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Roots and Wings:
Orthodoxy, Tradition, and Creativity in Irish Folk Catholicism

Joseph Feller

Submitted Under the Supervision of
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Roots and Wings: Orthodoxy, Tradition, and Creativity in Irish Folk Catholicism

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Abstract

The present work is an exploration of the beliefs and practices of three lay Catholic devotional communities in and around the city of Cork, Ireland. The research is guided by the theory that folk, or popular, religion is a dynamic process in which individuals and groups utilise the resources of orthodoxy, popular tradition, and personal creativity, to better interpret, articulate, and create religious experiences. Ethnographic fieldwork was the principal method of data collection. Four areas of folk religion are given special attention: the use of religious narrative to represent and reproduce religious experience, the use of material artefacts to create channels for sacred presence and activity, the use of ritual and pilgrimage to establish sacred time and space, and the use of prayer to accomplish all of these goals. These sections are followed by a more holistic analysis of the material, a critical examination of the work, and suggestions for further research.

Acknowledgements

Since its undertaking, I have at no point in this endeavour felt alone.

To my supervisor, Gearóid O Cruaíoch, for your sense of perspective, and for the solid foundation and guidance you provided, thank you.

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And to the faithful men and women of The Centre, The Group, and The People, I feel that I cannot begin to express my gratitude for your patience, love, openness, and knowledge.

Still, for what it is worth, thank you.

Introduction

The Question

I went to Ireland in 1993 for a semester abroad experience; I returned to Florida in 1996 with a wife and a doctoral dissertation to write. In that time, I have made more than a dozen trans-Atlantic flights, and it was on one of those journeys that the present work was born. The plane was over Greenland, but it was too dark to see the ice flows that I like so much, so the window was closed. I was too motivated to watch the movie, but not motivated enough to queue for the toilet, and I was anxious. I needed something, but the call button for the flight attendant could not help. I needed a question; I needed something to write about.

I had read *Celtic Heritage* before, but I felt it was a good, conversational book to have out on my lap. So I opened the book to chapter ten, "The Storyteller's Repertoire," and read the words that I would repeat to my supervisor a few days later:

"The question arises as to why the poets learnt the tales classified in this way according to events or deeds. Why was it not more convenient for them to memorise them according to cycles, or at least as narratives about the entire careers of individual heroes?... [Because,] arranged as they were ... the storyteller could easily select his stories to fit the different occasions as they arose" (Rees and Rees 1991: 209-11).

The implication of the passage seemed like a eureka to me. The narrative repertoire (the intellectual and mythological tradition) of the pre-Christian Irish was structured around people, and day-to-day life. I didn't know much about Catholicism at that point, but I knew that the narrative repertoire of the church was firmly set in a three year cycle, whether the Fifth Sunday of Ordinary time happened to be dull or earth shattering in the lives of the parishioners. So at dawn, when we landed in Shannon, I had my question: "What had happened to the individual in Irish spirituality?"

I brought the question first to my supervisor, who seemed satisfied with its potential, if nothing else. Then I took it to a priest at University, who led me to a Dominican Father downtown. He in turn referred me to a layman, who introduced me to the Rosary group I call The Group. Through the members and interests of The Group, I met a community of lay Dominicans who run a religious supply shop *now* charity thrift store (The Centre). The members of The Centre introduced me to a weekly charismatic prayer group (The People) and, suddenly, the ball was rolling.

The Beginnings of an Answer

Three years later, the question has been modified, clarified. The role of the individual is no longer elusive prey - in fact I conclude it is essential to, and omnipresent in, the process of popular religion. This dissertation, therefore, is an exploration not of *whether* the individual continues to shape popular religion in Ireland, but of *how*. My most succinct statement on the matter can be found in the title, inspired by May,¹ an extraordinary woman whom I met in my fourth month of field work. In our second taped interview, the conversation turned to child rearing. She told me that parents could hope to give nothing more to their children than “roots to stand firmly and wings to fly,” further suggesting that these were also the gifts of the “Heavenly Father” to His children.

And so, in twenty-five words or less, the answer to “how?” is this: the layman² does not do it alone. A member of a popular devotional community relies heavily upon the resources, or roots, of orthodoxy and tradition, while “taking wings,” and producing meaningful experience, through personal religious creativity.

¹ In this work, all personal names, as well as group names, including those found within transcribed narratives, are pseudonyms.

² Primarily for ease of reading, I have, after much deliberation, opted to use the masculine pronoun in a neutral fashion throughout the dissertation.

Ultior Motives

The overarching aim of this work is to develop a better understanding of the ways in which Irish Catholic laity experience, interpret, and represent the sacred. In it, I focus on specific dynamics of religion (namely narrative, iconography, ritual, and prayer) because it is in the concrete expressions of faith that we may gain insight into its general structure. However, there are many subordinate goals that have shaped this undertaking, the most important of which is to enter into the cross-disciplinary theoretical dialogue of the study of religion.

The need for social scientists to develop clearer language for the discussion of religion in general, and folk religion in particular, is, I believe, evident. The difficulty in creating a generic classification system for folk religious materials, for example, or in defining the “folk group,” demands attention in its own right. Thus, the first few chapters, devoted to the “foundation” of the study, is not only the underpinning for this particular work. Rather, I seek to provide useful definitions and models to be applied to other ethnographic settings.

Overview

In Chapter One, I discuss the theoretical models which underscore my analysis, or rather *analyses*, as the present work is organised on two levels. On a macro-analytic level, a dynamic definition of folk religion is offered. This model, in brief, looks at religion the verb rather than religion the noun; process is emphasised over product. Religion is seen in both experiential and representational terms, as the constant cycling of sensory, emotive, cognitive, and social symbols, and in terms of the identity which is brought about in sharing these symbols and the experiences to which they refer. The sources of these symbols are identified as Irish Catholicism's two roots - orthodoxy and popular tradition - and in terms of its wings - personal religious creativity. From a

distance, the pattern of folk or popular religion can be seen as a plait of these different threads; viewed more closely, as plaiting in progress, for it is a dynamic process. This model is applied to the research as a whole in Chapter Eight. On a micro-analytical level, this work applies more specific theoretical arguments to a number of popular religious dynamics, in Chapters Four through Seven.

In Chapter Two, the folk religious group is considered and defined. My definition of group is hinged upon the two concepts of “linguistic communities” and “imagined communities.” After defining the term “group”, I describe The Group, The Centre, and The People in detail.

Chapter Three deals with methods; more specifically, methods of collecting and of classifying. In this chapter I describe the field techniques and the ethnopoetics of transcription employed and outline the four main areas (narrative, material culture, ritual, and prayer) that I focus my research upon.

Chapter Four is entitled “Bearing the Good News” and consists of a collection of narratives and their analysis. In this chapter, I argue that the personal religious narrative is a substantially different form of verbal art than the secular personal narrative, and that its aim is to not only *represent* religious experience, but to directly *reproduce* it in the listener’s experience.

Chapter Five, “Bringing Images to Life,” contains a gallery of photographs and a discussion of the use of rosary beads, saint’s relics and medals, scapulars, Holy Water, and other sacramentals. It includes two detailed case studies: the first involving statues, and the second involving icons. I conclude in this discussion that the “bringing to life” of religious artefacts consists of unlocking their potential to both channel spiritual energy and communication and to “speak” eloquently for the individual or group.

“On Earth as it is in Heaven,” Chapter Six argues that the principal dynamic of pilgrimage and ritual is the creation of sacred time and space, and, secondarily, personal

transformation and community. The chapter is focused on a rosary pilgrimage made by The Group, and includes shorter discussions of a charismatic workshop, mission work in a hospital, and public prayer.

Chapter Seven, “Channelling Grace” deals with prayer, and is the final micro-analytical chapter. I left the subject of prayer for last because it is my contention that prayer accomplishes all of the things which narrative, iconography, and ritual do separately. Prayer functions as representative and evocative narrative, as verbal iconography and channel for spiritual activity, and as a ritual creator of sacred space and time.

Chapter Eight, as mentioned above, summarises the analysis in the previous chapters, and applies the macro-level theory articulated in Chapter One to the collected materials in a more holistic fashion. The chapter is entitled “Roots and Wings,” as it contains a restatement of the general model and follows through on the application of that model.

Chapters Nine, Ten, and Eleven re-evaluate the work, critically approaching the theoretical assumptions, methodological decisions, and research priorities. Alternatives are suggested to the theory and method employed, and suggestions for further research are offered.

Chapter One: Defining Folk Religion

The Model

Theory is perhaps the safest “baggage”³ that the ethnographer brings to the field because it is explicit, easily recognised, and therefore easily accounted for. The researcher must acknowledge that theory not only affects the analysis of cultural materials but the gathering of the same. Theoretical preconceptions act as lenses which focus the eyes of the field worker, drawing attention to those details under examination; at the same time they can greatly limit peripheral vision.

My own set of lenses (and blinders) begins with Clifford Geertz’ often quoted, and often contested, definition of religion:

“(1) a system of powerful symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz 1973: 90).

Geertz’ definition conspicuously lacks the more common words found in academic discourse on religion, words like “sacred,” “spiritual,” and “supernatural.” Instead, he is concerned with the fusion, found in religion, of two concepts: ethos (i.e., moods and motivations), and world view (i.e., general order of existence) (127). Geertz considers religion’s purpose to be the ongoing combating of “chaos;” which he defines as the limits of human intellectual analysis, physical endurance, and moral insight. The tools with which religion accomplishes this task are human faith, resting on presupposed authority, and symbolization, providing a medium for said authority (92, 109). Geertz argues that the fact that the fusion of ethos and world view achieves the appearance of

³ See Michael Agar’s *The Professional Stranger* (1996) for a lengthy discussion of this term and topic.

objectivity, and therefore coercive power, is vital to understanding religion as a cultural system (131).

At first glance, Geertz' dynamic of religion versus chaos seems like the Freudian reduction of religion as counter-transference; a sugar coating of harsh reality. It does not, however, retain Freud's connotation of pathology, but is rather a remarkably sympathetic and empowering definition. This empowerment lies in the perception that religious symbol systems are in some way uniquely suited to their role and serve as valid, not dysfunctional, ways in which to understand and interact with the world.

Geertz, in many ways, echoes the thinking of Claude Levi-Strauss, who also concerned himself with the human struggle against "chaos." Levi-Strauss defined humanity's nemesis as paradox - those parts of our environment we find it difficult to "wrap our minds around." Discussing an indigenous South American healing ceremony, he writes:

"The song seems to have as its principle aim the description of these pains to the sick woman and the naming of them, that is, the presentation to her in a form accessible to conscious or unconscious thought" (Levi Strauss 1967: 195).

With Levi-Strauss, as with Geertz, the strength of a particular religious act rests in its ability to personalise the general mythic reality; to present a world view which fortifies the coherence and comprehensibility of an individual's ethos - in short, to create a safer environment and healthier self. A religious symbol system can provide a "language by means of which unexpressed, and otherwise inexpressible, psychic states can be immediately expressed" (Levi-Strauss 1967: 193, 198) Levi-Strauss argues further that the efficacy of these symbols does not rely merely upon the eloquence of the manipulator (e.g. a shaman, priest, or sorcerer) but on the belief, or faith, of the individual and community (168).

William James offered sanctuary to religion in the traditionally reductionistic camp of clinical psychology. Unlike Geertz and, to a lesser degree, Levi-Strauss, religion for James is empowered not by social authority and coercion, but by individual variety. James writes that the “divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions” (James 1958: 368-9).

It is an eloquent statement, echoing the Pauline Epistle: “ so we, who are many, are one body ... We have gifts that differ according to the grace given us: ... prophesy, ...ministry, ... teaching, ... exhortation” (Romans 12:5-8)⁴ It exemplifies James’ argument that general realities are less complete, less real, than private and personal phenomena (376).

In short, James claims that it is not the “aura of objectivity,” but rather the subjectivity of religion that is important. “The pivot around which the religious life, as we have traced it, revolves is the interest of the individual in his own personal destiny... [which] may be disparaged as egotism [or] unscientific, but is the one thing that fills up the measure of our concrete actuality and any would be existent that should lack such a feeling, or it’s analogue, would be only half made up” (371, 376).

Like James, Carl Gustav Jung emphasised the subjectivity of religion in its unique psychological manifestations, “...in so far as an idea occurs in only one individual” (Jung 1938:3). However, he also points out two “objective” or, at least, non-personal facets of the phenomena: the collective, societal pool of symbols and the ontological autonomy of the “numinous” in its relation to individual wills. Like Geertz and Levi-Strauss, (or rather, vice-versa) Jung maintains that belief is that which empowers symbols (1938: 3,5).

Jung argues that the “original religious experience” is the encounter between the “numinous” and the individual psyche. This encounter is then formalised to create

⁴ All biblical references are drawn from the New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.

dogma and creeds. In this, Jung reflects the tradition of such thinkers as Schleiermacher, who felt that any linguistic interpretation of the religious experience, even that of the believer, was a denigration (Proudfoot 1985:7-10). Jung holds that the symbol systems created serve as references for further experience, and as a shield against the naked power of the individual, immediate, encounter with the "holy" (1938: 6,22,53).

All of the thinkers examined here agree on two things: that religion is symbolic, and that religious symbols have some unique ability to maintain human resistance against physical limitations, the inexpressible, ill health, etc. Agreeing with these two points, I begin my working definition with the statement that religion is manifested as a symbol system, which presents a unique way for an individual to understand and interact with his or her environment.

As far as the nature and character of these symbols go, I feel it is best to seek a synthesis of the ideas of the above theorists. Geertz describes, very eloquently, the ability of symbols to serve as models; both models *of* reality (world view) and models *for* behaviour (ethos). However, he understates the fact that models are not ontologically eternal; rather they are malleable and temporary, continually created and recreated. It is the act of personalising symbols - their manipulation by individuals - that creates a living religious experience. In the words of Leuba, quoted by James, "the truth of the matter can be put in this way: God is not known, He is not understood, He is used" (1958: 382).

Talal Asad approaches Geertz' work in the spirit of "exploration and not refutation," recognising his subject as "the most accomplished anthropological definition of religion to have appeared in the last two decades" (Asad 1983: 237). His critique of the definition is, nonetheless, aggressive. In brief, Asad asserts that the universal claim of the definition, indeed of any definition on the subject, is fundamentally blind to "the extent that the effects of these [religious] processes are historically produced,

reproduced, and transformed" (1983: 238). Asad's critique of Geertz' seemingly autonomous symbols is one which strikes home with my own thinking. And so, I expand my definition to read: religion is the individual appropriation and manipulation of a system of symbols, which presents a unique way in which the individual may understand and interact with his or her environment.

Two observations guide my next step. The first is that James, the staunch defender of the "religion of the individual," while honouring the process of personalising the sacred, fails to give an outlet for personal spiritual creativity. Personal religion cannot, for my purposes, mean isolated religion. The manipulated, or personalised, symbol must be shared with others and allowed to grow. The second is that Jung refutes the Freudian claim that religious symbols are used in an act of self-deception which allows the individual to ignore the unpleasant. Rather, he concludes that the symbols are used to buffer the individual from the power of the immediate experience, and as a sounding board for understanding that experience.

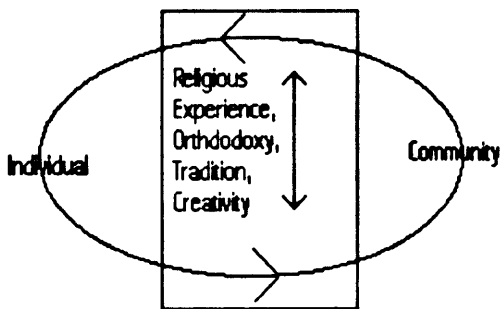
And so I can expand my definition still further and state: religion is a process in which individuals experience both the numinous and the symbolic accounts of the numinous provided by others; by which they appropriate, manipulate, (and, when necessary) create, and redistribute the symbols into the social group around them for the use, manipulation and redistribution of others. The phenomena articulated above can range from a child's creative "God bless Grandad, too...," to a trip to the mountain top and the bringing down of The Law.

The Asadian concern with power and structure, and the control which they have over knowledge, mirrors my own consideration of orthodoxy and tradition not only as threads but occasionally as loom, as the context in which individuals and groups *do* religion. It is also reminiscent of Ulf Hannerz' idea of "cultural complexity," which focuses on the processional nature of culture, the "river you cannot step in twice"

(Hannerz 1992: 4). Hannerz looks at three aspects of this kinetic picture of culture, or three “dimensions.” These are (1) ideas and modes of thought, (2) forms of externalisation, and (3) social structures of distribution (1992: 7).

The Hannerzian model, if bought in a shop, would require batteries. It is designed to be perceived in motion, like that which it depicts. Hannerz does not contend that culture is the shopping list of three items: ideas, externalisations, and structures. These are mere footprints. Culture, for Hannerz, is the set of verbs in motion between these three nouns; a constantly flowing cycle of meaning, expression, experience, and order. The Hannerzian definition has always resonated with me, and together with Asad, his ideas finish off the “general” model of religion I am using in this work, which is:

(Folk) religion is (1) an experiential and representational process in which (2) communion with a non-empirical spiritual reality, and (3) the symbolic accounts of such communion provided by orthodoxy, popular traditions, and the creativity of individuals within a social historical context, are (4) internalised, manipulated creatively and usefully, and redistributed into the community, using (5) symbols provided by orthodoxy, popular tradition and personal creativity, and modes of distribution specific to the social/historic context.



The figure above illustrates the constant cycle of folk religion, not only as individuals and communities react to the experiences and representations labelled, but

also as those very symbols change status. For example, parts of early Christian tradition became Catholic orthodoxy, Vatican I's orthodoxy is the unofficial tradition of a post-Vatican II era, and creativity can become either tradition or orthodoxy as the process continues.

An example of the process in motion can be illustrated ethnographically. Eoin is a gentleman in his 50's, who lives alone (separated from his wife), and is extremely active in a variety of "religious activities;" he helps to run The Centre, is part of the administration of a lay Dominican group, he is active in counselling and attends informal charismatic prayer meetings, he prays the Evening Office and attends daily Mass, is a lay Minister of the Word and an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, etc.

Looking at one of these activities, preparing for the reading of the word at Mass, the dynamic process of religion is given clarity. The position of "minister of the word" is an orthodox position that is quite young in the Roman Church; its origins are found in community tradition and social change. In preparing for the reading, Eoin undertakes many steps of preparation, some recommended by the clergy (Orthodoxy), some by fellow readers (Tradition), and others unique to his experience (Creativity). He prays extensively, believing it is necessary to add the experiential presence of the Holy Spirit to these various symbolic representations and rituals. Relying on this divine communion for a foundation (Experience/Creativity) he then adds several readings of the scripture (Orthodoxy), and secondary sources explaining the historical and social context of the reading (Tradition). For Eoin, the expression (Creative) of these internalised symbols is three fold: one in reading to the congregation, where no words are changed and the desire is for God to "speak through him," another in discussing the passage with others, both laity and clergy, and the last in applying the essence of the word - understood by him in terms of input from orthodox, traditional, personal, and experiential sources - into his daily life and behaviour. If Eoin is not the reader, but a member of the

congregation, he receives the reading from the pulpit (Orthodox) and from a "missalete" (a traditionally modified photocopy of a portion of the orthodox Missal), takes it home and applies the same research, prayer, and contemplative techniques in order to understand it and re-express it into the community by word and deed.

Orthodoxy

Before proceeding, a more detailed investigation of orthodoxy, tradition and creativity is needed. My principal argument regarding orthodoxy is that it is, despite popular conceptions, heterogeneous. The most eloquent example of this heterogeneity can be found in a brief history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The *Chronicon of the Prosper of Aquitaine* tells us that in A.D. 431, Pope Celestine sent Palladius to be the first Bishop to the Irish. While popular tradition only has eyes for Patrick, many historians look to the *Chronicon* and other ecclesiastic documents (regarding Bishops like Palladius, Secundius, Auxilius, and Isernius) to accomplish two things. To begin with, the appointment of Bishops logically points to a significant Christian population which predates the Patrician mission, thus dating Irish Catholicism. More importantly, the sketchy picture of a fledgling church structure can be viewed in contrast to Patrick's highly unorthodox person and enterprise (Corish 1986: 1-3).

If Patrick is to be understood as often operating outside of the control of the church hierarchy, he serves as an excellent role-model for the early Irish church. To begin with, indigenous social structures were better organised to adopt modular monastic institutions than the more centralised ecclesiastic hierarchy. Not only did the monastic lifestyle maintain the traditional structure of the *tuatha*, but it "was in the world of the great monastic jurisdictions that the Christian and native [religious] traditions were fused" (Corish 1986: 11).

This fusion (which centred on rites of passage such as marriage and funerary) was the beginning of a long process of syncretisation which continues today. It was also the beginning of Roman efforts to reform the Irish church, striving to create a less pagan and less secularised institution. Corish describes the goals of the seventh century reformers as “themes always dear to ecclesiastic reformers: an Episcopal church with its clergy free of lay control, and church appointments free of simony” (1986: 13).

For their part, it would seem the Irish clergy approached the reformers in a conciliatory manner. For example, the rhetoric of Columban and Patrick, even when in open disagreement with the Pope, invoked the names of Peter and Paul in what seems a sincere identification with the roots of the faith. The Old Irish word *ruam* was used to refer to the city of Rome, but also (in high praise) to refer to a particularly respected monastery (Corish 1986: 10). Whatever sympathies these examples might imply, by the middle of the eighth century, the monastic structure of the Irish church remained unreformed (despite various synods which ruled in favour of the Roman agenda).

The eighth century saw its own reformation, that of the *Celi De*, or Culdee. Unlike their predecessors, who sought to establish Roman structures in the Irish church, it would seem that they instead wished to establish Roman values in Irish structures. Corish highlights the Culdee agenda: to promote asceticism and hermitages (thus driving a wedge between monasteries and secular powers), to promote personal study and better education for priests, and to better enforce the keeping of the Sabbath day. Two factors led to the ultimate failure of the reform: internal disorganisation and the massive disruption of the Viking invasions (1986: 21-3).

If the ninth century was characterised by chaos and the weakening of social structures as a result of the Norse presence, the tenth century follows the opposite trend, namely, increased centralisation in both the secular and religious social structures. For Corish, this sets the stage for what he describes as the “opening up” of the Irish

church to the “wider world.” An Irish reformation, fuelled by the input of continental pilgrims and a increasingly self-composed papacy, now sought to bring the church more fully in line with Rome (1986: 28-9).

While the relative stability of the eleventh century allowed this agenda to unfold, the Norman occupation (and subsequent disorder) of the twelfth century threatened the effort. Late in the century, the papal appointment of an English King, Henry II, led to further divisions between the native Irish and the Norman Invaders (Corish 1986: 30-40). In the thirteenth century Rome saw an obedient, yet very uneducated, Irish Church (1986: 44). In the fourteenth century Rome saw little of anything, as it struggled to regain itself in the face of multiple popes and international tension (1986 : 47).

Corish writes that the late medieval Irish church (fifteenth century) suffered a decay in monasticism and a popular deviation from canon law due to “the failure of leadership in the church, theological and administrative, above all in the papacy” (1986: 61). It was this increasingly disorganised church which, in the sixteenth century, entered modernity with the rest of Europe. At this time, Ireland felt the first imposition of English Protestantism in addition to English government (63) and the Catholic clergy, no longer a part of the “official” church of Ireland, adopted the revolutionary stance of the counter-reformationist.

The resistance of the sixteenth century was all but crushed in the seventeenth, and Catholic properties were confiscated and increased anti-Catholic legislation passed, culminating in the Penal laws of the early eighteenth century (96, 123). These laws were focused on property, not religious practice (123). Nonetheless, government schooling and anti-papal legislation created an outlaw Catholic church preaching anti-reformation theology and Irish patriotism (126, 150).

Catholic emancipation and demographic change (due to famine) in the nineteenth century changed Catholicism again, mainlining the religion and decreasing the

influence of popular religion (192, see also Connolly 1982). It was this conservatively Roman church that became the official religion of the Republic in the twentieth century, and remains conservative despite the reforms of Vatican II in the second half of the century.

Having examined the brief history above, the ambiguity of “orthodoxy” in the Irish Catholic Church is obvious. The centralised hierarchy of Rome took several centuries to find firm footing on Irish soil, and soon after the “orthodox church” was placed in an outlaw position by foreign political powers. During the reformation, the Irish Church was more “orthodox” than its continental counterparts, yet that same conservatism placed it outside of the “orthodoxy” of Vatican II. The changes of the last three decades continue this trend of “blurred orthodoxy,” with legal and social changes being imposed by the international community, and internal scandals and devotional movements rocking the stability of the conservative hierarchy.

So it seems that any discussion of orthodoxy as a “thread,” or “root,” in this study must be negotiated and defined on a case by case basis. Furthermore, attention needs to be given to several approaches to orthodoxy; questions of teaching, worship, hierarchy, and secular power, all need to be discussed.

Tradition

In considering popular or folk religious tradition in Ireland, one could attempt to catalogue “survivals” of Celtic roots in a (pre-)historical survey of the unofficial church, but that is an inappropriately large enterprise for the present work. Above, the history of the “official” Church was given not to answer the question “What is Irish Catholic Orthodoxy?” but simply to better understand what that question means. Similarly, the idea of popular tradition will not be addressed with an extensive catalogue of answers, but rather with a brief chronological survey of ways in which different scholars have

asked the question. Specifically, the approaches of Sean O Suilleabhain and the Irish Folklore Commission, are compared with various theorists and ethnographers of folk religion in the United states and Europe.

Historians define “history” in terms of sources, not events. The coming of written documents to Ireland “began” Irish history, although historical events, of course, had happened before then. Similarly, although the popular faith of Ireland has been chronicled in sources as various as medieval travel literature and English polemics, I will look to the social scientific efforts of the Irish Folklore Commission (1930's) as a starting point for the study of Irish Folk Religion. Sean O Suilleabhain's *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* can be examined to better understand the guiding theory of those associated with the IFC. The Handbook was informed by the IFC's protocol of training scholars to recognise and snap up the precious remnants of Irish “folk” culture before time had its way with them. Not surprisingly, no formal theory or conception of folk religion is given in the book, and instead the theory must be inferred from the lists that O Suilleabhain associates with the topic and those which he doesn't.

The section of the *Handbook* entitled “religious tradition” makes reference to several other “related sections” (1970: 548). Listing the various items in these sections, as well as those conspicuously left out, draws a contour map; the shape, not of popular religion in Ireland, but of the idea of popular religion held by the IFC.

“Religious Tradition,” according to the Handbook, is concerned with popular beliefs about God, the Angels, the Old Testament, Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Passion, the Apostles, and “an exhaustive census” of the Saints. However, this focus on beliefs seems to ignore their public expression, and the lengthy section entitled “Religious Tales” is not even cross-referenced by the author as useful to the would-be researcher of popular religion.

Sections that *are* cross-referenced include entries on structures (churches) of the past, candles and rushlights, the soul, funerals and burials (but not beliefs about the “restless dead”), charms, traditional codes of right and wrong (O Suilleabhain only cross-refers to the pages regarding sacrilege, and stops a page short of those traditional ethics which focused on the *sidhe*), devils, demons, patterns, pilgrimages, annual festivals (although not cosmological conceptions of “time” in general), Holy Wells (but not the sacrality of geography/nature), The “end of time,” Judgement Day, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Fallen Angels, seers and priests (but not fate, divination, healers, wise (wo)men, or charm setters). Finally, emblems, medals, crosses, holy water, and prayer books are mentioned (but not the substantial data on numerology and symbology).

In short, the list's focus is unarguably on “what's and who's,” but seldom on “when's and where's, how's and why's.” This focus on text over context is not surprising, nor is the exclusion of non-Christian interaction with the spirit world from the idea of “religion.” Folk Religion, in the *Handbook*, is characterised by the orthodox idea of what a religion, even popular religion, should be. O Suilleabhain's later work on Irish *Folk Custom and Belief*, possessed a greater awareness of the living character of popular religion, but still tended to view it as less than legitimate religion, a type of “lower science” or desire for “magical” efficiency (1968: 10-14, 81).

While O Suilleabhain was writing *Folk Custom and Belief* and the *Handbook* was being reprinted, John Messenger was writing his ethnography of *Inis Beag*, and soon after, a theoretical essay on the study of folk religion based on his Irish experience. Messenger perceived religion on the island to be the coexisting influences of Orthodox Roman Catholicism and retentions and reinterpretations of pre-Christian faith (1969: 88). In setting up this dichotomy, and in detailing the fear and bitterness that characterised clergy/lay relationships, Messenger foreshadows later theorists discussed in this section (1969: 90). In dedicating a section to the “basic personality structure of the

Inis Beag islanders” and linking “this causally with religion,” (1969: 107) his thoughts run in similar directions to my own concerns to understand personal religious creativity. In his theoretical essay (1972), Messenger locates folk religion on a scale which includes “primitive,” “folk (peasant),” and “civilised” cultures (1972: 217) although there is not the connotation of evolution. His description of folk religion focuses on things, “sacred attitudes,” “supernatural entities,” etc. and emphasises the necessity that a group share a belief in order to call that belief religious (1972: 218). While I would initially disagree with the focus on lists rather than on personal, social, and symbolic processes, Messenger does approach the dynamics of the relationship between creativity, folk religion, and orthodoxy when he asserts that “Where monotheistic religions are dominant now, their followers cling to rituals and beliefs of religions that have been replaced and of those practised at earlier stages in their own histories. Added to these are invented and diffused forms from whatever source deemed unacceptable by the present orthodoxies” (1972: 221).

In so stating, Messenger not only opens the door to discuss tensions between official and unofficial religion, but throws light on the changing nature of both orthodox and folk belief. Ten years later, new theories continued to evolve, with American scholars such as William M. Clements (1983) and William H. Wiggins, Jr. (1983) discussing ideas of performance, the shaping of religion by historical power relations such as slavery, and interaction between the folk church and the “main-line” religion of a (national) society.

