure.”<sup>34</sup> Many pilgrimages do appear to be to a “far place.” But others may be on the pilgrim’s doorstep. There is nothing “liminal” about St Peter’s or the Ganges, or the sacred spring in the Bronx, particularly for those living around the corner. Eamon Duffy remarks that a pilgrimage to Walstan’s shrine, in East Anglia, is no more liminal “than going to a local market town to sell or buy geese or chickens.”<sup>35</sup> One of the difficulties the Turners faced was that there were so few accurately recorded studies on pilgrimage, and they were compelled to make assumptions that have not always stood up to the acid test of time.

Since then there have been a considerable number of studies on individual pilgrimages, in places such as Japan, India, Sudan, Vietnam, the United States and the United Kingdom, Ireland and Tibet and what were once termed the “Iron Curtain” countries, to say nothing of those so-called “secular” pilgrimages.<sup>36</sup> These studies have highlighted both the similarities and the differences in intent, approach, behaviour, ritual and meaning, leading inescapably to the conclusion that there is unlikely to be a simple

single definition of pilgrimage (not that the Turners were simplistic). Simon Coleman and John Eade have pointed out that there is a difference between “domestic pilgrimage” and those journeys to major shrines, for example.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless the contribution of the Turners was invaluable in that it placed the study of pilgrimage squarely into the discipline of research. But just as important was Alan Morinis’s perception that the *individual’s* experience of pilgrimage is critical to its understanding and that pilgrims cannot be considered as an “undifferentiated mass,” as Ian Reader puts it.<sup>38</sup>

In fact, Reader adds, “if more attention is paid to what individual pilgrims think and feel, our understandings of pilgrimage as an individual *and* as a social phenomenon simultaneously will be significantly deepened.”<sup>39</sup> Nancy Frey’s exhaustive study of individual pilgrims on the *Camino* attests to that; no longer can that venerable route be studied without considering individual meaning within a plural context. It is the individual’s “sense of felt purpose” which is the key to defining pilgrimage – its *intent*.

### ***Sacred Intent***

Some pilgrimages sites are remote and others are not. Though distance has been considered meritorious in pilgrimage, especially before modern transport, it is the intention within the act of pilgrimage itself which is critical to understanding, not only the “sacred site” (if one exists).

Alan Morinis has been critical of the attempts by the Turners to perceive *communitas* in a variety of settings. He correctly considers that the individual component of pilgrimage must not be overlooked (because of this, he perhaps pays less attention to the significance of social groupings, as well as “secular” pilgrimages – that is, those falling outside the framework of organised religions - than is warranted). Likewise, William Sax’s study of a Himalayan Hindu pilgrimage does not conform to the theory developed by the Turners. He noted frequent conflict, rather than a building of a *communitas*.<sup>40</sup> C. Bawa Yamba and Michael Sallnow both feel that *communitas* is not only dispensable for an understanding of pilgrimage but that focussing on it effectively becomes a kind of theoretical straightjacket.<sup>41</sup>

As broader studies of pilgrimages become available, it is also clear that not all pilgrims are “equal” on the journey. The happy vision of a “loose commonality of feeling with fellow visitors” was never the case in classical pilgrimage, when the “common”

pilgrims knew not to overstep their social boundaries towards “commonality” with rich, titled and/or powerful pilgrims, whose pilgrimages were visually closer to royal “progressions” than humble wayfarers – the pilgrimage of Princess Mathilda of England in 1125 to Santiago de Compostela, or the erst-while Maharaj of Jodhpur in India, H.H. Jodhpur, in 1986 to a drought-ravaged area of “his” former kingdom are but two examples (*see Chapter Two: Personal, Political and Natural*). Nor is today any different; celebrities continue to attract attention, unwanted or otherwise, while on pilgrimage,<sup>42</sup> but may make up for it with extra privileges, while pilgrims perceived as “outsiders” continue to struggle in major pilgrimage spaces such as Mecca or the *Camino*.<sup>43</sup>

Futher, a single pilgrimage shrine may mean very different things to different people. Eade and Sallnow point out that a pilgrimage shrine, while apparently emanating an intrinsic religious significance of its own, at the same time provides a ritual space for the expression of a diversity of perceptions and meanings which the pilgrims themselves bring to the shrine and impose upon it. As such, the cult can contain within itself a plethora of religious discourses.<sup>44</sup> There are, so we see, as many “Jerusalems” as there are religious denominations visiting the city.<sup>45</sup> And Sarah Thal has pointed out with respect to a Japanese shrine that “presenting different faces to different visitors, Kotohira was in 1912, among other things, a destination of devout pilgrimage, an exciting urban adventure, a cultural monument and a rural anachronism...created by the diversity of its visitors.”<sup>46</sup> This sense of the “multiplicity of meanings” is now an accepted term used about many pilgrim sites, though it should be noted that not *all* sites are actually contested.<sup>47</sup>

The Turners declared that there is something “inveterately populist, anarchical, even anticlerical, about pilgrimages in their very essence. They tend to arise spontaneously (and) religious specialists have attempted to domesticate (them) into orderly pilgrimage, more susceptible to ecclesiastical control.”<sup>48</sup> The latter is partially correct. Pope Gregory the Great issued an injunction in the sixth century to “baptize the customs”, that is, to incorporate “pagan” practices wherever possible into the Church’s mainstream, and this has happened with the ancient rituals of spring equinox (Easter) and winter solstice (Christmas), as well as harvest festivals. But there is nothing to make us believe that popular pilgrimages around the world are anarchical or anticlerical “in their very essence.” Pilgrims in Japan, Tibet or India may be horrified at the thought. In other parts of the world, such as Australia and Africa, such categories do not even apply.

One of the attractive things about pilgrimage, says Ian Reader, is that it straddles so many disciplines, and he argues for widening our interdisciplinary scope: “Rather than narrowing our aims in order to understand pilgrimage, we should broaden our fields of enquiry, for it is in so doing that we are able to acquire fuller and more encompassing cross-cultural and comparative perspectives.”<sup>49</sup> We have seen how narrowness of definition has bedevilled attempts by scholars of pilgrimage when they have tried to squeeze their observations into a pre-set mould. Like the compulsive typologist Carolus Linnaeus, we have at times been quick to categorise, not to mention imposing our own cultural standards, especially in ambiguous areas. And there is little that has been more ambiguous than pilgrimage.

### *The Ambiguity of Pilgrimage*

How do you become a pilgrim? When you leave? When you arrive? When you get back home? And do you need to know what you are doing to be a pilgrim? Do you need to be recognisable? Must you belong to a recognised religious tradition? Do you need to travel?

Although we often assume a pilgrim to be a combination of all these, on closer scrutiny this is not the case. A pilgrim who had reached his or her goal is not demoted to non-pilgrim status because he or she fails to survive the return journey, or decides not to return at all. On the basis that an action follows the idea, is pilgrim status conferred at the moment when the idea of pilgrimage is conceived? And if there is a physical journey involved, what happens if that journey is prevented? Is *intent* enough?<sup>50</sup> If there is a sacred site involved, or a prescribed set of actions, then presumably the pilgrim will be aware that “arrival” has taken place. But what if there is no specific destination?

And what of the anchorite, both ancient and modern, who does not physically move? Helen Martins in Nieu Bethesda is a case in point, as she struggled along her metaphorical Road to Mecca.<sup>51</sup> How do we categorise the “pilgrimages by proxy” of Mourids, who are unable to visit Senegal but whose donations enable pilgrimages by others?<sup>52</sup> What about the *gyrovagus*, and other perpetual pilgrims with no fixed goal? Outa Lappies of Prince Albert, whose entire life has been a pilgrimage, will be considered later.<sup>53</sup> In fact in recent years there has been something of a backlash against

“destination oriented” questing. In Europe the trend is called “*Der Weg ist das Ziel*” (the way is the goal). Japanese poet-pilgrim Matsuo Bashō has written something similar:

Each day is a journey,  
and the journey itself is home.<sup>54</sup>

One fixed point in being a pilgrim seems to be that of self-recognition. This seems to be a very unscientific measurement, but then so is that of a lover (as in “one proclaiming love”), and generally we do not question that self-definition, nor is there usually doubt cast against those who claim to have experienced a “conversion.” We assume that such a powerful claim would not be made unless it was true. (Fraudulent claims of love (and conversion), usually for gain, do happen but are assumed to be the exception to the rule).

Where the problem of defining a pilgrim’s identity becomes evident is in the element of outside recognition. Does a community need to recognise the pilgrim? And what community is that? What happens if such recognition is not forthcoming, as indeed is sometimes the case? Many pilgrims on the *Camino* are not “recognised” by the villagers, *refugios* and sanctuaries along the way because they are not Christian, or more specifically, not Catholic. However, many of those pilgrims recognise *themselves*, and may be accorded pilgrim status by those they meet on their travels, including priests, and by those they have left at home.<sup>55</sup> This can and does lead to confusion and sometimes resentment and disappointment.

The need to go beyond a narrow definition of pilgrim is evidenced in the case of a Japanese architect of Buddhist background who spent two years detailing every feature of the ancient St Benedict’s first monastery at Subiaco, east of Rome. His obvious love of the work and the place convinced those there that he was among the most genuine pilgrims to visit Subiaco in decades, even though he was clearly not Christian.<sup>56</sup> Once again the critical component of his pilgrimhood was his intent, his inner connection, which made him seem “authentic.”

Often pilgrims are too timid in the face of suspicion to claim pilgrims’ status for themselves. Researchers not infrequently encounter pilgrims who feel ambivalent about their actions. The resulting statements usually sound like, “Well, I’m not really religious (or spiritual), but this feels almost as if I’m on a pilgrimage.” This sort of comment is a

regular occurrence along the *Camino* and is also sometimes heard in venerable sites such as Jerusalem.

Curiously, those on so-called “secular” pilgrimages often feel no such hesitation, perhaps because there are fewer rules about defining a pilgrim, and also because modern secular pilgrimages are a feature of a contemporary lifestyle in which it is considered acceptable to do something that is personally affirming. The New Age movement’s defining characteristic appears to be a belief in the primacy of personal transformation, notes Adrian Ivakhiv.<sup>57</sup> Whether to Gorée Island in Senegal, or the football cathedrals of Europe, or the Bloomsday festival to celebrate James Joyce in Dublin on June 16<sup>th</sup>, or to sanctuaries of wells, dells, trees and gardens, to the graves of statesmen, poets and musicians and to Nelson Mandela’s cell on Robben Island and to Elvis Presley’s shrine at Graceland, such pilgrims will talk unabashedly of the moving qualities of their pilgrimage.

Added to this confusion is the observation that many pilgrims claim not to have realised their “calling” at the time; the impulse to go has simply been there, and unavoidable. Others claim not to have recognised their pilgrimage until some time after the event. This impetus, the seemingly inchoate volition of pilgrimage, has been noted by scholars on a regular basis.<sup>58</sup>

In trying to figure out how pilgrimage is different to other forms of human activity, including religious tourism, with which it shares many, though crucially not all, features (*see Chapter Three*), Simon Coleman and John Elsner suggest that it is “the constant possibility of encountering the new” which makes pilgrimage different from all other forms of ritual.<sup>59</sup> If that is true, then an art historian fulfilling a longed-for encounter with a painting in a distant art gallery should not be different from the pilgrim to Mecca or Jerusalem. Indeed, our art lover may well have experienced a mystical moment though that is not specifically the point. Equally, many pilgrims go on return journeys to the same place over and over, not to encounter something new, but to re-unite with the familiar. A wish to restore that original sense of awe, or peace, may be what they are looking for, not something “new” which may prove unsettling or disturb the original experience.

Some pilgrimages are so familiar, or so commonplace, that nothing new is expected. It may be the very sameness of the experience that is comforting. Not all pilgrimages are far-flung, though those are often written about because they tend to be

more dramatic. But other, almost daily pilgrimages are made all over the world *within* communities. Churches, *stupas*, shrines, tombs, graves, sacred wells, labyrinths, rivers, trees and stones, caves and a myriad of other features, natural and otherwise, may be a living and integral part of the communal experience. Familiarity does not always breed contempt; in communities where, for example, ancestors are regularly venerated, the very opposite may be the case.

One theme that constantly crops up in pilgrimage is the sense of “going home.” Not one’s actual dwelling, but a sense of recovery of a place in the outside world that feels like “home,” including a sense of “I should be here.” Many pilgrims describe that as one of recognition, often at a site they have not previously visited and we will consider several such examples. It has become a regular feature of the symbolic home-coming of African-Americans and other descendants of African slaves, on their return pilgrimage. Several (though not all) pilgrims I have spoken to in this context talk of a sense of having recovered something from their past, rather than an encounter with something utterly new.<sup>60</sup>

The ambiguity of pilgrimage is further realised in the fact that the “landscape” of any pilgrimage site or path may include not only physical landscape and/or architecture, but also the tradition and narratives connected to them (and that these may vary). It is this latter character, fundamentally, which gives them their remarkable persistence, even in the face of active disapproval from authorities, and also in overcoming the divisions we may try to make between sacred and secular geography.<sup>61</sup> Church authorities repeatedly tried to quell Irish pilgrimages to the mountains and megaliths, holy wells and shrines of heroes of the ancient Irish world, with little success; it has proven more expedient, at times, simply to appropriate them into a revised Christian ritual.<sup>62</sup>

Government officials attempted unsuccessfully to stop the repeated pilgrimages to the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania at which pilgrims leave ritual gifts while praying for good health, mourn the dead, the imprisoned or exiled, or give thanks for blessings in their lives. The small hill, covered with its thicket of crosses and other religious symbols, was bulldozed again and again, and was promptly covered immediately with more crosses, until President Gorbachev said, in 1985, “Let them have their hill”.<sup>63</sup> Is this dogged persistence different to the hundreds of devotees who still converge on Jim Morrison’s grave in Père-Lachaise cemetery, Paris, to leave graffiti and flowers to his

memory?<sup>64</sup> Is it not in fact part of the ancient urge to pay homage at the final resting places of those whose words, music and actions have stirred our souls, just as generations of pilgrims travel to the battlefields of Europe, to Gettysburg and to Magersfontein<sup>65</sup> (*see Chapter Four: Pilgrimages of Loss*) to honour heroes, forbears and ancestors?

Can a pilgrimage be temporary? Yes, though once again it usually requires a passage of time to establish that. Some pilgrimages “die out” as the narratives about them are lost. Some are re-established, and may even flourish long after their initial popularity – such as the *Camino*. Other places may change their meaning over time and provide a pilgrimage site for an entirely new set of pilgrims – Mapungubwe and Driekopseiland in South Africa are examples. Others, such as the Anfield pilgrimage, are one-off events, not to be repeated.

It is worth bearing these ambiguities in mind when we question the term “pilgrimage” in a modern age. We have inherited a world in which we are educated to focus on the physical and material world. “One of the reasons why religion seems irrelevant today is that many of us no longer have the sense that we are surrounded by the unseen”, writes Karen Armstrong. “Our scientific culture educates us to (instead) focus our attention on the physical and scientific world in front of us”.<sup>66</sup>

Though earlier generations of the English went to church to understand our relationship with the earth, they may now pay homage at the gardening shrines of Kew and Sissinghurst. China, on the other hand, prefers the *uncultivated* state; “nature” or wilderness, such as the Three Gorges of the Yangzi River or the sea of clouds around *Huangshan*, “Yellow Mountain.”, are preferred.<sup>67</sup> In South Africa, “going to the bush”, or *veld*, is a metaphor for leaving behind the “impure” urban areas, and returning to the purity of the wilderness, where real values become tangible again and that original link between humans and the sacred earth is restored (*see Chapter Three*).<sup>68</sup> Certain places where this ancient connection is believed to be pre-eminent have become modern pilgrim destinations for those who wish to walk in the footpaths of the ancestors.<sup>69</sup> Many of Robert Coon’s “twelve sacred sites” on earth are natural features, such as mountains and islands (*see Sacred Geography*).

Further, it is worth noting that the word “holy” and “heal” are closely connected. A visit to a sacred site, especially a shrine with a relic that offers intercession and/or healing, has long defined a form of pilgrimage, and in earlier times many of these

were associated with water. One of the most famous is Lourdes, but today pilgrimages may be undertaken in the hope that the journey itself will bring healing and wholeness.<sup>70</sup>

Many secular pilgrimages today have a ritualistic quality that echoes ancient tradition; the Dean of Canterbury, the Very Rev. Robert Willis, calls this part of the search for “blessing and enrichment”. In pilgrimage, body, mind and spirit come together in an individual quest, he says. “Jesus was always walking, walking, walking – all the way to Calvary. Any journey that adds a mini-jigsaw piece to the puzzle of you can be a mini-pilgrimage”.<sup>71</sup>

If we do not recall a time when our world was not bifurcated into sacred and secular, then we inevitably run the risk of our definitions being incomplete. Also, pilgrimages cannot be dismissed as *not* pilgrimages on the basis of culturally-bound, rigid criteria. Nothing, not even language, remains static. If a word no longer adequately defines the set of actions or concepts it was designed for, then one of two things needs to happen. We either need a new word, or we need a new definition of the old one.

### *Towards a New Understanding*

Would a new definition of pilgrimage come into conflict with the old one, or else infer that there is a need for separating the old from the new? I think not. The words “pilgrimage” and “pilgrim” perfectly describe what is going on today, which is what has always been going on: *humans engaged in a literal or metaphoric journey, with an urgent and profound sense of purpose, which offers a sense of transformation or completion.*

That seems a rather long definition although it at least has the merit of emphasising the dynamic, of describing a process (as all pilgrimages are). Jill Dubisch, who spent much time studying the shrine on Tinos, thinks that “the everyday world is altered by such an encounter”.<sup>72</sup> That is the point about “transformation” or “completion.” Perhaps a successful pilgrim is not one who reaches a “goal”, a sacred place, but one whose world is changed because of the quest.

Those who prefer short definitions may be partial to Ambrose Pierce’s description of a pilgrim, “a traveller that is taken seriously”.<sup>73</sup> But like most short definitions, it is too ambiguous. Pilgrims need not necessarily be “travellers”, and *who* should take them seriously? We are back to ambiguity again.

Further, I suggest that the “measure” of pilgrimage is *intent*; if it is the person’s *intention* to be on a pilgrimage, then that should be the yardstick whether or not it “looks” like a pilgrimage. I draw on C. Bawa Yamba’s study of the “permanent pilgrims” of the Sudan: they may have been stationary for several generations but as long as their *intention* is to continue to Mecca, they are considered by themselves and those around them as pilgrims. Also useful in understanding the importance of “intent” is Jill Dubisch’s work on the shrine at Tinos, Greece.<sup>74</sup> If pilgrims have made a vow to visit the shrine then even if circumstances delay the journey (on one occasion, for sixteen years) they are still considered to be pilgrims-in-waiting.

The devotional frame of mind that may or may not accompany pilgrimage has always varied, even within the most pious rituals, though it is true to say that whatever form of pilgrimage is taking place, it remains a journey of the heart. Unpredictable and inexplicable, irresistible and compulsive, pilgrimage remains annoyingly imprecise for anyone who wishes to neatly corset it.

To further emphasise the importance of intent, let me suggest the following: a couple, man and woman, dressed simply and efficiently make a journey to Jerusalem. What are they doing? Are they getting married, shopping for food or household furnishings, visiting family, attending a show, completing a medical check-up, attending a funeral, taking photographs for a magazine or choosing a venue for a new restaurant - or a variety of other mundane or even dangerous motives? Jerusalem is a pre-eminent pilgrimage destination, yet that may not be the reason for their visit. The only way we can know their intent is to get evidence directly from them, irrespective of whether or not they “look and act like pilgrims.”

The difficulty with earlier anthropological studies of pilgrimage is that they were usually measures of the outer journey, not that essential ingredient of all pilgrimages, the inner one. The problem, of course, is that although “inwards” may be a direction, it is so difficult to measure. It is far simpler to describe actions that are visible, such as women crawling up the steps of the Virgin’s shrine at Tinos, or carrying a religious effigy along a prescribed path. Pilgrims participating in those events can be included without difficulty in a definition of pilgrimage. But if intent is excluded, then so is a huge range of pilgrim experiences that may take place in isolation, or that do not fit the current standard definition of (religious) pilgrimage, such as those pilgrimages which

occur in what is described as the secular world, and those pilgrims who do not belong to or believe in any readily identifiable religion.

Whether a pilgrimage is termed religious, spiritual, cultural, emotional or secular, I submit that is of far less import than whether or not that pilgrim's intent is to fulfil an impelling journey of the utmost essence and importance, even if he or she cannot exactly explain why. In one sense at least, that of personal claim, pilgrimage lies beyond the reach of dispute. If the term "pilgrimage" is not recognisably more flexible today, it runs the risk of causing offence to those who are pilgrims but who are not officially defined as such. The words "pilgrim" and "pilgrimage" should not have exclusive ownership.

Though Simon Coleman suggests that a single definition of pilgrimage does not matter very much, he is talking about scholars, not pilgrims, to whom it may matter very much indeed. Cultural imperialism is not a past master; it has the robust persistence of a weed. We need an inclusive approach in order to make way for a more accurate understanding of pilgrimage.

### *Motives for Pilgrimage: A Wandering Star?*

Our nature lies in movement;  
complete calm is death.

(Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*).

Even less understood than a definition of pilgrimage is the reason why we do it at all. At the very least we need to grasp the enormously long history of pilgrimage on every continent and in every civilisation, and to consider that it may be one of our oldest and most innate forms of behaviour. It is inaccurate to dismiss pilgrimage as something just done in "olden times" (usually meaning the Classical or Middle Ages in Europe) – it is far older.

Luigi Tomasi has written of the *homo viator*, the figure featured in all cultures who is constantly on a journey in search of the sacred. Pilgrimage, he suggests, originated in a desire to travel that was already manifest in "primitive [sic] societies, subsequently in ancient ones, then in modern ones, and finally in the current societal conditions of late modernity."<sup>75</sup>

But the origins of pilgrimage may lie even further back: it has been suggested by anthropologists that it may be rooted in the nomadism of early humans and their

ancestors. We know from texts, as well as from archaeological records of even earlier eras, that pilgrimage is one of humanity's oldest habits. This is significant, because it means that patterns of special journeys were established despite a newly settled lifestyle in our earliest history.

The obvious but not always stated point about our propensity to migrate, to participate in nomadic behaviour, is that it was done out of a need to be somewhere else for our healthy continuance. If our ancestors had not migrated, once they had pinned their hopes to highly mobile food sources (animals), they would have been in danger of starving or been too frail from hunger to defend their territories against invaders. I am only suggesting that there is something in our evolutionary makeup which gives rise to pilgrimage, and that it may be seen as a healthy process, rather than an unhealthy or "superstitious" trait that is now unnecessary, rather like a spiritual appendix.

It is noticeable that babies sleep peacefully as long as their mother keeps moving.<sup>76</sup> *Wanderlust* is a concept that is both familiar and accepted. Spring and summer sees hordes of Europeans pouring into the forests and mountains; some 2 million Germans still engage in such excursions every year.<sup>77</sup> South Africans talk about the need to go "back to the bush", and participate in great coastal migrations in summer. Gypsies, or *travellers* as they are known in Ireland, are almost continually on the move.

Such a strong urge can be irresistible. Literature abounds with examples of those who have obeyed the call and gone off to climb mountains, traverse deserts, cross frozen wastes, sail seas and bash through jungles. We actually admire them. When queried about motives, their response is usually the completely inscrutable "because it's there". Yet the compulsion is not trivial. It prompts them to take risks and encounter dangers in order to fulfil their longings - just like pilgrimages. Author and outdoorsman Jon Krakauer describes this behaviour as "driven by a variety of lust that supplants sexual desire." It is a yearning, he suggests, too powerful to be quenched even when risky.<sup>78</sup>

Relics and artefacts from previous ages, such as stone circles, barrows and sacred caves, indicate that pilgrimage is a habit older than historical records are able to recount. There is ample evidence that pre-historic people, and our earlier ancestors, gathered together at particular spots to do more than merely continue an unbroken pattern of subsistence survival. Beautiful paintings, pecked drawings and engravings, the laborious movement and positioning of stones, some of massive weight, and the creation

of ritual rooms or corners of early human dwellings and burial centres, as well as graves filled with ornaments and flowers, indicate to us a very long record in sacred journeys.

There is a sense that this is how we find reality. Paul Shepherd writes: “To the desert go prophets and hermits; through deserts go pilgrims and exiles. Here the leaders of the great religions have sought the therapeutic and spiritual values of retreat, not to escape but to find reality”.<sup>79</sup> The underlying reason for this, I think, may be hope for transformation. They hope that somewhere along the way meaning will be revealed to them, or they will begin to understand what is happening to them, and how to cope with it. This is one of the most ancient reasons for sacred travel, from evoking oracles to visiting a shaman or visiting a healing spring.

The motivation for pilgrimage can be extremely varied. Pilgrimages of veneration were certainly among the primary motivations for early pilgrimage, but there have always been a host of other reasons. These may include the fulfilment of vows and promises, the renewal of faith and demonstrations of thanks. Some have seen it as “walking meditation” and reflection; others do it to expiate sins, request intercessions or to pray for others. Healing is a strong motive. One man went because his parents, both invalids, asked him to go in their name. A few have gone after becoming priests or ministers or as part of the process of dedicating their lives to a religious commitment, while others make a pilgrimage of initiation to welcome adulthood. Pilgrimages may stem out of loss, a need for recovery or reconciliation, or even a sense of outrage. Agricultural pilgrimages and those held to mark other moments of sacred time are frequent. Some pilgrims have made the journey many times. Some simply aren’t sure why they are doing it.

Nancy Frey’s research on the *Camino* divulged to her that pilgrims wished on some level for transformation, either of themselves or society. For this reason, she has described the modern pilgrimage as “a journey of the suffering soul, rather than a journey of the suffering body”. Part of the *Camino*’s enormous appeal as a symbol is its *flexibility* to accommodate various interpretations, and yet retain its basic structure.<sup>80</sup>

There are less elevated reasons for pilgrimage too, like Chaucer’s Wife of Bath who had “been in Galicia at Seynt Jame.” It has filled a need for companionship and social fashion, commerce, opportunities for marriage and even crime. Pilgrims could, especially in the past, be a tough bunch.<sup>81</sup>

Eade and Sallnow point out that sacred shrines may operate not only as trade centres, but also as cultural and inter-cultural bazaars and play an extremely important role in the diffusion and re-diffusion of all kinds of ideas and practices. They may thus contribute to the spread of unorthodox, not to say dissident customs, concurrently supporting and challenging the official cult.<sup>82</sup>

When Jesus was 12 years old, his family went on a pilgrimage “as usual” to Jerusalem, a city which was to become one of the most established, and contested, pilgrimage sites in history. By the seventh century, the “holy journey” was such common practice that pilgrimage became the customary thing for a young Frankish noble to complete, not very different to the “Grand Tour”, that “gap year” of Victorian gentlemen, and for similar reasons: to literally broaden their horizons, and to enoble the spirit (though not everyone agreed that it did). We have already noted that Luther suspected pilgrimages; both he and Calvin called for bans on them. But Thomas Cook, a Baptist minister and social reformer, specialised in morally uplifting tours, little knowing that his name would one day be synonymous with brisk travel.

### ***Baby Boomers and the Self***

A characteristic of our modern age is that we are a “generation of seekers”, struggling to find answers from saving the whale to saving our souls. If humankind has always been so, the difference today is perhaps that it is much more an individual pursuit. Wade Clark Roof writes that “members of this [baby boomer] generation are asking questions about the meaning of their lives. Religious and spiritual themes are surfacing in a rich variety of ways – in Eastern religions, in evangelical and fundamentalist teachings, in mysticism and New Age movements, in Goddess worship and other ancient rituals, in the mainline churches and synagogues, in Twelve-step recovery groups, in concern about the environment, in holistic health, and in personal and social transformation.”<sup>83</sup> They move freely across religious boundaries. Many combine elements from various traditions to create their own personal, tailor-made systems. Choice, so much a part of life for this generation, now expresses itself in dynamic and fluent religious styles.<sup>84</sup>

If we are to understand pilgrimage in the modern era, we need to bear this in mind. Individual choice is a prime concern in the Western world (though there has

probably never been a community that will allow the individual full expression). Of all the primates, humans appear to be the only ones whose social desire is bifurcated. We have on the one hand a need for company and a supporting community, yet, on the other hand, a longing at times for solitude. It may well be that pilgrimage is one way of addressing that tension. To become a pilgrim is to *authentically* withdraw, in part, from daily life, with all its demands. It signals to the community that the pilgrim is devoting time to the inner road, not to escape reality but to find it.

A spiritual search may describe what is missing, rather than specifying what it hopes will be found in an age when there are no longer jobs for life and the traditional institutions of church, family and community appear to be breaking down, says Mick Brown. “It is a symptom of a disenchantment with the values of materialism, and a weariness of science which has stripped all mystery out of existence.”<sup>85</sup>

Modern humans live in a desacralized cosmos, wrote Mircea Eliade, very different to the world of “the nomadic hunters and the sedentary cultivators” who live in a sacralized cosmos, manifested in the world around them. Eliade saw that “the road and walking” can be transfigured into religious values, and every road can symbolize the “road of life”, and any walk a “pilgrimage”, a peregrination to the Center of the World, for they are walking towards the “supreme truth.”<sup>86</sup>

While churches in Europe are increasingly bare (in a population of 60 million in England, the number of people who turn up on Sundays has dropped below one million), pilgrimages are on the increase. In 1993, when the feast of St James fell on a Sunday and was declared Compostellan Holy Year, 99,436 pilgrims walked the whole length of the 500-mile *Camino* route, and about four and a half million pilgrims arrived by motorized transport. In pilgrimage there is a reciprocal relationship; the pilgrim not only takes, but also gives, and in so doing, engages in a dialogue with the object of veneration, usually without a mediator. Thus the ritual is a dynamic one, which evokes passion in a passive era.

The post-WWII generations have been more reluctant to accept authority than their forbears. The cult of questioning might have been considered disrespectful in their grandparents’ generation; today it is seen as a bedrock of personal growth. “The mind must be free from all authority – no followers, disciples and patterns...nobody can give guidance to another. Only you can do that, but you have to stand completely alone.” This was advice not from a New Age advocate, but from one of the most celebrated – and

disillusioned - gurus of the twentieth century, Krishnamurti, who lived in California during the early 1930s, but grew tired of the “circus” of followers who would not think for themselves, and of those he saw as charlatans who exploited them.<sup>87</sup> “When a guru says he knows, he does *not*...whether they are Eastern or Western gurus, doubt what they are saying”, Krishnamurti warned, advice that has not often been followed.<sup>88</sup>

There is a sense in which many in modern society feel that religions are no longer necessary to make us “good”: atheists and agnostics believe in ethical values as much as anyone else, and devotees of orthodox religions sometimes behave very badly indeed. But though that has made some very suspicious of orthodox practice, it has not displaced what many writers have described as a “yearning for the sacred.”

This yearning may manifest itself in unusual ways. Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, is now associated by many spiritual seekers with redemption, rebirth and the process of “moving to a higher plane.” Professor Angela Zito of New York University suggests that Groundhog Day (held on February 2, halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, when the small creature is meant to forecast the weather) illustrates “the Buddhist notion of samsara, the continuing cycle of rebirth that individuals try to escape”. Michael Bronski said: “The groundhog is clearly the resurrected Christ, the ever-hopeful renewal of life at springtime, at a time of pagan-Christian holidays. And when I say that the groundhog is Jesus, I say that with great respect”.<sup>89</sup>

Though some may accuse the above example of being an over-eager attempt at syncretism, it seems to work for the people concerned. David Hare reminds us that “we no longer expect society to validate our beliefs. Our only values are private values.”<sup>90</sup> If we are no longer seeking permission to pursue spiritual or, at any rate, deeply felt beliefs, then there is no reason why our cultural environment should not provide a rich template of resonance.

For some, that resonance increasingly looks like the Great Outdoors. Nature has become a sacred concept (rather than a wild place waiting to be tamed), much as it did in that other age of disenchantment, the Enlightenment. The Wilderness, as we shall see, has become the new Cathedral.

It becomes increasingly apparent that the motives for pilgrimage are wide-ranging and dynamic. They may be traditional, orthodox, judicial, penitential, transitional, initiatory; of healing, reconciliation, recovery, reclamation and thanksgiving.

Perpetual, protest, metaphorical, so-called “secular” and virtual pilgrimages are thriving. There are pilgrimages of obligation, acknowledgement and the fulfilment of a vow, such as pilgrimages of barter. But in the end, every pilgrim faces an unknown place, and faces it alone.<sup>91</sup> Though they may walk, hike, ride, row, climb, crawl, swim, run, drive, sail or fly, the most deeply significant journey is the inner one.

Is there, then, anything we can say about pilgrimage that is absolutely universal? I think that it is perhaps an *act of engagement*. It is the very opposite of the disassociative state of meditation, even though pilgrimage is also in its essence an inner journey. The pilgrim, whether attending a sacred shrine, venerating an ancestor, absorbed in healing rituals, protesting or reconciling, an anchorite in a cell or stranger in a strange land, fulfilling an obligation or bartering with a saint or god/dess, climbing a sacred mountain or tending the grave of a lost loved one, petitioning for fertility or arriving at a place that feels like “home,” all are acts of engagement. It is in the ritual of engaging the outer world of significance that we encounter the inner world of meaning.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE PERSISTENCE OF PILGRIMAGE

The urge to make a pilgrimage is both ancient and universal. Buddhists go to Bodh Gaya where the Buddha attained enlightenment; Jews bow before the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Hindus bathe in the sacred Ganges and visit the seven *moksapuris* (sacred cities). The Christian tradition draws the faithful to the Holy Land, Rome, Santiago de Compostela, Fatima and Lourdes, while Muslims are required to hajj to Mecca. The Chinese visit their sacred mountains, especially Mount Tai, as do the Japanese, especially Mount Fuji and Mount Ontake. Antipolo in South East Asia receives thousands every week. Greeks asked for counsel at Delphi, and cures from Asclepius at Epidaurus. Pre-Colombian Americans travelled to Quetzal, Cuzco and Titicaca, native Americans visit Cahokia, Illinois, and Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. Australian aborigines journey along their “songlines” to Uluru (formerly Ayres Rock).

In Africa, Ethiopians flock to Axum, Egyptians once made their way to Sikket’s shrine at Busbastis, to Luxor and Heliopolis; today they visit their iconic ancestors in the Valleys of Kings and of Queens. Zimbabweans travel to Mutemwa for intercession and millions of Zionists bus to Moria in the northern part of South Africa each year at “Passover” while others return to Mapungubwe and Driekopseiland to reclaim their ancestors and their past.<sup>1</sup>

Then there are contested landscapes that hold more than one meaning. Jerusalem speaks to many faiths and cultures. Ethiopians puzzle over the devout Rastafarians who visit them (in 2005, to celebrate 60 years of Bob Marley’s revelation). Stonehenge means one thing to historians and another to Wiccans. Sodo in Haiti attracts devotees of Voodoo and Catholicism – and both. Sedona, in Arizona, is both a major centre of New Age mysticism and the home of 27 Christian churches, the more conservative of which regard the New Agers as “satanic.”<sup>2</sup> The “sacred island” of Iona is celebrated by Christians and Celts. Ireland’s sacred mountain, Croag Patrick, is climbed by both Christians and those who celebrate an earlier, Celtic belief system as well as New Age adherents; this multiplicity of meanings is duplicated at Glastonbury. Sacred wells, rivers, trees, grottos and caves, and mountains are still visited by the devout, in a conscious or unconscious hearkening back – or forward - to nature rites. It is quite possible for a pilgrimage to satisfy many agendas.

Some religions eradicate any ambivalence about belief systems by simply refusing entry to the sacred areas. Only Muslims may visit the Ka'ba in Mecca: for centuries, no non-Muslim was allowed entrance to Petra, in Jordan, and thereby access to the altar of Haroun (Aaron). Petra is also an example of a "cross-over site", for it contains the High Altar of Sacrifice of the Nabataeans, as well as Roman and Crusader religious sites.

Entrance to the Adyton, the sacred chamber at Delphi, was limited to the Oracle alone. Choir screens were placed in the major cathedrals in England to separate the congregation, with their untutored theology, from the clergy; most of the sacred rites, such as preparation for mass, were performed out of sight. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies, an area prohibited to ordinary Jews, as was the temple room topping the ziggurats of Mesopotamia. Sacred caves in the Free State, South Africa, are routinely roped off and casual visitors discouraged. No non-Zionist may approach Moria in South Africa except by special invitation; visit is carefully controlled.<sup>3</sup> These restrictions remove anxiety that holy places may be polluted by infidels.

There were pilgrimages sites of great popularity which are now virtually ignored; Kala' at Simaan in Syria, where Simeon the Stylite (390-459AD) sat on a pillar about 20 metres high for 30 years and was credited with numerous miracles, attracted bigger crowds than Jerusalem in its day. With few exceptions, only tourists now visit Delos, a great religious centre in the days of Classical Greece, and for the most part that applies to the Acropolis too, though Mount Olympus is still the site of the highly ritualised lighting of the "sacred" Olympic flame every four years. A temple to Jupiter used to exist at the top of the great St Bernard's Pass which pierces the Alps; a similar temple to Minerva existed at the top of Assisi in Italy, now built over (though travellers can walk the old Roman streets underneath the present building).

Pilgrims once travelled to Pisa to walk on what was literally, in their minds, "holy ground"; Crusaders' ships returning from the Holy Land filled up with soil from Calvary from which was created the *Camposanto*, a cloistered cemetery in which the rich and famous could be buried next to Pisa's cathedral. Today, tourists flock to photograph themselves in front of the Leaning Tower, but the *Camposanto* remains cool and deserted, except for a few "cultural" visitors.

In Ireland, a huge crowd was recorded in 1877 as taking part in the Inishcealtra pilgrimage, with flotillas of boats, villages of tents and crowds of merrymakers; such

jolly affairs were crushed by the church, though in recent years, St Patrick's Well at Mauméan, in Connemara, has been revived.<sup>4</sup> The great pilgrimage sites of the ancient New World either stand silent, except for visitors, or are lost. Stone circles were places of sacred rituals all over the British Isles, Ireland and Brittany, yet many are now seen as nuisances by farmers, such as Long Meg and her Daughters, in the Lake District.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most popular pilgrimages in Britain was to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, where in 1061AD it was believed that the Virgin appeared to the Lady of the Manor, commanding that a replica of her house in Nazareth be built. A priory was later built on the site, close to wells of water with miracle powers. It was considered one of Europe's most important pilgrimage sites until it was destroyed in 1538 during the Reformation purges by Henry VIII, who had himself earlier visited the shrine. Today it is once again a premier pilgrimage destination (*see below*).

Other pilgrimages are of relatively recent origin. In Japan, one of the biggest is that of Tenrikyo, headquartered in the town of Tenri, not far from Osaka. Here in 1838, according to Tenrikyo belief, "God the Parent" spoke through the medium of Nakayama Miki, the nineteenth century peasant woman who is the founder of the religion. She became not just the prophetess of the deity but a powerful figure of worship in her own right, and is paid as much homage as devotees do to "God the Parent." Pilgrims report that their visits are spiritually recharging, a frequent claim amongst pilgrims of all persuasions who hope for transformation or completion.<sup>6</sup>

The Hill Cumorah is one of the holiest sites for Mormons, and eventually most Latter Day Saints who are able to make a pilgrimage to it. Although it measures only a couple of hundred feet, it is the highest feature in the vicinity and is adorned with a statue of Moroni and an American flag. It was on Cumorah, about 180 years ago, that Joseph Smith dug up the gold plates that launched the Mormon faith.<sup>7</sup>

In South Africa, both the Nazareth Baptist Church and the Zionist Christian Church date to the early twentieth century. The traditional sacred trek of the Shembe, to the Nhlankazi Mountain in KwaZulu-Natal, dates back to 1913; the annual exodus by millions to Moria by Zionists at Easter, or "Passover", is one of the world's largest annual pilgrimages, when more than two million Zionists travel to their "Holy City."<sup>8</sup> Further, some Zionist faith-healers, such as Ma-Radebe, established their own centres of pilgrimages; her home drew hundreds of pilgrims daily to "the Mother of Cancele", for holy water that was potentised by her blessing.<sup>9</sup>

More recently, the Bosnian village of Medjugorje, near Dubrovnik, has been visited by hordes of pilgrims since 1981, when the Virgin Mary appeared to a group of six young visionaries, imploring for peace. And localized pilgrimage sites continue to pop up in abundance. In September, 2004, a fibreglass statue of Christ washed up in the Rio Grande; it attracts up to 100 pilgrims a day. It was found by the US Border Patrol agents and is known as “The Christ of the Undocumented.”<sup>10</sup>

Also there are those personal pilgrimages which the Western world usually finds difficult to decipher. What of the pilgrims who trekked to see the *Mahatma* (“Great Soul”) Gandhi, (a term first given to him by Westerners)? And in 2005, at least 100,000 pilgrims from Nepal and India flocked to a dense forest in south-eastern Nepal to venerate a youth who is considered to be a new Buddha. Ram Bahadur Bomjon, fifteen years old, is said to have been meditating without food or drink for six months; witnesses claimed they had seen light emanating from the teenager’s forehead.<sup>11</sup> The concept of a living holy man is commonplace in India, yet the West remains nervous of it. We prefer our saints dead. But clear anomalies continue: there are Jews in Eastern Europe who annually visit a “rebbe” of special holiness and do not undertake any major enterprises without his blessing. And of course, there is the Pope, the ultimate “holy man” for all Catholics.

We have not even begun to address so-called “secular” pilgrimages.

Alexander Moore refers to the Walt Disney World amusement park, “whose form is borrowed from the pilgrimage.” Traditional pilgrimages, he says, have three parts; leaving home and therefore separating from ordinary life, entering the sacred precinct during a stay of transition, and returning back to the world. Also, traditional pilgrimage centres evoke the “supernatural, or at least mythic-heroic pasts. Walt Disney does both.”<sup>12</sup> The “playful” pilgrimage is particularly appropriate to a secular, technologized society in which transition is constant, he writes; by “playful” he means “grand play”, or ritualized action.

Disney executives are very aware of the visceral, personal connection the theme parks have created for their fans. The fact that it is common to see people smiling and enjoying themselves is cited, an escape from the harsh, ordinary world. Disney is a place that is safe, secure, “innocent” and therefore pure. Drunken and obscene behaviour is swiftly dealt with, as it “inappropriate dress” or any aspect which the park’s executives believe will give offense and is part of Disney’s “family values” image.<sup>13</sup> Thus it

becomes one of the few places in the West that appears to emulate a “sacred” community, where individual indiscretions are not tolerated. Janet Wasko said that part of Disney’s success stemmed from understanding the “sacred” role the company has played in childhood and family life.<sup>14</sup>

(In a curious development, a Disney-like Bible-themed in Israel is in the process of being planned, next to the Sea of Galilee. It will be interesting to see whether this “virtual” pilgrimage will attract more visitors than the historical places themselves).<sup>15</sup>

Here is some advice from the Turners: “Each pilgrimage, of any length, is vulnerable to the history of its period and must come to terms with shifts of political geography. Pilgrimage is more responsive to social change and popular moods than liturgical ritual.”<sup>16</sup> That seems not only a reasonable but a demonstrable assertion.

Pilgrimages, particularly those to sacred sites, invariably begin in small numbers. As we have seen, over time the numbers may fluctuate or die away altogether. But it is also a truism that once established at grassroots level, pilgrimage is very difficult to stamp out. Local authorities initially boarded up the grotto at Lourdes in an attempt to keep persistent pilgrims away. The Hill of Crosses in Lithuania survived all attempts by the Russian occupiers to destroy it until USSR President Gorbachev bowed to the inevitable. As regimes change, there can be hostility to the people paying tribute at the graves of former heroes; it does not halt the practice. Many Celtic pilgrimages were continuously prohibited until the Church incorporated some of them in their annual rites.

Pilgrimage is remarkably persistent.

### ***The Global Phenomenon***

It is to a degree understandable that there exists a popular belief, notably in Protestant-dominated countries, that pilgrimage seems to have disappeared. Besides the annual hajj to Mecca, media coverage often seems to concentrate mainly on “crank” news items much beloved by the press, such as the story about pilgrims who visit a site in the Bronx, built in 1939 to resemble the famous grotto at Lourdes. A stream of tap water completes the replica. Today, devotees visit the site to drink or bathe body parts in the “sacred spring” while devout taxi drivers use it to give their vehicles a “spiritual car wash.”<sup>17</sup> A recent example is that of the “Buddha Boy”, who had allegedly not eaten or drunk water in six months and who was being visited by “hundreds of thousands” of

devotees in Nepal.<sup>18</sup> It is reasonable, in reading such reports, to suspect that they are being printed as examples of naïve or superstitious traditions.<sup>19</sup>

But rituals do not always confor to notions of propriety. Strawberry Field, the children's home immortalised in the Beatles eponymous hit, became a shrine for their fans who left flowers on the distinctive red wrought-iron gates and graffiti on the walls outside. They were dismayed when the home closed early in 2005. "It's a pilgrimage site for many Beatles fans", said spokesperson for the British Beatles Fan Club Dave Bedford.<sup>20</sup> The Beatles embarked on their own unforeseen pilgrimage when they visited their guru in India, challenging orthodox Western belief systems of the time.<sup>21</sup>

In the secular West, we have empty churches and full sports cathedrals. Some fans arrange to have their ashes scattered in their club's stadium after they die. Others visit stadiums even when there is no match - and not for their usually dismal architectural charms. Stadiums, like cathedrals, are where crowds gather to glimpse a higher beauty, to feel part of something larger than themselves, to feel passion and belonging.<sup>22</sup>

Claims of pilgrimage to the football cathedrals, and other sporting venues, should be taken seriously. I am not suggesting such events be dismissed. On the contrary, they form a pattern of many millennia, that of people sacralizing their locality, of their finding spiritual meaning within the world immediately surrounding them. Instead of decrying them, we should be wondering why they are successfully filling a void which, traditionally, religions satisfied.

In the aftermath of the tragedy of Hillsborough in the United Kingdom on April 15, 1989, when 94 football supporters were crushed to death as millions watched on television, the mourning people of Liverpool flocked not only to the local cathedrals and churches for solace, but in even greater numbers to Anfield, the home ground of Liverpool Football Club. In what has become known as the "Anfield Pilgrimage", more than one million people had filed through the grounds by the end of the week, twice the population of the city.<sup>23</sup> When the Director of Liverpool Football Club said firmly that "Football is not a religion, it's an important part of our life. And here in Liverpool there is no real gap between religion and life. They go together. That includes football,"<sup>24</sup> he was articulating an ancient theme, that there should not, and need not be, a contradistinction between "religion" and "real life."

The death of football icon George Best in November, 2005, further illustrated the power of the "beautiful game" and its capacity to provide a "home" for its fans. Best's

funeral was a quasi-State ritual in Belfast, marked by tens of thousands of mourners who had made their pilgrimage to honour him in bitter weather, lining the route to the cemetery. Though Western thought has implied a bifurcated world of sacred and secular occupations, even today many cultures do not recognize any such distinction, and indeed, may condemn it. Though perhaps practical for ideological and governance reasons, this separation is essentially an artificial one created by us, and in times of stress this may be revealed.

I hope I have also emphasised that pilgrims do not need to travel far, nor for that matter, do they need to be “liminal”, in order to be accorded their status. Pilgrims of all kinds, I submit, are doing something entirely normal within the human ambit of the modern world. It would therefore be appropriate, at this point, to investigate whether this is so, if pilgrims and pilgrimages actually do form part of a broad, indeed global, phenomenon today.

The intention behind the following description of current pilgrimages is to provide a useful, though by no means exhaustive, inventory of sacred journeys which are undertaken in every part of the world today, in different religious traditions and cultures, and which have appeared at different times in history in response to a myriad of events.

These examples also serve to highlight differences in intent and observance while nevertheless falling firmly in each case within a domestic tradition of understanding pilgrimage. By contrasting the similarities and differences we are able to examine how broad pilgrimage behaviour is, with a wide range of multiple meanings.

### ***Mother Ganges***

The Sanskrit word for a place of pilgrimage is *tirtha* (from the root “to cross over”). Apart from the primary meaning of crossing over water, it also has a symbolic meaning; the intersection of two realms, the sacred and the profane.<sup>25</sup> The connection with water remains important, as it has been associated with religious sites, and rituals, throughout time. At places of pilgrimage where there is no natural water supply, artificial ponds are frequently cut, because physical cleansing of devotees prior to Hindu rituals is important, as it is to Muslims. For Hindus, the great river Ganges is not merely a supplier of essential water, but *Mother Ganges*, sacred and central to Hindu belief.<sup>26</sup>

If size counts, then the single largest religious event on earth is the one held at the *Prayag*, also known as the *Sangam*, both words meaning “confluence.” This convergence, of the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical, or else long-since-dried-up Saraswati – there is argument about whether it ever existed, but that is not the point – happens at the *Prayag*, which is also referred to as the *Triveni*, “the confluence of three.” Every 12 years, when “Jupiter is in Aquarius,” at least 12 million devout Hindus gather to immerse themselves.<sup>27</sup>

For Hindus, prayers and offerings are valuable anywhere, but they are especially so at a *tirtha*, where the divine appears more readily accessible. This sense of sacred meeting points, between this world and the spiritual realm, is common to all religions; some places are more authentic and therefore special, than others. Such places are highly charged, as is in the case of mountains, in China, Japan and Tibet for instance, which are the nexus of the sacred and the secular worlds.

It is commonly pointed out that “God”, or the sacred sector, is everywhere. This has never had the slightest effect on the popular belief, worldwide, that some places are imbued with a special holiness, either through sacred geography or because of historical associations with holy and/or heroic figures.

Gangotri is revered as the spiritual source of the Ganges. Sacred, too, are the seven *moksapuris* (cities which bestow liberation on pilgrims), as are the seven holy rivers that wash away sins and purify, i.e. *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, *Sarasvati*, *Narmada*, *Kaveri*, *Godavari* and *Sindhu*. In north India, the practice of pilgrimage involves completing a “holy circuit” within the region of a main centre. In visiting *Gaya*, for example, pilgrims can choose from several options consisting of five, eight, 35 or 38 stations on the journey.

The grandest of all pilgrimage circuits is the one that covers the entire length of the Ganges, beginning on one bank at the source, travelling to the mouth, then returning up the other bank to the source again.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most important pilgrimages involving the Ganges is that of “Sinking Flowers,” undertaken by (usually male)<sup>29</sup> relatives to sink the bones (referred to as flowers) of their departed into the sacred river. In this ritual, death and pilgrimage which have always been closely associated, are even more intimately linked. Modern transport has made it possible for this pilgrimage to take place before the traditional “twelfth-day feast” after a death has occurred, though postponement of the submersion of the bones is still perfectly acceptable.<sup>30</sup>

Immersion of bones in the Ganges is done to give peace to the soul, as well as “deliverance” or “release,” writes Ann Gold. The “flowers” are, after cremation, inserted into a special pouch, usually red, and usually placed around the neck of the pilgrim, who on arrival at the Ganges removes them, bathes them with river water, and mixes them into the sandy bottom with the prayer, “Be royally seated here and reach the spot of Vaikunth. We are happily sending you off.” The “flowers” are not lifeless bones but souls who are aware of everything that happens.

There is nevertheless an awareness, says Gold, that it is “better” to take your mother and father to the Ganges to bathe while they are still alive. But the “sinking flowers” ceremony remains important for both fulfillment of duty in the eyes of the public, as well as guarding against potential misfortune (for example, the spirit of a dead first spouse should be pacified, by sinking the flowers, before a second spouse is installed).

An essential part of the pilgrimage is the return home bearing a pot of sacred Ganges water obtained only after the sinking flowers ritual is completed. This “living water” is taken back to the village, where it is distributed among the community at the Celebration of Ganga, symbolizing the reciprocal relationship that Hindus have with Mother Ganges, who gives life and receives it back again.

### ***Footsteps of the Buddha***

Unlike the sacred sites of Hinduism, which are often associated with myth, the stations of Buddhist pilgrimage in India follow the footsteps of an actual historical figure, Siddhartha Gautama (563-483BC), the son of an aristocratic Hindu chief, sometimes referred to as a king. He was protected from the “cruel world” as a child but an encounter with the harsh realities of life outside his compound “enlightened” him. He abandoned his family and the rarified air of the palace, and walked out into the world in search of Truth. His progress from renunciation to realization, from enlightenment to Nirvana, can be charted on a physical map.

They include *Bodh Gaya*, where the Buddha reached enlightenment; the deer park at *Sarnath* where he preached his first sermon; and the remote village that was the lonely site of his death. These have come to form a sacred geography, one that the pilgrim encounters during a physical *and* spiritual journey. Occasionally the pilgrim may

stop for prayer. At other times, he/she may encounter physical obstacles that must be overcome.

Despite his known opposition to pilgrim sites, *stupas* and shrines have been constructed at virtually every major locality connected with the Buddha's life.<sup>31</sup> By 412AD Fa-hsien had documented an enormous cult of relics spread all the way across the Buddhist world, fostered by the popularity of pilgrimages and the "cult of traces" in ancient India. Followers continue to visit his known habitats; sometimes as devotees, at other times as family members picnicking in the shade, circulating the *stupas* as well as snapping photographs of tame deer.<sup>32</sup>

Outside India, the best-known of the Buddha's relics is in the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka. In an inner chamber one of the Buddha's teeth is preserved on a golden lotus flower inside nine golden caskets. It is a revered pilgrimage shrine.

One of the most significant pilgrimage centres for Buddhists, and especially venerated by Burmese Buddhists, is the Shwe Dagon near Rangoon, a wonder of Asia and one of the largest shrine complexes anywhere. It was built 2,500 years ago to enshrine eight sacred hair-relics given personally by the Buddha to two Burmese devotees. The anniversary of the enshrinement of the relics is celebrated at the full moon harvest festival of Htaname in January.

The Shwe Dagon has been enlarged over the centuries and now reaches a height of 330ft, and is "crowned" with 5000 diamonds and semi-precious stones. Intricate carvings, mosaics and symbolic statues adorn the more than 80 shrines around the many levels of the *stupa*; some of the shrines house vast reclining Buddhas, while others hold "small spirit" houses, where pilgrims may offer food, flowers, incense and prayers as personal tributes. There is also a Prayer Pavillion with 28 representations of incarnations of the Buddha, where talks on meditation and other Buddhist virtues are given.

### ***Golden Temple***

Like the Buddha, *Guru Nanak* (d. 1539) deprecated the value of pilgrimages. He used humour to clarify this, pointing out that a saint who bathes at a place of pilgrimage is still a saint afterwards, and a thief is still a thief – so what is the use?<sup>33</sup> And one of his followers observed that "if bathing at pilgrimages does any good, frogs are assured salvation!"<sup>34</sup>

Despite that opposition, his successor, *Guru Amar Das* had a *baoli* (well or tank) with 84 steps leading to it, constructed to symbolise the popular Hindu belief in 84 *Lakhs* or lives. This became a Sikh site, in recognition that times had changed and that there was pressure to create a sacred geography specifically for his followers.

*Guru Arjan* later had another tank excavated about ten miles south of Amritsar, at a place now called *Taran Taran* (Pool of Salvation), which rapidly became associated with healing and is particularly known as a centre for people with leprosy. A similarity to Lourdes is not coincidental: water is often associated with sacred sites, especially those connected with healing.

Many shrines exist now around the complex at Amritsar; the “Golden Temple” (*Harmandir Sahib* or God’s Temple, as it is known locally) is considered to be one of the world’s most beautiful structures.<sup>35</sup>

Some shrines mark sites where the Gurus sat while the work of building was in progress. There is one site, *Atsath Tirath*, where bathing is said by Sikhs to be more effective than at any of the other 67 pilgrimage sites in India.<sup>36</sup>

Sikh buildings are built and maintained by contributions from devotees. Today, pieces of marble used in construction are inscribed with the name of the person who contributed that particular slab of stone. In fact, even the individual blades of fans and other fittings are often inscribed with the names of the donors. This is part of a long-time human impulse to leave their names, or the names of their ancestors, inscribed at a sacred place, be it shrines, cemeteries or graffiti on the gravestones of the admired.

### ***Mountain Goddess***

The “royal pilgrimage” of the effigy of the Goddess Ulugamai takes place in Shri Nanda, the Indian Himalayas, every year. Over two, often muddy, days a varying number of people, including dignitaries and priests, take part in the procession, usually in difficult circumstances,

William Sax, who observed the pilgrimage in 1987, pointed out that this Hindu pilgrimage does not conform to the well-known theory of pilgrimage developed by Victor Turner, but is based on particular qualities of places, and on the powerful effects of certain kinds of persons and actions, for example the extraordinary power of their earth and the efficacy of their water. He was fascinated by the amount of rancour involved.

“Local priests refused to co-operate, rams were offered by the wrong caste, people arrived too soon or too late, and arguments about protocol, including who should lead the procession and placement, abounded.”<sup>37</sup> Many traditions were broken; for example, a foreigner and two women completed it. Several rituals were not completed. But the biggest disappointment was the failure to curb the feuding priests. Ulugamai, the mountain goddess, reportedly had to remind the weary pilgrims: “This is not a human drama! This is the Pilgrimage of the Goddess”!<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the pilgrimage was pronounced successful. Drama, after all, is a necessary part of the process in order to be effective, in either highlighting or unifying divisions between the locals. A private procession would be like giving a party to which no one came: it would not only be pointless, in terms of the community, it could also lead to other forms of conflict, such as those of exclusion.

Sax also writes that, in his opinion, the pilgrimage is “meta-social” in that it reproduces social relations of male domination and female subordination; the Goddess is being returned to her husband’s place, her “proper” place. Women are discouraged from attending, as improper. Thus he says, it is in the men’s interest to promote virilocality to contain women, and so to dominate them.<sup>39</sup> It is not at all surprising that pilgrimages, like other rituals and actions, should reflect the social mores around them. That this should be done for the sole purpose of dominating women might seem difficult to substantiate.

### *Living Avatar*

One of the most famous “holy men” of India currently, Sathya Sai Baba, is described by his followers as an *avatar* – a rare and divine being, like Krishna and Christ, who take human form at specific times to aid humanity’s spiritual evolution and to alert them to their potentially divine nature.<sup>40</sup>

He is said to have been born on November 23, 1926 to a family of the *raju* caste in the village of Puttaparthi in what is now the state of Andhra Pradesh. His given name was Satyanarayana. We are told that, like many holy people, his birth and his childhood were extraordinary. The first pivotal occurrence took place when he was thirteen (not unlike Jesus, at the age of twelve). After falling into a seizure one morning, he began materializing sweets and flowers for members of his family and neighbours. His father threatened to beat the boy, at which he announced “I am Sai Baba”, a reincarnation of a famed holy man who years before lived in the town of Shirdi in Maharashtra. “Sai”

means mother and “Baba” means father. His claim therefore was to be the divine parent, blended into a single personality, of all beings.

He left his parents, renounced all worldly ties, and set up encampment in Puttaparthi, in the garden of the village accountant who built him a shed. Pilgrims began to flock there, and stories of his miraculous powers spread. Pilgrims began to flock to Puttaparthi in their thousands. In 1950, on his twenty-fourth birthday, he inaugurated his ashram on the outskirts of the village, naming it *Prasanthi Nilayam* (the Abode of the Highest Peace).

In June, 1963, he fell into a coma lasting eight days, after which he propped himself up in a chair and told the crowd that the illness was not his but that of a devotee, which he had taken upon himself. At that, he sprinkled himself with water and seemed to effect an instantaneous cure, then disclosing that he was both Shiva and Shakti in a single body. He would die at the age of 91, in the year 2020, in the body of a young man.<sup>41</sup>

The ashram at Puttaparthi continues to play host to the tens of thousands of pilgrims who flock there, some to see the holy man, who is frequently reclusive, and others to beg for healing or for “gifts”, for he has often “materialised” watches, jewellery and other objects for those in the huge daily audience.<sup>42</sup>

Like all those who are pronounced or claimed to be saintly, he has his detractors. Some observers believe him to be a “very clever guy”, to whom the gullible have lost their minds, another form of “Nazi spirituality.”<sup>43</sup> There is something authoritarian about it all, contradicting any ideas about freedom of individualism, of unique expression, they claim.

This expresses a particular conundrum almost unique to the West: how do we devoutly surrender, without also surrendering intellectual discrimination? It is with this reason in mind that many pilgrims today withdraw from formal religious affiliation, and prefer to “make it up” as they go along, or to affiliate with a personally affirming “New Age” movement, which offers no specific demands on them. There may be even a paradox in the very motives, which could be on the one hand to seek or, conversely, to leave behind.<sup>44</sup>

*Personal, Political and Natural*

Although this thesis has emphasised the individual aspect of pilgrimage, pilgrimage of course does frequently include a communal element, never more so than in India. We have noted that the largest mass pilgrimage in the world is held at *Prayag*; India is a continent virtually seething with pilgrims at any given point. Pilgrimage is built into the very social structure of Indian culture, and it is not unusual for a man entering the final stage of his life to renounce his domestic life and “take to the road” with little more than a begging bowl. This more closely resembles the Irish *gyrovagus* than the more traditional “Western” notion that pilgrims leave home for a while, and then return (it is sobering that today we could easily confuse a *gyrovagus* with a street person, and Western visitors to India are not always aware of the courtesy afforded “beggars”).

Certain pilgrimages have always been undertaken by leaders as a public demonstration of faith, in order that the community may be visibly assured of the value of such an exercise and that the leadership involved, either inherited or elected, may be trusted. Among the luminaries who in the past made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela were Dante, any number of monarchs and nobles, and General Franco, as well as the present Spanish King and Queen.

Such a deliberately high-profile pilgrimage was undertaken in 1986, when H.H. Jodhpur (the Rathor Rajput Maharaja of Jodhpur who in 1971 lost his titles and privy purse in the Deregulation of Princes Act) visited the village of Kolu in Rajathan, which was suffering from drought. Although he went as a private citizen, he took along a royal retinue of 80 people including cooks, speechwriters, journalists and a video crew. It was, not coincidentally, a “kingly walkabout” for he was at least in theory accessible to “his” people, (with an air-conditioned caravan in the background).<sup>45</sup>

He went from being a citizen of democratic India with no right to aristocratic titles, to a Maharaja touring his dominion, in a semi-mythical time when men and women who were later deified performed their miracles. As he approached his temple destination, the gap between present time and the ancient world narrowed.<sup>46</sup>

In order to be authentic, to “be like olden times and traditional”, the journey had to be undertaken by foot, though it included a large support system. An unusual aspect was the strong association that the site has with untouchables and Muslims, and it was done at the time of year when the majority of pilgrims at the shrine were likely to be

untouchables.<sup>47</sup> Each day's walk covered between 13 and 19kms and was broken by H.H. Jodhpur meeting villagers in pre-arranged halts, with dignitaries in place.

It is reported that as he walked the last kilometers of his pilgrimage a few clouds gathered and a light shower fell. In 1988 the rains in Jodhpur were good, and he returned to complete his vow that he would return to worship when the rains came. This time, his car journey was almost ignored.

The original pilgrimage was both a protest and a critique against the government's "inaction", was well as a reminder of the possibilities for communal harmony that was believed to have existed in Jodhpur during the time of the Maharajas, and, significantly, when the desert and the people appeared to live in balance and understanding.

Throughout the above-mentioned pilgrimages in India lies a strong element of the power of nature, just as it does in pilgrimages elsewhere. Though in the past millennium some religious beliefs have tended to emphasize a division between the sacred "other" and the secular "this world", the attachment of humankind to the earth runs deep.

The Hindu reverence for the "Mother Ganges," the Buddhists' devotion to particular places and trees, the Sikh's emphasis on wells/tanks of water, Sai Baba's "miracles" at the sea, and the H.H. Jodhpur's pilgrimage to alleviate drought reflect our unshakable connection with the life giving properties of soil and water. Thus it does not seem odd, to Hindus, to celebrate the symbolic marriage of two trees in the hope of pleasing the god of rain, as took place in Pondicherry, in February 2004. As the crowd chanted Hindu hymns a cleric tied a knot on a neem tree, which was the bride, to solemnise its eternal union with a peepul tree.<sup>48</sup> Such rituals, including marriages between animals, are commonplace in India and thought no stranger than praying for rain, or that floods would abate.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Sacred Mountains***

Mountains are considered to be sacred in many faiths and cultures; it could be said for some pilgrims that "the higher, the holier." They have always held great appeal to the religious feelings of the Chinese and therefore are believed to be special places for religious practices. The veneration of mountains, on sacred mountains, was an integral part of ancient China. In the *Book of History*, a passage describes the imperial tour of

inspection, made by the sage king Shun (2255-2206BC).<sup>50</sup> During his tour, Shun visited the four quarters of his domain and in each section offered a sacrifice on the top of the sacred mountain, which were gradually identified with four well-known peaks: Mount Tai in the east, Mount Hua in the west, Mount Hen in the south and another Mount Heng in the north. These, together with Mount Hsung in the middle comprise the famous five sacred mountains in China that were the most acceptable to the gods of heaven. Of them, the eastern peak, Mount Tai, is the favourite.<sup>51</sup>

The interregnum of Communism saw a steep decline in visits to sacred sites. Today, the early Christian monastery and pagoda of *Da Qin* (“West”) in China, which was rediscovered in the 1990s near the modern city of Xian, has been carefully restored by the government,<sup>52</sup> while conservation of the five sacred mountains is under way in conjunction with Taoist priests. Chinese pilgrims once again participate in travelling to sacred sites, demonstrating the persistence quality of pilgrimage.

In Japan, as in China, many mountains became the centre of pilgrimage cults. The most prominent have been Mount Fuji, Mount Ontake and the Yoshino-Kumano range south of the ancient capital of Nara. Each stage in the pilgrimage represents a stage in the progress through the realm of existence conceived of by Buddhism.<sup>53</sup>

Tateyama, a mountain in central Japan, was the centre of a cult until the middle of the last century; the mountain represented hell on earth. Pilgrims passed through a series of religious sites, representing symbolic hells, at which they performed austerities and penances to atone for their sins, which enabled them to go directly to the Pure Land at death.<sup>54</sup> (This is analogous to Christian pilgrimages that promise indulgences). Conversely, spiritual realms such as Fudaraku (the Buddhist Pure Land presided over by the *bodhisattva* Kannon), are located in the Yoshino-Kumano mountains, and pilgrimages there were “journeys to paradise.”

Pilgrimages still occur on large numbers of Japanese mountains, Fuji and Ontake in particular. They continue to be marked off in ten stages, at each of which there is a rest-station offering refreshments. Pilgrims dress in white (the colour of purity and death) on a religious ascent; tourists taking a bus up to the fifth station on Mount Fuji may witness the members of a *Fujiko*, or Fuji pilgrimage association, slowly climbing up.<sup>55</sup>

### *The Great Immortal Wong*

The temple of the Great Immortal Wong, the *Wong Tai Sin*, is a spectacular Taoist temple in Hong Kong. During the twentieth century his temples were destroyed in China where he had once been deemed to float in the mists, seeking eternal life. His image was brought to Hong Kong by two believers in 1915 and he now “floats” above the temple.

Many Hong Kong expatriates living abroad travel back to his temple to worship and seek his help. There are large crowds there on the Chinese New Year, for Wong Tai Sin’s birthday (on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month), and also throughout the seventh lunar month. Wong’s original specialty was healing, and a clinic next to his temple offers free Chinese herbal medicines. Worshippers on pilgrimage there now also ask him about marriages, careers, business or emigration.<sup>56</sup>

### *Angkor Wat*

One of the most spectacular religious monuments in the world was rediscovered in the ruins of Angkor Wat in 1860 by Henri Mouhot, a French naturalist who stumbled across it. He wrote of how he felt; “suddenly (the traveller) seems to be transported from barbarism to civilisation, from profound darkness to light.”<sup>57</sup> Angkor Wat is a colossal terraced structure covering almost one square mile and crowned by five towers, each in the shape of a huge lotus bud.

It was created as a tomb for Suryavarman, a twelfth-century ruler and god-king who personified the Hindu god, Vishnu, to whom the temple is dedicated. Angkor depicts in stone the epic tales of Hindu mythology. Early pilgrims paid homage to the god-king. In later centuries, with Buddhism the major form of worship, pilgrims revered the one thousand statues of the Buddha.

It was the spiritual and cultural heart of the powerful Khmer kingdom until the Thai invasion of 1431; eventually abandoned, it was overgrown by jungle and lay undisturbed for 400 years. Now a World Heritage Site, since the 1991 ceasefire over a thousand people a day journey to it. The approach is along a causeway lined with carvings of sacred snakes, representing the bridge between heaven and earth. Inside,

behind a platform guarded by stone lions, the outer gallery contains the thousand statues of the Buddha. The main sanctuary is at the heart of the complex.<sup>58</sup>

### *Goddess of Possibilities*

The pilgrimage of the goddess known as the Lady of the Realm at Vĩnh Tế, in southern Vietnam, is part of a revival of religious activity in this country. The goddess, Bà Chúa Xứ, is a feminine likeness in stone and rendered cement, dressed in finery. She is housed in a magnificent shrine surrounded by large halls that hold and display the offerings people have made to her.

The village is at the base of a small mountain on Vietnam's border with Cambodia, and the annual festival, which takes place in the fourth lunar month, attracts hundreds of thousands of mainly rural pilgrims; urban pilgrims tend to avoid the shrine at that time, writes Philip Taylor, because of the crush, and they tend to visit at other times of the year.<sup>59</sup>

The series of rites commences at midnight on the twenty-third of the fourth lunar month with the bathing and robe changing of the Goddess, followed the next day by a colourful ceremony to invite the spirit of the revered mandarin Thoại Ngọc Hầu into the shrine. The main ceremony commences on midnight of the next day and is performed by the cult committee, which presents a large pig carcass, a sequence of formal offerings to the goddess of water, incense, fruit, flowers and lighted candles, and the chanted request for peace, the main function of the ritual.

This is immediately followed by a formal opera on behalf of the goddess. Though most of the above rituals can be attended by invited guests only, because of crowding, the opera is attended by large numbers of pilgrims and lasts until dawn. Taylor suggests that many important aspects of the ritual, including ritual entertainment, commerce and socializing, may be found at the "fairground" outside the shrine, and that most pilgrims come into "more significant" contact with the goddess before or after the ceremonial rites due to the large numbers involved.

The "ordinary" pilgrims (of which there may be hundreds of thousands) presents offerings to the goddess on arrival at the sacred site and whisper their petitions and pleas; they then leave the shrine with items from her altar (distributed as far as possible by shrine attendants), considering themselves charged with her power.<sup>60</sup>

The “Goddess of Possibilities”, whose origin is obscure, is considered to be super-responsive to requests for aid, and is particularly popular among female pilgrims (*see Chapter Five*), many of whom see her as a celebration of the independence of women in a country which has not always valued their role.<sup>61</sup> The Lady of the Realm is one of a group of goddesses in Vietnam whose shrines attract a multitude of devotees from all corners of the country. There is a particularly powerful reciprocal relationship between the devotees and the Lady; offerings, prayers and veneration is given in exchange for gifts (from the shrine) and fulfillment of requests.

### *Jewish Shrines*

It may be a surprise to many practicing Western Jews that there is any tradition of pilgrimage in Judaism, apart from the one implicit in the traditional phrase: “Next year, Jerusalem!” There is certainly no obligation of pilgrimage in Judaism, as there is in Islam. Yet the practices of Islam heavily influenced North African Judaism as well as, to a lesser extent, practices in Israel, and Eastern European Hasidism, embedded in a deeply orthodox Christian culture, developed a tradition of saints, both living and dead.

Like so many other devotees, the Jews of antiquity felt that they could get closer to God by making a pilgrimage to the place of Adam’s creation or the tombs of the prophets, while today the Western Wall is a sacred site, and Hebron is one of the most holy places in Jewish sacred geography because it is the first piece of land that Abraham bought.<sup>62</sup>

Classic rabbinic Judaism never designated saints, and the Jewish calendar has no saints’ days or seasons. There is little need for individual intercession or sacrifice, because Judaism understands that redemption will only arrive when society as a whole is ready for it; thus there is a popular idea that the Messiah would arrive if all Israel kept a single Sabbath. Nor is there a unique founder in Judaism. Even Moses was the object of no special attention; while he was given a distinct role by God, he still remained subject to the Torah. It, and not he, is the focus of religious devotion.

But humankind has always looked to those who are models for imitation, and Judaism is no exception. From early days, the tomb of Samuel the prophet, at Ramah, was a spot venerated not only by Muslims but also Jewish pilgrims who held annual communions and celebrations there. There are ancient graves of biblical and rabbinic

holy men which are located in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Babylonia<sup>63</sup>, all of which have been visited by Jewish pilgrims in a way similar to their Christian and Muslim<sup>64</sup> counterparts, especially on the anniversary of the saint's death. Some of these were festive celebrations called *Hilula* (the wedding). The grandest of these is still celebrated by Sephardic and Oriental Jews on *Lag Be'Omer*, the thirty-third day after Passover, for R. Simeon b. Yohai, the hero of the *Zohar*, at his grave in Meiron in Galilee. While some Jews mark this day by a lifting of the restrictions in force between Passover and Shavuot, the *Hilula* celebrants conduct a joyful vigil at his grave, lighting torches and bonfires, dancing and singing, and performing special rites such as cutting children's hair.

There are a number of instances of women's pilgrimages, such as those to Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem, where women pray to "Rachel, our mother" for fertility, while in Morocco the tomb of R. Amran b. Divan is also so revered.

A modern and vigorous example of pilgrimage to Jewish saints emerges from the Hasidic movement that took shape in the late eighteenth century in Poland and the Ukraine. Called *Baal Shem Tov*, and led by the charismatic preacher and amulet writer Israel ben Eleazer (1700-1760), the movement appealed to those who rejected the elitism of rabbinic learning, and who were devastated by the conditions in Poland after the 1666 massacres. To them, *Baal Shem Tov* offered something directly accessible, a "living Torah."

The disciples of ben Eleazer, the *tsaddiq*, each formed their own centre, and taught in the tradition of the great man as they understood it. Each *tsaddiq* had, and has, a distinctive personality and orientation and is not determined purely by locality; disciples travel a long distance to "their rebbe", often passing other Hassidic communities on the way. The *tsaddiq* serves as a life model, a living Torah; in essence, an *axis mundi*, through which divine grace flows to the community and also the agent through which the community approaches God. Robert Cohen writes that "to witness the *rebbe* addressing his followers or casting scraps of food to them from his plate is to be shocked into the recognition that some Jews in the contemporary world venerate saints." This is exemplified by one disciple famously remarking of his master, "I did not go to the Maggid of Meseritz to learn Torah from him, but to watch him tie his boot laces."<sup>65</sup>

There is also a highly developed sense of sacred geography in Judaism, particularly the Orthodox, and in certain sense all of Israel is a sacred site, a place of potential pilgrimage, just as Tibet was for the Tibetans before the modern era. Masada is

a sacred site, and all Israeli conscripts were once required to make a pilgrimage to the famous mountain of resistance to take their oaths. This habit was cut short by controversy, as some Jews feel that Masada represents not only a spirit of resistance, but also of suicide and defeat. It nevertheless remains one of Israel's most revered and protected places.

In more recent times, other places of pilgrimage for Jews have been carved out of tragic circumstances: visits take place to the death camps of WWII. Auschwitz has been described as a giant cemetery, and has been preserved as such for those who lost family there, and also for those, both Jewish and gentile, who wish make the pilgrimage to honour those who died. Holocaust Memorials in many countries, including South Africa (in Cape Town) also perform the function of acting as focus for spiritual, as well as historical journeys.

### *On the Way to Mecca*

Mecca is one of the best-known pilgrimage sites in the world. It is also one of the most exclusive, restricted to Muslims only. Millions visit the holy city annually, more going on the "minor pilgrimage", the Umrah, than on the major one, the Hajj. The most sacred moment of the pilgrimage is considered to be the visit to the plain of Arafat; during the major pilgrimage, in spite of more than two million being present, a quiet falls over the gigantic crowd, known as the "Silence of Arafat", where each pilgrim prays and meditates. All wear the same garments and are in theory all equal.<sup>66</sup>

The Hajj is a requirement of all Muslims, and means to be literally "nearer to God (Allah)." Mecca was a pilgrimage site before Islam developed with a tradition thought to date back to Abraham, and many current rituals were pre-established. Therefore the prophet Mohammed is the restorer of pilgrimage to that of Abraham's time, and the destroyer of the idols which had polluted it.

Before the modern era, the pilgrimage to Mecca was an epic journey of months if not years, both costly and dangerous. Modern travel has changed much of that for those who can afford it, but for those who cannot, the Hajj continues to be an great journey and for some, it can take literally a lifetime – and more.

C. Bawa Yamba studied the role of pilgrimage in the lives of West African Muslims in Sudan, and the makeshift villages in which they live. He found that although

many of the inhabitants of the “pilgrim villages” in Sudan are 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation immigrant “pilgrims” who have lived their entire lives in the Sudan, they still regard themselves as being “on the way” to Mecca. Poverty keeps them stationary. In a sense they have become permanent pilgrims, unable to move forward; yet their Sudanese “hosts” also accept their definition of pilgrim status and commonly address them as *Hajj*.

They originate from all over West Africa with a predominance of Northern Nigerians. As they, or their ancestors, arrived in Sudan by trudging eastwards along desert routes, with great privation, they continue to choose not to be encumbered with worldly goods and build transient homes, converting whatever they can earn into currency for the rest of the pilgrimage ahead, though uncertain about its timing. It may not happen in their lifetimes but perhaps in those of their descendants.<sup>67</sup>

They are highly critical of their counterparts who travel by air: those who use swift, comfortable means of transport to Mecca cannot be “true pilgrims.” This coincides with the fact that they belong overwhelmingly to the poorer classes (which they regard as being beside the point). They hold that since the pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the highest merits Muslims can attain, its pursuit must be made without consideration to the comforts of the flesh. Suffering, in this view, is an intrinsic aspect of proper pilgrimage (see *Chapter Three: Pilgrimage and Pain*).

The notion that pilgrimage must involve hardship is of course not confined to Islam. There is still a strong tendency in Christianity to treat suffering as an authentic and even compulsory part of the pilgrimage process. The hardship of the *Camino*, the long pilgrim’s path to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, stresses the necessity of walking the route, rather than using modern transport. Needless to say, the hundreds of kilometres take their toll on the stamina of pilgrims.

### ***Bahá’i Shrines***

Devotees of the Bahá’i Faith from all over the world aim to visit at least once in their lifetime the global centre of their faith, the shrines of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh in the cities of Haifa and Acre in Israel.

The founder of the faith, Bahá’u’lláh (1817-92) endured forty years of imprisonment and exile for teaching the unity of humankind and the oneness of religions. His resting-place is in Acre and his followers believe it is the holiest place on earth.

The Báb was a divine messenger who was executed for spreading the faith in his native Persia. The Shrine of the Báb on the slopes of Mount Carmel in Haifa is popularly known as the “Queen of Carmel” and is one of the most distinctive sights in the Holy Land. About a quarter of a million pilgrims and visitors attend the two shrines annually. The Faith has no fixed rituals and anyone may pray or meditate there as they see fit.<sup>68</sup>

### *Sheba’s Heritage*

Thirty thousand pilgrims annually arrive at the ancient city of Axum, near the Eritrean border, for the religious festival of *Hidar Zion*. Axum was once the centre of an empire built, according to Ethiopian custom, by the Queen of Sheba and her descendents. Extending all the way to the Yemen it equalled Rome in stature and influence. The city is believed to house one of the most holy of relics, the Ark of the Covenant, which, legend has it, was taken from Jerusalem by the Queen of Sheba’s son. It is secluded from public view except for this solitary occasion each year, in late November, when it is paraded in the presence of the Grand Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in a festival alternating with celebration and solemnity.

The remote town of Lalibela is very much a contemporary, as well as ancient, pilgrimage site. There remains an extraordinary collection of cave- and rock-hewn churches built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by King Lalibela as an attempt to set up a new Jerusalem. All eleven of the churches have been carved downward, out of the earth itself, and are connected by a labyrinth of channels, bridges and passages into which additional small chambers are carved.

Timkat, which is celebrated throughout the Ethiopia, is the most important event for the country’s Orthodox Christians (who follow the Julian calendar) and takes place on January 19, twelve days after their Christmas. Pilgrims descend on all sacred centres; those heading for Lalibela often journey for days. On the eve of Timkat, the *tabotat* (replicas of the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed) are removed from the Holy of Holies within (each) church and paraded, wrapped in damask, to the banks of the River Jordan which flows through Lalibela. The priests and pilgrims hold vigil over the *tabotat* throughout the night, when temperatures can fall to almost freezing.

At daybreak the priests bless the pilgrims with holy water and the processions return to their respective churches.<sup>69</sup>

### *The Grotto*

As far as sacred geography is involved, there is no place in Christianity besides Jerusalem that is more special than Lourdes. Much of this is to do with the exemplary life of its inspiration, Bernadette Soubirous.

In the cold winter month of February, 1858, this frail and asthmatic 14-year-old girl from a poor family in the little French town of Lourdes set off with friends to collect firewood from the surroundings of the village.<sup>70</sup> While doing so on the banks of the Gave de Pau, on which Lourdes is situated, she rested for a moment near an outcrop of rock, known as the *Massabielle*, with a grotto at its base. (This appears to have been the site of a sacral locality in earlier, pre-Christian times; such places often maintain their mystical character). Bernadette saw a soft light coming from a niche high in the Grotto and saw a lovely smiling child in white who seemed to beckon to her. No words were spoken at that time. Later interrogation caused her to amend the description of her vision to “my lady.” She never claimed that who she saw was the Virgin Mary; that claim was made by others.<sup>71</sup>

Bernadette saw, in all, 18 visions in the grotto of “her lady”, whose lovely visage caused her to fall into a trance, sometimes an hour long, during which time her face “glowed” and she replicated the sign of the cross which, she said, her “lady” had made. The vision eventually spoke to her, asking that there should be “processions” to the Grotto, and that a chapel should be built there. Bernadette was also told to bathe herself in a “spring.” There being no water at the Grotto itself, Bernadette scratched in the mud, whereupon a trickle of water appeared, which gradually strengthened into the famous healing pool which is seen at Lourdes today.

The first “miracle” occurred when the Soubirous’ neighbour, whose fragile toddler was not expected to live, plunged his entire body into the freezing water of the spring in a desperate attempt to prevent his death. Justin Bouhouhorts was immediately revived and lived to a great age. Since then thousands of healing miracles have been reported, though the Church has authenticated only a fraction of them, admitting only those cases which have medical histories, are unequivocal, and are instantaneous cures.

Initially deeply sceptical, the local clergy and then the Church were eventually won over to Bernadette's obvious sincerity and her distress at the celebrity she had to endure. She was persuaded to take refuge in a strict convent, where she died of tuberculosis in 1879. All the attributes that later became legendary – her poverty, simplicity and ignorance – were at first held against her by authorities investigating her visions, and then later used as “proof” of her authenticity.<sup>72</sup> She was canonized in 1933 when tens of thousands attended her lavish ceremony in St Peter's. Her tomb has become a shrine, despite her dismay at being herself associated with miracles.

It is difficult to say how many pilgrims have visited Lourdes, both in the hope of healing and also in a spirit of faith and a sense of unity with other pilgrims; however, more Christians visit Lourdes than Rome or Jerusalem – probably over four and a half million every year. Caregivers have noted that the benefits for those isolated by illness and disability are incalculable.<sup>73</sup>

Bernadette's experience did not occur in isolation. During the 1850s and 1860s France was riveted with tensions between the “Enlightenment”, which campaigned against the strictures of the Church, and the pious peasantry, in whom a craze for *spiritisme* emerged. A number of apparitions appeared, perhaps most famously in the isolated Alpine community of La Salette, about 40kms south of Grenoble, just eleven years before Bernadette's experience at Lourdes. In September, 1846 a boy and girl attending livestock in the hills above their home were frightened by a bright light that transformed into a beautiful lady shimmering in white. Mélanie Calvert and Maximin Giraud were told of impending disaster for the irreligious behaviour of the population. They were also given “secrets” which they divulged to no one but the Pope.

Such a dramatic vision is often the origin of a pilgrimage site: the pilgrimage centre of Fatima in Portugal is based on the visions of three local children reckoned to have seen a “lady” on five separate occasions in 1917. She identified herself as “Our Lady of the Rosary” and requested that a chapel be built there which attracts great crowds today.<sup>74</sup>

The “girl” Bernadette saw at the Grotto was gentle and radiant, while the maternal lady at La Salette wept bitterly for humanity, and spoke in an apocalyptic tone. Initially La Salette seemed to have attracted the most attention. It was the scene of a nationally organised pilgrimage by the Assumptionists in 1872 but gradually its allure

began to fade. The Bishop of Grenoble was unable to control local priests who condemned the apparitions as frauds.

More worrying were the visionaries themselves. Mélanie tried but rejected the religious life; she had gone as a postulant to Corenc, outside Grenoble where she proved to be a handful.<sup>75</sup> Maximin tried a stint in the Pope's volunteer army but became an alcoholic and by 1872 was selling souvenirs to pilgrims and retelling the story of his experience to all comers for a "consideration." They had become an embarrassment and left the Church vulnerable to attack. In contrast, Bernadette's conduct was peerless. Her behaviour during and after the visions was modest and unselfserving. She never asked for any form of enrichment and rejected it, when it was offered, insisting that her family did the same.

One of the greatest concerns in any institution is that a visionary or prophet may appear and capture the imagination of the populace. Such charismatic characters are "uncontrollable." They cannot be contained within the strict framework of what is, and is not, orthodox. Their utterances may be seen as divinely inspired, or at least imbued with a special insight, given their special relationship with the divine; how can they be challenged, when the divine has appeared to them in person?

The Church solved that problem with Bernadette. The least attention-seeking person imaginable, she suffered torments when followed by crowds asking her to bless their rosaries, or trying to touch her garments; she seemed horrified by the idea that she was in any way "special." Though she had not wanted a religious life, the anonymity of the cloisters offered the only solution for the quiet and unremarkable life she pleaded for, and there she remained, under the careful supervision of the Church, until she died. In so doing she was never had the opportunity to embarrass or outrage society with "wrong" deed or word. Without her knowledge or desire, Bernadette seemed able to communicate something of the compassionate consolation that flooded her own being whenever she saw the "lady", thereby transferring to the masses a portion of her love. Through Bernadette's mediation they came to feel that behind the forms and words and rites used by the clergy there lay not a vague possibility but an almost tangible reality.<sup>76</sup> A combination of her matchless character and the sacred geography of Lourdes, the healing waters, have turned it into the most successful pilgrimage destination in modern Christianity.

If sacred places and actions in the world involve a reciprocal relationship, then Lourdes, and Medugorje, are two prime examples of “places of giving and receiving”<sup>77</sup>, as is the next, less well-known pilgrimage in the south of France.

### *Two Marys*

Intimacy seems to be the key to reciprocal relationships. The devout have a personal, direct relationship with the object of veneration and/or the site and this heightens the pilgrim’s “urgent and profound sense of purpose”, the completion of which has deep significance for them. That this direct relationship with sacred objects/relics and sacred sites has so often been dismissed as “superstitious” or “peasantlike” or even, dismayingly, “primitive” is a poor reflection of the intellectual blinkers of post-Enlightenment scholastic discourse. There are no faith-systems that have escaped these pejoratives when viewed from another paradigm; when adequately understood, the contributive value of such a relationship cannot be negated. It is worthwhile reminding ourselves of nineteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume’s caution that “There is no such thing as a rational belief”, as there is an inherent and insoluble contradiction between those last two words. Each refutes the other, despite their frequent coupling.

It is the intimacy of a reciprocal relationship which brings Europe’s “gypsies”, or “travellers” to the coast of the Camargue every year on a little-recognised but spectacular pilgrimage (and which also, incidentally, refutes the theory that “only settled peoples make pilgrimages”). Its locus is the church of *Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer* (the two Marys, Mary the mother of Jacob and Mary Salomé, mother of James). Local legend has it that Lazarus, Martha, Mary Magdalene and the previously-mentioned two Marys, who had been put to sea in fragile boats, eventually found their way to the shores of Provence.<sup>78</sup> There is now a special Bishop of France who is designated to serve the diocese of the travelling people.

The Feast of the Marys is held on May 25. On the Eve of the feast, a descent of the *chasses* is held in the church; a vivid account by Jennifer Lash records the following: “In the high chapel...the figures of men and boys could clearly be seen fixing the ropes. The small peaked tin trunks (bearing the bones of the saints), bolted together, were ready to make their descent. Very slowly the relics were lowered, the ropes had bouquets of flowers tied to them. At each short, careful drop, the congregations called out: *Viva les*

*Saintes Maries... Viva Sainte Sara!* All arms were stretched towards the relics, many held up lighted candles. Increasingly there was pleading, fervour and longing in their voices. It was as if the people pulled the relics towards themselves, by their repeated cries. The crowd pressed forward; there are great blessings for those who first touch the casket."<sup>79</sup>

A crowned figure representing Sara is carried to the shore's edge. Then the little figures of the saints Mary Jacobé and Mary Salomé, standing in a small blue "boat", are taken on the same journey, borne shoulder high, while pilgrims rush to touch their cloaks. Tourists transfer that touch to companions and bless themselves and each other with seawater made holy by the saints' presence.

