

## *The Way* (2010) and the Camino de Santiago: Christian, Spanish and Galician Identity

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The Camino de Santiago has ostensibly long been the most international manifestation of Galician identity. Foreigners who have walked the path have written many books and guides, and the route has recently been featured in the Emilio Estevez film production *The Way*, released in 2010. A US-American film presence intimates an international perspective of Galicia, the Cathedral of Santiago and the Camino functioning as metonymic markers. But while Basque identity is differentiated from Castilian through historical and linguistic references in conversation, Galicia is registered visually, by its Cathedral and rugged west coast, the Christian/spiritual identity therefore superseding the Galician. Since the 1980s, the Camino has become far better known in the United States, but Americans tend to overlook cultural differences within Spain, especially in the north. This article argues that *The Way* is essentially an extension of this homogenous perspective, utilising stereotypical elements to represent Spain: the bulls in Pamplona, the Basques, plentiful food and wine, myriad churches and chapels. The US-American perspective of the Camino, which has evolved into a general spirituality, finds its roots in the Christian-Castilian identity of Spain, which was cemented in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In this binomial, the Christian has been portrayed and interpreted as an underlying personal spirituality in the film, while the dominance of the Castilian is implicit throughout. Regional identities define Spain and are essential to understanding the Spanish culture and the cultural history of Spain itself, and to overcome the narrow national definitions which have dominated the discourse.<sup>2</sup>

### ***The Way* (2010)**

The film *The Way* (2010) was written and directed by Emilio Estevez and stars his father Martin Sheen. It is loosely based on a book by Jack Hitt entitled *Off the Road: A Modern-Day Walk Down the Pilgrim's Route into Spain*, which first appeared in 1994 and was reissued in 2005. The book and the film share some of

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<sup>1</sup>The film will be referred to as *The Way* and the pilgrimage will be referred to as the Camino throughout this article in order to clearly differentiate the path from the film.

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed discussion of the dominance of the concept of Spain's national character in academic publications in the United States, see Kagan, and Epps & Fernández Cifuentes.

the same characteristics, among which the absence of Galician identity from the US-American perspective stands out. The pilgrimage is primarily regarded as spiritual; food, landscape, and religion are mentioned and suggested as representing the traditional and typical elements (the first two purely physical, the last purely spiritual) in Spain. Therefore, the spiritual markers give way to generalised Spanish markers, the combination of the two forming the completed implied vision of the Camino as a mixture of old and new Spain. There is also an international perspective, as various nationalities/ethnicities are present in the form of characters such as Canadian, Gypsy, Dutch, and Irish. Spanish or Galician are not included here. However, in the book Spanish people play a larger role.

There are a variety of topics associated with the relationship between book and film—the genre of documentary/biography, travel literature, intercultural relationships, or transatlantic aspects. The book is travel literature with elements of biography, and the film can be regarded as a type of European road movie with some characteristics of a documentary. A topic present in both is the spiritual identity subsumed by the Camino de Santiago in lieu of the Spanish or Galician, as witnessed metonymically in the film, as if it were a flagship for the various travel accounts published in English in the last twenty years.

Lead actor Martin Sheen's grandfather was *gallego*, a term used by Sheen in various interviews to describe his heritage. This is also one of the few instances in which *gallego* or *Galicia* are mentioned with regard to the film. Sheen's ancestry is the most direct and ostensible link to Galician culture and identity both as a part of the film (the dedication at the end is to his grandfather Francisco Estevez) and outside the film in the various articles and interviews, where the grandfather is mentioned as a prime reason and motivation behind the making of the film. In the book, Galician culture surfaces in the form of *caldo gallego* (Galician broth) and once when referring to a phrase uttered in the regional language.

The official plot summary on the IMDb website does not mention Spain or Galicia but rather the spiritual quest the main character Tom is about to undertake:

“The Way” is a powerful and inspirational story [. . .] Tom decides to embark on the historical pilgrimage [. . .]. Tom begins to learn what it means to be a citizen of the world again. Through his unresolved relationship with his son, he discovers the difference between “the life we live and the life we choose.”

