Talking Place: Ritual and Reciprocity at Holy Wells and Mass Stones in the Republic of Ireland

Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien,
Pacific Lutheran University

Abstract

This article is an analysis of the role of holy wells and mass stones in the Republic of Ireland. The piece is based on participant observation and ethnographic interviews with parishioners and local historians from Bantry, in West Cork, as well as some of its surrounding communities. Through an analysis of the ritual activities that surround such places, and the way in which these activities help to shape a relationship between people and place, the essay argues that while places are imbued with cultural and historical meanings, they are experienced through embodied rituals that affirm an intrinsically reciprocal relationship between people and place. During an era of rapid social, economic and cultural changes, holy wells and mass rocks remain fixed features in the landscape where local people connect to place, to their heritage, and to a sense of what it means to be Irish. (1)

1. Holy Wells and Mass Rocks as Sacred Places

This article addresses the ritual activities that accompany contemporary veneration of holy wells and mass rocks in the southwest of the Republic of Ireland. These places share in a long history of sacrality, going back to pre-Christian spirituality, early Christian folk religion, and, as isolated hidden locales, they played a key role in the resistance to English suppression of Irish Catholicism in the 17-19th centuries. Such a complex history certainly shapes Irish experience of these places. And yet, while this historical significance is vital to understanding the contested nature of wells and mass rocks, this article contends that their significance cannot be fully understood without considering them in light of the phenomenological experience that comes of ritually participating in the place. Indeed, ritual activities such as pilgrimage to holy wells, or attending mass at a mass rock provide a valuable arena for reflecting upon the relationship between people and place. Through an analysis of these locales and the rituals that surrounds them, it becomes evident that it is a reciprocal relationship that transforms both people and place: places take shape through the presence of people's ritual activity, and people themselves are transformed through their interaction with a storied landscape imbued with agency, power, and significance. But before such an analysis can be conducted, it is worth considering just what *being there* might entail. A brief description of one such experience, which follows, will suffice for now.

Field Notes, Lady's Well, Bantry, County Cork, 15 August, 2005:

We have met this evening at the West Lodge Hotel, just outside of town on the main road. When about 30 people have gathered, several women decide that it is time to begin. Leading the way across the busy highway, the women begin praying the rosary, their prayers matching the pace of their walk. The mood immediately shifts as these women—mothers themselves—begin their prayers to the Mother of God. Men and younger people trail along behind, chatting and quietly joking amongst themselves. We follow a single lane road for some while, then set off across a rugged footpath that leads us through fields, past ruined cottages covered in fuchsia and ivy, and within sight of Bantry Bay. Around me, people are marveling at the view, while those new to the journey are gasping at the unexpected challenge of the walk. We have been walking for some time, when I glance back: I'm

stunned to see that nearly 200 people are following behind us. Where have they come from? The line of walkers seems endless. Many are praying the rosary, others just walking, or chatting quietly with their friends and family. After a healthy distance, we pause to help each other over a stile, and down a steep descent into a hollow.

We climb down into an open space, sheer grassy walls on each side, and immediately, things feel different. This place feels special. The air almost shimmers here. The sound is different—and I quickly remember I've been told the hollow has special acoustics. We're warm from the walk, and many of us are eyeing the well, thinking how nice the cool water would taste, and wondering if it is appropriate to go for a drink. The smell of the ocean and livestock gives one a sense of being truly out of doors. The ground is soft, squishy, forgiving. The space itself feels protective, encircling, and the air is warm, carrying the sound aloft, but also keeping it securely within the space. The well is at the center of the hollow, with the mass stone just behind it. Local caretakers have covered the mass stone and the rock-face behind it with bunches of hydrangeas, and above, looking down over the well and the hollow below, is a statue of the Virgin Mary, freshly painted. One can't help but feel watched over.

For the next half hour, more and more people continue to gather, until the priest welcomes those who have come, and a small choir begins to sing. With the help of the amazing natural acoustics, their voices travel easily throughout the hollow, and even those at the far edges of the gathering can easily hear. The priest then reminds us of the historical significance of the site: during the Penal Times when the English sought to suppress the Catholic faith this was a place their ancestors had come to hear the mass and pray, and, that long before that, for untold generations, their ancestors had come to this place seeking spiritual strength. He continues, explaining that being here is an important part of being Irish. The priest comments on the beauty of the place, on how surprised and pleased he is with the hundreds of parishioners who have come today, and concludes, reiterating the historical significance of the place. After mass, many go to the well, taking a drink of the water, or filling small containers they have brought for the purpose. As we do so, the priest welcomes us, thrilled that my fiancé and I have come all the way from Seattle for the event. As the service concludes, we greet those people we have not seen for some time, many of whom eagerly share with us more stories of English persecution, of the pagan origins of the well, and of miraculous healings that have taken place there. Others take advantage of the moment to "do the rounds," walking in a clockwise circle up and around the well (taking care to put their foot in an indent in the rock, a "footprint" left by a saint), to bless themselves with the water, and to put a coin or two in the well. As parishioners walk past the well, they step over a stone marking the grave of a priest, a priest that some say was murdered by the English for saying mass at the well. We leave by a different route, walking up to stand beside the statue of Mary, who is looking down, as she does, over the hollow, and across to the Bay. It becomes clear how sheltered the place is, how one could see any intruders long before they could see you. As we walk back to town, we pass blackberry bushes full of fruit, and we eagerly help ourselves. We are all joking, laughing, a long line of extended family and friends, teasing each other as we walk back home, and looking forward to our supper.

2. Theoretical Positioning: Thinking About Place

Before going on to discuss the ritual activity surrounding this site and others like it, it is worth reflecting further on the nature of place, ritual, and pilgrimage in the construction of collective identity. In the paragraphs that follow I will briefly outline a variety of theoretical approaches to considering ritual engagement with place, what I've labeled Inscriptive, Contestational, Processual, Phenomenological, and Post-Colonial, before articulating the approach I feel to be most useful in reflecting on holy wells and mass stones in the Irish Republic. I suggest a view that draws upon all of these perspectives while emphasizing a reciprocal exchange between people and place. The implications of this discussion are to complicate straightforward notions of place as cultural projection, and to consider the ways in which places participate in their creation.

Inscribed Places

The notion that places are the product of cultural construction, that place is a blank canvass upon which cultures impose meaning, is an important one for considering the role of place in collective identity. From this perspective, people's histories, politics, ethics, values, and memories become implanted in locales, and these locales, as repositories rich with stories, "speak" to people, reminding them of the very values that they have brought with them. In his book *Taking Place*, Jonathon Z. Smith called attention to the political context within which sacred places take shape. David Chidester and Edward Linenthal followed Smith's approach as they sought to resituate

sacred places in their historic and cultural contexts (Chidester & Linenthal 1995). John Eade and Michael Sallnow reflected a similar perspective in their work on Christian pilgrimage, arguing that "it is the meanings and ideas which officials, pilgrims, and locals invest in the shrine—meanings and ideas which are determinately shaped by their political and religious, national and regional, ethnic and class backgrounds—which help to give the shrine its religious capital." In this light, a shrine can be seen as a "religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices" (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 15). Put more succinctly: "The sacred center, then ... appears as a vessel in which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers, and aspirations (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 15). Places are products of history, of the "perceptions of and values attached to landscape," which "encode values and fix memories to places" and so "become sites of historical identity"(Stewart and Strathern 2003: 1).

Contested Places

The view of place as "religious void," empty vessel, or *tabula rasa* filled or inscribed by culture has been useful for highlighting the role of places as locations of contested meanings, linked to global and local power relations, as well as the heterogeneous nature of identity. If places are the products of historical memory, if they are constructed, inscribed, or imbued with the meanings that people bring to them, it follows that the meanings brought to a place will be varied and complex, and reflective of the political concerns brought to them. As Stewart and Strathern argue: "memory and place, via landscape, can be seen as crucial transducers whereby the local, national, and global are brought into mutual alignment, or as providing sites where conflicts between these influences are played out," and where "historically defined power relations ... are both imposed and resisted at local levels" (Stewart and Strathern 2003: 2-3).

According to many theorists, it is this contested nature of places and pilgrimages that make them sacred, because they are locations where competing political voices vie for dominance (Lane 2001: 44). Eade and Sallnow explain that Christian pilgrimage: "is above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and communitas, and for counter-movements towards separateness and division" (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 2-3, 10-11). Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary M. Crain reflect this perspective in their work on ritual and identity, when they argue that ritual be seen as "a series of cultural performances in which ... groups advance diverse claims which affirm, negotiate, and/or challenge particular identities" (Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998: 137). Here, ritual is a "contested space for social action and identity politics—an arena for resistance, negotiation, and affirmation" (Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998: 2).

At the heart of these negotiations and affirmations is the emplacement of identity, for place and landscape is "fundamental to a person's or community's sense of belonging and identity." And the creation of identity "through shared experiences and events, shared memories and histories" can be seen as "an act of ritualization" (Smith 2003: 73). Collective ritual and pilgrimage are a space for identity politics because they construct a people's sense of their place, and their location within it. Hence, from these perspectives, the sacrality of the place is derived from its contested nature, and from its participation in collective memory. The place itself is little more than religious void, empty vessel, or blank page, before it is imbued with the histories and memories of the people who inhabit it.

