Representing and Performing Pilgrimage in a Comic Book: On the Camino

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Over the last few decades, comic books and graphic novels have become valid literary sources within the humanities and social sciences. This paper addresses a new creative and performative artistic expression of the European pilgrimage route the Camino de Santiago in Spain through examining the autobiographical graphic novel *On the Camino,* written by the Norwegian cartoonist Jason (2017), which introduces a new way of sharing pilgrimage experiences through combining pictorial and literary devices. Here, the focus is on the dynamic paradigm that arises beyond the 'fixed sequential images' in the graphic novel and the role of readers in the spatial meaning-making-process. This creative mode of production regarding pilgrimage along the Camino, suggests that comic books and graphic novels can be a valid source of understanding and portraying pilgrimage experiences.

Key Words: graphic novel; creative narratives; pilgrimage; Camino de Santiago

Introduction

Literary works have long been considered valid documentary sources (Brosseau, 1994). In recent years, pop culture literary sources, such as comic books and graphic novels, have arrived on the academic scene as a valid form of study, with Comics Studies in particular experiencing a large growth in interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journals spanning several disciplines such as Cinema and Media Studies (Morton, 2015). In the 1980s, graphic novels were recognised as the 'Ninth Art' in Europe and an important part of humankinds' common heritage (Blanc-Hoàng, 2016; Meskin, 2007). Today, comic books and graphic novels are considered an important transmedia and multimedia platform that can re-mediate the entire range of human expression (Mitchell, 2014). They have also become a medium for both adult audiences and serious readers.

H.S. Blanc-Hoàng (2016) suggest that manuscripts with *miniatura* or illustrations that added visuals to written descriptions of pilgrimage travels along the Camino de Santiago[1] were the precursors of the modern comic book. Exploring any graphic novel about the Camino requires considering the origin of the Camino and examining the intersections between pilgrimage and the tourism industry. As the leading

pilgrimage route in Western Europe, the Camino was declared the First European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe in 1987 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. The number of pilgrims who

Figure 1: Cover of *On the Camino* by Jason.

Available at https://www.fantagraphics.com/oncamino/

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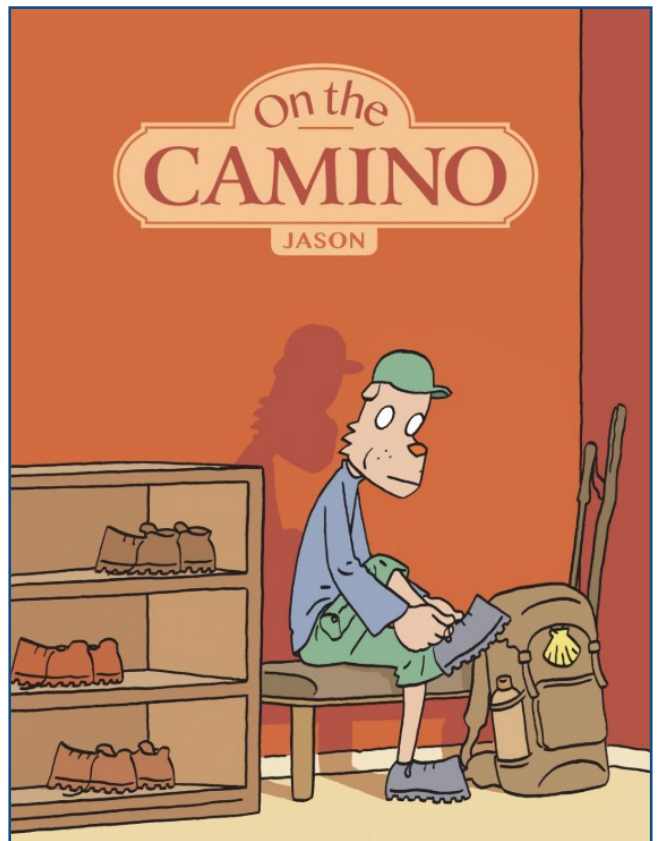
1. The abbreviation 'Camino' will be used henceforth to refer to the Camino de Santiago, also known as The Way of Saint James, which is one of the most important Christian pilgrimages in Europe.

walk the various routes towards Santiago, Spain, has increased in recent decades, with 347,578 pilgrims collecting their *Compostela*, marking the end of their pilgrimage journey, in 2019.[2] Although Santiago marks the official end of the Camino, many pilgrims decide to continue until Finisterre (meaning *Land's End* in Latin) which is not acknowledged by the Catholic Church as an official part of the Camino. However, the route to Finisterre marks an informed continuation of the Camino for walkers who come from all religious and spiritual backgrounds, reinforcing the pluralistic nature of post-contemporary spirituality that occurs along this pilgrimage path (Margry, 2015).

As comic books and graphic novels provide researchers with an avenue to examine new perspectives in the study of post-contemporary spatial meaning-making processes, the main purpose of the paper is to advance a new creative and performative engagement through qualitative research to survey the artistic expressions of the Camino. Contributing to the contemporary academic interest in comic book geographies (Dittmer, 2010a, 2010b, 2014a, 2014b; Fall, 2006, 2014; Peterle, 2017a, 2017b), this article introduces the narrative potentialities of a graphic novel to communicate the spatial experience of a pilgrimage space. Here, the graphic novel *On the Camino*, written by the Norwegian cartoonist Jason (2017), is examined as an autobiographical comics book which

> offer[s] *innovative ways of using the comic's medium to tell stories, exploiting the potential of the medium's inherent characteristics of multimodality, sequentiality, and image–text interactions* (Kunka, 2018: 6).

Similar to written autobiographies, autobiographical graphic novels can be presented in many different forms. For example, an author working on an autobiography may use figurative language to express an idea or a thought without it challenging the veracity of the autobiography, whereas graphic novels rely on a more flexible range of first-person narration (Versaci, 2007).

2. The Compostela is a document issued by the Chapter of the Cathedral of Santiago to pilgrims who (1) have completed a minimum of 100 kilometres on foot or horseback or 200 kilometres by bicycle along any of the pilgrimage paths along the Camino, and (2) who declare they did so for religious reasons. Anyone giving only other non-religious reasons receives a less attractive certificate. Also, pilgrims must also show an officially Camino passport, which passport must be stamped at various points along the Camino as proof of their journey.

