

From the Ground Up: Journeys Through the Leitrim Landscape

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This thesis should be considered in tandem with three original short films and music compositions contained on the enclosed DVD.



Figure 1. Mountain Road, Glenfarne, Co Leitrim (March 2016)

The soil in Leitrim is poor, in places no more than an inch deep. Underneath is daub, a blue-grey modelling clay, or channel, a compacted gravel. Neither can absorb the heavy rainfall. Rich crops of rushes and wiry grasses keep the thin clay from being washed away. The fields between the lakes are small, separated by thick hedges of whitethorn, ash, blackthorn, alder, sally, rowan, wild cherry, green oak, sycamore, and the lanes that link them under the Iron Mountains are narrow, often with high banks.... The very poorness of the soil saved these fields when old hedges and great trees were being levelled throughout Europe for factory farming, and, amazingly, amid unrelenting change, these fields have hardly changed at all since I ran and played and worked in them as a boy.

John McGahern, *Memoir*, 2005

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FOREWORD

As a child, my grandmother Detta would often bring me up the land. Her fields were on a sloping hill, half a mile in the lane from the house where she had raised eleven children. We would walk the land, checking the cattle and sheep. As we walked, we would eat fruit from the blackberry and sloe bushes. There was food to be found all year round. She would crush the roots of stray thistles with the heel of her boot as she walked, to ensure that they would not grow back. We carried sticks, to aid walking, and no nettle was passed without a whip from it. On such poor land, nettles were in such abundance that it seemed like a losing battle. These journeys were an opportunity for her to teach me things about life, and instilled in me a strong sense of belonging to a family, a place and time in history.

As an adult, my relationship with the land was expressed in different ways. In my late teens, distant horizons were far more appealing; however during my twenties I spent more time at home, particularly during the summer months. Outdoor parties and festivals had begun to spring up every weekend, as the mid '90s rave culture spread from the nightclubs of post-industrial Britain to remote locations across Ireland. Forced out by Thatcherite policies, new age travellers arrived in convoys, with mobile sound systems and hedonistic lifestyles that seemed a world away from the conservatism of rural Catholic Ireland. In a way, those early-morning repetitive beat sunrises led me to uncover connections with traditional Irish music. Strictly condemned and outlawed by the Catholic Church and the Dance Hall Act (1935), Irish music and the dancing that occurred in rambling houses and parishes throughout Ireland, were as radical as any modern-day grassroots movement. The truth is, empires come and go, but evidence of former power structures remains visible on the landscape, or is buried just below the surface. With these layers of history, the relationships between culture, knowledge and place become ever more complex.

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ABSTRACT

This research uses the landscape of county Leitrim as a spatial lens through which to view alternative forms of knowledge past and present. In the physical act of journeying through the landscape, by boat and on foot, I have encountered evidence of a range of social structures linked to place including: ‘off-the-grid’ living, community education, political resistance, pre-Christian rituals and indigenous music. This research explores Leitrim’s rural landscape as a site of subjugated or outmoded knowledge, as well as a site of deep-rooted tensions: old/new; local/global; native/foreigner etc. These forms of knowledge and counter-hegemonic spaces sit in opposition to the increasingly globalised systems of knowledge operating in the West. This research addresses questions such as: Who determines the value or usefulness of knowledge? How is knowledge mediated, preserved or discarded? To what extent is rural living a counter-hegemonic action?

Key words: Leitrim landscape; walking; Irish music; hegemony; sustainable living; activism; community education

PART ONE



Figure 2. Inismagrath Island, Lough Allen, March 2016.

PART ONE: CHAPTER ONE

Like many people, I have become increasingly disillusioned with the current status quo. This year marks the centenary of the Easter Rising and ‘The Proclamation of 1916’, a visionary document which outlined the founding ideological principles of the new Irish Republic. With burgeoning levels of social inequality, child poverty and homelessness (CSO; 2011), and widespread privatisation of the country’s services and natural resources (Hearne, 2015; 11), it seems that in modern Ireland, there is mass disconnect between State and civil society. For my purposes, civil society refers to the organisations and bodies representing the will and interests of families and their wider communities. As the instrumentalisation of all aspects of civic life continues to dismantle the founding principles of the Irish Free State, there is plenty scope for negativity. However, with this research, I wanted to focus on something positive, and felt that, in retreating from globalised agendas, the local was the best place to start.

In hindsight, this was perhaps a form of retreat away from the levels of distress being felt across many areas of Irish society as a result of government-imposed austerity. I am particularly demoralised by developments in my own professional sector of Adult and Community Education, which has witnessed not only severe wage cuts and tax hikes for existing staff and an embargo on hiring new teachers, but has also been subject to major policy reform, infused with labour market agendas, which emphasises up-skilling and prioritise jobs-related courses and training (Grummell. 2014: 127). In my experience, this has included an aggressive down-grading of the arts within education as a whole, causing the provision of arts, drama, music and heritage courses within Adult Education to diminish considerably across the country without explanation.

My research attempts to understand why many of the Adult Education courses offered by Leitrim Education and Training Board, (ETB), seemed to buck this current trend, offering seemingly ‘alternative’¹ training in music, art, organic farming and outdoor pursuits. I wanted to examine this in detail, but could not settle on a theoretical framework or approach. The light bulb moment came when I realised that many of the accredited Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses offered in Leitrim are situated on or near the waterways of the River Shannon. I wondered what might happen if I set out to visit these educational centres via Leitrim’s network of rivers, lakes and canals. Gradually this inquiry broadened out to focus *less* on the educational remit of each establishment and *more* on the contribution of knowledge and its relationship with the landscape – an inquiry that was manifested in several ways.

¹ The term ‘alternative’ is often used to describe music and the arts in education. It demonstrates, in general, the lack of value it has within the mainstream institutions of education, and serves to further compartmentalise it.



Figure 3. Ruins of Church, Inishmagrath, Lough Allen, Co. Leitrim. (March 2016)

Notes on Structure

This thesis is primarily centred on three journeys I made through the Leitrim landscape, both solo and accompanied, on foot and by boat. The thesis is divided into two parts: part one introduces the rationale, theoretical framework, methods and relevant existing research underpinning my inquiry. Part two further explores literature pertinent to the Leitrim context, which is thematically organised using sub-headings. This structure offers the reader unbroken accounts of the three journeys which are contained at the end of part two. The journeys are presented as sections of prose based on my own interpretation of events, as documented in entries in my reflective journal. Across these accounts, a range of material is presented including: geographical information, place names, physical structures and landmarks, local history, folklore and mythology, personal thoughts and conversations had along the way. Each journey has been given a one-word title, based on active verbs linked to core ideas raised and the findings of each section, namely: EXCAVATING, DWELLING and RESISITING.

I have used a range of approaches to document the landscape, including photography, film and sound recordings. A piece of music was composed in response to Journey Two and has been used as the soundtrack for the second film. Numerous photographs have been included as visual documentation of the journeys. These undertakings are referenced throughout the thesis. The reader will be directed to watch a film of each journey contained on the DVD which is enclosed in the front of the thesis. Ideally each film would be viewed **after** reading my account of each journey. In this way, my contribution becomes more concerned with documenting experience and the research process, rather than just the end product(s).

Placing Myself

My grandmother Detta Metcalfe raised a large family and had cattle and sheep on her forty nine acre farm. As head of a large family, Detta was a matriarch: when she spoke, people moved. At the time of writing, she is ninety four. She inherited the farm from her father Eoin McDermott, who was awarded forty nine acres in 1939 by the Land Commission under the Land Law (Ireland) Act. Enacted in 1881, the Commission began redistributing farmland from landlords to tenant farmers following the Land War of 1879. In my view, I grew up during a special time in rural Ireland, as I witnessed the last phase of an era of farming that had existed for many generations. Prevalent but not unique to the West of Ireland, the system of community farming based on co-operation is widely referred to as ‘rundale’ or the ‘infield out field system’. Locally it was known as ‘meitheal’, which is the Irish word for team.

It is safe to assume that co-operative work ties were cemented by a strong sense of neighbourly affiliation and a lively evening social life, as I saw myself in Faulmore in the 1970s. Rundale was more than a technical arrangement; it was a way of life. (Yager 2002: 162)

Although our land had set divisions, ditches and often staked wires fences, the labour was shared equally among four neighbouring families, and was rotated systematically to ensure that the fields of each family were harvested and the hay saved. A handheld slane was used to cut turf– a labour intensive process which required the helping hands of men, woman and children. I have memories of family and neighbours working side-by-side on long summer days with the smell of freshly cut hay, eating ham sandwiches and drinking strong tea. The men would often finish the day with bottles of Guinness. We made our own ropes to tie down the cocks of hay, and turf was footed and clamped with the great precision. With this sense of community, great pride was found in everyday tasks.

Orientation

I was raised in Leitrim's neighbouring county of Roscommon and still live on the Roscommon side of Carrick-on-Shannon, a small town which is demarcated into two counties by the River Shannon. However I have a long history with county Leitrim as I was educated there, both at post-primary level, and as an adult on the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) accredited Traditional Irish Music course in Drumshanbo. Years later, after completing a B.A in Traditional Irish Music at the University of Limerick, I returned to Drumshanbo and taught on the course as part of my post-graduate studies in Further Education. I have worked for many years as a music tutor for various schools, community music initiatives and festivals in Leitrim including 'Carrick Trad' and the 'Joe Mooney Summer School'.

Drumshanbo lies at the southern tip of Lough Allen, the first of the River Shannon's three great loughs, which measures ten kilometres long by four kilometres wide. Water levels on Lough Allen can fluctuate by as much as eight feet and are controlled by the ESB via the sluice gates just outside Drumshanbo. The traditional source of the River Shannon is a large spring called the Shannon Pot, located near Cuilcagh Mountain on the Cavan/Leitrim Boarder. The spring flows throughout the year and is fed by streams that disappear into limestone rock higher up in the catchment area. The spring is roughly sixteen metres in diameter and has been explored by divers to depths of over fourteen metres. As the source of Ireland's largest river, the Shannon Pot is also the source of rich mythology and folklore which are referenced through my writings, particularly in relation to Journey One.

Knowledge, Policy and the Irish Economy

The term 'Further Education' embraces 'education and training', which usually occurs outside of 'post-primary' schooling but which is not usually part of the 'third-level system' (Teaching Council, 2011: 2). According to Fergal Hardiman, 'Further Education is a major provider of education for Adults, as more than half the students in Further Education are now mature students' (Hardiman, 2012: ii). Long associated with vocational training for adult training groups within socially deprived communities, the sector has expanded significantly in recent times, becoming a viable route for women returning to the workforce, retirees wishing to remain active, up-skilling for the unemployed and as a stepping stone for early school-leavers seeking accredited training courses (Share et al: 156).

Ireland's first ever national strategy for the Further Education and Training (FET) sector provides a framework for the 'transformation' of the sector over a five-year period, outlining strategic goals based on 'skills for the economy' (SOLAS, 2014). In short, the current FET policy framework in Ireland appears to offer little more than brash, short-term measures for the sector. This myopic approach constitutes a universal retreat on the aspirational ideas cultivated in Ireland's inaugural, White Paper on Adult Education, which accommodated the seemingly Freirean principles of 'consciousness raising', 'citizenship', 'cultural development' and 'community building' (DES, 2000). The governing principle of the 2000 White Paper was 'Lifelong Learning', described as the 'most radical and innovative idea in education, indeed in society' at the end of the twentieth century (Granville, 1999:3). It was argued at the time that in such a 'fast changing world', knowledge quickly becomes 'redundant', and that even those with third level qualifications will need to update their skill-sets (Fleming, 1998:58). It has been widely argued since then that, under the heavy influence of the 'marketplace', the principles of Lifelong Learning have been increasingly colonised by neoliberalism 'for its own economic and political logic' (Gouthro, 2006; Grummell, 2007).

Economic Climate: Curriculum from the Ground Up

During recent times, under Neoliberal policies and against a backdrop of global economic recession, discussions on hegemony and the colonisation of Adult Education have resurfaced and intensified (Grummell, 2007: Brine, 2006: Hussey, 1999: Fleming 1999). Neoliberalism (which is based on a so-called new form of economic liberalism) is the belief that liberating the markets and freeing enterprise from state-imposed bonds is the best way to ensure economic gains, described during the Regan-Thatcher era of the 1980s as ‘trickle-down economics’ (Healy et al, 2011: 4-5). The belief that this process will benefit everyone in society has proved to be the biggest myth of the modern age, and has resulted not only in exponentially soaring profits for multinational companies, but in the wider impoverishment of society’s most vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The facility of the free market to afford optimal prosperity and freedom for the individual had secured an ideological victory for capitalism that would over time be translated into political realities of the world.
(Coulter, 2015: 4)

In reality, freeing of markets translates to deregulation, privatisation and the downsizing of public services including health, welfare and education. Most significantly, the promotion of ‘individualism’ under neoliberalism places responsibilities on the poorest in society for their lot, while diminishing the responsibility of the State (Fitzsimons, 2015: 32). Ireland’s ‘Celtic Tiger’ era (mid 1990s – mid 2000s) has become synonymous with lax banking regulations and reckless lending practices (Coulter, 2015: 5-6). Fuelled by an unsustainable housing boom, the availability of easy credit for Irish Banks and a slump in the world economy, Ireland’s financial prosperity began to show signs of demise in 2007. Faced with the imminent collapse and insolvency of the country’s banking system, a guarantee was issued by the Irish Government on September 29th 2008, whereby bank debts of up to 440 billion Euros were guaranteed by the State. This deal was partnered by the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund

(IMF), and the subsequent bailout package resulted in much of the banking system ‘becoming dependant on the State’. The EU, ECB and IMF became known as the Troika, and were responsible for imposing a range of austerity measures that inflicted considerable financial hardship on both the employed and unemployed through a series of direct and ‘indirect’ taxation measures (Fitzsimons, 2015: 29-30). In the current economic climate, a heightened emphasis on ‘up-skilling’, ‘re-skilling’ and jobs creation for a ‘flexible and adaptable workforce’, has begun to dismantle the founding principles of Adult Education (Grummell, 2007; 128). This process has become increasingly evident in the Irish context, where current Further Education policy frameworks have become so closely intertwined with labour market policy as to appear colonised by it. Grummell (2007: 182) argues that policy-making of the last decade has been ‘increasingly shaped by neo-liberal discourses’ which have subsumed ‘adult education principles, such as lifelong learning and emancipation.

