



Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

Civil Religion in Europe: Silent Marches, Pilgrim Treks and Processes of Mediatization

Margry, P.J.

published in

Ethnologia Europaea

2011

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in KNAW Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Margry, P. J. (2011). Civil Religion in Europe: Silent Marches, Pilgrim Treks and Processes of Mediatization. *Ethnologia Europaea*, 41(2), 5-23.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the KNAW public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the KNAW public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

pure@knaw.nl



Ethnologia Europaea

Journal of European Ethnology

41:2 2011

Museum Tusulanum Press

Ethnologia Europaea

Journal of European Ethnology

Volume 41:2
2011

Copyright © 2011 Ethnologia Europaea, Copenhagen
Printed in Sweden by Grahns Tryckeri AB, Lund 2011
Cover and layout Pernille Sys Hansen
Cover photo Peter Jan Margry, September 2010
At the end of the Santiago trail to Finisterra, "Land's End", pilgrims
leave their clothes as a ritual of finishing their journey.
ISBN 978 87 635 3877 0
ISSN 0425 4597

This journal is published with the support of the Nordic board
for periodicals in the humanities and social sciences.

Museum Tusulanum Press
University of Copenhagen
Njalsgade 126
DK-2300 Copenhagen S
www.mtp.dk

CONTENTS

Peter Jan Margry

Civil Religion in Europe. Silent Marches, Pilgrim Treks and Processes of Mediatization 5

Mats Lindqvist

Colonizing Latvia? A Piece of Swedishness in the Forests of Talsi 24

Luís Silva

Beneath the Surface of the Heritage Enterprise. Governmentality and Cultural Representation of Rural Architecture in Portugal 39

Katrin Amelang, Violetta Anastasiadou-Christophidou, Costas S. Constantinou, Anna Johansson, Susanne Lundin and Stefan Beck

Learning to Eat Strawberries in a Disciplined Way. Normalization Practices Following Organ Transplantation 54

Anna Malewska-Szalygin

Postsocialism as a Diagnostic Tool. Common-Sense Concepts of Power and State in Southern Poland 71

CIVIL RELIGION IN EUROPE

Silent Marches, Pilgrim Treks and Processes of Mediatization

Peter Jan Margry

This contribution demonstrates that in relation to societal crises and personal existential anxieties new varieties of religious practice and experience have gained importance in Europe. Based on the analysis of two recent rituals of movement and contemplation – the Dutch silent march and pilgrim treks in Europe – I have sought to uncover manifestations of civil religion. Arising in societies under threat, both ritual forms represent in their mediatized expression alternative public theologies centered around an ideal of a society at peace and possessing moral unity. It is this mediatization of these crisis rituals that gives them a meaning beyond itself, offering a moral and spiritual frame of reference for both European society as a whole and for its citizens individually.

Keywords: civil religion, crisis rituals, anxiety, memorialization, heritage, mediatization

Since 1967, when Robert Bellah proposed his renowned model of a transcendent civil religion as a universal belief system within American society, the concept of civil religion has largely been perceived as an American phenomenon (cf. Bellah & Hammond 1980; Kim 1993). Originally triggered by constitutional rituals and commemorative practices within the United States, the enlightenment idea of a civil religion was given new meanings by the theorizing and critiques of a series of American sociologists (Bellah, Coleman, Richey, Gehrig, Hammond, Jones, Wimberley etc.), resulting in the construction of an “American Civil Religion” (Mathisen 1989). In the words of Christenson and Wimberley, it is an ideological social construct differentiated from “common religion”, being neither a reduction of Christian principles to essentials, nor a synthesis of religious pluralism or the politicization of religion. They see the basic tenets of American civil religion

as “the perception of Divine sanctions and inherent morality in civil laws” and the ascription of sacred connotations to secular symbols and practices (1978: 77).

Notwithstanding the many publications on the theme, many of Bellah’s initial postulates basically still stand, and have indeed taken root elsewhere. His remark that “all politically organized societies have some sort of civil religion” (Bellah 1974: 257) has also drawn the attention of researchers outside the United States to the subject (Kleger & Müller 1986). In the past decade a renewed interest in the manifestations of civil religion in Europe has become apparent, unfolding perspectives on civil religion outside the US realm (cf. Davie 2001; Parsons 2002; Kleger & Müller 2004; Hvithamar, Warburg & Jacobsen 2009). In that context the rise of (cultural) nationalism in twentieth-century Europe fed the idea that even nationalism should be interpreted as

the (civil) religion of modern times – a view which, however, has also been subject to criticism (Santiago 2009).¹ As the academic field of civil religion had mainly been explored on a theoretical level and showed a substantial lack of empirical data, European ethnologists and anthropologists commenced trying to identify civil religion on a more ethnographic basis, employing a more open conceptual paradigm (Rawbottom 2001; Margry 2008b; Barna 2009; Povedák 2009).

In this contribution I will elaborate on this basis and seek to adapt it to a more general concept of civil religion with which contemporary rituality can be interpreted in new ways. The concept is not operationalized as a fixed target but as a paradigm in order to understand and explain what is happening and why the researched phenomena are so popular and subsequently so widely mediatised. In this light I hope the results also add to the ongoing discussion on the concept of civil religion itself.² For this article I studied pilgrim treks in Europe and silent marches in the Netherlands for which I analyzed a vast amount of media messages and articles, (published) pilgrim diaries, interviews and questionnaires.³

John Coleman already made a rather convincing effort toward a synthetic open definition of civil religion (Coleman 1970: 69–70). Based on his interpretation, and leaving the specific American-national focus out, my operational definition is as follows: civil religion is the religious symbol system which relates the citizen's role and society's place in space, time and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning.⁴ For Europe the last part of this definition is nowadays particularly relevant as, partly due to the undermined position of institutionalized religion, traumatic death and its memorialization have become oversensitive and major issues, as we can infer from new mourning practices, which even have been termed “memorial mania” (Doss 2010: 2; cf. Margry & Sánchez-Carretero 2011). Although my stance derives from Durkheim's implicit definition of civil religion (cf. Durkheim [1912]2001: 25–46) and its ascribed quality to integrate and create community, this perspective should not be taken as an all-inclusive model (cf. Cottle 2006: 428). Included

among the cases presented here are some in which divisive and conflict-oriented tendencies are present, which exclude individuals or religious or ethnic subgroups in the way Gamoran for example found exclusion in American schools (Gamoran 1990: 254). The “noise wake” after the murder of movie director Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam in 2004 is an example of that, a contrarious ritual, as Van Gogh disliked “bourgeois”, consensus-driven silent marches – but see also the postings by others (often young people) who say they have “silent march fatigue”, or regard the silent march as outdated and/or not functional.⁵ Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, the case studies treated are characterized by a dominant but not comprehensive community-creating quality. Moreover, do such rituals, as Lane argued, mirror problematic social relations or political concerns, and do they help sacralizing the social order (Lane 1981)?

For the argument in this article I have shifted my focus from state-organized rituals to non-institutionalized ritual practices of individuals and grassroots civil organizations in society. In that line, elaborating on Grace Davie's open theory of “Global Civil Religion” from a European perspective,⁶ and to facilitate research into emerging practices and patterns, I would like to revise the concept in two ways: by making it more universal, detached from the “nationalistic” American situation, and also by stretching the concept into a supranational dimension, in this case the European realm. This will be demonstrated and elaborated on the basis of two very different examples of civic rituality that have the potential to generate civil religion. Their dissimilarity makes it clear that civil religion is not just to be found in those practices with which it is usually connected, but that research should examine other less obvious rituals and practices that in themselves do not obviously express civil religion.

On the other hand, what these two examples do have in common is that they are “locally” constituted rituals of movement, and performed in public. It is only through a transfer process realized by the media that they gain their generic civil quality. It is through the intervention of the media that the examples are generalized to a (trans)national or Eu-

ropean level. To explain this I need to introduce and focus on the role of modern processes of mediatisation. Major researchers on this theme endorse the assumption that the mediatisation of rituals serves to sustain and/or mobilize collective sentiments and solidarities on the basis of symbolization and a subjective orientation to what should or ought to be, as Cottle defined it (Cottle 2006: 415). Lundby relates mediatisation more to societal changes and the role of media and mediated communication in these transformations of society (2009: 1). Moreover, in the case of a small European democracy similar to the Netherlands (i.e., Denmark) Hjarvard found that media are effective agents of religious change, distributors of Christian-inspired values and norms “providing both moral and spiritual guidance and a sense of community” (Hjarvard 2008: 24). Such agency does not seem limited to those examples, but as an active factor it is applicable in a more generic way in European society.

