Tourism Management Perspectives xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Tourism Management Perspectives

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tmp

Spiritual tourism as a quest

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ARTICLE INFO

Available online xxxx

Keywords:
Quest
New age tourism
New pilgrims
Taxonomy
Spiritual tourism
Travel memoirs
Spiritual experience

ABSTRACT

The academic literature on spiritual tourism is often limited to taxonomies of travel, and reasons for spiritually oriented tourism are analysed largely according to their economic, social and historical aspects. Despite the recent growth in interest in spiritually oriented tourism it has become increasingly apparent that to fully understand the practical implication for the field of spiritual tourism, a theoretical discussion on the discursive shift from a 'religious' to 'spiritual' experience of travel needs to be addressed. Although these concepts have only recently been touched upon in academic travel literature, they have been richly explored in literary travel-focused memoirs.

It is the intention of this paper to conflate the theoretical discussion of spiritual tourism with personal accounts written by writers of literary travel memoirs. The first part of the paper will discuss the reasons for travelling for spiritual growth, as opposed to the traditional notion of religious pilgrimage supported by Michel Foucault's theory of the heterogeneous aspects of discursive formation. The second part of the paper looks into the existing typologies of spiritual tourism and compares them to Joseph Campbell's (1973) stages of a mythic quest. Lastly, the third part supports the academic discussion with brief excerpts from three literary spiritual travel memoirs.

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1. Introduction

The growing interest among scholars in spiritually oriented tourism as opposed to traditional pilgrimages undertaken within the constraints of particular institutionalised faiths raises some interesting questions about the shift from 'religious' to 'spiritual' experiences and their definitions, which too often overlap, adding to confusion rather than to conceptual clarity. Broadly speaking, if pilgrimage is often situated within the constraints of established religions, spiritual tourism is prompted more by a desire for a spiritual experiences and personal growth, rather than the devotional aspects prescribed by traditional religions and their motives for pilgrimages.

There have been several interesting ethnographic studies (Fedele, 2013; Hall, 2006; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Wilson, McIntosh, & Zahra, 2013; Wood, 2007; Taylor, 2002, among others) conducted in various geographical locations focusing on spiritual, rather than traditionally religious, pilgrims, their destinations and their reasons for undertaking their spiritual tourism. Too often, however, these studies have seemed to come under the illusive term of 'New Age' studies (Wood, 2007) while encompassing large and diversified audiences, and have been analysed purely from sociological or anthropological approaches. Although their sociological value is undoubtedly important, they do not attempt to define individuals' underlying subjective or internal reasons for spiritual tourism.

Thus, despite of the richness of ethnographic studies of spiritually oriented travellers as well as the amount of spiritual travelogues which capture the imagination of wide audiences, there is still a need for a fuller conceptualisation of this relatively new field. This fact suggests 'a visible cultural change' (Fedele, 2013; Timothy and Olsen 2006; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005) in perceptions of both spiritual toursim and spirituality itself, and how different they are from religious experiences and traditional religious pilgrimages. Thus, this analysis of ethnographic studies as well as spiritual travelogues or memoirs will focus on shifting through the perceived differences between travelling for 'spiritual experiences' and the undertaking of traditional religious pilgrimages.

2. Spiritual tourism and spiritual experience as a discursive shift

Two questions that need to be asked here are: who are the spiritual (rather than religious) tourists and what are their motivations for spiritual (rather than religious) tourism? These two questions will help to delineate the new parameters of spiritual tourism as distinct from religious tourism. Fedele (2009, 2012, 2013), for example, calls the phenomenon of spiritual tourism 'new pilgrimages' and those undertaking them 'new pilgrims'. In her study of pilgrimages to the sites associated with Mary Magdalene; e.g. Sainte Baume, Saint Maximin and Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in Southern France, Fedele (2012, 2013), provides new reasons for spiritual tourism as verbalised by the spiritual pilgrims themselves. This study reveals a common longing for spiritual

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.07.011
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Please cite this article as: Kujawa, J., Spiritual tourism as a quest, *Tourism Management Perspectives* (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.07.011

experience associated with Mary Magdalene, who is seen as a counterpoint to a patriarchal and dogmatically organised Christianity.

The new pilgrims from Fedele's study believed that achieving a connection to the figure of Mary Magdalene envisioned in this way would not be possible (or desired) via a traditional pilgrimage. Most interestingly, however, the participants' desire to undertake this new pilgrimage is not based on the readings of traditional religious sources (e.g. the Bible) but on a combination of readings of various alternative spiritual sources, such as *The Course in Miracles* (1975), Buddhist works, the writings of Margaret Starbird (1993, 1998) and other religiously and spiritually diverse sources. Study participants stressed their discontent with the institutionalised religions, which they consider dogmatic, and do not describe themselves as 'religious', yet are vehement about calling themselves 'spiritual'. At the same time, they actively and creatively construct their own rituals, which are an eclectic combination of both orthodox and unorthodox beliefs (Fedele 2012, 2013).

Similarly, Hall (2006), uses traditional terminology (such as 'religious experience' and 'pilgrimage') to describe an alternative approach to travelling for spiritual reasons. Indeed, he unequivocally states that 'religious experience' is central to spiritual tourism. Since he is arguing from the perspective of religious humanism, he proposes that religious experience is 'arguably also significant' for people who do not belong to any institutionalised faith or even to religious faith per se (p. 65). He operates according to Geering's (2002, p. 147) extremely broad definition of religion as 'a total mode of interpreting and living life', which helps lead him to reach a conclusion that the spiritual experience can include 'different notions of god and the spiritual' for even those who do not believe in the existence of a god 'or a being independent of themselves' (Hall, 2006, p. 66).

