

The Modern Pilgrim

A Study of Contemporary Pilgrims' Accounts

Paul Post

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Following a brief sketch of a theoretical framework the author examines a selection of contemporary Dutch pilgrim's accounts. With the help of a model of analysis an attempt is made to interpret the accounts as 'biographical stories of experiences', at both a textual and contextual level.

Three clusters, with the help of which the analytical material can be ordered for an analysis of contents, could – in the opinion of the author – be listed as follows under the supportive and binding denominator of 'experience of contrast' and 'self-presentation': a/ the ritual, the journey, pilgrim-beingness; b/ meeting, relations; c/ the past.

The theme of 'involvement with the past' is more closely examined, especially within the framework of the so called musealisation of culture. In the ritual of pilgrimage the past is used, invoked and deployed. The ritual extends to a sort of 'vessel-ritual' that may be filled according to individual necessities: it is a 'vessel-ritual' that is attractive because it is 'traditional'. But beside or in this aspect of continuity and tradition, innovation is also involved. In the corpus of pilgrim's accounts we find a completely new and emerging type of pilgrim and pilgrimage in the sense of a new function and appropriation. Through a detour to the past, one seeks identity and quality of life through a series of contrasting experiences. The article concludes with some comments on the 'proportion of tradition', popular culture and European ethnology, and on the (Dutch) terminology of 'pilgrimage'/'bedevaart'.

Paul Post, Professor of liturgy and Director of the Liturgical Institute. Theological Faculty of Tilburg, Postbus 9130, NL-5000 HC Tilburg, The Netherlands.

1. Introduction

"And would I now accompany him to fill in the paperwork? Don Javier is known as a fervent collector of pilgrim statistics. The form on which he wrote my information is designed in a multiple-choice format. Under 'reason for trip', for example, the options 'religious', 'cultural', 'friendship', 'athletic' and 'other' can be checked off. (...) I tell Father Javier that my motives are spiritual and journalistic. He is silent, staring at my stamp card (...) and then at me, trying to work out if I am being completely serious. With a sigh he writes down the two words, his check boxes unattended. 'I dislike journalists,' he says as he gets up. He walks to the door of his office and opens it for

me. Appointment finished. The only question I was able to put to him concerned the growth in the number of pilgrims. Up until 1982 there were at most one hundred registered per year. In 1984 there were five hundred and in 1987 nearly fifteen hundred. 1989 showed signs of a fifty percent increase compared with the previous year" (Vuijsje 1990: 120).

This anecdote is in the pilgrim's account of the trip home from Santiago de Compostela by the Dutch journalist and sociologist Herman Vuijsje. His account is one of many which have appeared in recent years in the Netherlands and Belgium, as also in the rest of Europe; the diary format is particularly popular for such accounts.

What is the source of this popularity? This is

a complex question. What is the initiative that brings people to undertake such a journey and to write an account of it? What is the motivation for publishing an account of the journey, which is often so personal in nature; and in what form should it be published? There is also a question of reception: why do these accounts find an audience? Does it have something to do with a fascination with pilgrimage itself, or does it have more to do with a curiosity about the long-distance runner, or with the increasing interest in the genres of (auto)biography and travel literature? Or is it a more general cultural-historical interest that people take in pilgrimage, in writing and in reading?

The opening quotation touches upon the phenomenon of pilgrimage itself. The old pilgrimage routes in Europe are busy these days: thousands upon thousands of usually single and non-affiliated pilgrims spend weeks, even months, on the way towards the traditional goals of pilgrimage such as Rome and Chartres. The old medieval routes to Santiago de Compostela in Spain are far and away the most popular. From all the corners of Europe people walk and cycle to the tomb of St. James, but smaller local and regional goals also seem to share in this European 'pilgrimage boom'.¹

Here also a number of questions arise: is there really a question of a renaissance throughout the entire spectrum of pilgrimage? May we speak further of continuity or discontinuity in the pilgrimage tradition? What is to be said about the 'religious content', about motives, effects and functions? What should we think about Father Javier's list of motives? Do people seek holiness and healing, or is it rather a matter of the omnipresent shift of touristic culture to cultural tourism? Finally, we can look for relevant global cultural processes which can serve as fruitful interpretational frameworks. What should we be considering in this regard? The return of religion in a post-modern period? Or rather than this a 'culturalisation' of religion?

2. Framework and organization of the article

2.1. Theoretical framework

'Revitalisation'

Before giving the framework of the investigation, I shall first draw attention to the stream of 'revitalisation' literature, chiefly from an ethnological or anthropological angle (cf. Salomonsson 1984, Boissevain 1991, 1992, 1994, Post 1991a, c, 1993). Just as in other aspects of pilgrimage, there are unmistakable reports of indications of regeneration and resurgence, indications that make it appropriate, in the theoretical respect, to seek connections with other forms of ritual revitalisation processes. Alongside recent studies by Boissevain on processes of change in the subject area of festival and ritual in Europe, I shall want above all in this connection to utilise the insights and starting points of Salomonsson. In a classic article of 1984, he formulated a range of points to take into account in the investigation of revitalisation processes which, in this connection, I shall want to sum up under two heads and incorporate in my research. First is the emphasis on the cultural-scientific researcher's need to turn to underlying ideas,² and second the thesis that revitalisation often goes together with the conferment of new meanings, new functions and new underlying factors and arguments.³

A debate about pilgrimage

In the following I shall seek to utilise a more tailored form of research into the phenomena of revival, namely research into pilgrimage in the form it has taken in recent years in a number of disciplines. (Cf. for pilgrimage in general: Theilman 1986, Dupront 1987, Post & Van Uden (eds) 1987, Van Uden & Post 1988, Post 1988, 1989, Pieper, Post & Van Uden 1990, Post 1991a, 1991b, Margry & Post 1994.)