However, in Leitrim, the Adult and Further Education sectors have so far managed to maintain a strong community-based ethos, by establishing and delivering formal and informal educational programmes in direct response to the lifestyles and perceived interests of local people. For example, the aforementioned course in Traditional Irish Music (delivered by Drumshanbo College of Further Education) was established in 2001 in response to the momentum generated by the town’s long-running Joe Mooney Summer School – a weeklong annual festival akin to the Willie Clancy Irish Music Festival in Co. Clare. As well as the desire to provide tuition in Irish music all year round, there was also interest from people who had relocated to Leitrim in learning how to play an Irish instrument. It could be argued that in rural areas such as Leitrim, with low levels of industry, offering certain jobs-related training courses does little other than to encourage people either to relocate to urban centres or emigrate.

Leitrim: Counter-Urbanisation

From the mid 1980s onwards, just as the Leitrim's young people were leaving in their droves, the region experienced a mass-influx of migrants from the cities of northern Europe and the United Kingdom. Such mass-migration formed part of a well-documented global Counter-Urbanisation Movement, which continued until the mid-1990s, resulting in population revivals in certain non-metropolitan regions. This movement away from cities was attributable, in part, to rising rents in urban areas, increased mobility, transport infrastructures and a 'blurring of geographic boundaries – between space and place, between place of work and place of residence and, of course, between rural and urban' (Mitchell et al. 2004: 152).

Documentation of the Leitrim phenomenon is relatively sparse (aside from sporadic interviews or newspaper articles), however small pockets of existing research attest to the fact that the migrants were enticed to Leitrim, in part, by some of the lowest property prices in Europe at that time (Browne, 2011: 4). Many were artists, craftspeople, writers, artisan food-producers and activists opting for 'off-the-grid living', remoteness, and the perceived life-style that might accompany a shift away from the urban environment. Another significant motivating factor for these migrants seems to have been a sense of alienation from their own society, and a desire to return to a lifestyle which is perceived as authentic (Kneafsey, 1994). At that time, there were increasingly violent clashes between police and anti-nuclear protestors in Germany, while in Thatcherite Britain encroaching neoliberal policies specifically targeted the New Age Travellers.

The term 'New Age Travellers' is generally considered to be a media label (Davis, Grant & Locke, 1994). Despite rejection of the title by many who follow this lifestyle, its universal use attests to the influence of the British media on public perceptions of this minority group. Chas Critcher discusses this phenomenon in his 2003 book *Moral Panics and the Media*:

Prior to the summer solstice of 1985 and 1986 Britain was in the grip of moral panic. Travellers to Stonehenge were folk devils, and stories about the threatening lifestyles of the "hippies" abounded in the press and in Parliament' (NCCL, 1986: 37). Their dress, insignia and values connoted a distinct subculture which connected with mainstream youth culture at festivals, peace campaigns (Greenham Common from 1981 onwards), poll tax demonstrations (1990), road protests (Twyford Down 1992) and animal exports (1995). Symbolically important was a network of free annual music festivals at Glastonbury, Windsor and especially Stonehenge. The police sporadically raided these throughout the 1970's, though as late as 1984 the biggest ever Stonehenge festival was tolerated by the police, despite some damage and crime. But the next one, in June 1985, produced the 'Battle of the Beanfield'. Concerned by the damage, owners English Heritage obtained an injunction against the festival. The police established an exclusion zone around it. One convoy was forced into a field by police who then forcibly removed them, confiscating and destroying their vehicles and property. Though film of the incident mysteriously disappeared from Independent Television News, the travellers later successfully sued the police for wrongful arrest and damage to property. By this time, 'the travellers had become fully-fledged folk devils' (Collin, 1998: 187), vilified by Home Secretary Douglas Hurd and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The Public Order Act 1986 specifically prohibited the massing of convoys (Cricher, 2003: 54).

At the time, one in twenty of Leitrim's population were born in Britain and held British passports. As recounted by a new-age traveller from Birmingham who lived in Co. Leitrim between 1988 and 1992:

It was really like going back in time, which many of us wanted to do, I suppose. It was easy to be horse-drawn there as well, as there were so few cars on the back roads. The first permanent site I lived in was when I joined up with a few others who also would have left [England] as a result of [Battle of the] Beanfield. (Rennicks, 2013)

Sustainable Living

As documented by artist Sarah Browne in her comprehensive research publication 'Lebensreform in Leitrim', these migrants (predominantly from U.K, Germany and Holland) brought with them the

ethos and traditional skills necessary for self-sufficient and communal living, with many renovating old cottages and establishing smallholdings. Lebensreform is a term that originated in Germany in the mid 1890s to reflect social movements which attempted to ‘renew the whole conduct of life’, especially in the spheres of nutrition, clothing, dwelling and health. As suggested by Browne, these life reform movements were predecessors of today’s ‘escapist’ constructions of identity, formed via lifestyle conceptions (Browne, 2011: 5). Addressing the ‘countercultural legacy’ of these alternative lifestyles in the northwest region, Browne discovered that *those* who settled experienced initial curiosity, but eventually their knowledge and lifestyles integrated with the existing communities. Fundamentally, this amounted to a shift in how Leitrim was imagined and perceived, a sentiment echoed by writer Michael Harding who chronicled the impact of the migrant population in shaping a new identity for the county as ‘an artistic province’ and a ‘rural bohemia’ (Harding, 2006). Anecdotally, novelist DBC Pierre described Leitrim as ‘your own personal Tibet, but with more lakes and craic, and no oppression’ (Browne, 2011: 3).

Of the lifestyle-choices documented at the time, vegetarianism featured highly, as well as a preference for natural births, non-western and alternative medicines and abstention from vaccines. In addition, pastimes such as hiking and outdoor pursuits were commonplace among the Dutch, Swiss and German migrant communities, strongly reflecting the Lebensreform tendencies identified by Browne. Perhaps the most identifiable legacy of these communities in Leitrim was their contributions to the craft sector and food production industries. Reviving traditional crafts, such as felt-making, weaving, pottery and wood-carving, these artists merged with existing arts community to forge a strong-hold of craft production, for which Leitrim became renowned. In a similar vein, seemingly outmoded methods of food production were revived or expanded, including organic foods, free-range eggs, artisan cheeses, home-baking and craft beer, at a time when demand for such produce increased, contributing to a modern ‘eco’ image for Leitrim that was later forged.

Informal Learning and Communities of Practice

As previously outlined, during a period of mass migration to Leitrim in the 1980s many outmoded practices linked to sustainable living were revived. During this time loose networks emerged, and a great deal of informal education took place, based on the exchanging and sharing of knowledge and practices. Important infrastructures were developed, which were, for the most-part, conceived and sustained through community effort, and paved the way for more substantial, visible or permanent hubs for informal learning. For example, the swapping of produce between small-holders paved the way for the establishment of Carrick-on-Shannon's weekly farmer's markets, which continue to operate.

The rising popularity of artisan foods gradually ushered wider enterprise in Leitrim's food sector, such as Drumshanbo Food Hub – a unique, multi-tenant food production and education facility, established through social enterprise in 2004 on the site of the former Lairds jam factory (where jams and marmalades had been manufactured and widely exported during the 80's and 90's). The Organic Centre was established in 1995 by Hans Wieland in Rossinver, north Leitrim. To this day, the centre functions as a hub of training and education, offering a diverse programme of workshops and demonstrations on all aspects of organic gardening, sustainable living and food production. Similarly, the Leitrim Sculpture Centre was established in 1995 by a pioneering group of local artists, and continues to be a hub for training in all sculptural disciplines (including bronze casting and stone carving) and a massive artistic resource for the region.

It could be argued that Leitrim's modern-day hubs of informal learning (exemplified in the given examples of food production, organic farming and craft) emerged out of the interests and daily lives of migrant communities in their pursuit of sustainable living. Informal education, which goes on

outside of a formal learning environment (such as a school, college or university), can be defined as ‘learning that goes on in daily life’ or ‘learning projects that we undertake for ourselves’ (Jeffs & Smith, 2011). In this way, the knowledge-sharing and acquisition of skills that took place among Leitrim’s diverse communities could be best described as informal or ‘situated learning’ – a term developed by anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to focus on the ‘relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 14). Rather than defining learning as the acquisition of propositional knowledge, Lave and Wenger examined social co-participation as a form of learning, emanating from a process of engagement in a ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 14). For Lave and Wenger, communities of practice are groups of people who ‘share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, 1998: 1).

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter positions my research firmly in the local, offering orientation through geographical descriptions of Leitrim, and outlining my personal connection, both as a child and as an adult, to the rural landscape. The recent restructuring of Further Education has been contrasted against the principals of lifelong learning in Adult Education, under the former policy framework of the *White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000). In analysing the apparent shifts in ideology and perceived function of education, discussions on the economic climate have focused on the post-Celtic Tiger period of re-adjustment and austerity – a neoliberal construct.

The historical impacts of neoliberal logic in the Leitrim context have been examined, with reference to the people who moved to the region seeking alternative life-styles, and the models of education

that have evolved in response. This chapter has highlighted the skills, knowledge and communities of practice developed by those who migrated to Leitrim, and the how perceptions of the county have been shaped by these processes. Part Two will further outline moves by residents to protect their land, waterways and livelihoods and to resist neoliberal agendas, including proposals by the Hydraulic Fracturing Industry for gas extraction in the region.



Figure 4. Ram on Mountain road, Gortnaleck, Co. Leitrim. (March 2016)

CHAPTER TWO: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Viewing knowledge through the lens of landscape has ignited my interest in the field of Human Geography. Several theorists have featured recurrently in my reading, and their writings have helped me to develop a loose critical framework with which to organise my findings. Chapter Two examines a range of scholarly insights outlining links between landscape, walking, history and knowledge. The chapter commences with an appraisal of bell hooks' unique style of cultural criticism, which uses various non-academic, literary techniques (including narrative reflection and memoir) that have inspired me to find alternative ways to articulate my ideas. This chapter also provides a brief history of rural and urban walking which frames walking as both epistemology and research tool. As suggested by researcher John Anderson, 'conversations held whilst walking through a place' have the potential not only to 'generate a collage of collaborative knowledge' but also to use landscape as an 'an active trigger' for individual and collective memory (Anderson, 2004: 254).

Belonging: A Culture of Place

In her book *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, writer and cultural critic bell hooks examines the concept of belonging – a term which evades easy definitions – through notions of class, race, gender and landscape, and by addressing issues such as landownership, community and environmentalism. Levelling her critique of 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy' (hooks, 2009: 8) – which she sees as the root cause of oppression and domination in American society – hooks suggests that those who control us are implicated in our notions of belonging. Her ideas on the links between culture and landscape have allowed me to draw parallels with the Leitrim context, particularly regarding perceived freedoms of rural living and the sense of empowerment that comes from self-governance and living by one's own values and beliefs in harmony with nature.

Using an autobiographical style hooks contrasts city life, ‘where money and status determine everything’ (hooks, 2009: 7), with descriptions of her upbringing at the foothills of the Virginia Mountains. As subcultures living ‘freely in the hills’, these ‘non-conforming’ black communities were largely disregarded, and even dehumanised, feared and viewed with suspicion by the state and civil society. Consequently they learned to ‘self-care’, creating self-sufficient, sustainable lives, with ‘belonging’ generated through strong family and community ties. For hooks, the dominant culture destroys our sense of belonging and distorts what we learn about home and place as children, replacing ‘truth’ with ‘oppression’ and ‘domination’ (hooks, 2009: 7).

In *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, autobiographical elements (including childhood memories) are interspersed with theoretical discourse and notes-to-self (as if thinking out loud). Similarly, her use of quoted speech (reflecting native dialect and slang) situates the writing within a uniquely American landscape, where the ‘southern black folk’ suffered under the confederate flag – itself an expression of ‘white racist power and privilege... [and] a symbol of heritage and hate’ (hooks, 2009: 10). hooks’ style of writing forms a methodological contribution that raises epistemological questions about the nature of knowledge, and who owns and controls it. In many ways she wrests knowledge from the academy and brings it right back down to the level of landscape. The main criticisms of this book came from feminist readers, who denounced a perceived shift away from traditional gender and race politics towards more autobiographical material (Tieken, 2010). However it could be argued that this approach in fact widened the author’s readership, as it echoed emerging practices in the growing field of Cultural Geography² at the time, where her influence continues to be felt. Certainly hooks descriptions of walking (primarily as the most practical way of getting from A to B in mountainous regions of rural America) conjure points of intersections with a range of other disciplines.

² Cultural Geography is a sub-field of Human Geography which focuses on the patterns of human behaviour and culture in their natural environments.



Figure 5. Leitrim Way, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

A Brief History of Walking

An interest in walking as a leisure pursuit emerged during Romanticism, and was revived in mid nineteenth century France with Charles Baudelaire's poetic theorisations of the 'flâneur' as a figure of literary and philosophical significance³. Up until that point, walking was generally considered an 'activity for the poor, the criminal, the young, and above all, the ignorant' (Jarvis, 1997: 23). Only in the nineteenth century, following the example set by Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge⁴ – who 'roam[ed] the country by night as well as by day' – did people of leisure take to walking as an end in itself, beyond the 'confines of the landscaped garden' (Colegate 2002: 204). Up until that point, the upper classes were usually carried around the countryside in fast-moving carriages at a safe distance from the dirt and poverty of the roadside. According to Solnitt, the major distinction between the wandering journey of a Romantic poet, and the garden stroll of an aristocrat, was the 'quest for discovery of one's inner depths' (Solnit, 2001: 112).