Hall concludes that spiritual experience is still possible for a religious humanist as long as it 'comes from within' (2006, p. 75). And it is this 'within' or internal element that this paper suggests constitutes spiritual experience (whether it belongs to an institutionalised religion or not). Indeed, it is a peculiarity of spiritual tourism that external travel is needed to achieve an internal experience of spiritual meaning. The inclusiveness of Hall's (2006) definition is in agreement with the post-theist view of religious humanism as developed by Cupitt (1984) and espoused by Hall (2006). It also appears to support the Foucauldian idea of the heterogeneity of discursive shifts, which, in turn, create an opening for new spiritual structures.

Another definition of spiritual tourism which would support Hall's (2006) take on spiritual experience and spiritual tourism comes from Wilson et al. (2013), who describe the phenomenon as undertaken by an 'individual in the quest for personal meaning from and through travel' (p. 152). Wilson et al. (2013) claim through their 'phenomenological portraits' of people who undertake spiritual tourism that the fact these tourists feel 'energised', 'inspired' and 'uplifted' after their trips and also feel a sense of 'connectivity' with people from other parts of the world is a clear sign of the spiritual aspect of their travel for them (p. 160).

It is worth mentioning that the spiritual tourism the interviewees undertook was not to a religious destination but to Macchu Picchu, which is a destination more in keeping with the choices made by New Age groups than by traditional pilgrims. Indeed, all forms of connectivity are discussed in many other studies (Cohen, 2004; Miner-Williams, 2006; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Norman, 2012; Piedmont, 1999; Robledo, 2015; Schultz, 2005; Wilson et al., 2013; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999, and more). Although such broad sociological studies have much to contribute to the field of spiritual tourism, it is perhaps an error to rely on them solely while discussing deeply intense internal experiences.

Other scholars have also attempted to define 'spirituality' as potentially and perceptually different from 'religion'. The empirical analysis of what Heelas and Woodhead (2005, p. 150) call 'tectonic shifts in the sacred landscape' suggests that the move towards 'spirituality' and away from 'denominational religions' is a result of 'the massive subjective turn of modern culture' (p. 129) to focus on subjective life. This shift towards subjectivity, they argue, is a social phenomenon that will most likely grow for a number of years. Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) observations do not necessarily help to define 'spirituality' as such, since their study is sociological in nature and more concerned with social movements, estimating the numbers of such movements and predicting their longevity and influence for the future. Although undoubtedly spirituality can be considered a social movement towards subjectivity, it was beyond the scope of their research to define what the paramount reason is for this shift. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) approximate spirituality to 'catering for subjective life' (p. 130).

The implicit distinction here is between the formal, social structures associated with religions, and more fluid and personal approaches towards belief. The degree to which traditional religions (here, mostly Christianity) decline relates directly to the ability and willingness of the religions to address any 'subjective turn' in the general population. From Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) conclusions, it is possible to argue that it is the aspect of a person's interiority and the desire for a more palpable internal experience, rather than the external expression of faith, which is the driving force behind this shift towards subjectivity, and this is what differentiates spiritual tourists from traditional pilgrims (Figs. 1–4).

The 'tectonic shifts in the sacred landscapes' of Heelas and Woodhead (2005, p. 150) have been further analysed by Matthew Wood (2007). Wood (2007) participated in 'New Age' workshops at the Nottinghamshire fair and used this as a platform for his empirical

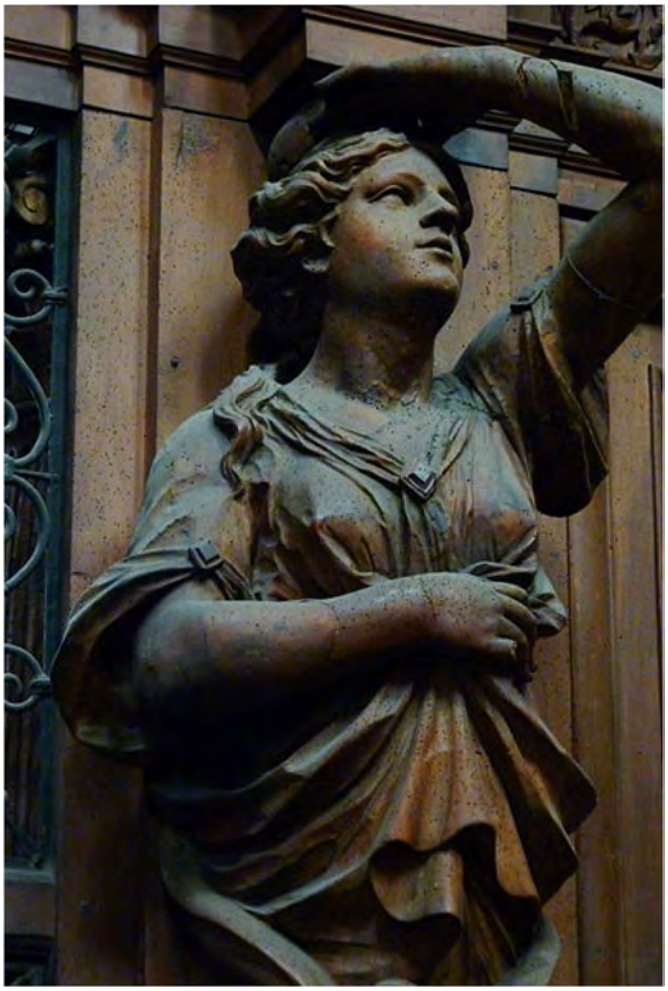

Fig. 1. Saint Baume.

