

PAWEŁ PLICHTA



**“WE WERE LIKE PILGRIMS FROM THE 12TH CENTURY.
THIS IS SOMETHING! I DO NOT PRAISE,
I APPRECIATE IT.”¹ CAMINO DE SANTIAGO
IN THE MEMORIES OF POLISH *PEREGRINOS***

ABSTRACT. Paweł Plichta, “*We were like pilgrims from the 12th century. This is something! I do not praise, I appreciate it.*” *Camino de Santiago in The Memories of Polish peregrinos*, edited by Z. Drozdowicz and S. Sztajer, “Człowiek i Społeczeństwo” vol. XLI, Poznań 2016, pp. 189-207, Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 0239-3271.

This paper examines a few aspects of religiousness presented in various narratives offered by Polish authors of the Camino memoirs. The parameters that determine the individual dimensions of religiosity are self-confession, religious practices, religious knowledge, religious ideology, religious morals, religious experience, and religious community. This paper adopts an analytical approach to varied source material including literature and popular and scientific texts created by authors that walked the Camino de Santiago themselves.

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Each year thousands of people walk the Camino de Santiago, a month-long pilgrimage of nearly 800 kilometres. Others, choosing to save time, decide to travel to the Galician shrine by bicycle or on horseback. All these three categories of pilgrims, or *peregrinos*,² share the same goal of reaching the

¹ J. Kiełpiński, *Camino tinto. W 31 dni na koniec świata*, Toruń 2014, p. 247.

² Both terms are derived from Spanish *camino* – Way, and *peregrino* – pilgrim. Medieval authors used the Latin word *peregrini* to describe precisely those pilgrims who were setting off to Santiago de Compostela, as opposed to *palmieri* – travellers to Jerusalem, and *romei* – travellers to Rome. Dante, *Vita nuova*, XL.

city of Santiago de Compostela. Bearing in mind that we live in a globalizing world with rapidly changing and modernising societies, this millennial revival of the medieval Ways of St. James, and other pilgrimages, appears to be an interesting fact that could be explored from a religious and cultural perspective. The Ways of St. James transcend nationalities, cultures, and religions, revealing a paradoxical nature of the contemporary religious experience conceived either as a religious act (indeed a pilgrimage), a spiritual ritual of sorts (a spiritual experience not necessarily articulated by any religion), or as a part of the backpacking culture (a sightseeing route).

There are numerous reasons to look at the Camino from a religious perspective, most notably its historical roots dating back to medieval pilgrimages and the cult of the apostle as the martyr,³ the contemporary revival that follows “European” teaching of John Paul II and his various initiatives in this regard,⁴ and statistical data suggesting primarily religious reasons for walking the ways of St. James.⁵

³ M. Starowieyski, *Legenda Św. Jakuba Większego Apostoła*, “Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne” 8/1995, pp. 39-96.

⁴ See, for example, *Jan Paweł II o Europie. Wybór myśli*, edited and selected by G. Grochowski, Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Sandomierz 2003. Key in the revival of the Camino were the so-called *European Act* and IV World Youth Days that took place in Santiago de Compostela between 15-20 August 1989. See John Paul II, “*European Act*” (Santiago de Compostela, 9 November 1982), *Insegnamenti* v/3, 1982, pp. 1257-1258; idem, *Homilie i przemówienia z pielgrzymek. Europa*, part 2: *Francja, Hiszpania, Portugalia, kraje Beneluksu*, ed. P. Ptasznik et al., Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2008, pp. 505-508, 525-539. Compare E. Mendyk, “*Europa, tchnij życie w swoje korzenie.*” “*Akt Europejski*” a *renesans Drogi św. Jakuba – rozważania w drodze*, in “*Akt Europejski*” *bi. Jana Pawła II a renesans drogi św. Jakuba*, ed. A. Jackowski, F. Mróz, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 2012, pp. 107-121; W. Wierzbieniec, *Santiago de Compostela – miasto pielgrzymów i turystów w czasie IV Światowych Dni Młodzieży. Kiedy turysta staje się pielgrzymem?*, in P. Roszak, W. Rozykowski (eds), *Camino Polaco. Teologia – sztuka – historia – terażniejszość*, vol. 1, WN UMK, Toruń 2014, pp. 121-131.

The main venue of the event, Monte do Gozo, is an important landmark on the Way of St. James. Emerging at the top of the Mountain of Joy, pilgrims could catch a first glimpse of the cathedral, their final destination (compare BJ: 127; KB: 230-231). In Santiago de Compostela, WYD left behind a legacy in the form of Centro Europeo de Peregrinación Juan Pablo II, as well as the so-called Polish albergue – a shelter for pilgrims run by Polish volunteers. See Albergue Monte do Gozo, <http://albergue.pl/> [access: 10.10.2015].

⁵ In 2014, 42.46% of the respondents indicated religious reasons, 50.62%, religious and cultural reasons, 6.92% cultural reasons. Compare, for example, K. Orzechowska-Kowalska, *Współczesny pielgrzym na szlaku do Santiago de Compostela*, “*Turystyka Kulturowa*” 4/2013, pp. 36-55; B. Sury, *Droga Europy – Camino de Santiago jako element integracji europejskiej. Profil pielgrzyma do Santiago de Compostela w Roku Jubile-*

In this paper, the notion of religiosity is perceived the views, beliefs, opinions, and behaviour that shape human consciousness and enable a relationship with the *sacrum*. It will be considered through individually experienced parameters such as self-confession, religious practices, religious knowledge, religious ideology, religious morals, religious experience, and religious community.⁶

The goal of this paper is to discuss various elements of religious experiences as they present themselves in Polish memoirs published between 2001 and 2015 following the completion of Camino Francés,⁷ the most popular of the ways of St. James. Although the number of Polish *peregrinos* is growing, they still account for a fairly negligible national group, and some authors comment on this in the following way: "They indeed are here and there, but still few and far between" (A: 241), "We did not meet any Poles" (OP: 31), "Strange. You would think that 99 per cent of Poles are Catholic, but it feels like a holiday to meet someone from Poland on this pilgrimage" (H: 59).