A good introduction to the broad spectrum of questions and problems of ethnological pilgrimage research in general, is offered, in my opinion, not so much by the numerous articles providing an overview of the field, as by the equally numerous debates and polemical stud-

ies. In particular, I am thinking of the fierce discussions which took place in German studies in the seventies and eighties (cf. Assion 1982/1983, Brückner 1983, Scharfe, Schmolze & Schubert (eds) 1985). I will review certain themes, positions and attitudes in this regard, as exemplified by such a debate, as a form of orientation for the kind of research and questions with which this study is concerned.

Assion, in a sampling of social sciences orientated 'Gegenwartsvolkskunde' (contemporary ethnology) assesses the contemporary revival of pilgrimage, the renaissance of the traditional pilgrimage, and the rediscovery of the phenomenon in a number of disciplines. This is all firmly set against the background of changing concepts of tourism, given as an important facilitating factor. The renaissance of journeys on foot or on bicycle is of especial interest to him. Assion attempts to characterize and interpret this phenomenon. In doing so, he calls attention to two associated characteristics: a withdrawal from the cult object, the holy and healing centre of the journey, and motivational structures which lie in a derivative social-existential level rather than a primarily religious one. In a general sense, Assion talks of a supportive contrast-experience to which the pilgrim addresses him- or herself. An experience of actual sociability and solidarity, of vocation, is set in contrast to modernity; the pilgrimage is, in short, an oasis, a blank space, in a world permeated by modernity even within the framework of church communities. Assion places these issues in the broader framework of religiosity in the (post)modern world and ties his thesis in with various forms of lay devotion and new religious movements and countercultures. Forms of religious (popular) culture, in this case pilgrimage, are not seen as relics or as expressions of continuity with the past, but as important new forms of religion, as ritual behaviour, the functions of which become clearer when placed in the context of the social-cultural framework of modern society. The internal situation of the church after Vatican Council II is completely implicated in this.

Brückner reacted at that time in a strong and engaged manner. Given the general social theoretical background, which he, unlike As-

sion, does not see as relating European ethnology to the social sciences, but rather to the 'natural partner', social history, Brückner opposes the all-too-easily-reached conclusions concerning processes of change in the field of pilgrimage. He denies that there is a sudden increase in attention to the pilgrimage journey as opposed to the goal with its holy site and cult objects. He stresses how the journey and the group experience of the pilgrims stood and stands in the centre, how the journey and the goal actually should not be placed in opposition to one another. He treats the motivational structure with the utmost care and reticence. He argues a Marxist inheritance in Assion, according to which popular religion is seen and interpreted as a cry from an oppressed proletariat. Brückner asks for attention to be drawn to the everyday methodology of European ethnology in particular: is the empirical substructure established, for example, through responsible fieldwork or through social scientific case studies? Brückner asks for restraint from researchers, for caution in the employment of various stereotypes and categorizations concerning pilgrimage, and for clear differentiations between participatory elements such as the social aspects, and specific supportive elements. The point of departure for him is that pilgrimage is that which the pilgrims themselves find it to be, that their interpretations must be central. The granting of meaning, and here Brückner and Assion are in accord, must mostly be formulated as an emotional experience. Brückner sees more continuity with the past in present pilgrimage practices, and the success of pilgrimage is explained for him through the success of the traditional, of a received tradition, of a working, always newly actualized, practice.

The main elements of our subject are, in my opinion, strikingly laid out here. I consider that these two points of view can, in fact, be brought into harmony. There are aspects of each with which I would like to associate my discussion. In the case of Assion, I find his questions to be quite to the point, and I would like to test his answers as working hypotheses. In the case of Brückner, I accept his methodological viewpoints, his advice and his warn-

ings, his arguments for the necessity of empirical research, for unbiased and methodical responsibility, especially as regards the quest for the pilgrim's own bestowal of meaning.

Discourses and appropriations

I want to add an important additional perspective to my theoretical framework. I shall, in fact, to a greater extent than in the forementioned debate, want to lay stress on the differences between the various circuits, 'discourses' and appropriations as a way of bringing into the picture the field of force within which rituals develop (afresh). This involves a search for the attributions of meaning (sometimes very diverse) by the participants themselves: the pilgrims (men and women, younger and older) as well as other participants (organisers, spectators, pastors, theologians, the tourist industry, the press). Essentially the controversy described for illustrative purposes is also to a great extent determined by just these different perspectives. Here we touch on an important impulse that in recent times had been profitably introduced to studies in the field of (popular) culture. Following De Certeau, Chartier, Burke and others it was to an increasing extent, and successfully, operated within this perspective of cultural circuits and appropriations and related mutual influence on behaviour (de Certeau 1984, Chartier 1988, Burke 1992, Rooijackers 1992). The final analysis of a (revived) ritual should then be seen as the outcome of a synthesis of sometimes very varied ways of dealing with or adapting it. Perhaps more than happened in the debate between Assion and Brückner, it is necessary right from the start of the investigation to keep an eye open also for changes in perspective, changing forms of appropriation and giving of meaning. Besides, in this way full justice can be done to Salomonsson's points.⁴

2.2. Organization of the article

Against these theoretical backgrounds, I propose to give a first 'reading' of text and context of a dossier of present-day pilgrims' accounts. In doing so I shall stay in the first instance, very close to the pilgrims' accounts them-

selves, in order at the end to emerge again more analytically free from the account of the pilgrimage and the questions about function, meaning and change. We will first orientate ourselves by examining the actual sources, then attempt to establish a model of analysis in order finally to interpret the accounts at the textual and contextual levels. We shall then set the interpretation into a broader framework of research into the function and meaning of pilgrimage. I conclude with a number of earlier soundings of religious (popular) culture in which the theme of dealing with the past occupied an important place (cf. Post 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d, 1992a, Post & Pieper 1992).