The particular quality of modern media as the primary conduit for communication of messages and symbols clarifies that the practiced ritual and symbol language presented only create a full range of effect, and can only be transformed into civil religion when, with the use of mass media like TV and the Internet, they are transferred from the local to the (supra)national level. Media then have a “social integrative function” and play “a vital role in the ritualization of important societal transitions,” with which whole communities can, for example, participate in collective mourning and coping with trauma, as Hjarvard argues (2008: 18–20). Using the definition given above, I will first demonstrate that the popular Dutch grassroots crisis ritual, the silent march, has the capacity to become civil religion when its performative power is nationally disseminated by the media. This performativity does not imply just the local enactment of the ritual, but also includes the active commitment of an audience at distance, which is prepared to “participate” in a symbolically meaningful way (cf. Cottle 2006: 428–29). Second, I will indicate how a less nation-state orientated approach is also needed within civil religion studies in order to identify supranational

forms of civil religion, as in the case of the revived pan-European practice of treks on pilgrim ways.

The Silent March as Crisis Ritual

On October 22, 2002, in the Dutch city of Venlo, a 22-year-old man, René Steegmans, saw two teenagers on a motor scooter narrowly miss clipping an elderly woman. He shouted to them to show more respect for their elders. With this, both teenagers turned on him and began to beat and kick him so severely that he died of his injuries shortly after. In the eyes of the Dutch populace such expressions of violence had increased significantly over the previous decade, and were seen in part as an expression of an individualized and multi-cultural society that prevented assimilation of new ethnic and religious groups, and in turn resulted in rising pressures on “living together”, and caused social norms and values to become blurred and faded away. The term “senseless violence” came into use to apply to these very serious forms of aggression for which there does not seem to be any apparent reason (cf. Pouwels & Vegter 2002). This is a form of violence that is regarded as all the more evil because one cannot assign any justified meaning or function to it. Because such violence for the sake of violence, from boredom, perversity or arising from alcohol abuse, is more or less incomprehensible for civil society, and can occur at any time without any clear cause, not only are its consequences extremely traumatic for the families of victims, but the phenomenon also challenges the traditional, ostensibly peaceful image and high value standards that the Dutch keep of their society. The case in Venlo fed this thinking still further because it sparked off a national debate after the parents of the primary perpetrator, a Moroccan-Dutch boy, declared on television that their son was only “an instrument who carried out the will of Allah.” The statement divided the Moroccan-Dutch community itself, but chiefly appeared to highlight the shortcomings of the national integration process and to stress the problems Western society is facing with regard to the impact of Islamic culture and religion and the role of the media in the changing perceptions of Islamic culture in relation to violence.

In order to allow people to mourn collectively, to discharge some of the tension in the atmosphere of crisis, and to promote cohesion in the divided communities in the city, three days later a silent march was held in which 17,000 people, among them different Moroccan groups, took part, out of a total population of 90,000 residents (Visser 2002). It was an exceptional ritual broadcast all over the country. In Cottle's taxonomy this phenomenon could be identified as a combination of "moral panic" and "mediatized public crisis": the mobilization of collective fears and anxieties in concurrence with the manifestation of social drama (Cottle 2006: 416). Through the nationwide media attention a national idea of unity and alarm against senseless violence and the dangers of Islam was realized, meanwhile the online condolence registers had to be closed down because of many anti-Moroccan racist postings.

Since the 1990s the collective public manifestation that in Dutch is termed a *stille tocht*, or silent march, has become a general and widely accepted ritual in crisis situations (Post et al. 2003: 79–186). This ritual, which takes place precisely in times of social turbulence, has acquired a place as a prototype in national observance and memorialization practice and has, based on a proven ritual tradition, the power to enhance societal cohesion and reduce societal tension. This march distinguishes itself from public parading by football fans or other communal public manifestations because of its ratio as coping ritual in cases of trauma and situations of existential crisis. The symbol system is one in direct connection to life and death, represented in processional community finding, an explicit wording during the commemorative and, eventually, the creation of a temporary memorial.

Crisis Ritual in Transformation

The present silent march has its roots in the sixteenth century when the Netherlands became religiously mixed as a result of the Reformation, and remained divided. In the newly created Protestant Republic of the Seven United Provinces Roman Catholics were as a consequence forbidden to express their faith publicly. The importance of procession practice in the

Catholic culture of devotion and remembrance, led Catholics to seek ways to keep this traditional veneration practice alive in a non-ostentatious manner that would be tolerated by the Protestant authorities. They invented a rudimentary "procession", not performed as solemn liturgical ceremony, but individually without any religious symbols or sounds, that would follow the former sacred trajectories.⁷

The successful emancipation of Dutch Catholics in the nineteenth century was followed by an initiative on the part of the Catholics to be permitted more open manifestations of their faith in public. Around 1900 the ritual of individual silent processions was "reconstructed" into yearly large-scale collective marches, still silent and without any religious symbols. The silent procession of Amsterdam developed in the twentieth century into the most successful periodic celebration of Dutch Catholicism. It proved to be an effective instrument to increase cohesion within the Catholic diaspora and create Catholic nationalism in a newly imagined community. In its low-key performance the ritual was also generally perceived as an implicit protest march against the restrictions the Catholics still faced (Caspers & Margry 2006: 41–56).

The shared experience of the humiliation of the Dutch nation during the Second World War and the suffering that the whole people underwent weakened the traditional barriers of the rigid social-religious segmentation of Dutch society of those days, and led to a certain (if temporary) postwar sense of religious reconciliation. This made possible that the old Catholic ritual of the silent procession became the template for the national and multifaith yearly observance and memorialization of the victims of the Second World War. On 4 May, 1946, the national Remembrance Day, 600 cities and towns organized a silent march for the first time, with hundreds of thousands of participants in total. The silent memorial marches were an immediate success. This new minimalistic commemorative ritual in collective form was described as "serene, spiritual and dignified", but at the same time intended also to express a moral intention. The central idea behind the silent marches was the desire that arose after the war to

generate hope and inspiration for a better future, and to arrive at a “strengthening of solidarity” and cohesion on a national level. In most communities where a march took place, it developed into a ritual of personal and collective reconciliation that aided in processing the national trauma associated with the war, and at the same time was an immanent protest against war and violence in general. Participants regarded it as an indirect protest: “this [i.e., the war] must never happen again” (Caspers & Margry 2006: 59). Although organized locally, it was primarily a national commemoration, mediated likewise. Years later the purpose of the marches would be expanded to include remembrance of victims of all hostilities in which the Netherlands had ever been involved, and they further assumed the function of being a symbolic protest against injustice and discrimination in general.

The success of the annual memorial marches can be explained through its nature as a neutral, basic and therefore accessible ritual in which all denominations of the so strongly divided (“pillarized”) Netherlands could easily participate, not only individuals but also representative members of the national community. Immediately after the first memorial march in 1946 newspaper articles mentioned the euphoria of those present, who greatly appreciated the “sense of [national] unity” which the ritual as a form of *communitas* proved to be able to create in the Netherlands (Caspers & Margry 2006: 60).

Later, in the 1960s, a “new” type of march arose out of the silent memorial march, which can more specifically be called the silent march of protest. It hardly differed in terms of form, but had a different function.⁸ The two types of silent march existed alongside one another, and were an antithesis to the noisy protest demonstration that made a massive appearance in those days. The silent marches came to be employed increasingly widely as an instrument of protest, against ongoing or new wars, against oppressive regimes, and after the deaths of exceptional international figures. The phenomenon also appeared very occasionally in other countries, such as the march after the murder of Martin Luther King. While until the early 1990s the silent march was still

particularly directed as a stand against the violence of warfare, it began to be increasingly used against rising racism in the Netherlands, such as the silent march on August 16, 1992, in response to the shooting of a young Moroccan-Dutch boy due to racist motives, or the vandalism of a Jewish cemetery in Middelburg in 1993.

These were the first signals of another transformation in the silent march ritual. As a “last” developmental phase, a more frequent, structured and an almost generally accepted moral ritual arose alongside and out of the more politically focused silent protest marches, which is today what in the Netherlands would commonly be identified as *the* silent march. The term for the genre has now become the proper noun denoting such events: the silent march. In the second half of the 1990s these marches evolved into the widely accepted mourning and crisis ritual after traumatic death, as it is familiarly known in the Netherlands today. To date, more than hundred of these silent marches have taken place.