By the early twentieth century, avant garde movements such as the Situationist International further probed walking as a radical act. Aligning with the history of protest walks, the conceptual and symbolic significance of walking was explored. The concept of 'Psychogeography' was developed by the Lettrist International movement – a Paris-based collective of radical artists and theorists. Founder Guy Debord described psychogeography as 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' (Debord, 1955: 5). Debord defined psychogeographic practices as

³ The flâneur was a man of leisure who sauntered around urban areas as a 'connoisseur of the street', particularly in inner-city Paris of the mid 1900's. This literary figure was prominent in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, and emerged as an important subject for 20th century writers, scholars and artists through the writings of German philosopher Walter Benjamin.

⁴ English poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, accompanied by Dorothy Wordsworth, embarked on long speculative walks through the hills of the Lake District, talking and composing poetry. They embraced the Romantic notion that nature was the only place where one could truly experience the deep, powerful emotions from which true creativity and inspiration emerged.

encompassing ‘just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape’ (Hart, 2004: 40).

Walking as Epistemology

Walking ... is the intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart.... Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord. (Solnit, 2001: 5)

To think and to walk are the same thing. To follow the current of a river in a canoe and to reflect are also the same thing. To hunt and to dream: another equivalent. (Bouchard, 2006: iv)

Over the last few years, walking has become an increasingly important research method for a growing number of social scientists and geographers (Anderson, 2004; Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003; Reed, 2002). Adapted from ethnographic fieldwork, walking as a qualitative research technique forms part of a perceptible shift away from ‘subject-orientated’ practice, towards more participatory methods of engaging with people and place (Banting, 2010; Edensor, 2000; Hart, 2004; O’Rourke, 2013). Whether wandering through the landscape chatting to participants, or carrying out highly structured tours (designed to elicit responses to specific, predetermined places), researchers have found that ‘walking interviews’ generate richer data, due to implicit connections with the surrounding environment (Evans and Jones, 2011).

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, John Anderson, in an article entitled ‘Talking Whilst Walking: A Geographical Archaeology of Knowledge’, discusses ‘conversations in place’ as a qualitative research method which he believes can ‘make geographical context more explicit’ by

‘enhancing understandings of knowledge and the lives of individuals’ (Anderson, 2004: 254). Several theorists have outlined an array of cultural connotations associated with walking practices (Kay and Moxham, 1996; Edensor, 2000). For example, British social anthropologist Tim Ingold, a pioneer of walking research, investigated recreational rambling and hill-walking in the Scottish highlands. With this and other research Ingold aims to develop ethnographic perspectives on the ways in which the sociality of walking can bind time and place to people’s experiences, relationships and life histories (Ingold, 2004; Lee and Ingold, 2006; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008a; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008b).

Narrative and Walking

The links between narrative and walking have been widely explored by numerous fiction and non-fiction writers using an array of literary devices. For example, German writer W.G. Sebald, in his novel *The Rings of Saturn*, presented first-person narrative accounts of a nameless narrator who embarked on a walking tour of Suffolk, England. During this solitary walking trip, the narrator describes the locations as well as the people he meets along the way, which in turn prompts him to reflect on the historical and cultural implications of his encounters. Addressing themes such as identity, astronomy and the erosion of memory, the book is a hybrid of genres, from mythology and fiction to travelogue and memoir.

Perhaps walking is a very immediate way of engaging with the landscape and understanding our relationships with it. As identified by Rebecca Solnit in her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, the rhythm of walking ‘generates a kind of rhythm of thinking’, just as the passage through a landscape ‘echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts’ (Solnit, 2001: 5-6). Solnit qualifies this by suggesting that the history of walking is the ‘history of thinking made concrete’,

given the fact that ‘motions of the mind’ cannot be traced, but motions of the feet can (Solnit, 2001: 5-6).

Urban Walking

It has been broadly acknowledged that up until fairly recently, psychogeography has been practiced and theorised about almost exclusively in urban contexts, a concept reaffirmed in the mid 1980’s with Michel de Certeau’s influential work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which investigates the unconscious ways in which humans navigate city streets. In the chapter ‘Walking in the City’, Certeau uses New York’s former World Trade Centre as a vantage point to view conceptualisations of the city – something he believes are generated through the policies of governments, institutions and corporations, who try to map and quantify the city as a ‘unified whole’ (Certeau, 1984: 93). As highlighted by writer Sukhdev Sandhu, ‘since the post-war era of inner-city neglect and mass suburbanisation, cities have become hot commodities for academic theorists as much as financiers and real-estate moguls’ (Sandhu, 2006: 46).

While much of this scholarly activity has previously focused on cities and urban space, there is also a growing curiosity about suburban, rural, peripheries, borders and other contested landscapes. Contemporary approaches to urban and rural walking have further expanded the tradition of psychogeography, to encompass memory studies, counter-tourism, digital technologies and virtual landscapes, occurring at the interface between social anthropology, geography and urban planning. The grounded act of walking reveals alternative routes which reach beyond the logical confines of Ordnance Survey, Google Earth or GPS navigation software. In relinquishing existing maps, the act of being present in an unfamiliar location requires other, more intuitive methods of orientation.

Deep Mapping

The process of ‘deep mapping’ makes visible a complex array of physical, social and emotional structures, something academic researcher Dr. Iain Biggs describes as ‘an essaying of place’ (Biggs, 2010). This process highlights a range of inter-connected ecological, historical, mythical, visual, archaeological, scientific, cultural, linguistic, and intuitive elements which may be suggested within the physical landscape. In short, where traditional maps serve as statements, deep maps serve as conversations (Bodenhamer et al. 2015). Whether as a series of signposts, technological image maps or interactive archives, the material products of deep mapping aim to implicate the viewer in a wider conversation. The process of deep mapping is particularly well-placed to prompt reflection on how multiple layers of human history might co-exist, and be viewed from the vantage-point of today. In this way, deep mapping becomes a form of knowledge-creation, which, ‘as an approach to place’, aims to ‘democratize knowledge through the crossing of temporal, spatial, and disciplinary boundaries’ (Springett, 2015: 624).

Mystical West

As a spatial designation, ‘landscape’ has occupied a central place in the cultural history of Ireland, and, by extension, has historically been synonymous with Irish spirit and identity. Historical depictions of the west of Ireland landscape in particular – portrayed as ‘an imaginary, mystical and timeless landscape’ (Cleary, 1995: 155) – helped forge an identity for a newly independent Ireland. Conversely, contemporary writers, artists and academics seek to re-construct ‘the West’ away from ‘Romantic nationalist ideas and clichéd tourist[ic] frameworks’, towards modern understandings of what it means to ‘live and practice on the fringes in geographical or conceptual terms’ (Waugh, 2013; 46).

In conventional accounts of the historical transformation of nature, the landscape tends to be regarded as a material surface that has been sequentially shaped and reshaped, over time, through the imprint of one scheme of mental representations after another, each covering over or obliterating the one before. Through walking, 'landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never-ending' (Tilley, 1994:29–30). The concepts of psychogeography have also been expanded to encompass waterways, presenting rivers, canals, lakes and seas as sites of public connectivity, human endeavor and cultural history. In many of these scenarios, walking through a landscape has been replaced by swimming, diving and boating through a region's waterways.

In summary, this chapter has set out the first part of a theoretical framework for my unfolding research. Based on the theme of landscape, notions of culture and belonging have been explored. The history and theory of walking has been outlined in detail, while also probing the role of walking as an alternative research tool for elicitation, interviewing, knowledge-creation and discovery.

CHAPTER THREE: ON KNOWLEDGE

This chapter commences with an in-depth examination of the immense contributions made by Paulo Freire in his theorisation of emancipatory education for society's most marginalised groups. Freire's insights are particularly relevant for me, not just because of my current research on the propagation and ownership of knowledge, but also because of my previous work in prison education, where the inadequacies of the formal education system were apparent to me on a daily basis. In examining the links between local knowledge and landscape, this chapter introduces the concept of indigenous knowledge and 'alternative ways of knowing' which serve as a critique of neoliberalism and the Western scientific model of education. Finally, Antonio Gramsci's important theoretical insights are introduced under the heading of instrumentalisation of knowledge.

For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (Freire, 1970: 72)

Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is a highly influential theorist within the school of critical pedagogy. The origins of critical pedagogy can be traced through several paths, including American universities and scholars such as Ivan Illich and Henry Giroux. Freire's contribution however, was based on a community-based movement of educational philosophy. Based on his experiences as an educator with marginalised groups in Latin America, Freire began to question the ways in which people, particularly adults, were educated. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in 1968⁵, Freire proposes new ways of defining relationships between student,

⁵*Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Pedagogia do Oprimido)* was originally published in Portuguese in 1968. The English translation was later published in 1970, and re-published by Penguin in 1972.

teacher and society, using Marxian class theory to differentiate the ‘coloniser’ from the ‘colonised’ (Leach, 1982:189). Freire’s new model for education strived for consciousness-raising by helping learners to recognize ‘authoritarian tendencies’, while making connections between ‘knowledge and power’ and developing the ‘ability to take constructive action’ (Giroux, 2010:80).

Freire believed that humans have the power to grow and develop ‘to become more fully human’ (Freire, 1970: 42). According to Freire, ‘knowing is a social process’ and ‘knowledge is a social construct’ (Freire, 1998: 92). More specifically, Freire considered that ‘beliefs’ are shaped into ‘knowledge’ through the processes of open dialogue, discussion and critical reflection. In other words, the learning process is strengthened as students learn from their peers, continually question, begin to think democratically, and develop skills for meaningful reflection.

In *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (1998), Freire loosely categorized knowledge into two forms: Practice-based knowledge (unconscious, emotional, intuitive or practical) and theory (critical, reflective or theoretical forms knowledge based on logic and common sense). Freire advocated the pairing of both ‘emotion and cognition’, as they constitute two distinct yet complimentary elements. In this way, knowledge should not be ‘limited to logic and content’ or ‘emotions and superstitions’, but should ‘seek the connections between understandings and feelings’ (Freire, 1998: 3). For Freire, knowledge is rooted in daily life: ‘purposeful action in the world’ (also termed ‘praxis’) ‘cannot exist without theory, because it is only together that they constitute knowledge’ (Taylor, 1993: 46).

Freire’s suggestion that learners should be treated as the ‘co-creators of knowledge’ remains a foundational principle of modern critical pedagogy. As noted by Freire, in the traditional ‘banking’ system of education, learners are treated as ‘empty vessels’ or ‘receptacles’ of knowledge, to be ‘filled’ by the teacher (Freire, 1970: 72). He elaborates by stating that under this model, ‘knowledge

is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable, upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (Freire, 1970: 46). The term 'banking system' suggests that knowledge is 'deposited' in students, in the same way that money is deposited in a bank.

This banking mode of education is characterised by the 'transferral' of knowledge, distant teachers and passive, alienated learners. Freire believed that the 'one-way exchange of knowledge' in the traditional banking model of education is nothing more than an instrument of oppression, because it indoctrinates people, moulding them into 'adaptable, manageable beings' who will 'passively accept the dominant rules and norms of the society in which they live' (Freire, 1970: 46). In contrast, Freire's 'problem-posing' model of education is based on a dialogical process. Under this dialogical model, students and teachers enter into open discussion and active learning is generated through facilitation. The co-ownership of knowledge is encouraged, which, according to Freire, creates an awareness of the power structures around us, and a fundamental desire to change inequality through caring relationships. This liberating model of education acts as a means for both student and facilitator to jointly undertake the act of knowing. (Freire, 1970)

The restructuring of adult education and move towards jobs activation courses as outlined in chapter one, mean that Freire's ideas on knowledge ownership are of the utmost relevance to my research. Deirdre Keys' 2004 article 'Accreditation within Adult Education' for the *Adult Learner* points out that the drive for accreditation within the sector is pushing us back towards a banking model of education and away from organically emerging knowledge. She relays the attitudes of her tutors who perceive 'accreditation as taking the major focus away from the student to the subject, something which they saw as [being] in direct conflict with their ideological position on adult education' (Keys, 2004: 71).

Indigenous Knowledge: Alternative Ways of Knowing

During my research I have encountered particular readings that have presented alternative perspectives on knowledge, something Freire might have described as ‘authentic thinking’ (Freire 1970: 77). As an educator with interests in traditional Irish music and outdoor pursuits, I am particularly intrigued by discourse which forges links between cultural knowledge and the physical landscape. Drawing on his Cherokee ancestry, educator and academic Four Arrows (aka Don Trent Jacobs) is an advocate of ‘Indigenous Knowledge’ – a growing scholarly field which he believes is created through a combination of ‘intuition, self-reflection, meta-cognition and observation of human nature’ and acquired through ‘direct experience in the natural world’ (Four Arrows et al, 2010: 41). The term emerged in agricultural research in the early 1980s, and according to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it can be described as ‘local knowledge that is unique to a culture or society’. Other terms include ‘folk knowledge’ or ‘traditional wisdom’, passed from generation to generation to form the basis of ‘agriculture, food preparation, health care, education, conservation and the wide range of other activities that sustain societies in many parts of the world’ (Nakashima et al, 2000: 12). In indigenous settings, holistic ways of knowing might mean the difference between dying, surviving or thriving. One example, as outlined in *The Authentic Dissertation* edited by Four Arrows, is ‘Tin-Can Bear Fat’ – an essay by Sandi Warren reflecting on oral and narrative traditions and indigenous methods of inquiry, based on her father’s approach to the land, the creatures, the seasons, and all relations. Warren outlines how fish are harvested and the angler’s relationship with the environment. As a young child Warren asked her father how to catch fish and he replied:

*I will show you the water, the land, the seasons, and all the relations that connect you and the fish.
When you understand these things, you will understand how to harvest fish* (Four Arrows 2008: 28).