3. The corpus of pilgrim's accounts and a model of analysis

3.1. Introduction to the corpus

The sources that I wish to consider, (published) accounts of pilgrimages, poured forth abundantly from about 1980 in the Netherlands and Belgium, after their emergence in the late sixties. From the approximately 100 collected Dutch pilgrimage accounts of various natures and types, I have selected six for a thorough examination: a selection which appears purely intuitive at first glance. I list them briefly (translating the Dutch titles):⁵

1. Hans Annink, *A late pilgrim along the Milky Way. A round trip from Enschede to Santiago de Compostela. 5500 kilometres on foot*, 1980.⁶ Hans Annink, after a severe motorcycle accident, resigned his position as a young history teacher, sold all his possessions and undertook in 1977–78 to make the journey on foot from Holland to Santiago de Compostela and back. Parts of his account appeared earlier in the local and regional press of East Netherlands.

2. Loek Bosch, *Pilgrims of Peace: Pilgrimage to Assisi June 7–August 24, 1986* (privately published).⁷ Loek Bosch is a young priest in a modern district of a large city. In the summer of 1986 he made the journey on foot from Utrecht to Assisi with two other companions. He returned by bus.

3. Henny Lamers, *Diary of a Pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela*, 1987 (privately published).⁸ Henny Lamers was employed by the faculty of astronomy at the State University of Utrecht. He underwent a crisis in both his personal and his professional life, and in 1984 undertook, originally with a friend, to make the journey from Utrecht to Santiago by bicycle.

4. Herman Vuijsje, *Pilgrim Without God*, 1990.⁹ We have met him already. Walking the route from Santiago to Amsterdam in 1989, he took a 'reversed pilgrimage'. Portions of his story appeared earlier in the national press.

5. C. and J. Houdijk, *To the True Jacob: Diary of a Foot Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela*, 1990.¹⁰ A middle-aged couple, Cootje and Jan, undertook the journey on foot from southwest Netherlands to Santiago. Their office jobs were temporarily suspended for this purpose. Jan also writes historical novels and makes sketches. The account of their journey was written by both of them, with Jan providing the drawings.

6. Herman Post. *On Foot to Rome: In the Footsteps of Bertus Aafjes*, 1991.¹¹ A journalist advanced in years, employed by the Catholic Broadcasting Service (Katholieke Radio Omroep), Post used a leave of absence for a journey by foot to Rome, following in the path of the famous Dutch poet Bertus Aafjes, who made the same journey in 1936, and included his experiences in an influential poetry collection in 1944–45.

There is neither time nor space to present these sources in greater detail. I will argue however, that the accounts I have selected do provide us with insight into the broad field of modern pilgrimage accounts.

3.2. Exploration of the genre: a model of analysis

Two formative principles

There are two formative principles which establish the foundation for the model of analysis employed in this article. These concern the understanding we have of a *relative genre*, and further a number of points that come to the fore for consideration if we designate the ac-

counts as *personal narratives* or *biographical stories of experience*.

A relative genre

In the introduction I freely used the term 'pilgrim's account' as a sort of indication of genre for the set of accounts. (See for the 'genre' of the pilgrim's account: Hennig 1944–1956, Seeman 1976, Howard 1980, Richard 1981, Holloway 1987, Herbers (ed.) 1988.) The question now arises whether such a term as 'pilgrim's account' can indeed serve this purpose. This question of orientation concerning our corpus of accounts is of the highest relevance. Each definition of genre is already a step towards analysis, and is indicative in particular of a relevant context. Now it is almost impossible to demarcate the genre. But on the other hand, this affords us a glimpse of a positive aspect of the use of the term, an advantage that lies likewise in its openness and relativity. The term 'pilgrim's account' compels us to begin broadly, to take into account all possible relationships and lines of association with the related materials, that is a broad range from *ego-documents or accounts in the first person* (telephone, recorded accounts, stories, video, photo album, sketchbook, letters, household books, travel notes, diaries, accounts, memoirs, inscriptions in guest books, etc.), 'mediated' accounts (interviews and journalistic accounts) to the edited accounts (travel account, travel short story, poetry collection, photographic book, travel guide, travel stories) and *the fictional account* ('voyage imaginaire').

Biographical stories of experience

As a second formative principle I would like to take a set of methodological insights which enter the field of view when we designate our accounts as biographical stories of experience and thereby seek connections with, in particular, recent developments in literary studies and above all in research into (folk)narratives. (See for this perspective of the (folk)narrative: Lehmann 1978, 1980, 1983, Pentikäinen 1978, Ward 1979, Röhrich 1988, Röttgers 1988, Schenda 1988, Dolby Stahl 1989, Kvideland & Kvideland 1990.) I shall list these points of

consideration here briefly in order to employ them as a checklist:

1. Reflection on terminology and division of genre;
2. Attention to the narrative context;
3. Interaction of the oral and written traditions;
4. Form and editing;
5. (Responsible) interpretation.

Model of analysis

I considered six pilgrim accounts according to a model of analysis which in schematic form can be described as follows: first there is the orientational research phase (investigation and description of genre); secondly the analysis of text and context, followed by a synthesis or interpretation (function, meaning, contents, message); and then the outcome can be taken up in a further, broader investigation, in our case that of the question of changed or changing function and meaning of pilgrimage.