During the same decade that O Suilleabhain and Messenger were further articulating their theories and analyses of folk religion in Ireland, Lauri Honko was thinking and writing extensively about the ethnology of folk religion in general. Honko’s stated concern was to encourage fruitful dialogue between the study of ethnographic context in anthropology and the attention given to genre analysis and source criticism in

folkloristics (1964: 5). The goal of such a dialogue was a clearer understanding of the roles of tradition and individual experience in the construction of popular religion. In this enterprise, Honko foreshadows the work of American scholars in the 1970's and 1980's, whose work stems from the context intense theories of cultural anthropology. More importantly, Honko critically approaches "nominal" genre systems, such as that present in O Suilleabhain's work, and encourages genre analysis based on function. In particular, Honko advocates the Malinowskian rule of thumb: "Listen to the natives." (1968: 57). In so doing, Honko articulated a theoretical definition of tradition which takes into account the role of individual creativity and experience, resonant with the definition proposed in the current work.

Shortly after Honko published his ideas on tradition, folk religion, and genre, Juha Pentikainen published several works addressing these topics. In 1973, Pentikainen restated Honko's petition for an integration of ethnographic context and oral source criticism, adding to the call a desire for historians of religion to acknowledge the importance of oral tradition (35). Pentikainen argued that tradition, religious or otherwise, can be defined minimally by the notion of continuity, the process of handing-down cultural values and beliefs from one generation to the next. This minimal definition, however, does not fail to take into account the role of individual innovation, and group decision making processes within specific cultural contexts. In short, tradition can be minimally defined, but must take into account the dynamic political and cultural process which it represents (38). In agreement with Honko, Pentikainen encourages that the generic classification of religious traditions follows a functionalist approach, in particular that cultural materials labeled as religious include cognitive, affective, conative, social and cultural, functions which relate to the individual experience and interpretation of the supernatural (46-7).

In the last five years, Europeanists in cultural anthropology and folkloristics are exploring these questions further. Returning to the Irish context, Gearoid O Cualaoich describes contest in the Irish Merry Wake, a now extinct folk religious event, against the backdrop of “the practice of the Church [combined] with a traditional allegiance to ancestral cults derived from a cosmology and a metaphysics whose origins lay in Celtic religion” (1990: 147). His exploration of the “bi-religious” and contested qualities of folk religion is echoed by Diarmuid O Giollain (1990) who describes both the contestation between official and unofficial religion (1990: 69) and the continuum that exists between the two spheres (1990: 67). Examining in greater detail Cirese’s idea of bi-culturalism, O Giollain argues

“The official world view is never totally in control, partly because traditional world views can often survive in the least public areas of life, partly because of the innate conservatism and immutability to change of significant groups in society, and partly because any movement of the centre is likely to leave the periphery behind (1990: 72).

Bi-culturalism and contestation inform the work of many other scholars of folk religion as well. Mart Bax (1990) has conducted research around the Marian shrine of Medjugorje, looking at contestation between religious and secular clergy, and between clergy and laity, and discussing pilgrims and seers as not only a folk phenomenon but also “a product of an institutionalised and formalised church culture” (174).

Taylor desires to “explore the particular and specific ways in which “religion” comes to acquire any number of possible shapes” (1995: xi), and to do so from a point of view from which “the intimate world of experience and meaning and the broad sweep of historical formations of power are both clearly visible” (5). His agenda reflects that of Ellen Badone, who wishes to contribute to the understanding of “the ongoing tension between “official,” orthodox, or clerical and “popular,” “folk,” or lay definitions of religion in Europe. A concern to document, evoke, and interpret this tension, both

from historical and contemporary vantage points..." (1990: 3) inform and unite much of Europeanist religious scholarship today.

Creativity

I situate my work in the history of popular religious scholarship in Ireland, and most closely associate it with contemporary concerns of processional religion, religion that is negotiated historically and personally, and unofficial religion that is co-defined in dialogue with the official. Most importantly, I define folk religion as being "alive" only when these two "threads" of tradition, the official and unofficial are engaged by the third, that of personal creativity. In the words of Stanley Brandes,

"They are above all a religiously creative people, forging there own brands of Roman Catholicism ... yet always remaining within the confines of the overarching sacred tradition [official or unofficial] into which they were born and raised..." (1990: 197).

By creativity, I mean the "religious imagination" of an individual, the ability to express oneself in religious "language," either in reaction to direct experience with the numinous or in response to the symbolic accounts of such experiences. In order to discuss this personal religious creativity I return now to the psychology of religion. A wide range of theories and theorists are available - Humanist, Materialist, and Descriptive - from Freud's reductionism to Jung's collective symbol pool and Erikson's stages of religious maturity. My focus is on the descriptive tradition of William James, who rebelled against materialism and championed "the fruitfulness in the individual life" (Wulff 1991: 11). In Germany, the descriptive tradition also possessed a few eloquent defenders, including Rudolf Otto, who attempted to construct a model of the "I-Thou" relationship between the individual and the numinous, the "*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*," the wholly (and holy) Other (Wulff 1991: 19).

William James had, long before his publishing his much heralded *Varieties*, laid the ground work for his thinking on personal religious creativity, writing “the largely vague and ever changing character of personal consciousness guarantees that even within a single individual every thought or feeling is unique” (Wulff 1991: 479). This sense of individual peculiarity is coupled with that of individual agency, for “instead of saying that religion does this or that, we should remember that human beings do what is done, out of perceptions and motives that we have come to call religions” (Wulff 1991: 629).

Ignoring for the moment the dismissal of an ontologically valid “spirit world,” focus can be placed upon the idea of powerful, religiously creative, humans *doing* religion. James says “inner communion ... is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy ... produces effects within the phenomenal world” (James 1958: 367).

The scholarship of Honko and Pentikainen, discussed above, also sheds light on the notions of individuality and creativity. Like James, Honko points to the individual experience as the root of religious tradition. Honko asserts “Belief in the existence of spirits is founded not upon loose speculation, but upon concrete, personal experiences, the reality of which is reinforced by sensory perceptions. In this respect, spirits are empirical beings.” (1964: 10). The importance of this statement lies in the implication that although group controlled tradition may shape the interpretation of a religious experience, it is the individual’s empirical encounter, and desire and ability to recount the experience, which allows for a living religious tradition to continue.

Pentikainen reiterates this point, arguing that “A memorate is an experiential narrative ... and it is the most reliable source for the scholar of religion [because] it represents an empirical tradition.” (1973: 50). In this, the theoretical emphasis on the native world view bears out in analysis which emphasizes the role of the individual practitioner and bearer of religious tradition. As Pentikainen later wrote in *Oral Repertoire*

and World View, “We can say that an individual who comes by birth to a community does not develop and create a culture of his own, but the culture develops him. The hegemony of man in the world is not secured primarily by his ability to invent new things all the time, but by his capability of adopting, transferring, and applying tradition.” (1978: 20). In so saying, Pentikainen articulates my own argument, that tradition and creativity are interactive, and interdependent, concepts.

It is in coming to terms with the reality of personal religious creativity that the “plaiting process” which I am calling folk religion can be understood. Once again, echoes are heard of Taylor’s (1995) desire to begin with the specific, not the universal, when James argues “so long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term” (1958: 376-7).

It may seem that this discussion is very brief, compared to the last two. The reason for this is my belief that the discussion of creativity is best expressed by the dynamic model in detail above; a model, like Hannerz’, which is better understood when seen in action. Other wise, we are left once again with simply lists, and “roots” and “wings” remain only nouns.

Chapter Two: Defining the Folk Group

Definition

With the present research specifically in mind, I recently discussed the concept of the folk group in an article published in *Folklore Forum*, (Feller 1996: 54-55). In that article (as in the present work), my definition of the folk group follows the lead of Dorothy Noyes (1995). Noyes asserts that the “community of the social imaginary coexists in a dialectical tension with the empirical world of day to day network contacts ... This productive tension is the complex object we denote with the word group”(1995: 471). I find Noyes’ definition useful, because it points to both the centre (every day contacts) and periphery (social imaginary) of a collection of individuals.

Because I am dealing with devotional groups these questions of centre and periphery are constantly present. As I’ve stated before “If Pascal’s metaphor is accurate, if God can be conceived of as a sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, than surely these devotional groups were made in the image of their creator” (Feller 1996: 54).

As is evidenced by the three or four individuals who dominate this work, I have always found it easy to identify “core” individuals or sub-groups; to identify the centre of a group. What is more difficult is identifying a groups circumference or boundary. The major causes of this difficulty are (1) the relationships between the human group members and the spiritual world, and (2) the belief held by many of the members of the devotional groups that they are a part of a global devotional community.

The ethnographic example I used previously is, I believe, highly illustrative of these points. I quote it in full below:

“Each Saturday, The Group holds an open air, street level Rosary meeting. Arriving at the meeting it would be easy and tempting for me to draw geographic lines

around the tiny cobble-stoned square where it is held; temporal lines around the noon hour, or the five decades⁵; social lines between the bodies in the circle.

If I'm observant, I can include within my sets of lines a variety of nominal group members: perhaps those who slow down or stop in passing to bless themselves, or say one prayer, or even a full decade, before moving on; certainly those who are merely absent for the week. However, it soon becomes clear that even these lines are inadequate; that there are individuals who never attend, who are perhaps homebound, but who are nevertheless considered a part of the group. Furthermore, there is a global network of individuals praying the Rosary, and working towards its growth, and the members of this group express a solidarity, a shared identity, with this wider community.

Finally, and most challenging to the social scientist, there are members of the group who have passed away some time before, yet are felt to play an active role of the proceedings; and, of course, Our Lady, whose statue is physically in the centre of the meeting, must be spiritually present for the activity to have any meaning at all" (Feller 1996: 55).

For the most part I use Noyes' definition of group as a rule of thumb in this work. I would amend it, however, to take into account the idea of the "speech communities," a position which is articulated and defended in Chapter Four. For me, the idea of shared linguistic resources defining a group (central to the idea of a speech community) resonates with Noyes' definition, since it is primarily in language that the "social imaginary" comes fully into being.

The Group

"The Group," as mentioned earlier, is a Rosary devotional community focused upon Our Lady of Fatima, and associating themselves on a spiritual and cognitive level

⁵ See Chapter Seven for a full explanation of the rosary prayer.

with Rosary groups world wide. They are not, not however, an organised confraternity, nor are they associated with any hierarchical, centralised devotion organisation.

Their ties with official church leaders are nominal. Originally the leaders of the group were in close contact with the Dominican fathers in Cork who host the Shrine of Our Lady of Graces (see Chapter Five). By the Summer of 1996, however, the relationship with those clergy was strained considerably by disagreement over a street procession of the Shrine. The leadership of the Group maintains a solid working relationship with the clergy who officiate in the chapel of the hospital which members of the group regularly visit (below). Likewise, they are in contact (and, for the most part, in theological harmony) with the clergy who oversee a number of devotional and pilgrimage centres around Ireland.

The majority of the participants in the Group are female, although the leadership of the group is decidedly male, consisting of a core group of four individuals, known here as Jim, John, Barry, and Mary. Although Jim is married with children, the majority of the men in the group are bachelors. The women, on the other hand, are for the most part mothers with living husbands. With the exceptions of myself (age 25), a married couple (late 30's), and an unmarried man (late 20's), the Group's participants are over the age of 50, many in their late 60's/early 70's. The majority of the older members of the group are retired, and worked earlier in life in skilled, semi-professional, and civil service trades.

As individuals, all members make an attempt to pray the Rosary and attend Mass daily. The central activity of The Group as a community is the weekly Rosary prayer service (above) which takes place in a small courtyard on a busy corner of downtown Cork. The prayer service has met regularly for several years, and attracts from 12 to twenty "full" participants⁶ each week, who stand in a circle around a statue of Our Lady

⁶ Those who stay to pray the full set of mysteries.

of Fatima and pray one set of mysteries, with assorted prayers added on. The members of the group, in various combinations, participate in several other devotional activities besides the weekly Rosary. Jim, Barry, and another woman from the group visit a local hospital regularly, carrying statues of Our Lady of Fatima, handing out Miraculous Medals, Rosary Beads, St. Anthony medallions, and praying the Rosary with, and for, the patients. A large proportion of the group attend a weekly adoration service, and a monthly benediction service, at a nearby convent. About half of the group will participate in out of town processions and Rosary walks, and visits to Irish and international shrines (such as to Knock, Mt. Melleray, Fatima, or Lourdes). Patrick, a lab instructor at a local college (early 40's), although not a participant in The Group's regular activities, works closely with Jim organising processions and distributing statues of Our Lady of Fatima (see Chapters Four, Five, and Six). Three members of the group (the young married couple and a single woman (a retired nurse, in her 60's)) are also regular members of "The People" (below).

The Centre

"The Centre" is a religious supply shop *cum* charity thrift shop which is located in the coastal town of Youghal between Cork and Waterford. As a community, the Centre is made up of 10 core members, who regularly volunteer their time to run the shop, and a flexible number of community members who volunteer occasionally to help the Centre in its various activities. There are also many members of the greater community who participate in the activities and devotions hosted by the Centre.

Although not all of the Lay Dominicans in Youghal volunteer time at the Centre, the central core of the Centre's volunteers are all Lay Dominicans. When the founder of the Centre left to do mission work in the West Indies, the de facto mantle of leadership fell to Eoin, who also recently became the President of the local Lay

Dominicans. The secular order and the Centre are not, by any means, the same group. However, the Dominicans are often looked to for a communication infrastructure and support network for the shops activities, and, conversely, the Dominicans are heartened to hear reports of, and often claim ties to, the work that the Centre is doing.

Like the Group, the Centre is made up primarily of women, who are in their 50's or older. The majority of the women are married or widowed mothers, and many are also grandmothers. A few hold jobs in addition to their volunteer schedule, though the majority are retired. Unlike the Group, the Centre's leadership is dominated by females, starting with the female founder of the Centre and continuing into the present by virtue of a highly democratic committee based leadership structure. Eoin's position within the Lay Dominican's does not make him "President" of The Centre.

In addition to their ties with the secular order, the Centre has close relationships with the Dominican Fathers of Cork, the parish clergy of Youghal, and a number of missionary priests world wide. The Centre is also tied to the local convent which hosts a Perpetual Adoration chapel.

The Centre's primary activities include: providing a comfortable venue for prayer, counselling, and viewing religious videos; providing a workspace and sense of belonging and purpose to both the elderly and youth; and regularly assembling and transporting relief packages to Africa and the West Indies. Most of the individuals associated with The Centre make regular use of a perpetual Adoration chapel in town, and many of them volunteer their time to making sure the displayed Host in that chapel is looked upon every hour of the day and night. Because the Lay Dominican's place a strong emphasis on the Bible, most of the members of the group will regularly read, and study, both sacred scripture and commentary. The majority of participants pray the Divine Office daily, three or four of them regularly pray the Office together in the back room of the Centre. Most community members pray the Rosary, but irregularly, and

have often attended events/groups within the umbrella of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

The People

The People are a charismatic prayer group that meets weekly using a Cork parish community centre. There are about thirty regular participants, on the whole a substantially younger group than those involved with The Centre or The Group; many of the participants are in their early thirties. Because of the younger age bracket, the majority of community members work a full work week, and therefore limit their devotional schedules to the weekly prayer meeting and Sunday Mass. The People is also a more gender balanced community than the Group or the Centre, due in large part to the presence of a number of married couples.

The weekly prayer meeting, when I began my research, included the exposure of the Host in a Monstrance. Toward the end of my field work, however, the priest who accompanied the Host was no longer able to attend, so the meetings adapted to this lack. The priest in question was the closest tie the People had to the clergy, although they maintain good relations with the parish clergy in whose centre they meet, and there are also a number of priests associated with the Charismatic Renewal who visit the meetings occasionally. Although there is not an organisational structure to the Renewal per se, there are annual conferences and a well attended circuit of seminars, and the People identify themselves with this active international community.

With or without the presence of the Host, the meetings are led by a guitarist, who accompanies the assembled group as they sing lyrics common to the International Charismatic Renewal. The average meeting consists of a musical praise service, followed by, and intermingled with, an extended period of free praise, prayer, and prophesy.

The Question of Representation

The three groups whose beliefs and activities make up the body of this work can not, by any means, be looked upon as a “random sampling” of Irish Catholic laity. The most important distinguishing factors which separate these groups from the majority of Irish Catholics are the breadth, depth, and intensity of their devotional lives. The individuals participating in these communities are what Taylor (1995) has termed “super-Catholics,” and the level of their participation in religious activity is substantially higher than the norm.

This is not to say, however, that these groups are unique to Cork, nor even to Ireland. John O'Brien (1994) has devoted an entire book to describing the “seeds of a new church” in Ireland. The book contains short narrative portraits of a number of groups across Ireland and their devotional activities, which include pilgrimages and Rosary processions (like *The Group*), charismatic praise and prayer (like *The People*), and religiously motivated community service (like *The Centre*). Szuchewycz (1989) has done fieldwork among charismatic worshipers in Galway, and Taylor (1995) has documented the dynamics of pilgrimage, Rosary devotion, and charismatic worship in Donegal. In short, groups involved in activities similar to those discussed in the present work can be found throughout contemporary Ireland.

Furthermore, many of these activities include identification with international communities. The Catholic Charismatic movement is an import from America; devotion to Our Lady, particularly in connection with particular Shrines, is maintained by an international infrastructure of active pilgrims, passive (that is to say, non-travelling) devotees, and clergy; and community outreach groups can be found in continental Europe, Africa, and in the United States and Caribbean (a network utilised by Irish communities like *The Centre*). Badone (1990) has presented a collection of ethnographic essays drawing on the experience of similar devotional communities

throughout Europe, and ethnographies can be found dealing with Asia, Africa, and the Americas (see, for example Stirrat 1992 (Sri Lanka), Ingham 1989 (Mexico), and Rasing 1996 (Zambia)).

Just as the groups examined in the present work are rare, but far from unique, geographically, they are also represented in earlier periods of history. Szuchewycz (1989) locates the beginnings of the Charismatic Renewal in Ireland in the early 1970's, however, dynamics such as silent contemplation and inner locution can be found much earlier in Catholic history. Devotion to the Virgin, particularly in the form of the Rosary, is quite conspicuous from the medieval church onward (see Warner 1976, O Dwyer 1995, and Walsh 1993). The Lay Dominicans trace their roots back to the 13th century "Army of Christ" and specialised confraternities and lay groups can be found throughout the history of the church (Walsh 1993).

Most importantly, the psycho-cultural dynamics which seem to lead to the formation of devotional communities such as those dealt with in this work are not the kind which can be limited to a specific society or historical period. Taylor (1995: 166, 225-26, 237-39) dealt with this issue by applying Turner's notion of "communities of affliction." In this light, he argued that a point of physical or psychological illness provided the doorway into a particular devotional idiom, and that growth in that idiom stemmed from a shift in purpose. Specifically, Taylor pointed to the moment when a "search for a cure becomes a quest for healing" (166). As I have argued earlier (Feller 1996), this same analysis can apply to the groups and individuals encountered in my own research. The conversion narratives collected continually point to moments of illness and anguish, and the rhetoric of spiritual growth is consistently underpinned by therapeutic imagery. To say, therefore, that the situations which stimulate the formation and growth of these devotional communities is somehow unique to contemporary Ireland, is to say the human frailty and fear is unique to that venue as well.

Finally, the devotions and rituals used by the groups studied here are part of the repertoire of Catholic believers not necessarily involved in such active communities. While, some of the prayers and rituals are drawn from popular tradition, or are idiosyncratic, most are part of official, or quasi-official church liturgy and psalmistry, and are thus accessible to even nominal Catholics. Therefore, as stated above, it is the breadth, depth, and intensity of devotion which distinguishes these groups of “super-Catholics,” not the repertoire itself. Since much of the analysis in this work focuses on the dynamics of the active use of elements from this repertoire, that analysis can be applied in a modified form to similar usage by more nominally active Catholic Laity.

As I have outlined above, the three communities have perceived connections to larger, national or international, groups (religious supply stores, secular orders, confraternities, charismatic prayer groups, etc.). Their leadership structures, however, are independent and internal. Like wise, their relationships to the church’s hierarchy are tenuous, and typically involve individual priests who perceive their vocation to be in line with the different groups’ agenda.

The Group is demographically, theologically, and ritually “older” than either the Centre or the People. Marian devotion is, for the most part, more supported by the older laity in Cork city, and the devotees identify themselves with a more conservative, sometimes pre-Vatican II theology. Earlier (1996), I discussed the tensions that exist between Marian and Charismatic devotees, and the contested discourse surrounding basic theological elements such as the Holy Spirit. In my field work, the only Mary centred event which attracted a predominately young crowd was the visit of an image of Our Lady of Guadeloupe to Cork. The draw of that particular image is tied to the Our Lady of Guadeloupe’s role as patron of young (and pregnant) mothers.

Although demographically similar to the Group, the members of the Centre tend to be more involved with contemporary theological movements, identifying

themselves more with the Charismatic Renewal than with devotion to Our Lady, and applying themselves to the enterprise of a service oriented theology, often spending their time packing boxes rather than in more highly ritualised activities. Similarly, the Dominican emphasis on the Bible encourages the members of the Centre to spend a good part of their devotional time in study.

The People stand in demographic contrast to the other groups, because of the average age of the participants, but also because of the presence of a large number of men. The overall atmosphere of the People is thus one of family centred worship, and the structure of the central activity is similar to that of the ordinary Sunday Mass (and to many Protestant worship services). Structurally, therefore, there is less of a feeling of participating outside of the boundaries of the church. Theologically, however, Charismatic worship sits well outside of the official church liturgy and ritual, relying as it does on direct communication between God and the devotee. For this reason, Charismatic worship is often hotly contested by both clergy and laity outside of the movement.

Chapter Three: Classification and Method

Genre

The “problem of genres” is omnipresent in folkloristics, mainly because it is so intricately bound with everything that the folklorist does. Dan Ben-Amos asserts that considerations of genre shape the study from collection to analysis; from performance through publication (1976: xi).

Quoting Alan Dundes, Ben-Amos points out the irony that although genres have dominated both theory and practice, and although genres are often regarded as folklore's “primary particles,” not one genre to date has been completely defined and agreed upon (1976: xii). Of course, very few disciplines can claim total semantic harmony, but for Ben-Amos the disagreement is more fundamental than that; he asserts that “at variance are not the principles for describing single forms but the general ideas of what kind of a category genre is” (1976: xiv).

Ruth Finnegan has also closely examined the problematic nature of classification in social science. She argues the most prevalent dilemma facing a would-be genericist is “the desire, on the one hand, to have general terms to facilitate translation and comparative understanding and, on the other, to represent specificity” (1992: 135-6). Finnegan maintains that the attempt to satisfy this dual desire has in many ways shaped the history of the various sub-disciplines of classification; and, in the post-modern era, has lead to an increased awareness of the fluid and dynamic nature of genre.

Quoting J.D. Dorst, Finnegan asserts that contemporary approaches look “not just to stabilities, as in earlier studies, but also to change and ambiguity, taking account of “emergence, transformation, obsolescence, and so on as positive realities of genres, that is, as active processes to be treated in their own terms and not merely as forms of defect or breakdown in the generic order”” (1992: 137). It is a sentiment echoed by Ben-

Amos, who points to the growing ethnographic influence on genre theory, with its emphasis on performance, dynamics and change (1976: xxxvi).

Both Finnegan and Ben-Amos best serve the reader when they state (as do must of the authors cited in this paper) that to “do” folklore, one must eventually stop theorising about genres and use them in their most basic role: as classifiers. No matter how plagued with problems the process of classification is, the social scientist must try, for it is an integral part of cross-cultural analysis and translation (Finnegan 1992: 139).

The present work is organised around four areas of religious activity, and I use these terms as my “top-level” generic division. These categories are each discussed in their relative chapters, but I describe them briefly here.

Narrative

In particular, this work is concerned with what I term the personal religious narrative. Drawing on the genres of legend and personal experience narrative, I articulate a generic description which is centred on issues of personal ownership, religious content, function and intent, namely, the desire to recreate (rather than merely represent) religious experience.

Material Culture

The chapter on material culture includes a number of Catholic sacramentals, objects and places which are supplementary to the Sacraments of the official church. I focus exclusively on artefacts, rather than architecture, art, etc., though these are also part of material culture. Specific items of material culture examined here include prayer beads, medals, relics, scapulas, prayer cards, holy water, statues, and icons.

Ritual

I utilise the Jungian definition proposed by Robert Johnson (1986: 102) that ritual is “symbolic behaviour, consciously performed.” I include in this category a variety of events and activities, although I focus on the specialised ritual of pilgrimage for much of the chapter on the subject of ritual. My definition of ritual as behaviour includes both speech and kinaesthetics.

Prayer

I define the genre of prayer as verbal, though not necessarily verbalised or intelligible, communication with spiritual beings and forces. Because it is a two way channel, prayer includes prophesy; e.g. visual or verbal communication from spirits to humans.

Collection

This essay is based on material collected during twenty months ethnographic field work, as follows: Sept-Dec 1994, Jan-March 1995, May-June 1995, Sept-Dec 1995, Jan-March 1996, May-August 1996.

I used, primarily, the techniques of participant observation and the ethnographic interview. As a participant observer, I was involved in the regular devotion services of the three groups described in this study, and also spent time with individuals and groups in a variety of situations: formal and informal, religious and secular, professional and social. I would classify my level of participation as “high” though not complete.⁷ I prayed when others prayed, and if asked to perform a religious act on my own or on behalf of the group, I would do so to the best of my ability.

⁷ See Spradley 1980 for a classification of levels of participation.

My notes as a participant observer were kept on site as jottings, and expanded into full notes nightly. These field notes include descriptive entries of people, places and events, as well as analytical entries later expanded into formal essays and submitted to my supervisor. The present work is constructed out of my notebooks and these essays, as well as from the recordings and transcriptions of numerous interviews.

In the field I discovered what I imagine to be a common dilemma: balancing participant observation (which provides a "natural" context for discourse, but which is difficult to recall verbatim) with the taped interview (which allows for total recall but in a contrived, or artificial setting). In all cases, the "natural" setting was recreated in the interviews as well as possible - by asking for stories I had heard previously, by using what I perceived to be "proper" questions for the subject at hand, and by simply introducing a subject and allowing the informant to go their own way, with minimal guidance.

I have considered the veracity and value of the semiformal interview very carefully. I was able to find precedence in my field experience of one-on-one, minimal turn-taking, solicited narrative performances (i.e. situations like the interviews, only without the tape recorder) which took place "naturally." For example, consider this excerpt from a personal narrative regarding an ecstatic trance, in which different individuals are reported to have asked the narrator to tell, or repeat, his story:

Jim: ...so M.M. kept on to me, "What did you see? You were away,"...uhn, "You saw something. What did you see?" So I told him.

JF: Um-hmm.

(Later, regarding the same vision)

Jim: ...the woman of the house asked me the next morning.

JF: She knew?

Another example comes from a "cool down" conversation after an interview.

Eoin had been present, although silent, during the taped interview of May. He told me

he had heard her story several times - that he had *asked her to tell it to him several times* - but that it still affected him (Field Notes, February 11, 1995).

These are but two examples of the “natural” status of the solicited narrative performance; where a person is asked to tell a story that another person knows of or has even heard before, and then performs it with minimal interaction. I have encountered many others.

Ethnopoetics

The transcriptions in this work appear single spaced, in Courier New font, in contrast to the double spacing and use of Garamond font for the body of the text. I utilise a modified version of the format used by Gary R. Butler in his book *Saying Isn't Believing*. Every attempt has been made to reproduce dialogue verbatim, which may make reading slightly awkward. Each text is preceded by a header stating the text number, the informant's pseudonym, biographical details and the date and circumstances of the text's collection. Within each text, the following symbols are used:

...	pause
/	interruption or false start
(italics)	aside, action, or comment
name	name replaced by pseudonym
[]	indistinct word/phrase (1990: 11,148).

**Chapter Four: Bearing the Good News:
The Religious Narrative Process**
Overview

"We're a vulnerable lot, but please listen to my story because

I have a gospel story, Father, if you have too."

-May

This chapter examines religious narratives, and the process of religious narration. Once again, May's gentle wisdom has guided the title and subject of this work, for it was her plea to a local priest (above) which fuelled my desire to learn more about the "gospel stories" of common people; the "good news" according to Jim or Sarah or Michael or whomever.

Because this chapter deals with the specific area of folk narrative, some additional theory is required to supplement the previous exploration of folk religion. Firstly, my analysis of the narratives presented below is situated in the "ethnography of speaking," and so a brief discussion of the conceptual modes of this school of thought is needed. Secondly, since the personal experience narrative⁸ remains a contested genre among folklorists, questions of genre must also be addressed. Finally, theories from cognate disciplines⁹ are examined, in order to come to a better understanding of the linguistic representation of religious experience.

My analysis contains four main arguments. I assert that the personal religious narrative¹⁰ is (1) a distinct genre, which is both (2) evangelical (a tool for "spreading the word"), and (3) reflective, (a tool for coming to a better understanding of religious experience). Furthermore, I argue that (4) its principle strategy for success (in both its

⁸ Also referred to as "pn." and "pen."

⁹ In this case, the ideas of cultural anthropology, philosophy of religion, cognitive science, physical anthropology, and folkloristics, all provide materials for the articulation of my general argument.

¹⁰ Also referred to as "pm."

evangelical and reflective functions) is the communication of what Donald Braid (1996) terms “experiential meaning.”

The transcriptions and/or summaries of thirteen personal religious narratives are presented in this chapter, each accompanied by contextual introduction. The narrative context is essential to the analysis, which primarily explores story telling events, not narrative texts. The theory is applied to the ethnographic materials on several levels, including an analysis of the tension between tradition and creativity, of the dynamics of performer/audience negotiation, and of the transmission of experiential meaning.