This paper first discusses pilgrimage along the Camino, and then turns to examine the geography of comic books and graphic novels. After presenting the case study and the methods used in this paper, attention is given to pointing out the creative modes the author uses within *On the Camino* to communicate. These are termed here as 'the space of the Camino', 'autobiographical space', and 'the space of the readers'. The paper examines the challenges of depicting pilgrimage experiences in graphic comics, namely the dynamic paradigm beyond 'fixed sequential images' (Groensteen, 2007: 7) and the importance of readers in the spatial meaning-making-process. Within graphic novels, words and images support each other to characterise space and practices and to express *e-motion*[3] and subjectivity. Even if pictures are static media (Carello, Rosenblum & Grosofsky, 1986; Cutting, 2002; McCloud, 1993), comic book artists often depict characters performing all sorts of motions (Juricevic, 2017). According to Rowe (2016), spatial rhythm is a unique and fundamental expressive property of comics, whereas for Picado (2016), the very effects of the potential animation of stable visual forms are noticeable in drawings. These kinds of images provide readers with all the necessary information to turn them into meaning-making co-producers (Eisner, 2008; Potts, 2013). The conclusion of this paper examines the contribution of comics and graphic novels to the cultural turn taking place along the Camino and gives future directions for research.

The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (Spain)

Pilgrimage involves geographical movement towards a place that is considered sacred, and has become an intense interdisciplinary field of study with an emphasis on economic, political, and anthropological factors (e.g., Collins-Kreiner, 2010a; Lois González, Castro Fernández & Lopez, 2016). The word 'pilgrimage' refers to a *quest* - that is, a spiritual journey that involves searching for the 'self' (Morinis, 1992; Osterrieth, 1997; Turner & Turner, 1978). Initial research from a geographical perspective looked at pilgrimage in terms of creating typologies of the sacred journey and pilgrims / tourists. However, present research is much more varied and spatial, visible, concrete, cognitive, and sacred factors. Some examples include problems of access and the coexistence in sacred places from a phenomenological

3. The term 'e-motion' refers to the physical and emotional displacements that occur in writing and reading practices.

point of view (Digance, 2003); mobility issues relate to pilgrimage as a movement that contributes to the re-centring of people (Coleman & Eade, 2004); spatial relationships in terms of distance travelled, and behaviour during travel to and while at sacred sites, and intercultural exchanges at these sites (Stoddard & Morinis, 1997); the symbolism of the path and the place (Stoddard, 1997; Wagner, 1997); the location of sacred places (Preston, 1992); and the evolution and organisation of activities at pilgrimage centres, the role of religious traditions in motivating people to participate in pilgrimage, and the characteristics of pilgrims and their journeys (Stoddard & Morinis, 1997).

Pilgrimage was, and continues to be, a movement and a journey of people and ideas which keep the sacred value of certain spaces and places alive, thus engendering spatial relationships between people and the sacred (Barreiro Rivas, 1997; Coleman & Eade 2004; Esteve Secall, 2002; Stoddard & Morinis, 1997). According to Eade and Sallnow (1991), pilgrimage creates a sacred space in which religious and secular discourses meet. As such, pilgrimage allows for exposure to multiple discourses and intercultural encounters. This has led to, again, a wide range pilgrimage research, ranging from the structuralist to the 'more than representational' (della Dora, 2011; Lorimer 2005). Lorimer (2005) uses the expression 'more than representational' to stress the importance of the metaphorical and the physical expressions of a place, this idea has recently been enriched by the subjective dimension of the sacred (della Dora, 2011, 2012; Maddrell, 2009). Thus, the space of pilgrimage is 'under construction and constructive' since it responds to logics of spatial production and favours the social interactions that originate from human subjectivity (Papotti, 2007). Sacred places and pilgrimage routes, then, are dependent and complementary, since sacred places determine the route and pilgrimage routes provide meaning to sacred sites (Lopez, 2013).

As noted above, the case study for this paper is the Camino, one of the oldest religious pilgrimage itineraries, which came into being as a major pilgrimage route in the Middle Ages. The origins of the Camino go back to the 9th century, following the discovery of the remains of the body of the Apostle St. James, known as the *inventio*,[4] and its accreditation

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4. The term *inventio* means the discovery of the relics of a martyr in a place where there had been no previous tradition of their existence.

by the Catholic Church in the 12th century. This discovery and accreditation led to Santiago de Compostela becoming a major pilgrimage destination, reaching the peak of its popularity in the 12th and 13th centuries (Graham & Murray, 1997; Murray, 2014; Santos Solla & Lopez, 2015). The popularity of this pilgrimage destination led to the reinforcement of Christianity in Europe and contributed to the urban development of cities and villages along the route to Santiago (Lois González, 2000; Lois González & Somoza Medina, 2003). However, in the 15th century, the number of pilgrims walking along the Camino began to decrease, which decrease continued into the 19th century (Lois González, 2013). This decline was mainly due to the *Protestant Reformation* and its condemnation of pilgrimages and the worship of relics (Gusman *et al*., 2017). While pilgrimage to Santiago continued (Pombo Rodríguez, 2007), by the 19th century the numbers of pilgrims were so small that the tradition of pilgrimage to Santiago had practically disappeared - even the image of St. James underwent a change from the medieval times representation associated with being a pilgrim saint, to a warrior saint fighting against the heathen like Santiago Matamoros (St. James the Moor-slayer) (Domínguez García, 2009). However, during the second half of the 19th century pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela began to grow, with the Camino taking on new meanings. One of these new meanings included the importance of the pilgrimage route in creating a Western European identity. As Goethe once stated, 'Europe was built by walking towards Santiago' (Chemin, 2016; Lois González & Lopez, 2012). The route also was seen as contributing to the development and construction of the immediate region (Bermejo López, 2001; Graham & Murray, 1997; Lois González, 2000; Passini, 1984) and for facilitating cultural, economic, and social exchange (Ashley & Geegan, 2009; Soria y Puig, 1993).

From 1950, the Franco government took an interest in restoring the grandeur of the pilgrimage along the Camino, focusing on monumentalising the city and its symbolic places (Castro Fernández, 2010; Lois González, 2013; Lois González & Lopez, 2012; Murray, 2014). The Holy Years 1954, 1965, and 1971 served as events in preparation for the great Holy Year of 1993, when the Camino was officially re-presented on the international tourist scene (Lois González & Santos Solla, 2015; Santos Solla, 1999). While the Camino itself was declared the First European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe in 1987 because it was considered a European space rich in collective

memory, Santiago and the Camino become more internationally recognised when the French Way of the Camino was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. History, art and society are three elements of culture which in the Camino have taken on an international significance, especially during the Holy Year of 1993. That year marked the beginning of the contemporary enhancement of the Camino and Santiago de Compostela, taking advantage of a religious event to promote other forms of tourism (Graham & Murray, 1997; Santos Solla 1999, 2006). The revitalisation of the Camino has contributed to the (re) discovery and recovery of tangible and intangible heritage along the route, the improvement of pilgrimage and tourism infrastructure, and the rehabilitation of ancient communication routes and the construction of *dotaciones camineras*[5] (Lois González, 2000). Another important contribution of this redevelopment has been the rediscovery of the 'spirit of hospitality' that has always characterised the Camino, in that monasteries, churches, mills, ancient stone houses, ancient municipal buildings, and old rural houses have been transformed into pilgrim and tourist accommodation facilities (Graham & Murray, 1997). Many hotels have improved their reception facilities, including expanded parking for bicycles and accommodation for horses.

