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Journey into the Heart of the Earth

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Spiritual Tourism: Journey into the Heart of the Earth

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Abstract: From the current context of contemporary spiritualities, we wanted to approach an emerging form of tourism known as spiritual or mystical tourism. In many instances this combines many elements of cultural, religious, nature and health tourism. However, spiritual tourism differs from these on a fundamental level. It is largely located in the borders of the tourism industry in that it is managed by its own protagonists, known as spiritual seekers. The work that follows is based on a group of spiritual seekers, all Spanish. This is why the work was carried out in Spanish and the original text is presented at the bottom of each page. This research is based on qualitative methodology, field observations and in-depth interviews through which we have approached this phenomenon using the specific example of spiritual seekers: a group of their own. In order to do this, we have focused on the most important European destination in spiritual milieu: Glastonbury, also known as the mythical Avalon Island.

Keywords: Spiritual Tourism, Mystical Tourism, Contemporary Spiritualities, New Age, Glastonbury, Holy Place

Spiritual or Mystical Trip

In the great and growing world of the tourism industry, a new way of travelling has emerged. This combines many elements of cultural, religious, nature, and health tourism (Gee and Fayos-Sola 1997). A wide range of trips that include some and even all these elements has become a more mainstream option for many people, though generally, some types of trips are prioritized over others. For example, we can easily find people travelling to an Ayurveda clinic in India and while receiving medical treatment they might also practice silence, meditation, or yoga. In this way, they acquire both physical and spiritual² well-being as they begin to learn about a different culture and visit places of natural beauty.

In this work, we have focused on the study of spiritual or mystical journeys, which specialized literature often refers to as “New Age” and to their protagonists as “New Agers.” This term usually displeases the spiritual milieu since it has gained a pejorative nuance due to its identification with the commercialization of spirituality and therefore with its superficiality. However, we should recall the “New Age” movement as being based primarily on popular criticism of Western culture (Hanegraff 1998). Therefore, here we will refer to them as mystical or spiritual journeys and to their protagonists as spiritual seekers or pilgrims.³ It should be noted that this type of tourism is far from the standard religious tourism, although it is true that both can converge towards the same destination.⁴

Spiritual seekers are real tourists in the sense that they do not simply travel to see a place, go shopping, or take pictures; they participate and become part of the destination through meditation, prayer, and other rituals (Attix 2002; Ivakhiv 2003; Reisinger 2006; Timothy 2002).

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² These fitness and healing tours operate on the idea that good physical health leads to strong spiritual health. Health holidays or holistic tourism are focused on activities such as yoga and spa treatments, shaman tours, metaphysics, tarot, nature excursions, reflexology, crystal healing, meditation and aromatherapy.

³ Thus we can meet spiritual seekers and followers of a particular religion in the same place and, certainly, although the term pilgrim has been traditionally used in reference to religion in its strictest sense, in its broadest sense, according to Marion Bowman, it is used to refer to “more traditional Western Christian modelsthrough interfaith pilgrimage, Goddess pilgrimage, Celtic calendar related activity, conference/symposium attendance, earth energy-inspired journeying, one-off instances of spiritually significant co-presence (which may or may not be considered pilgrimage), and virtual pilgrimage” (Bowman 2008, 241).

⁴ To elaborate on this distinction, see Albert (2020).

Specific rituals and activities, such as attending seminars and workshops, praying with Tibetan monks at a monastery in the Himalayas, or undergoing a ceremonial death and rebirth inside one of the pyramids in Egypt are common examples. It is a common practice to leave crystals, stones, flowers, candles and other offerings in places you consider magical or sacred. In this way, the spiritual seeker seeks a commitment to his inner self, a connection with the self, and a reconciliation of the inner discord through profound personal and spiritual experiences (Smith 2003; Timothy 2002). These experiences are often guided by experienced specialists: shamans, monks, nuns or other revered persons, who teach people to slip into a deeper dialogue with nature, to receive Earth's powers, to live their lives in the best way (Hooper 1994), to feel their strength and be healed, etc. (Albert 2020).