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Fig. 2. New Age Shrine.

study of the New Age movement. Wood is primarily interested in classifying the New Age movement in terms of its authority and organisation to determine why social structures or 'new spaces' ascribed to the New Age exist among 'Euro-Americans' (p. 9). His theoretical underpinning relies on 'Bourdeuian and Foucauldian approaches' to power, discourse and practice (p. 175). Wood focuses on the formative and non-formative aspects of the New Age phenomenon. He reaches the interesting conclusion that the secularisation of western societies, or 'unchurching' as he calls it, has created non-formative spaces in religious life where 'authorities are relativised' (p. 175). Although Wood states that he never intended in his study to consider spiritual experiences per se – an interesting fact in itself – the work did point out the change in the 'sacred' landscape and the movement away from perceiving this landscape in previously established ways which the subjects of his studies considered too dogmatic.

Despite any limitations of these studies, there are two common underlying themes in them: the desire among spiritual tourists for a personal and meaningful spiritual experience, and the active re-working of old rituals to provide them with a new relevance and meaning, which suggests the occurrence of a shift in thinking about spiritual experience and, consequently, spiritual tourism. Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) 'tectonic shifts' and Wood's (2007) 'unchurching' relate conceptually to Michel Foucault's (1972) idea of 'discursive formations'. According to Foucault (1972, p. 173), when one discursive formation is substituted for another it does not mean a brand new discourse is created with all new elements but rather the elements of the old discourse

Fig. 3. Author at the tomb.

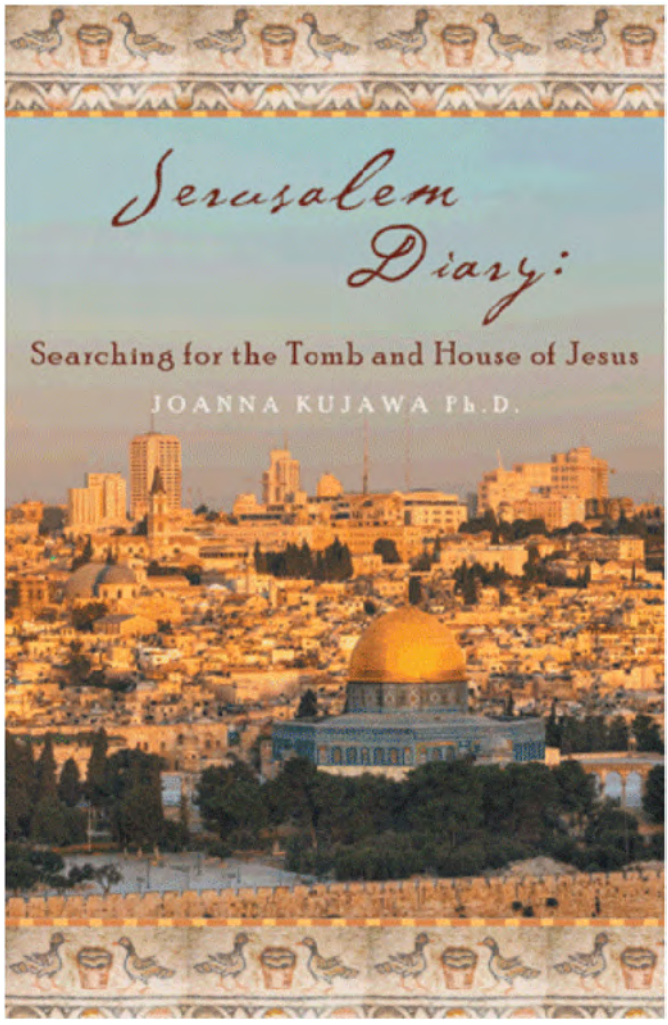

Fig. 4. Jerusalem Diary.

remain the same, in 'form and content but their formations being heterogeneous'. Yet, once knowledge – in this case, sacred knowledge or religion – becomes institutionalised, those institutions begin to claim sole authority as expert and judge over more spontaneous, non-institutionalised spiritual movements.

It is interesting that institutionalised forms of religion in the past took elements of incompletely institutionalised beliefs and movements (here falling more under the notion of 'religious experiences' in Jamesian terminology or the 'spiritual'), while now the new spiritual, non-institutionalised movements are adapting the systems of beliefs and rituals from the old religious institutionalised discourses. In Foucauldian terms (1972, p. 172), both discursive 'formations' have gone through similar 'types of transformations' by using elements of earlier discourses.

Foucauldian analyses of the paradigm shift apply as well to William James' classic on the topic of 'religious experience' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). James' work is still relevant, with its distinction between the personal (or individual) internally related experience of divinity, however perceived, and its external ritualised expression as an institutionalised religion. Or as James so eloquently calls it 'religious experience versus institutionalised churching' or 'corporate dominion' (p.337). James devotes plenty of attention to the process of the institutionalisation of original religious experiences – a process which in some ways is both regrettable and necessary. The original religious experience, undergone usually by some charismatic religious figure, is eventually institutionalised and, worse, dogmatised.