It is clear that the Camino is a “powerful and inspirational” pilgrimage that will teach the main character to be a “citizen of the world” and allow him to discover the metaphysical message that “the life we live is the life we choose”. The idea of the pilgrimage supersedes and predates the idea of a national character and is evident here in the inherent understanding that the journey does not focus on exterior national borders and cultural boundaries but rather on interior aspects of the self. On the first page of the book, the author mentions that he “cast off religion”, and so paves the way for a spiritual pilgrimage. There is an implicit irony at work here as the Camino erases borders, yet regions do not. It does this, as is made clear

in the film, by not focusing on the regional differences, and mentioning them only to contextualise certain specific elements or features, and then focusing on the literal and metaphysical journey the pilgrim is undertaking. The Camino is regarded as non-national and non-territorial, and therefore facilitates the overlooking of national borders. This leads to a cultural homogeneity bulwarked by the spiritual, but does not mean that some regional differences should be overlooked with respect to others, or reduced to homogenous stereotypical representations. The tendency of US-American scholarship and general interest in Spain to overlook or downplay regional differences diminishes the understanding of the different cultures and traditions present in the Spanish nation.

The book can be placed within the genre of travel literature, where the narrator embarks on the Camino, starting in France. He recounts his journey, explains what it is like to be a pilgrim, includes historical and cultural references, and does not shy away from personal anecdotes. The film, on the other hand, begins from a different perspective. An adventurous meandering young man named Daniel Avery dies in a storm in the Pyrenees while doing the Camino. His father, Tom Avery, then decides to follow in Daniel's footsteps in order to understand his son's point of view of life's journey. While he does the Camino he sprinkles his son's cremated remains at certain points along the way. He starts in France and during his walk has various adventures and meets three fellow pilgrims, Joost from Holland, Sarah from Canada, and Irish writer Jack, with whom he shares this journey, each having their own spiritual (or quasi-spiritual) reasons to embark upon the Camino. Eventually they end up in Santiago de Compostela, and later go on to the rugged Atlantic coastal fishing village of Muxía, where Tom sprinkles what remains of his son's ashes. In short, the film puts emphasis on the Camino as a spiritual experience, while the book is more of a travel journal.

Two key points will now be examined, in that they serve to define the role and identity of Galicia and the Camino in US-American cinema, which in turn represents a more generalised US-American perspective. The Camino is principally spiritual, secondly it is Spanish, and lastly it is Galician, the latter two being generally overlooked as the Spanish/Galician element is only important to contextualise the geography and food, but virtually nothing else; the Camino therefore is a pilgrimage and spiritual journey.

### **The Camino and Galicia in US-American Cinema**

The first point that will be made is that Galicia in US-American cinema by way of the Camino has no identity. Any supposed international perspective of Galician people, language, and identity is therefore false and only perceived. The assumed implicit Galician identity is something one would actually expect to find when examining Camino related resources, but the fact is that it is non-existent and replaced, rather, with a vague personal spirituality.

This point of view is upheld in the book and especially in the film. Five aspects of the film will be examined in order to illustrate what the identity discourse—

interspersed with personal spiritual teleology—says about the Santiago pilgrimage. The first theme is Galicia/Santiago, the second St. James, the third the *Codex Calixtinus*, the fourth the Basque Country, and the fifth Americans. The discourse on identity is from a travel slant and revolves around the pilgrimage rather than the nation, therefore from a semantic and lexical point of view we can examine the number of times and the contexts in which these five elements are mentioned.