The Ethnography of Speaking

The “ethnography of speaking” began with Dell Hymes' critique of the Chomskyan notion of “communicative competence.” Hymes called for “a second descriptive science of language” which was concerned with the use of language, rather than its grammatical structure (Coultard 1985: 34). This second-science was to be concerned with “ways of speaking,” giving attention to linguistic resources, styles, rules of interpretation, governing norms, structure and setting (Coultard 1985: 34).

The present work is informed by, and situated in, the ethnography of speaking, which is based on what Bauman and Sherzer describe as “a conception which holds that the patterning of language goes far beyond laws of grammar to comprehend the use of language in social life” (1989: 6). My reproduction, description, and analysis of language use in this chapter is thus approached as “research directed toward the foundation of descriptive theories of speaking as a cultural system or as part of cultural systems” (Bauman and Sherzer 1989: 6).

Speech Communities

Earlier, I described the difficulties in defining the devotional group, and declared that the groups involved in this research were best characterised as speech communities. Coulter asserts that "any group which share both linguistic resources and rules for interaction and interpretation is defined as a speech community" (1985, 35). That such a community has special claim to the attention of folklorists and ethnographers of speaking is attested to by Bauman and Sherzer, who call the speech community the "the point of departure" (1989: 6). Dan Ben-Amos agrees that "folklore has a social limitation as well, namely the small group," which Ben-Amos describes in terms significantly similar to Coulter, Bauman, and Sherzer's speech communities (Ben-Amos 1975: 12).

The Group, the People, and the Centre, are all recognisably assemblies of people sharing "both linguistic resources and rules for interaction and interpretation," and as such can be called speech communities (and, thankfully, "groups"). The label is true to the spirit of the present work, which is more concerned with the popular use of linguistic resources (narrative, prayer, iconography, ritual expression) than with popular social structure. Linguistic models also accommodate the reality of shifting group membership more readily than more structurally oriented definitions. Finally, the label "speech community" connotes heterogeneity, which is particularly useful in this chapter.

Bauman and Sherzer call the speech community "an organisation of diversity; insofar as this knowledge and ability [to communicate competently and appropriately] ... [is] differentially distributed among its members; the production and interpretation of speech are thus variable and complementary rather than homogenous and constant" (1989: 6, 15-17). Below, I argue that two of the linguistic resources shared by these groups are personal religious experience, and the capacity to interpret these encounters

with the divine. The irregular distribution of these resources is the “economic” reality which supplies the need to communicate “experiential meaning.”

A Processional Perspective

The ethnography of speaking requires a processional, contextual view of folklore, which I believe to be already established in this work. Without process, it would be an ethnography of speech, rather than speaking; without context, it would not be ethnography at all. Ben-Amos insightfully declared that “most definitions have conceived of folklore as a collection of things ... [which] requires a methodological abstraction of objects from their actual context. ... Any definition of folklore on the basis of these abstracted things is bound to mistake the part for the whole. ... It is necessary to examine the phenomena as they exist. In its cultural context, folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process - a communicative process, to be exact” (1975: 9).

A processional perspective changes the focus of a study from speech texts to speech acts. The idea of a speech act can be found in the work of a number of linguists; Searle, Labov, Fanshel, Grice, Garfinkel, etc. (Coulter 1985: 30). J.L. Austin, however, is identified as a seminal figure for the shifting of linguistic emphasis to performative statements which “evince emotion or ... prescribe conduct” (Coulter 1985: 13). Austin argues “that in saying anything one is performing some kind of act” (Coulter 1985: 17). Likewise, Hymes distinguishes between “genre” and “doing a genre” (Coulter 1985: 42), and Bauman and Sherzer “performance in terms of the interplay between resource and individual competence, within the context of particular situations. Performances thus have an emergent quality” (1989: 6).

Just as I have defined folk religion as an emergent, contextualised phenomenon, this chapter looks at narrative as an emergent performance, a contextualised act and event. The chapter title was chosen specifically to point to the processional nature of

narrative, and the research follows Hymes' guidelines for ethnographers of speaking. Thus, this chapter seeks to understand not only the structure, topic, and form, but the setting, participants, purpose, key, and channel for each narrative event (see Coulter 1985: 44).

A Dual Event

Richard Bauman, in the tradition of Roman Jakobson, claims that narrative is “doubly anchored in human events. That is, narratives are keyed both to the events in which they are told and to the events which they recount” (Bauman 1986: 2). Bauman’s ideas are central to my argument that the personal religious narrative seeks to convey experiential meaning, and thus has the potential to serve as a religious experience in its own right. The question constantly in my mind, therefore, is “What happens, not only in the narration, but in the narrating?”

The Personal Religious Narrative

Introducing *Folklore Genres*, Dan Ben-Amos warns the reader that “the adequacy of generic descriptions depends entirely on the theoretical view they are designed to satisfy” (1976: xiii). Ideas of genre shape everything a folklorist does, from collection and analysis. More importantly, if they are at all accurate, or reflective of the “native view,” they shape what the performer and audience does as well. Such a powerful idea as genre requires exploration before going further.

Reimund Kvideland argues that in folklore, “all too often quite a few genres have been considered marginal” (1990: 61). This includes what Kvideland, “for lack of a better term, ... [calls] Christian memorates: they are stories about supranormal events within the context of popular Christianity which have been experienced by the narrator himself” (1990: 61). In this chapter, I deal with narratives like Kvideland’s “Christian

memorates,” though I classify them generically as “personal religious narratives.” As in Kvideland's definition, subject matter is important, but for me the function and motive of narration is what truly distinguishes these narratives as a performance genre.

I would like to consider the fact that although the personal religious narrative may represent a marginalized genre, recent folklore scholarship has seen a boom in the study of the generalised personal narrative. Sandra Stahl argues that this increased interest is laudable, and articulates the benefits to studying this blend of traditional form and personal experience as a vehicle for understanding contemporary storytelling, thus overcoming many antiquarian notions of folklore (1983: 268). Stahl points out that historically, the personal narrative has always thrived as a verbal art form; the “boom” is in academic interest, not performance frequency (1983: 268; see also Degh 1984: 235).

How, then, has this increasingly popular genre been defined? Degh challenges Stahl's appealingly simple definition of the personal narrative, which reads “The pn is a prose narrative relating a personal experience; it is usually told in the first person and its content is non-traditional” (Degh 1984: 237). Degh's criticisms hit home, pointing out that many pn's are told second or even third hand, that there are non-prose performances, and that nothing can be utterly without tradition (1984: 237-40). In a way Stahl's definition holds more water when it is reversed to read “A first person, non-traditional, prose narrative is a pn.” It simply is not the *only* type of pn.

Following Ben-Amos' advice regarding the limited adequacy of generic classifications, I wish to look at two of these three criteria (personal ownership, and tradition), in light of my own theoretical requirements. The basic definition of the personal religious narrative employed in this study hinges on the fact that the teller of the story has claimed a personal relationship with the content of the story - either as a participant, an eyewitness, or both. Stories which are told second hand - but told with expressed authority or affinity which links the teller (in the teller's mind) to the

participants and witnesses of the story - meet this requirement. In short, the performer of the personal religious narrative, rather than the collector, or even the narrative, distinguishes it from the non-personal religious legend.

Degh calls the question of traditionality "the most problematic element in [Stahl's] definition" (1984: 238). She argues that even if the manner of telling could somehow be non-traditional, the experience which is related (and its interpretation) is the product of tradition. I agree with this analysis wholeheartedly. As a whole this work is concerned with the roots and wings of Irish folk Catholicism; the relationship between tradition and creativity, resources and competence, etc. Although I will re-approach the subject of traditionality below, for now a short list of a few of the "traditional characteristics" of the personal religious narrative will suffice to establish its place in a communal heritage.

Lawrence Taylor asserts that the International Charismatic Renewal gave to its participants "a way of speaking about miracles," a language which "maintained their new field of religious experience," and which he describes (I think quite aptly) as "an amalgam of liberal, person-centred therapeutics and revived appreciations of the miraculous character of the Catholic sacraments" (1995: 237). This "way of speaking" is certainly not limited to the participants of the charismatic renewal, and represents one of the traditions, one of the resources, from which performers draw. Other resources include the narrative traditions and miracle/vision interpretations of pilgrims to various international shrines. Narrators also draw from the liturgy, from inspirational tapes and literature.

Perhaps most importantly, narrators also look to the structure, content, and tone of the gospels and other books of the New Testament; thus allowing them to add to the living message, to "God's good news." Without a doubt, the personal religious

narrative is more than merely personal, and looks to a diverse array of rich traditions for inspiration and guidance.

Religious Experience

Jewish philosopher Martin Buber argued that “the religious essence in every religion can be found in its highest certainty ... that the meaning of existence is open and accessible in the actual lived concrete. ... [This] does not mean it is to be won and possessed through any type of analytical or synthetic investigation. ... Meaning is to be experienced in living action and suffering itself, in the unreduced immediacy of the moment” (1968: 182).

The study of experience is central to any study of religion, other than the most theologically abstracted. Many philosophers of religion have looked at the seeming primacy of religious experience and reached a wide range of conclusions: viewing it as somehow “beyond” the corrupting, finite nature of language or, for the same reason, as irrational and nonsensical. Religious experience has been viewed alternatively as emotion, perception, communication, and hallucination (see Peterson, et al. 1991). But what is of greater importance to the subject of this chapter is how religious experience is represented in language, and why.

Friedrich Schleiermacher is traditionally credited with first articulating the idea that religious experience exists, somehow, beyond language. This means not only that religious experience is difficult to express linguistically, but also that the experience occurs without cognitive shaping or interpretation (Proudfoot 1985). If this is so, the task of sharing experience through the performance of a personal religious narrative is indeed a difficult one.

Schleiermacher's recommendation is that “anyone attempting to describe religious experience must employ evocative rather than analytical language,” (Proudfoot

1985: 8) and he is not alone. William James argues that religious language seeks to share the essence of a religious event by reporting the “fact of experience: the divine is actually present, religion says, and between it and ourselves relations of give and take are actual. If definite perceptions of fact like this cannot stand upon their own feet, surely abstract reasoning cannot give them support. ... Religious experience, in other words, spontaneously and inevitably engenders myths, superstitions, [etc.]...” (James 1958: 346).

But religious experiences are, in C.H. Whiteley's words, “rare and therefore unfamiliar” (Lewis and Whiteley 1968: 262), a point which I discussed earlier. This being the case, and if we assume that belief requires experience to feed and strengthen it, we are posed with a question: from whence comes the wide spread distribution of faith, and familiar ease with which certain groups handle the miraculous? I believe the answer is found in the evocative language, not of theologians and philosophers, but of individual storytellers.

H.D. Lewis asserts that “ideas need to be made vivid for us and made to count for us personally by being related to matters that concern us closely if their full impact is to be felt” (Lewis and Whiteley 1968: 249). I would argue that this is the essence of the verbal art of the personal religious narrative - the vivid expression of experience.

If we are to understand how an experience characterised by many as non-linguistic can be expressed successfully - the task of the personal religious narrator - we must approach the question in several steps. The first step is to understand that the concepts of “non-linguistic” experience and belief are not as intimidating they would first seem. Maurice Bloch argues that much of cultural knowledge is non-linguistic, formed in networks of meaning that are implicit and experiential, but which, under the correct circumstances can be transformed into explicit discourse (1991: 186). Ward Goodenough, in a similar vein, asserts that the mental and neurological capacities that

are necessary for proposition and belief are pre-linguistic, possibly even pre-hominid (1990).

Religious Language

Seeing that the task of expressing the non-linguistic is not impossible, the next question is one of circumstance: under what conditions can religious experience be reproduced in religious language? The beginning of the answer is found in the question itself, which presupposes that there is such a thing as "religious language," which Balle-Peterson calls "a professional language ... Its special vocabulary and forms of expression serve to express something which is of another world and essentially different from colloquial speech and everyday life" (1981: 98). This language, this resource, is then used in a particular way of speaking, in the powerful linguistic form of religious narrative.

Why is oral religious narrative capable of doing something which written, highly rational, philosophies and theologies cannot? I believe the success of the pm is partially due to the personal and illustrative nature of oral narrative, an intimacy which carries great weight in the negotiation of belief. Braithewaite characterises the religious assertion as powerful because, unlike a moral assertion "it will refer to a story as well as an intention" (1968: 340-1). In my analysis of the narratives below, I contend that the "story" of the religious assertion is a very special verbal art. It is both evangelical, as a tool for encouraging others to believe, and reflective, as a tool for coming to a better understanding of one's own religious experiences. Performers are able to accomplish this two fold task by transferring the full force of their experience to the audience. Donald Braid (1996) calls this process the transfer of "experiential meaning," which includes activity on the part of both the audience and performer. The ability of narrative to create an experience is also approached by Richard Bauman, who hints that rather than narratives being icons of events, perhaps "events are abstractions from

narrative” (1986: 5). Having addressed these theoretical considerations, I turn now to the narratives and their analysis.

Narrative Corpus

Narrative One:

Jim is in his late 50's, and is a retired Garda. He is the leader of The Group's weekly, outdoor rosary, and organises many of The Group's special activities. As mentioned previously, Jim regularly visits a hospital in Cork with small, blessed statues of Our Lady of Fatima. Jim originally told this story to me as he drove me into Cork after an informal get together in Blarney on January 31, 1995. On March 17, 1995, after attending a silent adoration in a nearby convent, Jim did a tape-recorded interview with me regarding the miraculous healings he had witnessed in his visits to the hospital. About midway through the interview, he repeated this story.

Jim: The next one was, um ... a young fella from Ballingearry by the name of M.L. ... He was struck by a car in Ballincollig ... And/say/we'd just prayed the rosary ... and we/say/got into the lift ... and I asked the Holy Spirit ... would he please direct us to some ... person ... who was/badly needed us.

JF: Mm-hmm.

Jim: So we pressed the button to go up to three and instead of ... lift going up/went down to the basement.

JF: Hmm.

Jim: So I did say to the crowd were with me, "There is some poor creature here that needs help." So I went around the corner/there was a broken hearted mother and she crying/weeping away ... and there was a big crowd with her. ... And, uh, I placed the statue in her hands ... and we said/I said "Do you mind if we say the rosary?" ... So we all agreed/that we would say the rosary. ... So we started the rosary and in between the decades I used to say/tell them ... that this little lad would be all right ... if they'd only faith....So there was a lad across from me, I'd say he was, um, he was a/actually, uh, he looked to me like a school inspector ... fairly important looking anyway/

JF: Right, mm.

Jim: /well dressed. But he used to stare at me in a kind of an abnormal way like as much to say, "Would you ever shut your blooming mouth, you half-wit?" You know?

JF: This is/

Jim: That's/the what was coming to me/

JF: in the hospital/

Jim: Yeah, in the hospital. ... So anyway, what/they told us was the child was cross/was crossing the road with the mother and she had him by the hand ... and suddenly he ran/darted across the road/

JF: Hmm.

Jim: and a car come and hit him ... and the doctors told them that he was brain dea/dead.

JF: How old was the boy?

Jim: [] was only about eight. ...

JF: Hmmm.

Jim: An only son, and no hope for another one.

JF: Hm.

Jim: So um ... the next thing ... then happened was ... that um ... eh, I was so taken by the case ... so in bits sad for the father and that ... we did put the statue in with the young lad that night and we came back on the Sunday night, Mary(another member of The Group, in her late 40's) and myself ... and we joined them again in the rosary ... and the lad across the way started staring at me again ... with a kind of forbidding look ... because I was chattering away about faith and believing ... that he would come around. ... So anyway, we finished the rosary ... and ... I asked the father could we go into him and we blessed him with holy water ... and I put a relic of Saint Anthony under his pillow.... And this is Sunday night.... And I said to the father, "I think/I believe that he's going to be all right by Tuesday. ...

JF: Which is St. Anthony's/

Jim: This/

JF: day?

Jim: Yeah.

JF: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah. So the next thing then ... he says to me, "Well, they're pulling the plug tomorrow ... this Monday ... and it's either up or down." ... They'd pulled it already and he showed no reaction whatsoever ... and, um ... the doctor said/only/that they had beseeched the doctor give him a chance/the doctor wasn't interested. ... So, um, the next thing anyway I got a call ... from Mary ... on the Monday ... the great news that the young fella/when they pulled the plug he was breathing and moving ...

JF: Hmmm.

Jim: And the doctors were astounded and he was now out in the children's ward. But, uh, I don't know whether he had spoken anyone or not at this stage but when we went in on Monday night ... to see him ... with excitement ... uh, he was asleep or ... either looked like coma or asleep ... you wouldn't know which. ... While I was talking to the father he woke up/and sat up in the bed and he threw his arms around the father ... um, around his neck. ... And the two of them started conversing in Irish at a fierce rate.

JF: Hm. Fantastic.

Jim: Wasn't it?

JF: Yeah.

Jim: So he/he put his hand out then/he shook hands with me and/um/I went to take the statue away ... because we were visiting other pa/patients ... and the nurse said to me, "Leave that statue there!"

JF: (Laughs)

Jim: (Laughs) She knew ... she knew how bad he'd been ...

JF: Yeah/

Jim: and when I said to her it was a miracle, she nodded.

JF: Did she?

Jim: She did.

Narrative Two:

Towards the end of the March 17 interview, Jim told this story which describes an "unintentional" healing that took place in the home of a woman he had met as a result of the hospital visits.

Jim: I told her that I would be eager to have ... eh ... a prayer meeting in her house ... and when she rang me about a month later to tell me the news/ now she says "I want you to come down to the house." And we did go down to her house/I went down to her house on my own ... with the big statue ... and we did three rosaries in her house interlaced with the Stations of the Cross ... And while that was happening there was a woman there/there was about forty people in the house ...even though this woman has cancer and all the rest of it she went through the trouble. And the tea and all ready/but []

JF: Hmmm.

Jim: we/when were finished praying. But while we were praying this woman/whom I didn't know from Adam at all/had never been at a prayer meeting in a house before ... she felt heat going through her, and she was full of arthritis. And she heard a voice saying to her, "You are cured. You are healed." Or something like that/either cured or healed ...

JF: Right, right.

Jim: and/um/the next morning she was able to jump out of the bed without pain or anything.

Narrative Three:

On May 16, 1995, Jim, myself, and the tape recorder met again. For the second time I found myself sitting with him in the front room of his house, drinking tea, eating crackers and jam, and wondering where his wife, children, and dog had disappeared to. I had wanted to talk about the large Fatima statue that is the centrepiece for the weekly rosary meeting, but Jim decided he wanted to tell me about a rosary walk they had walked in the Marian year. Among other things, he described a vision he saw at Mt. Mellary.

Jim: And then I headed down ... for the grotto ... to say the rosary that I'd promised.

JF: Mm-hmm.

Jim: And I'm going into the grotto ... one of the p/people with me ... a woman/she said to me ... "What time is it?" and ... I believe the time was ... I think it was ten past ten. ... And the date was the 10th ... of May, Monday. I can remember/

JF: Mm-hmm/

Jim: it because it was ... such a ... colossal night. ... When I looked down Patrick and Jerry, who were two fellas with me ... they were just finishing up the rosary so when I came into them I said "Look it, ... I have to say another rosary, will you please say it with me?" ... "No problem," they said. ... So, uh ... Patrick is on my left and Jerry on my right and we're kneeling on the kneeler right beside the grotto ... and the water was winding it's way down. ... And when I started the rosary I looked up at the statue ... and I could see nothing, only pure whiteness, ... no sign of the statue, ... of the face of the statue. ... So I said to Patrick, "Can you see the face of the statue?" ... And he said "Yes, no problem at-all." ... So this worried me quite a bit ... first of all I said "Is she out with me?" ... Because I left the grotto/

JF: Right, "Is she hiding her face?"/

Jim: Yeah.

JF: Yeah.

Jim: Is it some sign ... that I was displeasing to her... and um ... haven't gone through the town praying and all this stuff was coming to me, you know?... The battle that was going on. ... And then I said "Maybe



I'm going blind, ... you know? ... This is a reality, like I couldn't/all's I could see was whiteness ... there was ... a light ... trained on it ... on/to the statue itself. ... So then ... I prayed away this decade and all this was going in through my mind ... am I going blind? is she out with me? or what? ... And then on the second/just started the second/it was the glorious mysteries, ... the ascension. ... The next thing I could see/a silhouette of a woman ... with her back to me ... with/um ... a great big hood coming out as far as here (gestures about a foot in front of face) ... like something the monks would wear/

JF: Mm-hmm.

Jim: Like it was like a hood...but it was coming out that far now ... very,very far/

JF: Right/

Jim: from the head ... and she had her back to me and I said "she's definitely out with me anyway ... she has her back turned to me " (laughs) and I wasn't worried about what/the silhouette ... I was seeing it/that wasn't/it was still/I was still worried ... and then I came to the assumption ... and just as I started the assumption I started seeing it ... I'd just barely started it ... and the next thing the whole [] just burst into light ... couldn't describe it now, all the trees, the shrubs, everything ... became the most beautiful/no way could I ... describe them ... only that the greatest artist on earth wouldn't put one of them together the way the way they were.

JF: Hmmm.

Jim: And this yellow light was flowing out from them ... they're really bright themselves but the light ... was kind of yellowy/

JF: Mm-hmm.

Jim: Kind of a goldy-yellow ... light ... be more ... sorry orangey ... orangey/

JF: Right.

Jim: Orangey ... to ... Goldy coloured... and it was flooding out ... and I was very conscious it was the light of God like coming out through his nature... all the ferns everything.

Narrative Four:

In the last few minutes of the May 16 interview, Jim told me the story of how he and Patrick began distributing the small, blessed Fatima statues (which are not only brought into the hospital wards, but into private homes as well).

Jim: The little statues ... how that came about actually ... it would be about/I think about three years ago. ... We went up to T./we were invited up to a day of prayer in/uh/I think it was/uh/not St. Patrick's but another seminary there. ... And/um/when we were/came in to the church ... I had the big statue with me ... and I wasn't invited to bring it but I brought it and put it up in the church ... and then we had a silent hour ... in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

JF: Mmm-hmm.

Jim: And then [] priest called us into an inner room ... and he said the Rosary.... And then he came out with something/he said "Now let the Holy Spirit speak through you."... So I got this compulsion to speak any way about Our Lady of Fatima/I said "I honestly believe that if every town and city in Ireland/and village/had a statue of Our Lady of Fatima ... in that town or village ... then Ireland would be saved ... the chastisement."

JF: Hmmm.

Jim: And ... I thought no more of it ... but Patrick who doesn't say much but listens well/

JF: (laughs)

Jim: he took that serious and the next thing (laughs) I found that Patrick had/a [] load of small statues had arrived in his house. ... (laughs) And he wanted to get them blessed with Our Lady of Graces...

Narrative Five:

Eoin is 50 years old, is retired, and lives alone about two minutes walk from The Centre, where he is part of the central, all volunteer management team. When I visit him (in a town about 45 minutes from Cork) I stay in his flat, and on more than one occasion, we recorded interviews, usually at night, on a variety of subjects. On December 3, 1995, we were discussing the International Charismatic Renewal Conference that had taken place the week before, and Eoin told this story about the 1994 conference.

E: The healing ... the healing/ta, uh ... service started ... and, uh, what happened was that, um ... that one man ... he/I remember Father saying there's/there's/there's one man in ... the hall who has never heard in his life ... but he can hear me speaking now ... you see? ... So ... you know you'd kind of/I don't know what kind of/what was going on inside in me like ... when I heard/

JF: Mm-hmm/

E: this statement ... to be quite frank about it. ... But like after awhile this man/he said/he invited/he said "Look," he said "You can hear me! I know you can hear me and you've never heard in your life." ... So he said "Come to the stage" he said "and give glory to God." ... You know? ... And after awhile this man eventually came forward/came up all from somewhere up along the hall ... came to the front stage and he gave his testimony to the Lord. ... And he put/I think it was a thousand pounds worth of hearing aids ... I suppose in the hospitals they'd been trying to help him/

JF: Right/

E: to get some class of hearing or whatever ... and he put them up on the stage and he didn't have need for them after that.

JF: That's amazing.

E: You see?

JF: (Nods)

E: So I can assure you that absolutely my mind was boggled to see this.

Narrative Six:

Later in the December 3 interview, Eoin described one of his early encounters with the Charismatic Renewal, a Charismatic mass in the city of Cork.

E: And what it was then was a mass, ... and like ... I mean it was just such a beautiful ... celebration of the mass/

JF: Right/

E: Right now as I even speak to you I still have the picture in my mind/

JF: [] very different than []/

E: because like ... uh, we [] there was all the people there were charismatic ... you know ... as we call charismatic. ... And ... but what it is sticks in my mind most of all is that ... we ... were invited ... to stand/come out of our seats and stand one at the end of each seat ... in a row ... down through the church. ... And the priest left the alter ... with the monstrance ... with Jesus in the monstrance ... and stood before each individual all the way down one side of the church and all back up the other. ... And I had my eyes closed. ... But I felt the presence of Jesus even when I didn't know the priest/where he was/whether he was up or down the aisle or where he was. ...

JF: Right.

E: But I felt the presence of Jesus and the priest was obviously there standing in front of me with the monstrance. ... So that was a beautiful experience.

JF: It is, yeah.

Narrative Seven:

May is a widow in her fifties, with grown children, who founded The Centre.¹¹ May left Ireland only two months after we met, but in that time we talked often and extensively, both on and off tape. To my great surprise (a folklorist's dream!), she and Eoin made several tapes on their own, perhaps motivated by the realisation that May would be travelling soon to the West Indies (where she is currently doing volunteer work). One such tape was made on January 3, 1995. By way of introduction, Eoin says:

This is the story of a woman of faith,... her name is May, ... and, uh, well May, ... you know the reason why We're here, the Holy Spirit knows the reason why we're here ...

Eoin asked May to talk about the origin of The Centre, and for May, that story is tied into another story, the story of her own spiritual journey.

*May: I suppose I could start with that/uh/1976.
... um ... I was a very ill person I/um for want of a better word and I now/know now ... it that, um, my body had collapsed. ... um ... I had cancer, I had trombosis, I had angina of the heart ... in other/in other words I ... what would you call it? ... froze up inside or whatever they call it nowadays. ... But I was very ill and I'd/I had a valium problem so I was highly addicted. ... And then I was taken to Mellary and was a priest prayed with me there ... and she told me I was cured over night and of course again ... as I've often said ... I thought he was a madman ... and, um ... I came home/didn't believe a word of it ... and was ... putting my hand out to take my tablets ... per usual and ... there was somebody or something ... stood behind me and said "What can they do for you that I can't?"... And all of a sudden as I reached out my hand to take the tablets ... I thought they looked/they all looked like Smarties ... and because with kids growing up and Smarties I just ... don't like them ... because ... of the dye that would come off and would be on their clothes ... so all of a sudden I had a hatred ... of tablets. ... It was gone ... this thing ... and I couldn't believe it because I went to bed that night and I remember putting my hand out and saying "Jesus I'm scared."... And I'd say from that day ... um, my journey started but I didn't know where I was going or what I was doing.*

¹¹ This is the same May whose words provided the title both for this chapter and for the work as a whole.

Narrative Eight:

About fifteen minutes into the conversation between Eoin and May, May tells this story about an instance of bibliomacy:

May: At that time ... at that time ... that, um ... when I'd/I'd be in my deepest distress ... uh ... like for example that my husband was a builder ... and I remember one day ... and I would have five kids to cook for as well, now, and that/I mean that/that's reality. ... But one day he said we'll go and collect the money ... and we left at nine in the morning ... and we went up to S. Stud and he had built ... um ... stables up there ... and he had thirty thousand into his hand Eoin. ... We went further down the road ... and there was another nineteen thousand. ... And I remember asking Rob (her husband) "Could we stop to have a cup of coffee?" And the answer was no because he had to get back home ... to have his dinner ... so that he would go out and have a drink afterwards. ... The kids had to be fed. ... But I remember I always carried a little/pocket bible with me ... and I was/I was saying ... I was just kind of weak in myself. ... And, uh, I felt like totally abandoned ... that I was not a person ... in my own right. ... And, um, I opened up the Bible, and of course what do you think Jesus says "They hated me, they'll hate you" ... And I says "Oh God, right so" ... And I think the minute I said "right so" ... I think my anger went.

Narrative Nine:

May felt that the story of *The Centre* was a collection of stories about people, not only her own story, but Eoin's and the rest. In the middle of the January 3 interview, May turns the mike over to Eoin, asking him to comment on his own "journey."

E: Well May, what I have to say about it is that ... um .. yes, I was at the lowest ebb when I/when one morning I met you after mass/and your very much aware of that. ... And uh, you did give me a key, and you gave me trust in sa/to bring me back into The Centre. ... But, uh, ... before that/and I'll have to get on me old specs for this because I've forgotten to put them on. ... Strangely enough, in the office tonight that we've done, it says "Out of the depths I cried to you, O Lord, ... Lord hear my voice, ...O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading, ... if you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord who would survive? But with you is found forgiveness ... for this we revere you. My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word ... my soul is longing for the lord more than watchman for daybreak ... let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord" ... or as I've been ... t/taught lately/that I can put in Eoin there and Eoin can count on the Lord ... "Because with the Lord there is mercy ... and fullness of redemption ... Israel, indeed, he will redeem from all its iniquity ... out of the depths I cry to you." I think, before we ever met on that particular morning that you're speaking about ... that, eh, [] you talking about my pain ... that I had gone down into the depths of pain that only God could see ...

The following series of narratives (Ten through Thirteen) must, unfortunately, be presented in a paraphrased form, as they are reconstructed from fieldnotes and have not been recorded. However, I am aware of my role as a link in the chain of this tradition, and will thus try to tell the "story of the storytelling" as well as possible. I believe it is a even trade-off, what I have lost by not having a verbatim transcription is gained by the fact that the story was told in a completely "natural" setting.