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Taylor (2002), in commenting on the process of dogmatisation, paraphrases German Lutheran theologian Carl von Harnack when he says the original 'white hot charisma' of new spiritual movements (using the example of early Christianity) must eventually go through a period of 'cooling into routine under the constraints of institutionalisation' (p. 19). Thus, people who follow an institutionalised form of religion with all its rituals and external expressions experience, in Jamesian terms, a 'second-hand religious life', while original religious experiences are 'pattern-setters' for them (1902, p.6). In this respect, it is possible to argue James is suggesting that the presumed secularisation of modern and post-modern societies is misunderstood.

Similarly, Taylor (2002, p. 111) provides an insightful response to the charge of superficiality and the lack of association levelled at the broader 'collective connections', both political and social, of the new spiritual movement. In the final chapter of his *Varieties of Religion Today*, Taylor (2002, pp.116–117) suggests that after the initial effect of the 'momentary sense of wow!' many of the seekers who have moved away from dogmatised religious traditions 'may continue formal spiritual practices' of their own. In this respect, Wood's seekers or 'New Agers', who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, would probably agree with James' definition of religious experience. However, it is important to note that, as Taylor (2002) points out, James operated only within 'North Atlantic regions' (2002, p.12); i.e. a western context. Seekers of spiritual experiences do not limit themselves only to the one region, as they often choose to travel to other parts of the world in search of an original experience and are open to other, non-Christian, religious beliefs.

Fedele's (2013) study seems to confirm Taylor's (2011) projection. New Age pilgrims interested in alternative interpretations of the figure of Mary Magdalene (as represented differently to those in orthodox sources) still travelled to Catholic sacred sites associated with Mary Magdalene but created their own rituals of passage (life-stages) which reflected their connectedness to Mary Magdalene and what she represents uniquely to them. Taylor's (2002) and Fedele's (2013) research supports Bell's (1997, p. 224) conclusion that we are witnessing a phenomenon of 'a growing social legitimacy for many types of ritual improvisation' and supports the argument that we construct rituals to 'structure and interpret our world' (p.267).

Indeed, Bell's (1997), Taylor's (2002) and Fedele's (2013) empirical research goes hand in hand with Pagels' (1989, 2003) historical analysis of the formation of the early Christian Church between the second and fourth centuries CE. Pagels (1989, 2003) points out that the development of early Christian rituals was also a melange of selected improvisation from then-emergent different sects of Christianity. Thus, the desire for a spiritual experience does not mean spiritually oriented tourists seeking a personal spiritual experience do not create their own impromptu rituals, as Fedele's (2013) study shows. The difference here is in the ownership of the experience and the rituals, and in the giving of a meaning to them that is no longer possible within a traditional framework. In this way, spiritual tourists might elaborate on the existing sites and rituals and thus preserve some elements of traditional approaches.

According to this line of argument, western society is not so much becoming secularised, as rebelling against the fossilised forms of institutionalised religions that have lost touch with the original religious experiences undergone by religious 'geniuses' (Jamesian terminology) in the past. The growing dissatisfaction in the West with the dogmatism of existing religious systems, and even the alienation from their ritualistic and dogmatic approaches, has created a desire for a more personal spiritual experience than organised religions have offered so far. With this is mind, I would suggest that the extremely generalised New Age movement and interest in shamanism, paganism and eastern thought are not an expression of the secularisation of western society but, on the contrary, are a desperate attempt to regain or rediscover original religious experiences. This search (by some Westerners – falling under the umbrella of the New Age, according to Wood) is a way of filling in a great spiritual vacuum created by 'routinised' religious institutions which seem unable to offer an individual religious experience anymore.

3. Aspects of spiritual tourism: the quest

Drawing on James' varieties of religious experience, Norman (2012) created his own varieties of spiritual tourist experiences: spiritual tourism as a quest, as an experiment, as healing, as a retreat, and as a collective. Similarly, Robledo (2015) proposes his own typology, defining spiritual tourism as the tourism of spiritual growth, tourism as a search for meaning, as a search for 'both inner and outer connection' (p.82), and as transcendence. In many ways, Norman's (2012) and Robledo's (2015) varieties of spiritual tourism overlap. For example, Norman's 'tourism as a quest' overlaps with Robledo's 'tourism of spiritual growth' and 'search for meaning'. However, while Norman equates this quest with Giddens' search (1991) for 'the elusive self-knowledge' or as 'personal discovery of knowledge' (Norman, 2012, p. 30), Robledo's point of departure refers to Wexler's (2000) 'loss of meaning', a prevalent malaise of modernity (2015, p. 80), and to MacCannell's conclusion that it is Westerners especially who seek authenticity outside their own culture. Likewise, Robledo's 'connectedness' and 'transcendence' are closely related to Norman's idea of spiritual tourism as a retreat, as a healing and collective experience. Both scholars note the uniqueness of spiritual tourism as both a deeply personal and transformative experience that often takes place in a collective setting with like-minded people (Norman, 2012, p. 32 and Robledo, 2015, p.85).