Such forms of knowledge have become increasingly pitched in opposition to Western scientific education and knowledge systems, which so frequently ‘emphasise compartmentalised knowledge’, and can be ‘de-contextualised and detached from reality’ by being taught in a classroom or laboratory (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005: 8). Furthermore, formal education systems have ‘disrupted the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning, replacing them with abstract knowledge and academic ways of learning’ (Nakashima et al, 2000: 12). It strikes me that such critique levelled at formal, western scientific models of education, in defence of indigenous knowledge, is wholeheartedly Freirean and frames the ‘modern-science-as-enlightenment’ model as being vastly flawed. Freire habitually criticised the traditional system of education for overestimating ‘scientific knowledge and advanced technology’ while under-rating ‘popular wisdom’, criticising the fact that this ‘ideology of whiteness’ remains the ‘centre that knows, while the periphery never knows’ (Freire & Faundez 1989: 88). In this way, indigenous Knowledge sits in marked opposition to the instrumentalisation of education under neoliberalism.

Instrumentalisation of Knowledge

For the purpose of this research, the term instrumentalisation refers to the ways in which education has been used as a tool (or instrument) to service neoliberal agendas, resulting in knowledge being increasingly quantified solely in narrow economic terms. The Instrumentalisation of knowledge has been an omnipresent and well-documented concept within Twentieth century discourse pertaining to the field of Adult and Community Education (Darder, 2015; 7). Many significant educational theories have emerged out of a desire to expose and resist this process. For example, the politics of education in Western capitalist societies were central to Antonio Gramsci’s formulation of the concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) and pivotal in his strategy for social transformation in all spheres of life. For Gramsci, Hegemony describes how the dominant or ruling classes manage to

present their version of reality or truth in a manner that is consented, adopted and normalised by society as common sense, while at the same time rejecting and marginalising any group or sub-culture that presents alternative truths or views. Reflecting a lifelong mission to educate members of the 'subaltern classes' (Gramsci, 1970; 202) (so that they might not remain on the periphery of political life), Gramsci's writings on 'the State' and 'Civil Society' (Gramsci, 1971: 145) strongly convey his critique of educational establishments. Gramsci believed that schools and other educational institutions are not 'neutral' but 'serve to cement the existing hegemony' because they are 'intimately tied to the interests of the most powerful social groups', namely the bourgeoisie (Mayo, 1999: 3).

The most convincing aspect of Gramsci's writings is the fact that they are largely informed by his own experiences, namely his work with the Italian Socialist and Communist parties and Turin's Factory Council Movement in the early 1920s, before his arrest and imprisonment by fascist police in 1926. With his theories on hegemony, Gramsci built on core Marxist principles – that the owners of production have power over the majority, and the only way capitalism can be defeated is by revolution. For Gramsci, capitalist revolution alone will not succeed. We need to simultaneously educate people to see the world as it exists, or what Freire refers to as 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 1970: 33). Furthermore, the idea of simultaneous reflection and action, education and activism, is played out in Gramsci's theories on the War of Position and War of Manoeuvre. The War of Manoeuvre (Gramsci, 1970: 192) refers to the class struggle and the fact that the ruling class has hegemony and legitimacy, which shapes society's consciousness. The War of Position (Gramsci, 1970; 445) is self-organised, counter-hegemonic struggle to gain position in society. It can be a function of both activism and education, and is the main way in which counter-hegemony might be achieved.

The revolution needs intellectuals to carry out this work, and Gramsci introduces us to the idea of the ‘Traditional’ and ‘Organic Intellectual’ (Gramsci, 1970; 136). According to Gramsci, Traditional Intellectuals view themselves as being distinct and independent from the dominant social groups, while Organic Intellectuals are produced by each social strata and function by directing the interests of their class. Bourgeois Organic Intellectuals promote capitalism, as they are the ones who benefit from it. Gramsci wanted the working class to produce its own organic intellectuals to form counter-hegemonic thinking and action for social transformation and ultimately to expose the inherent contradictions of capitalism. He classified adult educators as ‘intellectuals who are organic’ to the ‘subaltern groups aspiring to power’ (Mayo, 2008: 426) because they are engaging in ‘counter-hegemonic cultural activity’ (Mayo, 2008: 425). Gramsci believed that in order for the revolution to be successful, all of the working class and left-wing groups must be mobilised, and not just existing Marxists. Gramsci’s ideas are particularly illuminating in relation to Leitrim’s socialist history and modern-day grassroots movements – a topic that will be further discussed in the first chapter of Part Two. It could be argued that the essence of Gramscian philosophy is to expose the instrumental nature of the dominant culture. Gramsci’s counter-hegemonic approach therefore proves useful in dismantling flawed neoliberal logic.



Figure 6. Mountain Drive, Gortnaleck, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

CHAPTER FOUR: APPROACHING KNOWLEDGE AND SHAPING MY RESEARCH

Aspects of the methodological approach that underpin this research have already been presented through discussions on walking as epistemology. As well as discussing the research paradigm and ontological position, this section will also outline the research methods used to engage responses to landscape, with a strong emphasis on narrative.

Influence of Narrative

Within the realm of social research, narrative inquiry embodies a departure from quantitative methods of research, which traditionally rely on statistical information, charts and multiple-choice questionnaires. The feminist school of research is commonly credited with the introduction of narrative inquiry during the late twentieth century. Narrative inquiry has been described as both ‘a way of knowing’ (through storytelling), and an extension of ‘literary theory, ethnography and psychoanalysis’ (Chataika, 2005: 3).

For my purposes, ‘narrative’ refers to: (i) The manner in which the data is generated (through dialogue, conversation, folklore and story-telling) (ii) The ways that the data is recorded (personal accounts written in my reflective journal; recorded and transcribed conversations; photographs, music and film) and (iii) How the material is presented (a thesis organised around three stories about connected events presented as a sequence of written accounts; a film presenting visual and aural accounts of three journeys).

This narrative, ‘transactional’ process acknowledges the role of dialogue in consciousness-raising and challenging accepted assumptions and belief systems. As identified by American cultural critic Henry Giroux,

Transformative intellectuals... uncover and excavate those forms of historical and subjugated knowledges that point to experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle... [they] link the notion of historical understanding to elements of critique and hope (Giroux, 1988: 213).

In other words, by discussing past forms of knowledge, we gain a deeper understanding of the present and begin to think critically about the future – a reflective process that has been heightened in Ireland with ongoing commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising and other important upcoming centenary dates. In addition, the evolution of ‘place’ is interactively constructed through language, as is widely evident in rural Ireland where place-names and town-lands demonstrate important links with pagan, Christian and colonial histories.

Critical Theory and Historical Realism

As a traditional Irish musician, I place huge value on cultural heritage and believe that the relationship between landscape and its inhabitant communities is in a constant state of evolution. Aligning with the paradigm of critical theory, my research approach takes a holistic view of knowledge, with narrative methods forming the basis of my qualitative investigations. Critical theory was largely developed in the Frankfurt School' of social research in the 1930s emphasising the use of reflective methods in the critique of society and culture. As described by German philosopher and member Frankfurt School member Max Horkheimer, a theory is ‘critical’ insofar as it seeks ‘to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them’ (Horkheimer, 1982: 244).

In keeping with the discourse of Historical Realism, my ontological approach centres on a belief that 'reality' can be understood as a 'historical construct connected to power' (Cupchik, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Historical examples of social organisation (pre-dating modernity's dominant monetary and bureaucratic structures) can be viewed not just as utopian ideas, but as forces and social movements with real impacts and effects (Ray, 1993). By studying these alternative systems of knowledge we can understand how they came into (and went out of) being, and how their legacies continue to shape reality.

Given that this research has a strong self-study element (recorded via a reflective journal to relay key responses to landscape including personal memories), my own position and existing knowledge and values will inevitably influence the research findings. Expressing a transactional and subjectivist epistemology, the link between myself as researcher and the investigated subjects and objects of my research was acknowledged from the outset. The findings – presented throughout my accounts and further reflections on each journey – are ultimately mediated through me, and can therefore be described as 'value mediated' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110). I feel this approach is most relevant to my research because of the strong links between critical theory and social critique which challenges the mechanisms of hegemony. Clearly the world is unequal, yet that this inequality is structural, with geography playing a significant role.



Figure 7. Time-lapse filming, Gortnaleck, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

Research Methods

Aligning with the approaches of critical theory, I view my research methods as an intrinsic part of my epistemological contribution to existing knowledge and critical discourse. For example, I felt that conducting, recording and transcribing formal interviews with participants would not be appropriate for my research. I wanted to focus on creating the right atmosphere for ordinary or 'natural conversation' between peers (sacks et al., 1974: 698) to unfold in open-ended ways. I felt a question and answer format might limit scope for personal reflection (by the participant) or the topics addressed. Instead, I prepared a small amount of material beforehand, which allowed me to guide the conversations occasionally, but overall the conversations flowed relatively well unprompted.

This thesis is organised around my accounts of three journeys through the Leitrim landscape. These journeys involved a combination of walking and boating. I was accompanied by other people for the first and second journeys, while Journey Three was a solo trip. The physical act of walking and journeying through the landscape proved to be a really useful device which seemed to trigger plenty of dialogue and personal reflection, for both me and for the people who accompanied me on these journeys. During Journey Two, it seemed fitting that, as three musicians, we would compose a piece of music in response to the landscape we had travelled through. This musical composition has been used as the soundtrack for the second film and is notated in Appendix v. This in turn acknowledges the historical legacy of music-making and indigenous responses to the native landscape – something musicians, poets and artists have done for millennia. As my research included a continuous self-study element which raised various autobiographical lines of inquiry, a Reflective Journal was used. This recorded personal accounts, insights and memories triggered in response to the landscape. I also took notes in my journal, as a way of recording conversations, and found that I generally remembered a lot of what was discussed and what had transpired.

Music-making

I developed soundtracks to accompany each of the three films in a style that reflected the mood of each journey. Percussive and melodic computer-generated samples accompany the first and third films, which are mixed with the various field recordings including bird song, trickling water and the sound of wind blowing across the landscape and through trees. The soundtrack accompanying the second film is a traditional Irish tune 'Inis Magrath' composed by Patrick, Rodney and myself in response to our journey across Lough Allen. Patrick developed the main melody, a relatively simple dance tune in 4/4 reel time, and we each played traditional instruments, namely banjo, fiddle, concertina and bouzouki. In order for the recorded piece to harmonize with the other more electronic sounding tracks accompanying the other films, a mooge synthesiser was used to create rhythmical and electronic sounds which we felt mimicked our journey across Leitrim's largest lake (See Appendix v: Music Notation 'Inis Magrath').

Filmmaking

While I am a relatively experienced sound technician, I have only ever produced one film in the past with input from an experienced cameraman and editor, so researching this medium was a big learning curve for me. I decided on the format of three short films, as a way to not only document my journeys and showcase the landscape, but also to reference the region's rich history and folklore. The medium of film allowed me the creative freedom to combine audio tracks (comprising narration and field recordings) with dramatic footage of the Leitrim landscape. I see the films as experimental and unfinished and have come to view them as the beginning of some larger future project.

Documentation

It was important to anchor my research in a specific terrain; therefore maps have been used to give the reader a sense of geographical orientation. I documented my journeys by taking hundreds of photographs with a Nikon D60 DLSR camera – a good quality 12 megapixel camera comprising an 18–55mm lens (for portraits and stills), a zoom lens (for landscapes), a UV filter and a polarising filter (both used for landscape and water scenes in order to minimise light refraction). The camera was both hand-held and mounted on a telescopic tripod at certain times for particular shots. I occasionally used a shutter-release remote for self-takes and long aperture shots. Time-lapse photography was used to study how particular landscapes changes over time. Field Recordings were used to document the natural soundscapes of the places I visited.

Video Equipment

To document my journeys I used the ‘GoPro Hero 4’ – the latest High Definition model in the GoPro sports action video camera range. While this lightweight and waterproof model suited my needs for walking and boating, it does have several limitations. For example, its fish-eye lens and lack of zoom capacity tends to make things look further away than they actually are. As a result, I focused on time-lapse filming (the exact opposite of slow motion photography) which involves lowering the frame rate, giving the appearance of time moving faster when the film is played back at normal speed. I am keen to explore this technique further, potentially over a number of months, seasons or years to explore the idea that landscapes operate on a very different timescale to the people that inhabit them.



Figure 8. GoPro Hero 4, Silver Edition

Editing

I edited my photographs using ‘Adobe Lightroom’ and video footage with both the ‘GoPro Studio’ and ‘Adobe Premiere Pro’. I also used ‘Adobe After Effects CS6’ to develop the video titles, where I also created lighting strobos using a plug-in called ‘Video Co-Pilot Flares’. One of the disadvantages of ‘GoPro Studio’ is that it only has two audio tracks, meaning I often had to use a third application to premix audio tracks into a single channel, in order to stay within the two track limitation. (For example, I wanted to use field recordings of wind and birdsong alongside music and a monologue by my guide on the folklore surrounding the creation of the River Shannon. By using Adobe Audition, I could multi-track the audio and bounce it down to Mp3 as a single track, effectively mixing three or four tracks together as one). To record our newly composed tune ‘Inis Magrath’ in response to Journey Two, I used ‘Avid Pro Tools’ – an industry standard piece of studio equipment. I also used

'Fruity Loops 9' to create effects on the soundtrack of journey one and three, which gives the user an array of virtual instruments and midi keyboards for sampling.

I quickly realised that my laptop was not up to the job of editing my video footage. Working in High Definition video requires the latest processors and large amounts of RAM. Apple Macs are the industry standard for this type of work; however at over €4000, I could not afford to buy one. I began to research how to build my own P.C, and ended up developing an efficient editing system for a fraction of the price (approximately €700). I purchased a second hand Intel I7 Processor and began to assemble the machine around it, recycling the hard drive and Asus P9X79 motherboard from an old PC and buying some additional new parts. I added two Solid State Drives – the latest in hard drive upgrades with a read capability of 500mb per second, which is ideal for video applications. Video editing needs as much virtual memory as possible, so I purchased 32 GB of DDR3 RAM.