Processual Places

This notion of a landscape inscribed or imbued with meaning has been complicated by scholars such as Eric Hirsch and Michael O'Hanlon, who have proposed a processual view of landscape, arguing that landscape is continually in process as individuals negotiate *foreground* (their concrete, experience of the place), and *background* (their ideal or imagined sense of the place) (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995). Hirsch and O'Hanlon, call for a "theorization of landscape as cultural process that is dynamic, multi-sensual, and constantly oscillating" between lived emplacement and social ideal (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995: 6). Pei Yi-Guo locates this notion of landscape and ritual as processual when arguing that landscape is "not the inscription of memory or encoding of memories, but the *process* of remembering." In contrast to the "Western conceptualization" that sees "landscape as a fixed, objectifiable and measurable description of a surface," processual notions see "landscape as something that is affected by the project of its representation and remembrance, as part of a process of remembering." The "local environment" is seen "as a lived space, as a cultural process" (Yi-Guo 2003: 200, emphasis mine).(2)

Processual theorists also emphasize the role of the body and movement within pilgrimage and ritual interaction with place. An examination of the creative interaction between people and place requires that one return to the body, and that one ask what it means to be embodied in a place. In their 2004 work on pilgrimage, Simon Coleman and John Eade sought to shift the focus from the *place* of pilgrimage to the physical *processes* of mobility and movement.

This work invites us to reflect upon ritual action, particularly when it is "deliberately shaped for expressive and communicative, rather than simply instrumental, purposes" (Coleman and Eade 2004: 10). Rather than place, they argue, "the essence of the journey is movement" (Coleman and Eade 2004: 14). For Bente Nikolaisen, "place is about doing as much as it is about being," and it is bodily movement that contributes to the on-going process of remembering a self in place (Nikolaisen 2004: 98).

Phenomenological Places

The invitation by processual theorists to consider bodily engagement within the experience of place gains further nuance when considered in light of phenomenological approaches to place. From these perspectives, while landscapes are certainly mediated through "memories and associations that feed into ideology" they are nonetheless "based primarily in subjectivity and experience" (Stewart and Strathern 2003: 9). The phenomenological approach allows us the opportunity to recall our embodied experience, the way in which *being* in the place, and the place itself, can transform our sense of self, and our sense of the place. One need only to encounter a sudden squall while walking through the Irish countryside, or to see the clouds part and a brilliant sun emerge over Bantry Bay to realize that, while one's experience of the place will certainly be mediated by culture, history, and language, the place has something to say about it as well.(3) Simon Coleman and John Elsner reflect this notion in their work on pilgrimage, when they advise theorists to be cautious of overemphasizing the idea that places of pilgrimage are "void of intrinsic meaning"(Coleman and Elsner 1995: 202). They go on to argue that "we cannot say that the site merely acted as 'an empty vessel,' passively reflecting individual experience," but rather that places shape our experience of them (Coleman and Elsner 1995: 210). Pilgrims can mark the landscape, but the landscape likewise shapes the pilgrim's experience of it: through its very topography and the way one interacts with it (Coleman and Elsner 1995: 210-211). As these authors point out, if sacred places are entirely the result of culture, history and contestation, the landscape becomes a silent blank canvas on which humanity projects meaning. In this analysis, place becomes completely and utterly a product of human construction, a one-way process, without a means of exchange. Phenomenologists seek to reintroduce the body into this conversation, raising the question of how the materiality of places can impact individuals on a perceptual level. Here, the significance of such places is found in the interplay between people and place, within the reciprocal relationship established through ritual movement. Drawing on the phenomenological perspectives of Maurice Merleau Ponty and Edmund Husserl, scholars such as Belden Lane and Jon Pahl have described this view as a "pilgrimage of place," wherein the contested meanings of places are nuanced by the phenomenological experience of the place itself (Lane 2001, Pahl 2003).

For Edward Casey, an emphasis on embodied experience opens up further possibilities for thinking about the relationship between people and place. Casey expresses his "uneasiness occasioned by recent anthropological treatments of place as something supposedly made up from space— something factitious carved out of space or superimposed on space" (Feld and Basso 1996: 43). He counters this notion by arguing that "place" (the local and experiential) is primary, not secondary to abstractly-conceived space. "Space and time," he argues, "are contained in places rather than places in them" (Feld and Basso 1996: 44). He instead proposes that place "is to know, is to become aware of one's very consciousness and sensuous presence in the world ... place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience—the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time" (Feld and Basso 1996: 9). Casey points out a key disconnect between anthropological approaches to place, and the view of place held by the people anthropologists study. As he puts it, "for the anthropologist Space comes first; for the native, Place; and the difference is by no means trivial"(Feld and Basso 1996: 18). Through the phenomenological consideration of embodied experience, Casey suggests we can reconcile this anthropological tendency to see "place" as the product of cultural construction with the indigenous tendency to see "this ground itself to be a coherent collocation of pre-given places" (Feld and Basso 1996: 18).

Casey, Feld, and Basso point out that a consideration of perception is not to suggest that perceiving is pre-cultural, but it is to suggest that we do perceive *something*, and that that *something* shapes our embodied experience of it. As they write, "the primacy of perception is ultimately a primacy of the lived body—a body that is a creature of habitual cultural and social processes." What occurs here is a dialectic of perception and place, which "means that we are never without emplaced experiences. It signifies as well that we are not only *in* places, but *of* them ... Lived bodies belong to places ... by the same token, however, places belong to lived bodies and depend on them ... Just as there are no places without the bodies that sustain and vivify them, so there are no lived bodies without the places they inhabit and traverse ... Bodies and places are connatural terms. They inter-animate each other" (Feld and Basso 1996: 20, 24). Guo mirrors this notion of the inter-animation of people and land-

scape, when she argues that, "in a processual model, landscape is more than a space alive with meanings, or the representation of place or environment; the relationships between people and landscape are more intertwined" (Guo 2003: 201).

All this raises a difficult question: if perception is not pre-cultural, can it be pre-objective, pre-cognitive? Thomas Csordas addresses this, in what he describes as "the play of the preobjective and objectified body in experience." He explains, "Our lives are not always lived in objectified bodies, for our bodies are not originally objects to us. They are instead the ground of perceptual processes that end in objectification"(Csordas 1994: 7). He goes on to say that "to understand the body as the biological raw material on which culture operates has the effect of excluding the body from original or primordial participation in the domain of culture, making the body in effect a 'precultural' substrate. Mind is then invariably the subject and body is an object ... Little space remains to problematize the alternative formulation of body as the source of subjectivity, and mind as the locus of objectification" (Csordas 1994: 9). As he argues, "The distinction between representation and being-in-the-world is methodologically critical, for it is the difference between understanding culture in terms of objectified abstraction and existential immediacy"(Csordas 1994: 11). This call for attention to existential immediacy suggests that the objective realm of culturally inscribed place can be seen to exist in dialogue with a preobjective realm of subjective bodily experience of the place. The significance here is that place has a role to play in how we perceive it. Our bodily experience of the ecological, meteorological, and topographical particularities of the place shapes our experience of it.

Post-Colonial Places

Inspired by phenomenologists' emphasis on embodied experience of place, Crisca Bierwert and other scholars of post-colonial societies have argued that it can be problematic to focus too much on the contested or constructed nature of place. Bierwert suggests we return to the embodied particular experience of a place, in order to consider the ways in which people negotiate their relationship with and identity within a place. As Bierwert notes, these relationships take on a different shape when one considers the views of indigenous people, who are not constrained by a Cartesian dualism of spirit vs. object, sentient humanity vs. insentient world. In her study on the Coast Salish of the Fraser River Valley, Bierwert explains that "Salish people see power as being within a place, not only inscribed upon it," the land is sentient and aware, and it has moral rights and obligations (Bierwert 1999: 39, 41-42). To better understand the significance of this perspective, Bierwert suggests Casey's "synesthetic" mode of sensing the landscape: an emphasis on returning to sensual awareness, and *paying attention* (Bierwert 1999: 43).

Employing this synesthetic approach, Bierwert argues that place, and sacred places in particular, are experienced in five ways by the Coast Salish people: They are *natural places* that exist whether people are there or not: rivers, mountains, valleys. These are ecological systems of currents, fish, and steep cliffs. But these are also *social places*: human places where generations of families have gathered, affirming community and kinship. These are also *dangerous places.* Put simply, people die there, on the rapids and currents of the Fraser River. These are also *historic places* shaped by their Salish and Euroamerican histories, and imbued with the memories and meanings that they carry. But these are also *mythic places*, places (from a Coast Salish perspective) that house powerful spirits. Bierwert's work is remarkable for several reasons. First. she challenges anthropology to consider Native voices and perspectives on the landscape as co-equal partners in the theorizing process. As she argues: "If we do not presume a truth in what people say they know, we cannot begin to learn more than we can already measure" (Bierwert 1999: 70). Secondly, and perhaps most important for this piece, she challenges the notion that culture creates place, that places are blank canvasses upon which culture inscribes meaning. Rather, she suggests, landscape is a continually on-going dialogue: the place creates the culture, as much as the culture creates the place. As she states: "There is no culture in isolation from the land" (Bierwert 1999: 49). One can't get at this sensibility by cognition, she suggests, but rather through "being embodied in immediate experience," (Bierwert 1999: 68). In his work, Lane likewise emphasizes this "importance of our bodies in the interactive exchange by which perception occurs" (Lane 2001: 44). He points out that ritual, done thoughtfully and with care, enables people to "listen to the place itself, to recognize its own topography and material character as suggesting affordances or offerings of their own." Through bodily ritual exchange, the "places themselves participate in the perception that is made of them" (Lane 2001: 44). (4)

In his work with the Coeur d'Alene, anthropologist Rodney Frey brings another perspective to this notion of landscape and perception as interactive exchange. From the perspective of the Coeur d'Alene, landscape is essentially a relationship of *kinship:* the people have the obligation and opportunity to "share with and 'give back' to all members of the family, including the landscape itself" (Frey 2001: 11). Storytelling and ritual are the ways in which people renew their "kinship with the landscape," and "help

maintain the vitality of the landscape" (Frey 2001: 13). This view of the relationship between people and landscape as one of kinship is helpful in reconciling this overall theoretical conversation. Landscape here is certainly the product of human culture: the Coeur d'Alene bring their values, stories, and memories to the place and view it through this lens of their cultural heritage. Through storytelling, Coeur d'Alene "lessons and values embedded in the narrative are also intrinsically and unequivocally interwoven into the surrounding landscape ... In the act of storytelling, a landscape is perpetuated and the teachings of the First Peoples disseminated" (Frey 2001: 5, 13). Indeed, Frey argues that, "landscape does not have an existence separate from that of the human." However, he also points out that neither do humans have an existence apart from the landscape: "The Human Peoples, in kinship with the Animal Peoples, exist only to the extent that they are a part of the world, and not living apart from it ... The human assumes an active and essential role in continuing to bring forth the world, and by so doing, places himself firmly within it" (Frey 2001: 270).