By afternoon the two Marys are back in the main aisle of the church, standing in their little blue boat, bedecked with robes and flowers. It is the last chance for the two caskets to be touched and kissed, and for loved objects, handkerchiefs and shawls, to be pressed against them. Very soon the relics are taken up once more into their high resting place.<sup>80</sup> That night, out on the road to Cacharel, there is always a feast. Long tables accommodate a hundred or so people, weighed down with wine and rose-petals. The Gypsy Kings come to the feast, and are courted by a variety of local gypsy musicians.

This annual, passionate pilgrimage provides what is essential a "home" for nomads, a sacralized site where they can return at regular intervals to reaffirm their allegiance to specific representative of the Church, and to each other. In extrapolating notions of sacred and secular space, it is the opposite of liminal; it is the sacred and literal centre. It seems possible that in prehistory such pilgrimages to touch the "sacred centre" were made to stone circles, sacred caves and exposed sites of great metaphorical significance, such as Wildebeest Kuil and Driekopseiland in South Africa, in the Kimberley area (*see Chapter Four*).<sup>81</sup>

### ***The Cyclists' Madonna***

The Lombardy Pass is one of the most exciting in Europe and certainly one of the highest motor roads on the Continent. Its other main significance is to the pilgrims who journey to the Sanctuary of Sant'Anna, which stands in a high lonely site just on the Italian side of the frontier.

Jan Morris remembers witnessing their journey: “All the way up the last steep stretches of that road, laboriously put together every few hundred yards, are the cairns of the supplicants and penitents of Santa Anna down the centuries.”<sup>82</sup>

Also in Lombardy is the roadside shrine of the *Madonna del Ghisallo*, the patron saint of cyclists. A thousand years ago, in the wooded hills of Mount Ghisallo near Lake Como, the Count of Ghisallo was out hunting when he was attacked by brigands. While fleeing for his life he pleaded for help at a roadside shrine to the Virgin Mary and, according to legend, was mercifully spared. A chapel was built there in 1623, around the painted icon of the Virgin Mother and became a sacred place for travellers.

When cyclists first began riding up the tough 754 metre, 9 km ascent from Bellagio to the shrine, it became a natural place for them to pause. In 1948 the chapel’s rector persuaded Pope Pius XII to dedicate the building to cyclists, and a year later to appoint the *Madonna del Ghisallo* as the patron saint of Italian cyclists<sup>83</sup>. She is asked by cyclists to “protect us along the roads, relieve us from dangers and lead us to victory.” The great Italian cycling champion Gino Bartali, twice winner of the *Tours de France*, was a devout Catholic who set up shrines in his hotel bedrooms, and when he had first won the Tour he gave a bike to the chapel, which is festooned with photographs, race jerseys, pennants and other biking memorabilia including the damaged bike frame of Fabio Casartelli, a teammate of Lance Armstrong and a Lake Como native who died in a pileup during the 1995 Tour. His death serves as a cautionary note to other cyclists about the dangers of the road and emphasises the need to visit the Chapel on Mount Ghisallo to ask the Madonna for protection, and to wear her medallion from there on their bikes. They are the cycling pilgrims.

### ***Medieval Martyr***

Many readers throughout the English-speaking world will be familiar with Canterbury as the site towards which the robust pilgrims walked in the *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer, written in the late fourteenth century. By that time, Canterbury had been a major pilgrimage site for centuries, the original cathedral there having been built by St Augustine after his arrival in 597AD to spread Christianity in England. It soon became the Mother Church of the country, and the Archbishop of Canterbury remains the most senior primate in the Anglican Church.

Shortly after the Conquest, in 1066AD, the church burned down and has been entirely rebuilt. The crypt remains the oldest part, dating from 1100, and it was there that Thomas à Becket, archbishop from 1162 to 1170, was murdered by four knights of Henry II after his long and bitter feud with the king. Many miracles were recorded in relation to his shrine which was a scene of pilgrimage for more than 400 years until it was dismantled and relieved of its jewels by Henry VIII, no respecter of sacred buildings. Just behind the altar is a roped-off space, worn and uneven from the multitude of pilgrims who knelt there.<sup>84</sup>

In recent years there has been a revival of pilgrimage to Canterbury, with routes walked, or travelled by other means, from many different centres in England. More than a million pilgrims a year now make that journey.

### ***Ancient Avalon***

Glastonbury scarcely exists any longer in physical structure, with only the ruined medieval walls of the abbey still standing. Yet the geographical area that has come to be called “Glastonbury” has an almost talisman-like quality today, with its historical, legendary and mythological associations with Britain’s past. “There’s a new myth created every day around Glastonbury,” commented a woman to Marion Bowman.<sup>85</sup>

Its greatest claim has been that Joseph of Arimathea, who the Bible identifies as having provided a tomb for Jesus, went to Britain to expand Christianity and at Glastonbury built a simple abbey church dedicated to Mary.<sup>86</sup> He is believed to have planted his pilgrims staff at nearby Wearyall Hill, where it flowered unseasonably each year at Christmas as well as in Spring (though the “original” is no longer there, there are other trees that have been, over time, claimed to be offshoots of it). Some believe that Joseph hid the Chalice of the Last Supper there, in what is called the Chalice Well (a natural spring) that alone attracts about 40,000 visitors a year, including the Aquarians, some of whom hold that the Phoenix “has its beak” in the well.

Linked with the Chalice legend are the Arthurian legends, in which the quest for the Holy Grail is a central obsession. After his last battle, the “once and future king” Arthur was said to have been spirited away to Avalon for his wounds to heal, after which he would return again in an hour of need (unquestionably in the tradition of a resurrection myth, of which there are many). The monks of Glastonbury exhumed his remains

fortuitously there in 1191, together with a leaden cross which proclaimed in Latin, “Here lies entombed the renowned King Arthur with Guinevere his second wife in the Isle of Avalon.”<sup>87</sup> The (now ruined) Abbey was said to have been on the site of the earlier chapel in England: St Patrick was its first Abbot, and numerous saints (St Brigit, St Columba and St David) have been connected with it.

The site is also linked to Celtic Britain; the most striking and visible feature of Glastonbury from miles around is the Tor at the top of the hill, which has been claimed as the centre of an ancient fertility religion. The Great Ley or Michael Line reputedly runs through it, and most recent claims are that it converges with the Mary Line (a complimentary line of “female” energy). This Tor is (not for the above reasons) the starting point of the Catholic pilgrimage procession at Glastonbury, and is also the site of seasonal pilgrimages by pagans, Druids and New Age celebrants.<sup>88</sup> The latter, in particular, hold Glastonbury to be the epicenter of the New Age movement in Britain.

In Glastonbury, notes Bowman, pilgrimage is not a thing of the past but is very much present in a number of guises. The Anglican pilgrimage occurs there on the last Saturday in June; some pilgrims walk considerable distances from home on foot to participate. Since 1986 there have been pilgrimage badges, a revival of an ancient tradition, and from 1990 there have been special red badges for foot pilgrims. The formal Roman Catholic pilgrimage was revived in 1950 (though earlier such pilgrimages had been held); after hymns in Tor Field, there is a procession with the statue of Our Lady of Glastonbury from the Tor to the Abbey grounds where Mass is celebrated. Another form of all-year-round pilgrimage is the retreat at Abbey House, which cares for about two thousand visitors a year.

For the Zodiac Companions of Glastonbury, there are monthly pilgrimages to different sites; there are also “mystical” pilgrimages of Glastonbury, which take in the major sites, and there are many pilgrimages of healing there (for pilgrims from all walks of life). Pilgrimages also include the summer and winter solstices, and the spring festival of Beltane (May 1).<sup>89</sup>

There are perpetual pilgrims in Glastonbury who feel that by living there they are in a constant process of spiritual renewal; others remain there because they feel “at home,” and, says Bowman, it seems natural to unite the physical home with the spiritual one.

Glastonbury embodies, therefore, a wide range of meanings and is a prime example of what is described by Adrian Ivakhiv, following Foucault, as a “heterotopic site, spaces where meaning is created, contested and negotiated by many actors, at least one of which is other-than-human;” Ivakhiv believes Glastonbury’s “success” in this regard lies, firstly, in the wealth of existing folk lore, and secondly and equally crucially, the creative imagination and intentionality of Glastonbury’s pilgrims. Finally, he says, there is the landscape itself, with its mystery and magic; the lay of the land, its shapes and contours, accommodates itself to the perception of the Earth as a living and energized being.<sup>90</sup>

### *Mary’s House*

Walsingham has enjoyed a pilgrimage revival over the past century, and has, records Simon Coleman, become one of the premier pilgrimage sites in Britain with perhaps as many as a quarter of a million pilgrims visiting it each year.<sup>91</sup> As noted in Chapter One, the shrine was founded in 1061 when a widow from the nobility, Richeldis, had three visions of the Virgin who took her to Nazareth and showed her a copy of the House of the Annunciation, then demanded that an exact copy of this house be built in Norfolk (for this reason it is referred to as “England’s Nazareth”). By the time it was destroyed by Henry VIII, it was the second richest shrine in Britain, after Norwich.

In 1896 benefactor Charlotte Boyd decided to restore the ruin. Unable to persuade the owners of the original site to sell, she instead bought a small fourteenth-century chapel just over a mile away in Houghton-le-Dale, which had been the last stop for medieval pilgrims before arriving at the shrine. Here, at the Slipper Chapel (St Catherine’s, built in 1325), medieval pilgrims would remove their shoes to walk the final mile barefoot. This chapel became the site of the first official Roman Catholic pilgrimage in England since the Reformation, and in 1934 was named the Roman Catholic Shrine of Our Lady.<sup>92</sup> Anglicans soon followed despite the Protestants’ mistrust of pilgrimage generally.<sup>93</sup> In the 1930s a replica of the Holy House was built in Walsingham, where a “holy well” was discovered that was claimed to have been associated with the original shrine (of which nothing remains today though some of the friary buildings survive).

Despite earlier strained relations between the two Churches, the site “now offers a multitude of routes to pilgrims seeking spiritual experiences,” writes Coleman.<sup>94</sup>

### *Madonna of Peace*

Since the early 1980s more than 20 million pilgrims have travelled to the remote Bosnian village of Medjugorje, near Dubrovnik, where a group of young visionaries reported seeing the Virgin Mary.

In the spring of 1981 villagers reported that they had witnessed the prophet Elijah riding his flaming chariot across the evening sky. Elijah was the first to “see” the Holy Mother and her Son, nearly a millenium before they walked on earth, so he is a vital link between the Old Testament and the New, and the one prophet whose return is waited with anticipation, for he did not die but “went up by a whirlwind into Heaven” (2 Kings 2:11).

One month later, on June 24, the feast of St John the Baptist, a “radiant light” appeared at the top of Mt Podbrdo, overlooking the village. As 15-year-old Ivanka Ivankovic and 16-year-old Mirjana Dragicevic were returning together in the evening after having finished their chores, they saw a woman bathed in a shimmering light, holding an infant. They fled. Then they returned with friends, who also saw the apparition, and they all ran home to tell their families.<sup>95</sup> As the children ascended the mountain again, curious villagers saw them suddenly begin to run up it and then fall to their knees; when approached, they appeared to be in a state of ecstasy. During the 15 minutes or so that the apparition lasted she identified herself as the “Blessed Virgin Mary” and told them to come closer, to see the infant in her arms. Her parting words were: “Go in the peace of God.”<sup>96</sup>

The apparitions continued as the days followed. The crowds grew and so did the traffic. The socialist republic of Yugoslavia, as it was then, was unprepared for such a popular reaction of faith and suspected a plot. The visionaries and their families were interrogated and subjected to psychiatric examinations but were judged to be “normal.” The parish priest, Father Jozo Zovko, was imprisoned on charges of sedition and the local church sacked. This did not deter the apparitions however, and crowds swelled. Eventually the government decided it was not in their interest to create martyrs; that respite convinced the faithful that the Virgin Mary had won over the “dark atheist forces.”<sup>97</sup> She has entrusted 10 secrets to the six – not unusual, as we have noted in many visionaries including that at Lourdes – only one of which has been vaguely revealed.<sup>98</sup>

Once again, as has so often happened, not everyone involved is convinced. A local priest, Father Pavich, thinks that “recognition would be insane.”<sup>99</sup> It would mean that anything the seers said until they died would be regarded as true revelation. Some also point out resentfully that they now “lack nothing.” At the same time, writes Nicholas Shrady who witnessed the throngs of pilgrims, the visionaries did not look particularly cheerful about being the centre of attention: “To be chosen, I imagined, must sometimes seem a curse” (particularly true of Bernadette Soubirous).<sup>100</sup>

### *Sacred Island of Iona*

The “sacred isle” of Iona was founded by St Columba, who left Ireland in 563 AD on a “pilgrimage for Christ” and landed on the rugged island off the West Highlands of Scotland. There he founded the island’s first monastery. For four centuries it was the very centre of Celtic Christianity as the Continent, Britain and Ireland were shaken by succeeding invasions.

Before the arrival of St Columba Iona had already been a sacred site, as is the case with many holy places built on the remains of an older faith. Even today, the natural landmarks on Iona, such as the spouting cave, the healing pool and the great bay at the back of the ocean, are magnets for those who are more drawn to holy places of natural occurrence rather than those that are human-built.

Lord Kenneth Clark wrote: “I never come to Iona – and I used to come here almost every year when I was young – without the feeling that some God is in this place. It isn’t as awe-inspiring as some other holy places – Delphi or Assisi. But Iona gives one more than anywhere else I know a sense of peace and inner freedom.” It is also, he observed, the place where for centuries, holy men kept western culture alive. Legend has it that there were once 360 large stone crosses on the island, nearly all of which were thrown into the sea during the Reformation.<sup>101</sup>

The monastic tradition continues; there is an abbey which now houses the Iona Community, and which hosts a Christian service on June 15 annually, in honour of St Columba. It is not the easiest place a pilgrim can visit: cars and camping are generally not allowed on the island (there are a few places to stay) and it is rugged and exposed. Yet pilgrims continue to make their way to Iona, It may be the very isolation and wildness of the sacred island that is the chief attraction for religious roamers who value solitude.

### *Sacred Island of Shikoku*

The island of Shikoku, fourth largest in the Japanese archipelago, sees a 900 mile clockwise pilgrimage circuit of 88 Buddhist temples around the island. The pilgrimage stretches back over a millennium, writes Ian Reader, and remains a popular practice in contemporary Japan.<sup>102</sup>

Pilgrimages continue also to be made to individual sites on Shikoku, such as Mount Zōzu (now known as Mt. Kotohira) which saw the height of its popularity in the 1850s and grew into one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in the nineteenth century.<sup>103</sup>

The pilgrimages are voluntary, as is the nature of the manner in which it is performed, framed within the usual courtesies. Most pilgrims travel by motorized transport, including family groups and individuals or relatives bearing mementoes or actual remains of loved ones. As each pilgrim is considered to be accompanied in a personal relationship (“two pilgrims together”) by the miracle-working saint and folk hero Kōbō Daishi who is at the centre of the pilgrimage, the addition of a departed family member who is being “carried along” by the pilgrim gives it extra significance.<sup>104</sup>

The temples are scattered unevenly around the island in a rough circle; each has a main hall of worship dedicated to one of the Buddhas of the Buddhist pantheon, and a separate hall of worship to Kōbō Daishi. They are all numbered, starting from the port of Naruto in eastern Shikoku, but pilgrims may circumnavigate the island as they will. Despite various changes that have taken place over centuries, notably in transport, important continuities remain and contribute to the authenticity of one of Japan’s most important pilgrimage routes.

### *The Emerald Isle*

It will come as little surprise to anyone Irish that pilgrimage still thrives, as it always has, in Ireland. (A web search of “Ireland AND Pilgrimages” revealed nearly 150,000 results in 2006). Many of Ireland’s most sacred sites today have a long history reaching back into pre-Christian times, and there is still a mix of Church and Celtic practice which intermingles, with varying degrees of acceptance.

The best-known pilgrimage site within Ireland is generally acknowledged to be the 765-metre holy mountain of Croagh Patrick (early named *Cruach Aigle* and latterly known as “the Reek”). The mountain’s summit is often under cloud, and in ancient times this is where the gods were said to stay. There, the Celtic god *Lug* was celebrated at the end of July, usually the first Friday of the harvest season; locals still call that day *Aoine Chrom Dubh* (after Chrom Dubh, a pagan harvest deity, who was later “vanquished” by St Brandon).

In modern times the main pilgrimage is on the last Sunday of July, called Reek Sunday, when tens of thousands of pilgrims arrive from all over Ireland and beyond, a small number still following the tradition of starting at midnight, barefoot, with a lamp or candle. The most contrite take the long route of *Tóchar Phàdraig*, from Ballintubber Abbey. Prayers are said at various stations along the way, (as they are on holy mountains in Japan).<sup>105</sup>

Croagh Patrick is also revered as the place where the patron saint of Ireland, St Patrick, famously “expelled” all the snakes from the island. He had spent the last days of Lent on its peak in 441 AD, fasting and meditating during his mission to convert the “pagan” Irish. During Ireland’s turbulent history following its occupation by England, the pilgrimage fell into disuse but was revived in 1903, by Dr Healy, Archbishop of Tuam,<sup>106</sup> though records of earlier pilgrim visits go back at least a thousand years. Its authenticity is derived not only from its great age but also from its hardship; even today, barefoot pilgrims as well as those with stout shoes struggle over the stony sides, while in 1113, thirty people fasting on the mountain were struck by lightning, by no means the only time this has happened.

The close relationship between Irish pilgrimage sites and their pagan past is still extant today. Near St MacDara’s Island, County Galway, is the island of Inishmurray Sligo, not mentioned in early documents yet in more recent times an important place of pilgrimage.<sup>107</sup> The island is only a mile long and its main enclosure, the Big Station, has an altar with a pillar and a number of rounded stones on it. These are called the *Clocha Breacha* (literally, the speckled stones, or more aptly, the “cursing stones”). Some of them are decorated with crosses (and are said to be “uncountable”). A celebrated feature of this island, they were and still are used to place a curse.<sup>108</sup>

There is sensitivity about the provenance of these stones and some pious islanders argue that several of the stones bear crosses. But in the ancient tale, *The Burial of King Cormac*, a pre-Christian figure, there is a verse:

They loosed their curse against the king,  
They cursed him in his flesh and bones;  
And daily in their mystic ring  
They turn'd the maledictive stones.<sup>109</sup>

There is also an upright stone bearing holes nearby, and it has been the custom of expectant mothers on the island to put their fingers through the holes in the hope of a successful childbirth.

Clonmacnois has the longest recorded history of pilgrimage in Ireland, and there is still an important Church of Ireland celebration on the feast day of St Ciaran, who founded his monastery there in 545AD and died at age 33. But a beautiful torc, or neckring, of eastern French origin dating back to 300BC was found there, strengthening claims of its even longer history as a pagan site.

The Irish believe that Christ himself was an eternal wandering pilgrim of the earth: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8: 20). During the early years of Irish Christianity, pilgrims differed from the usual description of pilgrims in that they had no goal and did not intend ever returning home –they were known as *gyrovagus*. The ninth-century epic of St Brendan, an imaginative account of a sixth-century Irish saint with fourteen monks who set off in an oxhide boat, is a depiction of those holy beings who entrusted their fate to God. The epic echoed the real-life practice of Irish monks such as Dubslane, Machbethu and Maelinum who in 891 landed in Cornwall after having cast themselves off Ireland in a coracle without any oars “because they wished for the love to God to be in foreign lands, they cared not where.”<sup>110</sup>

St Patrick used the term *peregrinus* to describe himself as one who had left his own country, England, to come to Ireland to preach the gospel to the heathen, though probably the first clear case of a Christian Irishman going on a pilgrimage was St Columbanus, the person who set the whole Irish (Christian) pilgrimage movement on its way. He may have been inspired by a woman ascetic he met as a young man; she told him that she had been on a pilgrimage away from home (but still within Ireland) for fifteen years and that, if she were not a woman, would have gone even farther. St Columbanus described his desire to leave his country as “burning like a fire” and he

founded a number of monasteries on the Continent, including Bobbio in Italy, where he died in about 613AD.<sup>111</sup>

The early Irish pilgrims, as well as saints, were depicted with croziers, or drop-headed staffs, often with a bell in hand, and perhaps a book or bag in the other. This staff was deeply significant (*see Chapter Three: Pilgrims' Props and Symbols*). In old Irish annals, someone who went on a pilgrimage was said to have "taken the staff" (the *bachall*).

Hermits' graves were sought out by pilgrims, such as St MacDara's island off the south coast of Connemara, which is still a pilgrimage site. This and other islands along the western and northern seaboard of Ireland presented ideal stopping-off points for a maritime pilgrimage along these coasts and beyond them to Scotland and this may be the background for the *Navigatio Brendani* (St *Bréanainn* or Brendan), the great Irish epic.<sup>112</sup>

During the anxious years of the Viking invasions, it was the anchorites who became the spiritual heirs to the wandering pilgrims, though those journeys were often mourned and the founders of monastic rule were forever devising ways of quelling *wanderlust* in their novices. "A monk out of his cell is like a fish out of water," said St Anthony. Yet it did not escape their notice that Jesus and the apostles walked their journeys through the hills of Palestine: a monk of the period wrote: "All alone in my little cell, such a pilgrimage would be dear to my heart."<sup>113</sup>

Then the Vikings left. Now the Irish no longer used boats, or *currachs*, made of animal skins, for they had seen the superiority of wooden vessels and they were able to travel wider. Earlier, in the *Voyage of Snédgus and MacRiagla*, two monks on their way to Iona say, "Let us leave our voyage to God and let us put our oars into the sea."

The pilgrimage to "Patrick's Purgatory" in Lough Derg was the only one known outside Ireland during the Middle Ages and was famous for its toughness.<sup>114</sup> There are many records of harrowed pilgrims, past and present, who have endured its demands. It is on an unprepossessing island in a remote mountain lake in Donegal, prone to poor weather, and tradition has it that St Patrick experienced a vision of purgatory there; his Welsh disciple, Davog, brought Christianity to the region and founded a monastery on the nearby Saints' Island.

Pilgrims endure a three-day fast, a 24-hour vigil during which they recite prayers, barefoot peregrinations over stony tracks and the compulsory recitations of 63

Glorias, 234 Creeds, 891 Paternosters and 1,458 Hail Marys. They are expected to sit in a pit for 24 hours, often alone, during which time they could expect to be tormented by horrible visions. On the last day they celebrate Eucharist in a spirit of rejoicing after the rigours of their spiritual exercise.<sup>115</sup> Its ordeal was known as far away as Italy and may have inspired Giotto's paintings and Dante's *Inferno*.<sup>116</sup>

A favourite pilgrim spot in Ireland is at Knock, in the west of Eire, which in 1878 was battered by a great storm. The slate roof and windows of the little church there were damaged and some statues were smashed. A year later, on the wet evening of August 21, a group of women saw figures standing outside the church and assumed they were new statues. Returning later, they noticed that the statues were moving and ran to fetch witnesses to this miracle. In all, fourteen people claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary, dressed in white wearing a golden crown, accompanied by St Joseph and St John.

Pilgrims began arriving at the shrine from all over Ireland, and miracles were recorded. At first the Church refused to recognise the "stories" which resulted in the pilgrims making up their own rituals, reverting to Gaelic forms of worship while chanting the Rosary and Liturgy out loud. Today, Knock has a basilica which can hold 12,000 people, and a folk museum which houses costumes and craft tools from the time of the apparition, as well as detailing the miraculous events which have taken place there.<sup>117</sup>

Pilgrim tours of Ireland are big business, though they are not confined to Christian treks. They include "Celtic and Shamanic connections" to, among other places, the home of "Eiru the Great Goddess", Druid's hills and sacred wells.<sup>118</sup> Sacred wells in Ireland have, for thousands of years, been famous for curing specific ailments such as headaches, rheumatism, backache or sprains. As an example of "reciprocal relationships", trees that exist beside a holy well still have rags tied to them as can be seen at Seir Kieran, County Offaly, or at the better-known Well of Doon, in County Donegal. The rags, often red or white, are left there so that any ailment the pilgrim has brought along, may be left behind. At Clonenagh, County Laois, the rags have been replaced by thousands of coins hammered into the tree by pilgrims. Legend tells that when the neighbouring well dried up, the water rose and formed a pool in the branches of the tree. Crutches are also left at wells, as are religious medals and rosaries.

The Rev. Charles O'Connor of Bellangare, a noted eighteenth century antiquarian, asked an old man named Owen Hester what these customs were about, particularly that of securing rags on the branches of such trees and spitting on them.

Hester's reply, the same as that of other older men, was that their ancestors did it as a preservative against *Geasu-Draoidacht*, the sorceries of the druids; that their cattle were preserved by it, and that the *daoini maethe*, the fairies, were kept in good humour by it.

It can be noted here that pilgrimages to sacred sites to propitiate the ancestors are not solely the custom of African and other developing countries. In Roman times, the spirits of ancestors were propitiated, and the belief that they were easy to contact was a lesson carried over into Christianised Europe, in the figures of saints. Indeed, once any form of visiting tombs, shrines, and graves is closely examined, there is a commonality of venerating ancestors which runs as a thread through all humanity to this present day.

### ***Viking Saint***

Norway's legendary Christian hero-king and saint, Olav Haraldsson, was killed in battle with King Canute in 1030 AD, and his body was buried near the Nidelven River in Trondheim, the former capital of Norway and home of the early Norse parliament.

Springs of water began to flow from his grave; they were accredited with healing properties, and miracles were recorded. A year later, his body was disinterred (and found undecayed, often taken as a sign of sanctity), and moved to the town's only church. Norway declared Olav a saint and martyr, and in 1070 his nephew, Olav Kyrre, began to build the vast stone church on the site of his (first) burial place. The oldest parts of this church date to the twelfth century and form part of the present cathedral which is dated 1152.

In the Middle Ages, countless pilgrims made the journey to Trondheim and a chain of pilgrims' hospices marked the southern route to the shrine. The Reformation destroyed the tradition of public pilgrimage there; but Nidarosdomen is still the traditional burial place of Norwegian monarchs, and the first modern Norwegian royal couple were crowned there in 1906. The present king and queen of Norway, Harald and Sonja, were formally blessed there in 1992.

Norwegian and Swedish pilgrims in particular continue to visit the cathedral, as well as the ancient battlefield of Stikelsad, near Trondheim, especially on July 29, the official anniversary of Olav's death.

### *Ceremony of the Lambs*

Just as the innocence and purity of Bernadette Soubirous played a significant part in the success of the Lourdes story, so too is it a factor in the lesser-known yet poignant fate of St Agnes, a 12-year-old martyr who was murdered in 305AD in Rome. Despite the long time-gap, pilgrims today still visit her shrine, *Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura* where her memory is fresh, and the devout continue to mourn her early fate.

According to the fifth-century story, Agnes was only 12, or perhaps 13, when she aroused a passion in the son of a Roman Prefect. He had seen her coming home from school and she was at an age when Roman women could become promised in marriage. He begged her to marry him, offering her houses, riches and the power of being part of the Prefect's family. She turned him down, saying that she was already "engaged" to Christ and would have no other husband.

The law gave Agnes a fiendish choice if she would not marry; either to be made a vestal virgin and spend the rest of her life sacrificing to idols, or to be exposed naked in a brothel. She chose the brothel, but was "miraculously" saved from rape. Finally, she was stabbed in the throat, a merciful death at her age.<sup>119</sup>

Agnes probably died on January 21, 305.<sup>120</sup> From the beginning, her martyrdom attracted pilgrims. Pilgrims to Rome in the seventh century were guided by itineraries telling them where martyrs' shrines lay beyond the city's walls: by then St Agnes was a well-established site. Eventually the little church was built over her grave. Further miracles occurred there, enhancing its pilgrimage status.<sup>121</sup>

The church's fame was complete when, in 1959, Pope John XXIII made it one of the station churches of Rome. Thousands of people attend its stational feast on the fifth Sunday in Lent, as well as to see the Ceremony of the Lambs on January 21, and to join the procession through the catacombs a few days later.

The colourful and appealing Ceremony of the Lambs is a particular draw for pilgrim families; each year, two live lambs are placed on the altar and blessed. They are crowned with roses, one red and one white, to represent the young saint's status as martyr and virgin. The crowd is then allowed to pat the lambs outside and then they are whisked off to the Pope's residence at Castel Gandolfo in the Alban hills to join the flocks kept there.<sup>122</sup> The earliest reference to the custom of the lambs dates to 1442AD – the word *agnus* means "lamb" in Latin, so it is a sort of sacred pun.

St Agnes's afterlife as a martyr began outside the walls of Rome, because of "a prohibition on burial inside human settlement", as Robert Alvis has described the anxieties of contagion, especially from a cemetery.<sup>123</sup> Those saints who excelled spiritually in life, or braved a martyr's fate on account of their faith, came to be perceived as exercising inordinate power after death. Centuries of devotion by faithful pilgrims eventually led to her shrine being incorporated within the essential itinerary of a pilgrim's visit to the "holy city" of Rome. Her containment within the "centre of things" by the Church is complete.

### *Old World Ancestors*

Though Christ is not seen, theologically, as an "ancestor" by Christian scholars, it does not mean that all of the reverent flock share this view. In Jaén, a beloved image known as the Christ of *la Merced*, or more familiarly as the *abuelo* (grandfather), is taken out on a Good Friday procession, to which many pilgrims flock. It is brought out late at night: only the face is illuminated.<sup>124</sup>

One of Malaga's Holy Week images of Christ is also called "grandfather." The power of ancestral affiliation is not only part of the ancient world but of the present as well. Our laws of inheritance are based on it, as is, frequency, status and even celebrity. Genealogy and heraldry is thriving business today, and many pilgrimages are made in search of "roots", whether to the proverbial little croft in Ireland, or to Gorée Island in Senegal.

Pilgrims have always believed that there are sacred places of power involving ancestors, or past believers. We call them saints, those whose lives manifested a particular relationship with the divine, as did the Holy Virgin who for two millennia has brought motherly comfort to the needy.

St Francis of Assisi died in 1226, childless, but the many pilgrims who travel to his town in Italy are seeking, in part, to be touched in a deeply personal way, to be drawn into the "family" of this remarkable man (whom Kenneth Clark described as a religious genius), who regarded not only other people but also all living creatures as his direct brethren.<sup>125</sup> The tiny chapel he built in a forest, the *Porziuncola* ("little portion"), though now overpowered by the massive Church of St Mary of the Angels inside which it nestles, reflects - far more than the enormous basilica in the Assisi itself - the intimate

and personal charisma of the man. I have witnessed adults weep inside the *Porziuncola* as if they were at the graveside of immediate family and they were the chief mourners.

The same may be said of another example, the relationship modern pilgrims have with Sister Margaret-May Alacoque, a young nun who in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century was visited by intense visions which demanded a devotion to the Sacred Heart and the instruction to display its image. Though Lourdes holds by far the record for annual visits, Paray-le-Monial, also in France and seriously boosted by a Papal visit, attracts great numbers to its huge Charismatic Centre for Pilgrimage. Here, there is nothing “distant” about the relationship between the devout and the young “Sister”, despite her long demise.

This sense of intense relationship by pilgrims to the venerated intensifies with the increased youthfulness of the subject. There seems to be an inherent paradox in this. Being young means having no power, to be lower on the pecking order of prestige. Yet it is the very quality of childishness, of youthful innocence and vulnerability that is responsible for such strong emotional ties. As adults we are implicitly the guardians of all children, and their wellbeing. Tragedies involving the young touch us all.

### *Voyager Virgin*

The foremost pivot of religious tourism in the Philippines today is Antipolo, not far inland from Manila. It is the premier axis of pilgrimage in the Philippines, the site of many “miracles” and “wondrous events”, and part of the identity and consciousness of Filipino Catholics.<sup>126</sup> Enshrined there since its dedication in 1633 is the small wooden figure of the Virgin Mary, invested with the power to grant safe journey, and to heal illnesses and foster good health.

The statue owes its fame to a series of maritime voyages, beginning in Acapulco on March 25, 1626, when the Governor-General Juan Nino de Tabora selected an attractive statue of the Virgin Mary from a neighbourhood church to stand as the “sacred sentinel” on his three-month trip to the Philippines. It was carved out of dark hardwood by an anonymous local sculptor and is a strikingly beautiful example of seventeenth-century Mexican folk art.<sup>127</sup> (Each statue taken on board had emblematic value. It sat on a prominent altar and was the focus of daily devotions throughout the voyage. It also became the object of urgent pleas to God during storms, fires, disease and battle. The

statues were usually borrowed from parish churches or the chapels of religious orders in the vicinity of Manila and Acapulco).

In addition to its outward voyage, the *Voyager Virgin* had safe-guarded 13 trans-Pacific crossings by the Manila Galleons. No other sacred image ever came close to that record. She had become the beloved protectress of the all-important oceanic lifeline connecting the Philippines with the powerful and prosperous colony of *Nueva España*, which was the hub of Hispanic dominion in the Americas.<sup>128</sup> Her “miracles” began before the Antipolo church, her eventual domain, had been completed. Every evening the friars placed the statue in a temporary home, the nearby chapel in Santa Cruz. Each morning it was discovered in a stately *tipolo* (breadfruit) tree at the new site; this was interpreted as a plea to urgently finish the building project.

By the end of the nineteenth century the small town of Antipolo was both the primary axis of Marian worship in the Philippines and the foremost hub of Christian worship in Asia.<sup>129</sup> It was already accumulating tens of thousands of pilgrims annually, more at the time than Jerusalem (which was under the control of the Ottoman Empire). In 1908 a rail line was constructed between Manila and Antipolo, providing inexpensive and comfortable transport.<sup>130</sup> Soon a parallel road connection was set up; now pilgrims were able to visit Antipolo in droves, especially at weekends.

As with pilgrimages elsewhere in the world, the site gradually became a mixture of sacred and secular activities. Almost without exception, pilgrims who have just arrived rush immediately to the church in order to see the image, and pray. A few approach the statue on bleeding legs, raw after crawling for hours or days through the cobbled streets of the town. This is often followed by a cheerful reunion with family and friends, relaxation, games and picnics, as well as local areas of interest.

But there is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of pilgrims not only venerate the *Voyager Virgin* but also feel a close personal relationship to the affectionately named “*De la Paz*” (the Peacemaker) of Antipolo. Though the town was burned during the last months of WWII and the church destroyed by bombs, the restoration process was virtually completed by 1950. Today, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, between four and five million pilgrims visit the Virgin of Antipolo each year.<sup>131</sup>

### ***Snow Star Father***

Carrying holy water requires a safe container. This provides no problem for pilgrims in the southern Peruvian Andes, who simply carry home large blocks of ice which, when melted down, provide a good supply of holy water for the following year.

Each year, about 25,000 pilgrims, predominantly Quechua-speaking, converge on the stone chapel of the miraculous *Señor de Qoyllor Rit'i* (Lord of the Snow Star), a figure of the crucified Christ painted on a rock. In 1783, a shepherd-boy, Mariano, is believed to have been befriended in the desolate Sinakara valley by a “pale-skinned” stranger. When Church representatives travelled from Cuzco, about 55 miles away, to see Manuel, they found “Christ’s body” hanging in a *tayanka* bush. Mysteriously the body disappeared, leaving only a tree shaped like a crucifix. When Mariano died he was buried beneath the adjacent outcrop of rock.

A painted figure of Christ was later portrayed on this rock, which today forms the focal point of devotion. Pilgrims firmly identify the *Señor de Qoyllori Rit'i*, or *taytacha* (“little father”) with the powerful mountain deity, the 20,000ft Ausankati in whose shadow the fiesta unravels. This weather creator has the power to give fertility and health, or to ruin the crops.

Pilgrims travel by road to Mawallani village and then trek the last five miles to Sinakara in a colourful procession. Village dance groups pay homage, with formalised choreography, to the “little father” on behalf of their home communities and, scattered among them, the “bear men”, with woollen masks and speaking in falsetto voices, protect the pilgrims. Trinity Sunday is the central day of pilgrimage; dancing goes on all day and an image of the “little father” is paraded up and down the valley. In the early hours, the “bear men” ascend the glaciers where they plant candles, retrieve a cross placed there a few days earlier and return to the valley amid celebration.<sup>132</sup>

### ***Happiness Pilgrimage***

Sodo is the popular name for an annual pilgrimage to the Haitian village of Bonheur, “Happiness”, and its waterfalls, Saut d’Eau. The mountainous site is sixty miles along a pot-holed road from the capital city of Port-au-Prince; there, the Miracle Virgin, *Vierj Mirak*, is venerated every July 17, the feast day for Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

According to local tradition, the Virgin first manifested herself on July 16, 1841. Looking for a lost horse, a man named Fortuné came to a palm grove and, looking up, saw a beautiful woman standing in a palm tree. Every year since his vision at least 20,000 pilgrims have visited the site, though few wait for the Mass at the Church built to commemorate the vision. Most head directly for the waterfalls a mile or so away, to immerse themselves in torrents sacred to Ezili, the Voodoo goddess of love, and to her serpent lover Danbala, the patriarch of the Voodoo pantheon.<sup>133</sup> Water is a “divine” element and many pilgrims appear to experience possession while standing under the falls.

Pilgrims appear to feel no contradiction in their dual devotion to the *Vierj Mirak* and the Water Gods. They feel that Mary and Ezili are different aspects of the same divinity (though local clerics are less happy with this interpretation).<sup>134</sup>

When the Miracle Virgin appeared again on top of her palm tree in 1915, the priest asked a captain from the occupying US Army to cut the tree down. As he did so, the vision moved from tree to tree, until the forest of palms was destroyed. As the last of the palms fell, the vision changed into a pigeon which apparently stayed close to Bonheur for several days, and then flew to Sodo where it disappeared into the iridescent mist. The pigeon links the Church and the Falls into one holy site where miracles are said to occur, and pilgrims continue to make their colourful journey there where all are welcome.<sup>135</sup>

### ***Healing Earth***

Pilgrims of different faiths and backgrounds travel to Chimayó, 30 miles north of Sante Fe, New Mexico in particular for its healing powers.<sup>136</sup> Legend says that in the Tewa village in Chimayó there was a pool with mud which had healing properties. The pool dried to dampness when an “obsidian chief” (huge volcano) was destroyed in a flurry of smoke and fire. The sacred hill became the entrance to the underworld.

Native Americans left the valley around 1400 and Spanish settlers arrived in 1692. They constructed several chapels in the valley, one over the site of the healing mud. This is called *El Santuario de Chimayó* and pilgrims walk from a hundred or more miles across mountain and desert to reach it during Holy Week during Easter. Some carry tall crosses, others photographs of sick relatives, while others carry nothing but water.

On Good Friday about 2,000 pilgrims gather to access the power of the earth at a sacred spot in the church.<sup>137</sup> From the sacristy a narrow, low door leads into a tiny room with a dry earth “well” in the middle of the floor. Pilgrims take away bags of soil from this hole, or rub the soil directly onto themselves. The priest is on hand to “replenish” the soil and its healing powers are attested to by the surroundings, where crutches hang, as do photographs, flowers, candles and touching stories written in Spanish. The rarely-seen *Penitentes*, who meet in private to suffer for Christ<sup>138</sup> (and who a century ago had to kiss the “blessed earth” as part of their initiation), leave at Easter, which is a busy time, but pilgrims visit Chimayó every day of the year to experience the healing, holy earth.

### *Ancestral Songlines*

The connection of ancestors to pilgrimage is absolutely central to Australian Aboriginal belief. The very existence of the continent is believed to depend on the legendary totemic beings who, in the creation myths, wandered over the length and breadth of the land, singing out the name of everything that crossed their path - birds, animals, plants, rocks, waterholes – and by so doing, sang the world into existence.<sup>139</sup>

As they believe that the original world was perfect and could be in no way different, the spiritual quest of the Aboriginal has the central aim of keeping the land the way it was, and should be. The man or woman who makes a “walkabout” is making a ritual journey, treading in the footsteps of the Ancestor, and singing that Ancestor’s stanzas without changing a note or word. This is how the Creation is recreated and reaffirmed.<sup>140</sup>

Crisscrossed throughout Australia is a labyrinth of pathways, usually invisible to the eye of Europeans who sometimes call them “songlines” or “dreaming-tracks”; but they are known to the Aborigines as the “Footprints of the Ancestors”, or the “Way of the Law”.<sup>141</sup> Custom requires each generation to hand down to the young the songs in their exact form, for embedded within them are the intricate workings of a sacred geography in which features of the landscape are precisely located. Even when visiting areas they have not previously seen, they are able, by singing the “songline”, to establish where they are, and to reaffirm the land.

There are specific rules for “going back”, or rather for singing their way back to where they “belong”, to the individual’s conception site, where *tjuringa* is stored. Only after completing this pilgrimage can that person become, or re-become, the Ancestor.<sup>142</sup>

Chatwin suggests Aboriginal pilgrimage is similar to those in Islam and especially the Sufi Orders, of *siyahat*, the action or rhythm of walking which is used as a technique for dissolving the attachments of the world and allowing for a losing oneself in God. The aim of a *dervish* is to become a “dead man walking”, one whose body stays alive on earth yet whose soul is already in Heaven. The Sufi manual, the *Kashf-al-Mahjub*, asserts that towards the end of the journey the *dervish* becomes the “Way”, not the “wayfarer.” By spending his whole life walking and singing his Ancestor’s songline, the Aboriginal too eventually “becomes” the track, the Ancestor, and the song.

Throughout their lives, rural Aborigines are on, in at least one sense, a pilgrimage. The “walkabout”, far from being a notorious feature of unreliability, is a sacred quest, a spiritual imperative. *Tjukurr* (Aboriginal Law) imparts the profound meaning of “dreaming tracks” and of the significance of sacred sites, such as the famous Uluru, in the centre of Australia, and, 32km west of it, the even more sacred *Kata Tjuta*.<sup>143</sup>

In yet another example of a mountain structure being seen as especially sacred, Uluru is believed to have been made during the play of two young boys at the time of Creation and then used and remade through the actions of other “dreamtime” creatures. Rising 350m from the flat desert floor it is a solid piece of sandstone more than 3km long and 2.5km wide and gets its red colour from the rusting of iron in the otherwise grey rock. It was named Ayers Rock, after colonial Governor Henry Ayres, in 1873 by William Grosse, the first European man who recorded climbing it.

The idea of climbing its almost vertical sides has remained a challenge to European visitors, and anathema to the Anangu Aborigines who have guardianship over it. At the base are caves where, over thousands of years, Aborigines have painted, and on the rock surface there are giant trails and marks which they say were left by the Creation beings, their half-human, half-animal ancestors. According to their culture, only qualified Anangu elders may make the long trek to the top and then only during ceremonial occasions. The “wounding” of the rock, in which metal posts with chains as handrails were inserted, is an affront to the place where, says Wally Jacob, “the ancestors were and still are. If you ask us, we will say, ‘Please don’t climb the rock.’ When people fall off

and die (at least 37 have done so), it's not the government that cries for them. It's us."<sup>144</sup> (Native Americans have similarly protested against climbers of Devil's Tower in Wyoming, which has religious significance for them but which continues to attract recreational rock-climbers).

In recent years, the concept of travelling to Uluru in a sacred or spiritual journey has gained a wider acceptance in Australia, assisted by Aboriginal Law asserting that there is a "moral and existential right for white Australians to make a pilgrimage to the Mecca of all Australia": there is a greater recognition of the journey to Uluru being a broadbased, more inclusive and flexible pilgrimage with growing sensitivity to its unique role, as essentially a place of initiation and homage.<sup>145</sup> The Rock is recognised as a place to replenish the spirit and commune with the "ultimate" and so lays a claim which now seems beyond dispute, despite its colonial history.<sup>146</sup>

### *To the Field of Stars*

The venerable and famous pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain is currently the focus of much attention, in the media as well as in formal studies. It is the last of the examples of "world pilgrimages" considered in this Chapter, and is today a fascinating and creative blend of ancient themes and modern needs, demonstrating the flexibility to not only survive, but to currently enjoy considerable and growing popularity in spite of its long "trek" and rigours. It is unique, and yet incorporates nearly all the aspects of pilgrimage we have observed so far.

It is one of the greatest of all historical Christian pilgrimages, and yet thousands of non-Christians still walk it today. Its goal is the Cathedral of Santiago (St James) with its relic of the martyred saint, and yet it is the journey itself on which attention is concentrated, unlike most other Christian sites where it hardly matters how the pilgrim arrives. "Authenticity" plays a great role in the pilgrimage, yet in the last couple of decades, the Church has stretched normally rigid boundaries; and in any case many pilgrims on it invent their own notion of the authentic. It is also one of the few pilgrimages on which "authenticity" can be actually verified (or withheld) – by the credentials as well as by the *Compostela* awarded at its end.

There is one *Camino*, but at least seven official "paths" to Santiago – and many more, as pilgrims make their own routes. Its ending is ambiguous: is it in Santiago de

Compostela or at Finisterre on the coast? For some pilgrims, the ending is irrelevant; when they feel their pilgrimage is over, anywhere along the route, they go home. And for some, it is perpetual – their journey, begun on the *Camino*, is never over; some pilgrims have reported an “enigma of arrival”; they turn away from Santiago during the last few stages in order not to have to face the consequences of the pilgrimage ending.

It has a great and noble history – yet many modern pilgrims care little about that, some not even knowing what or where “Santiago” is. The saint whose name it bears has been seen as both a “peacenik” and a warmonger. It has incorporated almost all types of pilgrimages, from *veneration* to *penitential*, *barter* to *healing*, yet many may also walk or ride it in a celebratory or inquisitive spirit or on cultural expeditions. It can be extremely difficult and long – many have died along its route - or relatively short and simple, some pilgrims arriving by car or coach (though their authenticity may be challenged by the purists). It is Spanish by right, but international by practice, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site (proclaimed in 1993).

Further, no historic pilgrimage has more captured the imagination in recent times. Numbers along the route are swelling yearly (in the High Middle Ages, about half a million pilgrims visited it yearly, an enormous number when considered against the total population; by 1867, the numbers were down to fewer than 50. Currently, they are in the hundreds of thousands annually, with millions attending the Feast of St James in July in a Holy Year). Its “badge”, the scallop shell, is a vital part of its own history, and yet the scallop is seen in pilgrim churches all over the world as the universal emblem of pilgrims. Pilgrims of every spiritual background – and none – take to its road, from seemingly every country in the world. It was claimed by the ancients and the Romans long before St James lived, and now by the New Agers and the Wiccans. It gives elation to some and despair to others. There are no guarantees.

Before the route became so intricately involved with St James, it was a Roman trade-route, nicknamed *La Voie Lactée* (“The Milky Way”) as it seems to follow the starry configuration of that name; the pale arms of the Milky Way stretched out to the West, where the sun goes down – the ends of the earth (“*finis terra*”). By “route”, I am referring to the path which crosses over the modern border from France to Spain near Roncesvalles, and which was known for at least a thousand years as the *Camino Francés*.<sup>147</sup>

Then James the Apostle arrived – twice.<sup>148</sup> After his time with Jesus, he is supposed to have visited Zaragoza, Spain, where he had a vision of the (still living) Virgin Mary. This spurred his erection of the first church ever to be dedicated to the Virgin; shortly afterwards he returned to Jerusalem where he was beheaded on the orders of Herod Agrippa by a Roman sword in about the year 44AD. He was the first Apostle to be martyred, and the second Christian martyr (after Stephen). He had not been a “quiet” disciple; his nickname was “James of the Vortex” – because of the commotion that his preaching produced.

By rights his body should be buried somewhere in the Middle East. But legend records that two of James’ disciples removed his corpse to Jaffa, where a “stone boat” appeared without sails or crew, and carried them for seven days over the seas to Padrón (from *pedrón*, meaning stone), about twenty kilometers away from Santiago. The local pagan queen, Lupa, after converting, permitted his body to be buried locally in a large stone coffin, next to which his disciples were later interred. (The *pedrón* to which the boat was moored still exists; it is under the high altar of the parish church there).<sup>149</sup>

It is at this point that the legend of the scallop shell, so deeply associated with the *Camino*, takes hold; for as the “stone boat” reached the shores, a horse was “maddened at the sight” and galloped into the ocean. When it and the rider emerged miraculously unscathed, they were both covered with scallop shells, a regional delicacy (and the origin of the name of the famous French dish, *Coquilles St Jacques*, named after the saint by French pilgrims).<sup>150</sup> The scallop, *venera*, is etymologically linked to Venus and by association, birth and regeneration.

For seven centuries, the site was utterly forgotten. Then in 813, a time of great upheaval in Spain during its struggle with the “Moors”, the body of the Martyr was fortuitously found by *Pelayo* (Pelagius), a hermit-monk, who was attracted to the site by visions of stars. Three sets of bones were found, and the hill on which they were disinterred was named *Compostela*, from the Latin *campus stellae* (“field of stars”).<sup>151</sup> Alfonso II “the Chaste” (791-842), King of Asturias, visited the site to pay his respects, built a chapel there, and then conquered Lisbon and repelled Arab attackers. The saint, credited with the success, was adopted as the champion of Christian Spain against the “Moors” (Muslims). By 838, the grave of the apostle was celebrated, and both locals and pilgrims were displaying “extraordinary devotion” to his remains, noted a ninth century martyrology by Florus de Lyon.

In 844,<sup>152</sup> King Ramiro I of the Rioja region of Spain had a dream, in which Santiago said to him “tomorrow will you see me go into battle, on a white horse, with a white standard and a great shining sword in my hand”.<sup>153</sup> Whereupon Ramiro launched the first decisive counter-Islamic victory, at the Battle of Clavijo, where the saint was “seen” in shining armour, mounted on a white charger at the head of the Christian army, holding a white banner emblazoned with the blood-red cross. In his right hand he gripped a great sword.<sup>154</sup>

In an ironic twist of fate, *Santiago Peregrino* (St James the Pilgrim), the preacher of non-violence that was a cornerstone of the early Christian Church, became *Santiago Matamoros* (the Moorslayer), and his appearance at subsequent *Reconquista* (the “Reconquest”) battles transformed him into the crusading symbol of the fight against Islam, whose followers on the southern shores of Spain had launched a drive up into its northern-most reaches.<sup>155</sup> By 1085 the Spanish capital Toledo had been reconquered by Spaniards, and ten years later the First Crusade set out for Jerusalem. The Holy War in Spain had been at first one of survival, then revenge. St James was the standard-bearer of Christendom, the Knight of Heaven, and in the early Middle Ages “half of Europe set out for his tomb to render him homage and thanks”, which in part at least, explains the great number of pilgrims to his shrine in that era.<sup>156</sup>

St James himself was credited with having personally dispatched 60,000 Moors, and over six centuries was seen at some forty battles, even allegedly assisting the massacre of Native Americans in the New World.<sup>157</sup> The difficulty of portraying this fisherman-apostle as a bloodied knight seemed unproblematic, though when General Franco brought his expert Moroccan troops to Compostela to dedicate themselves to the overthrow of the Spanish Republic, all statues and other paraphernalia relating to his Moor-slaying background were discreetly hidden under sheets.<sup>158</sup>

The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the peak of pilgrimage traffic to Santiago; Louis VII of France made the journey in 1154, and St Francis of Assisi in 1214. It was a period of relative stability in western Europe, of considerable agricultural and intellectual development, assisted in no small part by the “information highway” opened up from the East by the Crusades, when great tracts of knowledge lost to the West during the so-called “Dark Ages”, and new learning, was flooding in from the Arab world.

A small percentage of pilgrims were wealthy, and their journeys were undertaken in style, on horseback and with retainers, staying at inns rather than charity

hospices. Gunther, Bishop of Bamberg in Germany, made the pilgrimage in 1065 travelling with an entourage worthy of a head of state. By now, pilgrims were protected travellers covered by a form of international law which guarded them from tariffs and tolls, entitled them to charity and safe conduct, and condemned anyone robbing or killing them with the severest punishments. They were also protected by the credentials they carried. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the Royal Chancellery of Britain, which had already protected the property of pilgrims during their absence, now issued letters to them requesting any foreign ruler or official that they favour the bearer. These became effectively the forerunners of the modern passport.

Santiago had become the third most important pilgrimage site in Christendom next to Jerusalem and Rome, but was foremost in the European popular imagination because of its proximity.<sup>159</sup> Hospices and *refugios* built by wealthy donors offered free shelter.

Mathilda, daughter of Henry I of England and widow of the Holy Roman Emperor, visited Santiago in about the year 1125 with a fabulous retinue and was honoured, according to the custom of the time, with a gift of one of St James's hands. She presented it to her father, who founded Reading Abbey, centre of the Santiago cult in Britain. Its Coat of Arms included three golden scallop shells, and it provided a hospice which offered free food and lodging for pilgrims on a kingly scale. (The court of the British monarch is still official entitled the Court of St James, on account of a leper hospital that was consecrated to St James, and which formerly occupied the site of what is today St James' Palace).

One of the *Camino's* principal propagandists was Aymery Picaud, from Poitiers, who is the most likely writer of the *Codex Calixtinus*, the essential guidebook for pilgrims then travelling the *Camino* (and which appears to have been fraudulent).<sup>160</sup> Despite its prejudices, it became a medieval best-seller. In 1456, a priest and Fellow of Eton College named William Wey who had made the pilgrimage compiled the *Informacon for Pylgrymes*, listing details of the Spanish kingdoms through which he passed. He had counted no fewer than 80 foreign ships in the harbour near Santiago, of which 32 were English. Among the pilgrims who sang praise of the "sacred path" was Dante.

The Black Death, the terrible epidemic of bubonic plague which killed nearly a third of Europe between 1349-52, heralded a serious decrease in numbers of pilgrims.

But the most serious attack on pilgrimage came during the Reformation, which attacked not only the corruption and exploitation that were part of it, but also targeted the cult of relics in general, regarding them as “superstitious.” In the sixteenth century an English doctor, Andrew Boorde, who visited Santiago as a pilgrim, was told (incorrectly) by a priest who gave him absolution that there were no relics of St James in the city at all, Charlemagne having moved them to Toulouse eight centuries earlier.<sup>161</sup>

Then, incredibly, the saint’s precious relics *were* lost. They had been hidden during a crisis by the Archbishop Don Juan de San Clemente in 1589, and were forgotten until their “rediscovery” in 1878. So much doubt now surrounded the relic that in the late nineteenth century, Father John Morris, SJ, travelled from Britain to Spain to investigate. His report, published in 1882, assured readers that the left hand of the apostle’s body was indeed missing – the very left hand which had been given to Mathilda, Henry I’s daughter. Their authenticity was confirmed by means of an 1884 Papal Bull, *Deus Omnipotens*, from Pope Leo XIII.<sup>162</sup>

By then, the *Camino* was in crisis. The British travel writer Richard Ford had warned: “Pilgrimage, the oriental and medieval form of travelling, is passing away even in Spain. The carcass remains, but the spirit is fled”, he had written in the 1840s.<sup>163</sup> The recovery of the saint’s remains was crucial, but the numbers of pilgrims did not immediately increase; it was a slow process of rehabilitation.

After the Spanish Civil War and WWII, General Franco consciously allied himself with *Santiago Matamoros*, and in keeping with his habitual lack of modesty proclaimed himself and the saint as the saviours and unifiers of Spain. In 1948, a Holy Year, the magazine, *Compostela*, began to be published by the head confraternity of St James in Santiago.<sup>164</sup> The 1950s and early 1960s marked the rise of the “Friends of the Camino” in France and Spain, and a marked interest by historical and cultural groups. A group of French academics formed such a group in Paris to investigate and restore the vast cultural patrimony linked with the *Camino* in France since the tenth century. In 1957 Walter Starkie, who made three pilgrimages to Santiago, commented on the “pampered pilgrim”, marking a crucial moment in the history of criticism of the modern pilgrimage. He commented that “there are still in every country a number of lonely pilgrims who forsake the rapidly-moving supervised pilgrimage, and make the long journey guided solely by the myriads of wandering souls in the star-dust of the Milky Way”.<sup>165</sup> From then on, foot pilgrims were seen as the most authentic pilgrims.

But the post-WWII love-affair with motor vehicles was not quite over. From the 1950s through the 1970s Spain promoted the pilgrimage as “On the Roads to Compostela in the ‘Gasoline’ Age”, with such signs posted along National Highway 120.<sup>166</sup> The *Camino* had become a “petrol pilgrimage”. Nevertheless, a transition occurred in the 1980s and 1990s when participants began to reject the modern way in favour of cycling and walking the route, in the “traditional way”, though this did not become popular with the Spaniards until the late 1980s.

In 1987, the cultural branch of the EU adopted the pilgrimage route as the premier “European Cultural Itinerary” and set up studies of the pilgrimage routes of Europe.<sup>167</sup> A culture of support began to revive around the *Camino*. By the late 1980s, pilgrims no longer had to sleep on barn floors and otherwise fend for themselves. *Refugios* were built. The local governments of Castile-Leon and Galicia began to provide facilities and numerous guide books were published. In the Holy Year of 1993, closely following the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, 100,000 pilgrims walked or cycled the route, and millions more arrived by transport in Santiago.<sup>168</sup> The Spanish Government by now had realised the full impact of the pilgrimage’s reanimation.<sup>169</sup>

Iberia Airlines began, from the mid-1990s, to offer reduced one-way fares from Santiago for pilgrims bearing the *Compostela*, the certificate of completion. They also transport bicycles without charge for pilgrims carrying the certificate.<sup>170</sup> The Spanish Royal Family identified themselves as pilgrims and walked part of the way on foot.

For some pilgrims who arrive at Santiago de Compostela the journey is not yet over. They carry on, to Finisterre, the Medieval “end of the earth”, where the boat of St James and his two disciples, according to legend, moored in Padrón (that mooring stone is kept below the altar of the Santiago Apostle parish church and shown on request). It is a geographically dramatic fishing village, about 100 kms west of Santiago, where cliffs lead down to the sea and the setting sun. The city seal of Finisterra reads *Fin da Ruta Xacobeá* (“end of the Jacobean route”) and the *Finisterrana* certificate that is awarded in the town hall to pilgrims who present their *Compostela* accredits the pilgrim’s arrival at “the end of the *Camino*.”

About ten percent of those who arrive in Santiago go on to Finisterre, though some of those do so as tourists and go by bus. Most of the pilgrims who continue to walk are foreigners. There is no *refugio* at “the end of the earth”, a subject of annoyance. The route is more rugged than on the rest of the *Camino* and maps are necessary, even though

there are scallop shell way-marks for both directions (indicating for the only time on the route that the way back home is inevitable). In the Middle Ages it was obligatory to venture on to Finisterre, but the Church in Santiago insists that their Cathedral is the end of the route and discourages pilgrims from continuing on, claiming that “esoteric practices” at Finisterre are detrimental to the pilgrimage. The Galician government encourages the pilgrims to take the journey west to Finisterre. There are clearly competing discourses at work.

The responses to the *Camino* are as varied as those who walk it. As a realm of competing discourses, the Santiago pilgrimage for the most part successfully accommodates a host of opposed orientations and belief systems, as well as motives. In the Middle Ages only the “religious” were considered pilgrims. Today, a pilgrim may be *authentic* and yet not be “religious” at all. Despite attempts to control it, there is no exclusive voice that mandates authenticity.

Shared sacred spaces are by no means unknown, though they may be open to criticism by “purists.” David Chidester has described how shocked Portuguese Catholics were, in the sixteenth century, when discovering on arrival in southern India that their most sacred shrine of the Apostle Thomas was revered by Hindu devotees and guarded by a Muslim attendant who explained the *baraka*, the “sacred energy” of the apostle, in decidedly un-Catholic terms.<sup>171</sup> Yet until the assertive arrival of the Portuguese, everyone else seemed to have been getting along famously.

In the West’s move to a secularised society, people live in a world in which they may have a need (sometimes referred to as a “yearning”) to seek meaning in their lives, to be religious roamers as their ancestors were, but without any particular religious convictions. The *Camino* is flexible enough to accommodate this, and, if one dare say it, ancient enough to have a wisdom of its own. The link to the past is critical but no longer an imposition. It seems that it, and other pilgrimages, have become metaphors for a postmodern age: the *Camino* has also become a pathway to the future.

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These examples of the global phenomenon of pilgrimage underscore the claim outlined earlier that, far from being an activity of the past, it is a thriving and even burgeoning modern ritual. It is evident that more people are becoming pilgrims today than at any other time in human history.<sup>172</sup> Available data is heavily reliant on tourism

figures, but it is not tourism that is driving pilgrims to become religious roamers, though increased comfort in travel does help.

Is it, as the Turners have suggested, an “implicit critique of the life-style characteristic of the encompassing social structure”?<sup>173</sup> That is too limited. On the contrary, there is a high variability in motive, as we shall see in Chapter Four. For many, pilgrimage is an affirmation of their “characteristic lifestyle.” For others, different factors such as a life crisis or a need for reconciliation, even an ethical protest, may be the driving motive.

For now, let us turn to the innovative and creative definitions of authenticity.

University of Cape Town

### CHAPTER THREE: AUTHENTICITY OF PILGRIMAGE

At the very heart of religious and spiritual practice is the notion of *authenticity*. This operates on many levels. Authenticity is necessary to validate religious or spiritual expression on an institutional level. While it might be fine for the individual to experience or act on any vision, impulse, message or ceremony, if those are to be urged onto or imposed upon a wider audience there needs to be a consensus of opinion that they are valid beyond reasonable dispute. In this way, the community, small or very large, acts as jury by accepting what appears to be authentic and rejecting that which is suspect.

By exerting control over acceptance or exclusion, religions may act as gatekeepers whether that intention is conscious or not. It is the mechanism by which control is wielded over the accepted orthodoxy and as such is understandable in that it is a method of protection. Change should come carefully from within the hierarchy, which will weigh how much of a threat such alteration will be to its sphere of influence. To treat something as authentic is to include it within the orthodoxy, along with any necessary editing or trimming which is deemed crucial. To deny something as inauthentic is to exclude it, or the person or people involved, from the community and its practice. And in so doing, exclusion protects a place from defilement or desecration.<sup>1</sup>

A clear example of gatekeeping is that of the authorities at Mecca who, in October 2005, announced that the numbers of pilgrims to the holy city would be severely restricted owing to the high number of tragic deaths because of crowds during the hajj. This caused a storm of protest from international Muslim communities for whom the hajj is a sacred requirement – the Saudi government was placed under such pressure that it was forced to postpone the restrictions. The death of 345 pilgrims in 2006 resulted; it remains to be seen what will happen next.<sup>2</sup> Is a “virtual pilgrimage” to Mecca on the cards?

A further example of religious gatekeeping is on Pure Crystal Mountain, in Tibet, where all women, irrespective of rank, are banned from performing the peak circuit and much of the middle circuit, excluding them from a large area of the mountain coinciding with its main places of power. Even nuns and yoginīs are rejected, despite Chinese authorities allowing pilgrimages again since the early 1980s, observes Toni

Huber.<sup>3</sup> The so-called “women’s circuit” is named *Kyemengi Korwa*, meaning, literally, “the low-born’s circuit.”

Jewish women may not pray in the primary area of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Their much smaller area is to the right, farther away from the place where the bar mitzvahs are celebrated (by men only, even if the mother has accompanied the party), and is more exposed.<sup>4</sup> No women are allowed to make the Christian pilgrimage to Mount Athos in Greece, and women in traditional African societies are barred from entering the area where young males are undergoing ritual circumcision: they may not even make eye contact if they accidentally stumble upon them. And only recently has the current head priest, Kotooka Yasutsugu, of the Kotohira pilgrimage shrine in Japan managed to include women as full officiants in shrine ceremonies; before, they were considered too impure (several men have left the shrine because of his reforms).<sup>5</sup>

Gatekeeping is a complex issue. It is used to preserve and protect tradition, but the nature of change means that it is often under pressure. Altered circumstances can alter the rules. The Catholic Church attempted to discourage early pilgrims to Lourdes, but eventually bowed to public pressure, as was the case of pilgrims visiting the shrine of Padre Pio: after the death of this charismatic priest, Pope John Paul II promoted his cult and pilgrimages were encouraged to San Giovanni. Once saints are dead, controlling them is simplified.

Even absolute monarchs have had to bend their knee to the authority of the Church when threatened with excommunication, while witches and heretics have traditionally faced fire or exile. In the modern world the punishments may not always be so extreme, although some such examples do still exist. In South Africa, particularly in rural areas, episodic bouts of “witches” being hounded out of their villages or being killed still occur.

On a less dangerous but individually-wounding note, refusal to recognise non-Christians as authentic pilgrims has on occasion resulted in resentment and conflict. A curious thing about the *Camino*, in Spain, is that it is one of the few pilgrimages in which “authenticity” can actually be “proved” in the literal sense –the pilgrim need merely brandish a travelling “credential” to be given the privileges of board and meals along the route, and in order to qualify for the certificate known as the *Compostela*, the ultimate stamp of official approval as a pilgrim, you must have either walked at least 100km or cycled a minimum of 200km (there are also other *Compostela* requirements).<sup>6</sup>

Anxiety about authentication denies thousands – perhaps more – of pilgrims from claiming that status around the world each year, despite the fact that they are clearly performing the same function, for similar reasons, to those who have been duly authenticated.

David Chidester refers: “Assuming that something like “pure” religions exist, [it is alleged] that some forms of religious life are unauthentic mixtures.”<sup>7</sup> Much of this has to do, he notes, with unequal relations of power. To be more specific: the *Camino* is “owned” by the Catholic Church, which holds itself to be the “true” religion. Other Christians may be considered “inauthentic”: followers of other religions even less authentic, devotees of small cults or sects less authentic still, and pilgrims without any religious affiliation, the most inauthentic. It is no accident that those considered to be more or most authentic belong to the most powerful religious groupings, while those who belong to small sects, traditional religions or with no religious affiliation have minimal bargaining power. These are the ones least likely to be granted the *Compostela* certificate.

Inherent within this “hierarchy” may be the belief that some religions are more authentic than others. The largest and strongest group, that which “owns” the particular site or pilgrimage, will not infrequently claim that those outside the group are inauthentic. Those may be barred access or denied recognition and sometimes access to aid in the form of food, shelter or free medical help. They are at times denied official recognition of their endeavour (such as the the *Compostela*).<sup>8</sup> They may also be abused, verbally and physically.

There is, of course, another side of the story: support groups for “genuine” pilgrims are usually voluntary and point out that they need to protect themselves and their resources from “chancers.” It is a fact that casual travellers have misused generosity. A Consequently, there is a lack of acknowledgement of the veritable hordes of pilgrims from many differing religions as well as agnostics, cult groups and those who are simply lumped together as “pagan” while performing the same or similar pilgrimages. Some pilgrimages are simply written off as “secular” and therefore not worth noticing, and there has been ongoing confusion about the difference between pilgrimages and religious tourism. Scholars who took pilgrimages seriously in the 1970s and 1980s tended to treat them either as “liminal” or else as something either quaint or bizarre, to be viewed together with scarification and trance dancing. But Edward Said has argued that post-

colonial or post-imperial scholarship means “not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how “our” culture or country is number one”.<sup>9</sup> The tendency to do this has been at times apparent in the pilgrimage debate.

Returning to the notion, consciously or unconsciously held, that some religions and religious actions are more “authentic” than others, Chidester notes this practice in that “the term syncretism has been used in the study of religion for the kinds of mixtures that arise when elements from different religions are combined. However this academic term continues to carry a polemical thrust.”<sup>10</sup> So-called syncretic religious practice has been frequently deprecated as less pure (and therefore less powerful) than that of “non-syncretic” religions. Yet all religions “borrow” from each other or an earlier tradition. Islam for example, specifically sees itself in a direct line from Judaism and Christianity, whose prophets Muslims revere.

In the twenty-first century when formal religious attendance appears to be dwindling in Europe and elsewhere, many - particularly the young who have grown up with an emphasis on the individual and personal rights - are turning to new forms of religious and spiritual expression. Not all wish to reject the past, but they may wish to “own” it in a more meaningful way for themselves. A.N. Wilson suggested, in *God’s Funeral*, that “the individual journeys of modern men and women show that none of the compelling journeys raised by the Victorian crisis of faith received finished answers – else the matter would not continue to haunt us today”.<sup>11</sup>

Even within an accepted orthodoxy there is enough manoeuvrability to make accusations (of increasingly small gradations) of inauthenticity: perhaps the pilgrim who goes by car is not a real pilgrim. Using a bus is not acceptable; in fact no form of being a “petrol pilgrim” is. Riding a bicycle is suspect; being a part-time pilgrim (an option for those who cannot take off long stretches from work or family) negates the tradition. Pampered pilgrims are also castigated – a “real” pilgrim wouldn’t sleep in a comfortable hotel or eat restaurant food. And so on, until the definition of “truly authentic” has been whittled away to a tight, inflexible definition of what a real, authentic pilgrim is – a definition that many modern pilgrims across the world would have trouble recognising.

There is also the matter of dress, often taken very seriously, as well as what the pilgrim carries on the journey. And very important is how the pilgrim conducts him/herself – in a sufficiently respectful manner. Are the correct rituals being observed?

There is also the devilish question of whether religious tourists are pilgrims. There is a (complex) resolution to that, as we shall see, but it has to be said that there are occasions when, to the ordinary observer, they are indistinguishable.

And does “place” matter? Are there some places more holy than others, and how is this congruent with the claim common to most religions that God or the Divine is omnipresent?<sup>12</sup>

There is little doubt though, that the most insistent attribute of pilgrimage is that it should be painful.

### ***Pilgrimage and Pain***

Does the road wind uphill all the way?  
 Yes, to the very end.  
 Will the day’s journey take the whole long day?  
 From morn to night, my friend.  
 Shall I find comfort, travel-sort and weak?  
 Of labour you shall find the sum.  
 Will there be beds for me and all who seek?  
 Yea, beds for all who come.  
 (Christina Rossetti, *Uphill*).<sup>13</sup>

Pain is a highly-prized commodity. We may fear it, but it gives us essential information, for it is an urgent indication that something is amiss; more than that, it tells us that action may be called for.

The modern world is so allergic to pain that there is a multi-billion dollar industry in analgesics. But it has not always been despised. Pious Christians welcome pain as “Christ-carrying,” a way of sharing the agony of crucifixion, of empathy and gratitude for the supreme sacrifice. Nuns in centuries past gave thanks for pain, for its rigours were seen as a lesson in humility, and bearing it without complaint an expression of personal sacrifice. Ian Reader has noted that if physical hardship is removed from John Bunyan’s classic work, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, it makes little sense, for Bunyan exemplifies the successful pilgrim who has overcome spiritual and physical trials.<sup>14</sup>

There are records of actual Christian pilgrimages of pain, or flagellation, which seized the public imagination in the Medieval era. Groups of 200-300 would walk from city to city, stripped and scourged, in middle Europe, beginning in the German states and spreading to Holland, Flanders and into France during the 1300s, the belief being that

anyone who undertook such a pilgrimage for thirty-three days would be cleansed from all sin. These pilgrimages resulted in such seizures of the public imagination, with admirers dipping cloths into the blood of the flagellants, and riots breaking out, that they came to resemble hordes of hoodlums, attacking “heretics” and Jews. By 1349 Pope Clement VI issued a Bull calling for their dissolution and arrest, and Philip VI of France promptly forbade the flagellant pilgrims on pain of death.<sup>15</sup> Suddenly it was over; though even today, there are examples of it in the Philippines. Blood rituals appear to heighten emotions, with outcomes that can seem threatening or chaotic.<sup>16</sup>

Elaine Scarry suggests that such acts do not deny the body, eliminating its claims from attention, but in fact emphasise the body to such a degree that the contents of the world are cancelled and the path is clear for the entry of an unworldly force. “It is in part this world-ridding, path-clearing logic that explains why the crucifixion of Christ is at the center of Christianity, why so many primitive (sic) forms of worship climax in pain ceremonies.”<sup>17</sup>

Pain cannot be seen by others though it is perhaps the greatest diagnostic tool there is, not only in medicine but in the range of human expression. It is extremely potent in the artistic rendition; witnessing the pain of others in literature, or particularly in theatre or on film can be so potent as to be unendurable. There is a strong connection between pain and theatre in religious action, a heightening of the emotions and “making visible” the invisible.

Pain has also been considered a purifier. The torment of torture during such religious barbarities as the Inquisition was there not only to extract from the “sinner” a confession (often wrung out of an innocent wretch by unendurable agony) but as part of a cleansing process, for not only the accused but also the tormentor who was enacting “God’s will” in an evil world. He or she who confessed was absolved from sin immediately before the further painful process of death, frequently by that other great purifier, fire.<sup>18</sup>

Certain functions have been considered authentic only if pain is an accompaniment; childbirth is one of these. There are still pockets of culture which believe that childbirth “ought” to hurt. (A newspaper article I wrote in the early 1970s describing the introduction of epidurals, spinal anaesthesia for painless childbirth, was met by a howl of outrage from the public: abusive letters and telephone calls followed, more so than for any other article, no matter how controversial, I have ever written).

There is not infrequently a certain smugness among women who have delivered the “real” way. Initiation ceremonies are so devised that pain is meant; circumcision as an initiation into manhood is one of these, a way of demonstrating that the adult can bear pain stoically, unlike a child.

Certain sports are enhanced by the players’ ability to master pain; the sporting arena is no stranger to crowd worship, and the greater the punishment a player can absorb, in rugby or wrestling, boxing or ice hockey, the greater the accolades. All of these sports are spectacle as were the gladiatorial productions of the past.

There is a part of some pilgrimages which may be spectacle, or theatre, as Jill Dubisch reminds us. At the shrine which is the Church of the Madonna of the Annunciation in Tinos, she records it as a place where “hundreds of individual ritual extremes of human suffering are dramatized”, such as a Gypsy man crowned with thorns, bearing a large wooden cross up the hill, or a woman on her knees bearing on her back a frail, sickly child who she believes has been bewitched.<sup>19</sup>

Pain may not be solely a function of the flesh. Emotional or spiritual pain may also be a sign of the high price paid for recognition as a pilgrim. The torment of conquering physical desire is deeply meritorious, whether as a pre-fight boxer or an anchorite dedicating his or her life to God. Those in pain who put aside worldly things and dedicate themselves to a physical, spiritual or psychic quest of healing may be greatly admired. Nancy Frey calls the modern pilgrimage a journey of the suffering soul rather than a journey of the suffering body.<sup>20</sup> The very fact that the pilgrim is ultimately a lone voyager of the spirit or soul, even when travelling in a group, is a challenge to us humans, who are essentially social creatures. No system of thought, no creed or ideology, can ever completely answer questions of ultimate reality for an individual; if asked at all, they are questions each must answer separately.

There is little question that pain, or hardship, is an integral part of many underlying assumptions about pilgrimage. The English Medieval Catholic Church ranked sacred sites in order of the difficulty of reaching them. Two visits to St David’s in Pembrokeshire in Wales equalled one visit to Rome.<sup>21</sup> And the tougher the journey, the more merit; pilgrims were able to procure indulgences from the Pope in respect of such journeys.

Though distance can be a factor, often enough it is the conditions themselves that provide the hardship. Some believe that special merit is earned by making a

pilgrimage in winter; they are also less likely to be mistaken for “frivolous tourists.” Walking with bare feet, sleeping rough and, in modern times, travelling with neither money nor credit cards have been used to increase the “authenticity” of the experience (medieval pilgrims were often reliant on the kindness of strangers for their bare survival).

In the spirit of “chasing pain” to prove a pilgrim’s worth, E. Valentine Daniel describes the Ayyappan pilgrimage, which takes place between mid-December and mid-January in India; hurting is essential to the devotion (*bhakti*) in which pilgrims walk barefoot over stony ground. By inviting pain into the ritual, pilgrims use its intensity as a transforming agent to attain transcendence; pain is eventually replaced by devotional love for Ayyappan in an intense manner in which all other thoughts and feelings are blotted out - sacred pain is actively sought.<sup>22</sup>

Sarah Thal has noted that when asked about their trips to the Japanese site Konpira, pilgrims “inevitably comment on the many, many steps: 785 to the main shrine, then an additional 1,368 to the inner shrine.”<sup>23</sup>

At places of medieval pilgrimage such as Canterbury and Walsingham, modern “foot” pilgrimages have been reinstated. Even within the category of foot pilgrims, there are further degrees of separation. Some may choose to travel part of the route on their knees, such as at Antipolo or the Church of the Madonna of the Annunciation on the Greek island of Tinos<sup>24</sup>, while others walk barefoot, as at Croag Patrick. Enduring such pain is seen as particularly pious, though for practical reasons these journeys are usually not very long.

Pain may be sometimes seen as the “friend” of pilgrims as far as authenticity is concerned, but it can carry the seeds of its own downfall. Sometimes the journey is simply too painful, or too dangerous, to continue. Many have had to return home with ruined or infected feet, or other ailments, and thus with a sense of failure at not completing their profound and significant journey. About 20 percent of pilgrims who begin the *Camino* to Santiago de Compostela do not finish, often accompanied by a desire to return.<sup>25</sup>

The sense of failure at not completing any pilgrimage is itself a source of pain; but for those who do finish, the rewards are considerable. One of our human frailties is to incline towards the idea that “the more you pay for it, the less inclined you are to doubt its authenticity.”<sup>26</sup>

### *Pilgrimage and Peril*

Sometimes hardship morphs into actual danger; pilgrims of old travelled with the knowledge that they may face pirates and brigands, predatory creatures, or perish from the elements nor are such instances unknown today. The bishop of Ardpatrick, Na Longain, was killed by lightning on Croag Patrick in Ireland in 1106AD, and in 1113AD a “thunderbolt” fell on the eve of St Patrick’s festival and killed thirty of those pilgrims on the summit.<sup>27</sup> In 1120AD over one thousand pilgrims died when the church at Autun in France caught fire during a festival. At Roncevalles the monks still continue to pray for the souls of thousands of pilgrims who have died on the way to Santiago de Compostela, from bandits, illness, wolves or losing their way.

Nicholas Shrady recalls how on the *Camino* a young man named “Philippe” told him how worried he was about his sister, given the weather conditions. His brother was three or four days behind them but the snowstorm and wolves were threatening him (unsurprisingly, as he was travelling with a goat).<sup>28</sup> Shrady was himself robbed at gunpoint on the pilgrim path between Bodh Gaya and Rajagriha in India.

Wild animals have certainly taken their toll on pilgrims, and there are still routes where they may be considered part of the danger. Domesticated animals have also played their part – the staff of the pilgrim is there for practical reasons, including protection from angry dogs. A man reported taking along a gas gun on the *Camino* as protection against dogs; though he did not have to use it on them, he killed two vipers.<sup>29</sup>

Death on the pilgrim trail was an accepted part of the risk during the Middle Ages; anyone who died making a pilgrimage was granted an automatic plenary indulgence by the Church so it was not an undesirable way to die. Pilgrim Lydia Itoi recalls seeing the road lined with “graves of pilgrims who didn’t make it”, as she crossed the border from France to Spain, on the *Camino Francés*.<sup>30</sup> On the way to the obscure village of Uncastillo, Cees Noteboom saw this: “*Peregrino, reza una oracion en memoria de Alice de Graener. que fallecio el 3 7 1985* (Pilgrim, say a prayer in memory of Alice de Graener who died here on 3 July 1985 on her pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, and in memory of all pilgrims who died on the way).” The text was given twice, in Spanish and in Dutch, and underneath someone had chalked in Spanish, “Alice, good luck on your new road.”<sup>31</sup>

Some dangers may be more imaginary than actual, nevertheless they “count” if they are believed sufficiently. Aymery Picaud, a monk in Poitiers and co-author of the *Codex Calixtinus*, an early pilgrim’s guidebook, issued dire warnings about the “savage” inhabitants of Navarre as well as other dangers. He had undertaken the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela himself so he spoke from experience, and his assessments were not flattering.

(For one sou and a half) a man of Navarre will stab a Frenchman to death. The people of Navarre are full of malice, swarthy of complexion, ugly of appearance, depraved, perverse, despicable, disloyal, corrupt, lechers, drunkards and past masters of all forms of violence, wild, savage, treacherous, deceitful, blasphemous and foul-mouthed, cruel and quarrelsome, incapable of honourable behaviour. All vices come easily to them.<sup>32</sup>

The very aspect of having to endure the miseries of such rotten “foreigners” may have just as much merit as facing harsh weather conditions, or wolves. “The foreigner”, remarked Gerhardus van der Leeuw, “is one who is a stranger to the sacred”, an attitude often taken literally.<sup>33</sup>

Loss of life is a feature of pilgrimages, even more so in the past when pilgrimages tended to take longer as fast transport was unavailable. In medieval times pilgrimage was considered to be a “civil death,” either temporary or permanent, as long as it lasted. Luigi Tomasi points out that, for this reason, medieval law stated that the pilgrim should be considered dead when a year and a day had passed since news had last been had of him – an indication of pilgrimage’s lethal potential.<sup>34</sup> A German cyclist had a heart attack in the mountains of El Bierzo while cycling to Santiago and his final resting place in those heights is marked by an iron bicycle which is now a much-recognised landmark by pilgrims. Flowers, small crosses, bits of cloth and other mementos are often left next to graves or shrines of those pilgrims who did not make it to their goal. The Catholic Church believes that it is a “Christian comfort” to die on the *Camino*, and grants an automatic plenary indulgence, while in Santiago a Mass is offered in the person’s memory.<sup>35</sup> This is in keeping with its theology that those who wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven must suffer, uttered by Pope John Paul II in 1984.<sup>36</sup>

Devout Hindus believe, like many other religious practitioners, that to die on a pilgrimage is auspicious (though to mention it while travelling is deeply inauspicious). Sometimes a pilgrim will travel to a sacred site like Benares, on the banks of the Ganges,

to settle permanently and wait for the benefits of dying there in the natural course of events.

Though death does during pilgrimages, whether through illness or accident, it is usually seen as unsought by the pilgrim. Suicide pilgrimages, however, are a feature of classical Hindu texts both as a way of expiating terrible sins, and as a means of accessing heaven or release.<sup>37</sup> Though during her study of Hindu pilgrimage to the Ganges Ann Gold did not hear advocacy of such extreme measures, she did overhear one pilgrim announcing that if his wife, who had disappeared in the crowd, was not found he would then and there become “an offering to the Ganges” and pass to a better existence.<sup>38</sup>

In Australia, in the days before modern transport, a journey to Uluru resembled extraordinary danger; today those who have made that “true pilgrimage” refer with disdain to those who visit it as part of a package tour. As befits the notion of pilgrimage, writes Elui Whittaker, the route is depicted as difficult, the climb dangerous, and a true test of spiritual endurance. The whole undertaking is seen as an initiation ceremony,<sup>39</sup> invoking the heroic actions of their ancestral past.<sup>40</sup>

We have already noted how regrettably regularly Hindu pilgrims are killed in crowd stampedes at local shrines. In April, 2005, more than 150 pilgrims were drowned or went missing in the usually calm Narmada river, India, when the gates of a nearby dam were negligently opened; 300,000 Hindu pilgrims had gathered on the banks of the Narmada a day ahead of the new moon, a period which is considered auspicious by those Hindus who feel that bathing in the “holy river” at this time will wash away their sins.<sup>41</sup>

The sacred city of Mecca too has seen the mass death of pilgrims in recent years. In January, 2006, during the hajj, 76 pilgrims died when an “aging hostel” collapsed while more than 350 pilgrims died in a crush during the ritual stoning of three pillars representing Satan’s powers; one year before, 250 pilgrims lost their lives during the same ritual while 64 were wounded.<sup>42</sup>

It is true that any journey involving thousands, and especially millions, of travellers will see casualties, not only through natural attrition but also because of transport accidents, and health and housing hazards due to the press of people. The challenge for safety arises where specific rituals, that are required, result in fatalities. Although it is frequently considered auspicious to die during a pilgrimage, some pilgrims may feel that they would rather reap the benefits of a sacred journey while they are still alive.

### *Pilgrims' Props and Symbols*

How important is it for a pilgrim to be recognised as such? If pilgrimage is a personal journey, then does it really matter? For the most part, it seems to matter very much. Few people are strong enough to live a life apart from their community and indeed humans are not evolved to do so, for all forms of early habitation are communal ranging from the immediate family to large groupings.<sup>43</sup>

Although modernity has resulted in more personal independence, we still find it difficult to go “against the grain”, to behave deliberately in a way that annoys others – mutuality is a fundamental aspect of our co-existence, so much so that we are suspicious of those who choose solitary lives, or who appear to disregard public norms. Our terms define this: we call them “eccentrics” and cranks (fairly harmless), misfits and/or hooligans (potentially harmful) or “lone” terrorists (extremely harmful, such as suicide bombers or the “Unabomber”, Timothy McVeigh of the Oklahoma City bombing or New York’s “Mad Bomber”).<sup>44</sup> The belief that “it doesn’t matter what others think” may be a mantra of the present era but in practice we do care what others think, to greater or lesser degrees. “Authenticity” as valid action taps into this.

Along with recognition by others comes respect. Our actions or rituals in public are designed to be recognisable precisely so that they may be perceived as “normal” and not threatening. A large band of people descending on a strange village may give great fright; but if they are recognisably pilgrims they will be tolerated and sometimes fêted. Such acknowledgement can be a source of support for difficult undertakings.

Frey records an Englishman saying that he first felt like a pilgrim when he stepped off the boat from Plymouth to Bilbao to begin his journey (on the *Camino*), and a man on the dock, seeing his backpack, crossed himself. She also recorded a villager in Belorado (Spain) remarking that before the large influx of pilgrims in the 1990s they were often taken for vagabonds or thieves. Over time, the villagers began to recognise and associate the scallop shell with the pilgrimage to Santiago.<sup>45</sup>

Recognition may be important not just on the psychological level of being “validated” while on pilgrimage, but on a practical one; there are special “rewards” for pilgrims besides those of spiritual satisfaction and completion.

In the Medieval period, pilgrims carried a document from a religious authority accrediting their mission; it was to ensure that they were given aid by temporal and secular authorities along the way, and it also served to weed out those “false” pilgrims, the *coquillards*, who tried to take advantage of safe passage and refuges. This document was the forerunner of modern passports. Recognition as an “authentic” pilgrim may enable entry to a sacred place barred to outsiders, as in Mecca and in Moria in South Africa.<sup>46</sup>

Pilgrims were protected by local lords, and more recently by governments. They have also received free accommodation in monasteries and refuges built especially for pilgrims, double portions of food, and occasionally gifts from locals. Sometimes generosity is extraordinary. Pilgrims may be provided with food and drink which can ill be spared, by either monks or villagers. Unfortunately some pilgrims have come to see such support as a “right” and may demand it as their just “reward” for undertaking such a difficult feat, feeling that it is the “least they are owed.” Some villagers along pilgrimage routes feel that the pilgrims occasionally (though not often) have better facilities than they do, such as hot water and medical attention, which may be paid for by local taxes as is the case on the *Camino*.

A visual affirmation is the most common form of identification of a pilgrim. The task is much easier if the person “appears” to be dressed as an authentic pilgrim, or is carrying recognisable symbols. Not only must the viewer recognise and identify them accurately, but the user must feel that they are an apt representation of him or her. The reciprocal relationship of symbols is important

Just in case this seems to be an overly obvious point, consider the case of the flag of the little-known Turks and Caicos. In 1870 the imperial authorities in London ordered a heraldic designer to come up with a flag and crest for this particular part of the British Empire. The designer had never heard of the place, but was sent a sketch by a local artist that showed a “typical” scene: men wielding long-handled instruments and behind them, large white mounds. This happened at a time when interest in the Arctic was high, and the designer assumed they were igloos. Until 1968, the habitually polite people of the Turks and Caicos islands in the Caribbean put up with a panorama of igloos, with doors, on their official crest, forbearing to tell their Imperial overlords that the mounds of white stuff were salt, the only product which made any money there.<sup>47</sup> It was hardly an apt reflection of who they are, and at the first opportunity of independence

they politely changed it. Recognition needs to happen on both fronts, the onlooker and the “owner”, otherwise the symbol has no deep significance.

In Christianity, the pilgrim symbol most often recognised is the staff, the essential tool that aids the action of walking and may also be used as a defensive weapon. “The staff is also a cudgel” was a frequent utterance of early pilgrims. It was referred to in the (forged) *Codex Calixtinus* as the “pilgrim’s third foot” and for some it helps create a pathway and a protected space. Brazilians say it is like a “magic wand.”<sup>48</sup>

Some take along their staffs from the beginning; others pick them up along the way, sometimes quite literally. Certain pilgrims see them as companions and “helpers”, an emotional stave as well as a physical one. A man from Barcelona, on his second pilgrimage along the *Camino* in 1993, claimed that his intricately carved staff “is a story beginning with Santiago.” There was the carved saint at the top and below, incised into its wood, “I am the Way” written in English, while fine carvings continued all down the shaft.<sup>49</sup> Betsy, a woman from Colorado, said that her staff and the carvings became a “map of the process.”<sup>50</sup> For her, and for many others throughout history, the pilgrim’s staff has given out the same visual clue as an appropriate flag, particularly useful in that they can both be seen from a distance, a means of “semaphoring” intent from afar.