The first massive, and thus in a certain sense constitutive, silent march was the memorial march that was held after an El Al Boeing jet freighter crashed into a large apartment complex in the Bijlmermeer, an Amsterdam immigrant neighborhood, on October 4, 1992, while attempting an emergency landing at Schiphol airport. This incident is one of the major catastrophes in recent Dutch history. The magnitude of the disaster, the estimated amount of at least 43 victims, and the trauma it raised on dwellers along all urban airport approach routes, enhanced the need for a nationwide commemoration. One week after the crash a silent march was held in which 40,000 people participated, and proved to be a successful format to help overcome the grief and trauma in which people of 36 different nationalities – and actually the whole nation – were involved.

This disaster and the “first” racist or “senseless” (Dutch: *zinloos*) killing, the stabbing of the Antillean-Dutch teenager Kerwin Duinmeijer by a sixteen-year-old skinhead in 1983, might be seen as constitutive traumas for Dutch society, and might explain why these are the only ones which are still being kept memorialized with a recurrent annual silent march.⁹

Although in the 1990s there were still silent marches of an international and “political” character, held against dictators such as Suharto (August 19, 1996), as a memorial for the massacre in Srebrenica, Bosnia (July 11, 1996), for victims of terrorism, or to commemorate the Kristallnacht in 1938 (November 10, 1997) et cetera, the silent march became more and more synonymous with the ritual for civilian victims in the Netherlands itself.¹⁰ The definitive confirmation of the transformation of the ritual came with the death of Meindert Tjoelker on September 13, 1997, another victim of what in the Netherlands is termed “senseless violence”.¹¹ During a bachelor party outing, the week before his marriage, the 30-year-old Meindert was kicked to death by four men who were vandalizing bicycles, after he had ordered them to stop. In part because his victimization assumed almost mythic proportions in Dutch media, this event established the ritual format of the silent march as reserved purely for cases of senseless violence and after disasters. Since then the ritual has been part of the national mourning repertoire. If the trauma of the fatal loss, and perhaps still more definitive, if the trauma of the way in which this loss occurred is great enough, it seems to be a rule that a silent march will be organized, although the mechanism is not always clear. The story of the “senseless” death of Tjoelker became a newly constructed format on which many marches were based: a “mythical” narrative, stripped of its context, that recounts the event in a reductionist way as a battle between good and evil, while a reconstruction of the events brought up a much more complicated situation (Pouwels & Vegter 2002: 22).

Notwithstanding the early example of Kerwin Duinmeijer mentioned above, victims of immigrant background initially received less media attention as examples of what was perceived as senseless violence, as compared with native Dutch casualties. After 2000 this difference disappeared and organizing a march also became part of the grassroots immigrant culture (cf. Vasterman 2001; Stengs 2007).

It is nowadays unthinkable that a silent march would be called to reinforce the salary demands of the police during pay negotiations, as still happened

in 1995. A silent march which was held by friends of animals for a dog that died as a result of neglect and abuse by its owner created general indignation, because it was seen as a trivialization and a profanation of a ritual that should be reserved for human victims in particularly tragic circumstances (Van Dijk 1999).

The silent march as a long, basic procession of people did not remain entirely unchanged. While the given concept on which the marches were based was to proceed in complete silence, in a calm and dignified manner, without having attention-seeking texts or attributes, in recent years flyers or objects have sometimes been tacitly introduced. They are carried along by individuals, and sometimes even the silence will be broken. It may also happen that participants carry texts which agitate against what happened or against the situation which allowed it to occur. With increasing frequency groups also allow themselves to be spurred on at particular moments, often at the end of the march, to chant slogans or to sing together, to press home their cause. The tension that the emotional silence generates appears to require some form of discharge, and on very rare occasions this has happened literally with the use of fireworks at the end of the march. Not only texts on banners, but also balloons and torches are attributes that are appearing with silent marches. Because the beginning or end points of the marches are often places where the person(s) being remembered died, or is buried, participants may bring along something to leave there – flowers, toys, letters or cuddly stuffed animals – and create a temporary memorial in the way as they are made for traffic victims (cf. Everett 2002).

A Performative Ritual

The silent march, as it is commonly termed in the Netherlands, is first and foremost a grassroots collective expression of grief and mourning over what has happened to or overcome a person or group. The grief is shared with the relatives of the victim or victims, but also with all those others who feel themselves affected in one way or another (friends, neighbors, fellow residents of a city, fellow sufferers,

etc.). Although initially often instigated by the local authorities, they are now usually organized by the victim's family, acquaintances, colleagues or neighbors, sometimes with the assistance of local victim services or antiracism groups, etc. Its form is a long procession of people, often led by family members and representatives of local (and in the case of greater disasters, also national) administrations, politics, churches, et cetera. As a rule these massive mourning marches are also an expression of widely shared feelings of moral indignation, addressed to the Dutch government or society as a whole. Lynn posted the online message "I hope the march empowers you all; show that this nonsensical violence must stop."¹² The silent march then delivers a more or less implicit protest against phenomena such as senseless violence and dangerous conditions (particularly involving traffic and transportation) and the traumas which these cause.

The rise and development of the silent march in its present form can be explained by the feelings of disharmony between our ideals and the world as it is. The absolutization of individual freedom has led to a less social way of living and subsequently a disintegration of community, of which senseless violence is perceived as one of the consequences (cf. Verbrugge 2004: 28). Another explanatory element is the strongly decreased acceptance of premature, illogical or irrational ("senseless") death in modern society. The idea has taken root that in the contemporary, technological, closely regulated world, with the marvels of modern science and medicine, death can be banished to a considerable extent. When people are still confronted by a premature death without rhyme or reason, the grief is all the greater and the grief processing all the more difficult. Relatives then also feel the need to inform the world at large with the "injustice" – "Why you Nathalie?"¹³ – that has taken place. The reason for this behavior is twofold. On the one hand it helps the personal coping with the trauma, on the other it involves the outside world in a general healing process for the trauma that was aroused by the disaster.

Participants in the silent march express that they feel united in a national alliance against irrational-

ity and the lack of norms in society. They regard the feelings that exist on this matter in society as being symbolically represented in the march, as the mayor formulated in the Steegmans case: "I think that silence represents yelling; crying out that the government should deal with senseless violence." A journalist described the march: "It is the ritualization of impotence and therefore the only just reaction." A.H. wrote, "I want to participate, because this is senseless violence and it has to stop."¹⁴ Or in the case of the death of Quincy Schumans, an Antillean teenager shot by his best friend, a woman called Mathilde posted, "What does this bring for our Netherlands?"¹⁵ By a performative march they wish to draw attention to these problems at a national level, and appeal both to the authorities and to society itself (and potential perpetrators within it) to help prevent new cases and reinstate central values in and for society; or, as Lodewijkx, Kersten and van Zomeren state, affirming sacred values, solidarity with the moral community and an affiliated belief in a just world (2008: 154, 164). This is typified by the search for collectivity, cohesion and mutual support in society, in word, gesture and ritual, when that society has become too strongly individualistic, and traditional and national communal ties have been undermined, lost, or never developed and the role of the churches is in retreat. The collective march has therefore been qualified as "searching for community" (Jansen 2000: 79) – a vigorous ritual with which the community at the local level, but also through the media at a national level, straightens out with real life again. Sometimes the ritual was therefore also called a "fraternization march". Moreover, with this new public ritual, Dutch society surprised itself by the fact that individuals in a grassroots movement could be mobilized for general societal anxieties.

Time and again the traumatic incidents provoke generic existential feelings of anxiety – this could happen to me (or my child) too – among the general population (cf. Kierkegaard [1844]1980: 41–46). The ritual then indeed expresses the (latent) feelings of the whole community, serving as a prophylactic instrument to exorcise "evil", suppress anxieties and make a public appeal to main-



Ill. 1: Silent march for Quincy Schumans, a Dutch-Antillean sixteen-year-old boy shot by a friend in Amsterdam, September 5, 2010. (Photo: Peter Jan Margry)

tain the norms and values of society. When in 1999 the 16-year-old Marianne Vaatstra was abused and murdered, a mother explained her participation in the silent march – with 15,000 other participants – as follows: “Everyone I know has the strong feeling ‘it could have been my child’.”¹⁶ In relation to a march for another murdered young woman in 2010, again Lynn wrote: “Respect for the silent march. Show that this nonsensical violence must stop.”¹⁷ What struck society, and has since also remained the focus of the media, was this way of “finding community” through marches, an antithetical development to what is generally seen as the process of individualization. This does not however exclude the fact that when a silent march is announced debates will often occur on Internet forums about the functionality of silent marches and the question of them having become obsolete as a means for mourning and protest. Plugge⁸⁵

wrote: “For the mourning maybe good, but I get fed up with these marches.”¹⁸

This media focus is fundamental for the meaning and reach of the phenomenon of silent marches. Apart from the effects of a silent march at the local level, the cohesive and assuaging power of the civil religion it generates is only realized as a result of intervention by the media, especially the national media. The experience of transcendence of a silent march at a national level is in fact totally dependent of intermediality. Without the presence of the media and their widespread broadcasting and publishing, the marches could not be observed so closely by so many and would consequently not gain their attributed meanings. Even after so many marches, when a traumatic death occurs people organize a silent march, and it will still be covered, almost as a mantra, by the media. Although after more than a decade, the marches’ functionality has been disputed

(cf. Bijma 2007: 74), with the medial dissemination of their meanings they continue to fulfill their role in recovering the delicate balances regarding emotions and life and death.