Although the Camino is considered a difficult journey, it still retains its authentic and original essence through the act of walking, which embodied act is the original way of traversing the Camino (Lois González & Somoza Medina, 2003; Santos Solla, 1999). Indeed, the walking participant is seen as the truest form of pilgrim, adding to the authenticity of the Camino (Coleman, 2004; Frey, 1998). From landscape to gastronomy, culture to *communitas*, and history to nature, walking the Camino is a spiritual 'experience' (Lois González, 2013; Lois González & Santos Solla, 2015; Lopez, 2013). Investment in the pilgrimage infrastructure along the Camino has facilitated walking pilgrimages and tourist requirements in the 21st century (Graham & Murray, 1997; Lois González & Santos Solla, 2014, 2015; Murray, 2014), this type of slow mobility, which then allows for opportunities for contemplation of the natural landscape and the local culture (Lopez, Lois González & Castro Fernández, 2017). However, while at its roots the Camino is a spiritual corridor, it is also a tourist, economic, global and non-mass produced

product, catering to people from all religious or non-religious walks of life, making the Camino a unique tourist product (Santos Solla, 1999). Indeed, differentiating between pilgrimage and tourism and pilgrims and tourists is difficult, not only on a spatial level, but also on an experiential level, because the behaviours of pilgrims and tourists coincide in many different ways (Cohen, 1992; Collins-Kreiner, 2010b; Gil de Arriba, 2006; Olsen, 2010; Rinschede, 1992; Turnbull, 1992). This is partly because socially, pilgrimage provides for the condition of liminality and unique patterns of socialisation. No longer limited to a religious experience, the Camino has become a multicultural and multi-religious itinerary (Lopez, Lois González & Castro Fernández, 2017).

Even with a contemporary reinterpretation of the Camino, today's walker is looking for an original experience that is far from everyday life, and walking the Camino provides emotional, spiritual and natural elements experiences and strength to pilgrims (CETUR, 2007-2010; Chemin, 2015; Kurrant, 2019, Lois González & Lopez, 2012). Pilgrims' motivations correspond to modern culture, made up of new religious, spiritual, and secular trends that they are conveying along one of the most ancient and religious Christian routes (Moscarelli, Lopez & Lois González, 2020). The result therefore is a renewed magnetism of the Camino (Preston, 1992).

The Comic Book Geography

Comics have their origins in early twentieth-century metropolitan newspapers (Dittmer, 2014a), and since the late 1970s and early 1980s the number of and interest in comic books and graphic novels has increased. Presently, comic books and graphic novels are literary sources that cultural geographers have been using according to a new research line defined as 'comic book geographies' (Desbois, Gervais-Lambony & Musset, 2016; Hawkins, 2015; Hawkins *et al.*, 2015). Dittmer's *Comic Book Visualities: A Methodological Manifesto on Geography,* M*ontage and Narration* (2010a) and *Comic Book Geographies* (2014b), the 'Comics and Media' special issue of *Critical Inquiry* (2014), the work of other researchers (e.g., Fall, 2006, 2014; Peterle, 2017a, 2017b), and the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences have all lent legitimacy to the use of comic books and graphic novels in geographical inquiries related to culture, arguing that they (re)produce spatial and temporal dimensions of both imagined and everyday life based on verbal and visual language. For Groensteen, comic books and graphic novels can be

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5. This phrase refers to typical infrastructure and buildings of the Camino, such as public hotels, panoramic views, belvederes, and places of refuge.

described as a type of system comprised of

> *an original combination of one (or two, with writing) subject(s) of expression and of a collection of codes* (Groensteen, 2007:6).

These codes work simultaneously within the picture frames, which frames serve as the primary and functional expressions for the content of the books and novels that allow the spatial practices to emerge in content and form. However, each frame should not be individually studied, but rather understood more broadly within architecture of sequencing, symmetry, equilibrium, shape, dimension, and movement (Adler, 2011).

According to Fall (2015), the term 'comics' has been replaced by various terms as a sign to construct respectability for what has often been a marginalised and frequently trivialised genre, such as 'sequential narrative' (Whitlock, 2006), 'graphic narrative' (Holland, 2012) and 'comic journalism' (Sacco, 2011). Other kinds of non-fictional graphic novels are historical non-fiction, biographies and memoirs. Since the late 1980s, the expression 'graphic novels' (a comic in longer form and complete with subtext) has given comics books acceptance and respect (McCloud, 2000). The graphic novel format has elevated the medium to the status of 'serious literature' and greatly enhanced the presence of comics on the shelves of regular bookstores (Weber & Rall, 2017). Eisner's book *A Contract with God* (1978), however, marked the consolidation of graphic novels and their recognition as a serious art form (Peterle, 2017a; Weber & Rall, 2017). Different from other literary works, comics introduce a further semantic level that makes them more complex to understand. Authors such as Black (2002), Bredehoft (2006), Dittmer (2010a), and Peterle (2017a) prefer to refer to them as media, with, again, their codes, styles, norms, and specific grammar. Their complexity is also because they are the result of the

> *hybridisation of various traditions of narratives, drawings,* estampes*, press illustrations and caricatures, as well as sequential figures that draw from chronophotography* (Fall, 2015:7).

In recent years there has been a proliferation of autobiographical comics (Groensteen, 2007). According to Lejeune (1989:4), autobiographies are

> *retrospective prose narrative[s] written by a real person concerning their own experience, where the focus is their individual life, in particular the story of their personality.*

El Refaie (2012: 48) defines autobiographical comics as:

> *a loose category of life writing through the use of sequential images and (usually) words'*

which can be recognised according to textual and paratextual cues. At the beginning, autobiographical comics were regarded as alternative comics (El Refaie, 2012; Hatfield, 2005) because they differed from the underground comic movement of the 1960s and 1970s through the small press and DIY (do-it-yourself) movements of the 1980s and 1990s. Presently, autobiographical comics address a more critical approach when communicating the mundane, quotidian, and often humorous experiences of daily life (Kunka, 2018), amplifying the creator's individual experience and his / her art style, panel layouts or other narrative techniques (Kunka, 2018).