Those narratives take on various literary forms (a diary, journal, feature, short story, essay, poem, press interview, scientific paper) contribute useful material for qualitative research, and can provide broader insight into the existing quantitative data. According to Agnieszka Jaworska and other scholars,

uszowym 2010, in *Wpływ Świętego Roku Jakubowego na rozwój kultu i drogi św. Jakuba*, ed. A. Jackowski, F. Mróz, I. Hodorowicz, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 2011, pp. 79-93; B. Matuszewska-Sulima, *Pielgrzymi w drodze do grobu św. Jakuba Apostoła w Santiago de Compostela w latach 2006-2008*, in I. Hodorowicz, F. Mróz (eds), *Pielgrzymi na drodze św. Jakuba. Przeszłość i terażniejszość*, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 2009, pp. 57-69; M. Wójtowicz, *Wzrost i przekształcenia ruchu pątniczego na szlakach pielgrzymkowych do Santiago de Compostela w latach 1989-2009*, in A. Jackowski, F. Mróz, I. Hodorowicz (eds), *Kult św. Jakuba Apostoła na szlakach pielgrzymkowych do Santiago de Compostela*, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 2010, pp. 45-55; M. Wójtowicz, *Przekształcenia ruchu pielgrzymkowego do Santiago de Compostela w latach 1989-2010*, "Peregrinus Cracoviensis" 22/2011, pp. 313-333; S. Gołąb, *Los peregrinos – w kontekście przemian współczesnego świata*, in A. Jackowski, F. Mróz (eds), *Święci i błogostawieni na drodze św. Jakuba – W 800. Rocznicę pielgrzymki św. Franciszka z Asyżu do Santiago de Compostela*, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 2014, pp. 291-300.

⁶ W. Piwowarski, *Socjologia religii*, RW KUL, Lublin 1996, pp. 65-66.

⁷ According to statistical data, in 2014 the numbers of pilgrims walking particular routes looked as follows: Camino Francés – 161,994 (68.10%); Portugués 35,491 (14.92%); del Norte 15,071 (6.34%); Via de la Plata 8,490 (3.57%); Primitivo 8,275 (3.48%); Inglés 7,194 (3.02%); other 717 (0.30%); Muxía-Finisterre 652 (0.27%); 2 (0.0001%). Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino (2015), <http://peregrinossantiago.es/eng/pilgrims-office/statistics/> (Retrieved 10/05/2015). The memoirs of Polish *peregrinos* walking other routes are still few and far between. These have "*" next to abbreviations explained in the reference matter, and in the table presented in the paper.

this growing popularity of “pilgrim memoirs” describing religious-aesthetic experiences and psychological introspections, constitutes, along with more conventional guidebooks and companions, the essential part of the “Camino culture.”⁸ The authors readily admit that their journeys were inspired by other Camino narratives, including most notably *The Pilgrimage*⁹ (BJ: 6; H: 7¹⁰, 52, 74; K: 5; KAA* 8; OP: 30; WE: 17; WM: 5), *I’m Off Then: Losing and Finding Myself on the Camino de Santiago*¹¹ (KB: 5, OP: 85; Z: 13), and *Nie idź tam człowieku! [Do not go there, man!]*¹² (WE: 18; see also WE: 11). However, while they were making preparations for their journey, they were

⁸ A. Jaworska, *Camino de Santiago. Tradycja i współczesność*, Petrus, Kraków 2015, p. 164. Compare K. Zabawa, *Fenomen pielgrzymek do Santiago de Compostela w najnowszych polskich relacjach i badaniach*, “Rocznik Wydziału Pedagogicznego WSFP Ignatianum w Krakowie” 2009, pp. 221-231; A. Kucharski, *Typologia polskich relacji z pielgrzymek do Santiago de Compostela od epoki nowożytnej po czasy współczesne*, in *Camino Polaco. Teologia – sztuka – historia – teraźniejszość*, vol. 2, P. Roszak (ed.), W. Rozyński, printed by WN UMK, Toruń 2015, pp. 115-143; J. Bremer, *Camino de Santiago – droga świętych legend*, “Folia Turistica” 27/2012, pp. 93-108; idem, *Hagiograficzna semiotyka drogi do Santiago de Compostela*, in *Camino Polaco...*, vol. 2, pp. 11-37. For similar literature published in English between 1985 and 2009, see A. Hesp, *Writing the Camino: First-Person Narratives of the Camino de Santiago 1985-2009*, The University of Michigan, http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/78867/ahesp_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [access: 9.10.2015].

⁹ P. Coelho, *The Pilgrimage*, transl. Alan R. Clarke, HarperCollins Publishers, United Kingdom 2005, original title P. Coelho, *O Diário de Um Mago*, Ed. Eco, Ed. Mandarino, Rio de Janeiro 1987. Paulo Coelho (born 1947) – inspired by this medieval route, the Brazilian writer and poet wrote a novel that would be best described by its original title. Although the book is an essential read for many *peregrinos*, and helped popularise the Camino de Santiago among the Brazilian public and as a pop cultural reference, it largely departs from its Christian origins and “is not at all a guidebook.” BJ: 80; compare K: 252; OM: 327; H: 52. Only with this reservation the book could be included in the list of the Camino memoirs.

¹⁰ In this particular publication the author spelled the name of the author as “Coehlo” pp. 6-7, 23, 50, 52, 54, 74; correctly spelled p. 27; elsewhere spelled “Cohen” (KP: 9, 10). Zeno Howiacki cites also another inspiring book by Coelho: *Warrior of the Light: A Manual*, transl. Margaret Jull Costa, Perennial, New York, 2004. Similarly misspelled name in the quote from KB – see B. Zdziarska, *Rozważania o Jakubowym szlaku pątniczym*, “Migotania” 1/2015, p. 39, with the name “Paolo” (BJ: 6).