The I7 processor has a base clock speed of 3.4 GHz, but I planned to over-clock it. Over-clocking is the process of increasing the clock rate of a CPU, allowing it to run at higher speeds than it was designed for. The problem with over-clocking a CPU is that it generates extra heat which can damage a system or make it unstable. To avoid this, an efficient cooling system is needed, so I purchased an upgraded cooler for the CPU, and four fans for the case. Drawing cool air into the case and across components and removing hot air with extractor fans is an effective way of maintaining safe temperatures. The final component was a graphics card capable of handling High Definition video, with an HDMI connector for my existing monitor. With this new system, I am able to get a base speed of 4.6 GHZ from the processor, which has greatly reduced video rendering times and improved my work rate significantly.

Notes on Ethics

Following NUI Maynooth 'Ethical Research Guidelines' (2013), I have endeavoured to adhere to professional and ethical practice across all stages of my research. In keeping with NUIM's 'Ethics Policy for Social Research', I implemented measures to ensure that participants understood the scope, aims, and potential audiences of the research, and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality offered at all stages of the project (NUIM, 2013: 9). Participant's real names have been used, except in the case of An Dru-Fo-Cud who requested the use of this particular pseudonym. Appropriate measures have been taken to store the research data in a secure manner, in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act (SAI, 2013: 7). I have taken care not to misrepresent or misquote any individual who participated, and have avoided using designations which could give rise to unreasonable generalisations (NUIM, 2013: 11).

I have adhered to the general principles of social responsibility and have been mindful of any potential conflicts of interest (SAI, 2012: 1). I asked for verbal or written informed consent before conducting any interviews and provided individuals who participated in this study with previews and drafts before using any of the transcript material. Accompanying photographs, videos and documentation were only used with full permission and consent of my participants, An Dru-Fo-Cud, Rodney Lancashire and Patrick Carayannis.

PART TWO:

PART TWO: CHAPTER ONE

This chapter examines Leitrim's counter-hegemonic spaces and communities of practice generated through informal education. The chapter revisits Gramscian theories on cultural hegemony tied to conceptions of the capitalist state, and reaffirms the relevance of Gramsci's Organic Intellectuals to Leitrim's history of socialism and ongoing activist campaigns. The subsequent section introduces Traditional Irish music and its relationship to the landscape, offering a pre-cursor to my accounts of the three journeys (contained in the next chapter), which are permeated with folklore and music-making. In order to further contextualise my journeys, this section introduces the Irish Bardic tradition to expand important links between landscape and music. Functioning as storytellers, poets, musicians and chroniclers of ancestry, the once powerful Bards of Ireland were the original guardians of local knowledge and folklore. The chapter concludes with discussions on Christian hegemony, as a way of exploring past and present dominant ideologies of provincial and national significance.

Socialist History of Leitrim

In Part One, Chapter Three, I introduced and discussed Gramsci's vision to educate members of the 'subaltern classes' (Gramsci 1970: 417). Gramsci's work with the Italian Socialist and Communist parties and Turin's Factory Council Movement in the early 1920s (before his arrest and imprisonment by fascist police in 1926) resonates strongly with Leitrim's Socialist and Trade Unionist histories. A notable figure of this period was Leitrim socialist James Galton (1886 – 1945) who was the leader of the Revolutionary Workers Group (a precursor to the Communist Party of Ireland). Following his emigration to America, Galton became heavily involved in various workers movements, and was a leading figure in the creation of the powerful Transport Workers Union,

established in 1934 (Guckian, 1986: 12). On his return to Leitrim, Gralton ‘established a dance hall’⁶ on his parents land in Effernagh, Co. Leitrim, which was named ‘Pearse-Connolly Memorial Hall’, in honour of the Socialist and Republican leaders of 1916. Jimmy Gralton’s hall functioned as a hub for Adult education, offering lessons in art, music, history and Irish language as well as community activities such as boxing matches and dances. Gralton educated locals on political issues and became heavily involved in the land struggle, establishing a Direct Action Committee to help tenant-farmers regain lands from which they had been evicted. Amidst strong opposition from the Catholic Church and local clergy, the Free State forces drove him out, and Gralton remains the only Irishman ever deported from Ireland, branded by Taoiseach Éamon de Valera in 1933 as an ‘undesirable alien’ (Guckian, 1986: 12). Gralton has been almost entirely written out of all but local Leitrim history. As discussed in the previous chapter, Gramsci’s theories on the War of Position (Gramsci, 1970; 445), is particularly relevant, not only in relation to the plight of Jimmy Gralton, but also in discussions surrounding ongoing campaigns of resistance in the Leitrim context.

Grass-Roots Resistance

The current and very real threat of Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking) in Leitrim, which has the potential to harm the county’s environment, agriculture, waterways and tourism industries, highlights the incongruent and destructive nature of neoliberal agendas. At the time of writing, the hugely controversial Shell oil refinery has just commenced pumping gas from its offshore plant to its land-based processing station in the Village of Erris Co. Mayo. Since the discovery of natural gas off Mayo’s coastline in 1998, it has taken almost 20 years for the Corrib gas field, pipeline and gas processing plant to become operational. During this time, the divisive strategies of Multinational companies (backed by the State through the deployment of hundreds of Gardaí to facilitate the

⁶The life of James Gralton, the great Leitrim Socialist, was chronicled in the 2014 film ‘Jimmy’s Hall’ by British director Ken Loach.

project) became apparent and all too real for Mayo's rural communities. The resistance of locals and the Shell to Sea campaign was dealt a harsh blow by the jailing of the 'Rosspport Five'⁷, causing local TD Michael Ring to comment that 'Ireland was now a dictatorship within a democracy' (Chrisafis, 2005).

In light of the staunch resistance and ultimate defeat of the Shell to Sea campaign in Co. Mayo, the prospect of Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking) and shale gas extraction in Leitrim and neighbouring counties became a significant cause for concern among communities in the north-west. In February 2011, Australian oil and gas corporation Tamboran Resources and Lough Allen Natural Gas Company (LanCo) were granted exploration licenses covering an area of approximately 1500 sq km over parts of counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon and Sligo. Leitrim is regarded as one of the most promising locations for fracking, and the county's geology could mean big reserves of shale gas in the region. Within a year, Tamboran estimated that gas reserves in Leitrim could be valued at over 55 billion dollars. A number of anti-fracking campaigns were swiftly assembled, with four of the six north-west groups currently based in Co. Leitrim.

The anti-fracking campaigns continue, despite the fact that Leitrim County Council unanimously voted to ban fracking, and the Fine Gael / Labour coalition government agreed not to issue further licenses until the Environmental Protection Agency research study 'Environmental Impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration and Extraction' is published and considered. However, the nature of these seemingly disparate groups, and the contribution of Leitrim's aforementioned migrant population to the overall campaign are yet to be comprehensively addressed. It is my view that the skills and past experiences of these migrants (who moved to Leitrim from the UK and northern Europe during the '80s and '90s) merged with the knowledge of local people to create multi-faceted

⁷ The Rosspport Five are: Willie Corduff, brothers Philip and Vincent McGrath, Micheál Ó Seighin and James Brendan Philbin, from Erris, County Mayo. The men served 94 days in prison in 2005 for contempt of court after refusing to obey a temporary court injunction sought by Shell, forbidding them to interfere with work being undertaken by Shell on their land.

campaigns of resistance against these proposed threats to their land, water ways and livelihoods. In this regard, educator and researcher Tracey Ollis' theorization of 'lifelong' and 'accidental or circumstantial' activists is useful in demonstrating the approaches, alliances and forms of social capital that have been central to the strategic evolution of Leitrim's anti-fracking campaigns.

For Ollis, the critical ontologies of 'lifelong' activists are 'developed incrementally' through their participation in activism over many years, across a 'broad base of community issues and social movements' (Ollis, 2012: 6). Leitrim's so-called 'lifelong' activists (comprising, for example, some of the aforementioned British anti-Thatcher and German anti-nuclear activists) were able to draw on their past experiences and knowledge of how these things play out. They aligned and connected with similar anti-fracking campaigns across Ireland and internationally, showed solidarity by travelling to attend protests abroad, and by inviting prominent activists to Leitrim to speak publically about their own campaign activities. The contributions of artists and musicians, who have fundraised with concerts and art auctions and brought music, colourful banners and large numbers to protests, cannot be underestimated.

Conversely, Leitrim's 'circumstantial' or 'accidental' activists, who, according to Ollis often participate in protest or become engaged in activism through a series of life circumstances, have drawn on their own social networks. These networks include local business contacts, the farming community, as well as fishing, hill walking and outdoor pursuits clubs, to lobby local councillors and give voice to wide-spread resistance across the county. In Part One, Chapter One, I discussed in detail the Communities of Practice and informal learning taking place in the Leitrim context. It is my tentative view that these two distinct strands of activism might not have aligned so readily, had it not been for the informal educational networks that have made them so visible to (and accepting of) one another over a number of years, prior to the fracking threat. It could be argued that Leitrim's anti-fracking movement itself has become a 'community of practice', because it has involved so much situated learning and the rapid acquisition of skills and knowledge (on the scientific processes and

global debates surrounding Hydraulic Fracturing). Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals becomes equally pertinent when we consider the emergence of key figures within the anti-fracking campaigns who have come together to act as agents of social action and generate resistance through radical, informal learning.

Traditional Irish Music and the Landscape

Traditional music has enjoyed a huge revival over the last twenty years. In a high-speed world of mass consumption, this resurgence arguably represents a cultural shift, a backlash to modernity, and perhaps a refocus on the local and community. This very tension between the present and past, the new and the old, ignites an ongoing argument within traditional Irish music, namely, the influence of other genres (including modern or ethnic music) and the potential dilution of age-old regional styles. In spatial terms, these regional styles geographically locate Irish music within specific landscapes. In much the same way as we have different accents depending on where we come from, Irish music is divided into four distinct regional styles, with Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon being one of them. The characteristics of this style make it both recognisable and unique to this part of the country (Keegan, 2010: 63).

Irish music is distinct from other genres of music in the western world. As an indigenous music, it has been preserved through the oral tradition and historically has been passed down within small communities. As the world has opened up and expanded, so too has the transmission and function of the music, much to the annoyance of hardcore preservationists, such as Sligo flute player Seamus Tansey:

The mongrelisation, the bastardisation, the cross-pollination, the copulation of our ancient traditional music with other cultures, then I say we want none of it and I know I speak for thousands of traditional musicians, followers and music lovers up and down this country today. . . . I would sooner see our

music die completely in this generation than see it drip-fed by outside cultures treading the length and breadth of this land in the century to come (Tansey, 1996: 31).

Though not alone in holding such strong views on the issue, die-hard traditionalists like Tansey are in the minority. In my view, it seems counterproductive to select or favour a particular time in history and to decide to preserve the exact style or criteria from that day forward. This type of intervention denies natural growth and evolution. As outlined by Freire:

Growing to us is something more than growing to the trees or the animals that, unlike us, cannot take their own growth as an object of their preoccupation. For us, growing is a process in which we can intervene. The point of decision of human growth is not found in the species (Freire, 1998: 94).

While Tansey appears almost fundamentalist in his views, further examination of his perspective reveals strong links to the landscape, mysticism, religion and nature – themes which dominated my own findings throughout my three journeys.

[The music arises from] *the laws of nature and the law of the land, which in this case is the island of Ireland. The laws of nature are the environment and the creatures of that environment since Ireland first began. The singing of the birds, the ancient chants of our forefathers, the calls of the wild animals in the lonely countryside, the drone of the bees and the galloping hooves of the wild horses. The law of the land is the geographical location of the countryside, be it mountain, valley, forest or plain. The wind, the rain, the flowing river that shapes the mind and passions of our ancient forefathers inspiring them to harness all together the sounds of animals, minerals, birds and insects so as it moulded itself into a melody of Ireland's soul* (Tansey, 1996: 30).

Tansey's perspective relies heavily on imagery which roots Irish music firmly in the Irish landscape, however some have argued that the tradition is often 'couched in mythological metaphor' (Sommers, 1998: 132). Sommers also suggests that such viewpoints are perhaps 'located in the midst of antiquity', and broadly created 'as much of imagination as history' (Sommers, 1998: 132). However,

other theorists have implied that evocations such as Tansey's should not be dismissed, as they hold potent clues about the evolution of modern Western culture. In his book *Landscape and Memory* (1995), British art historian Simon Schama journeys through the 'garden of the Western landscape imagination' to examine a range of European and American ideas, environmental myths and allegories about the landscape. Landscape, Schama argues, is 'distinct from mere geography'; it implies the 'inclusion and active agency of humans in its appreciation and interpretation'. Various art forms therefore become expressions of the interaction of the human population and the geography it occupies. In this way, (real or fanciful) landscapes unique to each land 'participate in the creation of a national ideal, national memory, and according the Schama, the very 'idea of a nation itself' (Schama, 1995:6-7).

As an oral tradition, Irish Music has been used as way of preserving various aspects of Irish culture including mythology and folklore. Tunes are often named after specific regions – The Leitrim Jig is an obvious example. Descriptive imagery of the landscape is encountered, such as in the slip jig 'The Whinny Hills of Leitrim'. The tune 'Si Bheag, Si Mhor' (meaning Big Hill, Little Hill) was composed by Leitrim piper Turlough O'Carolan (1670 –1738). O'Carolan is believed to have been inspired by the folklore that surrounds two hills in Co. Leitrim, which are said to be 'inhabited by the spirits of ancient warriors whose mortal bodies lie entombed within the hills, from time to time these spirits revive their quarrel' (McCullough, 1987: 67).

Representations of the landscape feature heavily in literature, music, art, poetry, Celtic mythology and folklore, and build on the rich legacy of Bardic storytelling. The Bardic poets of medieval Ireland belonged to a hereditary caste and were political chroniclers, historical reciters and satirical observers of an aristocratic society. Many bards also functioned as seanacháí or storytellers, with a sacred duty to remember and keep alive the sacred myths and legends of their people. The Bardic tradition was intertwined with music, and it was said that without it, the bard lost half of their mystical powers (Rowan, 2003: 92).