Comics and other genres of literature are similar, in that they take part in the process of generating meaning (Adler, 2011), each genre having their language, morphology, semiological aspects, and rhetorical functions. As far as the relationship between images and texts is concerned, images are iconic signs that make things visible while texts are symbolic signs (Peirce, 1983). The iconic sign represents the object that it stands for; it resembles or imitates its object or a certain characteristic or aspect of the object, thus suggesting authenticity and veracity (Weber & Rall, 2017). Another relationship between literature and comic books is the use of metaphors. According to Juricevic and Horvath (2016), comic book artists use literal and metaphorical devices based on a corpus analysis, but in very different ways.

The comic book's dual language asks the reader to be able to translate two-dimensional sequential images into four-dimensional narrative (Dittmer, 2010a). Although words and images in comics act together in the process of signifying the work, the

> *visual and verbal interpretive skills needed for scholarly work on comics require literacy in the interpretive regimens of art and of literature* (Whitlock, 2006:968).

In fact, in comparison to written text, reading comic books requires new interpretive skills, since,

> *the vocabulary of comics represents figures and objects across a wide iconic range from the abstraction of cartooning to realism; its grammar is based on panels, frames, and gutters that translate time and space onto the*

page in black and white; and balloons both enclose speech and convey the character of sound and emotion (Whitlock, 2006:968).

As far as verbal communication is concerned, comics have a distinctive language made of specific basic units that compose utterances and propositions (Hickin, 2014), while visual language involves the use of original illustrations supporting the critical reflection of spatial representations (Peterle, 2019).

McCloud (1993) states that reading comic books is a specifically embodied and learned activity, because it is based on the use of distinctive devices, vocabulary, unique codes, and possible ambiguities and strategies for challenging typical literary conventions. Therefore, they enrich the readers' experience while asking them for an imaginative work of 'closure'[6] (McCloud, 1993). Furthermore, images are artefacts, and therefore they mediate subjective interpretations, and even with the utmost intention to be objective, writers and creators

> *instill their own beliefs and have their own opinions that might impact what stories they tell and the way these stories are told* (Weber & Rall, 2017:384).

In fact, Dittimer (2014b: 483) suggests that 'the material elements of the comic are mineralisations of the artist's efforts,' meaning that the audience is responsible for assembling and making sense of the information (Zebracki, 2012), thus creating multiple narrative interpretations.

Precisely for its peculiarities, the comic pictorial style can be either 'lacunar' or 'expressive', both implying aspects under which visual meanings are achieved through association with dynamic potentialities of pictorial representation (Gombrich, 1960; Picado, 2016; Wölfflin, 1950). In Gilmore's (1994) analysis of the changing discourses of truth and identity that feature in autobiographical representations of selfhood, he did not refer to comic autobiography, but his assumption introduces the issue of a subjective graphic narrativity. Following this, Whitlock (2006) coins the term 'autographics' to refer to graphic memoirs to draw attention to the specific conjunctions of visual and verbal text in this genre of autobiography and also to the subject positions that narrators negotiate in and through comics.

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6. According to McCloud (1993: 68, 69), the act of closure means to go beyond the borders or 'gutters' between panels and fill in the narrative gap. This is possible thanks to the active participation of readers.

Materials and Methods

The Case Study

The relation between comic books and the Camino is not new. While the first two comic books about the Camino were produced in Galicia and written in Galician, namely *Don Gaifero* (Kukas, 1993) and *Aventuras no Camiño* (Primitivo, 1996, 2008), in 2003 *El Peregrino de Santiago* (Perera & Perera, 2003) was published in Spanish. Some years later, in 2013, a collection of four volumes was published in French. In the graphic novel *Don Gaifero* (1993), Gus (Agustín de Castro) and Kukas (Marcelino de Santiago) relate the vicissitudes of Don Gaiferos de Mormaltán's pilgrimage from Roncesvalles to Santiago. This work was mainly focused on the balance between pilgrimage, tourism and emigration (Blanc–Hoàng, 2016). A different approach was adopted in *Aventuras en el Camino*. Originally written in 1996 and then published in 2008 by Marco Primitivo, it presents the pilgrimage to Santiago of a thirteenth century noble family and attempts to teach the way of life in the Middle Ages. A similar style was represented in *El Peregrino de Santiago* (Perera & Perera, 2003), which book was inspired by the *Codex Calixtinus*[7] and is more spiritually oriented; although, according to Blanc-Hoàng (2016), the graphic novel is similar to a tourist guide. Finally, Saint-Dizier and Mutti (2013) wrote *Campus Stellae, sur le Chemin de Compostelle*, a collection of four independent volumes that narrate police investigations in the cities and stops of the four main roads to Compostela. Like the former works, it is set in the 12th century.

Even if these books are different among themselves, these antecedent comic books were bound to history (Middle Ages), symbolic references to the Camino (e.g., *Codex Calixtinus*, Campus Stellae.) and relate to the adventures protagonists (or pilgrims) whose identities and profiles derive from their authors' creativity. Jason's (John Arne Sæterøy) *On the Camino* differs from them for the following reasons:

1)   It is an autobiographical comic book regarding his decision in 2015 to walk for 32 days from St.

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7. This is the reference book of the Jacobean word. It was written in Latin during the central decades of the 12th century. It is considered one of the monuments of the continental culture of the Middle Ages, a jewel almost always as attractive and as exciting for those who want to approach the Jacobean matter from its base, but also for those who are interested in the general dynamics of the Middle Ages and in Spanish and European history.

Jean Pied de Port to Finisterre to mark his 50th birthday. The aim of the author was to produce a mostly practical book, that, following Weber and Rall (2017), used a narrative mode to demonstrate different abilities to deliver the information, mixing fiction and non-fiction. A similar style enables him to share the

> *experience of discovery: background, context, different perspectives, tone, language and emotions of the public* (Weber & Rall, 2017:380).

In fact, Jason relies on his subjective perspective to alternate his pilgrimage to include fictional characters or events.

2) From the stylistic point of view, Jason draws anthropomorphic characters as he had been doing over the last twenty years.[8] Following the autobiographical style, caption boxes contain first-person narration of the autobiographical self, and he alternates his interior monologues and dialogues with unnamed protagonists and addresses his work to an adult audience. The literal part is introduced in forms of anchoring captions, speech balloons, or signals. Thanks to the interactive nature of comics (McCloud, 1993), the readers access different kinds of information producing a sympathetic connection between the reader and author. Furthermore, Jason often uses silence or few words to describe different situations.