Since the end of the last century, the proliferation of many guidebooks and websites to lead people to Earth's sacred sites has turned these sites into true pilgrimage destinations (Attix 2002). This is accompanied by a rich and abundant literature within which we want to make a special mention of the work of John Michell (1987) which refers to a network of lines that connect places around the world considered as centres of natural magic used by ancient people (Andres 2000; Attix 2002; Johansen and Barclay 1987). Within those we can find Glastonbury, the place where the work presented here has been performed and to which magical powers are granted (Roberts 1977). The circulation of spiritual seekers through these places who, as Adrian Ivakhiv points out, drift from place to place seeking longer-term spiritual connections; gives rise to the development of networks of healing centres, spiritual communities, retreats, and places of New Age commerce. Glastonbury is one of the best examples we can find (Ivakhiv 2003), as it possesses just the right elements to be considered a magical and spiritual centre, thus becoming a place of pilgrimage where its most significant characteristic lies in the diversity of people who come to this small population of the south of England, with different interests, objectives and expectations among the spiritual seekers; to which we must add the visitors and tourists that the city also receives.

The work presented here is the result of a research stay of six months at the University of Bristol (England), 40 km away from Glastonbury, during 2018. In this period, in-depth interviews and field observations have been carried out on some people organizing trips and visits to the "mythical land of Avalon." The work that follows is based on a group of spiritual seekers, all Spanish. This is why the work was carried out in Spanish and the original text is presented at the bottom of each page. Throughout the article, Glastonbury and Avalon will be mentioned interchangeably, and it should be noted that we are referring to the same place; a small town in the south of England in Somerset County. The mythical land of Avalon lies in Glastonbury, the destination of many spiritual seekers and center of pilgrimage with a long tradition.

In the following pages, the attractions of a place like Glastonbury, considered a sacred center and the heart chakra of the Earth, will be presented. It has become a meeting place of spiritual seekers in tune with the contemporary spiritualities that for decades have been expanding throughout the world. Our goal in this work is to show how this sacred destination is configured as a place of; i) knowledge and, more importantly, of reconfiguration of beliefs; ii) to share their own spiritual experiences, regardless of what they are. In the third section we will focus on the description of a group of spiritual seekers who travel on their own and who are not defined as belonging to any particular spiritual cult. In this way, we will be able to show their main motivations and characteristics, in accordance with the objectives set. Finally, we will provide brief conclusions.

Glastonbury's Attractions

Since the 1970s, with the revival of the Glastonbury Festival in the nearby village of Pilton, “Glastonbury has become a meeting point for hippies, anarchists, anti-capitalists and the Green. Indeed, along with entertainment this kind of manifestation has been often used to verbalize that call for respect for nature and for a ‘spiritual awakening’ shared by all these groups” (Aubrey and Shearlaw 2005, 22). In this context, with the arrival of alternative young people, Glastonbury becomes a spiritual and religious center to the point of acquiring the status of being the most widely known magical and sacred center of Europe that, together with Iona and Findhorn, is part of the so-called “energetic triangle of Great Britain.” Such places of power are considered an authentic place of contemporary pilgrimage (Bowman 1993, 2008, 2012) because they are a “powerful tool of personal transformation and place of pilgrimage” (Ivakhiv 2007, 267) for many of the people visiting the place.



Figure 1: Glastonbury Morris Dancing on the Market Cross for Samhain
 Source: Albert Rodrigo 2018

In the case of Glastonbury, it is worth noting some of its main attractions such as the hill of the Tor Tower, considered a place of worship since prehistoric⁵ times, where the ancient Celts left their mark and where the current worshippers of the Goddess⁶ continue to celebrate their seasonal rituals. Glastonbury is also known for the richness of its waters; two springs, the White Spring and the Chalice Well,⁸ flow there and both of them are highly valued because of the healing properties attributed to their waters. Not in vain, the city's largest center of alternative medicine is located there. Its management organization, Chalice Well Trust (n.d.), organizes healing weekends and seminars on non-European medical practices (mostly oriental) which include, for example, aromatherapy, gong baths, shiatsu, reiki and spiritual healing. Because the

⁵ According to the spiritual orientation, the ancient Isle of Avalon was a site of prehistoric worship and mystical tradition that, arguably, can be traced as far back as the Atlante, an era of 10,000 BC (Mann 2004), when the Atlanteans are said to have used the Tor Tower as a natural temple after their own temples had been destroyed by the sea.

