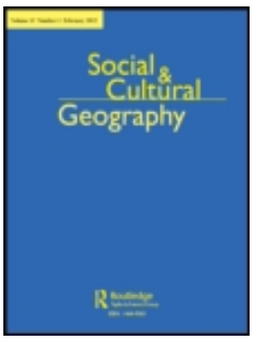
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Celtic pilgrimage, past and present: from historical geography to contemporary embodied practices

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Perigrinatio, the Latin term for pilgrimage was at the heart of the medieval Celtic church, but was this was understood and practised not only as a journey to a shrine, but more broadly as a spiritual journey, which could lead to an isolated hermitage or peripatetic evangelistic mission. In this paper, we outline the beliefs and practices of the broad assemblage known as the Celtic church, particularly the interleaving of pilgrimage, asceticism and landscape poetics, and how these have informed continued and renewed pilgrimage practices to sites of the early Celtic church by particular denominations, ecumenical groups and those interested in broader spiritualities. These sacred mobilities are explored through vignettes of embodied-emotional-spiritual practices situated in the landscapes and faith communities of Lough Derg, Ireland and the Isle of Man. They share geographical marginality, a focus on multiple Celtic saints and an enduring belief in the immanence of God, expressed through embodied spiritual practice in the landscape. However, they differ widely in matters of institutionalised structure, regulation, discursive scripting and gendered hierarchy, reflecting situated and denominational preferences for the ascetic and aesthetic spiritual legacies of the medieval Celtic church.

Keywords: Celtic; pilgrimage; spiritualities; embodied-mobilities; landscape

Pélerinage celtique, passé et présent: de la géographie historique aux pratiques incarnées contemporaines

Perigrinatio, le terme latin pour pèlerinage était au cœur de l'église médiévale celtique mais il était compris et pratiqué non seulement comme un voyage vers un lieu saint, mais aussi plus généralement comme un voyage spirituel, qui pouvait mener à un ermitage isolé ou une mission évangéliste péripatétique. Dans cet article, nous présentons les grandes lignes des croyances et pratiques du vaste assemblage connu sous le nom de l'église celtique, en particulier l'entrelacement du pèlerinage, de l'ascétisme et des poésies du paysage et de la façon dont ils ont inspiré, continué et renouvelé les pratiques de pèlerinage vers des sites de l'église celtique primitive par certaines confessions, groupes œcuméniques et par ceux qui s'intéressent aux spiritualités au sens large. Ces mobilités sacrées sont explorées à travers des vignettes de pratiques émotionnelles-spirituelles incarnées situées dans les paysages et les communautés croyantes de Lough Derg en Irlande et sur l'île de Man. Elles partagent la marginalité géographique, une focalisation sur de nombreux saints celtiques et une croyance durable dans l'immanence de Dieu, exprimées à travers la pratique spirituelle incarnée dans le paysage. Toutefois, elles diffèrent considérablement dans les domaines de la structure institutionnalisée, de la règlementation, de l'écriture discursive et de la hiérarchie selon le sexe, reflétant des préférences situées et confession-

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nelles pour les héritages ascétiques et esthétiques spirituels de l'église celtique médiévale

Mots clés: Pèlerinage celtique; spiritualités; mobilités incarnées; paysage

Peregrinación celta, pasado y presente: desde la geografía histórica hacia las prácticas corporales contemporáneas

Perigrinatio, el término del latín para peregrinaje estaba en el corazón de la iglesia celta medieval, y se entendía y se practicaba no sólo como un viaje a un santuario, sino más ampliamente como un viaje espiritual, lo que podría conducir a una aislada ermita o misión de evangelización itinerante. En este trabajo se describen las creencias y las prácticas del amplio conjunto conocido como la iglesia celta, sobre todo la intercalación de la peregrinación, el ascetismo y la poética del paisaje, y cómo éstas han asistido a las prácticas de peregrinación renovadas y en curso a sitios de la iglesia celta temprana por grupos religiosos particulares, grupos ecuménicos y aquellos interesados en espiritualidades más amplias. Estas movilidades sagradas son exploradas a través de historias de prácticas corporales-emocionales-espirituales situadas en los paisajes y comunidades de fe de Lough Derg, Irlanda y la Isla de Man. Comparten marginalidad geográfica, un enfoque en múltiples santos celtas y una creencia duradera en la inmanencia de Dios, expresada a través de la práctica espiritual corpórea en el paisaje. Sin embargo, difieren ampliamente en cuestiones como la estructura institucional, regulación, escritura discursiva y jerarquía de género, lo que refleja preferencias situadas y grupales por legados espirituales ascéticos y estéticos de la iglesia celta medieval.

Palabras clave: celta peregrinaje; espiritualidades; movilidades corporales; paisaje

Introduction

In this paper, we address pilgrimage as a form of sacred mobility (Coleman & Eade, 2004; Maddrell, 2011, 2013; Maddrell & della Dora, 2013; Maddrell, Terry, & Gale, 2015) within a regional historical geography of the medieval Celtic church and its continued influence today. Whilst the interdisciplinary field of pilgrimage studies is burgeoning, and the subject is attracting more attention within social and cultural geographies, pilgrimage in Ireland and Britain are relatively under-studied beyond Knock, Canterbury and Walsingham. Here we bring two case studies together from the Celtic region of Britain and Ireland. This area boasted a rich medieval network of pilgrimage practice, a more uneven post-Reformation pattern and now has various sites of contemporary spiritual significance, including the Iona Community and the Buddhist Centre for World Peace and Health. Celtic Christianity is an assemblage of regionally and historically grounded beliefs and practices, which have been described as speaking 'with uncanny relevance to our age' (Bradley, 2003, p. xiii). Although often represented as a pre-Roman church, the Celtic church is more accurately described as a distinctive regional inflection or dialect of the wider Church (Bradley, 1993, 2000). Understandings of the contemporary manifestations of Celtic spirituality tend to be dominated by particular Celtic spiritual movements; however, the ongoing role of Celtic-informed *pilgrimage* within mainstream Christian practice also needs to be more fully and rigorously interrogated. We draw on two empirical case studies, which mobilise their Celtic heritages in a contemporary context, to enrich academic and social understandings of 'Celtic pilgrimage'. We briefly outline the range of the Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland during the medieval period, the particularities of its theology and practices, and the legacy of these traits in contemporary pilgrimages at Lough Derg, Ireland and in the Isle of Man (see Map 1). First, a few reflections on the geographies of religion and interdisciplinary pilgrimage studies.