Although people in the media also have observed that silent marches do not prevent senseless violence, they are not entirely without any practical influence. This has become clear from the way they have raised political awareness, and the various practical civil and administrative initiatives taken – traffic and public safety measures – as a result of the marches to deal with the social problems the marches address. Also, stimulated by the wide attention that marches against senseless violence and loutishness have gained, the public discussion on norms and values has been placed on the national political agenda. The popularity of silent marches has even turned them into an export product. Since 2000, beginning most prolifically in Belgium, the silent march has become better known in the world as a mourning and protest ritual.¹⁹

A Unifying March for Civil Society

As mentioned before, the widespread attention given by the media to the phenomenon of silent marches plays a crucial role in bringing the significance and effects of the marches to a national level. Despite the fact that as a rule they are responses to local events by locally organized groups, both spokespersons and commentators insist that, in their perception, these marches represent feelings that are found elsewhere too, nationally and throughout society. The incidents to which these marches are responses are thus presented as typical examples of the decline of the morale of the nation, a lack of oversight by the government or the injustice of life. In these cases the ritual permits the community involved to express itself, and further serves to exorcize the “evil” and to control and redress existential anxieties. In the words of the mayor of Gorinchem, “because it could have happened to any one of us... that understanding affects democracy and the sense of safety” (Bal, van Dijk-Groeneboer & Menken-Bekius 2001: 282). The ritual also makes a public, national appeal for the maintenance of social norms and values in con-

temporary society – one in which norms and values are believed to have become eroded, and increasingly less able to be identified. The absence of national symbolic moral anchors means that these grassroots initiatives assume an even greater value, and turns them (with a certain governmental encouragement) into an ideological instrument (cf. Christenson & Wimberley 1978: 82).

In the search for these characteristic Dutch norms and values, and *a fortiori* for a new Dutch identity and better society, reference is often made to the Christian roots of the “secularized” nation. This is particularly the case for marches following incidents of senseless violence, when quite often their organizers or spokesmen make explicit reference to the Ten Commandments and the fading away of their observance in individualized modernity, and which, it is suggested, must again be imposed as a moral guide for society. Participants of the marches usually admit that the march helps to control emotionality at the personal and local level, while journalists or sociologists writing in the media state that the collective indignation aroused to certain extent also soothes and conciliates the affected (national) community. The mediatised active participation of people in the street resacralizes ritual and imagination, and thus makes a strong appeal to the national community (cf. Hjarvard 2008: 24). This reassurance then creates a temporary overarching unity in society that can be called civil religion. This does not of course mean that all citizens feel united, but that through the media society at large is involved and coping with the issues raised by the trauma.

Pilgrim Treks in Europe

The second example of civil religion I want to focus on is related to the successful heritage creation and religious renewal that has emerged in recent decades along revitalized pilgrim ways all over Europe. The network of trails seem to have both dynamized Christian roots, capitalizing on the new religious and spiritual demands created by secularization, as well as responding to the demand for shared and Christian-inspired European values and meanings in times of crisis and anxiety.

A renewed interest in “ancient” pilgrimage trails – in particular initially the various European routes to Santiago de Compostela – picked up speed in the 1960s, arising at first from the perspective of the history of art and architecture along the *camino* (Oursel 1963).²⁰ In the years that followed this focus slowly changed into what today is called the “art of pilgrimage” as a reference to the central significance of pilgrimage, foot routes and contemplative movement in new forms of religiosity. Apart from the centuries-old metaphor that every human life here in this world is a severe and enduring pilgrimage, in individualized modernity pilgrimages are seen more and more as an inquiry and a quest of the self for values and meanings in life, as well as for the understanding of life and its hereafter (e.g., Cousineau 1998; Rupp 2005; Webb-Mitchell 2007).

Because of this process the rationale of pilgrimage has been changing. Its main goal is nowadays often not to be found in the contact with the sacred at the shrine at the end of the road, but in the activity and finality of *doing* the pilgrimage, the actual walking itself – not the sacred destination, for which formerly the walking was only the practical necessity for accomplishment (Margry 2008a: 24–25). Walking, and certainly long distance treks, can be boring and toilsome, but the new endeavor is to apply the art to perform this basic activity in a sublime way. As a combined physical-sensory activity, and connected with the human capacity for reflection, the trekking should create sufficient satisfaction and meaning that deeper thoughts or spiritual experiences will flow from it (Cousineau 1998; George 2006). These experiences will be enhanced when wandering is practiced on tracks that have proven their spiritual relevance. Adherents of new spiritualities thus often travel along the same tracks, to the same spots, as these represent a universal spiritual value to them. A 32-year-old man from Belgium perceived on the camino “a fusion of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ religion, an ‘ecumene’; which represents values based on the Ten Commandments, values that are important during your whole life.”²¹

It is due to this development in particular that pilgrimage researchers Coleman and Eade drew inspi-

ration from the idea of physical motion in relation to pilgrimage. Embroidering on Hervieu-Léger’s *La religion en mouvement* (1999), they identify pilgrimages as “cultures in motion”, based on the many testimonies of the spiritual and physical transformation effected by the journey to Santiago and the combination of “travel, pilgrimage and tourism” on the *camino* (Coleman & Eade 2004: 11).

Fieldwork by Albers adds the element that during the pilgrim’s journey movement in itself can release forces that are grasped by pilgrims as sacral (Albers 2007: 445–450). Apart from the fact that hiking can also actually be physically healing – as it happens, walking releases hormonal dopamine that help your body and yourself to feel better – it seems that walking also can deepen one spiritually. A female Santiago pilgrim wrote of her journey, “The essence is that you are in search of the sense and absurdity in life. I have learned to put aside my tendency toward rational logic. There is more between heaven and earth.”²² And there are many such statements, as since the 1980s a whole new genre of travel books and reflective diaries and blogs written by Santiago pilgrims has arisen, which can serve as source material yielding ample evidence for this quest (e.g., Frey 1998; Post, Pieper & van Uden 1998: 221–242). According to one of these travelers, walking the pilgrim way is “how to travel outward to the edges of the world while simultaneously journeying to the depths of your soul” (Cousineau 1998: back cover). Still another pilgrim recounted the historical depth of the trails: “On my journey westward along the *camino*, I felt I was traveling backward in time to a place where began the experiences that made me, and the human race what we have become today” (Maclaine 2000: 10). For many walkers the journey along a pilgrim route has become an individual rite of passage, or “a pilgrimage to one’s self” as Eberhart once called it (Eberhart 2006: 260). Trekking the pilgrim trails has become an inward-orientated activity for questioning oneself or giving meaning to oneself in relation to the world. But the networks’ influence is not just a personal issue, it affects European society as well. Various pilgrims stress the importance of walking pilgrim ways as a “binding” and “fraternizing” prac-

tice, which “creates mutual understanding” among themselves and *a fortiori* among the people and nations of Europe.²³