⁶ Druidism was replaced by Christian doctrines and beliefs. “Modern Druidism represents the eighteenth-century revival of the ancient order, which centers on pre-Christian gods and goddesses, and wherein the sun is seen to represent divine light. Over the years, many splinter groups have formed several factions of Druidism, and today there are approximately 10,000 Druids in Great Britain” (English 2002, 8).

water is reddish in color, due to its high iron content, it has also been claimed by modern Neopagans as symbolizing the menstrual blood of the Goddess and a representation of the divine female. “Glastonbury has a strong female energy; there is a strong emphasis on the divine female” (Sepp 2014, 46).

Another of its emblematic places is Glastonbury Abbey, built during the first century and considered as the first Christian Church in Great Britain, where the first Christians guided by Joseph of Arimathea arrived (Capt 2008). Nowadays, you can visit the ruins⁷ of a large medieval abbey linked to legendary Arthurian characters. In this sense, it is interesting to note Marion Bowman’s reflection on how the beliefs about significant figures connected to Celtic myths, that of King Arthur and Brigid for example, have been revived, recycled, and manipulated (Bowman 2012).



Figure 2: Lighting of Market Cross Christmas Tree
Source: Albert Rodrigo 2018

High Street is the main street of the city, full of shops, alternative healing centers and establishments where all types of objects can be acquired, as well as services related to contemporary spiritualities beyond those related to the place. This location is considered an “authentic paradise” for the spiritual seeker, since you can find all kinds of objects and services related to the spiritual sphere.

⁷At the beginning of the twentieth century, “the architect and freemason Frederick Bligh Bond, who was in contact with Mr. Goodchild’s group, uncovered several of the Abbey’s ruins by means of ‘automatic writing’—the unconscious channelling of words provided by a ‘super-human’ force through an individual mind intrance. In that case, it was the spirit of a monk of the Abbey who was said to have spoken to Bligh Bond, directing his excavations” (Hopkinson-Ball 2007, 58).

Perhaps the most striking feature of this small Somerset town is the extent to which it acts as a magnet for an ever-increasing variety of pilgrims, with varied forms of pilgrimage and multiple understandings of what pilgrimage might mean or be. Because a variety of people come to Glastonbury with assorted interests, aims, and expectations; a spectrum of pilgrimage activity can be seen here, from more traditional Western Christian models, through interfaith⁸ pilgrimage, Goddess pilgrimage, Celtic calendar-related activity, conference/symposium attendance, earth energy-inspired journeying, one-off instances of spiritually significant co-presence (which may or may not be considered pilgrimage), and virtual pilgrimage. (Bowman 2008, 241)

All of these activities act as a symbol of the many spiritual overlays that coexist in Glastonbury and have resulted in a vibrant and varied industry of spiritual services that include guides and specialists of very diverse draughts. In addition, it is on this main street where the two new pagan communities, the Order of Druids of Glastonbury and the Goddess Movement, are located. The latter has gained remarkable popularity which is evident in the activities they carry out. Each summer since 1996, “there is the Goddess Conference and its Goddess Procession, with participants following an effigy of the Goddess, singing Goddess chants and bearing banners with images of female deities” (Bowman 2008, 250). Certainly, Neo-paganism is one of the trends within the contemporary spiritualities that, according to Wouter Hanegraaff, has become the major trend within the New Age movement (Hanegraaff 1998).