Japanese pilgrims hold the pilgrim’s staff in equally high esteem. The *tsue* symbolizes the body of Kōbō Daishi on the Shikoku route and pilgrims follow the custom of washing the foot of the staff each night, as if washing the saint’s feet. It also represents the pilgrim’s gravestone on which the pilgrim writes his or her name and if a pilgrim died on the journey, it was customary to mark the grave with the staff.<sup>51</sup> Wooden walking staffs are also used by pilgrims to the South African sacred caves in the Free State. “The walking stick is the power and the strength we receive from our ancestors. Moses used a walking stick, he also used it to hit the rock, and water came out,” said one pilgrim at Badimong.<sup>52</sup>

Clothing is another essential prop. A pilgrim needs to be “dressed” like one to be taken seriously. In Mecca, pilgrims are immediately authenticated by wearing the required garments of white, a single unseamed white cloth for men and two lengths of similar cloth for women. Japanese pilgrims also wear white, especially a white wrap-around shirt, or *hakui*, which symbolizes the burial shroud; they used to wear wide, flat hats made of reed to protect them from the sun and the custom developed of writing *dōgyōninin* (“two on the trip”) on these hats to demonstrate that the pilgrim was

accompanied on the road by Kōbō Daishi, a wandering holy figure. Though its main indication is that a sacred presence is felt by the pilgrim, there is also a sense of comfort from the idea of “two together.” There is a resonance in this in the Irish proverb, “Two shorten the road.” Christian pilgrims may refer to “walking with Christ” as a companion.

Pilgrims to Badimong wear copes and robes of red, yellow, green (or sometimes blue, white and silver), set off by appliquéd crosses, moons and stars. These colours have ritual significance: white represents peace, red represents the blood of Christ but also danger and the necessity of sacrifice, green represents life and blue the sky (heavenly realm).<sup>53</sup> Those who enter Moria in South Africa frequently wear uniform clothing and will be identified by their “star of Zion”, the visible badge of their authenticity. The pilgrimage “badge”, an ancient tradition, has been revived today at Glastonbury, with a special red one for foot pilgrims (usually considered more “authentic”).

Newcomers to the annual Run for the Wall pilgrimage across the US (*see Pilgrimages of Transformation*) are given a large yellow badge to wear, with the letters FNG on it. The polite version is given as “Fun New Guy;” the less polite and more accurate version, “Fucking New Guy” refers to the Vietnam experience, when new recruits, or rookies, did not know the ropes and were dangerous to be around. “We wore the badge with pride,” said Irishman Declan Hughes who took part in the Run bearing the names of 16 Irish citizens “who died alongside their American cousins.” (Hughes had also participated in the Travelling Wall in Ireland, which highlighted the fact that many Irish-born citizens from there and elsewhere in the world, including Australia, fought and died in the Vietnam War. Up until the late 1990s this was not generally acknowledged).<sup>54</sup>

For many, to be a pilgrim is to develop a detachment towards the ordinary possessions of everyday life, and outward trappings of “smart” clothing as well as jewelry and other accoutrements are not considered to be the signs of a “genuine” participant. There is also a practical consideration. Stout footwear has always been the first consideration of pilgrims except for those who are travelling barefoot. Clothing also needs to be hardy if the route is long; today such kit can ironically cost a fortune, making it expensive while looking rustic. Some accreditation officials along the *Camino* have been known to refuse pilgrims who have arrived in ordinary daily clothing, saying such “inappropriate garments” appear to reflect their lack of seriousness about the journey.<sup>55</sup> The lack of “appropriate” dress can often hamper the diligent pilgrim in accessing a sacred place. Churches, mosques, temples and synagogues nearly all have dress codes,

when items must either be added to “day dress” such as garments over the head, shoulders and legs, or removed, such as shoes. These traditions are usually invoked as “showing respect” and the pilgrim, no less, is expected to do so too.

A few pilgrims take this to considerable lengths, dressing in replicas of ancient or medieval clothing in order to appear more authentic. The pack, pouch or backpack has also long signalled the possibility of its bearer being a pilgrim. It is on the one hand, a receptacle for bearing the necessary items of the journey, and on the other, a symbol that the pilgrim is prepared to “carry his or her own weight”, a praiseworthy attribute. The pack can represent the “weight” that is carried in life; or, for a devout Christian, the Cross and the weight of one’s sins (some pilgrims start off carrying heavy packs but experience soon takes over, and usually they begin to remove items very quickly). Others have deliberately carried boulders, chains and other heavy objects to represent their unworthiness or a particular inner burden they carry.

The concept of “proper dress” is culturally determined. In feudal Japan, men who made a “naked” pilgrimage (that is, wearing only a loincloth) were considered especially virtuous, because of the demonstrated humility of the petitioner before the god.<sup>56</sup> Naked pilgrims are a common enough sight along the banks of the sacred Ganges. Elsewhere such nakedness may be considered inappropriate. In the Christian world, “bare-feet” is considered meritorious, though potentially odd<sup>57</sup>. There is additional merit in the fact that the lack of normal garments or shoes may cause physical discomfort, increasing merit.

Pilgrims may wear other small items that reflect their intentions. On the *Camino* the scallop shell is worn around the neck, sewn to the hat or the backpack, or fastened to a bicycle. The shells may be large or quite small. This picture, of the “authentic” pilgrim carrying staff, pack and scallop shell along with a cloak and hat, is the iconic image of the “real” pilgrim, one which most closely represents the Medieval image of authenticity and still has a strong pull on the modern mind.

Within the narrowness of range of these symbols, or props, they may be interpreted in different ways. Though constant, they still remain elastic enough to give meaning to those who bear them, often in an individualised way.

***“Proper” Pilgrims and Mobility***

“Proper” pilgrims go on foot. This is a heated assertion by those who wish to include pain as an essential ingredient of authentic pilgrimage. The pilgrim should suffer, and therefore should not use any method of transport which makes their journey easier.

Many of those who assert this most hotly have travelled to the route of their pilgrimage by modern transport, airplane, train or ship. I was told about a South African pilgrim who walked the length of the *Camino* after first flying to Spain first class, which seems to have amused his friends.<sup>58</sup> Ships or boats, though, seem to fall into a certain category of exemption. No one can travel on water without them, and early pilgrims used them extensively, following in the wake of St James, St Brendan and other luminaries. Those vessels were, however, generally fragile and vulnerable to mighty storms, so the element of risk was there, as there was for the early Irish pilgrims in their *currachs*.

Few today would challenge the passage of air travel to the route of a pilgrimage except for a few die-hards such as the permanent Muslim pilgrims of the Sudan. Yet once those airborne pilgrims are on the ground, within a clearly demarcated route of a sacred journey, the idea of “petrol pilgrims” may become anathema to the purists. Notably, this has not always been the case. During the 1950s through the 1970s many pilgrims went to Santiago by car as part of a promotion by the Spanish Government, “On the Roads to Compostela in the Gasoline Age”, when *Camino* signs were posted along National Highway 120.<sup>59</sup> (This attitude, that there’s nothing wrong with “getting a move on,” still exists among the Word of Life members who valorize the speed associated with hyper-modernity).<sup>60</sup>

A sharp rejection of petrol pilgrimages occurred in the 1980s and 1990s when pilgrims began to favour walking or riding along the route “in the traditional way.” (The bicycle has usually taken the place of a horse in terms of “riding.” This frugal model of a pilgrim has been ingrained by the various Friends of the *Camino* Associations which are based loosely on models of the late Medieval pilgrims’ brotherhoods (though they are usually ecumenical). When pilgrims claim that they wish to “walk in the footsteps of their ancestors”, they mean it quite literally as part of the nostalgic belief that the past seems to have been more devout and less materialistic than the present.

Pilgrims who cannot walk distances or whose time is seriously limited are not always given quarter. In the Fromista pilgrims’ *refugio*, one walker wrote that *Asì no vale*.

*El peregrino va a pie, el que va en bici es una turista* (“That doesn’t count. The pilgrim goes on foot. The pilgrim who goes by bike is a tourist”). A furious response was *Eres idiota porque mis huevos me ha costado subir las cuestas sin bajarme* (“you’re an idiot because I had to bust my balls to climb the hills without getting off my bike”).<sup>61</sup> Neither mentioned their motive for the pilgrimage. Others have noted that, for them, it was harder to go by bike than by foot, and among the bikers there is a further division between those who mountain-bike on the *Camino*, and those who ride on the highway.

Hitching for part of the way, or taking a bus, may also score very low points on the authenticity scale. Pilgrims may feel that it shows a lack of dedication, an unwillingness to put up with pain (some pilgrims who do use modern transport are unaware of the resentment this causes). Car pilgrims and those on bus tours may be regarded as tourists, though this is not how they view themselves. Cees Noteboom regarded his own car trip that meandered through Spain culminating at Santiago de Compostela as a “pilgrimage” to many places in Spanish history.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Authenticity while Navigating the Camino***

There are endless gradations of what is perceived to be the most authentic way to be a pilgrim on the *Camino*. Conrad Rudolph is one of the purists. “It is the challenge of the modern pilgrim to mentally reconstruct the dynamic of the medieval pilgrimage,” he wrote.<sup>63</sup> Cyclists are accepted by Pilgrims’ Office in Santiago but many foot-pilgrims sneer at them, though to be recognised by the Office cyclists have to cover at least double the distance of the foot-pilgrims.

But the walkers seem to be winning statistically. Both the Pilgrims’ Office and the Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends (of the *Camino*) try to keep statistics; according to their data, about 71% walked, 28% cycled and less than one percent (of those who did not use motorised transport) went on horseback.<sup>64</sup>

When asked about other pilgrims on route almost all walking on the *Camino* failed to mention bus or car pilgrims. It is clear from Nancy Frey’s research over several years that the central factor in establishing the authenticity of pilgrims there is not the length of the journey, nor the religious or spiritual background of the pilgrim, but *how the journey is made*. In the (modern) walkers’ view, cars and buses tarnish the essence of this route; they pollute a sacred space.<sup>65</sup>

Is the preference for walking because of the long history of the *Camino*? But pilgrims seldom walk to other ancient sites, such as Jerusalem and Rome. There is a feeling that the *Camino* “should” be walked based on the imagined lives of the medieval pilgrims who suffered, sacrificed, endured and lived austere, to emulate them is to be authentic too. This could well be a rejection of the material world, but it could also be the very human idea that nothing worthwhile is gained except through pain.

The experience of pain plays a crucial role in the formation of solidarity among the pilgrims. Most *refugios* have containers for the bathing of feet, an important Christian symbolic act. In an Italian refuge, *hospitaleros* bathe the pilgrims’ feet, reanimating this tradition of humility and equality; the elevation of the normally impure and low, is possible as time and space are not normal – the pilgrims have entered ritualised space.<sup>66</sup>

In the overarching view of the *Camino*, the Catholic Church “owns” and defines its authenticity, yet has also recognised the boom in pilgrims, many of whom are not Catholic. In 1993, the Spanish Diocesan Commission issued a statement: “The traditional pilgrimage to Santiago is made on foot, and this invokes special merit”. However, they point out, the essential part of the pilgrimage is to make it “with spirit of faith” and this is not linked to any mode of transport.<sup>67</sup> Pilgrims must live with the inherent contradiction. As David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal have written, “A sacred space is not merely discovered, or founded, or constructed, it is claimed, owned and operated by people advancing specific interests”.<sup>68</sup>

The Church is clear that “esoterics” and “gnostics” are *not* pilgrims and discourages such “influences” on the pilgrimage.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, it hesitates to impose strict limits on the pilgrimage because it is precisely the *Camino*’s openness that can bring more into the church fold. The Church also recognises that pilgrimage is a process (and that sometimes people convert while walking).

All this confusion can make people who are walking the *Camino* feel like frauds. For those who journey “in faith”, the non-religious pilgrimage often seems pointless. Conversely, there are those who feel that the essence of the journey is in its history and art, and enrich their pilgrimage by stopping in churches along the way – of which there are many – and viewing the architecture and art. They in turn may disparage those (such as Paul Coelho) who are indifferent or ignorant about the Road’s rich history, claiming that such pilgrims fail to really appreciate and understand it.<sup>70</sup>

Journalist Kevin Jacobs was, like many other modern pilgrims, afraid to claim true pilgrim's status. "I am drawn more by a simple desire to do it because it's there than by religious fervour". Then he adds "on this road I have looked into my heart and found anew a richness in life – and I wish it had no end".<sup>71</sup>

The "culture of the *Camino*" can alter the participants' behaviour; many "new" pilgrims are made aware of the idea of a "proper pilgrim." Pilgrims who have found something special for themselves on their journey, which they believe is authentic, can be fearful that newcomers may dilute or tarnish "their" meaning. Sometimes more experienced pilgrims and *hospitales* try to "educate" them about the "right way" to do things, making narrow judgements. Some pilgrims have remarked that this is a "hidden way to impose power, nothing else. Love is to give without conditions".<sup>72</sup>

Pilgrims who travel in a group may also be excluded from the cult of authenticity. Going alone is understood to be the ideal way to experience oneself in nature and obtain spiritual and personal insight. Cyclists in groups are especially marginalized and are understood to be athletes or tourists, though they may not agree with this or even be aware of it (as was the case with poet Gus Ferguson, Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee and others from Cape Town who as a small party cycled the *Camino* in 2001).<sup>73</sup>

Pilgrims who make the longest journeys, both in distance and time travelled, are considered to be the most authentic. The impression is that long journeys are best able to release spiritual potential. Those who begin at the French-Spanish border or before, and who walk for at least one month or longer, are considered "most" authentic. This idea of distance being important is an old one: Dante wrote that "they are called pilgrims who journey to the house of Galicia, because the tomb of St James is farther away from his home country than that of any other Apostle." Yet today, distance on its own should not wear the halo of special merit; it may be easier for a modern traveller to journey thousands of miles by airplane, ship and bus to Santiago than for a poor pilgrim to walk fifty kilometers. It is the combination of distance and pain, that of sacrificial effort, which lays high claim to authenticity.

Because of this part-time pilgrims may fall short of being declared authentic. Yet when Nancy Frey spoke to them, and listened to their stories of being pilgrims, she realised that she had dismissed them because of her own struggles with the "authenticity trap." Part-time pilgrims may have pressing needs back home, and often make great

sacrifices to snatch time away, to walk the pilgrimage in stages. They “make the most” of the time available, and are often not so worn down with exhaustion and sore feet, the bane of long-distance pilgrims (those who judge them harshly may not be aware that large-scale “weekend pilgrimages” began to be made to Santiago in the early 1990s).<sup>74</sup>

Even though there is a *Camino* culture that suggests that “some pilgrims are better than other pilgrims”, each person creates his or her own meaning. If the inner journey is the more important journey, and this is confirmed by the Church, then there can be no single “authentic pilgrim”, but many authenticities. For a few pilgrims the travel is part of a much longer process. “I’m always a pilgrim on my own private *Camino*”, said one.<sup>75</sup>

Frey lists the following two anecdotes: in 1994 a Japanese pilgrim complained that he had been denied a *Compostela* and claimed it was the most disappointing moment of his pilgrimage. He and companions (many of whom were non-religious and yet received their *Compostelas*) had walked from Roncevalles, suffered and experienced joy, cried when they saw the Cathedral at the journey’s end. He clearly felt he was also an authentic pilgrim. The Church disagreed.

On the other hand, in 1992 an English pilgrim decided to walk the *Camino* after the loss of his thirty-year-old son to cancer. He walked in winter to raise money for cancer research. He acknowledged at the outset that he went without any kind of religious belief. Without hesitation, the Canon in charge declared him an authentic pilgrim with the right to receive the *Compostela*.<sup>76</sup>

In this instance, his journey, made as a sacrifice and in the name of another, merited the stamp of authenticity. Unfortunately, the Japanese student was not “seen” as a pilgrim.

It is not uncommon to see pilgrims accompanied by animals. Horses and mules were traditionally used on pilgrimages either as transport or as pack animals, so their use is not overtly questioned though some have grumbled at the relative ease of those who travel on horseback. Other animals are taken along for company; dogs, frequently, and even goats. There is an additional difficulty for the pilgrim in finding shelter and food for these animals along the way, particularly in winter.<sup>77</sup> And there is the problem of dealing with the transport animals on reaching their pilgrimage destination. They may have to be sold (particularly horses). The invention of modern technology has elevated a few archaic forms of transport. “Obsolete forms of transportation evoke possibilities of genuine travel

as an arduous journey, the archetypal form of which is a religious or sacred quest”, wrote Jon Goss.<sup>78</sup>

It must be remembered that at some pilgrimage sites, such as Fàtima or Lourdes, the method by which the pilgrim arrives is usually considered irrelevant. When the emphasis is only on the sacred site itself, the means of getting there is less important. On pilgrimages like the *Camino*, though, it is the *route* that has become the priority, not the arrival; it is a long and difficult physical journey in which the pilgrim has the opportunity to travel inwardly as well.

It is the rare pilgrim, however, who today makes the return journey by foot or bicycle. Despite the route itself being so highlighted, there is a strong sense of being direction-bound, of having a clear sense of direction that is not always evident in everyday life. There were no means of energy-driven transport for medieval pilgrims to hop onto, yet today there appears to be no incongruity experienced in the insistence of arriving “traditionally” but leaving in a contemporary way. That the mindset can include one and exclude the other is another example of our remarkable ability to compartmentalise our realities.

### ***“Right” Rites***

We have concentrated on the method of getting to the sacred site, but there are also “proper” actions to be observed once it is reached. From early on in history pilgrims have been informed about the appropriate behaviour expected on arrival. Pilgrims to Rome in the seventh century would have been guided by itineraries, telling them not only where the martyrs’ shrines lay in the countryside, but also in which order they should be visited: those who had already seen the catacombs of Priscilla on the Via Salaria should walk next, in a clockwise direction, towards the Via Nomentana, and so on.

Approaching the Ka’ba in Mecca is done in a specific, circumambulating way, in decreasing circles. In India, there are also various prescribed ways in which pilgrimage can be performed: for example, in Gaya, pilgrims can choose from several rounds, or circuits, consisting of five, eight, thirty-five or thirty-eight stations on the devout journey.

Few instructions for pilgrimage have been as minutely detailed as those given for the “proper” way of approaching Patrick’s Purgatory, also known as the Round of Lough Derg:

First, when beginning the Round, after entering the Chapel or Church, to kneel, to recite Pater, Ave Maria and Credo, and to give a kiss to the Church door when going out, keeping the Church to thy right westwards and to give a kiss to the old Cross which is in front of the Church and keeping the Cross to thy right, northwards to the side of the Church and to give a kiss to the stone, which is at the side of the Church, and to go northwards hence to the Cross and to the Cairn, which are on the eastern side of the Church and to give a kiss to the stone which is on the northern side in the Cairn, and to take to thy right on the other side of the Cairn and to the Cross where is the Bell of Patrick, broken into three fragments, and to give a kiss to one of these, and to go from the north forward round the Church to the other Cairn, and to give a kiss to the round and wide stone, in which a Cross is carved and hence to the door, from which thou set'st out before, and to go seven times round the Church (and it is not needful to give a kiss to any one of the said objects except the first and last times, but to bend thy head at every spot where a kiss is given) and when the seventh time is performed, go to the Cross which is on the western side of the Church, as we have said, and give it a kiss and northward again to the other stone which is at the side of the Church, and give a kiss and go from the north again, retracing thy steps between the Church and the old Cross we have mentioned, and go westwards directly from the Cross to Brendan's Bed and give a kiss to a certain stone, which is in the door of the bed (note: the "bed" is a sort of circular stone kraal) and go three times sunwise round the Bed reciting certain prayers, on the outside, and go three more times sunwise inside and say three Paters three Ave Maria and Credo on thy knees and come out of it on to thy right hand, going out to Brigid's Bed, and do the same thing, and on coming out again, take to thy right hand on each side of the same Bed northwards to Catherine's Bed and do the same thing....Laus Deo.<sup>79</sup>

The above is only a small part of the obsessively detailed itinerary and it is a tribute to the persistence of pilgrims that such an exhaustive schedule should have been obligatory. Few, if any, would follow all those instructions today.

### *Sacred Time*

The notion of time itself is understood to be a factor in authenticating religious rituals such as pilgrimage. Not all time is seen as "linear" or "cyclical"; the Mayans actually "borrow" time, reports Anthony Aveni; certainly our own understanding of time is based on our cultural conditioning.<sup>80</sup> The powerful hold that "time" has is well illustrated by the following example; in 1753, during Britain's changeover to the Gregorian calendar, London bankers publically protested "Give us back our eleven

days!” and refused to pay their taxes on the “new” date of March 25, paying them eleven days later on April 5 – which remains tax day in Britain.<sup>81</sup>

It therefore makes sense to engage with “sacred time” as an integral ingredient of ritual rather than routinely follow a bare date stripped of meaning, for auspiciousness is vital to the understanding of many pilgrims and may enrich their experience immeasurably. There are significant dates in religious calendars which are measured by the movement of the moon (such as Easter, Passover and the end of Eid).

The major Hajj to Mecca – at a different time each calendrical year - is considered to have particular virtue, though the majority of pilgrims who go to Mecca do not visit during that crowded time. Some Christians believe that to tread the cobbles of the Via Dolorosa at Easter is to closely authentically replicate Christ’s pain. “Holy Years” are also auspicious times for pilgrimage, as is the visiting of shrines on a saint’s day. During such times, says Jill Dubisch, a past event or set of events associated with most pilgrimage sites gives them their special character, for they act as a “bridge” between worlds. At Tinos, though pilgrimage may occur at any time of the year, it is the holy days that draw the greatest crowds, for on these special occasions the sacred power of both time and place is magnified. And when calendrical rituals provide the major impetus for pilgrimage, then pilgrimage may become highly seasonal in nature.<sup>82</sup>

Ancestors and heroes are venerated by visiting their graves, or sites that symbolise their sacrifices, on the anniversaries of their births or deaths. Each year on November 11<sup>th</sup>, leaders in Britain visit the Cenotaph in London to commemorate all war dead, though the date is significant particularly to World War One, when peace was declared at 11a.m. on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918. “The eleventh of the eleventh” is imbued with such significance that the pilgrimage to Whitehall on that day is mandatory for not only the head of state, the Monarch, but also all leaders of political parties who, in theory at least, value the lives of those lost in defense of their country. (After WWI, a call for such a respectful silence on every November 11<sup>th</sup> was made independently by both Sir Percy Fitzpatrick of South Africa, an author, and an Australian journalist, Edward G. Honey. The first Armistice Day was held in 1919 throughout Britain and the Commonwealth, a tradition that continues. After WWII the name was changed to Remembrance Day, to include all those who died in that, and later, wars. In South Africa it includes the liberation struggle).

Spiritual connections to the world of nature conclude that Solstices are important occasions for special rites, the best-known perhaps being that at Stonehenge on June 21<sup>st</sup> each year, when a modern pilgrimage is made to one of the most ancient sites in Europe.<sup>83</sup> Both summer and winter solstices are the cause of pilgrimages to Glastonbury, as is the spring festival of Beltane (May 1).

### *Sacred Geography*

It remains a curious feature of religion, as we have already noted, that some places are considered more sacred than others. There is an incongruity between this belief and the notion that God, or the divine presence, is not only omnipotent but also omnipresent. If the latter is correct, then the idea of “special” sacred sites seems illogical. Nevertheless, places of special “potency” are attested to by all religions; they appear to be, in Mircea Eliade’s words, “openings to the transcendent.”<sup>84</sup>

Early religions, it would appear, were mainly concerned with the god, or gods, of their locality. The agricultural god, or the god of rain and/or water, for example, were to be venerated within the surrounding physical domain. A well-known mountain, cave, field, waterhole or river would have been the special place of worship and supplication, and rites performed there would have particular power. The notion of an overarching god may well have been present but was of little direct, intimate use. That deep, personal connection with sacred spaces has not diminished and remains inclusive of every belief system, the unerring conviction that there are sacred points where it is possible to come into close contact with the Divine. To this day, almost every Spanish *romería*, a festival-like pilgrimage celebration, starts in a wood or even more frequently, at the headwaters of a stream.

Such places (and objects, such as relics) have acted as the divine go-between in the relationship between humankind and the “Other”: as the bridge between this world and the next. Their potency is full of both potential and menace, and great care must be taken when approaching them, including purifying ceremonies. The lack of due ceremony taken by tourists is one of the reasons pilgrims may be annoyed or even enraged when their sacred site is not given the reverence they believe it deserves.<sup>85</sup>

Ancient and classical religions were deeply devoted to unspoiled places: woods, water, including rivers and pools, were seen as the natural habitat of the gods. Waterholes

are repeated encountered in San/Bushmen myth dealing with life, death, creation and origins.<sup>86</sup> Rain collects in them and they extend downwards, thereby joining the upper and lower realms. A San “rain-making” site is at Thaba Sione, 50km from the town of Sannieshof in the North West Province, and which is still considered sacred by traditional healers, and by some members of the Zion Church, who go there to pray for rain.<sup>87</sup> There are also rain-making ceremonies in August and September at the Phiphidi Falls in Limpopo, when the sister of the Paramount Chief makes special offerings of beer and food.<sup>88</sup>

One of the most sacred sites in VaVenda lore is Lake Fundudzi (otherwise known as Roluvimba Pool after the VaVenda deity), South Africa’s largest inland lake. It is believed to be the remnant of the waters that covered the earth before the appearance of dry land, and that it is inhabited by a great python (also a San deity – *see section on Driekopseiland*), and a white crocodile, which guard the spirit world of the deep. A pilgrimage is made there at least once a year to perform secret rituals.<sup>89</sup>

The Well of Moshoeshoe, revered founder of the Basotho, at the very end of the valley of Badimong is one of their most sacred sites for prayer and meditation. The king is believed to have bathed there as a young man; that he did so shows it is a holy place, and that substances from his body remain there. At nearby Modderpoort, the Well of ‘Mantsopa, the nineteenth century prophetess and adviser to Basotho royalty, is also revered, as is her “cave church,” a small cavern created by a natural rock fall.<sup>90</sup>

Ancient Egyptian religion recognised and revered their utter dependence on the Nile, while the erratic flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates is reflected in the great flood myth in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Utnapishtim’s successful struggle to survive the catastrophic flood, ordered by the gods, is the prototype of Noah’s, in the later Old Testament story, and is a warning that the elements may not always be friendly if the gods are not properly propitiated. In India, the great Ganges is sacred and central to pilgrimage. Similarly, in South Africa, pilgrims make their way to a point on the Isikhwebezi River in KwaZulu-Natal, where seven streams meet, to pray and fetch holy water.<sup>91</sup>

Asian traditions also reflect the ancient tradition which sees their land as the centre of the world and intrinsically sacred. This sense of the power of place is felt by Hindus about the Himalayan Mountains, whose name means “abode” (*alaya*) of “snow” (*hima*); that is where the meeting place of heaven and earth takes place, and the pinnacles

of Hindu temples are allusions to this. Chinese and Japanese religions also reflect the veneration of high mountains.

All of the “high land” of Tibet has been considered sacred to its inhabitants. In its creation myth, the land was said to be under the dominion of an ogress, or witch, who resisted every attempt to introduce her to the teachings of Buddha. The actual landmass itself was said to be her body, which was finally subdued by the construction of *stupas* and temples on her heart and limbs, rendering her immobile and incapable of further harm. Around the central temple on her heart, an inner series of four constructions pegged down her shoulders and hips, another series pegged down her elbows and knees and a third series her wrists and ankles. Those original thirteen sites of her subjugation remain places of worship and pilgrimage to this day.<sup>92</sup>

Mountains have also been regarded as sacred to the San/Bushmen of Southern Africa. “It was precisely as a temple that the wandering huntsmen regarded the mountain in ancient times. “And like other temples, the Brandberg (in Namibia) possesses its holy of holies: an inner shrine whose walls were elaborately decorated by the tribes who came to worship there”, wrote Jon M. White.<sup>93</sup> One of the sacred attributes of hills and mountains is that they are “where the rain comes from”, providing the lifegiving water without which they could not survive.<sup>94</sup>

Table Mountain, the easily-recognised flat-topped Mountain rising above Cape Town, is regarded as sacred by a wide range of New Age practitioners, though such beliefs may go back much further. It was listed by New Age writer Robert Coon as one of the twelve “sacred places of the earth” (including Glastonbury, Uluru in Australia and the great pyramid of Giza in Egypt).<sup>95</sup> Its less benign qualities were encapsulated in the myth of Adamastor, in an epic poem, *The Lusiads* by sixteenth century poet Luis de Camões, in which the “ugly” Adamastor is banished to the far south for his plan to overthrow the gods. There the sea nymph Tethys, annoyed by his attentions, turned him into Table Mountain (and the large peninsula known as the Cape of Storms) which seafarers such as Vasco da Gama had to overcome. In modern times it has been associated with “planetary healing work”<sup>96</sup> as well as a connection with “a mysterious grid of geometrically aligned Solar and Lunar observatories across the southern tip of Africa”, according to Dean Liprini, who arranges pilgrimages to certain “gateways” and “observatories” on Table Mountain and the peninsula.<sup>97</sup>

Sacred geography is also present in Mecca: the Ka'ba, the black stone at its centre is not merely the central point of the world for Muslims, for directly above it, in the centre of the heavens, is the "Gate of Heaven" The Ka'ba, in falling from the sky, made a hole in it and it is through this hole that communication can be best effected between this domain and heaven. This "axis" is referred to in Muslim metaphysics as the *Qutb'* and can also manifest in a person of special virtue.<sup>98</sup>

In Judaism, as elsewhere, there are "degrees" of sacred space. In a Mishnah text (Kelim 1:6-9), "there are ten degrees of holiness: the land of Israel is holier than other lands. The walled cities of the land of Israel are still more holy; within the walls of Jerusalem is still more holy; the Temple mount is still more holy; the rampart is still more holy; the courtyard of the women is still more holy; the courtyard of the Israelite is still more holy; the courtyard of the Priests is still more holy; between the "sea" and the altar is still more holy; the sanctuary is still more holy; the Holy of Holies is still more holy, for none may enter therein save only the High Priest on the Day of Atonement."<sup>99</sup>

This notion of intensifying degrees of sacredness is not unique. The altar of a church is considered more holy than the rest of its structure and in some churches to this day, the congregants are separated from it by a rail, or a screen. The Choir may form an additional buffer zone between congregants and priests. In Delphi, only the Oracle, the High Priestess, could enter the Adyton, the sacred chamber inside the temple where she spoke her ambiguous utterances.<sup>100</sup>

Geographical directions may also have special significance. East has been associated with the "descent of humanity"; when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden by God for eating the forbidden fruit, they left towards the East (Gen. 3:24) and in later chapters, the builders of Babel moved East before they constructed it. In these contexts, the move East appears to be associated with a challenge to God's power. Lot chose the East side of the Jordan, leaving the West bank to Abraham and the Israelites who came after him. Abraham gave his descendants, other than Isaac, lands to the East (Gen. 25:6).

Jean Holm writes that the text makes a double association: the West is equivalent to holy and is the proper setting for Abraham and his chosen descendants, while the East is associated with evil and is the proper setting for other nations. With the Diaspora, East lost its symbolic power, but the Ark, the most important part of the modern synagogue, is placed on the Eastern wall, and services in a synagogue are

conducted facing East (symbolic of facing Jerusalem and the Temple).<sup>101</sup> Christian cathedrals, also, should be built facing Jerusalem. Early converts to Islam prayed facing Jerusalem before the Prophet Mohammed fell out with the Jews of Medina, and since then all prayers, five times a day, are performed facing Mecca which is for Muslims the most important geographical site in the world.

It is useful to remind ourselves at this point that the points of the compass are artificial constructs and the very way in which we think of the “map” of the world is controversial. In “flat maps” the landmass of Europe is shown as greater than it actually is; and why should Australia always suffer the indignity of being at the “bottom?” Moreover, as Jonathan Z. Smith points out, “map” is not territory, though ritual may be a mechanism of negotiating the differences.<sup>102</sup> And there is a whole range of ideas about “directions”, from Eliade’s design of the centre as a direction from which all others flow outwards, to Isa Steynberg’s sense of “inside” as a direction, to Federico Fellini’s instructive to live “like a sphere – in all directions!”<sup>103</sup> The flexibility of notions about what seems apparently a solid given – geography – is another warning to take nothing for granted, especially in terms of metaphoric space. Pilgrimage, for example, may be a journey from A to B, horizontally, or vertically, or from the outside in (Eliade’s model), or from the inside out (Fellini’s), or Van der Leeuw’s sense that sacred space revolves around the portable centre of the human heart: that the greatest sacred journey lies within.<sup>104</sup> In practical terms for pilgrims, this translates into climbing mountains, transversing deserts, stepping into shrines, visiting waterholes or staying put. In terms of sacred geography, all are equally valid.

In the natural world, springs, wells, trees and other natural objects are the subjects of special veneration. The sacredness of the spring at Lourdes is famous and is by no means the only one in France that is revered.<sup>105</sup> In Ireland, “holy” wells, trees and stones are commonplace; in South Africa, certain caves, riverbeds and mountains are similarly sacrosanct. The best known “Holy Cave” in South Africa is Motouleng, “the place where the drums keep beating”, a huge, cathedral-sized cavern in the Maluti Mountains of the Free State, to which thousands of pilgrims travel. It is a place of retreat, of worship and of spiritual healing and is shared by a number of diverse churches and sects. Inside, the length and width of two rugby fields, there are stone kraals and shrines where special ceremonies are conducted. Further in is an especially “holy” space, where

ancestors may be alerted and help sought from them. Though most pilgrims are Christian, Motouleng is where “western” and “traditional” religion comes together in one place.<sup>106</sup>

Just as remarkable is the sacred cave of Badimong, which gives lie to the belief that pilgrimage sites are inevitably “contested spaces” (see *Chapter Five: Women’s Pilgrimages*). The range of pilgrims there encompasses the widest possible spectrum of ancient and modern belief systems, from the ancient San to the “New Age.” This cave among others was lost to the Basothos due to land conquest, but during the last half-century has been reclaimed by them and other celebrants. It has a sacred well; the acquisition of the “medicine of chieftancy” through bathing as youths in sacred pools is a common theme in Bantu folk narratives, and similar tales are told about the Zulu King Shaka.<sup>107</sup>

Pilgrims on the ancestor trail are much attracted to Wonderwerk Cave, in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, which may have the longest continuous habitation of any cave, certainly in Southern Africa. Archaeological excavations have detailed a long sequence dating from around 800,000 to a million years ago, through to the early twentieth century when members of the Bosman family made it their home.<sup>108</sup> The rock paintings are relatively recent – perhaps within the last thousand years – but the engravings are older, dated at approximately 10,000 years old.<sup>109</sup>

Possibly South Africa’s best-known rock art cave site is Main Caves, in the central Drakensberg Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal.. The site, a twenty-minute walk from the offices of the Giant’s Castle Nature Reserve, is not one but three adjacent caves or shelters, each of which contains paintings, significant because of their suggested implication in ritual. The site is difficult to manage because of its “sprawling nature” on the mountainside; nevertheless archaeologist Geoff Blundell has proposed that it be considered a “metaphoric pilgrimage”, to be used as a template for other public rock art sites. In this way, he says, San rock art becomes part of the whole sweep of South African history and not the isolated fragment it currently is – it can be recovered and “owned” by all.<sup>110</sup>

The belief in sacred caves, springs and other natural aspect of the landscape is not just a feature of a past world. Taoism holds that the more “uncivilised” a place, the better. A place is not sacred because of its potential benefit to people, but because of its possible function of incarnating Tao; indeed, people are seen as often exploiters and destroyers of such sites.

Although there may be no seeming reason to think that one site is any better than another in today's world, yet the fact remains, Nicholas Shrady observed, "that never had I previously felt so near to the Absolute as when I was bound to a sacred path. I felt somehow blessed, because the pilgrimage brought me closest to Man's first condition."<sup>111</sup> But not everyone feels this way on encountering a famous route or site. Jonathan Sarna records that "the shock of direct experience (can lead) travellers to a monumental deflation threatening values ascribed to the Holy Land, transforming the encounter with the "sacred dream-land" into a nightmarish experience. Melville describes it as a "blasted landscape", the river Jordan as a muddy creek. Also, nothing disappoints more than the sectarian squabbles over the possession of the shrines, the tawdriness of the holy places, especially the Church of the Sepulchre (which Melville wrote was a "sickening cheat").<sup>112</sup>

The ever-cynical Mark Twain commented: "It is infinitely more satisfactory to look at a grotto, where people have faithfully believed for centuries that the Virgin once lived, than to have to imagine a dwelling-place for her somewhere, anywhere, nowhere, loose and at large all over. . . there is too large a scope of country. The old are wise. They know how to drive a stake through a pleasant tradition that will hold it to its place forever."<sup>113</sup>

Palestine has long evinced a range of emotions, including those of deep reverence and also cynicism. It is a major contestant in the claim for the world's most sacred geography, for the very landscape is part of Divine revelation for three major religions, and for them at least, its claim to authenticity is beyond dispute.

Are such places more important than the inner pilgrimage? This has always been disputed. The Israeli novelist David Grossman said that the war of 1967 "destroyed our essential Jewishness, because up till then places and buildings and stones didn't mean anything to us. They weren't important. What mattered to us were ideas."<sup>114</sup> David Hare goes on to ask, does the literal truth matter? When we kiss a stone, do we kiss the stone or an idea?<sup>115</sup> Yet he concedes that on a visit to Yad Vashem, the Museum of the Holocaust, which he had always found deeply moving and affecting, he was shocked at the "stunning arrogance and disrespect" of young Israeli conscripts who had not even bothered to remove their sub-machine guns before entering (in fact, Israeli conscripts are taught never to leave their guns anywhere, anytime).<sup>116</sup> We mostly have a sense that profane behaviour should be avoided at certain sites.

Though a Tantric pilgrimage has its 24 sacred places, nevertheless the “truly enlightened” *yogin* is able to move freely within the sacred space of his/her own wisdom, which inhabits both inner and outer phenomenon without distinction, remaining at the epicentre of sacred space. The *yogin* Saraha said “I have not seen another place of pilgrimage blissful like my own body (*dohakosa*)”.<sup>117</sup> Pilgrimage in this content means the movement of subtle airs and humours along the internal pathways of the body, experienced by the enlightened as Bliss. As we have seen in some of the examples above, “vertical” direction can be as important as “horizontal.” We are used to thinking of geography as “map-like”; even when a globe is used, we gaze at only one section at a time. But several decades ago, Maurice Merleau-Ponty understood that “lived space is different from objective uniform space,” that we perceive territory differently depending on such changeable factors as age and gender.<sup>118</sup> Perhaps a better way of understanding “space” is to think of it as “skeins”, something like the complex and dynamic structure of the Internet.<sup>119</sup>

There is a strong echo of the *yogin*’s “bliss” in the words of John Hain: “From the study of things underfoot, and from reading and thinking, came a kind of exploration, myself and the land. In time *the two became one* (my italics) in my mind. With the gathering force of an essential thing realizing itself out of early ground, I faced in myself a passionate and tenacious longing – to put away thought forever, and all the trouble it brings, all but the nearest desire, direct and searching”.<sup>120</sup> Hain’s comment reflects that “sacred aspect” of Nature once acknowledged by our ancestors, and which is today reclaimed by many modern pilgrims who return to the “Wilderness” for their experience with the numinous.<sup>121</sup> “Wilderness has become the new temple”, says South African conservationist Ian Player, “it is where the inner journey meets the outer journey.”<sup>122</sup>

Interestingly, there is increasing evidence to support the importance of biophilia, the recognition that human health and wellbeing are dependent on our relationships with the environment, say psychiatrists.<sup>123</sup>

Just as “eco-tourism” is a catchphrase of the new millenium, so a form of “eco-religion” has developed distinct characteristics. We have noted how natural features of the landscape have been venerated throughout the ages; even glaciers have their adherents. Pilgrims in India and Nepal travel to the Himalayas and bathe in their frigid meltwater which supply sacred rivers such as the Ganges.<sup>124</sup> Free access for spiritual

rituals in the Palmietberg reserve close to Paarl, in South Africa, has been provided for traditional healers and their rituals.<sup>125</sup>

Now “New Age” pilgrims incorporate such features into veneration and travel so as to encounter their sacred potential. An example is the “Eco-Shrine” at Hogsback, a cool, inland mountain in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The setting, high on the edge of a forest overlooking the valleys below, is a critical part of the shrine itself, echoing that tradition in San/Bushmen art. The undulating cement and mosaic shrine is roughly circular with a pond of water in the middle; tall, built shapes include paintings and symbols, and the effect is reminiscent of a Celtic stone circle.

It was built by Diana Graham, who wanted “to explore the sacredness of geological, palaeontological and biological facts – I wanted to reconsecrate at least the land on which the eco-shrine is built and the mountains and valleys to which it belongs”.<sup>126</sup> It is her response to how the earth was formed, how life evolved, and expresses her feelings of awe and wonder, she says. It is also a response to global technological culture’s unawareness of this significance. Some remove their shoes and talk in whispers; it is a place of healing, where the self and the natural world are restored (from the alienation created by our contemporary culture), she believes. There is also an eleven-circuit labyrinth nearby (*see Chapter Four, Virtual Pilgrimages*).<sup>127</sup>

Such shrines formalize a reverence of nature which is a hallmark of the modern era, in particular as a response to the warnings of planetary pollution and global warming. Attention is given to aspects of life which have long been taken for granted – clean water and air, undamaged soil and the preservation of species. It is difficult to imagine European forbears taking such concerns seriously just a century ago, when land seemed plentiful and animals were there to be shot at. Suggestions that they were worth a pilgrimage may have seemed laughable – or sacrilegious. Yet a reverence for the earth and its features is as ancient as any spiritual exercise, and its restoration today is seen by many as long overdue.

Such sacred places are, says Adrian Ivakhiv, “the physical and geographic anchor points for our psychic and cultural imagining, the stories we tell about ourselves, the world, and the relations between them.”<sup>128</sup>

To “return” to Nature is to go “back” – yet another category in sacred geography, the directions forward and backward. Yet “back” in this instance has no negative connotations – on the contrary, the desire to go “back to Nature” is frequently

seen as a rejection of the pollution of urban life, and a desirable enterprise. A further measure of sacred geography may be “encapsulation”, when an entire territory comes under sacred “protection”, rather like the Eden project in Cornwall, the biospheres or domes of which protect specific “hemispheres” of the plant kingdom.

This “geography of protection” is usually present in what Margaret Visser has termed “church-shaped spaces”<sup>129</sup>, the volume which is contained within all or at least most holy buildings, such as synagogues, shrines, temples, mosques, holy caves and cathedrals. It is for this reason that such sacred sites have often been denoted as literal sanctuaries, in which the fugitive may be safe from secular power. In unusual instances this geography of protection may travel “outside” the structure and its potency may extend to open land with specific boundaries. Mecca is an example. So is Stonehenge, or, for that matter, Driekopseiland in South Africa. A well-known example in Cape Town is that of the “Ring of *Kramats*”, a roughly circular area of shrines (or *mazaars*) in which holy Muslim teachers are buried.<sup>130</sup> (*See Chapter Four: Pilgrimages of Protection*). The chain of sacred caves stretching from far north of Lesotho along the entire length of the Caledon River border until it reaches Wepener in the south of the Free State Province, is another example, sanctioned by the ancestors (*see Chapter Five: Badimong*).

The “geography of protection” is an indication of how deeply our spiritual attachment to actual physical territory can be. Despite warnings from many religious sages about attachments to the physical rather than the symbolic aspects of sacred geography, there is often little result – as Mark Twain noted. The founder of the Sufi order of whirling dervishes, Rumi, metaphysical thinker and poet currently enjoying a period of revival, was especially conscious of the human weakness for visible, tactile sacred spaces. He did not want his tomb (in Konya, Turkey) to be venerated. “Look not for my grave in the earth, but in the hearts of my devoted seers.”<sup>131</sup>

Despite his injunction, the human need to identify with a specific site as particularly potent, won. Though Kemal Ataturk decreed all mystic orders banned once he had come to power in 1925, the Mevlani centre named after Rumi, (whose title was *Mevlana*, “Our Master”), is now a pilgrimage site, as well as the “home” of the dervishes, as is the Galata Mevlevi Lodge in Istanbul; the use of the latter, reflects the fact that traditions are to be seen as lived experiences and that they are continuously changing, reminds Bente Nikolaisen.<sup>132</sup> Once a year on the anniversary of Rumi’s death, even government employees whirl.

### *Sacred Relics*

Just as particular geographical places have acted as “bridges” between this world and the realm of the divine, so sacred objects have been imbued with similar qualities; these relics, usually of holy people or heroes, are tangible links with a power superior to that of an ordinary person, and by extension they too are regarded as having a magical capacity. By visiting them and even better, touching them, or better still, owning one or more, there is a reliable possibility of getting God to listen, and to act, on behalf of the applicant.

The most common sort of relic consisted of the physical remains of a holy person, an entire body or a limb, a tooth or hair. These relics were seen as *pignores*, “pledges” or assurances left behind, to guarantee that at the end of time, the holy person would return to their relics and reclaim their bodies at the general Resurrection. Those rich enough would spend fortunes to be buried near the relics, or in “holy ground” such as the *Camposanto* in Pisa, in the hope of being near the front line of those chosen for heaven.

Saintliness is very much in the eye of the beholder. Each tradition harbours saints or holy ancestors who are particularly venerated, usually for courage or particular acts of greatness. These are special people who have been singled out by their heroism, their dedication and frequently, their self-sacrifice. (The apparently irrational cult of celebrity is a manifestation of how humans love to tap into a source of power that is substantially greater than their own). The belief that Jesus overcame the permanence of death lies at the heart of Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, while the powers of St James that seemed to have survived his – and other saints – death was central to the burgeoning of pilgrimages to their remains and relics.

It can be difficult to understand the relationship with a particular saint or ancestor. John A. Coleman noted that “it was striking how alert the students (post-graduates at a course on religious exemplars and leadership types at the Graduate Theological Faculty in Berkeley in the spring of 1982) were to the charismatic power of Indian fakirs and gurus, Hasidic rabbis and Sufi dancing saints.” But when they were asked to reflect on contemporary Christian analogies to such gurus, healers, sages and

tellers of tales, their imaginations seemed to fail them. They trotted out tame, almost banal portrayals of clinical workers, parish organizers and administrative pastors.<sup>133</sup>

The root of the word saint is the Latin word *sanctus*, alluding to that power of holiness that the first saints, the Christian martyrs were thought to possess, and which they demonstrated by giving their lives for their beliefs. Their potency is believed to have a residue in their bones and relics, including any body parts, clothing and objects which they may have worn or touched in their lifetimes.

Such relics are by no means the sole prerogative of Christians. Chinese and Southeast Asian Buddhism, North African and Turkish Islam, areas of Judaism, Hinduism and Jainism are all associated with relics as were Celtic strongholds, which are particularly associated with sacred stones.

Even the very names of saints or holy ancestors were, and occasionally still are, meant to bestow a special strength and protection on the children who receive them. Such great figures are considered to have served as God's mediators, signs of the divine presence in an often-disappointing world. Blaise Pascal argues that no religion can claim to be "true" if it does not give some account of the hiddenness of God while at the same time identifying points of access to the Divine. Holy figures provide such access, "proof" that a special relationship is possible.

Intercessory power is a central factor in classical Christian, Chinese, Sufi and Buddhist notions of sainthood, though there may be room for differences over whether such power is best done if the saint is alive or dead.

In Christianity, most saints are venerated for their intercessory capacity after death while in rabbinic Judaism, those who might be considered "saints" intercede while living; though Jains resist the idea that their *Tirthankaras* can intercede at all.<sup>134</sup> Continuity between living and dead is kept alive in Japan, especially at the Yasukuni Shrine, the place of worship where 2.5 million war dead are enshrined as deities and to which both ordinary Japanese and top political figures make pilgrimages (the fact that the site has enshrined 14 Class A war criminals indicates again the point that sainthood is very much a personal view).<sup>135</sup>

Coleman suggests that saints and holy ancestors anchor a sense of tradition by facilitating communities of memory, and have traditionally served as God's mediators, signs of the divine presence even at the level of the trivial, local and everyday.<sup>136</sup> A more picturesque description comes from Franz Werfel who wrote in the 1940s of the town of

Lourdes which had saved him, a Jew, during WWII: “The saints (are like) telescopes; they are instruments which permit us to see stars which the naked eye could never see.”<sup>137</sup> He noted that the people of Lourdes, through Bernadette’s mediation, came to feel that behind the forms and words and rites used by the clergy there lay not a vague possibility but an almost tangible reality.

It is precisely the difference between the ethical and/or heroic lives of saints, and our own worldliness, which intrigues us and attracts us to them. The ethical element is often essential. Muslim portrayals of the Prophet Mohammed are frequently a catalogue of virtues, while Catholic teaching is that heroic virtue is the very condition for saintliness. In general, we expect our saints to behave well, though in Africa, indigenous religions acknowledge that the holy ancestors may both be approached for help and advice, and on the other hand become angry and even vindictive if they are not properly acknowledged and propitiated; but the relationship between living and dead remains intimate and immediate. Ancient Greeks had a similar, stormy view of their relationship with the gods.

Classical rabbinic Judaism never officially designated a group of people who are worthy of special reverence, or models of pious behaviour, and the Jewish calendar has no special days set aside as saints’ days; Jewish graves occasionally became shrines and relics are almost unknown; but North African Jewry was heavily influenced by Muslim practice and they, and Eastern European Hasidism, both developed traditions of saints as spiritual elders who had cultivated a unique path and can help followers cultivate their own.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, the saints’ journey to holiness endows them with the ability to aid or intercede for followers as they pursue daily life. The Jews of antiquity were no different to anyone else when they felt that by visiting the tombs of prophets they could get closer to God; this practice still continues, though not always formally sanctioned.

When Christian pilgrimage began to develop in the centuries after the death of Jesus, it drew on both the older Jewish and Greek traditions. After the Empress Helena’s discovery of the “True Cross” in a cave beneath the Mount of Golgotha in Jerusalem in 326AD, an era of pilgrimage began which specifically related to holy relics, encouraged by Helena’s son, Constantine. The first known transport of a saint’s body took place at Antioch, and was ordered by Gallus, the husband of Constantine’s daughter, Constantina, (who built the basilica of Saint Agnes, the little martyr, in Rome). As ruler of Antioch in

351AD he ordered the body of Saint Babylas to be taken from its grave and buried a few miles away at Daphne, in a newly constructed church intended to replace the local shrine of Apollo.<sup>139</sup> So began a long history of the trafficking of human body parts and other associated relics in order to bolster the reputation of a particular church. It was felt that if such “sacred” relics could be acquired, they would provide its location with special power, of intercession and healing in particular, and would be a drawcard to many worshippers.<sup>140</sup> This in turn meant extra revenue and power to the clerics in that district. In effect, the relics and by definition their holy ancestors became the “gods of the locality.”

The presence of a dead saint was a source of great confidence; his or her remains were invested with god-like powers, and were able to influence the course of events on earth. They were even sometimes carried into battle. Christians were not the only soldiers to utilize sacred relics in war; the rulers of Muslim Spain kept an arm of Mohammed in a vault in Cordoba, and this revered limb was thought by the beleaguered Christians armies to give their foes a holy edge. This advantage was only cancelled out by the discovery of St James’s body in one of the few areas of Spain not yet under Muslim rule.<sup>141</sup>

Just as the Egyptian sun god Amun was considered to inhabit his temple at Karnak by the people of the New Kingdom, so the saint was thought of as “dwelling” in the church. Martyr’s relics had become more important than their places of burial; Saints Cosmas and Damain died in Spain, but it was to Constantinople, where their relics were housed, that pilgrims flocked.

By 500AD Rome outshone Constantinople with its fine collection of churches bearing relics; in the sixth century it began to distribute relics, especially to exalted visitors, who were given the finger or, if very exalted, the whole arm, for example, of a saint to take home. By then, items other than the True Cross had come to be venerated in Jerusalem; they included the lance which pierced Christ’s side, and the chalice into which the sacred blood flowed from his side, as well as St Stephen the Martyr, whose death is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles. Bethlehem, too, had become popular with pilgrims and the cult of the Virgin developed at Ephesus, along with that of John the Baptist. There grew up an Eastern Christendom proverb that says “No bones, no pilgrimage.”<sup>142</sup>

In 787AD, the Second Council of Nicea’s decision was to make custom into law; that from then on, the consecration of a church always had to include the placing of

at least one relic inside it (this decree has never actually been annulled). Bishops who tried to subvert this law could lose their office, and even be excommunicated. Cemeteries moved from outside the communities, into its heart – the church; tombs became altars. In a few places, martyrs bones were left where they lay, and their shrines were protected by monasteries attached to them. These included the martyria of Sebastian, Lawrence, Pancras, Valentine and Agnes. But in general the pathway was opened up to wholesale trading of the sacred commodities.

From then on, any obscure town or village could become a “little Rome”, complete with its own saint. The city of Tours bought the famous half-cloak of Saint Martin (he had sliced it in two and given the other half to a beggar), and kept it in a small room, named after the cloak – *capella* in Latin, *chape* in French. This piece of cloak may have given rise to the word “chapel.”

Soon the relics themselves needed protecting, from acquisitive pilgrims and from relic-hunters. One of the most notorious was Deudona, who denuded the catacombs of many dubious relics and took them in caravan-loads across the Alps in the second quarter of the ninth century, where he sold them to the highest bidder. Wherever relics were displayed, their ability to work miracles was carefully recorded and publicised to advertise the efficacy of the local saint, or sacred object.

This practice, of visiting a holy person, was well documented in the annals of Christianity. The sick were laid out on beds so that St Peter’s shadow might fall on them as he passed, and handkerchiefs and aprons that had had contact with him were taken to people whose diseases – or devils – then were reported to have fled. In most of the Mediterranean regions from the third century onward, the concept of the holy man was “Christ-carrying”; he was far more than an exemplar of the faith. Very often, he simply *was* Christianity, or rather Christ made accessible. This idea was encompassed by Lucianus, the disciple of the martyr Saint Lucian of Antioch, who wrote on a marble plaque in a little church in central Anatolia:

Lucian the martyr, He who nurtured you.  
 With him Christ made you  
 A follower of Himself.  
 A carrier of His Cross;  
 A Cross dwelt on divinely in the mind,  
 And touched by you, martyr Lucian,  
 In concrete pains (of death).<sup>143</sup>

Reputations were built on the strength of relics. The great cathedral of Chartres was built around the “silk veil” of the Virgin. The relics of Mary Magdalene were taken from the church of St Maximin at the beginning of the eleventh century to Vèzelay; from then on, thousands and thousands of pilgrims visited it to pray that their own sins might be forgiven, “because she loved so much”, and it became a major stop for those bound for Santiago de Compostela. It was at Vèzelay that St Bernard of Clairvaux preached the second crusade, on the north slope of the hill where thousands of warriors and peasants were assembled, along with the young King Louis.<sup>144</sup>

Henry’s father, Henry I, founded the great royal abbey at Reading in honour of his daughter Mathilda; it became the centre of the Santiago cult in England. Mathilda had been married to the Holy Roman Emperor and had visited Santiago de Compostela in about 1125AD, where as an eminent pilgrim she had been honoured with the gift of one of St James’s hands, which she presented to her father on her return to England. The abbey’s monks were the custodians of this, England’s most venerable relic, and their coat of arms included three golden scallop shells, symbol of St James.<sup>145</sup>

At Reading the conscientious pilgrim could worship not only the celebrated hand of St James and the cloth it was wrapped in, but also such sacred objects as the foreskin of Jesus, which the Emperor Constantine had once owned, a piece of Christ’s shoe, blood from His side, some hair and garments of the Virgin Mary, the robe of Doubting Thomas, a tooth of St Luke, bits of Aaron’s rod, a fragment of the rock which Moses had struck and a collection of fingers of minor martyrs and two pieces of the True Cross. King John added the reputed head of the apostle Philip. They were spoilt for choice and it is not surprising that Reading flourished. It was also this immense fame which was to bring the special wrath of Henry VIII when he demanded that the abbeys turn over their property to him. The last abbot chose, in 1539, to be executed by Henry rather than do so, and in royal revenge, Reading was destroyed more thoroughly than most of the other great abbeys and monasteries of England.<sup>146</sup>

There were degrees of sanctity awarded to such holy relics. They depended not only on the importance of the saint, but also on their antiquity. Those that were closest in time to the Crucifixion were considered the most potent. Within a few centuries of the discovery of St James’s body in Spain, part of his arm was in Liège, a fragment of his mastoid in Pistoia, relics in Toulouse and of course his hand in Reading. The fragmentation of such holy relics continued: At a solemn feast in 1392, King Charles VI

of France ceremonially distributed the ribs of his ancestor, St Louis, among his guests. The most distinguished members of the company, the Dukes of Berry and Burgundy, were given entire ribs. Lesser mortals received just fragments.<sup>147</sup>

Inevitably, fragmentation led to multiplication. There are several shrouds of Christ and a tank-full of the Virgin's milk. It has been difficult at times, even for pious pilgrims, to remain credulous. There is an often-told story of a sixteenth century visitor to various shrines in France being shown the skull of John the Baptist on two successive days at two different monasteries. When he demanded an explanation, the custodian of the second skull explained that the one he had seen the previous day must have been the skull of the Saint as a young man.

Reims has a Holy Thorn, Conques an arm of St George, Boulogne some Precious Blood and Evron a quantity of (again) Our Lady's Milk. Ridicule began to creep in, in either real or apocryphal stories. Boccaccio tells with irony the tale of the Archangel Gabriel's feather left behind after the Annunciation. There is a story of a pilgrim who bought a vial containing the sound of King Solomon's Bells. The printer Henry Stephens recalled that he had come across a church that possessed a glass containing the breath of the Lord.<sup>148</sup>

Abbots anxious to raise funds for building or other purposes would take their most notable relics on a road show; at each stop in the district it would be put on public display before the sick and the sinful, who would pay for the honour of offering up prayers.

Pilgrimages to holy shrines were of the utmost importance, for the relics were the most direct possible way of accessing holy power. They were also a primary source of revenue to their owners. Churches may burn down and be rebuilt, but once a treasure was lost, the local clergy could be plunged into poverty. In the Middle Ages in particular, the pilgrimage industry depended on relics in the same way that today's tourist industry depends on the weather.

Underscoring this dependence was the doctrine of the Treasures of the Church, confirmed by Pope Clement VI in a Papal Bull in 1350. This upheld the belief that Christ's merit, and that of the saints, could be made available to the ordinary person – at a price, from an official Pardoner. Within fifty years no pilgrim route was free of con artists passing off “official Pardons” like travelling salesmen. The Council of Trent abolished the office of the Pardoner in 1562, but the doctrine of indulgences remains.

Some Christian pilgrims still travel today, to holy sites, to confess and receive remission for their sins.

The patronage of a local relic may still be considered critical to the locality's wellbeing. The pious inhabitants of Naples hold their breath each year until the liquification of the blood of their patron saint, Gennaro, which is kept in a safe under the altar in two small vials.<sup>149</sup> Even the second-hand powers of the relics were potent: mirrors which had captured the image of the holy relic were revered; pilgrims would carry mirrors to Aachen "to catch the soul of God."<sup>150</sup> There, every seven years, a bishop stood on the balcony and showed the robes of the Holy Virgin to the crowd, as well as Christ's swaddling bands and loincloth, and the blanket that had wrapped the head of John the Baptist. Those who had mirrors would hold them up to catch the holy rays, and then quickly cover the mirrors in cloth. At home they were kept firmly in chests or drawers and taken out only in emergencies such as a sick child or injured livestock. The holy light was then unwrapped and used to heal the victim.<sup>151</sup>

Pictures, paintings and photographs may also capture a holy essence. Sheikh Amadou Bamba, founder of the African Sufi movement known as the Mouride Way, was born in Senegal in 1853, and died under house arrest by the French in 1927. The only known photograph of him was taken in 1913; he was dressed in white, his head and part of his face covered with a turban-like shawl; the glare of these white robes placed the rest of the photograph in shadow so that his hands and feet are lost to view. To the Mouride believer, it is proof of Bamba's authentic superhuman status; why would a transcendent being need hands and feet? He has been depicted many times since, and to some degree, every image of Bamba, original or reproduced, is believed to project his holy aura.<sup>152</sup>

The extraordinary power of unexpected holy images continues to attract believers: in March, 2005, residents of Lavender Hill, an impoverished area in Cape Town, flocked to see the image of Jesus in a frosted bathroom window; Remona Petersen, 18, looked at the window shortly after 7pm one Saturday night and saw a bright but hazy image of Christ's silhouette on a cross. The image of the crucifixion appeared again the following Monday night, this time accompanied by six smaller angels; this phenomenon, repeated again during the week, was confirmed by neighbours who claimed they could see it clearly. By then pilgrims from surrounding districts were flocking to witness the image.<sup>153</sup>

This event echoed the celebrated appearance of “Our Lady of Clearwater” in Florida, in the United States, when on December 17, 1996, an image was noticed on a two-storey series of window panes on a building which bordered Highway 19. There was immediate consensus that the image “looked like” many contemporary artistic renditions of Jesus’ mother, especially those found on modernistic Christmas cards. News on the media immediately brought huge crowds. At times over eight hundred people an hour were trying to cross the intersection, where there was normally no pedestrian traffic at all. Current estimates are that over a million people have visited the site.<sup>154</sup> The reason for its longevity as a modern pilgrimage site appears to be linked to the interpretations of Rita Ring, a Catholic lay locutionist who claims to have received daily messages from the Holy Family. Ring had apparently been received “private revelations” for several years prior to the Clearwater apparition, and two days after its appearance, Mary specifically authenticated her Clearwater apparition to Rita and told her to inform the world that this was a great Christmas gift from the Mother Mary.

In a similar event in April, 2005, pilgrims flocked to see a yellow-and-white stain on a concrete wall in the Kennedy Expressway, Chicago, which they believed was the image of the Virgin Mary. Hundred brought candles and flowers, and prayed at the site. Beside the image was an artist’s rendering of the Virgin Mary embracing the late Pope John Paul II in a pose which some claimed echoed the stain. “We believe it’s a miracle”, said Elbia Tello, 42. “We have faith and we can see her face.” Officials ascribed the stain to salt seeping out.<sup>155</sup>

The power of relics has been overwhelming to many pilgrims. Some were known to crawl right into the very tombs of saints, and others ate the dust or mortar of their tombs. Some drank the water used to wash the tombs, the wine used to wash the skull of a revered saint, the water in which the mummified hand had been dipped, or even the water in which living holy men had washed themselves. Their personal presence might be so strongly felt that pen and parchment would be left on the tomb in case the saint should be moved to write down a response to a particular question. One local pilgrimage, which the Church authorities tried, unsuccessfully, to bring to an end, was to the relics of a dog who became revered as a saint.<sup>156</sup>

The premise underlying such pilgrimages was that the holy could be localised. To the medieval pilgrim, who had little hope of a direct relationship with the divine, it

was a way to address, persuade and even experience the divine more immediately than was possible at home.<sup>157</sup>

### *Sacred Smells*

Not only the visual but also the olfactory may hold special, magic powers that are deemed “authentic.” In Europe, sprays of St. John’s Wort are still hung above the doors of houses at the summer solstice, and a sprig of rosemary beneath the pillow is thought to protect sleepers from nightmares, or demons that visit in dreams. But the most effective method of invoking sacred power everywhere is the use of herbs and essences in special vessels or censers, what has come to be called “incense.”

The earliest use of incense appears to come from China; the practice spread through the Hindu civilisations, which added frankincense, lime and jasmine to the cassia, cinnamon and sandalwood already in use. The Egyptians formalised the production of aromatics, introducing myrrh, laudanum, galbanum and styrax to the repertoire, turning the use of them into a spiritual experience; incense purified and protected believers and acted as a channel between them and the gods.<sup>158</sup>

Biologist Lyall Watson comments that it is intriguing to note that the herbs chosen to burn on altars are not chosen at random from nature’s vast pharmacopaeia; they are all expensive and rare resins, chemically very closely related to human steroids and are perceived by all of us, both consciously and unconsciously, in the same way and along the same sensory pathways as human sex hormones. They go straight to the emotive limbic areas of our brains, and “are unquestionably exciting.”<sup>159</sup>

One of the consequences is that we are more likely, in the presence of incense, to experience the sort of communal ecstatic feelings on which religion and spiritual experiences rely. It is noteworthy that in Southern Africa, San/Bushmen rituals as well as those of traditional Nguni healers include the use of the aromatic plant, ‘*mpepho*’; its smoke, particularly, is believed to be cleansing and a connecting agent to the spirit world.<sup>160</sup> Odour, to the San of Southern Africa, is a medium for the transference of power. Supernatural potency, *n/um*, is carried in it, as in the burning of a person’s hair, or when eland fat, which is described as sweet-smelling, is rubbed on a girl during her initiation ceremony at puberty (*see Chapter Five*). The smell of the fat contains an

essence of the revered eland, its *n/um*; through this, she participates in its power and must be respected.<sup>161</sup>

Remains of roses have been found in Egyptian tombs; Romans scattered their petals at banquets, threw them in the paths of victors, and drank rose oil in their wine. This “Queen of Flowers” with its rich, sweet, tender and warm fragrance, is venerated in Christian (the Madonna, the Heart, the Passion and the Angels are all symbolised by the rose), Rosicrucian and Sufi traditions.<sup>162</sup>

There is a long-held belief that “real” sanctity is sweet smelling. St Paul said of his priests, “we are the aroma of Christ”, a quality of those imbued with real grace. St Lyddwyne, we are told, boasted seven distinct flavours of sanctity; Padre Pio could muster six, and Santa Theresa managed four. All are best remembered however, for the odour of their going; St Simeon’s death was accompanied by an incomparably sweet fragrance. When St Patrick died, a sweet aroma was reported to fill the room where he lay, and when St Hubert died, all Brittany was reputedly suffused with his fragrance. The bones of St. Pelayia, which were lost for many years after she died on Tinos in 1834, were recovered during excavations in 1950-1; they were “identified” by the sweet smell that emanated from the site, and from the skull when it was disinterred.<sup>163</sup> It was therefore a hallmark of a saint’s authenticity to smell “sweet” or attractive. No wonder *parfumeries* do so well, if scent is a hallmark of the virtuous.

Conversely, sinners can be identified by their stench. If the good smell good, says Watson, then the bad must smell terrible, and that is just a short step from “those who smell terrible are obviously bad.”<sup>164</sup> Bad or astringent smells are associated with fumigation, another loaded word, originating in the exorcism of demons by smoke too thick to let even the devils breathe. Poets and mystics have often spoken of “the foul stench of hell”, writes Karen Armstrong.<sup>165</sup> It may have its origins in the “sulphery aroma” that can be a warning sign of seizures, or epilepsy, regarded as a manifestation in Europe at least, of being possessed by demons. (Yet, as always, much lies in the eye of the beholder. In Africa, seizures have long been connected with sacred power, and those who are described as “sufferers” in the West, may be regarded as especially gifted and blessed in traditional religious practice).

The “smells and bells” of the traditional orthodox ceremonies enhance ritual in myriad ways; they create an authentic framework for the notion that sacred is “site specific.” Whereas God may be everywhere, He is particularly close in churches and at

the shrines of saints; being a pilgrim to such sites, to the great ceremonial “theatre” of cathedrals on high holidays (from “holy days”) was a total experience of all the senses, a spectacle of giddy power.

### *Sacred Souvenirs*

It is an arresting human characteristic that we believe certain objects have strong “sentimental value.” They may have associations with a recent past – an object once owned or given by a loved one, or a souvenir of a special event or holiday. They may also be linked to our ancestors, or places and people of special power. Though such objects may appear mundane to the outsider, they may be especially treasured by the owner; they are a physical manifestation of charisma, and a direct, concrete link with the power of that memory.

Such objects may be considered to have an inherent power of their own. There are plenty of stories of “miracles” being worked by not only relics but also sacred souvenirs, such as images of the Virgin or amulets from Japanese shrines. In the latter’s case, so enormous could the demand be that in 1873, in a time of austerity, the Kotohira Shrine sold more than 250,000 amulets of all types.<sup>166</sup>

Pilgrims frequently bring back a token of their journey, both as proof that it has been accomplished and as an ever-present reminder. Relic-hunters were in the past prime targets for the unscrupulous peddlers who sold them acres of holy robes and enough saints’ bones to fill a football stadium. Today, traffic in human remains and historically significant artefacts is usually illicit, and souvenir shops display replicas instead of relics.

Taking home water from a sacred source has often been a practice; in Lourdes, pilgrims may buy a bottle of water from the sacred spring in the shape of the Virgin Mary, as a reminder of who revealed that source. What may look ridiculous to some seems ingenious to others. Healing waters also appeared on a ranch in the small town of Tlacote, two hours’ drive north of Mexico City, in 1991, discovered when an injured dog owned by the rancher quickly recovered after drinking it. Since then some three million people have made the pilgrimage to Tlacote, and more than twice that number are estimated to have drunk the water; claims that it cures a variety of ailments include diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis, cancer and even AIDS. It is sold elsewhere, and in London it may be obtained in a homeopathic potency.<sup>167</sup>

Water from holy wells and springs is frequently carried home by pilgrims all over the world. Sea water too, may have a special sacred efficacy; it is often taken home by newly baptised members of African Christian churches in Natal, (which occasionally loses candidates in the tumultuous ocean waves – most recently in 2005).

No material is beneath the acquisition of pilgrims. Dust (*dhuli*) from a sacred place has special significance for a Vaisnava pilgrim, and gathering dust off the feet of a holy man is a symbol of humility. While visiting *tirthas* pilgrims rub the dust of the holy place on their foreheads and body as a mark of humble devotion. And anything that comes into contact with a saint is much sought after: when Simeon the Stylite sat on his pillar in Syria for 30 years, in the fifth century, devotees scrambled for the lentils of his half-eaten soup.

Food has also been deemed “holy” because of visual manifestations: in January, 2005, the Golden Palace Casino in Miami paid \$28,000 through an online auction house for a partly-eaten, 10-year-old grilled cheese sandwich claimed to bear the image of the Virgin Mary; they plan to take it on tour so that “everyone can see it and learn of its mystical powers for themselves.”<sup>168</sup> Shortly after that, a bar manager in Switzerland announced plans to sell an oyster shell resembling the face of Jesus Christ. The Italian, a devout Catholic, said he had found the shell in a batch two years before, and it had stuck to his hand as if God was calling him. He kept the shell on top of the stereo on the bar after he had found it, and it was now in a bank.<sup>169</sup>

Not quite so security-conscious was the owner of the “Nun Bun,” a cinnamon bun that allegedly bore a striking likeness to Mother Theresa. The owner, Bob Bernstein, runs a coffeehouse in Nashville, Tennessee where, in 1996, a customer was about to bite into the bun before noticing “the revered nun in the folds of flaky pastry.” The Nun Bun was preserved with shellac, and the shop sold T-shirts, prayer cards and mugs with its image before Mother Theresa wrote a personal letter to Bernstein asking that the sales be stopped. On early Christmas morning, 2005, Bernstein opened his shop to discover that the famous pastry had been stolen; he suspects someone wished to eat it.<sup>170</sup>

This occupation with the special powers of foodstuff which has come into contact with the venerated one has translated, in modernity, into a similar preoccupation with the artefacts and detritus of celebrities. Again, it is about personal access to power, and people will pay for relics just as they once did for the body parts of saints. Late in 2004, Wade Jones of North Carolina offered some water partially drunk by Elvis on the

internet auction site, eBay. After an Elvis concert which he attended when he was thirteen, a policeman gave him a plastic foam cup from which he had seen Elvis drinking earlier. Jones said he kept the cup and water in his freezer until 1985, when he transferred the water to a vial and sealed it. He sold it to the highest bidder for \$455, but plans to keep the cup though he will allow bidders to “exhibit” it for a short time.<sup>171</sup>

Why Elvis? In terms of analogies of pilgrimage as personal quest and as a journey to a divine source, Elvis exists in a pantheon of saintly figures as a mediating figure. “He is the guide along the way, a helper on the pilgrim’s path, a vehicle and medium through which the pilgrim may come into contact with and encounter a higher truth and reality,” writes Ian Reader.<sup>172</sup> In this, he is little different to St James in Spain, Kōbō Daishi of Japan or Husayn of Iraq.

Semi-mythic heroes, alive and dead, continue to attract devotees because of their “example” and therefore their special power. Mandela’s cell in the Robben Island prison, where he spent 18 of his 27 years behind bars, has become a pilgrimage site for visitors from all around the globe; a replica was even built of it in Geneva.<sup>173</sup> The emotional impact of his cell lies partly in it illustrating how he was able to rise up with dignity over a place designed to degrade – a triumph of the human spirit. Many travelled to meet Gandhi while he was alive, and, since his death, to the places he frequented in what Mark Juergensmeyer refers to as “Gandhiolatry”: “such adulation shows that sainthood is far from dead, even in the present day and even, perhaps, when the “saints” themselves – Gandhi included – disavow it.”<sup>174</sup> He points out that, ironically, Gandhi, a Hindu, was considered by many in the West to be more “Christ-like” than other Christians: “Gandhi lifts the Cross” proclaimed a press headline in *The Christian Century* of 1933. He was acclaimed by many to be a universal saint.<sup>175</sup>

Elvis continues to be a mythic hero whose home at Graceland is a regular site for pilgrims. James van Harper, who visited it on Valentine’s Day in 1998 with his wife, says he has been inspired all his life by the singer and suggests that his pilgrimage to the shrine was a chance to get close to the “relics” of the King of Rock “n” Roll. “My pilgrimage taught me that no matter what heights we reach, we all have struggles. Being there at Graceland somehow allows me to carry my burden with a little more grace.”<sup>176</sup>

Of particular value are the objects that have been in direct contact with either a holy person or their remains. Pilgrims frequently pushed objects through the grills and bars of saints’ tombs in order to touch the mummified corpse; these objects were believed

to have special powers. This practice is not outmoded. At Paray-le-Monial, “The City of the Heart of Jesus” in France, the convent shop sells little pictures of the saint (young Sister Margaret-Mary Alacoque, who in the seventeenth century experienced intense visions) for sale. On the pictures are small circles of brightly coloured moiré silk. On the back of the picture it says that “this material has touched the bones of the saint.”<sup>177</sup> Gypsies, or “travellers”, of the Camargue in France press handkerchiefs and shawls and scarves against the images of the “two Marys” during their annual pilgrimage.

But all too frequently, pilgrims have vandalised a site in their eagerness to take away some precious memento; though most sacred places are better guarded today, that has not always been the case. Mark Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrims’ Progress*, reflected his exasperation with such behaviour on his voyage in 1867. “The incorrigible pilgrims have come with their pockets full of specimens broken from the ruins. I wish their vandalism could be stopped. They broke off fragments from Noah’s tomb; from the exquisite sculptures of the temples of Baalbec; from the houses of Judas and Ananais in Damascus; from the tomb of Nimrod the Mighty Hunter; from the worn Greek and Roman inscriptions set in the hoary walls of the castle of Baniyas; and now they have been hacking and chipped these old arches that Jesus looked upon in the flesh. Heaven protect the Sepulchre when this tribe invades Jerusalem!”<sup>178</sup>

Venerable objects continue to draw the attentions of relic-hunters; nor is it certain that modern pilgrims understand the irreplaceable nature of their scavenging. Whereas most holy places – temples, churches, *stupas*, shrines – were once open permanently to visitors, today they are more likely to be monitored by 24-hour security systems, or simply locked up “after hours.”

The acquisition of souvenirs may no longer be sought in vandalising; there is a growing consciousness that sites need to be preserved and protected and this sense is aided with new technology. Rolls of film and video clips and other mementos provide evidence of “proof” in a way impossible for earlier pilgrims. They are also an invaluable aid in reconstructing the sacred in the secular world of home. Rosaries, crosses, paintings and statues of the Virgin and saints, though clearly faux replicas, are nevertheless considered “genuine authentic” relics because of their sacred association, and are greatly treasured. That desire to own something “special” remains a characteristic of both the pilgrim and the tourist. A Brazilian tourist told Frey that he had bought a small statue of Santiago (St James) to represent and remember all of the effort he had made on the

*Camino*. He added that he needed an object, or amulet, “to remember the thirty days I suffered.”<sup>179</sup>

There is also sometimes the need to participate in a reciprocal relationship. Many sacred sites are littered with medallions, crutches, coins, photographs, even wheelchairs, flags, scarves and other personal objects left behind by grateful pilgrims.

Critics often claim that souvenir shops are offensive, that they detract from the power of the spiritual experience and that, especially when they are sold inside such sacred buildings as St Paul’s Cathedral in London, they are unwelcome manifestations of sordid commerce. This attitude misses the rationale whereby pilgrims buy such objects, which act as material memories of the special journey, and are “imaginative links” for those back home. Far from being mere trinkets, they are imbued with meaning that may last a lifetime.

The souvenir exemplifies the capacity of that object to “evoke nostalgic desire for an authentic anterior and exterior reality that is felt to have been lost to us”, says Jon Goss.<sup>180</sup> By realising the function of both fetish and gift, it may even act as a sacred substitute.

However, the intensity of reverence connected with sacred geography should not be underestimated. Opposition to shopping “attractions” at Oswiecim, better known to the West as Auschwitz, the Nazi death-camp, is implacable. Janusz Marszalek, the Mayor of the economically depressed town, points out that “Half a million pilgrims visit every year, then leave inevitably depressed, having not spent any money, and in no mood to explore further.”<sup>181</sup> Auschwitz survivors and families of victims are utterly opposed to any “commerce” associated with, or near, what is essentially the world’s largest cemetery. Their passion is understandable, though they may have underestimated the importance of the reciprocal relationship with a place of pilgrimage. In buying mementos of whatever kind, pilgrims from a wide variety of backgrounds are leaving part of themselves (money) behind, and bearing away a visible memory of their visit, one that will permanently link them with the site.

### ***“Half a Pilgrim, Half a Tourist”***

Religious tourism is one of the world’s growth industries today. Substantial groups of tourists with a shared interest in religion can be easily and relatively

inexpensively hauled to special places of interest, either close to home, or continents away. Some travel companies also specialise in individually tailored itineraries for religious tourists with deeper pockets, or for those who, in small numbers, wish to embark on a specific pilgrimage.

Scholars have long puzzled over the seeming lack of clear distinction between the two.<sup>182</sup> How does one separate “religious tourism” from “pilgrimage?” *Are they different?*

I believe they are different, and that it is possible to make such a distinction; in essence, I contend that whereas a religious tourist remains an *observer*, a pilgrim becomes a *participant*. This distinction comes with the necessary caution that the two categories may tend to “blur” into one another. Appearances are sometimes deceptive.

Erik Cohen reminds us that there is no homogenous “tourist type” and developed a continuum where “existential tourists” resemble many pilgrims in the seriousness of their journey and the search for local authenticity. To take this a step further, we have already contended that any journey undertaken with serious intention, and which has an aspect of completion or fulfillment to it, may be considered a pilgrimage. In such a case the traveller is a full *participant*, not a mere bystander, and despite being engaged in a “non-religious journey” (and even that is questionable, depending on how one explains “religion”)<sup>183</sup> may authentically make the claim of pilgrimage.

Tony Walter observes that tourists sometimes become unintentional pilgrims, finding that for a few moments they have ceased to be tourists and have “connected with something very deep.” He admits that this has happened to him, describing it as the “tourist becoming a pilgrim.”<sup>184</sup> He adds that, “on the twentieth century battlefield, we find both tourism *and* pilgrimage, and operators and travellers alike know the difference. When heroes die, when their relics heal, that is when you find pilgrimage. And at a shrine containing such relics, the orientation and behaviour of the pilgrim is easily distinguishable from that of the tourist.”<sup>185</sup>

A further difficulty may be that “pilgrims” are deemed to be more authentic than “just” religious tourists. This judgement is highly value-laden. There are those who insist for example, that a pilgrim must have undertaken the journey, or path, voluntarily. Such a judgement could conclude that the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca for Muslims, be considered as “religious tourism” rather than true pilgrimage, for it is obligatory as well

as voluntary; but this would be plainly absurd. (In the Christian Middle Ages, obligatory penitential pilgrimages were seen as fully authentic pilgrimages even though they may not always have been undertaken in a dutifully fervent spirit).

It is worth remembering that the modern “difficulty” of distinguishing pilgrims from tourists, should that be wished, tends to be a modern division and one that was not necessarily made in previous eras. Clara Gallini notes that as early as the nineteenth century guidebooks were printed in Lourdes for the two different categories: one book, but two separate sections,<sup>186</sup> so already, as travel modes accelerated, such distinctions were being made.

We have observed that some tourists who have not seen themselves as pilgrims, may experience profound emotions when confronted with a sacred site, a feeling that may remain with them for life. One of the yardsticks of measurement by which a pilgrimage is considered “authentic” is whether it has been a life-changing experience; this may occur with one or several members of a group of tourists, but not necessarily all. Tony Walter notes that pilgrims, unlike tourists, talk of their journey as *completing* their life, of being able now to die in peace. This may be because they have managed to make a coherent link between their experience at the site and their life back home.<sup>187</sup>

The same may be true of designated pilgrims; not all experience a pilgrimage as profound or enlightening; there are always those who are resentful or disappointed that their journey has not fulfilled their expectations. Melville described his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with its sectarian squabbles over territory, as a “sickening cheat.”<sup>188</sup>

This “blurring” was captured by the irrepressible Mark Twain on his voyage to the “Old World” in 1867, on board the *Quaker City*. Twain’s initial references to his fellow travellers as “pilgrims” was a lighthearted allusion to the term “pilgrims of New England,” the American Pilgrim Fathers. But by the time they reached the Holy Land, his references to “pilgrims” are embedded in the religious sense, even if at times ironically. He was able to see sacred geography through their eyes: “There, a few miles before us, lay a vision which millions of worshippers in the far lands of the earth would give half their possessions to see – the sacred Sea of Galilee!”<sup>189</sup>

A recent highly visible event may serve as a useful example. Pope John Paul II’s funeral was held in Rome on April 8, 2005; it was one of the largest public funerals ever held, attended by prelates, princes and presidents. Enormous numbers of visitors

poured into Rome for the function, including over one million pilgrims from Poland, the late Pope's homeland. Some in the crowd were attending out of duty, representing their country or constituency; others were curious, even reverential tourists, who wished to witness an historic event; many more were there as genuine participants, followers or admirers of the Pope who experienced grief and personal loss at his death. To the tourists, the Pope was identifiable, but a stranger. To the pilgrims, he was an intimate; their call of immediate canonization reflected their loss, for to be a saint is to be a communal ancestor, accessible and capable of personal intercession.

Each person there was "authentic" to the degree that he or she was participating at whatever level was appropriate for a given background. A reasonably clear distinction can be made, however, between those who were *travellers* to the funeral, and those who were *pilgrims*. In the first case, they were observers. In the second instance, they were participants. This, I think, is the particular distinction which separates pilgrims, who are full participants at a particular site or event or process, from the religious tourists, who observe but who remain partially or fully "on the outside." Victor and Edith Turner describe the complex relationship between the two states: "The streams of English visitors and foreign tourists (and many of them are closet pilgrims) who visit Canterbury Cathedral mainly to gaze on the reputed spot of St Thomas á Becket's martyrdom, attest to the hardihood of the pilgrim spirit. As we hinted earlier, a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist."<sup>190</sup> They further note the ambiguity of this position; the pilgrim may fall between all familiar lines of classification.

When the Turners made that last point, thirty years ago, pilgrimage had not been widely studied by modern scholars.<sup>191</sup> Though scholars have been paying close attention to pilgrimage for the past few decades, this attitude has by no means widely changed among the "person in the street." It is the reason why the usually acerbic author Will Self was so caught unawares on his journey to Anatolia, to see the dervishes, in 2001.

"I suppose I'm as cynical about spiritual tourism as I am about any travel that makes you a voyeur, extracting trivial pleasures from the profundities of other cultures", he wrote. "When Westerners are young, we tend to do this in a material dimension, taking our cheap holidays in other people's misery. But when we grow old enough and rich enough, we think we're behaving more laudably by taking expensive ones in other people's piety".<sup>192</sup> On the face of it, he admits, he was probably as "bad" as anyone else

on agreeing to accompany a friend to the Festival of the Mevlana, where the dervishes famously whirl.

The Sufi cult derives from the scholar and poet Rumi (literally “from Roman Anatolia”) who was born in Afghanistan in 1207.<sup>193</sup> In 1244 Rumi’s life was changed by an encounter with the wandering dervish, Shams of Tabriz, with whom he embarked on a *sobbet*, or mystical conversation, over a period of time. Myth has it that when Rumi and Shams were in conversation, they had no need of sleep or food for weeks at a time. It was this relationship which changed Rumi into a mystical poet, and his 65,000 verses in Persian have been compared with Shakespeare in the range of his impact and his portrayal of his cultural surrounds. He became known as the *Mevlana*, “Our Master.” Rumi had not wanted a venerated tomb: “Look not for my grave in the earth, but in the hearts of my devoted seers.” Needless to say, his shrine has become a place of pilgrimage, displaying brilliantly illuminated manuscripts of his works.

Ataturk banned the Sufi sects in the 1920s and it has taken time for the government of Turkey to come round to allowing the dervishes to be publically staged (the tourist potential has been partially instrumental in the thawing of official censorship). In the week preceding the anniversary of Rumi’s death – December 17, 1273 – the whirling ceremony is held twice daily, as the Festival of the Mevlana in the sport stadium, before large audiences – sometimes two thousand or more.

Self had been warned that these performances were no longer “authentic”, that they were “touristy” and “hammy.” But, “when the dervishes began to whirl, all was explained, all was clarified, and all the background cameras flashing and rumblings of the audience faded into the darkness. The dervishes whirl steadily and metrically. Their motion is intended to represent the heavenly bodies and there is something otherworldly about these men who revolve steadily, their skirts flaring out, canted at an angle. They hold one arm up receiving grace from God, and one down, distributing it to humanity; they float up one side of the court and then down the other, then into the middle, until the whole area is carpeted with their white blooms, yet at no point – despite the fact that their eyes are half-closed – is there any possibility of collision. While they whirl, the musicians sing of the desire for mystic union. . .”<sup>194</sup> This event moved Self powerfully; despite his wariness he had been drawn beyond the point of being a curious religious tourist, and had experienced an *encounter*. The experience stayed with me, he concludes. Half a tourist, half a pilgrim.

As Simon Coleman and John Elsner have suggested, a pilgrimage is not just a journey. It also involves the confrontation of travellers in rituals, holy objects and sacred architecture. Moreover, pilgrimage is also about returning home with the souvenirs and narratives of the pilgrim's adventure.<sup>195</sup> It is for them the constant possibility of encountering the new which makes pilgrimage distinct from other forms of ritual.

How does one encounter the new? In the much travelled world of today, that is not necessarily the easiest thing to do in the literal sense. For Mark Twain, the essence of "authentic" traveller was to be the "first". The idea is to breathe a virgin atmosphere before anyone else, or before, in the dreaded lexicon of dedicated travellers, it has been "discovered." Hilton Obenzinger discusses this idea of authenticity by differentiating between "animal-like "packs" or hordes who endlessly repeat predictable responses as they are quickly "herded" from sight to sight by railroad or steamship, and "true travellers" who differentiate themselves from those very tourist herds by their disdainful attitudes and by their quest for "real" encounters with "unspoiled" places.<sup>196</sup>

David Hare recalls, with an almost visible shudder, "busloads of American evangelicals, dressed in shell suits and baseball caps, searching vainly in an old Arab city for any remaining evidence of Our Lord....". If that sounds unnecessarily harsh, he adds: "to be honest, I share their bewilderment. After all, Christianity is a well-known religion and I'd say influential in its day. You'd think it was still worth a pilgrimage, but in this town (Jerusalem), we come a sporting third. We're the sideshow."<sup>197</sup>

The frustration of religious tourists in not finding the "a-ha!" sense of wonder that they may have expected from certain sites, is part of the universal difficulty of being an outsider. Dean MacCannell has written at some length about this. Tourism absorbs some of the social functions of religion in the modern world, he writes, because of the concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experiences. On the other hand, primitives [sic] need not worry about the authenticity of their rituals. The very survival of their society stands as internal proof of the victory of good over evil and real over false.<sup>198</sup>

It is possible that pilgrimages may have been the first forms of tourist travel, when groups of villagers or individuals would visit a sacred site for purposes of ritual and/or worship. Such travelling was by definition "authentic"; the travellers were moving with a personal sense of quest, so that although they may be entering unknown, strange spaces, their purpose enabled them to be "insiders." They became part of the process.

Today, tourists try to “get in with the natives” to personally experience what is “going on”, to gain intimate perceptions and insights. But they are not invited into what MacCannell describes as the “back region”, the area out of bounds to visitors. This may be “profane” geography such as a kitchen or cleaning area, or a domain open to initiates only or other places of sacred geography. “It is only when a person makes an effort to penetrate into the real life of the areas he visits that he ends up in places especially designed to generate feelings of intimacy and experiences that can be talked about as ‘participation.’”<sup>199</sup> As an example, he cites the New York Stock Exchange where sightseers may view proceedings from a special balcony for them in a touristic setting. Because of the physical proximity to serious social activity, such a tourist space is always mystified, and the lie contained in the touristic experience presents itself as a truthful revelation, a “pseudo-event.”<sup>200</sup>

We can all think of such “psuedo-events” in which we remain observers even though we are invited as participants. Enjoying a “medieval banquet” may be one; performing “traditional dances” (and even plate smashing) with “the natives” remain popular touristic attractions. Even while enthusiastically participating, we are aware that these are staged events, and that soon we will pack our bags and go home. Watching a Mass or religious ritual in a new setting may bring feelings of respect and even emotion (as it did to Will Self), but that is not the same as participating as a devotee.

