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**Cultural glocalization or resistance? Interrogating the
production of YouTube videos at an Irish summer college
through practice-based research**

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of PhD

Huston School of Film & Digital Media

National University of Ireland, Galway

March 2017

Supervisors

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In Memoriam

Vincent Mac Dowell (1925–2003)

‘When I was a child, my father would recount how the power, wealth and status of the high priests in ancient Egypt derived from their ability to predict the annual Nile floods, essential to the country’s agricultural economy. The priests derived this knowledge from astronomical observations and a system for monitoring river levels, but hid it in arcane language and religious symbolism in order to maintain their power, and pass it on to their children. He told us this story in order to teach us to question the language the elites use in order to preserve their own privileges.’

This thesis document, pp. 95-96

DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted in two parts. The first part is a body of creative practice in film, and the second part is this written exegesis. The body of practice consists of the principal doctoral film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* together with two short precursor films, *Cochaillín Dearg/Little Red Riding Hood* and *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia*. These films are in the Irish language. A subtitled copy of the principal doctoral film (with subtitles in English) is included on the DVDs which accompany this written exegesis.

The films which form the body of practice, and this written exegesis, are the result of my own work and include nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the films or in the text. The final doctoral film *Dúshlán Lurgan* includes a number of short extracts from YouTube videos produced at Coláiste Lurgan, Indreabhán, Co. Galway, Ireland. These are used with permission, and indicated in the film. The precursor film *Cochaillín Dearg* includes footage shot and used with permission during performances of a school musical in 2011. None of this work has been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

Signed: _____

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Gaillimh

ABSTRACT

This thesis includes the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* and a written exegesis which reflects on the film's 'generative performance'. The film asks if making Irish-language versions of music videos in English at Coláiste Lurgan in Connemara can be understood as an example of the cultural hybridity described by Nederveen Pieterse (2004a) as evidence of cultural vigour, or if the phenomenon is better understood as an act of assimilation, by reworking cultural products in a hegemonic language (English) into a lesser-spoken language (Irish) that is threatened with erasure for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the increasing dominance of the hegemonic language in a globalized era. It also presents *prima facie* evidence of the impact of creativity and creative processes (including singing, music-making, dance and video production) on language learning among adolescent learners. The principal method of inquiry is through the production of an essay film that incorporates elements of self-reflexive documentary with ethnographic footage shot on location at Coláiste Lurgan during the summer of 2014. The master version of the film is in Irish, and a second version with subtitles in English is also available. Two short precursor films form part of the thesis and are included in the submitted body of film practice; these are *Cochaillín Dearg/Little Red Riding Hood* and *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia*. The written exegesis comprises a contextual analysis which situates the film in relation to the literature on practice-based research in film and the creative arts; the literature on the nature of the essay film; and academic discourses concerning cultural globalization. It also includes a critical reflection which examines the development of the creative approach during pre-production, production, and post-production, and focuses on how the structure of the final film emerged through processes of trial and error, and through 'rituals of making' (Kentridge, 2016). A number of theoretical questions arising from the study are analysed, and some implications of the research for public policy are discussed.

In accordance with the practice-based methodological approach adopted, the written exegesis is best understood in relation to the artwork produced during the creative research process. For that reason the reader is encouraged to view the film before reading the written text.

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Stiofán Ó Fearail, Keith Ó Briain, Jenny Ní Ruiséil, Daithí Ó Ruaidh, Cathal Ó Ruaidh, Kevin Soirtéal and Conchúr Ó Mórdha, combined with the interventions of *animateur extraordinaire* Séamus 'T-Rex' Ó Fionnagáin, serve as a reminder to educators everywhere that the teaching of a language can be a joyous and liberating activity. So too does the work of teachers Méadbh Ní Fhoighil and Úna Uí Dhireáin, and that of the former principal of Scoil Cholmcille primary school in An Tulach, Baile na hAbhann, Co. Galway, Philomena Uí Dhubhghaill. My thanks to them, and to the participants in the school's award-winning 2011 musical, *Cochaillín Dearg Ar Strae*, which inspired one of the precursor films. *Go mba fada buan iad ar fad.*