Those Who Reach Glastonbury

In contemporary spiritualities, people find themselves in a perpetual spiritual journey of discovery that is reinforced and nourished with the visit to sacred places in which they open themselves to new experiences and perspectives. In this section we have been using information gathered in our fieldwork during the months of July to December 2018. During this period, especially during the months of August and September, we made observations in different strategic locations of the town of Glastonbury (High Street, Abbey, Chalice Well, Tor Tower, and Pilgrims’ Inn) where we also interviewed different people, some of them were visiting the place and some of them lived there. These were chosen according to their availability, that is, the time they were willing to spend talking about their experiences during the trip. The people most willing to do so were those of Spanish nationality. Due to my status as a Spaniard, they seemed to like to meet a fellow countryman with whom to share their journey. Interviews were recorded after asking for permission and pseudonyms have been used in order to guarantee the anonymity of all interviewees.

Most of the people who come to Glastonbury describe the place as powerful, magical, sacred, or very spiritual. They understand it as a deeply spiritual place filled with powerful energy since the night of time, referring to the ancient Celts and their druids. Some of the informants we have encountered in our field work openly define themselves as Pagans, Christians (who may be Anglicans or Roman Catholics), Sufis, etc. During their stay at Glastonbury, they visit and worship places and entities in accordance with their beliefs, although they might also visit places associated with other beliefs. There seems to be an atmosphere of deep respect for the diversity of manifestations. Thus, we want to highlight the words of one of the interviewees who claimed to be deeply influenced by Pagan beliefs and who had come to Glastonbury to “meet and celebrate the Goddess.” However, during her journey, she found an unknown Christianity. She described it as follows:

⁸“On a summer weekend, the Abbey grounds might be full of Anglicans, if it is a Saturday, or Roman Catholics, if it is a Sunday, for both groups celebrate Mass there as the highlight of their annual pilgrimages” (Bowman 2008, 247).

I don't know what to tell you, because I feel Pagan, although, of course, I was baptized as a Catholic Christian, but then I didn't practice Catholic religion at all. In fact, I ran away from this religion and looked for other things. But here, when you visit Mary Magdalene's chapel and they tell you about her time here, her Christian apostolate, I feel closer to my Christian origins, so I don't mind being also Christian.⁹ (Juana, August 27, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

It is precisely this redefinition of beliefs that allows the spiritual seeker to belong to different beliefs without any hindrance, so he can integrate the knowledge and practice of different mystical traditions in his experience of spirituality. Such possibility is very much present in the discourse of the spiritual atmosphere,

in the end the essence is the same, there are many ways to get to the same point, and when you understand that, you do not care about the path others take, you respect it deeply, because the important thing is to make way, and you can share many moments, it is wonderful.¹⁰ (Juana, August 27, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)



Figure 3: Visit to Tor Tower
Source: Albert Rodrigo 2018

⁹“pues no sé qué decirte, porque yo me siento pagana, aunque claro, a mí me bautizaron como cristiana católica, pero después yo no he practicado para nada la religión católica. Es más, he huido de ella y he buscado otras cosas. Pero aquí, cuando visitas la capilla de María Magdalena y te cuentan su paso por aquí, su apostolado cristiano, pues me siento más cerca de mis orígenes cristianos, así no me importa también ser cristiana.”

¹⁰“al final la esencia es la misma, hay muchos caminos para llegar al mismo punto, cuando comprendes eso, te da igual el camino que lleven los demás, lo respetas profundamente, porque lo importante es hacer camino, y puedes compartir muchos momentos, es maravilloso.”

The experiential aspect of pilgrimage to Glastonbury is thus varied and complex, for people come seeking a variety of experiences. Marion Bowman describes these experiences as

from *communitas* with fellow believers to connectedness with the universe; for healing for themselves or for the planet; to discover the Goddess or to find their true selves; to benefit from or to enhance earthly energies. And of course, in the context of integrative spirituality, they might do a number of these simultaneously. (Bowman 2008, 275).