Geographies of religion and interdisciplinary pilgrimage studies

In the past, geographies of religion have tended to focus on the spatial patterns of belief, sacred places and sites (e.g. Park 1994), but since a reinvigoration in the early 1990s, the geographies of religion and spirituality have broadened and diversified considerably with renewed interest in the spaces, practices and politics of religion and spirituality (Holloway & Valins, 2002; Kong, 2001, 2010). Reflecting growing engagement with lived religion and spirituality, a central pillar of these new geographies has been a focus on 'elements of the individual's social, material, imaginative, and emotional experiences associated with the religious experience' (Saunders, 2013, p. 786), as well as interventions founded on the post-secular interstices of religion, spirituality, faith and belief (see Brace, Bailey, Carter, Harvey, & Thomas, 2011; Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009; Maddrell, 2009). Here, building on larger disciplinary trends in the past decade, we focus on the geographies of pilgrimage as a form of sacred mobility (see Maddrell et al., 2015). Reflecting the growth in the practice of and interest in pilgrimage in recent years (Bradley, 2000; Olsen & Timothy, 2006), there has been marked increase in research into pilgrimage from across the social sciences, which has led to the development of theoretically and empirically rich case studies (e.g. Coleman & Eade, 2004; Dubisch, 1995; Frey, 1998; Maddrell & Della Dora, 2013), as well as recent attention to social diversity and gendered relations in pilgrimage (Gemzöe, 2005; Hermkens et al., 2009; Jansen, 2012). We aim to bring elements of these insights to the examination of the two contemporary Celtic pilgrimages studied here.

Despite its non-obligatory character in Christianity, pilgrimage remains a very common practice with major shrines attracting millions of believers annually (Bhardwaj, 1997; Jansen, 2012). Pilgrimage is particularly pronounced within the Roman Catholic denomination, although, modern Catholicism tends to emphasise interior piety over external practice and social customs (Cunningham & Gillespie, 2004). Throughout the world, Catholic pilgrimage encompasses a broad range of shrines and activities, including long-distance walks, typified by the Camino de Santiago; sacred sites of liturgical and communal activity, such as Lourdes or Fatima; and, notably for this study, local journeys to shrines, especially on ecclesiastical feast days (Foley, 2010; Reader, 2013; Walsham, 2011). It is notable that within Christian practice (as with world-wide pilgrimage), the majority of pilgrims are women, in contrast to the predominantly male management of pilgrimage shrines (Shackley, 2001). A general feature of Catholic pilgrimage is its intimate relationship with the Church as hierarchical institution, primarily through clerical control and strong links with doctrine, such as the Sacraments and Catholic social teachings. This has profound implications for gendered relations, most obviously manifest in the male-only clergy of the Catholic Church. By contrast, most Protestant churches eschewed pilgrimage after the Reformation, on the grounds of it being theologically redundant, as well as frequently corrupt and exploitative in practice. Nonetheless, many Protestants have undertaken spiritual journeys, e.g. visits to Biblical sites such as Jerusalem, but not necessarily described them as pilgrimage (Tomlin, 2004). High church Anglo-Catholics maintained pilgrimage practice, particularly after the Victorian development of the Marian shrine in Walsingham, England (see Coleman, 2004, 2005), but Protestants more generally remained suspicious of pilgrimage until recent years. Arguably, increased openness to pilgrimage on the part of some Protestant clergy and congregations represents a marked shift in attitude to pilgrimage *per se*, and can be attributed to two key factors. Firstly, as a result of greater theological openness and ecumenical engagement, which have increased receptivity to new practices and



Map 1. The Celtic region in the early medieval period. Source: Author.

expressions of faith. Secondly, pilgrimage can be seen as part of changing spatial practices, including 'taking the church out of doors' in the face of declining regular attendance at church (Maddrell, 2011, 2013).

Research on pilgrimage is increasingly exploring its nature as a physical corporeal activity that facilitates inner, spiritual or emotional journeys (Maddrell, 2011; Maddrell, della Dora, Scafi, & Walton, 2015; Rountree, 2006; Slavin, 2003; Zimdars-Swartz, 2012). This aligns well with calls for 'research into the construction of, and interplay among, religion, society, and space, foregrounding the embodied subject' (Bailey, Harvey, & Brace, 2007, p. 143) that appreciate how bodily centred experiences are central to research into religious and spiritual arena. By acknowledging how worlds of 'spirituality, belief and emotive performance … necessarily include embodied performances' (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009, p. 697), we can further analytical engagements with how 'Religious and spiritual geographies are (re)produced through a variety of embodied acts and bodily practices' (Holloway & Valins, 2002, p. 8) and with how 'religion is embodied, and bodies are religioned' (Yorgason & della Dora, 2009, p. 634).

Within these approaches, the geographies of mobilities offer a strong analytical lens to study embodied practices by foregrounding movements, transits and flows (Adey, 2006; Cresswell, 2006). Crucially, the mobilities field facilitates re-examinations of 'the nature of pilgrimage not only as inner spiritual and outer physical journey, but also as

an embodied practice, corporeal, sensory, emotional and affective' (Maddrell, 2013, p. 75). By 'prioritising movement, [and] connecting meanings and experiences' (Scriven, 2014, p. 255), we can appreciate how pilgrimage 'unifies the inner and physical journey' (Hyndman-Rizk, 2012, p. xvi) and explore its practice as 'a nexus between the body, self and the world' (Slavin, 2003, p. 16). By foregrounding sacred mobilities, we highlight how movement and embodiment in the Celtic pilgrimage tradition is currently manifest and how the embodied experiences of pilgrims provide insight to the practices, their meanings and associated power relations (see Longhurst, 2005 on embodiment). Another important concept is that of liminality, widely deployed (if critiqued) within pilgrimage studies since the work of Turner and Turner (1978). During pilgrimage, it is argued, the pilgrim enters a liminoid phase in which they become a ritual subject: their status is ambiguous, existing betwixt and between societal norms. Central to these experiences is the spatial and functional detachment from everyday life that 'enables the pilgrim to intensify his or her understanding of the spiritual meanings of his or her faith' (Collins-Kreiner, 2010, p. 439). The enduring concept of liminality is frequently referenced in studies of pilgrimage as it captures a sense of the normative break and potential for personal and spiritual transformation which are held to be central to the phenomenon. Here, we wish to hold in tension the sense of pilgrimage as both detached from, but nonetheless grounded, in everyday practice, and will explore this in the following discussion of local or regional pilgrimages in the 'Celtic West'. We will also use liminality in analysis of pilgrims' reported spiritual experiences as a form of post-human encounter.

Celtic Christianity past and present

Although there was a limited Christian presence in Britain during Roman rule, (Bradley, 2003), it was not until a period of widespread conversion between the fifth and the seventh century that Britain and Ireland become thoroughly Christian (Charles-Edwards, 2000). During this time, the Celtic Christian Church emerged through multiple nodes across the areas of north-western Europe where the Insular Celtic languages (from which modern Irish, Manx, Scots Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish and Breton derive) were spoken in the early medieval period, including the west and north of the British islands, Ireland and Brittany (see Map 1). The Celtic church is difficult to define retrospectively, and varied across space and time, but is widely understood to have been characterised by monasticism, ascetism, a mystical poetic appreciation of nature, a strong sense of the immanence of God in the everyday and in 'marginal' spaces, and pilgrimage (Bradley, 1993, 2000; Joyce, 1998; Lehane, 1968–2005; O'Louglin, 2010; Sheldrake, 1995). The location of churches at pagan sites coupled with balladic narratives of spiritual triumph suggest the superseding of previous deities; but the translation of existing pagan feasts into Christian worship also suggests a degree of syncretism with existing traditions (O'Louglin, 2010), aided by pre-Christian Celtic reverence for triads and a priestly class (Lehane, 1968–2005). The Celtic Church developed a sophisticated local theology (O'Loughlin, 2000b), with theological and aesthetic connections with the Sinai 'Desert Fathers' or mystics of the Eastern Orthodox church via the church in Gaul. Celtic theology included a privileging of the immanence of God in nature and everyday spaces, a critique of the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin, and a female presence within the clergy (e.g. Brigid who is credited with leading a mixed monastery in Kildare) (Bradley, 2003).