Information and experience gained in such events will inform us about the traditions we observe, but not the realities of direct “ownership” of them. Pilgrimage, however, does offer that possibility, though it may be different for each person. The physical act of complete participation “rewrites” the pilgrim, in a process of constant reciprocity.

The difference between pilgrimage and religious tourism is that, with the latter, you can cancel the ticket, writes Mick Brown.<sup>201</sup> At first glance this seems facile. A pilgrim can, too, literally cancel a ticket. But Brown has touched on something deeper than a literal meaning. Once a pilgrim is committed, the pilgrimage is virtually unstoppable, even though it might be postponed for quite long periods of time. It is an act of volition, with a sense of urgency that will imbue the pilgrim to one degree or another at all times. Unlike other forms of travel, including religious tourism, it cannot be filed away into photograph albums and home movies, while life returns to “normal.”

Luigi Tomasi suggests that there is no exterior indication by which a pilgrim may be distinguished from a tourist, religious or otherwise. “Perhaps the only feature that marks them out from other travellers is the purpose of their journey, their different *inner disposition* [his italics]. To reverse the comparison, it seems that modern tourists themselves can be considered pilgrims when they set off to visit places of ‘holy’ significance to them, like museums or art galleries.”<sup>202</sup>

Furthermore, it may be that “tourist meaning” and “pilgrim meaning” are so entangled in a multiplicity of other meanings that it can be difficult if not impossible to disentangle them. Ours is a secular world, unlike “the Christian world” of the Middle Ages, in which such distinctions were seldom made. People then made their way to Westminster Abbey to visit the tomb of St Edward the Confessor; today they are more likely to venerate those buried in “Poet’s Corner.” Few pilgrims today even know of the existence of Eorconweald, the seventh-century fourth bishop of London, whose tomb at St Paul’s was a place of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>203</sup>

One may conclude then, says Tomasi, that while the form of pilgrimage has changed, its meaning is the same as in the past: the typically human desire to seek out the sacred (even though what symbolizes or articulates “the sacred” today may be very different. The sacred has been placed alongside the other mundane aspects of life and there is nothing deplorable about this, however, as he claims that every age has its own mode of relating to the sacred.<sup>204</sup>

The crossover from “observer” to “participant”, in other words from tourist to pilgrim, has a permanent character. The pilgrim-participant may return to ordinary life, but the experience cannot be deleted. It remains a definable part of that person and, in some cultures, may even add to his or her prestige. To be “authentic” has become a rare and desirable quality.

## CHAPTER FOUR: VARIETIES OF PILGRIM EXPERIENCE

Because human behaviour is so varied, there is a wide variety of “types” of pilgrimages. That is why finding a satisfactory definition has been so difficult, and in the absence of it, why, perhaps, scholars struggled for so long to find adequate ways of writing about it. The BBC’s extensive series of religious practice of the world, *The Long Search*, was made in the 1970s and scarcely mentions pilgrimage except as a slightly exotic “foreign” practice.

Yet pilgrimage, as we have noted in previous chapters, is one of the most commonly practiced rituals in the world today, from North to South, East to West, in virtually every religion, sect, spiritual or secular grouping; only the rituals involving the disposal of the dead are more commonly practiced, and those are done in such a variety of ways (from burial to cremation to exposure) that there may be little sense of similarity among mourners.

Pilgrimages are difficult to control and quantify. There are ritual pilgrimages, but there are also many which are spontaneous, or privately organised, and also those that fly in the face of orthodoxy. It is interesting to see, on route to Santiago de Compostela, how many pilgrims who are *not* Catholic walk the *Camino*. By denying authenticity, we also deny recognition. This effectively controls how we measure who is actually on a pilgrimage.

A further problem occurs if we accept that *intent* must be part of the pilgrimage experience. We cannot rely on behaviour-recognition alone; it is too easy to overlook a pilgrim because he or she is not dressed or acting “properly.” On the other hand, a steady stream of people to a shrine may also include those who are only there on sufferance, perhaps family members or friends who have been cajoled into going along. It bears repeating – if the inner journey is not present in some form, then the experience is unlikely to be more than just another trip.

People vote with their feet. This commonplace wisdom is well known to marketers, for it is a truism of people’s affiliations. Europe has experienced decades of emptying churches, while pews in Asia, Africa and South America have been continuing to fill. It is a simple fact that if people’s needs are not met, they will go elsewhere.

One of the accusations levelled at the stance of churches in Europe is that they are stale, rigid and reluctant to respond to modern demands. At the same time there are

those who look at the vibrant but often unorthodox rituals of developing countries with suspicion, and insist that traditions retain the conservative values with which they are familiar. Inherent in this position is the belief that their own rituals and practices are more authentic. This is not surprising; “my” beliefs are always more authentic than “yours” otherwise “I” would not hold them. There is surely a need, however, to be able to understand and acknowledge that the life experience of others will lead them to a quite different sense of the authentic.

In the Catholic Church, Europe has 58 cardinals but a mere quarter or less of all acknowledged Catholics. Latin America has only 20 (or 18% of the total number of 115 cardinals), yet has an estimated 500-million followers. Africa has 11 cardinals, and Asia a mere 10, despite the fact that their church numbers are growing, in competition with the increase of Islam. Yet Church conservatives continue to complain about the modification of ritual and practice in developing countries, which incorporate their own traditional, recognisable customs into their services. Sometimes, an insistence on “localising” practice produces conflict, such as the “Black Christ” which so offended apartheid-South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Customs and practice change over time, regardless of whether they are desired or not. Ritual in the Vatican today is a far cry from the workings of the early Christian community. Despite the admonition that the Qur’an has been given in a pure form, Arabic, and cannot be translated without it losing its perfection, the Qur’an has indeed been translated into many languages to enable access for those who do not speak Arabic. There are many variants of Jewish religious practice today, including the Orthodox, Reform and Conservative, to name but three. Buddhism is practiced differently from Sri Lanka to Taiwan, from Japan to Tibet; in Japan alone there are thirteen major forms of Buddhism, including Zen and Pure Land. There are as many ways of being Hindu as there are Hindu Gods – about 330 million, at last count. Yet there continues to be an insistence that there is a “right” way of doing things. Humans have a great need for reassurance, which is why customs passed down from one generation to another are so highly venerated, for they have withstood the acid test of time. Yet change denotes life, while stasis indicates death.

Very often we do not see what is right at our feet. And it is our feet that should be looked at. When the local church, shrine, temple, synagogue, mosque, chapel, hall, ziggurat, stepped pyramid, cathedral or holy cave proved too small to hold the aspirations

and yearnings of spiritual seekers, they took to the road, paths, hills, mountains, deserts, rivers and byways. They did so in ancient times and they are still doing so today.

### *A Plethora of Pilgrimages*

Besides those pilgrimages that have historically been associated with an *initiatory* process, or have been to *venerate* the “greater force” which special people and objects on earth have represented – or both – there is a wider range of pilgrimages today than perhaps there has ever been.

As examples, there are *orthodox* pilgrimages to the “Western Wall” in Jerusalem, *ritual* pilgrimages to the Ganges, *traditional* pilgrimages to sacred caves, *seasonal* or “cyclical” pilgrimages such as those of the Hopi at winter solstice, and pilgrimages to Stonehenge at the summer solstice<sup>2</sup>; *penitential* pilgrimages ordered by the criminal justice systems of Holland and Belgium to Santiago de Compostela, as well as to assuage guilt, *healing* pilgrimages to Lourdes, *perpetual* pilgrimages (similar to those of the Irish *gyrovagus*) by Japanese pilgrims on the island of Shikoku; by Muslims anchored in the Sudan while on their way to Mecca<sup>3</sup>, and by “Outa Lappies” in Prince Albert, Western Cape Province of South Africa, *anchored* pilgrimages of hermits and recluses, such as Helen Martins of Nieu Bethesda, pilgrimages of *recovery*, which may include ancestor-hunting, of *thanksgiving* to the shrine of a saint or deity, of *loss*, to Wounded Knee or Magersfontein, or of *reclamation*, as pilgrims affirm their roots. There may be pilgrimages of *barter*, to fulfil a personal vow or one taken by a loved one.

There are also pilgrimages of *closure*, in order to lay to rest a troubling piece of personal history – such as visiting the grave of a lost loved one, or of confronting a tormentor. In South Africa in particular, we have seen both *protest* pilgrimages in the era of apartheid, and pilgrimages of *reconciliation* in the subsequent years of democracy. Increasingly, there are *virtual* pilgrimages; these have always existed, as, for example, the stations of the Cross which recreates in the imagination the last journey of Jesus, or the labyrinth, an ancient pathway which is a metaphorical pilgrimage, or the recreations of sacred geography, such as a faux Lourdes grotto. Now, virtual pilgrimages are being offered on the Internet.

There are also many pilgrimages today that are mainly or solely for *women* as there were in both the past and present for men; even today, women and “beardless

youths” are not permitted to journey to Mount Athos in Greece. Significantly in the modern world, there are “secular” pilgrimages that have been dismissed as “not authentic,” when they should have been counted. As we shall see from the examples given here, “non-religious” pilgrimages (to use an unhappy phrase) are engaged in with frequency and fervour, and are fully part of the variety of pilgrimage experience.

### *Pilgrimages of Veneration*

Certainly among the oldest and most common forms of pilgrimage are those made, either solely, or chiefly, for the veneration of a deity, saint, hero and/or ancestor or sacred object. But we cannot assume that pilgrimages of veneration are the primary motive, or intent, of pilgrims. Such pilgrimages could also be coupled with an intent to request healing or offer repentance or even barter with the divine element, as human behaviour is often compound.

Indeed, in the modern world, it is possible that such pilgrimages are in the minority. A study of the Marian pilgrimage site at Beauraing, Belgium (most often frequented by French and Belgian travellers) showed that out of more than a thousand pilgrims questioned, only 4 percent of them went for “praise and adoration.” In contrast, 91 percent went to ask for “a grace,” usually to do with health.<sup>4</sup>

We tend to regard pilgrimages of veneration as focusing primarily on the divine power represented by a sacred site or shrine, an acknowledgement of the deep respect and reverence directed at the hallowed being or object. These pilgrimages have a tendency therefore, to be directional and site-specific, or at least area-specific. The entire geography of the Buddha’s life may be considered sacred geography, as may that of Jesus.

An interesting variation on this is the depiction of Jesus’ mother, the Virgin Mary, as herself a pilgrim, visiting various needy places in the world and calling on her devotees to return to their religious convictions and behavior. The sacred geography then becomes *her* chosen site, and may ‘link’ with each other. The international Movement of the Pilgrim Virgin saw its apogee in the mid-1990s in France. Beginning in 1995 and extending into 1996, up to 108 statues of the Virgin Mary criss-crossed France in a pilgrimage of over 40,000 prayer vigils, locating in a specific place each night, calling the locals to prayer. The statues were “housed” for their trips in glass-sided cases and were

drawn on trailers behind cars, enabling unimpeded vision of them by passers-by and devotees. Families and individuals were invited to 'adopt' a statue of the Pilgrim Virgin overnight or for a few days. "She has become a pilgrim to visit our homes...and countries all over the world," suggested Eduard Fricoteaux, the main organiser of the project.<sup>5</sup> On December 8, 1996 in St Peter's Square, the Pope blessed 250 statues and icons of the Virgin Mary that had been brought from various countries participating in the Pilgrim Virgin Movement. South Africa has its own National Movement of the Pilgrim Virgin, focused in rural Ngome in KwaZulu Natal.

In Africa the Pilgrim Virgin has appeared to followers in Zeitoun in Egypt, Kibeho in Rwanda, Mutemwa in Zimbabwe, and her devotees believe she has chosen Ngome in the heart of Zululand to become a place where her followers might "find a little bit of Heaven in the busy, developing world," says Norman Servais, filmmaker, of Metanoia Ministries, who has made the pilgrimage there several times, effecting a return to his boyhood faith of Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> One of the factors contributing to the Movement, he felt, is that "a Mother would be compassionate." The shrine at Ngome, he points out, "is almost maternal – it's like going home, that sums it up quite well. Going home to Mother (with Father hopefully there as well!)." <sup>7</sup>

The Ngome Marian Shrine in KwaZulu Natal, about 80km from Vryheid in the diocese of Eshowe is certainly the most important Catholic place of pilgrimage in South Africa. Here, a Missionary Benedictine Sister, Reinolda May (also known as Sister Mashiane) had 10 visions of the Virgin Mary, the first appearing on the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception in December, 1955, and her final sighting on May 2, 1971.

Sister Reinholda was born in Germany on October 21, 1901 and named Francisca. In the early years of her religious life she was sent to South Africa, where she made her final vows, in 1928, and learnt to speak Zulu fluently. During the time she worked as a mid-wife and head of the maternity department at Nongome Hospital (not far from Ngome where the Benedictines had a large farm), she experienced ten visions of "Mary, Tabernacle of the Most High." From the beginning her visions were taken seriously by those who knew her, and pilgrims began to visit Ngome.

A chapel was built in honour of "Our Lady, Tabernacle of the Most High", at Ngome in 1966. In 1992, an open-air altar was built and blessed by Bishop Mansuet Biyase with several hundred pilgrims; from then on, pilgrimages to Ngome "were no longer merely

condoned but could now be actively promoted.” Sister Reinholda died in 1981, and is buried at Inkamana Abbey cemetery, where some pilgrims visit and pray at her grave.

Bishop Biyase took part in three major pilgrimages to Ngome in 1993, accompanied on each occasion by between three and five hundred pilgrims. Pilgrims also gathered there on May 31, 1994, after South Africa’s first free General Election had been conducted peacefully, for a Thanksgiving Mass. In 1996, a Pilgrims Rest Centre was opened, along with a grotto and statue of Our Lady. In December 1997, Benedictine Nuns from Twasana moved into their new convent there, built alongside the Ngome Shrine. In 1999 the Diocesan Pilgrimage (for Eshowe) was held at Ngome. It has sometimes been referred to as “South Africa’s Lourdes,” indicating yet another example of the potential multiple significance of a pilgrimage site.

Ngome Shrine is positioned above a dense forest in which many streams have formed a pool, and pilgrims often pray and meditate at the wooden Cross and benches found near the edge of the water. It is of interest that the area, known now as Ntendeka Wilderness, is South Africa’s smallest but one of its most beautiful wilderness areas, of 5,250 hectares of forests, deep valleys, waterfalls and streams and is a historical Zulu refuge (King Cetshwayo is believed to have sheltered there); the ancient so-called “Zulu Highway”, a traditional route leading from the plains to the highlands, starts on the northern boundary and leads hikers past an *isiVivane* (stone cairn) where it is customary to add another stone when passing.

The lonely leper station of remote Mutemwa in Zimbabwe, some 140kms northeast of Harare, is the site of what has become known as a “place of miracles,” where witnesses say they have seen the Pilgrim Virgin. This is where the martyr John Bradburne lived, and each September, on the anniversary of his murder, upward of 10,000 pilgrims attend special rituals. Pilgrims visit during the rest of the year too, spending all night praying on the mountain at the spot where he experienced a vision of an archangel.

The lanky poet and mystic was born in Cumbria, England, the son of a high Anglican clergyman. Commissioned into the Indian Army during WWII, he had a distinguished war record, serving with the Gurkhas and then with the Chindits in Burma. After the war, Bradburne became a pilgrim, attaching himself to various monastic orders in Europe and the Holy Land. None of them thought he was “right” for them, but encouraged him to continue his search. In the 1960s he contacted a fellow officer and Jesuit, Fr. John Dove, who was to become Bradburne’s eventual biographer, and asked “Is there a cave for me in Africa?”<sup>8</sup>

Bradburne arrived in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, as a Franciscan and after a year or two, visited the leprosy station (which still exists) at Mutemwa,<sup>9</sup> where there were about 80 lepers struggling for survival. As soon as he saw the place, he told Fr. Dove that he knew it was where he was supposed to be. "I'm a reject and they're rejects so we'll understand each other," Dove records him saying. Bradburne tried to improve the lepers' quality of life, and encouraged them to believe they were special. "He gave them his heart, his love. It was his best and greatest gift," says Dove. But he annoyed the authorities connected with the leper station and was expelled.<sup>10</sup> Refusing to leave, he squatted nearby until a local farmer gave him a tin hut in which to live, and that became his home. He also annoyed some of the nearby community who were inclined to take advantage of the lepers.<sup>11</sup>

As the Rhodesian "Bush War" intensified, the area around Mutemwa became increasingly dangerous. In February, 1977, three Jesuit priests and four Dominican nuns were gunned down at St Paul's Mission, about 50 kms from Mutemwa. By July, 1979, it had become a complete no-go area when Dr Luise Guidotti, who regularly visited the leper station, was shot dead at a security roadblock.<sup>12</sup> Bradburne was urged to leave by his colleagues, but refused: he prayed on Mount Chigona, in the immediate vicinity of Mutemwa and, having ascended the mountain in great agitation, he returned in a profound sense of peace, saying that he had been visited by an archangel while praying on the mountain, who told him it would "please God" if Bradburne remained.

He was, however, aware of the danger he was in, and had presentiments of his death. On the afternoon of his abduction, he experienced a great, mystical thirst, "perhaps like Christ's", says Fr. Dove, which eventually dissipated. He was taken from a thatched hut, adjacent to his own tin hut, by local "auxilliaris" on the night of September 2, 1979 to a nearby cave, where he was abused and taunted.<sup>13</sup> But the local guerrilla commander knew that Bradburne was a decent man, not a spy, and that his abduction had endangered their mission. He ordered that Bradburne be released, but on his attempted return to Mutemwa a couple of days after his abduction, while praying along the way, Bradburne was fatally shot by a security officer who believed the priest had seen too much and was therefore a grave security risk.

While the body was being recovered, a series of mysterious events occurred. Loud singing was heard, and three shafts of light touched the body. A large white bird had been noticed by local witnesses, hovering over the body. "This was all beyond the comprehension of the people, from a vastly different culture...the symbolism of the phenomena had no

meaning to the group. They experienced only fear and bewilderment,” says Fr. Dove, who interprets the “signs” in terms of Christian iconography.<sup>14</sup> A series of mystical events followed, and between 1994-95 the Franciscans began to receive reports of sightings of the Pilgrim Virgin at the cross in memory of Bradburne that had been raised on Mount Chigona, in sight of the leper station. On two occasions it was reported that her face could be clearly seen, in spite of the distance, and that she was calling her followers back to their faith.

Miracles continue to occur. Fr. Dove, who owns Bradburne’s red headband, reports its use in miraculous healing. “Everywhere you hear about John and his cures. He achieved his three wishes: to save lepers, to die a martyr, and to be buried in the habit of St Francis.”<sup>15</sup> He also mentions a child who had been kidnapped and held in a disused quarry near Harare. On her recovery, she appeared to be composed, and told her mother that a very kind man came every day to talk to her and tell her lovely stories about Jesus; he promised her she would not be harmed. She described her consoler as tall, white and with a beard. When shown a photograph of Bradburne she immediately identified him.<sup>16</sup>

Pilgrims in their thousands continue to flock to Mutemwa, to venerate the Pilgrim Virgin and John Bradburne. So strong is his cult that a petition was presented to the Catholic Archbishop of Harare to initiate the procedure for declaring him a saint; if this does occur, he will be Zimbabwe’s first.<sup>17</sup>

Also in KwaZulu Natal (near Donnybrook) is the Sacred Heart Church at Centocow, one of the finest Trappist churches in Africa, and the focus each year in winter to an annual pilgrimage of both veneration and healing. It was founded in 1888 by Abbot Francis Pfanner of Mariannahill, who named it after the well-known Polish shrine of Czestochowa, simplified into Centocow.

Seven years later, in 1895, Father Gerard Wolpert founded the Sodality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, focused on prayer and concern for the poor, and it was from Centocow that the Sodality spread throughout Southern Africa. It currently has about 48,000 members

Centocow, one of several pilgrimage centres established by the Mariannahill monks – the most important being Ngome – hosts an all-night vigil for between 8-9,000 pilgrims annually, on or around June 23, when they celebrate the Sacred Heart Feast. The majority of pilgrims, virtually all African, arrived by buses from as far away as Johannesburg and Umtata, many dressed in characteristic clothes of white shirts and dark capes, wearing the badge of the sodality, and dark hats or caps. The pilgrimage is characterised by intensive choral singing, both during the masses and informally, as pilgrims sit on the (cold but dry)

winter ground in packed crowds outside the church, praying, singing, clapping and also attending confession, which is heard in the open air, priests sitting on garden chairs a discreet distance from each other while pilgrims kneel on the ground in front of them, and murmur in their ears.<sup>18</sup>

Ululating, they eventually wend their way to Mass, generally celebrated by several Bishops from the Catholic church in South Africa. The majority of the several services throughout the night are celebrated in Zulu. Between 2-3am “Holy Hour” and Benediction is held, and between 3-4am a healing service for body and soul, during which the saints are inveighed as “our ancestors in the faith.” After this, each forehead is anointed with the sign of the cross, and from 4-6am there is a closing Holy Mass, before pilgrims leave for the long bus-ride home.

A further Marian Shrine, of Our Lady of Fatima, near Empangeni in KwaZulu-Natal, sees thousands of pilgrims attend the open air night pilgrimage, on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady in August (from Saturday night to Sunday). The Shrine houses a magnificent painted wooden statue of Our Lady of Fatima, sent by the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima in Portugal in 1930, just thirteen years after the appearance of the Virgin Mary at Fatima. A chapel to provide a sanctuary for the statue was completed in 1954, during the Marian Year.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Initiatory Pilgrimages***

Archaeology has given us some help in reconstructing the pilgrimages, the ritual and spiritual journeys of prehistory. Pilgrimages of initiation to sacred places, such as caves and river sites in South Africa, or to the stone circles of the Celtic world of the British Isles and France, to the cliff dwellings and temples of the Americas and sacred cities of Asia have elicited insight into the elusive world of the past; we recognise certain patterns of behaviour while trying not to make assumptions too quickly.

But we know that pilgrimage must have been extremely important to earlier humans because one of the very first written stories that exists is that of a pilgrimage of *initiation* – the Epic of Gilgamesh. It includes much else as well, but the thrust of the ancient tale, known in Mesopotamia at least five thousand years ago and probably much earlier as oral history, is that of a journey of self-discovery.<sup>20</sup>

His desperate quest for eternal life leads him to the Flood survivor Utnapishtim, who warns him that the immortality granted to him and his family by the remorseful gods was a once-off deal after the Flood. Eventually, Gilgamesh the hero-king is forced to return home empty-handed, a wiser man. Gilgamesh has been on a great journey; he has flexed his considerable abilities and stretched them to the limit, but he cannot conquer Fate. His task now is to rule his people as a wiser and more compassionate man, and to accept the limitations of his personal power.<sup>21</sup> The Epic is a remarkable creation, and it cuts to the heart of the matter – what is the purpose of life? How should I conduct myself? These twin themes lie at the heart of all religious, spiritual and secular ideology. It took a pilgrimage for Gilgamesh to figure it out.

We should not be surprised. As Turner wrote, “there is undoubtedly an initiatory quality in pilgrimage.”<sup>22</sup> When the load at home can no longer be borne, or when it no longer seems to offer all the answers, it is time to take to the road (or enter a hermit’s cell). The journey is not merely an outer one, but one into a deeper level of existence than before.

This theme runs throughout literature, from Gilgamesh to the story of Odysseus and his son, Telemachus, through tales of the Knights of the Round Table and the Quest for the Holy Grail, the Upanishads, the Exodus, the Wisdom literature, the songs of the Crusades by the *jongleurs*, medieval and modern morality tales, and a great deal of poetry.

Time and resources used to be made available for such an important journey. In the High Middle Ages, bright clerks ambitious of higher rank and many parish priests were allowed to draw full salary (provided their pilgrimage did not last longer than three years).<sup>23</sup> Today, such journeys are often seen as self-indulgent in the West and are almost certainly privately funded, though the East still recognises them as essential to those who have chosen the pilgrim's path, and local support can generally be counted on.

Pilgrimages of *initiation* may also exclude those who should not be party to the restricted information and rituals. Initiation rituals are frequently divided up along gender lines; they may also exclude “outsiders”, including foreigners, or even insiders who do not qualify. Among the Huichol of northern Mexico, there is still an annual pilgrimage to collect the powerful hallucinogen, peyote. They travel to Wirikuta in the Sierra Madre where they “hunt” the peyote cactus, the entire journey being surrounded by ritual, strict taboos and a number of “conceptual inversions.”<sup>24</sup>

Until the post-War era, young Japanese of both sexes were accustomed to performing some or all of the pilgrimage route on Shikoku as an adult initiation ritual. Such initiatory practices, which occurred throughout Shikoku, usually took place in spring. Such initiatory practices, says Ian Reader, appear to have disappeared from around the late 1930s onward.<sup>25</sup>

The Isinuke Cave, about 5 kms from Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, has a specific sacred function in that is where clay for the boys' initiation ceremonies is collected. These are initiates undergoing the *ukwalusa* or *abakwetha* rites, that marks their entry into manhood, and which culminate in circumcision. The young men are isolated from their communities and covered with the white clay, which "marks" them as separate; no one apart from their instructors, and especially not women, may approach them during this period.<sup>26</sup>

A detailed account of a South African pilgrimage of initiation for women is included in Chapter Five (*Pilgrimage of Female Initiation: Driekopseiland and the Riversnake*).

### ***Penitential pilgrimages***

There appears to have been a general preoccupation during the Middle Ages in Europe with the remission of sins, or *remissio peccatorum*. The doctrine of original sin, launched during the decline of Christian Rome in the fifth century, had eventually taken hold, and an increased anxiety about the burden of guilt and the need to expiate them found an outlet in pilgrimages of penance.

The impression grew that a sinner could be forgiven, or at least reduce the amount of time spent in purgatory, by travelling to a particular sacred shrine. As early as the ninth century, a system of fixed penances was in force in Ireland, and indulgences were available to those who visited certain sanctuaries.<sup>27</sup> A number of these redemptive tables have survived, reflecting a fixed scale of payment that was considered appropriate to each shrine according to the distance and hardship involve in getting there. We know from these that in order to avoid making a pilgrimage from, for example, Flanders to St-Wandrille in Normandy, the sinner had to pay a pound (or equivalent), while it was far more expensive to avoid the long pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela or Rome, which were rated at twelve pounds.<sup>28</sup> (The average sinner had virtually no chance of raising that

much money. He or she had to go, and that was the end of it). Rich sinners could endow a monastery, or pay for someone to take their place on a Crusade. The road to heaven was shorter and smoother for the wealthy.<sup>29</sup>

A pilgrimage route was considered an earthly representation of that road to heaven and the physical intensity required, and the hardships involved, gave the pilgrim a feeling that the sins were being worked off (echoes of this remain today).

Some of these penitential pilgrimages were obligatory. In 1283 the Archbishop of Canterbury sent a parish priest from Chichester on a series of pilgrimages for being a serial fornicator despite bouts of repentance, first to Santiago de Compostela, the following year to Rome and finally to Cologne. Half a century later, Mabel de Boclande was convicted of adultery and ordered to go on to Santiago de Compostela as an alternative to being beaten with rods six times round various churches.<sup>30</sup> In the same year another woman, the godmother of “John Mayde”, was found guilty of having sex with her godson and she too was packed off to Santiago. Chaucer’s robust Wife of Bath was not unique.<sup>31</sup>

Secular authorities (which included civil courts, guilds and other corporations) began to imitate the temporal authorities during the Middle Ages, and to prescribe pilgrimage as one possible outcome of the juridical persecution of heterodoxy. When the Inquisition against Waldensians and Cathars was fully under way in southern France in the 1240s, heretics were condemned to go on pilgrimages to sites as far away as the Holy Land, England and Germany. In one case, writes Lutz Kaelber, the inquisition of Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre in 1245-46, of 207 condemned heretics, twenty-three were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, whereas the remaining 184 were compelled to wear a yellow cross and to go on minor or major pilgrimages.<sup>32</sup>

In order to make the penitential pilgrimages even more worthy, certain pilgrims would be additionally handicapped in some way: chains could be attached to arms and/or legs according to how grave the offence was, and murders often had the murder weapon they had used hung around their necks as a public admission of guilt. As such visible signs of criminality discouraged hospitality usually afforded to other pilgrims, such penitential pilgrims not infrequently resorted to criminality, and came to constitute a threat to the safety of the communities they passed through. These practices were discontinued in the fourteenth century in order to prevent the roads from being overrun by criminals in the form of penitents, as well as penitential pilgrim recidivists.<sup>33</sup>

Some civil authorities used such pilgrimages as a form of banishment, to get rid of those who, in modern parlance, were considered hooligans and serious disturbers of the peace.

As a consequence, pilgrimages were not always undertaken in a state of piety. One of the least penitential pilgrimages ever made was that of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, in 1386. He had married the daughter of Pedro of Castile in 1372 and had an eye on that throne. On the lightest of pretences he and a motley army descended on Santiago where they proceeded to get drunk and create general pandemonium.<sup>34</sup> His “pilgrimage” and succession to the Castile sovereignty was unsuccessful but for some time afterwards, the city and the Church in Santiago refused to allow in any English pilgrims at all (a foretaste of English soccer hooliganism – for soccer stadiums have become a new pilgrimage destination).

We have to bear in mind that after the long immobility of Europeans during the early part of the Middle Ages (from about 500 to 1000AD) after the fall of Rome and the waves of invasions, the relatively stable medieval period opened up possibilities for the quest seeker. Just as today, when a tourist may be in part a pilgrim, so in those days a pilgrimage also represented a chance to see the world.

Although the Reformation destroyed many pilgrim churches and relics, the Counter-Reformation responded in the early seventeenth century by granting special indulgences to chosen pilgrim locations. This practice is not obsolete today, though it is more sparingly invoked.

Belgium and Holland still send youths on penitential pilgrimages, in the hope that the challenge and experience of the difficult journeys will bring more insight to the offender than sitting in jail. This is an interesting blend of modern and ancient wisdom (and, somewhat ironically, has been criticised by some as “too indulgent”). Since 1982, an NGO named Oikoten (from the Greek meaning “away from the fatherland” and also “relying on own resources”) has used the *Camino* as a path of rehabilitation. Because of the success of the venture, more than 160 youngsters of both sexes have been guided to Compostela by the organisation.

Walter Lombaert, who works for Oikoten, acted as guide for two boys who had spent more than six months in care; they walked from Belgium, for four months. “It was important not to stress the religious beliefs behind the pilgrimage to Santiago – this might have resulted in rejection from boys who viewed society defensively and negatively”, he

wrote. “Personally, I give great value to the influence of a path that has been walked by millions of pilgrims since early medieval times. The people we met along the way gave us great support in creating a climate in which changes and transformations could happen.” The meaning of pilgrimage, he felt, was to experience physically what the whole of life is about: growing, being on your way, getting closer to the beauty within.<sup>35</sup>

Of course penitential pilgrimages are not limited to Christianity; for example, the seven holy rivers of India wash away sins and purify those who make pilgrimages there. Small numbers of pilgrims are on perpetual penitential journeys, spending a lifetime trying to compensate for an awful deed and/or to bring the body into submission.

Pollsmoor Prison, in the leafy southern suburbs of Cape Town, is probably best known as a place where the former South African President and struggle icon Nelson Mandela spent more than seven years, from 1982 to December, 1988 (and where he picked up tuberculosis) after being moved from Robben Island. It is a forbidding complex in keeping with its large prison population and its large brick “Maximum” section for male prisoners who have committed serious offences. In his autobiography, Mandela wrote that “Pollsmoor had a modern face but a primitive heart.”<sup>36</sup>

In short, it is an unusual place to find the origins of a pilgrimage. Yet in May, 2002, a penitential pilgrimage “experiment” was successfully concluded there. Five long-term prisoners, serving at least 10 years for serious offences (armed assault, drugs) were given the opportunity of spending four days and three nights “out”, on the Table Mountain chain overlooking Pollsmoor Prison, which is where they were being held in Maximum.

The prisoners were among eighteen who had voluntarily entered a rehabilitation programme known as the President’s Awards, in which they had to qualify through three levels, bronze, silver and eventually gold. Only five prisoners made through to the gold level, and these five men were taken on a “trail” under the guidance of experienced nature conservator Mark Hawthorne, accompanied by three armed warders.<sup>37</sup>

“The experience had a profound effect on them,” said Hawthorne. “Though they had been brought up in Cape Town, none of them had been on the mountain before. When I said goodbye to them, one of them replied, ‘Mark, if you forget us, remember we will not forget you.’<sup>38</sup>

The pilgrimage was made in the first of Cape Town’s cold and wet winter months, which was a challenge to the first-time hikers. On the first day they ascended the

mountain in pouring rain which, recalls Mark, played a major role in encouraging teamwork and bonding. Each day saw strenuous hiking, often in rain, including being caught on the Constantiaberg in hail and lightning. “The ground was like a white blanket,” said Mark. Shortly after this they stopped near Elephant’s Eye Cave and were able to see over the Cape Flats, the vineyards of Tokai and Constantia, and, significantly, Pollsmoor Prison itself. It was a powerful moment for the men, as they were asked to reflect on their lives there and the choices they could make. Following this was a night hike.

On the third day, in better weather, they walked through the indigenous forest of Kalk Bay Mountain where, after lunch, they had to leopard-crawl into the deep Boomslang Cave, home to a colony of bats and cave crickets, where the torches were extinguished and they stood in total darkness. “No matter how big and bad they were, they were scared!” remembers Mark. He feels the total experience was transforming. “On the spiritual side, there was something that connected them to God. When they looked over the scenery (which none of them had ever seen before), when we read poetry and scripture at night on the mountain, it had an impression on them. They especially responded to the poem *To the Wayfarer*, which is on display in parks and reserves across Portugal, as they began to see the tree as a metaphor which literally accompanies us from the cradle to the grave.”<sup>39</sup>

Rasaad du Toit, one of the five prisoners, agrees that it left an indelible impression. “I never knew how it would feel to walk on the mountain. When you really encounter something, you start to appreciate it. I never used to walk or hike. It eases your mind. You can listen to insects and birds, look at flowers. There was a time when we was [sic] walking and was very thirsty and we had to go without water for a long time until we found a stream. We found that even water was special.”<sup>40</sup>

All five prisoners successfully completed their gold level and were awarded gold medals at a ceremony in Grahamstown on July 7, 2002. This was the first time that anyone from Pollsmoor Prison, home of some notorious gansters, had ever reached this level.

One of the accusations levelled against modern pilgrims is that they are pampered. Long-distance travel, open borders, reliable transport, regular inns and good guidebooks have all smoothed the way. But the accusation is only valid if the emphasis is on the physical journey only, and if there is a supposition that a degree of pain is

required. Cultural prejudices underlie the notion that the pilgrim must suffer; this stems from the notion that pain is an indicator of authenticity in pilgrimage, as we discussed in the previous chapter. Yet a pilgrim may experience great suffering without moving a step – one has only to visit the Owl House in Nieu Bethesda, South Africa, to see that (*see Chapter Five, Women's pilgrimages*) – while some pilgrimages are those of *celebration* and *thanksgiving*.

### ***Perpetual Pilgrimages***

As noted in Chapter One, the Irish *gyrovagus* provides an example of a pilgrim perpetually on the move. The central idea was that there was no destination, or holy shrine, in mind.<sup>41</sup> The *gyrovagus* placed complete confidence in God's navigation for the pilgrim, and simply walked out into the world, with staff and cloak, to follow God's "map" – a plan that was unknown and irrelevant to the pilgrim. After all, had Jesus himself not wandered as a pilgrim "in a strange land?" The pilgrim's entire life was a process, open to change at any point. This definition of pilgrimage, the "Wayless Way," was commonplace in earlier Christianity and the general concept is also an aspect of the Hindu wandering holy man.

Such an act requires extraordinary faith or extraordinary confidence – perhaps some of both. It's therefore easier for us to imagine a *perpetual* pilgrimage – such as the "Wayless Way" of Meister Eckhart - in earlier times, when we imagine religious faith to have been stronger than today.<sup>42</sup> Yet the phenomenon still exists. There are, as noted in Chapter Two, Japanese pilgrims on Shikoku, permanently circling the 900 miles of sacred geography on the island.<sup>43</sup> Among those who chose this lifestyle were lepers, not only in the hope of a miracle cure but also because they had been driven from their homes and were unable to find shelter elsewhere. Becoming perpetual pilgrims allowed them to beg legitimately for a living, one of the very few options they had.<sup>44</sup> In fact, many pilgrims may claim to be on a perpetual sacred journey, even though their outer lives may seem mundane.

Another *perpetual* journey is that on Mount Kailish, or *Kangrinpoche*, at the western end of the Himalaya, its four faces facing four directions with a great river flowing from each, and is understood to be the home of Shiva, her *tirtha* being a focal point of Hindu pilgrimage. For Buddhists, Kailish is the centre of the Earth. Pilgrims

make three, five or thirteen circumambulations of the sacred mountain, sometimes more. “The way has no beginning and no end.”<sup>45</sup> In practice though, it is limited because the Chinese government allows only a small number of “licenced” pilgrims to take the old pilgrim route from Kumaun, via Lhasa.

Someone who has taken the concept of *perpetual* pilgrimage to an unusual level is the colourful Jan Schoeman of Prince Albert, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Much of his life has been spent “on the road”, though seldom far from the place of his birth, which occurred fortuitously “on the *trekpad* (“trail”) “during the winter of 1924” (although no records of his birth exist).<sup>46</sup>

Better known in South Africa as *Outa Lappies* (Old Father Rags), due to his habit of sewing colourful off-cuts of found material into his garments, his harsh life is belied by his cheerful nature and wiry resilience in a world in which he was born poor, nomadic and black, none of them useful qualifications in a racially-hierarchical South Africa. The rags are not an afterthought, but a deliberate action of solidarity with a childhood friend, Apools Katz, whose patched clothes were sniggered at; from that day, he says, he wore patches to identify himself with the poorest of the poor.

His questioning approach to life seems to have begun early. “*Wat is my storie?*,” he asked his father. “*Hy wys* (“He showed”) – ‘n blade. This is the sharp side of life”, *hy’t my vertel* (“he told me”).”<sup>47</sup> With little formal education – “up to Std. Two-and-a-Half”, he insists, his life might have ended like countless others, in poverty-stricken obscurity. Yet today he and his artworks – made mainly from found materials - are known far beyond the borders of South Africa, in Scandanavia, Egypt, Australia, and North America and he has been invited to galleries in the Netherlands and Belgium, among others, though his days of *wanderlust* are, for the most part, over.

After a number of clashes with the local authorities in Prince Albert, then a pretty village run by its white citizens, and after an attempt at living in a tree, which he decorated with all manner of ragged flags and objects made from wire and tin, he was run out of town and lived in a makeshift farmhouse at Botterkraal, between Prince Albert and the National Highway (N1).<sup>48</sup> There he built a large “chariot” entirely from scraps, decorating it with lanterns made from old cans and broken glass that he fashioned into hands and hearts. At the back of the chariot he attached a further string of miniature carts, each smaller than the next and each with a candle inside, and an ostrich plume, emulating a “steam train.”

And when it was complete, he placed the yoke over his shoulders, as one would an ox, and “lifting his arms like the wings of a bird, lifted his burden and set off on a 16,000 km journey through the stark, unforgiving, dusty Karoo.”<sup>49</sup> In fact the journey lasted twenty years, and probably covered more than 20,000 kms, during which time he planted fruit trees along the side of the road to give succour to fellow travellers, and sunflowers, in honour of his hero, Vincent van Gogh. “I walk to challenge three things,” he said. “To challenge my enemies, to challenge my friends, and to challenge myself.” “What am I living for?” he adds, in his stream-of-consciousness way, “not just for myself. But also to give to the poor – *ook 'n hoender of 'n kat is vir my lekker* (“even just a chicken or a cat is lovely to me”) - “they are all on my *toerpad* (“journey”), and I must look after them, even a cat or snake. *Jou geloef het jou gered* (“your faith saved you”).

“I climbed the highest mountain and I survived. My whole body is sore and injured, but I lived!” said *Outa Lappies*. “Are you a pilgrim?”, I asked. “Yes. Yes. I found what I was looking for, and much more. I found gold – the *rustig* (“peace”).” He remains an anomaly. An elderly, impoverished man of slender resources but great resourcefulness – his motto, often repeated, is “something from nothing”, which both describes his own life, and his folk artwork. He leads a humble life in a poor environment, constantly working and hammering – he does not often take to the road these days, due to age.<sup>50</sup> In 2000, he was named Western Cape Tourism Personality of the Year, yet many in Prince Albert – which uses him in its promotional material – think he is a nuisance. Yet from time to time, other pilgrims, far richer than himself (which does not take much) visit him and come away feeling enriched and humbled, some sending him photographs of his artwork in their homes.<sup>51</sup>

For twenty years, *Outa Lappies* roamed the roads of the Karoo, a permanent pilgrim with his *karretjies*, pulling the symbol of his self-pride and also his burden, emblematic of his life. The experience was a transformative one, empowering and uplifting him. While Britain’s Queen Mother was still alive, he sent her one of his artworks on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, with a note: “Excuse my dust, Lady, it’s very hard to keep dust off your special things in the Karoo.” He also enclosed R70 in case she wanted to return it. She didn’t.

### *Pilgrimages of Healing*

These may be closely aligned to pilgrimages of veneration, and are a very ancient motive for sacred journeys. Not only the healing of the body, but of the mind and, indeed, the spirit are motives for pilgrimages of healing. A number of religions have considered physical illness as a manifestation of spiritual distress, or more particularly as an outward manifestation of sin, one that might even be unknown or in the unconscious of the bearer. The Christian Church regularly suggested that the sick see a priest rather than a doctor, and confess their sins; the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 urged the doctor not to visit a patient for a second time until the priest had done what he could.<sup>52</sup> So pilgrimage to a sacred site was understood to be a journey towards a source of healing, like a therapeutic journey, today, to a spa or “wellness centre.” Illness was not only a medical but also a moral problem, and pilgrimage centres were, and sometimes still are, the clinics of the poor.

“Possession” has long been a state for which healing is sought; the temple complex of Mehndipur Balajui, outside Jaipur in India, has experienced great fame in recent years attracting both local pilgrims and those from much farther regions who need exorcism of recalcitrant ghosts and witches.<sup>53</sup>

Water – in the form of springs, wells, rivers and the sea – is a particularly frequent element in healing rituals. An example is the annual pilgrimage that takes place on the Sunday following June 22 to Saint Winifred’s Well in the town of Holywell, North Wales – as well as an annual Pan-Orthodox pilgrimage on the first Saturday in October; pilgrims either bath ritually – in a prescribed manner – in the water, which is said to be surprisingly cold, or drink it and take the “holy water” home.<sup>54</sup>

In Western Christianity, Lourdes must be considered to be the pre-eminent place of healing; millions have travelled to the grotto in hope and there are multiple “Lourdes grotto” imitations which are claimed as “holy” by the faithful. Its characteristics, a sacred spring associated with a divine manifestation and associated with healing, are also repeated in other Christian pilgrimage places including the New World shrine of Saint Anne de Beaupré in Quebec.

Many “incurables”, irrespective of their faith, seek healing at the Roman Catholic shrine to Our Lady of Health at Velankanni in Tamil Nadu. Jewish pilgrims travelled to the pools of healing of Siloah and Bethesda for cures.

In India, about ten miles south of Amritsar, a place named *Taran Taran* (Pool of Salvation) has long been associated with healing and is particularly known as a centre for people with leprosy. Hindus also travel to Tarakeshwar in West Bengal, where the local deity, Baba Taraknath, is believed to cure coughs, dysentery, gonorrhoea, tuberculosis and leprosy.<sup>55</sup>

Healing is associated with the the mind as well as the body and many pilgrimages have been made to heal the psyche. As Ian Reader points out, “grief-centres pilgrimages have their share of pain and suffering, and such emotional pain is often a vital element in the development of a pilgrimage.”<sup>56</sup> In such cases it may be the route itself, rather than the site, which becomes important. The *Camino* is sometimes referred to as *la ruta de la terapia*, the therapy route, for many are motivated to walk it because of grief, transition, rupture or loss. One man ran from Bordeaux to Santiago to relieve the grief he felt after the loss of his son.<sup>57</sup> Another Frenchman found himself walking the *Camino* after he lost a successful job, his home and then his wife. Remarks such as “we’re the walking wounded” are not uncommon. It can become a form of walking meditation, which has a strong counterpart in Buddhism. A young German man on the *Camino* explained, “In the experience of walking, each step is a thought. You can’t escape yourself.”<sup>58</sup>

Relics, as we have noted, are greatly prized in healing rituals. In ancient times, those who were ill travelled to Ephesus, or Epidauros in the Peloponnese<sup>59</sup>, or the Asklepieion at Bergama in Turkey, one of over 200 sanctuaries dedicated to the god of medicine and healing. There, lamps were lit and supplicants usually slept within the confines (which was called “incubation”), and occasionally symbols were carved into the rock, an eye, arm, leg or whatever body part was problematic; these *ex votos* may be seen today, as an early form of “graffiti” (a late form of pecked engraving so popular in the Middle Stone Age), at Wildebeest Kuil, South Africa.<sup>60</sup>

Pilgrimages of healing also take place to the Philippines, where healers are reputed to “operate” without instruments, and conduct other unusual treatments. They have been increasingly visited by Westerners who are desperate, or who no longer trust

conventional medicine, or both. Cures are reported, as they are of all healing sites. Without such validation, there would be no further interest in them.

In South Africa, pilgrimages of healing are made to a number of Marian Shrines, including the Kvelaer Mission, founded by the Mariannahill monks in KwaZulu Natal, on May 1, 1888.<sup>61</sup> A new outdoor pilgrimage altar was constructed there in 1988 to accommodate the pilgrims who pray to the “Comforter of the Afflicted.” The night pilgrimage to Centocow includes a service of healing during the early hours, while South Africa’s primary Marian site, Ngome, is also considered to be a place of spiritual and physical healing.

A two-year pilgrimage of healing linked to AIDS ended in Cape Town on World Aids Day, December 12, 2005. The African-American husband-and-wife team, Tim and Myrna Bullock, had visited Africa previously during the Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage, and wanted to return because of the AIDS pandemic in Africa. “We realised that 10 percent of the world population (in sub-Saharan Africa) were experiencing 75 percent of HIV/AIDS. You can’t change what you don’t acknowledge,” reflected Myrna, who believes that the world outside Africa is “in denial” about AIDS. “It’s not that we can cure it, but we wanted to touch as many people as we could, to bring sacred energy, which we gathered in rituals before we left,” said Myrna.<sup>62</sup>

Tim Bullock, who felt he had been called to this pilgrimage by a vision, felt his approach was somewhat different to Myrna’s. While he also wished to “walk the land, be with people (with the disease) and bring ‘transforming’ energy to them,” he hoped “that healing would not only take place in the lives of the people we touched but also in our own families for generations to come.” They spent more than a year of the pilgrimage of healing in Swaziland, where poverty exacerbates the high incidence of AIDS, and where they felt they could be of most use. Though Myrna’s experience of Africa has been enveloped in “a strong sense of returning home, Tim said that “I thought coming to Africa would be ‘coming home’ but I felt as strange in Africa as in the USA. When I walked down the streets of (West) Africa I did not feel I had come home. But the Pilgrimage is a place of coming home! The more I travelled and met people, the more I learnt about *me*. I’m more comfortable in my skin now.”<sup>63</sup> This sense of the “journey being home,” uncannily echoes the sentiments of the Japanese pilgrim Bashō we noted in Chapter One.

Myrna continued: “Pilgrimage helped me to develop a sense of belonging anywhere. As our foot touches the ground, we know we belong to the earth, we are citizens of the world.” She added, “Though as pilgrims we oftentimes go out to a place, it’s really always about the inner journey.” The healers have a sense of being healed.

Another pilgrimage related to AIDS included five Episcopalian women who visited HIV/AIDS programmes in Namibia and South Africa in July, 2004.<sup>64</sup> African women are particularly hard hit with HIV/AIDS. Of women affected worldwide, 77 percent are Africans. In southern Africa, women aged 15-24 are three times more likely to be HIV-positive than men of the same age.<sup>65</sup> This was understood as an *Ubuntu* pilgrimage, an emotive African word meaning humaneness and betokening generosity of spirit, and was aimed at helping sufferers and their families.

### ***Pilgrimages of Protection***

As we have noted in Chapter Three, when discussing “sacred geography”, some areas are perceived to be imbued with special potency and their locations may even be understood to give special protection to those bound up inside their protective qualities, in a similar way, for instance, to the “sanctuary of protection” traditionally provided by the altar within a church or cathedral. Though sanctuary is not always recognised by secular authorities, the notion of sacred protection retains its potency, even in the modern world.

The simple act of drawing a circle of protection and standing within it is one of the oldest forms of “self-protection” in European folk-lore, one which children still occasionally emulate in play.

It is a strongly-held Muslim belief in Cape Town today that the city and its surrounds are protected by the “Circle (or Ring) of *Kramats* (shrines)” of Muslim saints and heroes which are spread over the city area and surrounds (including Robben Island). The most important of the *Kramats* is that of Sheikh Yusuf, a nobleman of Macassar who was born in 1624. He was involved with resistance struggles against Dutch colonisers in the East and was exiled to Cape Town in June, 1693, where he was recognised as a *Kramat*, or saint, declared to have performed several miracles. He and his 49 followers were settled outside the Cape Town central area, on the farm Zandvliet, in the area now called Macassar. He died on May 23, 1699 and was buried there; though his body is

alleged to have been returned to the East Indies, his shrine at Macassar remains a place of pilgrimage, for it was the first cohesive Muslim community in South Africa.<sup>66</sup>

Twenty other shrines, or *kramats*, are located around Cape Town, including four on Signal Hill which overlooks the city, and one on Robben Island where in the tradition of it holding political prisoners, Tuan Matarah was exiled in the 1740s. Ironically, his charming, mosque-shaped shrine was built on the Island by the apartheid prison authorities in the 1960s.<sup>67</sup> Tradition has it that 250 years ago a prophecy was made that there would be a “circle of Islam” or as Chidester has described it, “a sacred circle around the city”, to protect it and shield its people from disaster.<sup>68</sup> Modern pilgrims may visit all, except the one on the Island that necessitates a separate trip, in a single day. Though there is always a steady stream of pilgrims visiting one or several of the *kramats*, there is a major pilgrimage over Easter (a holiday weekend) to Macassar, when thousands will visit and/or camp there.

A further “circle of protection” is provided by the Catholic Schoenstatt Shrines in Cape Town. The original Schoenstatt (meaning “beautiful place”) Shrine, on the Rhine River in Germany, was built on the spot where the Virgin Mary appeared to a group of high school boys and their spiritual director in 1914, and promised to make it a special place of grace. There are now over 170 replicas of the Schoenstatt Shrine throughout the world, serving as places of pilgrimage, prayer and retreat, of which five are in South Africa.

The primary South African Schoenstatt Shrine is in the foresty area of Constantia, a second lies above the City of Cape Town, in the steep Kloof Nek Road, and a third is in the previously “Coloured” and impoverished township of Hannover Park. Pilgrimages are arranged on or near September 24 annually, in which pilgrims walk or ride from one shrine to the next, visiting all three in Cape Town in a single day, in which the “good Mother” is requested (in the Schoenstatt prayer) to “guard and defend me as your property and possession.”<sup>69</sup> Some Catholic pilgrims, such as nature conservator Mark Hawthorne who has undertaken the pilgrimage, believe that the “protection” may be understood to encompass the place in which the pilgrim lives and travels (in this case, Cape Town).<sup>70</sup> The two other Schoenstatt Shrines are in Bedfordview, Johannesburg, and Cathcart, near East London.

The lack of protection from poverty is of concern to many in South Africa (as elsewhere). Once a year, usually on the Saturday following Easter, pilgrims make their

way to The Shrine of Our Lady of the Poor at St. Benedict's Abbey, Pholokwane (north of Johannesburg) where an all-night vigil is held.<sup>71</sup>

Another pilgrimage to specifically highlight the plight of the poor was first organized in 1975 to Jonathan, a village of destitute black farmers in a remote and deserted area 90km north-west of Pretoria, in which diocese it falls. A shrine was subsequently erected there to house a large and expressive statue of Our Lady of the Assumption, supported by two angels. The statue was made in France in 1896, and was first kept in a convent in Grahamstown, before its removal to Jonathan in 1991, where the shrine has become increasingly popular among the local population who say of it, *Setshwantsho se, se na le seriti* (meaning it gives the impression of being alive).<sup>72</sup>

### ***Pilgrimages Obeying Sacred Time***

“Cyclical” pilgrimages are among the oldest type of pilgrimage. Sacred time may be as significant as sacred geography. Certain seasons, months, or stages of the sun and moon are seen as auspicious, and “significant time” has been part of pilgrim-shrines from ancient times. Furthermore, seasonal migrations were on occasion linked to ancient routes containing sacred geography: Luigi Tomasi writes of the nomadic people of Afghanistan, whose season migrations “follow ancient routes scattered with tombs at which the nomads halt to pray; these are the tombs of the pious, venerated and sanctified men to whom the nomad addresses a prayer or an invocation, leaving a rag or stone as a sign of homage and prayer.”<sup>73</sup> This same gesture, of leaving something behind at the sacred site, is still seen today, in Jewish cemeteries, Irish holy wells and trees, African cairns and the enormous cairn of stones on the *Camino*.

In the Mediterranean world of 2000 years ago, the Mystery religions held pilgrim events correlated to the seasons. At full moon on the autumn equinox, crowds of pilgrims visited the goddess Isis at her sanctuary at Philae. The Mysteries of Eleusis honouring Demeter saw pilgrims meeting three days before the autumn equinox to bathe together in the sea near Athens. Today, pilgrims to Tinos try to time their visits to the Church of the Madonna of the Annunciation to correspond with the feast day (July 23) or August 15 (the day of the Dormition), when pilgrimage is especially auspicious.<sup>74</sup> Christian pilgrims descend into the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem on “Christ’s birthday” at Christmas by packing into the tiny space. By doing so they are “mystically

present” at the original event. In South Africa, Rastafarians, celebrate the birth of Christ on January 7, with a three-day “fire ceremony.”<sup>75</sup> The two functions, one in Bethlehem and the other in Vereeniging, ostensibly mark the same event, yet, like the Orthodox Christmas, are held on different days, demonstrating the flexible nature of sacred time, unlike the rigid human-made calendar. The Hajj is also based on the lunar calendar (as is Easter and Passover).

The Hindu pilgrimage of Pandharpur is linked to the lunar calendar. Exactly four months and a fortnight after entering Pandharpur, pilgrims may make a second pilgrimage to the tomb of the saint Jnanesvar at Alandi. Pilgrims who make the double pilgrimage refer to their journey as *vari*, signifying the periodic appearance of a person at a particular place at a particular time, and they are known as *varkaris*, pilgrims. Some go once or twice a year, while others go every month.<sup>76</sup>

Many seasonal pilgrimages can be traced back to the agricultural year in other parts of the world. Early Hebrews were required to take the “first fruits” to the Temple as an offering to God, and the Jewish Shavuoth, the Festival of Weeks, is observed at the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. In England, a loaf made from the first grain to be harvested would be taken to Church to be used in the Mass. Anglo-Saxons called this service *Hlaf-Masse*, which became Lammastide, an important festival and procession. English Plow Monday, when farm workers begin after Christmas with ploughing, includes a procession in which young men in rags haul an old-fashioned plough and demand alms.<sup>77</sup>

Spring has always been the main season for pilgrims in Shikoku, the premier Japanese pilgrimate route, and the months of March, April and May account for almost half of all pilgrims there. In earlier times this was the period that it was most convenient to travel.<sup>78</sup> A procession connected to the Rice-Planting Ceremony is held on the first Sunday in June in rural Japan. It had been popular until the beginning of the twentieth century, then died out; it was revived in 1930 and is generally a great procession including oxen carrying gold and silver saddles, while women in long rows ritually plant rice by hand.<sup>79</sup>

In Switzerland, in September, animals decked in flowers and their minders return in a ritual ceremony from the mountains, while local people wear national dress and formally welcome them “home” for the winter. May Day rituals are widespread; sometimes they have been transmuted, as occurred during the traditional May Day

pilgrimages to Moscow during the old USSR, to view the power of the “worker state.” And Yule, of German origin, celebrated the feast of the God Jolnir at the winter solstice. Christians adopted this custom during the fourth century, linking it with “Christmas.”

One of the most persistent – and unlucky – of seasonal pilgrims is Trevor Corneliusen, a 26-year-old musician and painter, who makes a month-long pilgrimage to the desert each winter to meditate, and record his experiences. In January of 2006, while on his annual pilgrimage, he bound his ankles together with a thick metal chain and padlock, and then sketched his predicament. On completion of the drawing, the key could not be found.

The nearest town, Baker, was 8km away. For twelve hours he hopped through sand and rocks with the help of an old miner’s stick, until he reached a petrol station. Just past midnight, the county sherriff was summoned, with paramedics, to free him. Their anxieties that he might be a fugitive from a chain gang were allayed when he produced his sketch. Though bruised and scraped, Corneliusen immediately returned to his seasonal spot. His mother, Marie Corneliusen, describing her son as “very absent-minded,” told reporters that her son is a born-again Christian. “It’s a religious experience what he does there. He communes with God in the desert.”<sup>80</sup>

Pilgrimages connected to sacred time may also be a mixture of religion and folk tradition. Mythical ancestors of the Hopi in the Great Painted Desert of Arizona, the *Kachinas*, revisit the earth for half of each year, arriving at the Winter Solstice. While on earth the *Kachinas* are represented by male dancers wearing masks. The Niman (“home dance”) ceremony in July is the farewell dance before they return to the spirit world. Pilgrims travel from far to honour the spirits and say a seasonal farewell to them, and even risk the thong of the “Whipping Kachina.” If they did not dance, the rain would not come and the corn would not grow, the land and the people would die.<sup>81</sup> Such pilgrimages serve to preserve a people and their memories, customs and rites.

December 16 had a special significance for Afrikaners in South Africa for nearly 200 years. Called “Dingaan’s Day,” after the Zulu king, it was to commemorate the Boer’s success in the Battle of Blood River in 1838 when they were heavily outnumbered by Zulus and made a Covenant with God that if they survived they would always keep that day holy.<sup>82</sup> Sacred “treks”, or pilgrimages, would be made each year to communal areas where several days of festivities and religious rituals would occur.

Piet Muller recalls Dingaan's Day (later to become the Day of the Covenant) as "spiritually, politically and socially very important" when he was a child in the Free State. "The festivities usually started a week previously, when *feesgangers* ("feast pilgrims") started to *trek* to a predetermined place, often a farm, in the district. They usually arrived in ox wagons (symbolic, for it was ox wagons that had enabled the Voortrekkers to reach the hinterland of South Africa, searching for independence), although in later years they were replaced by tractors and wagons, often with trailers." A large tent served as the communal meeting place for religious services, cultural activities and for celebrating the Vow. "The week-long gathering had an Old Testament air to it. As a child I considered it as being akin to the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. Both celebrated divine deliverance in times of extreme national danger," he writes. "The overall tenure was deeply religious, with morning and afternoon services. But in between there was sufficient time for serious (as well as frivolous!) courtships to start, playing boeresports and taking part in the *perdekommando* ("horse commando"). Virtually everybody overindulged in the eating of all kinds of cookies and pastries and in drinking *gemmerbier* ("ginger beer").<sup>83</sup>

"On December 16 all fun and frivolity stopped and the tone was grave. The day started with the customary *biduur* ("prayer hour"), after which everybody withdrew to their tents until the service started at 10.30am. This took the form of a regular church service during which the Vow made by the Voortrekkers under Charl Cilliers before the battle of Blood River was solemnly read, a vow that bound the original participants and their offspring in perpetuity to hold the day sacred and to celebrate it as a 'Sabbath'.

"After a brief respite the meeting convened again; a visiting orator would address us on the meaning of the Vow and the significance of the Battle of Blood River for the survival, physically and spiritually, of all Afrikaners.

"The meeting ended with the most solemn part of the ceremony, the stacking of a cairn of remembrance. Every person, young or old, who was capable of walking and carrying a mid-size stone, walked to a prescribed spot and stacked a cairn. This was usually done after scripture reading from the Book of Joshua, Chapter Four, which describes how the 'Tribes of Israel' miraculously forded the Jordan River and how a representative from each of the twelve tribes took a stone from the dry river bed.<sup>84</sup> These stones were used later to build a monument of remembrance.

“These words and the simple act of throwing stones on a heap turned all the participants into votaries engaged in some solemn and very significant ritual. It was like joining all generations who were before, with all those to come, in a mutual understanding.”

Ampie Muller, Piet’s brother, recalls that even if their parents were unable to join the events for the full week, as boys they would be sent along with other families for the week-long ceremonies. This would serve as part of their initiation into their traditional roles as Afrikaners.<sup>85</sup>

Though the majority of Afrikaners today no longer observe December 16, some pilgrimages are still made commemorating that day by a minority of conservative Afrikaners, including a pilgrimage to the Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria.<sup>86</sup> When I was last there, in 2005, custodians told me that far fewer *Boers* were arriving each year. December 16, in the “new” South Africa, is now commemorated as the Day of Reconciliation.

### *Pilgrimages of Loss*

Such journeys may be similar to some of those outlined above, but they deal specifically with a strong sense of loss. In the individual sense, they might equally be termed pilgrimages of healing, but not in all cases does healing occur, nor is it expected. The loss of a loved one in battle for example, may urge a visit during peacetime to war graves; there are war cemeteries all over the world, from Normandy to Vietnam.

Although today we recognise that visits to the graves and battlefields of war, along with other grief-centred pilgrimages, are a way of coming to terms with loss, this insight has not always been manifest. It took the UK government until 1985 to institute subsidised pilgrimages for widows who had yet to visit the graves of their husbands killed between forty and seventy years earlier, in the First and Second World Wars.<sup>87</sup> Under the War Widows Scheme, 7/8ths of the cost of the visit to a husband’s grave or memorial overseas was paid by the government; in the first six years of the scheme about 5,000 widows took part. They were by no means the first UK pilgrimages to battlefields, of course; the 1923 St Barnabas pilgrimage to Ypres involved 850 pilgrims while 274 went on the 1926 pilgrimage to Gallipoli.<sup>88</sup>

One of the results of such a battlefield pilgrimage is that sense may be made of an unimaginable tragedy: Tony Walter recalls that a history teacher told him that battlefield visits are about creating order out of chaos. By visiting the actual place of the tragedy, survivors are enabled to create some meaning out of the “personal disintegration that is bereavement, out of the child’s suppressed fears of non-existence.”<sup>89</sup> It is no longer a chaotic void of mud and meaningless death, but an actual physical place that can be “translated” according to existing records.

A community may continue to mourn an event far past, even earlier than living memory. In this way, pilgrimages of loss continue to be made, for example, to Wounded Knee, to Magersfontein, and to Gettysburg.

Wounded Knee is the site of one of the bloodiest deeds against Native Americans. It is east of the Black Hills in the plains of South Dakota (not far from Mount Rushmore). In 1890, the year in which the frontier “ended”, the United States Seventh Cavalry, in an attempt to crush the “ghost dance uprising”, slaughtered nearly 200 men, women and children at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The Native Americans, seeing they could not survive a skirmish, agreed to lay down their arms. Then the cavalry opened fire. Today, only a small cairn on the mass grave and a faded notice board mark the wind-swept hills of Wounded Knee. It is still considered a shrine and numerous pieces of ribbon and cloth adorn small crosses on the more recent burials. It is a place of lost identity.

Such occurrences took place in South Africa. Similar events took place in the Swartberg of the Western Cape, South Africa, where hundreds of “Bushmen” or San, men, women and most of the children, were slaughtered. Some of the small children were captured for domestic service.<sup>90</sup> Nor were these events isolated; in 1774, for example, a commando of “Bokkevelders” in the Northern Cape killed 142 Khoisan and took 89 captive as part of a locally-understood policy of extermination.<sup>91</sup> The genocide was deliberate, often following on acts of resistance; historian Nigel Penn tells of tobacco pouches being made out of women’s breasts.<sup>92</sup> Young Khoisan children were sometimes spared, as it was believed that if they were captured young enough, they made good domestic slaves. There is, however, no shrine to them. The original indigenous people of America, though disempowered, still have more clout than do those of South Africa. To where do their descendants, and those who wish to honour them, make their pilgrimage?<sup>93</sup> The pilgrimage to *Xnau* (see this chapter, *Pilgrimages of Reclamation*) is a

recent and isolated attempt to address this problem. The grave and memorial of Sarah Baartman is a rare exception (*see Chapter Five*).

Bulhoek, near Queenstown in South Africa, is the site of religious pilgrimage and is the spiritual home of the Israelities, the followers of the charismatic Enoch Mgijima. It was the scene of a massacre in 1921, when police opened fire on the worshippers who had refused to move from their camp, killing 163. The site encompasses a cemetery with three mass graves and a memorial stone inscribed with the story of the massacre.<sup>94</sup>

There are many Anglo-Boer War battlefields in South Africa, one of the most significant being Magersfontein, south of Kimberley in the Northern Cape. There, on December 11, 1899, the Boers inflicted a famous defeat on the British. They held their own against superior numbers and inflicted nearly a thousand casualties on the British forces, while suffering only a quarter of that number in return. The shock in Britain was gigantic; they had expected to crush the Boers, whom they regarded as a “rag-tag” army, in a few months at most. It was the worst ever defeat of the Scottish Highland Brigade, and came on the heels of two other defeats, at Colenso and Stormberg; these three, in a single week, became known to the stunned British as “Black Week.” Two Victoria Crosses were awarded, both for service under fire to the wounded. Today, descendants of the soldiers lost there (including a Scandinavian component), and those with an interest in war history, continue to make their pilgrimages to Magersfontein.<sup>95</sup> For those whose losses or sympathies were on the Boer side it is not, of course, a pilgrimage of loss but rather one of veneration; another such place is the 2,000-foot-high table mountain of Majuba, in KwaZulu-Natal where, on February 27, 1881, the Boers won a decisive battle against the British.<sup>96</sup>

In the United States Civil War of 1861-5, the “North” faced the “South”, for the Union had divided on the issue of the repeal of slavery. After a number of victories, at Bull Run (1861) and Fredericksburg (1862) the Southern division, usually referred to as “Confederates”, suffered a decisive defeat at Gettysburg. Lincoln, who had issued the emancipation proclamation in 1863, was victorious, but the South was ruined. Over 600,000 on both sides died (many through infection and disease).

The Southerners had believed in their “graceful” world as a superior life, often romanticized in historic dramas. That world, which was largely based on a slave economy, was lost forever and some mourn it to this day. Pilgrimages of loss are still

made to Gettysburg, which is visited by one and a half million people annually, and other war cemeteries in the South.

“The Wall” is a testament to the nearly 58,000 United States military personnel who died during the war in Vietnam.<sup>97</sup> Others may travel to the Kremlin, Arlington, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, or, particularly in the apartheid years, the Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria<sup>98</sup>, all of which have sacred significance for communities as well as individuals. Such sacred centres, including Holocaust museums, memorialise pain and echo the ancient tradition of making pilgrimages to pay homage to the losses of war and the need for survivors to have a place to grieve.

These few examples are the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Throughout the world, from Nanking to Warsaw, such places have become sacred centres of loss.

It is therefore particularly painful when they disappear. British soldiers who died and were buried on foreign soil, which includes most of those who fell in the two World Wars, are cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which does an excellent job of keeping the battlefield cemeteries in pristine condition, a comfort for relatives and loved ones who visit them, and who feel that those they lost are being “cared for.”

But ordinary cemeteries that fall under local jurisdiction may not be as reliable. In November, 2005, it was reported that all 217 of the graves of those British soldiers who died in the Anglo-Boer War and were buried in the Klerksdorp cemetery, had been vandalised. All had their heavy cast-iron crosses, each marked “For King and Country”, removed overnight in what appeared to be vandalism. The same article reported that across South Africa, thousands of crosses marking the graves of the 22,000 British soldiers who died in that conflict had been stolen.

This means that the graves cannot be individually identified – even if the crosses were to be recovered. As a steady trickle of Britons continue to visit South Africa to find the graves of their ancestors who fought in the bloody colonial war, it may mean that their pilgrimages could be in vain. Local historian Reon Snyman, whose great-grandfather, Petrus le Roux, was a Boer commando, regularly corresponds with Britons whose ancestors served on the opposing side and now dreads the day when one of them visits Klerksdorp cemetery. “If I bring people here, what will they see? There’s nothing left. It’s all gone forever.”<sup>99</sup>

Loss and suffering caused by death is the primary motivation for the annual pilgrimage, on the Saturday nearest to September 15 (the Day of Our Lady of Sorrows) to the Marian Shrine at Maria Ratschitz Convent, 12km from Wasbank near Dundee in KwaZulu Natal. It was founded by Trappists in 1890, and the church there, dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, was completed in 1909. Forced removals by the apartheid government saw a decline in the mission and shrine, but after the election of the democratic government in South Africa, restoration of the complex was begun, and rededicated in the Jubilee Year of 2000 by Bishop Michael Rowland of Dundee. Pilgrims repeat the prayer of Our Lady of Sorrows, which refers to the excruciating pain of her Son's suffering and death, continuing "you know of our needs."<sup>100</sup> Pilgrims may visit the shrine, where accommodation is available, during the rest of the year as well as on the annual pilgrimage.

### *Pilgrimages of Recovery*

Though there is an apparent link, these are not the same as those of healing, or of loss. In the former case, the pilgrim is generally looking for a cure, or may have returned to give thanks for one. "Recovery", in the sense used here, refers to those journeys or quests which are about rescuing and "restoring" some part of oneself or of communities, or even recovering artefacts from the past.

It is interesting to note that, despite the passage of time, personal pilgrimages to the graves and battlefields of the two World Wars in Europe are burgeoning. Although less than 1,500 enquiries about the whereabouts of such graves was made to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the 1960s, that figure rose to 28,000 in 1990, and has increased since then. The Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg in the United States is still visited by 1.5 million "battlefield pilgrims" annually.<sup>101</sup>

Whereas individual pilgrimages, such as those of war widows, may be seen as pilgrimages of either "loss" or "closure", there is a sense in which pilgrimages to such places may also be about "recovery." For some, it may be the recovery of memory and details about an ancestor or relative they have never known, or they may pay homage to those who have been neglected through history.

The Griqua people of South Africa, marginalized during all the years of colonisation and apartheid, have engaged in a journey of recovery for their lost identity<sup>102</sup>

and “nationhood”, with some success. The pivot in this struggle was the *Kneg*, “Servant” (of God), a deeply religious leader who was imprisoned for his beliefs, prophesied with extraordinary accuracy, and united a disparate group of people together in a religious-based organisation that concentrates on the welfare and common purpose of the Griqua.<sup>103</sup>

The *Kneg* was Andrew Abraham Stockenstrom Le Fleur the First, born July 2, 1867, who married into the Griqua “nobility”, the Kok family, and was chosen to be the “Paramount Chief” of the Griquas. His childhood and adult years were marked with remarkably accurate prophesies, including the death of an apparently healthy Lady Kok – to the minute.<sup>104</sup> A deeply religious man, while on retreat on Manyane Mountain in the Matatiele district, he received a message from God who instructed him to go out and gather the bones of Adam Kok (the original Griqua leader) and call the people from the nations “so that they can become a People and I can be their God.”<sup>105</sup> He began to travel widely in South Africa, reorganising the fragmented Griqua people, forming treaties with black leaders and trying to convert other “Coloured nations” to his cause. He was accused of being a political agitator, and at, (ironically), Kokstad, was sentenced to 14 years hard labour in Cape Town, beginning May, 1898 just two years after his marriage.

He prophesied that he would walk out of the Breakwater Prison a free man on Friday, April 3, 1903 at exactly 3pm (nine years before his prison term was due to expire) and what was more, that he would be saluted by the deeply unpopular prison overseer. On that day, to the amazement of his fellow prisoners, these exact events took place.<sup>106</sup> In 1904, he established the Griqua National Conference of South Africa, and began organising pilgrimages from all over the country to Krantshoek, near Plettenberg Bay. In 1920 he founded the Griqua Independent Church,<sup>107</sup> which is the custodian of both spiritual and cultural values, and works to maintain Griqua unity. Sixty-six years after a “divine revelation” by the *Kneg* that the Griqua would acquire the farm *Luiperdskop*, “Leopard’s Head”, to be known as *Ratelgat*, at absolutely no cost to them, they were handed the farm, free, by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom, in 1999.

Le Fleur died in a little house on the Robberg, at Plettenberg Bay, on July 11, 1941, and his tomb was erected nearby. “He believed his people to be the lost tribe of Israel; for the Griqua of today, Krantzhoeck is their land beyond the River Jordan, Robberg their Holy Mount, and the tomb of Le Fleur their everlasting shrine.”<sup>108</sup>

Pilgrimages are made every year by Griqua to his last resting place, on December 31, as well as to the Griqua Monument in Krantzhoek on September 10 (Griqua Monument Day).<sup>109</sup> These pilgrimages recall their recovery from dispersal at the hands of their oppressors and their subsequent empowerment, and are an important part of their confidence and independence.<sup>110</sup>

A pilgrimage of recovery with remarkably literal connotations involved the “Black Christ”, a crucifixion scene painted by Ronald Harris in 1961, when Chief Albert Luthuli had to ask the apartheid government of South Africa for permission to pick up his Nobel prize. That hurt Harrison deeply: “I thought about how I could depict the suffering of the blacks and the oppression of the whites. The blacks were literally being crucified,” he said.<sup>111</sup> So he painted Luthuli being crucified, flanked by Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd and Minister of Justice John Vorster. It was first unveiled at St Luke’s Anglican Church in Salt River, Cape Town. The South African Board of Censors banned the Black Christ painting on the grounds that it was calculated to give offence.

Harrison was interrogated by the police but authorities could not confiscate the painting unless he showed it publicly again. Canon John Collins, an anti-apartheid crusader who worked at St Paul’s in London, used his contacts to smuggle the painting out of South Africa; it was displayed in St Paul’s Cathedral and used to raise anti-apartheid funds. It disappeared for thirty years and was rediscovered after a public appeal in the Hampstead house of a 90-year-old ex-South African who had been in exile since the 1960s.<sup>112</sup>

The painting was returned to Cape Town, where it was rehung in St Luke’s Church, and, having been on its own pilgrimage, is sought out both by both religious and anti-apartheid pilgrims alike (it is now an acquisition of the South African National Gallery). Its reassuring message is that of endurance and the triumph of good over evil, and as a symbol it is authenticated by the pain which apartheid caused.<sup>113</sup>

A pilgrimage of recovery was the intent of a journey in September, 2005, undertaken by my husband, Professor Ampie Muller and myself. Ampie’s great-grandfather, Adriaan Petrus Johannes Diederichs, an Anglo-Boer War hero, was the Kommandant (Boer equivalent of a Colonel) of the Ladybrand Commando from the Free State. He was the most senior Boer to die at Magersfontein, the most important Boer victory of the war, in the early hours of December 11, 1899 – a date that has a special place in Boer history.

A farmer, he and his eldest son had ridden off to war when called. Early in the morning of December 11, as he led his troops on their horses into battle, he was heard to say, *Buurman, ek het 'n doodskoot* "Neighbour, I have been mortally shot," to his close friend, Jan de Wet, brother of General Christiaan de Wet. After his death at Magersfontein, his son "Jan", Ampie's grandfather, buried him on the nearby Bissett Farm where there is now a Boer War Memorial of those who died at Magersfontein. But after the war, the Kommandant's son returned to disinter his father and take him home to the family farm, Halt Whistle, where he was buried in the family cemetery a couple of hundred metres from the farmhouse, which had been burnt out by British troops (a common strategy, aimed at breaking the morale of the civilians).

Over the years his grave had been lost. The family farm was in the hands of a new owner, and not easily accessible. Eventually we were able to locate the farm owner, and with his help, the grave, in a now-derelict little copse surrounded by tall cypresses and accompanied by a few other family graves. Many of the headstones were broken or damaged. But *Groot-oupa's* (great-grandfather's) tombstone remained intact, and in locating and photographing it for the rest of the family, Ampie Muller was able to finally recover his ancestor's last resting place, as well as pay homage to his memory. This journey enabled him to complete the recovery of his ancestor's last journey, and provided a place of reflection for all that has changed in South Africa in the last century.

Such a pilgrimage of recovery may "take over from the religious pilgrimage as the vehicle by which modern people seek authenticity and the sacred, retaining essentially the shape of pilgrimage while shedding the officially religious aura."<sup>114</sup>

Anthony Blasi has suggested that the reliving of a personal tragedy serves as a catharsis not only by being experienced again, but also by being experienced in the context of a continued life. The personal site of the disaster is not necessarily diminished but "is repositioned in a new perspective, one that allows for news and renewed life projects. Nothing forces one to move forward from a past as effectively as that event being appreciated from a new perspective."<sup>115</sup>

Sometimes the symbolism of a particular pilgrimage is more important than historical fact. "The Door of No Return" on Senegal's Gorée Island has come to represent one of the cruelest episodes in history, the enslavement of some 12 million Africans, many more of whom died in transit. But Gorée was not the main departure point for those sold into slavery between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and despairing slaves never walked

through the door - created as a symbolic “portal” - at all, though local guides will claim otherwise. At least 26,000 slaves did pass through the island but were loaded onto boats at a beach about 300m away. However, “The Door” is the tangible place where descendants travel on pilgrimage to both recover and honour their ancestors and through this process, their own identities. Jenice View, a school teacher from Washington, DC, who made a pilgrimage there with her family and friends, explained “There’s an unusual human need to have a sacred place. This is ours.”<sup>116</sup>

Recovering from the effects and legacies of slavery has taken generations – the effects are still being seen today. The Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage, held between May, 1998 and May, 1999, was in response to this. It was a pilgrimage that was a “living prayer of the heart, mind and body for the sons and daughters of the African Diaspora. We walk through this history to nourish seeds of genuine consciousness, so that in the next century, a more humane, compassionate and equitable world can be realized,” was the stated intention.<sup>117</sup>

The “Middle Passage” refers to the second leg of the sea journey by the slave ships, who sailed a triangular voyage from Europe to West Africa to buy slaves, from there to the New World (the “Middle Passage”), and then back to Europe. It was instigated by Buddhist monk Nipponzon Miyohoji, led by Buddhist nun Clare Carter, and included a fluctuating groups of between 50-60 pilgrims of diverse backgrounds between the ages of 16 and 74 who visited a large number of “slave sites” in the United States and the Caribbean as well as the Underground Railroad, which attested to the courage of those who helped the slaves to escape.

The notion was to “reverse historical patterns by moving eastward to Africa, thus ‘giving back’ the honor and respect pillaged from Africa along with its people and natural resources.”<sup>118</sup> On reaching the Door of No Return, “the pilgrims put a ladder up against the wall and walked through backwards. We felt that in this way we were returning the spirits of long-dead slaves to home,” said Nokiko Richardson.<sup>119</sup>

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, honorary chairman of the Middle Passage Pilgrimage, reminded the pilgrims that they had walked the Middle Passage “so that you may be inspired by the courage and determination of those who walked it first. Those who did not allow adversity to overcome them.”<sup>120</sup> In alluding to the apartheid years of South Africa, he reminded them that it was possible to recover from the past, and ensure that such horrors would not be repeated. The closing ceremony was held in Cape Town.

Ghana, for the first time in 1998, invited the “dispersed children of Africa” to participate in the celebration of Emancipation Day and thereby to “embark on a pilgrimage perceived as one of rediscovery of your roots.”<sup>121</sup> The highlight of the celebrations was incontestably the re-interment of the remains of two former slaves from the US and Jamaica, who were said to have originated from Ghana. “This return of the bones of the enslaved was intended to symbolize the final reversal of the original movement of dispersal, which had created the African diaspora under such painful and destructive circumstances,” writes Katharina Schramm.<sup>122</sup> Both coffins and a large procession made their way through the Door of No Return, a significant aspect of the rituals; this time though, the Door has been labeled with a new plaque – “Door of Return.”<sup>123</sup>

As we have seen the sense of identity and recovery need not be of a direct ancestor. Some ancestors can be universal; Nina Epton reminds us that “Christ is a beloved ancestor”<sup>124</sup>, as are saints and “holy men and women.” Actor Denzel Washington who appeared in the 1989 movie “Glory”, about the first black regiment recruited to fight in the Civil War, has spoken about his pilgrimage to prepare for his role in the “caves” in Savannah, where the hooks to which the slaves were chained can still be seen.<sup>125</sup> He was recovering a part of his past in a potent place; that he may not be a direct descendant of those slave ancestors is irrelevant.

The relationship between pilgrim and place may sometimes seem quite tenuous but is claimed nevertheless, adding to the jigsaw puzzle of identity. Pilgrims go to the mountain-top citadel of Machu Picchu in Peru, the Teotihuacan archaeological site in Mexico, Stonehenge in England, and Sri Pada in Sri Lanka where, usefully, the “sacred footprint” seen there has been variously interpreted as being that of Buddha by Buddhists, of Shiva by Hindus, of St Thomas by Christians and of Adam, the first man, by Muslims. The Navajo and Hopi lead “new seekers” on sacred journeys into the red rock canyon to contemplate the ruins in the Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, and lift up their prayers to the ancestors.

In Southern Africa, our small hunter-gatherer ancestors are offered homage at the “Cradle of Humankind,”<sup>126</sup> and at the magnificent rock art in every province. President Thabo Mkeki of South Africa, born a Xhosa, was able to say that “I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape...they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our

freedom and independence.”<sup>127</sup> One of his predecessors in the ANC, Anton Lembede, was able to reject narrowly defined “tribal” or “ethnic” histories by insisting that the heroes of all such histories were the common possession of Africa. “Memory of the past, therefore, was essential to the process of opening Africa to that spiritual future”, writes David Chidester.<sup>128</sup> Ancestor hunting, in both the narrow and broad senses of the phrase, is a core of many modern pilgrimages, to recover the past (often seen as “purer” than the current age) and claim identity with it.

More conventional pilgrimages of recovery may include a visit to the church in which forbears were married or buried, or placing flowers on the tombs and graves of family, who may or may not have been personally known. Some deliberately travel along a specific pilgrim route so that they may experience walking in the footsteps of the ancestors. Another trend is for people to assert their claims to ancient (or lost) rites. This is seen in younger generations, which may ask to participate in tribal ceremonies of which they have no personal memory. Others, without guides, improvise.

On the *Camino*, a German student described his experience in walking past Santiago, and on to Finisterre on the sea, which some believe is the “real” end of the pilgrimage. “We had our own Celtic rites. We waited for the sunset, made a fire, burned our clothes (which they had walked in) and at last ran into the ocean at midnight. (We) sang and played music all night. That was the real end of our pilgrimage.”<sup>129</sup> Some burn clothes or boots or walking sticks. Some cast them into the ocean. There is evidence of Celtic occupation throughout Galicia, and northern Europeans in particular sometimes wish to connect with those “roots”, though rituals may have to be makeshift.

Recovering the self can take place after a trauma or a long period of unease; it also has to do with identity. Ten years ago, television producer Gerard Thomas Straub was out of money and forlorn. He was also disillusioned; after working as a producer for the televangelist Pat Robertson, he wrote “*Salvation for Sale*”, in which he described televangelists as “purveyors of falsehoods.”<sup>130</sup> He sat down in an empty church in Rome, to rest his feet. Something extraordinary happened to him then, he says: “God broke through the silence.” It was a revelation in which he felt “enveloped in love” for the first time, and it transformed him “from an atheist to a pilgrim.”<sup>131</sup> Today he films and photographs what he sees as the suffocating, deeply unjust conditions of the world’s poor; he has travelled to 29 countries and in 1999 produced a book titled “When Did I See You Hungry?” A video version was narrated by the actor Martin Sheen. “Not

knowing what to do is not an excuse to do nothing,” he said.<sup>132</sup> His journey recovered his sense of who he is, and of his useful place and purpose in life.

Increasingly, too, funerals rites are being used as events of recovery. Those who are not comfortable with formal church rites – which must be many, considering how few Europeans actually attend church – may choose another way of commemorating death. Funeral gatherings in gardens, forests, on beaches and mountains, on desert dunes and in caves all attest to the interest in turning back to a time which is imagined as more “pure”; or turning away from the “corruption” of civilisation. Some have asked that their remains be disposed of in a manner mimicking the rites of their ancestors, or those ancients whom they admire; “Viking” burials, of sending a burning craft out to sea or onto a lake, bearing the remains (usually ashes), have been requested. Such journeys could be considered *post-mortem* pilgrimages of recovery.

### ***Pilgrimages of Reclamation***

Pilgrimages of reclamation are journeys connected with reclaiming something important that has been taken away, and which is now reclaimed with pride and a sense of ownership. As with pilgrimages of recovery, they may also be about healing old hurts; to reclaim something from the past may help to assuage a sense of anger or pain. But whereas rituals of recovery are connected to more intimate emotions, usually connected to the immediately known, rituals of reclamation take that a step further into the past - a need to proclaim a vital connection with a former era. They are in one sense an act of protest, in that they are connected with “putting something right”, an act of reformation.

A case in point is the late Iron Age site of Mapungubwe.<sup>133</sup> A once-great citadel of thousands of skilled Africans, near the Limpopo in South Africa, with a rich and powerful king, it was lost to history by both the passage of time and deliberate guile. Today, it has emerged as one of the most potent symbols of the “African Renaissance,”<sup>134</sup> after decades of oblivion (like many archaeological sites of symbolic importance, in fact any that attest to precolonial achievements by Bantu-speaking people) under the apartheid Government.<sup>135</sup> The gold rhinoceros found there is the exquisite emblem most associated with South Africa’s renewal. Its reclamation has enabled the proud claim of a spectacular civilisation. The “Order of Mapungubwe” is South Africa’s premier order, its first recipient being former President Nelson Mandela.<sup>136</sup> It is also a sacred site;

ancestors, some of them royal, were buried on the citadel with symbols of their wealth. This is considered to be not just another rich archaeological site, but sacred ground too.

The site is a great sandstone buttress at the junction of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers, on the South African side – Zimbabwe lying to the right, and is the result of a culture that spanned today's borders.<sup>137</sup> Nearby are two other important sites from c.900, Shroda and K2.<sup>138</sup> By 1220 AD, K2 was abandoned for the citadel of Mapungubwe which is remarkable in a number of ways, not least of which is that for the first time in Southern Africa, royalty was separated from the people. At its height, there were probably about 5,000 people<sup>139</sup> living around Mapungubwe and on its citadel (as opposed to about 2,000 at K2, and 500 at the earlier site of Shroda). Access to the summit is via one steep path, which was carefully hidden by the growth of trees at their entrances, on the south-western face.<sup>140</sup> At the top, boulders were balanced on stones, presumably meant for use in repelling invaders.<sup>141</sup> The top of the Hill is now grass-covered with low scrub.

During the seventy or so years (1220-1290 AD) in which Mapungubwe was the cultural capital of the area,<sup>142</sup> royalty lived on the top of the hilltop/citadel in semi-isolation from lesser aristocrats and commoners below, a new pattern of socio-political segregation. The kings entered into a special relationship with the ancestors and God<sup>143</sup> and were approached only on matters of great significance. The citadel included a stonewalled palace central on the summit, the court, the royal wives' chambers, the place for followers and the place for the guards. To the northwest of the palace are the graves and the residences on the hilltop, of the royal wives.<sup>144</sup>

It was in the hilltop cemetery that a number of burial sites containing gold objects were found; in one burial, a person – probably a woman – was found in a seated position and adorned with at least 100 gold-wire bracelets, with a further 12,000 gold beads scattered around her. Other graves yielded necklaces of gold beads (one necklace contained at least 8,950 gold beads<sup>145</sup>) and cowrie shells, objects covered with gold foil and other gold fragments including the gold rhino. Other gold objects were found, included a gold sceptre and bowl, and spindle whorls used for weaving, suggesting a high concentration of wealth.<sup>146</sup> Gold seems to have become wealth in itself, rather than something with which to trade. Those who worked at Mapungubwe, used to smelting iron, found smelting gold simple enough. The richest burial contained about 2.2 kgs of pure gold.<sup>147</sup> No longer were cattle the sole determining factor of riches.