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT	3
1.2 THE RATIONALE FOR A PRACTICE-BASED METHODOLOGY	7
1.3 CONCLUSION	9
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1 DEFINITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION.....	11
2.2 THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT.....	13
2.3 CULTURAL AND MEDIA GLOBALIZATION	16
2.4 HYBRID CULTURE	19
2.5 THE GROWTH OF ‘GLOBAL ENGLISH’	21
2.6 CONCLUSION	25
3 THE ESSAY FILM.....	28
3.1 THE ORIGINS OF ESSAY FILM.....	29
3.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-WAR ERA.....	31
3.3 THEORETICAL ISSUES	34
3.4 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES.....	37
<i>Globalization and Essay Film.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Performing the Self: autobiographical and autoethnographical elements in essay film</i>	<i>40</i>
3.5 CONCLUSION	45
4 METHODOLOGY.....	48
4.1 WHAT IS PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH IN THE ARTS AND MEDIA?	48

4.2 WHY A PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH TO A STUDY OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION?	52
4.3 THEORIZING OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PRACTICE.....	55
4.4 CONCLUSION	58
5 CRITICAL REFLECTION	64
5.1 PRE-PRODUCTION: THE SLOW GESTATION OF AN IDEA	65
5.1.1. <i>Cochailín Dearg</i>	68
5.1.2 <i>Aisling san Áis</i>	71
5.1.3 <i>Finding a filmic 'universe'</i>	76
5.1.4 <i>Ethical considerations and approach to ethnographic fieldwork</i>	80
5.2 PRODUCTION: THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE SHOOT	83
5.3 POST-PRODUCTION: DISCOVERY THROUGH EDITING AND THE STRUGGLE FOR COHERENCE.....	86
5.4 CONCLUSION	93
6 CONCLUSIONS	97
6.1 THE MAKING OF IRISH-LANGUAGE VERSIONS OF POPULAR SONGS IN ENGLISH IS A POLYSEMIC PROCESS THAT INDICATES BOTH RESISTANCE TO AND ACQUIESCENCE WITH PROCESSES OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION	100
6.2 THE PRACTICE REVEALS NEW KNOWLEDGE AS TO THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING	104
6.3 THEORETICAL INSIGHTS	105
<i>Cultural globalization and hybridity theory</i>	106
<i>Theorizing documentary practice</i>	107
6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY	108
<i>Implications for the funding of creative filmmaking</i>	108
<i>Implications for Irish-language funding</i>	109

6.5 CONCLUSION	110
REFERENCES	112
APPENDICES	128

LIST OF APPENDICES

RELEASE FORM FOR SHOOT	129
OVERALL EDITING SCRIPT OF FILM.....	130
IRISH VOICE-OVER SCRIPT	134
FRENCH VOICE-OVER SCRIPT.....	139
SCRIPT FOR SUBTITLES (FRENCH VOICE-OVER).....	145
‘REEL ART’ FUNDING APPLICATION	150
TG4 FUNDING APPLICATION.....	164

1 INTRODUCTION

The spread of English as a global language since the end of World War II, in the context of the rapid growth of international communications in an increasingly globalizing world, has been a focus of research within the academy in recent years (see Chapter Two). The more recent impact of digital media on this phenomenon, and in particular that due to the ready availability of contemporary music videos in English to young speakers of minority or lesser-used languages such as Irish, has not yet received the same attention. These cultural products are attractive to young people, as they are frequently made to a very high standard, with professional sound and video production values, using well-known celebrity artists from the United States and elsewhere, and backed by well-financed international marketing campaigns as part of concentrated efforts to monetize them. Given the increasing centrality of digital media in the lived experiences of young people, it is reasonable to ask if the ready availability of these products has contributed to a perceived acceleration in the decline of such lesser-used languages in recent years, particularly in the traditional heartlands where they are spoken as community languages.

It is beyond the scope of this practice-based research project to attempt a detailed sociolinguistic examination of such a broad question. It does, however, offer a useful contextual device with which to frame an artistic and intellectual engagement with the complex interplay between globally popular cultural products in the English language, and efforts to promote the learning and use of the Irish language among

teenagers in Ireland. A case history of that nature may be seen as a means of examining, through film, wider issues about the impact of globalization on cultural and linguistic minorities. This was the general aim of this research project, and led to its title: 'Cultural glocalization¹ or resistance? Interrogating the production of YouTube videos at an Irish summer college through practice-based research'.²