As the above discussion illustrates, theoretical conversations must consider the ways in which place is shaped and mediated by cultural context and experience, and how places are often the location of conflict, resistance, and accommodation. But, as processual, phenomenological and post-colonial theorists illustrate, places may not be solely the result of cultural inscription. These theorists remind us that the human-landscape relationship is a *dialectic*: a relationship of reciprocity and kinship. Our experience of place is always mediated through our cultural lens, but the place shapes that experience as well.(5) As this piece goes on to show, Irish holy wells and mass rocks reflect the ways in which culture and history participate in the formation of sacred space, and the central role that such places play in the creation and maintenance of identity (both local and national, religious and secular). However, these sacred places are profoundly experiential places as well. Their meaning, while informed by political tensions and various discourses, is also shaped by the embodied experience of *being* there. Here, discursive and phenomenological experience combine, and in doing so act as a means for contemporary Irish communities to continue the important work of identity formation and meaning-making.

3. Inscription and Contestation: Holy Wells, Mass Rocks and Social Memory

Given this complex theoretical conversation, it is important to first consider how holy wells and mass rocks are inscribed by culture and memory. Sacred places such as the well at Beach described above are indeed shaped by history and ritual traditions that enable parishioners to step into "embodied memory" (Mitchell 2004: 26). The history of these places illustrates a layering of multiple meanings and identities, at times contested, at times reconciled within the place. As this section shows, political history comes alongside personal history, in a way that imbues these places with memory and meaning.

Indeed, a keen sense of the history of the place was expressed by many of the people with whom we spoke. Many people noted that holy wells and mass rocks have been central locations of ritual and prayer for millennia. Many contemporaries pointed to their indigenous origins, and explained that pagans and druids first used them to honor the spirit of the well. In those pre-Christian days, it was pointed out to us, water, rock, fire and trees were venerated as holy. When Christian saints first entered Ireland, they baptized the wells, and they were subsequently renamed after saints or the Virgin Mary, transforming them from pagan to Christian wells, and endowing them with healing properties (see also Logan 1980). We were told that these ancient ancestors recognized that the worship of holy wells mirrored much of Christian practice: a sense of the sacrality of water and the symbolic renewal of life. A set of ritual activities evolved over millennia as people visited and venerated these sites.(6)

Such ritual activity, however, would take on political importance with the onslaught of the so-called "Penal Era." From 1691 to 1778, English colonial power imposed a series of laws intended to establish the Church of England as the dominant religion of Ireland by suppressing Irish Catholicism and any Protestant nonconformists. In 1697 Catholic clergy were banned from Ireland, "under penalty of incurring death for high treason" (Wall 2001: 180). By 1716, the suppression of Catholic clergy and practice was enforced only sporadically, and by 1782 clergy had again been granted legal status. However, historians generally agree that throughout the period Catholic worship remained tenuous: the ability of clergy and parishioners to worship and speak freely depended on the unpredictable benevolence of the Anglican ruling class. During times of political unrest, or when tensions between England and France or Spain were high, authorities cracked down on Catholic clergy, who were seen as potential allies with England's Catholic rivals. Thus, while the Catholic Church continued to practice, and by the 1750s had restored its organizational structure to pre-Reformation strength, clergy were forced to remain wary. At the same time, Catholic parishioners experienced other material impediments to their faith. Throughout the Penal Era tithing to the Anglican Church of Ireland was a legal mandate, and

Catholic churches suffered financially as a result. And, since most churches and monasteries had been seized by the Anglican church, during this era parishioners attended mass in improvised locations: private homes, stables, storehouses, or in "scathlans," small shelters where the priest and parishioners would be at least partly protected from the elements (Wall 2001: 183). Some of these scathlans were mass stones, large flat rocks located in secluded places within the countryside, frequently with a holy well nearby.

While the relative degree of observance at wells and mass rocks has changed in the modern era, they have remained an important part of Irish worship. Prior to the 1860s and the Potato Famine, holy wells and mass rocks were centers of Irish folk religious practice. While weekly mass attendance was quite low (estimated around 30-40% of the population), thousands would turn out at holy wells for annual saints' days. However, by the late 19th century, after the Famine, veneration at holy wells and mass rocks had declined significantly: political suppression had all but disappeared and economic conditions had changed, and Catholic leaders responded with a push toward building parish churches and reforming liturgy and ritual to align them with continental practices. Irish worship changed dramatically, shifting toward near universal attendance at parish churches for Sunday mass (Connolly 1987: 89, 98). At the same time, the Church sought to suppress practices at holy wells, seeing them as potential locations for vice (Connolly 1982, Connolly 1987, Giollain, 2005). Indeed, 19th century pilgrimages often concluded with drinking, dancing, and fighting. Hence, throughout Irish history these places were central locales for individuals seeking healing, and during the Penal Era, when English colonial power sought to suppress Irish culture and religion, they served as a means of covert resistance, places where Irish folk religion could flourish. This history strongly shapes contemporary views of holy wells and mass rocks, as people continually describe them as places where the Irish faithful resisted English colonial coercion.

While individual veneration of wells for the purposes of blessings and healing continued throughout the 20th century, it was not until Vatican II that clergy once gain began incorporating pilgrimage and patterns into liturgical worship, and increasing numbers of parishes once again held masses outside, near holy wells and at historical mass rocks (Taylor 1995: 65).(7) During the annual "saints", "patron," or "pattern" days, communities gather annually to honor the well, its saint, and their ancestors who survived English persecution. During such pilgrimages, petitioners walk the distance from town to the well, as their ancestors would have done. Arriving at the place, petitioners may celebrate the mass at a mass rock, or they may be led through a collective oration of the rosary at the holy well. From there, petitioners visit each "station" in the area, offering prayers and ritually interacting with the space.

These ritual events are key elements in the life of community and of family. Again, and again, when people described the importance of the place, interviewees noted the experience of people coming together, simply enjoying the companionship and festive nature of the day within a beautiful natural setting. Among previous generations, people saw the pattern days as an opportunity to take a long weekend, to have a holiday with friends and family. This historical memory of wells and mass rocks as locations of social engagement remains a strong one. As one man recalled:

> The devotion would be, mainly on Lady Day, which is the 15th of August. Way back in the early part of the century like, people would come and they would make it three days ... a trinity kind of thing, you know. My father in law used to remember like the dead, and the night before a Lady Day, [he recalled] there would be maybe 6 or 7 horses and traps parked up in the field and they would tent over and make it their own all-night of it. And they were kind of frowned on a little bit by the priest. I mean, to stay warm, they'd drink a little draft of port—they let the women do the praying. (JC)

Others affirmed that the social activity that took place at these events helped make them a central part of community life:

> They were religious gatherings, but it was also a social time. You see, at that time, people had no way of meeting up, no dances or cinemas, so, just like you know where to go to meet friends and neighbors or relatives far away, so they'd usually meet at the holy well on the pattern day as they called it. And, there were prayers and all that.... There's a huge one in Gougan (Barra). And, they brought beer tents and food tents and all this, they dined, and they'd drink, and there was another tent for ladies, and what not. And there were all sorts of dances. And, they ... they were extremely religious all day, their prayers and holy waters and all that, but then all of a sudden they changed with the drink. (DF)

Historically, these social events provided an escape from the difficulties of daily life. Another participant also observed this was the case at St. John's well at the top of Mt. Maulin on the near-by Beara Peninsula: "Some say, the 24th of June they would come up to it, and there were actually three wells. And they would come up and say five decades of the rosary around each well you know, for a

cure. For, I suppose really they were poor people, and not much joy in their life, and it was a day out from the trial and drudgery of life. Yeah, on the 24th of June anyway, they used to go there"(JH). The significance of rituals of place thus cannot be separated from the social experience. Such activities work to build community, to reaffirm local identity and loyalty, and to build this sense of collective meaning that draws on deeply rooted narratives of place.