Excavating Hidden Landscapes

Stories - and folklore in general - are inextricably linked with landscapes, overlapping them snugly, bound to them and colouring them like paint on a barn wall. They are a central means by which people organise their physical surroundings (Ryden, 1993:59).

In his book *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*, American scholar Kent C. Ryden reminds us that landscapes have an invisible layer; an ‘unseen component’, made up by ‘subjective experience, memory and narrative’. According to Ryden, our sense of place, consists of ‘deeply ingrained experiential knowledge’ and an awareness of our ‘communal and personal history’, which he suggests can only be revealed through story, both written and spoken (Ryden, 1993: 17). The narratives offered to us through this process reveal hidden landscapes which are not always ‘immediately visible, and which outsiders may not suspect the existence of – unless they listen and read carefully’ (Ryden, 1993: 17).

Early on in my research, I discovered that County Leitrim, in particular the mountainous region surrounding Lough Allen, has the highest concentration of sweathouses (steam houses used for the treatment of ailments) anywhere in Ireland – a fact anecdotally raised by An Dru-Fo-Cud during our walks through the wetlands surrounding the Shannon Pot. The earliest references to these sweathouses were made by the French aristocrat and travel writer Chevalier de La Tocnaye in his book *A Frenchman's Walk through Ireland (1796-7)*. De La Tocnaye noted that sweathouses, vapour houses or *teach alluis* (as described on 19th century Irish ordnance survey maps) were in common use on his travels around Ireland. He remarked that ‘wherever there are four or five cabins near each other, there is sure to be a sweating-house’ (Latocnaye, 1984).

Most likely fuelled by turf or wood, these sweathouses are common across many cultures and are similar to the native Indian sweat lodges, used for both spiritual ceremony and for the treatment of a wide range of ailments, primarily rheumatism, but also ‘sciatica, lameness, sore eyes, gout, skin disorders, psychiatric disorders, impotence and infertility’ (Bolton, 2014). Surviving records indicate that use of sweathouses was often a communal activity. Afterwards, ‘patients’ would take a cold plunge in the nearby water source – in this case, Lough Allen. The practice is thought to have dwindled across Ireland between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with wider access to modern medicine and the advent of dispensaries (Bolton, 2014).

The remains of over thirty sweathouses have been discovered around Lough Allen; however, given that these hemispherical structures were originally built against banks or sloping ground, they are virtually invisible on the landscape. In many ways, the small mounds that remain are ‘field monuments’ which attest to historic forms of dwelling in Leitrim.

Christian Hegemony⁸

My journey with An Dru-Fo-Cud revealed evidence of other historic structures visible on the Leitrim landscape, such as wells, cairns and dolmens and sites of pre-Christian worship and habitation. A Dru-Fo-Cud’s pagan insight highlighted not only the power structures of prevailing Christian ideologies, but also the process of conversion from one ideology to another. We tend to think of the conversion process in terms of the early medieval Crusades, which were bloody affairs, as cultures resisted Christianity. However, early Christian missionaries in Ireland focused heavily on the ‘similarities and continuities between Christianity and Paganism rather than the differences between

⁸ Christian hegemony is the pervasive, set of Christian beliefs, values, figures and institutions that pervade and dominate all aspects of society and everyday life.

them' (Dwyer 2011). This conversion was 'as much about continuity as it was about change', thus making conversion more gradual for the generations moving from Paganism to Christianity, and negating the need for the bloodshed seen in other European countries (Dwyer 2011).

However the burgeoning Christian hegemony gradually reframed pagan traditions and absorbed them into Christian rituals, before erasing their pagan roots completely (Lippert 2012: 32). Despite a lack of real historical evidence confirming St Brigid's existence, the story of Brigid attests to the willingness of early missionaries to absorb pagan culture and traditions. Brigid's pagan festival of ImBolc (held on the first of February to celebrate the arrival of spring) eventually became St. Brigid's Day (celebrating the renewal of the Virgin Mary) and so the 'transformation of the pagan Goddess into a Christian saint was complete' (Greene, 1995: 434).

CHAPTER TWO: THE JOURNEYS



Journeys Preamble

In many ways, each of my three journeys was a quest for knowledge, permeated with my own reflective inquiries, which sought to make visible forms of knowledge which are embedded in, or triggered by, the Leitrim landscape (e.g. habitation, self-sufficiency, energy production, pre-Christian rituals, counter-urbanism, and activism). Examining the links between landscape and knowledge became an open-ended inquiry which was manifested through several speculative journeys, solo and accompanied, by boat and on foot. I did not know exactly what I was looking for, and could not have anticipated the rich and diverse forms of knowledge, past and present, that I would encounter along the way.

Journey One

Journey One explored the region surrounding the Shannon Pot, the traditional source of the river Shannon. Accompanied by a local folklore expert (An Dru-Fo-Cud), I walked the landscape documenting the cairns, ring-forts, dolmens and wells. My guide told me about pre-Christian traditions, rituals and town-land names, as well as some of the local history, folklore and mythology. As a seanacháí, and file (traditional Irish story-teller and poet) he allowed me to record some of his stories and a poem he had prepared. Extracts of these recordings have been used as part of the soundtracks in films one and three, and I have used parts of the transcript within my writings of Journey One. I feel it is important to honour his unique knowledge, document the authenticity of the experience and preserve his words truthfully.

Excavating former systems of knowledge became a recurring theme across Journey One, with remnants of pre-Christian civilisations evident in the sweatlodges dotted around the shores of Lough Allen, and the former pagan settlements surrounding the Shannon Pot. The source of Ireland's

longest river proved to be a site of rich mythology, reflecting the preservation of history through the narrative tradition. Stories from the Fenian Cycle of Irish folklore permeated this journey, from the Salmon of Knowledge to mythological figures including Diarmuid and Gráinne (who hid in a forest near the riverbank) and Sionann, granddaughter of Lir, who went to Connla's Well in search of wisdom and drowned, giving the great river its name. The later influx of Christianity in Ireland remains highly visible on the landscape, from the churches, grottos and religious effigies I observed on my walks, to the Christian place names which feature on my Ordnance Survey maps.

Journey Two

Journey Two involved an expedition by boat down the full length of Lough Allen accompanied by two musician friends, Rodney Lancashire and Patrick Carayannis who are also former graduates of Drumshanbo's Traditional Irish Music course. We travelled to the island of Inishmagrath where our conversations turned to homelessness, sustainable living and energy production. We later composed a piece of music in response to our journey which provides the soundtrack for my second short film.

I used the theme **dwelling** for this second journey as an umbrella term to prompt reflection on the ways in which landscapes are inhabited and culture develops. As an indigenous music, traditional Irish music has its own dialect, and spatiality is used as a means to classify this music based on regional styles. Leitrim's town-land names, geographical features and historic tales of emigration are preserved through music and song. In addition, the eco-homes, organic farms and wind turbines that dominate the horizon over Lough Allen denote considerable communities of practice that emerged in rural Leitrim during the 80s and 90s following an influx of migrants who brought with them the knowledge and skills for off-the-grid living.

Journey Three

Journey Three was carried out alone, by boat from Drumshanbo to Leitrim VEC's Sound Engineering course in Cootehall on the banks of Lough Drumharlow in Co. Roscommon, where I recorded the piece of music composed during Journey Two. In many ways this journey signifies my own cultural crossing between the two counties of Roscommon and Leitrim. It was a reflective journey which allowed me to really think about the industrial and political history of the region whilst reflecting on the recurrent themes of the previous two journeys.

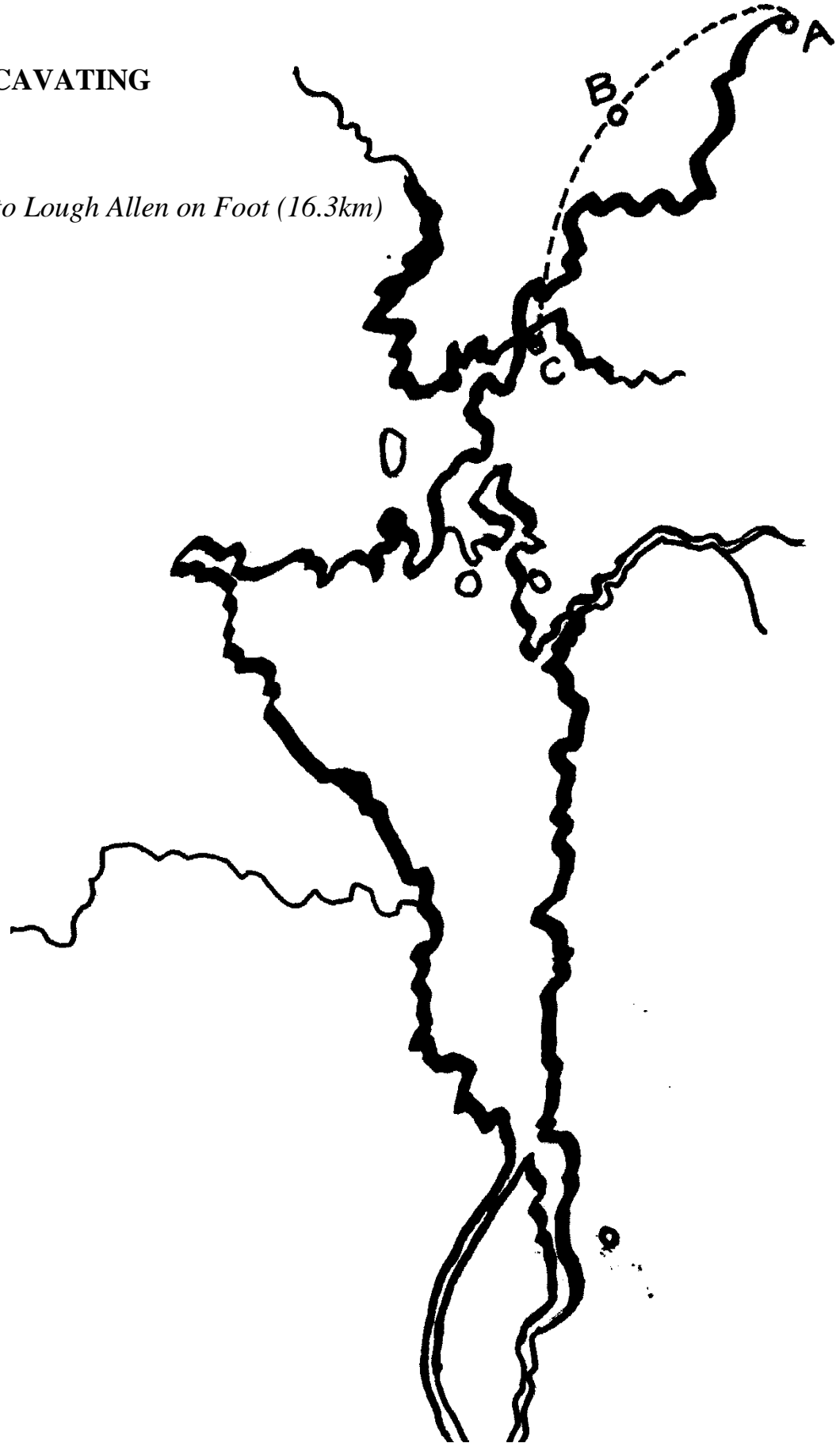
In a region so reliant on the natural landscape and unspoilt waterways, it is unsurprising that there has been such stringent opposition to proposals seeking to explore the potential for Hydraulic Fracturing in county Leitrim. Under the theme of **resisting**, this research tracks the legacy of activism in the region, evident in the multi-faceted anti-fracking movements, anti-water charges campaigns and mass opposition to the EU turf-cutting ban. As my research came to an end, it seemed fitting to visit the site of the former Pearse-Connolly Memorial Hall – a community hub built by Leitrim Socialist Jimmy Galton in the early 1920s. As a radical figure, Galton was deported from his own country and was written out of the history books, demonstrating the lengths a dominant culture will go to, in order to eradicate opposition.



Figure 9. Leaba Dhiarmuid agus Gráinne, Carrickbrannon, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

JOURNEY ONE: EXCAVATING

From the Shannon Pot to Lough Allen on Foot (16.3km)



Journey One

I met my guide in the town of Dowra at 9am on Easter Sunday. Over the phone we had made loose arrangements to travel from Dowra to the Shannon Pot in his car, leaving my own car behind. I would walk the 10km back alone following a route known as The Cavan Way – a scenic walk that begins in Co. Cavan and finishes in Co. Leitrim. The guide had been recommended to me by a friend. In the past, he had guided tourists around the ancient sites of Leitrim, Sligo and Cavan, but has taken a break from this now. He seemed very interested in my research, particularly the alternative forms of knowledge I was seeking. He asked that I refer to him in my writing as ‘An Dru-Fo-Cud’, meaning ‘The Undercover Druid’.

As we set off in his car, he announced that we would take ‘a slight detour’. After a couple of miles we parked on the side of the road opposite a narrow, tree-lined laneway. ‘Put your wellies on’ here he said. (Journal, 2016) We walked up the laneway and crossed some wetland. In front of us, in the corner of a field, were some standing stones:

An Dru-Fo-Cud: *‘Here we are in Carrickbrannan and town-land, standing at what was the remains of Court Cairn, wood, oak tree, hazel and holly... So, the old Irish name was ‘Leaba Dhiarmuid agus Gráinne’, and it’s where the lovers slept when they were on the run from Fionn Mac Cumhaill. But what’s interesting about this town-land is that it’s the centre of a tribal node: here behind us is a cairn, the burial mound of the ancestors’.*

With open hands, he gestured across the landscape:

An Dru-Fo-Cud: *‘There’s where the cairn was here, and we’re looking this way, and beyond the cairn is the Shannon. And just south of us is the sweat house and a ring-fort, but then north of here, beyond the cairn, is the cashel... and all these – the cairn, the cashel, the dolmen and the river – they’re all what was called a tribal node, or a tribal centre where you have the elements of the*

habitation point. So, what's interesting about Carrickbrannan, the town-land name, is that Brannan means a 'guardian', or 'protector', and this was a code that the druids used to describe themselves – protectors of the land and guardians of the rituals to do with the Shannon... I feel that this could be where the grove of druids lived in the cashel, worshipped at the cairn and dolmen, and also, when the time came, they went to Connla's Well (otherwise known as the Shannon Pot) for the rituals at the beginning of February, Brigid's day, and other ceremonies...'