¹¹ H. Kerkeling, *I’m Off Then. Losing and Finding Myself on The Camino de Santiago*, transl. Shelly Frish, Free Press, New York 2009; original title H. Kerkeling, *Ich bin dann mal weg. Meine Reise auf dem Jakobsweg*, Malik Verlag, München 2006. Hans Peter Kerkeling (born 1964) – German television comedian, actor, presenter, openly gay.

¹² Andrzej Kołaczkowski-Bochenek (born 1940) – sociologist, journalist, entrepreneur, traveller, until his pilgrimage a self-confessed atheist.

also seeking first-hand accounts from individuals who had already completed their pilgrimage (K: 145). This is also suggested by various surveys and interviews: the respondents admit that the above publications helped them to make a commitment to walk the Camino, but they were also inspired by reprints and reissues of other widely read memoirs. For many *peregrinos*, reading those contemporary travelogues and short stories, as well as legends contributing to the "mystique of Camino,"¹³ is something they described as "maturing" or "gradual immersion" (KP: 8-14).

Publication of personal reflections and emotional experiences on their return from the pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James is indeed a clear and strong self-confession of their religious attitudes, practices, motivations, or religious transformations (WD: 9). Once they thoughts and convictions are conceptualized as fully formed thoughts and convictions, they start feeling an urge to write down and share their experiences as they lived them on the Way of St. James. This paper deliberately excludes broad research material found elsewhere, namely in blogs, Internet forums, social media and topical websites (compare BKPS: 22; OM: 327), and the decision to narrow down the material was also informed by the fact that these more traditional publications are similar to the widely recognized genres of religious literature and the travelogue, which can be compared with itineraries of old.¹⁴ Their authors come from various social groups, professions, and walks of life. Scientists, poets, travellers, journalists, students, editors, soldiers, a minister, an alcoholic, married couples, agnostics, priests, the faithful, as well as those

¹³ J. Bremer, *Camino de Santiago – droga świętych legend*, pp. 107-108; compare K. Zabawa, *Fenomen pielgrzymek do Santiago de Compostela...*; A. Hesp, *Writing the Camino...*, p. 147; A. Jaworska, *Camino de Santiago...*, pp. 164-165; A. Kucharski, *Typologia polskich relacji...*; K. Orzechowska-Kowalska, *Refleksje na temat pielgrzymstwa średniowiecznego i współczesnego*, in M. Kazimierzczak (ed.), *Jakość życia w kulturowych przestrzeniach podróżowania*, Poznań 2012, p. 389.

¹⁴ For the long tradition of Poles walking the Way of St. James, see B. Wyrozumka, *Z dziejów polskich pielgrzymek w średniowieczu*, "Zeszyty Naukowe UJ" 886/1989, "Prace Historyczne" issue 89, pp. 79-88; C. Taracha, *O polskich pielgrzymach do św. Jakuba*, P. Roszak (ed.), in *Camino de Santiago – nie tylko droga. Historia i współczesność Szlaku św. Jakuba*, transl. P. Roszak, K. Kilanowska, WN UMK, Toruń 2011, pp. 185-200; K. Orzechowska-Kowalska, *Wstępne badania dotyczące pielgrzymów polskich w Santiago de Compostela w latach 1631-1717*, in A. Jackowski, F. Mróz, Ł. Mróz (eds.), *1200 lat pielgrzymek do grobu św. Jakuba w Santiago de Compostela*, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 2013, pp. 349-360; A. Kucharski, "Kompostella" i Droga Jakubowa w polskiej literaturze geograficzno-krajoznawczej XVIII wieku, in *Camino Polaco...*, vol. 1, pp. 73-92; A. Kucharski, *Typologia polskich relacji...*, I am not including here standard reference literature for the history of Poles walking the Camino from the 1500s to the 1990s.

confessing to be “at odds with religion” (H: 90), all meet like-minded, and those less so, companions on this strenuous journey for many days of the pilgrimage (por. Z: 13).

Table 1. List of Camino “memoirs”

Author	Title	Camino	Year
Szulc Anna, Piekarska-Duraj Łucja, Duraj Aleksander	<i>Droga do Jakuba</i>	2001	2001
Burdziej Stanisław	<i>W drodze do Santiago de Compostela</i>	2001	2005
Antkowiak Włodzimierz	<i>Vamos, peregrino! Droga do Santiago de Compostela</i>	2003	2005
Szomburg Lucyna	<i>Droga do Santiago de Compostela. Samotna pielgrzymka do grobu św. Jakuba Apostoła</i>	2004	2006
Włoch Dominik	<i>Pielgrzymka do Santiago de Compostela</i>	2004	2013
Grabowska-Markowska Jolanta	<i>Buen Camino!</i>	2005	2009
Wiernikowska Maria	<i>Oczy czarne, oczy niebieskie. Z drogi do Santiago de Compostela</i>	2005	2013
Bremer Józef, father	<i>Santiago de Compostela. Pielgrzymim krokiem</i>	2006	2007 2009 2010 2011
Kończakowski-Bochenek Andrzej	<i>Nie idź tam człowieku! Santiago de Compostela</i>	2006	2009 2010
Kopacz Piotr	<i>Rowerem do Santiago de Compostela czyli jak dotarłem do Grobu św. Jakuba</i>	2006	2009
Krawiecka Ewa, ed., youth supported by Foundation AMF	<i>Pozwól, aby droga... Świadcstwa młodych pielgrzymów z Camino de Santiago</i>	2007	2007
Opłocki Przemek	<i>Camino inaczej czyli dlaczego warto zostać pielgrzymem</i>	2007	2009
Szady Beata	<i>Droga</i>	2008	2010
Kiełpiński Jacek	<i>Camino tinto. W 31 dni na koniec świata</i>	2008	2014
Zwoleńska Joanna	<i>Idę – moje Camino</i>	2009	2009
Orzechowska-Kowalska Kazimiera	<i>Via de la Plata – moje Camino de Santiago 2009</i>	2009*	2010
Sokolik Emilia and Szymon	<i>Do Santiago. O pielgrzymach, Maurach, pluskwach i czerwonym winie</i>	2009	2010 2011