The term *Galicia* appears twice in the film, first in the context of drinking (*orujo*). This once again suggests the importance of food and drink in differentiating one culture from another and is especially prevalent in Spain. Alcohol (and especially wine, as the appellation system in Spain is based on geographical region) tends to be associated with specific provinces or areas. Galicia is mentioned again in a more geographical/Christian/spiritual context: “You must continue across Galicia to the sea. There is a shrine in Muxía. La Virgen de la Barca. Go there. Place the remains of your son in the water. It is for him and for you.” This is a geographical explanation of the end of the road or the end of the pilgrimage, and what is understood to be Tom the father’s catharsis with regards to the death of his son. The physical manifestation of this catharsis is his son’s ashes, which are eventually scattered into the sea. Tom has walked the entire Camino to the ocean, first scattering the ashes at a handmade wooden cross which marked the place where his son died, and then along the way, as he slowly reaches an apex of understanding and communion with his dead son. It is fitting that, as opposed to the biblical “from dust to dust”, the dialectic of water as the giver of life and the taker of life is at work here. The latter is especially interesting as the fishing village of Muxía is situated on the Costa da Morte (Death Coast), infamous for its rough seas and various shipwrecks in its waters. Muxía is symbolic in that it is where the shrine dedicated to the Virxe da barca (Virgin of the Boat) is located. Legend has it that the Virgin Mary appeared to St. James here, in a stone boat, to encourage him to continue his mission. The scattered stones, it is said, are those of that craft. The rugged and rocky coastline, a lighthouse, and a small stone church are prevalent in the last scenes of the film, and comprise a physical as well as spiritual end to Tom’s journey, and consequently a manifestation of closure in his relationship with his son. They have both discovered their own personal spirituality, and Tom finally comprehends his son’s thirst for adventure and wanderlust. He scatters the last of the ashes as he looks out across the Atlantic ocean towards America, realising that instead of taking his son home, he has joined him for part of his journey. Tom saw visions of his son at various points along the way, and so Muxía signifies what is truly the end of their time together. The Camino was Tom’s mechanism for dealing with grief as well as their tumultuous relationship, and in the end his son has been able to encourage him to live his life to the fullest. Muxía is geographically the end of the Camino and the end of the continent, while the last of the ashes are the end of the main character’s spiritual journey of the Camino, and the beginning of his world travels.

Santiago is mentioned twenty times in the film, always in reference to the Camino in one way or another. The Cathedral, mentioned twice, is treated in much

the same way. It is viewed as an integral part (or in reality, the end of and therefore the physical realisation of) the Camino. As far as being visually represented in the film, the city of Santiago (presided over by the towers of the Cathedral) is seen by the four pilgrims as they are about to enter the city from atop Monte do Gozo. The Cathedral is shown at various angles from the outside as they are approaching from the main Obradoiro plaza. They climb the stairs to the main entrance, behold the Portico of Glory and the statue of St. James, and then are shown walking around the Cathedral, each having their own personal epiphanies: Tom at the tomb of St. James, Joost on his knees approaching the mullion with the figure of St. James, Sarah with her right hand placed on the same central column, and Jack sitting in a pew. They all attend the pilgrim's mass and witness the tradition of the *Botafumeiro* (the swinging back and forth through the transept of a giant incense burner). The Platerías entrance to the Cathedral is also shown, after they all get the *Compostela*, the certificate which signifies one has completed the Camino, thus constituting a physical representation of the dynamic nature of the walk.

St. James is mentioned four times in the context of the Cathedral and the Camino.<sup>3</sup> It is one way to explain the very Catholic foundation of the walk: "We believers are told that the remains of St. James, the apostle of Jesus, are interred there. And so we make pilgrimage. This is what your son Daniel was doing." This makes it clear that his son's reasons were ostensibly spiritual as is the Camino in general. It is mentioned again by Sarah, the Canadian woman, as the place where she will finally quit smoking. The architectural representation of the Cathedral is shown in the film, while the last mention suggests a pervading spiritual purpose present in anyone and everyone who sets out on the Camino, a type of fate or destiny which calls one to embark upon this pilgrimage: "And if I know one certainty about the Way of St. James, it is that no one walks this Camino by accident. No one." St. James is therefore connected with Santiago by way of the building which is the Cathedral and the symbolic end of the walk and homecoming, as it were, into the house of God. The Cathedral as represented in the film is Christian for those who are believers, spiritual for those who engage in personal metaphysical faiths, and not Galician in any way. The spiritual supersedes the regional, in the form of the Cathedral, therefore only the landscape makes up more of an implicit Galician marker in this sense.