The central mode of investigation is through the production of an essay film that incorporates elements of self-reflexive documentary with more autoethnographic and poetic reflections. The main research outcome is the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge*, which is situated in the context of a broader 'generative performance' that includes two short precursor films - *Cochaillín Dearg/Little Red Riding Hood* and *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia*. The main film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* is based entirely on footage shot on location during a three-week language learning course in July-August 2014 at Coláiste Lurgan, an Irish-language summer college in Connemara in the west of Ireland. A key activity during the course was the production of high-quality music videos in Irish by staff and students, which were subsequently uploaded to the college's YouTube channel, TG Lurgan. Accordingly, the research question at the heart of this doctoral thesis is the following:

Does the production of Irish-language versions of popular US music videos in English represent an act of resistance to cultural globalization, or is it a surrender to that process, a form of localized appropriation³ in which dominant global cultural forms are internalized and reworked in a minority language?

1 'Glocalization' is a relatively new neologism, combining the words globalization and localization, and first came into use in the late 1980s. According to Robertson (1997), glocalization 'means the simultaneity – the co-presence – of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies'. It is frequently used to describe efforts by multinational conglomerates to tailor their products to local tastes. Examples of glocalization in the fast food industry include the sale by McDonalds of McVeggies instead of hamburgers in India, a country in which the cow is sacred; or Chicken SingaPorridge in Singapore; or Seaweed Shake Shake Fries in Hong Kong.

2 Every summer thousands of teenagers from all over Ireland attend three-week Irish-language summer courses in scores of small language colleges in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking areas), mostly along the west coast. Most combine language learning with a wide range of activities.

3 According to Thompson (1995: 173-74), 'localized appropriation' refers to the manner in which symbolic and cultural products are received or appropriated by individuals in a specific locality at a specific time: 'The appropriation of media products is always a localized phenomenon, in the sense that it always involves specific individuals who are situated in particular social-historical contexts, and who

In accordance with the practice-based methodological approach adopted (see Chapter Four), the written part of this thesis submission should be read as an exegesis that is best understood in relation to the artwork produced during the creative research process (see also the rationale for a practice-based approach in section 1.1.3 below). Both the film and the written document were produced and informed by each other during a series of iterative cycles of theorizing, production, and critical reflection. For that reason the reader is encouraged to view the film *before* reading the document.

1.1 Historical and Contemporary Context

The relationship between the Irish and English languages and their speakers has been a source of conflict in Ireland since at least the middle of the fourteenth century, when the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366 proscribed the use of the Irish language and customs among Anglo-Norman colonists, in an attempt to stem their growing gaelicisation and prevent the dissolution of English laws and customs. Successive colonial administrations in subsequent centuries attempted to bolster the status and influence of English as the language of the ruling elite, but the decline of Irish as a spoken vernacular did not gather pace until the turbulent years of the nineteenth century. The use of Irish declined rapidly during that century, helped in no small part by the ravages of the Great Famine and the mass emigration that followed; but also by the establishment of a national school system whose mission was, in part, to propagate the English language in Ireland. To this end pupils were beaten for speaking Irish in class, and the following verse was printed in school readers and taught to generations of Irish schoolchildren:

draw on the resources available to them in order to make sense of media messages and incorporate them into their lives. And messages are often transformed in the process of appropriation as individuals adapt them to the practical contexts of everyday life. The globalization of communication has not eliminated the localized character of appropriation but rather it has created a new kind of symbolic axis in the modern world, what I shall describe as the axis of globalized diffusion and localized appropriation. As the globalization of communication becomes more intensive and extensive, the significance of this axis increases. Its growing importance attests to the dual fact that the circulation of information and communication has become increasingly global while, at the same time, the process of appropriation remains inherently contextual and hermeneutic.'

I thank the goodness and the grace

Which on my birth has smiled

And made me in these Christian days

A happy English child (Taylor, 1810).

In 1893 Douglas Hyde and other scholars set up the Gaelic League with a mission to reverse the relentless decline of Irish as a vernacular language. It went on to become the largest grassroots cultural movement of its kind in Europe in the early twentieth century: by 1913 the Gaelic League had an estimated 1,000 branches and 100,000 members (Johnson, 1997: 180). Hyde was the League's principal intellectual architect, exemplified in his seminal lecture *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*, which he read at a meeting of the Irish National Literary Society in Dublin in November 1892. His argument was meant 'not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people, for that would be absurd, but rather to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish, and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English' (Hyde, 1892: 1). He railed against what he saw as the narrow provincialism of Dublin at the time, and warned about the loss of a distinctive Irish identity if people continued to follow the latest imported and derivative fads and fashions: 'We will become, what, I fear, we are largely at present, a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation' (Hyde, 1892: 1).