Walking the pilgrim ways today, one at the same time reaches back to the wanderings of the early missionaries, who by their *peregrinatio* gave shape to the spiritual “grand tour” of the early Middle Ages (Kötting 1950; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005). It was with their pilgrim wanderings that Christian thought was broadly dynamized for the first time and spread across Europe as culture and religion. Today this is happening anew. Hervieu-Léger formulated the useful concept of the “chain of memory and tradition”, with which we also in this case can explain how through the pilgrim-trail network European heritage and Christian values are again being revitalized and mobilized in the collective memory. The *camino* is the metaphor for Christianity which serves as an ideological and symbolic device with which European identity is created anew, and which makes individuals and European society at large aware of belonging to a religious lineage or tradition. In this way the network has become a supranational vehicle with which various connections are realized in newly constructed spiritual and heritage-based imagined communities (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 171–177; cf. Davie 2001: 465–468). These communities find inspiration from the past in creating new forms of religiosity which may also help individuals cope with their problems, insecurities and doubts (cf. Peelen & Jansen 2007), but also strongly reconfirm Christian roots and values in their public and mediatized form in contemporary multicultural European society. Just as the Dutch silent march is related to a specific incident but has more general effects, the pilgrimage also helps to resolve the concerns of the pilgrim – or better, the community – in a more general way, with regard to a process that is perceived as a sense of being uprooted as a result of trends in modern society. It is an instrumentalization of the religious past in a new ideology, which was defined by Hobsbawm as the recurrent process that he called inventing traditions or “practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and

norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). This process includes not only the performative practice of pilgrimaging, but also the new routes themselves, which for the most part have been invented and newly constructed. This development was so successful that through the heritage creation of and on the routes the pilgrim treks have become more and more disconnected from contemporary institutional religion and its troubled political and social connotations. Although some pilgrims mentioned the violent past of the Catholic Church, most recognized the importance of Christian culture and its values. As two Dutch pilgrims wrote: “Our European culture and identity are based on it”; “we have no other/better values.”²⁴

Without the extensive and widespread media coverage of the old pilgrimage practices, the cultural politics of Spain, Unesco and of the European Union, the transition from a destination-oriented ritual to seeing the journey as a pilgrimage in itself would not have been so universal, as it is now. Nowadays pilgrimages have no starting point and destination – or at any rate they are not relevant. Being detached from daily life, moving, walking, the accessibility and freedom of the ritual, time for reflection and contemplation, being in nature, and tranquility are all elements that have contributed to its success.

The success of the spiritual format related to the transnational network of pilgrims’ tracks leading to Santiago, in combination with their art, culture, antiquity and their contemporary revitalization, also brought the *camino* to the attention of supranational organizations. Because the strong dynamics of the network propagated and enhanced Christian culture in Europe, even as it had in the Middle Ages, the European Union recognized the significance of the pilgrimage ways early on. The potential of such a value-creating network, which moreover was supranational in character, dovetailed perfectly with European political ambitions (Schrire 2006: 69–72). In 1987, less than a year after Spain had become a member of the EU and – important for pilgrims – open borders had come into effect, this led to the Council of Europe proclaiming the Camino to Santiago

de Compostela the first European Cultural Itinerary. This high status was further upgraded in 1993 through its inclusion on the Unesco World Heritage list. With that listing it was established that the camino had “outstanding universal value” as a logistic system – thus not because of the static historic material culture along the route, but chiefly because of the fundamental role of the route in “encouraging cultural exchanges between the Iberian peninsula and *the rest of Europe* during the Middle Ages” – and, I would add, also after the Middle Ages. Or, as the Unesco site has it, “it remains a testimony to the power of the Christian faith among people of all social classes and from all over Europe.” This is the appreciation of intangible heritage in its performative dimensions. But every bit as much, the recognition is a canonization of the rediscovered Christian pilgrimage as an instrument of trans-European cohesive force. Quantitatively this resonates in the numbers of Santiago pilgrims, which have grown steadily from 2,905 in 1987 to 269,742 in 2010, figures which represent only the officially counted pilgrims, who indeed arrived in Santiago.²⁵ This promotion of the pilgrim ways is nowadays an ideological instrument to facilitate the stability of the European political system, a “manipulation” like that found by Christenson and Wimberley for civil religion in America (1978: 82), inspired by Christianity.

The fascination of spiritual seekers remains deep, and the engagement of the organizations behind it at such a high level that in addition to the Spanish-French camino similar routes were sought, found and, if necessary, created *ex nihilo* all over Europe (Döring [2003]2004: 54). In relation to Connerton’s view, it is clear that the images of past pilgrimage and the recollected knowledge about it are conveyed and sustained by a modern ritual performance of the new pilgrims (Connerton 1989: 39–40). The construction of a mythical network of trans-European pilgrim ways as part of the historical camino to Santiago reflects thus how Europe is imagined as a thoroughly Christian subcontinent, and how Christian heritage is being reinvented. A 58-year-old man from the Netherlands stated that the Christian camino reflects the “norms and values we cherish” in Europe.²⁶

The pilgrimage itineraries form one of the implicit answers to Europe’s confusion about religion and spirituality in general, and symbolically and practically reposition Christianity in an ecumenical or neutral way as a unifying historical factor.²⁷ This idea is splendidly explored and endorsed by Sven Grabow’s study of Europe’s cultural policy on the routes to Santiago. An assessment of the Polish and the Danish routes, for example, clearly demonstrates its missionary character and the strategy of bringing in Christian heritage to this Santiago route, as only 16 percent of the heritage along the track has a relation to Saint James (Grabow 2010: 97–99). The track thus actually revolves more around Christianity in general, and expresses an ideologically fed Christian discourse. Grabow states that the pilgrim paths, underpinned by instrumentalizing “evidence”, develop “a pan-European cultural heritage paradigm characterized by closedness, exclusivity, and homogeneity” (Grabow 2010: 108). Subsequently pilgrim treks propagate this grammar of Christianity among the public, and it is disseminated further by the media. This performative activity helps in re-establishing the community’s fading historic norms and values.

Thus, in this case too mediatization plays a central role in spreading and dynamizing the idea of trans-European spiritual paths. It is a form of Christian transnationalism, the strengthening of a pan-European identity, against the backdrop of the eclipse of transnational Christian Democracy in Europe (cf. Davie 2001: 466–67). It is also a reaction to the increasing tensions regarding the separation of church and state, and the increasing presence of Islam and other faiths in Europe.

Today, the wide interest in pilgrimage routes and the decisive role attributed to the many revitalized and new pilgrimage trails to Santiago, the *Via Francigena* to Rome, “les chemins de Saint Martin de Tours”, the Austrian “Spiritual Path”, the Dutch “Pelgrimswegen”, the “European Path of Contemplation” and many others,²⁸ have extended beyond the domain of cultural heritage and the open religious domain. The Catholic Church itself has also begun to focus more strongly on the meaning of the journey than on the cult object (Saint James) at the final des-

tion. Whereas formerly the walking journey was a necessary evil, nowadays it is seen as “tradition” or as pilgrimage heritage, and more and more frequently a pilgrimage is only seen as a “real” pilgrimage if it is completed on foot and on an “historical” way. Special Catholic and secular travel agencies have come into being to help individuals on their way. Dedicated national Saint James associations, often counting more than 10,000 members, deal with the pre- and post-camino social, practical and spiritual care of pilgrims and potential pilgrims. Not only does a pilgrimage performed in this way create community and a communal tradition, it also offers a public and performative Christian reaction to the difficulties regarding the church–state relations and the growing sensitivities about religious objects such as Islamic veils and headscarves, minarets and crosses in public or the grow-

ing presence of Islam in European society (cf. Grabow 2010: 94–95, 108). Boissevain has pointed out how the revival of rituals is linked to the coming of outsiders (1992: 9–16). This “answer” involves not only pilgrimages, but also includes a reevaluation of other Christian rituals: in some countries the procession is back on stage as a renewed “contra-Reformational” instrument for the “invisible” Christian church and as an antidote to secularization and a growing public presence of Islam.²⁹ In that regard it is not irrelevant to mention that in Catholic tradition Saint James is the matamoros – the Moor-slayer – par excellence. In this way an informal mixed initiative of civil servants from the EU in Brussels and members of the Rocio Brotherhood for a Camino Europeo is also to be understood as a resacralization mission in the symbolic space called “Europe” (Plasquy 2010: 280–281).