Having discussed a number of terms potentially relating to Galician identity in their context, I will now have a look at terms that are not employed and, in this way, constitute notable omissions, especially in the context of identity and the Camino. Galicia (as an autonomous region different from the rest of the patchwork of regions which make up Spain) and the Galician language are not mentioned at any time. This omission is particularly interesting in light of the explicit references to Basque identity, as can be seen in the following conversation which takes place in Navarre:

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<sup>3</sup>As an interesting side note, the other two individuals of the name *James* mentioned in the film are the American folk singer James Taylor and the Irish author James Joyce.

“It’s my first time in Spain.”

“You are not only in Spain. You are in the Basque Country. We are in Navarra.”

“Well, is there a room in the Basque Country in Navarra?”

This brief exchange clearly does two things. On one hand, it includes Navarre in the Basque Country. Even though the Basque language is spoken in parts of Navarre, it forms an autonomous region separate from that denominated Basque Country, and so this is not a geographically accurate statement. On the other hand this serves to differentiate the Basque people/identity (which includes Navarre) from the rest of Spain with the simple phrase “not only”, and so the unique nature of this region is posited as a positive identifying factor with regard to the larger area of the nation. It is possible that the filmmakers overlooked the fact that they are two autonomous regions, or perhaps they embrace a wider concept of “Basqueness”, which would include the Basques living in Navarre. In any case, it is confusing for the spectator in that the two regions are used interchangeably in the dialogue and geography, when they should be described as separate regions. At the same time it is clear that the geographical consideration of Navarre is subsumed by the more generalised idea of a specific Basque people occupying this area with their own identity.

This composite Basque identity is the product of a stereotype which in turn fits nicely into the overall stereotype of a homogenised Spain as being an element of difference, or rather, the exception that confirms the rule. These cultural differences can be interpreted as quaint and do not challenge the ideas inherited from the nineteenth-century concept of Spain as an old world nation with negligible regional identities.

The Basque Country is mentioned, and “Basqueness” is differentiated once again during an animated discussion among pilgrims and locals about Charlemagne:

This is Spain! This is Basque Spain! He tortured the Basques of Pamplona and allowed his men to have a little too much rest and relaxation with our women. When the Basque shepherds, who lived around here, heard what happened in Pamplona, they slipped into the woods, and we, we Basques, killed them.

This completes the hero myth of the Basque people and makes one of their cultural characteristics virtue, as they were a noble and brave people in the face of danger and tyranny. Here is a clear allusion to Spanish national character. The Basque people (Basque Country/Navarre) are afforded an identity within the larger framework of Spain, while Galicia is not. Estevez and Sheen are not to blame for this exclusion. They made a successful travel movie which combined a fictional narrative with the real-life actors and was well-marketed from this perspective. The filmmaker calls the film “pro-people, pro-life, not anti-anything.” While this is certainly true, some type of Galician markers, like the ones employed for the

Basques, would have enhanced the perspective of varied Spanish cultures within the country's regions, the understanding of the Camino, and the people and places encountered along the way.

While visual markers tend to be lacking, the aural markers present on the official soundtrack of the film include two songs by Galician group Berrogüetto ("Fusco" and "Nadal de Luintra"). The Coro El Encuentro Burgos sing the song heard during the gypsy party, and the rest of the soundtrack consists of instrumental music and songs in English. It is ironic that Galician identity in terms of the language, tradition of folk music, and traditional instruments (especially the bagpipes) is registered aurally, albeit not visually or verbally. This necessarily places it in the background where it would easily remain unnoticed and therefore not constitute as fundamental a marker as the visual or the verbal.