As signalled above, the concept of *perigrinatio*, a life-long pilgrimage of asceticism and service, was at the heart of the Celtic church. Inspired by the Vitae of European saints and the Desert mystics of the Sinai, eremitic Celtic Christians ventured to remote areas in and around Britain, Ireland and the Continent to encounter the sacred through a state of alienation from the world (Bitton-Ashkelony, 2005), exemplified in hagiographies or Vitae of Celtic saints such as Brigid, Columba and Cuthbert. *Perigrinatio* was undoubtedly undertaken largely by men, but included women and acolytes of female leaders such as Brigid, whose influence can be read in a network of church and place names in Ireland and lands surrounding the Irish Sea, e.g. Galloway (Scotland), Pembrokeshire (Wales) and the Isle of Man. *Perigrinatio* drew on the well-established trope of the 'desert' as a place of pilgrimage and retreat, found in the Abrahamic religions, although it was adapted to local circumstances with islands, mountains and forests serving as the 'deserts' of the north-western Europe (McGinn, 1994). Furthermore, *perigrinatio* could represent a weak form of 'white' martyrdom, whereby the pilgrim would undertake exile in order to evangelise non-Christian communities elsewhere in the region (Bradley, 2003; Maignant, 2007).Through these activities, the Celtic church played a major role in spreading Christianity in seventh-century England and to northern parts of Continental Europe in later centuries (Charles-Edwards, 2000; Lehane, 1968–2005).

Whether on evangelising missions or on spiritual retreat, these early church founders produced sacred landscapes of worship and pilgrimage (Thacker, 2002). Posthumously, places associated with the saints, especially their graves, were believed to be tangible links with the Divine, where salvation and spiritual comfort could be more easily accessed (Bitton-Ashkelony, 2005). These beliefs, perpetuated by the saint's disciples and through the use of hagiographies, transformed locations and natural features across Britain and Ireland into sites of devotion and pilgrimage (Harvey, 2002; O'Loughlin, 2000b). The veneration of St Patrick, popularly associated with spreading Christianity across Ireland and to the Isle of Man, is reflected in the large number of places being named for him, including the Croagh Patrick and various holy wells in Ireland, and St. Patrick's Isle and 'Chair', as well as numerous keeills, wells and farms named 'Pheric' (Patrick) in the IoM. There is no textual evidence that Patrick visited the island; however, his influence clearly reached there, courtesy of his followers if not by his own hand. Thus, both case study sites are linked to St Patrick and his disciples, and there is a clear historical connection between Lough Derg and the keeills which dot the Manx landscape. A combination of medieval architectural styles and place names attributed to Columba, Columbana and Brigid in the Isle of Man also suggest strong connections with the wider Irish church from the sixth century onwards; although similar evidence also points to pockets of influence by the British-Roman church from North Wales (Dudgale, 1998).

As many of the Celtic lands were not fully or even part of the Roman Empire, they lacked the urban areas on which continental Christianity was based; instead ecclesiastical structures centred largely on monastic foundations, such as Lindisfarne, Iona or Bangor. The Celtic Church, similar to other regions in the medieval world, was a local expression of the wider Christian Church (Joyce, 1998) with its own theologies and practices (O'Loughlin, 2000b). The (re)conversion of large areas in the south of Britain from the late sixth century, by missionaries who were sent by Pope Gregory the Great and led by St Augustine (of Canterbury), established Roman Christian practices and theologies in those territories. Although both the Roman and Celtic Churches shared considerable common ground, there were doctrinal (and occasional political) tensions

between the two traditions, culminating in the controversial Synod of Whitby in 664, which asserted Rome's ecclesiastical authority. This, combined with subsequent Viking raids and the eleventh-century Norman conquest marked the 'end of a distinctive native Christianity' in the Celtic region (Bradley, 2003, p. 25). Nonetheless, the period 664–1066, saw continued mobility of personnel, ideas and artefacts between the centres of the Celtic church; e.g. the monks of Iona were forced to retrench by Viking marauders, taking the Book of Kells to Ireland, whereas the eighth-century Ceili Dei ('culdee') or 'Servants of God' embodied a centrifugal wave of ascetic and evangelistic migration spreading out from Irleand (*ibid.*). By the twelfth century, the Christian church of Britain and Ireland was largely romanised and organised under a masculinised diocesan system, but, the spirit of the Celtic church persisted in its legacy of church dedications, a strong sense of the immanence of God in the everyday as well as particular liminal or 'thin' places, and in 'a store of prayers, poems and artefacts that testify to the presence and protection of God' (Silf, 2005, p. 31).

Since the early modern period, the concept of the Celtic Church has been open to differing historical interpretation and its status and meaning polemical. In post-Reformation Ireland, the Franciscan writers have described the Celtic Church as a means of preserving the culture of Gaelic Ireland, while, by contrast, Protestant scholars emphasised the *pre-Roman* nature of the Celtic Christianity (O'Loughlin, 2000b). In the context of the cultural nationalism of the nineteenth century, a distinct Irish identity was constructed around the Celtic past (Ó Giolláin, 2005; Shovlin, 1991). This in turn resulted in a significant revival of pilgrimage, which was mobilised as an expression of Irish/Catholic identity. Pilgrimage has likewise been deployed as an assertion of European Christian identity in recent years (Jansen & Notermans, 2012), a subject which merits further attention in the light of Kong's (2001) call to address both the *politics and poetics* of the geographies of religion.

More recently, there has been a 'Celtic revival' (Power, 2006, p. 33), across the region, which encompasses different Christian traditions alongside Neo-paganism and alternative spiritualities. The Iona Community, a radical Christian revival of St Columba's medieval foundation, has done much to promote Celtic spirituality in Britain and Ireland. The Abbey attracts over 40,000 visitors per year and the Iona community itself plays host to thousands of day visit and residential pilgrims (BBC, 2009). Within the broader Celtic revival movement, however, there is considerable variety of practices and beliefs with varying foci: personal development, spiritual growth, community development, aesthetics, relationality to others and the environment. Broad Celtic spirituality is attractive to those inclined to beliefs in immanence of the divine/ sacred, place or object/relic-centred spirituality, including New Age and Neo-Pagan adherents (Bradley, 1999). This has prompted Eade (2000, p. xvii) to describe some contemporary pilgrims as taking a 'pick and mix' approach to spirituality 'shaped by neo-medievalism, Celtic enthusiasms, 'white magic', psychology, antiquarianism and other alternatives'. The increasing prominence of these movements has resulted in their interpretations and aesthetics dominating popular conceptions of Celtic worship. However, in response, there have been calls for Christian Churches to develop liturgies and forms of worship that incorporate Celtic themes while bringing them in 'the mainstream of the Christian tradition'(O'Loughlin, 2000, p. 35). Both case studies align with this latter sentiment as they feature Celtic elements which have been interwoven with denominational discourses, practices and priorities.