The strength of these two typologies lies in their focus on the interplay of the interiority of travel as a spiritual experience as well as the necessity of the external movement away from the habitual roles a spiritual tourist may seek. The varieties of spiritual tourism as typified by Norman (2012) and Robledo (2015) may also be approached as aspects, rather than types, of spiritual tourism. In this way, they do not need to be seen as separate from each other but as inherent elements of this type of tourism. Indeed, based on Norman's (2012) and Robledo's (2015) typologies, it is possible to define spiritual tourism as a quest for the experience of transcendence and connectedness for the purpose of personal transformation (spiritual or physical healing).

An alternative approach towards spiritual tourism which espouses all three of these elements (transcendence, connectivity and transformation as a result) is also expressed in mythical terms by Joseph Campbell (1973). The quest of Campbell's (1973) hero provides a useful set of guidelines for the inner aspects of such an undertaking. While the varieties and types of tourism divide the spiritual experience into separate sections, they also are counter-intuitive to the actual experiences of the person on the quest – experiences which are more fluid and organic – or what Csikszentmihalyi defined as the 'flow' (2008). Campbell's (1973) hero's quest is closer to the archetypical experience of the person who distinguishes him or herself as a hero or heroine on a journey. This also correlates with Robledo's definition of transcendence as 'going beyond' (pp. 83, 84), as well as what Elliade (1971) called 'regeneration through repetition of an archetypical act' (1971, p. 55), what Norman (2012, p.30) called a 'quest' for 'the elusive self-knowledge … something that Giddens characterises as "the capacity to keep a particular narrative going"'.

Campbell (1973), drawing on Jung's in-depth psychology of archetypes (1980), provides us with an archetypical model of a spiritual quest. Campbell (1973) focusses on the internal narrative of the hero's journey, which often moves in the opposite direction to that of the external narrative and the pressures of the hero's external life and related involvements. Campbell's mythical quest (1973) consists also of three essential elements that every traveller faces and which are widely discussed in spiritual travel literature: the reasons for departure, the initiation (the experience of transcendence and connectivity), and the return (the presentation of the transformed self back to society).

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4. Spiritual travel memoirs as testimonies to the quest

In order to test the definition of spiritual tourism and its three elements (transcendence, connectivity and transformation) it may be useful to turn to 'experts' on the interior experience, those who offer insights through writing of spiritual nature, and people who have either studied this from a more internalised point of view (such as the discussion of an archetypical journey) or who have candidly described these sorts of experiences in the form of spiritual memoirs.

To this end two classic spiritual travel memoirs will be analysed as well as the present author's personal experience as a questing traveller. The focus will be on three accounts that fall into the category of travel memoirs: Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* (2003), Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat*, *Pray*, *Love* (2006), and the present author's own account *Jerusalem Diary*: *Searching for the Tomb and House of Jesus* (2012)[1], and will apply to them the simplified definition of spiritual tourism based on Norman's (2012) and Robledo's (2015) typologies in conjunction with component of Campbell's (1973) quest. It is important to note here that the limited use of my own experiences as a questing traveller are touched upon only as confirmation of the interiority of the experience as described by Brunton (2003) and Gilbert (2006).

The mythical quest begins with a feeling of discontent at 'what is' or the experience of reality in its present state until the moment of departure. It is often by removing ourselves from our habitual environment that the goal of the spiritual quest is accomplished. The departure is preceded by a 'call to adventure' (Campbell, 1973, p. 49) heralded by some discontent or person/trigger/event which symbolises dark forces 'judged evil by the world' (p.53) but which ultimately will become a necessary element for transcendence. Robledo (2015, p.80) describes this trigger as the experience of a 'loss of meaning' that precedes the desire for spiritual quest.

In this respect, the heroines of the *Jerusalem Diary* and *Eat*, *Pray*, *Love* and the hero of *A Search in Secret India* undergo an identical process. Gilbert's heroine undergoes a period of darkness (an 'emotionally wrenching divorce') during which, through the advice of a friend, she writes a 'petition to God, asking for this thing to end' (Gilbert 2006, p.34). Soon after, she meets her herald in the form of a lover (David Piccolo), who entices her with tales of his spiritual awakening through a guru. He, too, triggers her internal narrative, which takes precedence over the external narrative of her life. She sees a picture of 'a radiantly beautiful Indian woman' in David's apartment, and learns that she is his 'spiritual teacher'. Her heart 'skips a beat' and she announces: 'I want a spiritual teacher' then begins fantasising about going to India to spend time in the guru's ashram (pp. 25–26). In her attempt to write a petition to God, Gilbert's heroine is perhaps the most apparent example of Wood's (2007) 'unchurching' of spiritual experience and both Norman's (2012) spiritual tourism as a healing and Robledo's (2015) 'search for meaning'.

The moment the herald appears is evocatively described in *A Search in Secret India*, when Brunton's colourful and dramatic hero enters a London café with 'black curtains over (his) heart' and meets a dark and mysterious stranger from India who instructs him about the origins of spirituality, explaining that it comes from India rather than 'Christian Fathers' (2003, p. 23). Intrigued, Brunton's hero begins to dream about a trip to India – not as a 'white tourist who "does" the chief cities and historical sites and then steams away with disgust' at Indian civilisation but as a 'wiser kind of tourist' who looks for 'living sages who can reveal a wisdom untaught at our universities' (Brunton, 2003, p. 17). Brunton's hero is pushed towards the spiritual quest by what Wexler (2000, p.80) called 'loss of meaning' and pulled towards India in search of that meaning outside of Western civilisation. Thus simultaneously, fulfilling several aspects of Norman's (2012) aspects of spiritual tourism (as a quest, as a healing 'of black curtains over his heart') and Robledo's (2–15, 0.82) 'search for meaning and 'spiritual growth'.