Another juxtaposition at play in the film is that of Americans and Europeans, and of the sublime spirituality perhaps inherent in Europeans and not present in the younger, less developed US-American culture, especially from the point of view of the pilgrims and those who cater to them. One of the comments made by Tom involves the linguistic inflexibility and ignorance of many Americans, as well as American rather than English being the language that they speak: "You know I don't speak Spanish! I'm an American! I speak American!" Other comments suggest various negative stereotypes from the point of view of the Europeans, such as the fact that Americans are opinionated, never punctual, and unable to drink socially:

"Americans are always late."

"Hey, the Americans are here! Bueno, bueno, bueno!"

"Finally! An American without an opinion. Take a picture."

"Proof once again that Americans can't hold their liquor."

Tom, the main character, also has his own particular view of the Europeans and especially the Dutch, which represents most facets of the American stereotype on this issue—that Europeans like to party and drink and socialise and due to this they are not efficient travelers: "You see, unlike the Dutch guidebook which may be directing you to the nearest party, the American guidebook is designed so that you don't look like a clown if you order *pintxos* when you really mean *tapas*." Tom of course gets the two words confused and is quite embarrassed when the waiter informs him of his mistake, once again fortifying the idea that Americans are incapable of speaking foreign languages. This constitutes one of the various references to language and food and strengthens the Basque identity as the waiter mentions that they are *pintxos* because they are in Navarre, as *tapas* are only served more to the south, in Madrid.

Both Tom and Joost are carrying guidebooks with them, which seems to imply the idea of the Camino as a packaged tour. There are so many guidebooks around nowadays that the Camino has the characteristics of both a tour and a pilgrimage. In

his book, Hitt differentiates between the tourist and the pilgrim, asking the question whether walking the Camino was a “sacred task” or “trumped-up tourism” (196). He later comes to the conclusion that pilgrims are a “subspecies of tourist” (230). The film regards the pilgrims as just the opposite, a superspecies of tourist, as it were, in the sense that, above and beyond engaging in typical tourist activities such as staying at hostels and dining out, they have a sense of a spiritual mission.

In the book, Hitt also differentiates the Basque Country from Spain, but not Galicia. He quotes the monk Aimery Picaud (author of the *Codex Calixtinus*) concerning the “Basques of Navarre” (53), and also discusses the history, language and character of the Basques, even hinting at their aversion to the Spanish state (54). With regard to Galicia, he gives a passing mention of the *quemada* as a pilgrim ceremony (182–83). He mentions the Celtic *pallozas* (round huts made of stone with straw rooves) in O Cebreiro, the first stop in Galicia on the Camino. One of these is quickly shown in the film. In the book, Galician, pilgrim and Celtic are intermingled and not clearly discussed. When he arrives in the city of Santiago, Hitt mentions Platerías and Azabachería as the streets where artisans historically sold their products (235), and continue to do so today. Platerías is a plaza and not a street. He mentions *pulpo* (octopus), but does not state that it is a typically Galician dish (220), and mixes Castilian and Galician place names, even though the Galician names are the official ones, in places such as *Palas de Rey* (for *Palas de Rei*) and *Mellid* (for *Melide*). He incorrectly Galicianises the name of a town ten kilometers from Santiago where the airport is located, coming up with *Lavacola* instead of *Lavacolla* after substituting the Galician *l* for the Castilian *ll*, and then furnishes a dubious etymology (233). In these things he is blatantly wrong and they actually work to discredit parts of the book, especially as travel literature. A correct and more in-depth historical context for the Galician elements and characteristics of Santiago would lend the tale a more complete and concise portrait of the region and especially the town which gives its name to the Camino.