The social importance of pattern days and their role in maintaining local identities could also be seen in the historical tradition of ritualized fighting. In the 18th and 19th centuries the evening following "patron days" often involved dancing, drinking, and what came to be known as "faction fighting". Faction fighting provided a ritualized means for local communities to compete, and work out social conflict and tensions. As one Bantry man explained:

> For a period in Ireland there was a phenomenon called faction fighting. Do you know faction fighting? Faction fighting was a peculiar type of fighting. One family or one town or one area would hate another area. And if you asked them why, they wouldn't know. And the holy well pattern days ... they'd meet there, and before the evening was out, there would be a fight. Faction fights were very, very common ... But these faction fights happened quite regularly, and everybody went to see them. There was a pattern day here, or a pattern day somewhere ... and there would be a big faction fight. Faction fights are very interesting because it wasn't just pure boxing fighting and all this; it was very organized. And, I know that there were certain maneuvers that they used. And one fellow would go out and throw off his jacket, and drag his jacket along the ground between the two lines, and say if there's one man enough to fight me ... so that usually started the fight. And the holy wells were the place of it. (DF)

Such activities as faction fighting were strongly opposed by the Church and eventually were discontinued. As one individual noted:

> Several wells have been discontinued because, ah, well there used to be a bit of a piss up, you know, when crowds get together and all, but it, it's, there's one, it isn't far from here, but it was discontinued because blood was spilled there, a man was killed there so ... [After the patterns] there they would stay dancing for the evening, drinking and what have you. Having been forgiven all their sins at the holy well, they proceeded to commit more at the pub in Kealkil. (SO) (8)

Within shared memories of these places, pilgrimage to the sites emphasized collective, shared experience and the meaningful reality of doing the same thing, in the same place, as one's ancestors had done for centuries. In terms of our larger discussion, several things are worth noting here: The way in which parishioners view these places are shaped by their cultural, historical, and political context. They are places rich with multi-layered and multi-faceted histories: simultaneously speaking of an indigenous pre-Christian heritage, recalling narratives of resistance to English colonial control, as well as local memories of community and sociability. What begins to emerge, in this brief synopsis of a very complex history, is the intricate way in which memory, identity, and social community of the people of West Cork are tied into places. The community brings their collective memory to the place, imbuing it with meaning, sacrality, and significance. And in turn, the places have shaped the people's historical experience—by providing them with spiritual inspiration, safe shelter from oppression, and locales for social cohesion.

4. Ritual and Reciprocity: The Place in Process

Historical memory, however, while vastly important and certainly informing peoples' sense of these places, does not tell the whole story of Irish wells and mass rocks, for their significance is also shaped by the ritual practices that take place there. By shifting one's focus to ritual action, the processual nature of place becomes apparent. These places, and the people within them, are continually in process, each mutually impacting the other. Particular kinds of ritual activities, ranging from solitary devotions to collective, annual events, continue to shape the experience of *being* in the place.

Individuals, for instance, might visit the wells seeking healing, a blessing, or a successful pregnancy. During such a visit, the petitioner quietly "does the rounds," circumambulating the well, and pausing at each "station" (which are often features in the landscape such as a ruined church, a Neolithic standing stone, a tree, or mass stone) to pray the rosary. In some locations, an individual might pick up a small pebble and make the sign of the cross on a stone, joining with generations of other petitioners who have etched the cross deep into the rock. Through walking the limits of the site, the parameters of the place are defined, and set apart from the space around it. Upon returning to the well, the petitioner prays the rosary, offers prayers, and blesses him or herself with the water. After

drinking the water, and perhaps filling a bottle to take home, the petitioner leaves an offering at the well, a *clootie.*(8) Traditionally, these were small pieces of cloth or ribbon, which gradually decayed in the elements. For the penitents, such objects were symbols of prayers. According to some interpretations, as the cloth decomposed, so would the petitioner's worry. If the request was granted, the petitioner would return, leaving another offering by way of thanks, and would likely thereafter return regularly on the well's annual "pattern day."

But how do these ritual activities create identity and relationship with place? What is it about the ritual experience that grants it efficacy? Looking carefully at the ways in which pilgrimage and ritual transform and imprint a place can help us better understand how sacred places act as intermediaries within a reciprocal relationship between human community and place. Through ritual, people act upon a place, and over centuries the place is transformed. It becomes part of the lived experience of human history, inseparable from that community and its past.

Consider the well at Beach, described at the outset of this paper. A small trail circumambulates the well, going up and over a steep incline. Along the path is a "footprint" of a saint, reinforced and worn into the rock by countless pilgrims' feet. Pilgrims visiting the site make a point of placing their foot in this marker, thereby participating materially in this ongoing exchange with place. The caretaker for the well explained it this way:

> JO: And some of them, they used to go all around here you see. And they would say decades of the rosary. They'd go up that side, and down this side, and they'd keep going around. And it was called praying the rounds. So if you were really into religion or whatever, you'd offer up your rosary, you'd go all around, and ... [this path] was cut into the rocks, from the penal days, when they would go over it, you know, when people kept walking all around.
> SC: Yeah! Isn't there a footprint here? That you're supposed to put your foot in?
> JO: Oh yes! In the rock! Made by people's feet!

Through the tread of people's feet, ritual practice itself comes to shape the space. A similar example can be found in the practice described above, where pilgrims will pause at certain stations, praying the rosary, and marking the sign of the cross on a stone with a small pebble, or simply with their fingers. Over time, these crosses wear deep in the stone, becoming part of the geology itself. St. Declan's Well in Ardmore (Co. Waterford), with its sandstone crosses and ruins of a medieval church are a powerful example of this. As a Bantry man recalled:

> I will never forget the first time I was in Ardmore, I was down, I think it wasn't in the graveyard itself, but the other church, kind of along the cliff, and you know, the practice of drawing on stones with pebbles, and there were crosses up there into the stone that must have about 2 inches deep. It was like, my God, people ... the power of faith ... Ardmore is pretty impressive and very old. And of course, he's supposed to be a pre-Patrician saint, before Patrick, part of that whole tradition in south of Ireland, that there were Christians before Patrick." (JO)

As described here, crosses carved into stone at St. Declan's well offers an example of the way ritual interaction with place literally gives shape to the landscape.

Another important ritual element that suggests the impact ritual practice has upon a place is found in the ritual votives, or *clooties*, the items left behind at the well, or tied to a nearby tree.(9) The origin of these votives was both practical and spiritual, as one collaborator explained:

> Well, when that custom started, we didn't have money, we didn't have anything. So they tied fancy ribbons that they could afford, and they'd give you ribbons when you got there, and they tied ribbons as an offering to the God that cured ... And, the one, the place in Beach ... I remember when there used to be crutches and things like that. Due to the people who had cures, who left their sticks, or crutches and that sort of thing. Whether they were miraculously cured or what, but they were there. (DF)

Another informant mirrored this observation: "And course there's a certain tradition that if you were healed from drinking of the well, or water at the well, that you would leave something behind on one of the bushes or around the well. Now, I think Kilmacomogue, out near Kealkil, you will find stuff hanging around it" (TO). In addition to clooties, some penitents keep track of their prayers by dropping stones along the way. As one individual described: "Often, you'll find a small pile of stones so, when people arrived to pray, they would pick up five stones, one for each decade of the rosary. And, they would drop the stones, so. They didn't have a rosary then, people in the old days; they didn't have or couldn't afford it. They just used small pebbles, and they dropped one. So when they had five stones dropped, they would know that they had completed their prayers" (CM). Such votive objects left behind as signs of gratitude or prayer become fixed features in the place. They are tangible memories of ancestors and relations who likewise prayed at the well or rock.

In addition to clooties and rosary stones, people have shaped the landscape through other monuments as well.

As financial circumstances improved in the latter half of the 20th century, people made more elaborate offerings, such as the statues of the saints or the Virgin Mary erected near many wells.(10) As one well's care-taker reflected on the image at Beach: "Now, the statue was only erected in 1952. That was erected by my father and Johnny Crowley and all the neighbors. Voluntary Labor they called it. And the well now would be around the same time. The well was always there, but they kind of you know, did some nice building around it. But the mass rock, oh I've no idea, it's ancient" (JO). Such additions can be seen throughout southwest Ireland, where structures were built around some wells, or grottos, statues, or niches were added. Hence, through ritual, votive offerings, and monuments, the people participate in shaping the place.

Other historical and mythical examples demonstrate peoples' imprint on the land as well. For example, the impact of human history upon a place is seen through numerous examples in which wells and mass rocks are said to have been marked with the imprint of a saint's body. Most wells and many mass rocks contain indentations attributed to a saint's foot, hand, knees, body, or backside (Logan 1980: 38). And, when pilgrims place their hand in the handprints, or sit in the saint's "seat" they are participating in the place, reenacting the moment of its conversion to Catholicism and memorializing the saint. The symbolic significance cannot be understated—for the land appears to have itself been converted to Catholicism, to have received the saint into itself and to have been modified by the saint's touch: water was transformed from cursed to curing, and stones were marked with the saint's flesh. In so doing, the saint's faith transformed the indigenous landscape.

This is also apparent in the burials of priests, allegedly killed by English authorities for conducting mass during the Penal Era, found near some wells and stones. These burials are believed to contribute to the spiritual power of the place, endowing it with the potential for transforming and healing the faithful, as they evoke a human history of religious and social conflict. Many with whom I spoke affirmed the importance of these burials. As one man said, "Someone who dies for their faith is a martyr, a martyr is a saint, and the place where the saint is buried is a holy place, where relics are found and miracles occur" (TO). Hence, places said to be the site of a priestly burial, including Priest's Valley in the nearby township of Goulanes, or Lady's Well at Beach in Bantry are important not only because of their continuity with a pre-Christian past or their healing power, but because of the ritual commemoration of sacrifice, and the burial that has become a new feature in the landscape.