In this way, those who arrive to Glastonbury come to what they perceive as a special place to connect, celebrate and share the magic of the place and themselves, regardless of whether or not they adhere to any particular spiritual tradition. They can do this in different ways; in groups, on their own or by joining a tour, and all of these options are viable. In this section, we will focus on one of the options chosen by the spiritual seekers to reach this magical destination. The case presented here will be that of a group travelling on their own. From our point of view, it is not only revealing to know what motivates these spiritual seekers to go to Glastonbury but also to see how they decide to do so.

Travelling as a Group

We will focus on the modality of travelling as a group. Specifically, we are going to focus on a group we interviewed and accompanied during their passage through the sacred city. Isabel¹¹ arrived from Spain in this way, in a group of eight people between 35 and 65 years of age—two of them were a couple and the rest of the group was formed by women—who knew each other from the spiritual milieu in which they “participated in workshops of family constellations, shamanic trips and group meditations.” One of the members of the group, Cecilia, had visited Glastonbury and its surroundings years ago and was longing to return and to share the experience, because, in her own words, “it is a very special place, I wanted more, it’s like I did not have enough time.”¹²

However, except for Cecilia, the rest of the group had never been to Glastonbury. Isabel confesses that she hadn’t even heard of this mythical place,

I really didn’t know anything about Avalon. I had no idea. I let myself go with the flow. Cecilia, who already knew the place, and Susana, who gets by with English, were the ones who organized it. Cecilia planned the route and we all thought it was right, well you know, some more than others [laughter]... since we didn’t know where we were going, or at least I didn’t. Susana booked the rooms and then we rented a van to move.¹³ (Isabel, September 14, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

In this case, almost the entire group had known each other for a few years. Although not many, they have shared such personal and intense experiences, in the workshops of family constellations, for example, that have brought them much closer together. Thus, they refer to themselves as “sisters”, “known souls”, “soul sisters”, or “life companions.” This journey was raised as one more experience to share on their spiritual path of knowledge and healing. It is important to highlight that the spiritual experience is always accompanied by aspects of knowledge and healing. Isabel says that since she “discovered” spirituality, her life changed. Her horizons have broadened because “spirituality is not just about going to pray,” besides,

¹¹ It is a pseudonym name, as well as the other names that appear.

¹² “es un lugar muy especial, me quede con ganas de más, es como que me faltó tiempo.”

¹³ “en verdad que no sabía nada de Avalon, no tenía ni idea la verdad, yo me deje llevar totalmente, Cecilia que ya conocía el lugar y Susana que era la que se manejaba con el inglés lo organizaron. Cecilia planeo la ruta que a todas nos pareció bien, bueno ya sabes, a unas más que a otras, jajajaja... como no sabíamos a dónde íbamos, yo por lo menos. Y Susana reservo las habitaciones y luego pues, alquilamos una furgoneta para desplazarnos.”

spirituality is knowing you, it has helped me a lot to know myself, to know who I am. I'm discovering it, and then, I'm healing my wounds. But indeed, indeed... from the feeling of your heart. And that's very different from what I was told, and from what your head tells you too.¹⁴ (Isabel, September 14, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

Isabel says that she has been practicing yoga for years, which was precisely what opened the door to her spiritual path. It was in that moment when she began to meet people interested in these subjects, and where she began to experience "sensations such as calm, heart openness, and feeling at peace" in her own body. Thus, over time she has learnt different mystical techniques and traditions, although she confesses not to have delved into any of them. She has been interested in all of those that she has found and that is how she perceives it in the people she has been meeting in the spiritual milieu.