Elements of these hybridities are evident in contemporary Irish pilgrimage, with many of the Christian sites being dedicated to Celtic saints, with practices often centring

on natural features, such as wells, rocks and trees (Nolan, 1983). This reflects a strong sense of the imbrication of the visible and invisible worlds and the landscape as numinous and therapeutic (Silf, 2005). 'Celtic cosmologies around nature and landscape were predicated on the spiritual and physical healing dimensions of place that reflected global indigenous cultural narratives' (Foley, 2010, p. 2). The particularity of the Celtic theological discourse can be further appreciated when compared to European shrines where the majority are dedicated to the Virgin Mary and are focused on objects and relics. Moreover, the desire to connect with the past and previous generations, as a means of expressing and experiencing identity and a sense of community, is common in Irish pilgrimage (Maignant, 2007). This is exemplified by the new Brigid's Way Celtic Pilgrimage or *Slí Bhride*, which reanimated pilgrimage to Kildare in 2013, and focuses on Celtic spirituality, with prayer and meditation entwined with everyday life and death, the landscape, seasons and community (Catholic Ireland, 2013). Similarly, Tóchar Phádraig, an historic route between Ballintubber Abbey and the pilgrimage hill of Croagh Patrick, has been developed in recent decades (Ballintubber Abbey, 2014). While there are few traces of pre-Reformation pilgrimage practice in the Isle of Man, there is nonetheless a 'sacred topography' of over 200 keeills (cell-like medieval chapels), of which about 30 remain, and a strong sense of Celtic landscape aesthetics and heritage materialised in the national collection of Celtic crosses. The contemporary pilgrimages of Lough Derg and the Isle of Man draw on the combined heritage of the Celtic Church and their location within particular denominational and national-cultural settings; these will be analysed in more detail after a brief note on the methodologies underpinning the empirical data.

Methodologies

'… start with the fact of moving and retain that as a focus' (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011, p. 4).

This paper brings together research from two independent case studies of pilgrimage as contemporary manifestations of Celtic pilgrimage. Both studies build on recent trends in pilgrimage studies to 'delve into pilgrimage as journey' by firmly locating the research in the practising of these sacred mobilities (Scriven, 2014, p. 254). In both case studies, fieldwork consisted of 2–3 field visits, including participating in the pilgrimage, interviewing pilgrims, clergy and other leaders. This active participation in the pilgrimage allowed the researchers to share in the embodied and kinaesthetic experiences of the practices (Spinney, 2009), while also facilitating interactions with pilgrims, enabling conversation which developed and enriched understanding through common experience (see Lorimer & Lund, 2003). The interviews have been analysed using a thematic coding framework and, unless otherwise stated, names used are the first names of the participants. The Isle of Man case study (Maddrell's childhood home) also included a short survey of participants via postcards and six participant photo diaries. All research participants at Lough Derg were Roman Catholics, including various degrees of faith commitment and practice, ranging from strict adherents to Church teaching to those who were nominally or culturally Catholic. In the case of the Isle of Man, most Praying the Keeills participants were members of Protestant churches (predominantly Anglicans and Methodists, reflecting the largest congregations on the island), as well as some Roman Catholics and a significant minority who were not affiliated to any religious institution. The last group reflect the attraction of pilgrimage to those who may be spiritually inquisitive or interested in pilgrimage as a cultural practice or social experience, but who may

not be affiliated to a particular faith group or organisation. Participant experience is 'voiced' through the use of quotes; and given the significance of the presence or absence of religious affiliation, age and gender to the inflection of pilgrimage experience, these characteristics are identified when participants' comments are cited below.

Lough Derg

Lough Derg gained importance in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, especially due to its connection with the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory (the belief in a post-mortem transitory state during which souls are cleansed before entering heaven). During his Lenten retreat in a cave on the island, St Patrick had a vision of purgatory and hell which marked the site as a numinous or thin place 'where it was possible to physically descend to the Otherworld' (French, 1994, p. 103). It was believed that by imitating the saint's asceticism at this place, resident monks and pilgrims could spiritually purify themselves and achieve salvation by experiencing a worldly purgatory (Cunningham & Gillespie, 2004). In the context of attempts to close St Patrick's Purgatory and suppress Catholicism more generally in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the pilgrimage's survival and continuity of practices was represented as a triumph of Celtic Catholicism over British/English Protestantism (Flynn, 1986). Thus, Lough Derg was a geopolitical as well as spiritual 'symbol of the Faith in the North of Ireland; (Mould, 1954, p. 137), which, with other shrines, provided a link with a 'glorious' Celtic past (Shovlin, 1991). Since 1780, the site has been integrated into the Catholic Diocese of Clogher and has gradually been developed with the extension of the island and the building of dormitories and the Basilica. Today, the site is staffed by both lay and religious personnel, headed by a diocesan priest – referred to as the Prior in reference to the Augustian and Francisan Friars who maintained the medieval pilgrimage – and includes a pastoral team of other priests and counsellors. During recent years, approximately 15,000 pilgrims visit the island annually, although numbers have fluctuated throughout the twentieth century, from 8000 in 1921 to 34,645 in 1952 (Duffy, 1980).

St Patrick's Purgatory mobilises many of the ideals of the Celtic medieval Christian pilgrimage: pilgrims travel to the hinterland of Ireland in search of spiritual encounters through the liminal space of a remote lake island. Turner and Turner (1978, p. 104) described Lough Derg as an 'archaic pilgrimage' due to its hybrid nature being shaped by older practices and traditions. Several parallels between St Patrick's Purgatory and pilgrimages historically undertaken to Celtic monastic communities can be identified: a liminal location is central; the rituals are focused on a Celtic saints associated with the place; the activities are observed on site, rather than the journey there being of central significance; and they are highly ordered 'monastic' experiences. The physical infrastructure of the island further links with the Celtic past. Most prominent among these is St Patrick's Basilica built in a Hiberno-Romanesque style, which was part of the larger Celtic Revival and Irish Arts and Crafts movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Sheehy, 1980). Although open to people of all religious backgrounds, the pilgrimage's structures and role as a denominational pilgrimage result in a particular Celtic-Catholic character, which can be contrasted to other contemporary Celtic spiritualities. Alternative or New Age Celtic spiritual movements tend to be multi- or non-denominational, to have a distrust of ecclesiastical structures and involve spontaneity of expression in worship and degrees of liturgical freedom (Power, 2006). Instead St Patrick's Purgatory has a more subtle 'Celticism', in which Celtic elements are mobilised and experienced in the embodied spatial practices of Catholic liturgy. By

withdrawing from the everyday world and sacrificing food and sleep over a three-day period, pilgrims temporarily replicate the ascetic ethos of Celtic saints. In performing the Lough Derg pilgrimage, the theologies, aesthetics and character of historic Celtic spiritual practices can be lived, felt and appreciated in modern form.