Narratives of renegade priests who resisted English suppression are imbedded in the landscape in other ways as well. One important West Cork place also speaks to this wider process of the inculcation of meaning in place. According to local legend, a renegade priest escaped the English, and in so doing indelibly marked the landscape. Fleeing his persecutors, this priest was trapped on a high cliff overlooking the sea. Leaping into certain death, the priest and his horse miraculously flew across Bantry Bay, and upon landing left an imprint on the earth (Carroll 1996: 58-9). One interviewee tells the story of this particular spot along the highway, popularly known as Priest's Leap (pronounced "lep"):

> It's supposed to be the landing. When the stone isn't covered with mud, you're supposed to be able to see the imprints of, I think it's the saddle, and horse's thigh, and the stirrup, and rider's whip, pressed into the rock from the force of landing. The story of that, I don't know exactly where it comes from. They say that the priest himself was James Archer, who was a Jesuit ... it would have been around year 1600, (after) the Battle of Kinsale and the aftermath of that. But it is also remembered as being during the penal times, which were a lot later. But basically as a Jesuit, a priest, he would have been a contact between the Spanish and the Irish chieftains so it would make sense for the English forces to be after him. The story is he was up the Coomhola Valley, up at the priest's lep, and out, you know, celebrating mass for the community, and the rumor was, the news came up the valley that the English soldiers were out, had been tipped off, and were out looking for him, and he got on a horse and rode up the valley. They spotted him and they were chasing him, and eventually he reached the very top of the hill, and at that point, he saw another crowd of soldiers coming up from the other side, so he was trapped. What he did, he just turned his horse toward the cliff, and galloped off the edge of the cliff, and what happened was, he basically sailed (from Coomhola) over the bay and down, landing on that rock on the Glengarriff road and so escaped, and also came down with a big bang but neither the horse or the rider were in anyway damaged or hurt or injured, and that is how he escaped. There is an old iron cross right on top of the Priest's Lep marking the place where he supposedly jumped. There is a very long poem which some of us were made to learn in school, that tells the whole story of it. But that's the legend of it in any case. It's a very bad road to get up to it. (TO)

As the above examples illustrate, stories and histories such as Priests' Lep are found both *in* and *on* the landscape,

marked upon the earth by supernatural saints and very this-worldly ancestors who have shaped the place with their faith and their experience. In return, the place offers these storied landscapes, these markers on the land, and participates in an on-going ritual exchange with the present pilgrim. The point is this: people's ritual engagement with the place transforms the place itself: through the construction of monuments, the carving of crosses into stones, through burials, and through indentations into earth and stone.

5. Ritual and Reciprocity: People in Process

If, as the previous section has shown, people impact, shape, and give meaning to the landscape, then how does the landscape, the place itself, work to shape human understanding and experience? If, as phenomenologists contend, the full significance of place demands that one consider the impact of the phenomenological experience of *being* there, then one must consider how this relationship between people and place is a reciprocal one. From this perspective, the people and places alike are in process: people bring their memories, and through ritual engagement shape the landscape that they inhabit. But the place likewise responds, transforming those memories, feelings, and inclinations through the experience of being in the place. The issue here is that particular place matters. One could not have the same experience in (or project the same ideas onto) a different place.

Places Strange and Beautiful

The first way in which wells and mass rocks shape one's experience of them has simply to do with their location. Holy wells and mass rocks are located in remarkable, out of the way, usually difficult-to-find locales. And, in West Cork, they are in places that retain breath-taking natural beauty. While visiting the well at Beach in the summer of 2004 with its current caretaker, the solitude and seclusion of the place was strikingly apparent:

> JO: But it, it's a nice, quiet place to come, isn't it?
> SC: Yes, it's perfect, beautiful. So secluded.
> JO: So secluded. Yes. I think they picked those places at the time, you know, so they wouldn't be seen from the roads around, you know. Nobody sees anybody here, they're not going to shoot you ... they can see them coming from across (the Bay and the surrounding fields).

Likewise, while visiting another nearby holy well and mass rock at Sheep's Head, I was again stuck by the seclusion and privacy of the place, as well as the fact that one has a clear view of the Bay, and any potential visitors, long before they arrive. As our guide informed us:

> CM: Now holy wells and that, they're usually in an out of the way place ... So, they were very rarely in a very prominent place. They were always very remote ...
> SC: Tucked away ...
> CM: Yes, tucked away.
> SC: What was the mass rock used for?
> CM: Saying mass during the penal times in Ireland, when priests weren't allowed to practice. They would have been shot if they were found to be practicing the mass. And bishops weren't allowed to be canonized or anything at that time, you know?
> SC: Would they say mass at the wells too, during that time?
> CM: They probably would, but more often they said the rosary there, and the rounds.
> SC: They'd say the rosary there. They'd have the mass at the mass rock and then maybe they'd go to the well and say the rosary?
> CM: That's right, yeah. There's a lot of the older people that go to the mass rock, especially in the summer, see this here now [pointing to a stone commemorating a recent mass at the site] ... [Pause] It's lovely here. (CM)

The natural beauty and seclusion of these locales shape one's experience of them, conveying both memories of past human experience, and the embodied sense of *being there.* The air, the wind, the sea—the place itself—has a profound effect upon the visitor. Commenting on the breathtaking beauty of the site of a well and mass rock on Sheep's Head peninsula overlooking Bantry Bay, an observer pointed out, "There must have been a connection there, it would have been ... they (pre-Christian ancestors) decided this was a nice place to worship. The early Christian people then, decided that these places of pagan worship, that there was something unique, special about them, and so they adopted them as their own places of worship" (CM). This sense of wells and mass rocks as uniquely special and set apart can be seen by the way in which such wells are cared for, even when they are no longer visited by pilgrims. One well, long out of use on the Beara peninsula, can still be found by the way in which the grass and turf around it are left undisturbed. As one local farmer who showed us the site pointed out: "You can see they cut all around it, but they don't touch this bit, you know. They keep away from it" (JH).

The above comments make clear that places themselves—their sheer grandeur or rugged terrain—inform one's experience of them. Consider, for instance, St. De-

clan's Stone, in Ardmore, Co. Waterford. After honoring the well and the stations around it, petitioners leave St. Declan's well, and move collectively to the beach below, where a large rock, propped up on two other stones forms a small opening beneath. For hundreds of years, petitioners have crawled through this small opening, with the assurance that doing so would provide relief from back pain. It is a small space, and a difficult drag to get through the opening. The sheer bodily experience of water, stone, and physical effort transforms one's experience of the well and the day. You are wet, you are tired, you are cold, and the stones under your knees are hard and painful. Here, an unusual geological manifestation shapes religious experience, making it distinctly local, embodied, unique. The same religious experience could not happen somewhere else.

Material Connection to an Ancient Past

In addition to being remarkable geological and topographical sites, these places act as tangible manifestations of continuity with an autochthonous past. Ritual activities such as mass at a mass rock, or doing the rounds at a holy well provide a material way in which local people can participate in a veneration of place that has been going on for millennia. While the particulars of ritual practice have changed, many elements retain a sense of ancient continuity: circumambulation, the practice of taking water and leaving behind an offering, and most importantly, the place itself. Indeed, one of the most frequent comments to be made upon visiting a well, or passing by the Neolithic standing stones often found near wells, was that these places were first and foremost locations of pagan spiritual practice. As one individual noted, "Of course most of these wells are regarded as pagan wells, not Christian" (SO). Tangible engagement with ancient places has the powerful effect of shaping a sense of identity that is indigenous, tied to the land—a clearly continuous expression of a land-based culture.

Within light of such symbolic associations, participation in ritual activities such as pattern days or doing the rounds becomes a means of physically participating in a continuous history, of maintaining a relationship with the ancestors and the ancient land.(11) Without the place itself, the sensual experience of participating in rituals shared by generations of one's ancestors would not be possible. When a parishioner visits a well seeking healing, their prayers are directed to God or the Saints, but when they drink the water, when they make an offering to the well (a candle, a coin, a bit of ribbon), they are also quite aware that they are sharing in an experience that predates the saint after which the well is named. The taste of the water, the feel of the stone, the act of petition, and the very place itself is a manifestation of this continuity with the past. Through ritual activity within the place, people can realize a sense of experiential continuity with the past.(12)

Walking Out Together

Places also shape human communities through the phenomenological experience of moving, together, through particular terrain. An example of this can be found in the degree to which young people are drawn to these outdoor events, drawn not by ideological or theological ideas, per se, but by the *experience* of being together, in a place. Mass attendance in West Cork and Bantry in particular is still very high—the vast majority of the community attends regularly, and often in family groups. But pattern days, particularly the mass on "Lady's Day" (August 15th) at Beach (described at the beginning of this essay), draws a remarkably large crowd, which is disproportionately young. As one of the caretakers of the well and mass rock at Beach observed regarding attendance at the outdoor mass:

> JO: "Now there'd be an awful lot that come to mass, mind you. We had, last August, we had a *huge* crowd because we had a beautiful day, it was finer than today, you know. And the place was lovely ... and it was beautiful, a *massive* crowd. They were up in the rocks; they were everywhere ... I think the young people ... the open-air mass, they love it, you know. And there was a huge crowd for it."
> SC: "Do you think more young people would come to mass if they did it more often outside?"
> JO: "I would think so, *definitely* yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's a kind of turn-off I suppose going into churches and, you know, for lack of a better word, if you have a priest that's a bit long-winded ... With all the best intentions in the world, young people won't listen to that. You see them there, they're brought along with their mothers and fathers, and sure, they're completely bored. You need something to kind of ... I'd say open-air mass is lovely ... Oh, I think so, yeah, yeah. I think they should make more use of places like this. And I intend to have a word with this priest about it. Because I think they should make more use of places like this, you know. It would be lovely wouldn't it, a mass on a fine day!"