This wealthy capital seems to have been abruptly abandoned around 1290 AD, possibly because of climate change.<sup>148</sup> (Great Zimbabwe began around 1250 AD and rose to prominence only *after* the decline of Mapungubwe, though the two show many similar features.) For hundreds of years, Mapungubwe lay untouched. The royal graves were considered sacrosanct to local villagers, who regarded it as a “hill of awe”, and believed that death would come to any who climbed it. Historian Leo Fouché reported that when it was discussed with “the Natives”, they would not so much as point at it, and when it was discussed with them they kept their backs turned carefully towards it. “It was sacred to the Great Ones among their ancestors, who had buried secret treasures there.”<sup>149</sup>

By the 1930s, rumours of gold in that area were rife, and many fortune-hunters set out looking for its origins. On the last day of 1932, a small group of white men persuaded with difficulty a local man to guide them to the top of Mapungubwe<sup>150</sup> and in scratching around on the top, found the first of the golden artefacts.<sup>151</sup> The son of one of the treasure hunters, Mr J.C.O. “Jerry” van Graan, a student at the University of Pretoria, posted some gold fragments<sup>152</sup> to his professor, Leo Fouché, who had a particular interest in ancient cultures.<sup>153</sup> Realising the significance of the find,<sup>154</sup> the University of Pretoria took over legal possession of the site, and the artefacts, under the instructions of General Jan Smuts,<sup>155</sup> and the excavation rights of the farm Greefswald, as well as K2 and Shroda, all of which were excavated for almost 50 years until the “border wars” in the 1980s made the work too dangerous. In all, 108 skeletons<sup>156</sup> were recovered from K2 and Mapungubwe, along with a wealth of artefacts including a great deal of elegant pottery.<sup>157</sup>

The rhino, which has assumed such symbolic importance, was reconstructed from the fragments recovered<sup>158</sup> and is a unique piece of craftsmanship. The plate body has been finely modelled to give an impression of short-legged solidity.<sup>159</sup> The method of construction – that of attaching plating to a wooden core by means of gold tacks – has a single southern African analogy in two specimens found in the Gubatsaa Hills in north-eastern Botswana.<sup>160</sup> One is a wooden carving of a buffalo; the remains of copper plating that has been tacked into position survive on the forehead and poll of the figurine. It is possible that not all the pieces were fully recovered.

Among the other fascinating mysteries of Mapungubwe is the so-called “beast burials,” six graves containing cattle bones which were buried with layers of pots, bangles, ornaments and even fragments of mica. These cattle burials may be related to the

traditional Venda custom of burying a domestic animal when a family member dies away from home, and it is not possible to return the body to the homestead.<sup>161</sup>

In 1933 and again 1936, the rhino and other artefacts from Mapungubwe were put on display in the Transvaal Museum. For the next fifty years the University of Pretoria conserved them and showed them to scholars and dignitaries, on application. The accusation levelled is that evidence of an early and elaborate African culture was deliberately suppressed by the apartheid regime; certainly, most Black – as well as white – Africans grew up without knowing of its existence. From the beginning of its discovery, there was resistance to the idea that black Africans could be the authors of such an august civilisation.<sup>162</sup>

Fortunately not everyone shared this view. Professor Hannes Eloff, who excavated at Mapungubwe, says he had always sensed a “certain aura” about it. “The indigenous people treated it with respect. And when I and my students arrived there, we made a point of the very first day going up the hill to greet the old people (ancestors). We used to talk softly as a mark of our respect.”<sup>163</sup>

Mapungubwe’s appeal is broad; long before humans walked in Africa, dinosaurs roamed the Limpopo valley; there are dinosaur footprints near Pontdrift, and a dinosaur fossil lies in the stone formations not far from the citadel itself. Early hunter-gatherers also knew it. More than 150 rock art sites have been documented,<sup>164</sup> along with a wealth of Stone Age tools.<sup>165</sup> Interestingly, the designer of the Voortrekker Monument, a shrine to Afrikaner history, based his shape on the citadels in the Mapungubwe area.<sup>166</sup> So Mapungubwe represents a tapestry of the past.

A new phase of research began in June, 2000, and the Mapungubwe Collection at the University of Pretoria was opened to the public as part of the permanent Mapungubwe Museum.<sup>167</sup> The citadel was declared a World Heritage Site in July 1993 and forms part of the newly created Mapungubwe National Park, opened on a permanent basis in September, 2004.

Many who travel to the hilltop today are not only tourists, but also those seeking connection with a more ancient heritage. One of the best known guides in Limpopo Province and member of its Tourism and Parks Board, Chris Olivier, describes his feeling there: “When I’m at Mapungubwe Hill I feel the happiest. It is a special place for me – it makes me feel at home.”<sup>168</sup> This rather neatly demonstrates the tension between tourist and pilgrim.

What may to one appear to be a muddy hole, a boring hill or a squalid shrine may, to a pilgrim, shine with sacred significance. It is the difference between being an observer as opposed to a participant. For some pilgrims, the entire journey, there and back, to Mapungubwe becomes a whole.<sup>169</sup>

The golden rhino symbolizes strength and power; it is recognisably the possession of a great king, who for the first time, was considered as holding “sacred leadership”, a mediator between heaven and earth, and one to whom the ordinary folk had scanty access. Most contemporary pilgrims to the sacred citadel will know little about its history – only recently has it been pushed to the forefront of South Africa’s reclamation of its past. But Mapungubwe, along with other sacred sites nearby, such as Thulamela, “Place of Birth,” an Iron Age citadel occupied three hundred years after the time of Mapungubwe and lasting until 1700 AD, has become part of a network of sites of holy significance, where it is possible to claim the ancient ones – one of the oldest reasons for pilgrimage.

Barbara Bender and Margot Winer have suggested that in the practice of ancestor hunting, a “solution” may be found as to where to look for the self. This is not merely narcissistic, they point out; this hunt can reinforce communality and continuity. It does represent a kind of homecoming, and “home matters.”<sup>170</sup>

The Department of Anatomy<sup>171</sup> at the University of Pretoria agreed with traditional healers and claimants of the site that the two skeletons excavated at Thulamela be reburied there with full traditional rites, as recognition of the belief that disturbing the dead is believed to cause anger among ancestral spirits. This is perhaps the first time (though not the last) in South African archaeological history that such a compromise was negotiated.<sup>172</sup>

South Africans have not just recovered Mapungubwe and its ancestors; it has been reclaimed.<sup>173</sup> An old wrong has been “put right” and pilgrims who travel there do so in cognisance of this, connecting to an authentic, empowering past, connecting them to an ancestral past on the Continent from which humankind arose.

Another site, more modest, has also emerged as an even earlier site to which modern pilgrims travel along the “ancestors’ path.” Wildebeest Kuil, “Wildebeest Pool,” is the location of a circular series of “pecked” or engraved stones lying on top of a slight hill, on an open plain 15 kms from Kimberley.<sup>174</sup>

The engravings there, and their setting in the landscape, “hint at a spirituality reflected in the beliefs of the /Xam and other San groups that can be sensed in many thousands of painting and engraving sites across the country.”<sup>175</sup>

A number of small rocks, some not much bigger than a football, have animal engravings, including elephant, rhino and of course, eland, as well as other geometric symbols – a boardwalk creates a circular path from which most of the rocks may be accessed.

As with all rock art sites, the interaction between art and landscape is important; the rocks are not just “canvases” but form part of the symbolism itself (*see Chapter Five, Women’s Pilgrimages – Driekopseiland, for a discussion of “topophilia”*). Some of the images of animals appear to be “unfinished”, though it is believed this is deliberate – the animal entering or leaving this world for the spiritual realm, so that the head, or the body, is invisible.<sup>176</sup> This is not “just” art, but sophisticated religious motifs associated with ritual specialists in San society. They are judged to be between one and two thousand years old; sharp rocks have been used to peck the surfaces, exposing lighter surfaces underneath which gradually darken with time.

Some of the rock engravings,<sup>177</sup> which originally numbered over 400, were removed from Wildebeest Kuil and exhibited at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886, and are currently in the British Museum; such tampering has adversely effected not only the integrity of such sites but also their intrinsic spiritual meaning. We cannot know what the “whole picture” was meant to represent.<sup>178</sup>

The !Kun and Khwe communities who currently own the site were hunter-gatherers who were displaced from Angola and Namibia from the 1970s by political strife, instigated by apartheid South Africa,. Under the Land Reform programme of the democratic South African government, they held legal title to land – the Platfontein-Wildebeest Kuil farms – for the first time in modern history.<sup>179</sup> This has enabled them to reclaim an ancestral site – though not necessarily their own immediate ancestors; rather, the metaphoric shared ancestry of not only the San, but, at some point further back, of us all.

As we have previously noted, the San/Khoi people of Southern Africa were not only dispossessed of their land and at times hunted to virtual extermination by the colonisers, both black and white, who came after them, but those who survived have over the centuries lost much of their language and culture. Their struggle for identity has faced

what seem like almost insurmountable odds, and it is a tribute to their tenacity than the following pilgrimage took place at all.

“The Road to *Xnau*” pilgrimage took place in 2005 in the secluded village of Tamboekiesvlei, near Katrivier outside Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Province of South Africa, an area rich in ancient artifacts and paintings. It was the first time in more than three hundreds years, according to the organizers – Khoi descendants – that this particular ritual had taken place.<sup>180</sup> The *Xnau* is a ritual of transition, one that is performed during those potentially dangerous times when a person (or people) is moving from one state to another, such as birth, puberty, marriage, initiation and death.

In this particular case, the *Xnau* ritual was also one of self-affirmation and self-determination: marking a return to the ancestor’s way and reclaiming an identity previously undermined by the longtime racial as well as apartheid laws of South Africa.

A sacred field (non-initiates were barred from standing on the sacred ground) was prepared.<sup>181</sup> Ground was cleared, and a number of light structures were built of branches and reeds, areas of seclusion. A hut of isolation was also erected, in which the initiates spent the night. At midnight the ceremonies began with a sheep sacrifice, and included songs, poetry and a dispensation of knowledge among chiefs and those who had already been initiated. The proceedings were led by Chief Moonsamy from Port Elizabeth who experienced great emotion as she affirmed her “brownness,” echoed in the land around her. This is about the restoration of a people, she affirmed. A number of “tribes” including the Inqa and Damasquoi, were participating and for many of them, it was the first assembly they had ever experienced.

Ten hours after the proceedings had begun, initiates were taken by elders from their tribes into the *Xnau*, led by the “horn-carrier” (animal horns). What happens inside is kept a strict secret; they are fed a mixture of honey and aloe, reflecting the “bitter-sweetness” of life and the entire ritual is considered an *oorgaan*, a “going over” to a new existence. When they entered, they were wearing ordinary clothes, but on their emergence they were dressed in traditional animal skins and beads, and had taken a Khoi name. A young female praise-singer acclaimed their emergence, calling out “your quest for freedom is not in vain!” and a series of cultural events followed, included San/Khoi dances especially devised to reflect the animal world.

What was stressed on the Road to *Xnau* was their recognition as an indigenous people. This is particularly important to groups who have traditionally been sidelined as

“Coloured, half-Coloured, Cape Coloured, half-caste” and a variety of similar categories that have reflected their struggle for full identity. These they reject, replacing it instead with the long historical tradition of Khoi occupation in Southern Africa, part of this region’s original inhabitants. “It is a relief,” said participant Anthony Loots, “especially on a spiritual level.”<sup>182</sup>

This is the first known pilgrimage of reclamation of the Khoi, who along with the San/Bushmen have had little power or land with which to assert their historical, political, cultural and spiritual rights, all aspects to which they now lay claim. It is unlikely to be the last.

### ***Pilgrimages of Transformation***

Many pilgrimages may be considered transformative; pilgrims may be “transformed” during their sacred journey, or an historical event itself may be transformed in the eyes of the beholders, who discover a new way of thinking and feeling about their experiences. Such journeys, along with pilgrimages of recovery and reclamation, are closely linked with personal identity and the healing of past hurts.

In this way a pilgrimage to the Door of No Return in Senegal, for example, may be one of recovery, or reclamation, or transformation – all slightly different gradations of closely related concepts, yet distinct among themselves. We notice continually that pilgrimages to various sacred centres are experienced differently by individual pilgrims, their intent may be marked different from one another, and the results may also be differentiated.

The Catholic Church acknowledges that walking the *Camino* may be a transformative experience, which is one of the reasons they are loathe to restrict “authenticity”; in their eyes, there have been many recorded instances of conversion along the sacred route. Others on the *Camino* or elsewhere may find that they begin as “mere” hikers or tourists, and are transformed into pilgrims as they experience full emotional participation in events. There is always a possibility that pilgrims may end their journey with a sense of failure; but they may also be surprised by joy. Transformation may be planned, or unexpected. It is almost always welcome.

There has been a steady stream of African-American and white American pilgrims to South Africa since 1994, engaged in “finding some sense of deep belonging

there,” as Jerry Haas, director of the Upper Room’s Academy for Spiritual Transformation in Nashville, Tennessee, puts it. He led a group of sixteen Christian pilgrims to South Africa in 2004; many of the sites they visited were related to the struggle for democracy. “Sometimes we need a ‘burning bush’ to motivate us to Christian action,” said Elliott Stotler of Atlanta, Georgia, who was one of that group. “I found my burning bush in Africa.”<sup>183</sup>

The “miracle” of what happened in South Africa in 1994, namely the (mostly) peaceful transition in government and the sense that through the leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé and others, God had done something powerful and unique, has played a significant role in drawing pilgrims.<sup>184</sup> (One of the more unusual is the convicted murderer and gang founders Stanley “Tookie” Williams, who was executed in California in December, 2005. He asked for his ashes to be scattered in Africa, according to Barbara Becnel, who led the campaign to save the reformed gangster’s life. “He wanted to return to his ancestral home,” she said).<sup>185</sup>

Haas also spoke about the spiritual experience of being in Africa thus: “Africa is a sort of ‘thin’ place, as the Celts used to say, a place where God seems very close, almost in every bush and beneath every rock and in every face. My first experience (there) was in Mozambique, up north from Maputo, and I began to feel it there. Worshipping among the Africans is so much more of a kinetic experience and almost everything, including standing in a queue waiting for the bus can become worship.” He added that nowadays he looks at African-Americans differently “I ponder their faces and wonder where their ancestors came from, as I’m sure they do too. I find myself drawn to them, interested in them, and feeling for them in a way that I didn’t do before I went to Africa.”<sup>186</sup> His pilgrimage has been a transforming experience, opening up a realm of possibility that had not previously existed.

One of the most powerful pilgrimages of transformation is the annual 3,000 mile “Run for the Wall” from California to Washington, when hundreds of veterans of the Vietnam War, (and latterly, veterans from other countries) embark on a motorcycle pilgrimage across the heartland of America. These veterans, many of whom were troubled and/or wounded in the failed crusade, returned to a hostile nation; they were not welcomed home as heroes, but were often vilified, rejected or ignored. The Run for the Wall replaces the homecoming parade they were never granted, and enables them to transform their painful history. In the process of the motorcycle pilgrimage they return to

their status as heroes and defenders of freedom, including a focus on those who they believe are missing in action or still live prisoners of war: <sup>187</sup>

“That the journey is made on motorcycles is a significant element in the reconstruction of history and memory,” writes Jill Dubisch. <sup>188</sup> The motorcycles are seen by many as symbolizing important American values of freedom, self-reliance and individualism. They are also associated with the “open road” and the sense of brotherhood that exists among bikers also comes into play. Many of the co-ordinators indicate their self-sufficient qualities with their names, such as John “Shooter” McCabe and Steve “Hawgwash” Hill. <sup>189</sup>

The Run for the Wall pilgrimage began in 1989, when a group of Vietnam veterans decided to ride their motorcycles across the United States, from California, to visit the recently inaugurated Vietnam Veterans Memorial (“The Wall”). They also planned to join Rolling Thunder, a large biker gathering (now drawing about a quarter of a million participants every year) on Memorial Day weekend (the last weekend in May); <sup>190</sup> “Rolling Thunder” takes its name from the “carpet bombing” of Cambodia during the War.

Originally planned as a one-off event, the response from communities along the way was so enthusiastic that Run for the Wall has become an annual pilgrimage with a national organization and a website (an additional route, more southern, has been added). Though there is a Run “leader” elected every year by a board, it is not an “organization” to which one belongs and there are no dues. Nor is there a fee for taking part. One simply shows up. Participants include not only Vietnam veterans but also veterans from other wars and struggles (from Canada, Australia and Ireland, for example), and family and friends of those dead and missing, who fall into the “concentric circles of effect”. Also included are “those riders who at first just come along for the ride” but who invariably find that they are drawn into an extraordinary process that is difficult to resist, even if they wanted to. <sup>191</sup>

Much of the pilgrimage is to do with healing. One goal is the personal healing of veterans who are still suffering physical, emotional and spiritual effects of their War experience. Healing is not confined to veterans however, as some of the participants have lost a loved one. And in a larger sense, it is a healing pilgrimage for the nation, to transform it back to “home” and, also, to transform and free those who, because of their

continued sufferings, are still in their own minds prisoners of the Vietnam War, and who can be said to still be “missing in action.”<sup>192</sup>

One of the critical aspects of the Run for the Wall is the extraordinarily warm welcome the bikers receive in their 10-day crossing through Middle America, often through poor or sidelined communities who host the veterans in moving ceremonies.<sup>193</sup> Leaving Ontario, California, all wear the obligatory RFTW band on their wrists; newcomers also wear a big yellow badge with the letters “FNG” (*see Chapter Three: Pilgrims’ Props and Symbols*). The first overnight stop is Williams, a small town in northwestern Arizona; here a veteran brings an entire crew to cook dinner (and breakfast) for the riders. The dinner is preceded by a ceremony in which the symbolic “remembrance table” plays a central role; representing the various branches of American military service, each branch has an empty place with plate, silverware and overturned glass; the empty places remind them of the dead and of the fact that they will not return home.

The next day’s ride is to Gallup, New Mexico with a poor, Hispanic and Native American population, which gives one of the warmest receptions of the trip. Several years ago the Navajo nation invited the riders to attend ceremonies at their Navajo Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Window Rock, the first time that they had formally invited outsiders to participate in their Memorial rituals.<sup>194</sup> Another moving stop is Angel Fire in New Mexico, where, seven years before the idea of The Wall in Washington had even been mooted, a retired history professor, Dr Victor Westphall, built a Peace and Brotherhood Chapel to the memory of all fallen soldiers after the death of his son, Marine Lt. David Westphall who along with 12 other men in his unit died in a battle in 1968. (After the war, Westphall made a pilgrimage to the exact spot in Vietnam where his son was killed taking with him soil from Angel Fire, the home ground of his son’s short life. He mixed this into the soil of the country that had absorbed his son’s blood, and he took Vietnamese soil back to Angel Fire. “The effect of this place on all veterans would make a stone cry,” said Irish participant Declan Hughes).<sup>195</sup> Described as a “man with an iron will,” Dr Westphall, in his nineties, has greeted the Run for the Wall participants each year.<sup>196</sup>

Ceremonies, healing circles, rituals and other events pave the rest of the way. One veteran told Dubisch, “This is the welcome home I never had.”<sup>197</sup> Another told her, “We’re not tourists. We’re pilgrims.”<sup>198</sup> One of the goals of the Run for the Wall is, she

says, to bring that veteran out of isolation imposed by his stigmatized status and by his own psychic wounds, and to reintegrate him into society. The imagery is of the “veteran who lives in the woods,” that is, alone and isolated, and also metaphoric, referring to the person hiding in the forest of his own memory and pain, and the object is to transform this into a process of demonstrating that he is not alone, and moreover, that he is welcome.

The destination and emotional climax of the journey is “The Wall” in Washington, where the names of more than 58,000 American dead are inscribed on the black granite surface. Some kneel in prayer, others take offerings (wreaths, flags, flowers, even a cigarette box) and others make rubbings of the engraved names. On the 1998 Run, the ashes of a deceased Vietnam veteran were carried in an ammunition box on the back of a motorcycle across the country, to be left at the Wall.<sup>199</sup> “We have come to see The Wall as a family cemetery,” wrote Scott and Nancy Kroeneman after the journey.<sup>200</sup>

Most of the riders join the Rolling Thunder Parade on the Sunday, as it roars through Washington, D.C. But it is here the Wall that the pilgrimage itself culminates. It is, says Dubisch who completed the ride in 1998, “a profoundly spiritual journey.” Every day begins with a prayer by a Run chaplain who asks for “travelling mercies.” In the course of their 3,000 mile trip, they find themselves “transformed from bikers to pilgrims.”<sup>201</sup> In the pilgrimage, the bikers symbolically reconstruct history and memory in a ritual of transformation.

### ***Political Pilgrimages***

Though we might be accustomed to the idea of a “separation” of Church and State, in practice this is not often achieved and in some cases, not desired. Even in countries where separation is rigorously promoted, such as the United States, the government draws on religious symbolism in its justification for action and legislation, and every dollar, the symbol of American power, has inscribed on it “In God We Trust.”

In reality, no such separation can be fully effected, even if aspired to, and a considerable number of countries do not. In theocratic countries, such an idea would be heresy.

A pilgrimage to the site commemorating a national hero or triumph, such as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, the appropriately-named *Arc de Triomphe de l’Etoile*,

or the tiny, austere bedroom inside the grandiose palace in Istanbul where Kemal Ataturk died, may hold profound emotional content for devotees. Political pilgrimages are those that are acted out either to venerate a political system, or a desire to set up a new one away from perceived political interference (*see below, the Jerusalem-gangers*).

Paul Hollander has described the Western intellectuals and communist idealists who visited the various communist states in the twentieth century as “political pilgrims.”<sup>202</sup> Sylvia Margulies, writing as far back as 1968 in her work *The Pilgrimage to Russia* explains that “the word pilgrimage was chosen for the title of this study because it suggests more than an ordinary journey to a foreign country. For many a trip to Russia was a journey to worship at the shrine of a new civilization seemingly based on the ideal of social justice.”<sup>203</sup>

As Communist countries eroded religious rights, a political pilgrimage was usually the only option left to those who persisted in pilgrim behaviour. During the twentieth century Communist revolution in China, traditional and other forms of religion were despised and practically outlawed. An interesting replication of religious practice took place, in which the habit of pilgrimage was encouraged to “revolutionary sacred places” marking the significant landmarks of the Communist revolution, such as the sites of important meetings and even the birthplaces of Communist leaders (just as those in the West visit the birthplace or graves of saints).

This habit is so ingrained that it continues, despite a new and more relaxed attitude to ancient and even foreign-influenced religious sites. Even though Hou Bo was sent to a *laogai*, a forced labour camp in rural China during the “cultural revolution”, despite her job as the official photographer to the Chinese leader Mao Zedong, she and her husband Xu Xiaobing (both now recognised as pioneering photographers) still make a pilgrimage twice a year to honour him. Despite her hardship she is still grateful for her 12 years of being “educated” by the Great Helmsman. “We, with others who worked for Mao, join together on the anniversaries of his birth and death and go to kneel before his body”, she says.<sup>204</sup>

More than a million people visit Robben Island, off the coast of Cape Town, every year, where black political prisoners including Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki (father of President Thabo Mbeki) and other struggle icons, were incarcerated.<sup>205</sup> The prison on the far side of the island, strategically placed so that the mainland cannot be seen from the complex; no one ever escaped from it. (During the political years, a myth

developed among many within the prison that it was not really on an island, but that that was part of the “plot” to make them feel isolated from the homeland. Most prisoners were taken on the then one-hour sea voyage at night, further heightening the mystery).<sup>206</sup>

The highlight of any tour of the island is a visit to the grim B-section, where Mandela spent 18 years behind bars in his single cell. Its austerity, coldness and bleak outlook serve as a contrast to the warmth and generosity of spirit with which Mandela emerged from his prison years, 27 in all. It is difficult to recreate the atmosphere of those days (as a prison visitor, I found it terrible and yet full of life and noise, a place of great energy). Today it feels like a “skeleton” of the original, and yet there is no doubt that many who stand before that small cell experience profound emotion. The mental geography of Mandela’s cell transcends its mundane location; it is common to hear the visit described as a pilgrimage, and I have heard certain visitors declare it to be the most profound experience of their lives.<sup>207</sup>

The memorial of Hector Petersen in Soweto has become an essential pilgrimage shrine for visitors to South Africa wishing to honour “The Struggle”. The protests of black schoolchildren in South Africa against Afrikaans being the proposed language of instruction flared into widespread resistance in 1976. On June 16, student bodies massed in Soweto to march past the Mandela home. After confrontation, a shot from the police rang out and Hector Petersen, 13, dropped, mortally wounded, to the ground. A photographer, Sam Nzima, witnessed a young man picking up the dying child and took the photograph that became emblematic of the anti-apartheid struggle. The Hector Petersen Memorial and Museum was opened in Orlando West, Soweto, on June 16 (Youth Day), 2002, not on the exact site of his death – on the corner of Moema and Vilakazi streets – but two blocks away, on Khumalo Street. A line of steel plates runs from the museum in the direction of the site of the shooting, where an earlier memorial was placed in 1992.

An unusual example of a political pilgrimage is that of the *Jerusalem-gangers*, who in the mid-1800s trekked away from their compatriots in the northern part of South Africa on a futile trek to “find Jerusalem.” (This was the heir of an earlier, better-known pilgrimage of protest, the “Great Trek” from 1836 onwards, a series of ox-wagon treks by Afrikaners determined to rid themselves of the British yoke).<sup>208</sup> They were driven by a deep hatred of the British, who they were convinced were one of the “horns of the Beast” from Revelations; in other words, the anti-Christ. They were led by a “fanatic,”

Commandant John Adam Enslin, and used for navigation purposes the defective maps at the back of their family Bibles.<sup>209</sup> So opposed they were to anything British that when evangelist Andrew Murray gave them a Bible, they buried it when they discovered it was printed in England; nor could they tolerate his singing of hymns, instead of psalms only.<sup>210</sup>

The hardcore *trekkers* seriously intended to complete their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, believing that it could not be very distant because they had noticed “Arab horses” in the possession of a local tribe.<sup>211</sup> Considerable political division occurred in the ranks of the trekkers about this; eventually it was solved by Commandant-General Andries Pretorius and the *Volksraad* appointing Enslin leader of his own group, while appoint leaders for three other factions. Enslin led his group in the direction of “Jerusalem” – eventually they saw what they assumed was an unfinished pyramid (which was actually a mountain known as *Modimolle* or *Kranskop*) and a swollen river, which they mistakenly assumed was the Nile. It was a rain-flooded tributary of the Mohalakwena River which covered a floodplain, rife with malaria.<sup>212</sup> The place was called *Nylstroom* (“Nile Stream”), a name it still carries, and many of the trekkers stopped there, exhausted or deathly ill. Enslin died shortly afterwards<sup>213</sup>, in 1852, and the pilgrimage petered out.<sup>214</sup>

In some ways, the *Jerusalemgangers*, who envisioned their journey as a religious pilgrimage,<sup>215</sup> engaged in a form of exodus (which usually has political implications). The driving impetus of the *Jerusalemgangers* was their detestation of their British overlords, whose way of life they believed to be immoral. The fixation of Jerusalem as their “goal” was based on a religious and political delusion, that their pilgrimage there was feasible and that the Holy City would provide a refuge for them.

South African poet Antjie Krog used them as “a metaphor of Afrikaners who keep on trekking and who aren’t able to distinguish between reality and metaphysics”; they thought they could trek from “Heilbron to the Holy City, from the Free State to Heaven”.<sup>216</sup> The *Jerusalemgangers* were ultimately up against the odds; moreover, they were deluded about navigating their journey, in both secular and temporal terms. Their pilgrimage of flight, protesting their plight under the British or even just a threat of being “polluted” by them, was doomed to failure as a practical impossibility. Zealots are seldom, however, deterred by the apparently impossible.

### *Pilgrimages of Protest*

Though pilgrimages of protest do often have a political element to them to a greater or lesser extent, they are neither there to venerate a political system, as were the journeys by Westerners to the old Soviet-bloc countries or to venerate national heroes. They are there, primarily, to attempt to change the system within which they currently live out of religious or ethical conviction (unlike the *Jerusalemgers*, who wanted to put as much distance between themselves and their hated political rivals as possible).

This does not mean of course that all protest marches are pilgrimages. Many are made to demand “rights” such as wage increases or safer working conditions, and while this may be of great concern to the marchers, it is unlikely – though not impossible – for these to be considered pilgrimages in any real sense. There may be a blurring of lines at times: anti-war protest marches may be highly secular (as in, “I hate the Western powers”) or may stem from a very deep religious conviction that it is wrong to take life, in which case the protest march may be seen as a form of pilgrimage by that person – it would be necessary to investigate intent.

One of the most famous protest pilgrimages of the twentieth century was the “Salt March” in 1930, by the Mahatma Gandhi. It was in its very essence a pilgrimage of protest against the yoke of British oppression, and began on March 12 from the ashram at Sabarmati; Gandhi marched from there with 78 men and women to the sea at Dandi, 200 miles away. Recalled Jawarhalal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, “The picture that is dominant and most significant is as I saw him marching, staff in hand, to Dandi on the Salt March. Here was the pilgrim on his quest of Truth, quiet, peaceful, determined and fearless, who would continue that quest and that pilgrimage, regardless of the consequences.”<sup>217</sup>

Salt taxes had had a terrible toll on the Indians during the years of British Occupation. Their colonisers had seen it as an easy way to make money and had forbidden Indians from making or collecting it in any form. In a hot continent, where most laboured under the sun, this was an appalling blow, a potential death sentence to those who could not afford to buy salt.<sup>218</sup> By the time Gandhi decided to make the Salt Tax pilgrimage, salt was readily available and not expensive; but the (British-controlled) government had a monopoly, levied a tax on its sale, and prohibited Indians from making it themselves. It was a deeply emotive issue in India and had been for generations;

Gandhi tapped in to a deep well of discontent that at the beginning of the march was lost on the British authorities. So Gandhi was marching to the sea to make a handful of salt illegally; well, so what?

But the little man in a loin cloth, picking an unequal fight, embodied a great idea. He would match his capacity to suffer against the authorities' capacity to inflict suffering. He would not hate but he would not obey, and he would wear down all resistance by an infinite capacity to take it – the beginning of his non-violent civil disobedience moment (Gandhi disliked the term “passive resistance” – there is nothing passive about my resistance, he was fond of saying).

It was one of the strangest treks ever witnessed. Over twenty-four days he and his group marched about ten miles a day, meeting dignitaries and supporters along the way, who sprinkled water on the road to keep the dust down, and flower petals on them to make the going on foot easier. Gandhi was sixty-one, and the heat was stifling, but the distance proved no match for him. By the time he had reached the sea, the Gulf of Cambay, he had been joined by thousands, and attracted media attention from all over the world. (Some of Gandhi's followers compared his march to the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, and added a donkey to follow in his wake).<sup>219</sup>

On the evening of April 5, he told his followers, “Either I shall return with what I want, or else my dead body will float in the ocean.”<sup>220</sup> (The ocean is considered by Hindus to have *darshan*, meaning that even the sight of it is auspicious, just as a deity or saint has *darshan*).<sup>221</sup> At 5.30am, clad only in a loin-cloth, Gandhi walked into the sea for a ceremonial bath of purification. Then, to cries of ‘Hail, Deliverer,’ he bent down to pick up a small piece of natural salt (later auctioned for 1,600 rupees). Gandhi had completed the pilgrimage. Overnight, tens of thousands joined him, either at Dandi or symbolically, in their own areas, making salt.

The British authorities in Delhi waited a month, hoping the fuss would die down, but massive demonstrations continued to spread. Gandhi was arrested on May 4, shortly after midnight, and put behind bars without trial to be held “at the pleasure of the government.” His pilgrimage to the sea to collect a scratching of salt had become “a symbol of imperishable power over the imagination.” (A while later, while having tea at the Viceregal palace, Gandhi opened a small brown packet and added a pinch of salt to his tea. “Just some of the salt I collected illegally”, he said drily to the Viceroy; “don't tell anyone”).<sup>222</sup>

Gandhi undertook another, less well-remembered pilgrimage to protest against the Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the days prior to Independence. He rose at 4am each morning and walked, unprotected, along the border to calm the rioting. Angry protesters threw thorns in his path, but he remained undeterred. If necessary, my death must do what my life did not, he responded.<sup>223</sup>

The “Atomic Mirror Pilgrimage” in 1995 was by a group of 26 like-minded pilgrims of different nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs, who shared the view that nuclear weapons should be abolished and that nuclear power should be phased out. The journey spanned Continents; they carried “healing earth” over the route of the first atomic bombs, 50 years after the birth of the Nuclear Age, from Albuquerque, to Los Alamos where the bomb was created, to the Trinity test site near Socorro and the nuclear laboratory at Livermore. They proceeded by plane to San Francisco from where the bomb was shipped to Hawaii, then to Pearl Harbour and to Osaka. The journey ended at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At the Los Alamos Laboratory, a Hiroshima survivor, Yoshi Tsukishita, returned the fire of the atomic bomb to its origins by presenting the flame he had carried from the Peace Park. On the journey they called publicly for nuclear abolition, offered ceremonies and gave gifts of healing to their host communities. In a Nagasaki Zen temple on August 9, they heard the bell toll over the city and joined the prayer: “Never again.”<sup>224</sup>

In a seven-month journey to protest against the “oppression” of the Maasai and the Kenyan government’s “indifference” to their plight of losing land for their beloved cattle, Miyere ole Miyamdazi Selenguironeirei walked through four countries from Kenya to South Africa, arriving in Cape Town in April, 2005. His journey took him, dressed in tribal robes and carrying a spear, through Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, because of his unflinching belief that as one warrior he could make a difference. “We lose our cattle, we lose our lives,” he said.<sup>225</sup> The profound connection with land and systems of meaning which explained their world has been noted by historian Nigel Penn, referring to the San defending their territory against foreigners. “To lose the land was to lose, literally, everything,” he wrote.<sup>226</sup> Selenguironeirei’s walking style is unusual, for he lifts his legs at the knee when taking a step, a style of walking used so as not to disturb nearby animals. “But this too, is a jungle,” he said, pointing at the concrete city.<sup>227</sup>

In order to protest the destruction of family life through the migrant labour system in South Africa, when workers frequently spent all year apart from their families in order to work in the mines (where families were not permitted to join them), six clergymen and two university lecturers<sup>228</sup> walked 960kms from Grahamstown to Cape Town from December, 1972 to January, 1973 to protest what they saw as an evil policy. Participant Bishop David Russell recalls it as a “pilgrimage of confession” in which fellow white South Africans were invited to confess their share in common guilt and to commit themselves to changing this situation. The careful positioning of the pilgrimage as “not protest” should be seen in context; the apartheid government was quick to condemn or ban any opposition that seemed to be “protest.” Nevertheless, the pilgrimage specifically highlighted the iniquities of a State that had forced people off arable land, and then refused to allow labourers to live with their families where they could find work.<sup>229</sup>

“Our aim was conscientisation,” says Francis Wilson. “It was to get at white South Africans about this serious aspect of family life. We were guided by the examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King – their way of non-violent action.”<sup>230</sup> It was also referred to as a pilgrimage of protest in the press.<sup>231</sup>

The pilgrimage was carefully planned to have significant political symbolism. It was done during the long summer holidays over Christmas and New Year, usually the only time that workers were able to see their families, and when most white South Africans were at leisure. It began on December 16<sup>th</sup>, a day then sacred to Afrikaners as “The Day of the Covenant”<sup>232</sup> commemorating their victory over Zulus at the Battle of Blood River. It started in Grahamstown, where the Voortrekker leader Jacobus Uys camped with his party, and received a Bible from Thomas Philipps on behalf of local sympathisers.<sup>233</sup> This Bible, which held considerable symbolic value as an historic “link” between the English and Afrikaner communities, was carried by the eight pilgrims to Cape Town, where “white involvement in the politics and economy of South Africa began... By walking to Cape Town we are requesting Parliament to do what we cannot do; namely, to make it legal for every South African husband and wife who wish to do so to live together with their children in a family home.”<sup>234</sup>

The pilgrimage took four weeks, and was widely reported in sympathetic terms by the English-language newspapers.<sup>235</sup> Despite the care taken to position the pilgrimage, it was viewed with suspicion by government supporters; a prominent

Afrikaans theologian, Professor J. Lategan, expressed doubt about the “theological motive” behind it and suggested that the walk was a publicity stunt. He declared that penitence was “not a public deed,” but a happening between man and God.<sup>236</sup> In one sense he was correct; the pilgrimage highlighted a particular evil of the apartheid system, and English newspaper editorials were quick to use its publicity value to attack the government’s laws.<sup>237</sup>

Four thousand people welcomed the pilgrims on the Rondebosch Common, in Cape Town, on Sunday, January 14, 1973, among them the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev. Robert Selby Taylor, and the Director of the Christian Institute, the Rev. C.F. Beyers Naude.<sup>238</sup> The Catholic Archbishop of Durban, the Most Rev. Denis Hurley, asked why no serving member of the three Afrikaans churches had also made the pilgrimage, and why the Moderator of the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk (the NGK was the dominant church in apartheid South Africa) had not taken part in the service of welcome. The pilgrimage of protest had reached its pinnacle.

In this vein, a second pilgrimage was walked by David Russell and John Stubbs from Grahamstown to King William’s Town in the Eastern Province, in April, 2000, once again concentrating on the theme of a strong family life. The pilgrimage concentrated on a different theme for each day; on the fourth day, a Wednesday, they highlighted the need to stop abuse and violence against women and children, while two days later, the theme was a call to build a sharing society. Bishop Russell recalls this experience as “deeply moving.” It ended on Palm Sunday, when the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane walked the last few kilometers with them, and then held a service in the Victoria grounds in King William’s Town.

Dean Stubbs remembers that he could not afford new walking shoes, and so wore old tennis shoes. He suffered terribly from blisters. “I have a vivid image of Bishop David washing and bandaging my feet in the dusk at a rondavel in Peddie. That symbol, of the washing of the feet, is the symbol he has on his Episcopal Seal. I suppose that I will never forget the translation of the image from ink into real life!”<sup>239</sup>

A tendency to see pilgrimages of protest as “modern” should be dismissed; they have been around for a long time. In the 1500s, for example, disguised as a “Pilgrimage of Grace”, English Catholics marched to recover their heritage and their rights. Led by Robert Aske, a London lawyer and commander of a rebel army, along with William Stapulton, they defied the recent royal dismantling of “superstitious pilgrimages” and

demanded that the dissolution of religious houses be reversed. They carried a relic and banner of St Cuthbert. Though their “political” pilgrimage in 1536 was successful, their “religious” pilgrimage in 1537 was not; in fact, writes Michael Bush, it simply hastened the banning of pilgrimages altogether and the destruction of holy relics.<sup>240</sup>

Notable is the way that pilgrimages of protest are often clad in a more respectable title. This is necessary in the face of political disapproval; they face not only the anger of the authorities, but also the possibility that ordinary people may be frightened off if the pilgrimage is not carefully positioned to make it “acceptable” and therefore accessible. Both Bishop Russell’s “pilgrimage of confession” and Aske’s “pilgrimage of Grace” were packaged as religious duties, though the prime motive in both cases was to draw attention to political as well as religious injustices, and spark reform.

### *Pilgrimages of Closure*

Pilgrimages of closure are usually about survivors, rather than victims, of tragic or warfaring events. The emphasis may not be on the actual loss, but on “putting to rest” an event that has traumatically shaped their lives.

Wake Island in the Pacific had been a stopover for wealthy Europeans and Americans on their way to Asia; a pleasure resort. But after Pearl Harbour in WWII, the Japanese decided to use the facilities, including the island buildings and runways, for their war effort and were Occupiers there until their defeat in 1945. In 2003 there was a reunion of Allies on Wake Island, where hundreds had died during the Occupation. “This is a pilgrimage of closure,” said one observer who had experienced rigours of the war.<sup>241</sup>

A moving pilgrimage of closure was orchestrated in 2003 by James Cameron, director of the hit movie “Titanic.” He arranged for some of the few surviving crew of the great German battleship, the Bismarck, to travel to the ship’s watery grave in the Atlantic.

The ship, launched in 1939, was considered to be the greatest fighting ship of all time; this opinion was held not only by its makers, the Germans, but also by the Allies, who realised its capacity to inflict damage. It was launched in 1939 and was 830ft long, very wide and massively armoured. Its sole purpose was to hunt convoys, and starve England into submission. The British Command realised it was imperative to destroy it.

Britain's war Prime Minister Winston Churchill pulled all his battleships into the fray. More than 100 British vessels took part in the biggest naval chase ever seen and the Royal Navy vowed to pursue the Bismarck until the end, chasing her for 1,750 miles from Greenland to 550 miles West of Land's End, as the ship tried to reach the safety of Brest. Several prime British ships were lost, including the HMS The Hood with 1,421 crew, only a handful of which survived.

After a mighty battle, the Bismarck was sunk on May 27, 1941. Thousands of young Germans plunged off it into the icy waters. Allied ships attempted their rescue, but were informed that German submarines had entered the area, which they then evacuated. Only a few hundred German sailors survived, and they were never decorated or recognised; they still meet annually at the war grave of their former comrades to recognise their sacrifice, fewer, of course, each year.

The disgruntled remaining survivors were taken by Cameron on a ship to the site of the Bismarck, now a designated war grave. One of them, in tears, told the camera: "When we first saw British sailors in the water (from the ships they had sunk) we couldn't believe it. We had been brought up to believe they were terribly evil. But they were just young fellows like us. We realised then how wrong this was. Now, everyone knows better," he said.<sup>242</sup> He and a few colleagues were able at last to have some closure, after this deeply moving journey. Whether his is right about "everyone knowing better" remains to be seen.

Pilgrimages to war memorials such as the bombed shell of the old Coventry Cathedral, and shrines connected with ideological struggle, enable some to ponder on the destructiveness and loss of war, and provide a focal point and comfort especially for those whose relatives and/or ancestors lie in unmarked soil. It is also an opportunity for a few pilgrims to forgive the enemy, and to let go of the pain inflicted by such loss.

A major theme at such shrines is that of sacrifice and martyrdom. Others died so that the living can continue. For some, such as the former comrades of those killed or "missing in action," coming to terms with that sacrifice is part of a ritual process of thanking, and letting go, those heroes of the past.

In Cape Town, a memorial to the "Guguletu Seven", activists who were led into an ambush by apartheid security police and killed, some in execution-style, on March 3, 1986, was unveiled on Human Rights Day, March 21, 2005. The memorial was raised near the entrance to Guguletu Township, where the young men died. Each of the seven

young men is named and thereby recognised;<sup>243</sup> for some, this is the only memorial they have and is recognition not only of their sacrifice but of the might of the evil system they opposed. They have survived in memory. Apartheid has not. This place, too, has become “sacred ground.”

By erecting these memorials, that have become shrines, the democratic government of South Africa has closed a chapter on the “evil” past in which such young heroes were branded as wrong-doers and even “terrorists”.

### *Pilgrimages of Reconciliation*

At times, a survivor might wish to journey beyond closure, and attempt reconciliation. This may be in a general spirit of goodwill and forgiveness, or in a highly painful personal confrontation.

The latter lies at the heart of Eric Lomax’s pilgrimage of reconciliation. During WWII he survived the nightmare world of P.O.W. camps after having been sent in 1941 to Malaya as a member of the Royal Corps of Signals. Taken prisoner during the Fall of Singapore, he was put to work on the infamous Burma-Siam railway, which cost the lives of over a quarter of a million men. He built an illicit radio in one of the camps, and was tortured and starved in the notorious Outram prison from which few emerged. Only the end of the war saved him.

Demobbed without any debriefing, he returned to Scotland and remained unable to speak of the horrors he had endured, his postwar life being one of quiet failure. Nearly 50 years later, despite having therapy, he still harboured a murderous grudge against his tormentors. By a fluke, Lomax discovered that one of them, a Japanese-English translator, was still alive, and he determined to meet him though not to forgive him. But during the meeting – it is not dated but seemed to have been in the early 1990s – at the River Kwae between Lomax and Nagase, an extraordinary bond occurred. Nagase apologised profusely and confessed to never having forgotten Lomax’s face. They touched hands. Lomax discovered that Nagase had also suffered towards the end of the war, and had spent much of his life involved in charitable work making amends for the Japanese war record. Nagase had also opened a temple of peace on the River Kwae Bridge, and spoke out against militarism.

The meeting was more than one of bodies. It was a union of suffering souls, who recognised in each other the possibility of forgiveness through shared suffering, an implicit reciprocal relationship. Lomax then visited the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima with Nagase; they themselves had found peace with one another. “Meeting Nagase has turned him from (being) a hated enemy, with whom friendship would have been impossible, into a blood-brother,” wrote Lomax, in his autobiography, *The Railway Man*. “If I’d never been able to put a name to the face of one of the men who had harmed me, and never discovered that behind that face there was also a damaged life, the nightmares would always have come from *a past without meaning* (my italics),” he wrote.<sup>244</sup>

A pilgrimage of reconciliation in a similar vein, to see the face of evil, has been undertaken by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a professor of psychology at the University of Cape Town and clinical psychologist who served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Human Rights Violations Committee.<sup>245</sup> In September, 1997, Eugene de Kock appeared from the TRC in the first of many hearing on human rights violations, including murder. He was a major participant in the planning and execution of “hits” on apartheid activists, and the extent of his atrocities earned him during the TRC hearings the nickname “Prime Evil.”

De Kock realised soon enough that he was also a scapegoat for his superiors, none of whom were convicted of the crimes they had ordered, and he began to co-operate fully with the Commission. Early on, he asked to see widows of those he had killed. Two agreed; Pearl Faku, reported later that she was “profoundly touched by him.” Both women felt that de Kock had communicated to them something he felt deeply, and he had acknowledged their pain. “I was overwhelmed by emotion, and I was just nodding, as a way of saying yes, I forgive you. I hope that when he sees our tears, he knows that they are not only tears for our husbands, but tears for him as well,” said Faku.<sup>246</sup>

Gobodo-Madikizela embarked on her (initially nervous) pilgrimage to visit de Kock in prison forty-six times, talking to him about his part in the apartheid atrocities. On one momentous occasion, she was moved to touch his hand – to make the human connection. Her conclusion was that de Kock had travelled on his own personal path of transformation, and that mercy should be shown to him. Today he sits in a maximum-security prison, serving 212 years for crimes against humanity. There are those who will never have closure, let alone reconciliation, over the loss of their loved ones; but for the

people personally involved with de Kock's confessions, there has without doubt been an element of reconciliation.<sup>247</sup>

An international pilgrimage of reconciliation was held on Robben Island from April 14-17, 2004, exploring themes of anger, hatred, shame, guilt and the journey to forgiveness. Among those who participated were survivors of death row (Uganda and South Africa), and those who had experienced atrocities (Rwanda). Bountthanh Phommasathit from Laos, whose community was bombed during the Vietnam War, eventually met a Vietnam veteran who was responsible for the deed, and who continues to involve himself in acts of reparation and restorative justice. "She became, in a sense, his liberator," writes Father Michael Lapsley, organiser, who was himself the victim of apartheid atrocity, having had both his hands blown off by a letter bomb.<sup>248</sup>

Pat Magee, an IRA combatant, spoke of the journey of reconciliation he was participating in with Jo Berry, the daughter of a victim killed in a bomb he detonated. Andrew Rice, whose brothers were killed in New York on September 11, 2001, is part of an organisation that seeks to connect with communities on the other side of conflicts with the US.

Christo Thesnaar from South Africa spoke of dealing with shame and guilt over the apartheid past. "I benefited from the apartheid system in terms of my education, health and wealth. Whenever I hear another person's story of how their lives were affected by apartheid, I feel this shame. I think that shame is a continual process of saying sorry, of acknowledgement." His feelings were responded to by Karin Penno-Burmeister from Germany, who pointed out that shame can lead people to change their actions: "We must accept this sort of shame which can help us rather than fear it will destroy us."

During a closing pilgrimage around the island, the historic sites were visited and at the leper cemetery participants washed the gravestones – in particular where names were written – asserting the dignity and seeking to rehumanize all those buried there. Earlier, Rwandese had spoken of the struggle to humanize the individuals behind the statistics of hundreds of thousands hacked to death.

At the closing ceremony, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu said that the South African story tells us that it is possible to make a new beginning; it is possible for an enemy to become a friend.<sup>249</sup>

Another attempt to turn conflict history into a pilgrimage of reconciliation was made in January, 2004, when South African Zulu warriors and soldiers from the 24<sup>th</sup>

Welsh Regiment, now the Royal Regiment of Wales, travelled to Isandlwana in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, to recreate the bloody battle which ended in Zulu triumph. The underlying theme was not war but reconciliation between the two peoples (English-speaking and Zulu), called for by King Goodwill Zwelithini. “To us as the Zulu nation and to the British nation, this event is very important in forging ties to take us forwards,” he said.<sup>250</sup>

Dressed in leopard and cattle skins and hefting spears and sticks, about 300 Zulu warriors faced around 35 men dressed in red coats to replicate the battle of 1879, when some 1,300 British troops and between 1,500 and 2,000 Zulus died, as 20,000 of King Cetshwayo’s warriors overran a British camp.<sup>251</sup> Both British and Zulu representatives said the commemoration had been held to convey a message of reconciliation and mutual respect. “We all have death and battles and fighting but it’s what you do with that afterwards that really counts,” said Rhodri Morgan, Welsh First Minister, who had travelled to South Africa for the event.

Such journeys are not merely travelling. They are connected with events of profound significance to the individuals and/or groups concerned, and perhaps to their descendants too. They move the dynamics of the relationship between two previously opposing polarities to a different place, and create ritualised space in which reconciliation may occur. Much is invested in this, including confession and forgiveness, in circumstances where grudges may justifiably be borne. Part of that process is the visible manifestation of pilgrimage, of one or several parties prepared to undertake a metaphorically difficult journey in order to “arrive” at a new place of understanding between them. The effort, including perhaps pain, in doing so should not be underestimated.

That suffering has occurred can be recognised through ritualised pilgrimages. The reconstruction of the Battle of Isandlwana was an example of this. In recognition of the value of such ritualized sacred action, labyrinth-maker Clare Wilson has created a “Labyrinth of Reconciliation” next to the *Slangkop* (“Snake’s Head”) Lighthouse at Kommetjie, Cape Town. It has, unusually, *two* entrances, “to show that we have not all started from the same place,” she says.<sup>252</sup> The paths meet in the middle, and all participants can walk out together through the “heart space.” Labyrinths have been used for thousands of years as sacred paths, or virtual pilgrimages (*see below*).

These particular Reconciliation labyrinths (she has devised a number of three, five, seven and nine-circuit versions) were born out of a need to create a symbolic way of celebrating December 16, the Day of Reconciliation in South Africa, in the new democratic dispensation. She felt that a labyrinth, which is dogma-free and neutral, was an ideal way to create a journey of exploration, “to put into symbolic form a place in South Africa that feels whole or healed, but also to recognise that we all come from different places. I kept thinking that there can’t be *one* path, which seems prescriptive. I knew it had to reflect the balancing of the tensions. It couldn’t be ‘just’ concentric circles, so I based it on the quadrant form, mirrored, so if two people walk together, they go away from and move towards each other). When you’ve covered every inch of the territory, you meet at the outer edge and your feet lead you out, through the ‘heart’ and through the labyrinth’s ‘feet’ – that’s when your living journey begins.” The exit symbolises South Africa’s choice of a “third way”; - exemplified by Nelson Mandela’s choice of reconciliation after 1994.<sup>253</sup>

The first Reconciliation labyrinth was built in 2002. Clare Wilson created temporary labyrinths of reconciliation, on beaches and in park areas, most recently (at the time of writing) outside St George’s Cathedral in April, 2005. She regards them as sacred archetypes. Importantly, there is a modern recognition that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to walk a labyrinth. It may be danced, sung, walked, woven, talked or prayed along. It is emblematic of a ritual journey to the centre; the pilgrimage to the interior which is so often mentioned in sacred texts.

At heart, pilgrimages of reconciliation are closely aligned with some of the most difficult forms of self-healing – confession and forgiveness. Such a journey requires more than a usual degree of courage.

### ***Pilgrimages of Barter***

Pilgrimages of “barter” are, of all pilgrimages, most closely associated with a reciprocal relationship with the Divine. An exchange is offered; if the pilgrim promises to fulfil a vow of pilgrimage, the Divine is asked to provide something in response, very often a cure for a severe illness, or even survival itself: and this involves an intensely personal relationship between the vower (or barterer), and the potential source of power.

Liliane Voyé has suggested that “the European pilgrimage today, is, above all, part of a logic of request, of gift exchange.”<sup>254</sup>

Barter may lie behind pilgrimages to, for example, the Church of the Madonna of the Annunciation at the Greek isle of Tinos. One example, cited by Jill Dubisch, was of a girl whose family had moved to Australia. While a baby, she fell ill and her parents vowed to bring her to Tinos on a pilgrimage, during which she would be baptized, if she got well. The girl recovered but it was sixteen years before her parents could afford the journey. Nevertheless, the intent was always there, and they eventually fulfilled their side of the bargain.<sup>255</sup>

These are not straightforward “pilgrimages of healing”, when devotees travel to a sacred site well known for its curative properties, such as Lourdes. In such cases the pilgrim first travels to the site, and then asks for relief without any necessary engagement in a reciprocal relationship; the cure is provided, if it comes, by grace alone. The healed pilgrim may then donate goods to the site in thanksgiving, but no specific barter has taken place. This only occurs when, in the face of traumatic illness or loss, a person promises that “if so-and-so is cured, or saved” then a pilgrimage will be undertaken in fulfilment of that vow. Occasionally such pilgrimages of barter will be made when something more worldly has been requested and “given” – advancement in a career, or the restoration of something much prized. Generally, though, such pilgrimages are associated with health and, as women are generally responsible for both the family’s physical and spiritual wellbeing, it is often they who participate in these particular types of pilgrimages.<sup>256</sup>

In maritime nations, such as Greece, vows may be taken to make pilgrimages if the loved one is delivered safely from a stormy sea, or even a battle. The close relationship between pious sailors and the object of their veneration may be seen in ceremonies world wide, in which boats are annually blessed, such as that held in Cape Town on the first Sunday in October. During this “Blessing of the Fishing Fleet Ceremony,” statues of St Peter (a fisherman) and Our Lady of Fatima are carried to the Waterfront, where a Mass is held and a wreath is cast onto the sea in memory of lives lost at sea. It is a reminder of the fragility of life at sea, and the need to maintain close relationships with, and veneration of, saintly intercessors who may protect those in peril.<sup>257</sup> In these instances, the ritual action is preventative. In vows connected with barter, they are made *after* danger has appeared.

The notion that humans can “barter” with gods may seem odd, but it is a very old notion, often reflected in tales about the lack of proper reciprocal relationships – if the gods are not properly propitiated or venerated or obeyed, then evil will befall them. Ancient texts are full of such stories, including that of the Flood. Indigenous religions in southern Africa will often point to the “lack of respect” shown to ancestors, or to the Divine, as a cause of misfortune. In pilgrimages of barter, the relationship is swung around; if *I* promise to do this, will *You* grant my plea? In 2002, a Spanish mason completed more than 200,000 kilometres around Europe and Asia to thank God for healing him. Miguel Torres suffered a labour accident in 1986 and ended up in a wheelchair. He promised God and the Virgin Mary that he would hike five times around Europe and Asia if he learned to walk again. The pilgrimage took him 16 years.<sup>258</sup>

In India, a pilgrim may offer to make a certain offering if he receives a certain boon; this is a contract, because the deity will not deliver without the vow. The pilgrim, on the other hand, is not accountable for anything if he does not get his *parcya* or “proof,” a significant term not only about a demonstration of power, but its utilisation in response to human need.<sup>259</sup> Once the petitioner has received this proof, the deity will get the offering, a transactional reciprocal relationship.

A vow may also be made on behalf of another, if the person in question cannot come – for example, if illness prevents the journey. One man walked the *Camino* to Santiago de Compostela because his parents, both invalids, asked him to go in their name.<sup>260</sup> In many such cases the pilgrim will often take something home from the site, holy water or consecrated oil, icons or perhaps even a pebble from the site visited.<sup>261</sup>

A pilgrimage of barter was the origin of the South African shrine known as Our Lady of Shongweni in the Archdiocese of Durban, about a half-hour drive inland from that city. Father Henry Wagner was stationed in Natal when he was called back to Germany in September, 1939, to take up arms as a soldier. He prayed to the Virgin Mary and told her that if he should be saved in that war, he would start the pilgrimage to thank her and her son Jesus.

After returning to Shongweni after WWII had ended, he kept his end of the bargain and with the agreement of his parishioners, led the first pilgrimage, carrying the statue of “Mary, Cause of our Joy”<sup>262</sup> from the Hammarsdale church to Shongweni. The pilgrimage is repeated every year on May 31; it now includes the neighbouring diocese of Mariannhill, and devotees travel from as far as Johannesburg for the event.

In another episode of barter, a priest, now Bishop Hubert Bucher of the Diocese of Bethlehem, in the Free State of South Africa, vowed to dedicate the neglected church at Tsheseng in the diocese to the Immaculate Virgin if she would if she would “accept this assignment at Tsheseng.” As he offered up a Holy Mass alone, pleading with Her to change matters there, “a mother came into the church surrounded by her numerous children, the first pilgrims although unknowingly so!”<sup>263</sup>

The Shrine of Our Lady of Bethlehem was blessed on October, 1989 and the pilgrimage season to Tsheseng opens with the Feast of the Holy Rosary in October, and lasts until the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

### ***Stationary Pilgrimages***

The notion of pilgrimage without movement may seem a contradiction in terms to many. The overwhelming image of a pilgrim is a person on the move; yet, as we have seen, this has not always been the case. Anchorites were considered to be the purer form of pilgrims during the Dark Ages in Europe, when mobility was dangerous.

More importantly to the argument of this thesis, if the inner journey is indeed the most important aspect of pilgrimage then the outer journey should be dispensable without losing the essential aspect of the quest. Those who are, for one reason or another, unable or unwilling to make a physical journey should, both in theory and in practice, be able to claim the notion and status of pilgrim without leaving home. Indeed it has been suggested by several writers, noted in this thesis, that it may at times be easier to undertake an exterior journey than to deal with internal conflict and anguish.

A moving and unusual example of the inner journey was chosen by South African Francois Smuts, father of a baby son who lived for only forty days in 2000. Subsequently, in 2003, he walked the *Camino* to Santiago de Compostela in an attempt to make sense of the tragedy.

In 2004, he made a decision to fast for forty days. “The reason was intensely personal. Four years ago, I experienced the *pelgrimstog* (pilgrimage) of the death of a baby. Since then, I’ve been increasingly fascinated by the idea of pilgrimages. This year [after the previous year’s pilgrimage to Santiago] it was the pilgrimage of the memory and celebration of the forty days that my son lived. By not eating, I experienced the stripping away and the winter of death on my own body (*stroping en winter van die dood*

*aan my eie lyf ervaar*). By not eating, I have traversed the ordinary days with a wonderful secret in my heart. By not eating, I carried the forty days in the year that was special in my life, like a jewel around my neck, there where no one sees it.”<sup>264</sup>

Smuts said that it was “the quiet, small voice of God that called me to do it. It was not a directive, but a conviction that carried me through the difficult times and the long sections of the journey.” It was an attempt to transpose the “ordinary” of his life into the extraordinary – another passion of his. “God wants us to live with passion. We must be intensely alive. Yes, it was also an adventure that didn’t cost a pile of money, something that not many people do, something involving a bit of danger and a journey with unknown experiences and outcomes. Considering all this, looking back on it, the journey was worth everything.”<sup>265</sup>

The power of his inner journey permeates his story as vividly as any description of an external pilgrimage, and we are conscious of the volition of his quest, the pain and peril involved, the sincerity of his intent and of his achieving a sense of completion.

Smuts had tried the external pilgrimage on the *Camino* but, though powerful, it had proved insufficient to meet his needs. He volunteered to remain stationary, to allow the pilgrimage to make its inexorable path to the inside. But not all stationary pilgrims have a choice. Helen Martins of the Owl House longed to see the sacred sites of the world but poverty anchored her; her pilgrimage is discussed in the next chapter.

### ***Virtual Pilgrimages***

The term “virtual” is one that has come to be associated with the era of personal computers, which has had an impact on pilgrimages.<sup>266</sup> Those unable to undertake an actual physical journey may now do so via the Internet; an early study of Internet users in the US in 1998 showed that 25 percent used it for “religious purposes.”<sup>267</sup> Pilgrims unable to trek to the shrine of Viashnodevi, an incarnation of Shakti, the goddess of power, can now log in on the shrine’s website to offer money, arrange for prayers to be said on their behalf and have *prasad*, food offerings made to the deities, sent by couriers. The shrine is 1,600m high in the politically unstable region of Indian Kashmir.<sup>268</sup> Other sites, like Jesus2000.com, sell sacred souvenirs and enable a prayer or blessing to be deposited in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The “interactive” quality of the Internet provides

a “dynamic multimedia environment for communing with the sacred,” writes M.W. MacWilliams.<sup>269</sup>

But *virtual* pilgrimages have always existed even though they may not have been so-called, recognising that many – perhaps most – would-be pilgrims do not have the capacity to undertake a long and harsh journey. Such journeys are not simply journeys of replication, but are understood to be pilgrimages in their own right, in different or altered geographical space and sacred time. What they require is an mental geography that may or may not correspond to a physical geography, but which is nevertheless fully imbued with meaning for them.

MacWilliams has noted that when the term “virtual” is used to denote something that is not “real, authentic or proper,” it fits only *some* “virtual pilgrimages,” those that are informational only or that provide pictorial simulations and/or postcard-like views of a sacred site. But, he notes, virtual does not necessarily mean inauthentic; the “virtual” body of Christ, through bread and wine in the Eucharist, is the most obvious example of how authentic and physical “virtual” can be, “providing a ritual means of potentially experiencing Christ’s spiritual reality.”<sup>270</sup>

And in the arena of “what’s ‘real’ and what’s not”, Alan Morinis reminds us that “earthly journeys are [portrayed] as somehow more real than ‘metaphorical pilgrimages’ when, in fact, most cultures subsume physical journeys and other quests into one more inclusive category: the spiritual life is a pilgrimage, the ascetic learns to visit the sacred shrines in his own body, devotion is a journey to God.” Along with Morinis I have constantly postulated that the inner journey is the most critical aspect of a sacred journey; without proper intent, what appears to be a physical pilgrimage may be no more than a movement from one space to another, without deep or profound significance. A virtual journey may, in fact must, include the latter, and therefore cannot be rejected as “not a true pilgrimage;” and it may include physical participation, or not, depending on the vehicle preferred (feet or fingers?).

Labyrinth-builders habitually use the word “virtual” to describe their constructs; Clare Wilson, South African representative on the international Labyrinth Society, [www.labyrinths.co.za](http://www.labyrinths.co.za), confirms that she has been using this term since her initial involvement in 1999, and that it is a term that has long been used by all members.<sup>271</sup> In the modern world, “virtual” is a term widely used outside the immediate domain of computers, broadening into the mainstream of movies, electronic media, hallucinogens,

literature and reality checks, all alluding to the notion that there are alternative concepts of reality.

It helps to remember that any pilgrimage or pilgrimage site consists not only of physical terrain and architecture, but also of all the myth, tradition and narratives associated with natural and man-made features. Religious ritual is, in part, about making one place “become” another, for the purposes of re-enactment. The “Stations of the Cross” which are in every Catholic and High Anglican church, are devised so that there are spaces between each of the carefully marked events. This allows people to “walk the path”, making their own journeys of inward reflection. One of the Stations of the Cross is named after Veronica, who is said to have wiped the face of Jesus, covered with blood and dirt and sweat. The imprint of his face remained in her veil. There is no evidence that Veronica existed, but her story expresses the wish that someone had performed such a deed, an act of compassion. So her “Station” has become more “real” than most documented events in history.

At Easter, the *Via Dolorosa* is walked not only by pilgrims in Jerusalem, retracing the final route of Jesus, but at other destinations in the world, from Mexico City to Durban, where the *Via Dolorosa* route is reimagined. Such reimagination in religion is part of its organisation of ritual; to gaze upon a saint’s image, an icon, allows the pilgrim access to the reality of religious history as represented in the faces, clothing and surroundings.<sup>272</sup> The symbol of the crucifix in every church replicates the suffering of Christ, and enables the viewer to recreate in his or her imagination that ordeal.

Virtual pilgrimages are not modern – they are part of history. The early Irish *Navigatio Brendani* (The Navigation of St Brendan) was a pilgrimage of the mind, designed by the Church as an “armchair” substitute for a physical pilgrimage to Rome.<sup>273</sup> Pilgrims to the Anglican shrine at Walsingham move in a procession which echoes the *Via Crucis*, point out Simon Coleman and John Elsner. They also suggest that the trip through Hagia Sophia (Istanbul), becomes in effect a trip through the Holy Land “transposed in the imagination.” Diagrams and narratives not only reproduce the topography and experience of the sacred journey, but define and even constitute it. They provide the means for imagining pilgrimage.<sup>274</sup>

Instead of the medieval figure Ines de Holme actually travelling on two pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, he substituted by donating a window in 1381 to York Minster Cathedral, depicting St James and St Catherine. This was considered

beneficial to both de Holme and to the congregants of the Cathedral who, ever since, have enjoyed the benefits of his “swop.” It was also possible for the rich to “buy” themselves out of going on a Crusade – initially seen as a form of pilgrimage – and paying for another to go in their place. By doing so, they would reap the benefits of having actually gone – reward in Heaven. This approach has an ancient background, manifested the votive figures left in temples to continue adoring the god or gods concerned while the owner of them went about normal, daily business.

That the sacred is a moveable and transferable entity has long been accepted. Simply because a particular location is sacred, does not mean that it alone has a prerogative on the sanctity that accompanies its location or its association with a spiritual entity such as a *buddha* or *kami*. Sacrality of location can be transferred; from the sixteenth century on small-scale localised replicas of pilgrimage routes (most commonly replicating the important *Saikoku* and *Shikoku* routes, each of which is several hundred miles long and may take several weeks to do by foot) were constructed in Japan.

Some of these small-scale routes may be done in a few days, such as the popular eighty-eight-temple route on the island of Shodoshima, which is one-sixth the length of the *Shikoku* model it copies, while others are so small that they can be done in a few minutes.<sup>275</sup> Many of them have developed their own legends and miracles. The point is that they represent a replication of sacred space and the perception that the sacred can be copied and moved, in accordance with popular needs.

The shrine of St Jude in Chicago, founded in 1929, has for much of its history been a virtual pilgrimage site; in fact, the church actively encouraged such behaviour, for it meant that far more devotees would be able to contribute to the shrine than if they had to make a physical journey to it.

“The League of St Jude existed explicitly in place of pilgrimage, offering the devout a full share in the benefits of an actual visit to the place,” writes Robert Orsi.<sup>276</sup> The shrine should be thought of as a kind of radio transmitter, linking the faithful through prayers, and letters sent and received. Great care was taken to inform the League members about precise times of ritual and prayer at the shrine, and they were given very detailed instructions on how coordination could be achieved, praying at the same time at home, or attending Mass and receiving communion at their local church.

In this way, suggests Orsi, “time replaced space” as the central devotional category. By carefully noting times of crises, the faithful were able to verify St Jude’s

intercession and thus the success of their virtual pilgrimage. “Earlier, pilgrims had availed themselves of the powers they believed to reside in a place by going there; Jude’s devout did this by writing to it – it was a postal devotion, and writing replaced going as the primary devotional act.”<sup>277</sup>

A growing phenomenon in the world today is the use of labyrinths as virtual pilgrimages. This is, of course, not new. Labyrinths are ancient in their symbolism and their usage; they have been found in the ancient and Classical worlds, in indigenous cultures, as far apart as the Celtic<sup>278</sup> and Hopi Indian, and very early on in Christian churches.<sup>279</sup>

It should be pointed out that mazes are not labyrinths. A maze involves many paths, some of which lead to “dead-ends.” A labyrinth has only one path, to the centre. It “draws the person in”, rather than confusing or perhaps frightening them with false choices. All that is needed is to keep going, until one surely finds one’s way to the centre. Because of this, it has a calmness and surety about it that is compelling to those who believe it to be a spiritual tool for transformation. In Church history they were sometimes called *Chemin de Jérusalem*, and walking them was an alternative to a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

The labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral was built in c. 1200, just as the Crusades, which grew out of pilgrimages, came to an end and it was no longer feasible for pilgrims to travel to Jerusalem. The design of the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral was specifically designed to be a virtual pilgrimage. Like all church labyrinths, it lies at the Western entrance – the direction of the setting sun, symbolising death – so that it would be the first thing the pilgrim would encounter before entering the sanctuary and the high altar.<sup>280</sup> Pilgrims walked, or crawled, the pilgrimage routes to Santiago, Rome and Jerusalem in metaphor. The three parts of the pilgrimage – setting out, arrival, and return – were reflected in the labyrinth walk. There is also some evidence that labyrinths may have been used for heightened awareness.<sup>281</sup>

The modern labyrinth movement was begun by the Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco while she was involved with a programme titled “Quest” in the early 1990s. In August 1991, she walked the eleven-circuit labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral: as she walked it “I had a strong experience that my life was going to change,” she said.<sup>282</sup> A canvas labyrinth was then made at her behest for the inside of Grace Cathedral. It proved so popular that a pavement-style labyrinth was built outside it,

and the movement to build labyrinths mushroomed. Today there are more than 1000 labyrinths in the U.S. and more than a million people have walked a labyrinth in the United States.<sup>283</sup>

In South Africa, the first public labyrinth was created at St George's Cathedral in central Cape Town, a pavement-style labyrinth that is a replica of the one in Chartres. The Dean, Rowan Smith, visited Grace Cathedral in 2000 while on sabbatical and the idea was born there. "The former Dean here in Cape Town, Ted King, had a model about what a cathedral was – a laboratory, hotel, hut for a shepherd and so on, including that cathedrals are places of pilgrimage, and not just for those who worship there. This had resonance with me," he said. "I see the labyrinth as a pilgrimage, and also very much as a healing tool. It can also be a walking meditation. I related it to my own spiritual journey. We are always on a journey, and my ministry has been one of pilgrimage. The labyrinth witnesses to the fact that we are a pilgrim church. I have found that physical things help me on my journey. Praying with my feet makes sense to me, and at the centre is the desire for God, always drawing us nearer. We also have to go out from that centre, back into the world – the labyrinth pushes you back to the world from which you came, but you've moved on from where you've entered and are better able to deal with the world. No two walks are ever the same – that's what Lauren Artress reminds us."<sup>284</sup>

Not everyone was happy with the decision to build the labyrinth. There were accusations that the Church had lost its focus.<sup>285</sup> St George's Cathedral has borne the brunt of similar charges since the apartheid years, when it served as the "Struggle Church", led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and was the scene of many protest meetings and services.<sup>286</sup>

There are now more than 60 labyrinths in South Africa; some are private, but most are open to the public, including the Peace Labyrinth for Africa at the Beatitude Healing Centre in Pretoria and the Labyrinth of Reconciliation.<sup>287</sup>

"Finger labyrinths" have been developed, which enable the owner to trace a route on a carved wooden or clay "tray"; these are seen as replications of walking meditation and of virtual pilgrimages. They are especially helpful for immobile users.<sup>288</sup>

Virtual pilgrimages are the clearest indication yet that the old definition of "what pilgrimages are" is far too limited. Today, though emphasis may still be placed on the outer journey, there is at least equal attention given to the one within, and a flexibility that allows greater inclusion. Sacred geography after all, is a mental construct. Modern

responses to pilgrimage, from the Internet to labyrinths show a willingness to explore newly-available options as well, as part of the endless process of moulding pilgrimages to meet contemporary needs.

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Though pilgrimage is a ritual, it is remarkable how wide the range of pilgrim behaviour is, and how varied and compelling the reasons are for undertaking it. There are eighteen “categories” of pilgrimage discussed here, a list that is by no means exhaustive.

The importance of dividing pilgrimages into their functions, rather than into the more traditional “faith-based” categories, is to show that such functions, whether pilgrimages of veneration or healing, initiation or the recovery from loss or grief, are universal categories and may be participated in fully by people of any background, language, faith, ideology or custom. They need not be “believers.” They need not be smart, or rich, or experienced, nor need they be superstitious or limited or ignorant. They have a great deal in common. The similarities of intention, function and completion are plain, and this method of thinking about pilgrimage emphasises the universality and cohesion of pilgrimage behaviour, rather than focusing on the ideological differences.

## CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN'S PILGRIMAGES

Some pilgrimages are divided by gender, such as those of initiation and, frequently, fertility. Though they may reflect some of the usual types of pilgrimages, such as penitential, healing, veneration, initiation or barter, these female-oriented pilgrimages have a particular emphasis for women. Also, it is not surprising to find that there are pilgrimages that are devoted exclusively to women, for women's pilgrimages are often devoted to a particular aspect of human life which men do not share, or do not want to share. Obvious examples include the bearing of children, or the celebration of female qualities that tend to be subsumed in male-dominated rituals. They may also invoke women who have lived outside the norm and who therefore do not "fit" with the traditional role of women in a masculine-dominated world.

Figures representing those "outsiders", women who were different, include the Biblical Lilith, and the historical martyr, Joan of Arc. "St Joan's" reputation was later resurrected, but we cannot forget that she was burnt at the stake by her own countrymen, the fate of tens of thousands, perhaps even more, of women who were living outside the norms of a male-dominated society in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, when witch-burning became the preferred method of dealing with women who would not conform.<sup>1</sup> Women who live on the edge frequently take an enormous risk, even today.

One woman who went her own way on a remarkable "stationary" pilgrimage was the late Helen Martins of Nieu Bethesda, in South Africa, yet during her lifetime she was frequently ridiculed and the fearful recipient of vandalism and stone-throwing.<sup>2</sup> Another was the young Pedi girl, Manche Masemola, who tried to break with her religious tradition. Pushed, literally, to the outside of her world, she was killed. A third case was that of the Griqua Sarah Baartman, who was taken from South Africa to Europe as a physiological "freak" and whose body parts were displayed at the *Musee de l'Homme* after her death. It took an international campaign to restore her dignity (*for accounts of all three, see below*).

The risk may also be of "divine punishment"; Jill Dubisch gives several illustrations of women who were not obedient to their shrines and suffered the consequences, as well as examples of those who had been rewarded for their discipline.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, women who conform to the “traditional” functions of wife and mother are greatly respected in their domestic capacity – in some cultures, the role of “mother” has reached levels of adoration. Catholic countries, such as Greece, Italy and Colombia, revere mothers to exaggerated levels, so long as they remain “pure.” This has had the effect of relegating traditional women to accepted places of being female – private and/or concealed. If however, they are fulfilling their *public* functions as suffering “mothers” – in mourning, or in completing a pilgrimage as a result of a vow - then the resulting “clamour” is tolerated as part of the perceived emotionalism of women in general.<sup>4</sup>

The sacred role of the Virgin Mary, as icon or as role model, is not particularly helpful as a model to emulate. On the one hand, Mary offers a spiritual space for female-identification and comfort – one only has to travel through Europe to see how empty the cathedrals are except for the Marian chapels, usually inside the cathedral, but on one side (on the “edge”). They are always, in my experience, alive with flowers, candles and murmuring women. Mary represents the unattainable “ideal”, as has often been pointed out by feminists – the Virgin who is a Mother. In her maternity, chastity and obedience, she is the epitome of a “tamed female deity”, remark some feminists, brought under male control and bent to patriarchal purposes.<sup>5</sup>

Philip Taylor’s study of the current rise in popularity of goddess cults in Vietnam, including that of Bà Chúa Xứ, demonstrates that the images of femininity venerated in such cults are often “incomplete or abject. As virgins, sexless mothers, or women who have died young or badly, they can be seen as a form of self-containment and an indication that the women who participate in such practices may have little option but to embrace a conditional status as a means to social integration and cultural validation.”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps goddesses do admit a realm of relative feminine autonomy, Taylor adds, though it may not be a domain that presents many alternatives to women. Indeed, it appears that some followers transact with these deities to seek relief from or acquittal of onerous and unfair burdens placed upon them.<sup>7</sup>

Sexist language in Western religious rituals is taken far less seriously by some male representatives than it should be, for these words ignore the existence of half of humanity, and have, at the very least, an exclusionary quality.<sup>8</sup> There are many women who, in response, have taken themselves and their pilgrimages elsewhere, reflected also in the upsurge of “New Age” rituals reclaiming the goddess. This movement believes that

power is inherent in the earth itself, and is increasingly known by its feminized, ancient Greek name Gaia.<sup>9</sup>

Goddesses have long been venerated in India; the importance of the Goddesses has increased throughout their recorded history. *Shakti* is primal female energy, as in the Great Kali, without which the gods could not function. Though often portrayed as bloodthirsty, her task is to stop demonic forces from endangering cosmic order. She is assertive, rather than aggressive, and returns to women the three virtues – strength (moral and physical); intellect and knowledge; and sexual sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Yet this has not resulted in equality of life for women in India generally.

The “Three Religions” of China, particularly in the South, include the Queen of Heaven, Ma-Tsu, who is particularly admired for her help in sea battles, though it has to be said that Buddhism itself has aspects which are offensive to feminists, including the belief that at some point, a woman has to be reborn as a man in order to achieve Nirvana. In Buddhism the role of women has actually decreased, or “downgraded,” as they are kept out of the sangha, and nuns are generally regarded as second-class beings with limited ritual status.

For Mourid women in Senegal, a pilgrimage to Prokhane is a chance to venerate Mam Diarra Bousso as a sacred mother, generous and loving, in a joyful experience. This contrasts with the hard physical labour of their daily existence and allows for the “domestication” of their religion. While Mourid men always put Mam Diarra’s son first in the religious hierarchy, Mourid women assert that the two, mother and son, are one, and that she is just as sacred and highly ranked a religious personality as her son.<sup>11</sup> Many women use this relationship to make a pilgrimage of barter to Prokhane, believing that Mam Diarra Bousso will not deny them their requests.

“Traditional” indigenous religions may appear to be more egalitarian, as veneration devolves far more on wisdom, age or being an ancestor, rather than gender. Homage to such attributes in women is evident at the pilgrimage site of the sacred cave, Badimong, in South Africa, where women vastly outnumber men as both practitioners and pilgrims. Driekopseiland also in South Africa, an ancient site including thousands of engravings in a glacial pavement, now a river bed, is believed to have been the sacred site of women’s pilgrimages for initiation purposes and would have certainly been under the supervision of women elders (*see below*).<sup>12</sup>

### *Fertility Pilgrimages*

The sense that sexual reproduction gives a continuity to life, which prevails over the grief and finality of death, is the outspoken theme of the “Calf Twelfth” (*Bach Bahras*) festival in India, writes Ann Gold.<sup>13</sup> This “sexual reversal” of death is quite outspoken, in the context of a segregated female pilgrimage during which modesty does not need to be preserved.

The event falls on the twelfth day of the dark half of Bhadra, the fourth and final month of the rainy season. After a morning spent honouring the Cow Goddess, the women, dressed in their finery, stop at homes where death has occurred over the past year and in colourful clusters they then proceed to an assembly place near the water reservoir (in the case in which she studied, Rajasthani, the reservoir was just beyond the last houses of the village). The elderly, who are less inhibited, will wield a long stick, thrusting it between the legs of younger women while slightly lifting their skirts. The “ba-ba-ba” of suggestive “goat talk” is heard. “An hour of this sort of sport continues with good-natured participation, then the women return to the village *en masse* repeating the ‘joke’ that ‘lots of babies will born after this day’”, writes Gold.<sup>14</sup> In this way, she says, a communal fertility is evoked which effaces separate losses.

Speculation on what happened in prehistory should be delicately approached, but archaeological evidence of ancient Venus figures indicate that the Mother Goddess, or Fertility Goddess, was the centre of religious veneration. Such ancient figurines as the Venus of Lespugue, (c. 20,000BC) and the Willendorf Venus,<sup>15</sup> are generally small, with prominent sexual and secondary sexual characteristics, such as pregnant bellies, huge breasts and buttocks, and sometimes exaggerated vulvas.

The royal graves at Ur, in ancient Sumer, contain relics that indicate the worship of a supreme fertility goddess. No images of adult male gods have been found on any of the Neolithic sites (males are always displayed as infants or children, diminutive next to the Mother Goddess). At Çatal Hüyük in Turkey, goddess-filled buildings have been excavated from the period between 7000 and 3500BC; they range from monumental goddesses to tiny figurines and include the Goddess asleep, in the process of giving birth, and in a worshipping or blessing stance.<sup>16</sup> A persuasive case can be made that pilgrimages were made to the shrines of these Goddesses – especially in view of the

reverence held for them and the fact that some of the figurines were depicted in a “blessing stance”.

In South Africa, “fertility pilgrimages” were made to the so-called Birthing Passage in the rural Koue Bokkeveld, the southern extremity of the Cedarberg region, which is rich in San paintings and artefacts. The narrow passage itself, winding through rock, is marked with striking images of pregnancy and associated rites. Modern pilgrims visit it, according to local guides, to experience renewal and regeneration.<sup>17</sup>

Recent archaeological excavation has uncovered the role of the principal goddess of ancient Palestine, Asherah, who was venerated by both women and men. Jewish Kabbalistic writings confirm an early goddess called Shekinah and testify to the holy act of sexual union between her and Yahweh.<sup>18</sup>

In Celtic religion, the great horse goddess, Epona, was widely worshipped. She became a favourite of the Roman cavalry, and was the only Celtic goddess to be granted her own festival, within the city of Rome, to which pilgrims flocked. It was customary in ancient Ireland for the king to “marry” the earth to guarantee his right to rule, and as late as the 12<sup>th</sup> century there is an account of one king marrying a white mare – the symbol of Epona – at his coronation.<sup>19</sup>

The most ancient goddess of Rome was Vesta, who was believed to be the “beating heart of the city” and later, the empire; she was commemorated as a flame, kept perpetually burning by the Vestal Virgins. Venus, like Aphrodite, was considered to be the goddess of love and pilgrimages were made to their shrines to ask for help in matters of affection, among other issues. Isis of Egypt and Ishtar of Babylon were similarly revered and their shrines honoured.

Rituals connected to early Celtic culture frequently involved stone circles. Standing stones were also a common feature of Canaanite fertility cults that flourished at Beth-El until the eighth century BC; early legend associated Jacob with this pagan sanctuary.<sup>20</sup> There are suggestions that “standing stones” were a feature of Southern African ritual as well; a group of polished megaliths is to be found at Blinkklip, “Shining Stone,” just north of Wolmaransstad in South Africa; some stand over two metres tall and appear to have been extensively worked by hand, though there is little evidence of how they were used.<sup>21</sup> The well-preserved ring at Callanish, on the isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides still bears the legend that the stones are giants petrified for refusing to embrace Christianity – and that the ring has powers of fecundity. As late as the nineteenth century,

locals still visited Callanish for the latter purpose, as “it would not do to neglect the stones.”<sup>22</sup> Even in the twentieth century there were reports that childless women stripped naked at the Rollright Stones near Oxford, to rub themselves against the life-giving “male” pillars.<sup>23</sup> “Witches” also prevented anyone from counting the stones there; women accused of being witches were often older women – “wise” women, feminists suggest – and often lived “on the edge” of society, as widows, spinsters, herbalists and midwives. They were “guilty” of two transgressions: living outside the control of male partners, and of possessing wisdom and authority, traditional “male” attributes.

Many Stone Circles are associated with “witches” – near Castle Fraser, in Aberdeenshire, is the Lang Stone o’Craigearn, 3.5m high, around which covens of witches were rumoured to assemble. At Ninestane Rigg in the Shetlands, legend has it that the wicked Lord Soulis of Hermitage Castle was put to death inside the circle for his witchcraft (and kidnapping).<sup>24</sup> Long Compton, near Oxford, used to be a “stronghold of witches.” The most famous witch in the Lake District was the Witch of Tebay, whose name was really Mary Baynes and who was said to be in authentic – and prejudiced - fairytale style, “repulsive looking.” She is supposed to have predicted the coming of the railway, and she was blamed for every accident in the village (of Tebay).<sup>25</sup>

Aubrey Burl notes that many of the names of British Rings, such as *Dans Maen* (the Stone Dance), may recollect the activities that once took place inside them. Long Meg and her Daughters (in the Lake District), as well as the Nine Ladies (Derbyshire) and others, record how later people believed that girls were petrified for dancing on the Sabbath. Long Meg Standing Stone was said to be variously a witch, a dancing girl, an earth mother and a seductress.<sup>26</sup> At The Weddings, three rings of stones at Stanton Drew, it was the bride, groom and riotous guests that were turned into stone, echoing a vague remembrance of not only music and dancing but of rites of fertility. Stone rings were frequently used in celebrations until very recently, for old customs die hard.<sup>27</sup> Today, they continue to form part of “New Age” rituals that in fact celebrate a past age.

Fertility pilgrimages, to places such as those mentioned above by women seeking conception, remain a common form of pilgrimage for women today, including India, as we have seen. In the Calf Twelfth ritual, fertility is celebrated; but for some women, it is fervently to be sought as they face barrenness, which can be unbearably painful and for which, in some societies still, they will be blamed.

In Haiti, in a blend of Christianity and Voodoo, the Church of St James in the centre of Plaine du Nord reluctantly shares its canonical feast on July 25 with the local rites for Ogou, a deity who is the chief of the Voodoo pantheon. Mud pits outside the church are kept carefully moist throughout the year, for these are believed to be terrestrial emergence points for Ogou. Pregnant women as well as infertile women are among the pilgrims who descend on the area in July; the women line up for a bath and a blessing from the local herbalists.<sup>28</sup>

Barren women still go in pilgrimage to the tomb of Morocco's most famous rabbi, R. Amran b. Divan, who died in 1782. Similar practices can be observed at Rachel's tomb, outside Bethlehem, where women pray to "Rachel our mother" for fertility. Queen Isabel la Católica twice visited the church of San Juan de Ortega in northern Spain, which barren women visit, to take the fountain waters and pray for a miracle. Of her five children, two were named Juan and Juana.<sup>29</sup> In Ireland, childless women pilgrims climb the holy mountain, *Croag Patrick*, to visit a type of stone kraal at the top that has the evocative name of "St. Patrick's Bed."<sup>30</sup> On the island of Inishmurray Sligo, near Galway, there is an upright stone with holes in it, and it has long been the custom of expectant mothers to put their fingers through the holes in the hope of a successful birth.<sup>31</sup>

The Virgin Mary, the epitome of motherhood and a powerful intercessor, has heard many pleas for conception from women. Jill Dubisch describes Mary as a powerful and complex figure who understands the concerns of women, can act as the most powerful intercessor of all saints, and is also mighty enough to defend whole countries (such as Greece, which shares its Independence Day with the day of her Assumption – August 15).<sup>32</sup> Ethnic Chinese turn to the goddess Tien Hau, as the guarantor of fertility, says Philip Taylor; her duties also cover commerce and health.<sup>33</sup>

Fertility pilgrimages are not always well-received by male religious authorities. In Israel in 2005, hundreds of young women visited the tomb of the venerated Rabbi Yenothon Ben Uziel in the Amuka region. In a slightly unusual example of "reciprocal" relationships, they left their bras and panties on the grilles of the tomb, or on the branches of nearby trees. Rabbi Israel Deri, in charge of the holy site, said that they were guilty of profanity and that their prayers would go unanswered.<sup>34</sup>

The overwhelming desire to have a family has been, unsurprisingly, the motive for women's pilgrimages throughout the ages, but it is not the only reason why women

may seek out their own. Carole Rawcliffe, investigating the leading motives for women visiting healing shrines, says that while wealthy women invoke the saints for fertility, poor women prayed for relief from “diseases associated with hard manual labour, dietary deficiencies and squalid living conditions.”<sup>35</sup> Some such women pilgrims seek out female role-models, while others long for a territory which is not under male domination.

Healing pilgrimages, for one reason or another, are more likely than most to be in the domain of women. Healing is connected with care-giving, a traditional female role, and in traditional societies women were, and are, recognised as having a particular capacity, and even duty, to fulfil this function.

### ***Pilgrimage of Healing: Badimong, “Cave of Ancestors”***

One of the most democratic pilgrimage sites imaginable is the sacred cave of Badimong, (“among ancestors”) about 30 km north-east of Ficksburg, in the lovely, inland eastern Free State Province of South Africa bordering on the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. Here, not only the vast majority of healers are female but so are more than 90% of the pilgrims.<sup>36</sup>

This cave is one of several important highland caves strung along the border area between the province and Lesotho. Although it is continuously used by almost every traditional and modern religious system that exists in the area, from indigenous to the full spread of Christian churches, to “New Age” and other modern manifestations of spiritual belief, there is almost universal accord among the celebrants. “This place has no spiritual borders. We are one nation both black and white here,” explained one pilgrim.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the wide variation of claims upon it, it is one of the most uncontested pilgrimage spaces. There is no conscious or acknowledged leadership. Every form of local belief from pre-Christian Basotho divination to mainline Protestantism and Catholicism is not only welcome but mixed together at Badimong, and ritual forms can switch among them instantaneously, according to the plan or temporal progress of a celebration or even the spiritual transports or inclinations of individual celebrants. Two churches of very different persuasions can hold a service together to broaden and intensify their range of spiritual energy, and a feast of Christian thanksgiving (*Sejeso*) can turn into possession healing and the enraptured speech and dance of divination (*ho thoasa*).