Similarly, Kujawa's heroine, after completing her PhD, experiences a deep confusion with, and disconnection from, the world around her, as she finds herself directionless after an intense period of study and temporarily unemployed. Her worldly (external) narrative requires her to focus on securing academic employment, while her internal narrative seeks another outlet for its expression (Kujawa, 2012a, 2012b). However, like Campbell's hero, she meets a 'herald' who provides a call to adventure for her at the beginning of the book: she moves into the house of a 'traveller', who himself is away on some adventure in Jerusalem and which nobody knows anything about (p.1). Upon his return, he arouses her curiosity with tales of his mysterious travels to the Holy Land, where he claims to have discovered Jesus's tomb. He is both a seductive and dark figure ('tall, grey-haired and eagle-like'), threatening to lure her away from the expectations of her worldly narrative, which is telling her to find immediate employment and fulfil her professional ambitions (p.5). He hands her a book – the *Gnostic Gospel of Mary Magdalene* – and triggers the heroine's desire to explore the rejected spirituality of the Gnostics as well as the herald's adventure in the Holy Land. In this respect, Kujawa's heroine is not that different form Fedele's (2012, 2013) 'new pilgrims' seeking spiritual re-connection with the figure of Mary Magdalene in Catholic shrines of southern France. Like the new pilgrims, she, too, relied on similar unorthodox sources for her spiritual search (a gnostic gospel rejected by the Catholic Church as heretical).

Thus, all three protagonists consciously set themselves on a spiritual journey which, they hope, will take them from the present darkness of their external life towards a new clarity, however obscured at that moment. Through their decision to travel, all of them make an external move to fulfil their interior need to find a deeper meaning in life and re-connect with the original spiritual experience which was lost for them in what James (2010) calls 'institutionalised churching' (p.337).

The next part of a quest is the 'initiation' (Campbell, 1973, p. 97), which consists of a 'road of trials' necessary for the 'purification of the self' (p. 101) away from the habitual manner of thinking and for preparation for imminent transcendence. Campbell here refers to transcendence as 'transmuting the infantile images of our personal past' (p. 101) – images which might include our past values and aspirations. Or, more colloquially, transcendence is the breaking of the mental constructs to which our habitual existence is used – 'the agony of breaking through personal limitations' (1973 p. 190) – and is an opening for a new perception of reality ('a realisation transcending all experiences of form') (1973, p. 190). Similarly, for Norman (2012, p.30) it is the impulse for personal 'knowledge and discovery' that precedes transformation.

The protagonist in *A Search in Secret India* undergoes many trials until the very end of the book when, having found his spiritual teacher ('a real Master') in the person of Ramana Maharshee and flagged his intention to become his disciple, he is forced to return to England after a

[1] I am aware the field of autoethnography has discussed the positioning of the personal pronoun 'I' within the area of research thoroughly. James Buzzard (2003, p.61) especially has raised some objection to the use of the personal 'I' in research, warning of the possibility of a resultant vagueness in such research in terms of essentialism and identity politics – a danger which does not apply here. Buzzard (2003), after Arjun Appadurai (1988), also raises the question of 'voice' and concerns that use of the first person singular personal pronoun is not detached enough. It is, however, my observation that in the field of spiritually oriented tourism this kind of disengagement is not always beneficial to the study of something as internal as spiritual experiences, where theoreticians and ethnographers often treat the internal solely from an external perspective. As a result, their disengaged 'voice can't fully report on the object of their observation. Tami Spry (2001), on the other hand, offers a more friendly definition of 'ethnographic performance' as a way to 'I-witness' our own 'constructs of reality' (p. 706). Similarly, Leon Anderson (2006) proposes 'analytic ethnography', whereby a researcher is a 'full member' of a given 'setting' as well as in 'published texts' (p.373). And Norman Denzin (2006), following Spry and Anderson, more boldly expands on the presence of the use of 'I' as a means of 'inserting' oneself 'into the setting to 're-write and re-experience' the past (p.423), and this is precisely what the chosen spiritual memoirs offer.

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letter 'of extremely bad news' arrives, informing him that his 'financial fuel will unexpectedly run so low', and that it will 'cut short' his stay in India. This forces him to resume his 'activities in the West' (Brunton, 2003, p. 298). The shock of the unexpected end to the protagonist's spiritual apprenticeship is somewhat diminished when he has a series of spiritual realisations about the nature of his quest (pp.298–305).

For the heroine of *Eat*, *Pray*, *Love*, her trials are also both material and spiritual as she struggles to end an emotionally wrenching and financially disastrous divorce and to cope with the moral dilemmas that follow. On her quest she has two moments of redemption: one in India in an ashram after a meditation, and the other at the end of the book. The first redemptive moment comes in the form of self-forgiveness after a plumber-poet from New Zealand walks her 'to a building (she) had never been inside before, unlocked the door and took (her) up a back set of stairs'. There he tells her to sit and meditate until 'it's over' (Gilbert 2006, p. 193). The second moment occurs when she decides to embark on another relationship and utters the final words of the novel: 'Let's cross over' (p.348) then begins a new life.