The traditional Lough Derg pilgrimage is a three-day undertaking. From arrival, pilgrims go barefoot, keep a partial fast throughout and a 24 hour vigil on the first night, and complete nine 'stations' (see Hickey's (2012, pp. 111–113) photo essay and http://liminalentwinings.com/nine-stations-lough-derg/), a 'station' being the name given to a particular pattern of prayers lasting about an hour and involving the repeated recitation of specific prayers – Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostles' Creed – while walking around and kneeling at different designated places on the island. The pilgrimage is punctuated by liturgical services, including four masses, night prayers and the sacrament of reconciliation (confession). Pilgrims actively participate in these services in the roles usually assigned to the laity within Catholic practice, e.g. giving Bible readings, while the pilgrims organise their own prayers and stations during the night vigil.

Perigrinatio brought Celtic saints to remote harsh locations, such as Iona or Lindisfarne, in order to establish their lives in exile from the world and to seek spiritual encounters and immanences in the earthly realm. Bede's Life of St Cuthbert, one of the most prominent early British Christian hagiographies, describes how the saint retreated to a small island off Lindisfarne where he raised the 'whole bent of his mind to higher things' (p. 217) and 'learned to live a solitary life of fasting, prayers and vigils' (p. 221). This sentiment is explicitly manifest in the liminal character of Lough Derg (Turner & Turner, 1978). The setting and structural components remove the pilgrims from quotidian life and facilitate entry in a liminoid zone, a temporary island existence parallel to everyday life, as one pilgrim articulated: 'It's just a different world … there could be anything happening beyond those pillars there [the gates of the main entrance visible on the lake shore] and we won't know' (Eleanor, Female, 15–35 years, Roman Catholic (RC)). The requirement for pilgrims not to use phones and other electronic devices is perhaps the most significant means of disengaging from contemporary society. 'Not just leaving the mainland and leaving your technology behind, but there's something almost Medieval about it, in the sense of the bare feet, everything is so basic' (Noel, Male, 36–55 years, RC). In different ways, the pilgrims interviewed expressed a deep appreciation of the pause and recess that Lough Derg offers, not just as a 'time out' but as a very real and meaningful experience of the 'set-apart character of pilgrimage' (Maddrell & Della Dora, 2013). The performance of this retreat is a further link with the Celtic monastic past as the rigours of the routine, the visceral experiences of sacrifice and the rhythms of the island combine to adjust priorities and attitudes. Pilgrims act out their spiritual practice which is explicitly framed as part of the continuum of historical faith practice enacted in this 'thin place'.

The highly structured format of the pilgrimage, which reverberates with monastic aesthetics and practices, shapes the pilgrim experience creating circumstances for meaningful moments and fellowship, alongside emotional and spiritual encounters. The physicality of this pilgrimage is underscored by the shrine policy that 'Pilgrims must be fit and able to walk and kneel unaided. Pilgrims must be able to fast and endure twenty-four hours without sleep' (Lough Derg, 2014). Although this may appear to be uncompromising, discriminatory even, it is understood as preserving the originality and authenticity of the pilgrimage (with alternative one day retreats offered for families and those unable to partake in the traditional version). This is further reflected in the distinct



Figure 1. Pilgrims at penitential 'beds' at Lough Derg. Source: Richard Scriven

emphasis that is placed on the role of the practices and the performing body throughout the services, sermons and reflections.

The former Prior of Lough Derg, Monsignor Richard Mohan, explained that: 'Lough Derg has been part of our Irish tradition going back for a thousand years, at least, maybe 1500 years and as such is very Celtic … it's all about patterns and it's all about movements … But, it's the doing these things I think are important and it's praying with the body.' This 'praying with the body' is recognised both as a central pillar of the pilgrimage and as a link with medieval Celtic pilgrimage practices which were often physically demanding (Bradley, 2000). The patterns of motion are comparable with other pilgrimage practices that are informed by Celtic custom, e.g. devotions at holy wells in Ireland which centre on the *turas* or the 'rounds', a circular journey in which pilgrims walk a prescribed number of times (usually in combinations of the religiously significant numbers of three and seven) sun-wise around the wells, and other pilgrimage foci, while repeating certain prayers each time (Meehan, 2002; O'Sullivan & Ó Carragáin, 2008). Although the origins of the Lough Derg practices are understood and felt as an enactment of vernacular and Celtic traditions. The embodied prayers and rituals actively connect pilgrims to their Celtic monastic heritage (Figure 1).

These aspects readily come to the fore in the performances at the Penitential beds, one of the most memorable parts of the pilgrimage. The beds are low circular structures, three to four metres in diameter with a small gap, which are the reconstructed remains of beehive monastic cells – a building structure primarily associated with early Celtic monasticism. Pilgrims circumambulate the exterior and interior of each of the six beds, and kneel at the entrance and at a cross in the centre. Also, each bed is named after a saint, five of whom are Celtic (Brigid, Brendan, Columba, Patrick, Davog and Molaise), focusing the devotional activity and invocations on these figures. These saints were

described by Turner and Turner (1978, p. 115) as 'like their divine exemplar Jesus, heroes of self-sacrifice.'

In each performance, the very interactions of feet, knees and the mobile body with the combination of the island's natural surface and the ruins known as the 'Penitential Beds' are of central significance. Gogarty's (1913, p. 809) evocative, and poetic, account conveys the sheer corporeality of the routine: 'Paths, worn and quarried by human feet through rocks that wrench and stones that bend every ambulatory muscle with a pain.' This observation was echoed in field notes: 'Attention to each placing of a foot, while continuing prayers and rotations … the surfaces are most[ly] kind for the feet, but the beds offer little comfort or ease [for the knees]' (Fieldnotes, 8th July 2013). Through these activities, 'the 'immaterial' embodied and sensory aspects of [the] mobility' (Spinney, 2009, p. 817) come to the fore, as pilgrims recite familiar prayers instilled since childhood and carefully traverse the awkward topography. Such enactment can completely absorb the performers, bringing them into the 'present moment – to be present to the world as well as oneself' (Slavin, 2003, p. 11). A pilgrim explains that while praying on the beds 'everyone is just intense on their own prayers and you never look up because you can't look up, you have to stay looking down and praying' (Brigid, Female, 56–75 years, RC). Likewise, Tom (Male 36–55 years, RC) explains that the beds 'get easier as you get down, further down the hill. That St Brendan's Bed is probably about the worst one, the second one down, isn't it? It's very uneven.' The challenges and rhythms of the enactment bring Tom into the process as his embodied interactions with the place highlight the immediacy of the experience. The overriding importance of the exercise involves focusing entirely on the scripted movements and prayer to the extent that fellow pilgrims are peripheral. By praying with the body, the Celtic character of the pilgrimage is enacted by weaving the embodied traditions and performances together. Beliefs, customs and personal intentions are all felt and lived in each step, strain and pause.