3) During the last decade, the experiential content of the Camino has inspired countless travel diaries, which have been published under various forms (print, online, blog, etc.). *On the Camino* is, at the present, the only autobiographical comic book and, hence, a new form of writing a pilgrimage travel diary. In fact, in addition to sharing and presenting a travel diary's personal experiences, this graphic novel performs tourism functions, in that it describes the route (especially when drawing historical sites), its heritage and cultural offerings, and its possible activities.

Methodology: Qualitative Critical Reading

There are different approaches when reading a text. In the case of a graphic one, this exercise is more challenging, as images and text interact to convey the 'best possible effect with the least possible mental

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8. According to Adler (2011:2279): 'the animal/human relation allows exploiting many stereotypes in order to economically and efficiently attribute characteristics to the protagonists'.

effort for a wide audience' (Juricevic, 2017:5) and to 'keep the reader immersed in the story or narrative' (Potts, 2013:23). Considering the above mentioned stylistic premises, the qualitative critical reading of *On the Camino* follows the Corpus Analysis Relevance Theory (CART) (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Wilson & Sperber, 2008), in which

- the style of the cartoonist is an essential one: all its drawings are in black and white (except for the book cover that is coloured—See Figure 1);

- the rhythmic transition between day and night is expressed by the use of grey, alluding to the absence of light. Sometimes this passing by of days is accompanied by literal details, and;

- the majority of the drawings represent *e-motions*. This expresses the key idea of the pilgrimage (e.g., walking, moving, visiting, feeling) as a rhythmic activity whose graphic narrativity drawings continuously evoke motion.

Assuming that the act of seeing is an act of knowing (Jenks, 1995; Stafford, 1991), Rose (2001) defended the contemporary importance of the visual dimension for cultural construction of Western social life. In Rose's tribute to visual methodologies, emphasis is placed on the importance of visual images to convey knowledge, power, and culture. Since each way of looking at images is 'historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific' (Rose, 2001:16) and each critical reading has its own methodology based on the interest of the research, the following methodological steps were used to analyse *On the Camino*:

1) Reading *On the Camino*.

2) Selecting literary and visual descriptions of the graphic novel.

3) Analysing these selected literary and visual descriptions (according to three interpretative criteria: a) The space of the Camino; b) The autobiographical space; c) The space of the readers.

4) Advancing the main concerns of the graphic novel.

Reading *On the Camino* and selecting the literary and visual descriptions results in a process of recognising and decoding the symbols and cultural referents that the author chooses to characterise as the pilgrimage space of the Camino. This paper introduces a hybrid reading alternating images and literal analysis. Hence,

the included illustrations are meant to enrich the analytical discussion, trying to understand how the cartoonist tries to stimulate readers' spatial imagination and to empathise with them.

Results and Discussion

Walking the pilgrimage (along with its rituals), writing about it (or better still, depicting it) and reading text are performative practices. They are set in a physical space that connects both the cartoonist and the reader. In this way, the critical analysis is structured according to the following items: the space of the Camino, the autobiographical space, and the space of the readers.

The space of the Camino

According to Barthes (1977), an object becomes a symbol when it acquires a significance that allows it to refer to something else. Symbols involve subjectivity (or intersubjectivity) because the sign matches a user's feelings, emotions, and social values (Adler, 2011). The Camino can be defined as a symbolised space with its system of values and beliefs based on its original cultural code (Lois González, Castro Fernández & Lopez, 2016). On the Camino there are different symbolic landmarks that enact a process of 'appropriation', thus reminding pilgrims, tourists, and others of its uniqueness. Jason manifests this by depicting shells, arrows, stones, and statues as part of the pilgrimage landscape and turns his work into a qualitative method of interdisciplinary research to understand stories as modes of knowledge production (Cameron, 2012). Figure 2 shows an example of this, and readers are left to reconstruct its meaning (Adler, 2011). The empty route of this kind of postcard of the Camino (covering two pages) transmits a sense of peace and calm.

The pilgrimage landscape of the Camino is a unique one, not only due to its culture, identity, territoriality, and power, but also because of its symbolism (Lois González, 2013). Landscapes reproduced by Jason (2017) in *On the Camino* refer to both urban and rural contexts. Urban landscapes are usually characterised by widely recognised cultural assets that inform readers of the heritage offer of the route and also with an image of this territory. Rural landscapes in the book include monasteries, vineyards, sheep, and cows. These drawings also inform the reader about two ways of walking the Camino: alone or with companions. Pilgrims (with rucksacks, shells, and walking sticks) are part of the Camino landscape, as they confirm that you are going in the right direction. Figure 3 gives

visibility to the heritage of the Camino. In addition, for its similitude to photos and postcards, it has both a memorial and promotional function.

As far as the spatial movement along of the Camino is concerned, the dual semantic systems indicate the geolocalisation of the drawings On the one hand, Jason introduces signals, showing arrows and milestones that show pilgrim directions as well as typical Camino landscapes (e.g., El Alto del Perdón and Monte do Gozo). On the other hand, word balloons and captions inform the reader about the location of places (such as Roncesvalles and Pamplona). For example, the sense of movement is transmitted when, once having arrived in Galicia, Jason depicts a milestone functioning as a geolocator and a marketing tool, remembering that the Camino is a European Cultural Itinerary (European flag) (Figure 4).

Different to other travel diaries on the Camino, in this work there is not a map of the Camino. For this reason, Jason's choice can show a post-representational cartography perspective, where 'the map is less important than the process of making it and using it' (Caquard & Cartwright, 2014:105). Indeed, besides being part of the cartoonist's creative process, this stylistic and content decision introduces a more processual approach that relies on the readers' creative imagination to produce different mental maps according to their reading and physical and sensory experience.

The autobiographical space

From the authorial point of view, writing and drawing *On the Camino* requires 'filtering' the proper experiences, selecting the most relevant events, information, and memories. All drawings, by their very nature, are subjective, because their graphic style pertains to the author who decides to adopt certain stylistic conventions and visual means of expression to express his or her creativity and viewpoints. By this 'graphiation' (Kukkonen, 2013), readers can recognise the unique contributions of the author or artist; thus, even drawings connect the double-subjective space of the pilgrim and the author, who decides the page layout, the presence or absence of colours or how to express the night and day are unique to said author.