Ozóg Maria	<i>O Santiago de Compostela i kryzysie Kościoła – inaczej</i>	2010	2010
Armatowski Jan	<i>Wakacje z cudami. Dziennik duchowej przemiany na drodze św. Jakuba</i>	?	2010
Howiacki Zeno	<i>Moje Camino. Dziennik uczuć spisany podczas pielgrzymki do Santiago de Compostela: Paryż 7 maja 2010 – Finisterre 24 czerwca 2010</i>	2010	2012
Doburzyński Dariusz, father	<i>Camino znaczy droga. Świadectwo pielgrzyma</i>	2010	2012
Miszewski Wojciech, father	<i>Z biskupem w drodze do Santiago de Compostela</i>	2010	2011
Różycki Paweł	<i>Via Podiensis – z wiarą i pobożnością przez wieki</i>	N/A*	2011
Gasowski Mieczysław	<i>Uniwersytet życia (pielgrzymka do Santiago de Compostela)</i>	2011	2012
Hartwich Elżbieta and Edward	<i>"Przymus" pielgrzymowania</i>	2011-2012-2013	2014
Bożek Ryszard, Pawlikowski Jerzy, Stefaniak Łukasz	<i>Polscy wojskowi pielgrzymi na Camino de Santiago 2012</i>	2012	2013
Bożek Ryszard, Kępa Zbigniew, Pawlikowski Jerzy, Stefaniak Łukasz	<i>Camino – bądź wierny – idź</i>	2012	2013
Gać Jan	<i>El Camino czyli hiszpańskie wędrowanie</i>	N/A	2013
Gawryś Mirosław, father	<i>Camino. Droga, ludzie, miejsca. Zapiski z pielgrzymek do Santiago de Compostela</i>	?	2013
Klimek Andrzej Antoni, father	<i>Camino. Do Santiago i w głąb siebie</i>	2010*	2014
Wąsacz Emil	<i>Santiago de Compostela. Dzięczynne pielgrzymowanie</i>	2013	2014
Blachowska Barbara	<i>Camino Portugués 2013 – dziennik pielgrzyma</i>	2013*	2014
Zwoleńska Joanna	<i>Asfaltowe Caminho</i>	*	2014
Wilczewski Mieczysław	<i>Prowadź muszlo Jakubowa! Rowerem na szlaku wiary</i>	2012	2014
Samolej Maciej	<i>Buen Camino! Obrazki z pielgrzymek do Santiago de Compostela</i>	?*	2015
Kamiński Marek	<i>Cudem jest to, że doszedłem</i>	2015	2015

Source: author's compilation.

Keeping a journal, a ritual of and in itself (H: 9; OP: 132-133; Z: 6, 105), served as an inspiration and a sort of commitment: “this journal will grow into a book” (H: 52). The writers consider it to be a personal and individual experience, noting: “This is not a journal or a guidebook. This is me trying to capture what I found surprising, thought-provoking, moving” (Z: 5). That said, some of the pilgrims could not help but share with their readers at least some practical advice, offering “pilgrim’s essentials” (S: 405-415; compare Sz: 105), “helpful advice” (WM: 129-142), or even separate guidebooks and companions.¹⁵

Apart from some passages describing their growing interest in the Camino, mental preparations for the pilgrimage, or how they reached a particular landmark (usually Saint Jean Pied de Port), the memoirs discussed in this paper usually have a couple of things in common. Although they cannot be considered as itineraries *per se* (compare BKPS: 203–266; WM: 130-134), they nevertheless structured as a diary, with the narratives divided into subsequent days, stages (A, D, GM, H, KJ, MW, Sz, WE, BB*, KPP*), or sites (BJ, GJ, KB, OP, OK*). They often portray customs, scenery, lodgings, fellow *peregrinos* encountered along the way, landmarks and sites with former presence of celebrated individuals such as Gaudi (BJ: 97; OP: 50–51; WM: 114-115), Hemingway (OP: 37), Rolland (S: 31), El Cid (WM: 112-113; BJ: 59-60), Charlemagne (WE: 6), and also notable Poles (BPS: 372-375; BKPS: 152-169; KB: 232-233). The authors capture in these “memoirs” their own personal Camino (Sz: 104; OP: 134; BKPS: 203–266; WE: 29-30, 166-167), illustrating chosen moments with photographs (BJ, D, GM, GMJ, H, KB, KE, MW, S, WE). Often, illustrations include symbols strongly associated with Camino de Santiago such as seals collected along the way (D: 271; H: 8, *passim*; S: 36 *passim*), *compostelas* (D: 305; GM: 100; KP: 158; W: 236; WE: 174; WM: 83, 94), credentials (BKPS: 33, 180-181; D, 12, 62, 151, 187, 205, 229, 240, 260, 271, 288; GMJ; H: 1, 96; KP: 157; SPD: 109; W: 10, 69; WM: 26-27), or maps (BJ: 187; S: 6–9, 16, *passim*; D: 4; BKPS: 32,

¹⁵ S. Burdziej, W. Miszewski, P. Rochman, *Droga św. Jakuba. Przewodnik pielgrzymia do Santiago de Compostela*, Toruńskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Toruń 2004; J. Gać, *Szlak Francuski do Santiago de Compostela. Przewodnik merytoryczny*, Bernardinum, Pelplin 2011; Z. Iwański, A. Kołaczkowski-Bochenek, *Santiago de Compostela. Przewodnik pielgrzymia*, WAM, Kraków 2013; A. Kołaczkowski-Bochenek, Z. Iwański, *Santiago de Compostela. Poradnik pielgrzymia*, WAM, Kraków 2013; A. Laskowska, J. Grabowska-Markowska, *Camino Portugués. Portugalska droga św. Jakuba. Przewodnik. Porto – Santiago de Compostela*, Wydawnictwo Salwator, Kraków 2013.