### **Stereotypical Views of Spain and the Camino**

The Camino is considered Christian and Catholic rather than specifically Spanish or Galician according to the film. It is a historically religious pilgrimage, and continues to conserve many vestiges of this tradition, but at the same time has also given way to a generalised spirituality stemming from and not precluding the Christian/Catholic element. This point is illustrated in the film through the figure of Father Frank. He is an elderly Catholic priest from New York who wears a yarmulke, which clearly suggests a spiritual if not religious syncretism present on the Camino. He gives Tom a rosary after the latter mentions that he is not a practicing Catholic, and subsequently comments that a lot of “lapsed Catholics” are doing the Camino. This does three things: it serves to concisely delineate the Christian or Catholic dimension underlying the spiritual element present in the pilgrims, it blurs the boundary between religion and spirituality, and it overlooks regional peculiarities.

In this manner, there is a unified vision placed upon Spain, so that regional differences (Basque/Galician/Catalan, etc.) become quaint and comparable to the regional differences in the United States. Spain appears therefore as a kind of medieval Republic of Letters without national or regional boundaries. France is barely differentiated from Spain in the film, even though Tom starts the Camino from Saint-Jean Pied-de-Port. The Basque Country is confused with Navarre and subsequently the Basque people are differentiated historically and culturally from Spain, yet the tensions between the regions and the central government are never alluded to.

This undifferentiated view of Spain goes back to the beginning of Hispanism and Spanish Studies in the United States in the nineteenth century, with the likes of Spanish professor and literary historian George Ticknor, historian William H. Prescott, author Washington Irving and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. They were all involved in studying, criticising or translating Spanish literature and history, and they all shared the basic imagological premise of Spain as a unique culture, which informed the basis for all of their observations. Spanish literature especially was viewed as the most national of all literatures, and this was its most outstanding aspect as it was seen to represent the ideals and character of the Spanish people.

The image of a decadent Spain was prevalent especially in the nineteenth century. At the end of his *History of Spanish Literature* (1854), George Ticknor praises the Spanish people yet laments the inevitable fall of empire, culture and literature (3: 350–51). Ticknor believes that the very core of the Spanish national character, loyalty and faith, ultimately led to its decadence and decline. He writes that “Spain’s early cultural florescence was doomed to decay” thanks to the monarchy, Inquisition and “corrosive forces of courtly life” (Kagan 254). Spain was viewed as a backward nation throughout the nineteenth and also into the twentieth century in terms of literary history, where “The discrepancy between Anglo-American and Spanish understandings of literary history” were apparent in the “discrepancy between innovation and tradition, openness and control, inclusion and exclusion” (Epps & Fernández Cifuentes 18). Richard Kagan develops an idea he calls “Prescott’s Paradigm”, which indicates that Spain was considered the antithesis of the United States in politics, culture and philosophical ideals (253). This led to a romantic yet decadent image, which Kagan affirms was created in the nineteenth century and was then largely influenced by Hemingway in the twentieth century (ix–x).

The same perception continues today, and for this reason nationalisms and national identity in this context are often overlooked—identity and pilgrimage does not make sense in terms of regions. Northern Spain and France are portrayed visually in the film and in reality are quite similar in architecture and landscape, and so the jump from this to a homogenous culture is easy to make and also to infer. It becomes clear that the succession of stereotypes in the film demonstrate this homogenous perspective, as there are images of, or conversations about, the running

of the bulls in Pamplona, the stereotype of the Basque people or Basque identity (the fact that they speak Euskera and not Castilian is well-known), food and wine, churches and chapels. These are not challenged by the characters and are even incorporated into the idea of the Camino itself as a stereotypical pilgrimage. These elements converge into an image of the Spanish character that is implicit in the film, as interaction with Spaniards is purely anecdotal and rather uncommon. This being said, in one of the few interactions with the local population, in Burgos there is an important episode in the film involving a young Gypsy, who steals Tom's pack. He is eventually reprimanded by his father for "dishonouring" himself and his family, and apologises and returns the pack to Tom. The pilgrims are then invited to a Gypsy party. The son is later made to carry the pack to the edge of town for Tom in order to redress his wrongdoing. This part of the film works on two levels: it is a sequence of both negative and positive stereotypes regarding Gypsies—the father actually confronts the idea that they are "thieves and beggars" as much through his words as through his actions—, and it represents a generalised quaint Spanish culture in which the ethics of Catholicism are inherently instilled. In Burgos, Father Frank also tells Tom to visit the Cathedral, as it is where *El Cid*, from the "Chuck Heston film", is buried. *El Cid* was a Spanish national hero who also figures prominently in Spanish literary history, as the *Poem of the Cid* is the oldest instance of Castilian verse.