Other elements expressing subjectivity are the use of an instinctive verbal narrative style. In this case, Jason adopts different tones, ranging from the sarcastic to the melancholic, as well as critical tones, making it is easier to understand his thoughts. For instance, at the
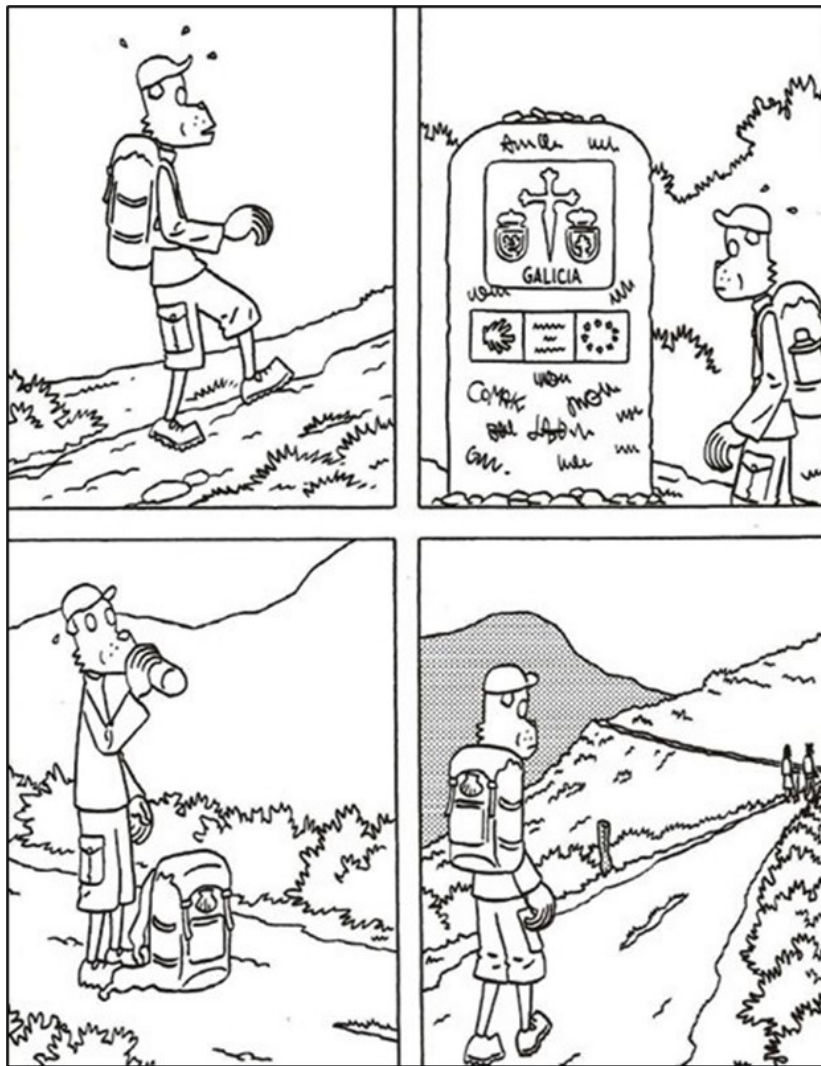
Figure 2: The Camino
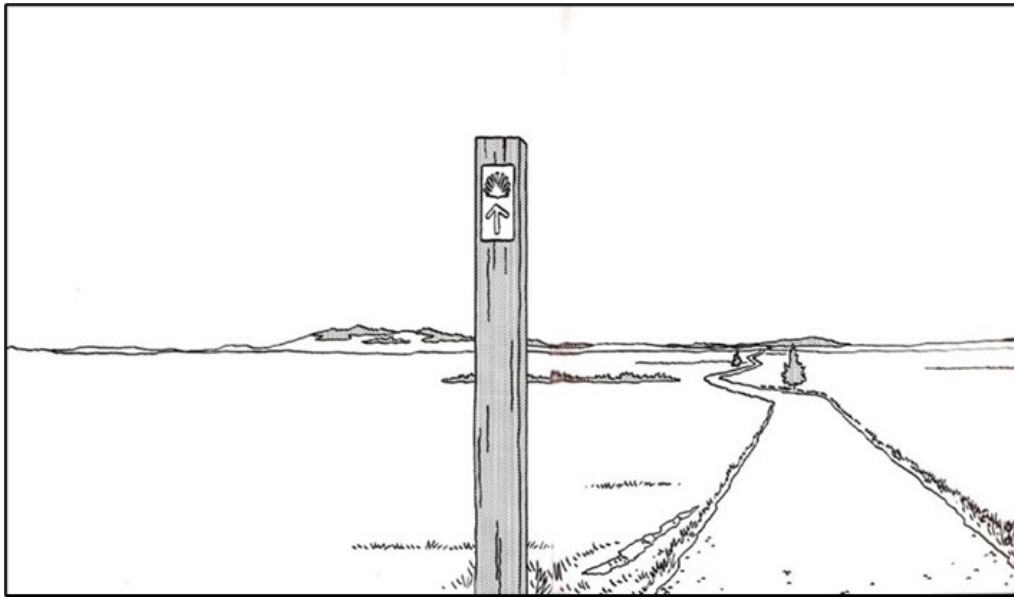
Courtesy of Jason. Source: *On the Camino* (Jason, 2017:6-7). Reproduction authorised.

Figure 3: Old historical villages along the Camino
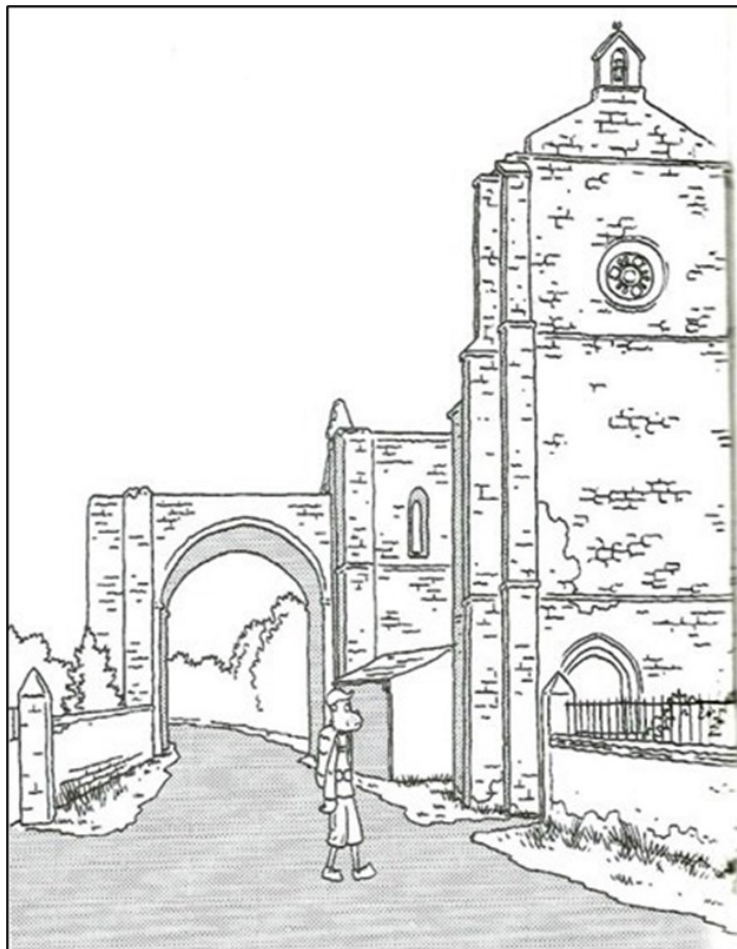
Courtesy of Jason. Source: *On the Camino* (Jason, 2017:84). Reproduction authorised.