While fasting is a feature of many religious traditions, it seems to have held a significant role in the asceticism of the Celtic Church. There are frequent hagiographical examples of saints enduring extreme fasts as a means of freeing themselves form worldly desires (Wooding, 2003). Pilgrims report that the sacrifice of food, while being intensely felt periodically, is readily endured resulting in reflections on the role of food in the everyday. 'When you're without your food and your sleep for a couple of days, then when you get it you are so grateful of it, especially the food.' (Claire, Female, 15–35 years, RC). This self-imposed hunger can produce moments of gratitude and contemplation throughout the pilgrimage. With the fasting lasting over the full 72 hours, the embodied experience of pilgrimage can be felt in the pangs of hunger which affect the body at a fundamental level before, on and after the island. The extension of the sensuous registers of pilgrimage beyond the shrine shows how 'the experience of religion is in no way confined to the bounded spaces of the officially sacred' (Gökarıksel, 2009, p. 669; Kong, 2001; Maddrell, 2009) underlying Celtic beliefs in the spirituality of the everyday.

While praying on the Penitential beds, pilgrims walk around and kneel at crosses with the names of Celtic saints. Similarly, the performances, worn paths, bare feet, Catholic prayers and personal intentions circle and merge with the Celtic themes and motifs of the pilgrimage. Lough Derg's Celtic nature is (re)created and reinforced in the inherent balance between the structural elements, such as clerical governance, liturgy, customs and the built environment, and the mobilities through which the pilgrimage is (re)produced anew by each pilgrim. Through the situated sacred mobilities of the



Figure 2. Manx cross, Kirk Maughold and Praying the Keeills prayer walk to St Michael's keeill 2014. Source: Avril Maddrell

performance, a selection of themes, aesthetics and beliefs from the Celtic Church are manifest on this pilgrimage. It is the 'tension between what is solid, present, corporeal and material and that which inheres in the material as something mysterious, elusive, and ethereal' (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009, p. 698). Physical, symbolic and more-than-representational mobilisations occur throughout the three days with patterns of movement, voluntary deprivations and fellowship facilitating personal reflection and encounters with the spiritual realm. These corporeally and spiritually felt moments are sustained, facilitated and prompted by the buildings, liturgies, staff and fellow pilgrims.

Isle of Man

In the Isle of Man, the Reformation severed many of the threads connecting medieval Celtic and contemporary *practices*, but the *geography* of much of the Celtic church persists in the form of the remains of a network of tiny medieval chapels known as keeills. Likewise, while there are no textual records, the aesthetics and beliefs of the period are materialised in a collection of carved stone Celtic crosses, which frequently blend Celtic and Viking motifs (see Figure 2). The diocesan system was implemented on the Island in the twelfth century, but twelve of the seventeen ancient parish churches were dedicated to Celtic saints, as were many other keeills or holy wells (*chibbyr*), indicative of the strong Celtic legacy in the history of the Manx Church (Bowen, 1969). As Walsham (2011) has noted, the Reformation wrought huge, if uneven, impact on the infrastructure and practices of churches in Britain and Ireland, but most churches kept their pre-Reformation dedications (Walsham, 2011). Remnants of Celtic traditions integrated within the Romanised church in the Isle of Man were further obscured by the processes of the Reformation, but elements were retained in post-Reformation folk religion practices such

as well dressing and in material artefacts such as the Manx crosses and the architectural legacy of the keeills themselves. Interest in Celtic traditions and discourses were stimulated by the revival of Celtic aesthetics on the island in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, led, among others, by Manx artist Archibald Knox, who used Celtic motifs in his designs for Liberty. As with Ireland, this Celtic turn coincided with a self-conscious reassertion and definition of Manx identity at this time. Census figures also show that the small Roman Catholic community on the island grew from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, largely as a result of migration from Ireland to the fishing communities of Peel and Douglas; and this denominational group has historically used the keeills (and the original St German's cathedral on St Patrick's Isle) for worship, burial etc., as pre-Reformation consecrated sites (Maddrell, 2009; 2015).

More recently, the Praying the Keeills initiative, started in 2006, sought to mobilise the remnants of the medieval keeills as a spiritual resource for all local churches, focusing on these archaeological remains as the physical embodiment of the common foundation of the (Celtic) Christian church in the Isle of Man. Inspired by pilgrimage practices, if not always named as such, the Praying the Keeills group offer an open invitation to join in prayer and meditation at the keeills, as part of an annual week of guided walks and visits, including local history talks and communal meals, primarily for resident participants. The extant medieval carved stone altar pieces and crosses, originally found at keeills and parish churches, have been collected in groups for conservation purposes, so few remain *in situ*. While the materiality of the keeills is important to pilgrims' sense of place-temporality and spiritual imaginary, especially the sense of continuity of belief and prayer (Maddrell & della Dora, 2013; Maddrell, 2015), the lack of artefacts prompts both introspection and reflection on the wider landscape setting as source of inspiration. As empty ruins, they could be seen as an example par excellence of Eade and Sallnow's (1991) description of shrines as empty voids on which pilgrims project their own aspirations and assumptions. The very limited historical knowledge of the keeills, including the general (if not universal) absence of claims of supernatural healing or apparition, avoids potential theological conflict and allows them to be scripted as sites of common faith heritage, which in turn facilitates the initiative as an ecumenical endeavour. The discourse of Celtic Christianity, adopted by many of the Praying the Keeills (PTK) worship leaders – including links between faith and the environment, the possibility of immanence being experienced in particular places, and the value of pilgrimage *per se* – prompted and influenced the design and practice of these prayerful walks including a commitment to welcoming all, church members or not (Interview FC, LG, JL, BB 2010, DH, PR 2011, Isle of Man) (see Maddrell, 2011, 2013). We will now turn to examining the key ways in which these walks are inflected by and experienced as 'Celtic' pilgrimage, namely through intertwined Celtic theology, poetics, aesthetics and practices.