Narrative Ten:

Patrick is a man in his early 40's who works as a lab supervisor in a college. Jim refers to Patrick in #3-4, and the two are close friends. Patrick does not participate in either the weekly rosary or the hospital visits, although he is very active in organising processions and walks, and in promoting rosary devotion. He is Jim's partner in distributing the small statues of Our Lady of Fatima around Ireland.

On the afternoon of May 11, 1995, I called into Patrick's office, dodging the curious looks of a lab full of engineering students, and found him alone, working at his computer, as usual. He seemed happy to see me, and I must have had an eager look on my face, because he seemed a little amused as well. As I hoisted myself on to a high stool which was always my "take a seat" perch during our talks, I asked him about the weekend. He and Jim had gone on their annual May "motor rosary," and I had missed it because I was out of town visiting Eoin. His response to my broad and simple question was detailed and thorough. Although he told several stories about the day's events, there is one in particular I wish to repeat here.

They were driving in Jim's car, with load speakers competing with a large statue of Our Lady of Fatima for space amid a bed of flowers on the roof. It was in the afternoon and they were making good time; 50 mph down country roads. It was at this speed that the yellow plastic rosary beads held prayerfully by Our Lady flew off her hands and, miraculously, caught a flower from the arrangement and secured itself and the flower to the rear windscreen wiper. In the next village, Jim and Patrick retrieved it and found that it was, again miraculously, unharmed. Patrick added that the flower came from a graveyard, before telling me what happened next.

In the village, they told the story of the beads to a woman, who amazingly, was nonplussed. She replied with a similar story, in which rosary beads flew out of the hands of a passenger, only to get hooked in the rim of the car's rear left wheel. As with Jim and Patrick, she

and her friend retrieved the fragile beads from their dangerous landing place unharmed. Patrick, hearing this, predicted to Jim, "If there is two, there must be three." And indeed, later, they met another man who heard their stories and told his own about a woman he knew who, a full month after losing her rosary beads, found them wrapped around her tail pipe, unharmed.

Narrative Eleven:

At a later date, I was able to hear Jim's version of what happened.

Two days later I went to the outdoor rosary, mainly to find out what Jim had to say about his weekend experiences. I was late to the ceremony, and Jim ushered me into the circle, and close to the statue at it's centre, without interrupting the litany of "Hail Mary's." I looked at the statue and saw in her hands the yellow beads from Patrick's story.

The rosary was woven around brief homilies, as usual. Today, most of them were concerned with the trip, little events that Jim thought the group would appreciate. No word about the beads. The rosary ended and the group of about twelve (mostly women, mostly 50 or older) began to break up and wander off - to mass, to shopping, to coffee shops.

I stood and waited to talk to Jim, when I overheard him talking to two women about an amazing thing that had happened on the trip. Their attention alternated between eye contact with Jim, and studying and handling the yellow beads hanging from Our Lady's hands. Jim eagerly told them the story of how those same beads had flown off, at 50 mph, and caught one of the flowers (which he said were from Stephen's Green). He paused, and then answered their puzzled looks triumphantly, telling them about the miraculous way in which the beads had caught the wiper, and remained there until the next village. He didn't mention the other stories, he didn't have a chance. The women were vocal and enthusiastic, and were pointing out that yellow was a Fatima colour when I was distracted by someone greeting me...

Narrative Twelve:

John is a bachelor, again in his mid-fifties, who attends the weekly rosary faithfully and, when Jim is absent, will sometimes lead the prayer. On one such occasion, I spoke to him after the rosary and he told me his testimony; the story of his conversion.

I arrived at the rosary meeting and discovered that Jim and some of the others were gone - I was told "on a rosary walk." Truth be known, I was a bit glad, as I wanted to speak to some of the others in the group, who tended to be rather quiet when the "leaders" were there. There was a fair turn-out, about fourteen people, and the sun was shining beautifully. John, who lead the praying, joked that if Jim were there it would surely be raining. Despite the fair weather, the whole event was rather subdued; it lacked Jim's powerful voice, and the visual focus of the centre statue (which was out of town with Jim).

After it was over, John invited me to the small coffee shop that The Group's members frequented both before and after the meeting. It was there, eating a sticky bun, that I heard the story of his conversion, which took place in 1985.

It happened at midday, he told me, downtown. He was in a lounge bar, indicative of his lifestyle at the time. Then, suddenly, he realised he needed to urinate, so he went upstairs, where they had a "semi-private toilet." Nothing happened. So he returned downstairs. A few minutes passed, and the sensation returned. Again upstairs, again nothing. This went on, back and forth, sensation and frustration, for thirty minutes. Then something extraordinary took place.

John went up to the toilet and this time, determined, stood and waited. That is when he heard a voice, or more accurately, felt a voice. The spectral voice "spoke with great authority" and "shook the very fibre" of his body. It said: "YOU ARE LEADING A SINFUL LIFE."

Without thinking, John replied, "Thy will be done."

The voice vanished, and he was able to relieve himself.

After conversion, John began faithfully attending Mass and praying the rosary. To date, he told me, he has visited Medjugorje seven times, and plans another trip soon. His drinking and his gambling (horses) are moderated and controlled by his new life of prayer. He is looking for a wife.

Before I left, John told me he had shared his story for a reason - I was young, and I will tell it to others, and it just might "tip the scales."

Narrative Thirteen:

Jim told me the following story three times. The first time was on February 4, 1995, when it was told in a short homily between decades of the rosary. The second time was after a rosary meeting (February 18, 1995), where the lashing rain did little to drown out the group's enthusiastic discussion about the eminent visit of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The third time was in his car, on March 4, as we drove home from a visit to the hospital.

Only about ten people had attended the rosary that day, the rain must have kept them away. Jim, myself, a woman from Blarney, and the statue of Our Lady of Fatima, were all gathered under Jim's large umbrella. He and the woman were examining the four or five rosaries in their hands, looking at the colours of the beads, and pointing out the changes. Two weeks before Jim had announced to the group, in between the third and fourth glorious mysteries, that yet another set of beads had miraculously changed colours. Today those beads were at home, but both he and the woman had seen similar miracles before.

Jim told myself and the woman, about one previous change. He had failed to say the rosary one day, and to make up for it had gone to an early mass before work the next morning. After the mass, he began to pray the previous day's mysteries. The white glass beads in his hands, as they were pushed through his fingers one prayer at a time, transformed into multi-coloured splendour. All but one. Jim went home, knowing that his truancy was forgiven, and showed the beads to his family. His son, a rebellious teenager at the time, considered it a terrific opportunity to poke fun at his father. He stopped short when, before his very eyes, the remaining bead changed colours.

"Maybe they're tiny signs," Jim said to us, "the real sign is that we're all praying together."

The following week I "did the rounds" in the hospital with Jim, and on the way home he told me the white-bead story again - this time introducing it with a summary of a saint's dream. In the dream, the world is a storm tossed sea, and the Eucharist and the rosary are the twin pillars between which first the Pope's ship, and then all other ships, take shelter. Talking about the power of the rosary reminded him of the story of the beads which, had he not been driving, he would have pulled from his pocket to show me. He added that there was once a nun in the hospital whose beads not only changed colours but began emitting the smell of roses. Everytime she prayed, the smell grew stronger, until finally, one day, the string of beads broke apart.

Analysis

My approach to these narratives follows two strategies. Firstly, I am concerned with the negotiation of belief between the narrator and audience. I contend that the negotiation of belief is fundamentally a negotiation of experience, an attempt to recreate the original event in its full sacrality for the listener. Linda Degh worked with storytelling events similar to those represented above, and has written an interesting analysis of the personal narrative *us-à-us* the legend (1990). Degh asks the important question, "What does the legend mean for its bearers?" and goes on to define the subject of a legend with the criteria: "It is of existential importance for people who participate in its presentation, elaboration and discussion, it is surrounded by uncertainty lacking firm knowledge, and it is controversial, invites expression of diverse points of view" (1990: 76).

A fuller examination of Degh's ideas reveals that the word "bearers" applies not only to the narrator but to the audience as well; again, reinforcing the idea that performance is emergent. Braid also engages with these two ideas - negotiation and audience activity - when he claims that "following a narrative therefore involves a repeated reframing of the perceived events in an attempt to predict the narrative course and grasp the coherence that informs the narrative and gives it meaning. ... The listener's struggle to make sense of the narrative is crucial. Through this struggle they are led to tentatively accept or experience the coherence of the narrative, a pattern that I suggest ... embodies the ideology of the narrator" (1996: 9).

This, then, is the first lens through which I will examine the thirteen narrative records. Two questions are posed: what is the ideological negotiation, if any, that is taking place? What roles are played by the narrator and audience in the negotiation? Because experiential meaning is part and parcel of these negotiations, the topics are approached in tandem.

Secondly, I wish to address the issue of traditionality, which will be re-addressed in the general analysis following these four, topic specific chapters. Kvideland argues that his Christian *memorates* are traditional on a number of levels. These are, (1) biblical parallels, (2) reinterpretations of non-Christian folk belief, (3) generic status as personal narratives and as legends, (4) recognisable/constant form and style, and (5) folk religion vs. official teaching (1990, 68-9). Certainly all of these criteria are true of the narratives dealt with here, though I add two more, the traditions of various folk Catholicisms and the genre of "gospel" narratives.

Negotiation of Belief

Narratives One, Two, and Five, can be grouped together, on the basis of content, as "healing stories." It is not merely the content, however, that causes me to do so, but rather what Hymes would call the "key" to the story. Narrative Seven, for example, is a narrative about a healing, but in it healing is not the key event, rather the salvation of a soul is at stake. Likewise, One, Two, and Five could have been placed with Ten and Eleven, and called "miracle stories" (for that matter, all thirteen narratives could be called "miracle stories"). But stories about healing have, again, a different "key" to than other miracle narratives - there is a greater intimacy, a greater weight attached to the frailty of a human being than to the frailty of a set of prayer beads. The high stakes to be found in a healing narrative therefore make it an obvious site of performer/audience negotiation.

The first time I heard Narrative One, Jim's story of the boy in a coma, Jim found he had a captive audience in more than one way. We were in a car, late at night, alone. We had spent the evening for the most part talking, either together or in larger groups. The negotiation of belief had gone on for many hours and, it seemed to me, Jim was continuously amazed at my interest in, and acceptance of, his stories. Not that

he was used to being doubted, or afraid that he would be. I've regularly seen him tell such stories with great authority to a group of solemnly nodding fellow believers, and I've watched ridicule just roll off his back, as often.

But my youth seemed to surprise him, and my affiliation with the college. I remember we drove slowly when he told the story of M.L. coming out of the coma, and then he fell silent, waiting for me to say something. So I asked to talk to the nurse, and Jim burst out laughing and said he would try to arrange it (we never have). He did not seem offended, he knew that I wasn't checking up on him, that I just wanted another version of the event.

By the time we put the story on tape, Jim's negotiation with me on the subject of M.L. was well over. I had been in the elevator in question, I had been in to see the sick, I had held the statue; my sincerity, and veracity, was spoken for. But the audience at the other end of the microphone which sat amid the biscuits on the coffee table was another story. Jim's negotiation with them was just beginning.

The story opens just as I heard it the first time, with what can be called, I hope not too irreverently, the "warm up." The minor miracle of the elevator going down instead of up prepares the audience for the greater miracle to come. My curious "Hrm" (so often stated) showed Jim that I accepted his implication that the elevator buttons hadn't been pushed by a mischievous child who got off on the floor above, but instead was serving some spiritually guided purpose. Satisfied that I'm "with him," Jim describes his prophetic statement to those around him, and it's immediate fulfilment (minor miracle number two).

What happens next is a rather "high context" event. Because of the time I have spent visiting the hospital, I know that Jim's approach to the mother is not typical of his normal banter, which he uses to give everyone a medicinal dose of laughter. The high sensitivity of the situation not only prompts Jim to take on a gentle manner, but also to

make sure the narrative audience realises he was welcomed by the bereaved: “we all agreed that we would say the rosary.” This solicitation of audience understanding is necessary to make the next event significant.

“... So there was this lad across from me, But he used to stare at me in a kind of an abnormal way...” March 17 was the first I had heard of this individual. But the emphasis Jim places on him leads me to believe that his scepticism was important to Jim's understanding of the miracle, which required the family (and the audience) to “have faith.”¹²

Jim tells the details of the boys accident, and allows the tragic drama of the scene to unfold. His second prediction of recovery by Tuesday (one which I heard often in connection with giving someone a St. Anthony medal (see next chapter) is again greeted by the cold look from the young man, and even the father seems to be at the edge of hope.

Two events wrap up both the story and the “case” being presented to the audience . First, the boy is healed, and although he came out of the coma earlier, Jim experiences it and describes it in its original, miraculous splendour,¹³ desiring the audience be able to do the same. The boy pops up from his coma like sleep with flamboyant life, embracing his father and chattering in Irish. Second, and just as importantly, the doctors and nurses were astounded - they have understood what has happened.

In closing Jim wants to make sure I understand as well (adding another mini-testimony, my own verbalised acceptance, for the taped audience). Our dialogue is brief, and positive. I call the event fantastic, he agrees, and then tells me what other's have said. The nurse called it a miracle, he tells me, and together we laugh, at the tragedy

¹² This character is also seen in Narrative Thirteen, a non-healing miracle narrative, only this time the skeptic is Jim's own son.

¹³ “he was asleep or ... either looked like coma or asleep ... you wouldn't know which. ... While I was

turned comedy, at the nurse who sees the miracle and orders that the statue be left in place the way she might tell someone to be sure and swallow both pills.

As with Jim (much more so), my relationship with Eoin contains a level of trust which means Eoin tells me stories he may tell only a very few others. Narrative Five, however, is a story open to public consumption, and is a example of a different type of negotiation. Eoin is trying to better understand his experience at the same time that he shares it. His halting style in the narrative is not typical, and as he speaks, his cigarette burns away in his hand, forgotten, while he concentrates on the year old memory unfolding.

At the outset, it might be safe to say that Eoin's role as a witness to the event automatically provides Eoin a less confident voice than did Jim's role as a protagonist. However, I think the reality of the situation is deeper than that. Eoin plays the "roles" of nearly all the characters in Jim's story - he is at once the faithful believer, the doubting young man, and the wonder-struck nurse. Unlike Jim, he is not made to feel triumphant, but is humbled by the event, and his narrative brings the listener along the hesitant trail in fits and starts.

At every turn, Eoin makes sure I'm following his story: The father called to the deaf man, speaking nonsense. Do you understand? I didn't know what to think. Do you understand? Etc. Slowly, articulating it as much to himself as to me, Eoin records the wondrous. The deaf man heard, and came forward. The miracle of what happens is placed on the scales against £1000 of hearing aids, against the efforts of modern medicine (which Eoin, as a cardio-vascular patient, is all too familiar with), and against two witnesses, Eoin and myself. That's amazing, I say. You see? Eoin makes sure. I can tell that my strong response made him feel I was being flippant so this time I just

talking to the father he woke up"

nod. Eoin agrees that silence is the appropriate reaction to such an event, and he assures me that his mind was (and is) boggled by it as well.

Stories of vision, locution, and prophesy, tend to share this tone of unfolding wonder. They are not triumphs of faith but unpredictable, unexpected events of pure grace. Narratives Three, Four, Six, Eight, and Thirteen are examples of such prophesy stories. Again, the typing of these narratives is based on subtle criteria; Narrative twelve is also about a heavenly voice but is, I believe, a story of conversion; prophesy is present but is not the "key."

John's loud, internal voice (Narrative Thirteen) stands in sharp contrast May's anecdote about a common Christian divination technique, bibliomancy (Narrative Eight). Her story is simply an aside, and is told to a very close friend, thus negotiation is minimal. There remains, however, a desire to convey the experience in a powerful way so that the listeners may make use of the same technique themselves. The events in the story are fairly mundane, and May's frustration is tangible. Then comes the "but," when a Bible, May's first love,¹⁴ is produced from a hidden place in the midst of turmoil, both inner and outer. The anecdote is, in and of itself, a negotiating bid, a raising of the stakes, asking the listener to understand even more fully the lengthy story of her life's conversion in which it is set.

But this is not a story of reading the scriptures, it is a story about hearing the voice of Jesus through the reading and feeling the effect of that voice. It is the story of a dialogue: "Jesus says ...," "I says ...," and the anger - the problem - is alleviated. The story is not told to convey information, it is told to encourage behaviour, to inspire to action.

Narrative Three is another narrative in which the negotiation of belief is minimised. Instead, understanding and interpretation is negotiated, as Jim tries to

¹⁴ It was the priority placed on scripture that first attracted May to the Lay Dominicans.

formulate a clearer idea of what happened. His strategy for doing so is to recreate the experience as best as he can for the listener. To do so, he employs two techniques: detail and doubt. Together they construct a powerful negotiation engine, and a successful transference of "experiential knowledge."

Jim starts off with a statement of the exact time,¹⁵ in the same breath cutting off any would be accusation of artificiality by explaining why he knew the time. Next, the presence of others is mentioned. They are not important now, but they become so; not as witnesses but as anti-witnesses.

More details are offered, details of location and atmosphere, setting the stage for what is about to happen. The first stage of the vision is, curiously, an lack of vision; Jim can see nothing. He seeks confirmation, and finds he is alone in the experience. His response comes out of two mind-sets, thus offering the listener a choice of experiences and interpretations. Interestingly, Jim "pitches" his fear of blindness harder than the idea that Our Lady is "out" with him. He does so, I believe, because I, as the primary audience, have demonstrated an understanding of the religious thought process by restating it in my own words - "Right, is she hiding her face?"

From doubt, Jim turns again to detail - the exact spot in the rosary, the exact length of the hood.¹⁶ And then, having negotiated his rapport with the audience, Jim brings the listener, and himself, into the experience of wonder, with the grotto bursting into a splendour only describable in negatives ("no artist could paint it") and fuzzy adjectives (a kind of "yellowy-orangey-gold") .

¹⁵ Though he never got around to answering my inquiry, I asked Jim about the numerological significance of the three "tens" (10:10, on the tenth day of the month).

¹⁶ Again, though we never had the chance to discuss it. I've often wondered what connection Jim's hooded woman might have to the Mantle of the Goddess Bride, and similar symbols in pre-Christian Irish religion.

Narratives Seven, Nine, and Twelve tell stories about the transformation of a soul, or a life style. By far, this is the most dramatic miracle in the Christian world view, as it represents *the* miracle of the incarnate God slain for creation's sake.

May's story, like many I have heard, is situated in the story of a physical healing that parallels, and in some ways illustrates, the spiritual transformation taking place.¹⁷ May puts herself in a passive role, although she is the author, antagonist, and performer. Her broken state and addiction are emphasised, she is passively "taken" to Melleray where *others* pray and predict, and where she only doubts, the sure sign of a "sick soul." Then four miracles take place: her addiction is cured, her physical recovery begins, a divine voice speaks to her, and, most importantly, she finds a voice to answer. From that day onward her journey continues toward physical, mental, and spiritual health.

John's story is, admittedly, the most unusual conversion testimony I have heard - either among Irish Catholics or in eleven years of American charismatic Protestantism. John's story illustrates two important points.. First, it provides evidence of the massive weight of the narrator's interpretation of (fairly outlandish) events, and the ability for the performer of a narrative to effectively share the experience of their world view - to show others things *as the narrator sees it*. Second, John is explicit in stating why he tells the story - it is to "tip the scales," to negotiate with me, through me, or six steps down the road, belief in the saving power of God.

Narratives Ten and Eleven tell the story of miracles (as well as a few related stories within stories) which do not fit into either the healing, prophesy, or conversion categories. As I said before, this type of miracle involves less risk on the part of the performer. If he or she is not believed, there is not a great deal to be lost. Narrative Thirteen is similar, for although I have placed it with the prophesy narratives, the colour changes are downplayed by the narrator as being unimportant compared to the social

reality of a faithful devotion group. The “prophecy” is not demanding of attention, but is a “tiny sign.” Despite having little “on the line,” both Patrick (Ten) and Jim (Eleven) do their best to negotiate an understanding of the clearly miraculous nature of the event.

For Patrick, talking exclusively to me, the miracle must be set in the context of the supporting stories to be fully appreciated. Thus he tells me of his own astonishment, then Jim's, then the woman's story, then the man's (and in fact begins telling other stories about the miraculous durability of objects associated with Our Lady). For Jim, the presence of the beads in question, and of a friendly audience, made negotiation, for the most part, unneeded. He was just reporting a quick vignette to a group who expected that kind of story, if not something more.

The Question of Tradition

Kvideland's list of traditions in which Christian memorates are situated (above) are applicable to the thirteen narratives presented in this chapter. The content of these stories have biblical parallels, and also contain reference to non-Christian themes and motifs (numerology and hooded goddesses). Like all personal experience narratives, personal religious narratives have the potential of growing into the communal repertoire of legends, and are in turn shaped by these legends. The narratives evince a stylistic standard, and the “teachings of the narratives,” group them together in contrast to official church teachings.

I identify two other contexts which characterise these narratives as traditional. First, the stories are told within the emergent traditions of many “Folk Catholicisms.” I believe this is an important point as the dichotomy of folk vs. official religion often implies that both are homogenous and regular; a categorical untruth which has been approached earlier. Consider the highly negotiated events described in stories Four and

¹⁷ Taylor (1995: 225) has pointed out the despair, sickness and trauma are often entry points into Irish

Six. In Narrative Four, Jim, who is very uncomfortable with the charismatic movement, is confronted with a very charismatic situation - "let the Holy Spirit" speak through you. His response is to speak about Our Lady. Likewise Eoin, in Narrative Six, interprets one of his first encounters with the charismatics in terms of one of his favourite devotions: the adoration of the host. In Narrative Nine, Eoin reacts to being put on the spot by referencing another of his regular devotions: the evening office. These activities not only place the narrators in a number of different orthodox roles, but in a variety of Catholic folk traditions as well.

The idea of biblical events and narrative styles serving as traditional models for narration is an important one for my analysis. Specifically, I see the two main genres of the gospel - miracles and parables - as continually represented in these narratives. Furthermore, it seems that *the* gospel genre, the salvation story, is prized above all others. Hence the title, and guiding idea, of this chapter. In telling these stories, narrators are implicitly part of many traditions, but they are explicitly part of one great tradition, the mission of the Church entire. In telling stories, they add to the gospel, giving contemporary accounts of an active God. In a way, Narrative Two is most interesting as a story about this process. Jim tells the story of a "second generation" healing, as the power of faith and grace which started in the hospital, spreads outward.

Conclusion

Drawing it all together, I would conclude that these personal religious narratives, these "gospel stories" are, above all, *successful* story telling events. Three key theoretical ideas open up the possibility for this success: that religious experience is not the only type of non-linguistic knowledge that can survive the transition to language under the right circumstances, that there is a special relationship between narrated event and

Catholic devotional groups, which he compares to Victor Turner's "communities of affliction."

narrative event, and that the speech event is an experience in its own right, thus potentially a *religious* experience.

Looking at a variety of narratives in terms of their key event and performer intent, the process by which religious experience is translated into emergent performance can be approached. The strategies for negotiation and the transmission of experiential meaning are many and diverse, and depend primarily on context, the participants in the event, and their attitude toward the narrative content. While definitively personal, these narratives are “traditional” in many senses, and draw on a wide range of linguistic and cultural resources. If the goal of the narrators is to add to the gospel story, to better understand their religious experiences and share them with others, I feel it has been shown that they do so with great skill and passion.

Chapter Five: Bringing Images to Life: The Eloquence of Religious Artefacts

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the active and creative use of religious artefacts in popular Catholicism. The use of the word “eloquence” in the chapter title points our inquiry in the direction of what Colleen McDannell calls, *a la* Robert Armstrong, an object’s “affecting presence” (1995: 18). My understanding of the term, and the way in which it is to be used in the present work, is that a material object is both used *in* a cultural context and has the capacity to *create* a cultural context. An object’s “eloquence” or “affecting presence” is that quality which creates, in the subjective experience of an individual or group, a meaning or import beyond the physical and functional characteristics of the objects. More than mere “sentimental value,” the presence of the object “speaks” to the human observer in a way which profoundly alters the meaning of an experience. In line with the general tone of this research, my analysis of material culture is concerned with process. In the following pages I address the active use of the material world, rather than the “grammar” which dictates such activity on an ideal level.

It is my contention that popular modes of interaction with religious objects “bring the images to life” - that is to say, activate the affecting presence, or eloquence, of the objects - in two ways. First, these activities open up a two-way spiritual channel through which devotion, prayer, and graces may be transferred between the human devotee and the spirit world. While mundane objects are often utilised as as physical or sensory *foci*, religious or sacred objects, once “activated,” become *loci* of tangible spiritual energy. Secondly, these activities transform the object into a type of discourse which speaks to both the devotee and community, a discourse which articulates both the identity of the user, and the nature of the social context created by the use. This notion is not foreign to the study of material culture. At UCC, the “eloquence” of Irish vernacular architecture and technology was a significant part of the folklore and ethnology curriculum. I would often discuss with tutorial students the capacity for something like a book bag to “speak” about its owners identity; for example, distinguishing an American from a European student. We also explored the ability of objects to create social context; a pot of tea, with its perpetual refill’s, establishes a more leisurely venue for conversation than a cup of tea (with a soiled bag perched on the countertop, staining the lino). If these “mundane” objects possess this power to

articulate and shape their context, the “sacred” objects examined here can be expected to have an even more noticeable “affecting presence.”

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first several pages are devoted to the *Gallery of Artefacts*, a collection of photographs of religious objects commonly used by the individuals with whom I worked. Next, in *An Analysis of Commonly Used Objects*, I discuss in general terms the use of three different types of religious objects, namely Rosary Beads, Medals and Relics, and Liturgical Objects. These objects all belong to the category of the “sacramental.” More fully described below, a sacramental is an object whose use is more than merely symbolic, and serves to capture and maintain the spirit, tone, and power of the Sacraments of the church. Finally, in *Case Studies*, I analyse two specific object-oriented activities in depth. The first activity is the construction of religious icons by , and the second is the consecration and distribution of statues of Our Lady of Fatima by Jim and Patrick.

McDannell divides the study of material culture into four categories: artefacts, landscapes, architecture, and art (1995: 2). This chapter is only concerned with religious artefacts. I define artefacts not simply in terms of human manufacture, but also in terms of human perception; the objects discussed in this chapter are perceived to be primarily functional, and only incidentally artistic or aesthetic. In the pages which follow, it is illustrated repeatedly that the physical characteristics and intended functions are always secondary to the “affecting presence of the object as perceived by the community. My decision to focus purely on the concept of artefact emerged out of the ethnographic reality; artefacts were the dominant form of religious material culture used by the groups with whom I worked. In my suggestions for further research I recommend potential avenues of inquiry for the remaining three categories.