4. Example of use

4.1. Structure and narrational levels

Three levels of the account are to be distinguished: a. *the level of the daily account*, of the experiences of the journey; b. *the level of the contemplative pieces* framing or interpolated therein, of the perception of the journey; and c. *the level of the unspoken messages*, for example concerning the function of the book itself in the life of the narrator or of the group in which the account functions, the level of the 'ultimate, primary function(s)/meaning(s)' of the pilgrimage. Each of these levels may now be further analyzed and decoded, using the previously described phases of analysis as a checklist.

The first narrational level is in all the accounts very consistent. Just as with boarding school experiences or extended, so-called, *life stories*, the pilgrimage bears with it a set of so-called commonplace elements, which may be regarded as a sort of 'script'. Intimacy, self-presentation and recognizability go hand in hand with a set model of life. Each account pays consequent attention to the established

daily model: rising, seeking the way, losing the way, meetings, eating and drinking, seeking shelter for the night, sleeping, weather, impressions of the landscape.

The surprising – or perhaps better put, that which contrasts with daily routines of home – is emphasized. Through the journeys they have undertaken, these individuals acquire an interest in things at which beforehand they would never have paused to look. The first-person figure of 'I' runs (literally) as a sort of *Leitmotiv* through this trivial level. The story is, as it were, carried by a hero who undergoes a development, a growth, sometimes even a conversion. The resulting 'I-report form' underlines this.

Onto this first linear narrative level is tied, or worked in, a series of more representative segments at a second level. At this derivative second level a fixed series of themes, plots or narrative types are also present.

4.2. Themes

In all the accounts, in my opinion, the following contents and themes are dominant:

Departure and arrival

It is striking that the *arrival* is, for the most part, briefly and summarily narrated. All of the emphasis is on the pilgrimage, the journey itself. In some cases, such as those of Houdijks and Post, the arrival is something of an anticlimax: "...is this then everything...?"

Encounters

An important role is set aside for *encounters* en route, and to these encounters are tied elaborations of various sorts. The anecdote dominates here. The account may in certain respects also be read as a linking together of usually unplanned, diverse encounters along the way; there is much attention given to reflection on involvement with other people.

Nature and occasion of the pilgrimage

Various experiences on the way provide occasions for digressions, as for example concerning the religious 'calibre' of the event (in comparison to a walking tour, in comparison to the

past (especially the Middle Ages)), above all also concerning the occasions, motives, and effects of the journey undertaken and changes in these regards throughout the journey, etc.

Nature

The constant confrontation with nature during the journey is a dominant theme in all accounts. 'Nature' is in them broadly construed. It is a question not only of the experience of the landscape, the changing weather conditions, but also of discoveries in relation to one's own body. Concerning the theme of nature we read digressions which above all verbalise the contrast with the bourgeois existence left behind and sometimes lead to discussions of our estrangement from nature, about nature and the attribution of meaning, milieu, and quality of life coupled with living in harmony with nature. Yet the theme is not as dominant as is the case in some English-language accounts. I am thinking, for example, of the 'green account' by Hanbury-Tenison that concludes with an ecological pleading or manifest (Hanbury-Tenison 1991). In any case, this association with nature is a 'classic' pilgrimage theme. Research shows clearly how important the (emotional and religious) surplus value of the pilgrim is as an 'outdoor liturgy'. The experience with nature forms an important source of attraction also for the smaller local and regional pilgrimages (cf. Neville 1978: Ch. II 28ff., 1987).

The past

Finally, I would like to take up more explicitly involvement with the past as a theme. The past first of all plays a role in the various cultural/touristic digressions: places-of-interest invite elucidation in the manner of a travel guidebook, invite stories about origins and development. Also laid out or sought is a coupling with a Christian past that is tied up with the religious, personal identity of the author, or with a more general, cultural denominator. We meet here both personal reminiscence and a general cultural thread. Here the dyadic opposition of engagement and distance, or of the actuality of the journey and the general historical framework, plays a part.

The past also frequently functions as a means in bringing better into focus several of the above mentioned points: consider especially motivation, perception, bestowal of meaning, etc.

4.3. Synthesis and interpretation

On the basis of these observations the researcher proposes further questions concerning the role of the development of the narrator of the story, following norms and values which implicitly and/or explicitly come forward, etc. Three clusters, with the help of which the above mentioned analytical material can be ordered for an analysis of contents, could, in my opinion, be listed as follows: a. the ritual, the journey, the essence of being a pilgrim; b. meetings, relations; c. the past. These three clusters exist as overlapping sets ordered under the supportive and binding denominator of 'experience of contrast' and 'self-presentation'. The 'why' of the narrated story is the disseminated and narrated consciousness, lived through the journey undertaken as a series of contrast-experiences, experiences which are fundamentally different from the life experiences that prevailed before the journey. These experiences touch on the quality of life, interaction with nature, with other people and with one's own past that is again embedded in a more general past. The fact that Lamers, Anink, Post, Bosch, Vuijsje and the two Houdijks produced their accounts is a sign of what I am describing here: there is something else at play different from the traditional, possibly routine, organized Lourdes expeditions. They, from the moment that the plan for their pilgrimages took shape, had the feeling of 'not running with the crowd', and in many cases the journey undertaken is a ritual with an enormous impact, frequently with the character of a singular rite of passage or even conversion. Those experiences which are judged of greater and broader significance are very personal; the editorial process tries to structure this self-presentation in order that it can be relevant for a broader group of readers or listeners.