Initially spearheaded by the Anglican bishop, Praying the Keeills soon developed into a non-institutionalised ecumenical event, led predominantly by lay people, reflecting Joyce's (1998, 140) observation that 'it is usually smaller less institutionalised groups that embrace their Celtic roots'. It was also strongly influenced by the ethos and spiritual life of the Iona Community, which is centred on Celtic spirituality and social justice. Indeed, several members of the keeills committee had made regular pilgrimages to Iona (Interviews PC, 2010; DH 2011, Isle of Man). In addition to being part of the spiritual practice of several members of the PTK committee, the theology and ethos of Iona and wider Celtic Christianity can be identified in worship materials used as part of the annual pilgrimage walks, exemplified by the anthology and prayer leaflets produced for

the 2006 launch: *Come Pray the Keeills. Prayers from the Celtic Tradition* (Praying the Keeills, 2006). These included traditional Irish – Celtic – prayers e.g. those by St. Aidan and St Columba (see below), as well as generic popular 'Celtic' prayers and those from the contemporary Iona Community, or publications such as O'Malley's (2002) *A Celtic Primer*. Although discursively framed by an annual theme (e.g. 'Abundance' in 2014), PTK worship is not pre-scripted; leaders devise their own prayers, reflections and meditations and are not limited to this printed material. Celtic prayers and meditations frequently featured in and discursively framed the theology of PTK worship (Isle of Man Field Notes 2010, 2011) and, in keeping with Celtic motifs, several leaders referred to the landscape itself as a source of spiritual inspiration (Interviews BB, PC 2010; DH 2011, Isle of Man).

Other dimensions of Celtic theology can be seen in the prayer below, taken from the 2006 PTK leaflet of prayers, indicative of the Celtic Christian belief in God's immanence in every part of daily life, and the physical and spiritual-metaphorical landscape, as well as a believer's right to call upon the encircling protection of God as shepherd-guide.

> Be thou a bright flame before me,
> Be thou a guiding star above me,
> Be thou a smooth path below me,
> Be thou a kindly shepherd behind me,
> Today, tonight and forever
> (St. Columba)

Participants on the walks responded in varying ways to the Celtic prayers and discourses. One Methodist described his experience of PTK as deeply rooted in its medieval Celtic origins:

> Experience has been very soulful and spirit filled. As a Celtic Christian the landscape makes me what I am. By this I mean the green hills and seascapes across the Irish Sea make it all come together for me. The sense of the old monks wandering about these British islands is so very real to me and it makes my experience heightened. (Male, 66–75 years, Methodist)

Reflecting different personal and worship preferences, another man expressed appreciation for the traditional pre-walk service and landscape setting for worship, but was dismissive of a contemporary Celtic circle prayer during the walk: 'the glass pebbles and all the twentieth-century "Celtic" heritage stuff was rather "touchy feely", but good to be up there worshipping the Creator. The landscape was central to the experience.' (Male, 66–75 years, Christian). Numerous participants expressed an appreciation for an opportunity to access both faith and national heritage, as expressed by one couple who reported: 'Praying the keeills is a wonderful way of celebrating our national Celtic religious and cultural heritage'(Male and Female, 66–75 years, Methodist). One woman, an Anglican by birth non-believer who had a keen interest in history, explained that for her the poetry of the Celtic prayers evoked an emotional response and were part of what prompted her to participate in Praying the Keeills every year: 'Though I don't, can't, respond to the religious elements of the prayers, I often respond to the sheer poetry of the words, especially the old Celtic prayers (however one defines 'Celtic')' (Female, 66–75 years).

These varied responses point to the significance of landscape, heritage and identity in this local pilgrimage; how Celtic narratives, theologies and practices were used to facilitate a personal and landscape-centred relationship to the divine; and how these 'spoke' to participants, including non-believers, but also repelled others. Some participants did not refer specifically to Celtic texts or discourses, but expressed their experience of worship and landscape in terms of a sense of spiritual enchantment with the landscape: 'Sitting in a place of prayer surrounded by beautiful woodland and carpets of spring flowers was sheer delight. An awe-filled mystic experience each day being a new landscape, vista, and different type of weather. To have the mists surrounding St Runius surrounded by ancient graves, the dappled sunshine as we prayed at Glen Mooar up above Spooyt Vane, then down to the wild beach below. From hilltop and Viking burial grounds and grassy fields to the woodlands and waterfalls to the beaches, all enveloped in the glorious May splendour of new green and wildflowers. Magic.' (Female, 66–75 years, Roman Catholic). Others, including several who did not have an affiliation with a church, described their interwoven experience of walking and worship in the landscape as 'spiritual': 'The whole experience was a very moving and spiritual one. We met wonderful people, went to spectacular places and learnt much in the process.' (Male, 36–45 years, Methodist). Thus, the prayer walks, with their interwoven Celtic-inflected kinetic and sensual mobilities, landscape aesthetics, spiritual practices and communal socialities served to foster a mindful engagement with faith heritage and to '(re) enchant the everyday' (Holloway, 2003, p. 1961) of the local heritage landscape.

The idea of numinous or 'thin places' is an interesting theme within contemporary expressions of Celtic Christianity because it suggests that spiritual experience – and even God – can be accessed more easily in particular places. While this appears to support Durkheimian notions of sacred versus. profane spaces as represented by Eliade (1957), and sits more easily with the theologies and practices of Christian traditions which are more object-focused, it appears to be contrary to Protestant theology in particular, which asserts God's universal immanence and accessibility (Walton, 2015). Yet reference to the numinous and 'thin'places were explicit in several Keeills leaders' accounts of their own theology and experience, as well as the worship materials they used. This represents a belief that certain places and landscapes can be both compelling and propelling to relationship with the divine, explicitly stated in the invitation to 'spend time exploring these "thin" places of great beauty and prayer' (PTK website 2007). However, most who articulated this view were keen to stress that although these qualities were commonly attributed to one or two (of the most remote and picturesque) keeills, ultimately it reflected their belief in God's ability to communicate through nature or the resonance of historic prayer rather than site-specific revelation. As one leader explained, such prayers 'draw on creation as the Celts did in those prayers … the content has a lot of references to and metaphors [of] the wind and the waves and the sun' (Interview BB, 2010, Isle of Man). Influenced by Margaret Silf's (2005) *Sacred Space*, she described a planned silent pilgrimage walk up the wooded glen to Spooyt Vane (White Spout waterfall): 'there'll be prayers at the river and prayers at the hill and crossing place, and the keeill … I will refer to a thin place' (ibid.); participants were moved by these topographically inflected reflections which overlaid their embodied experience of physical mobility and sensual experience of the landscape: (Field Notes 2010). Thus, Celtic spirituality in a contemporary Christian context was recognised as a fuzzy concept, largely centred on 'enjoying the gifts of creation' and the metaphorical hermeneutics of the landscape, (Maddrell, 2011, 2013) as well as a sense of 'liturgically charged pathways' (Coleman & Eade, 2004, p. 19) and the relevance and informality of

prayer and spiritual practices to everyday life: 'I love the Celtic thing of God in my walking and God when I make a fire and God when I milk the cow [laughs] … It's not churchy is it?'. This last point also links to the organisers' intention that PTK walks should be inclusive to all, not only church-goers, reflected in its open invitation and public programme, as well as the 'light touch' approach to worship, intended to create a space for spiritual reflection without making demands on anyone to participate. Thus, what is seen as 'Celtic' theology coupled with the practice of outdoor worship is seen to offer spiritual inspiration to believers, whilst its poetics, embodied and non-denominational practices are attractive to those on the fringes or outside the church; as one PTK leader put it: 'it is touching a nerve in modern society'. This includes those who are attracted to the pre-Christian heritage of some keeill sites, as well as those who situate broader Celtic spirituality within an environmentally sensitive approach to life (Interviews BB, PC, JL, FC 2010; DH 2011, Isle of Man). This was exemplified by some one-fifth of respondents who did not have an affiliation with a church, but who appreciated the spiritual qualities of the walks and worship, and/or the aesthetics of the Celtic prayer, as well as the wider embodied, intellectual and social benefits of the communal guided prayer walks.