In *Jerusalem Diary*, the 'road of trials' has a double meaning. Not only is the heroine going through a spiritual and professional crisis but she and her companions also follow the steps of Jesus' life while trying to find some meaning outside the orthodox representations of it by looking to Gnostic sources rejected as heretical (Kujawa, 2012a, 2012b). In a sense, the heroine's transmutation of Campbell's 'infantile images of our personal past' consists of both her transcending her personal expectations of what her life is supposed to be and of opening herself to new possibilities and a re-evaluation of her relationship with the religious beliefs of her past. This all occurs while she walks through the streets of Old Jerusalem haunted by images of suffering, whose purpose she questions (2012).

The hero or heroine is usually assisted on his or her 'road of trials' by a mysterious or supernatural 'helper' who symbolises a 'benign power' and supports them in their 'supernatural' or spiritual passage (Campbell, 1973, p. 97), signalling an apotheosis (p. 149). The apotheosis is nothing else but the experience of transcendence (Campbell, 1973; Piedmont, 1999), 'interconnectedness' (Mitroff and Denton (1999), 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), 'connectedness (Robledo, 2015), etc. Except that this 'helper', unlike the 'herald', is not a mysterious figure. He or she is often masked or presented as a familiar person who has not earlier been taken into consideration and who often has some comical aspects – almost like the figure of a jester, who, beneath an unassuming exterior, carries inner wisdom with them. Almost ironically, in spiritual travel, the guides are widely available and indeed, in most empirical studies discussed here they are both tour guides and spiritual guides/facilitators as, for example, in the case of Fedele's (2013) Mary Magdalene pilgrims or Wildsn et al.'s 'empirical portrait' (2013) all went on 'guided' tours which facilitated their spiritual experience.

Although, the three protagonists of the spiritual travel memoirs did not go on organised tours, like Fedele's (2013) 'new pilgrims' they were also guided on their journeys by familiar figures. The protagonist of *A Search in Secret India* undergoes an internal trial of self-doubt and, indeed, decides to quit his search for a great being who will instruct him in the traditions of ancient wisdom he has set out to find after the conversation with the stranger, or 'heralder', in the café in London. Brunton's protagonist, after three years of what he believes to now be a useless search, goes to a western cinema as a gesture of reasserting he belongs in the West. There he receives a letter from a man with whom he has corresponded for a while and who urges him to re-visit the shrine of Ramana Maharishee (Brunton 2003, p. 275).

The heroine of *Eat*, *Pray*, *Love*, meets a similar, almost comical, wise person in the form of a Balinese shaman, Ketut Liyer, who not only restores her faith in her life and her spiritual quest but also gives her a glimpse into her future and makes her into his temporary apprentice. Ketut shares with her his insights about her place in life by presenting her with 'an androgynous figure' which he has 'drawn during meditation' and provides her teaching on the necessity of having 'balance' in life, promising that if she ever comes back to Bali he will teach her 'everything (he) knows' (Gilbert 2006, p. 28).

In the case of the heroine of *Jerusalem Diary*, this helper is her second companion on the quest, Martin, a figure familiar to her. On the way back from Bethlehem the heroine is assaulted by her past values, ambitions and the emotional intensity of her inner 'trials', and she questions the validity of her spiritual quest. She doubts whether Christianity can hold any spiritual meaning for her or provide guidance. All she has left is an intellectual sarcasm and a dubious relationship with colourful saints such as St. Jerome, whom, nevertheless, she does not consider too holy or a worthy adviser on how to live a good life (Kujawa, 2013, p. 89). In this moment of self-doubt, Martin steps in and offers her wise counsel and support, assuring her she 'will find (the) peace' she is seeking (p. 106).

The third, and final, part of a quest, the 'return', is perhaps the most challenging, as the questing individual is called to return to their previous society or forced 'back into the kingdom of humanity' (Campbell, 1973, p. 193). The great test for the questing individual is to gracefully return to his or her old life and yet be able to preserve the gift, or boon, of new knowledge as well as the experiences of transcendence. If the questing individual succeeds in connecting or integrating the return to 'normality' with new insight, the connectivity is established. Thus, connectivity is often the result of the entire questing process and comes after the experience of transcendence; it carries the heightened feeling of oneness with oneself and others.

According to Campbell (1973), the 'return' is a complex process involving several stages, and the number of such stages may differ from one protagonist to another. But the first and most common phase of the 'return' is the 'refusal to return' (p. 193). After 'the penetrations of the source'; that is, after the establishing of a 'contact' or spiritual 'connnectivity' or transcendence, every protagonist is asked to bring his or her acquired wisdom back to society (p. 193). However, often the protagonists refuse to return, as they do not want to face the world with all its complexities. They are also afraid their new-found insight may not have a place in this world. The basic question for them is: how can I function in society knowing what I know now? Alternatively, the protagonists may be enjoying their new-found peace and insight, yet are afraid of losing these things in the world. Yet the refusal to return cannot last and the protagonists, often reluctantly or at least cautiously, are prompted to 'cross the threshold' between their inner and outer worlds (p.217).