5. The theme of 'involvement with the past' more closely examined

The elements of these syntheses – I am specifically targeting the three clusters, already referred to, of ritual, encounter and bygone days – can now be elaborated in turn and can be set within a broader framework. I intend further to set in a central position the aspect of association with the past. As part of this (or possibly a case can be made for it on the basis of our exploratory analysis of the pilgrims' accounts), it also appears that (popular) religious rites and symbols are going to constitute a branch of what is well-described as 'musealisation of culture'. If the concept of a 'museal pilgrim' is revealed by the account, are we not then on the track of a new modern bestowal of meaning or appropriation? Perhaps it is not really a question of a pilgrimage and is the traditional rite of pilgrimage extracted from its original context; perhaps it is rather a matter of a cultural, ritual framework for the diverse individual forms of presentation of a range of contrasting experiences.

In a more derivative sense, even more closely related aspects in this connection merit our attention: the question of what I term the 'proportion' of tradition in this type of pilgrimage. I shall keep this aspect of 'the tradition-proportion' for the final conclusions, and just now shall first briefly investigate the traces of 'musealisation'.

5.1. Introduction to the mechanism of musealisation of culture

Through musealisation a cultural process is traced and typed (cf. Lübke 1979, 1983, Assion 1986, Vaessen 1986, Zacharias (ed.) 1990, Sturm 1990, Post 1991a, Frijhoff 1992; important in this context is also: Gerndt 1972). This concerns a certain form of involvement with cultural elements, a certain mapping out of human experiences. Objects are primarily in focus here, but I should emphatically also include rites among these, in particular those rites of religious (popular) culture such as pilgrimage.

Musealisation involves a hypothetical diag-

nosis of time or culture, a model of diagnosis that concerns our human experiences. It is a mechanism that requires and deserves a closer differentiation (Zacharias (ed.) 1990). The concept of musealisation presupposes, for example, a double movement: a development of *historicisation*, a certain involvement with the past that among other things is inclined towards regarding cultural elements as purely expressions of a strange, other life; and one of *aestheticisation*, which transforms everything into the pretty, the beautiful, and in the end reduces it all to the mere appearance of beauty. Wolfgang Zacharias has demonstrated both aspects of the musealisation process in the death ritual of a Cologne prelate who tagged the crucifix placed on his deathbed with the label "Schlechte Arbeit. 18. Jahrhundert." ("Poor workmanship. 18th C.").¹² He died as he had probably lived: in a museum.

The process of musealisation therefore is chiefly concerned with experiential change, called by some loss of experience or reality, with transformed and transforming attempts at signification in a transforming world. The involvement with cultural elements is determined through distance, through viewing, rather than through integration with everyday life (cf. Lukken 1991).

5.2. Musealisation and the pilgrim accounts

In my opinion in the accounts the past functions as an evocation of the totally other; we read of the contrast, the irretrievable contrast with the Medieval pilgrims whose quality of fascination is due precisely to their inaccessibility and otherness. One experiences the journey undertaken in important ways as a journey to the past. One seeks for a way to summon the experiential world of the past; one wishes to connect with the past up to the level of direct experience. This is all summarized in the constantly returning formulation of 'becoming a pilgrim.'

The manner in which experiences are related in our six pilgrim accounts, insofar as they are concerned with the past, strikes me as evidence that they are involved to a very high

level indeed in this mechanism of musealisation. Many experiences are seen, as we have noted, in the light of the modern everyday life that those who have undertaken these journeys have left behind for varying lengths of time. This is not an isolated observation of musealisation and compensation, but something which stands in the much broader context of the functions of (popular) religious rituals in the past and today. The pilgrims appear to wrestle with a constant sense of contextual and functional change. In part, I would like to interpret the pilgrims' accounts as an unmistakable sign of the musealisation of religious (popular) culture. Much of the contents and the messages which I have outlined in this analysis seem to indicate that an old ritual was performed in the eighties and nineties of this century, but performed in a new context. Due to the shift in context, the consequent experiences constantly become confusing.

An important question for further multidisciplinary research lies in the further designation and analysis of the nature and functions of these experiences. Various compensation theses already associated with the process of musealisation are therefore appropriate for consideration in this context, as also in the realm of folklorism (*Folklorismus*) which lies so close to that of musealisation. And thus, with the theatrical and reassuring reversion to the past, with the exploitative involvement with the past, we stand in the midst of the interesting debate on folklorism that in essence is a reflection of the very nature of the field of European ethnology.

The involvement with the past displayed by our pilgrims, and the indicated shifts in context and function, can cause us to see the 'vessel-ritual' of modern pilgrimage as an aspect of musealisation: we would then see the pilgrim as an actor in a performed reality; we would make a piece of religious theatre of his journey. The conclusion of this enacted living history, in a complete museal context, is reached by none of the accounts; all seek to root the traditional ritual in his or her daily life and experiences, this forming the balance of the effects they acknowledge; the account takes in many aspects the character of a struggle, but

also that of a legitimation. The cultic, ritual, religious component is thus frequently designated as a cultural component.

We should, though, be aware that the pilgrims, through their relationship with the traditional 'vessel-ritual' of the pilgrimage, find themselves on the borders of folklorism and theatre. Vuijsje's account refers directly to the consequences of a complete change in context and function through an anecdote:

"Somewhere along the route a host father enthusiastically told me about a group of true pilgrims who had recently passed by. 'Twenty Frenchmen, all in classic pilgrim costumes, with staffs and gourds. There were various physicians among them, also journalists and a television producer. They had their baggage in a car driven by a chauffeur.' How delighted I would have been to have seen this group arrive at Father Javier's!: 'Profession?' 'Journalist.' 'Reason for the journey?' 'Just a moment. Once our car is here we can show you our screenplay. In the meantime, could you hold this antique rosary and look towards the camera?' Here are played out the ultimate consequences of all the developments which threaten the authenticity of the Camino. Pilgrims as actors in a hyperreality, an enacted reality. The Camino as an artificial evocation of something that, in fact, it no longer is.

