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The Unexpected Real: Negotiating Fantasy and Reality on the Road to Santiago

Alex Norman

Abstract

As modern phenomena, pilgrimages present unique entry points to the study of expressions of meaning and identity. The pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, a Catholic shrine in north-western Spain, have seen the passing of millions of pilgrims over the last thousand years. Throughout the twentieth century the routes, particularly the Camino Francés in northern Spain, have seen a revival of interest. Accurate statistics have only been kept since 1987, when 2,905 people completed the pilgrimage, yet in 2007 some 114,026 people completed it (up 14,000 from 2006). Part of the reason for this increase is undoubtedly the profusion of literature on the pilgrimage in popular culture, mostly in the form of travel books. Of pilgrims recently interviewed while making the pilgrimage two titles stood out – Coelho's *The Pilgrimage* and MacLaine's *The Camino* – not only for being far more widely read than others and being seen as inspiration to do the journey, but as an unreal depiction of life on the route itself. This is often a cause for a brief sense of disappointment that, as we shall see, emerges from the fact that many pilgrims embark upon the Camino in order to have precisely the types of experiences read about.

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To them it feels real, and their inability to distinguish fantasy from reality is what causes it. As much as we like to think we are rational creatures in full control of our faculties, we are not that. Our brain does lots of things "under the hood", hidden from our consciousness. So our hold on reality takes work and for a lot of people it's easier just to believe what makes them feel secure. 57 views. Related Questions. What is the line between reality and fantasy? The Unexpected Real: Negotiating Fantasy and Reality on the Camino de Santiago. A Norman. *Literature & Aesthetics* 19 (2), 50–71, 2009. 2. 2013. The Turn East: "New" Religious Consciousness and Travel to India After Blavatsky. A Norman. *Journeys and Destinations: Studies in Travel, Identity, and Meaning*, 129–158, 2013. The Unexpected Real: Negotiating Fantasy and Reality on the Road to Santiago. Article. Full-text available. For the purposes of discussion, the chapter focuses on the application of Biodynamic methods in the modern viticulture industry. Material drawn from wine makers and growers, wine critics, and from View.