Further, “ownership” of the cave (legally by a local white farmer) is conceded to have been originally by the San (“Bushmen”) hunters and gatherers, now conveniently no longer around to claim it; their painting and artefacts exist in cliff overhangs and caves all over the eastern Free State. Basotho celebrants feel it is appropriate to acknowledge a spiritual connection between them and the San, whom they replaced in the landscape, by using San artefacts and scrapings of pigment in their medicine, and in honouring the sacred visions of the ancestors on the cave walls.<sup>38</sup>

Herbal healers and trance-dance diviners, almost all female, are trained at Badimong in several, or a blend of, ethnic traditions; their initiation as healers is achieved by total immersion, hymns, prayers and animal sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> Basotho rites of initiation into womanhood are conducted there, and even Xhosa girls, for whom there are no organised initiation schools in the Free State, come to all-welcoming Badimong to take part in initiation.<sup>40</sup>

Badimong, like the other sacred caves, is a place of miracles made possible by the ancestors. The original “miracle site” was the river bed of reeds itself, below the “cave” (which is really a lengthy overhang). Local people had noticed columns of smoke rising up from the decaying reeds;<sup>41</sup> the reed deposit appeared to be welling up, (another name for the place is Nkokomohi, “to rise up, like bread”), leaving mounds of white, black and dun-coloured powder on the surface next to small pools of clear water. It is believed that the ancestors, who live beneath the earth, cause the fire from their domain. The powder is used in ritual powders, including ritual cosmetics, and in ceremonies of healing, fertility and initiation, which can take some weeks or longer. During this time the pilgrims take refuge in the overhang by building mud, thatched and sandstone enclosures in the cave, accompanied by altars of cattle dung (also used for flooring), or chosen from suitable rock formations.<sup>42</sup>

Pilgrims leave their vehicles, if they have used transport to arrive (many still appear on foot), and travel along a central path, past circular altars laden with offerings of lit candles, tobacco (especially snuff, beloved by the ancestors), uncooked staple foods, tickets for the national lottery and letters of request to the ancestors.<sup>43</sup> On the left lies the swampy pond of *khanyapa*, “the tutelary spirit of Basotho diviners, which takes the shape of a snake with the breasts of a woman, and instructs spirit mediums as to their ritual dress and other matters in dreams,” writes David Coplan.<sup>44</sup>

A female dance healer tends an altar just above the path, decorated with flags of different colours; she is there to direct the pilgrim to that location within the caves “where your ancestors wish to find you, or your particular desires will be heard, or your illness healed.”<sup>45</sup> It seems that all the pilgrims share an explicit calling (in dreams) from the ancestors either to be healed of their afflictions, or to venerate, propitiate and thank them. Personal ancestors will give specific instructions about where they are to be found along the cave walls, clearings, pools or streams, while large overall areas function as sites for specific complaints, the most common of which is female infertility (which needs to be healed).

A smaller area is dedicated to ‘Madiboko (“Mother-of-clan-totems”), a legendary prophet and healer; she is said to have been the first to perform miracles here. Another site is reserved for ‘MaNkopane, mother-in-law of the famed chief and herbalist Mohlomi of the local Bakwena clan (and mentor of the great Basotho founder-king Moshoeshe). The secret of Badimong’s welcoming nature as a sacred site may well lie in the legacy of Chief Mohlomi, philosopher and himself a pilgrim, who travelled widely through the northern parts of modern-day Southern Africa, spreading his message of peace, love, tolerance and good governance, walking with only a staff and a calabash of water and accompanied by a few unarmed men. He traversed many thousands of kilometres in his long life – he died aged ninety-five in 1815. To this day his wisdom is revered by Basothos, who remember his admonition to fully protect all within the kingdom, and that their land “should be a home to travellers and fugitives.”<sup>46</sup> Other mottos, such as “Peace is my Sister,” (meaning it may be vulnerable and needs to be cherished) and “It is better to thrash the corn than to shape the spear,” are among the many Mohlomi proverbs.

Ancestors usually appear to the sick in their dreams, after those victims of severe physical or psychological illness and dysfunction have already sought help from a doctor or traditional healer. The ancestor instructs the sufferer (or, at times, their traditional healer to pass on the message) to visit Badimong to be cured. Such instructions cannot be ignored, and only the ancestors know how long the Badimong experience will have to last – occasionally it can take months before the pilgrim who has been “arrested” by the ancestors is declared cured and released.

Recently, pilgrims suffering from HIV/Aids (which healers do not claim to cure) are undergoing initiation as diviners so that they may “open the way” for the many others

who will follow them to the heaven of the ancestors. Sufferers are thereby offered “a kind of half-way house to heaven, cared for by fellow adepts, and spared the callous neglect and lonely suffering in shame that is all too often the lot of those dying of AIDS,” writes Coplan.<sup>47</sup>

He has suggested that the prominence and numerical domination of women at Badimong can be ascribed, firstly, to the equality of women in local healing and divination ideology and practices, and also to their less rigid religious identity. He points out that, historically, it is usually women who change their religious or church affiliation in a “mixed” marriage, and “hence are less invested in denominational identity than men.”<sup>48</sup>

Further, though, it provides a sacred space, free from interference, where women can practice their ancient art of caring and healing.

### ***Pilgrimage of Female Initiation: Driekopseiland and the Riversnake***

Driekopseiland (“Three Heads Island”), about 60km to the west of Kimberley in South Africa, has long been considered by archaeologists to be associated with female puberty rites.<sup>49</sup> Evidence suggests that the remarkable site, one of the pre-eminent rock engraving sites in Southern Africa and estimated to be between 2000 and 2,500 years old, would have been a sacred place to which women pilgrims made their way in connection with these initiatory rituals.

The river bed lies in a wide shallow valley below the sandy banks, forested on one side, and is partially covered at present with reeds. It is unfortunately defaced in one section by a damn wall about two and a half metres high, for farming purposes in this dry region.<sup>50</sup> The site consists of over 3,500 engraved images on exposed glaciated basement rock in the bed of what is today known as the Riet River, but was once known as the !Ora Name, |Gama-!ab, or “Gmaap”.<sup>51</sup>

More than 90 percent of the engravings are geometric images, such as crossed circles, concentric circles, wavy lines, grids and rectangular forms; few animal motifs and only one human figure were found in the eastern part of the site, which covers about an hectare, while 325 animal and 19 human depictions (some badly eroded by water) are in the western portion of the smooth, glaciated rock.<sup>52</sup> The “interaction” with the rock

surface was a kind of entering, by engraving, quite literally “into” the spiritual realm while the images left behind would link people and place over time.<sup>53</sup>

Significantly, the site of Driekopseiland is covered by river water for a portion of the summer rainfall period, from December to March. In winter it can be slightly covered or almost dry, with the engravings “rising up” on the rock surfaces that bulge upward out of the river bed. This connects directly with an inherent “power of place” and has congruency with beliefs associated with the “great watersnake”, *!Khwa*, which has played a prominent role in San folklore.<sup>54</sup> There are also stories of *!Khwa*'s association with the eland-antelope. The *!Khora* believed that the watersnake controlled the streams and could cause a *kuil*, or “pool”, to dry up; at the conclusion of the menstrual rites, ochre would be sprinkled on the water, otherwise *!Khwa* could cause it to dry up<sup>55</sup> and this, in a land of drought, could signify death. In at least one instance, *!Khwa*'s name was used to mean “menstrual fluid.”<sup>56</sup>

The very topography of Driekopseiland was vital in the association with the maidens' rites.<sup>57</sup> There was no division between the sacred and the secular among the San (as there tends to be in modern “Western” life) and the landscape itself was imbued with meaning; the very geographical features themselves were more than just location, they became part of the power of specific places, not just horizontally but also vertically, for instance linking the rain from above, the waterhole on the ground, and the world of the ancestors beneath the surface.<sup>58</sup>

What happened at Driekopseiland? Its symbols, its location and its geographical features have suggested powerfully to archaeologists that it is here that young maidens would be taken to be initiated and scarified. “There, *!Khwa* as water, or watersnake – or looming up as the angry “male rain” – operated as an impersonal force, greatly feared, that mediated and required to be appeased.”<sup>59</sup> The undulating form of the great snake itself, its coils rising and submerging seasonally under the river, could be detected without difficulty, as it protrudes up to hold back the river, or “dips down” to permit it to flow.<sup>60</sup>

Essential to the very survival of a San<sup>61</sup> grouping was the first menstruation rite of a young girl (the boys underwent a “first kill” ceremony). The harmony, well-being and sustenance of the group depended on the correct procedures having taken place; the young girl is rubbed with the fat of the eland – an animal special to the San – as well as honey and *buchu*, a favourite plant of the revered eland, and, above all, the older women

must dance the “Eland Dance”<sup>62</sup> and sing the Great Eland Song.<sup>63</sup> Unless this is done, the maiden and her people are considered to be at risk and their fertility threatened. Once this is completed, she is said to have “shot an eland” and may now be “hunted and eaten” (courted) by the young men; the San themselves are said to be “the people of the eland.”<sup>64</sup>

The connection with the Great Watersnake and the Eland in the rituals is not surprising. The eland was the first animal that the San deity, /Kaggen, created and it remains his favourite, as it does the San. It is the most commonly depicted antelope in both rock paintings and rock engravings throughout Southern Africa.<sup>65</sup> It stores vast quantities of fat, which was believed to be exceptionally powerful because it contained a supernatural power – the essence of the universe.<sup>66</sup>

The initiation ceremonies of maidens who had reached puberty were of utmost importance to her and her people, and placed her temporarily in a dangerous position; the proper ritual observances and respect for taboos would restore the balance; otherwise a girl and her relatives could be swept away by a whirlwind and transformed into frogs, to be deposited into pools. Their material possessions would revert to the original raw materials (karosses into springbok, arrows into reeds) and lightning could strike them. They were also vulnerable to attack by animals.<sup>67</sup>

Although it has been a historical monument since 1943, Driekopseiland remains a fragile site, especially as the land on which it is located is privately owned. In October, 2000 a front-end loader was used to scrape mud off the engravings on part of Driekopseiland, resulting in bruising and breakages – fortunately only one section of the site was damaged.<sup>68</sup> This is not only destruction in material terms, but in a very real way, desecration.

### ***Pilgrimages of Reclamation: Witches and Wiccans***

The history of contemporary Goddess revival in the Western sphere of influence may have begun in 1861 with the publication of *Mother Right* by the Swiss historian and anthropologist J.J. Bachofen (d. 1887). This book suggested that the rights and powers of mothers had once taken precedence over fathers. A further publication in 1921, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* by Margaret Murray, claimed that priestesses, or “witches”

had existed continuously since the Paleolithic era. Though many of her theories were later discredited, they inspired women to establish their own covens.<sup>69</sup>

Witches may be male as well as female, but pre-eminent in their worship is the Goddess. One of the foremost pagan groups is the Dianic Wicca of the Hungarian refugee Zsusanna Budapest, who claims to be a hereditary witch with a pedigree that dates back to 1270. Wiccans reject their bad image; the Wiccan code enshrines free will, but also commands against evil use of magic:

Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil,  
An' it harm none, do what ye will.<sup>70</sup>

Pilgrimages are made by Wiccans on festival days; there are eight annually on the pagan calendar, sometimes known as the “Witches’ Wheel”, four major and four minor. The four lesser mark the solstices and equinoxes; the best known of the major festivals is probably *Lughnasadh* (or Lammas) on August 1; in Ireland, *Lughnasadh* was in ancient times the summer festival of the sun god, *Lugh*, set up for him by his foster-mother *Tailtiu*.

Others, such as the photographer Mary Beth Edelson who travelled in 1977 to the neolithic ritual site of Hvar Island in the then Yugoslavia,<sup>71</sup> make spiritual journeys to the caves and sacred sites of “Old Europe”, such as Crete, where it is believed that Goddess-worship was once predominant.

The *Aquelarre* (Witches Sabbath) is celebrated by thousands who travel to the Basque country village of Zugarramurdi, near the French border, each year at the summer solstice, and commemorates rituals performed by witches in the fifteenth century with fire ceremonies and other fiesta events.

Women who participate in these events will frequently make the claim that they are not “new”, but in fact, very ancient. This, they believe, is the reclamation of the power of the Goddess, and by implication, the power of women. It is a contemporary response to the problem implicit in Mary Daly’s brusque summing up of theology: “When God is male, the male is God.”<sup>72</sup> Such women are intent on reclaiming, and restoring, what they see as their right.

Wicca is a “registered” religion in South Africa. “When I discovered Wicca about six years ago, *there* was the Goddess. It was wonderful to find a home. I had a problem with the concept of God as a male person, and always having to say ‘he this and

he that,” said forensic psychologist Lucille Reynolds, who had been brought up in an Anglican home and is currently the leader of Witches Unite.<sup>73</sup> She said (with a wink) that her two broomsticks are used for ritual cleansing – to removed negative energy from her space – and not for riding.

Despite their creed of causing “no harm” to anyone, the general public still regards witches with suspicion (as embodied in Western fairy tales). Reynolds says that on “outing to natural vortexes” they are so harassed by the public that they tend to concentrate now on the “inner pilgrimage.”<sup>74</sup>

### *Women Pilgrims and Peril*

That pilgrimage was of particular peril to women did not escape their admirers, particularly as women were seen to be more fragile than men. By implication, that meant that their journeys involved even more hardship and pain than men, and were therefore more virtuous and authentic. In the seventh century a Spanish monk, Valerius, discovered a journal kept by a Spanish lady, Egeria, who had crossed from Iberia to Palestine from 381-4. He regarded her pilgrimage as one of especial saintliness: “Nothing could hold her back, whether it was the labour of travelling the whole world, the perils of seas and rivers, the dread crags and fearsome mountains or the savage menaces of the heathen tribes, until with God’s help and her own unconquerable bravery, she had fulfilled all her faithful desires”, he wrote, in rather breathless prose.<sup>75</sup>

Pilgrimage may also have been a useful reason for escaping the strictures of home for women, as it gained acceptance and legitimacy. It was a woman, the Empress Helena (d. 328), mother of Constantine, who set the standard for all later Christian pilgrims. She was determined to find traces of Jesus’ life in Palestine and to her own satisfaction she did so, founding the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and many other churches.

The Catholic Church declared many of these early women travellers to be saints. One of the best known was the wealthy and nobly-born Roman widow Paula (d. 404), who travelled extensively with her daughter, Eustochium. While in Jerusalem they wrote a letter to a Roman friend, a woman we know only as Marcella, in which they describe their journey to North Africa in 385. Making their way along the Libyan and Egyptian coasts, they finally reached Jerusalem, where they spent the rest of their lives

supporting and financially assisting the monk Jerome, who was then translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin.<sup>76</sup>

After the death of her husband in the fourteenth century, Bridget set off to the Holy Land with her daughter. Ultimately she became Saint Bridget of Sweden (dying in 1373).<sup>77</sup>

The religious ecstatic Margery Kempe (b 1364) of Norfolk, England did not let her motherhood of fourteen children stop her pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Germany; in fact they allowed her to set aside her role as wife and mother, which she had amply proved. Her journeys, with all their tribulations, were published in “The Book of Margery Kempe”, the first autobiography ever to be written in English.<sup>78</sup> Kempe’s work bridges “the gap between outward pilgrimage and inner experience”, writes Colin Morris.<sup>79</sup> The linking of those two are, in this thesis’s understanding of pilgrimage, essential.

One of the most famous Japanese pilgrims was the Lady Sarashina, born about 1008, the daughter of a provincial governor. She kept diaries of her pilgrimages, which were admittedly frightening at times to her. Her mother pointed out the terrors of the pilgrimage sites of Hase, Ishiyama and Mount Kurama but Sarashina went anyway. After her marriage fell apart, she wrote: “Now that I was able to do exactly as I wished, I went on one distant pilgrimage after another. Some were delightful, some difficult, but I found great solace in them all, being confident that they would bring me future benefit.”<sup>80</sup>

There are women who have faced severe if not fatal hardships in insisting on walking their own paths. Three South African women, one white, one brown and one black, one of them old and two young, all resisting the society into which they were born, are discussed below as women who “lived on the edge”, and who today are themselves the subjects of pilgrimages. They are Helen Martins, who built The Owl House and Camel Yard, creating her “paradise” in her own back yard, Manche Masemola, who was cast out of her community and murdered by her parents, and Sarah Baartman, whose tragic end in Europe was superseded by her triumphant return home to South Africa. They had this in common: they were poor women, and they were disempowered – about as marginalised as it is possible to be.

*Stationary Pilgrimage: The Owl House*

Deep in the remote, fertile valley of Nieu Bethesda in South Africa, impoverished and alone, Helen Martins created a world so visionary and extraordinary that today people who know about it travel great distances to see her Owl House and Camel Yard. That would have delighted her, had she lived to see it. But more importantly, its creation was a great pilgrimage for “Miss Helen” herself and one of which she was acutely conscious.<sup>81</sup>

Unable to complete her work, fearful of going blind, Miss Helen – as she was known to the villagers – committed suicide in 1976. Though she felt she had not completed her pilgrimage, she nevertheless left behind a significant work of astonishing power. The “Owl House” as her space is generically known, is an example of the complex nature of pilgrimage spaces. It was created as Helen Martin’s spiritual space, where she lived out the latter part of her life as a pilgrim-anchorite, unable through poverty and social strictures to travel to the special places such as Bethlehem and Mecca, that she longed to see. Here she created her own symbolic sacred route, “The Road to Mecca,” with much of the sacred symbolism, both orthodox and pagan, of which she was aware.

Since her death it has become a pilgrimage destination. In the manner in which the locii of saints and heroes are visited by pilgrims in order to venerate them, so too do those who wish to honour Helen Martin and access her vision visit the Owl House and reflect on her painful quest. It is a site that is accessible to all, in the sense that her sculptures represent all – and none exclusively – of the world religions, as well as symbols of ancient and contemporary power. There is something for everyone, and in much the way in which visits to temple complexes<sup>82</sup> and sacred sites revolving around a particular history reflect a range of needs and responses from pilgrims, the Owl House produces similarly differing responses. Following Foucault, Adrian J. Ivakhiv has described such sacred spaces as “heterotopic,” spaces where meaning is contested, created and negotiated by many actors.<sup>83</sup>

Miss Helen was born in Nieu Bethesda on December 23, 1898, the youngest of ten children, six of whom survived – three boys and three girls.<sup>84</sup> The family lived in the home that was to become Helen’s, and is now the Owl House museum; a “typical” Karoo single-storey, with a *stoep*, or “balcony”, running along the front. They were short of

money yet decently educated – Helen at the nearby town of Graaff-Reinet’s teachers’ training college, about 50 kms away, nearly two days ride by wagon. Helen did well in college and married a local teacher, Johannes Pienaar, tall and “brilliant”, who divorced Helen after two years and “ran off” to England.<sup>85</sup> Helen had at least one, if not two, abortions during her short relationship with him; that she did so was considered a scandal in the family.

She worked in the Transvaal for a while, then moved to Muizenberg, Cape Town, where she struggled to make ends meet. When her mother became seriously ill, Helen, as the only unmarried daughter, moved back to Nieu Bethesda and nursed her until she died, to the great appreciation of her siblings. She had a poor relationship with her “cantankerous” father.<sup>86</sup> After his death she was ceded the family home by her siblings and soon afterwards began to change the interior, filling it with mirrors, knocking down walls and above all, covering almost every surface, including the ceilings, with painted images and ground glass. Rooms were crammed with lamps and candles; Helen wanted to invite light into her world, especially at night, and as her home took on the imagery of a pilgrims’ inn.<sup>87</sup>

Light is important to most religious belief. It is understood to come from God, or the Divine, and candles are used in ceremonies to represent this; to be “illuminated” is an important aspect of self-realisation, and saints are believed to have this quality. Helen is reported to have said: “There was very little brightness in my childhood. As soon as I was able to I began to express the brightness around me.”<sup>88</sup>

For her last thirteen years, until her suicide in 1976, she lived alone<sup>89</sup>, and relied on the help of her last worker and fellow crafter, Koos Malgas, the last of three local villagers who helped her with her creations. They were Helen’s “hands”, creating her visions and images drawn for their execution. She used the cheapest materials she could – wire and cement – and decorated the sculptures with glass ground in huge quantities from bottles collected for her by the local community, children in particular. To the dismay of her family, she spent all of her small income, from them and her pension, on her beloved creations at home, and on the generous (for the time) wages she paid her current worker.<sup>90</sup>

Her habitual reclusiveness was enhanced by her extreme embarrassment over her “deformed” feet. While being operated on for bunions, her little toes were mistakenly amputated.<sup>91</sup> From then on she was unable to comfortably wear shoes, and walked

barefoot or in sandals; there are reports of her hiding her feet by simply sinking down on them and covering them with her skirt, when she met others in the street.<sup>92</sup> An image of her thin, small body<sup>93</sup> and her feet with four toes each is in the Camel Yard, one of several she imagined were portraits of herself. As her yard began to fill with “foreign” images, some villagers wondered, frankly, if she was sane.

Besides owls, which she envisioned as receptacles of wisdom, and which are emblematic of her home, there are many images of mermaids in both her house and the Yard outside. Mermaids too, have no feet, yet they are embodiments of beauty and femininity, and graceful in their natural element of water. Inside the Owl House is one of her darkest sculptures, her “Little Devil”, the only statue she made completely by herself. The headless and armless torso, “blind” and bound in a sacklike garment, lies on the ground and has two legs sticking out – one human, and one a cloven hoof.<sup>94</sup>

Dozens of camels in the Yard form part of Helen’s “sacred pilgrimage to the East.”<sup>95</sup> Some of them are ridden or accompanied by wise men and they are connected with her Nativity. The garden is peopled with a hustling throng of pilgrims, ecstatic figures in arobatic poses, alluring mermaids, wise owls, other birds including peacocks, church spires, pyramids, wild animals such as lion, graceful giraffes with only their necks and heads showing (so they would be close to the plants she grew), and a sphinx. Her work became her life and her passion.<sup>96</sup> To Helen it was her “palace of splendour” and she could hardly bear to be away from it. Even while away on a rare family visit, she wanted to be home with her work. It was a driving vision of which she was proud, eagerly showing it off to visitors (those she admitted). Even though observers, including neighbours, sometimes ridiculed her work, and even berated her about it<sup>97</sup>, she never wavered. She told a young friend who was close to her during her last years, Jill Wenman, “they think I am crazy, the village idiot. And behaving like that keeps them away and I can get on with my work.”<sup>98</sup>

Her inspiration came from many different sources, though limited to what she could access in Nieu Bethesda. Family and friends gave her objects, pictures and books. She knew the work of William Blake, and loved *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* – she had some of his lines traced out in wire and hung outside.<sup>99</sup> There are Biblical references too, though she did not attend church. She appears to have regarded herself as a “vessel” through which her particular vision, incorporating all possible belief systems, could

manifest; she was an “enabler.” A prayer cut from a newspaper and kept between the covers of her precious *Rubáiyát*, offers a clue:

Do only Your will, Lord, Your will with me,  
You, Potter, with my clay.  
Form me and make me just as you will,  
On you, only, I wait, humble and still.<sup>100</sup>

The image of God as a *Pottebakker*, a divine potter, had resonance with Helen’s own work, as she moulded a landscape, inhabited by her own creation. Her ability to transcend the boundaries of received wisdom was evident when she filled the courtyard with her wise men and camels marching purposefully off towards what was supposed to be the East, but turned out to be the opposite direction. Realising that their pilgrimage was incorrectly oriented – to her, “East” was the origin of the sacred, and the rising sun – she simply hung a bilingual sign high up on her fence, announcing “East/Oos”. As the creator of her world she had the capacity to manipulate it at will – even the “fixed” points of the compass.

The East had a profound impression on her and her work reflects this; there are pyramids, a sphinx and Buddhas, let alone the camels. She wanted to find out what Mecca looked like, believing it to be a spiritual ideal.<sup>101</sup> In the end she built six “Meccas” of her own imagination, all different. They are contemplation shrines, one possessing a seat on which the inhabitant may meditate and reflect, while gazing down at a half-moon *dammetjie* (small water feature). Helen called them her *ligtehuise*, literally, her “lighthouses”, with a double allusion to “light” – both as a beacon, and as inspiration. The honey coloured bottles are extremely reminiscent of a hive, or of honeycomb.<sup>102</sup>

Her Camel Yard holds at least twenty-nine Wise Men or Magi, those who had rejected the material world on a spiritual quest to seek holiness and truth. They have the wisdom to seek and find a spiritual destination; many have their arms lifted up, or stretched out, reaching towards their goal, in the East. Many carry hooked staffs, the traditional pilgrim symbol. Elsewhere, ecstatic sun-worshippers arch backwards, arms upraised, to greet the origin of all light. Helen believed this posture was important; not to bow one’s head down, away from the sun, but to receive its glory on the upraised face.

The Christian nativity scene is set in a stable created of bottles. It shows Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus lying in a manger, a donkey, lambs and worshipping figure. The

importance of the divine child is echoed elsewhere; a child is the symbol of the future; there are four other babies found in her work.<sup>103</sup>

She also understood that sacred sites were often associated with places of healing. The Camel Yard includes a Japanese healing effigy on a water tank.<sup>104</sup> Water, significant in all belief systems and possessing a vital quality in the Karoo, where it is so scarce, was present all around the Camel Yard during her lifetime. There are small pools, a tank and even little depressions within the sculptured figures, which contained water.<sup>105</sup>

The Owl House also has a dangerous edge. One must sidle through it carefully. The profusion of ground glass changes even the most domestic of objects into traps. Doors, walls, chairs, suitcases – wherever there is a surface, there may be splintered glass. Nor would familiarity bring safety. Helen changed her objects around from week to week, creating a dynamic and subtly shifting world, and she herself was part of that energy and shimmering. The home had life in plenty – Helen, light, plants, birds – all these, including Helen herself, were part of the abundance of her world. This sense of life, Emslie reminds us, should always be borne in mind “now that the Owl House has acquired a static and posthumous quality.”<sup>106</sup> Jean Parker, when visiting the Owl House after Helen’s death, said “it’s as if you had switched off a light (without her there)...”<sup>107</sup>

Helen’s world was completely enclosed, and complete within itself – a pilgrimage and a universe collapsed into one. On the high fence that surrounds the property, she had erected a defiant declaration in spiralled wire script, reading “This is my world.”<sup>108</sup>

Susan Ross wrote that “the Camel Yard is essentially about a spiritual pilgrimage, with interludes, anecdotes, and diversions along the way. The spirituality portrayed is eclectic, and although pre-dominantly Christian (sic), shows an openness to worshipping a high being who might encompass all these different religious viewpoints.”<sup>109</sup>

“Helen undertook the harsh and hurried desert journey through the hot and dry sands of Egypt to arrive at her Bethlehem. She also undertook the still interior journey, and saw contemplation and meditation as an alternative pathway on the road to the acquisition of self-knowledge and the approach to the Divine. Helen’s Buddha and her meditating Hindu figure embody the interior quest,” wrote Emslie.<sup>110</sup> These Eastern figures had made an early appearance in her yard. Yet it is the ecstatic sun-worshippers, arching back to greet the glorious Sun, which are among the most graceful and yearning

sculptural pieces in the yard. Some are almost ethereal. Helen was gradually moving away from a (literally) concretized world into soaring dimensions that no longer bound her to this hard and disappointing life.

On a cold winter's day in 1976, Helen drank a deathly potion of caustic soda. She had been in failing health, reporting to her intimates that she was tired and debilitated, sleeping a lot. She was also afraid of going blind.<sup>111</sup> As one who had been so fixated on light, the possibility of permanent darkness must have been unbearable to contemplate. After being discovered by a neighbour, she was rushed to the hospital in Graaff-Reinet and died three days later, aged 78.

Helen had asked that all her things should remain together in the house, clearly hoping that the Owl House would survive her death and that her vision would be recognised by others.<sup>112</sup> However, many of her items, especially the lamps, were removed. Her wish that her ashes should be mixed with her precious, difficult to obtain, red glass in her pantry, and used to decorate "Oswald", the large benevolent owl which sits outside her back door, was sadly never carried through. Eventually Koos Malgas scattered some of her ashes in the Camel Yard.

To the astonishment of the villagers, who had frankly thought Helen's work to be more than odd, visitors began to make the long trek to their valley specifically to see her work. But the pilgrimage to the Owl House really began after 1992, when a film, "The Road to Mecca", based on Athol Fugard's play of that name, was made starring Oscar-winner Kathy Bates and Yvonne Bryceland, who played Miss Helen. Presently, the Owl House is a museum and has been proclaimed a National Monument. Much work has been done to restore crumbling sculptures with the assistance of the Friends of the Owl House. Thousands of visitors – more than 15,000 a year, according to recent tourist figures (a considerable number, given the off-the-beaten-track nature of the place) - and also pilgrims, who make their way there every year, are also encroaching on a fragile environment. Its long-term survival is deeply uncertain.<sup>113</sup>

Helen Martins was a visionary and a pilgrim. Anchored because of her poverty and inhibitions, she nevertheless had an urgent and profound vision of her quest, and believed its completion to be of unique significance. Few of those who make the long trek there every year are unmoved by her work.<sup>114</sup>

Though Helen never finished her life's work, to her own satisfaction (perhaps she would never have been able to), she created a profound and important legacy.

Pilgrimages there, today, are made in honour of her vision. Powerless and poor, tiny and physically damaged, she represents the resilience of women survivors everywhere.

*Pilgrimage of Veneration: A Maiden Martyr*

Manche Masemola was a poor, rural girl who was beaten to death by her parents in 1928 because of her conversion to Christianity. Her memory may well have disappeared into the mists of obscurity, yet against all expectations, a statue of her now stands above the main entrance of Westminster Abbey in London, highly visible to all the world.

This remarkable – and unprecedented – journey defies all the odds. As a young, rural Pedi maiden, disempowered on each of these counts, she “should” have remained invisible, the miserable lot of many of her contemporaries. Black, female and poor, illiterate, fourteen years old, there was no reason to think that this young person would ever achieve international recognition. Manche herself would have been the last person to imagine any such accolade.

But on July 9, 1998, before an international audience led by Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, the Archbishop of Canterbury unveiled ten statues of twentieth century Christian martyrs in the niches on the West front of the Abbey – and Manche Masemola was one of them, in the illustrious company of Martin Luther King and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, two of the most famous churchmen of their times.

And every August a pilgrimage is made to her grave in Sekhukhuneland.

Manche Masemola was a dutiful daughter, one of four children in her family, who lived in the village of Marishane, about ten miles from a mission station with a hospital, church and school named Jane Furse (after the daughter of Michael Furse, Bishop of Pretoria, and his wife Frances. Jane died in 1918, a fortnight before her fourteenth birthday). Jane’s father became Bishop of St Albans, England, where money was raised for the mission centre to be opened in 1921,<sup>115</sup> the place where Manche encountered Christianity. So the unhappy fortunes of these two young girls from such different backgrounds, Manche and Jane, both dead too soon, became strangely conjoined.

There is no record of Manche’s birth, but it was probably about 1913; she had two older brothers and a younger sister, Mabule, also to die tragically young, and a

cousin, Lucia, who lived with them because her mother (sister of Manche's mother) had died. Manche's father had arable land and therefore did not have to be a migrant worker, the hard lot of most young men after the Pedi had lost their land to the British colonisers in 1879. Many members of Pedi society equated the colonisers with the missionaries; both had wanted to strip them of their traditional way of life – and for some decades there had been a power struggle between those Pedi who clung to the source of their original identity and power, and those who accepted change.

The Masemolas were traditionalists. That they were deeply displeased about their daughter's interest in Christianity is an understatement; they did everything in their power to stop her. Manche, with her cousin Lucia, had heard the local Father preach at St Peter's Church in Marishane. Fr. Augustine Moeka was aware of the tensions between his mission and the community, and advised young converts not to defy their parents.<sup>116</sup>

The Masemolas were among many of their community who linked the missionaries with their own loss of freedom, and they were determined to stop Manche.<sup>117</sup> Nothing worked; Manche, though just a "skinny little girl", was nothing if not determined and headstrong – like her mother.<sup>118</sup> Her cousin Lucia was sent away, further isolating her; her parents, believing that incense used by the Church had bewitched her, consulted a traditional healer who made a potion for Manche, which they forced her to swallow. It did not produce the required effect. Then her mother confiscated her clothes, so she could not attend church, but Manche continued to pray outdoors, several times a day.<sup>119</sup>

The beatings began from about October, 1927. There was never any question of interference with parents' authority, also much of this physical abuse happened away from the village. The Masemolas, as was customary, owned fields some distance away, and would spend summer months living there, cultivating their crops and living in a temporary hut. According to an eyewitness account by Elesina Masemola, they took her into their fields on or about February 4, 1928 (this day is kept as the feast day of Manche) and beat her until she died. Anxious to bury her body quickly, they wrapped it in a blanket and took it to the local burial ground, but according to local tradition, wherever they dug, they struck rock. Locals noted that the ground "refused to accept her." Finally they took her body some distance away and at the foot of a large granite rock, on which she allegedly used to sit while recovering from her previous beatings, they managed to inter her.<sup>120</sup>

Father Moeka remembered that in January 1928, the last time he had seen her, Manche told him that “I shall be baptized in my own blood.” This may seem uncommonly melodramatic, but the previous October she had told him about the beatings and it is recorded that she had said, “If they cut off my head, I will never leave my faith”.<sup>121</sup> She seemed to have realised that her parents’ resistance to her conversion was implacable. Determined that what he saw as her martyrdom should not go unmarked, Father Moeka went to some trouble to establish the site of her grave, to tell the Church leaders about her death, and to encourage them to visit the site.

No steps were taken to inform the State authorities about the crime, but that was not uncommon; the Pedi community would not have welcomed government interference and no doubt officials would have been met with a wall of silence. The Church would not have wanted to stir up hostilities in an already volatile situation. If it had not been for Moeka’s persistence, however, Manche would have become one more teenager who had succumbed to domestic violence, and simply disappeared.

Why were the Masemolas – the mother in particular, it is reported – so bitterly angry? By rejecting their way of life, Manche – like so many teenagers – appeared to be disrespectful of them. They had also noticed that the nuns at the mission at Jane Furse were not married. If Manche converted, they were afraid that she would not marry and have children, essential to the Pedi understanding of fulfilling a pre-ordained role in life. It has been speculated that they were worried about losing *lobola* (bride tribute, usually of cattle), which they would expect from her future husband, and which would add to their wealth and prestige in an impoverished area.

Her break from traditional religious and ritual practice was seen as delinquent. As a young girl she was expected to “toe the line”; instead, she chose to live “on the edge.” To some, she would have got what she deserved.

For decades, her parents remained adamantly opposed to Christianity, which they believed bewitched people, and also strongly denied that they had caused their daughter’s death. Peter Anderson, who lived in the area, recalls tales that pilgrims walking past the parent’s house to her grave would be pelted with stones and endure abuse hurled at them.<sup>122</sup> Manche’s mother in particular was hostile, and would spit at the pilgrims; for four decades she resolutely attacked Church practice. Eventually, she was approached by a young relative, Norah Masemola Tsebe, and her mind was changed. She was converted and baptized in 1969 in St Peter’s Church, Marishane by Bishop Edward

Knapp-Fisher, when she was over eighty years old, taking the name “Magdalene.” She was in church three hours before the service; villagers, noting her wizened little body, with hardship imprinted on it, announced that “Saul became Paul.”<sup>123</sup> She died at the hospital in Jane Furse, where there is a children’s ward named after Manche.

The first organised pilgrimage of veneration to her grave was in 1935, when the Bishop of Pretoria, Wilfred Parker, celebrated a requiem mass there at Rogationtide with the newly appointed Canon Moeka; a group of African celebrants were also present, including the Daughters of Mary. There was another pilgrimage to visit the grave in September, 1941, and in July, 1949, Francis Blake led the pilgrimage, intending to hold a prayer meeting there. Reports were that the “sense of the numinous” on the hillside was so strong that the pilgrims simply knelt together in silence for about 30 minutes, and then went home.<sup>124</sup>

Pilgrimages to her grave began to take on a ritual appearance and eventually they became established as an annual event, held in August in order to avoid the rains, and not on Manche’s Feast Day in February. Hundreds, even thousands, attend, many bussing in from Pretoria, Witbank and Phalaborwa, where there is a church named in her memory.

The grave, object of the pilgrimage, is an attractive sight, with big, flat stones and the euphorbia trees and aloes blooming red in August. There are little crosses and a plaque. Smartly dressed pilgrims attend “as if they were going to church”, having endured the long journey of several hours, and a night’s singing in the local church.<sup>125</sup> As the morning wears on, the day grows hot. Choirs sing, priests speak, and the service continues for some hours until the afternoon, when a “feast”, similar to a picnic, is held.<sup>126</sup> The mood is festive, not mournful, though also reverent.

Bishops in South Africa recommended in 1937 that her name be added to the calendar of commemorations “at the first convenient opportunity.” Apparently it took them 38 years to find that opportunity, as her name was not included until 1975, at a time when there was a rush to forge closer links with local communities. Her pilgrimage cult is not mentioned in general histories of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa. During most of its history little attention was paid to African Christians, let alone women.<sup>127</sup>

In the 1990s in the spirit of an era that recognised the value of the inclusion of women, opportunity beckoned. During the restoration of Westminster Abbey, begun in

1973, the idea was conceived to use to ten empty Gothic niches on the West front of the Abbey (today its main entrance) to convey a message – that there were more Christian martyrdoms in the twentieth century than at any other period in history, greatly exceeding the persecutions of the early Church. Standing together, the statues would represent the entire gamut of Christian witness and martyrdom, across a wide range of denominations, cultures and continents.<sup>128</sup>

Mandy Goedhals believes that the inclusion of Manche is appropriately representative of the great masses of South Africa,<sup>129</sup> and even the numberless people of Africa itself, “because, like them, she has been hidden from history. It is difficult to imagine a more marginalized person. A member of an oppressed race, as a young woman within her own society, she owed respect and obedience to all except young children...her labour was controlled by her parents, and she could not read or write.”<sup>130</sup>

There were of course no images of Manche to draw from. Though Dr Harvey recalls the process of producing Manche’s likeness was done “entirely in consultation with the Church in South Africa,” the result is not entirely satisfactory from an African perspective, in that the drapery is like nothing we know here. It is, however, in general keeping with the medieval style chosen to “fit” into the style of the venerable Abbey.<sup>131</sup>

A formal service was held on July 9, 1998, in Westminster Abbey before British Royalty and representatives from many parts of the world, at twelve noon. The Order of Service announced on the cover: “The White-robed Army of Martyrs Praise You.” Then the Unveiling and Dedication of Statues took place outside the Great West Door, facing the statues. Sister Markey remembered the moment when the statues were unveiled as “the most moving thing I’ve ever experienced.”<sup>132</sup> Among those who participated in the unveiling was the great-nephew of martyr St Elizabeth of Russia, HRH Prince Philip, who read from the Acts of the Apostles (7: 55-60).<sup>133</sup>

There, today, stands the statute of Manche Masemola, second from the left, high above the descendants of the people who colonised her country. The statue, like the others, is exposed to the cold rain and chilly climate of a land foreign to her. But back in Sekhukhuneland, every August, the euphorbias and aloes bloom red in the hot noonday sun, as pilgrims gather to venerate her mortal remains. She remains a symbol of not only her martyrdom to Christianity, but of the painful clash between unequally matched cultures, and of the powerlessness of a young maiden caught up in the eternal battle between preserving the past and coming to terms with the future.

***“I Have Come To Take You Home”: Pilgrimage of Reclamation***

Much of South Africa was gripped by the sight, in May 2002, of a coffin being wheeled into Cape Town International airport, draped in a South African flag and flanked by six Khoi-San children. Inside the coffin were the remains of a woman born more than two hundred years before, and whose doleful journey to Europe in search of riches ended in tragedy.

Sarah Baartman was born in 1789 into the Griqua tribe of the Eastern Cape (related to the KhoiSan people who are now understood to be the first aboriginal dwellers of the southern tip of Africa). Her family moved to Cape Town, and while working as a 20-year-old servant to a local farmer, she caught the eye of a visiting ship’s surgeon from England, William Dunlop, who was fascinated by what he considered her curious biological features, specifically her remarkably large *steatopygia* (enlarged buttocks).

Dunlop persuaded her to return to England with him, to be the subject of medical “research,” that would make her rich and famous. She was 21 years old when she arrived in London and was examined by medical scientists who were particularly interested in her “Hottentot apron,” as they called it, unusually elongated labia, a genital feature of some KhoiSan women of the time. It was this feature in particular which captivated the prurient interest of London society, who paid one shilling to see her exhibited. At one point she was displayed as a wild animal in a cage, dancing for her keeper.<sup>134</sup>

In 1814 she was taken to Paris and exhibited according to archival accounts by a “showman of wild animals” in a travelling circus. Her anatomy inspired a comic opera, “*The Hottentot Venus or Hatred to French Women*,” that encapsulated the complex racial and sexual prejudices in Europe at that time. It appears that Baartman, who was now working as a prostitute to survive, drank heavily to cope with the humiliation. She died a lonely alcoholic on January 1, 1816, but even her death did not end her ordeal. Less than 24 hours later she was dissected by Baron George Cuvier, who cast her body in wax and pickled her brain and genitals, which were put on display in the *Musee de l’Homme* (Museum of Mankind). They were withdrawn from public view in 1974, and put in storage.

But some South Africans had not forgotten her. In 1994, Nelson Mandela requested France to return her remains, and the eminent South African

palaeoanthropologist Professor Phillip Tobias was asked to negotiate with them.<sup>135</sup> During the following eight years of protracted negotiations, a South African “Coloured” student studying at the University of Utrecht in 1998 became desperately homesick, missing her mother who had recently died. Diana Ferrus said, “I told myself if I miss my mother this much, how much did Sarah Baartman miss her mother? She was so young still.”<sup>136</sup> The result was a poem she wrote for Sarah Baartman that includes “I have come to take you home/where the ancient mountains shout your name/I have made your bed at the foot of the hill/your blankets are covered in *buchu* and mint...” (see *Appendix B for full text*).<sup>137</sup> This tribute became a focus of the campaign for Sarah Baartman’s return and was the first poem written into French law in a Bill, submitted by Senator Nicholas About, that enabled the return of the remains.<sup>138</sup>

On January 29, 2002, the night before the Bill was to be debated in the French Parliament, a number of poets, artists and activists met in Cape Town for a prayer/energy-giving session.<sup>139</sup> They played drums, sang and burnt traditional herbs as the full moon rose. The next day the French Senate voted that the remains of Sarah Baartman be repatriated within two months. At the handing-over ceremony in Paris, Diana Ferrus recited her powerful poem. “I thought it was one way (sic) to have this poem on a page in front of you, but it would be something else to hear it from me. I said the poem like I never did before. The French were ashamed. I saw many of them hanging their heads. After the ceremony they took a long time to come to me,” she said.

Diana had indeed kept her promise to take Sarah Baartman home, along with the deputy-minister of Arts and Culture, Bridgitte Mabandla, the South African ambassador to France,<sup>140</sup> and others, who took possession of her remains in France on April 29. They were greeted at Cape Town airport by Professor Tobias and a crowd of distinguished guests and celebrities. Her remains were formally buried on Women’s Day, August 9, 2002 in the area of her birth, the Gamtoos River Valley in the Eastern Cape; the entire proceedings were captured live on television.

“Sarah’s return was a pilgrimage for her and for many South Africans, in fact for many people all over the world. I think it is essentially so because the poem speaks about loss. Many people, including myself, mourn the loss of the parts of our lives which we were denied (by apartheid), which we did not know of. The return of Sarah has created an awareness of who we were, where we come from – that which we denied and that others denied us.

“We needed Sarah to go on the first leg of her ‘pilgrimage’ and to complete this pilgrimage at the time she did. She was the one chosen to experience the humiliation, the degradation, whose body was used to write these atrocities on. But she came back cleansed, cleansed because the French apologised, saying their ‘science’ was untrue. She came back to her people then because they needed cleansing,” says Diana Ferrus.<sup>141</sup> She adds that on their return, many people reported going on a search/pilgrimage from within and finding “moral significance” in what they discovered; “Yes, her return made us journey to a place where we once ‘lived’, a place that we can always journey back to, to seek reassurance, to seek comfort. I talk of home.”

When I first asked Diana Ferrus whether she considered her own role in the events a pilgrimage, she replied, emphatically, “Oh, *yes*. It was a pilgrimage of healing, and of reclaiming my identity.” For this reason, among others, the pilgrimage of Sarah Baartman “home” can be identified not only as one of recovery, but more specifically, of reclamation. In the acknowledgement of Sarah Baartman as a “special case,”<sup>142</sup> and of the injustices that were done to her, a sense of restoration and national pride was affirmed.

### *Finding Space*

Though women participate in most pilgrimages, there are also specific pilgrimages which have particular resonance for them. These either reclaim particular women who may become the objects themselves of veneration – often women who have been outcast from society during their lifetimes – or they reclaim sacred space from which women have been, either consciously or not, removed. Such women’s pilgrimages enable them to partake fully in religious rituals, such as those of healing, initiation into womanhood or of honouring the goddess and/or the feminine in the divine.

There are also women’s pilgrimages to traditionally “mixed” shrines such as Tinos, in Greece; although Catholicism is male-dominant, such pilgrimages create a special space for women in their public function as mothers – women who have taken vows to journey there are given special recognition and privileges. These women remain “inside” society – yet the dramatic nature of their vows has made them highly visible.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless the place of women in society is frequently one in which visibility may expose them to harm or ridicule. Pilgrimage may at times be a quiet function, close to domestic confines, as was that of Helen Martins.

Pilgrimages of and for women are frequently made in the area we would expect – that of fertility and the completion of a woman’s public role as mother. This form of pilgrimage is unlikely ever to disappear, although instead of travelling to the sacred Celtic stone circles, the Virgin of Guadalupe, to Tinos in Greece, the shrine of the Lady of the Realm in Vietnam, or to Badimong in South Africa, some modern women may choose to make their pilgrimages today to those chapels known as fertility clinics, in order to find gestative completion.

Furthermore, the traditional concept of women as “carers” and “givers” results all too often in women feeling fatigued and depleted; pilgrimages may also hold the promise of restorative action. The Rev. Mpho Tutu, daughter of the South African Nobel Laureate, Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, led a group of 20 women (from the United States) on a pilgrimage to South Africa in 2005 with the explicit intention of being on the receiving end. “We seldom go on a journey having admitted our tiredness, our busyness, our need for rest, renewal and replenishment,” she said. Although the journey included significant historical sights, such as Robben Island, the primary intention was to go “empty-handed; with palms cupped ready to receive, to encounter the world on its own terms, to feel everything, to listen for the breath of God.”<sup>144</sup>

In addition to the recognition that forms of “gender-exclusive” pilgrimages are justified because of the particular needs of women, there is a growing recognition in the contemporary world that an ancient, long-standing veneration of female divine power existed and was suppressed by male-dominant religions for millennia. Because of that, there has been for some decades an attempt by female theologians to restore the rightful role of women as regards the early Christian community. An example of this is Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s book, *In Memory of Her: a Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, in which she demonstrates that women played a great role in the “Jesus Movement,” were his chosen evangelists of his message, and were also rich patrons and prominent leaders, all of which seems, all too frequently and conveniently, to have been forgotten by Church authorities as the role of women has been “written out” of Christian history, or ignored.<sup>145</sup>

Women, like men, are adept at survival strategies. In a milieu in which women are not generally considered to be the equal of men in decision-making processes, some women leaders in South Africa have headed breakaway apostolic Zionist and Ethiopian church movements. Women like “MaMofokeng,” Masechaba Mofokeng, who is the

bishop of her self-founded Holy Jerusalem Church of Repentance in Jabulani, Soweto, specialise in “spiritual healing” in an indigenous, confessing and praying style of Christianity. Other women-led churches recently established include Joyce Mthembu’s Fivefold Outreach Ministries in Pimville, Thandi Sithole’s Vukukhanye Jerusalem in Chiawelo, Beauty Masina’s Holy Jerusalem Church in Katlehong, Puree Balyi’s St John’s Church in Fourways, and Lindi Mkhwanzai’s Holy Jerusalem Church in Leondale.

The reason for this new development is that, according to Bishop Kenosi Mofokeng of the African Progressive Baptist Church in Walkerville, many mainstream churches bar women ministers. “It’s only they who can’t countenance woman priests,” she says, “but God chooses who he wants to work with him, man or woman.”<sup>146</sup> Her mentor was Bishop Mother Christinah Nku, who broke away from the Apostolic Faith Mission Church to establish the St John’s Church in Evaton, near Vereeniging. The churches are packed; the community is taking them seriously. Though it is not unusual in mainstream Protestant churches today to see female priests, it is far more unusual to see this latter development in a world of conservative African traditionalists. In a contrasting move, the orthodox Afrikaans church, *Die Gereformeerde Kerk* (the Reformed Church) decided in January, 2006, not to reform and rejected women in any key leadership positions. One of the women concerned expressed disappointment and pledged to what women have all too often been reduced to – waiting patiently for a miracle.<sup>147</sup>

What we see demonstrated in this chapter is not an attempt to reject the male world, but to affirm the female world. In an era in which there is increasing pressure to provide equal rights for women globally, and to provide legitimate spaces for women to live full, unhindered lives, it should not be surprising that pilgrimage itself should form part of that sacred space.

## CONCLUSION

The longevity of pilgrimage has been established. Sacred journeys were undertaken long before they could be written down, evident from archaeological evidence, and oral and traditional knowledge. Early pilgrim journeys often coincided with the seasons, and cycles of the sun and moon, and many still do; the Yucatec Maya word *ximbal* means both pilgrimage, and the passage of the stars.

Religious roaming is so deeply entrenched in us that nothing stops it, not even when what we do is claimed to be inauthentic. We just do it anyway. This is very extraordinary: what can possibly be the value of undertaking something which is so obviously difficult and controversial?

There are many motives for pilgrimage; overall, they seem to come down to the need to identify with “something bigger than oneself”, a sense of engaging in a reciprocal relationship which gives meaning and which allows a dialogue with a “higher” purpose – without outside interference.<sup>1</sup> The great variety of reasons for pilgrimage, of *intent*, lays the foundation for the idea that it is more useful to look at the category of pilgrimage function than to identify it solely on the religion of the pilgrim. Observing that a pilgrimage is Christian, or Hindu, or any other faith- or ideological-system may be less useful than discerning whether it is a pilgrimage of veneration, healing, loss or barter, and is certainly a less divisive method. Though the faith of a pilgrim will give us clues to the significance of symbol and ritual action, it is worth remembering that pilgrims from different backgrounds on a path to healing, for example, may have much more in common than pilgrims from within a single overarching faith system. Walsingham is just one such example; any contested site of rival factions will suffice to make the point.

Critically important, a pilgrimage can be “owned” by an individual, even one who is uneducated, impious and unimpressed with what the world has to offer. That pilgrim is also, just like the rich and famous on the same journey, able to access power without mediation. It is in that sense profoundly democratic, even when engaged by an entire community.

Authenticity continues to be an overarching issue within the pilgrim’s search for meaning and connection to a greater source of power, but increasingly we understand that the meaning of pilgrimage is not static. There is a long-held affection by pilgrims world-

wide for doing things “as they were done in the past,” an idea that earlier pilgrims were more authentic. That does not stop pilgrims using modern transport to reach a pilgrimage route, or site, or the Internet, or telephones or any other form of modern technology that will enhance their experience and provide greater safety. Though attempts are frequently made to “set” a tradition within a pilgrimage, the form of pilgrimage may change from culture to culture, and within the culture too. Attempts to set parameters are culturally bound and, as cultures inevitably change, so do those parameters.

An example of change may occur within pilgrimage tradition even when based on very traditional circumstances. The “Night of Peace” pilgrimage to Shepherd’s Field at Bethlehem took place on December 25, 1999, the “Jubilee Christmas.” Five countries participated in what was the climax of the late-millennium Pilgrim Virgin Movement (*see Chapter Four: Pilgrimages of Veneration*); thousands of pilgrims accompanying their Pilgrim Virgin statues and icons flocked to Shepherd’s Field, an large open space beneath a Franciscan Sanctuary outside Bethlehem.<sup>2</sup>

Giant screens and sound systems were erected, 11 “Bedouin tents” were set up to provide shade during the day, and a large Nativity Scene, complete with figures of the Holy Family and tinsel was set up under an open thatched structure on a mound. Pilgrims arrived in cars and on camels. As the chilly, wet night fell, the Pilgrim Virgin statues and icons were “presented” to the “Holy Family” by the pilgrims, some of whom had traveled thousands of kilometers for the event: it was described as a “night of healing and reconciliation.” Many presented their statues to statues of the Holy Family in a ritual of introduction, while kneeling and/or praying. Meanwhile a running commentary of events appeared on the screens and over the sound systems, in several languages.

This was followed by an extravagant Sound and Light Show on the theme of the Nativity watched by pilgrims sitting in white plastic chairs. The voice-over pointed out that the birth of the Holy Child signified that “Time was suspended in the middle of History.”

What was described as the “highlight of the evening” was a midnight Mass, broadcast live onto the large screens from the St. Catherine’s Basilica in Bethlehem, just three kilometers away. This broadcast also carried live footage of Pope John Paul II in Rome, witnessing the Midnight Mass. After this, pilgrims in Shepherd’s Field (which may or may not be near the actual field mentioned in the Nativity story) were able to participate in Mass, if they wished. A grand firework display, filling the skies with

explosions of light – sometimes like stars – closed the cold vigil as they welcomed in the Year of the Jubilee.

It is a difficult event for an observer (like myself, seeing it on film) to unpack. What part of it was “real”, and what part “replicated” or “virtual?” All, or some, or none? And am I guilty of the “authenticity trap?” The participants seemed for the most part not to be bothered with such questions, to be experiencing sincere emotional connections to the ritual, a “heightened reality” – some wept, others beamed, or were rapt in concentration during the Sound and Light Show, and the live broadcast. It appeared to be a pilgrimage of veneration and devotion, but was also described as one of “peace and reconciliation.” When the statues of the Pilgrim Virgin were presented to the statue of the Virgin (in the Nativity Scene), what was the function? There is little doubt that it was of profound significance to the pilgrims, some of whom had accompanied their statues or icons for very long distances within and from their homelands.

Did the live broadcast or the Sound and Light Show make it a “virtual” pilgrimage in the sense that it was enacted in “other” space? Surely not, for otherwise why would the pilgrims have travelled so far to be present on Christmas Day (sacred time) on Shepherd’s Field (sacred geography) to see an enactment of the Nativity (sacred props and symbols) and participate in Mass (sacred rituals, smells), while taking home sacred souvenirs – when they could have watched the “highlight” on television at home? And were the fireworks sacred or secular (or both, or neither)? Furthermore, it was filmed and later broadcast on a devotional Catholic channel, and is available on video, and is sometimes used as part of “witnessing” faith.

To the observer, such rituals will always raise questions and puzzles. To the participants, the pilgrims, things could not have been clearer. Their intent was to venerate, heal and/or give thanks (specified in records of the proceedings). What could be clearer?

Recognition of the multiplicity of meanings on any given pilgrimage and a resultant flexibility of approach is critical. As every single pilgrim experience is an individual one, even within a group, there is no “right way” to interpret any pilgrimage though there are repetitive attempts to insist on this.

Some pilgrimages remain exclusive, though increasingly there seems to be a more universal acceptance of inclusivity and a greater inclination to accord dignity to the sacred journeys of others. Women’s pilgrimages form an exclusivity of a sort, yet we

have almost always accepted some form of division within ritual, to celebrate or signify a particular aspect of humanity. Rituals of initiation are frequently gender-specific, as many other rites of passage including birth (ritual seclusion, infant circumcision), puberty and even death (some cultures prioritise male mourners). Separation may be purely functional, or it may be to entrench power relations. At this present time in which women are generally disadvantaged in a world overwhelmingly of male control (even though individuals may be advantaged), and in which the narratives of human activity have often been written by and focused on men, it seems to me that there is legitimacy in placing some emphasis on the importance to women of finding a feminine quality and purpose in ritual action. Fertility, conception and birth are usually assumed to be women's issues, though men may have much at stake in the eventual outcome. Yet most of the pilgrimages in the "women's section" fall into categories such as veneration, healing or recovery, indicating universal concerns; it would be encouraging to imagine a world in which "women's concerns" and the desire to see female space reflected in all rituals and religions, become a universal goal.

There has been some reservation that significant "obviously secular" journeys should annex the word "pilgrimage." As Jean Comaroff cautioned us, the division between sacred and secular is an artificial one, a construct of our own. The first step is to recognise that, and the second is to acknowledge that there have always been disputes over what is authentic and what is not.<sup>3</sup> The row is not a new one. A position will hopefully be reached in which the authenticity of others is not seen as a denial of one's own claim to the authentic, and one in which different views are acknowledged, not reviled. Chaucer's mixed bag of would-be saints and sinners on the road to Canterbury should be a caution to us all not to be too precious in our notions of who makes a sacred journey, and why. The modern pilgrim may equally walk to churches or football cathedrals.

Jennifer Westwood reminds us that there is seemingly no limit "to the range of desires of the human heart laid bare before deity,"<sup>4</sup> and gives a remarkable example. In the narcotics capital of Culiacán, northern Mexico, the *narcotraficantes* (drug traffickers) venerate the shrine of Jesús Malverde, a dead bandit hanged from a tree in 1909. Although he has never been recognised by the Church, he has his own feast day, May 3, when crowds gather before the candlelit shrine to which the *narcotraficantes* give liberally. Though drug lords, they are also devoutly religious, practicing the Catholicism

of rural Mexico, with its visions, saints and miracles. They wear Malverde scapulars, and ask him for a generous harvest for the cocaine and marijuana farmers in the Sierra Madre. He is also requested to safeguard their drugs on the journey to the U.S. Their hit-men apparently also ask for their bullets to be blessed. Ordinary people support the shrine, for the drug crops employ them, and support their hospitals, orphanages and schools, not to mention the Jesús Malverde Funeral Service provided free for the poor. In a “Robin Hood” analogy, the poor see Jesús as a hero who robs the rich to provide for the poor.

That such a pilgrimage exists at all will no doubt come as a shock to many law-abiding citizens. Yet it fulfils all the requirements of the definition suggested in Chapter One: “humans engaged in a literal or metaphoric journey with an urgent and profound sense of purpose, and which offers a sense of transformation or completion to them.” Their devotional frame of mind and sense of purpose is unquestionable. Does our surprise lie in their honouring a *bandito*, or that the shrine is sustained by drug barons? Their veneration is intricately involved in all the issues that matter deeply to us; survival, health, employment, education, burial rites and that sense of connectedness to “something bigger.” Are we guilty of assuming that “some pilgrims are better than others?” And who will be the judge of that? Who sets the barriers between right and wrong? It is worth reminding ourselves of the Australian aborigine, who was quoted by Michael Jackson: “That’s the whitefella way,” he said irritably, “fixing boundaries.”<sup>5</sup>

Mental geography inevitably supercedes physical geography on any pilgrimage, even when the sacred site is as famous as Jerusalem or Mecca or Amritsar. It is the connecting bridge *inside* us that makes the link of significance; if it is not there the site may be no more important than a museum or a shopping mall. One of the most prescient comments to be made in this regard came from a simple cook; in researching Rajasthani pilgrims in India, Ann Gold asked her “Is God found in *tirthas*?” Sohan replied, “No. God is in this jug,” tapping her chest.<sup>6</sup>

It is apparent that no matter how long or demanding the physical journey, it is invariably shadowed and subservient to the inner course. In essence, the ultimate pilgrimage is always the one to the inside.

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## APPENDIX B: TRIBUTE TO SARAH BAARTMAN

*“I have come to take you home,” by Diana Ferrus, 1998.*

*(printed with kind permission of the author)*

I have come to take you home.  
Remember the veld –  
the lush green grass beneath the big oak trees?  
The air is cool there and the sun does not burn.  
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,  
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,  
the proteas stand in yellow and white  
and the water in the stream chuckles sing-songs  
as it hobbles along over little stones.

I have come to wrench you away –  
away from the poking eyes of the man-made monster  
who lives in the dark with his clutches of imperialism,  
who dissects your body bit by bit,  
who likens your soul to that of satan  
and declares himself the ultimate God!

I have come to soothe your heavy heart,  
I offer my bosom to your weary soul.  
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands,  
run my lips over the lines in your neck,  
feast my eyes on the beauty of you  
and I will sing for you –  
for I have come to bring you peace.

I have come to take you home  
where the ancient mountains shout your name.  
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,  
your blankets are covered with buchu and mint,  
the proteas stand in yellow and white –  
I have come to take you home  
where I will sing for you,  
for you have brought me peace,  
for you have brought us peace.

### Glossary:

**Buchu** – a herb used by Khoikhoi people for medicinal purposes

**Proteas** – the national flower of South Africa

**Veld** – wide open space

## ENDNOTES.

### ENDNOTES: INTRODUCTION.

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 103. It is the recognition of this fundamental characteristic of ritual that most sharply distinguishes our understanding from that of the Reformers, with their all too easy equation of ritual with blind and thoughtless habit, he suggests.

<sup>2</sup> Walter H. Capps, "Commentary," in *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*, ed. Laura Honko (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 185. He suggests that at some future point, the turn must be taken away from permanence to processes of change, motion, movement and spontaneity.

### ENDNOTES: CHAPTER ONE.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Comaroff, personal interview, Cape Town, February 17, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Reader, "Conclusions," in Ian Reader and Tony Walter, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), 222.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>4</sup> "Bede" means "prayer or supplication" and "vaart" is a journey or navigation. "Pelgrim" is "pilgrim" and "tog" is also a journey (though it has other definitions, such as in "ekstus-tog", excuse me). The difference lies in usage; the "Pilgrim Fathers" would refered to only as "Pelgrimvaders"; a pious journey to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem would be a "bedevaart."

<sup>5</sup> Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 135. On the more potent pilgrimage, the *Yatra*, travelling "paired" (such as a husband and wife) is considered to have high value although sex is definitely proscribed.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), 180.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Shrady, *Sacred Roads: Adventures From the Pilgrimage Trail* (London: Viking, 1999), 119.

<sup>10</sup> Meister Eckhart, a Dominican, was a great German mystic (1260-1327). His attempt to combine solid theology with religious emotion, in particular to rekindle the "Divine Spark", the *Seelenfünklein*, was seen by some as pantheistic and he was accused of heresy though not executed. See Sidney Painter, *A History of the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 420-1, also Frederick B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 427-8, and David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (London: Penguin, 2000), 274-5.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Frey, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998). (See also Chapter Four, "Penitential Pilgrimages", for further details of Oitoken).

<sup>12</sup> J.G. Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* (London: SCM Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transitional History of "The Pilgrim's Progress"* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004). This weaves together British, African and Caribbean history and literary studies: Bunyan's original book was translated into 200 languages, 80 of them in Africa.

<sup>14</sup> Guy Butler, *Pilgrimage to Dias Cross* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> The memorial has become an essential pilgrimage shrine for visitors to South Africa wishing to honour "The Struggle". The protests of black schoolchildren in South Africa against Afrikaans being the proposed language of instruction flared into widespread resistance in 1976. On June 16, student bodies massed in Soweto to march past the Mandela home. After confrontation, a shot from the police rang out and Hector Petersen, 13, dropped to the ground. A photographer, Sam Nzima, witnessed a young man picking up the dying child and took the photograph that became emblematic of the anti-apartheid struggle. The Hector Petersen Memorial and Museum was opened in Orlando West, Soweto, on June 16 (Youth Day), 2002, not on the exact site of his death – on the corner of Moema and Vilakazi streets – but two blocks away, on Khumalo street. A line of steel plates runs from the museum in the direction of the site of the shooting, where an earlier memorial was placed in 1992. See also Philip Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Struggle* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2004) and post-1994 histories of South Africa.

<sup>16</sup> Sax, *Mountain Goddess: Gender and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage*, 204-205.

- <sup>17</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr: this useful comment is used by Clift and Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage*, 1. Though “creatures” need neither have been in motion nor outside their own territories to be pilgrims, there is something compelling about his use of the word *completion*. It may be at least a part of the current definition that seems so inadequate.
- <sup>18</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (London: Vintage, 1999), 5.
- <sup>19</sup> Reader, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 9.
- <sup>20</sup> Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 80-81. She warns against taking this “separation” from mundane daily things too seriously. Everyday life may and does invade “sacred” space, as people eat, talk or sleep, wash dishes and clothes and see to children:
- <sup>21</sup> This comment, with its perceptive understanding of dimensions, came – unsurprisingly – from a sculptor, Pretoria-based Isa Steynberg (personal interview, Cape Town, July 2, 2005). Her work explores involves not only the dimensions we “see”, but those she “displaces” as her creations emerge. Michelangelo claimed that he could “see” his subjects imprisoned within the marble block, and all he did was burrow into it and release them. That journey inward for pilgrims is the one which releases their spiritual potential.
- <sup>22</sup> Al-Hallaj was executed for declaring that the genuine sanctuary was the heart – David Chidester, “The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space: Towards a Critical Phenomenology of Religion in *The Phenomenology of the Sacred*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 211-231.
- <sup>23</sup> Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage: Outer Action with Inner Meaning* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996), 29-30.
- <sup>24</sup> Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 30. The subtext was the Protestant emphasis on faith, rather than good works, as the road to salvation.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> Jean Holm, *Sacred Place* (London: Pinter, 2000), 18. The emperor Asoka had his own *dharmayatra* (Journey for Truth) to Bodhgaya, the pre-eminent site of pilgrimage where the Buddha attained enlightenment, recorded in stone.
- <sup>27</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 151.
- <sup>28</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 75.
- <sup>29</sup> Dr Janette Deacon, Stellenbosch, February 2005 (personal interview). Also Aubrey Burl, *A Guide to the Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
- <sup>30</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation* (London: BBC and John Murray, 1974), 42.
- <sup>31</sup> Helen Martins was the creator of the Owl House and Camel Yard on her property in Nieu Bethesda, a remote valley in South Africa. Poor and powerless, she nevertheless built her personal pilgrimage shrine with cement and glass (see *Chapter Five: Women’s Pilgrimages*), also Anne Emslie, *The Owl House* (London: Penguin, 1991) and Sue Imrie Ross, *This is my World: The Life of Helen Martins* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- <sup>32</sup> C. Bawa Yamba, in his study of Muslim pilgrims in the Sudan, complains about the “inhibitions derived from Turner himself, whose own varied and complex pronouncements on pilgrimage provide what amounts to an uncomfortable yardstick for every prospective analysis of the phenomenon. One finds that the most interesting studies of pilgrimage are those which reject or ignore the Turnerian model and instead go on to “do their own thing.” C. Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).
- <sup>33</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 237.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 241. When pilgrimages involve grave sites, there is a good reason why they “tend to be located on the periphery.” Burial inside city walls was prohibited for health reasons. But, as in the case of Sant’ Agnese’s shrine in Rome, built over the little martyr’s grave after her death in 305AD, no one ever saw it as “liminal”, nor is it seen so today by the pilgrims who visit it. In 1959 Pope John XXIII made Sant’ Agnese one of the station churches of Rome; today it has its own station feast (the fifth Sunday in Lent).
- <sup>35</sup> Eamon Duffy, quoted in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 166.
- <sup>36</sup> Many of these are listed in the Bibliography, and I am indebted to them.
- <sup>37</sup> Simon Coleman and John Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage*, 13.
- <sup>38</sup> Ian Reader, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 13.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 239. Barbara Aziz also argued early on in the modern development of pilgrim studies that we should pay attention to “what pilgrims say”, “Personal Dimensions of the Sacred Journey: What Pilgrims Say,” *Religious Studies* 23, 2, (1987): 247-61.

<sup>40</sup> William S. Sax, *Mountain Goddess: gender and politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 12.

<sup>41</sup> See Coleman, “Do you Believe in Pilgrimage?”, 11, who suggests that in limiting an area of research, we are allowing them to become “prisons of limited comparison”, 364. Also see Eade and Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred*.

<sup>42</sup> Shirley Maclaine complained continuously throughout her book on the *Camino* about the unwanted attention that she, as a movie star, attracted, especially in her scruffy state: *The Camino* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Pilgrims to Mecca who do not “look” Arabic, have reported that they are shunned or even insulted (see BBC documentary on “Mecca” in 2005): pilgrims on the *Camino* are sometimes refused the ink stamps for their credentials, if they do not “look the part”, while Spaniards have long assumed that cyclists riding in groups are not pilgrims but athletes (see Frey: *Pilgrim Stories*).

<sup>44</sup> John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London: Routledge, 1991). This book contributed to a revival in studies of pilgrimage, though its emphasis on contestation may have been overstated: see Coleman, “Do You Believe in Pilgrimage? 357.

<sup>45</sup> Glenn Bowman, “Christian Ideology and the Image of the Holy Land: the place of Jerusalem pilgrimage in the various Christianities”, described how contested spaces in Jerusalem may not be necessarily “contested” but rather, other competing groups ignored, in Eade and Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred*, 98.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Thal, *Rearranging The Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 15-73-1912* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 297.

<sup>47</sup> See Ian Reader, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 12-13. He cites the pilgrimages to Anfield and Kosovo as examples. I include the pilgrimage to Badimong, in South Africa (Chapter Five) as being a remarkably *uncontested* space in the literal sense though one of multiple meanings.

<sup>48</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 32.

<sup>49</sup> Reader, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 222.

<sup>50</sup> Yes, it may be, says Dubisch, *In a Different Place* – see her discussion of Tinos in *Chapter Five*.

<sup>51</sup> Helen Martins, creator of the Owl House and Camel Yard, devised her pilgrimage out of her poverty in her own backyard in Nieu Bethesda, South Africa (see *Chapter Five*).

<sup>52</sup> Eva Evers Rosander, “Going and Not Going to Porokhane: Mourid Women and Pilgrimage in Senegal and Spain,” in Simon Coleman and John Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 69-90.

<sup>53</sup> Jan Schoeman, aka “Outa Lappies” (Old Father Rags), a colourful character and artist who lives near Prince Albert in South Africa, has spent a lifetime on the move in this vicinity, regarding his pursuit of the road as his lifelong pilgrimage (see *Chapter Four*).

<sup>54</sup> Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), revered Japanese poet whose work includes *A Narrow Road to Far Places* and *The Rustic Gate*. He is considered a prime example of a pilgrim who meaning is found in the “journey” of pilgrimage, rather than arrival. His *haiku* are much quoted. This quote sourced in Donald Keene, ed., *The Anthology of Japanese Literature*, 1955.

<sup>55</sup> See Nancy Frey’s thoughtful contribution to the modern presumption of “pilgrimhood” in *Pilgrim Stories*.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 45.

<sup>57</sup> Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>58</sup> Ian Reader, Nancy Frey et. al. I have also heard such comments in the process of my investigating South African pilgrimages, where people tell me that “they don’t know why they are doing it, but they have to.”

<sup>59</sup> Coleman and Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present*.

<sup>60</sup> Though some pilgrims feel that they have arrived “home” on pilgrimage, others do not. Myra Bullock, on the Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage (see *Chapter Four*) had that feeling while her husband Tim did not; the pilgrimage itself became my home, he said. Personal interview, Cape Town, December 15, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> A discussion of “sacred space” and more particularly, the endless ways there are to “map” and negotiate a territory is by Sam Gill, “Territory” in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 298-313, in which he compares Mircea Eliade’s focus on the sacred space, the strongest space, as the “sacred centre”, with Jonathan Z. Smith’s declaration that the sacred centre is a “dubious notion” (p 304) and that the “maps” of meaning are an act of creativity which are by definition flexible. See *Chapter Three*, “sacred geography”.

<sup>62</sup> Some of the most venerated pilgrimages in Ireland, both extinct and still existing, are built on the earlier, pagan beliefs of local inhabitants. The famous pilgrimage to *Croag Patrick*, still flourishing, echoes the older one based on Celtic deities. See "Ireland" in *Chapter Two*. Also Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999). Throughout Europe, Christians appropriated previous sacred sites for their churches in the characteristic habit of drawing on the power of the old to enhance the new.

<sup>63</sup> Phil Cousineau, *The Soul of Pilgrimage* (San Francisco: Amber Lotus, 2000). The small hill's history began in the nineteenth century, when crosses were placed there for lost relations; in the 1900s, crosses were taken there, some small and some large, to recall those who did not return from Josef Stalin's gulags; it became a focus of nationalist fervour during the years of Communist occupation and still exists as a shrine. Some of the crosses have attached to them pleas for "help" for various problems. Visitors there talk of its "eerie" feel (BBC, July 4, 2005). Lithuania was the last "pagan" country in Europe to convert to Christianity, in the 1300s.

<sup>64</sup> David Chidester writes that Jim Morrison was not merely a popular entertainer – he was "the Lizard King, the electric shaman, opening the doors of perception", in *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005), 174.

<sup>65</sup> Site of a battlefield, south of Kimberley, where the Boer forces scored a famous victory on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1899 during the Anglo-Boer War.

<sup>66</sup> Armstrong, *A History of God*, 10.

<sup>67</sup> Carolyn Cartier and Alan A. Lew, eds., *Seductions of Place: Geographical Perspectives on Globalization and Touristed Landscapes* (London: Routledge, 2005), 283. The veneration of ancient trees and stones also forms an important part of their perception of sacred space.

<sup>68</sup> William Dickey writes, for example, of "that sacred energy of Augrabies" emanating from the site of the mighty Falls in the Northern Cape, South Africa. *Borderline* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004), 169.

<sup>69</sup> Such sites include Mapungubwe and Wildebeest Kuil in *Chapter Three* and Driekopseiland in *Chapter Five*, as well as caves such as Motouleng and Badimong in the Free State, where Christianity and traditional religions come together. Wonderwerk Cave, near Kuruman in the Northern Cape, is another eminent site which reflects a long tradition of human habitation, and has become a shrine for those who are "ancestor-hunting" – see by Mike Cope, *Ghaap: Sonnets from the Northern Cape* (Cape Town: Kwela/Snailpress, 2005)

<sup>70</sup> The *Camino* has long been called the "therapy route", *la ruta de la terapia*, along with the belief that simply by shouldering the long journey, the scarred self will encounter healing. See Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 45.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Willis, quoted in Jeff Chu, "The Pilgrim's Way," *Time*, July 5, 2004.

<sup>72</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> Frontispiece, in Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*.

<sup>74</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 93: a family that had moved to Australia made a vow to take their daughter to Tinos on a pilgrimage, if she was cured (see "Pilgrimages of Barter"). They had to wait sixteen years before their finances would allow it. As long as the intent is there, and the vow has been made in good faith, the vow cannot be said to be unfulfilled, 94. If the intent is discarded, "evil" may follow.

<sup>75</sup> Luigi Tomasi, *Homo Viator: From Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism via the Journey* in William H. Swatos and Luigi Tomasi, eds., *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 1.

<sup>76</sup> Modern parents have also resorted to putting fractious babies in cars and driving till they sleep. "If babies can't bear to lie still, how shall we settle down later?" asks Bruce Chatwin, *Songlines*, 118. Yet our modern lifestyle is – unhealthily – sedentary. The modern idea that pilgrimage should be "on foot" to be "authentic" seems to be related to a purer and more "valid" form of living – see discussion of this in *Chapter Three*.

<sup>77</sup> "Our Pilgrims' Progress". *Time*, July 5, 2004:

<sup>78</sup> Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 67. The book describes the journey of Chris McCandless, a young American who in April 1992, walked alone into the Wilderness of Alaska, where he died about four months later.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Shephard, "Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature" in Krakauer, *Into the Wild*.

<sup>80</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 220.

<sup>81</sup> Rudolph, *Pilgrimage to the end of the World*, 6. There were so many stabbings of pilgrims by other pilgrims in the Cathedral in Santiago (lubricated by heavy drinking during feast days) that normal church functions were regularly interrupted because of the need to reconsecrate the church every time blood was

spilled in it. This caused one medieval Pope to grant Santiago the special privilege of an unusually brief consecration blessing.

<sup>82</sup> Eade and Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred*, xi.

<sup>83</sup> Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 4-5.

<sup>84</sup> Martin E. Marty: "The Spirit's Holy Errand: The Search for a Spiritual Style in Secular America," *Daedalus* 96, 1 (1967). "In search of spiritual expression, people speak in tongues, enter Trappist monasteries, build on Jungian archetypes, go to southern California and join a cult, become involved "where the action is", hope for liberation by the new morality, study phenomenology, share the Peace Corps experience, borrow from cosmic syntheses, and go to church...."

<sup>85</sup> Mick Brown, *The Spiritual Tourist* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 1.

<sup>86</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), 17. Eliade, like other writers of his era, on the whole ignores pilgrimage even though he spends much time writing about cannibalism.

<sup>87</sup> Brown, *Spiritual Tourist*, 243.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 182. He was emphatic that after his death no one should speak in his name, that no church or dogma should arise from his teachings. Disillusionment also speaks loudly in the claims of Andrew Harvey, author of the much-read volume, *The Hidden Journey*. "Ashrams are lunatic asylums, filled with jealous and needy people...gurus are the magical "other" – everyone's in love with them, everybody's focussed on them, and everybody hates whatever position the others have with them."

<sup>89</sup> "Looking for redemption in a groundhog's shadow," *Cape Times*, February 2, 2004.

<sup>90</sup> David Hare, *Via Dolorosa: A Play* (London: Faber, 1997).

<sup>91</sup> Pilgrimages may be a group activity at times, but the emphasis is on the value and growth, and even completion, of the *individual*, though the community itself may benefit.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER TWO.

<sup>1</sup> Mapungubwe is just south of the Limpopo River, the northern boundary of South Africa and is an iron age site linked with the "African Renaissance" (see *Chapter Four*). Driekopseiland is believed to be a stone age female initiation site, not far from Kimberley in South Africa (see *Women's Pilgrimages*)

<sup>2</sup> Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 197. Despite the simmering tensions, the New Age movement assisted in putting Sedona on the map for the more than four millions tourists who visit it annually, closely rivaling the Grand Canyon. Sedona has in fact been called a "cross between Lourdes and the Grand Canyon," 147.

<sup>3</sup> Despite such restrictions, it was announced in 2005 that Moria was to become a local "Mecca" for tourists. Tom Boya, provincial president of the SA Leisure and Tourist Association, says Moria's development into a regional place of pilgrimage for "spiritually minded travellers" across the world has the potential to draw masses of new tourists to the province. It is not clear how the tourists would access the inner workings of Moria, known for its isolation and dislike of sight-seers. "Moria to become local 'Mecca,'" *Mail & Guardian*, June 24, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Personal experience, June 2000. A dirt farm track runs right through the large stone circle, with tractors and farm vehicles roaring through one of the most remarkable sites in the Lake District of England.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Holm, *Sacred Place* (London: Pinter, 2000): 198. We noted in *Chapter One* that the desire for transformation or completion is a hallmark of pilgrimage.

<sup>7</sup> John Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven* (London: Macmillan, 2003), 321. Since 1937, a huge, high-tech pageant has been held there every July for seven nights, admission free (most attending are members).

<sup>8</sup> These independent churches arose in the early part of the twentieth century in response to the dispossession and alienation of indigenous Africans to their own land and the churches of colonists. Moria took its name from the Biblical term for Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1) and is on a high plateau in the north of South Africa. See Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), also David Chidester, *Religions of South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1992) for "Moria", 134ff and for "Nazaries", 131ff.

<sup>9</sup> Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, 142.

<sup>10</sup> "Pilgrims flock to lost-and-found room," *Sunday Times*, October 3, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> "It looks a bit like when you shine a torch through your hand," said Tek Lama, a member of the committee dealing with the growing number of visitors to the "Buddha Boy", when referring to the light shining from the boy's forehead. "Pilgrims flock to 'new Buddha' in Nepal jungle," *Cape Argus*, November 21, 2005, "Nepalese call for help to probe mystery 'Buddha' boy", *Cape Times*, November 28, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Moore, "Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center," *Anthropological Quarterly* 53,4 (1980): 207-218.

<sup>13</sup> Just in case the jump from Church to Disneyland seems too great a leap, Moore's suggestion has recently been supported by reports of devotees moving closer to the theme park so that it would always be accessible, much as certain devotees have chosen to live near churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and shrines throughout the ages.

<sup>14</sup> University of Oregon communications Professor Janet Wasko, "Escapist American Disney fans take theme park experience to the extreme," *Cape Times*, May 2, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> "Holy Disney," *Sunday Times*, January 22, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> "Believers Bring Their Aches to Bathe in the City's Water," *New York Times* insert, *Sunday Times*, October 17, 2004. There are various miracle claims attributed to this "Lourdes of America."

<sup>18</sup> "Nepalese call for help to probe mystery 'Buddha boy'", *Cape Times*, November 28, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps my cynicism on reading such reports stems from my eight years of working in a newsroom (Cape Argus).

<sup>20</sup> "Strawberry Fields not forever as orphanage near Lennon's home closes," *Cape Times*, January 13, 2005. "Along with The Cavern and Penny Lane Strawberry Fields is one of the main places they want to see when they visit Liverpool", said David Bedford.

<sup>21</sup> They further outraged Christians when they declared that they were more popular than Jesus Christ – correctly, in retrospect, says Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase* (London, Harper Perennial, 2005), 135.

<sup>22</sup> Simon Kuper, "Faith in Football: are stadiums our new spiritual centers?," *Time Special Issue*, July 5, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> The mourners were described as pilgrims by the *Catholic Pictorial*, April 23, 1989. Liverpool became a "three cathedral city" during that week, of the Catholic and Anglican Cathedrals, and Anfield. Grace Davie, Chapter Eight, "You'll Never Walk Alone: The Anfield Pilgrimage" in Ian Reader and Tony Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993), 202-205.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>25</sup> The notion of two realms of discourse, the "sacred" and the "profane" is a Durkheimian distinction that has wielded much influence but is under criticism from those, such as anthropologist Jean Comaroff, who accuse it of being an "artificial distinction" (see *Chapter One, footnote 1*). Further discussion is taken up in the next chapter, under "sacred geography".

<sup>26</sup> The Ganges is also understood to be the *Ganga*, the "swift-goer", the goddess of purification and is 1,678 miles long. James Harpur & Jennifer Westwood, *Legendary Places* (London: Marshall Publishing, 1997), 62. It is considered impolite among devout Hindus to refer to the Ganges by "just" its name, i.e. "the Ganges," as it should always be preceded by some qualifying nomenclature denoting its divine status, such as "Mother Ganges."

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Shrady, *Sacred Roads: Adventures from the Pilgrimage Trail* (London: Viking, 1999), 55. The *Pravag* is the most important of the "great seven" pilgrimage sites, or *Saptamahatirtha*, along with *Hardwar*, *Varanasi*, *Dwarka*, *Ayodhya*, *Mathura* and *Ujjain*, and is called the *Tirth Raj* or "king of all pilgrimage sites."

<sup>28</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Women usually do not attend the "sinking flowers" ceremony if it takes place before twelve days have passed, because there is too much business to attend to at home after a death. A pilgrimage made in haste for this purpose is not recumbent on women though it is not forbidden.

<sup>30</sup> Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 85.

<sup>31</sup> *Lumbini* Garden, near *Kapilavastu*, where he was born (regarded by Buddhists as the "centre of the world" and known as the *vajra* seat of enlightenment), the deer path at *Sarnath* where he first turned the wheel of the Law, the various places where miracles were first performed and important discourses delivered, and at *Kushinagara* and surrounding districts where he died.

<sup>32</sup> Shrady, *Sacred Roads*.

<sup>33</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 151.

<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Westwood, *Sacred Journeys: Paths for the New Pilgrim* (London: Gaia Books, 1997), 203.

<sup>35</sup> The present building dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, built under the direction of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who ruled Punjab from 1799 to 1839. A long bridge leads across the sacred pool to the temple, with its inlaid marble walls and golden dome.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>37</sup> William S. Sax, *Mountain Goddess: Gender and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. Those who participate believe in the notion of *Tapasya*, the product of aesthetic “heat” through actions of self-denial and austerity, without which no “fruit” is gained. From these “fruits”, pilgrims obtain cures from disease, or their prospects are transformed. Thus essential to their notion of Hindu pilgrimage is the concept of “fruits” or benefits for one and for all.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>40</sup> The word avatar comes from the Sanskrit *ava*, meaning down, and *tri*, to pass. In the Vedic scriptures it means the descent of the Divine into flesh.

<sup>41</sup> Sai Baba said that Christ was born at 3.15am on December 28<sup>th</sup>. In 1984 he claimed to have materialized a photograph purporting to be the portrait of Christ at the age of 29, for an Argentinian devotee. This photograph, faded in the manner of a Victorian sepia print, shows a bearded man with deepset eyes, bearing some resemblance to the popular image of Christ favoured by European artists. He is also, famously, supposed to have replaced a black and white photograph of the face imprinted in the Shroud of Turin, into a coloured image, by merely placing his hand on it.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Babb cited in Mick Brown, *The Spiritual Tourist* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 186. Even those who are not so blessed seem to find meaning in his acts. A pilgrim who was disappointed that Sai Baba did not materialise a promised locket, said that the broken promise was a much-needed lesson in humility. Perhaps the greatest virtue of such a “saintly” figure is to be ambiguous enough to allow the spiritual imagination some basic insights of its own, he remarks.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *Spiritual Tourist*, 90.

<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the very *action* of being a pilgrim, remains the same. It could indeed be one of the few religious activities that involves an individual choice and which is done in the “now.” No one can be forced to become a genuine pilgrim (not even those on enforced “penitential” or judicial pilgrimages, or those for whom it is an obligation, as in Islam). There can be no substitution. There is an utter immediacy involved. Regarding these characteristics, the only other religious activity which reflects them is conversion. Both rely completely on the individual “call”; they speak directly to the emotional, rather than the rational mind, similar to most of our deepest values.

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Bender & Margot Winer, eds., *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 217. His motive was: “For peace among the disturbed villagers, for rain, for moral support.” The particular area had suffered cruelly from periodic drought and the national government had done little to alleviate the suffering.

<sup>46</sup> Our concept of “calendrical” versus “mythical” time is examined by Anthony F. Aveni, “Time” in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 314-333, in which he points out that the scientific discoveries such as the special theory of relativity caused us to rethink the meaning of time, and make it less absolute. Also see Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe* (New York: Harper, 1988).

<sup>47</sup> Bender and Winer, *Contested Landscapes*, 211. The history of Jodhpur owed a specific debt to the *Meghwals*, “untouchables”, for one had supposedly offered himself as a sacrifice necessary at the founding of the Fort, guaranteeing safety to it and to the State.

<sup>48</sup> “A well-rooted couple,” *Sunday Times*, February 15, 2004. The guests, who included a local legislator of India’s (then) ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, were invited for a feast after the wedding.

<sup>49</sup> All such myths and rituals, including harvest festivals, have their origins in the importance of the changing seasons and the regular supply of water in agriculturally-based societies. But even before the rise of settled cultures, hunters and nomads celebrated the life-giving property of water, the oldest of all human needs. Water in particular has continued to play a vital role in rituals, from baptism to the power of healing springs.

<sup>50</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 183.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Heaven is where *Shang Ti* and other heavenly gods live; the only way for humans to gain access to the spiritual world is to make sacrifices at the highest point they can reach, Mount Tai being the most favoured. According to Chinese cosmology, the round heaven covers the square earth; obviously heaven might fall down if not well supported and so the sacred mountains perform this function. In the myth of the “reparation of heaven”, Goddess Nu Wa, having repaired the broken sky, killed a large turtle and cut off its

four feet, making them four pillars in the four quarters and the world again enjoyed a peaceful and harmonious life.

<sup>52</sup> Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras* (London, Piatkus, 2001). Palmer and a team visited Central China in 1988 to find a Christian shrine which had been referred to in ancient texts. It was located in an eighth-century pagoda of the Tang dynasty, which had gone further West than any other Chinese dynasty before or since.

<sup>53</sup> Mountains are ritually divided into ten stages (to represent the ten Buddhist realms), with each stage marked off by a religious ritual at a specially designated site. Physical and spiritual ascent thus occurs simultaneously, and in this way the mountains serve not just as sacred places but also as ritual maps on the path to enlightenment.

<sup>54</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 191.

<sup>55</sup> Mt. Fuji is especially sacred to the Shinto religion, which believes that *kami*, “higher spirits”, inhabit it. See Harpur & Westwood, *Legendary Places*, 54.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 206. Once, he spoke to worshippers through spirit-writing: a Taoist in a trance wrote his words on a table. Today most pilgrims receive his messages by shaking a bamboo cup containing 100 numbered sticks. When one falls out, the number on the stick tells the worshipper which of the 100 fortune-poems contains the god’s answer. His advice and predictions are so much sought after that fortune-tellers abound.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>58</sup> Phil Cousineau noticed that by “some miracle of architecture” a votive candle in the Hall of the Buddhas is visible at all four levels of descent; his powerful reaction to Angkor Wat is an example of a modern pilgrimage (of a non-Buddhist believer) accessing the power of a sacred place in a profound and significant way – he felt it had “completed” his pilgrimage. Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* (Boston, Element, 1998), 232.

<sup>59</sup> The festival is held at the start of the rainy season. It is under the bureaucratic control of the Vietnam Government which has become more tolerant of religious ritual in recent years (though individual mediums and diviners are still frowned upon as “duping” a “gullible” public). Philip Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* For a detailed description of the noisy, crowded rites, see pages 1-5 and 165-192.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-3. The lack of specificity of the Lady’s origins (possibly Indian) has allowed for diffused meanings and disparate usages, and enabled her to speak to a geographically extensive following, 287.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland*, 23.