37, 51, 110-111, 173, page III of the cover; GMJ; GW: page IV of the cover; KAA*: 8-9; KB: 4, 242-243; SPD: 108; Sz: flap of the cover; W: 38; WE: 9; WM: 2; Z: 2). What is interesting, these illustrative materials are also present in scientific literature (BS: 12-13, 30, 93; OM – a "column" in a scientific journal).¹⁶ Other familiar themes are biblical pericopes and allusions, which serve to provide additional insight or provoke reflections on the nature of the journey (compare WD; WE: 34-36; GJ: 278). Włodzimierz Antkowiak begins his recollections by paraphrasing the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was (this time) in 'Polityka' [...], in an article, to be exact [SPD]" (A: 6). The author of a "journal of feelings" concludes one of the entries by emphasising a pericope of the Gospel (H: 85) to illustrate his struggles still around 60 kilometres from Santiago: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest..." (Mt 11,28-30). One other author, Dominik Włoch, alludes to the tale of the poor widow (Mk 12,41-44) while reporting what he describes as a miracle happening in front of the cathedral in Santiago (WD: 12, 13-14). Similar biblical allusions are shared by Howacki as he sits in a concourse of a train station, reflecting: "Sandrin is thirty three today. (Christ died at this age, but she might be just walking to be born again)" (H: 10). Of mundane pleasures experienced on the pilgrimage, called "pilgrim's blood" (K: 31), Zwoleńska writes: "Keeping well in mind the first miracle performed publicly by Christ at Cana in Galilee, I took great delight in wine from the cellars of La Rioja with no guilty conscience" (Z: 87; compare BJ: 50).

Although the authors generally knew the route beforehand, and sometimes studied it in greater detail, they initially feel out of place and bewildered: "What am I doing here exactly?" (KB: 5; H: 42), struggling to find balance and reason in their behaviour "Have you lost your mind entirely?" (OP: 12; compare 17).¹⁷ One author captures the ambivalence of the entire experience, claiming to have lived through "something wild, extraordinary, and fascinating" (OP: 12; compare KE: 10). One other author recalls previous therapeutic experiences, confessing: "And now therapy number ten – the Camino – a very fruitful work on your own self. Highly recommendable" (H: 61).

The *peregrinos* make it quite plain that their journey is one of the possible responses to the social anomies of materialism, consumerism, careerism, superficiality of personal relationships, pressure to conform to various glob-

¹⁶ See A. Jaworska, *Camino de Santiago...*, pp. I-XVI.

¹⁷ See P. Coelho, *The Pilgrimage*, p. 5; H. Kerkeling, *I'm Off Then...*, p. 5.

al trends, and human objectification. Their sometimes radical decisions to “log out of the everyday” while going through this liminal period of one’s life, as the pilgrimage is at one point called (BS: 107-130), reveals an existential duality in their life, which drives a strong desire to emerge from the *profanum* that consumes their lives in order to come closer to be exposed to the *sacrum*. “Come tomorrow, for us here there will be nothing of the so called international affairs or exchange rates to care for [...] I switched off [my phone] entirely. Should I feel the need to surface my head up from the depths of the river of Camino, I will make the call myself” (KJ: 14; compare BJ: 93). This willingness to enter a different spatiotemporal dimension is accompanied either by an intent to build or rebuild one’s identity, or at least an intuition that the Camino may somehow be the right path to follow: “This Route changed ordinary people, kings, and clergymen. Had it not, it would have fallen into obscurity” (Z: 105). The experiences narrated by Andrzej Kołaczkowski-Bochenek, as well as the entire Howiacki journal (H: 90), could be treated as prime examples of metanoia,¹⁸ epitomised by the joy and gratitude felt in Triacastela¹⁹ (KB: 200).

By pointing to various functions of the Way of St. James, the authors seek to clarify for themselves and for the readers what this experience actually represents. “*Peregrino* – a pilgrim. *Guía* – a guide. *Espiritu Santo* – Holy Spirit. *Fiat* – let it be done. This is the essence of the Way of St. James” (S: 35). Unsurprisingly, these religious and theological musings most often come from the authors belonging to the clergy (BJ, D, KAA*, MW). As one carefully examines these texts one may come to a conclusion that the revival of the ways of St. James, as well as the overwhelming presence of variously expressed religious themes (even if sometimes rationalised, compare K: 6), seem to refute the popular claim of the twentieth century that religious spirit is out of place in a secular society. To the contrary, the ways in which one experiences religion may be changing, but the fundamental human need for spirituality is anything but lost in the twenty first century. The Camino de Santiago thus serves as a good example of how a “shrinking” world shapes religious experience as people come together in a shared time and space to look for the commonly sensed *sacrum*, even if understood in many different ways. These diverse ideas of the *sacrum* notwithstanding, Polish *peregrinos* predominantly understand the pilgrimage as a Christian experience, although not exclusively: they sometimes associate it with a Higher Being (H: 8),

¹⁸ Compare A. Jaworska, *Camino de Santiago...*, p. 180.

¹⁹ Compare Z. Iwański, A. Kołaczkowski-Bochenek, *Santiago de Compostela...*, p. 116.

God, "however understood" (H: 61, 72), God-Fate, Destiny (H: 91), "Spirit of the Universe" (H: 9), or Cosmos (KB: 232). These vertical relationships co-exist with horizontal ones: for *peregrinos* to walk the pilgrimage means to follow simple ways of getting along with various human temperaments, characters, worldviews, and life experiences. The *peregrino* walks two weeks or more while being completely blind to social hierarchies (compare WM: 43), showing how powerful is Christian tradition and religion in answering to Franz-Xaver Kaufmann's call to preserve human subjectivity and dignity.²⁰

Believing, as they do, that faith is what we do unto others (OP: 50-51), the pilgrims strive to show that evangelical ideas are not at all abstract (compare OP: 50), and first and foremost manifest themselves in simple everyday gestures. In this spirit, struggling with his own pain and weakness, one of the authors notes: "I helped two women and that was the most gratifying thing that happened to me today" (H: 21).