Well, most of the people I've met, they are a little interested in everything, like me, because each one of them brings you something different. Try it, practice it and see how it works for you. If you feel good you continue and if you don't, you let it go. Another thing is the masters, the ones who teach, those ones are rooted in their teachings in concrete.¹⁵ (Isabel, September 14, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

So, going on a trip for a few days is a very pleasant activity and "with such pleasant company it is always worth it," says Isabel. She explains that she was not going with any predetermined intention, nor was she looking for anything in particular. Therefore, she had no expectations beyond getting to know a new special place and sharing a new experience with her group, her "life companions." However, she claims to have made a different journey, in fact, she says she had never made such a journey,

For me it has been... because above all it has been feeling, feeling, and feeling. I have felt everything, everything... so many things. This is to feel. This is wonderful. It is a special place, without a doubt. I'm floating and I mean really floating... don't you see how everything vibrates? Don't you feel it? Because since I've been here, I've been staring at people I've never seen in my life, with knowing expressions, saying gosh, you can feel it too!¹⁶ (Isabel, September 14, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

She adds that the experiences of this spiritual journey are different from the ones she had shared before with the group. In the other cases, they were looking for more specific experiences. It is also true that the rest of the group had more knowledge, more information about where they were going, and not all of them had made the "connection" they expected or would have liked to make. On the other hand, to be infused with legends and characters such as King Arthur, the fairy Morgana, Joseph of Arimathea, or Mary Magdalene, transports you to a distant time that, simultaneously, becomes very present in Glastonbury.

¹⁴"la espiritualidad es conocerte, a mí me ha ayudado mucho a conocerme, a saber quién soy. Lo voy descubriendo y entonces, vas curando tus heridas. Pero de verdad, de verdad. Desde el sentir de tu corazón. Y eso es muy distinto a lo que me habían dicho, a lo que te dice tu cabeza también."

¹⁵"bueno, yo, la mayoría de las personas que he conocido, pues se interesan un poco por todo, como yo, porque cada una de ellas te aporta algo distinto. Lo pruebas, lo prácticas y ves cómo te funciona. Si te va bien continuas, y si no lo dejas. Otra cosa son los maestros, los que enseñan, esos sí que están arraigados a sus enseñanzas en concreto."

¹⁶"Para mí ha sido...pues sobre todo sentir, sentir y sentir. He sentido todo, de todo...tantas cosas. Esto es para sentir. Esto es maravilloso. Es un lugar especial, sin duda ninguna. Estoy flotando, pero flotando, flotando...tu no ves ¿cómo vibra todo? ¿Tú no lo sientes? Porque desde que he llegado no he dejado de toparme con miradas, de gente que no he visto en mi vida, con miradas de complicidad, de decir, ¡ostras, tú también lo sientes!"

It's good to know and get acquainted with everything you find there, because...it's very, very...you really live it. I knew nothing of the Goddess, of the Druids, of Mary Magdalene...Anyway, I liked everything I've learnt. I don't know, I think when I come back, I'll look for more information.¹⁷ (Isabel, September 14, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

We agree that these ancient sacred sites are not simply dead relics from a bygone era. Nevertheless, they keep different traditions “alive,” which allows people to practice them. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the range of objects and services available in the place. As Isabel points out: “Glastonbury is a place where you go shopping, it's brimming, it's a delight, you can find everything.”¹⁸

During the trip, the group has practiced silence and meditation, sometimes together and sometimes alone. This has helped them to connect with the place and with themselves. Isabel adds and emphasizes that for her, it has been a very special trip, unlike any other.

I feel great, full of love, happiness, peace, it's...it's awesome. Feeling this is wonderful. When we went to visit the castle...back home we stopped in the forest and reached the waterfall. What a wonder! I felt presences, like the forest was talking to me, pulling me in and encapsulating me, I have no words.¹⁹ (Isabel, September 14, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo)

In the case we have presented here, in contrast to other groups, they did not attend activities (talks and concerts mainly, but also meditations, processions and “festive” celebrations) or hired services, which are plentiful and diverse within the city (tarot reading, interpretation of Akashic records and cleansing of different types). Isabel claims that “on a four-day trip you do not have time for everything.” However, in our field work we have had the chance to speak to Juan and Yolanda, a young couple. Yolanda is Spanish and Juan is from Guatemala, and over the past couple of years they have been offering their ceremonial services to people or groups who come to Glastonbury on their own and want to perform some “ritual” of connection or cleansing, as is described “yes, we work at the White Spring where we do mainly harmonization of male and female energy, with water we perform a very powerful ritual, of balance and compensation. We also make connections with the Goddess.”²⁰ (Juan and Yolanda, August 18, 2018, interview with Maria Albert Rodrigo).