Javier would never admit this group, because he would thereby become an actor in their street theater. It is now only a question of time before there are turnstiles installed, a life-sized image of the apostle will be mounted on the gable of the cloister and after every mass a well-meant applause will be heard" (Vuijsje 1990: 121).

6. Pilgrimage between tradition and modernity: some concluding comments

The contribution is admittedly put forward as a first exploration. We have laid stress here on a theoretical framework and on a justified analysis-model. On the basis of tests of the analysis, in the end we still stood specifically by the aspect of the association with the past,

insofar as that appears from the accounts, and tried through it to look behind the scenes of the ritual and to consider the extent to which there is talk of a new dimension of appropriation and giving of meaning. This is, it must be repeated, only one of the aspects that deserves to be elaborated; perhaps it is not even the most significant. Further research should step by step take account of the whole field of influence in which the pilgrims are on a journey and give an account of it.

At the end of this exploration, I give some further comments. I do so in order to bring some points from the analysis more sharply into the forefront, and set them alongside the theoretical framework that we presented at the beginning of this contribution. First of all, I link them with the comments we have just made on the involvement with the past.

6.1. A new pilgrim? Or: the 'proportion' of tradition

Questions concerning the involvement with the past are essentially contained within the question concerning tradition and modernity (cf. Bausinger 1991, Köstlin 1991): to the degree of change or continuity of the pilgrimage ritual, tradition or fashion, changes in function or motives. Pilgrimage, above all that to Santiago, is seen as an interesting old tradition to which people wish to make a connection. It is therefore, in my opinion, fully a question of continuity and tradition. But on the other hand we saw how Father Javier, shaking his head, broke off his discussion with the modern pilgrim Vuijsje. So there is also discontinuity. Perhaps it is through the concern with the old tradition that these pilgrims are differentiated from other pilgrims. Looking at motives and functions, these pilgrimages over old, traditional paths, leading to old cultural-historical regions deeply rooted in Europe's history, should differentiate themselves fundamentally from traditional bestowals of meaning. Perhaps I have formulated this incorrectly: it may be not the pilgrimages but the pilgrims themselves who should be differentiated. Or: we must attend to various repertoires of behaviour, and above all to various forms of appro-

priation. A single type of pilgrimage can be appropriated by different people in completely divergent manners. The differences in adaptation are apparent in the opening anecdote: Father Javier and Herman Vuijsje appropriate the journey completely differently. The Father had no place in his extensive question form for the journalistically spiritual 'modern' motives of Vuijsje. All the other pilgrims to Santiago, Rome and Assisi also recount similar conflicts piece by piece.

It is consistently apparent that this appropriation is the first matter of importance in these accounts. The past is used, is invoked and deployed; it extends to a sort of 'vessel-ritual' that may be filled according to individual necessities, a ritual framework as offered by the possibilities of contrasting experiences which may be filled by each pilgrim according to his own insight and, most of all, his own needs.

Now, every ritual fulfils such a 'vessel' role to some extent, but this case is to a very high degree one of an open framework, and the 'vessel-rituality' itself determines the degree of attraction and the function to a very important extent.

Thus I would in no sense wish to associate the renaissance of this sort of pilgrim account only with various reflections on altered pilgrim behaviour, or on the return to religion, or on the incurable religiosity of humanity. It is a 'vessel-ritual' that possesses allure because it is 'traditional'. Various compensating functions play an unmistakably important role here: the past, a traditional ritual such as pilgrimage, offers a holdfast in a modern, hectic, and most of all ordered and minimally surprising or exciting existence, but also offers a holdfast for an existence which has diminished in quality in regard to identity and interpersonal relations, or that has run amok, or that has become confused. One seeks in the past a holdfast as an orientation towards the future. The journey of searching can possess a clear religious component, but it need not.

This very important factor of the past, of tradition, leads us to the differences from other pilgrimages. We have here a completely new and emerging type of pilgrim and pilgrim-

age: beside the already noted concern with continuity and tradition, innovation is also involved, in the sense of a principally different function or appropriation. Wolfgang Brückner was right to speak of 'the success of the traditional'. But in contrast to Brückner I see here a fundamental shift in the signification and adaptation: these are less explicitly religious, and they do not completely cover the contrasting experiences which others sketched with terms such as community and solidarity. Of the complex system of actions that is pilgrimage, in the cases we are now considering only the vague cultural contours of a generally applicable 'vessel-ritual' remain. Through a detour to the past, one seeks identity and quality of life through a series of contrast in experiences. Just as in so many other places in the modern world, tradition offers here an island of time and meaning, to use an image that Konrad Köstlin recently employed (Köstlin 1991: 58–61). I also see traditional goals such as Lourdes, moreover, as being increasingly taken over in this manner.

6.2. 'Pilgrimage' and 'bedevaart' ('Prayer journey' and 'prayer-journey'), elite and popular culture

The material and the analysis we have made of it still raise some important related questions. In the first place, it is possible to speculate on whether (only) specific types of pilgrimage lend themselves to adaptation like those we think we have identified through the accounts, and also whether in connection with this a difference can be established between 'elite' and 'popular' pilgrimages (cf. Wegman 1992, Post 1992b). In other words: in the pilgrimage accounts, are we seeing an 'elite' travelling and writing, or is it still possible to speak of rituals of popular culture? Besides, it may also be the case that the sketched-out musealising association with the ritual is only applicable as a compensating adaptation process of the pilgrim 'elite'.