Conor: *'Do you mean pagan ceremonies'?*

An Dru-Fo-Cud: *'Exactly. So, I feel that Carrickbrannan was the druidic centre in ancient times'.*

As we left Carrickbrannan, we spoke again about my research. Having just stood at the bed of Dhiarmuid and Gráinne, I realised the significance of these 'former knowledge systems' and once 'dominant ideologies', and how 'valuable' these contributions were to my research. (Journal, 2016) We travelled up a hilly road, stopping occasionally for me to document the landscape, and soon arrived at Tuber Well. My guide walked three times around the well, stopping to light a candle and some incense, and to turn some round stones – which he called 'clocha breacha' (the speckled egg stones) – in a clockwise direction (Journal, 2016).

An Dru-Fo-Cud: *'and what's interesting about this well is the town-land is called Tuber, called after the Well... St. Mary's Well. This is very significant, because Mary is feminine for a start. When Christianity came ... a lot of the wells, including Brigid's wells, were re-dedicated and given a male presence... not all of them, but that was part of the turnover from the matriarchal society, but this well kept its feminine aspect, Mary's Well... but of course you have to ask, in pre-Christian times what was its name? Was it a Brigit's Well or could it have been Sionann's Well? And the reason I say that is when you look at the map of Lough Allen and the [Shannon] Pot, there's not just one tributary, there's the Owenmore, the Black River, a whole series of rivers and springs, so when you look then, as Ireland is the earth mother and this river is the Goddess, you look at Lough Allen, and*

it's very shape implies a uterus... then you follow the uterus up and you come to the ovaries... on the right hand side is the Pot and on the left Tuber Well... Where we are now is the other ovary. You Understand? See the symbolism in that? The ovaries and the uterus of Lough Allen... Perhaps this was one of Sionann's sanctuaries; perhaps where the Carrickbrannan druids would go left and right... I believe that this could have been dedicated to Sionann and that these were her two ovaries. Interestingly, in the 1880's before the famine, this was celebrated on Pattern Day... in those days the Pattern Day was the biggest festival day, and as you know there was quite a bit of faction fighting, a bit of whiskey drinking and a bit of general carousing, while in amongst, the women kept the moral centre ground, they done the rounds (walking around the well in a clockwise circle) and kept praying... the men almost used it as an excuse, and some of the girls too, to meet boys, so it was a kind of riotous affair, and it was so riotous that the parish priest decided that's it, no more Mary's Day, it's just too pagan, or whatever way you look at it... too much sin as it was..

Interestingly enough, not long after – the year after or maybe the year after that, a flood came and the well overflowed... the river beside us completely obliterated the village; there were mudslides and landslides. The whole village had to relocate to Dowra... and that is the foundation of Dowra – Dowra didn't exist before this. So you have in pre-famine days, a priest stopping the pattern of an obvious shamanic ritual that was always done in time immemorial, even into Christian times when it was re-dedicated to Mary, and when it stopped there was landslides, mudslides and torrents of water and they all had to relocate. That's a true story and you can Google it...'

On the final leg of our journey towards the Shannon Pot, my guide asked me what I thought about the upcoming general elections. Like many people, he felt despondent. We spoke about 'awareness', and the notion that what we are offered politically is an 'illusion' (Journal, 2016).

Water bubbles up in this mystical place from a series of underground springs that originate in the surrounding mountains. With the water seeming to ‘appear from nowhere’, (Journal, 2016) it is easy to understand why it was viewed as a sacred site during pre-Christian times. My guide had brought six hazel tree saplings for us to plant. According to folklore⁹, there were originally nine hazel trees surrounding the pot, but only three remain. As we sat, he recounted the story of the Sionann which features in the soundtrack of my first film.

After we parted, I set off alone along a narrow winding road, reflecting on what had unfolded that day. I thought about the ‘richness of our conversations’ (Journal, 2016), the evidence of past empires and remnants of pre-Christian cultures that are still visible on the landscape. This made me consider the former dominance of the Catholic Church, particularly in the west of Ireland: the coloniser within. An Dru-Fo-Cud, with his vast knowledge of the past, refers to himself as a ‘druid’ and ‘lives a pagan life’. He has a deep respect for the ‘natural world’ and treats the ‘landscape itself as a god to be worshipped’ (Journal, 2016).

Please watch the first film, Journey One, now.

⁹The Salmon of Knowledge ate nine hazelnuts which fell from the nine trees surrounding the Shannon Pot. Five streams were said to feed from Connla’s Well, so perhaps these drained into the source pools of Ireland’s five greatest rivers. Connla’s Well was surrounded by the Nine Hazel Trees of Knowledge, which were said to fruit, flower and seed all at the same time. The nuts fell into the water and were eaten by Sionann. The Salmon of Knowledge also swam in the Boyne and tormented the Druid Finnegas by evading capture until Fionn Mac Cumhaill came along and ruined all his plans. It is not told whether Sionann intended to eat the nuts or the salmon, but in any case, it was forbidden for anyone but the king to visit the well. The waters rose up in a huge wave and carried the poor girl out to sea, where she drowned. Thus the River Shannon was formed and named after her’ (An Dru-Fo-Cud)



Figure 10. Religious Effigy, Tuber Well, Tuber, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

JOURNEY TWO: DWELLING

Lough Allen by Boat (14km)

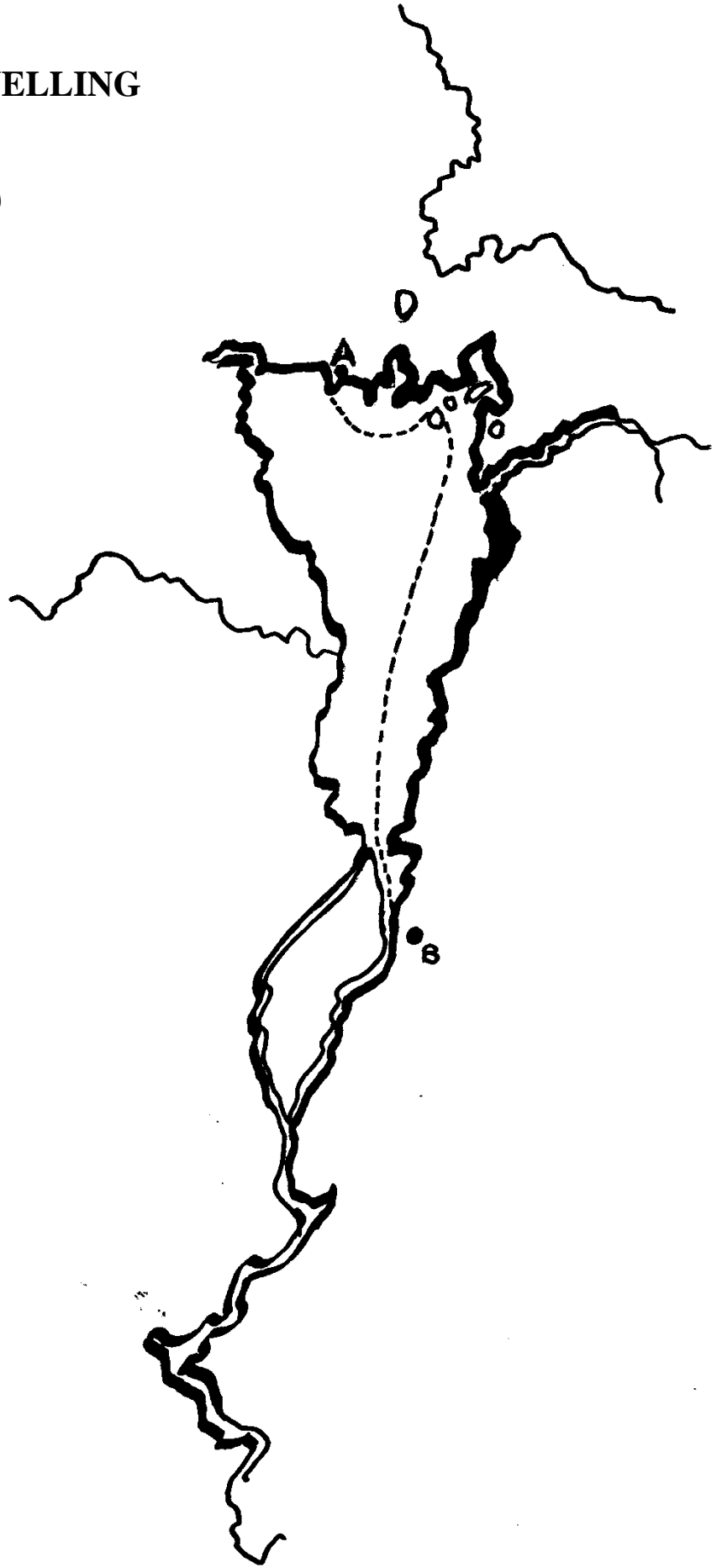




Figure 11. Patrick, Rodney and myself, Cory Strand, Lough Allen, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

Journey Two

The plan was to launch the boat at Corry Strand on the North East shore. Travelling out from the bay, we would take a hard left, towards the island of Inishmagrath where the Shannon flows into Lough Allen. The weather was of paramount importance: Lough Allen is ten Kilometres long and four kilometres wide with very little cover. It has a reputation for being extremely dangerous if the wind blows from the North or South, when calm conditions can quickly turn treacherous. I selected a day when light south westerly breezes had been forecast, as well as sunshine and little chance of rain. I was joined by my good friends and fellow musicians Rodney Lancashire and Patrick Carrayannis. Rodney and Patrick are also past students of the traditional Irish music course in Drumshanbo. After much preparation – route planning, boat safety and equipment – we set off.

Very little is known about the history of Inishmagrath Island or the derivation of its name. Interestingly, the spelling is the same as my own surname *Magrath* – a rare variation of the more common Irish clan name McGrath, derived from the Gaelic Mac Craith (recorded in written texts as Mag Craith, Macraith or Mag Raith), meaning ‘son of Raith’ (prosperity). In medieval Ireland, laymen were often appointed as hereditary wardens or ‘termoners’ to ‘protect’ and maintain churches and associated lands. The McGrath clan was one of the most prominent termoner families in Ireland at the time, so it is possible that the McGraths were termoners of the parish of Muintir Chionaith, and the island’s name evolved out of this appointment (Alwill, 2014).

Before reaching the island, I wanted to have a look at the mouth of the river, where the Shannon meets the first of the great lakes; however water levels were too low, and a pair of end of navigation markers signalled the end of this route. All was not lost: the inviting island lay slightly further out, just off to our left. The lads appeared excited and seemed to be really enjoying the experience. We heard the first call of a ‘Cuckoo’ this year, a sure ‘sign that spring’ has arrived and a ‘good omen for the day’. (Journal, 2016) We chatted about the weather conditions and they asked me about fishing.

I recounted some of the local stories I had heard about huge pike being caught in Lough Allen, including the 48 pounder reportedly caught in the 1970s by Leitrim angler Patrick Joseph Reynolds. We arrived on the beautiful shoreline of Inishmagrath. Although we had travelled for less than an hour, it was decided that this was the place to have lunch, but first we would explore the island. We tied up the boat and set off up the hill. Based on my research, I knew that the island had a church and was used as the main burial ground for the surrounding area until a church was built at Kilbride in the 1730s. I had been struck by descriptions of coffins being covered with sand on Corry Strand, and mourners waiting for bad weather to ease, in order to cross over to the island.

We came across a stone building and an adjacent little timber hut. A metal crucifix hung on the door of the hut alongside a bunch of fern leaves, which brought to mind the bundles of herbs and wild flowers historically pinned to front doors as part of Irish 'pisogues' (Journal, 2016), superstitious practices aimed at warding off bad luck and evil spirits. The main building appeared to have had some renovations done to it, but these were never completed. There were no signs of habitation or ownership. It was an odd mixture of new and old. Our conversations turned to building, dwelling and how you might sustain yourself living on an island. Rodney raised the subject of 'homelessness in our cities' (Journal, 2016) – something which had been widely reported in the media as reaching crisis point, due to mortgage repossessions and spiralling rent costs, particularly in urban areas. He said he would happily live on the island if he lost his home. There were many fallen trees, and firewood could be gathered. We talked about how people could be homeless when places of such 'beauty' and 'remoteness' like this exist (Journal, 2016). We headed on up the hill towards the peak and spotted what appeared to be a ring fort. As we drew closer we realised that the mound was in fact the fallen walls of the former church graveyard, which was overgrown with vibrant green moss. The ruins of the church had also been 'overcome by nature'; gnarly tree roots had pulled the 'structures apart and returned them to the earth'. We all remarked on the 'quality of the stone' (Journal, 2016). In what appeared to be some basic primordial instinct, the lads immediately

began to gather fire wood. I returned to the boat to fetch the sandwiches and flasks of tea. On my return, a small fire blazed within a neat circle of stones. As the smoke rose up into the tree tops, we sat eating and drinking and enjoying the moment. It felt like few people had been here before. ‘Why is that such a nice thought’ (Journal, 2016)? Patrick mused about a potential business idea, to bring paying tourists on day trips to places like this. ‘We could bring them out here by boat’ he said ‘do a bit of fishing and ‘then back to some pub for tunes’. (Journal, 2016) We were interrupted in our conversation by the squawking of birds. The smoke from our fire had disturbed a pair of cranes. They circled us above the trees ‘cawing loudly’, letting us know of their ‘displeasure at our uninvited arrival’. I recorded this primitive soundscape. I guessed they were ‘cranes’, but now I am not so sure. (Journal, 2016)

We decided to return to the boat and continue our journey, as it was already after three and the wind was gathering pace. We set off into a stiffer wind coming directly from the south, which blew straight at us, meaning I could navigate the boat with ease. As we passed down the east shore, the lads talked about the mountainous landscape that surrounds Lough Allen. Rodney remarked that it ‘looked like Colorado during winter time’ (Journal, 2016). Sligo’s Benbuben was behind us, Slieve Anierin was on our left and Kilronan Mountain was on our right. We were at the bottom of a massive valley which appeared to extend far below us, with the sonar unit on the boat indicating water depths of over 70 foot. We passed by the Lough Allen Outdoor Pursuits Training Centre, where ‘timber buildings’ and ‘brightly coloured boat sails’ attested to the rise of a strong ‘eco-tourism’ industry. The mountain ranges were peppered with ‘wind turbines’ (Journal, 2016), a common feature of the modern Leitrim landscape indicating an energy source that had proved quite divisive within local communities. Patrick remarked how they had ‘ruined the scenic view’, but for me they represent an attempt to harness renewable forms of energy. I pretty much accept their silhouettes as part of the landscape now. **Please watch the second film, Journey Two now. The original music composition entitled *Inis Magrath* is the accompanying soundtrack to the film.**



Figure 12. Outhouse, Inishmagrath Island, Lough Allen, Co. Leitrim (March 2016)

JOURNEY THREE: RESISTING

Drumshanbo to Cootehall by Boat (20.1km)





Figure 13. 'Save Our Land Ban Fracking', Co. Leitrim, Image courtesy of ©UTV Ireland.