As the pilgrims walk the Way of St. James trying to live up to their values, they begin to feel a communal experience that at first takes them by surprise: "And where this 'we' came from?" (KB: 5). "Brothers" (A: 14), "one big Camino family" (OP: 115; compare H: 46), "Now, this is irrational, but one has a feeling of togetherness" (K: 14), "by definition, *peregrinos* (...) are our brothers" (K: 20). At one time, however, before recognizing this diversity of the Christian community, Joanna Zwoleńska scolds herself for being annoyed by departures from familiar behaviour (taking calls during religious services, compare Z: 93), and ways of personal conduct in holy places: "I was so confused that I could only [...] sigh: 'Lord, forgive my contempt and anger'" (Z: 93). Emilia and Szymon Sokolik note, however, that this cultural diversity and religious unity is essentially part of the spirit of plurality found in Christianity, or even Catholicism: "whether receiving Holy Communion in the hand, in the mouth, standing, kneeling – we were a community, even if we come from various canonical backgrounds" (S: 36). This communal experience of the Camino is somewhat contradictory considering that the pilgrimage is most often experienced alone (BJ, BS, KB, Sz, W), in a company of one (K, OP, S, WD), or with up to three fellow travellers (BPS, MW, WM; with the exception of KE who travelled in a group). The authors often note that there is a fundamental difference between the Camino and pilgrimages to Częstochowa, for example (OP: 17; OM: 327). "*Camino de Santiago* is primarily a solitary experience. It has little in common with

²⁰ A. Zduniak, *Globalizacja a religia w ujęciu Franza-Xavera Kaufmanna*, in *Religia i religijność w warunkach globalizacji*, ed. M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, Nomos, Kraków 2007, pp. 29-40.

Polish pilgrimages where you set off on foot collectively” (Z: 105). Jacek Kiełpiński, noting this general absence of company, realizes a general rule of the Camino: “It is different here. [...] We naturally come to the rescue of our fellow pilgrims if need be so, but first and foremost – we are meant not to bother one another” (K 21-22; compare BJ 123). Another pilgrim notes one other puzzling thing about this supposedly solitary Camino: it is popular with the travellers, and some tend to abuse its general rule: “I need to be alone on the Camino” (H: 83).

The Camino’s final destination, the tomb of St. James the Apostle, serves as an acute reminder of its uniquely Christian background (OP: 54, 57, 119). It is first and foremost associated with the cult of the martyr, which is viewed both from a theological perspective: “‘You are not walking to [...] Santiago – you are walking to Christ.’ These words [...] sank in me deeply” (Z: 24), as well as from a cultural and historical perspective: “He told me [...] the shocking truth that there are no relics of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, that, most probably, it is just a legend” (H: 40). The Camino is “fashionable”²¹ and as such is promoted as a “tourist attraction” (compare KB: 6, 14), which often raises vehement objections of the authors (OP: 57). For this reason, they feel the need to uncover what the Way actually means and what is their role in it (compare WR: 10). In any case, however, they frame it primarily as a religious activity, choosing to describe it as a “magical” experience (OP: 17), or using such terms as “pilgrim” and “pilgrimage,” which the Sokoliks explain in the following way: “If we were just walking to the tomb of St. James, we would be but ordinary travellers. But since we were following in His Path, we were the most joyful of travellers – we were pilgrims” (S: 398). Elsewhere, the authors describe themselves as “Lord’s travellers on a Lord’s path” (S: 270), or feel they are “tiptoeing to God” (WD: 12–13). Although some authors are more religious than others, all of them seem to be aware of being part of a religious experience radiating a particular “charisma” (S: 19) that cannot be found in regular tourism: “It slowly dawned on me that I was becoming a pilgrim” (OP: 32), “a pilgrim sprouted in me” (KB: 15; A: 240). Santiago Matamoros himself becomes a “guide” on this journey, the Sokoliks expressing it plainly as they celebrate another night without bed bugs: “thanks be to you, James!” (S: 12, compare 34), or look into the future: “We can not even begin to imagine what St. James has in store for us further down the road” (S: 15). For the couple

²¹ Compare J. Mariański, S. Wargacki, *Nowa duchowość jako megatrend społeczny i kulturowy*, “Przegląd Religioznawczy” 4/2011, pp. 127-149.

of *peregrinos* from Warsaw, the Camino unfolds as a singular lesson in spirituality: "you contemplate and try to guess what does St. James want to teach you" (S: 19, compare 25). Through the ages, the ways to the Galician shrine grew populated by the cults of other saints, most notably Dominic de la Calzada (BJ: 44-47), Juan de Ortega, Ignatius Loyola (BJ: 12-14), and John Paul II (H: 74; K: 239), as well as other patrons of pilgrims such as Archangel Michael (S: 19) or St. Roch, both invoked by the Sokoliks. The pilgrims visit churches as they pass through towns along the way (GJ: 24; WM: 63-78), recognizing in their stone statues longstanding witnesses of Christian tradition, although various authors seem to have different reasons for doing so: "We wanted to quickly go and visit one particular shrine because 'somebody said something' about it or 'we read about it somewhere,' so we felt we had to go there. So very human – wanting to follow where others have gone" (K: 13).

Religious practices followed by the authors show their religious attitudes. They set off on a pilgrimage driven not only by the need to deepen faith (Z: 23), but "to find oneself and the faith in God – to find trust" (H: 8; compare K: 253), to find the meaning of life (H: 55), "Did I want to find myself?" (KP: 7), "I felt it was high time to thank the Lord FOR EVERYTHING" (Z: 7), "for All the Bestowed Graces, for All I have Experienced and What I Have" (Z: 8), to reconcile with God, to atone, to pray for the redemption of their closest relatives, health, or the right "formula" for a happy life (BPS: 90-107), but also to offer intentions. "*Camino* is a way of intentions" (Z: 75). Here, one pilgrim wonders why "in today's rational world people understand what the intention is, and are eager to entrust it to a stranger, for him to carry it somewhere?" (H: 9; compare 24, 32), further recalling that he felt heavily burdened by the sheer number and nature of intentions that he agreed to take upon himself (compare H: 51). These intentions are expressed by the authors both in metaphorical terms: "to be born anew" (H: 93), as well as in practical terms, asking for offspring for their sons (BKPS: 13).