Others expressed a similar idea: "There's a big drop off in young people going to mass.... But they'll go to these (open air masses)" (DF). "Young priests are much more enthusiastic about going out to the countryside, and perhaps saying mass at a mass rock. The older people get a bit stiff and stick to their church. I do know a young priest who led, I'd

say about 70 or 80 young people, teenagers mainly, to the top of Hungry Hill, celebrated mass and it was a most popular mass. I'm sure the kids probably wouldn't go to mass at the church at all, but they would go up there" (FO).

For many young people the history of the place, such as its role in resistance to English oppression, is a remote concern. When asked what draws them to the event, their responses indicate that it is instead the embodied, experiential nature of the place, of interacting with the landscape, that draws them. The sensual place, its smells, the wind, the sun (or rain), the sense of participating in their place, draws them. One young man agreed: "I go when I'm around. It's nice, it's a small little pilgrimage, but even when just walking from the West Lodge through the fields, it's, you know, it's a good kind of community experience. It's good to be out in the air on a little journey together, and then to have the mass in the open air, is, you know, it's novel, so it's got a great interest" (TO). Another young person had a slightly more direct way of putting it: "Oh yeah, it's quite nice. Walking out with everyone, and the fresh air and sunshine—the smell of sheep shite. (Laughs) What's not to like? It's a nice change, being outside and all" (PO).

In particular, the act of *walking* to the well to participate in a pattern day is a key element to the experience. Historically, the walk to pattern days was a central feature of the event. As one observer recalled: "People had no fear of walking. You know what, there could be 50 or 100 people walking on the road together and the *craic* would be good, and you wouldn't miss the time gone. Like we were talking ... I'm talking about people telling stories and everybody was trying to tell a taller story than the next, so there was kind of a competition going" (SO).

Coleman and Eade have discussed the importance of walking within Christian pilgrimage, noting that, "not only is walking a form of self-sacrifice involving endurance and austerity, it also allows 'pilgrims' to discover a sense of contact with the past. Many of the people ... are seeking to engage in bodily and temporal modes that subvert or transcend the rushing, mechanized world of modernity and postmodernity. They are choosing to move, but in a way that emphasizes a slowing down rather than a speeding up of life" (Coleman and Eade 2004: 11). And Coleman goes on to explain that "the bodily and temporal modes involved in the slow, effortful travel appear to subvert the rushing, mechanized world of the present, allowing space a kind of victory over time ... and helping to produce a sense of contact with the past. If the contemporary world appears to be about the compression of time and space ... pilgrims ... are entering a kind of sacred decompression chamber" (Coleman 2004: 66). Pilgrimage to wells and mass rocks such as that described at the outset of this chapter offer an important counter to the rapidly changing cultural, economic and political life of modern Ireland. As one family patriarch argued: "Well, I think the old people maintained, which I think is true, that the film between this world and the next is very slim. But with all our gadgets now, TV, cell phones, and what have you, we've forgotten all about it"(SO).

This section shows that while people shape places, places likewise shape people. Through striking beauty, unusual features, extremes of weather, or by affording space for walking out together on a pilgrimage, places shape the identity of a community. Ritual activities and the terrain in which they occur share in the on-going interactive process of creating identity, meaning, and place. It is, in part, the experience of walking through fields, of making the arduous (and rather treacherous!) climb up Mt. Maulin to reach the well, of joining together in the labor and challenge of pilgrimage, which draws people to the place. Without Declan's stone precariously perched, without Mt. Maulin's treacherous paths, or the sheep shite strewn path from West Lodge to Beach, that particular experience could not occur. These places are not merely empty vessels or religious voids, they have a texture and nuance of their own. People and places are the result of a continual process, an on-going exchange between people and place.

6. Places, Kinship, and Reciprocity

In this final section, phenomenological and post colonial theories of place come into play in order to consider a relationship between people and place based on kinship and reciprocity. As has been noted, the individuals with whom we spoke pointed out that holy wells and mass rocks were meaningful because of their cultural and political history. And, they explained, places held meaning because of their location as a place for social gathering. They also described them as physically beautiful, and geologically unique, shaping the human experience of them in an on-going process of ritual interaction. But they also attributed distinct *power* to these places, describing them as capable of healing sickness, transforming human spirits, and protecting local people from outside aggressors. If one stops short of affirming or denying the validity of these claims (I will leave that to Church officials and theologians), it still remains to make sense of these narratives in light of the role of ritual and pilgrimage in the relationship between people and place. I would suggest that such narratives illustrate the ways in which place and landscape are part of lived relationships, built upon a sense of kinship and interdependence.

One of the most striking illustrations of this reciprocal view of the relationship between people and place is found in the narratives of miraculous healing brought by the well or through water collected at a mass rock. Within such stories, the land itself offers healing and solace to the faithful. Regarding the Kilmacomogue well at Kealkil, local historian Michael J. Carroll suggests the name can be interpreted as "Kil-na-Cammoge" which "would translate into the 'afflicted of the gathering' or the 'gathering of the afflicted'—meaning taking solace from the sacred well" (Carroll 1996: 128). Just as the afflicted might derive solace from the well, the place speaks in signs that offer assurances of healing, communicating directly with the supplicant through the guise of a magical eel or fish. As one individual described:

> If an eel jumped, your request would be granted in some way, you know, you'd find that it would be looked on favorable. And one man, he left a pair of crutches there (at Lady's Well at Beach).... His friends brought him up, and they set him down (by the well), and they did the rounds ... and of course he saw the eel, and he jumped, and he said, 'Look at the eel!' And he stood up. And he left the crutches there ... And another story was that of a child of nine. She had suffered infantile paralysis. She was from near Drimoleague, and they brought her to the well, and in a horse and cart up through there. They didn't know the way, they were coming closer, but they came that way. And they borrowed a chair, a kitchen chair. (A woman) and two men brought her, the frail girl on a chair, and sat her down in front of the well while they were doing the rounds. And she was praying away, and she was bored I suppose, and, when they were just finishing, she said, 'Oh! Look at the eel!' And she got up and went to look at the eel. They made her put the chair up on her back, and carry it back. (JC)

Healing cures such as these affirm a relationship between person and place, and frequently inspire ongoing obligation with the place. Significantly such obligations are not solely directed toward a saint, or the Virgin Mary, but to the place itself. Those who have been healed return to the place regularly to honor their relationship. One story describes this well:

> (A man from the community) was married for about ten years. Anyway they had no family, and they were very anxious for a family, and they thought they had gone beyond that age. She was 46 then. And someone told them she should go to Lady's Well and take some water from the holy well.... And they went to mass ... and he did the rounds ... And next Lady Day they brought the baby in with them! And they came regimental with him, after that. And you know, they found peace or found something by coming to the well, you know? (JC)

Such narratives of healing and answered prayer strongly attest to the reciprocal nature of places: people bring faith, devotion, and ritual, and in return the place offers transformation.

Numerous stories also describe wells as being temperamental, possibly even dangerous. In response to insult or offence, wells will move, dry up, or cause illness. Earlier stories about "enemies" (nearly always Protestants) that disrespect holy wells or holy trees describe their being stricken with illness, misfortune, deformity, or death (Logan 1980: 94). In numerous stories, the wells fight back against enemies who interfere with or otherwise desecrate the well and who are subsequently punished (Taylor 1995: 63). Conversations in a local pub will inspire similar stories, and affirmation of faith in the power of places. A story told on the nearby Beara Peninsula, for instance, describes an alcoholic who took money from a holy well to buy a pint of beer. On his way to the pub he broke his leg, subsequently recognized his punishment to be stemming from his offence, and repented. Such stories told by West Cork inhabitants reflect a view of a sentient, powerful landscape.

The power of place to effect physical and spiritual transformation is demonstrated to no small degree in those stories in which even Protestants are moved to a relationship of reciprocity with place. In one story conveyed to me in the summer of 2004, a Protestant landowner was suffering greatly from arthritis.

> DF: And the Catholics around the place said, why don't you go to the well? And he went to the well, and kept going, and the arthritis was cured. Now whether it was the well that did it or what, I don't know. But for the rest of his life, he cared for the well, kept it clean and all that. That is a true story.
> AO: (Listening in) Oh! What a wonderful story!

This transformative experience reflects the people's relationship with the place, a place that is, as Deborah Bird Rose has described it, is "local, connected, and consubstantial"(Rose 2003: 178).

Places are powerful, in large part, because they are local places, part of the local community, its history and identity, and because they exist in reciprocal relationship with that community. These places, whether actively venerated or only rarely acknowledged, remain profoundly important for local communities. They remain "*our* Lady's Well." This is aptly demonstrated in one conversational

exchange. When I asked a young man who worked as the local tourist office guide if the wells drew any kind of New Age following akin to that at places like Stonehenge or New Grange, he replied:

> As far as I know, they (New Agers) would tend to be drawn more to stone circles, standing stones, the whole ancient enigmatic elements. I don't know and can't speak for them, but holy wells wouldn't seem to be a huge focus for them. I think one of the reasons might be that, in a sense, the wells (are) almost like just a natural part of the landscape and a natural part of ... No, more than the landscape, (they are) a part of the place and the world of the community of that area. So they are not something that are kind of neglected or something that's, you know, from the past. They still have a spiritual role or communal role, a *local* role, in the communal imagination. And ... as a result of that they are cherished in some way, maybe not actively, but they certainly wouldn't be relics. They still have an important presence in the community today, and because of that, people might not necessarily like a bunch of hippies coming around and setting up camp around the well. And that might have something to do with it (TO).