Photo 1 Rosary Beads and Roselette



Photo 2 Brown Scapular



Photo 3 Miraculous Medal

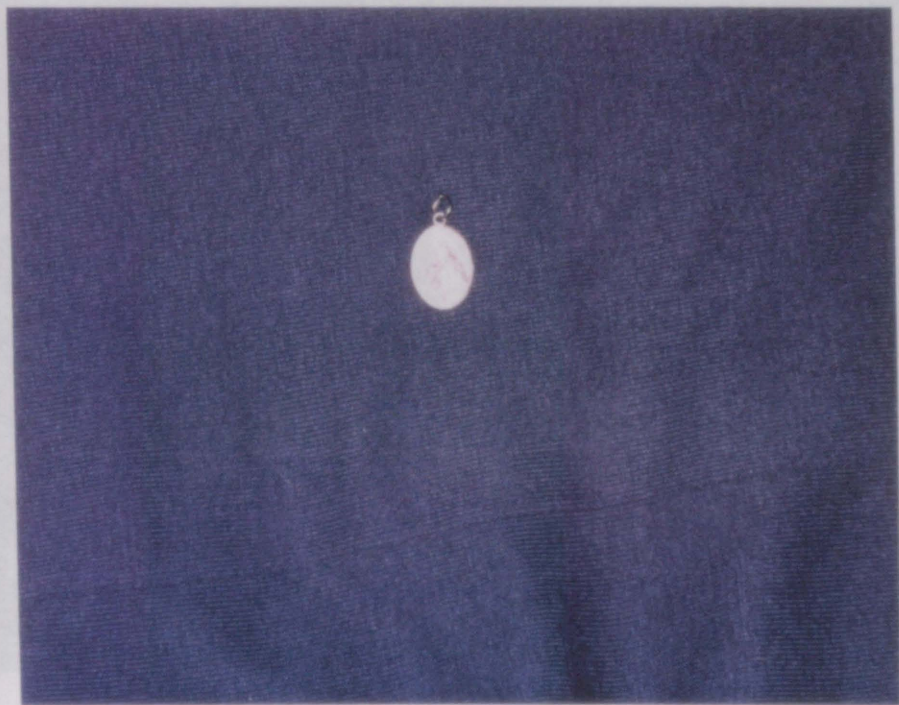


Photo 4

St. Anthony's Medal

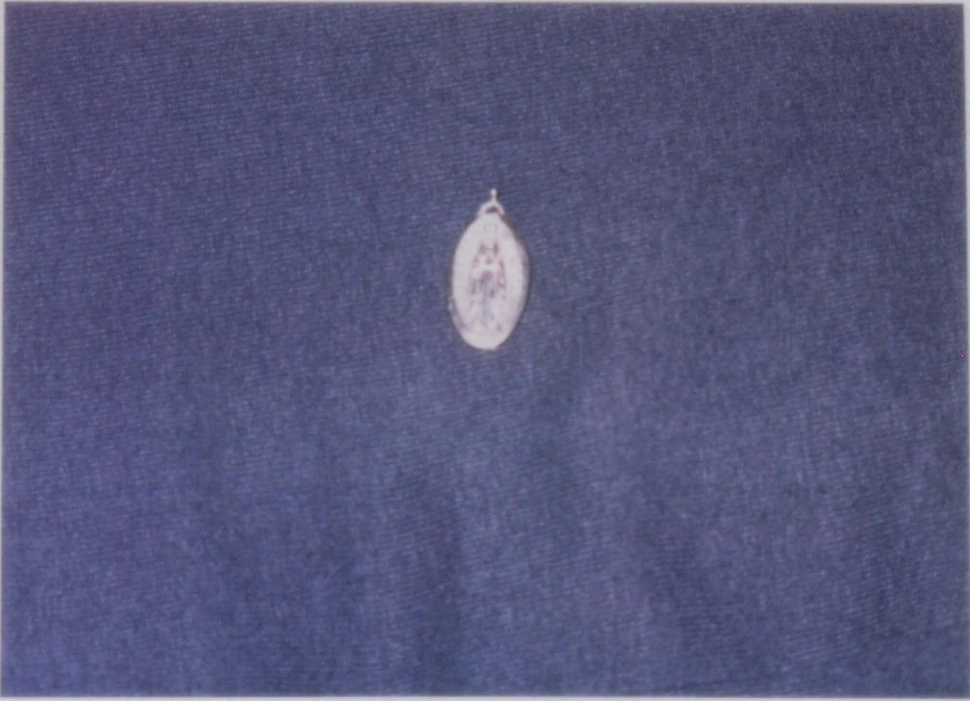


Photo 5 Our Lady of Knock Medal

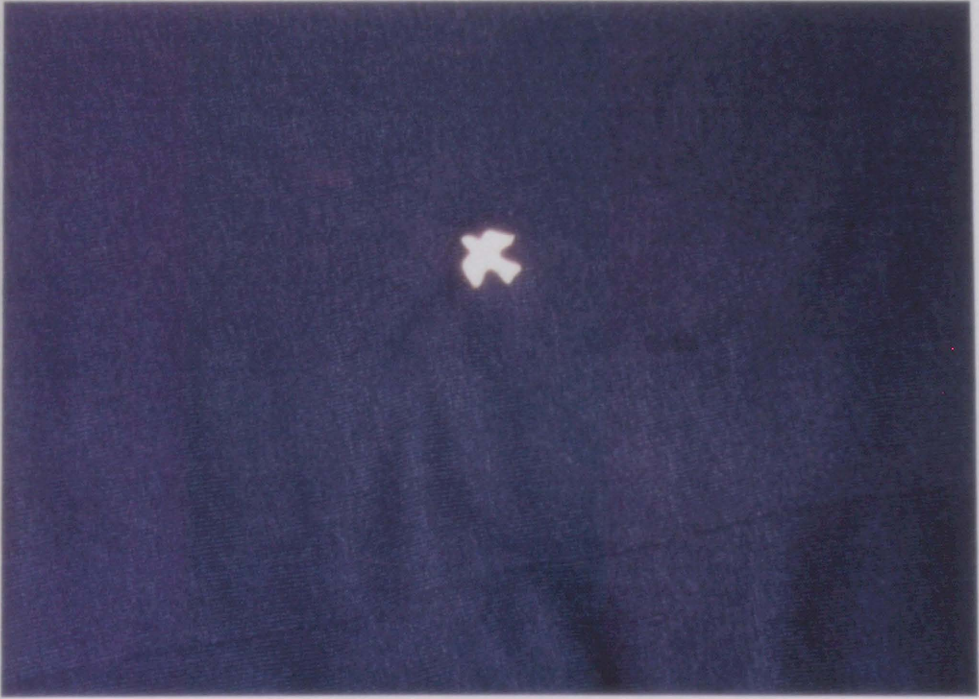


Photo 6 Holy Spirit Lapel Pin



**Prayer to
ST. ANTHONY
OF
PADUA**

Most Holy St. Anthony, the great love of God you possessed while on earth, merited for you the gift of miracles which you dispensed freely to those in trouble and adversity. Knowing our many trials and tribulations, we beseech you to whisper our petitions into the ears of the Holy Child, Jesus, whom you held many times in your arms with love and affection. If this request is for God's greater glory and my salvation, may it be granted. Amen.

43707

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PRAYER

Eternal Father, I thank you for the grace you gave to your servant, Edel Quinn, of striving to live always in the joy of your presence, for the radiant charity infused into her heart by your Holy Spirit, and for the strength she drew from the Bread of Life to labour until death for the glory of your name, in loving dependence on Mary, Mother of the Church.

Confident, O Merciful Father, that her life was pleasing to you, I beg you to grant me, through her intercession, the special favour I now implore . . . and to make known by miracles the glory she enjoys in Heaven, so that she may be glorified also by your Church on earth, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Favours attributed to the intercession of Edel Quinn should be reported to:

LEGION OF MARY,
DE MONTFORT HOUSE,
NORTH BRUNSWICK STREET,
DUBLIN 7, IRELAND.

Permissu Ordinarii Dioec. Dublinen, die 5 Septembris 1966

(Printed in the Republic of Ireland by Cahill Printers Limited, Dublin 3)





Our Lady of Graces
St. Mary's, Cork

Photo 9

Our Lady of Graces Shrine



Our Lady of Voughal
pray for us.



Photo 11 Eoin with Icon



Photo 12 Knock Holy Water



Photo 13 Ash Wednesday Ashes



Photo 14 Shop Display



Photo 15 Personal Shrine



Photo 16 Our Lady of Fatima

in contemporary devotion to Vishnu and Shiva, in Buddhism, and in Islam (Warner 1976: 305). A commonly held theory asserts that early crusaders could well have imitated the use of the beads by the Muslims; where such use is recorded as early as the 9th Century (Warner 1976: 306, Walsh 1993: 220). For Warner, however, the historical evidence points toward an independent, or at least earlier, development of the tradition in the west. In particular, she cites the 11th century account of Lady Godiva of Coventry, who specified in her will that her circular chain of gems, on which she regularly prayed, be hung on a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1976: 305-6). Deedy also discusses the importance of prayer counters in Western Catholicism in the 10th, 9th, even 4th centuries (1990: 182). These possible antecedents of the contemporary beads place the rosary in perspective and allow for a discussion of the beads as religious objects independent of the modern rosary prayer, thus helping us to understand the other ways in which the beads can be brought to life.

Thirteenth-century Dominican writings codify the rosary (both beads and prayer) as devotion to Our Lady; the same writings point toward the Rhineland as the geographic origin of the devotions widespread use. In particular, there is evidence that the Carthusian Order is responsible for much of the rosary's popularity at that time (Walsh 1993: 220-1). Despite this evidence, the rosary is popularly associated with St. Dominic and the Dominican order. Warner cites two powerful legends, which not only shaped the papal rhetoric of the sixteenth-century but, in my field experience, continues to shape popular discourse. The first legend concerns the Battle of Lepanto, a victory over the Muslim Turks which is attributed to rosary devotion and often looked upon as a miraculous confirmation of the rosary's power. The second legend concerns the origins of the rosary, and was first recorded in the fifteenth-century by a Dominican priest named Alanus de Rupe. De Rupe tells the story of how St. Dominic was conducting the Inquisition against the Albigensian heresy (early thirteenth-century), when he was visited by Our Lady. She handed Dominic the rosary beads, and charged him to encourage its use by all Christian people (1976: 308).

The physical variation of sets of rosary beads offer us insight into the world view of the individuals who own and use them. Rosary beads (see Photo One) come in numerous sizes, ranging from a few inches in length to several feet. The most common size used by the individuals who I worked with was about fifteen inches. Although the scale differs from set to set, the number of beads does not vary. A "full rosary" consists of five beads on the tail and fifty four beads in the loop. There is a medal which joins

the tail and the loop, and a crucifix at the end of the tail. The full rosary contains enough beads to say the introductory prayers and count out one set of mysteries (see Chapter V). The exception to this rule is the roselette, a smaller version of the rosary which contains only one tail bead and ten loop beads and is designed to count off a single decade of the rosary.

Because the size of a set of rosary beads was fairly standardised among the groups I worked with, it is difficult to analyse what if, anything, the size of the beads “says” or “does”. On one level though, the homogeneity is more eloquent than variety could be, and the beads thus act as a statement of affiliation to the lay group. Bead sets which are several feet in length are associated with religious clergy, and roselettes are associated with private prayer (see below). Using the standard set of beads therefore identifies the owner with the laity, and with public, or confraternal, rosary prayer.

On another level, the standard beads speak of a commitment on behalf of the user to pray the full rosary (or at least one set of mysteries) and to be “fully present” to the meditative character of the prayers. Because the smaller roselette contains only enough beads for one decade, the devotee must either end her prayers there, or, must become more consciously aware of how many prayers or sets of prayers have been said. This awareness can interfere with the contemplative goal of the prayers. Furthermore, if used in public, the roselette’s portability and inconspicuous size allows the devotee to maintain the “private” nature of the prayer.

There is tremendous variety in the materials from which the beads are made, and these varieties and the value attached to them can tell a great deal about the rosary’s “affecting presence.” Glass and plastic are the most common material for the beads themselves, although wood, ceramic, precious metal (silver or gold) and semiprecious stones are also used. The “string” can be made from common metal, precious metal, leather, monofilament, or cord. The medal and crucifix may be made of common metal, plastic, wood, or a precious metal. There is an aesthetic standard which dictates the pairing of materials (a wooden crucifix would not normally be attached to a silver chain, nor would a gold medal be attached to a plastic rosary), but I will not pursue its analysis. Rather, I am most struck by the value which is consistently placed on the origin and past experience a set of beads, rather than on its physical appearance. The ethos of seeking inner or spiritual beauty, and of a reversed social structure (“The first shall be last...”) informs social fellowship within folk catholic communities, and also, apparently, informs the evaluation of religious artefacts.

A few ethnographic examples illustrate the point:

- Upon his return from Medjugorje, Jim brought several strings of cheap plastic beads, the molding so rough that it was impossible to distinguish the images on either the cross or the medal. Despite these physical flaws, several members of *The Group* put away the beads they were using (one wooden and hand made, one made of glass and common metal, and two made of precious metals) and used the plastic beads solely because they were “fresh from the spiritual oven” of Medjugorje.
- Eoin, who is not a member of a rosary group but does pray the rosary carries a set of beads which belonged to his grandfather. The beads are made of wood, and are mounted on a common metal chain which has been mended several times. Eoin does not pray with the beads, but simply carries them in the leather pouch his grandfather used. More importantly, he carries the memory of his grandfather in a window seat, engaged in daily prayer over a stack of petitions written out on slips of paper.
- During one Saturday rosary meeting, I noticed that the glass beads which were normally hung on the statue had been replaced with a cheap string of yellow plastic beads. Several people showered the beads with positive attention, pointing out that yellow was a Fatima colour and very appropriate. I learned later that these beads were associated with a miracle, they are the beads which had blown off of the roof top litter during the motor rosary (see previous chapter).

These examples serve to clarify the emic view of bead variety. The materials and appearance of a set of beads is not as important as the origin and “experiences” of the beads. Furthermore, we see at work a type of contagion logic, in which the proximity of holy activity to a set of beads is able to “charge” the beads with a sacrality, or affecting presence. This world view is further demonstrated in the devotional activity of touching one’s beads to an object believed to be powerfully blessed. When the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was brought to Cork, about one hundred people queued up to kiss the image and touch their beads to it. The same thing was done (by a much smaller group) during a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Clonfert.

I have argued that rosary beads act as eloquent symbols of group affiliation and of an individual’s commitment to prayer, as effective tools for achieving meditative states, and as spiritual conduits for the association of a local, contemporary object to a distant or hereditary source (Lourdes or grandfather). These discursive and conductive processes, like all folk religious processes, draw upon orthodox church teachings,

popular traditions, and individual creativity, which I will approach again in the general analysis.

Scapulars, Medals, Relics, and Prayer Cards

The Brown Scapular is a miniature version of the Carmelite habit, and is worn as a sign of devotion by many lay Catholics, even those who may be part of a different lay religious order (e.g. 3rd Order Dominicans), or none at all. Wearing the scapular continually next to the skin, with a faithful heart, entitles the wearer to a spiritual participation in all of the masses, prayers and good works performed by the religious order. Also, by virtue of the *Decree of Sacred Penitentiary (September 17, 1968)*, several plenary and partial indulgences may be obtained through various devotions and promises. The Carmelite Order ascribes its origins to Mt. Carmel, near the fountain of the prophet Elias. When the Carmelites were forced by Saracen aggression to find a new home in Aylesford (in 1241), their devotion to Mary was reinforced. By 1251 the Carmelite Habit had become a sign of total consecration to Our Lady and of Her promise of protection, and the 3rd Order and Confraternity of the Brown Scapular is traditionally thought to have come into being. (Information taken from *The Brown Scapular of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel*, Anonymous).

A scapular, pictured in Photo Two, is a middle point in a continuum between the monastic habit and the medal. While the habit is an outward sign of a complete renunciation of the world for the sake of one's religious vocation. Scapulars and medals represent a commitment to a spiritual regime that is lived out in the secular world. Like rosary beads, these objects speak eloquently about the identity of the owner (associating the individual with a particular saint or apparition of Our Lady, and thus to a specific theology or set of revelations). In the native world view, however, I do not believe that the affecting presence of the objects is primarily associated with identity, despite the historical ties to the monastic habit. Rather, I would assert that medals, relics, and the

closely associated "Saint's Card," are viewed fundamentally as spiritual tools. The function of these tools is (1) to provide visual focus for prayer, which (2) associates the individual's action with the saint or apparition, thus (3) creating access to special channel of communication from the human world to the spirit world which also (4) serves as a conduit for graces and miracles from the spirit world to the human world.

The use of a Saint Anthony's medal (Photo Four) or St. Anthony's card (Photo Seven) is an excellent example of this process. In the chapter on prayer, I contrast a prayer which petitions St. Anthony to pray for a cause on behalf of the human devotee and a prayer which St. Anthony favoured while on Earth, which allows the devotee to pray directly with the confidence of St. Anthony. The use of the medal bears a greater similarity to the latter prayer dynamic than to the former.

This is at first remarkable, because both artefacts (the medal and the card) contain petitionary text. The medal has printed on the back of it "Pray for us," and the card contains the prayer *to* St. Anthony. I do not believe that this fact weakens my argument. Ethnographically, my experience has been that it is not the text which is important to the devotee, but rather the aesthetic and physical characteristics of the artefact. Both the card and the medal portray St. Anthony holding the Child Jesus. This visual representation, not only depicts the saint but also a gentle, approachable, incarnate God. Furthermore it portrays a relationship of mutual love and caring between a human and God, a love to which the devotee, in focusing on the image, gains access.

This is why the St. Anthony's medal is used so confidently by Jim, illustrated in Narrative One, or by the members of The Group who seek to find a lost object (in the following chapter on pilgrimage and ritual). The image is not only pleasing to the human eye, but, I have been told numerous times, pleasing to both St. Anthony and to

God. Like St. Anthony's favorite prayer, these artefacts can be used confidently as a two way channel of both prayer and grace.

Photo Three, the Miraculous Medal,¹⁸ provides another example of this dynamic. The Medal was designed by Our Lady herself, and revealed to St. Catherine Laboure in the nineteenth century. If the triumphant artwork (Our Lady crowning the world and crushing a serpent beneath her feet) were not enough, the divine origin of the image secures the artefacts role as a powerful ritual device. Like St. Anthony's medal, I have often seen the Miraculous Medal used to work healings.

Photo Five depicts the medal of Our Lady of Knock,¹⁹ a medal which I have only seen used in conjunction with Knock Holy Water (see below). It was explained to me that the medal brings back the memories (and powerful prayers) of the owner's visit to the site, reminding them of where the water came from. This variation of the process described above associates the devotee with a powerful place rather than person, but the dynamics are the same: the visual representation provides confidence and direction to the devotion or prayer being enacted.

The Holy Spirit lapel pin (Photo Six) is an unusual type of artefact, for two reasons. One, it seeks to depict that which cannot be depicted and, two, it is used almost exclusively by the members of the Charismatic Renewal, individuals who have often vocalised their distrust of excessive iconography. Yet, it is due to these same facts that the pin fits into my model of the "living" or "charged" artefact above. Rather than a lesser being, the medal represents the very spirit of God, a central theological reality in the charismatic movement. The primacy of the symbol gains further credence when its origins are considered. The dove is the body chosen by the Holy Spirit for incarnation.

¹⁸ Originating in Paris in 1830, by 1836 the medal was in its contemporary form and had secured the approval of the official church (Walsh 1993: 176-7).

¹⁹ Often called "the second Lourdes," Knock, in County Mayo, continues to attract huge groups of worshippers. Although now considered a shrine to Our Lady, the original apparition at Knock (1879) showed three figures, Our Lady, St. Joseph, and St. John the Baptist.

Although I have never seen the pin or similar jewellery ritually *used* for anything, I have been told that they act as constant reminders of the omnipresent, and active Spirit of God. In this way they serve to “maintain the channel” as do the Saint and Marian medals discussed previously.

Before moving on to Holy Water, the character of the Saints’ cards should be addressed. These cards are comparatively recent, and their “user friendly” characteristics make them exceptionally popular. Containing a visual representation, an associated prayer, and often calendrical information and contact addresses for devotional groups, these cards are pocket sized worship tool kits. Most importantly, they pull this information out of the oral tradition and into the world of print. Although they are most often used privately, honouring a Saint on his anniversary places the devotee in the midst of an imagined global community of followers. If a contact address is printed, and utilised, that imagined community can become a tangible social network. The most extreme example of this is the “cause” card (Photo Eight), which involves the individual in the ecclesiastic process of “making a Saint.” This grass-work activity is seen to magnify one hundred fold the identifying power of the artefacts discussed thus far.

Holy Water

Holy Water, in popular Catholic as in Spiritist traditions, is a universal solvent, and a conductor of spiritual energy. The “affecting presence” of the water is that of Baptism (healing and renewal) itself, and the most frequent use I have seen in practice is the blessing of a prayer group (both Charismatic and Marian) before the service begins. As with rosary beads, origin is an especially important detail, as different waters are believed to have different powers, or more accurately, different proper uses as intended by God. By far the most commonly used water by members of all three groups researched was Lourdes water, used often for healing “hopeless” illnesses. In general

the water is transported in plastic bottles in the shape of Our Lady. The practice is such an ingrained part of devotional life that it has entered into the popular repertoire of jokes, for example:

"A nun was in Dublin airport, returning from Lourdes. The customs agent asked if she had anything to declare and she replied, pointing at her full bag, "only these bottles of Holy Water." The agent, suffering internal ailments, crossed himself, and saying "Do you mind, Sister?" took a small sip from one bottle. Choking, he said "Sister! This is poteen!²⁰" The sister fell to her knees and pulling out her rosary and casting her eyes to heaven, cried out "Another miracle!" (Collected on November 11, 1995).

The joke doesn't make a lot of sense, since it is unlikely that anyone, nun or no, would smuggle poteen *into* Ireland, but it is a wonderful example of the comfortable relationship between the devoted and the artefact. Indeed, the joke was told because the miracle count on a particular bottle of water brought back recently was so high, and the phrase, "It's another miracle!" reminded someone of the joke. This version is more gentle than others I have heard, which imply the agent is distrustful of the sister (and thus, of the church) which is why he tests the water. This version, of course, casts the agent as yet another believer.

Other waters are more local. As mentioned above water from Knock (Photo Twelve) is used to anoint the sick (minor ailments), often in conjunction with a medal from the shrine. Another popular source of water is the shrine at Mt. Melleray,²¹ where the devoted take home water in recycled soda and milk bottles provided at the grotto for that reason. For more everyday uses, Holy Water is provided at local churches. St. Mary's Dominican church in Cork, for example, has two external tanks with spigots, one for general Holy Water, and another dedicated to healing.

²⁰ Irish bootleg spirits.

²¹ Mt. Melleray is located near a Cistercian Monastery in Co. Waterford. In 1985, two local boys saw Our Lady appear for five consecutive days. It is an unapproved apparition site.

Liturgical Objects

Liturgical objects, the paraphernalia of the official church, often make their way into popular devotion. On one level, Holy Water fits this category, but since some Holy Water is not actually blessed by priests (such as Mt. Melleray) I address it separately. Although there are popular devotions focused on liturgical objects, for example, the Adoration of the consecrated Host in a monstrance, I wish to discuss more purely popular uses of these types of artefacts.

Perhaps the most common example is the home use of altar candles, blessed and charged in their "active duty" in a local church. Photo Fifteen shows a shrine constructed in Eoin's home; the candles were gifts from a parish priest, when they had been replaced on the church altar. I have seen church candles used in processions and shrines by several people. A more creative appropriation of a liturgical object is shown in Photo Thirteen. By far the most unusual gift of the many I received in doing my fieldwork, this small envelope, originally used to hold a single dose of a fibre supplement, contains ashes from an Ash Wednesday mass.²² The owner gave them to me, instructing me to moisten them with Holy Water and apply as necessary when doing penance during the year.

The use of liturgical objects, and to a lesser extent the use of Holy Water, is slightly different than the use of medals and relics. Rather than associating the devotee with a certain deity, the faithful are brought into union with the full authority of the Church. Given the unofficial nature of most popular devotion, this resonance is desirable indeed, and empowers prayer and ritual by lessening the gap between orthodox sacrament and popular sacramental.

²² The use of ashes as a sign of penance dates back to the second century. Placing the ashes of the previous year's Palm Sunday reeds on the forehead for the beginning of the Lenten season originates in the tenth century (Walsh 1993: 32).

Case Studies

This section is concerned with two specific activities and (primarily) three individuals. The first activity is the construction of icons by Eoin in the back kitchen of The Centre (Photos Ten and Eleven). The second activity involves Jim and Patrick, and discusses the purchase, blessing, and distribution of small statues of Our Lady of Fatima (Photo Sixteen). For both of these case studies, I have included descriptions of activities and related narratives. These additional ethnographic materials are followed by analysis.

Our Lady of Graces

Before proceeding, a short exploration of the history of the Shrine of Our Lady of Graces (Photo Nine) is required, as this small figurine provides a symbolic context for both activities.

In the December 26, 1947 issue of *The Standard*, Cecil McCracken wrote "No matter what the weather may be, in sweltering heat or cutting snowstorm, the Dominican Church of St. Mary is filled each Saturday night with loving, confident and wholly devoted clients at the shrine of Our Lady of Graces." (Augustine 1952:44) In an interview with a Dominican Father at St. Mary's, I was told that during the late 40's an annual celebration (May 31) was dedicated to the image as well as the weekly devotionals (Field Notes, January 24, 1995). The tiny ivory statue known as Our Lady of Graces of Youghal has been in the hands of the Dominicans of Cork for over one hundred years, and continues to be the focus of countless prayers and devotional activities.

The historical account of the statue's origins tells of Maurice O'Carroll, an early 14th century Archbishop of Cashel, who wore it upon a necklace, and was the original owner of the statue. The account was first set down by Archdeacon Lynch, in 1672, and translated again in 1910 by Archdeacon Seymour. The story is told of how the archbishop

...fell grievously sick while making a visitation of his suffragans at Cloyne. Becoming worse and worse he was carried to the Dominicans at Youghal; and there feeling his end approaching, besought the Fathers that the little image of the Blessed Virgin, which he always wore round his neck, should be left on his body after death (Flanagan 1950:5-6).

An undetermined amount of time passed and the Priory fell into hard times. One of their order, while travelling in Ulster, received, in a dream, a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who gave him instructions that the archbishop was to be exhumed and the statue displayed to the public,

...adding that the corpse would exhibit no signs of decay, but would crumble to dust when the image was removed. He hastened with all speed to Youghal, and there found everything in accordance with what the vision had told him (Flanagan 1950:5-6).

The Priory soon became the site of great prosperity, reform, and graces. The name of was changed from Holy Cross to Our Lady of Graces in the late 15th century, "...as if they wished to emphasise that from the day this image came again among them a new life began for the priory" (Flanagan 1951:5-6).

The popular account of the statue tells quite a different story. It is a part of oral tradition, first recorded by a mid-17th century French traveller named Sieur de la Boullaye Le-Gouz. Dr. K. O'Flaherty translates the journal entry as follows:

In the convent of St. Dominic there was the image
[statue] of the Virgin of God, formerly Ireland's

greatest [object of] devotion, which arrived there in a miraculous manner; the tide brought a piece of wood into the town [market] square; several fisherman tried to take it away, as wood was scarce in that region, but they could not move it; they yoked ten horses [to it] without any result, and the tide brought it close to the Dominican convent; two religious carried it on their shoulders and put it into the convent yard, and the father superior had that night a vision that the [image of] Our Lady of God, Virgin of great power [virtue?] was within this wood; it was found there; that is what the catholics say, who, up to this very day have great devotion to it (Flanagan 1950:2n).²³

While the image was still in the log, laying out to dry in front of the church, it restored the sight of a blind man who mistook the log for the Holy Water font and washed his eyes with the rainwater collected in a niche (Flanagan 1950:4).

Regardless of how it ends up on public display, the statue is said to disappear for awhile, hidden from Sir Walter Raleigh by a lay woman, Onoria, daughter of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald of Desmond. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, popular devotion to the statue continued, and the statue, displayed in a golden shrine constructed by Onoria, was brought to the public again in Cork in 1823. In 1895, it was fully dedicated as it stands today (Flanagan 1951:7-9).

The articles cited above by Rev. Urban G. Flanagan, O.P., M.A., are, or so I have been advised by a Dominican Father and scholar in Cork, the most exhaustive study of

²³ Bracketed asides and irregular punctuation are the translator's.

the historical sources regarding the statue. Given the miraculous elements in both accounts, the designation of "history" versus "legend" is problematic. In fact, both accounts are printed side by side, along with the story of Onoria's brave rescue, on the wall next to the shrine in Cork and on small pamphlets available for circulation.

It is, however, useful to point out that while the "historical" account relies primarily on ecclesiastical tradition, the "legend" is a living part of the popular oral tradition, stemming from at least the mid-17th century until now. The Main Collection of the Irish Folklore Archives contains an entry entitled "Quay Lane," collected from a 50 year old man who lived in Youghal, on Chapel Lane, saying

Quay Lane is so called because the tide at one time came up as far as where the Main Street now is. The tide also came in, where Yallow Street now is; and all up around the graveyard is was [sic] all at one time underwater. The Dominican monastery was situated where the old graveyard now stands, and this explains, how the log of wood, in which the ivory statue, of "Our Lady of Youghal" was, could have come in so far (492:296).

In my own field work in Youghal, a woman (age 60) offered me the same logic (i.e. the changing coast line) as an explanation for the story of the log (Field Notes, February 6, 1995). It is obvious that, although both versions continue to circulate, the official history has prevailed over the popular legend, which was reduced to an aetiological narrative in the beginning of this century (the "Quay Lane" entry) and had to be actively solicited in my own research.

The Making of an Icon

I walked into The Centre through the glass door that faced the main street, and was surrounded by an eclectic collection of statuary, iconography, inspirational literature, prayer beads, medallions, candles, audio cassettes, video tapes, first communion cards, and posters advertising Novenas, Ceili's, and chiropody sessions. The front window had been set up for May: images of the Blessed Virgin dominated the centre of the display, for May is Her month; there were Family Bibles and picture frames, suggested presents for the inevitable summer weddings; and there was a pile of miscellaneous items with Celtic designs, and calligraphic proverbs *as Gaeltige*, to catch the eyes of strolling tourists.

The first time one visits The Centre, it appears small, but this is deceptive. Beyond the cash register and the table top pay phone, there is an area filled with racks of clothes and bins of second-hand books and shoes, and behind that is a room used twice weekly by a visiting chiropodist;²⁴ at other times used as a tea room for the three or four volunteers who may be working on any given day.

A rather dark hallway leads still further away from the street, past another room of clothes, up three steps and through a maze of boxes to a kitchen, where the walls are lined with religious stock for the front of the store. The kitchen has a back door, bearing the crest of the Lay Dominicans, and beyond it is a prayer room that doubles as a religious video screening room.

From the prayer room, through white, home-made curtains, one can reach the final room of The Centre: a crowded, cramped workshop. There is a high table against the far wall, covered with cans of paint and glue, brushes and pens, tools, file folders, photocopies, and half painted icons. There is about eighteen inches of moving space around the table, and the rest of the area is used up by stacks of boxes packed with clothes, headed for Rawanda, Bosnia, etc.

²⁴ Podiatric medicine, in this instance combined with reflexology and holistic healing.

On this visit, in the beginning of May 1995, I was in the workshop with Eoin, who had agreed to make an icon that I might see how it was done. Normally, he always works alone and in silence, but he had assured me that he didn't mind my presence, nor my questions.

Eoin pulled up one of the boxes and used it as a make shift table, opening up an overstuffed file folder and sorting through the contents: postcards, greeting cards, clippings from art books, colour plates from old Bibles, and colour photocopies of them all, in varying sizes. Eoin was trying to get the most use out of the wood he had, so size was as important as design in choosing a photocopy. After moving two images around the already puzzle shaped chip-board, he decided on the larger (a medieval "Mother and Child," standard A2 size), which fit neatly into one "arm" of the board.

We moved into the kitchen, where a gas heater had been lit in the centre of the room and the chairs could be used as saw horses. He told me that during the height of the warm weather, he opens the back door to the workshop and works there in the sun.

He lay the wood on the chairs and the image on the table, examining it for flaws in the neon kitchen light. With a pair of scissors, he trimmed away as much of the white border as he could, squinting in concentration and saying that this was the part he liked the least. Although he made quite an effort, he told me that little mistakes in the trim were easy to correct in the sanding process.

The trimmed image was then lain on the board - in this case one inch chip-board which Eoin was unhappy with, preferring a thinner wood with a smoother finish, which he had previously worked with. The corners were marked on the board and lines were drawn using a short piece of timber as a straight edge. Eoin stressed the importance of a tight fit; it was fine for the image to be larger than the board, but not vice-versa.

He then cut along the lines using a Black and Decker jig saw he had been given as a present. Before he'd received the gift (the previous Christmas) he had used a hand saw. The saw was working very well, which seemed to surprise him, as he was used to it acting up.