Journey Three

My final journey took me from Drumshanbo at the southern tip of Lough Allen, to Drumharlow Lake, across the border in county Roscommon, just outside my hometown of Carrick-on-Shannon. Leitrim VEC's long-running Media & Sound Engineering course is delivered at Lake Recording Studio, situated on the banks of Drumharlow. I had arranged to meet Rodney and Patrick there to record the music we had written in response to the landscapes of Journey Two. I decided to take a detour on the way back from work in Sligo, and called at the Organic Centre in Rossinver. Over coffee in the adjoining Grass Roof Cafe, I flicked through the centre's 2016 Adult Education prospectus which proclaimed that 'the joy of the place is its quietness and beauty, and the friendly welcome of its staff and lecturers'. The theme for that year was 'Let's Grow Together'. From the window I could see rows of polytunnels which glistened in the sun and brimmed with fresh spring growth. Later, as I passed through Manorhamilton, I noticed that the town's bus stop was furnished with 'handmade wicker benches' (Journal, 2016).

Launching the boat on Lough Allen canal, I was reminded of the region's industrial past. Constructed in the 1830s in advance of the expected coal trade from the Arigna mines, the canal was used to transport coal by boat from Lough Allen to the Shannon and further afield. With the decline of this industry, the canal soon fell into disuse and now serves as a leisure route for cruisers and holiday-makers wishing to travel the upper-end of the Shannon system. Easter week is traditionally the start of the boating season. Throughout the winter, high water-levels restrict large vessels from passing under bridges, however by spring, cruisers once again travel the length and breadth of the Shannon waterways.

The Canal opened into Acres Lake and from there I travelled through Battlebridge and into Leitrim Village on the system known as the Shannon-erne waterway. Remnants of ‘Celtic Tiger excesses’, wild speculation and ‘property development’, were evident in the marinas, hotels, housing estates and apartment complexes located along the river banks. At one stage Leitrim had the highest rate of ghost estates in the country which had lain empty and unfurnished, however many of these appear to have become ‘occupied’. Is this a tentative indication of ‘recovery’ in rural Ireland? (Journal, 2016)

Travelling in my own boat, there was a real sense of ‘familiarity’ (Journal, 2016), as I fish this stretch of water regularly in summer and winter, from Leitrim village down to Lough Drumharlow. I know every little hole in the river, every variation in depth and some of the hot-spots where fish congregate at different times of the year. The official name for Drumharlow is Lough Eidin, according to the ordinance survey map, but I have only ever heard it called that by tourists. As I passed under the bridge at Hartley, there were six anglers fishing on the left bank, gently running their stick floats along the current searching out vast shoals of roach, which had left their winter homes in the warmer depths of the lake and had now come up river to spawn. I asked if they were catching, and an English voice replied something about it being a little too sunny, but added ‘a bad days fishing is better than a good day at work’ (Journal, 2016).

Tourism forms a vital part of the economy in the North West region. In many ways, Leitrim has successfully capitalised on the county’s unspoilt landscapes and waterways, promoting outdoor pursuits and water sports as part of rural Ecotourism campaigns. However the very real threat of hydraulic fracturing looms on this landscape. The chemical toxicity of fracking could wipe out everything that depends on this river. Just this week, we heard that The Department of Environment has been disbanded amidst reorganisation of ministerial roles, while heritage has been completely

dropped from government agendas. Our political classes cannot be 'trusted'. This is a terrifying time for Ireland. Where will 'resistance' come from and how can it be 'directed'? (Journal, 2016)

A few days prior to my journey, I had visited the site of Jimmy Gralton's hall for the first time, which is situated in the town-land of Effernagh, just outside Carrick on Shannon. Although there is little to see there except a commemorative plaque, I wondered why I had never visited it before. The truth is, I have only really become politically aware in the past few years, and this has led me to become interested in Ireland's (very patchy) socialist history.

'Drifting slowly' across the lake, carried only by a very 'gentle breeze', I thought back on my three journeys. I had spent the last two weeks walking and boating through these 'deep purple valleys' (Journal, 2016), following the majestic Shannon from its source, and down through the first of its great lakes, Lough Allen. I had no way of predicting how rich my encounters would be. From the history and folklore embedded in these landscapes to the conversations I had along the way, I feel I have 'connected with this place in a more meaningful way' (Journal, 2016).

Please watch the third and final film, Journey Three now.



Figure 14. Site of Jimmy Gralton's Pearse-Connolly Memorial Hall, Effernagh, Co Leitrim.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It could be argued that in order to situate ourselves meaningfully in the landscape, we must inscribe its surface with stories. The role of narrative in expressing national identity and a sense of place has historically been extremely important in Ireland. Across my three journeys, excavating former systems of knowledge became a recurring theme. These inquiries have asserted landscape not only as the primary site of knowledge creation, but also as a repository which holds and preserves knowledge and its historical contexts, thereby informing future generations.

There appears to be a strong stance of resistance in Leitrim, which acknowledges the county's geographical landscape, heritage and indigenous industries, as well as the cultural diversity and lifestyles of its inhabitants. This research has relayed the uniqueness of Leitrim and the politicising nature of living here, revealing tangible links between rural living and counter-hegemonic action. Grass-roots education has developed in Leitrim through informal learning in response to the needs of its own communities, highlighting the incongruence of the labour-market activation model currently dominating Adult Education under increasingly neoliberal agendas.

The French word for research, 'rechercher', comes from the root-word 'recerchier'; 'Parcourir en cherchant' meaning 'to travel through while searching'. With this research, it was important that I not only discussed epistemology as walking, but embodied the process through physical engagement with the landscape. I endeavoured to develop research methods which were authentic to my own experience, and in this regard I have been influenced by Freire's theory of praxis, which asserts the importance of putting theory into practice and learning by doing. In my view, alternative research approaches, including the authentic voices of storytelling, folklore and memoir, are being homogenised by western scientific knowledge and neoliberal logic. It is therefore important to continue to create ruptures in the way that research is imagined, delivered and discussed.

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Appendix i: List of County Leitrim Post Leaving Certificate Courses

The **Traditional Irish Music** course (QQI Level 5) is delivered in the Mayflower Hall – a building steeped in show-band and dancehall musical history, which is situated adjacent to the southern shores of Lough Allen.

The aim of this course is to give students a broad understanding of traditional Irish music as well as Irish song, dance and folklore. The main focus of the course is on practical experience, i.e. playing traditional Irish music on suitable instruments. All instruments and levels are welcome and no previous experience is necessary (Leitrim VEC, 2012: 12).

Leitrim VEC's **Media & Sound Engineering** course (QQI Level 5) is delivered in conjunction with Lake Recording Studio, situated on the banks of Lough Drumharlow where the River Shannon meets the River Boyle.

This course is offered as a practical introduction to sound engineering, meeting the needs of a range of learners following multimedia orientated courses and establishing a foundation for further studies. The course combines practical training and experience with theoretical appreciation. It meets a wide range of vocational needs through emphasis on responsibility, good work practices, creativity, effective communication and cooperation. (Leitrim VEC, 2012: 12).

The **Outdoor Recreation** course (QQI Level 5) is delivered in conjunction with Lough Allen Adventure – an award-winning outdoor pursuits centre situated on the eastern shore of Lough Allen. The centre's timber buildings blend into the local landscape and are powered through renewable technologies including solar, wind, hydro and photovoltaic electricity generation, reflecting the

centre's commitment to environmental protection and maintaining a low carbon footprint in their operations.

The course offers training in many skills including: canoeing, windsurfing, power-boating, hill walking proficiency, computing, communications, expedition and leadership training, safety and first aid (Leitrim VEC, 2012: 12).

Horticulture (QQI Level 4) is delivered by The Organic Centre in the small village of Rossinver, located in north Leitrim, near the south eastern shore of Lough Melvin, close to the border with Northern Ireland. The Organic Centre is Ireland's leading centre for education and information on organic farming which promotes organic living through learning gardens, educational courses, tours and workshops as well as community and school projects. On-site demonstration gardens include seven polytunnels, an orchard, outdoor gardens, ornamental beds and woodland. There is also a cafe and eco-shop which stocks seeds for herbs, vegetables and flowers. The QQI Level 4 course in Horticulture enables learners to gain skills and competence in establishing, propagating and maintaining a range of fruits and vegetables plants.

Appendix ii: Poem by An Dru-Fo-Cud

Noble named One of Legend. Lady Sionann,
Daughter of Loden, Son of Lir!
You are still free and very much alive.
Having grace and beauty you still sought wisdom ...
to drink the power from Connla's Well.
Your lifeless body was found down river,
at that old strand where two streams meet
Kincora, in the groves of Killaloe.
Ten years before the famine,
with mighty torrents and mudslides,
you drove the people from Tober,
to found the new town of Dowra,
because a priest forbade Well worship.
Great River... lifeblood of Inisfail,
you were cursed this winter for overflowing,
making hundreds homeless!
Be afraid people of Eire!
of waters creeping up your front lawn,
lakes where they've never been seen before.
But today, we have travelled back,
up along by your ovaries,
on secret paths above Lough Allen.
to re-instate your Sheila Na Gig..
and once again turn your speckled egg stones".
Is Mise,
An Dru-Fo-Cud.

Written and performed by An Dru-Fo-Cud, addressed to the Lady Sionann at the Shannon Pot.

Appendix iii: Transcript conversation with my grandmother Detta Metcalfe

Conor: So Detta, tell me about when you were a child, how come your old house, at the oak tree on Brian's land, how come it wasn't a part of your farm?

Detta: Oh you see that was Daddy's. He was a herd for the landlord. He got the cottage and grass for a cow, for looking after one hundred and fifty acres.

Conor: Grass of a cow?

Detta: Yeah, that's what it was called, it was about an acre. He didn't get paid. Not one shilling. The land commission gave him forty nine acres in 1939, that's why the house where I grew up is not on our land – that was never belonging to us. It went with his job. He was Fitzmaurice; he had over fifteen hundred acres. I remember, there was a bush down at the narrowest part of the river, between the lake that faces Camillus (her daughter's house) and the one above, I would walk down and pull the bush out of the gap and he'd ride across. And he never said thanks nor kiss me puss or aahh... (She laughs) I had to run ahead and open any gates. He would do his rounds once a week.

Conor: You said he was Fitzmaurice, was he anything to our neighbors Fitzmaurice?

Detta: Yes he was one of them, belonging to Peter Joe

Conor: Was he?

Detta: mmm... oh I gave Peter Joe an awful time about him; he said we were paid in bonds.

Conor: What does that mean? I know what bonds are but, what does he mean? Was he left Bonds in a will?

Detta: Yes remember that he had 100 and odd acres in Aughrim, the same and Carew, the same in Lissaville and the same in Kinnard.

Conor: He must have inherited all that did he?

Detta: Yes and he never would say thanks, I'd open the gate for him and he never wouldn't recognize [acknowledge] me, you were dirt. Father Gannon was in with me last month, he said, your father what's the most respected man in Roscommon, isn't that nice?

Conor: Yes, does Father Gannon remember him?

Detta: Yeah, yeah... Anyone had a yew lambing and she couldn't lamb, sent for Owen Mac and the same with cars, he was great that way. He was always on the road walking, to and from fairs, selling cattle.

Conor: Do you remember when the land commission was?

Detta: Who?

Conor: The land commission, when the land was divided up

Detta: I do

Conor: Do you remember what year it was?

Detta: 50 Acres I think

Pause...my mother interjects here:

“Your Aunt Mary worked for the Land Commission; she will give you any of that information...”

Appendix iv: Sample Maps

Journeys:



Appendix v: Music Notation

Inis Magrath

Patrick Carayannis, Rodney Lancashire, Conor Magrath.



Appendix vi: Consent Form

I agree to participate in Conor Magrath's research study, as part of his Masters in Community and Adult education at Maynooth University.

The purpose of this study has been explained to me fully.

I am participating voluntarily.

I am aware that Conor will be videoing, photographing and recording sound on our journeys, and if I choose to be involved, I give my permission to be digitally recorded in the above formats.

I understand that that my photograph and my voice/words may appear in both images and films that will accompany the thesis.

I understand that we will engage in the composition of a piece of traditional music, and I give my permission for it to be used in the film and thesis.

I understand that I will have full access to the final edits of audio, film and photographs, and can withdraw from the study in full or any part of it, without repercussions, at any time, before, during or after.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data prior to completion of the thesis, in which case the material will be deleted.

Signed.....

Date.....