Figure 4: …And finally Galicia.

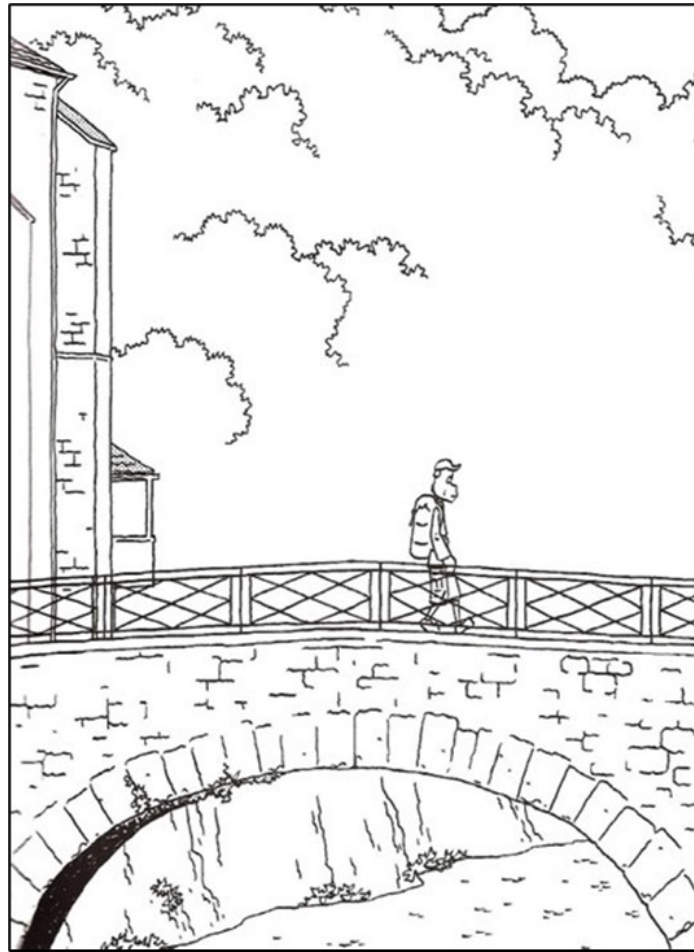Source: *On the Camino* (Jason, 2017: 131). Courtesy of Jason. Reproduction authorised.

beginning of his pilgrimage, Jason spends more time alone than with other companions as he is still not very familiar with the practical issues of the Camino, and in some of the panels he express his disappointment with not having the requisite knowledge of the Camino. As Jenkins (2007) notes,

> *everyone concentrates on what they want to, details are cropped out of photographs and stories go through an editing process. Every portrayal is to some extent a filter, and on that level, something that someone might find problematic* (Jenkins, 2007).

If novels present a subjective dimension that discloses a deep attached value to the environment (Brosseau, 1994), *On the Camino* shows that graphic novels can also be a part of the process of 'rehabilitation of subjectivity'. Pilgrimage movement and pilgrimage rhythms are added values for the geographical

engagement of the graphic novel, as they support progressive spatial production and consciousness. By means of his drawings, the cartoonist presents a spatial expression of time, emotions, ambiguity, connotation, and scales. Although it is generally referred to as reality, fictional places and events are also presented.

Figure 5 is an example of a silent image and a kind of moment of closure, which according to McCloud (1993) occurs when we observe parts of an event but perceive its whole. This kind of image reinforces a mental process that completes the individual experience; where closure connects different moments together and constructs a continuous reality (Adler, 2011). In this case it is a sort of 'walkscape': an introspective and experiential landscape that results from the aesthetic act of walking that is a simultaneous act of reading and writing about the surrounding environment (Careri, 2006).

Figure 5: Shaping Jason Walkscape.

Source: *On the Camino* (Jason, 2017: 15). Courtesy of Jason. Reproduction authorised.

The space of the readers

Reading images requires readers to engage in a process of deconstruction in order to understand their content. This is important when dealing with a 'vogue space' like that of the Camino. Walking along this historic, religious, and cultural pilgrimage route has become a worldwide activity, attracting increasingly more international (and secular) pilgrims. The use of anthropomorphic characters in *On the Camino* seems to enhance the fixity of the Camino through which subjects are presented and turn readers' attention to the liveliest aspects attributed to utterances and performances. Moreover, considering that there is little to no talking and captions are sometimes absent, readers are forced to interact with the image 'with the projective capacity of perceptual experience' (Picado, 2016:10). Choosing silence in graphic novels is an

> *invitation for the reader / observer to construct [their own] meaning within a sequence based on premises* (Alder, 2011:2279).

In this way, the reader / observer can fill in the missing details, charging the meaning-making process with his / her own emotions and feelings.

According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), metaphors exists outside of verbal language (Forceville, 2016), and understanding is made possible if the viewer experiences 'one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:5). The space of the reader is different, as it depends on whether the reader has or not been a pilgrim. As a result, two kinds of readerships can be generalised:

General and curious readership: here, the visual and literal storytelling can be easily processed. In the case of those readers who have not walked the Camino, these graphic and creative narratives are sources of information and knowledge which stimulate their imagination and possibly their desire to walk. They graphically narrate the pilgrimage space, thus capturing the attention of a

specific adult addressee, which, while generally interested in comic books, may also be interested in the Camino and one day can become a pilgrim or tourist along it.

Specific and expert readership: readers who have walked the Camino may feel a sense of empathy with content of the comic. While immersing themselves in the storytelling, experienced readers fill in the gaps of the narration and understand abstract metaphorical phenomena thanks to their experiences along the Camino. Moreover, considering that metaphorical devices also refer to states of mind (Kennedy, Green & Vervaeke, 1993), the sensuous Camino geography (Lopez, 2019) might be enacted in the reader's mind in order to revive the sensory (and metaphorical) experiences of the Camino.