Ill. 2: At the expo of Mini-Europe in Brussels the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela represents Saint James and the camino. The written explanation leaves nothing to the imagination: the Santiago pilgrimage devoted the Western world collectively to religion and also united the Christian world in its fight against the Moors. (Photo: Peter Jan Margry)

The idea of the new pilgrimaging along spiritual trails was a bottom-up movement, which was adopted later by the Church and European institutions. It is therefore not surprising that in 2004, in order to emphasize the importance of pilgrimages made on foot and the visitation of holy sites even more, under the collective auspices of the bishops' conferences in Europe, the Catholic Church organized an international pilgrimage to Santiago to mark the expansion of the EU with ten new member states. John Paul II used this occasion to once again hammer away at how the "soul of Europe rests on Christian values."³⁰ Moreover, according to him, Christianization had led to the unification of Europe which then, in 2004, was sealed on the economic and political level in the context of the EU. John Paul II was deeply sensitive to how, in the post-9/11 era, a moral, religious and cultural uncertainty had crept into Europe (cf. Drury 2004). Even in countries where secularism has to a certain extent become the norm, voices are beginning to be heard arguing that religion should again be allowed to play a larger role in politics and society. The argument is that mankind continues to have a need for religion, and that it still appears to be a stabilizing and civilizing factor. Pilgrimage in its elementary form, on foot, in reflection and silence, to the sacred sites that anchor Christianity geographically and spiritually, connects with the modern needs of the European citizen, offers space for ecumenical engagement and new forms of religiosity, puts Christianity forward again, and ultimately has salutary effects.

The cultural politics of European integration show a continuous interaction with the Christian roots of the subcontinent. With regard to the creation of a European identity, Chris Shore argues (2000: 231) that the European construction is the last and greatest of the Enlightenment grand narratives and that it instrumentalized its past for that purpose. Grace Davie pointed at the religious factor in the creation of a transnational European identity (Davie 2001). The paradox in the practice is however that all the while that the routes to Santiago were being employed from the top-down and being turned into a European trademark, at the same time a new

narrative was being created that caught the popular imagination, realizing an informal bottom-up re-valuation of Europe's Christian heritage which, as a form of transnational civil religion, transcends the nation-state and nationalism (cf. Warburg 2009).³¹ The transnational is understood here as the public representation of a "European", Christian-based and inspired continent. The pilgrim roads have become a specific portmanteau construct in which contemporary European-wide needs for regained norms and values and new forms of religiosity and spirituality can be generated and provided with content. In their mediated performance they form an overarching, binding factor in a morally and religiously divided European civil society that is seeking to find common bonds for its political and sociocultural unification and which matches with the secularized pluriform and individualized ways of religious consumption and infractions of other religions.

Civil Religion in Europe

Due to sociopolitical and religious changes in Europe, in the last two decades new varieties of religious practice and experience gained importance. This has been accompanied by the emergence of a religious-political problem related to the traditional religions which have been undermined. Where the traditional religions fail to create unity among groups whose values and lifestyles differ, the "quasi" or alternative religious expressions seem capable of achieving alternative forms of community. While civil religion theories are debated and reworked, no theoretical consensus has thus far been found, although the existence of particular forms of civil religion is usually acknowledged (Bellah 1974; Bellah & Hammond 1980; Coleman 1970; cf. Gehrig 1981). In light of this agreement, and on the basis of the analysis of two recent rituals of movement and contemplation – the silent march and pilgrim treks – I have sought to uncover new manifestations of civil religion and reveal their immanent power and transcendency.

On the one hand, the "Dutch" silent marches prove to be capable of realizing political-administrative changes and contributing to the solution of

problems such as violence and insecurity, and on the other they locally fulfill an explicit coping function by which personal grief can be healed and processed, while at the same time ventilating feelings of anger and powerlessness. The “national” variant of the silent march also fulfills the latter function when, as an expression of civil religion, the march, with the aid of mediatized representations, exerts a similar unifying and therapeutic – comforting, exorcising – effect on the whole society. In this way the ritual is in concordance with civil religion’s definition as a religious ritual and symbol system that relates the role of citizens and the position of society in space, time and history to people’s conditions of ultimate existence and meaning.

The organization of the modern silent march manifests a high degree of active bottom-up involvement by citizens themselves. As a result of its mediatization the local march has become a widely known and accessible ritual. It can be characterized as part of the transcendent, universal religion of the nation that, from social-cultural and political contexts, assumes its shape in an implicit manner over Christian religion, an institutional religion that for its daily practice has been thoroughly relegated to the private sphere. The civil religion generated by the silent march – performed locally and mediatized nationally – embodies a consensus with regard to the wish and need for social cohesion, healing and recalibrated societal values that can manifest itself in a transcendent way in “an overarching sense of unity” for Dutch society.³² The conclusion of some policy makers and researchers, that the silent march is a “ritual for the lack of anything better” (Jansen 2000), is thus unwarranted. The organization of the modern silent march is characterized by a great degree of active involvement by citizens themselves. As Bellah affirmed, “every community is based on a sense of the sacred and requires a context of higher meaning” (1974: 270); the silent marches connect sensitive questions around life and death and the norms and values of Dutch society with questions of morale and religious significance. Rooted in Dutch history, through time and its chain of memory, the silent procession has reinvented itself continuously

and proved to be a qualitatively strong, expressive and effective ritual of wide appeal. At moments of collective trauma and emotional crisis this political and commemorative ritual, with a national base and the power to unite people, can generate a meaningful answer to events and feelings of unease that bring society and individual citizens into existential turmoil. Because of its widely accepted significance and its transcendent character, in secularized Dutch society silent marches can be considered as an expression of civil religion at a national level, in the way that Bellah has identified it, and in which I disagree with Philip Hammond, who finds civil religion only in an institutional context (Bellah & Hammond 1980: xiv, 41–42). The mobilizing agency of the marches fully underpins Cottle’s theory on the mediatization of rituals in cases of societal and moral unrest.

While the Dutch example demonstrates that in direct relation to societal crisis and personal existential anxieties civil religion has become manifest, my second step was to deal with the question if civil religion can also be discerned on a European level in more or less related circumstances. In that case not only the heritage discourse of the *camino* and other pilgrims’ trails is being enacted “from below”, as a follow-up to the EU’s heritage politics, which is to Schrire a search for a common ideal in the Christian pilgrimage tradition and heritage romanticism (Schrire 2006: 73–84), but so is the idea of Christian history and values. These aspects are expressed by an imagined community that has – as pilgrims or in any another respect – a specific relation to one of the many pilgrims’ trails. They form a vehicle for the need for new forms of rituality, spirituality and religiosity in modern society. As argued above, this pursuit caused a crucial change in the pilgrimage, as the journey became an end in itself and the network of pilgrims’ ways became more and more “deatholicized” and ecumenical, and functioned as an open spiritual domain for all Europeans. For many of those walking them, being in transit is a performative journey of purification and reassurance in which elements such as self-reflection, the experience of silence as an expression of the sacred, and a form given to Christian values are central. It does not matter

that individual pilgrims have different motives or ideas; what counts in this respect is the mediatized concept of pilgrimage, to which Christian-inspired idiom and image already contribute unintentionally to going on the route. The mediatization of, and the cultural politics surrounding the pilgrims' ways have thus given "pilgrimage" a meaning beyond itself, which offers a moral and spiritual frame of reference for both European society as a whole, as it comes under increasing pressure and social disintegration, and for its citizens individually. This new pilgrims' praxis is an amalgam of symbols, myths and rituals within which, in the light of history and Christian heritage, the European citizen in modern European society can find support, both with existential problems and in the search for the meaning of life, which is in conformity with the interpretation of civil religion employed here. Although not a people's movement, it is a grassroots current and has a vanguard mobilization. For Europe as a whole this practice generates a stage for open spirituality and revitalizes Christian values and meanings, and works as a civil religion, as an aid in dealing with daily life problems and as an implicit counterweight against threatening influences of non-Christian religion and culture in Europe.

Both examples of mediatized rituals, if one would categorize them as such, are largely in line with Durkheim's idea of civil religion, as grassroots initiatives and expressions of deep values and collective sentiments of a notional community. They share the fundamental element of movement performed by individuals. They are expressions of movement meaningfully rooted in history as sacralizing ritual. Both practices have been stripped of certain divisive historical elements and connotations, being transformed into more neutral rituals that fit secular (or postsecular) Western society, but retain tradition (invented or otherwise) as a legitimizing factor. This creates an accessibility in which one can participate voluntarily and individually. Arising in societies under threat, both forms – one individual and one collective – in their mediatized form represent alternative public theologies centered around an ideal of a society at peace and possessing moral unity, which

in both cases are reminiscent of the importance of the Christian tradition of which they are part. Especially after the turmoil of global terrorism and the subsequent, increasing laicization, society's need for civility has become stronger. Both rituals mirror problematic social and political relations in society. The imagined European and national communities seek cohesion, norms and values, and cultural canons and identity. These elements, related to present existential anxieties, can be found in these rituals, gaining through their mediatization a transcendental quality as civil religion.