'Bedevaart'/'pilgrimage' ('Prayer journey'/'pilgrimage')

Through the difference cannot be readily ren-

dered in English, nevertheless closer investigation of the differentiated religious experience indicated by 'pelgrimage' and 'bedevaart' is of great importance. I draw attention to the long debate over the terminology. The same differences, if it comes to that, appear also in the debate between Assion and Brückner that I have outlined. In the framework of this investigation, however, I consider a resumption of the discussion and the establishing of difficult definitions and demarcations to be superfluous, certainly after the very recent synthesis of Berbée.¹³ In this framework I do not wish so much to name the differentiating point of the emphasis on the (long) journey and road, as the aspect of the foreignness and alienation. Whenever we set our accounts within the broader framework of the difference between 'bedevaart'/'pilgrimage', the antithesis appears as far as concerns 'bedevaart' and the 'bedevaartganger' ('prayer journey goers'), who seldom write accounts, and the unique character of our report-writing 'pilgrims' is expressed. The difference in relation to the 'bedevaartganger' ('prayer journey goers') stands out. In the case of 'pilgrimage' it is more a matter of personal choice, about the establishment of an attitude to life, about a converting withdrawal from the present existence, about alienation: 'The pilgrims' accounts should well be examples of the description by more or less learned people of their personally experienced alienation, of the estrangement of the self and of the polite social and ecclesiastical ambience, an estrangement which they convert into reality in the act of the pilgrimage (Wegman 1992: 334f.). As far as concerns 'bedevaart' it is a matter of a prayer expedition of a religious 'people' in which the aspect of alienation and estrangement plays no (or a reduced) role. A closer evaluation of the differences between 'pilgrimage'/'bedevaart' certainly gives in this way the possibility of bringing the unique character of our literate 'pilgrims' still more sharply into focus. The ritual of pilgrimage can be seen as a counter to the experienced alienation. Historicising and aestheticising are in that way forms of compensation in which and through which pilgrims before the present in

the past seek a footing with an eye to the future (Wegman 1992: 336).

Another element that can be tied in with the difference 'bedevaart'/'pelgrimage' in an illuminating way is that we said about musealisation and association with the past. That seems after all not (or to smaller degree) to be applicable to 'bedevaartgangers' ('prayer journey goers'). Perhaps the classical 'bedevaart' is a form of (popular) religious tradition, of which the sketched out phenomenon of musealisation still has the least grip (Wegman 1992: 336).

Nevertheless I want to warn against making the difference between 'pelgrimage' and 'bedevaart' too pronounced, also as far as concerns dealing with the past. Thus, I see a number of signs which indicate that the mentioned processes of 'festive alteration' also begin to affect the 'bedevaart'. Just as the massive dichotomy between popular- and elite-culture can be abolished or at least made more relative through working with the concept of changing representations of appropriations, so also in the case of 'bedevaart'/'pelgrimage' a change of perspective perhaps be fruitful. Attention should also be paid in the difference between 'bedevaart'/'pelgrimage' to the contrast in appropriation. An individual devotional journey to and from a holy place can then for one (or for a group) be a 'bedevaart' and for another (or another group) a 'pelgrimage'. In source material concerning 'bedevaart' and 'pelgrimage' it is often possible to discover traces of both in the use of words. Are these parallel and differing forms of terminology perhaps to be seen as markers of differing degrees of appropriation?

Elite / popular culture?

I should like to make a short annotation in relation to one aspect of the evaluation of the difference 'bedevaart'/'pelgrimage' which has already been conveyed in the above. Wegman sees 'bedevaart' as an action of 'the folk' and 'pelgrimage' as belonging to less or more literate people ('elite'). He especially stresses this differentiating point and couples with it the question of whether there is in the pilgrims' accounts no talk of an elite culture and of whether we should not rather investigate the

'bedevaart' where we are on the lookout for religious popular culture (Wegman 1992: 333).

Behind this critical question lurks a difference in the basic assumption which I shall briefly consider. I set the investigation of the pilgrims' accounts, inter alia, within the theoretical framework for what I and others call the rituals of religious (popular) culture. Here a short diversion is appropriate on popular or folk culture and folklore ('Volkskunde') or European ethnology as the branch of knowledge which carries out research in that area. From that it might then appear that I gave a somewhat different interpretation to 'popular culture' than Wegman and should want to a far less degree than him to work with the dichotomy 'folk' and 'elite'. It is not my concern in the first instance to re-open the question of the so-called canon of European ethnology. Rather do I wish to stress, in the tracks of discussions about the diverse forms of cultural concept, that European ethnology is not concerned with a normative but rather with an interactive cultural concept. In the context of discussions about diverse forms of cultural concept, it may be argued that European ethnology employs an interactive rather than a normative conception of culture. The term 'popular culture' no longer implies primarily an engagement with specific segments of a society or population (social classes or strata), but with civilization in general, with the way of life in which everyone takes part. Thus the European ethnologist is interested in the so-called broad cultural stream, in the everyday culture of as broad a spectrum of the population as possible, in culture with a small 'c', and no longer with the culture of the 'kleine Leute'. The reconstruction of culture and continuity are also no longer points of departure for ethnological research. European ethnologists direct their attention to the matrix of the culture they study; it is a discipline which studies the formation, meaning and effect of collective cultural phenomena in society; it is a discipline which is in search of the meaning of cultural phenomena in society. Therefore, the changes in and differences between these phenomena over the course of time and in their dissemination, both spatial and social, are the focal points of attention in

the field. In this connection, European ethnology becomes strikingly close to cultural scientific research into everyday life just as that, is carried out, for example within the framework of the disciplines of history and anthropology. Like social sciences that are acquainted with 'Kultur als Forschungsfeld' (culture as a field of research), European ethnology wants to investigate the everyday culture at the present day from different but mutually complementary points of view; it is a science on the lookout for the functions, meanings and mutual relationships of cultural phenomena. From this perspective, I count the culture of the 'bedevaart', as also that of the 'pelgrimage', present and past, as lying within the field of ethnological research.