It's interesting to note that the group to which we have referred has not mentioned any particular date while making the trip, since they do not adhere to any particular Cosmo vision of those that can be celebrated in Glastonbury. They are simply spiritual seekers and Glastonbury turns out to be a sacred and magical place where they can connect with the energies of the Earth. Coleman and Eade (2004, 18), in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, identify in contemporary pilgrimage “diverse processes of sacralization of movement, persons and/or places.” Such concepts have resonance for the varied manifestations of pilgrimage in Glastonbury for, as we shall see, people not only travel purposefully to Glastonbury to experience and participate in the sacred, but also self-consciously to help activate the sacred and to sacralize the landscape. “Whether reclaiming, reactivating, or creating the sacred, people come

¹⁷“esta bien conocer y familiarizarse con todo lo que allí te encuentras, porque...esta muy, muy...en verdad lo vives. Yo no sabía nada de la ni de la Diosa, de los druidas, de María Magdalena....En fin, me ha gustado todo lo que he aprendido. No sé, creo que cuando vuelva buscare más información.”

¹⁸“Glastonbury no deja de ser un sitio donde vas de tiendas, está lleno, son una delicia, encuentras de todo.”

¹⁹“me siento genial, llena de amor, de felicidad, de paz, es, es impresionante. Sentir esto es maravilloso. Cuando fuimos a visitar el castillo...de vuelta paramos en el bosque y llegamos hasta la cascada ¡Qué maravilla! Sentí presencias, como que el bosque me hablaba, tiraba de mí, me envolvía, no tengo palabras.”

²⁰“sí, a veces hacemos trabajos en el White Spring, allí sobre todo hacemos armonización de la energía masculina y femenina, con el agua se hace un trabajo muy potente, de equilibrio, de compensación. También hacemos trabajos de conexión con la Diosa.”

to Glastonbury to ‘participate in sacred-making activities...according to paradigms given by the belief systems to which they are committed’ (Anttonen 2000, 281)” (Bowman 2008, 245).

Conclusions

Since the middle of the last century, the world has been experiencing a progressive process of continuous change. In this context, the Western world has looked back to its own past and other cultures searching for other philosophies and worldviews as a way of returning to its origins, through which it reconfigures its own beliefs beyond established norms. In this context of contemporary spiritualities, a new way of travelling arises in search of magical and sacred places where the powerful yet subtle forces that inhabit them can be felt. One of these places is the mythical island of Avalon, located in Glastonbury, a small town in the south of England that stands out as a place where powerful yet subtle energies have appeared throughout history (from the ancient Celts to the present day, and even for some, dating back to the ancient Atlantean civilization). This mystical journey is posed as another possibility within the multiple activities that the current spiritual seekers perform in order to connect with the place and the self. In order to do this, they practice silence and meditation, but also ceremonies and rituals of reconciliation, reconnection, or cleansing. We have shown the example of a group of spiritual seekers who do not adhere to any of the spiritual traditions that are manifested more forcefully in Glastonbury—Neo-paganism and Christianity—but seek to familiarize themselves with them, to learn from them, and even in some cases to reconcile with them in order to continue on their own spiritual path.

This article is presented as the result of one of the first investigations related to the main characteristics of spiritual or mystical travel. Spiritual travel is a new kind of tourism that works outside the traditional tourism industry and is often managed by some spiritual seekers who, based on their past spiritual experiences, have become specialists in organizing these kinds of trips. We can find them selling a variety of esoteric and spiritual products in their stores, or offering different services—such as tarot readings, cleansings, rituals, etc.—conferences or periodical ceremonies. In the future, it is in our interest to investigate the economical and occupational aspects related to this phenomenon in more depth, as well as its real implications in the tourism industry.

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