Drawing on the contemporary politics of Iona and wider liberation theologies, other prayers used during PTK walks, such as the one reproduced below, included those concerned with environmental and social responsibility. This reflects a sense of relationality between pilgrims and the wider world as well as a sense of individual relation to God.

> Out of that deep centre, I weave a prayer of God's presence,
> Affirming that God is:
> That God is with the poor;
> That God is with the outcast,
> That God is with me.
> Creating, sustaining and all-loving God,
> Give us the strength and courage to be still,
> That we might better serve your broken world.
> (Closing prayer, Balladoole, 2010, field notes).

Conclusion

Pilgrimage is a form of sacred mobility, endowed with metaphorical-spiritual hermeneutics. It was embedded in the practices of the medieval Celtic church as a form of itinerancy in which physical journeys were a common part of life-long spiritual 'journeying' and service, for both clergy and laity. Aspects of 'Celtic' theologies, poetics, practices and aesthetics have persisted, including a strong sense of the immanence of God in the everyday material world, as well as in particular places and landscapes. Such beliefs resulted in a palimpsest material historical geography and more-than-human topographies of that believed to be sacred. This legacy has prompted local place-based pilgrimage as a practice of devotion, supplication, protection and healing.

The surviving hagiographical sources from the medieval Celtic Church built on Classical and early Christian tropes by representing the remote places of Britain and Ireland as liminal zones at the very ends of the earth – points of threshold between this earthly existence and other realms (O'Loughlin, 2000b). In these landscapes, islands and edge-lands accounts of Celtic saints reported heavenly visions, battles with demons and the performance of miracles. While being at a distance from these spaces,

historically and ontologically, contemporary pilgrims reach back towards them as they move through landscapes brimming with saints' names and tales of enactments which (re)create these hinterlands as sacred and 'thin' places.

Pilgrimage practices on both Lough Derg and the Isle of Man draw on this deeply embedded sense of spiritual place-temporality grounded in the historical ruins of the keeills and 'beds', as well as embodied-emotional kinetic and sensual experience, with both past and present animated by a sense of prayer-full faith-inspired mobilities, and of the liminal qualities that characterise 'islandness' (see Vannini & Taggart, 2012). Both share a common heritage grounded in the regional historical geography of that Celtic Christian church in its varying forms and both are located within the mainstream of Christianity, although with varying degrees of ecclesiastical involvement and influence. Neither pilgrimage focuses on the veneration of an individual saint, but rather on continuity and community of practice in the co-production of pilgrimage, sacred places and practices. Celtic attributes of pilgrimage practice (re)appear through the embodied sacred mobilities performed in the liturgical and landscape setting, reflecting Holloway's (2003, p. 1965) observation that 'the sanctity of space is corporeally enacted and physically sensed as sacred'. The confluences and interplays of prayers, ritual movements, specific locations and historical-cultural context add a distinct Celtic character to both pilgrimages. However, there are also significant differences between the two in terms of their theological framing, institutionalisation and pilgrim practices: Lough Derg is institutionally and discursively grounded in a Celtic-Catholic ascetic tradition and Praying the Keeills in a more fluid Ecumenical notion of a pre-Roman founding Christian mission and the spiritual poetics of landscape.

At Lough Derg, St Patrick's visions and retreat are ever present in the very substance of the lake island and the ritualised performances of prayer and penitence, which imitate his self-discipline and reverberate with Celtic monastic character. The pilgrimage is firmly situated in place and practice. It is the site of removal from the world which is corporeally felt in bare feet encountering bare rock. The location and activities weave together, resulting in one form of a Celtic-Catholic pilgrimage. Lough Derg is firmly located in the ongoing Irish pilgrimage framework which has married Celtic origin, vernacular custom and Catholic interpretations in the production of Celtic-Catholic tradition. The remote lake setting alongside the buildings and ruins named after Celtic saints encourage the mobilisation of the pilgrimage in the embodied practices of the pilgrims with the self-deprivation of fasting, prayer patterns and liturgies intended to create a reflective liminal state which reflects its physical marginality. In the intimacies, convergences and tensions of pilgrim and island, a distinct form of liturgically shaped Celtic pilgrimage is manifest.

By contrast, the Praying the Keeills pilgrimage walks are informal and free from institutional regulation (but also lack institutional support). They include women as leaders (both as clergy and laity) and are deliberately inclusive of and welcoming to non-believers, those on the fringe of any church, or occasional participants from different faiths. The poetics of Celtic prayer and the aesthetics of landscape and nature are mobilised through outdoor worship and the fellowship of communal walking, meals etc., in order to create local pilgrimages which attract an ecumenical, if largely Protestant, group of Christians, as well as those with less or differently defined spiritual beliefs and/or cultural interests. Within the context of Praying the Keeills, the landscape is as much a spiritual resource as the medieval keeills themselves, and while some expressed the spiritual nature of pilgrimage as *journey*, for others a belief in the immanence of God was translated into an expression of place-based spiritual inspiration – or

even theophany – that centred on particular keeills and/or landscapes. However, for the majority, it was the practice of informal outdoor worship, notably through prayer and meditation, which prompted and shaped their reported spiritual experience and sense of renewal. In addition to spiritual inspiration, organisers believed – and respondents reported – that the poetics and everyday theology of Celtic prayers combined with the informal fellowship of the pilgrimage walks to create an inclusive social space for spiritual and cultural reflection, enhanced by embodied experience of the landscape. The continued success of the walks and participant accounts suggest this is a genuine ecumenical post-secular exploration of spiritualities through Celtic-informed heritage and practice.

Through the prioritisation of sacred mobilities and vignettes of embodied-emotional-spiritual practices, we have illustrated how these two different historically based pilgrimages are shaped and created through the performances of pilgrims and their interactions with Celtic places and their faith-heritage. The aesthetics of place, the role of traditions (be they well-established, (re)created or modulated through modern institutions) and centrality of mobile enactment, coalesce and interact in many pilgrimages. The ongoing challenge and inspiration for those who study these phenomena is to seek to understand how they are mobilised, who by, and to what purposes – including further research on the Church-based mobilisation of Celtic spiritualities, which have tended to be overlooked. In highlighting the role of embodied sacred mobilties, we have also drawn attention to the need to pursue this aspect further in geographies of religion and pilgrimage studies, not least in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and empowerment. This in turn links to the, as yet, underdeveloped analysis of the politics of pilgrimage.

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