<sup>63</sup> Robert L. Cohen in *Saints and Virtues* ed. John Stratton Hawley (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987), 100-101.

<sup>64</sup> The site of martyrdom of Husayn at Karbala in Iraq is a major pilgrimage site of Shi’ite Muslims, for example. Reader, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 3-4.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>66</sup> Accusations of racism have emerged, with both black and blonde Muslims complaining of being treated “differently.” In fact about 80% of pilgrims to Mecca today are non-Arabs. “Inside Mecca”: National geographic documentary, aired 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2004.

<sup>67</sup> C. Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 202.

<sup>69</sup> The pilgrimages are colourful and noisy affairs; Catherine Fairweather writes of “taking off my shoes outside Bet Maryam church, into the gloom of the straw-strewn interior. it is an experience heightened by wafts of frankincense and myrrh, by the golden glare of the priest’s Coptic cross, the hypnotic chanting of the liturgy and the repetitive beating of the kettle drum and prayer rattle”. Catherine Fairweather, “Eighth Wonder,” *Sunday Times*, January 23, 2005.

<sup>70</sup> Bernadette’s family had not always been poor; once they had been prosperous millers. Now they lived in a sodden hovel, considered unacceptable even for prisoners who had once been housed there. She was the eldest child in a rural part of France that still placed seniority on the first-born, either son or daughter. She was exceptionally delicate in health however, and very small for her age, in appearance not much more than a child of ten.

<sup>71</sup> Bernadette was instructed by the clergy to ask the “lady” – or rather, the girl in white whom Bernadette said she saw – to identify herself. On the Day of the Annunciation, the apparition replied, in local patois: “*Que soy era Immaculada Councepciou*”. “I am the Immaculate Conception”, an unconventional phrase for the times; the Pope had acknowledged that title for the Virgin Mary only four years before. Bernadette swore that she had never heard it. This peasant area in France had a piously Christian character and yet still

regarded the agricultural rites of their forbears; stories of the “little people” such as fairies and pixies were deeply ingrained in their narratives.

<sup>72</sup> Ruth Harris, *Lourdes* (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>73</sup> Jennifer Lash, *On Pilgrimage*, 206. Suddenly, while on pilgrimage there, they feel wanted and loved, in the “right place”. They become the priority. Their homecoming can therefore be all the more difficult to face.

<sup>74</sup> The last remaining visionary, Lucia de Jesus dos Santos, aged 97, died in February 2005 in a Carmelite convent in Coimbra. She had been the main recipient of the prophecies from the Virgin.

<sup>75</sup> Her recollection of her early days as a cowherd, when she claimed to have led packs of wild animals through the woods in religious processions, chanting God’s name, were colourful to say the least, and she tried to bite the Reverend Mother. She went on to act as a self-made prophet in France and Italy, producing a book in 1879 claiming to deliver the “secret” divulged to her by the Virgin, full of gloomy professions. She died discredited, virtually alone and perhaps delusional.

<sup>76</sup> Franz Werfel, *The Song of Bernadette* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1948), 192.

<sup>77</sup> David Chidester, *Christianity* (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2000), 598.

<sup>78</sup> A woman named Sara, variously described as a pagan princess, or even an Egyptian servant, saw the struggling vessel and ran to the shore, throwing her long red sash to the women and thereby bringing them to safety. While the others made their way onwards, to Tarascon and St Maximin, the two elderly Marys (Jacobé and Salomé) remained in the small fishing village which now bears their names.

<sup>79</sup> Jennifer Lash, *On Pilgrimage*, 154-5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* There were the same chants. But the sound was quieter, a little sorrowful. As the bouquets reached the high chapel, they were taken off the ropes and thrown down. “It was as if these ceremonials made, in some way, womb and tomb as one. It was as if a transitory shaft of joy and celebration was allowed.”

<sup>81</sup> Wildebeest Kuil rock art site is about 15km north of Kimberley; a number of San/Khoi “pecked” engravings are exposed in the veld. The rock engraving site of Driekopseiland, (meaning “Three heads island”) further West of Kimberley, is situated on a “glacial pavement” in the bed of the Riet River and has a treasure of over 3500 engravings, most of them geometric figures.

<sup>82</sup> Jan Morris, *Fifty Years of Europe* (London: Penguin, 1998), 140. “Sometimes they (the cairns) are quite carefully made, substantial piles of rock with rough crosses on the top; sometimes they are just small mounds of rubble which look as though they have been thrown there by people at the very last extremity of exhaustion”.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Brunton, “Cycling’s Mountain Madonna,” *Time*, July 5, 2004.

<sup>84</sup> St Augustine’s Chair that is in the chapel, dates from about the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Made of Purbeck marble, it has been used ever since for the enthronement of successive archbishops. One English monarch, Henry IV, is buried in Canterbury Cathedral next to his queen, Joan of Navarre; also interred there is Edward, the Black Prince, son of Edward III, who as Prince of Wales died before his father. The Black Prince was a notable warlord, and the association with the “gallant dead” is part of Canterbury’s claim on pilgrims. Off the south-west transept is St Michael’s Chapel, better known as the Warriors’ Chapel because of the number of memorials to famous soldiers; rituals and services are performed there to honour the ancestors who died in battle.

<sup>85</sup> Marion Bowman, “Drawn to Glastonbury,” Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), 30.

<sup>86</sup> Bowman notes, page 35, there there does not seem to have been any particular veneration of Joseph at Glastonbury Abbey fore the late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries, and the first mention of the flowering thorn appears to be as late at 1502. Embroidering cults in order to attract more pilgrims (and therefore more money and power) was by no means unique to Glastonbury.

<sup>87</sup> This discovery was almost certainly not genuine; earlier records state that “Arthur’s” grave was not known. Glastonbury had just been ravaged by fire and England was being consolidated by the Anglo-Norman rulers. The “grave” is marked today; when I last saw it some years ago, it was marked by a modest notice.

<sup>88</sup> Bowman, *Pilgrimages and Popular Culture*, 33.

<sup>89</sup> Marion Bowman, “Glastonbury” in Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 43.

<sup>90</sup> Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 136.

<sup>91</sup> Simon Coleman, “From England’s Nazareth to Sweden’s Jerusalem,” in Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 47.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>93</sup> The reason for this, as we are reminded by Ian Reader, is that the Reformation protested against Catholicism's use of saints as mediators in the process of salvation. "Introduction," in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 4.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 49. He notes that the High Anglican pilgrimage is not without controversy in the established Church itself; it is associated not only with "bells and smells" but also with the more conservative trends of the Church such as disapproval of women priests. This is offset by the growing popularity of pilgrimages, there and elsewhere. It is not especially considered to be a place of healing, like Glastonbury or St Winifred's Well in North Wales, but is rather a pilgrimage of veneration.

<sup>95</sup> The next evening, Mirjana and Ivanka were joined by nine-year-old Jakov Colo, and three other teenagers, Vicka Ivankovic, Marija Pavlovic and Ivan Dragicevic. These six became the nucleus of the miracle. Shrady, *Sacred Roads*, 12.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* As Marija raced down, she was found again in an ecstatic state. Later she described how she found herself in front of a radiant cross at which the Virgin Mary was weeping as she implored, "Peace, only peace! You must seek peace. There must be peace on earth! You must be reconciled with God and with each other. Peace! Only peace!"

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13. The ensuing flood of pilgrims from abroad did bring in a great deal of hard currency – which made the authorities less likely to act against the site again.

<sup>98</sup> The third secret apparently involves the promise that a permanent, irrefutable sign will appear at the site of the first sighting on Mt Podbrdo. Those who repent and convert in time will be saved. These messages have been reinforced with remarkable reliability every Thursday, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. Some wondered about the significance of Thursday, but devotees say that they are highly symbolic (rather inaccurately citing Christmas and solstices).

<sup>99</sup> Shrady, *Sacred Roads*, 30.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. He remarks that to deal with the droves of pilgrims turning up unannounced and the perpetual vigilance of the Mother of God seemed to require remarkable fortitude. The vision of "Our Lady" has appeared to the visionaries at Medjugorje daily. Jakov, Marija and Ivan see her every day, and Mirjana and Ivanka once a year. Her message can be summed up as five essential dictates: Peace, Faith, Prayer, Conversion, Fasting.

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation* (London, BBC, 1974), 10. It is unclear which of the surviving great Celtic manuscripts were produced here, and which on the island of Lindisfarne, but it is likely that the Book of Kells was in the process of being completed here before the Abbot of Iona was forced to flee (to Ireland) in the face of the Viking invasions.

<sup>102</sup> Ian Reader, "Pilgrims in Shikoku" in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 107ff. While in the 1960s some 15,000 pilgrims were visiting Shikoku each year, by the late 1980s, over 46,000 were performing the pilgrimage.

<sup>103</sup> Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: the Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2-3. It has the first official shrine web site in Japan, [www.konpira.or.jp](http://www.konpira.or.jp).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>105</sup> At the summit, more prayers are said and the pilgrim may walk around the modern chapel, hear Mass and receive Communion. But hundreds of years ago, he or she would have entered the ruin of the old medieval chapel and left a token offering, such as a rag or nail. Also on the summit is St Patrick's Bed, a kind of stone kraal, where further prayers are said, and which is particularly visited by childless women.

<sup>106</sup> Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland*, 68. According to the annals of Loch Cé, there are references to St Patrick's visit to the mountain hundreds of years earlier, though this is disputed.

<sup>107</sup> It is named after a "Murray", (in Irish, *Muredach*) who may have been the bishop of Killala during the time of St Patrick, though the island's patron saint is said to be St Molaise.

<sup>108</sup> Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland*, 89. An aggrieved islander may fast and prepare for nine days, then go around the altar "widdershins" (against the course of the sun), turning the stones three times and unleashing the curse at each turn. But if the curse is unjustified, it is turned against the curser. The effectiveness of this ritual is confirmed by islanders, who point out that the curse was used against Hitler, and look what happened to him.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. Stones have special significance in Ireland, as they do in all Celtic cultures. The famous Hollywood Stone, now kept in the National Museum, Dublin, was found near Glenalough and has a labyrinth carved on it called the Walls of Troy by the locals. The only other example of a labyrinth in Ireland is on a stone of uncertain age at Rathmore, County Meath, which dates at least back to medieval times if not earlier. The labyrinth was known long before Christianity although it became a symbol in many Christian cultures, including France and Scandinavia.

<sup>110</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>112</sup> The importance as pilgrimage centres of the Dingle Peninsula and Clencolumbkille only makes sense when approached from the sea, rather than land, as the route markers and stones indicate the route from the shore. These maritime pilgrimages were only just getting into their stride when the Vikings made their appearance on the West Coast of Ireland, in 807AD. Their presence certainly took its toll. There are no references to pilgrimages in the Irish annals between the years 834 and 950AD, after which pilgrimages began again, but to a greater variety of places than before. But it was not just the Viking menace that changed the idea of pilgrimage. It is exceedingly difficult to control pilgrims who have no fixed point in their journey, like the *gyrovagus*, and by the end of the eighth century, the ascetic Maelruain of Tallaght, who died in 792AD, was advising people to stay at home, in an uncertain world. This reflects the ninth century phrase "To go to Rome, much labour, little profit", which also underscores St Jerome's remark that people were not any better because they had gone to Jerusalem, where he himself had been a pilgrim.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland*, 36.

<sup>114</sup> The *Irish Life of St Kevin* gives the four chief places of Christian pilgrimage as Lough Derg in County Donegal, Croagh Patrick, Monaincha and Glendalough.

<sup>115</sup> Pilgrims must be over 15 years old, without ailment or disability, and able to walk and kneel unaided.

<sup>116</sup> Morris, *Fifty Years of Europe*, 39. Travel writer Jan Morris describes his incredulity on overhearing a worldly young guest at a wedding reception being asked where he was going for his holidays. "I thought of giving myself three days at Lough Derg", he replied. Special one-day retreats are conducted in May, August and September.

<sup>117</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 208-9. What impresses some visitors is the "prayerful attitude" of the pilgrims, many – quite young – who follow rituals developed by earlier pilgrims. Many organised church groups visit the site, flying in to an airport 10 miles away.

<sup>118</sup> BodyMindSpiritJourneys.com: Magical Ireland. There are hundreds of such sites on the Internet.

<sup>119</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love* (London: Penguin, 2000), 96-7. The story also mentions that her persecutors tried to burn her alive because she would not change her mind, and that the flames "divided" and went out. There are several different accounts of her death, but on one issue they are resolved: at no point did she falter.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 245. Her death is likely to have been after the fourth edict of the persecution of Diocletian, which in March 304 ordered all Christians without exception to sacrifice on pain of death.

<sup>121</sup> In November of 1887, Thérèse Martin, aged 14, was visiting Rome with her sister Céline and their father. Another sister had become a Carmelite nun who had taken the name *Soeur Agnes*, so the visit was especially significant to the family. The future saint, Thésèse, wrote later of praying to St Agnes in her church in Rome, and begging for some memento (*relic*) of the visit for her sister in the convent. Suddenly a "little red stone" detached itself from the rich mosaic for Thésèse to take back to her sister. She interpreted this as a gift from St Agnes herself, whom Thésèse regarded as a "childhood friend", eternally of an age not much older than she was then.

<sup>122</sup> When grown, the lambs are shorn and their wool woven by the Benedictine nuns at the Church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, into palliums for archbishops.

<sup>123</sup> Robert E. Alvis, "Hallowed Ground, Contagious Corpses and the Moral Economy of the Graveyard in Early Nineteenth Century Prussia," *The Journal of Religion* 84, 2 (2004): 236.

<sup>124</sup> Nina Epton, who witnessed this procession, writes that "the image is accompanied by barefoot penitents carrying heavy chains and crosses and by a band of "Jews", whose task it is to jeer and revile Christ on his way to Calvary. As this is impossible for them to do in cold blood, they are plied with drink to give them the necessary courage and they stagger through the streets beside the cross, blind drunk. Nina Epton, *Andalusia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 20.

<sup>125</sup> Clark, *Civilisation*.

<sup>126</sup> Jill Forshee, with Christina Fink and Sandra Cate, eds., *Converging Interests: Traders, Travellers and Tourists in Southeast Asia* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 153.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 165. Carrying such statues on board had become a tradition between the two distant Spanish colonies, as they, twice a year, voyaged between *Nueva Espana*, (Mexico) and Manila. They were the richest ships on the ocean, coveted by pirates, and were subject to violent storms. No other regular navigation triumphed for so long under such harsh conditions, over 250 years of trade.

<sup>128</sup> The colony of Manila would have been unable to successfully function without the all-important bi-annual galleons – their survival, it was believed, depended on them, and the safety of those many galleons on which the *Voyager Virgin* travelled showed her special attention and benediction to Manila. When the Virgin of Antipolo began her lustrous career it was placed, after the first successful trip, in the Jesuit's

church of San Ignacio in Intramuros and a short time later was transported in a splendid pageant to the nearby Cathedral of Manila until 1633. Eventually, it was transported to the highlands for eventual enshrinement in the uncompleted church of Antipolo. Her last trip was along the Pasig River, then the only means of transport, to Antipolo in a huge and colourful parade, with crowds of Spanish, Filipino and Chinese onlookers witnessing the music and fireworks.

<sup>129</sup> Forshee, *Converging Interests*, 181.

<sup>130</sup> By 1912, the journey, which once took two days and a costly combination of boats, horses and perhaps palaquins, or three to four days of difficult walking, could be done in 95 minutes at the cost of 2.7 pesos for a second class ticket. The railway line was eventually discontinued as too expensive to maintain.

<sup>131</sup> Forshee, *Converging Interests*, 185.

<sup>132</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 197.

<sup>133</sup> Voodoo is an amalgamation of several traditional African religions and also borrowed freely from Roman Catholic and Freemasonic rites introduced by eighteenth-century slave masters. It is the national religion of Haiti and a vital part of its Creole culture.

<sup>134</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 131. In 1986, the parish priest decided to “take back” the pilgrimage; he stripped the church of the saints’ images, which were being revered as manifestations of the Voodoo gods and he also cancelled the procession through Bonheur of the plaster statue of Our Lady. He did, however, bless a group of his parishioners intent on carrying a wooden cross from the church to Sodo. But the confrontation never came off. The pilgrims with their cross “simply vanished into the ecstatic spume and thunder of devotion at the falls”.

<sup>135</sup> Donald Cosentino in *Sacred Journeys* by Westwood, 130. Cosentino, who is professor of African and Caribbean folklore at the University of California in Los Angeles, visited Haiti to see “Sodo” in 1986, the year the parish priest decided to “take the pilgrimage back” (unsuccessfully). “Failure to vanquish these popular devotions is an old story”, he said.

<sup>136</sup> The name Chimayó comes from the Tewa Pueblo Indian *tsi mayoh*, “obsidian chief”; it is in a valley watered by small rivers and springs, and early Native Americans chose to live in such valleys for their rich alluvial soil, trees and water supply.

<sup>137</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 214.

<sup>138</sup> Similar to fraternities in Sevilla, Spain.

<sup>139</sup> “Every feature of the contemporary landscape represents a “track”, a deed, a work, of these ancestors”: Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 11.

<sup>140</sup> The ancestors are not deities, suggests Sam Gill, but are thought of a heroic and mythic (as were the heroes of Greek myths), engaged in formative acts, establishing rites and identifying themselves with the territory they travelled through. For them, identity is inseparable from their territory and descendants have a responsibility to “hold up” the country by repeating their actions. Gill, “Territory” in Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 299.

<sup>141</sup> Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), 14.

<sup>142</sup> Bruce Chatwin describes a journey he took with an Aborigine to a place which the latter had never seen. “Limpy” needed to return to his songline’s origins, located in a river bed, over wild terrain. Chatwin reports the certainty of Limpy in his navigation, who, after a long trip, insisted that “*Tjuringa* place over there”, pointing to a dark cleft high above their heads. “In a clearing there were three “hospital” beds with mesh springs and no mattresses, and on them lay the three dying men. They were almost skeletons. Their beards and hair had gone. One was strong enough to lift an arm, another to say something. When they heard who Limpy was (a relative they had never seen), all three smiled spontaneously, the same toothless grin. They knew where they were going, smiling at death in the shade of a ghost-gum (tree)”.

<sup>143</sup> Referred to by Westerners as Mount Olga.

<sup>144</sup> Wally Jacob, quoted in Richard Paddock, “Remorse weighs on Uluru souvenir-takers,” *The Sunday Independent*, April 4, 2004.

<sup>145</sup> Elvi Whittaker, “Public Discourse on Sacredness: The Transfer of Ayres Rock to Aboriginal Ownership,” *American Ethnologist* 21,2 (1994): 328.

<sup>146</sup> In a recognition of Uluru’s special character, souvenir hunters who, like so many throughout history have smuggled a relic of a sacred place back home, have been returning “sorry-rocks” from places as far apart as Japan and Denmark. Some are tiny, while one weighed 34kg. They were all taken from the sacred mountain by those later weighed down with remorse; either with a new appreciation of Aboriginal culture, or out of fear of bad luck. “This rock has been longing for return”, wrote one repentant tourist). Paddock, “Remorse weighs.”

<sup>147</sup> The French, who call the route the “French Way” claim that the “start” is in Paris. Under the remaining bell tower of the extinct church of St-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie is a milestone inscribed with “0”. This is as close as the *Camino* gets to “X marks the spot”. The church, which stood in the Place St-Jacques, was demolished by the French Revolution. It had once held thousands upon thousands of pilgrims who were beginning their long walk to Santiago. The milestone and the bell tower are all that remains, though few modern pilgrims outside France even know about them.

<sup>148</sup> James is sometimes referred to as James the Greater, son (along with John) of Zebedee, and of Salome who is thought to be the sister of the Virgin Mary, and he would therefore be the cousin of Jesus (and not his brother, James the Lesser). He was a fisherman.

<sup>149</sup> There appears to be no single “history” of these early events that includes all the details given here. Each historical account concentrates on the details important to it, and leaves out others. The account given here has been gleaned from over a dozen separate versions, although Edwin Mullins, *The Pilgrimage to Santiago* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974) was particularly useful for the early years.

<sup>150</sup> As a badge of pilgrims, the scallop shell is first represented on the West doorway of Autun Cathedral in the Last Judgement carving, and is first referred to in writing by Aymery Picaud, in his “pilgrims’ guide” of about the same (Medieval) period, when he mentions that such shells were offered for sale to pilgrims on the north side of Santiago Cathedral. Further ref: Mullins, *The Pilgrimage to Santiago*, and Nancy Frey, *Pilgrim Stories On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998).

<sup>151</sup> Some dispute this attribution. Edwin Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 7, contends that the name Compostela does not pre-date the eleventh century and it derives from the Latin verb *componere*, meaning “to bury”, for “excavations have shown a Roman burial cemetery or early Christian necropolis.” I have chosen to stick to the popular version of the legend, as it has had most sway with pilgrims.

<sup>152</sup> The first actual record of Santiago pilgrims came from an Arab traveller known as Ibn Dihya, who noted that there were Normans visiting the tomb in the year 844. Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 22.

<sup>153</sup> Frey: *Pilgrim Stories*, 11.

<sup>154</sup> Bettina Selby, *Pilgrim’s Road: A Journey to Santiago de Compostela* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 42. She notes that there was never any mention of the Battle of Clavijo until the end of the twelfth century, by which time St James had long been entrenched in his dual role.

<sup>155</sup> Santiago, the City of St James himself, had been sacked in the tenth century and the bells of the new cathedral were in 997 carried off in triumph to Cordoba with the labour of Christian captives.

<sup>156</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 31.

<sup>157</sup> Mark Ellingham and John Fisher, “The Pilgrimage to Santiago,” *Rough Guide to Spain* (London: Rough Guides/Penguin, 2001), 522. Part of the Santiago legend is that it was the Emperor Charlemagne who became emblazoned as the first pilgrim to Compostela; the French epic *The Song of Roland* is, like all accounts of eventual winners, partly a paean of praise and partly propaganda.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>159</sup> The great abbey church of Cluny became pivotal; the Cluniac order dominated the road to Santiago and did more in the twelfth century to cultivate and sponsor the pilgrimage than any other institution.

<sup>160</sup> Edwin Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 39. The xenophobic document was donated to the Cathedral in Santiago by a woman with the flamboyant name of Gingerga Flandensis, a fellow pilgrim who made the journey with Picaud

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 54. By then, there were so many beggars posing as pilgrims that the authorities forbade them to remain in the city longer than three days, or else face four hours in the pillory.

<sup>162</sup> From *The Road to Santiago* produced by the Paradores of Spain (Madrid, 1999), 298.

<sup>163</sup> Ford: *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain*, third edition, Part Two (London: John Murray, 1855).

<sup>164</sup> The same year a Youth Pilgrimage to the city was organised, which has been repeated every Holy Year (in 1993 a seven-day march of nearly 2000 Spanish youths travelled along the *Camino* with the Archbishop of Madrid leading the way). Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 249.

<sup>165</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 240.

<sup>166</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 241..

<sup>167</sup> Marcelino Oreja, “Editorial, A Future for our Past,” *Council of Europe* 32: 3 (1988). Their statement read: “One could hardly find a phenomenon closer to the very essence of the Europe we wish to build than this pilgrimage movement, whose routes, above and beyond the religious dimension, have remained a meeting place, a medium of exchange, a means of communication and a source of solidarity which is the basis and origin of our own identity....representing the indivisible heritage of all European countries.”

<sup>168</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 250.

<sup>169</sup> Images of the pilgrimage began to sell furniture, milk and even telephone services.

<sup>170</sup> Iberia still offers this service, subject to regulations, according to one of its marketers Information via email from Carlos Jalon, in London. Enquire at your local office.

<sup>171</sup> David Chidester, "Monuments and Fragments: Religion, Identity and Reconciliation," *The Emory Humanity Lectures*, no. 3 (Atlanta: The Academic Exchange, 2001), 47. He also cites work by Karen McCarthy Brown in Newark, New Jersey, which suggests that people have multiple religious commitments, and religious communities include people of diverse religious affiliations.

<sup>172</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 38.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER THREE.

<sup>1</sup> "In the politics of exclusion, a place is sacred because it is at risk of desecration or defilement by the very 'alien' forces that are excluded", David Chidester, "The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space: Towards a Critical Phenomenology of Religion," in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *The Phenomenology of the Sacred* (Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1994), 228.

<sup>2</sup> "Mecca quota worries SA Muslims," by Ziegfried Ekron, *News24.Com*, (December 1, 2005).. The quota was fixed at one pilgrim per 100,000 Muslims in a specific country, pilgrims could not return to Mecca within a five-year period, and children under 16 could not accompany their parents.  
www.news24.com/News24/South\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\_1814138,00.htm

<sup>3</sup> Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 120-121. An explanation is that "women are of inferior birth, and impure (sic)," according to her informants, 123.

<sup>4</sup> Personal observation, Jerusalem (on several visits). The mothers I spoke to on each occasion were resentful about being excluded, even though they were Orthodox.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: the Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 309. This is an hereditary office: Kotooka Yatsutsugu succeeded his father in 1994. Several men of his father's generation left the shrine because of his innovations, including a more inclusive outlook and an innovative marketing campaign.

<sup>6</sup> Other requirements for the *Compostela* include having a regulation number of ink stamps from stops along the way, on the document that marks the pilgrim's route; this enables the Office of the Pilgrim to check whether the pilgrim has actually taken as long to travel the *Camino* as he or she claims.

<sup>7</sup> David Chidester, *Authentic Forgery and Forging Authenticity: Comparative Religion in South Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town New Series No. 186, 1994), 7. Witch-killing in its modern guise has tragically not been entirely eradicated in Southern Africa although perpetrators, if caught, are charged. A gruesome modern twist to this old phenomenon (practiced in Europe up until the eighteenth century), has been the "necklacing" of witches on occasion, placing a tyre around the victim's neck, dowsing it with petrol and setting it alight. This was a punishment sometimes used, though never condoned, on suspected "informers" in the days of the struggle against apartheid. It is a version of "trial by fire", using modern materials. The victims die a painful death, just as did those tied to a burning stake.

<sup>8</sup> There are two *Compostela* certificates; a large one for "religious pilgrims", and a smaller one for those whose motives are "tourism, sporting or cultural." This cannot but enhance the idea that some pilgrims are better than others, though local tourist authorities, who are delighted with the increase of pilgrims to the region, oppose this division. In this matter, Church and State sit in uneasy discord. The *Compostela* certificate may be denied to anyone deemed "not a real pilgrim" by the Pilgrims' Office, though lately this interpretation has been more flexible. Without one of the "correct" motives, the *Compostela* is not given; this occurs in less than 4% of the cases. But the Office is becoming more generous in how "religious" motivation is defined: it may be spiritual, religious or religious/cultural, and under "spiritual" a range of motives are accepted, including personal search, education and learning, and vows. Frey, 160.

<sup>9</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 408.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> A.N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (London: Abacus, 1999), 18.

<sup>12</sup> That "place" matters is the postulate of many writers on religion: Mircea Eliade believed in "hierophanies" or places where the sacred erupted into the world, while Gerhardus van der Leeuw wrote that a sacred place was not just meaningful but also powerful, in that it was appropriated, possessed and owned. Others, such as Jonathan Z. Smith, have written that there is a separation between map and territory, and that sacred space is a matter of religious creativity, rather than geography. Still others, including mystics, warn against attachment of place; on the whole, though, people seem to prefer a firm

locality for their sacred imaginings. See Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), also Gerhardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. J.E. Turner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Jonathan Z. Smith, "Map is not Territory" in *Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); and Sam Gill, "Territory," in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Christina Rossetti, "Uphill," in *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Ian Reader, "Conclusions" in Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), 225.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), 114-6. The flagellants were considered so "holy" for their suffering that children were brought to them to be healed, and in at least one case, to be resurrected (114). Inevitably they turned into a force in adversary to the usual trio of Church, State and the wealthy; Jews in particular, were their victims, in Friburg, Nürnberg, Munich and Regensburg among other places. The last pogroms took place in Antwerp and in Brussels, where in December 1499, the entire Jewish community was exterminated. Once the plague had also taken its terrible toll, there were few Jews left in Germany or the Low Countries. Those who survived lived in the shadow of the accusations by the flagellant pilgrims – as "well-poisoners" and other vicious stereotypes. "The period of the Jews' medieval flourishing was over" (116). So "pain" had not been restricted to just the pilgrims. See also Sidney Painter, *A History of the Middle Ages 284-1500* (London: Macmillan, 1875), 419.

<sup>16</sup> The large groups of flagellant pilgrims, frenzied with blood and pain, were outside the usual control of the church; the "democracy" of pilgrimage is one of its drawbacks in the West because it is unpredictable. Initiation ceremonies also expect initiates to bear pain stoically, but there they are under the control of elders, who are able to limit any outbreak of unpredicted behaviour. Also, in some cultures, pilgrims experiencing pain are encouraged to "perform" as part of the social drama; for more on this, see Catherine Bell, "Performance," in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), also Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 34.

<sup>18</sup> The "witch" is executed in an exceptionally painful manner because "her" death is conceived of as a spiritual passage, initiatory rite or saving violence, not merely a remove from society: Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

<sup>19</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, suggests in her study on the shrine on Tinos, that it offers women the chance of presenting public performances of "being good at being a women" as they drag themselves up the steep access to the shrine on their knees or stomachs, sometimes carrying burdens, 26 and 227.

<sup>20</sup> Nancy Frey, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 219.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Holm, *Sacred Place* (London: Pinter, 2000), 45.

<sup>22</sup> E. Valentine Daniel, *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), 268-9. Experience has shown that pain can make self-transcending realities accessible and vivid, writes Glucklich, *Sacred Pain*, 207.

<sup>23</sup> Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*, 300. She adds that, in an age when people sit in offices, in transport and at home, rarely walking uphill, the climb up Mt Kotohira is especially challenging.

<sup>24</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, describes those pilgrims, mostly women, who have made vows that they will ascend to the Church on their knees, or, even more difficult and painful, on their stomachs, inching their way up the hill. Sometimes they increase the pain of the journey by bearing a burden, such as a sick child, on their backs.

<sup>25</sup> Frey: *Pilgrim Stories*, 114. Some do so, occasionally more than once.

<sup>26</sup> The comment is attributed, among others, to George Smiley, the master "spycatcher" created by bestselling novelist John le Carré.

<sup>27</sup> Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 208.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholas Shrady, *Sacred Roads: Adventures from the Pilgrimage Trail* (London: Viking, 1999), 149.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Lash, *On Pilgrimage* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 222.

<sup>30</sup> Itoi., "Steps Towards Heaven," 56.

<sup>31</sup> Cees Noteboom, *Roads to Santiago* (London: The Harvill Press, 1997), 326.

<sup>32</sup> Cees Noteboom, *Roads to Santiago* (London: The Harvill Press, 1997), 323.

<sup>33</sup> Though Gerhardus van der Leeuw meant that the “politics of sacred place” excludes foreigners, the general xenophobia regarding strangers was a firm feature of past pilgrimage, even when the pilgrim himself or herself was technically “the foreigner.” See in Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*.

<sup>34</sup> Tomasi, *Homo Viator*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 84.

<sup>36</sup> In speaking of pilgrims (to Lourdes) Pope John Paul II said: “Through their suffering they, in a sense, pay back the boundless price of our redemption”. Glücklich, *Sacred Pain*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasatra, Vol. 4* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1953).

<sup>38</sup> Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Elvi Whittaker, “Public Discourse on Sacredness: The Transfer of Ayers Rock to Aboriginal Ownership,” *American Ethnologist* 21, 2 (1994): 318.

<sup>40</sup> It is the responsibility of each generation of Aboriginal descendants to “hold up” the country by retracing tracks to specific locations where they perform song and dance dramas that refresh the knowledge of their actions – and both “danger” and pain may constitute an accepted byproduct of the pilgrimages: Sam Gill, “Territory”, 299.

<sup>41</sup> “Relatives pray for loved ones after Hindu pilgrims swept away,” *Cape Times*, April 13, 2005. Officials at the Indira Sagar dam, about 100kms upstream of the festival, said they did not know the festival was taking place.

<sup>42</sup> “345 pilgrims die on hajj”, *Cape Times*, January 13, 2006. “Death toll rises to 76 in Mecca pilgrimage tragedy,” *Weekend Argus*, January 7, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> As biologists have often noted, we have no natural weapons, no claws or fangs or armoured scales that will rescue us if caught unawares. Our earliest protection was in groups: only in unity, our ancestors discovered, is there strength.

<sup>44</sup> On April 19, 1995, 27-year-old Timothy McVeigh destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma with a massive car bomb. George Metesky conducted a reign of terror in New York during the 1950s with the planting of 30 bombs, though not all exploded. The first bomb of his to do so was in the Paramount Movie Theatre in Brooklyn, on December 2, 1956. They typify the fears of a “lone renegade” who is difficult to track and their “loner nature” is considered to be part of their errant personalities.

<sup>45</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 61. This demonstrates that the most visible and famous symbol of that pilgrimage, the scallop, had been almost forgotten until recently, and was certainly not part of the “collective memory” of the *Camino*, as has sometimes been claimed. Moreover, outside of the *Camino*, in the rest of Spain and elsewhere, that lack of recognition still holds and pilgrims may be taken to be hikers.

<sup>46</sup> No non-Muslims may enter Mecca. Security is tight at Zion City, the headquarters of the Zion Christian Church in the Limpopo Province of South Africa; non-Zionists are routinely turned away.

<sup>47</sup> James Meek, “If they’re ill, charge them extra,” *London Review of Books* 24, 6 (March 21, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Carving personally significant symbols on it, such as a snake and an acorn, related to Betsy’s personal feelings of transformation

<sup>51</sup> Reader, “Dead to the World” in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 111.

<sup>52</sup> David B. Coplan, “Land from the Ancestors: Popular Religious Pilgrimage along the South Africa-Lesotho Border,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 4 (December, 2003), 987.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 987.

<sup>54</sup> Declan Hughes, “One Man’s Journey: Vietnam Veterans’ Motorcycle Ride from Los Angeles to Washington DC, May 19-30, 1999,” [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org).

<sup>55</sup> Determined to keep the *Camino* “pure”, a grumpy “gatekeeper” at St Jean Pied-de-Port reportedly often refused to give a “stamp” to those who seemed, to her, inappropriately dressed; she believed they were not “real” pilgrims. See Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 68.

<sup>56</sup> Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*, 21.

<sup>57</sup> I took my then two-year-old daughter Nandi to play in a London park many years ago. Like all South African children, she immediately slipped off her shoes. The other local children laughed at her, shouting “bare feet!” I gathered than children brought up in a cold climate, or in cities, do not walk barefooted much. This is an example of how cultural determination plays a role in how we perceive visual clues.

<sup>58</sup> This anecdote was told to me by South African TV presenter Betty Kemp, Cape Town, June 14, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 241.

<sup>60</sup> Simon Coleman, “From England’s Nazareth to Sweden’s Jerusalem,” in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 65.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 129-130.

<sup>62</sup> Noteboom, *Roads to Santiago*. His was a meandering journey through much of Spain's cultural heritage, including "Don Quixote" country, with his final destination as Santiago. He travelled by car.

<sup>63</sup> Conrad Rudolph, *Pilgrimage to the End of the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p 15.

<sup>64</sup> The average age is 30, though if the vacationing students are removed the mean age increases. Spain accounts for 70% of pilgrims but that figure is dropping; the remaining pilgrims on the *Camino* come from at least 63 different countries. The largest number of non-Spanish pilgrims are from Germany, Holland, Belgium and Italy, in that order. Virtually all are white. The majority, almost 70%, say they are Catholic by birth but not by practice. Many distinguish between practising Catholics and those who are not, while some insist that "spirituality" does not come from the church. Most are educated, urban and middle-class. Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 21-29.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 111. This emulates Christ's action of bathing feet, which is in itself a refrain of his Jewish background, where washing hands and feet is seen as symbolic of spiritual cleansing obtained under Mosaic law. The six water pots in the house at Cana, where the water was made wine (John 2:6) were for this purpose, "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews". Islam follows the tradition of ritual cleansing before praying. See C.H. Wright's 'Concordance' (Collins Press, Glasgow, 1962), 43.

<sup>67</sup> *Diocesan Commission* 3, 1993. The emphasis in italics is included in the original.

<sup>68</sup> David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., "Introduction," in *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> A pamphlet on these and other "undesirable influences" is available in the Pilgrims' Office, and articles occasionally appear in *Compostela*, the magazine of the head confraternity of St James.

<sup>70</sup> There are those who, like Paul Coelho, deliberately set out for a mystical experience on the road; the end of the journey has little or no importance to them. His guide, Petrus, told him that after a week he would begin to hear voices. According to Coelho, he did. He announced that his pilgrimage was at an end long before Santiago, and took a bus for the rest of the way.

<sup>71</sup> Kevin Jacobs, "Westward, to the world's end," *Sunday Times*, April 3, 2005. I know Kevin, and he well fits the description of a "cynical and experienced old hand" in the newspaper business. I was therefore somewhat surprised at his moving description – and pleased for him.

<sup>72</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 133.

<sup>73</sup> Personal interview, Gus Ferguson, January 2001. JM Coetzee did not complete the full journey; one of the difficulties was that, as a vegetarian, he found difficulty in feeding himself in rural Spain.

<sup>74</sup> They often include a cultural visit and a group dinner, combining elements of *romerías*, journeys to local festivities for the commemoration of saints.

<sup>75</sup> Frey, 136. The Dean of Cape Town, Rowan Smith, supports this idea. "My whole life is a pilgrimage", he says (personal interview, Cape Town, June 7, 2005).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. "In the strength and emotion of this moment, I cried. Then I explained that in every step of the way I had felt the presence of my son, Guy, in whose name I made the pilgrimage.....I asked him to write the name, Guy, on the *Composela* in front of me. When *Don Jaime* agreed, I began to cry again".

<sup>77</sup> Tim Moore's funny account of his journey along the *Camino* accompanied by the stubborn donkey, Shinto, gave a wonderful insight into the extra effort needed to take care of an animal: *Spanish Steps* (London: Vintage, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Jon Goss, "Souvenir and Sacrifice in Tourist Consumption" in Carolyn Cartier and Alan A. Lew, eds., *Seductions of Place*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 63.

<sup>79</sup> English translation by Father Grosjean of Brussels, from the Irish script of Michael O'Clery, on of the "four masters", *Royal Library*, MS 5057-5059.

<sup>80</sup> Anthony F. Aveni, "Time," in Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 314-333. Also see Aveni's *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks and Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1989).

<sup>81</sup> David Ewing Duncan, *The Calendar* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 313-5. The first time the entire world agreed on the date was on October 1, 1949, when Mao Zedong declared that China would follow the Gregorian calendar – though within religious traditional use, "cultural" dates may be used.

<sup>82</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 37-38. She points out that sites may even compete with each other in terms of auspicious timing. In Greece, there are at least three places that have major celebrations on August 15, the Day of the Dormition – Tinos, Paros and the site of the Panayía Soumela in northern Greece.

<sup>83</sup> In 2005, it was reported in a wide variety of the media that approximately 21,000 "druids" and other celebrants attended the summer solstice at Stonehenge. Interestingly, the nearby but undramatic site of Woodhenge is almost entirely ignored, even though it would also have been used for solstice rituals. It may be that "performance" is a strong criterium for preferring Stonehenge.

<sup>84</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958). Eliade thought that humans discovered or “identified” certain places, or “hierophanies”, of sacred potency and that the strongest place, which gives orientation to all other “place”, is the centre.

<sup>85</sup> See the section on pilgrimage in Australia – Aboriginals ask that tourists do not climb Uluru, which is sacred to them.

<sup>86</sup> “There is not other connection between our world and the lower world except possibly through a waterhole that the great god climbed from that world, when he first came here”, Maria van der Ryst, Marlize Lombard and Wim Biemond, “Rocks of Potency: engravings and cupules from the Dovedale Ward, southern Tuli Block, Botswana,” *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 59,179 (2004): 5-6.

<sup>87</sup> Thaba Sione is a tiny, unmarked settlement between Weltevreden and Khunwana, 50 kms from the town of Sannieshof and has over 550 engraved rocks, among them depictions of the rhinoceros that once frequented the area. Philip Harrison, *South Africa’s Top Sites – Spiritual* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2004), 50.

<sup>88</sup> The offerings are made to the *zwidudwane* – half-human, half-spirit, each with one eye, leg and arm. Legend holds that it is possible to hear drumming and singing from deep under the Guvhukkuvhu Pool. The turn-off to the Falls is at Donald Fraser Hospital on the R523 outside Sibasa.

<sup>89</sup> Lake Fundudzi is in the far north Limpopo Province, the region where Christian missions have been historically the weakest, and in which traditional African religious practices have been the most durable. According to the latest South African census, in 2001, only 126,000 people classified themselves as adherents of a traditional religion – the majority in Limpopo. Millions who live there, however, belong to Zionist and other African churches, which are a mix of traditional and Christian practices. Harrison, *Top South African Sites – Spiritual*, 11.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Mantsopa, born in 1793 at Modderpoort near Ladybrand in the Free State (and said to have lived until 1904), was a daughter of Makhetha, half-brother of the famous Bakwena chief and seer, Mohlomi and is therefore considered royalty. She came to prominence by prophesying the victories of King Moshoeshe over British colonial forces in 1851. Her powers gave her such prominence that the king exiled her to her original home at Modderpoort and she converted to Anglicanism at the mission station there the day after her cousin, the king, died. She was even buried in the “white” graveyard, unusual for those days.

<sup>91</sup> “Into the Light,” *Sunday Times*, April 24, 2005. Catholics and other Christians, as well as traditionalists, make the journey.

<sup>92</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 23.

<sup>93</sup> John Manchip White, *The Land God Made in Anger* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 11. The Brandberg, “Burnt Mountain”, contains one of the most famous San/Bushmen paintings, the so-called White Lady of the Brandberg, a central figure on an elaborate frieze that covers the wall of the principal cave. The figure is now believed to be neither white nor a lady. Another important mountain site in Namibia is Spitzkoppe, a tall, pointed mountain on the flatlands of Namibia, not far from Swakopmund. It is known as the “Matterhorn of Namibia” due to its shape. Rock art is found there, including a great golden snake (for its symbolism, see *Chapter Five, Women’s Pilgrimages – Driekopseiland* in South Africa). Some of the rock art easily accessible to the public, such as the rhino, is woefully deteriorating due to poor preservation techniques (it was covered with lacquer); I was shocked at its condition on a visit in September, 2004. The oldest rock art painting that has been discovered in Southern Africa is an eland, the beloved animal of the San, in the Apollo 11 Cave in Namibia, which is c.27,000 years old.

<sup>94</sup> For symbolism of the rain, which was associated with the “rain animal”, the eland, see “The Rain in the form of an eland”, told by /Han/kass’o to Dr Lucy Lloyd in 1873; the Bleek and Lloyd papers are housed at the University of Cape Town. This story is included in Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven’s Things: A Story of the /Xam* (Cape Town: LLAREC, 1999), 46-7. Although the eland is by far the most commonly painted animal in the Cederberg, their rock art bears no relation to the range of animals the San actually ate, reminds Janette Deacon, *Some Views on Rock Paintings in the Cederberg* (Cape Town: National Monuments Council, 1998), 13. Also present are paintings of zebra, elephant and lion, yet analysis of the bones shows that their diet was dominated by small antelope and ground game, such as dassies, tortoise and hare, emphasising that their rock art was not pictorial but symbolic.

<sup>95</sup> This claim of the twelve sacred places was made by Robert Coon in a “mysterious document”, according to Adrian Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground*, 48. The other eight places were: Haleakala Crater in Hawaii, Bolivia’s Islands of the Sun and Moon, Palenque in Mexico, the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the mountains Tongarito (New Zealand), Shasta (California), Kailas (Tibet) and Fuji (Japan), and the Four Sacred Mountains of Bali. Ivakhiv notes that the New Age and earth spirituality literature projects a geography of nonhomogenous space, marked by special places which stand out as especially important, meaningful, or powerful, 49.

<sup>96</sup> This is claimed by local and visiting members of the “International Light” and is also believed to rate very highly in terms of the Chinese tradition of *Feng Shui* – from the mountain top there is a lion on the left (Lion’s Head) and a dragon on the right (Devil’s Peak) – see Harrison, *Top South African Sites*, 96. Also the newsletter *Link-up* (Western Cape), published by the South African Natural Health Network, [www.naturalhealth.co.za](http://www.naturalhealth.co.za).

<sup>97</sup> Dean Liprini has identified physical landmarks on the mountain which he says would have enabled the ancients to observe the first and last rays of the setting sun, especially during the times of solstice and equinox, see [www.sunpath.co.za](http://www.sunpath.co.za). The Novalis Institute in Cape Town promotes Table Mountain as sacred space; the director, Natalie Baker, refers to it as “The Teacher”, Harrison, *Top South African Sites*, 96.

<sup>98</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 227. The vertical dimension of sacred geography is echoed in the Southern African San understanding of the function of the waterhole – where the sacred realms above and below meet.

<sup>99</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 116.

<sup>100</sup> An interesting exception to this rule seems to be the practice of Australian aborigines which specifically allows different groups, who may speak different languages or dialects, to occupy the same locations which are important to all. Ownership of the sacred and is understood to belong to all Aborigines and is “held up” by their continual rewalking and resinging the tracks and stories of their ancestors in acts of perpetual recreation. See Gill, “Territory,” 299-300.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, “Map is not Territory”, see also his *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>103</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*; Isa Steynberg’s comment that “inside is also a direction” is quoted at the beginning of Chapter One; filmmaker Fellini’s injunction to “live like a sphere” is a much-repeated one by those who knew him.

<sup>104</sup> Van der Leeuw: *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. Also Chidester, “The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space,” 211-231.

<sup>105</sup> Every August, the Recreation of the Mystery of Sainte Reine takes place in Alise-Sainte-Reine in Burgundy where she is the patron saint. She was created a martyr in 253AD, and a spring miraculously spurted forth from the site of her execution.

<sup>106</sup> *Motouleng*, known to local English-speakers at the “Fertility Cave”, while local black residents call it the “Holy Cave”, is near the resort village of Clarens in the Free State in an area of considerable rock art, indicating that the many caves may have been used for ritual purposes in the long-gone past: [clarens@bhm.dorea.co.za](mailto:clarens@bhm.dorea.co.za). It is on private land and is not signposted. Andrew Donaldson wrote that “we are humbled not only by its scale but by the almost tangible reverence that others have for it” in “Cathedral in a Peak.” *Sunday Times*, April 16, 2000. Another cave, though no longer used by traditionalists, is Holkrans near Fouriesberg; New Age adherents believe it still to be a place of spiritual energy and visit the cave for drumming and other ritual ceremonies.

<sup>107</sup> Coplan, 984.

<sup>108</sup> The cave, first recorded in writing in 1846 by Henry Methuen, was lived in for about two years between 1909-11 by its then owner, N.J. Bosman, his eleven sons and three daughters, while their homestead was being built. Remains of their interior dwelling can be seen. It was proclaimed a National Monument in 1993.

<sup>109</sup> The large cave is under continual excavation and is not open to the public because at present it is considered dangerous; it is 43kms south of Kuruman on the Daniëlskuil Road, on the farm Wonderwerk (“Miracle”), in an area rich with rock art and stone tools on the *Ghaap* (the /Xam word for “Hoodia plant”) plateau ; see [www.museumnc.co.za/McGregor/departments/Archaeology/wonder.htm](http://www.museumnc.co.za/McGregor/departments/Archaeology/wonder.htm). Teeth of an extinct horse dating back 8,000 years have been found there, among other animal bones and San artefacts. It runs horizontally for 140 metres into the Kuruman Hills. I spent a magical night there in September, 2005 (with permission).

<sup>110</sup> Geoffrey Blundell, *The Politics of Public Rock Art: a Comparative Critique of Rock Art Sites Open to the Public in South Africa and the United States of America* (MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1996). Both he and Deacon have argued that rock art sites should be preserved as modern pilgrimage sites, or else they may be lost. Blundell continues his research at the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) in Johannesburg, [www.wits.ac.za/raru](http://www.wits.ac.za/raru).

<sup>111</sup> Shrady, *Sacred Roads*, xiv.

<sup>112</sup> Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 49-50.

- <sup>113</sup> Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrims' Progress* (New York: Harper & Row, 1911), 264. A visitor to Palestine in the mid-1800s, Twain made the comment that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is "the most sacred locality on earth to millions and millions of men and women and children. With all its claptrap side-shows and unseemly postures of every kind, it is still grand, reverend, venerable – for a god died there; for fifteen hundred years its shrines have been wet with the tears of pilgrims from the earth's remotest confines; ...history is full of blood that was shed because of the respect and the veneration in which men held the last resting-place of the meek and lowly, the mild and gentle Prince of Peace!"
- <sup>114</sup> David Grossman quoted by David Hare in his monologue *Via Dolorosa, A Play* (London: Faber, 1997).
- <sup>115</sup> Hare, *Via Dolorosa*.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid. The image of the young soldiers visiting the museum as part of their national service was one of them chewing gum, making obscene jokes and chatting loudly on mobile phones against black-and-white photographs of men, women and children dying in concentration camps, attitudes Hare found intolerable.
- <sup>117</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 31.
- <sup>118</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).
- <sup>119</sup> Michael Jackson, *At Home in the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). He writes about the "network of ties developed", different for each person, leading to their skeins of relationships; so each aboriginal lifetime was a "recreation" but also a dynamic enterprise.
- <sup>120</sup> John Hain, "The Stars, the Snow, the Fire: Twenty-Five Years in the Northern Wilderness," in Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 127.
- <sup>121</sup> An example of this appeared in a recent advertisement for the rural Province of Mpumalanga in South Africa. It showed a person at the top of a mountain, with great vistas of wilderness and water below. "Discover God within...discover yourself", it claimed. *Sunday Times*, June 19, 2005.
- <sup>122</sup> Ian Player – brother of the golfer Gary Player – is an acclaimed "leadership through wilderness" conservationist in KwaZulu-Natal. See videorecording, *Hlonipa ("Respect") – Journey into Wilderness* by Peter Ammann, undated, filmed by a foreign group taken into the bush on pilgrimage.
- <sup>123</sup> One study, by the University of Leicester, compared two groups of patients with depression, half of whom swam and snorkeled with dolphins, and the other half who also swam, without dolphins. After two weeks, the group that swam with dolphins had "improved significantly" compared to the control group. English Nature has also reported evidence of health improvements after interaction with nature. "Swim with dolphins, feed your soul," by Jeremy Laurance, *Cape Times*, November 28, 2005. The term "ecopsychologists" has been coined to describe those who think that connection with nature is fundamental to our health and wellbeing, "It's official – getting back to nature is good for you and also for the environment," by Hugh Wilson, *The Independent*, August 28, 2005. See [www.psychologyonline.co.uk](http://www.psychologyonline.co.uk).
- <sup>124</sup> The devotions of pilgrims to these glaciers, that form a mass in the Himalayas, venerate the source of the life-giving water which is associated with Shiva, and which is under threat. Professor Syad Husein of the NGO "High Ice India", warns of the greenhouse warming effect that is rapidly melting them; he and glaciologist Dr Rajesh Kumar have tracked the shrinking of the glaciers that will ultimately have a devastating effect on their countries' water resources – and devotions. *BBC*, July 4, 2005.
- <sup>125</sup> "Poor to get free access to parks," by Pilda Essop, *Cape Argus*, November 3, 2005. The article acknowledged that there has been a "huge demand" to perform spiritual rituals in reserves.
- <sup>126</sup> Diana Graham, email to me, May, 2005. The symbols she used were drawn from "instinct" which, she says, is "wiser, richer (than academic knowledge) and appeals directly to the instincts in others". She also added: "I find that the public are aware that our global culture is disrespectful and abusive of something very precious in the human psyche. People love to see the Earth and all of nature respected and loved and honoured very simply in a truly most beautiful part of this land". Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Spiritual*, 84-85, refers to it as a "celebration of the divine in nature". It received international attention when it featured in the television documentary, *Secrets of Sacred Space* by Chuck Pettis. Also consult [www.ecoshrine.co.za](http://www.ecoshrine.co.za).
- <sup>127</sup> The labyrinth, which is described as one of the world's largest, is at "The Edge", Hogsback, a retreat. See [theedge@execunet.co.za](mailto:theedge@execunet.co.za). More information on labyrinths in South Africa is given in *Chapter Four*.
- <sup>128</sup> Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground*, 239.
- <sup>129</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery and Meaning in an Ordinary Church* (London: Penguin, 2002).
- <sup>130</sup> The "circle of *kramats*" is considered so important in Cape Town that it has been used as evidence in courtcases regarding use of land, most recently in the case of a property magnate who wished to sell or develop his land along the coastline for millions of rands. The South African Supreme Court of Appeal decided in May, 2004 that he should not be awarded development rights because of the presence of more than 20 Muslim graves, including two *kramats*. John Yeld, "Graves central in Oudekraal court ruling,"

*Cape Argus*, May 31, 2004. The judgement noted that the two *kramats*, in particular, had special religious and cultural significance for the Muslim community.

<sup>131</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 200.

<sup>132</sup> Bente Nikolaisen, "Embedded Motion: Sacred Travel among Mevlevi Dervishes," in Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 103.

<sup>133</sup> Coleman, "Conclusion: After Sainthood?," in Hawley, ed., *Saints and Virtues*, 205.

<sup>134</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, "Saint Gandhi," in Hawley, ed., *Saints and Sinners*, 216.

<sup>135</sup> "Japan's New Priest For a Complex Shrine". NY Times insert in *Sunday Times*, March 20, 2005.

<sup>136</sup> Coleman, "Conclusion: After Sainthood?," 208.

<sup>137</sup> Franz Werfel, *The Song of Bernadette* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948), 423. The book became an international best seller.

<sup>138</sup> Robert L. Cohen, "Sainthood on the Periphery: the case of Judaism," in Hawley, ed., *Saints and Virtues*, 87-89.

<sup>139</sup> Visser, *The Geometry of Love*, 216-7.:

<sup>140</sup> A ritual object became a power object at least in part because it could be owned: the "possession of the power object means *salvation*", Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 101.

<sup>141</sup> Edwin Mullins, *The Pilgrimage to Santiago* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974), 160.

<sup>142</sup> Jennifer Lash, *On Pilgrimage* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 63.

<sup>143</sup> Hawley, ed., *Saints and Virtues*, 9.

<sup>144</sup> It was also there that, in 1166AD, Thomas à Becket of Canterbury pronounced the excommunication of Henry II of England, thereby sealing his fate. His shrine then became the object of pilgrimage, in Canterbury.

<sup>145</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 64-65. For the benefit of pilgrims, Reading was equipped with a hospice that offered free food and lodging on a lavish scale; guests and pilgrims regularly consumed more than the monks themselves.

<sup>146</sup> In the eighteenth century, part of it was converted into Reading Gaol, where Oscar Wilde would later languish, and during the course of excavations workmen came across a mummified human left hand concealed in the base of a wall, believe to be the very hand of St James which Mathilda had brought back from Santiago six hundred and fifty years before. It was given to the Roman Catholic Church of St Peter at Marlow-on-Thames for safe keeping. Enough doubt surrounded the relic for Father John Morris, SJ, to visit Santiago to find out; in 1882 he published a report of his pilgrimage in which he revealed that the left hand of the apostle's body was indeed missing).

<sup>147</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 161. Royal chapels in Europe, particularly in Austria, have vestibules crowded with reliquaries containing sacred relics, such as finger bones, hair and teeth. These can seem gruesome to modern travellers, but were once considered almost priceless. Not long ago, Victorians kept relics of their loved ones, including locks of hair, in brooches and lockets.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* In June 2005, a vial allegedly containing the "molecules" of celebrities Brad Pitt and Angeline Jolie collected while they walked along a red carpet, was offered for auction on the internet. Several offers to buy this relic were recorded.

<sup>149</sup> "A bloody marvel," *Sunday Times*, May 9, 2004. The liquification is supposed to happen three times a year: on September 19, the festival of San Gennaro who was beheaded in 305AD; on the Saturday preceding the first Sunday in May; and on December 16, the anniversary of the 1631 eruption of Mount Vesuvius, and it happens in front of the congregation and dignitaries. The phenomenon was first observed in 1389; failure to liquify is seen as a bad omen. It did not happen at all in 1976, but has occurred every year since, though on nine occasions it has been late

<sup>150</sup> Blake Morrison, *The Justification of Johann Gutenberg* (London: Vintage, 2001), 96.

<sup>151</sup> Light is important, because it comes from God; this thought is common to Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Jews and people of many other faiths; candles are therefore particularly important, not only for their utilitarian value but as symbols of the divine light, and candles that had been used in church or sacred rituals were much prized as relics. New Age celebrants habitually use candles too.

<sup>152</sup> "Art Radiates the Aura of a Senegalese Saint," New York Times insert, *Sunday Times*, March 6, 2005.

<sup>153</sup> "Lavender Hill flocks to see 'Jesus' on window," *Cape Argus*, March 24, 2005. A month later people were still coming to see the image, but the family reported that after Easter, the crowds had dwindled; "Crowds dwindle but the 'miracle' lingers on," *Cape Argus*, April 21, 2005.

<sup>154</sup> Mary is reported to have said "I appear to you, my children, on a bank in Florida. You have made money your God!" This message was given to Rita Ring on December 19, 1996, two days after the

appearance of the Clearwater image: William H. Swatos, "Our Lady of Clearwater: Postmodern Traditionalism: in Swatos and Tomasi, *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*, 185-6.

<sup>155</sup> "Hundreds flock to pray before 'Virgin Mary' in concrete stain," *Cape Times*, April 21, 2005.

<sup>156</sup> Conrad Rudolph, *Pilgrimage to the End of the Word* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11-12.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>158</sup> Lyall Watson, *Jacobson's Organ* (London: Penguin, 2000), 151. Nefertum, the god of perfumes, could be reached only by the prayer line of scented smoke rising from a censer. Ramses III was said to have used almost two million jars of incense during his reign, most of it going to the Theban temple of the god Amun, known to the Greeks as Zeus. The Greeks learned the use of incense from the Egyptians in the seventh century BC and soon no ritual in the Peloponnese was complete without frankincense or myrrh – the heaviest use was probably made in the Dionysian rites of communal ecstasy, which overflowed into the Bacchanalian revels of Rome (and were kept alive in Europe by the festivities surrounding the Spring Equinox).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>160</sup> "Mpepho" is *Helichrysum*, of which there are several varieties in Southern Africa. That used most frequently in Zululand (northern Kwa-Zulu-Natal) is *Helichrysum odoratissimum*, while in the Cape, *Helichrysum crispum* seems to be used, often referred to as *Kooigoed* – "bedding stuff". It is used for a cure for high blood pressure but is most significant for its use in traditional ceremonies, in the "same way as incense", to connect to the spiritual world, says indigenous plant expert Phakamani Xabe of the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens in Betty's Bay, Western Cape.

<sup>161</sup> J. David Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic Meanings in Southern San Rock Paintings* (London and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1981), 51. After her isolation, the girl will distribute the scented eland fat to her people; the power flows out from her as the centre of the ritual, and ensures good hunting.

<sup>162</sup> Julia Lawless, *Aromatherapy and the Mind* (London: HarperCollins, 1994). The Hindu word *aytar* describes a mixture of sandalwood and rose oil, the "attar of roses" widely used in ritual worship, and it was the mainstay of monastery gardens during the pungent Middle Ages. Recent clinical studies, she says, have found that rose oil acts as a mild sedative and antidepressant, soothing nervous tension, slowing heartbeats, lowering blood pressure and increasing concentration.

<sup>163</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 153. The bones now rest near the entrance of the Church of the Madonna of the Annunciation on Tinos, a major pilgrimage site in Greece.

<sup>164</sup> Watson, *Jacobson's Organ*, 149.

<sup>165</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase: A Memoir* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 80. Armstrong was herself an undiagnosed epileptic who was bitterly embarrassed by her "spells", which included the powerful "sulphurous" smell and on occasions, hallucinations, before her condition was recognised in her mid-30s, a particular kind of focal epilepsy centred in the temporal lobe, responsible for taste and smell (as well as the retention of memories).

<sup>166</sup> Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*, 192.

<sup>167</sup> Ainsworth's Homeopathic Pharmacy, which particularly recommends it for restoring energy after illness: Mick Brown, *The Spiritual Tourist* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 257.

<sup>168</sup> "Casino forks out for 10-year-old 'Virgin Mary' sandwich," via email from *Cape Argus*, January 21, 2005, from the *BBC website*.

<sup>169</sup> "Christ-like' shell to go on sale," via email from *Cape Argus*, January 21, 2005 from the *BBC website*.

<sup>170</sup> "Nun Bun missing in smash-and-grab raid on coffeehouse," *Cape Times*, December 27, 2005.

<sup>171</sup> Taken from the *BBC website*, January 21, 2005.

<sup>172</sup> Reader, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 224.

<sup>173</sup> Matthew Krouse, "Therapy in Switzerland," *Mail & Guardian*, November 19, 2004. The cell of Mandela symbolises the triumph of good over oppression, or evil; Chidester described it as a "virtual shrine", in "Mapping the Sacred in the Mother City". If so, it would mean that Switzerland had created a virtual shrine of a virtual shrine. It is, however, I think an actual shrine: tourists guides such as Anne Nasson of Cape Town have described to me the intense emotion with which some visitors, or pilgrims, react to it. Also, reports of it being "desecrated" as allegedly happened when a notorious journalist, Jani Allen, visited it with a "golfing troupe" in 2002, met with a public outcry, see Wilhelm Snyman, "An examination of debate around sites and symbols," *Cape Times*, February 8, 2005. That it is empty without any distinguishing characteristics from the other cells adjacent to it is something of a problem; John Comaroff told me that he had on occasions been shown different cells on his visits with students there

(personal interview, Cape Town, February, 2005). “The cell is an *idea*”, he said, in explanation. So perhaps it is virtual, after all.

<sup>174</sup> Juergensmeyer, “Saint Gandhi,” 188.

<sup>175</sup> There are those who believe that respected leaders who have spent time in prison, like Gandhi and Mandela, were able to resolve many of their inner conflicts because they had isolation forced upon them. This echoes the way of the anchorite, the stationary pilgrim.

<sup>176</sup> Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* (Boston: Element, 1999), 185-6. Also on the “pilgrimage” to Graceland see Chidester, *Authentic Fakes*, 2 and 33.

<sup>177</sup> Lash, *On Pilgrimage*, 78. (The colours are apparently of no special significance, apart from them being “pretty”).

<sup>178</sup> Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrims' Progress*, 196 and 384. He reported that pilgrims took down portions of the front walls (of Mary Magdalene's dwelling), and in Egypt: “we heard the familiar clink of a hammer, and understood the case at once. One of our well-meaning reptiles – I mean relic-hunters – had crawled up (the jaw of the Sphinx) and was trying to break a “specimen” from the face of this, the most majestic creation the hand of man has wrought. But the great image contemplated the dead ages as calmly as ever, unconscious of the small insect that was fretting its jaw. Egyptian granite that has defied all time has nothing to fear from the tack hammers of ignorant excursionists. He failed in his enterprise”.

<sup>179</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 166.

<sup>180</sup> Goss, “The Souvenir and Sacrifice in the Tourist Mode of Consumption,” 57.

<sup>181</sup> Kate Connolly, “Into the light,” *Sunday Times*, February 6, 2005.

<sup>182</sup> Sacred sites were already places of commerce – in fact shopping and sightseeing were integral parts of the pilgrim experience. Originally, the church was a market, while temples have always sold sacrificial animals and objects. We should not be too quick to condemn tourists consumption for its sacrileges against spirituality, warns Jon Goss, “The Souvenir and Sacrifice in the Tourist Mode of Consumption”, 67. “It only repeats the vain attempts to drive merchants from the temple.”

<sup>183</sup> Sporting fixtures may be referred to as “religious experiences,” and so may visits to the shrines of the great and good (and bad), such as Nelson Mandela's cell, or Graceland. These can be life-changing moments, equaling and at time surpassing, pilgrimages to, say, a local shrine or basilica.

<sup>184</sup> Tony Walter, “War Grave Pilgrimage” in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 72.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>186</sup> Clara Gallini, “Penitenti e guadanti,” in *Intertionale Scuola cultura città* 3, 7 (2000), 29.

<sup>187</sup> Walter, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 85-6.

<sup>188</sup> Herman Melville quoted by Obenzinger; *American Palestine*, 50.

<sup>189</sup> Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrims' Progress*, 223.

<sup>190</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 20.

<sup>191</sup> There have been notable exceptions, including Morinis, Sallnow, Dubisch and Sax. Even there, the emphasis has usually been on individual pilgrimages, and not on the extensive field of modern pilgrimage worldwide.

<sup>192</sup> Will Self, “Whirled Wide,” *High Life*, May 2001, 90.

<sup>193</sup> Rumi and his family fled the invading Mongols around 1220 and emigrated to Konya, Turkey. His father had been a theologian and mystic, and after his death Rumi took over the dervish community in Konya (“dervish” derives from the Persian “darwish”, meaning poor man in relation to the richness of God).

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>195</sup> Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage, Past and Present* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 6.

<sup>196</sup> Obenzinger, *American Palestine*, 164.

<sup>197</sup> Hare, *Via Dolorosa*.

<sup>198</sup> Dean MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity: Arrangement of Social Space in Tourist Settings,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 79,3 (1973): 589.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 601.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 597.

<sup>201</sup> Brown, *The Spiritual Tourist*, 5.

<sup>202</sup> Tomas, *Homo Viator*, 20.

<sup>203</sup> William Swatos, “New Canterbury Trails: Pilgrimage and Tourism in Anglican London,” in Swatos and Tomasi, *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*, 110.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

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**ENDNOTES: CHAPTER FOUR.**

<sup>1</sup> Cape Town artist Ronald Harrison, who as a “coloured” man was considered a second-class citizen under the apartheid government of South Africa, painted Chief Albert Luthuli in 1961 as a crucified figure after Luthuli had to apply for special permission to pick up his Nobel Prize. It caused an uproar (see *Pilgrimages of Recovery*).

<sup>2</sup> Celebrating solstice events are fixed calendar events for many ancient as well as “New Age” devotees. Stonehenge draws its fair share. In 2005, about 21,000 “druids, spiritualists and revellers” observed the summer solstice at the famous site, beating drums and playing pipes as the sun rose at 4.58am: “21,000 celebrate summer solstice.” *Cape Times*, June 22, 2005). Eclipses have also become part of New Age ritual, and pilgrims wishing to observe them often travel great distances for the “best spot.”

<sup>3</sup> Muslims who are walking to Mecca, but who have remained in one spot for two or perhaps three generations. As long as the *intent* to fulfil the pilgrimage is there, they are considered to be pilgrims; see C. Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> William H. Swatos, Jr. and Luigi Tomasi, eds. *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 120.

<sup>5</sup> From the video, *The Fire Has Been Lit...It Will Burn!* by Norman Servais on behalf of the National Movement of the Pilgrim Virgin (Cape Town: Metanoia Ministeries, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Norman Servais, metanoia@icon.co.za, is the Western Cape representative of the (South African) National Movement of the Pilgrim Virgin and has made several pilgrimages to Ngome as well as producing a video of the Shrine, “The Message of Ngome” and designing its website, [www.icon.co.za/~host/ngome/Church.htm](http://www.icon.co.za/~host/ngome/Church.htm). The present custodian of the shrine is Fr. Michael Mayer.

<sup>7</sup> Personal interview, Cape Town, December 6, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. John Dove, SJ, who believes that John Bradburne was a Christian martyr, wrote a biography, “*Strange Vagabond of God*,” (Gracewing Publishers, 1997). The quotes from Fr. Dove in this text are taken from a 60-minute film, “Vagabond of God” by Norman Servais, based on that book; metanoia@icon.co.za.

<sup>9</sup> The leper colony is very much still in existence: the AIDS ministry there, “like modern-day leprosy” is a central concern, and there is an AIDS house there called “Mother of Peace.” Information from Norman Servais, email, January 18, 2006

<sup>10</sup> Ibid Fr. Dove reports that Bradburne was horrified at the fact that the lepers were forced to cover their faces with sacks so as not to upset the orderlies. He also refused to allow the lepers to be taken to hospital as he had witnessed their poor treatment there by nurses frightened of the disease, arranging for them to be seen instead by a local mission doctor.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Dove mentions, as an example, that cattle owners would allow their animals to graze in fields owned by the lepers, some of whom were blind, without compensation – until Bradburne demanded compensation for them. Bradburne appreciated the solitary life: his sparsely-furnished hut was home to a swarm of bees that he tended, and which kept away unwanted intruders. He is described, though, as being personable, approachable and “full of joy” by those who knew him.

<sup>12</sup> An Italian doctor, she was based at the nearby All Souls Mission. She was fatally shot while she was travelling in a clearly marked ambulance. “Place of Miracles,” by Kerry Swift, *Sunday Times*, October 14, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> The thatched hut from which John Bradburne was taken is one of two that were built latterly by the missionaries for lepers awaiting admission to Mutemwa. Until their construction, Bradburne had housed them in his own tin hut. The hut’s door carries a brass plaque stating “From this hut John Bradburne was abducted on the night of Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1979, never to return. RIP.”

<sup>14</sup> The large white bird, for example, may have been a manifestation of the Holy Ghost, reports Fr. Dove.

<sup>15</sup> Comments by Fr. Dove in the film, “*Vagabond of God*.” On Bradburne’s cross is his name and the details: “b. June 14, 1921, d. September 5, 1979 (Third Order of St. Francis).

<sup>16</sup> Reported by Fr. Dove. Apparently, when the child was informed that Bradburne was dead, she replied, “No, he’s not!”

<sup>17</sup> The Franciscan priest promoting Bradburne’s cause for sainthood is Fr. Paschal Slevin, who is supported by Fr. Dove. However, the Zimbabwe Bishops are less keen (perhaps sensible to the political ramifications): the Jesuit spokesman for the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Oskar Wermter, says the Church is proceeding with due cautious and warned that it may be “a long time, if ever” that such a claim be verified. “Place of Miracles,” Swift, *Sunday Times*, October 14, 2001. The laity are greatly supportive of the move to canonize Bradburne.

<sup>18</sup> Details provided by Norman Servais (see above), and from his video “Sodality of the Sacred Heart Celebration at Centocow, 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 2001.” It may be obtained from The National Executive of the Sodality of The Sacred Heart, c/o Fr. Dezilina Mbulawa, PO Box 2118, Komani 5322, South Africa, or from metanoia@icon.co.za.

<sup>19</sup> The chapel housing Our Lady of Fatima was vowed by Bishop Spreiter during WWII and was blessed at its completion on December 8, 1954. Until the ascendancy of Ngome, Fatima was considered by many to be the primary Marian site in South Africa. Contact: Our Lady of Fatima, PO Box 367, Empangeni 3880, or metanoia@icon.co.za.

<sup>20</sup> There is no doubt that there really was an historical Gilgamesh, who ruled Uruk around 2700BC; but the Epic is a mythologising of him as an ancestor, with his heroic deeds and capacity for self-knowledge, his conquering and subsequent befriending of his beloved companion Enkidu, a “wild man”, and his illuminating grief on Enkidu’s death, when he realises that he is not immortal after all.

<sup>21</sup> The gist of his search lies in the words of the tavern-keeper Siduri, who cautions him:

Gilgamesh, where are you wandering?  
Life which you seek you will not find.  
When the gods created humankind  
They fixed the destiny of death for us  
And held back Life in their own hands.  
Gilgamesh, eat, be happy, dance,  
Delight in your wife and child,  
This alone is the lot of humankind.

I have used the Old Babylonian Version of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* translated by Maureen Gallery Kovacs (Palo Alto, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Edwin Mullins, *The Pilgrimage to Santiago* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974), 61.

<sup>24</sup> Geoff Blundell, *The Politics of Public Rock Art: A Comparative Critique of Rock Art Sites Open to the Public in South Africa and the United States of America* (MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1996), 151.

<sup>25</sup> Ian Reader, “Pilgrims in Shikoku”, in Ian Reader and Tony Walter, ed., *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan Pty Ltd., 1993), 144.

<sup>26</sup> The cave is signposted on the road from Port St Johns to Umtata, but is considered to be off limits to recreational visitors. See Philip Harrison, *Top Sites in South Africa – Spiritual*, 81.

<sup>27</sup> See Peter Harbison, E. Mullins et. al. It seems fashionable today for some Catholics to deny that the practice of indulgences even existed. In fact, it is a practice which has never been formally rescinded.

<sup>28</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 157.

<sup>29</sup> Poverty was not necessarily a drawback to making a pilgrimage. Friedrich Heer notes in *The Medieval World* that a peasant from Upper Bavaria, who died in 1866, had gone on pilgrimage twice to Rome, twice to Jerusalem and once to Compostela (New York: Mentor, 1961), 52. He also discusses how those who had taken a vow to go on a Crusade, could “buy themselves out”, paying for a substitute, in the later Crusades, 139. Also see Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 61.

<sup>31</sup> *The Canterbury Tales*, about a pilgrimage to the eponymous city, was written by English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400). They are robust accounts by imaginary pilgrims, vividly describing Medieval life.

<sup>32</sup> Lutz Kaelber, “The Sociology of Medieval Pilgrimage: Contested Views and Shifting Boundaries” in Swatos and Tomasi, *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*, 59.

<sup>33</sup> Luigi Tomasi, *Homo Viator*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Mullins, *Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 68. Such lack of pious behaviour does not just apply to pilgrimages. Though the majority of Crusaders who “took the vow” did so out of genuine religious fervour, others were hard-headed adventurers who saw the Crusades as a means of acquiring wealth and status. This attitude enabled the catastrophe of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, when Western Christians sacked Constantinople, the wealthiest city known to them – and Christian, to boot. The event was the greatest single dismantling and destruction of art treasures until WWII.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Lombaert, “Santiago de Compostela,” in Jennifer Westwood, ed., *Sacred Journeys* (London: Gaia Books, 1997), p 71. Six years later, he and the boys were still meeting regularly and he felt that they had come out of the pilgrimage in another state of mind, as stronger individuals with more self-respect

<sup>36</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom* (Johannesburg: Macdonald Purnell, 1994), 501.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Hawthorne works for the SANParks, Cape Town section. The five men who qualified for the gold level experience “outside” the prison were Rudy Japhets, Moegamat Farouk Jones, Quinton Munjanja,

Rashaad du Toit, and Jonathan Salie. Their supervisor in Pollsmoor was June Loff. The three warders were R. Nero, D. Manuel and J.G. Julies.

<sup>38</sup> Personal interview, SANParks nature conservation offices, Rhodes Memorial, Cape Town, November 25, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> This particular poem from Portugal, *To the Wayfarer*, was read to the prisoners by Mark Hawthorne. It includes the lines: "I am the beam that holds your house/the board of your table/the bed on which you lie/and the timber that builds your boat. I am the handle of your hoe/the door of your homestead/the wood of your cradle/and the shell of your coffin." (Unascribed copy supplied to me by Mark Hawthorne).

<sup>40</sup> Rashaad du Toit was released after serving two and a half years in prison. He is a Muslim. He and the other four prisoners agreed that the involvement of warder June Loff (then known as June Ruiters) was critical. "She went through hell to get this for us. The other warders, they don't care, but she doesn't just do her job, she truly *works* for us. She can *strive*, hey!" Rashaad du Toit now works for his father in a bakery. Personal interview, Cape Town, December 15, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> The gyrovagus fits neither Victor and Edith Turner's notion of *communitas* nor John Eade and Michael Sallnow's "contested space" at a holy shrine, the two theories which have dominated discussion of pilgrimage in the last several decades – in anthropology, at least. Any attempt to "pin down" a definition of pilgrimage will prove unreliable unless it contains the utmost flexibility, and an understanding that not all pilgrimages are "to a sacred place", not all pilgrimages involve an outer journey, and not all pilgrimages are "exotic." It should not be necessary to remind ourselves that what is exotic to onlookers may be as ordinary as eating and sleeping to the insider.

<sup>42</sup> Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic (1260-1327). Further reading: refer to Chapter One, "Endnotes" no. 6.

<sup>43</sup> The modern pilgrimage on Shikoku is still steeped in the past: the "traditional" way to do it is to start at the tomb of Kōbō Daishi in the mountain-top monastery founded by him in the ninth century. Since the route circles the island, there is in reality no destination and some pilgrims circumnavigate it several, or even hundreds, of times, writes Ian Reader, "Shikoku: Walking with the Saint", who did the journey himself. Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 83.

<sup>44</sup> Reader, "Dead to the World" in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 121.

<sup>45</sup> Patricia Stoa, "Mount Kailish," in Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 78. Pilgrims may prostrate themselves, walk the length of one prostration, and then repeat the process; in this way it can take a month to circle the mountain. (Twenty miles away lies Tibet's holiest lake, Manasarovar, a sacred bathing spot for pilgrims. It takes four days to walk the traditional route, starting from the Chiu Monastery.)

<sup>46</sup> Personal interview, May 4, 2004, Prince Albert Road (off the N1 on the way to Prince Albert, where he now lives). There are various myths about his birth; some accounts suggest he was born in a cave near Willowmore of travelling labourers known as the *Karretjie* ("Cart") people, and that his ancestors are Matabele; his name, Schoeman, an Afrikaner surname, was allegedly given to him by white villagers who could not pronounce "his" name, Quze. In 1953 he married Lena Kammies and had four children, at least one of whom, a daughter, survives, he told me.

<sup>47</sup> The quotes of *Outa Lappies* are from a series of interviews I had with him between May 3-5, 2004, at his home.

<sup>48</sup> His run-ins with the law over his dwellings have become something of a *cause célèbre*; he has been jailed but won all of his court cases with the help of sympathetic legal advisors. It was in part to prove to the authorities that he was not "rubbish, a piece of dirt" that he chose to respond by living with dignity and pride, showing them through his work and pilgrimage that "everything has value."

<sup>49</sup> Pat Hopkins, *Eccentric South Africa* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2001), 13.

<sup>50</sup> The restlessness has not left him, though, and his often to be seen around Prince Albert, though these days he travels by local taxi, rather than walk 40 kms. He is always keen for new experiences: in September, 2004 he visited the University of Cape Town to donate an amount of his small cash income for an scholarship, established in his name by a Canadian visitor. (Having known me only three days, he pressed R200 into my hand, which he had just earned, at his tattered dwelling and asked me to take it to UCT; "if you have something, you must give to others – that's important," he said). The UCT Legal Centre helped him fight some of his battles and this is also a way of repaying his debt.

<sup>51</sup> He showed me several such letters and photographs, "filed" in a broken plastic bag on the floor of his cement house, indescribably chaotic. The letters verified the emotional experience it had been for many foreigners who had met this unusual, deeply poor but welcoming man. Some of my interviews with him are on film.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Costen, Chapter Five, "The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Medieval Europe" in Reader and Walter, ed., *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 144.

<sup>53</sup> Suhir Kakar, *The Inner World: a Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>54</sup> The saint's relic is venerated daily between Pentecost and September 30 at 11.30am and the pilgrims' hospice is open all year round.

<sup>55</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Reader, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 225.

<sup>57</sup> Nancy Frey, *Pilgrim Stories* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 45.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>59</sup> The "Epidauros treatment" consisted of first making a sacrifice to the gods, then a ritual purification and subsequently spending a night in the sacred dormitory, *abaton*, where they lay on the skin of the animals which had been offered in propitiation. If they were not cured instantly, priests would translate their dreams into treatment, by exercise, rest, baths or intellectual pursuits. In 1822, the Independence of Greece was proclaimed in the theatre of Epidauros; that too, was a "healing" event.

<sup>60</sup> Wildebeest Kuil is about 30kms outside Kimberley, and comprises an ancient San/Khoi site of pecked engravings on small rocks, in open veld in a circular setting (see below: Pilgrimages of Recovery).

<sup>61</sup> Kevelaer Mission is named after the well-known pilgrimage site in Northern Germany. It houses a twin picture of the one venerated in Germany, of Our Lady, Consoler of the Afflicted.

<sup>62</sup> Myra Munchus-Bullock is a "cultural healer, teacher and performing artist whose work is grounded in Pan-African dance & culture,"

[www.spiritwalkers.org/site/pilgrimage/section.php?id=7289&pos=0&print=1](http://www.spiritwalkers.org/site/pilgrimage/section.php?id=7289&pos=0&print=1). Most of the comments here were made to me in a personal interview with both Myrna and Tim Bullock, Cape Town, December 15, 2005.

<sup>63</sup> The Bullocks said they were both raised as Christians, but that their experiences had proven (to them) that "our view of the Divine is a larger one than one denomination."

<sup>64</sup> "Episcopal Relief and Development Sponsors Ubuntu Pilgrimage to Visit HIV/AIDS Programs in Africa," *InterAction*, [www.interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=3078](http://www.interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=3078).

<sup>65</sup> The recognition that women are more vulnerable to AIDS (partly because of their genital makeup, and also socio-culturally are more vulnerable to pressure and force) than men is sometimes a shock for North Americans, who initially experienced AIDS as a "gay" disease. "Nearly 60 percent of infections at the moment are in women, most of them in younger women," said Helen Jackson of the UN Population Fund at the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) held in Abuja in December, 2005. "Biologically, women more prone to HIV infection than men," *Cape Times*, December 8, 2005.

<sup>66</sup> The Cape Mazaar Society, which is responsible for looking after the shrines or *kramats*, has published a useful, illustrated booklet which gives details of each *kramat* as well as its location, *Guide to the Kramats of the Western Cape* (there are also three *kramats* outside Cape Town, near Worcester, Wellington and Caledon). See also Philip Harrison, *Top Sites in South Africa – Spiritual*, and [www.cmm.co.za](http://www.cmm.co.za).

<sup>67</sup> *Guide to Kramats of the Western Cape*, 15. It has no website but gives its address as: 27 Rylands Road, Rylands Estate 7764, Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>68</sup> David Chidester, "Mapping the Sacred in the Mother City," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 13,1-2 (2000): 27. According to him, the Muslim leader known as Tuan Guru who was responsible for establishing many of the mosques and madrassahs in Cape Town, invoked the power of the *kramats* as a promise of both protection and liberation. "In Cape Town, therefore, the religious meaning of urban space for Muslims began with a circle of shrines around the perimeter of the city."

<sup>69</sup> From *Marian Shrines, Places of Pilgrimage in South Africa*, compiled by the National Director, Reverend Monsignor Gregory J. Van Dyk for the Pontifical Mission Societies, Bethlehem, South Africa, 2006. More information from [metanoia@icon.co.za](mailto:metanoia@icon.co.za).

<sup>70</sup> Personal interview at the SANParks Rhodes Memorial offices, Cape Town, November 25, 2005.

<sup>71</sup> The movement of Our Lady of the Poor began in January, 1933, when the Holy Mother appeared to a little girl named "Marianne" in Banneux, Belgium, and identified herself as "the Virgin of the Poor." She also spoke about the spring there, saying it was reserved for all nations "to relieve the sick." More information about The Shrine of Our Lady of the Poor at St. Benedict's Abbey may be obtained at PO Box 2189, Polokwane 0700, or from [metanoia@icon.co.za](mailto:metanoia@icon.co.za).

<sup>72</sup> The statue, with outstretched arms and swirling robes, is believed to be based on a painting of the Assumption by Guido Reni in 1637. Though the Sisters of the Assumption cared for it in Grahamstown, a Stigmatine priest (name not disclosed) was instrumental in its relocation to Jonathan, where there was a small school dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. [metanoia@icon.co.za](mailto:metanoia@icon.co.za).

<sup>73</sup> Tomasi, "Homo Viator" in Swatos and Tomasi, *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*.

<sup>74</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 26. Another auspicious day for visiting the shrine is March 25 (the day of the Annunciation and also, significantly to devotees, Greek Independence Day). These particular days can be extremely crowded as pilgrims take ferries from long distances to be there at these highly significant moments.

<sup>75</sup> The Niabinghi Fire-key Ceremony coincides with the “birthday” of the establishment of the Niabinghi National Council in South Africa on January 7, marking that day as doubly auspicious. See “Enchanted Time” by Mphoentle Mageza, *Mail & Guardian*, “Leisure” supplement, February 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 160. The latter are the most highly respected; they can be relied on to appear to such an extent that if a man has not joined his group by a certain day, the rest must assume that he is dead and perform his obsequies.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 124. The youths had a tendency to plough up the gardens of those who would not pay.

<sup>78</sup> Reader, “Dead to the World” in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 107. He says that release from agricultural labour, which is season-driven, and modern transport has resulted in a second peak period annually, autumn.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Inghen and Philip Wilkinson, *Customs and Rituals of the World* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 1994), 122.

<sup>80</sup> “Born-again painter suffers 12-hour hop through the desert for his art,” *Cape Times*, January 6, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-7. The masked dances are not open to visitors but other “social dances” can be witnessed throughout the year. Contact Hopi Cultural Centre, PO Box 67, Second Mesa, AZ 86043, USA.

<sup>82</sup> Estimates are that there were 450 whites and between 10,000 and 30,000 Zulus.

<sup>83</sup> E-mail to me, January 11, 2006. He is my brother-in-law; an academic and writer devoted to progressive ideas, particularly to do with religion and spirituality.

<sup>84</sup> Joshua 4: 5-7: “And Joshua said to them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean you by these stones? Then you shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off; and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.” King James version, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

<sup>85</sup> Ampie Muller is my husband. He and his brother Dr Piet Muller (and other siblings) were brought up as traditional Afrikaners, including membership of the NGK, the “official” church of Afrikaner-dominated South Africa for much of the second half of the twentieth century. Both of them subsequently left the church and manifestations of Afrikaner nationalism. (see *Pilgrimages of Recovery – Finding Great-grandfather*).

<sup>86</sup> The Voortrekker Monument, icon of Afrikaner nationalism, was scheduled to be blown up by freedom fighters during the Struggle. The then President of the ANC (in exile), Oliver R. Tambo (known as “O.R.”) put a stop to the plans on the grounds that it was sacred space. These niceties were not always reciprocated by the apartheid forces.

<sup>87</sup> Tony Walter, “Chapter Two: War Grave Pilgrimage” in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 63.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 66, 64.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>90</sup> My primary information for this story comes from palaeontologist Dr Judy Maguire, who lives in the Prince Albert Pass and who has, through collecting artefacts, proved that “Bushmen” lived there, particularly at *Tierberg* and *Boesmanspoort*. Permission for expeditions to hunt and shoot them in earlier centuries was sought and given, on the grounds that the Bushmen were stealing livestock. Many hundreds were deliberately exterminated. “The Gouws family admits to an ancestor having a permit to shoot Bushmen as vermin – and oral tradition has it that the *Tierberg* Caves were one of the last refuges of the fragments of a nation that has been obliterated from the local landscape,” she wrote to me (June 12, 2005). See also *Kommandos deur die Klein Karoo: ‘n Boek ter Herdenking aan die Anglo-Boer Oorlog 1899-1902* published by the author, Adam J. H. van Greunen in Oudtshoorn in 2001. He mentions the request to, and approval of the Dutch government. Also P.J. Botes and M. Botes, *Gemeente Onder die Zwartberge, 1842-1992* (Prince Albert: DR Church Council, 1992). Also Frieda Haak, *Prince Albert: At the Foot of the Swartberg*, (Prince Albert: Prince Albert Museum, 1995).

<sup>91</sup> Nigel Penn, *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), 137. The leader of the Bokkevelders in this commando was Izak van der Merwe. He was accused by a fellow burgher of causing innocent blood to be spilt while on commando, that is killing Khoisan women and children. Van der

Merwe's actions were considered to be reasonable by the landdrost (magistrate) and officers of Stellenbosch, and his accuser, A.G. Schombee, was fined ten rixdollars, 138.

<sup>92</sup> Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things: A Story of the /Xam* (Cape Town: LLAREC, 1999), 15-16. Nineteenth century author Thomas Pringle collected "horror stories" of the treatment the San/Bushmen received from colonists, such as "I still often shudder...when I think of the scenes I was obliged to witness" – a story which tells of "destroying" a considerable number of Bushmen, keeping the five women who were still living for servants, and then shooting them because they could not march quickly enough, 17-18. For many, the Bushmen were no more than animals to be shot at will, or exhibited as freak shows. In 1853, Charles Dickens (in "*Household Words*") about one of the Bushmen being "exhibited": "his filth, his straddled legs, and his odious eyes shaded by his brutal hand – the world will be a better place when his place knows him no more," 23-24.

<sup>93</sup> Although the San and Khoi people are recognised as the original inhabitants of South Africa, their descendants struggle to be acknowledged as a "nation", with specific rights to land. "Our letters (rock art) are seen as a national treasure, but we do not benefit," said Petrus Vaalbooi, representative of the "Kumani-San", at a meeting with special UN rapporteur Rodolfo Stavenhagen who visited South Africa to assess their local communities. "We want to be the boss over our own stuff and own issues, even the rocks on our land, said Vaalbooi. André Grobler, "Khoi-San leaders ask UN special rapporteur for help." *Cape Times*, August 8, 2005.

<sup>94</sup> Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Spiritual*, 84.

<sup>95</sup> Magersfontein is the site of one of the greatest Afrikaner triumphs in their history, and it became a symbol of a victory over enormous odds. The senior British officer to die there was Major-General Andrew Wauchope, commander of the esteemed Highland Brigade. The senior Boer officer to be killed there was *Commandant* Adriaan Petrus Johannes Diederichs, whose body was later disinterred and buried on the family farm in Ladybrand, Free State (he was the great-grandfather of my husband; see *Pilgrimages of Recovery*). No Boer monument has ever been erected on the Magersfontein battleground itself, unlike several erected to the English, Scottish and Scandinavian dead, though a particularly ugly memorial to the Boer dead, including "enemy" dead and the grave of a nurse, is a few kilometers away in the veld. It is not wholly conducive to veneration.