In many ways, the 'return' is the most interesting part of the journey as it addresses the question of what happens *after* the 'subjective turn' (Wood, 2007) was taken. Can the hero/ine re-integrate their experiences of 'connectivity/connectedness/transcendence' (Norman, 2012; Robledo, 2015; Wilson et al., 2013) back into their daily lives? Norman (2012) describes this crossing as travelling to achieve healing and to resolve the 'elements of everyday life' which were initially perceived as 'problematic' (p. 28) in the quest for an 'authenticity of self' (p.31) and Robledo (2015) aligning of 'both inner and outer connection' (p. 82). Thus, Fedele's (2013) 'new pilgrims' went on their pilgrimage 'to see Mary Magdalene' (p.29) to recover their lost connection with the feminine which they believed was marginalised in their personal lives and within the structured of institutionalised religions. And, similarly, Wilson et al.'s (2013) subject of their 'empirical portrait' (Amber) returned 'energised' and 'inspired' by the experience of 'connectivity' (p.162).

This is also apparent in the case of Gilbert's heroine, who initially refuses to return to her previous world of romantic relationships in the fear that she will lose her new-found inner peace after the turmoil of previous relationships (Gilbert, 2006, p. 318). Brunton's protagonist is summoned back to the world due to financial and personal obligations (including bad health) – a fact which causes him great pain and throws

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him into an emotional crisis. But in the customarily dramatic way of Brunton's protagonist, help arrives in the person of a new friend, Ramiah, who quietly leads him into a jungle, where both sit under an 'exceptionally low tree' by a pool (Brunton, 2003, p.299). There, in silence, they begin meditating. Brunton's protagonist, at first apprehensive, succumbs to the environment around him and the inner peace of his friend, and receives an insight 'with startling clarity'. He understands that even in times of greatest 'tribulations' he can always find the 'standpoint of his deeper self' (p. 300). After this comes the realisation of how much he has learned on his journey and of the futility of his resistance to return to the everyday world.

In *Jerusalem Diary*, the heroine also resists a return to Melbourne, as she fears facing the uncertainty of her life. Her and her companions' journey to Jerusalem comes to an end, and they decide to go for their last walk in the Old City. There, just outside the Damascus Gate, where her companions believe the crucifixion happened, they find a locked, closeted convent. There seems to be no way of entering the place when the heroine, in a sudden resurgence of determination, decides to knock at the gate of the convent and addresses the nuns in French. The group is allowed to stay in the garden, where the heroine sits under a cactus and meditates on her journey. Like Brunton's protagonist, she receives the insight she has been seeking all along, which makes her return to Melbourne more meaningful (Kujawa, 2013, pp.201–203).

5. Conclusion

As the subjects of spiritual travel memoirs, all three protagonists in their search for transcendence and connectivity are questing for an 'original religious experience' (in Jamesian terms) or a subjective spiritual experience in terms of the empirical studies conducted by Fedele (2013), Heelas and Woodhead (2005), Wood (2007) and Hall (2006), and in line with Norman's (2012) and Robledo's (2015) typologies of spiritual travel. All three protagonists took what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) the 'subjective turn…catering to (their) subjective life' (p.130) outside of religious structures and, through their quest consequently, participated in Wood's (2007) 'unchurching' to find a new meaning in their lives. None of the three protagonists return to their original faiths nor do they convert to another religion, but rather they actively participate in the Foucauldian exercise of a 'discursive shift' of a spiritual nature. Gilbert (2006) has taken and augmented the spiritual understanding and experiences of her particular way of travelling to share them with her readers in the form of her memoir. Kujawa (2012a, 2012b) has adjusted her spiritual experiences with the heretical, rather than with the orthodox version of her original faith. Brunton (2003), in his attempt at a discursive shift, has adapted the teachings of the Indian sages of Yoga for the western audiences of his time (the 1930s).

The quests of all three protagonists accord with the empirical studies analysed insomuch as travel is the necessary element to prepare them for their spiritual quest and search for meaning that plays such an important part in both Norman's (2012) and Robledo's (2015) typologies. In other words, it is because they answer the 'call to adventure' and begin their quests that in the end they are rewarded with the experiences of transcendence and connectivity for the purpose of personal transformation. And it is of great interest that in the West, at least, this quest takes place often outside what James (2010) calls the 'corporate dominion' of institutionalised religions. In this view, the extremely generalised New Age movement should not be viewed as a proof secularisation of Western society but its desperate attempt to find the original religious experience outside institutionalised religions. And, in social terms, their 'subjective turn' (Wood, 2007) towards the interiority of religion rather than dogmatic 'churching' (James, 2010) might yet make them into the 'setters' (p.6) of new 'discursive formations' (Foucault, 1972) through the quest of spiritual tourism.

Thus, in terms of a tourism management perspective, this also means acknowledging this new movement as a new, potent form of spiritual tourism which is either partially or completely divorced from the traditional concepts of religious tourism and its destinations. By drawing this admittedly fluid boundary between spiritual and religious tourism, the field of spiritual tourism management can be both clarified and augmented. Consequently, the 'new pilgrims' and their destinations open a new door for both the conceptualisation and management of the spiritual tourism of the day.

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Please cite this article as: Kujawa, J., Spiritual tourism as a quest, *Tourism Management Perspectives* (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.07.011

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Please cite this article as: Kujawa, J., Spiritual tourism as a quest, *Tourism Management Perspectives* (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.07.011