Notes

- 1 Santiago puts civil religion and nationalism more or less on one line and concurs with Bryan Turner that the hypotheses on civil religion/nationalism are weak because of the "use of a methodology of analogy," which is neither developed nor tested empirically (2009: 400).
- 2 Thanks to Cristina Sanchèz-Carretero for her comments on an earlier version of this text, and to the anonymous reviewers of this journal.
- 3 The questionnaires make part of the project Processes of Heritagization along the Camiño of Santiago de Compostela: Route Branch Santiago-Fisterra-Muxia, a research project by the Institute of Heritage Sciences (Spanish National Research Council) in Santiago de Compostela, in collaboration with the Meertens Institute (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) in Amsterdam.
- 4 The "conditions of ultimate existence and meaning" make these rituals differ from football fan behavior or other collective manifestations of a particular form of community that in a mediatized way is not able to generate a meaningful overarching unity as civil religion.
- 5 See for example the website http://partyflock.nl/topic/1080704:Stille_tocht_voor_Arenda_Klaassens.html with comments on the 2009 silent march for a traffic victim. Accessed March 31, 2011.
- 6 Cf. Willaime (1991) where he points to the possibility of the development of a civil religion for Europe.
- 7 For example, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Catholics in Amsterdam continued to walk the former route of the famous medieval procession of the Miracle of the Sacrament, "doing the procession" as it was then called. This was an individual, notional reproduction of the original procession. Inconspicuously, and indeed often in the evening or at night, Catholics walked the route of the procession in silent prayer.
- 8 Parsons (2002: 272) pointed at the capacity of civil religion in maintaining and adapting traditions to modernity.

- 9 The initial response to Duinmeijer's death was a one-off, municipality-sponsored demonstration march. Only later, in the 1990s – the time in which the silent march became the format for such cases in the Netherlands – a silent march characteristic of others from that period was again organized on a yearly basis to mark the date of his death.
- 10 Meanwhile, in 1996, neighboring country Belgium was confronted with the horrors in the Dutroux case. The popular anger on the situation sparked off mass “white” marches of a partly different character, as these marches primarily contested the corrupt and incompetent Belgian political and judicial establishment. Although the white march movement came to an end in 1998, since 2000 the “Dutch” silent march has come into use in Belgium as a “new” ritual mourning practice.
- 11 On the term in this context see Pouwels and Vegter (2002); also, it is argued that “senseless” violence or violence without a function or reason does not exist, cf. Blok (1991) and Vasterman (2001); for silent marches related to senseless violence, cf. Stengs (2007).
- 12 <http://www.rtvoost.nl/nieuws/?nid=119519>, 21 December 2010. Accessed March 31, 2011.
- 13 <http://www.rtvoost.nl/nieuws/?nid=119519>, posting by the parents and boyfriend of Nathalie, December 21, 2010. Accessed March 31, 2011.
- 14 Quotes from: <http://www.nu.nl/algemeen/70690/venloopt-massaal-mee-in-stille-tocht.html> and <http://www.rtvoost.nl/nieuws/?nid=119519>. Accessed March 29, 2011.
- 15 <http://www.condoleanceregister.com/index.php?page=register&id=2215&pagina=21>, 6 September 2010. Accessed March 29, 2011.
- 16 See <http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/1999/05/08/Vp/03.html>. Accessed March 31, 2011.
- 17 <http://www.rtvoost.nl/nieuws/default.aspx?nid=119519>, December 21, 2010. Accessed March 31, 2011.
- 18 http://partyflock.nl/topic/1080704:Stille_tocht_voor_Arenda_Klaassens.html, December 9, 2009. Accessed March 31, 2011.
- 19 The phenomenon has spread internationally. Initially silent marches were occasional, like the silent march against poverty in London in 1996 or the silent marches by American groups against gun violence from 1996 on. Since 2000 the practice has been adopted in a more structural way in Belgium. Employees killed in the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad were remembered in 2003 in New York; in 2004 a silent march was held in Birkenau in commemoration of the Holocaust. In 2005 the United World Federation raised the idea of organizing “Silent Marches for the Innocent Victims of War” all over the world. In 2009 35,000 people held a silent march in Hannover following the suicide of the depressed soccer goalie Robert Enke, and in 2010 5,000 participated in a silent march for the 21 Loveparade victims in Duisburg, Germany.
- 20 This interest arose first in France, where the major part of old trails and their Roman and Gothic cultural heritage are situated.
- 21 Meertens Institute, online questionnaire on the camino practice, informant no. 67.
- 22 www.katholiekederland.nl/soeterbeeck/archief/2007/detail_objectID611692.html. Accessed October 16, 2010.
- 23 Meertens Institute, online questionnaire on the camino practice, informants no. 7, 47, 71, 85.
- 24 Meertens Institute, online questionnaire on the camino practice, informants no. 59, 66.
- 25 Figures given by the *Officina de Acogida al Peregrino* in Santiago, including only pilgrims on foot or bicycle who traveled more than 100 kilometers. During Santiago's Holy Years peak numbers were counted: 154,613 in 1999, 179,944 in 2004 and 269,742 in 2010. When the numbers are related to the pilgrim's motives, spirituality is rising, while the cultural incentive seems to be going down. Of the pilgrims questioned in 1999, 75% had (or also had) a cultural motivation; in 2002 this was 34%. In 2002 66% had only a religious motivation (the figure for 1999 is not clear due to different phrasing and multiple answering possibilities) (Degen 2001: 50).
- 26 Meertens Institute, online questionnaire on the camino practice, informant no. 27.
- 27 An interesting example of this development is the renaming of one part of the German camino as an ecumenical pilgrims' way: “Ein Weg, der zu Fuß bereist wird, entwickelt sich zu einer Beziehungslinie: zwischen Ost und West, zwischen Jung und Alt, zwischen Christen und Nichtchristen” (transl.: “A way which is traveled by feet, develops into a relationship line between the East and the West, between the young and the old, between Christians and non-Christians”). Accessed on March 31, 2011 at: <http://www.oekumenischer-pilgerweg.de/>.
- 28 The Contemplation Path was created for religious denominations, followers of esoteric philosophies and even agnostics (Eberhart: 157–159).
- 29 In Dutch cities, for example, the Catholic Church organizes processions to make the Church more visible in the public realm and to keep up with the growing visible presence of the Islam.
- 30 “Pope stresses Christian values of enlarged EU,” AFP, May 2, 2004, at: <http://www.rn.org/articles/15346/?&plac e=eu§ion=christianity>, accessed March 23, 2011.
- 31 Warburg (2009) also addresses the idea of the existence of transnational civil religion, as manifested in the celebration of America's national holiday (July 4) abroad, as performed by the transnational American community in Denmark.
- 32 The existence of a distinctive modern form of civil religion in the Netherlands was doubted earlier, see Laeyendecker (1986).