The landscape also forms an integral part of the Camino, as it gives form to the path itself. Churches are present, and rather than being treated as religious places, serve as landscape and spiritual markers for the Camino. The pilgrimage route is marked by the geographical features and the churches are visually symbolic as far as the pilgrimage is a Catholic/spiritual journey.

The Camino de Santiago as a spiritual quest and pilgrimage has been quite present in the English literary imagination as far back as Chaucer, who possibly even embarked upon it, and whose Wife of Bath did various pilgrimages including Jerusalem, Rome, Boulogne and, of course, Santiago de Compostela. Travelers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries like George Borrow helped to cement the Christian/generic Spanish identity of the Camino. Borrow wrote the following about Santiago in his *The Bible in Spain* (1843):

A beautiful old town is Saint James, containing about twenty thousand inhabitants. Time has been when, with the single exception of Rome, it was the most celebrated resort of pilgrims in the world; its cathedral being said to contain the bones of Saint James the elder, the child of the thunder, who, according to the legend of the Roman church, first preached the Gospel in Spain. Its glory, however, as a place of pilgrimage, is rapidly passing away. (378)

A revival of the Camino in the late twentieth century, especially on the international scene, moved the discourse away from the traditional subject of Spanish

romanticism and decadence to a more cosmopolitan point of view. There is an international rather than a local perspective in the film, which naturally leads to some stereotyping. One of the major aspects of the Camino represented is the fact that while on this personal spiritual quest, one encounters other pilgrims in a similar situation. Tom, for example, finds his own little group, which consists of a Dutchman doing the walk in order to lose weight and reignite the spark in his marriage, an Irishman who has writer's block, and a Canadian woman getting over an abusive marriage and planning to give up smoking. They are all on their own personal spiritual quests to confront personal problems. The Christian element of the Camino is replaced by the spiritual; personal transformation becomes spiritual; it is the individuation of the spiritual.

It has been mentioned that along with the film, various books on the Camino have recently been published. These tend to be different types of popular travel memoirs which demonstrate the growing popularity of the Camino. One interesting translation with regard to the history of the Camino is *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (1993) by William Melczer, who was a Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Syracuse University. It is the first complete English translation of Book Five of the *Codex Calixtinus*, according to the publisher. Book Five is regarded as the first guidebook for the Camino and dates from the twelfth century. The translation demonstrates the popularity of the Camino among intellectuals and in the academic world. The Irish writer character in the film, Jack, mentions this work. This book coupled with the multiple popular publications on this subject serve to illustrate the popularity of the Camino in America, which is further manifested in the making of the film, and which in turn merits study and discussion.

As has been illustrated in the two main points and the various examples from the film, supported by some historical contextualisation, the Camino de Santiago is certainly not a marker of national identity, be it Spanish or Galician, but rather holds primarily Christian/spiritual connotations. The film *The Way* (2010) is, for the most part, a succession of US-American stereotypes on Spain or Europe (many times one cannot tell the difference), which includes a paucity of references to Galician culture. The implications of the continuing romantic image of Spain simply serve to propitiate outdated ideas and cloud the understanding of the various Spanish cultures at work on the Iberian Peninsula. This in turn decontextualises historical and cultural markers, and also the especially Galician peculiarities which form an integral part of the Camino.

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