The cut piece of wood was lightly sanded and the image was then fitted over it. He had to orient and reorient the image to make it fit correctly, but it eventually did. Glue was then applied over the entire surface of the wood, and the image was placed on top of it. The spine of a hard cover children's book was used to smooth out the air bubbles, and a piece of clean cloth was used to pick up any glue that had leaked around the edges.

After the glue was allowed to dry (long enough for a cigarette and a cup of tea), the icon was sanded. First, a very coarse piece of sand paper was wrapped around a small block and moved downwards; the motion "tearing" away the edges of the image, blending it into the wood. This was done on all four sides, then along the grain of all four sides. The whole process was repeated with a finer piece of sand paper.

The sanded icon was placed face down on the table, and a egg-beater-type drill was used to make a small hole in the back for mounting purposes. At this point a little over an hour had past, which shocked Eoin, who had not realised it had been so long.

He said he would paint the sides and back of the icon on a different day. They are usually painted either gold or black (which only takes about ten minutes), and a label stating the artist's name (when known) and The Centre's name is placed on the back. Before it goes on the shelf for sale (or leaves the store as a gift) it is wrapped in clear plastic; the kind used for protecting books. The icons are sold at a price which barely covers the cost of the materials (photocopy, wood, glue, paint) and any profit goes back into The Centre. They are also given as gifts; in a variety of situations, and for a number of reasons. A good example comes from my first meeting with Eoin, whom I had met

while looking for information about Our Lady of Graces. While we spoke he showed me an icon of the image of Our Lady of Graces which he had just made. Pleased with what I was doing and knowing I had little money, he made the icon a gift to me when I left.

Icon Narratives

To my knowledge, the content of the narratives below is highly unusual, Eoin simply does not talk about the icons very often. Five texts follow: (1) A narrative regarding how the work began 2 years ago, (2) An explanation of the effect on Eoin of making an icon, (3 and 4) Two texts discussing the communicative nature of the icons, and (5) A statement of purpose for making and selling the icons. The narratives were all recorded in May of 1995, in Eoin's flat.

Narrative Fourteen:

E: One day, we were/happened to be working in the shop, as we often did, after hours...when the shop would be closed...you might be doing up the window or putting stuff on the shelf,redoing the shelves/

JF: Right.

E: Or whatever. And then the next thing /uh/ I think May said to me /uh/ "I'm hungry" or something or "I feel hungry" or something like that, but any other way [] ended down in Moby Dick's...having a toasted sandwich and/ so on, you know, to eat. Anyway...ah, we met this lad...ah, by the name of...what was it? M.G or G.G, they're two twins and I always get them mixed up/(The person he is speaking of is an artist who makes icons, whom they had met previously.)

JF: (Laughs)

E: but he was one of the G. boys anyway...and he was the one that was...ah, he was/obviously had spoken to P. about this in the past about making icons, and she had the desire to make the icons...And the next thing we/she/she must have brought it up/or it came up in conversation

anyway and he said to me, "I'll be in," he said, "tomorrow," or something like that, he said, "and I'll show you how to make them," he said, to me!

It is important to note that the first time I asked for an interview on this topic, I was turned down and told that it was actually May's story.

Narrative Fifteen:

E: Well/an awful lot have/has happened since... but I have found myself down/ah in the/in the back part/right up in the back of (The Centre) with the door open and the birds singing and the ... sun shining, and making an icon... and I find I'm totally at peace when I'm doing it.

JF: Right.

E: You know? Because I find that there's a presence of God/ah/around.

JF: Do/do you use the time as/as a devotional time?

E: I don't specifically set out to do that, no. I set out to make an icon.

JF: Right.

E: But this happens.

JF: I see.

E: You know?

Narrative Sixteen:

E: And you're actually...um...seeing the picture be in front of you, whatever it/icon, it could be Mother and Child, it could be the Transfiguration ... ah, it could be the Blessed Trinity/

JF: Right.

E: and so on. And like...ah, we spoke about this earlier on, Joseph and, it's not so much what...em...prayers I'm saying vocally or anything like that to the icons, it's just what the icon is saying to me.

JF: Right.

E: You know? And, ah, I have found...by travelling

to retreat houses, that, um, you can actually look at an icon...and/I didn't know this at the start, you/you learn these things as you go along/I think the Lord is in all of these and He's just showing you His way, His time ... and what He want's you to do or see, you know?...But anyway there's a challenge there/I've seen this/there's a challenge in an icon..."What is it saying back to me?" Right?

JF: I see, yeah.

E: You know? So, um, if you see, for instance, if you see eyes and, uh, someone say to you "Well, what do you see in the eyes?" and you say "I see an awful sadness," well then you reflect that back to yourself and say, "What am I sad about?"

Narrative Seventeen:

E: If I see something like...uh...the Transfiguration ...what happened five years ago that I changed? Do you know? These are the kinds of questions that the icons/that the icons bring up...The different icons bring up different questions...as different people perceive what they're saying to 'em.

JF: I see.

E: You Know? And that's the basic/thing about the icon.

Narrative Eighteen:

E: ...and it's not a profit making thing either/we're not in it for profit...but if any/anything that will help to keep the doors of (The Centre) open...which in effect is about spreading the/good news...the word of God.

The Blessing of a Statue

Jim and Patrick regularly arrange for the blessing of small statues of Our Lady of Fatima through the shrine of Our Lady of Graces, and for the distribution of these statues into the community throughout Ireland, and, to some extent globally. They work in conjunction with many other lay groups world wide. Unfortunately, I was never able to observe the blessing of a "batch" of statues. It was once a frequent occasion but the activity has grown in scope (250 statues at a time) and the frequency has been reduced; it currently takes place about once every six months. However, based on unrecorded interviews with Patrick, I have a description of the process.

Originally, small numbers of statues were brought to the shrine in St. Mary's, where a Dominican father would bless the individual statues using Holy Water and the "Standard Blessing" of the Church for "Sacred Images," with a special invocation to Our Lady of Graces of Youghal for healing. With the larger batches, the shrine is brought either into the home of Patrick, or of the Dominican father, and one statue is unwrapped and blessed before the shrine. The remaining statues stay in their boxes in the same room as the shrine and are thus blessed by proxy.

The statues are distributed in a variety of ways, including (1) door to door, with an invitation to "take Our Lady into your home," (2) by request, from individuals who wish to possess and/or redistribute the statues, (3) in hospitals, where they are carried from ward to ward, used as a focus for prayer for healing, and left with individuals in particular need until the next visit, and (4) in the case of Jim's large statue (also blessed), as the centrepiece of the weekly outdoor rosary and occasional processions.

Statue Narratives

Unlike the icons, the statues and the mission work that surrounds them are both very popular topics of conversation and performance among the members of The

Group. To supplement the narratives in the previous chapter, three stories are recounted here, (1) a narrative about the first miracle connected with a statue in a hospital visit, (2) a narrative about coming to an understanding about the statues' powers, and (3) a narrative about a statue incident during a Rosary Walk. All narratives come from interviews in Jim's home, in March and April 1995.

Narrative Nineteen:

Jim: She was an alcoholic/the poor old creature, and she fell down the stairs at home...and she went into a coma...and the husband thought it was drink/and/uh/he neglected her a bit and she was lying there about fifteen minutes before she was brought to hospital. But she was in the coma for about six weeks...and Barry (another member of The Group)said we should go visit her. So we went the first time, we just prayed the rosary...and/with the statue/and the second time then/we went/she was still in the coma/we left the statue with her...and as soon as we left the statue with her she came out of...the coma...and we took the statue away and she went back into the coma again...So the next time we left the statue with her and she came out of the coma...and she brought the statue home with her.

JF: Yeah, I'd say so. (Laughs)

Jim: (Laughs) Yeah...so the next thing happened/

JF: So...is that the first miracle?

Jim: That was the first one we know of, yeah. And ... um ...then this/then the next thing happened/was ...um...when she brought the statue home she handed it over to Barry and she says "thanks" and she says "I'm going out for a right rake of drink now altogether." She was thirsty after being so long off it. But...um...I gave that same lady a statue for herself...and every evening before she would go out even to drink she'd say/she'd put her hand around the statue and say "Dear Mother, you know I can't help myself, will you please help me?"

JF: Hmmm...

Jim: And Barry was telling me, in recent times now, she's down to/for the first time/controlled drinking.

(At the end of the narrative, about one minute later.)

Jim: So...Barry will/he'd be able to give you more facts on this because...I never bother taking names and addresses/he knows her personally.

Narrative Twenty:

Jim: And then there was/uh/we were/attributing all these successes/was/uh Barry's little statue...the one I had given him early on...that was doing/was c/was involved in all these miracles. You know?

JF: Mmm-hmmm.

Jim: And we thought that his statue was some way special (laughs).

JF: Right, right.

Jim: But Mary [] one and Mary was a little bit/You know?/I use to say "would we bring Barry's statue" and...this night we hadn't Barry's statue. So we went into intensive care.

Narrative Twenty-One:

Jim: And then I had to look for a place for Bed and Breakfast. So when I came back I saw this sign, left up towards this house where there was Bed and Breakfast/I'd never been to the house before. When I went up anyway/I found my way ...into the house/the name was []/it was also up on the road/four or five hundred yards up/further upwards/um/the hills...in/in Melleray. So I went up there and turned left...and in I came into the house and what was up in the window? Only a beautiful... small statue Our Lady of Fatima...about the size of this Lady here (gestures at small statue on mantle of sitting room (c.14" in height)).

JF: Hmmm.

Jim: And the chap that was carrying her...uh...I'll think of his name in a minute/he was an oldish man/well wouldn't be too old/but he's/uh/traveling the world from Australia and he'd been to Fatima ...tremendously turned on towards Our Lady of Fatima. And he was staying in the house...

Analysis

The argument articulated in the overview of this chapter was done so long ago; it bears repeating. As in the analysis of commonly used objects, I look to these two case studies to discover how these particular items of material culture (the statues and icons) are “brought to life” by the people who work with them. Two questions dominate the investigation: How do the efforts described here “open up a two-way spiritual channel through which devotion, prayer, and graces may be transferred between the human devotee and the spirit world?” And, How do they “transform the object into a type of discourse which speaks to both the devotee and community?”

Obviously, the statues and icons are physically substantial (especially compared to beads and medals and such). They are ethnographically substantial as well. My recordings and field notes are filled with references to the details and the importance of physical location (a subject re-approached in the following chapter).

Eoin distinguishes making the icons in the winter from making them in the summer (a question of time) by remembering where he made them (a question of place). The Centre's humble workshop is important because it is the source from which the icons radiate into the community; the artist's name on the back of an icon is a nice touch, but The Centre's name is a necessity. When I asked Eoin about any feedback he might have received from purchasers/owners of the icons, he told me that there was almost none. This, however did not bother him. The important thing was that the icons were going out to people from all parts of the world.

Patrick also stresses, in any conversation regarding the statues, the fact that he and Jim are not working alone, but that there are statues being distributed and received by people all over the world. One finds constant references in the narratives to the movement and location of statues: on walks and drives, in homes and hospitals, in churches, on retreats, being carried by pilgrims, etc. Furthermore, the actions of the

humans are carefully labelled in each narrative. Details of why the statue was where it was are important; was it brought as a surprise or was it invited? Was it honoured or rejected?

Thus, the physical manipulation of the objects must be perceived as an spiritually effective act, an act which does something beyond moving a physical object in space. To understand why physical manipulation is effective, one must understand that in the native world view, the presence of the image is believed to have very real power. The blessing of a statue or making of an icon does not merely polish the physical features of the image. It acts to transform an object, through human faith and divine grace, from profane to sacred. It opens the eyes of the icons and thus creates a mirror for the human soul. It turns a statue from a piece of marble into a channel for healing, and saving, graces. Most importantly, it opens up the mouths of the images, and gives them voices.

The images are considered vehicles for communication, which is perhaps their most remarkable feature. I asked all three men if there were any instructions, or special prayers, that they passed out with the icons and statues (as one would with a miraculous medal, or with a chaplet). All three replied no; that it simply wasn't necessary. It wasn't needed because the statues and icons could speak for themselves.

Learning to "listen" to the images, or becoming sensitive to the changing meaning of the symbols, is the most important part of learning to "use" them. Both the recordings and the notes offer numerous accounts of how one must constantly learn and relearn the meaning of the images. Jim tells the story (stories) of coming to understand the power of the statues, and Eoin talks about the various retreats in which he, the artist, had to gradually learn the power of the icons. Before proceeding I wish to address, briefly, these supplemental narratives, as well as relevant narratives from the previous chapter.



Narratives Fifteen through Eighteen do not seem to fit into any of the definitions of personal narrative, religious or otherwise, offered above. They do, however, conform to a wider understanding of the personal experience narrative, such as that articulated by Gary Butler. The narratives are asides inserted into longer, more conventionally narrative texts. Butler encountered similar asides in his study of the discourse of belief in a French Newfoundland community. He concluded that

The narrator here demonstrates a tendency to "break" the narrative frame based on the communicative intention to support supernatural belief and to re-negotiate the terms of reference from narrative discourse to what has been referred to elsewhere as "pedagogical discourse" (Briggs 1985). The narrator's primary aim has become directed towards the instruction of his listeners...There is no inconsistency here if one considers the entire text as an instance of discourse designed to accommodate the differential knowledge of the narrator and his audience in a manner which will ensure optimal communication of the narrators intended message... The frame-break is actually a temporary frame-shift to a different communicative mode for the realisation of the narrator's aim" (116-7).

The discourse studied here fits in neatly with Butlers ideas. As I have already argued, the personal religious narrative is ultimately a missionising discourse. The act of story telling is almost always an act of "sharing the good news," an articulation of the narrator's personal gospel story.

Our understanding of narrative in this context can aid in our understanding of these material case studies, which are likewise tied to the world view of an active God and active spirit world. Eoin once interrupted an interview to say he did not know why he was doing the interview, only that it must be what the Holy Spirit wanted. Patrick refused to use a tape recorder for the same reason. I've often heard stories or statements prefaced with something to the effect of "This just came up in me," or "I felt I needed

to say this." Similar motivations are given for the making of the icons or the doing of "statue work."

In the previous chapter, I dealt with the idea of narrative ownership, which needs to be addressed here again, simply because the examples are so crisp. Narrative Fourteen tells the story of how Eoin learned to make the Icons. It is noted that he initially refused to talk about this subject, claiming it was May's story. May, Eoin tells us, was originally interested in learning how to make the icons but, for some reason, was skipped over. At the time of the interview, after May had left to go do mission work, Eoin felt comfortable with his ownership of the story, and of the activity. One possible explanation, based on other statements Eoin made to me, is that Eoin only felt that the Icons were legitimately his work when it was clear that May had another calling.

Similarly, Jim and Patrick are constantly sending me back and forth between each other to hear the details of stories that "belong" to the other. Narrative Nineteen is an example of a narrative in which the narrator is a key participant. Just the same, it is framed-in by stating that the woman in the story is someone else's friend, and framed-out by recommending that I talk to this friend for the "real story."

Having made these comments, I will move on to address the importance of history in the "bringing of images to life." The history of the shrine of Our Lady of Graces is significant on two levels. First, whether it comes from the ecclesiastic or popular tradition, the history is a narrative about miracles. In the terms of my definition of folk religion, it is an "account of the numinous provided by others," just as a *pri* is. Second, the interpretation of this history - the popular understanding of *why* it is important - is also a cultural text, and, as such, it is used to activate the affective presence of the artefacts in question.

It should be noted that the activities of Onoria are actually given as much attention (or more) than any other part of the history or legend. When I asked different

to say this." Similar motivations are given for the making of the icons or the doing of "statue work."

In the previous chapter, I dealt with the idea of narrative ownership, which needs to be addressed here again, simply because the examples are so crisp. Narrative Fourteen tells the story of how Eoin learned to make the Icons. It is noted that he initially refused to talk about this subject, claiming it was May's story. May, Eoin tells us, was originally interested in learning how to make the icons but, for some reason, was skipped over. At the time of the interview, after May had left to go do mission work, Eoin felt comfortable with his ownership of the story, and of the activity. One possible explanation, based on other statements Eoin made to me, is that Eoin only felt that the Icons were legitimately his work when it was clear that May had another calling.

Similarly, Jim and Patrick are constantly sending me back and forth between each other to hear the details of stories that "belong" to the other. Narrative Nineteen is an example of a narrative in which the narrator is a key participant. Just the same, it is framed-in by stating that the woman in the story is someone else's friend, and framed-out by recommending that I talk to this friend for the "real story."

Having made these comments, I will move on to address the importance of history in the "bringing of images to life." The history of the shrine of Our Lady of Graces is significant on two levels. First, whether it comes from the ecclesiastic or popular tradition, the history is a narrative about miracles. In the terms of my definition of folk religion, it is an "account of the numinous provided by others," just as a *prn* is. Second, the interpretation of this history - the popular understanding of *why* it is important - is also a cultural text, and, as such, it is used to activate the affective presence of the artefacts in question.

It should be noted that the activities of Onoria are actually given as much attention (or more) than any other part of the history or legend. When I asked different

individuals what “miracles, prosperity, and reform” might have been associated with the original appearance of the statue, nobody knew. What I was told was that it was part of a tradition that was constantly changing. I was told I'd be better off asking what miracles had taken place last year, last week, or this morning (such as those discussed in the texts quoted).

Similarly, many people knew the outline of the history or legend but where sketchy on the details: names, dates, etc. What they all knew, however, was the story of the lay woman who risked her life to save the statue. The attention paid to Onoria's bravery leads directly to the question of how the “meaning” or “moral” of the history is used by individuals.

A good starting point can be found in the upper right hand corner of the icons that Eoin makes of the image (Photo Ten). There is a pen-and-ink drawing of a ship and the Youghal light house. Written beneath it are the words “Safe Harbour.” To Jim and Patrick, and to the people of the Centre, Our Lady of Graces embodies not only the presence of the Virgin in Ireland, but also the power, devotion, and piety of the Irish laity, who saved the statue from ruin during the time of the Penal Laws.

The history/legend of the shrine is a cyclical tale, an alternation between concealment (C) and display (D):

(D) Archbishop -> (C) Grave -> (D) Vision and Exhumation ->

(C) Penal Suppression -> (D) Onoria/St. Mary's, or,

(D) Miraculous Appearance -> (C) Log -> (D) Removal From

Log -> (C) Penal Suppression -> (D) Onoria/St. Mary's.

The individuals involved in the activities under discussion feel themselves to be a part of this cycle. Patrick told me of a homily given by the Dominican father to Jim and himself, on the occasion of the first blessing. The father recounted the story of the shrine, its inability to be subdued by persecution, and articulated the similarities between its history and the task the men had chosen for themselves.

Indeed, the inspiration responsible for the image's original display came from sacred visions and inner locutions, which are the basis of the statue work in Cork and elsewhere. Narrative Four detailed the occasion of the "prophesy" which began the work, and uses the explicit theme of establishing Ireland as a "safe harbour."

Patrick's version of the history of the statue work includes the story of a woman in a neighbouring town who had pulled together three volunteers and ordered three statues. One of the volunteers backed out at the last minute, unable to overcome her embarrassment. She went home and had a dream, in which she was walking door to door asking the residents to take Our Lady into their houses. She then realised she was not carrying a statue but walking arm in arm with the Blessed Virgin herself. The next day she was going door to door (Field Notes, May 11, 1995).

Another example comes from Patrick's paraphrase of Our Lady of Fatima, when I asked him why they were trying to organise a Centenary procession: "Our Lady told us she liked processions" (Field Notes, January 19, 1995). He has also said that The Group in Cork was devoted to "venerating Our Lady as *She* wishes to be venerated." He claimed the meaning of the history of the shrine was that Our Lady did not wish to be "shut up," but rather, "brought out into the people." "That," he said, "is the nature of the graces." (Field Notes, January 31, 1995).

Eoin also finds himself involved in the historical cycle of the shrine, and in the process of restoring a "safe harbour" in Ireland. In making the icons, he takes great pride in sharing the "good news" through the images directly; he also is happy to have a

craft which contributes to the greater mission of The Centre. The Centre's mission is to create a sanctuary; for the poor, elderly, sickly, youth, the war torn, the despairing, or the simply confused. And his status as a lay Dominican is important to him; he identifies strongly with St. Dominic and his life style, with the heroism of the Youghal Dominicans of the past, and is spreading the message that there are "real live Dominicans still in Youghal" (Field Notes, various dates).

Conclusion

This chapter has covered very broad ground, as it was required to do. In summary, I will restate my contention that the popular use of religious artefacts is a process of activating those objects' "affecting presence." This presence can be the capacity of a string of beads or piece of cloth to declare one's identity, the capacity of a medal or card to channel the power of a saint, the capacity of water to cure and renew, the capacity of a candle to tie one to the Church's authority, the capacity of an icon to speak, or of a small statue to redefine one's spirituality in epic and historic terms.

Chapter Six: On Earth as it is in Heaven:

The Ritual Process

Overview

The title of this chapter is drawn from the "Our Father," perhaps the most well known Christian prayer in the world. The prayer contains a number of implicit world views, and these implications are central to popular Catholic ritual life as I have come to understand it. When the devotee asks that God forgive him, as *he has forgiven others*, he attests to the efficacy of the action of the faithful. Like Peter, the rock of the church, "Whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven" (Matthew 16:19). When the same individual asks that God's will be done, he subsumes this great power under divine guidance. And when he invokes the very kingdom of God, the power is characterised, not as a manipulation of the physical world, but, as the transformation of the world, the ushering in of the divine realm. The analysis of the ritual process which follows is an exploration of the ways in which the ethos and world view implied by the Our Father grow into a cultural reality.

Victor Turner's notion of *communitas*, that suspension of social hierarchy so powerfully achieved by the liminal character of ritual, does play a role in my understanding of popular Catholic ritual. However, I contend that *communitas* is a secondary product, and a secondary concern for those involved. I assert that the primary goal of the popular Catholic ritualist is to create tangible, lasting domains of sacred time and space.

The bulk of this chapter is focused on the description and analysis of a day of devotional travel organised by members of The Group in late May, 1996. The conclusions reached in this case study are then applied to other rituals found the popular Catholic repertoire, and in my field experience.

Pilgrimage to Clonfert

My field notes from May 25, 1996, are also titled "Pilgrimage to Clonfert." It is an accurate, but extremely superficial characterisation of the events of that day. On one level, May 25 was the day on which Jim, Patrick, myself, and ten regular members of the group,²⁵ travelled from Cork to Clonfert, Ballinasloe, and back. However, a richer understanding of that day requires that it be viewed not as a single pilgrimage, but as several interconnected processions.

Jim had hired a small motor coach to transport us from Cork to Clonfert and back, and at the last minute the pick up location had changed. Playing it safe in the midst of this confusion, I arrived a half-hour early (@ 7:30am), and waited for the coach with three women who had driven into town together. They were in great form and jokingly called themselves the "three amigas." We chatted away for about a quarter of an hour. One woman, "Margaret" theorised that the change in venue had been Our Lady's will, and another, whom I was meeting for the first time, thought it was auspicious that my name was Joseph, since there was already a Mary in the group. Before the rest of the group arrived, conversation had moved on to Jim's spirituality, a topic I was always happy to hear more about. Margaret told me a story about Jim when he was still with the guards, and of how he used to pray for the criminals between the time of their arrest through to their conviction or acquittal.

The other members of the group arrived shortly, and Jim was pleased with the final headcount - thirteen - pointing out that it was (1) the Fatima date, (2) the ideal size for a group, and (3) that this trip marked the thirteenth year they had visited Clonfert.²⁶ The coach manoeuvred through the narrow streets of Cork's Northside to Patrick's

²⁵ There were five men and eight women. Besides myself and Patrick, all participants were over the age of sixty.

²⁶ The apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima occurred on the thirteenth of each month, May through October, in 1917 (for more information on the Fatima apparitions, see Walsh 1993: 100-102). The

home, where we picked up his large (4') statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Jim's large statue, which is normally used by The Group in their weekly outdoor Rosary, was in Croom, although he did have two small (18") statues with him.

From Patrick's, we headed north-west towards Limerick, and Jim led the group in praying the joyful mysteries of the Rosary. With each new decade, there was a shift in the call-and-response structure; first alternating from left to right, then from the front of the coach to the back, then from an individual to the rest of the group. When an individual led the decade, he or she was given one of the small statues to hold.

The village of Croom is not far from Cork, and by the time we finished praying the joyful mysteries we had arrived. Jim, Patrick and myself went into the home of a woman they knew, a member of the loose network of individuals who distribute the blessed statues of Our Lady of Fatima around Ireland (see previous chapter). Our stop in Croom, besides serving as a bathroom break, was done for the purpose of trading Patrick's large statue for Jim's. It was important to Jim that his statue be present for our next stop, his home village of Eyrecourt.

Jim and Patrick had some issues to discuss with our host, but I said good-bye and returned to the coach. Coming out of the narrow row house, I saw that the rear doors of the coach were open and several people were scrambling about under the seats. Just as I drew close, one woman shouted "Got it!" "It" was a medal brought back by Jim from Medjugore.²⁷ Apparently, the medal had been passed around and had been dropped between the seats. Someone had taken out a Saint Anthony's medal and prayed for the retrieval of the Megjugore medal. When it was found (just as I had returned) honour and praise were given both to St. Anthony and Our Lady.

second reference was to the popular belief that thirteen individuals form an ideal devotional community, patterned after Jesus and the twelve disciples, or Our Lady and the twelve apostles.

²⁷ Located in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Medjugore is the site of a number of apparitions of Our Lady, beginning on June 24, 1981 (see also Walsh 1993: 173-4, and Bax 1990).

Jim and Patrick soon came out of the house with Jim's statue in tow; the coach then pulled out of Croom and headed for Eyrecourt. On the way, Jim discussed his recent trip to Medjugore and handed out other relics and souvenirs - more medals, plastic rosary beads, and a crucifix, all acquired or blessed during his pilgrimage. I was also shown a set of Padre Pio rosary beads (his image appears on the medal) which emitted a strong (and believed to be supernaturally caused) smell of roses. Margaret held a small statue, "aiming" it out of the rear window and occasionally saying "I'm after converting another one..." I asked what she was doing and she told me to watch the drivers' reactions behind us. If they looked away, they had a hardened attitude, but if they gave a salute or a smile, they were "taking Our Lady into their hearts."

When we arrived in Eyrecourt, Jim's home village, we parked in front of the church and went inside, delaying slightly so that we could begin the next stage of the day's work at noon, and so be synchronised with those praying the rosary in Cork. Jim's large statue was placed facing Our Lady's statue in the church, and thirteen candles were lit. We said the first decade of the sorrowful mysteries, and then moved outside, carrying Jim's statue on a wooden litter (see Photos 17 and 18, over). Our first stop was the home of Fr. Joe Walsh, a murder victim considered a modern day martyr. A decade was prayed in front of the house, and Jim pointed out that the birds were praying (chirping) with us. The "three amigas" brought a small statue to the door of the house and, touching the door, prayed the invocation of St. Michael the Archangel.

We moved on in a wide circle around Eyrecourt, praying the sorrowful mysteries and eventually the glorious mysteries. Anyone we encountered was invited to join us, Jim earnestly promising change and cures to the faithful. The lack of response from the residents of Eyrecourt prompted Patrick to declare that the birds (who were still chirping away) were more interested in Our Lady than were the people. Returning to



Photo 17 Preparing the Litter



Photo 18 Procession with Litter

the church, we finished the glorious mysteries, disassembled the litter, and boarded the coach.

Our next stop was the chapel of Our Lady of Clonfert, where a special image of Our Lady is housed.²⁸ The statue in question is an unusual depiction of Our Lady - it is carved very coarsely from wood, stands about four and half feet high, and bears what I consider to be a very northern or Celtic countenance, rather than the delicate Roman features of the Fatima statues. In legend, Our Lady of Clonfert is said to have been constructed before the time of the Penal Laws. The story tells of it being hidden in the crook of a tree to avoid the persecution of the English government. The tree grew around the image, sheltering it, and so it remained undiscovered until the early part of this century. It was then that a man was sawing through the tree and, cutting off the figure's left arm, saw the tree bleed. He carefully exhumed the statue and arranged for its proper display. Inside the chapel, we set Jim's statue facing the one-armed image, and prayed the joyful mysteries. The grounds of the chapel contained the grave of Fr. Walsh, which appeared very well attended with flowers and gifts, though the members of our group did not appear overly interested.

From the chapel we drove the short distance to our final destination, the Emmanuel House of Providence. According to their informational pamphlet, the Emmanuel House "is a catholic centre for prayer and evangelisation,... a new community of Christ's faithful in formation, located in the very heart of Ireland"(Anonymous : 1). The centre is on the grounds of a farm, and consists of a very large, semi-open meeting hall, a building of counselling rooms and dormitories, a gift shop and kitchen/dining hall, and a devotional garden. It was founded in 1985 by Michael and Annette Cullen, and is under the ecclesiastic authority of Bishop Kirby of Clonfert. In 1990, Eddie and Lucy Stones moved to Clonfert and succeeded the

Cullen's, who moved to the United States. Under the guidance of the Stones, the centre has been shaped by the vision of a "spiritual hospital where people can experience the healing power of God in spirit, mind, and body" (Anonymous: 2).

Since we were to receive Communion, the majority of our group went to the counselling building where a priest was hearing confession. There were approximately two hundred people in various states of arrival, and the property was filling up with buses, coaches, and cars. Informal groups were chatting away in the gardens, and others were queuing to get into the small gift shop. Jim met with several of the groups who were arriving and explained that in addition to his statue which we picked up in Croom (and which had arrived the night before from Youghal), there were other statues being brought to Emmanuel House, one from Donegal, one from Dublin, and one from West Kerry. Two of the statues would be displayed in the semi-open hall during the healing mass, and all of the statues would be exchanged and sent to a different home at the end of the day. Such exchanges, Jim explained took place several times a year.