6.3. Tradition and modernity

In this paper we came, in my opinion, on the track of a new form of appropriation, by way of pilgrims' accounts. A 'traditional' ritual is played out in a new way. I shall conclude with a quotation from such a 'modern' pilgrim, to mark the adaptation process between tradition and modernity, including the emphasis laid on the theme of association with the past. In thinking and speaking about the reasons for their journey of pilgrimage, we read in the Houdijk's account the following:

"You are familiar with everything concerning the Romish faith. Then you wish to walk – walk very long and very far. Is there a more beautiful goal than this unknown city in northern Spain, where all of Christianity journeyed a thousand years ago? Add to this that there are a great many historical and cultural monuments preserved along the routes to Santiago. The Romanesque churches that we travel to see are treasure chambers where we too, in imitation of Medieval pilgrims, go to gape in wonder. To feel something of what the beggars and wretches and the punished and the sick and the plague-ridden from far before our time lived through – howbeit that we in our time can never do so fully, in that we cannot share their fears and dreams, and above all that we lack their childlike and blind faith – that is

what we wish. Bound with your own past and that of our entire European culture and savoring this solidarity sparsely – each day a little piece – building it up further in your innermost self. Yes, it must be something like this" (Houdijk & Houdijk 1990: 30f.).

Notes

This paper is a revised version of the Im Thurn Memorial Lecture, delivered in the University of Edinburgh (School of Scottish Studies) on 12 November 1992. A detailed first account of the research appeared along with a co- (or contra-) report, "Een vragende voetnoot/A questioning footnote", by H. Wegman, in the *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek*. Cf. Post 1992b and Wegman 1992. Dr Mark Meadow and Professor Alexander Fenton are responsible for the translation.

1. Most accounts are of pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. The great majority are privately published accounts. A survey of accounts in Dutch is provided by the Flemish Society of Santiago de Compostela (Library: Abdij Sint Andries, Zevenkerken, Bruges) and the journal *De Pelgrim*, or by the Dutch Society of St. James with its magazine, *De Jacobsstaf*. Outside the Netherlands I know so far only the more 'literary' accounts brought out by official publishers such as: Neillands 1985 (account of a bicycle journey starting from Puy), Aebli 1991, Hanbury-Tenison 1991 (account of a journey on horseback), Bentley 1992. See summary giving patterns of types of accounts: Post 1992b: 287f. and 292–297.
2. Salomonsson 1984: 45: "Thus, it is important for us to get behind the scenes and analyze the motivating forces of the process."
3. Salomonsson 1984: 46: "The same phenomenon may (...) be taken up anew, but with fresh arguments in a different situation."
4. For an application of these theoretical perspectives I refer not only to the longstanding fruitful multi-disciplinary soundings within the framework of the Dutch research programme, 'Christian pilgrimages' but also in succession to: a pilgrimage study from the Protestant viewpoint of which I had not been aware before but which inspired me greatly, as an exemplary ethnological investigation, and more one of recent appearance in which historical-anthropological perspectives are applied: Neville 1987, Dekker 1993, Te Boekhorst, P. Burke & W. Frijhoff (eds) 1992.
5. See for more details: Post 1992b. Also note 1.
6. Annink 1980; 110 pp. Return journey Enschede-Santiago de Compostela in 1977/78; many other diaries refer to this report. Parts of it also ap-

- peared earlier in the local/regional press (East Netherlands). Differs from other reports/journeys in that Annink also came back on foot.
7. Bosch 1986 (privately published); 138 pp. Journey from Utrecht with two other people to Assisi; return by bus.
 8. Lamers 1987 (privately published); 98 pp. Utrecht – Santiago de Compostela: a book based on diary accounts.
 9. Vuijsje 1990; 234 pp. Accounts of a journey from Santiago de Compostela to Amsterdam (account 1990; journey 1989): the author calls it ‘a reversed atheistic pilgrimage’: appeared (in part) earlier in *NRC Handelsblad* (newspaper); see for an interview: *HP/De Tijd* 3/4 (1992) 46–50.
 10. Houdijk & Houdijk 1990; 269 pp. Journey from Woensdrecht to Santiago de Compostela by the couple, Cootje and Jan Houdijk: the book was written by both of them, and an indication is always given of who wrote the parts in question. Jan Houdijk was responsible for the drawings. See also: interview in: *Op lemen voeten: tijdschrift voor voettochten* 10,3 (1988) (Nijmegen).
 11. Post, H. 1991; 134 pp. 4th edition of the book, the 1st by Conserve. Parts of it prepared earlier in columns in the KRO-programme magazine *STUDIO*: the 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions were published by the Schaduw Press, Tilburg 1989.
 12. The example quoted of the Cologne prelate taken from Zacharias (ed.) 1990 to B. Waldenfels (*Stachel des Fremden*. Frankfurt 1990).
 13. For the discussion on the terminology ‘bedevaart’ and ‘pilgrimage’ I only mention: Berbée 1986. See also: Post 1992b and Wegman 1992. Sometimes both terms/words are used: cf. for example the Dutch translation of the account of Fiennes 1992.

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