<sup>96</sup> Since the early 1990s, conservative Afrikaners have made an annual pilgrimage to Majuba, a three-hour drive south-east of Pretoria, to celebrate their historic triumph. "Traditional" dress and songs are the norm, and many arrive on horseback, sleeping in ox-wagons. This pilgrimage, to a symbolic time even further back than Magersfontein, commemorates a success – a week after the battle, the British negotiated peace, whereas the Anglo-Boer war was ultimately lost by the Afrikaners. For more on Majuba see Thomas Packenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991), also John Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion: The First Boer War 1880-1881* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005).

<sup>97</sup> The Vietnam Veterans War Memorial in Washington, DC was designed by a 21-year-old architectural student, Maya Ying Lin and unveiled in 1982. It is a potent place of loss, without the consolation of a victory, or a sense that the sacrifices were "worth it" for many who visit.

<sup>98</sup> In recognition of the sacred significance of the Voortrekker Monument for Afrikaners, the then President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, refused to ratify a decision by its armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) to blow it up in the 1980s. Although the monument, unveiled in 1949, was a monolith to Afrikaner nationalism and by definition therefore, the oppression of Africans, Tambo argued that the ANC would never descend to destroying something that anyone (else) held sacred; he held the view that *all* South Africans should be protected from violation by any act of desecration: see David Chidester, "Monuments and Fragments: Religion, Identity and Spaces of Reconciliation, *The Emory Humanity Lectures*, No. 3 (Atlanta: The Academic Exchange, 2001), 44-46.

<sup>99</sup> "Theft renders British Boer War graves forever anonymous," *Weekend Argus*, November 12, 2005.

<sup>100</sup> The name Maria Radschitz is taken from a shrine in Bohemia dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows.

Information available from Maria Radischitz Convent, PO Box 194, Wasbank 2920 or metanoia@icon.co.za.

<sup>101</sup> Figures from Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*, 63 & 70.

<sup>102</sup> Social scientist Alan Morris has researched Griqua historical and biological origins and argues that "although the Khoikhoi have made up a significant portion of this ancestry, claims for 'historical continuity' with the Khoikhoi are exaggerated and that the Griqua better represent a union of diversity rather than a repository of purity" – "The Griqua and the Khoikhoi: biology, ethnicity and the construction of identity" – paper at the Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage Conference, Cape Town, 1997. See also Alan Mountain, *The First People of the Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2003).

<sup>103</sup> The unification of the Griqua is not complete; the “nation” was divided into camps after the death of the *Kneg*, following his two sons among other leaders. The various groups have continued venerating the *Kneg*, usually conducting their ceremonies and commemorations separately. In 2005 two young “Le Fleur” descendants, Audrey and Reino, met each other for the first time in Cape Town in order to “trace their ancestor’s footsteps” and heal the divides, and have vowed to continue their mission. See also “A Matter of Mules,” written and directed by Beverley Mitchell, 2005.

<sup>104</sup> While looking for his father’s donkeys for three days without luck, he heard the voice of God say to him, “I am the Lord God speaking to you, go and gather the dead bones of Adam Kok and call them as one nation, so that they can be my people...the two asses you are looking for are on the other side of this hill. Go and tell your father what I command you to do, and tell him Lady Kok will die at eight o’ clock tomorrow morning. These two signs will open the minds of you and your father, so that you will know that it is the Lord who has spoken to you, and that the word of Ezechiel be fulfilled”:

<http://www.plettenbergbay.co.za/history/griqua/htm>.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>106</sup> He emerged from the prison flanked by two senior prison officials. As they walked past the disliked prison overseer he had no choice but to salute. The *Kneg* was said to be amused by this – Alan Mountain, *The First People of the Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2003), 93.

<sup>107</sup> The founding took place in the Maitland Town Hall, Cape Town, on April 6, 1920. It embraces Christian principles but ensures that the *Kneg*’s instructions and prophecies from God are upheld and actively propagated in the community. Also see: Robert Edgar and Christopher Saunders, “A.A.S. le Fleur and the Griqua Trek of 1917: Segregation, Self-help and Ethnic Identity,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15, 2 (1982): 201-20. The authors argue that the Church was one of the *Kneg*’s vehicles for promoting Griqua ethnic consciousness.

<sup>108</sup> His life story is rich in Biblical allusions. On the first night of his prison sentence, he said that three angels appeared to him in his cell, saying: “We are the three angels who appeared to Father Abraham when he was about to offer his son on Moria. Fear not, for we are sent by God to lead the way.” See

<http://www.plettenbergbay.co.za/history/griqua/htm>.

<sup>109</sup> There are eight special Griqua *volksdae* (people’s days): one, on April 3 (Breakwater Day), celebrates the *Kneg*’s release, as prophesied by him, from the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town, in 1903. On April 3, 2003, a re-enactment of his release was held as a centenary celebration. The *Kneg*’s birthday, on July 2, is also celebrated as Founder’s Day.

<sup>110</sup> This independence is visible in the symbols they use: a Griqua flag and anthem, traditional dress, and pilgrimages to significant places in Griqua history. In July 1995 a mandated representative from the Griqua National Conference attended the thirteenth session of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations held in Geneva for the first time; continual representation has been ongoing; see Mountain, *The First People of the Cape*, 97-8.

<sup>111</sup> As quoted in “Black Christ painting found in Basement,” *Electronic Mail and Guardian*, July 31, 1997.. Harrison asked one of Cape Town’s newspapers for photographs of Luthuli, Verwoerd and Vorster, telling them he was working on a special project, which is how the press became aware of the painting. When the security police picked it up, they apparently waited for a parishioner to finish praying in front of it before they took it off the wall of the church. In a bizarre move, the Dutch Reformed Church, closely associated with the then government, called for Luthuli to repudiate the painting – he could not pronounce on it as he was under a banning order and was prohibited from saying anything publicly on that or any other matter. A book titled *The Black Christ* is due to be launched in July, 2006.

<sup>112</sup> Canon Collins had sold the painting to the left-wing *Sunday Citizen* newspaper, which took it on a tour of Britain to raise funds for the anti-apartheid struggle. It ended up in the hands of Julius Baker, who had fled South Africa into exile and who had it in his basement when the appeal to find it went out. On reading the appeal, he wrote across the top of his newspaper, “Well, I’ll be damned. I’ve got it”. See [www.chico.mweb.co.za/mg/art/reviews/97jul/31jul-blackchrist.html](http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/mg/art/reviews/97jul/31jul-blackchrist.html).

<sup>113</sup> The painting’s recovery was widely covered by the local press.

<sup>114</sup> Walter, in Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 87. We had spent several years attempting to trace both the last resting-place of *Groot-oupa*, and the place where he was killed at Magersfontein as the circumstances of his death were unclear. Almost all the family knew was that “he was one of the first two Boers to be killed at Magersfontein”, according to our oral history, so we knew that he had to have died early in the morning. “Jan”, his son, survived the war as did one of his two young brothers, Albert (13) and Roelfie (10), who were both captured near their farmhouse by the British and sent to Bermuda as prisoners-of-war. Albert survived the three years in Bermuda, but Roelfie did not. With the

help of local historian Steve Lunderstedt of Kimberley, we were able to find the most likely location of his death, near a trench *behind* the Magersfontein Koppie, instead of in front of it, of which we had not previously been aware. We were also able to put together his last hours with reasonable certainty. Although his name remains at the top of the central plinth of the Boer Memorial near Magersfontein, he is not, as we established, buried there, but lies on his farm, Halt Whistle.

<sup>115</sup> Anthony J. Blasi, "Visitation to Disaster Sites," in Swatos and Tomasi, *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*, 177-8.

<sup>116</sup> Simon Robinson, "Through the Door of No Return." *Time Special Issue*, July 5, 2004. Some leave mementoes of their visit, another pilgrim trait; Guadeloupe presented the Island with a statue of a slave breaking his chains. Another visitor left graffiti scrawled on one of the cells – "Never Again."

<sup>117</sup> "The Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage," [www.peacepagoda.org/brochure.htm](http://www.peacepagoda.org/brochure.htm).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Nokiko Richardson was nineteen when she made the journey. She, along with fellow pilgrims of the Middle Passage Peter Elias and Arthur Burton, were robbed of their possessions on a train near Johannesburg. The attack had its roots in the past, they all said, [www.iol.za.org/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=ct19990621220021311N1426395](http://www.iol.za.org/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=ct19990621220021311N1426395).

<sup>120</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Atlanta, Georgia, September 19, 1998. [www.peacepagoda.org/bt.htm](http://www.peacepagoda.org/bt.htm).

<sup>121</sup> Katharina Schramm, "Coming home to the Motherland: Pilgrimage Tourism in Ghana," in Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 139.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-3. The final journey of the two slaves was held on Friday, July 31, 1998, assigned as "Martyr's Day. The emotional response was immense, recalls Schramm, with many participants in tears or even breaking down. The last stage of the pilgrimage was Assin Manso, a half-hour drive away, which had been a slave market on the slave route from the north down to the coast. Here the remains of the two slaves, Samuel Carson, and "Crystal" from Jamaica, were buried in a sacred grove.

<sup>124</sup> Nina Epton, *Andalusia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968).

<sup>125</sup> Denzil Washington in conversation with Michael Parkinson, aired on January 22, 2005. (Washington admits to breaking off a piece of hook to keep – in the long tradition of taking away a relic of a significant place).

<sup>126</sup> The "Cradle of Humankind" is near the town of Krugersdorp, north-west of Johannesburg, and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. It comprises of a number of caverns and sinkholes, the most famous of which is Sterkfontein, where Robert Broom discovered "Mrs Ples" in 1947. More than 500 hominid fossils have been found there, and almost 10,000 stone tools.

<sup>127</sup> Thabo Mbeki, *Africa, the Time Has Come – Selected Speeches* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1998), 31. See also Chidester, "Mapping the Sacred in the Mother City," *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 13, 1-2 (2000): 35-6.

<sup>128</sup> David Chidester, "Monuments and Fragments," 53. Anton Lembede was an ANC youth league intellectual in the 1940s, and called for the erection of monuments and memorials to the great heroes of African history that would create a national memory of the past, towards the self-realisation of the African spirit.

<sup>129</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 175.

<sup>130</sup> Gerard Thomas Straub, *Salvation for Sale* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1986).

<sup>131</sup> "When Filming the Poor Is a Spiritual Mission." New York Times supplement in *Sunday Times*, January 23, 2005.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* Straub has made other films that have been used extensively as fund-raising tools: "We have a Table for Four Ready" about a Franciscan soup kitchen in Philadelphia, and "Rescue Me", a feature-length documentary about the homeless in Los Angeles. His pilgrimage to the poor has taught him about his own vulnerability. "I went from riches to rags," he said. His most recent film is about a Florida doctor who gave up everything to help the indigent.

<sup>133</sup> From Sian Tiley, *Mapungubwe, South Africa's Crown Jewels* (Cape Town: Sunbird Publishing, 2004), 7. The name "Mapungubwe" is something of a mystery; it may be the derivative of the Nguni word *mhungubwe* or jackal – locals refer to it as the Place of Jackals in seSotho, and treated it with deep respect. It was taboo even to look at it, let alone climb it, and explorers in the early 1900s struggled to find anyone to guide them to the top of its seemingly impenetrable top. Other origins have been suggested, such as the Venda word, *punguvhe*, also meaning jackals, while to the BaLemba, Mapungubwe means "the place where the molten rock flowed like a liquid or water." Others have pointed out that the suffix, -bwe, means venerated stones or houses. It has also been translated as "the place of wisdom."

<sup>134</sup> Philip Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Arts and Culture* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2004), 55. South African President Thabo Mbeki initiated the idea of the African Renaissance, a future-thinking ideal which in part draws on Africa's remarkable ancient heritage, including Rock Art, and iron age cultures such as those of Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and Thulamela, situated in the Kruger National Park.

President Mbeki visited the Mapungubwe citadel in March, 2000.

<sup>135</sup> This assertion, one supported by other scholars in the field, is by Sian Tiley, curator of the Mapungubwe Collection currently housed at the University of Pretoria: personal email, November 29, 2005.

<sup>136</sup> The Order of Mapungubwe is South Africa's highest order and is issued in four forms; platinum (which was conferred on Nelson Mandela) for "exceptional and unique achievements in the international arena" in the interests of South Africa; and the Gold Order of Mapungubwe was awarded to former President F.W. de Klerk, co-winner of the Nobel Prize with Nelson Mandela, for "exceptional achievements in the international arena." The other two forms are the Silver, for "excellent achievements" and the bronze, for "outstanding achievements", see *Government Gazette* 472, Pretoria, 26929, October 25, 2004 for the amendment to the original Gazetting of the order on December 6, 2002. So far, the Award has been issued only to statesmen and scientists.

<sup>137</sup> Elizabeth A. Voigt, *Mapungubwe: An Archaeozoological Interpretation of an Iron Age Community* (MA thesis, University of Pretoria 1978, published by the Transvaal Museum, April 1983), 1-2. The Limpopo River changes drastically with the seasons; during the summer rainfall season it can be a in frightening flood, while in winter it may dwindle to a trickle, and so ceases to be an insurmountable barrier between people living on its banks. It is situated on a farm named Greefswald, on a flood plain, covered with mopane veld, used by iron age agriculturalists.

<sup>138</sup> Around 900 AD, trade with Arab partners saw the latter two sites develop; gold, ivory and crocodile products were traded for glass beads and other valued items. K2 eventually made its own glass beads, enabling them to store wealth themselves.

<sup>139</sup> According to Sian Tiley, there may have been as many as 9,000, controlling an area as large as today's KwaZulu-Natal.

<sup>140</sup> Mapungubwe lies about one km north-east of K2; the hill is an isolated outcrop of cave sandstone about 323 x 78 metres at its maximum dimensions, rising steeply about 30 metres above the general level of the valley. There was a third access path, besides those on the West and East faces, on the Southern buttress, known as "Mahobi's" path, according to the original archaeological records of the site by Professor Fouché, 12-13. In effect, the Western path is the only access route today. See also Voigt, *Mapungubwe*, 3.

<sup>141</sup> Tiley, *Mapungubwe*, 9.

<sup>142</sup> The datings are by Dr John Vogel, who worked for the CSIR Quaternary Dating Unit, and do not exceed 1290AD, although there are non-archaeological scholars who have disputed this (as I discovered during a personal visit to the Mapungubwe Collection, September 2005). The curator, Sian Tiley, is firm convinced that this is an accurate dating; it means that Mapungubwe is earlier than Great Zimbabwe, which is probably fourteenth century.

<sup>143</sup> "Mapungubwe": one-hour documentary made by SATV, 2000.

<sup>144</sup> Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites*, 56.

<sup>145</sup> Tiley, *Mapungubwe*, 40.

<sup>146</sup> Harrison, 57, and the film "Mapungubwe."

<sup>147</sup> Tiley, *Mapungubwe*, 10.

<sup>148</sup> This speculation about climate change is cited in all reliable literature about Mapungubwe, as the dates coincide with the so-called Little Ice age, which forced people to seek higher rainfall areas. Caution should be noted; there is no absolute evidence of this yet. There has been suggestion that it may also have been because of competition from other capitals – Great Zimbabwe is one that is frequently mentioned.

<sup>149</sup> Leo Fouché, *Mapungubwe: Ancient Bantu Civilization on the Limpopo – Reports on Excavations at Mapungubwe (Northern Transvaal) from February 1933 to June 1935*, edited on behalf of the Archaeological Committee of the University of Pretoria (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 1. He reminds us that the pronunciation is Ma-pu-ngú-bwe, with the accent on the penultimate syllable. "The u sound is, in both cases, equivalent to 'oo', as in food."

<sup>150</sup> Fouché, *Mapungubwe*, 1. Mr E.S.J. van Graan, a local farmer and prospector who lived about 80 kms away from Mapungubwe, had heard a "strange story from a very old Native," Mowena, of a white man gone wild, who presented to Van Graan's informant a big, beautifully made earthenware pot, quite unlike any local ware, which he claimed he had brought down from the hill. Following this story, Van Graan eventually located the sacred hill but found the local "Natives" unwilling, and indeed afraid, to help them find a way up it. Eventually, a son of Mowena, who was "literally shivering with fright and had to be forcibly detained, at last pointed out the secret stairway to the top." This was a narrow cleft or chimney in

the rock, with small holes cut into opposite sides into which crossbars could be slotted, like the rungs of a ladder.

<sup>151</sup> Mr R. Pearson, Deputy Master of the Royal Mint at Pretoria, reported that the gold artefacts were made of gold of great purity, the bangles being 91.23 percent and the pieces of plate 93.82 percent: reported in Fouché's *Mapungubwe*.

<sup>152</sup> Tiley, *Mapungubwe*, 10. Jerry van Graan realised that their find could be of great scientific importance, and "riddled with guilt (sic)," posted off some gold plate, nails and beads in an envelope, sending it by registered mail to his former professor. One can only speculate on the outcome of Mapungubwe had that envelope been "lost in the post."

<sup>153</sup> Fouché, *Mapungubwe*, preface.

<sup>154</sup> Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Arts and Culture*, 55. The discovery at Mapungubwe was reported in the *Illustrated London News* of April 8, 1933 as a "remarkable discovery in the Transvaal: a grave of unknown origin, containing much gold-work..."

<sup>155</sup> Smuts had a passion for the outdoors, and lobbied for the sanctuary of Mapungubwe, which had been known as the Dongola Botanical Reserve since 1922, to be linked with the neighbouring countries of Botswana and Zimbabwe. The heated debate in Parliament became known as the "Battle of Dongola." When Smuts lost power in 1948, the incoming National Party immediately repealed the Act (which had created the reserve in 1947). Farms were restored to their previous white owners (see Tiley, Harrison, et al).

<sup>156</sup> Fouché, *Mapungubwe*, 19. Four child skeletons were found with their skulls crushed.

<sup>157</sup> Pottery is not as glamorous as gold, but is frequently more useful to archaeologists, in dating and distinguishing cultures. It was because of a pottery bowl that Mapungubwe came to light in the twentieth century (Lotrie's gift to Morewa). "The value of relics, viewed as evidence, may be said to be in inverse ratio to their intrinsic value," said General Pitt-Rivers, quoted by Fouché, *Mapungubwe*, 10. An unusual burial at K2 was that of the remains of an elderly male, found inside a pot.

<sup>158</sup> Fouché, *Mapungubwe*, 2. He reports that when the artefacts of the site were recovered from the five original explorers of the site, the gold had been divided into equal portions and split between them. Therefore, he found "the head of a rhinoceros in possession of one, the tail and ears in that of another, the rump in that of a third member of the party. Reconstruction, in consequence, was almost impossible."

<sup>159</sup> Voigt, *Mapungubwe*, 129. The tail is a solid, thin cylinder; the slightly thickened end has several engraved marks to give the impression of a switch. The ears are made of thicker plate and are finely curved to give a tubular effect. They are held in position by a small tack deep inside the ear. The surviving eye is a gold tack with a roughly rounded head. The single horn is a cone of gold plate. It is fixed to the head forward of the eye. The single horn of the rhino may represent an Indian or Sumatran rhino, rather than a member of the African species, which are double-horned. Other claims are that it must be a *black* rhino, after which a special dance that chiefs do on the ancestors' graves each year, is named.

<sup>160</sup> Voigt, *Mapungubwe*, 129.

<sup>161</sup> Tiley, *Mapungubwe*, 18. Inevitably, the cattle burials have also been associated with the bull cults of the Middle East though there is no direct evidence for this. These beast burials have been a neglected area of study and it is to be hoped that further research will consider them more fully.

<sup>162</sup> In 1894, Mr John Hayes Hammond, consulting engineer to the Chartered Company in Rhodesia, sent a report to the effect that the workings of the old gold-mines were very ancient, "and showed skill beyond the capacity of any negroid [sic] or Bantu people": quoted by Dorothea Fairbridge, *The Pilgrims' Way in South African* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 35. Mr Hall, who claimed that the methods employed were the same as in ancient mines in Asia, claimed that Great Zimbabwe was built by "Bantu" labour under Asiatic influence – or Phoenicians, 37. This view was endorsed by other South African archaeologists working well into the twentieth century.

<sup>163</sup> Emeritus Professor Hannes Eloff, retired professor of archaeology at the University of Pretoria, quoted in Leon Marshall, "Our past seen from a hill of wisdom." *Cape Times*, September 24, 2004.

<sup>164</sup> At Machete, close to Mapungubwe, is Kaoga's Shelter, a site that contains almost 200 works, among them geometric finger-paintings and rare images of locusts. Rock engravings show an array of sable antelope, hippo and elephant, while paintings depict locusts and V-shaped figures. The site is unusual for the number of women depicted: Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Spiritual*, 42.

<sup>165</sup> Tiley, *Mapungubwe*, 15. The local white calcite and quartz were sought after by the hunter-gatherers to make sharp blades.

<sup>166</sup> The architect was Gerard Moerdyk; another shapes that influenced him was the circular *laager*. Construction began in 1938, a hundred years after the Great Trek, and took a decade. Moerdyk knew the Limpopo River valley well, as his farm, Samaria, was next to Mapungubwe, and the jutting buttress of the

Voortrekker Monument may owe its ultimate shape to the great symbol of the African iron age – somewhat ironically, as the Monument became an icon and pilgrimage site for Afrikaners who supported apartheid.

<sup>167</sup> The controversy about the housing of Mapungubwe's treasures (those that remain) is not over. There have been calls for the artefacts to go "home," along with artefacts from other important sites such as Sterkfontein ("Mrs Ples"), Taung (the "Taung skull") and Makapan (early hominid fossils). The most recent call was made at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Durban in July, 2005. The head of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (Sahra) has said that it "should not be the privilege of urban-based institutions to keep heritage objects for research," while world-famous palaeontologist Philip Tobias countered that it is global practice for high-quality casts of heritage treasures to be displayed at the sites of recovery, while keeping the originals in secure custodianship, and that they should continue to be housed in university institutions and museums. Fiona Macleod, "Give us back our treasures." *Mail & Guardian*, July 8, 2005.

<sup>168</sup> Chris Olivier, quoted in Thabo Mkhize, "The Province's apprentice." *Sunday Times*, September 26, 2004. At night, he says, you can hear the mountain talking to you. Not everyone shares this view of course; Olivier recalls a German tourist asking where the famous hill was; when Olivier drew his attention to it, right in front of him, the tourist replied: "it's just a f\*\*\*ing rock." "I felt really sad for him, he did not want to understand the significance of the place."

<sup>169</sup> Professor Tim Couzens suggests this in "The Yellow Brick Road" about his journey to Mapungubwe. *Sunday Times*, September 26, 2004.

<sup>170</sup> Barbara Bender & Margot Winer, eds. *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 346.

<sup>171</sup> The Department of Anatomy, at UP, are leaders in the return or repatriation of human remains, with a 75 percent repatriation rate. Information from Sian Tiley, personal email, November 25, 2005.

<sup>172</sup> Philip Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Spiritual*, 59.

<sup>173</sup> Among the new South Africa's most important decorations is the Order of Mapungubwe.

<sup>174</sup> Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Tourism centre is on the Barkly West R31 road, about 15 kms from Kimberley in the Northern Cape. It belongs to the Northern Cape Rock Art Trust, and the site is held on condition that it is open for public access. Khwe guides show the site to visitors, with a crafts centre and small interpretive centre; it is open Tuesdays-Fridays 10h00-17h00 and Saturdays and Sundays 11h00-16h00. Guides there told me they were also being trained as bird watching guides. The site is close to the tourism centre but in summer the short walk can be very hot – the earlier, the better.

<sup>175</sup> See [www.museumsonc.co.za/wildebeestkuil.htm](http://www.museumsonc.co.za/wildebeestkuil.htm) – "it is one of some 15,000 known rock art sites in South Africa compared to Europe, where only 350 rock art sites have been recorded," Mountain, *The First People of the Cape*, 39.

<sup>176</sup> It has been argued that the rock surfaces, especially the holes and flaws in rock crusts at shelters and other rock art sites appeared to be entrances and exits to "tunnels" leading to the spirit world: see J. David Lewis-Williams and T.A. Dawson, "Through the Veil: San Rock Paintings and the Rock Face," *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 45, 1990: 5-16.

<sup>177</sup> Engravings are generally found on the dry inland plateau of South Africa, while paintings occur mostly in the mountainous areas, such as the Drakensberg and the Cederberg. People who called themselves /Xam from the northern Karoo who were interviewed in 1870s, said their fathers had made engravings of animals. Engraved stones in the Wonderwerk Cave, near Kuruman in the Northern Cape, are in levels dating between 2,000 and 10,000 years ago – see website above.

<sup>178</sup> The site "is thought to have had rainmaking significance," Harrison, *South Africa's Top Sites – Spiritual*, 55.

<sup>179</sup> When Namibia reached Independence in the 1990s, 370 "Bushmen" soldiers from the old SADF with their families (4,500 people altogether) chose to emigrate to South Africa, and settled "temporarily" in a base at Schmidtsdrift where, controversially, they were left in limbo. The Bushman Battalion was disbanded in 1993. When I visited Wildebeest Kuil, in 2003, a school for Khwe children was being set up on a nearby site and the "Schmidtsdrift Bushmen" were in the process of being transferred to Wildebeest Kuil, with the idea that each family would own a plot in a town on the property. Whether this will be a success in the long term, given their hunter-gathering background, remains to be seen. Some talented artists, however, have re-emerged and are painting on canvas for a growing, appreciative market "in the absence of rocks to paint on" – Khwe artist Kunyanda Shikamo exhibited her work at a Memory Workshop there in 2004 (see Chris Roper, "Body of Work." *Mail & Guardian*, March 5, 2004); (I own one of her evocative "ancestor" paintings). Canny art dealers are selling their work for thousands of rands.

<sup>180</sup> Though many of the participants are today of what may be considered "mixed" genetic stock, they have taken their primary identity from those Khoi ancestors to whom they feel connected.

<sup>181</sup> From "The Road to *Xnau*," written and directed by Lee McCabe and shown on etv on Sunday, January 29, 2006.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. Loots, a middle-aged man, had been initiated in a ceremony in 2004.

<sup>183</sup> Quotes from a letter and documents sent to me via email by Jerry Haas, December 13, 2005.

jhaas@GBOD.org.

<sup>184</sup> This is an almost exact quote by Jerry Haas, but many other pilgrims to South Africa I have spoken to, including those on the Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage, and the Bullocks (*see Pilgrimages of Healing*), repeat almost the same words.

<sup>185</sup> Barbara Becnel said she chose South Africa as the place to scatter William's ashes because she knew some members of the Mandela family. His ex-wife, Bonnie Williams Taylor, said: "Knowing Stan, he probably wanted to go back to his origin, where we came from as a people. I respect that." "Executed gang leader's ashes to be scattered in South Africa," *Cape Times*, December 15, 2005.

<sup>186</sup> Haas, email (*see above, footnote 109*).

<sup>187</sup> There is a lack of official agreement about whether there are still American POWs and MIAs outside their country: but more than 2000 names of the Wall are MIA, claims Declan Hughes, "One Man's Journey: Vietnam Veterans' Motorcycle Ride from Lost Angeles to Washington DC, May 19-30, 1999, [www.rftw.org/onemans.1.htm](http://www.rftw.org/onemans.1.htm). It remains to be seen whether the veterans of the most recent wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, will be drawn into the Run for the Wall, though there are indications that this may be the case. Lori Piestewa, a Hopi Indian, was honoured in the Run as the first Native American woman to die in combat, 130. For a fuller discussion of the issue of MIAs, see Ray Michalowski and Jill Dubisch, *Run for the Wall: Remembering Vietnam on a Motorcycle Pilgrimage* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

<sup>188</sup> Jill Dubisch, "Heartland of America: Memory, Motion and (re)Construction of History on a Motorcycle Journey" in Coleman and Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage*, 106.

<sup>189</sup> See [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org), or [John@CrucifiedRider.com](mailto:John@CrucifiedRider.com) and [hawgwash@bigplanet.com](mailto:hawgwash@bigplanet.com).

<sup>190</sup> Memorial Day in the US is officially May 30, though it is not usually celebrated on that day but rather on the last Monday in May. Its origin lies in the decorating of Civil War graves, first done at Waterloo, NJ, on May 5, 1866. It is the premier day of recognition of armed forces in the US, superceding Veteran's Day (November 11).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 108-9.

<sup>192</sup> Dubisch recalls that the welcome these biker veterans receive forms a large part of their recovery. One man repeated tearfully to her, as he joined hands in a "healing circle," that "I though I was just going for a ride. *I thought I was just going for a ride!*", 121.

<sup>193</sup> Poorer states provide a disproportional number of soldiers to the United States military. Also, points out Dubisch, fewer young men from those areas could acquire educational deferments than could those from the more affluent areas.

<sup>194</sup> Moreover, they hold these ceremonies a week before Memorial Day in order to accommodate the riders, 120.

<sup>195</sup> Declan Hughes, "One Man's Journey," 10.

<sup>196</sup> Thom Cuttita, "Run for the Wall: A Journey Toward Healing," [www.rftw.org/journal3.html](http://www.rftw.org/journal3.html).

<sup>197</sup> Dubisch., 121.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 123. The leaving of offerings at the Wall is a practice that any scholar or practitioner of pilgrimage will recognized, remind Dubisch. Similarly, objects may be taken to the Wall and then back across the country, thus connecting the Wall to those back home (in a ritual not dissimilar to the "Sinking Flowers" ritual of Hindus taking the remains of their dead to the Ganges, and returning home with the sacred water).

<sup>200</sup> See [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org)

<sup>201</sup> Dubisch, 129.

<sup>202</sup> Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba 1928-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

<sup>203</sup> Sylvia Margulies, *The Pilgrimage to Russia: The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners, 1924-1937* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), v. She described the way political pilgrims to the Soviet Union were dissatisfied with their own societies and imagined they could find cures to those social evils in Russia, which had challenged notions of ownership and social ethic.

<sup>204</sup> "Capturing the inside of China's history through the lens of her camera," *Cape Times*, April 6, 2004. In Hou Bo's living room is a giant black and white photograph of Mao standing with her and her husband; she shot some of the most iconic images of him – Mao swimming in the Yangtze, posing with children or

talking to workers, portraying him as a strategist, teacher and prophet. She was ordered to the labour camp by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, a member of the now discredited Gang of Four.

<sup>205</sup> All political prisoners on "The Island" as it is simply referred to by ex-activists, were black and male. White male political prisoners were generally held at Pretoria Central, also notorious. It was also common to refer to The Island as "the University," for that is where many prisoners experienced their real politicization and political identity. Some prisoners who were taken there, like my friend Clement Zulu, were (initially) barely political but had been considered by the regime to be nuisances, involved with trade union activities. Clement, from rural KZN, was a shop steward with the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) and had had virtually no exposure to the ANC on his incarceration. That changed; he came out far more politicized than he had been on arrival.

<sup>206</sup> I had the moving experience in 1990 of taking just-released political prisoners to Signal Hill above Cape Town at their request, to "see the Island." It was the first excursion they asked for after being freed. They looked at it for a long time, then at each other. "So it *is* an island," they said.

<sup>207</sup> Personal observation. I was a rare "white" prison visitor to those political prisoners whose families lived too far away or were too poor to make the long journey to Cape Town (from KwaZulu Natal, for example). My first visit back there after the prisoners had left was with Nelson Mandela in 1997, when he declared it a Museum; despite the lively occasion – anywhere Mandela is turns into a celebrator – it felt to me as if I was standing in the skeleton of a whale. All the life had gone, despite my having no wish to see a return of that barbaric system. But African-American visitors particularly, though not solely, speak of their visit there with intensity and not a few break down emotionally.

<sup>208</sup> The symbolism of the Great Trek was heavily clad in Old Testament language and allegory. As has been noted by many scholars, the Trekkers were "leaving the land of Egypt" for the "Promised Land", guided by their jealous God. When they turned to this God to deliver them from the Zulu forces at the Battle of Blood River on December 16, 1838, they viewed it as a "Covenant", or contract, between them and Him – a reciprocal relationship whose validity was confirmed by their victory. During the apartheid years, December 16 was a sacred holiday, kept as the "Day of the Covenant."

<sup>209</sup> *The Standard South African Encyclopaedia*; also J.P. Claasen, *Die Jerusalemvaarders* (Pietersburg: privately published, 1981).

<sup>210</sup> Claasen, *Jerusalemvaarders*. The episode of Bible-burying occurred *omdat dit in Engeland gedruk was en daarom onheilig was*, "because it was printed in England and was therefore unholy," 81. The opposition to hymns was an ongoing issue, 91-96.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. When these "Arab" horses were spotted, near Rustenberg, the trekkers came to the conclusion that *waar die seuns van Ismael tevindé was, dié van Abraham nie ver kon wees nie*, "where the sons of Ishmael were, those of Abraham could not be far away."

<sup>212</sup> The river is often just a stream, as it was when I saw it during the dry winter months in 2005 – Nylstroom is in the northern-most province of South Africa and is therefore in a summer rainfall region.

<sup>213</sup> Enslin's death was reported in *The Friend of the Sovereignty* on May 15, 1852, as "John Ensil (sic), a famous fanatic, who supposed the Boers were in the wilderness and on the road to Jerusalem," while other newspapers referred to him as a "character," see Claasen, *Jerusalemvaarders*, 68-9.

<sup>214</sup> T.V. Bulpin, *Lost Trails of the Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 69. He writes that "disillusionment had come to these simple souls, but at least the land they had explored in search of Egypt, the *Waterberg*, had compensated them with a fertile and pleasant home." Local tribes were not so rapturous about their arrival.

<sup>215</sup> The *Jerusalemvaarders* were clear about their intentions of being authentic pilgrims: it was "*n godsdiensige bedevaart om die beloofde land te gaan soek*, "a sacred pilgrimage, using the Afrikaans term *bedevaart* which is literally a "prayer-journey," and a stronger claim than *pelgrim*, to find the Promised Land." See Claasen, *Die Jerusalemvaarders*, 39. See Chapter One for an outline of the difference between these two Afrikaans terms.

<sup>216</sup> Antjie Krog, personal interview May 22, 2005. Her volume of poetry, *Jerusalemvaarders*, was written in 1985 (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau), in which she writes *altyd wil iemand per wa God toe ry*, "there is always someone who wishes to travel to God in a wagon", 60. Krog is noted for her iconoclasm.

<sup>217</sup> Jawarhalal Nehru, quoted by Shirer, 100.

<sup>218</sup> The infamous "Hedge of India", grown down the spine of the sub-continent in the north, was to stop the smuggling of salt: at its peak it would have reached from London to Istanbul and it added immeasurably to the hardship of Indians and their livestock. See Roy Moxham, *The Great Hedge of India* (London: Robinson, 2002).

<sup>219</sup> William L. Shirer, *Gandhi, A Memoir* (London: Abacus, 1981), 95. Historian and journalist William L. Shirer was sent to India by the *Chicago Tribune* to cover the rise of the Independence Movement and met

Gandhi many times. He witnessed the Salt March. See also E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948).

<sup>220</sup> Shirer, *Gandhi*, 95.

<sup>221</sup> Ann Gold, 281. The word for wave, *lahar*, has a range of meanings that includes all kinds of extraordinary pleasure, such as love, bliss, intoxication and grace. Part of the sense of “letting go” in the ocean is important to Hindu pilgrimage, in the sense of loosening and emptying, vital to the goal of release.

<sup>222</sup> Recollection by Lady Pamela Hicks, daughter of Lord Mountbatten, last Viceroy of India; also mentioned in William L. Shirer’s book on Gandhi (page 99). In 2005, the Salt March was re-enacted in India along the same route that he had taken, over 24 days, to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mahatma’s pilgrimage, the beginning of the campaign that finally led to India’s independence.

<sup>223</sup> *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. Documentary on the Dstv History Channel, May 9, 2005.

<sup>224</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 98. The pilgrims carried the four elements – earth, fire, water, air – that had been dedicated at the opening ceremony. Healing earth came from Chimayó, New Mexico; water from Mount Shasta, California, a sacred mountain and “sister” to Mount Fuji in Japan; air, represented by a fan of owl feathers was a gift from the Umatilla people in Washington State; and fire was lit from the eternal flame in the Hiroshima Peace Park.

<sup>225</sup> From a speech given off a fixed soapbox in front of the National Gallery in Cape Town, June 2005.

“The Maasai is on earth to look after what God gave him,” he said. Rejecting urbanisation, which was threatening their way of life, he suggested, wryly, that “Maybe the Maasai are the people who will save the earth – you never know.” (Personal interview).

<sup>226</sup> Nigel Penn, “Fated to Perish – The Destruction of the Cape San” in *MISCAST: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, ed. Pippa Skotnes (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 88. For both Maasai and San, losing their land was not just losing a possession or livelihood. It has been the dismantling of their entire way of structuring reality and belief.

<sup>227</sup> “Maasai warrior’s long walk for tradition,” *Mail and Guardian*, April 25, 2005.

<sup>228</sup> The participants were: David Russell, Francis Wilson, Augustine Schutte, Victor Kotze, Norman Hudson, Tim Wilson and Francois Bill. Athol Jennings walked with them for part of the way.

<sup>229</sup> A leaflet printed at the time by “*Spro-cas for the Pilgrimage of Confession*” (December 16, 1972), began with a statement of faith: from Psalm 8, “He created us in His own image, to work with Him, to Love Him and each other” and further on, “this society for which we are responsible is tearing husband and wife apart through the system of migratory labour. The lives of thousands of voteless victims are being daily undermined by this set-up which flouts the commandment of our Lord: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”

<sup>230</sup> Dr Francis Wilson, Cape Town academic, personal interview, July 7, 2005. Dr Wilson said that they had positioned the pilgrimage in a “non-threatening” way, deliberately starting at the Bible Institute in Grahamstown and ending at Parliament in Cape Town. He recalled that they had been anxious about being “thrown off the road” by the police. See also *South African Outlook*, January/February 1973.

<sup>231</sup> . “Protest pilgrims sleep at farm.” *Cape Times*, December 18, 1972.

<sup>232</sup> A vow was taken by the Voortrekkers that, if the Lord helped them to victory in this battle, they would forever keep December 16<sup>th</sup> as a Sabbath, in view of their “covenant” with Him. They subsequently built a Church of the Covenant, which still stands in Pietermaritzberg, in KwaZulu-Natal, and December 16<sup>th</sup> was observed as a religious public holiday. After the transition to a democratic South Africa, December 16<sup>th</sup> was retained as a (non-religious) public holiday, renamed The Day of Reconciliation. South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was launched in 1995, symbolically on December 16<sup>th</sup>, “now a new holy day in the sacred calendar of a New South Africa,” Chidester: “Monuments and Fragments,” 48.

<sup>233</sup> A panel depicting little-remembered historical scene appears in the Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria, and also on the Bible monument erected on the actual site of the occurrence, in Grahamstown. Also see Leslie Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003), 97.

<sup>234</sup> Cape Town has always been the seat of Government, of the political and legislative power of South Africa, and is where the Houses of Parliament are situated. It was only Parliament that had the authority and the power to change the migratory labour system; it never did. The laws changed only after the democratic government was installed in 1994.

<sup>235</sup> “Pilgrims’ Bid On Labour System – six-point plan to ease migrant workers’ lot”. *Weekend Argus*, January 6, 1973. “Call for city mass meeting.” *The Cape Argus*, December 24, 1972.

<sup>236</sup> “Pilgrimage is questioned.” *Cape Times*, January 13, 1972. He said that the goal of keeping the family together was laudable in itself, but if families were to accompany migrant labourers, even greater disruption could be caused.

<sup>237</sup> “The cancer in our midst,” editorial in *The Cape Argus*, January 11, 1973. Victor Norton, “Reasons for Long Pilgrimage.” *Sunday Times*, January 21, 1973. Mr Norton wrote of “evidence that, of 2,5-million Africans working legally in White areas, every second person is a migrant or oscillating labourer (those who leave home before 4am and return after 9pm, never seeing their children awake). The reality is a picture of grinding poverty and grotesque imbalance of the sexes.”

<sup>238</sup> All of the clergymen mentioned were critics of apartheid, but it was the gentle Beyers Naude who, as an Afrikaner and previous Moderator of the Southern Transvaal Dutch Reformed Church, was particular victimised by the government. He was “banned” and suffered much at their hands. The funeral of “Oom Bey”, as he was affectionately called, was held on Saturday, September 18, 2004 and broadcast to the nation: “He is forever our hero,” said President Thabo Mbeki, while Archbishop Desmond Tutu joked “God was looking for a champion – who in their right mind would look in the Afrikaner community!”

<sup>239</sup> Dean John Stubbs, in an email to me, June 5, 2005. He supplied a detailed account of the eight days of that pilgrimage, including the names of those who hosted them along the way and those who joined in the pilgrimage for part of the way.

<sup>240</sup> Michael Bush, *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 81.

<sup>241</sup> Pat Roos, personal interview, Cape Town, 2004.

<sup>242</sup> *Bismarck*. documentary directed by James Cameron, 2003.

<sup>243</sup> Unfortunately the name of one of the Guguletu Seven, Mandela Eric Selani, was incorrectly engraved on the memorial. His brother, Vuselelo Selani, said the family was not happy that the information on the stone is not his real name. On the stone the first names are “Zola Alfred.” “That was the name he used in the struggle,” said Vuselelo, pointing out that his surname was also spelt incorrectly, as “Swelani” instead of “Selani.” The City of Cape Town promised to look into the matter. “Brother angry at wrong name on memorial,” *Cape Times*,

<sup>244</sup> Eric Lomax, *The Railway Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 276.

<sup>245</sup> The TRC was constituted by former President Nelson Mandela after he took office in 1994, and was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Its Amnesty Committee heard 1,626 cases in public hearings at 267 different venues and involved over a thousand interpreters (some 70 percent of applications for amnesty were dealt with in chambers). A total of 7,115 applications were received by the deadline of September 30, 1997, but the bulk were dismissed due to administrative errors and lack of full disclosure. Don Foster of the University of Cape Town suggests that applications from the former state security apparatus were particularly underrepresented, “Many pieces of the puzzle still missing,” *Cape Times*, June 20, 2005.

<sup>246</sup> Mrs Pearl Faku, quoted by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela in her book *A Human Being Died that Night: A Story of Forgiveness* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2003), 14.

<sup>247</sup> Jann Turner, daughter of assassinated anti-apartheid activist Rick Turner, also undertook the journey to see Eugene de Kock, and, too, felt there was reconciliation; she also believes that De Kock was the scapegoat of the generals and should be shown mercy for his confessions and apologies, which were not forthcoming from his superior officers.

<sup>248</sup> Michael Lapsley is director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories in Cape Town, South Africa, [info@healingofmemories.co.za](mailto:info@healingofmemories.co.za). “South Africa at 10: Unfinished Business” by Michael Lapsley, *The Witness Magazine*, <http://thewitness.org/agw/lapsley042904.html>.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> “Famous British defeat recreated.” *Cape Times*, January, 2004. King Zwelithini also used the occasion to ask Britain to pay compensation, as they had done in other countries they had invaded.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* A dramatic account of the battle of Isandlwana is given by Thomas Packenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991), 61-71. He gives the figures of the British dead at “858 men (including 52 officers) and 471 black troops (including non-combatants),” 70. Their defeat was seen as a terrible disaster by the British, who had considered their guns invincible against the unarmed (except for spears) Zulus, and cemented the Western view of Zulus as powerful and impressive foes.

<sup>252</sup> Clare Wilson, several personal interviews, Cape Town, March and June, 2005. She was introduced to labyrinths in Switzerland in 1999 and is now the South African representative in the world Labyrinth Society. They have become powerful sacred symbols in her life.

<sup>253</sup> John Yeld, “No turn wasted on the quiet journey to the centre.” *Cape Argus*, November 3, 2003.

<sup>254</sup> Liliane Voyé, “Popular Religion and Pilgrimages in Western Europe,” in Swatos and Tomasi, eds., *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*, 120.

<sup>255</sup> Dubsich, *In a Different Place*, 93. There is a flexibility within pilgrimages of barter; as long as there is genuine *intent* to make the pilgrimage, the would-be pilgrim is given the benefit of the doubt. It is sometimes, then, hard to know when the vow has not been carried out.

- <sup>256</sup> Ibid., 94. They often are accompanied by family members, but may also be accompanied “in spirit” by those, supportive, back home.
- <sup>257</sup> The Cape Town “blessing of the boats” ceremony is held over a weekend, either the first in October or the last in September, which is the beginning of the fishing season; it is organised by the large Catholic Portuguese community which has been traditionally associated with the fishing industry in South Africa, and who believe that Jesus has a special concern for fishermen having called most of his apostles from that trade (information from Fr. Rogerio Bettu, Portuguese Chaplaincy of Cape Town). Large crowds attend the festive occasion. See [www.portucape.scalabrini.net](http://www.portucape.scalabrini.net).
- <sup>258</sup> “Trek to thank God.” *Cape Argus*, January 26, 2002. In a bloody ordeal, a man in the Philippines had himself nailed to a Cross at Easter (a regular Easter spectacle) fifteen years in a row, to fulfil a vow after his mother had been cured of cancer. His journey of pain came to an end in 2005.
- <sup>259</sup> Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 187.
- <sup>260</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 32.
- <sup>261</sup> My sister did this for me, when she brought back a tiny pebble from the grave of *Die Kneg*, “The Prophet”, a pilgrimage site for Griquas at Plettenberg Bay, South Africa; she and her husband had visited the site and photographed it, at my request. Of Irish descent, she reflects their veneration for stones. Today, fortunately, the “relic-hunters” who so infuriated Mark Twain on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land have been curbed by better security, and a greater awareness of the fragile nature of antiquities.
- <sup>262</sup> The devotion to Mary, Cause of our Joy was first begun in France in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Christians were fighting in Jerusalem. Those who returned home thanked the “Blessed Lady, Cause of our Joy.” Further information from Albini Catholic Mission, PO Box 28, Hammarsdale 3700, South Africa, or [metanaoia@icon.co.za](mailto:metanaoia@icon.co.za).
- <sup>263</sup> The story related by Bishop Hubert Bucher was obtained through Monsignor Gregory van Dyk, PO Box 2630, Bethlehem 9700. Further contact may be made through [metanaoia@icon.co.za](mailto:metanaoia@icon.co.za).
- <sup>264</sup> Francois Smuts, ‘n *Pelgrimstog*, first appeared in *Die Kerkbode*, August 13, 2004. The passage here is a translation by Ampie Muller from Annelie Ferreira, ed., *Paaie: Verkenning van 'n Geestelike Landskap* (Pretoria: Griffel, 2005), 231-233.
- <sup>265</sup> Ibid., 233.
- <sup>266</sup> The power of the personal computer in the modern world of youth is huge and growing. MySpace, a social-networking Web site created in 2003, had 24.2 million unique users by October, 2005, and 11.6 billion page views, the fourth busiest internet site in existence (after Yahoo, AOL and MSN. It has even passed Google in size. Youngsters were changing their names to Keith2.0 or Joeymachine, reported Keith Wilson, a user – changing “virtual” into “reality,” “A Place on the Internet That Millions Under 30 Call Home,” *Sunday Times/New York Times*, December 4, 2005.
- <sup>267</sup> M.W. MacWilliams, “Virtual Pilgrimages on the Internet,” *Religion*, 32,4 (2002), 316.
- <sup>268</sup> “Kashmiri pilgrims can send internet offerings,” *Cape Times*, March 19, 2004. (Despite the tempting internet offer, more than five million pilgrims are thought to physically visit it annually)
- <sup>269</sup> MacWilliams, 319.
- <sup>270</sup> Ibid., 317.
- <sup>271</sup> Clare Wilson, personal interview, Cape Town, November 6, 2005. She said that labyrinth societies would not welcome the use of the term “replicated pilgrimages.” The labyrinth *is* a pilgrimage, in a specific space and time, she commented. This would apply to other pilgrimage-linked rituals, such as the Stations of the Cross.
- <sup>272</sup> Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- <sup>273</sup> Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland* (London: Syracuse University Press/Barrie and Jenkins Ltd., 1992), 237.
- <sup>274</sup> Simon Coleman and John Elsner: *Pilgrimage, Past and Present* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 124, 131 and 161.
- <sup>275</sup> Holm, *Sacred Place*, 195-6.
- <sup>276</sup> Robert Orsi, “The Center Out There, In Here, and Everywhere Else: The Nature of Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St Jude, 1929-1965,” *Journal of Social History*, 2, 2 (1991): 213-232. This “paradox of place” is dealt with in the Church’s promotional material; most of the League’s members (an estimated 95 percent) would never visit Chicago for devotion; on the other hand, an incentive was offered for pilgrims who made the journey, a two-hundred day indulgence.
- <sup>277</sup> Ibid., 221 and 223. The success of the virtual pilgrimage may be estimated by the fact that although more than four thousand people attended daily services during the novena to St Jude in 1938, still more sent

in their petitions by mail; the clergy calculated that there were about 10,000 petitions on the altar that season, 214.

<sup>278</sup> In Scandinavia in particular, many stone and turf labyrinths are associated with the name “Troy”, such as Trojeborg and Troia. The Celtic root *tro* means “to turn”, while today the Welsh *troi* means “to revolve, to turn.” For further information see Janet Bord, *Mazes and Labyrinths of the World* (London: The Anchor Press, 1976).

<sup>279</sup> Substantial history on labyrinths may be found in Jacques Attali, *The Labyrinth in Culture and Society* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1999), Virginia Westbury, *Labyrinths: Ancient Paths of Wisdom and Peace* (London: Aurum Press, 2001). Janet Bord, *The Voice of the Labyrinth Movement* (London: The Anchor Press, 1976), is based in California and may be contacted at [www.veriditas.net](http://www.veriditas.net)

<sup>280</sup> It is 858 feet, or 261.5 metres, in length and is considered to be the definitive version of a “classic” 11-circuit labyrinth, with a central “rose” (strong mystical connections with the Virgin Mary, and 112 cusps, or “lunations” around the outside.

<sup>281</sup> Bord, *Voice of the Labyrinth Movement*, 14. This effect, of “heightened awareness” was reported by many of the 7,000 visitors to the Nottingham Festival in July, 1971 as they walked a two-storey creation.

<sup>282</sup> Dr Lauren Artress, St George’s Cathedral, Cape Town, April 14, 2005. She has written of her experiences with labyrinths in *Walking the Sacred Path* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).

<sup>283</sup> Westbury, *Labyrinths*, 7. The world’s most prolific labyrinth maker, Robert Ferré, lives in St Louis, Missouri. Since 1995 he has created more than 400 in a variety of materials, including fabric, stone, cement and acrylic resin, ranging from three to thirty-one metres in diameter. He is the founder of the St Louis Labyrinth Project and his designs are used by church and community groups, therapists and workshop facilitators who used them for group work and for spiritual development. Another contemporary designer is Gernot Candolini who created a “sunwheel” floral labyrinth for a park in Innsbruck in 1996. His creations have also been used in psychiatric hospitals and other healing institutions. He has designed a range which he calls “Jacob’s Dances”, which are inspired by the path of pilgrimage. He specializes in the “candle labyrinths”; which are set out in public places during festivals such as Easter and Midsummer.

<sup>284</sup> Dean Rowan Smith, personal interview, St George’s Cathedral, Cape Town, June 7, 2005.

<sup>285</sup> An example was from Patricia McNaught David, who wrote to the Cape Argus that “I think the church has lost its focus and failed in its great commission to teach the world the ways and words of the founder of our faith.” *Cape Argus*, May 7, 2004. Several pastors from Fish Hoek complained as well, says Dean Smith. They all appear to be innocent of Church history. Possibly the oldest church labyrinth is in the Church of Reparatus, Orléansville, in Algeria, dating from the fourth century, while the one in San Vitale, Ravenna, dates to the sixth century.. Labyrinths are found in churches in Italy, France, England (though many have been destroyed over time), and painted ones still exist on church walls in Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark.

<sup>286</sup> Clergy at the Cathedral had long opposed apartheid. In 1972, during the first open defiance of the State in Cape Town for over a decade, students and protesters fled into the Cathedral to claim sanctuary from violent police action, but were dragged out, some by their hair (I was a witness, as a young journalist). The Cathedral continued to offer a space for any gatherings against apartheid and became its spiritual centre. In 1989 Archbishop Desmond Tutu led a march from the Cathedral of more than 30,000 people calling for democracy.

<sup>287</sup> The Peace Labyrinth in Pretoria is “linked to the peace grid around the world,” says Di du Preez. Further information from [www.labyrinths.co.za](http://www.labyrinths.co.za).

<sup>288</sup> I have seen two styles of “finger labyrinths”, one belonging to Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, and the others created by Clare Wilson of Cape Town. In the United States, the first record of a “finger-tool labyrinth” was created by Sue Anne Foster.

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER FIVE.

<sup>1</sup> It is claimed that the final execution of a witch in an English-controlled territory was in 1730 in Bermuda; she was Sarah Bassett, a black slave. Rhode Island did not officially eliminate hanging as a penalty for convicted witches until 1768, Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, (London: The Womens’ Press, 1984),:179. See also Sally Smith Booth, *The Witches of Early America* (New York: Hastings House, 1975). Witch-burning still occurs in rural areas of South Africa; it has proved difficult for the democratic government to quench, although prosecutions have occurred.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Martin was an artist who created her “own world” of cement sculptures in her back yard – much of it represents a pilgrimage. The conservative Christian community in which she lived were puzzled and

alarmed by her work, and occasionally youths and children in Nieu Bethesda mischievously damaged her work and threw pebbles at her in the street. Though a lively person, this added to her general unease about the outside world, and she lived most of her later life in seclusion.

<sup>3</sup> Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender and Politics at a Greek Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), see Chapter Ten; “Women, Performance and Pilgrimage”. She mentions that even if women were required to do something dangerous, total obedience would protect them or their families—whereas even a momentary hesitation would bring the wrath of the Divine, and would cause suffering.

<sup>4</sup> Even in Catholic societies, not all women agree with the traditional role of women as primarily mothers, nor are they necessarily impressed with women pilgrims who display exaggerated emotion. For more detail about this, including the theatre of ritual roles, see Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 223.. In her view, “it is too narrow an interpretation to see women’s involvement in religious activities, including their participation in pilgrimage, as indicating either greater feminine piety or greater identification by women with the church’s constructed image of (Mary)”.

<sup>5</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 231ff. Dubisch reminds us that most studies of the Virgin Mary and her cult have been focused on the Catholic tradition. Within the Orthodox tradition, Mary is not seen primarily as a Virgin figure, but is seen as the One of Great Grace (*Megalóhari*) and the Bearer of God; thus not her virginity but her maternal role is emphasised, as well as her power in the heavenly and secular world.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Wade Clark Roof, *The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 218. Roof reported that one woman said she was “so starved in a church that she decided to take a leave for a while to get away from “all the God-he talk” and rituals that remind her every Sunday that it’s a man’s church”. See also Sara Maitland, *A Map of the New Country* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>10</sup> The earliest sacred Hindu texts, the Vedas, were written between 1500 and 1000BC and goddesses were minor characters. But today, the three most important forms of modern Hindu worship are usually described as Vaishnava (Vishnu-worship), Shaiva (Shiva-worship) and Shakta (from *Shakti*, meaning female power). Shahrugh Husain, *The Goddess* (Alexandria: Time-Life Books, 1997): 156-6.

<sup>11</sup> Eva Evers Rosander, “Going and not going to Porokhane: Mourid Women and Pilgrimage in Senegal and Spain,” in Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 88. “The physical efforts of the women in a sacred context bring them religious merit, which helps them cope with fatigue and physical strain, she writes.

<sup>12</sup> The site is considered by many to be “one of the most sacred sites of the ancestors in South Africa” – Dr Piet Muller, in a personal interview.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 123ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* The reservoir represents a mythical husband, who has been buried in it by his father to promote rain, and who “rises up” from it on Calf Twelfth, covered in mud, to return to his wife. The allusions to this are bawdy.

<sup>15</sup> The tiny but broadly-dimensioned Willendorf Venus is now in Vienna; it is difficult to gauge its date, but is thought to be many thousands of years old.

<sup>16</sup> Husain, *The Goddess*, 10 and 14.

<sup>17</sup> The nearest large town to the Birthing Passage is Ceres in the Western Cape. San Rock Art Tours arranges visits.

<sup>18</sup> Asherah was the consort of the principle male deity in ancient Palestine. The union between “Shekinah and Yahweh” is somewhat explicitly described in the Kabbalah. “The Goddess of the Israelites” by Colin Bower, *Mail and Guardian*, September 16, 2005. Also in William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Tucson: William B. Eerdmann, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. The chalk white horses carved into the hills of Uffington and Wiltshire are connected with “regeneration”. The oldest, the Uffington White Horse has been dated, through archaeological digs, to nearly 3000 years ago and resembles the horses stamped on early Iron Age coins and traditionalists link the area to the Saxon leader Hengist, who had a white horse on his standard. Even today, courting couples are said to tryst within the outlines of the horses at night, to ensure offspring. The white outlines of the horses were covered during WWII but have gradually been restored. See *The White Horses of Uffington*, brochure compiled by J. & M. Young, 54 George Lane, Marlborough, Wilts. SN8 4BY.

<sup>20</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (London: Vintage, 1999), 24.

<sup>21</sup> Some of the stones carry finely executed engravings of animals, including rhinoceros, zebra, antelope and ostrich. Also present is what appears to be carved cup marks and basin-like depressions at the crown. An elongated passageway of large boulders is connected to the site. See *South African Journal of Science*, 75 (1979), 102. The report was written by M.E. ("Miems") du Toit who has written extensively on her investigations into such sites. In a note of caution, many "polished" stones in South Africa have been used by larger animals as rubbing stones, creating the glossy effect one can see at the ancient Greece site of Argos in the Peloponnese, where I have seen passages inside the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC Cyclopean walls rubbed smooth by millenia of sheep taking shelter in the ruins.

<sup>22</sup> Aubrey Burl, *Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 151.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>25</sup> Her lingering influence might be the reason why the village is full of "witch stones", the shaped and holed pieces of limestone which were supposed to protect homes from witches when set on top of a garden wall.

<sup>26</sup> Legend tells that the "uncountable" circle of stones around her represent her daughters, lovers or local girls. The 68 or so stones make Long Meg one of the largest prehistoric stone circles in the country; it is impressive even though the farmowner has driven a track right through its middle – an unacceptable desecration (personal observation, November 2000).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. At the Hoarstones in Shropshire, thin tubular holes can be found in some of the stones. They are the results of wedding celebrations when miners would drill into the boulders and fill them with gunpowder. The explosions caused accidents, but by all accounts, no fatalities.

<sup>28</sup> Jennifer Westwood, *Sacred Journeys: Path for the New Pilgrim* (London: Gaia Books Ltd., 1997), 196. In Haiti there is a general belief that St James is the senior brother of a line of divine Ogou warriors. In line with the widespread belief that pilgrims should wear special garments, they wear blue suits and red scarves, or the multi-stripped robes of a penitent.

<sup>29</sup> A firm endorsement for the efficacy of the fertility treatment – "Steps Toward Heaven" by Lydia Itoi. *Time Special Issue*, July 5, 2004, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Actually the remains of what appears to be a stone kraal.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 89. Clonmacnois had a church for women outside the main monastic enclosure; according to Munster tradition, the holy season of Lent began on the Skelligs later than on the mainland of Ireland, and couples were able to marry there during the fasting period when it would have been impossible on the mainland; this tradition does not seem to have survived. The magnificent Standing Stones of Stenness, on the Orkneys, used to have the holed Stone of Odin, which was destroyed in 1814. Once known as the Stone of Sacrifice because it was believed that Druids has pinioned their human victims to the pillar, young couples would make a pilgrimage to it, to "plight their troth" by clasping hands through the hole.

<sup>32</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 249.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> "Rabbi's tomb festooned with underwear as Israeli women seek divine intervention," *Cape Times*, December 19, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Carole Rawcliffe in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 134. As Reader in the History of Medicine at the University of East Anglia, she investigated shrines of healing where a touch of the relics or the tomb gave the sick access to the saint's power.

<sup>36</sup> "The pilgrims, although not their professionalized clergy, are 90 per cent female and middle-aged, as are the majority of the traditional healers at Badimong today," David B. Coplan, "Land from the Ancestors: Popular Religious Pilgrimage along the South Africa-Lesotho Border," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 4 (December, 2003), 987. Badimong is legally part of the farm Wonderklip ("Miracle stone").

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 986.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 985. Though there have been tensions between pilgrims and the white farm owners (though less so now than previously), there is pilgrim resistance to the suggestion that the sacred site be legally bought and made over to a pilgrimage trust. Coplan points out that in a sense, the present status quo suits the multiplicity of belief systems present. "The problems of leadership, the allocation of site resources and the factionalism that plague community improvement projects in South Africa might well negatively affect open access, peaceful interaction and dedicated spiritual activity at Badimong," he writes, 992.

<sup>39</sup> Coplan suggests that the animal sacrifices reverse and erase almost two centuries of missionary efforts to get Africans to reject animism, spiritism and syncretism, and to discriminate rigidly among Christian denominations, 983.

<sup>40</sup> These rituals are costly: in 2003 they charged R6000. Ibid., 983.

<sup>41</sup> It has been suggested this could have been caused by natural combustion.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 981.

<sup>43</sup> Coins are sometimes left but disappear quickly.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 982.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Max du Preez, *Of Warriors, Lovers and Prophets: Unusual Stories from South Africa's Past* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 54. Mohlomi, meaning "Builder" or "Founder", was the grandson of the Bakoena chief Monaheng. His reputation was secured as a youth by his prophetic visions and he was widely revered for his humanity and wisdom, even by later missionaries and historians who praised his legacy, the greatest of which was, probably, the "taming" of the initially violent and headstrong nature of the great king Moshoeshoe.

<sup>47</sup> Coplan, 986.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 983.

<sup>49</sup> Archaeologists supporting this theory include David Morris, head of archaeology at the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, see *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power: History and Landscape in a New Interpretation of a Northern Cape Rock Engraving Site* (MA dissertation, University of the Western Cape, 2002), and personal interview, and Janette Deacon, *My Heart Stands in the Hills* (Cape Town: Struik, 2005), also personal interview.

<sup>50</sup> Personal observation, September, 2005 with David Morris.

<sup>51</sup> Two rivers, the Riet and the Modder, converge near the settlement of Modder River, 57kms upstream from Driekopseiland. Before 1860, the lower section of the river there, the Riet, was known as the Modder, see Morris, *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power*, 26. "Gmaap" means muddy (*modder*): Morris, email, January 18, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 47-54. The geometric engravings are part of a regional pattern and they predominate at 28 percent of engraving sites north of the Orange River (page 56). For more information on rock art, see The Rock Art Research Institute (RARI), Johannesburg, at <http://rockart.wits.ac.za>, also the website of the National Museum in Bloemfontein, [www.nasmus.co.za](http://www.nasmus.co.za).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 203. The topography of the site, a "pavement" covered partially by water, is an indication of its association with female rites; so are some of the engravings –including those replicating snakes. Both Morris and Deacon concur in this (personal interview, Dr Janette Deacon, July 15, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 155. According to /Han=kass'o, (whose oral history was recorded by linguists Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek in Cape Town in the 1870s), the snake, along with the tortoise and terrapin, were the "rain's animals", while the /Xam believed that "the water snake is the water", 157. For discussion of some of this work by Lloyd and Bleek and the /Xam, see Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things: A Story of the /Xam* (Cape Town: LLAREC, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> Morris, *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power*, 158.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 172. The same Nama root word is shared for snake, waterhole, rain, blood, the colour red as well as to flow and to milk. The female initiate is intimately linked with the rain, water, blood and snakes.

<sup>57</sup> Morris argues that, drawing on the concepts of "topophilia" suggested by Deacon, the placement of the engravings on expanses of rock that are submerged when the river rises may be a key to their interpretation, iii.

<sup>58</sup> Work on the concepts of "topophilia", the connection between landscape features and spiritual realms, has been written on by Deacon, Morris, Parkington et al. The waterhole was not just a place that received life-giving water from the sky, the "upper realm", but was also a significant sacred space through which the "lower realm" could be accessed (see Chapter Three – *sacred geography*).

<sup>59</sup> Morris, *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power*, 172. Her menstruation placed her in a conceptual no man's land, a place of ambiguity. The proper ritual observances would restore the balance, and, in partaking of the rituals, she would also restore potency and protection to the group, men as well as women (see also J. David Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic Meanings in Southern San Rock Paintings* (London and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1981), 50ff).

<sup>60</sup> Morris, *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power*, 203. This undulating movement of the great watersnake echoes the sacred rain, welling up and falling from the clouds; the maiden, at puberty, is known as "the rain's magic power".

<sup>61</sup> Previously known as “Bushmen”, South African groupings are now referred to as “San” meaning aboriginal bush people (early colonists recorded meeting “Soaqa” or “Sonqua”, derived from the same word as San; unfortunately the word San also became associated with the meaning “stock thief”, as the San were driven out of their territories and forced to survive on poached livestock. See John Parkington, *The Mantis, the Eland and the Hunter* (Cape Town: Creda Communications, 2002), 17. The term “Bushmen” itself became a pejorative term in South Africa, but is still used at the request of groupings in Namibia and Botswana, who prefer it – information from Dr. Janette Deacon, personal interview, Stellenbosch, February 16, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis-Williams: *Believing and Seeing*, 44 ff.

<sup>63</sup> The eland is associated with an ancient musical scale from a very old layer of musical culture. Only two songs are extant, the Great Eland Song, which is sung at the female menstrual rites, and the Rain Song. They are sung in the same manner by many San language groups, notably with sounds of eland footbeats represented, and with a rising pitch (Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, viii), also see Nicolas England: *Music among the ju'l'wa-si of South West Africa and Botswana* (Ph.D thesis, Harvard University, 1968).

<sup>64</sup> Parkington: *The Mantis, the Eland and the Hunter*, 47. The young men have themselves literally “killed an eland” in order to undergo their own initiation. The young girl is smeared with eland fat and is said to be “fat”, and will ensure that her grouping also remains “fat”. See also Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, 48-52, who writes that there is an explicit equation between the fatness of the eland and the fatness of the girl who is undergoing the ceremony. He asked !Kun/obe, an old !Kung woman, why it was specifically an eland dance, and not a giraffe or gemsbok or some other animal. She replied that “the eland is a good thing and has much fat. And the girl is also a good thing and she is all fat; therefore they are called the same thing”, 48. To be beautiful, is to *not* be thin, 50. But further, the “fatness” of the girl is connected with ideas of “balance” or “harmony” in food supply, water, weather and the land in general. The power of the girl to “rennovate” the world is reflected in the /Xam word for a girl at her first menstruation: !kwi/a//ka:n, translated by Bleek as “new maiden”, “new” also being connected with special potency, 52.

<sup>65</sup> Deacon, *Some Views on Rock Paintings in the Cederberg*, 49.

<sup>66</sup> Geoffrey Blundell, *The Politics of Public Rock Art: A comparative critique of rock art sites open to the public in South Africa and the United States of America* (MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1996), 207. The eland is the most revered and beloved of all animals for the San; it is beautiful, large and carries a huge store of “sweet” fat, its most prized attribute. The supernatural power within this fat is said to be found in many living things; it was an essence that permeated the whole San universe (some San today describe it as energy that boils within them, almost like electricity).

<sup>67</sup> Morris, *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power*, 172, Parkington, *The Mantis, The Eland and the Hunter*, 47, Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, 52 and 66.

<sup>68</sup> Morris, *Driekopseiland and the Rain's Magic Power*, 264: The proclamation of Driekopseiland as a historical monument was gazetted in July, 2000 (Government notice no. 1388). “The damage was from work done by the son of Mr Justice M.D.J. Steenkamp. When confronted on site, he said he had not had the time to obtain permission from SAHRA (formerly the National Monuments Council).”

<sup>69</sup> Husain, *The Goddess*, 148.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>72</sup> This assertion, along with Mary Daly’s radical vision of feminism, are in her deliberately confrontational books *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (London: The Women’s Press, 1986) and *Gyn/Ecology* (London: The Women’s Press, 1984).

<sup>73</sup> “Discover the wonderful new face of the witch,” by Jeanne Viall, *Cape Argus*, December 2, 2005. Also see [www.wicca.co.za](http://www.wicca.co.za). Also personal interview, January 11, 2006.

<sup>74</sup> She recounts several instances of members of the public calling in the police to take action against them (which the police are not permitted to do, under the freedom of religious practice clause in the South African Constitution). Personal interview. Reynolds puts the prejudice down to “ignorance and brain-washing.”

<sup>75</sup> Nicholas Shrady: *Sacred Roads* (London: Viking, 1999), 188.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Milbry Polk and Mary Tiegreen: *Women of Discovery* (London: Scriptum Editions, 2001), 25.

<sup>78</sup> Westwood, *Sacred Journeys*, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Colin Morris, contributor and editor of *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, (with Peter Roberts as the other editor). Margery’s Jerusalem pilgrimage established a “strongly personal devotion to the humanity of the suffering Jesus”, 151.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. Women were allowed to climb the sacred Japanese mountain of Fuji only on one special day every 60 years, because the female mountain *kami* (awe and power) was believed to be jealous of other women; today there are no such restrictions.

<sup>81</sup> Susan Imrie Ross, *This is my World: The Life of Helen Martins, Creator of the Owl House* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126. This book was based on her doctoral thesis, completed shortly before she died.

<sup>82</sup> Philip Taylor's study on the sacred site in Vietnam known as the Lady of the Realm describes the "motley" crowd of pilgrims who flock there as being "variegated", not only coming from all walks of life but also whose motives for the pilgrimage and behaviour while at the site great differed. Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise*, vii.

<sup>83</sup> Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). He sees these sites as complex webs of interest, longings and anxieties.

<sup>84</sup> She was named after a dead daughter – Helen Elizabeth – and her smallness and dark looks led to her nickname, "Joodjie" (little Jew), a harbinger of her being "different". Her mother, Hester Catherine Caroline (van der Merwe before marriage) developed heart trouble after Helen's birth and was in hospital for six months while the baby was cared for by an aunt. Her father, Petrus Jacobus Martins, owned a smallholding and supplied milk to the village.

<sup>85</sup> He ran off with a Miss Wimble, also a teacher, whom he also abandoned, and proceeded to Oxford University (where he furthered his studies, changed his name to Pinard, and is believed to have been elected to Parliament). See Anne Emslie, *The Owl House* (Sandton: Viking, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> Her father lived on, in an outside room (now called the Lion's Den) for about another year and died at ninety-three, in February 1945.

<sup>87</sup> Every couple of weeks she would call on one of her workers, or friends, to help her light all the lamps and candles inside and outside – this could take a couple of hours. The glass glittered, similarly to candlelight on the shining mosaics of the Byzantine churches, (the *tesserae* angled especially to produce this effect in candlelight), and once a year, on Christmas Eve, Miss Helen lit up her home and invited villagers to enter and see the astonishing effect she had created. It is a great pity that the Owl House is no longer seen in the way she meant it to be; perhaps special events could be held with this in mind.

<sup>88</sup> Emslie, *The Owl House*, 84.

<sup>89</sup> Miss Helen had a long-term affair with a local builder who did some work for her, Johannes Hattingh, also an exceptionally tall man (one of the beds in the Owl House is extended, with the use of a small table, to accommodate his lanky frame). Hattingh had been struck by lightning twice (it was believed locally that his height was the cause), and reportedly "changed", suffering memory lapses and mood swings. It was a convenient scapegoat for Hattingh's family to blame when he pursued his long relationship with Helen. During this time, Helen briefly married, in 1952, a Jacobus Niemand, a local widower; it has been suggested that this was to needle Hattingh into leaving his wife permanently. After the ceremony Helen went home to the Owl House and after six months of fruitless attempts to woo her, Niemand had the marriage annulled. Hattingh, to the great distress of his family, continued to live with Helen on and off until his death in 1963, by which time Helen was in her middle sixties.

<sup>90</sup> Emslie, *The Owl House*, 51. Piet van der Merwe recalls her paying ten pounds a week. "In those days, that was a good wage. Most people were paid three shillings a day". White villagers sometimes felt that her "boys" (as the men who worked for her, including Jonas Adams and Piet van der Merwe were referred to) "exploited" her (page 67). The reason is no doubt because the other villagers paid so little.

<sup>91</sup> Helen had high hopes of the operation on her feet, and hoped it would remove her bunions. While medicated for the surgery, she reportedly told the surgeon that he was supposed to take away her little toes. He did.

<sup>92</sup> This is an often-told tale about her; it was repeated to me by Richard Rubidge (personal interview, Wellwood Farm, outside Nieu Bethesda, 2000). He used to drop farm produce off for Helen, and was present when she was transferred to hospital after she had taken poison

<sup>93</sup> Far from being "abandoned" as legend has it, many local people were very good to her. Neighbours would place cooked meals for her on her wall, and always found a charming note in return. Local farmers who knew her also dropped off excess produce when they were in the neighbourhood and her family begged her to take the quantities of vitamin pills and dietary supplements, such as iron, that they sent her (which were found, unopened, after her death). As Helen's work progressed, she seemed to become an ascetic, living on tea and bread, and charity, and her tiny frame became thinner and more wizened.

<sup>94</sup> A spoon lies next to it, part of the sculpture, indicating the inability to feed. It is significant that this creature was kept near Helen, with its deformed foot. It disturbed her visitors (and still does), but Helen treated it in a wry way, moving it around and cracking jokes about it.

<sup>95</sup> Anne Emslie: *A Journey through the Owl House* (London: Penguin, 1997), 54.

<sup>96</sup> “The overwhelming zest and urgency of her personal vision was the compelling and crucial component of her work”, writes her biographer Emslie, *A Journey through the Owl House*, 6. It was also the joy she took in her work, as it unfolded, which made it possible for her to be highly creative within the boundaries and limitations of her humble and isolated life. She was grateful when other artists confirmed that she, too, was an artist, though not in any conventional sense.

<sup>97</sup> “Miss Frances”, a retired schoolteacher, and “Miss Helen” saw each other every day. Miss Frances was forthright about her opinion of Helen’s work. She would say, “*Dis kak, hoekom maak jy die rubbish?*” But the relationship continued. Artist Peggy Delpont believes that despite the rudeness, there was a need between the two, as lonely people. She was grateful when other artists confirmed that she, too, was an artist, though not in any conventional sense.

<sup>98</sup> Jill Wenman, quoted in Emslie, *The Owl House*, 17.

<sup>99</sup> “The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on; nor all your piety nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all your tears wash out a word of it”, from *The Rubiáyát of Omar Khayyám*, stanza 71 (fourth edition, 1879). She used whatever she could lay a hand to – her large, painted and glassed “suns” are thought to have taken their image from a tin of Sunbeam floor polish.

<sup>100</sup> “*Doen slegs U wil, Heer, U wil met my, U, Pottebakker, met my klei; vorm my en maak my, net soos U wil, Op U slegs wag ek, nederig en stil*”, quoted in Emslie, *A Journey through the Owl House*, 128.

Translated here by Ampie Muller.

<sup>101</sup> She corresponded with the Young Men’s Muslim Association, asking them for a picture of Mecca which does not appear to have materialised.

<sup>102</sup> Anne Emslie, *The Owl House*, caption between pages 48-49 – Emslie points out that the bee and its honey is associated with inspiration and the essence of life which lies beneath the surface of existence. They therefore make most suitable contemplation spaces. Once again, Helen had made her own world; and “Mecca”, or rather her version of this spiritual destination, was the “place” she created more than any other.

<sup>103</sup> There are two little baby boys attempting the charming trick of trying to pop their toes in their mouths, one more in a pool and one next to the clock tower, marked with the months of the year, to which are attached wires with two youths trying to “stop the march of time”, and an old figure sitting at its base, representing the “ages of humankind” and the inevitability of time progressing. Helen, with at least one abortion behind her, never had children. Her sculptures were her offspring.

<sup>104</sup> and underneath it is written, rather illegibly:

On this image a wooden God is supposed to possess healing powers.

The patient first rubs his afflicted body on the painful spot

and then rubs the wooden figure in the identical place

which is supposed to effect a cure.

Outside the Temple at Kyoto. Japan.

A relief of a woman with hands on her forehead is positioned on the water tank above the “pool of healing”, eternally hoping that her headache will be cleared. This image came from an old Anadin headache medication box.

<sup>105</sup> Water was carried in by Koos Malgas in buckets from the *luiwater*, “sloot water”, released into the sluices outside homes – the village still has no piped water. Water had a practical significance too; Helen had a great love for birds, and she kept many, wild and domestic, in her yard, fenced in with wire netting. Eventually the netting collapsed and she was persuaded to let the birds go, which must have been a great wrench. They fulfilled her nurturing spirit, as she spent part her little money on their feed.

<sup>106</sup> Emslie, *A Journey through the Owl House*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Jean Parker, who knew Helen during her lifetime, quoted by Ross, *This is My World*, 144. I can well understand this sense of “emptiness” in a memorable location that has been deserted. My first visit to Robben Island, after the political prisoners had been removed from it, was a shock; I had been used to hearing and seeing the abundance of life and sound which filled the place when I was a prison visitor there, in the 1980s and in 1990. The prison now feels to me like a skeleton.

<sup>108</sup> Pat Hopkins, *Eccentric South Africa* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2001), 55.

<sup>109</sup> Ross, *This is My World*, 157.

<sup>110</sup> Emslie, *The Owl House*, 117-8.

<sup>111</sup> Koos Malgas told me that his eyesight was permanently damaged from working with the ground glass. Koos, her last crafter-worker, had been afraid of her actions on that last day in Nieu Bethesda: earlier that

same morning, she had said to him: “Koos, if I had a gun, I’d ask you to shoot me”, Emslie, *The Owl House*, 14).

<sup>112</sup> The Owl House was left to a nephew who, feeling that he could not maintain it in the manner she wished, sold it to the Nieu Bethesda municipality for a token sum.

<sup>113</sup> Much more needs to be done – the cement sculptures are vulnerable to the elements, and thuggery; in July 2003, vandals attacked and damaged some of the sculptures. I was told by visitors who had gone to assess it in May, 2005, that it is in a “sorry state” and that if present conditions continue, it cannot possibly survive in any meaningful way.

<sup>114</sup> A number of “strange experiences” have been recorded by visitors. Filming there in 1992, theatre luminary Roy Sargeant recalls sitting on a chair on the Owl House stoep when a coin fell from the ceiling and landed directly in his lap – he took this as a good omen. One evening, the headlamps of the truck that held all the film company’s lighting equipment flashed on – it was locked and there was no one inside (reported by Emslie, *A Journey through the Owl House*, 20-21.) On the first of my visits I was conscious of a significant tremor, a deep vibrating, inside the house, repeated after I had stepped back inside from the Camel Yard – my small daughter, Nandi, felt it too. Though questioned, no one else who was present did.

<sup>115</sup> There is a memorial plaque to Jane Furse in Pretoria Cathedral which makes interesting reading. Apart from the obvious emotional content, natural in the death of a young girl, the plaque also reads: “South African born and bred, she loved her country and her home; she loved all animals wild or tame and with them had no fear. . . her childish indignation blazed forth at all that was less than just to the child races (sic) of her native land.”

<sup>116</sup> Manche joined the Wayfarer Movement (a form of Girl Guides), run by Moeka’s wife, Mrs Sabbath Moeka, and by the Daughters of Mary, a religious order of Anglican nuns. Moeka, who was of the “hell and brimstone” persuasion, warned her that she would not be baptised for two or three years. Though she was enduring abuse at home, she was used to stoicism; Pedi culture and initiation demanded such behaviour. The prospect of pain and death seems to have intrigued her, especially the claim, which she was taught, that those who died as witnessing Christians would go to God.

<sup>117</sup> First they sent Manche and Lucia away, to cook for youths herding cattle. Then Manche was asked to wait for the return of a young migrant labourer whom she was supposed to marry. She was also forced to attend the initiation school, the repository of Pedi social cohesion, and undergo symbolic circumcision (missionaries forbade such practice, recognising the strong hold it had on promoting beliefs they considered “heathen”).

<sup>118</sup> Information from Elizabeth Anderson, who lived in Jane Furse, knew some of the older villagers who had known Manche, including Norah Masemola, a cousin, who is credited with the eventual conversion of Manche’s mother. Ms Anderson also attended two pilgrimages to Manche’s grave, with her husband, Peter (personal interviews, Cape Town, 2001 and 2005).

<sup>119</sup> Mandy Goedhals: “Imperialism, Mission and Conversion: Manche Masemola of Sekhukuneland” in *The Terrible Alternative*, ed. Andrew Chandler (London: Cassell, 1997), 38.

<sup>120</sup> Just a fortnight later, still grieving for the death of her older sister, Mabule became ill and died at Jane Furse hospital. She was buried at her sister’s side and their father planted euphorbia trees alongside the graves. They are still there.

<sup>121</sup> Goedhals, “Imperialism, Mission and Conversion”, 37-38.

<sup>122</sup> Personal interview, Cape Town, February 3, 2001.

<sup>123</sup> Canon J.B.K. Tsebe of Jane Furse wrote a short document of Manche’s road to martyrdom.

<sup>124</sup> Goedhals, “Imperialism, Mission and Conversion”, 40.

<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth Anderson, personal interview. Pilgrims join the long lines of transport parking in huge, makeshift open spaces, and then the walk up to the graves (of Manche and her sister). The grave itself is “far from anywhere”; first, a dirt road, and then a walk of about 200 metres into the hills.

<sup>126</sup> Peter and Elizabeth Anderson, personal interview.

<sup>127</sup> Goedhals, “Imperialism, Mission and Conversion”, 41.

<sup>128</sup> Chandler, ed., *The Terrible Alternative*, xi. In 1997, the list of the “Chosen Ten” was announced; they are (including dates of their martyrdom in brackets) the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia (1918), saint of the Orthodox Church, killed by the Bolsheviks; Manche Masemola (1928), killed by her animist parents; Maximillian Kolbe (1941), Franciscan killed by the Nazis; Lucian Tapiedi (1942), killed during the Japanese invasion; Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1945), Lutheran pastor killed by the Nazis; Esther John (1960), Presbyterian evangelist, allegedly killed by a Muslim fanatic in Pakistan; Martin Luther King, Jr., (1969), Baptist, assassinated because of his civil rights campaigns; Wang Zhiming (1972), killed in the Chinese Cultural Revolution; Janani Luwum (1977), Ugandan archbishop assassinated during the rule of Idi Amin; Oscar Romero (1980), Roman Catholic archbishop, assassinated in El Salvador.

<sup>129</sup> Sister Hilary Markey, who was part of the process of selection, recalls that she had to “fight tooth and nail” for women to be included, and that all Continents and “races” also be represented. It was not an easy victory, she remembered, (personal interview, June 2001).

<sup>130</sup> Goedhals, “Imperialism, Mission and Conversion”, 41.

<sup>131</sup> Personal interview during which Dr Harvey remarked that his predecessor at the Abbey, the former Bishop of Pretoria, had baptized Nelson Mandela’s mother. . The sculptor, Tim Cawley, relied on images drawn by “Sister Phoebe Margaret”, showing her with a very simple tunic caught together at the shoulder and covering her upper body, and a short skirt. She is barefoot and is wearing “ankle jewellery”. The sculpture, made of French Rlichemont limestone, depicts her resting her right hand on a rock. It is partly there to support the figure structurally, but is also of symbolic importance. The “Rock” is a pseudonym for St. Peter, also a martyr of the church; both Westminster Abbey and the church where she was a catechist in Marishane were named after him. Details from an undated report by Cawley, *Pose and Iconography* [of the sculptures].

<sup>132</sup> Sister Markey, personal interview, London.

<sup>133</sup> *Order of Service of the Unveiling and Dedication of Statues at Westminster Abbey, Thursday, 9 July, 1998* (London: Barnard & Westwood Ltd, 1998).

<sup>134</sup> “Sarah Baartman - tragic Venus,” <http://zar.co.za/baartman.htm>

<sup>135</sup> Phillip Tobias recounts his role in his memoir, *Into the Past* (Johannesburg: Picador, 2005), 84-6.

<sup>136</sup> These, and the following quotations of Diana Ferrus, occurred during personal interviews and e-mail correspondence between November 18 – 29, 2005, in Cape Town. Contact [dferrus@uwc.ac.za](mailto:dferrus@uwc.ac.za).

<sup>137</sup> *Buchu* is a medicinal herb used by the aboriginal people of South Africa for medicinal purposes. The full text of the poem may be seen on [www.southafrica.info/ess\\_info/sa\\_glance/history/saartjie.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/history/saartjie.htm). Note that the name “Saartjie,” a diminutive form of Sarah, is no longer used as it is considered to detract from her dignity.

<sup>138</sup> Ferrus is emphatic about the role played by Anne Sophie Parisot, the personal assistant of Senator About. Parisot translated the poem- which she said had greatly moved both her and the Senator - into French, and kept the South Africans informed of developments.

<sup>139</sup> The event was held in Unity House, Long Street in Cape Town, a space rented by Patricia Mowers and Loit Sols. Willie (an artist who has exhibited internationally) and Evelyn Bester, Yvette Abrahams, Willa Boezak, Jethro Louw and Ferrus were among those there.

<sup>140</sup> The South African ambassador to France was then Thuthukile Mazibuko-Skweyiya, a former exile who had returned to South African in 1990. She said, “Sarah Baartman is a symbol of our national need to confront our past and restore dignity to all our people.” “A Platinum Princess,” by Tumi Makgetla, *Mail & Guardian*, January 20, 2006.

<sup>141</sup> Cuvier observed that Sarah Baartman and her people were the “missing link” between human and ape. “The resultant internalized inferiority/racism had many of my people denying their Khoi-San roots, but with the return of Sarah, they proudly reclaimed their roots,” said Diana Ferrus.

<sup>142</sup> Before the French would consider the return of Sarah Baartman’s remains, they had to be convinced that this would not “open the floodgate” of demands for other relics they currently own. See Phillip Tobias’ account.

<sup>143</sup> Dubisch, *In a Different Place*, 195.

<sup>144</sup> “A pilgrimage to South Africa.” Commencement speech by the Rev. Mpho Tutu at Rocky Mountain College, US (Graduation 2005), [www.historicchristchurch.org/Mission/SoAfrica\\_Pilgrimage.htm](http://www.historicchristchurch.org/Mission/SoAfrica_Pilgrimage.htm).

<sup>145</sup> The Gospel of Mary Magdalene, part of the earliest New Testament, was excluded (among other “controversial” texts) at Nicene. No women were invited to exercise their vote. So important was this suppression that at the second Nicene Council, the judgement was repeated, directing that such texts deserve “to be consigned to the fire.” Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 75.

<sup>146</sup> “Holy rollers” by Nomavenda Mathiane, *Mail & Guardian*, December 9, 2005.

<sup>147</sup> “Church slams door on women leaders,” by Henriëtte Geldenhuys, *Sunday Times*, January 15, 2006. Desirée Muller said she had wanted to become a minister since her school days. The church, which has about 250,000 members nationwide, slightly opened the door to women deacons in 2003, but has now decided that only those who are already practicing as deacons may remain – no more women may be admitted. Minister Danie Snyman said that “a woman may not be in an authoritative, instructive or ruling position over men. A woman’s right to speak is limited.” The South African Council of Churches rejected this approach. Interestingly, the 2006 Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* ruled that that church’s “white and black” synods would have joint sittings in future – twelve years after South Africa’s transition to democracy in 1994.

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**ENDNOTES: CONCLUSION.**

<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on reciprocity is underscored in David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), 593. "Places of pilgrimage were necessarily places of giving and receiving". The journey to these places involved an investment of a person's self, money, and time in exchange for the sacred, he writes.

<sup>2</sup> "'Night of Peace', Bethlehem 2000," filmed by Norman Servais (Cape Town: Metanoia Ministries, 1999). Though the video title is dated 2000 to conform to the notion of the Jubilee Year, two thousand years after the birth of Jesus, in terms of our calendrical dates, it was still 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Besides Jean Comaroff's caution, which I have mentioned on more than one occasion in this thesis, there are other scholars who hold the view that the "sacred and profane" are less than satisfactory divisions. Jill Dubisch says this about her study of pilgrims on Tinos: "Although as an observer with stricter notions of the separation between the sacred and the profane, I made a distinction between what were for me two types of activities. I do not know that such a distinction would necessarily be made by most of the pilgrims", *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender and Politics at a Greek Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 105-6.

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Westwood, *Sacred Journeys* (London: Gaia Books, 1997), 28.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Jackson, *At Home in the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 64. The objector's name is given as "Archie".

6 Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys: The Ways of Rajasthani Pilgrims* (Waveland Press, 2000), 295. The clay jug is frequently used as a metaphor for the fragility of a human body as a container of the imperishable soul.

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## VIDEO RECORDINGS

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“Mapungubwe: Secrets of the Sacred Hill” by L. Gewer (Johannesburg: Icon Entertainment, 1999), 52 minutes.

“Night of Peace,” Bethlehem 2000, by Norman Servais (Cape Town: Metanoia Ministries, 1999/2000).

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