The source material discussed in this paper provides a range of strategies for self-identification through participation in particular religious practices (compare Z: 105; H: 61). Considering the crowds walking the Camino Francés, it is striking to see a relatively small number of people taking part in traditional ways of devotion such as religious services (compare BJ: 19), with one author noting at one point that these may be attracting as little as ten per cent of those walking the Camino, although the numbers seem to be much higher once the pilgrims arrive in Santiago de Compostela (OM: 327-328). Polish *peregrinos* are therefore in a minority as they attend services

(Z: 18, 65, 105; OM: 328; S: 34-35; H: 57; OP: 37, 68, 78, 115, 122; K: 15), gain indulgence by walking the pilgrimage (A: 242), treat confessions as an “intimate conversation” – “Steps taking me to my Lord” (OP: 99; compare H: 40) – or take part in customary celebrations of the “Lord’s day” (OP: 92). They also practice prayer to ease their hardships (OP: 36; H: 55), noting its communal nature (OP: 50, compare 123, 131), various routines such as “passing around a large candle, saying – some out loud, some in silence – our supplications and intentions. There was something mystical about it” (H: 40), and the need to find the time and proper conditions (Z: 79; H: 21, compare 29, 31) to lose oneself in prayer (OP: 71-72; 76, 86, 90, 120), particularly by the tomb of St. James (GJ: 279-287). “Paweł asked for a prayer because he feels down. Moved and tearing up, I felt joy coming over me. Of course I prayed for him, sending him strength, courage and serenity. I have vivid faith that they reached him” (H: 33). Others tend to pray the rosary (OP: 65, 87, 104), or practice other types of prayers, meditation, and contemplation (BJ: 117-118; OP: 42, 76, 99; H: 21, compare 29, 31, 40). “On this pilgrimage I discovered the need for prayer, it came to me uniquely and naturally, whether it was full of glory and adoration, being thankful and grateful, or me asking for intercession, mercy, and entrustment” (Z: 107).

The authors also demonstrate their religious imagination as they interpret symbols marking the Camino, in particular crosses that have guided pilgrims since medieval times (now joined by shells and fairly recently added yellow arrows), where they serve to remind of a religious dimension of the experience. Zwolińska notes: “some crosses have sculptures on both sides [...], inviting me to go around them. I looked at the sky and saw SANCTICITY. It was so obvious! – THIS is everywhere, everywhere...” (Z: 21-22). Another writer, Piotr Kopacz, took it upon himself to list and present the various types of crosses which he encountered along the way (KP: 164-167). Some authors recall customary pilgrim practices such as bathing in the ocean, which symbolises baptism and cleansing from sins (Z: 102). Also, many *peregrinos* reflect that pilgrims share a particular blessing of their own, making them part of a history stretching centuries back, and endowing their efforts with a proper religious perspective (OP: 37; Z: 18; compare OM: 328).

Religious morals is the seventh parameter that pilgrims eagerly judge other people attitudes and behaviour (keeping in mind, however, that a pilgrim “never thinks higher of himself than of everyone else” KB: 15; K: 247). Some examples of them viewing negatively what they observe on the pilgrimage include indignation at misrepresenting the religious meaning

of the Camino (OP: 57; BJ: 89), consumerism (OP: 57-58, compare 96), mediatisation and spiritual exhibitionism exemplified by the presence of TV cameras (OP: 86), opulent churches (OP: 89), and religious indifference: "wooden, metal, concrete, stone [crosses] [...], unfortunately, I have not seen anyone responding to this sign with a similar gesture" (Z: 21). Zwoleńska offers a critical view of how the Camino is presented to the world, distancing herself from and rebelling against the "political manipulation" of the image of St. James (Matamoros): "why is it so that faith must be imposed by sword and fire (this is not unique to the Moors)! Why the killing? I may understand dying for your faith, but to kill for it? In the name of what? Under what authority? [...] Is this what God wants? [...] how could this saint, and all he stood for, be twisted so horribly!!!" (Z: 99; compare BJ: 136). Maria Oźóg, on her part, cannot help being annoyed by inappropriate behaviour encountered in holy places and during religious ceremonies (people chewing gum, answering calls), tellingly pointing to a recurring view: "Curiously, this happens more often with Europeans raised as Christians – Asians who generally are not Christians have no trouble behaving" (OM: 328). In her highly passionate essayistic account, Oźóg is also devastatingly critical of the Spanish clergy. Interestingly, other Polish authors, including those with a clerical background, also take note of the problem, even if they choose to be rather soft-spoken about it (compare BJ: 19). "Most churches in Spain, particularly in smaller communities, are locked up for good," reportedly in the wake of falling numbers of priests (OM: 328). But even if the churches are open, it is difficult to understand the behaviour of those presiding over religious services. "[...] resulting in usually hasty and somewhat careless celebration of the Eucharist. [...] The priests seemed to be in a great hurry. Too great, in fact" (OM: 328; compare H: 57). In a part of his account where he describes his visit to the holy city, Kiełpiński lambasts its uncompromising and unprecedented materialism: "Night's lodging. That was painful. What an utter disaster! Minor Seminary wants to pass for Albergue Major! Seems like those at the top want to cash in big time on freedom! A concierge looking skin and bones without as much as a blink of an eye demanded no less than ten euros a person" (K: 245).

The authors seem to have a clear affiliation with Catholic institutions, seen, for example, in the descriptions of ecclesial initiatives (S: 28). Also, most of the memoirs were printed by publishing houses owned by the Catholic Church, including the Jesuit *WAM* (BJ, KB, WE), the Carmelite *Flos Carmeli* (WM), as well as *Verbinum* (OP), *Bernardinum* (BKPS, GJ, Sz, WD), or diocesan publishing houses (MW, KAA*, D). On several occa-

sions the memoirs are prefaced by bishops: Tadeusz Gocłowski (OP: 9–11), Józef Guzek (BPS: 7), and Józef Szamocki (MW: 5-7), one was published under auspices of an Ordinary (D), and one received *imprimatur* (WM: 4).