The various groups convened in the semi-open hall and a musical worship service began, using songs from both the charismatic repertoire and more established Marian hymns. The Mass was celebrated, albeit disjointedly, as Eddie Stones would periodically give small sermons punctuating the different stages of the ritual. In particular, he spoke a great deal about "healing the family tree," emphasising that the unrest of the faithful departed accounts for much of the unrest in our own lives, and a devoted prayer life on behalf of one's ancestors allowed for much deeper healing than simply praying for oneself.

Following the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and Stones called out for the sufferers of various ailments to come forth - ailments of the head, the stomach, the bladder, the breasts, paralysis, arthritis, etc. While individuals came forward to have

²⁸ No photograph is available, as the chapel forbids the use of photography and the

hands laid upon them, the congregation as a whole resumed worshipping in song, in a more “charismatic” manner than before, complete with glossolalia. Many of the people going forward for cures were “slain in the spirit” and fell to the ground, where they were tended to gently. The healing service lasted over an hour, with small groups coming in and out of the building. When it concluded, an invitation was given to bring up objects to be blessed.

After protracted good-byes and the exchanging of the statues, we set off for Cork via Thurles and Fermoy, a different route than we had taken in the morning, and one which transformed the round trip into a distinct circle. During the journey, we prayed the sorrowful and glorious mysteries, concluding the Rosary began in front of Our Lady of Clonfert. Since that left us with some travel time remaining, the group sang, *a capella*, several hymns to Mary. Other than a few complaints by Jim and Patrick addressed to the excessively “charismatic” nature of the healing service, the general sentiment (repeatedly vocalised) when we left the coach in Cork was that the day had been a tremendous success.

Creating Sacred Space

And so the question is begged: what success were they referring to? What work had they attempted to do, and how had they succeeded? Earlier I stated that the trip to Clonfert was not one, but rather several processions. Still standing by that statement, I would add that this plurality of events does not detract from the fact that the participants perceived the day as a single, uninterrupted ritual. Jungian analyst Robert A. Johnson offers a simple and satisfying definition of ritual which can help us understand how even the most mundane events described above can be considered a part of a day of spiritual work. Johnson argues that “ritual is symbolic behaviour, consciously

bookstore/devotional shop was closed during our visit.

performed" (1986: 102). My analysis of the "Pilgrimage to Clonfert" is an attempt to understand the nature and purpose of the self-conscious, symbolic actions of the participants.

Earlier, in describing the origin of the work done by himself and Patrick, Jim told the story of what happened when he attended a particular retreat. The climax of the narrative is an experience of prophesy:

Jim: And then [] priest called us into an inner room ...and he said the Rosary...and then he came out with something/he said "Now let the Holy Spirit speak through you."...So I got this compulsion to speak any way about Our Lady of Fatima/I said "I honestly believe that if every town and city in Ireland/and village/had a statue of Our Lady of Fatima...in that town or village...then Ireland would be saved...the chastisement.

Jim's prophesy provides a lens through which to view the pilgrimage to Clonfert on its most surface level, as an instance of physical travel. Profane transportation was transformed into sacred ritual in two ways. First, Jim took us to Clonfert and back by a route which was anything but efficient. From the points of view of either mileage or time, the broad circle circumscribed- from Cork to Croom to Limerick to Eyrecourt to Clonfert to Thurles to Fermoy and back to Cork - was needlessly long. From the point of view of ritual, however, it was frustratingly short. As with all processions organised by Jim, the trip to Clonfert was designed to be a partial fulfilment of the "prophesy of the Fatima statues." Just as the group physically circled Eyrecourt on foot (in order to create a solid foundation of faith and devotion to Our Lady), the group also circled a good part of the province of Munster by couch, (for the same reason).

It have just said that Jim perceived the journey to be unfortunately brief (a comment he made the following week). This frustration, however, was partially alleviated by a second set of travel itineraries, namely the reunion of the statues which took place at Clonfert. Oral tradition contains the figure of the hero who tricks the evil

ogre into granting him three paces of living space, and, stepping once upon the earth, once upon the heavens, and once upon the underworld, reclaims all space. As with the heroic trick, bringing together of statues from the north, south, east, and west, "pins down" the geography of Ireland, "surrounding" it in a ritual manner analogous to a circular journey by car or on foot.

The statue exchange points to another level of experience, which deals not with the creation of sacred space, but rather with the creation of sacred venues in which Our Lady can participate in physical, social encounters. Once, when I asked Patrick why he was lobbying to bring Our Lady of Graces into the streets, he told me "because Our Lady likes processions." His statement was based on the belief that Our Lady did not want to be "stowed away," but rather brought into the public, to be seen, and, perhaps, to see (1/19/95). On another occasion Patrick told me of a procession in Cork where a statue of Our Lady of Fatima seemed to turn slightly and to face the principle celebrant, who later confirmed Patrick's observation. This capacity for Our Lady to "look upon" Her children is also significantly present in one of Jim's visions, in which the feminine figure he saw refused to look upon him, a sign that something was seriously wrong.

Our understanding of this viscosity benefits from two cross cultural comparisons. The first comparison is with Hinduism. Diana Eck argues that "the central act of Hindu worship, from the point of view of the lay person, is to stand in the presence of the deity and to behold the image with one's own eyes, to see and be seen by the deity" (1985:3) This sacred kind of seeing is called *darsan*, and is an aspect of popular belief that seems manifest in rituals like the pilgrimage to Clonfert.

Perhaps the most dramatic example comes from the activities of Margaret in the back of the coach, who "aimed" Our Lady's face out of the rear window. As a ritualist Margaret was not interested in displaying a plastic art form but rather in establishing an social and spiritual encounter between Our Lady and the passing drivers. Could they

gaze into her eyes, as an man in Delhi might gaze into the eyes of Krishna, and not be emotionally moved and spiritually changed by the experience? Margeret's "conversions" were more likely confirmations, of Catholic laity sympathetic to Our Lady, acknowledging the power of the image and the efficacy of the work at hand. While dramatic, Margeret's work was not unique, and other instances of practice shaped by this belief can be found in the day's activities. In our procession around Clonfert, where the community's response was poor, members of the group commented that at least "She had been seen." And in the healing service, which many characterised as overly charismatic, Jim, Patrick, and at least two others, took comfort in the fact that Our Lady's statue was displayed prominently, and at a vantage point allowing her to look upon the crowd.

Another cross-cultural comparison can be made with the phenomenon of spirit possession in Afro-Caribbean syncretic religions. These religions, such as Candomble in Brazil, Voudou in Haiti, and Santeria in Cuba and the United States, focus on the experience of possession for interaction with the spirit world. There is, however, an added dimension to this interaction - the spirits do not only interact with their devotees, but with each other.²⁹ This came to mind as I watched Jim position our Lady of Fatima to face the statues in Eyre Court and Clonfert, and then later, to a lesser extent, as Jim cradled his statue in his arms and spoke to the other statue-bearers at Emmanuel House, who held their statues in a similar manner. In retrospect, the prayers offered up in Croom, with the Medjugore medal and St. Anthony's medal held reverently on opposite sides of the centre aisle of the coach, evoke this same effect. These comparisons are not intended to equate the use of statues with dynamics of possession, but simply to point to the fact that popular catholic ontology declares that

²⁹ See Hurston 1990, Murphy 1993, Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 1997, and Wafer 1991, for discussion about spirit possession in Afro-Caribbean religious systems.

the spirits are real, and that popular catholic epistemology argues that one can only “know” these spirits through a personal, nearly social, medium.

There are other ways in which the pilgrimage to Clonfert can be characterised as an effort to create sacred space. The verbal symmetry sought in the rosaries which were prayed on the road, was, in my field experience, unique. The alternation of the call-and-response format stimulated the attention of the participants, focusing a keen awareness on each prayer by constantly changing the lead voices. It also accomplished aurally what the group later accomplished kinaesthetically, namely, circumambulation. Without leaving their seats, the thirteen individuals praying in a coach on the road to Limerick “prayed in circles” around a constantly changing centre - the small statue being passed around.

In addition to creating sacred space, there seemed to also be an awareness of pre-existing sacred locations, the home and grave of Fr. Walsh for example. Not only was the “social” dynamic discussed above enacted (bringing a small statue to face the front door), but a folk hierarchy of sacrality was demonstrated, when the home was given considerable attention and the grave nearly none. The time spent in Eyrecourt’s church and the visitation of the image of Our Lady of Clonfert are other instances in which pre-existing sacred space was utilised by the ritual participants. Finally, in addition to the obvious example of the statue exchange, smaller efforts were made to allow the sacrality of the day’s activities to endure, from lighting the candles in Eyrecourt to the joyful to-do made of the fact that I was taking photos.

Creating Sacred Time

Moving temporarily away from the transformation of space, the pilgrimage to Clonfert can also be understood as an effort to transform time. As with space, the creation of sacred time is accompanied by an awareness of pre-existing instances. For

example, the inconvenience of the venue change was readily interpreted as evidence of Our Lady's personal attention to our day's itinerary. Like wise, the road time between several of our stops neatly accommodated one set of mysteries, a fact that was commented upon more than once.

In a script writing workshop I attended many years ago, a fellow student had her heroine confess to her lover, (something to the effect of) "I measure my time by when I will see you next. That's my time; Stanley time." Cliché, true, but applicable to the case at hand. When we boarded the coach that morning, seconds, minutes, and hours became Hail Mary's, decades, and rosaries. Many times our estimated time of departure was given in prayer: "We've time for one more decade." The rosary also set the pace for the day, there would be no half prayed rosaries - what began with the joyful mysteries in one place must be seen through to the end.

Perhaps the most dramatic ritual creation of sacred time is seen in the church of Eyrecourt when, candles lit, statues posed, we were silent for about a minute and a half, to time our first words of prayer with the members of The Group still in Cork. The thirteenth anniversary of the pilgrimage was significant, but equally important was the several years worth of Saturday noon's in which the rosary was heard prayed in downtown Cork. It was with that institution of sacred time that our group sought affiliation with, and with the people who had created it.

Creating Community

Victor Turner argued that pilgrimage was a highly specialised social institution, which he characterised as "*normative communitas*," A balance between the agonistic hierarchy of every day social structure and complete (ephemeral) homogeneity of true *communitas* (1969). M. J. Sallnow (1981) has challenged Turner's ideas, arguing that divisiveness was, in fact, definitive aspect of pilgrimage in the Andes. I am inclined to

agree with Turner that the *desire* to create community is an important drive in the process of all ritual, including pilgrimage, and with Sallnow, that this drive often remains in the realm of the *ideal*.

There is no doubt that there is often division and contestation present in the social reality of a pilgrimage. A minor usurpation of leadership like when the “three amigas” broke off from the rosary in progress to pray in front of the priest’s home in Eyrecourt is a good illustration. Ritually, however, the group was working not only toward social unity between themselves, but also toward spiritual unity with The Group back in Cork, the other devotees to Our Lady in Ireland, and indeed around the world. While social uniformity might not have been on Jim’s, or anyone else’s mind (certainly no one complained of individuals “doing their own thing”), the creation of *communitas*, in its sense of mass devotional identity, was on the agenda; along with creating sacred time and space, the group sought to create sacred community.

Other Rituals

This three fold model of sacred space, time, and community, can be applied to nearly any ritual in the folk catholic repertoire. For the present purpose I will examine three, chosen for their diversity. These are (1) a charismatic “Growth in the Spirit” seminar, (2) Jim’s hospital visits, (3) praying in pubs, and other unusual prayer venues.

Growth in the Spirit

The “Growth in the Spirit” seminar is a six to nine week workshop program which began in the United States but has achieved fair popularity among members of the Charismatic renewal in Ireland. The workshop begins and ends with a Mass, the sessions in between focusing on charismatic worship and prayer, Bible study, and small group discussion. The goal of the course is to grow in one’s awareness of the gifts of

the Holy Spirit. A seminar was conducted in March of 1996 in Cork, organised by The People, and taking the place of their normal meetings.

It may seem strange to look upon the seminar as a ritual, and compare it to a pilgrimage, but I believe the comparison is sound. The seminar is more about “progress” in the spirit than about growth. The rhetoric of the program is filled with imagery of “coming into the kingdom of God,” and “riding into battle with the armour of God,” etc. I feel that this discourse points to a notion of the course as containing the elements of movement, and progression, even though the body remains still.

This idealisation, or internalisation of space, is supplemented by the idea of the seminar as education, which has the capacity to create a sacred mind, rather than merely a more knowledgeable mind. The course is geared toward the transformation of the individual. Learning new worship songs, special prayers, and scripture is like learning a new language, and to that extent, gaining a new identity and community. In small group discussions, participants “walk” through different parts of their inner lives, making the “places” they go sacred and new. As with the statue activity above, this sacrality is intended to radiate out into the larger community.

Hospital Visits

The members of The Group who visit the hospital weekly, though they go to effect cures, are acutely aware of the dynamics of space. The choice of floor is ritualised, as in Narrative One, and the decision to move left or right is made through prayer. While decisions of privacy are respected, the group may pray in front of a closed door, filling a space and touching a person they cannot see. If a statue is left in a room, it is placed to face every one in the room, or perhaps, deliberately, only the person in most desperate condition. On all visits, the chosen floor is “pinned down” in a manner

similar to the trip to Clonfert, and the space is circumscribed with prayer and iconography.

Public Prayer

Public prayer venues serve to transform actively profane *social* spaces into sacred spaces, just as the journey to Clonfert was focused on physical space and the seminar was concerned with mental/personal spaces. Besides the street rosary in Cork, treated in great detail in the following chapter, two examples stand out in my mind. First, there was an evening early in my field work when I attended a fund-raiser with Eoin and May. Afterwards, we went upstairs to the hotel bar, and one thing leading to another, we ended up praying, holding hands across a large round table. For months afterwards Eoin discussed that event, he brought it up when we said our good byes. For him, the night stood for the awesome capacity of simple lay people to utterly transform social and physical space, which is indeed, what the event was about.

Similarly, the idea of the motor rosary (see Narratives Ten and Eleven) revolves around the capacity of PA and automotive technology to saturate a social space with the sound and spiritual presence of the rosary, and thus, Our Lady. Jim felt that the motor rosary in the narratives was a particular success, for two reasons. One, a bus-full of people began praying in response to their broadcast. Two, the radio mentioned them (derisively, as “those headers praying the rosary”) which Jim felt was yet another transformation, even ridicule had been made sacred and went out letting the people know that there were those still loyal to Our Lady.

Conclusion

As the pilgrimage to Clonfert suggests, and the other examples support, ritual in the popular Catholic devotional groups with whom I have worked, is predominantly concerned with the creation of sacred space, time, and community. Whether the scale of the endeavour is the individual, a bar, a hospital floor, a small village, Ireland, or the world, the dynamic is the same: symbolic action, consciously performed, is believed to be effective in transforming the physical, social, and spiritual environments.

Chapter Seven: Channelling Grace:

The Process of Prayer

Overview

Cross-culturally, verbal prayer is possibly the most common of popular religious devotions. Within the context of my research, this possibility is a certainty.

Understanding the reason behind the widespread use of prayer is the starting point to understanding the process of prayer as a whole. Two factors contribute to the both the popularity and efficacy of verbal prayer: accessibility and versatility.

Verbal prayer is the “simplest” of the folk religious processes examined in this work. This is not to say that it is easier to understand, merely easier to perform. Unlike interaction with religious artefacts, prayer requires no paraphernalia other than will and language. Unlike narrative performance, prayer requires no community other than the individual and one spiritual being. And, unlike ritual, prayer needs no other venue than the individual’s mind. Thus, prayer is the most accessible form of religious activity. More importantly, prayer is the most versatile of the devotions discussed in the present work, and this chapter is devoted to the explanation and elaboration of this versatility.

It is my contention that verbal prayer simultaneously serves as narrative, iconography, and ritual. As narrative, prayer has the capacity to represent, negotiate and recreate experience in much the same way as do the narratives in Chapter Four. As iconography, prayer is able to provide verbal portraits of divine persons (foci), and to manifest divine power (loci). In this way, a verbal prayer has an “affecting presence” analogous to that of a material object. And as ritual, verbal prayer is used for the same function (and with comparable success) as more elaborate ritual acts: namely, to create sacred space, time, and community. Above and beyond these functions, prayer serves, uniquely, as personal, cognitive communication with the divine.

These characteristics, functions, and effects of prayer are examined here primarily in the context of two prayer events (The Group's weekly outdoor rosary and The People's weekly prayer meeting). Textual representations of these events are presented first. Interspersed with the analysis are several other prayers which supplement the argument.

Principal Prayers

Prayer One: The Rosary

Previously, the rosary as a material object was discussed in some detail. Presently, I wish to focus attention on the rosary as a prayer, or rather a litany of prayers. The complete rosary consists of fifteen "decades." Each decade is a set of prayers which are said while meditating on an event in the lives of Jesus and/or Mary. These fifteen events, called "mysteries," are divided, according to their general tone and chronography, into three sets of five:

The Joyful Mysteries,

- 1 Annunciation of the Angel to Mary,
- 2 Mary's Visit to Her Cousin Elizabeth,
- 3 Birth of Jesus in the Stable of Bethlehem,
- 4 Presentation of Jesus in the Temple,
- 5 Jesus is Found among the Learned Men in the Temple.

The Sorrowful Mysteries,

- 1 Jesus Prays at Gethsemane,
- 2 Jesus is Scourged at the Pillar,
- 3 Jesus is Crowned with Thorns,
- 4 Jesus Carries the Cross to Calvary,
- 5 Jesus Dies for Our Sins.

The Glorious Mysteries,

- 1 Jesus Rises from the Dead,
- 2 Jesus Ascends into Heaven,
- 3 The Holy Spirit Descends on the Apostles,
- 4 The Mother of Jesus is Assumed into Heaven,
- 5 Mary is Crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

In general, "praying the rosary" means praying only one set of mysteries (including a variety of introductory and concluding prayers). As a daily devotion, the three sets of mysteries are spaced out over the week as follows:

Monday - Joyful, Tuesday - Sorrowful,
Wednesday - Glorious, Thursday - Joyful,
Friday - Sorrowful, Saturday - Glorious,
Sunday - Seasonal (e.g., Joyful during Advent,
Sorrowful during Lent, etc.) or all three.

Each set of mysteries is prayed following the same format. The words of each short prayer referred to appear below, and correspond to a physical section of the string of beads.

- 1 The Sign of the Cross ,
 (whole string of beads),
- 2 The Apostles Creed, (the crucifix),
- 3 The Our Father, (first tail bead),
- 4 Three Hail Mary's, (second, third, and fourth
 tail bead),
- 5 Glory Be to the Father, (chain between fourth
 and fifth tail bead),
- 6 Announcement of the first mystery, followed by
 The Our Father, (fifth tail bead),
- 7 Ten Hail Mary's, (first group of ten circle
 beads, going counter clockwise),
- 8 Glory be to the Father, (chain between tenth
 and eleventh bead),
- 9 Announcement of second mystery, The Our Father
 (eleventh bead),
- 10 As 7, (second group of ten),
- 11 As 8,
- 12 Announcement of third mystery, The Our Father,
- 13 As 7, (third group of ten),
- 14 As 8,
- 15 Announcement of fourth mystery, The Our Father,
- 16 As 7, (fourth group of ten),
- 17 As 8,
- 19 Announcement of fifth mystery, The Our Father,
- 20 As 7, (fifth group of ten),
- 21 As 8,
- 22 The Hail Holy Queen, (central medallion).

Prayer Two: The Sign of the Cross:

(While moving the right hand from the eyes to the stomach, then to the left shoulder, then to the right.)
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer Three: The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer Four: The Our Father:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Prayer Five: Hail Mary:

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Prayer Six: The Glory Be (to the Father):

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Prayer Seven: Hail, Holy Queen:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail our life, our sweetness, our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Prayer Eight: Charismatic Free Prayer

The following transcript represents 175 seconds of prayer recorded at a weekly prayer service held by The People. This is only an excerpt from a prayer session which lasted approximately thirty-five minutes. The phrase "free prayer" refers to a devotional practice commonly used by The People, and other groups within the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In a free prayer session a leader will pray, invoking the Holy Spirit and dedicating the time to follow to praising, and listening to, God. Because silence plays such an important role in these prayer events (105 seconds of silence vs. 70 seconds of prayer in this particular example) the pauses between verbalisations have been noted.

Susan: Believe that my spirit lives in each and everyone of you.

Silence: 6 Seconds

Robert: I did not give you a spirit of timidity, but of courage.

Silence: 9 Seconds

Carl: Thank you Lord.

Silence: 11 Seconds

David: I love you with all my heart, deeper than any ocean, ask anything and I will give it to you.

Silence: 5 Seconds

Carl: Praise you Jesus.

Silence: 1 Second

Robert: I want each and every one of you to be open to my [fruit].

Silence: 8 Seconds

Ed: I've come to heal my people.

Silence: 6 Seconds

Robert: I want to lift you out of your misery, I want you to walk with me.

Silence: 3 Seconds

Frank: I confirm [that].

Silence: 9 Seconds

Jill: Where two or more have gathered ... my peace I give you.

Silence: 10 Seconds

Herb: Thank you Jesus.

Silence: 9 Seconds

Robert: Have courage, do not be afraid, I am with you always.

Silence: 3 Seconds

David: Openness ... openness to my love is what I want from each of you.

Silence: 5 Seconds

Frank: Do not be afraid.

Silence: 3 Seconds

David: Look to me, I am all that you need. I want to give you all my grace and blessings.

Silence: 2 Seconds

Niamh: I can heal you, I am God.

Silence: 5 Seconds

Robert: Do not let yourselves be side tracked, I have called on you to follow me.

Silence: 2 Seconds

Frank: I confirm these words.

Silence: 3 Seconds

Barbara: Trust in me.

Silence: 5 Seconds

Liam: Alleluia, [alleluia].

Analysis

The principal prayer activity of The Group, both as individuals and as a community, is praying the rosary, as transcribed above. All individual members interviewed pray at least one set of mysteries a day, and the main communal devotional event takes place on Saturdays, at noon, when The Group meets to pray the rosary on a busy corner in downtown Cork. The visual focus of this event is Jim's large statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which is placed on a wooden bar stool (covered in white cloth) facing the crowded intersection. The members of The Group in attendance (usually between twelve and twenty people) gather in a circle around the statue, one holding a wooden/plastic crucifix (often myself, because Jim says I am "a good strong young man"), and another holding a framed image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For approximately thirty minutes, one set of mysteries is prayed in a call-and-response format alternating roughly between the right and left hand sides of the statue. Jim, who stands behind the statue, projects his solid, resonating voice, joining in with those responding, from whichever side. In addition, he announces each mystery, offering short sermons/testimonies between decades and adding additional prayers and songs.

Narration

To understand how praying the rosary can be a process of narration, it is necessary to look at both the text of the prayer and the living context described above. As a text, the form of the rosary is self-consciously narrative. Praying the rosary is not so much an act of articulation, as an act of meditation; the most important aspect of the prayer is to internalise (not broadcast) the story being told (the mysteries). As an example of oral storytelling, it is minimal indeed. The mystery is announced as one would announce the title of a story; requiring that the "telling" of the story take place in

the listener's mind. Nonetheless, the rosary is a devotion of recollection, and in public expression, the words and structure of the prayers are designed to "bear the gospel" in much the same way as the religious experience narratives previously discussed.

The announcement of the mysteries is the most obvious example of how the rosary as text possesses narrative qualities, but there are other, more subtle examples. In the Saturday rosary, before the Sign of the Cross begins the rosary proper, those gathered typically pray The Angelus:³⁰

Lead: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
Resp: Hail Mary,...
Lead: Behold the Handmaid of the Lord. May it be done unto me according to your word.
Resp: Hail Mary,...
Lead: And the Word was made flesh. And dwelt among us.
Resp: Hail Mary,...
Lead: Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.
Resp: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
All: O Lord, it was through the message of an angel that we learned of the incarnation of your Son Christ. Pour your grace into our hearts, and by his passion and cross bring us to the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen. Glory Be to the Father,...

The words of the Angelus began in scripture, that is to say, in narrative. As a prelude to the praying of the rosary, the Angelus functions as an opening formula which, like "once upon a time" in a *hausmarchen*, prepares the listener for the story to come and explains why the story is being told. The dramatic action in the Angelus is the same as that of the first and third glorious mysteries, namely the annunciation and birth of Christ. Beyond this recounting of the story, The Angelus points to what can be expected

³⁰ The Angelus is a popular devotion which was traditionally prayed three times a day and is currently used as an evening prayer. It consists of three scriptural verses and three Hail Mary's, and originates in the fourteenth century; though its modern form appears in the seventeenth (Walsh 1993: 24-5). In Ireland, Network Two broadcasts an image of the Virgin and Child each evening, allowing time for The Angelus to be said. In my experience, the sudden silence of the television allows one to hear church bells, which are ringing for Compline, a monastic evening prayer time.

by the individual who internalises the narrative; namely, grace. This devotional promise gives strength to the minimal narrative to follow in the mysteries themselves.

If The Group, like many other rosary groups, use The Angelus as a prologue to the rosary, the Memorare is used as an epilogue:³¹

"Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your assistance, or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, we fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, our Mother; to you we come; before you we kneel, sinful and sorrowful. O mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in your clemency hear and answer them. Amen."

Like the Angelus, the Memorare tells a story, though it is derived from traditionally accounted experience, rather than from scripture. As a private prayer, its ritual aspects are accentuated; the devotee, like the old testament fathers, plays lawyer with divinity by establishing precedent. As a public prayer, however, the purpose of the prayer is not to bargain with Our Lady but to tell a story about her. More accurately the Memorare tells a non-story; describing the *absence* of events in which the Virgin turned away from or neglected Her petitioners.

The examples above deal with various prayers as texts. The narrative dynamic can also be seen in the context of the weekly public rosary. Jim announces each mystery in one of two ways, both a kind of narrative. The first method is to deliver a short testimony about an event in the previous week, such as a description of a pilgrimage or procession, or a healing that took place in the hospital. These formally recognizable narratives fuel the mind for meditation by describing a living, contemporary event which relates to the mythological mystery. The second method Jim uses I would call a "present tense" or "play by play" narrative. In this type of narrative, those gathered and those walking by hear a story in the making; a description of why the prayers are being

³¹ The author of the Memorare is unknown. Its Latin form dates back to the fifteenth century, though in English it cannot be found earlier than in the nineteenth century (Walsh 1993: 174-5).

said and of their effect. One example involves popular conceptions of purgatory and redemption. Jim announced more than once that Our Lady said many souls go to Hell because no one will pray for them. After stating this message in a formal narrative (relating the prophesy in a historical context), Jim continues the narrative in the present tense (announcing who is being prayed for and the benefit it is having). Textually and contextually, the rosary and related prayers (particularly when said in public), can thus be seen as narrative events. These events include examples of mythological legend, personal experience narrative, and the fairly unique “present tense” narrative.

While the narrative qualities of the rosary are fairly obvious, understanding charismatic free prayer as a form of narration is slightly more difficult. I noted above that silence was important in this form of prayer; a tremendous understatement. Szuchewycz contributes to our understanding of the role of silence in charismatic prayer, which, she argues, “provides the motivation which leads individuals to vocalise their thoughts and thus to actively contribute to the meeting” (1989: 56). My research has led me to accept Szuchewycz’ analysis as insightful and accurate (see Feller 1996).

From this perspective, one could argue that the silence noted in the transcript above *is* the prayer, and that the vocalisations are by-products of the experience. No amount of analysis, however, can soundly assert that the silence is narrative, and so we must look at these “by-products” to continue. With the exception of praise offerings “Thank you Jesus, etc.,” the vocalisations transcribed above are spoken in the first person, or rather The First Person; they are understood by the participants to be the voice of God. If we are to view the prayer as narrative, we must realise that in the emic world view it is God who is narrating through, and to, the faithful.

Having made this “leap of faith,” we can proceed to examine the form of the utterances. Many are simply declarative: “Have courage, etc.” Although they are derived from a scripture based oral tradition, I do not consider them to be narrative in any way.

Other utterances are narrative in form, describing past action in the first person: "I did not give you a spirit of timidity, but of strength," "Do not let yourselves be side tracked, I have called you to follow me." These statements narrate the history of the relationship between God and the faithful, some drawn from scripture ("Where two or more have gathered...") and some drawn from personal experience.

These utterances also serve as a kind of present tense narrative analogous to the rosary introductions. Through an audio manifestation, the audience gains insight into the "inner action" that is taking place during the silence. On a communal level, the present tense narration tells the story of the spiritual work being done *en masse*. This group narrative is made more explicit following the prayer session. After each session, a leader of the group, who has been writing down each utterance, arranges the statements thematically and presents them as a coherent whole. This declaration serves as a narrative on two levels. As narrative, the leader is telling the whole story of the spiritual relationship that was presented in fractured form during the session. As metanarrative, he is telling the story of the session, and characterising the atmosphere, intent, and effect of the event.

One last detail provides insight into the narrative quality of this type of prayer. As a kind of prophesy, the statements made during the session require validation, even interpretation, by another person. As narrative, the same device ("I confirm...") can be seen as a authenticating detail, analogous to the litany of storytellers at the end of a legend. If, from the insiders perspective, God is the narrator, each statement made is really saying "God told me this ..." In this context, statements of confirmation are not affirming the theological validity of an utterance, but rather saying, "It's true, God told me too."

Closely related to the dynamic of narrative is the dynamic of iconography. Just as prayer can be used to relate a description of events (as a narrative), they can also be used to relate a depiction of a divinity (as a type of verbal icon). In the present context, three prayers dramatically illustrate how the Saturday rosary can be viewed as an iconographic workshop as productive as Eoin's back room.