Besides these different characterisations, comic book grammar, as well as any narrative particularities, requires skills and competences on the part of the reader (Groensteen, 2007). Hence, it is not possible to consider readers as 'passive image-viewers-and-receivers'. Rather, in the case of graphic novels or comics, especially in cases when words are rare, readers actively participate in production and understanding of the systemic meaning behind literal and pictorial devices. Their recognition process is dynamic, as it depends on their ability to identify contents and subjects (Lopes, 1996).

Beyond the Fixity of the Frame: the Visual Potentialities of the Graphic Novel

The above discussion highlights two main concerns: the dynamic paradigm beyond these 'fixed sequential images' (Groensteen, 2007:7), and the active role of the readership. As far as the paradigm of movement is concerned, the *e-motions* depicted in the comic book can be differently classified. There is the 'frame motion' that is the pilgrimage, which occurs daily (e.g., walking, climbing stairs, moving and shaking hands, eating, making gestures with hands and arms), and non-daily motion, or ones that are rarely done (lighting candles in chapels, visiting churches, etc.). These performative acts are the essence of the pilgrimage storyline.

The spatio-temporal structures of *On the Camino* correspond to a temporal sequentialisation and relationships with referential places. In the first case, the represented events follow a linear route, thus, the changing setting drawn by the cartoonist stands for a progressive movement in space (from Bayonne, France, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain). The displacement along the Camino is trusted to well-known landscapes, cultural assets, and signals that, based on the 'iconic solidarity' (Groensteen, 2007), reinforce the readers' interpretative task. Events are not only space-determined but also temporally-decided. Even if pilgrimage rituals are regularly repeated, they are performed within a certain place. Hence, the linear and temporal movement along the frames and strips of the comic book coincides with the linear narration of the pilgrimage along a linear route.

Comic book and graphic novel readers can therefore be 'pilgrims' without engaging in the physical journey, in that following the narrative stream, they mentally and metaphorically join in and take part in the pilgrimage along the route through their *e-motions* and embodied sensibilities. If one assumes a metaphysical-spiritual point of view of pilgrimage, the pilgrim's condition is not strictly tied to a space-time dimension (Coleman & Eade, 2004; Lopez & Lois González, 2017; Maddrell & Scriven 2016; Morinis, 1992; Stump, 2008). As such, a metaphysical and spiritual pilgrimage can take place anywhere as 'spaces are material and metaphorical, physical and imagined' (Knott, 2005: 13). Thus, we can consider a pilgrim as: 1) One who performs the pilgrimage *in sensu stricto* - that is, a traveller moves in a space-time dimension within an international scale of the macrocosm. This is a place-based pilgrimage, which is a journey to the holy place to secure forgiveness, indulgence, and / or healing (Dyas, 2001) or; :2) The pilgrim of life*, a peregrinus in situ* (Plötz, 1993), where he or she makes a *peregrinatio in stabilitate* (García de Cortázar, 1992; Hernando, 2007) or an inner and metaphysical journey. It might be compared to what Dyas (2001:6) refers to as a 'moral pilgrimage', or a combination of an interior pilgrimage and a place-based pilgrimage (Dyas, 2001). Indeed, this viewpoint suggests that pilgrimage is a quest, and therefore the pilgrimage experience does not end with the arrival at the destination or with the return home, because it is a spiritual experience that affects a person's worldview and long-term perception of the world (Coleman, 2004; Frey, 1998).

Considering this, *On the Camino* has a geographical connotation because it activates a spatial experience through its reading practice. As a result, readers 'walk' throughout the frames, following the pace of Jason's spatial experience. Frames are bound and shape 'walkscapes' that are intimate and personal

territorialities that emerge from the physical, metaphysical, memorial, and exploratory walking experience of the graphic novel. Each of these are accessible to both readers who have already followed the Camino and to those who have never even thought to undertake it.

Readers complete the lifecycle of a comic book, because without its reception and understanding, the meaning- and information-making process of this creative genre would not be fulfilled.

Conclusions

Literary production about the Camino has a longstanding tradition. Presently, its diversified image is no longer bound to a religious and medieval essence, but rather is being renewed. Among others, the longevity of the Camino can be attributed to the documentary qualities of its spatial representations, as, for instance, in the case of comic books and graphic novels. Each of them has its visual narrativity that uses a plastic counterpart chosen by the cartoonist to achieve an aesthetic and plastic dimension of his / her pictorial representations. Even if it characterises Jason's style, the use of an essentialist anthropomorphic approach might be a stylistic choice that enables attention to be shifted to the visual space of the Camino. Hence, from the point of view of comic book geographies, this paper points out the potentialities of autobiographical comics and graphic novels and introduces new perspectives on visual storytelling of a pilgrimage experience.

On the Camino is a creative and cultural form for expressing emotional engagement and personal territoriality. Apart from reflecting on reality and experience, Jason opts for different devices that transmit *e-motions* along the route, reviving his dynamic experience. The book's meaning-making-process relies on the active role of its readership, with each reader constructing their own personal and subjective geographies while going through its graphic narrativity. The external and intimate spaces of the pilgrimage experience is translated within *On the Camino*. Personal encounters, emotions, fears, and events inspire the pilgrim-cartoonist who profits from the work's dual language to share his intimate geography with his readers. This research also points out an on-going cultural-turn along the Camino, in which its secularisation has contributing to broadening its popularity. For example, in the comic book, Jason and his companions are not religious pilgrims - rather, they prefer to talk about spirituality, fitting the Camino's reputation as a post-contemporary pilgrimage (Lois González & Santos Solla, 2014; Lopez, Lois González & Castro Fernández, 2017). These post-contemporary motivations and attitudes are contributing to the change of the Camino, as the graphic novel shows by using creative devices. In demonstrating this *On the Camino* paves the way for further forms of exploring and approaching the intimate dimension of pilgrims. Researching the autobiographical character of this work supports the belief that comics offer insightful objective and subjective accounts of places and landscapes.

Future studies should investigate the role of comics within the production of personal imaginative geographies as well as their contribution to understanding how pilgrimage experiences are expressed by pilgrims. *On the Camino* is an alternative touristic guide that uses the comic book genre for tourism and marketing purposes. Comparing this task to proper marketing campaigns, tourism agents might benefit from using comic books to investigate the perception and re-creation of the Camino from different points of view. In conclusion, the interest in comic books by academics should be accompanied at the same time by the interest of cultural industries. While crafting their works, cartoonists and creators are disseminating images and messages, information and knowledge.

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