References

- Albers, Ineke 2007: *Heilige kracht wordt door beweging losgemaakt: Over pelgrimage, lopen en genezing*. Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.
- Bal, Leon, Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer & Corja Menken-Bekius 2001: De stille tocht van Gorinchem: Een sociologische analyse. *Praktische theologie. Nederlands tijdschrift voor pastorale wetenschappen* 28, 278–291.
- Barna, Gábor 2009: National Feasts, Political Memorial Rites – Feasts of Civil Religion? In: Ulrika Wolf-Knuts & Kathleen Grant (eds.), *Rethinking the Sacred*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University, p. 101–110.
- Bellah, Robert N. 1967: Civil Religion in America. *Daedalus* 96, 1–21.
- Bellah, Robert N. 1974: American Civil Religion in the 1970's. In: Russel E. Richey & Donald G. Jones (ed.), *American Civil Religion*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Bellah, Robert N. & Philip E. Hammond 1980: *Varieties of Civil Religion*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Bijma, Berber 2007: *Herinnering aan alle zielen: Nieuwe rituelen om de doden te herdenken*. Zoetermeer: Meinema.
- Bitton-Ashkelony, Brouria 2005: *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Blok, Anton 1991: Zinloos en zinvol geweld. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 18, 189–207.
- Boissevain, Jeremy (ed.) 1992: *Revitalizing European Rituals*. London: Routledge.
- Caspers, Charles & Peter Jan Margry 2006: *Identiteit en spiritualiteit van de Amsterdamse Stille Omgang*. Hilversum: Verloren.
- Christenson, James A. & Ronald C. Wimberley 1978: Who Is Civil Religious? *Sociological Analysis* 39, 77–83.
- Coleman, John A. 1970: Civil Religion. *Sociological Analysis* 31, 67–77.
- Coleman, Simon & John Eade (eds.) 2004: *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. London: Routledge.
- Connerton, Paul 1989: *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Cottle, Simon 2006: Mediatized Rituals: Beyond Manufacturing Consent. *Media, Culture & Society* 28:3, 411–432.
- Cousineau, Phil 1998: *The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred*. Berkeley: Conari Press.
- Davie, Grace 2001: Global Civil Religion: A European Perspective. *Sociology of Religion* 62:4, 455–473.
- Degen, Horst 2001: Jakobuspilger – statistisch gesehen. *Die Kalebasse* 30 (July 2001), 48–50.
- Döring, Alois (2003)2004: Auf Jakobs Wegen... Zur Erschließung der Jakobuspilgerwege im Rheinland und zur Aktualität der Pilgerreise. *Rheinisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 35, 54.
- Doss, Erika 2010: *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Drury, Shadia B. 2004: *Terror and Civilization: Christianity, Politics, and the Western Psyche*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Durkheim, Émile (1912)2001: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eberhart, Helmut 2006: Pilgrimage as an Example of “the past in the present”. In: Fabio Mugnaini et al., *The Past in the Present: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Catania: EdIt Press.
- Everett, Holly 2002: *Roadside Crosses in Contemporary Memorial Culture*. Denton: University of North Texas Press.
- Frey, Nancy L. 1998: *Pilgrim Stories on and off the Road to Santiago*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gamoran, Adam 1990: Civil Religion in American Schools. *Sociological Analysis* 51:3, 235–256.
- Gehrig, Gail 1981: *American Civil Religion: An Assessment*. Norwich: SSSR.
- George, Christian 2006: *Sacred Travels: Recovering the Ancient Practice of Pilgrimage*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Grabow, Sven 2010: The Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes: The Development of European Cultural Practice Policy and Practice from a Critical Perspective. *European Journal of Archeology* 13:1, 89–116.
- Hervieu-Léger, Danièle 1999: *Le pèlerin et le converti: La religion en mouvement*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Hervieu-Léger, Danièle 2000: *Religion as a Chain of Memory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hjarvard, Stig 2008: The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change. *Northern Lights* 6, 9–26.
- Hobsbawm, Eric 1983: Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In: Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–14.
- Hvithamar, Annika, Margit Warburg & Brian Arly Jacobsen (eds.) 2009: *Holy Nations and Global Identities, Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Globalisation*. Leiden: Brill.
- Jansen, Jacques 2000: Stille Omgang: Een zoeken naar samenleving: Plechtigheden en morele verantwoordiging rondom “zinloos geweld”. In: E. D'Hondt (ed.), *Zinloos geweld herdacht*. Baarn: Gooi & Sticht, pp. 65–79.
- Kierkegaard, Søren (1844)1980: *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*. Reidar Thomte (transl.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kim, Andrew E. 1993: The Absence of Pan-Canadian Civil Religion: Plurality, Duality and Conflict in Symbols of Canadian Culture. *Sociology of Religion* 54, 257–275.
- Kleger, Heinz & Alois Müller (eds.) 1986: *Religion des Bürgers: Zivilreligion in Amerika und Europa*. München: C. Kaiser.
- Kleger, Heinz & Alois Müller (eds.) 2004: *Religion des Bürgers: Zivilreligion in Amerika und Europa*. 2nd rev. ed. Münster: LIT.
- Kötting, Bernard 1950: *Peregrinatio religiosa: Wallfahrten in der Antike und das Pilgerwesen in der alten Kirche*. Münster.

- Laeyendecker, Leo 1986: Zivreligion in den Niederlanden. In: Heinz Kleger & Alois Müller (eds.), *Religion des Bürgers: Zivilreligion in Amerika und Europa*, pp. 64–84.
- Lane, Christel 1981: *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lodewijkx, Hein F.M., Gaby L.E. Kersten & Martijn van Zomeren 2008: Dual Pathways to Engage in “Silent Marches” Against Violence: Moral Outrage, Moral Cleansing and Modes of Identification. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 18, 153–167.
- Lundby, Knut (ed.) 2009: *Mediatization, Concept, Changes, Consequences*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Maclaine, Shirley 2000: *The Camino: A Journey of the Spirit*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Margry, Peter Jan 2008a: Secular Pilgrimage: A Contradiction in Terms? In: Peter Jan Margry (ed.), *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 13–46.
- Margry, Peter Jan 2008b: Stille tochten als *civil religion*. *Simulacrum, Tijdschrift voor kunst en cultuur* 17, 27–30.
- Margry, Peter Jan & Cristina Sánchez-Carretero (eds.) 2011: *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*. New York: Berghahn.
- Mathisen, James A. 1989: Twenty Years After Bellah: Whatever Happened to American Civil Religion. *Sociological Analysis* 50:2, 129–146.
- Oursel, Raymond 1963: *Les pèlerins du moyen âge*. Paris: Fayard.
- Parsons, Gerald 2002: *Perspectives on Civil Religion*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Peelen, Janneke & Willy Jansen 2007: Emotive Movement on the Road to Santiago de Compostela. *Etnofoor* 20:1, 75–96.
- Plasquy, Eddy 2010: El Camino Europeo del Rocío: A Pilgrimage towards Europe? *Journal of Religion in Europe* 3, 256–284.
- Post, Paul, Jos Pieper & Marinus van Uden 1998: *The Modern Pilgrim: Multidisciplinary Explorations of Christian Pilgrimage*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Post, Paul, Ronald L. Grimes, Albertina Nugteren, P. Pettersson & Hessel Zondag 2003: *Disaster Ritual: Explorations of an Emerging Ritual Repertoire*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Pouwels, Nelly & Laura Vegter 2002: Meindert Tjoelker en de mythe van het zinloos geweld: Een exploratief onderzoek naar het verschijnsel “zinloos geweld”. *Sociologische gids* 49, 9–25.
- Povedák, István 2009: Hungarian Civil Religion and its Heroes. In: Ulrika Wolf-Knuts & Kathleen Grant (eds.), *Rethinking the Sacred*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University, pp. 111–123.
- Rowbottom, Anne 2001: Subject Positions: Monarchy, Civil Religion and Folk Religion in Britain. In: Gábor Barna (ed.), *Politics and Folk Religion*. Szeged: University of Szeged, pp. 137–152.
- Rupp, Joyce 2005: *Walk in a Relaxed Way: Life Lessons from the Camino*. New York: Orbis.
- Santiago, Jose 2009: From “Civil Religion” to Nationalism as the Religion of Modern Times: Rethinking a Complex Relationship. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48:2, 394–401.
- Schrire, Dani 2006: The Camino de Santiago: The Interplay of European Heritage and New Traditions. *Ethnologia Europaea* 36:2, 69–72.
- Shore, Cris 2000: *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London: Routledge.
- Stengs, Irene 2007: Commemorating Victims of “Senseless Violence”: Negotiating Ethnic Inclusion and Exclusion. In: Peter Jan Margry & Herman Roodenburg (eds.), *Reframing Dutch Culture: Between Otherness and Authenticity*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 159–179.
- Van Dijk, Harmen 1999: Stille tocht na de dood van hond Boris. *Trouw*, 14 August.
- Vasterman, Peter L.M. 2001: Zinloos geweld als mediahype: De aanjagende rol van de media bij de sociale constructie van zinloos geweld. *Tijdschrift voor Bestuurskunde* 10:7, 299–310.
- Verbrugge, Ad 2004: *Tijd van onbehagen: Filosofische essays over een cultuur op drift*. Amsterdam: SUN.
- Visser, Ellen 2002: In Venlo schreeuwen de zwiigenden het uit. *De Volkskrant*, 17 October.
- Warburg, Margit 2009: Transnational Civil Religion: The Fourth of July in Denmark. In: Annika Hvithamar, Margit Warburg & Brian Arly Jacobsen (eds.), *Holy Nations and Global Identities, Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Globalisation*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 271–294.
- Webb-Mitchell, Brett 2007: *School of the Pilgrim: An Alternative Path to Christian Growth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Willaime, Jean-Paul 1991: Les religions et l’unification européenne. Grace Davie & Danièle Hervieu-Léger (eds.), *Identités religieuses en Europe*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Peter Jan Margry is an ethnologist. He studied history at the University of Amsterdam and holds a PhD from the University of Tilburg (2000). He is a senior research fellow at the Meertens Institute, a research center on culture and language of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam. His work focuses on contemporary religious culture, rituals, cultural memory and heritage. His last book is *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death* (co-edited with Cristina Sánchez-Carretero, 2011, Berghahn).
(peterjan.margry@meertens.knaw.nl)