The first prayer, transcribed above, is the Hail, Holy Queen.³² This prayer, which cannot be confused formally with anything but an impassioned petition, also serves to depict both the Virgin and humanity. The prayer's language is couched in powerful imagery, illustrating the human condition in situational terms (garden vs. valley of tears, mourning and weeping etc.) rather than in abstract concepts. This highlights the fact that the prayer is not a theological statement but an artistic representation of a stranded, impoverished people seeking the intervention of one particular divinity. The figure in question, the Virgin, is also described in vivid language. Our Lady's character is described, complementing her physical representation which is standing in the centre of the circle. She is surrounded by adjectives (gracious, clement, loving, sweet) and is seen as the source of great things (mercy, life, sweetness, hope, Christ). Again, these statements are not as much theological as artistic, taking the form of heroic epithets which concretise the identity of the Virgin; she is not some vaguely defined, disassociated spirit, but is the mother of *our* sweetness, *our* hope, and the fruit of her womb is made manifest in the physical world.

The use of epithets, or aliases, to pray to Our Lady, is the foundation of the next example of prayer as iconography, the Litany of Loreto.³³ The litany is prayed by the

³² The Hail, Holy Queen has existed nearl unchanged since the end of the eleventh century, although it was originally set to music (Walsh 1993: 117-8).

³³ Developed out of a longer prayer from the fourteenth century in Armenia, the Litany in its modern form dates back to the sixteenth century, and is perhaps the most popular of litanies (Walsh 1993: 164).

Group after the Hail, Holy Queen and the Memorare, and signals the conclusion of the

Saturday meeting. The Litany is said as follows:

Leader:

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy
God, our Father
 in Heaven
God the Son, Redeemer
 of the world
God the Holy Spirit
Holy Trinity, one God
Holy Mary
Holy Mother of God
Mother most honourable
Mother of Christ
Mother of the Church
Mother of divine grace
Mother most pure
Mother of chastity
Sinless Mother
Dearest of Mothers
Model of motherhood
Mother of good counsel
Mother of our Creator
Mother of our Saviour
Mother and Virgin
Virgin most wise
Virgin rightly praised
Virgin rightly renowned
Virgin most powerful
Virgin most gentle
Virgin most faithful
Mirror of justice
Throne of wisdom
Cause of our joy
Shrine of the spirit
Glory of Israel
Vessel of selfless devotion
Mystical Rose
Tower of David
Tower of ivory
House of gold
Ark of the Covenant
Gate of Heaven
Morning Star
Health of the sick
Refuge of sinners
Comfort of the troubled
Help of Christians
Queen of angels
Queen of patriarchs

Response:

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy

Have mercy on us

Have mercy on us

Have mercy on us

Have mercy on us

Pray for us

Pray for us

Pray for us

Pray for us

Pray for us

Pray for us

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Pray for us

Pray for us

and prophets	Pray for us
Queen of apostles	
and martyrs	Pray for us
Queen of confessors	
and virgins	Pray for us
Queen of all saints	Pray for us
Queen conceived without sin	Pray for us
Queen assumed into heaven	Pray for us
Queen of the rosary	Pray for us
Queen of peace	Pray for us

The Litany (which in personal experience has as much meditative potential as the saying of the decades, especially for those responding) relies entirely upon a series of titles to paint a picture of the Virgin. There is one theological statement made, albeit implicitly, that Mary (who is given forty-seven lines to God's seven) is a mediator who can only pray for the devoted, while God is the source of mercy. This theological statement is, however, substantially overpowered by the artistic representation of Our Lady, as virgin, mother, and queen; as tower, gate, vessel, house, shrine, and ark; as glory, health, refuge, comfort, and help; as star and rose. Not only does the litany describe a cosmology and assign various aspects of the universe to Our Lady's jurisdiction, it also depicts the Virgin in symbols so numerous and complex that her mystery rivals that of the triune God.

The final example of iconographic prayer in the rosary is more subtle, for it contains no descriptive language at all. The prayer has no title, and is one of the prayers requested by Our Lady of Fatima. The prayer reads:

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of your mercy.

The members of The Group pray this at the end of each decade, following the Glory Be. As I stated above, the prayer's language is entirely petitionary, with little, if any, descriptive value. However, the very presence of the prayer is representational, for it ties the verbal worship in with the physical representation of Our Lady in the centre of the circle. The Fatima prayer transforms the nature of the service from interaction

with Our Lady in general to interaction with a specific apparition, a specific *representation*, of Our Lady in an historical context. To the trained ear, the prayer is as recognisably the figure of Our Lady of Fatima as the statue is to the trained eye.

The iconographic nature of free prayer is related to its narrative character. Just as my narrative model relies on the emic assumption that verbalisations are prompted by the Holy Spirit, an iconographic model relies on the fact that these prayers serve as a self-portrait of God. Unlike Our Lady, whose verbal iconography is supplemental to a rich physical iconographic repertoire, God is a spirit reluctantly depicted in even a aesthetic-intensive religion like Roman Catholicism. The descriptions of God to be found in free prayer are, therefore, focused on spiritual rather than physical characteristics. The utterances in the transcription above point to God's location ("in each and every one of you," "Where two or more have gathered"), God's generosity ("Ask anything and I will give it to you") and God's desires ("I want each and every one of you to be open," "I want to lift you out of your misery," "I want to give you all my grace and blessings"). These spiritual sketches of God's character become a living part of a verbal repertoire of icons; depictions of the divine person.

Ritual

These narrative and iconographic models illustrate how prayer can be seen as a representational process; they point to the eloquence of prayer. However, prayer can also be seen as an effective process, one which *does* something as well as *says* something. The two effective modes of prayer can be labelled "ritual" and "communication." Prayer performs many of the functions of ritual examined in the previous chapter, and also, uniquely, acts as a medium for verbal communication between the human and spirit worlds.

All prayers fulfil the definition of ritual offered previously; that is, all prayers are symbolic actions, consciously undertaken. These actions are performed to have a tangible effect on either the spiritual or physical plane. The first function of both the rosary and charismatic free prayer, as rituals, is the creation of sacred time and space. In the previous chapter, it was pointed out that the circular movements enacted in the process of pilgrimage reflected the circular pattern of the rosary beads. This pattern is also present in the context of the weekly outdoor rosary, and illustrates how the prayer event becomes a ritual creator of sacred environment.

Obviously, on a physical level, the positions of the human beings involved create a circumference surrounding the central statue, and so create a delineated space. This space has a certain autonomy; teenagers passing by may shout out, disrupting the verbal space, but they will not cross the physical boundaries. Since the participants are facing inward, they are insulated by this space. Visual interaction with pedestrians (who are, by necessity, *across* the circle) is broken by the presence of the statue in the foreground and a praying devotee in the midground, buffering the praying mind from the distraction of those passing by.

This physical creation of a place of worship is, however, the most superficial of the ritual activities taking place in the street rosary. While the circle of bodies represents the physical context of the prayer, the important ritual work is found in the verbal context, Jim's introductory statements. The present-tense form of narrative discussed above serves a double function, as narrative, and as ritual. Jim often announced the fifth glorious mystery (The Crowning of Our Lady Queen of Heaven) by saying that "And today we crown her queen of [the square] and of Cork." This statement is ritualistic because it is self-referential; it does not refer to something that is happening elsewhere or by other means, the crowning is achieved *by making the statement*. The effect of the

crowning is to expand the physical circle to encompass all of Cork, or, sometimes, all of Ireland, on a spiritual level.

Another example of the ritual use of these introductory statements can be found in what I term Jim's "conscription" of passing pedestrians. As mentioned above, very often teens, especially male, will shout or otherwise disrupt the verbal space of the group. If the timing permitted, and it often did, Jim would dedicate the next mystery to the young men, treating them in such grand terms as to imply that the whole rosary was being said on their behalf:

Jim: The fourth sorrowful mystery, the carrying of the cross ... and we offer up this mystery for all those carrying crosses, but especially for the youth of Ireland, who carry such a heavy burden and have no guidance at all. We'll give it out on this side (gesturing left)...

Similar tactics were employed to involve passing clergy, parents with small children, obvious tourists, and the homeless. As with the motorists which Margaret had "converted," some physical sign made by the pedestrian was considered a sign of acceptance (signs including silence, in the case of the teens). A related practice involved individuals who stopped on their own accord to say a prayer with the group, who were given encouragement as they walked away to take Our Lady with them. While the physical circle represented an exclusive ritual, closing off sacred space, these verbal actions are examples of inclusive rituals, sending out radii of sacrality on physical, spiritual and social levels.

Charismatic free prayer also serves to delineate a sacred time and space. In contrast to the use of a visual and verbal focus in the Saturday rosary, The People utilise what can be termed anti-foci, namely darkness and silence. Physically, there is no ritualistic element to free prayer, other than the fact that sitting in parallel rows creates the accustomed feeling of being in mass. Those involved in this prayer close their eyes and sit silently, stepping away from the group to create a sanctuary within themselves.

Like the repetition of the rosary, this silence induces a meditative state, preparing the individual for the act of listening to the Holy Spirit. The silence does more than prepare the individual, however, it also prepares the group by defining the duration of the session as sacred time. Thus, any interruption of the silence is recognised as holy and spiritual, and important enough to write down and remember.

Sacrality is only one desired effect of ritual. Often the goals of a ritual are more tangible, such as seeking a miracle or sign. This is amply exemplified in the rosary prayers. Each Hail Mary is not only a small icon (depicting Our Lady as full of grace and blessed) but is also a petition, asking for Mary's intercession. This is also true of the Angelus, the Memorare, the Hail Holy Queen, and the Fatima prayer (O my Jesus...), The Our Father, even the Glory Be. These prayers act as invocations of a particular spiritual being, and as petitions for action. Possessing an almost spell like quality, these small verbal rituals are expected to have immediate impact on the world around them.

There are a host of prayers which I have encountered in my research which are dominated by this ritual quality. Unlike the rosary and related prayers, many of these short invocations exist only in the popular tradition, outside of the orthodox corpus. Consider the formulaic litany below, taught to Jim by his mother as a prayer to "take you straight to heaven."

Prayer nine: Jim's Salvation Prayer:

Two Our Father's, Two Hail Mary's, Two Glory Be's.
(The prayer is to be said once a day for three years,
with concentration upon the spilt blood of
Jesus.) (January 31, 1995)

This prayer, which utilises several of the building blocks of the rosary, is arranged in such a way to guarantee the faithful an instant journey to Heaven, without suffering the pains of purgatory. As a ritual, it is lengthy (three years) and its effect is not immediate, but rather comes after death. Other prayers which are goal oriented have

more instantaneous effects, such as these prayers, collected from Jim, which are said for miraculous work, particularly healing:

Prayer Ten: Prayer to St. Anthony of Padua:

Most Holy St. Anthony, the great love of God you possessed while on earth, merited for you the gift of miracles which you dispensed freely to those in trouble and adversity. Knowing our many trials and tribulations, we beseech you to whisper our petitions into the ears of the Holy Child, Jesus, whom you held many times in your arms with love and affection. If this request is for God's greater glory and my salvation, may it be granted. Amen."

(February 4, 1995)

Prayer Eleven: St. Anthony's Favourite Prayer

Three Hail Mary's (Most effective when prayed on a Tuesday (St. Anthony's day), and in conjunction with a relic or medal of the Saint.) (February 4, 1995)

The prayer to St. Anthony and St. Anthony's favourite prayer serve as dramatic examples of ritual negotiation with spiritual beings. The prayer to St. Anthony is conversational in tone, and its desired effect is not that a miracle be performed (which is up to God), but rather that the Saint offers his prayers in conjunction with the human devotee. St. Anthony's favourable response is desired because his prayers are believed to help the cause of the individual praying. Praying the Saint's favourite prayer provides a short cut in this negotiation; it is assumed that in praying the three Hail Mary's the saint is automatically joining in, and that the cause is immediately forwarded to God's attention. St. Anthony's favourite prayer is the most commonly used in the hospital visits, together with a distribution of St. Anthony medals.

Healing, particularly the laying on of hands, is common within the context of charismatic groups such as The People. The prayers said during the laying on of hands quite obviously possess the same ritual qualities as the prayers discussed above. The prayers may include scripture related to God's capacity to heal or to the faithful's

capacity to work in God's name, or they may be "anti-prayers," directed not at a divinity but at a demonic spirit, taking the form of commands:

Prayer Twelve: A cure for emotional problems:

In the name of Jesus Christ and by the merits of His precious blood, I break and dissolve every curse, hex, seal, spell, sorcery, bond, snare, trap, device, lie, stumbling block, obstacle, deception, diversion or distraction, spiritual chain or spiritual influence, placed upon us (November 9, 1995).

Prayer Thirteen: A physical cure:

Lord, you promised us that by your stripes we would be healed. In the name of Jesus Christ I claim that healing now, lay your hands upon your child and alleviate her suffering (January 25, 1996).

Communication

Finally, both rosary prayer and charismatic free prayer serve as active communication with the divine (in contrast to the *potential* channel for communication found in material culture). The silence of free prayer and the repetition of the rosary are analogous; both seek to induce a meditative state, an inner calm, that allows one to hear the divine voice.

In free prayer, a distinct cycle of communication is evident. First, the silence creates a venue for spirit to person communication, the "voice within." Then, prophetic or declarative statements mediate the message from person to person, "sharing the word" as the "spirit moves." Next, statements of confirmation reinforce the validity of the original communication, attesting to the fact that others have also "heard" the message. Finally, praise offerings and personal, human statements allow the worshipers to speak back to God, reacting both to what has been verbalised and to what they have heard inside but not spoken allowed.

The rosary's cycle is different, but can be understood, essentially, as a cycle of communication. The rosary, as prayer liturgy and artefact, is seen as a communication from the divine, whether it is to St. Dominic or to myself, learning it for the first time. This is true both for the central prayers and for "tag-on's" like the prayers from Fatima. Indeed, the central prayers of the rosary, the Hail Mary and Our Father, are lifted from scripture, the most linguistic of God's interaction with man in the Christian tradition. The cultural events and institutions associated with rosary devotion contain a world of experience which can then be articulated from human to human, and from human back to the divine, in the form of special litanies, special prayer contexts, and supplemental narratives such as the mystery introductions.

Conclusion

In summation, prayer can be seen to possess all of the key features and functions of the other dynamics discussed in this work, which may account for the popularity of prayer over other forms of devotion. This analysis must be approached with caution. Although I do stand by the assertion that prayer can serve as narrative, as iconography, and as ritual, in addition to verbalised communication, it nearly must do so on its own. All of the processes discussed in these past four chapters are constantly intermingled in daily reality. There is very little ritual with no prayerful, material, and narrative dimensions attached, nor prayer without the other three, nor iconography without the others, nor narrative standing alone. Intermingled, they form the complex dynamics of popular religion, a process which must at this point be viewed in its entirety. And so, I turn now to the macro-level analysis and readdress the theoretical model posed one hundred and fifty (or so) pages ago.

Chapter Eight: Roots and Wings

Overview

In this chapter, I approach the research on a macro-analytical, or holistic, level. The chapter begins with a restatement of the theoretical definition found in Chapter One, with brief commentary. Next, I readdress the rationale behind first approaching the various dynamics previously covered on a micro-analytical level. Finally, I apply the general theory to the processes and characteristics of folk Catholicism previously discussed.

Restatement of General Theory

In Chapter One, I defined folk religion as:

an (1) experiential and representational process in which (2) communion with a non-empirical spiritual reality, and (3) the symbolic accounts of such communion provided by orthodoxy, popular traditions, and the creativity of individuals within a social historical context, are (4) internalised, manipulated creatively and usefully, and redistributed into the community, using (5) symbols provided by orthodoxy, popular tradition and personal creativity, and modes of distribution specific to the social/historic context.

This definition is articulated to highlight the dynamic nature of folk religion, its symbolic form, the common resources for these symbols, and its dependence on social context. In the analysis which follows, I do not approach the various religious dynamics with a “checklist” to see if they “qualify” as folk religion. Rather, I apply the model in the hopes that it will further clarify and contextualise the processes discussed.

Processes within Processes

It is the nature of true process, true dynamism, that it be irreducible to objects, but only to smaller and smaller processes. In this work, I have divided (though not exhaustively) the process of folk religion (articulated above) into four sub-processes. My justification for initially approaching the four sub-processes (or genres) of narrative, material culture, ritual, and prayer on a micro-level is that it is only with close scrutiny that these ever smaller sub-processes can be seen clearly. For ease of reference in the section which follows, I will present this breakdown of processes in an outline form:

Doing Folk Religion :

Narrating

Articulating/Analysing Experience

Negotiating Belief

Transferring Experiential Knowledge

Situating Narrative and Self in Tradition

Using Material Culture

Activating Affecting Presence

Dedicating/Consecrating Objects

Using Objects as Discourse

Using Objects as Channels of Force

Doing Ritual

Consciously Performing Symbolic Action

Creating Sacred Space

Utilising Sacred Space

Creating Sacred Time

Utilising Sacred Time

Creating Community

Maintaining Community

Praying

Narrating

as above

Creating Verbal Icons

as above

Performing Ritual

as above

Communicating

Listening

Interpreting

Speaking

Application

This application of theory is based on the simple premise that the overall structure of a process applies to its sub-processes, and vice-versa. In this section, therefore, I seek to articulate the general definition more clearly in light of the micro-analyses previously presented.

Folk religion is an "experiential and representational process." The key word in this statement, remarkably enough, is "and." Folk religious events are never one or the other, but always both experiential and representational. In *Bearing the Good News*, I argued that the goal of a personal religious narrative performer was to recreate the immediacy of his personal experience. For both the performer and audience, prn's are emergent events, not simply representations. Like wise with religious artefacts. These objects, at first glance, are definitively dead representations, but I have asserted that the use of these objects is linked to the activation of their presence. Given their capacity to lock the user into the "act of seeing," to "speak" eloquently to the community and the spirit world, and to channel both worship and grace, these objects must be seen as experiential as well as representational.

For ritual and prayer, this perspective shift occurs in reverse, because the surface characteristic of these processes is experiential. Yet they also serve as representational acts. Ritual "creates" sacred space, time, and community by representing, acting out symbolically, the transformation desired. Prayer, as I have stated above, serves to narrate world view and experience, acts as a verbal icon, and acts powerfully as ritual. Particularly in a public context, prayer and ritual are representational as well as experiential.

The folk religious process is partly fuelled by "communion with a non-empirical spiritual reality." The dynamic relationship between the human devotee and spiritual world is dramatically illustrated in the four sub-processes dealt with in this work.

Although personal religious narrative is directed from human to human, its content grows out of immediate religious experience, communion with the other world.

Iconography seeks a tangible, visible link to give this relationship permanency, allowing for communication and the transfer of grace and understanding. Ritual is concerned with the invocation of the spirit world and the transformation of the physical world, creating contexts for sacred interactions (human-human, human-spirit, and spirit-spirit).

In addition to direct experience, folk religion also relies upon the “symbolic accounts of such communion provided by orthodoxy, popular traditions, and the creativity of individuals within a social historical context.” The influence of orthodoxy can be seen throughout the ethnographic material presented in the dissertation. The orthodox canon, and approved translations, shape prn’s. Official images dominate material culture, and liturgical objects and official blessings play important roles in “bringing images to life.” Popular ritual emulates the structure and tone of official liturgy and the prayer corpus is predominantly ecclesiastic. Like wise, popular traditions shape narrative structures and the use of objects, codifies ritual, and modifies prayer. Above all, personal creativity defines these various processes as processes, as new narratives are told, new uses for objects invented, new rituals performed, and new prayers said.

Direct experience and second hand representation is then “internalised, manipulated creatively and usefully, and redistributed into the community, using symbols provided by orthodoxy, popular tradition and personal creativity, and modes of distribution specific to the social/historic context.” With this statement, I argue that folk religion is not a finite, linear process, but an unbounded cyclical process. It is in the redistribution of symbols that folk religion finds its “tomorrows.” As individual human beings constantly supply new, or modified, narratives, objects, rituals, and prayers, the community modifies both its traditions and orthodoxies. Thus, a personal, creative

practice like aiming a statue out of a car window, may become a popular practice, or even an orthodox practice, with priests giving benediction from moving automobiles. More importantly, this redistribution sustains the religious individual, providing community, validation, interpretation, and new experience.

Chapter Nine: Critical Examination of Theory

In chapter one, I called theory a lens. In this chapter, I seek to more fully define the “prescription” of the lens used in this work, to “place” the theory, *vis-à-vis* the various scholars referenced. In this way, I hope to show how the present research is supported by the work of others, and assess the contribution made by this work to the general field of folk religion scholarship. This chapter is organised in five sections, corresponding to each of the analytical chapters.

Narrative

As I noted in the beginning, I situate my work among the ethnographers of speaking, and their desire to contextualize language use. My efforts to contextualize the personal religious narrative focused on the question of function, and examined the strategies by which these aims are achieved. In so doing, I believe I have opened a fruitful dialogue with the work of narrative theorists like Degh, Ben-Amos, and Bauman, Honko, and Pentikainen.

While I am satisfied with the sensitivity of the discourse analysis on a narrative by narrative basis, I would argue that the most substantial contribution made to this area of scholarship is to be found in the application of Braid's notion of “experiential knowledge” to the analysis of religious narrative. In so doing, the essential character of religious narrative, to create for the listener a unique, personal religious experience, comes into full view. This allows the prn to move away from formal constructs like those of Kvideland, and into the full, dual nature of narrative as articulated by Bauman.

Furthermore, this way of looking at the religious narrative event sheds light on how the difficulties presented by the “economic” reality of a scarcity of miracles is overcome by the faithful. Through an understanding of the narrative tools used to recreate encounters with the pre-linguistic *numinons*, we can understand how a single event can

be internalised by, and so nourish, an entire community. I believe it is for this reason that Pentikainen prioritised the “individual free form memorate” (individual in content, free in form, style and structure) as the “most relevant” type of narrative in the study of folk religion (1978: 130). More than any other characteristic, it is this transferral of experience which typifies the successful religious narrative event, and places it in its proper context.

Material Culture

Taylor (1995) has contributed greatly to our understanding of the sacred landscape, one aspect of material culture. In chapter five, I sought to provide a similarly enlightening analysis of the sacred tool kit. As with narrative, although I am satisfied with the analytical treatment of specific objects, I would assert that the principal contribution to the study of material culture made in this work stems from the application of a specific theoretical notion to a new set of facts. In particular, I think that it proved particularly fruitful to open up the notion of “affecting presence” to both spiritual and cultural manifestations.

In the analysis of commonly used objects, this two fold application led to an understanding of both the cultural context and communication created by the object, and of the spiritual efficacy and nature of the object, both of which are important to the subject as a whole. In the case studies, this duality was manifest in the insight that history and tradition not only shape practice, but the native understanding of practice. This led to the important conclusion that through the “activation” of an object, the individual can define himself in both spiritual and cultural terms.

Ritual

In the same vein of “taking the native view seriously,” chapter six benefited strongly from the application of an emic model (the Bible) to the subject. My understanding of ritual is shaped first by this native world view, and thus brings fresh thought to the table of Turner and Sallnow. While models of ritual which point to the transformation and sacralization of time and space are not new, giving such models primacy over social-functional models is relatively uncommon. In so doing, I hope that I have placed the division/*communitas* debate in proper perspective, and argued convincingly that the spiritual work at hand is more pressing in the minds of the believers.

This chapter also benefits from the use of farther reaching cross-cultural materials than appear elsewhere in the work. The Hindu notion of *darsan* and the afro-Caribbean understanding of possession have not, to my knowledge, been applied to Irish folk Catholicism before, and the application was quite useful to me. This insight into the relationship between the catholic devotee and divine persons opens up the scholarly understanding to a wider range of ritual functions and dynamics.

Prayer

The analysis of prayer presented in this work benefits from an understanding of prayer as more than just human-spirit communication, which is its most commonly addressed function. The application of narrative theory both expands scholarly understanding of the function and form of verbal prayer, and continues to broaden our notions of narrative. Specifically, it creates a more complete picture of public prayer, and clarifies the motivations of those engaged in it. By looking at prayer as a form of iconography, the dynamic model of material culture is strengthened, as function is seen to truly transcend form. This allows for the transposition of the idea of a physical

focus, like a statue, with an aural focus, such as silence. Finally, by seeing prayer as effective ritual, the theories applied to that process are reconfirmed, and provide an understanding of prayer as an act, rather than simply a mode of speech.

Roots and Wings

The macro-analysis presented in this volume is, as was stated in chapter one, situated in contemporary Europeanist ethnological scholarship. The notion of approaching the analysis on both a micro and macro level stems from Taylor's theoretical stance of approaching the specifics first and then working one's way out and up. By defining more clearly the processes of narrative, material usage, ritual and prayer, I sought to provide the building blocks for the final application of the theoretical model. In both its articulation and application, this model actively addresses the concerns held by the various theorists referenced, namely, the political and cultural realities of doing religion *vis-à-vis* the official and unofficial church. Through my analysis and contextualization of the folk religious process, I have sought to further the work of scholars such as Taylor in defining religion as a verb, not a noun.

On the macro, as well as the micro, level, I would contend that the theoretical models used in this work were successful in two functions: as descriptive and as analytical models. As descriptive models, they have at least marginally expanded our maps of "known space" in the realm of popular religion, providing useful templates for the understanding of both specific processes and the general process of folk religion. As analytical models, I feel that this work has contributed to the dialogue as was intended, and provides theory applicable to new data as it is collected.

Chapter Ten: Trying on Hats in the Looking Glass: A Critical Examination of the Method of Participant Observation

Throughout this dissertation, I have used language such as participant observation, ethnography, field work, and informant, without any qualification. Before concluding this work, I wish to react to some of the difficulties these terms create.

It is a new (and I believe necessary) luxury in ethnography that the researcher is allowed, indeed compelled, to sit before a metaphorical looking glass and engage in self-reflection (and occasionally self-indulgence). I'm here to admire my hats. I wear many hats in the field, some I have had since I was a little boy, others were given to me just last week by my informants and my colleagues. Some I find quite flattering and comfortable, others awkward and silly. However, it is important to be aware of all of them, for when I am in the field I am constantly helping to create my identity and the identity of others, and this process profoundly affects what I learn or do not learn.

As a point of departure I look to a recent forum in *The Journal of American Folklore* by the title of "A Conversation between Two Disciplines What Do We Learn When We Learn Music from Our "Informants"?" Editor Burt Feintuch introduces this discussion, which reflects on "studying with, not simply studying, the performers whose music intrigues us," as well as on the idea of playing music as hermeneutic (1995: 265).

The authors in the forum discuss the concept, coming from Mantle Hood, of "bi-musicality:" developing competence in a native tradition other than your own, and using this experience to do ethnography. The immediate parallel that occurred to me was one of bi-religiosity: learning religion, not just learning about religion, mastering the language of, and becoming a performer within the tradition studied in order to best understand "what is going on?"

Not to cause alarm, I am not advocating conversion, but rather the self-reflective and sober use of what insider vocabulary and status I have been given. Many informants

refer often to my own spiritual journey, and I acknowledge this hat as fitting. I am, on a personal level, involved in "learning religion" even as I learn about religion, with my eyes shaded by the brim of my academic cap, for fear of seeing the light.

Many of the musicians in the *Journal* reported a shift in subject-object relationships when they found themselves performing to the delight and emotional movement of their "informants." I have been in situations where I have counselled and prayed with those individuals with whom I had become exceptionally close, and then was told tearfully of the inner healing I had been a part of.

How does the Scholar react to that? There are two choices, ignore the event or try to understand the event with yourself in the equation, the subject as object. Indeed, the lines are blurred.

Chapter Eleven: Directions for Further Research

Overview

In September of last year I sat down with my pile of notes and tapes and beads and baubles and decided, painfully, what *not* to write about. In any academic work, decisions of scope need to be made, both in terms of research and analysis. In this section I would like to recommend additional avenues of investigation on the subject of popular Irish Catholicism in general, and my research in particular.

Narrative

The analysis of narrative in this work was focused almost exclusively on dynamics and functions of performance. An indexing of motifs in personal religious narratives, and other, more textual, analyses would be valuable. Furthermore, it would allow the researcher to compare the constantly growing corpus of prn's with the substantial narrative collections of the Irish Folklore commission.

Material Culture

My study of material culture was limited to artefacts. Other aspects of material culture (art, architecture, environment) play important roles in folk religious process as well. Valuable research can be done on the religious decoration of housing, choices in venues like The Centre, and perceptions of landscape, particularly the cityscape which is under represented in scholarship on Ireland (and religion in general).

Ritual

I particularly regret limiting my discussion of ritual to a few key rituals, and hope to personally explore the literally hundreds of tiny kinaesthetic and verbal rituals popularly employed by Irish Catholics. From crossing oneself while passing a graveyard

to crossing oneself when five similar coloured cars are seen (reminiscent of the five decades) I believe popular ritual represents a bumper crop to the would be collector and analyst of Irish popular religion.

Prayer

My analysis of prayer, like narrative, focused on performance. Textual studies of both established and “free” prayer would be rewarding. As with narrative, motif typing and analysis would be fruitful. Cross-cultural analysis could yield greater insight into the multiple purposes of prayer. I would also be interested in comparisons between the language of contemporary Catholic prayer and pre-Christian prayer to the Goddess in Ireland.

Archives

Finally, although I choose to focus on the ethnographic present, thus relying on field collected materials, archival sources would supplement this research nicely. Although the IFC collected relatively little material from urban settings like Cork, the IFC rosary questionnaire could be engaged in quite productive dialogue with my own research.

Concluding Remarks

I am hopeful that this work has accomplished two tasks.

First, I hope that my “ulterior motive” of entering into theoretical dialogue bears fruit, and that my proposed definition of folk religion contributes to the academic conceptualisation of folk religion. While it stands in its own domain as unchallenged, theory only comes to life when engaged by its first audience, and I look forward to the response. A corollary of this hope is that I have understood correctly, and articulated clearly, exactly what is “going on,” in the folk religious processes of prayer and narrative, ritual and material culture.

Second, I hope that in my desire to contribute to the academy, I did not fail to offer something to the communities which made this work possible. I was often told, explicitly and implicitly, that I was welcome because my research was exiting, meaningful, and gave the faithful yet another voice. I hope I have fulfilled these expectations.

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