As one man emphasized, "This is *our* Lady's Well" (CM).(13)

And indeed, the power of these places derives at least in part from their being *local*. They are powerful because they are part of the "world of the community," existing in a kinship relationship with it. This is confirmed in Taylor's observations of Columcille's well in Northern Ireland. Despite its being named after a national saint, Taylor argues that: "It is still the place that is powerful, the landscape is not disenchanted, merely renamed. So, in the end, Columcille is not an outsider, not the representative of external domination, but an intimate" (Taylor 1995: 44). The Lady's Wells at Beach, Sheep's Head, or Kealkil are likewise "chthonic—aspects of the landscape, which retain its wildness, its points of power and strangeness" (Taylor 1995: 70). From the perspective of the West Cork people with whom we spoke, it is ultimately the place itself that has agency, and that mediates spiritual power, renewal, and healing.

One final story powerfully illustrates this sense of place as defined by kinship and reciprocal relationship with its local community. In the summer of 2004, one of the caretakers for the well at Beach narrated his account of the priest buried near the well. In this version of the story, however, the priest was not killed at the site, nor was he captured while saying mass, as is often said. As our guide explains:

> The tradition was that at some stage soldiers surprised them in the morning saying mass. You see, Lord Kenmare allowed priest-hunting, and Lord Bantry didn't. Lord Bantry didn't mind them saying a mass, provided it was done nice and quietly, and no big scene about it, you know. Because he was a descendent of Catholics himself like, and he couldn't see any big deal about it. But Lord Kenmare was a real horror, and did not like anything to do with Catholics. You know, he wouldn't even hire them, or he'd only pay them half what he'd pay a Protestant, and that sort of attitude you know, which was given to the old factions of religion. And, there was a change of the barracks, like a change of officers and so on there, and somebody said there was mass to be here in the morning. It would have been a kind of foggy, like a misty morning, like you wouldn't be seen moving around through bushes. And somebody decided that they'd get the 20 pounds bounty offered for a priest's head for having him captured at the well ... But the tradition goes, the priest was saying the mass, and the soldiers appeared over the edge like, and they were all scared that they'd be shot with a musket. But then a Lady in Blue appeared with a white cloak and dropped it down over them, and the priest was able to escape! Well, we've tried it out in practice. If you come here on a nice whispy morning, and when a bank of fog comes in from across there [gestures toward Bantry Bay], you could not see a thing. I would not see you standing there, you know. The fog would just move along there, lovely, along at that level, you know. And you could escape up the back field, that sort of thing ... You know, there's a practical possibility, when people say, 'Oh, oh! Of course it was a miracle that it happened!' But I always say there would be another side of it as well. But that fellow that escaped, when he died later, he asked to be buried here at the well. It was such a lovely place, that he asked to be buried there after. (JC)

In this story, the familiar narrative of priest pursued and murdered by the English gets a new twist. Here, the place itself intervenes, in the guise of a "Lady in Blue," who drops her "whispy cloak" over them, protecting them from danger. However, in this story it is clearly not the divine or transcendent supernatural, but rather

the land itself that provides the miracle: fog, wind, water, and air. In this narrative, the very topography of the place acts in concert with the human community. This deep interconnection between people and their sacred place, affirmed through ritual exchange and reciprocal interaction, runs deep within these local perceptions of place.

As described above, Crisca Bierwert has argued that scholars should pay attention to descriptions of powerful places when they emerge from autochthonous communities, because they challenge human-centered assumptions of Western scholarship, and the Cartesian dualism that underlies them (see Bierwert 1999, and MacDonald 2003: 8). In her scholarship on Australian Aboriginal sacred places, Rose suggests a new way for conceptualizing place, which she terms *eco-place*. In contrast to a view of landscape as passive receptacle of human construction, "Aboriginal Australians do not take this kind of human-centered view of place. They hold place to be the project of the lives of many living things, including extraordinary beings and nonhuman beings." Rose uses "the term 'eco-place' to speak to a locatedness that is not human-centered and that is attentive to the many living things who participate in the life of a given place" (Rose 2003: 164). Stories such as those described above, come close to reflecting this notion of eco-place.

As is becoming clear, holy wells and mass stones are rich in history, with multiple, complex, and overlapping layers of meaning. They remind the faithful of an ancient, indigenous heritage that venerated sacred springs and groves, as well as the ancient saints who baptized them into Christianity. Simultaneously, these spaces encompass vivid memories of religious and political persecution by English colonizers, as well as the brave resistance to such persecution demonstrated by their ancestors and their clergy. They also house profoundly personal memories of healing, in which individuals prayed for and received healing, a baby, or new faith. At the same time, they embody highly social memories, in which families and communities recall coming to the wells and mass stones, for years upon years, to pray the rosary, celebrate mass, and celebrate each other. But the power of place is not limited to historical memory and social events. As the testimonies above describe, this community's sense of place is also derived from the ecological topography itself. The places themselves could be said to be rich with spirit and voice. The wells and mass rocks are, quite literally, expressions of the earth: water passing from an unseen place below into this vivid world of human life, while at the same time stones bear the imprints of saints and of countless generations of pilgrims—they are expressions of history, and locations where pilgrims can act in concert and in reciprocity with place.

Concluding Remarks

This essay demonstrates the ways in which theories of ritual and place can be employed to explore the relationship between people and place. Holy wells and mass rocks illustrate that places can be said to be inscribed, contested, in-process, experienced bodily, and to exist in a relationship of kinship and reciprocal exchange. This essay shows that places are given meaning by the memories, values, and political realities that people bring to them. Ritual and pilgrimage, physical interaction with the place through history, meanings and identities all become part of an on-going cultural process of remembering. As quickly becomes apparent the past is richly present in West Cork, as it is in many indigenous place-based communities. The past "is not dead, and not even past," as Taylor observed regarding his longtime relationship with a small seaside community in Donegal (Taylor 1995: 26). This is echoed in the comments of one man, made as we walked through the valley settled by his and my husband's ancestors. As we walked, he pointed out markers in the landscape, streams, stones, fields, ruined stone cottages, telling us their Irish names, and the stories that came with them. And he commented: "As I say, the greatest problem is that the English can never remember, the Irish can never forget. We have long memories" (SO). This is a storied landscape, imbued with memories.(14)

But these places cannot only be called empty vessels or blank canvasses, upon which meanings are projected. These are also places of reciprocal relationship and conversation. In one sense, stories are brought to and imposed upon the landscape, stories rich in human history and political implications. But the place also shapes the story, changes it, and returns it in a new and continually evolving form. As Belden Lane articulates, a relationship with place "involves a reciprocity between person and place. As one has been nurtured by the soil and ambience of a given locale, one learns—in turn—to revere the site that has become the anchor of memory." Ritual and pilgrimage is "an immediate reciprocity" with the land (Lane 2001: 15). As Csordas argues, such activities remind us of the embodied nature of perception that shapes our creation of place. The material embodied experience of terrain, topography, and weather, the smells of animals, and chills from fog, begin at the level of bodily sensation, and impact the course our thinking about place will take. The pilgrim participates in the place—putting foot or hand in the indent of a rock, walking the rounds, dropping

stones, saying prayers, drinking water—and in return the materiality of the place shapes the meaning, identity, and spiritual renewal that one brings away from it. The heat of the day and coolness of the water drunk from the well are at once visceral bodily sensations and imbued with cultural memory. Meaning is not simply unidirectional—it moves in fluid and multiple tracks, between people and place, history and the present. From the perspective of local parishioners in and around Bantry, these places are not passive, but active participants in this relationship, nurturing and giving birth to local meanings, identities, and spirit. These places are examples of the ways in which people and land are mutually dependent, in which they "interanimate" each other, and in which people exist in a reciprocal kinship with place: place does not exist without people, nor do people exist without place. Rose describes this aptly, when she writes: "The genius of place is at the heart of religion, defined as engagements with the origins and deep patterns and processes of the created world. At the heart of concepts of place is a system of embodied connectivities" (Rose 2003: 163).

Endnotes

1. This piece was researched and written over the course of several years (2002-2006), and was greatly facilitated by a Regency Faculty Research Grant from Pacific Lutheran University. Many and profuse thanks are due to those in Bantry, Co. Cork and its surrounding communities who made this possible. Special thanks to my husband Michael Timothy O'Brien, and to his family who offered such gracious support and assistance: Anne and Michael O'Brien, Sheila and Cormac O'Brien, Mary O'Brien, Patricia O'Brien, Nora, Jerry and Jack Widger, and Paula, Peter, Kate, Roisin, Trisha, Paul, Tim, and Shelly O'Brien. And a great thanks to the learned community members (and cousins several times removed) who graciously volunteered to be interviewed, and who took days away from their busy lives to lead us to hard-to-find holy wells and share with us their stories and wisdom. While they are too numerous to name them all, I would be remiss not to mention Sean O'Brien, Joe Harrington, Michael Carroll, Tomas O'Sullivan, Donal Fitzgerald, Charlie McCarthy, Jon Crowley, Julia Palmer, Jon O'Sullivan, and Frank O'Mahony. Without their kindness and support, this piece would have been impossible.

2. Hughes-Freeland and Crain likewise consider "the processual aspect of ritual action," and the ways in which identity is continually in process, rather than "essential, fixed, or homogenous" (Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998: 2-3, 7).

3. As one author noted "the drear quality of the persistent rain of Scotland ... is itself an enduring part of [local] senses of identity" (Stewart and Strathern 2003: 11).