The authors also share their various spiritual expectations and experiences. “The *Camino* touched me in so many different ways – religious, cultural, social, environmental – and I am deeply grateful for this to PROVIDENCE” (Z: 109). One example of an open-minded approach to spirituality is shared by Howiacki who set off on a pilgrimage with a book by Osho (1931-1990), a Hindu guru, teacher, and spiritual leader. He remembers encountering another *peregrino* from Italy, a frequent visitor to ashram in Pune. He concludes his out of body, mind, and soul experience in the following way: “God, I finally experienced what I have read so much about, I feel joy and fulfilment” (H: 78). Most often, however, the authors share how the simplicity of the pilgrimage made them discover spiritual values that they then try to live by: “The Camino refreshed my faith through little differences which made me pause, reflect, ask questions, and look for answers” (Z: 26).

The authors express here the feelings of closeness, emotional attachment, and seeking God’s assistance both through the act of entrustment: “How does it feel to experience the presence of your Guardian Angel, and how to put your trust in God [...], this very day I have experienced all that and found answers to those questions” (OP: 24; compare 27, 71, 94), “I confide in You, Lord” (OP: 25), “asking the Mother of God for support, my Family and Friends for prayer and good thoughts, I SET OFF” (Z: 11), “Lord, help me get there” (H: 13), “Let it be Your will, Lord, not mine” (H: 91), and thanksgiving: “Thank You, Lord!” (H: 95; OP: 130; compare Z: 79; S: 39).

Reactions of the authors to this vertical dimension of the Camino experience, and the associated hardships, are guided by their religious ideology, namely a faith in Providence: “On that day you could feel the presence of God, watching over us, comforting us” (OP: 21-22, 38, 43, 104). In those who help him, another pilgrim sees supernatural forces intervening: “My God or Goddess, in any case a Higher Being, have so far put on my path not less than five angels” (H: 15; compare 31, 61; WM: 142). Kiełpiński expresses similar ideas, albeit with less grandiloquence, and even in a slightly humorous way, when he writes: “Lord must have truly been watching over me as I approached them looking for shelter” (K: 30). Some frustrating experiences are treated as a form of atonement or mortification, as in one account when a female author tries to fall asleep while unwillingly listening to her snoring companions (Z: 68).

An eschatological dimension of the journey – including the idea that with its beginning and its end the Camino is life writ small – is demonstrated when the authors describe their visits to the memorials of perished pilgrims such as crosses, stones, plaques, and cairns, which are often accompanied by photographs or reliefs (compare BJ: 101; H: 51, 59-60, 74, 76, 88). Here, as well as with cemeteries often passed along the way (this in keeping with Spanish burial traditions), one feels humbled, and reflects on taking a broader view on life: "every time I feel troubled, I take a walk to the cemetery, I come back with serene thoughts" (H: 84).

Seeing miracles in, for example, a fortunate if unsuspected delivery from their plight, or a helping hand given them by a stranger, the authors bring back to life a medieval feel to contemporary pilgrimages (OP: 113-114, 129-130, 131). Recalling assistance received from a stranger Pole from Dijon, one *peregrino* writes: "I thought to myself, this is it, miracles start happening just now" (H: 9). The piety of pilgrims of old, palpable on the Way of St. James, as well as some essential understanding of hagiography, only heighten the anticipation of miraculous intervention and intensify belief in *do ut des* practices: "I had, I still have, hope that through this pilgrimage, these hardships, the Lord will heal or cure my hip. A miracle would come true! But today it crossed my mind that this miracle may not happen at all if I do not reach Santiago de Compostela, or even the ocean" (H: 15). Miraculous intervention is also attributed to waking up to experiences that are usually lost in the routines of everyday life. "I was not disappointed. I praised the Lord for miracles happening from sunrise to sunset" (Z: 42-43). The Sokoliks end their narrative with the eight-hundred-years old *Miracula Sancti Iacobi*, which resonates with their intentions (S: 401-403). Howiacki, on his part, breaks down a Polish word CUD, or MIRACLE, to propose an acronym that would signify the revival of "Ciało," "Umysł," and "Dusza," or, respectively, "Body," "Mind," and "Soul" (H: 61).

The authors' feelings, reflections, and experiences are filtered through their religious knowledge. Apart from the already mentioned considerations shared by ordained authors and in scientific papers, some interesting examples of religious knowledge can be found in the treatments of visual representations of the crucified Christ, analysed in terms of their artistic value and proper depiction of Christological themes (Z), discussion of a theological and symbolic meaning of the Portal of Glory in Santiago de Compostela Cathedral (GJ: 289-294), as well as historiosophical reflections on the way supernatural powers guide societies (GJ: 287).

According to Stanisław Burdziej, the religious attitudes of pilgrims walking to the tomb of St. James include “intense individual pursuits of spiritual values; creative confrontation with religious traditions, assimilation of particular practices and rituals, understanding tradition as a contemporary experience rather than rejecting it, individual reception, personal “digestion” of religious matters, seeking safety, security and stability one experiences upon becoming a pilgrim, a figure characterised by integrity, drive towards spiritual goals, openness, and individualism that nevertheless embraces communal values; changing the way one thinks about their mission by putting emphasis on how one shapes one’s behaviour; placing significant value in the new community, based [...] on organic will, deep commitment and self-awareness of the faithful” (BS: 74-75). The source material analysed in this paper provides various examples of these religious themes, observable in all the quantitative data examining the experience of the Camino de Santiago, which verify the sociological profile presented in this paper.

Camino narratives offered by Polish authors, present first of all the essentially traditional and Catholic approach to religious experience, and the pilgrims themselves in one way or another represent this particular way of looking at their religious life. Their expectations, as well as their ensuing experiences and considerations, very much reflect how Poles tend to experience religion. One of the authors summarises this stereotypically Polish and religious approach to life in the following way: “Have I lost my mind? Apparently, but this is also so very Polish. Suffer, atone, and you shall be welcomed in Heaven” (H: 31).

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