4. Husserl challenges western notions of pure objectivity, "because it lets humans so easily explain the world without ever attending to their own participation in it" (Lane 2001: 53).

5. Some theorists, such as Judith Butler, insist upon the cultural construction of the body, to such an extent that the body itself disappears altogether, becoming little more than the complicated, political machinations of discourse. Others, often referred to as biological "essentialists" argue that the body is everything, and through the physical experience of fleshiness, one can encounter the heart of gender. Phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty speak to this dialogue as well, asking that readers consider the way in which bodies and culture, flesh and discourse speak to and converse with each other. While theorists like Elizabeth Grosz sought to find a middle ground, affirming an experience of our bodies that is always mediated by culture, but also affirming that we do have bodies. Things like pregnancy, cancer and death may gain meaning through language and culture—but they will impose their presence upon us whether we have language for them or not. Likewise, the topography of landscape, the weather of a storm, the view from a mountain, the difficulty of a climb, while always mediated by culture, are not the creation of culture.

6. Historians have pointed out that the veneration of holy wells has changed significantly over time, both in form and meaning. While visiting wells for cures and blessings is a practice that has been carried on for centuries, and wells have been a central location for Irish folk religion, Michael P. Carroll has argued that more formalized elements of ritual engagement (such as praying the rosary and visiting "stations") were innovations promoted by the Church during the Counter-Reformation.

7. O'Giollain notes that this revival was also influenced by another nationalist movement toward the revival of folklore and other things Irish.

8. As one observer noted: "After the rounds, you take home a little bottle of water. And God knows, the water is no more tasty than any other water. However, it's all a matter of faith, you know. Faith. I mean, Christ, you have to believe in something" (SO).

9. Holy trees are an important element found at many holy wells, and described in detail in Patrick Logan's *Holy Wells of Ireland.*

10. This was particularly the case following the 1954 First Marian Year, when many wells received statues of the Lady of Lourdes, and new grottos were built around numerous wells. This was reinforced in the 1980s when two Marian apparitions in County Cork drew notoriety, at Ballinspittle, where young girls had a vision of the Virgin Mary, and at Inchigeela, where people claimed to have seen moving statues (Allen 2000).

11. Michael P. Carroll (1999) has argued that such rituals likely took shape in the Counter-Reformation, and that the practice of stopping at stations or doing rounds likely emerged during this time. (Carroll 1999). However, evidence suggests that some type of veneration, particularly seeking healing and leaving of votives, occurred at these wells long before the Reformation and Counter Reformation.

12. This perspective is also reflected within the various publications on holy wells, where the most consistent concern is to argue for their continuity with ancient, Celtic spirituality. See also Elizabeth Healy (2001) and Walter Brenneman (1994) for books that argue for the continuity between Celtic spirituality and contemporary veneration at Holy Wells.

13. This local affiliation with particular places exists despite

a historic shift toward re-naming wells after national saints such as Patrick, Brigid, and Columcille. Around Bantry most wells are simply referred to as Lady's Well. However, it would be easy to miss that a clear distinction is made between an abstract universal Virgin Mary, and a local manifestation of the Blessed Mother.

14. Taylor makes a similar observation: "My neighbors, I remembered, lived in the midst of their history—a physical archive surrounded them ... For my neighbors, that past was in fact living in the ruins and in the natural features of the landscape—for narratives and memories were 'attached' to what seemed like every bump and hillock, every piece of wall or one-time field" (Taylor 1995: 27).

References

Allen, Michael
2000 'From Ecstasy to Power: Marian Apparitions in Contemporary Irish Catholicism', in *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 9 (1): 11-35.

Bierwert, Crisca
1999 *Brushed By Cedar, Living By the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power.* University of Arizona Press.

Brenneman, Walter J. & Mary Brenneman
1994 *Crossing the Circle at the Holy Wells of Ireland.* University of Virginia Press.

Carroll, Michael J.
1996 *A Bay of Destiny: A History of Bantry Bay and Bantry.* Bantry Design Studios.

Carroll, Michael P.
1999 *Irish Pilgrimage: Holy Wells and Popular Catholic Devotion.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Casey, Edward
1996 'How to get from Space to Place in a Relatively Short Amount of Time', in *Senses of Place,* edited by Steven Feld & Keith H. Basso. School of American Research Press.

Chidester, David & Edward Linenthal
1995 *American Sacred Space.* Indiana University Press.

Clarke, Aidan
2001 'The Colonization of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641: 1603-1660', in *The Course of Irish History* fourth edition, edited by T.W. Moody & F.X. Martin. Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

Coleman, Simon & Eade, John
2004 *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion.* Routledge.

Coleman, Simon & Elsner, John
1995 *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions.* Harvard University Press.

Connolly, S.J.
1982 *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845.* Gill and MacMillan, St. Martin's Press.

Connolly, S.J.
1987 *Religion and Society in Nineteenth Century Ireland, Studies in Irish Economic and Social History, vol. 3.* Dundalgan Press.

Csordas, Thomas
1994 *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self.* Cambridge University Press.

Eade, John & Michael J. Sallnow
1991 *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage.* Routledge.

Eliade, Mircea
1957/1987 *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion: The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual Within Life and Culture.* Harcourt Brace and Company.

Feld, Steven & Keith H. Basso
1996 *Senses of Place.* School of American Research Press.

Frey, Rodney
2001 *Landscape Traveled by Coyote and Crane: The World of the Schitsu'umsh.* University of Washington Press.

Fulton, John
1991 *The Tragedy of Belief: Division, Politics, and Religion in Ireland.* Oxford University Press.

Gold, Ann Grodzins
2003 'Owl Dune Tales: Divine Politics and Deserted Places in Rajasthan', in *Experiences of Place,* edited by Mary MacDonald. Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Guo, Pei-yi
2003 'Landscape and Historicity Among the Langalanga, Solomon Islands', in *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives,* Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern. London: Pluto Press.

Hayes-McCoy, G.A.
2001 'The Tudor Conquest: 1534-1603', in *The Course of Irish History,* fourth edition, edited by T.W. Moody & F.X. Martin. Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

Healy, Elizabeth
2001 *In Search of Ireland's Holy Wells.* Wolfhound Press.

Hirsch, Eric & Michael O'Hanlon
1995 *Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space.* Oxford University Press.

Howe, Stephen
2000 *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture.* Oxford University Press.

Hughes-Freeland, Felicia & Mary Crain, eds.
1998 *Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media, Identity* Routledge.

Lane, Belden
2001 *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Logan, Patrick
1980 The Holy Wells of Ireland. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Limited.

MacCurtain, Margaret
1993 'The Role of Religion in Ireland: The Historical Dimension', in *Social Compass* 40 (1): 7-13.

MacDonald, Mary
2003 *Experiences of Place.* Harvard University Press, Center for the Study of World Religions.

Martin, F.X.
2001 'The Normans: Arrival and Settlement; 1169-1300', in *The Course of Irish History,* fourth edition, edited by T.W. Moody & F.X. Martin. Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

Mitchell, Heidi
2004 'Being There: British Mormons on the History Trail', in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion,* edited by Simon Coleman & John Eade. Routledge.

Moody, T.W.
2001 'Fenianism, Home Rule, and the Land War: 1850-1891', in *The Course of Irish History,* fourth edition, edited by T.W.Moody & F.X. Martin. Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

Morinis, Alan
1992 *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage.* Greenwood Press.

Nikolaisen, Bente
2004 'Embedded Motion: Sacred Travel Among Mevlevi Dervishes', in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion,* edited by Simon Coleman & John Eade. Routledge.

O'Brien, Conor Cruise
1995 *Ancestral Voices: Religion and Nationalism in Ireland.* Poolbeg Press.

O'Cuiv, Brian O.
2001 'Ireland in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries: 1000-1169', in *The Course of Irish History,* fourth edition, edited by T.W. Moody & F.X. Martin. Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

O'Giollain, Diarmuid
2005 'Revisiting the Holy Well', in *Eire Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 40 (1-2): 11-41.

Olupona, Jacob
2003 'A Sense of Place: The Meaning of Homeland in Sacred Yoruba Cosmology', in *Experiences of Place,* edited by Mary MacDonald. Harvard University Press, Center for the Study of World Religions.

Pahl, Jon
2003 *Shopping Malls and Other Sacred Spaces: Putting God in Place.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Rattue, James
1995 *The Living Stream: Holy Wells in Historical Context.* Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press.

Rose, Deborah Bird
2003 'Dance of the Ephemeral: Australian Aboriginal Religion of Place', in *Experiences of Place,* edited by Mary MacDonald. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Center for the Study of World Religions.

Smith, Angele
2003 'Landscape Representation: Place and Identity in Nineteenth Century Ordnance Survey Maps of Ireland', in *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives,* edited by Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern. London: Pluto Press.

Smith, Jonathan Z.
1987 *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stewart, Pamela J. & Andrew Strathern, eds.
2003 *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives.* London: Pluto Press.

Taylor, Lawrence J.
1995 *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholicism*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Wall, Maureen
2001 'The Age of the Penal Laws: 1691-1778', in *The Course of Irish History*, fourth edition, edited by in T.W. Moody & F.X. Martin. London and Dublin: Roberts Rinehart Publishers.

Biographical Sketch

Suzanne Crawford O'Brien is Assistant Professor of Religion and Culture at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. She received her M.A. from Vanderbilt University in 1997 and her Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2003. Her scholarship concerns the intersection of place, body, and culture within indigenous traditions, and their implications within healing traditions and responses to colonialism. She and her husband live in Seattle.