Hyde, the son of a Church of Ireland rector from the west of Ireland, argued for an inclusive and non-sectarian ethos within the League, an argument he lost in 1915. The debate he started about the place of the language in Irish society continued to echo, however, through the decades of sectarianism that characterized both states on the island of Ireland for much of the twentieth century. It continues to resonate with more contemporary discourses about globalization, migration, multiculturalism and cultural hybridity, and may be summed up by a simple question: is the desire to safeguard and protect a weaker language and culture from the overwhelming force of English inspired by some kind of retrograde, atavistic and obsolete impulse, or is it an effort to reclaim memory and originality from the erasure wrought by more powerful external forces?

To put it in more contemporary terms, if the early decades of the twenty-first century can be described as a historical moment in which a dominant global culture is gradually taking shape, is this development something to celebrate as breaking down the narrow confines of xenophobic particularity and essentialism, a global melting pot from which new hybrid forms emerge and are constantly refashioned, or does it represent an unequal struggle for cultural hegemony between those with access to money, power and technology, and those whose access to such resources is more limited?⁴

It is a tenet of this thesis that such power relationships have been underplayed in much of the contemporary academic literature about globalization and culture, and that nowhere is this question more germane than in the music industry. Across most of Europe, Asia and the Americas, young people listen to popular music that generally conforms to a narrow range of criteria as regards style, rhythm, melody and lyrical content, often with lyrics in American English that champion the virtues of conspicuous consumption, materialism, or sex.⁵ According to Kang (2015: 1-5), some US recording artists take part in a process in which they accessorize superficial aspects of other cultures as part of an effort, whether conscious or otherwise, to monetize the 'Other' by posing as something different, rebellious, or 'ethnic', while the ultimate impact of their efforts is to contribute to the creation of an increasingly homogeneous cultural landscape. He cites two examples of cultural appropriation in contemporary popular culture. When Miley Cyrus brought twerking to the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards she staged what he describes as a 'hypersexual' reinterpretation of a form of dance that was originally intended as a form of celebration, and that can be traced back to the

4 There are, of course, differing and opposing views in the academic literature as to whether or not a single or dominant global culture is emerging. For more on this see Chapter Two.

5 The tongue-in-cheek anti-consumerist lyrics of Janis Joplin's 1970 song *Mercedes Benz* ('Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz? [...] Oh Lord, won't you buy me a color TV? [...] Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the town? [...] I'm counting on you, Lord, please don't let me down/ Prove that you love me and buy the next round') may be contrasted with those of Gwen Stefani, whose 2004 song *Luxurious* ('Champagne kisses, hold me in your lap of luxury/ I only want to fly first-class desires, you're my limousine') may be read as a paean of praise to materialism. Other contemporary artists such as Britney Spears forge explicit links between sexual and financial exploitation: her 2007 song *Gimme More* ('I just can't control myself/ They want more?/ Well, I'll give them more/ Gimme gimme more, gimme more, gimme gimme more') features the singer performing a pole dancing routine while dressed as a stripper. Madonna takes a different approach in her 1990 song *Hanky Panky*, whose sadomasochistic theme is based on a girl who celebrates the pleasures of a 'good spanky' as the cure for her ills.

Mapouka dance from the Ivory Coast. According to Kang, this modern reinterpretation now dominates mainstream consciousness, in a form of cultural erasure that is ultimately racist:

It is possible to celebrate a culture, but relying on racist stereotypes and mimicking its traditional dances is not the way to do so. Whether she likes it or not, Miley has been branded as the face of twerking, and she continues to reap the lucrative benefits of appropriating Black culture (Kang, 2015: 4).

Another example cited by Kang features the Australian white rapper Iggy Azalea, who wore traditional Indian dress, including saris and bindis, for a Bollywood dance sequence in her *Bounce* video in 2014, while singing in what Kang describes as her ‘signature Southern Black drawl’ – simultaneously appropriating elements of Indian and Black culture:

If you’re wondering why a white Australian female transforms into a Southern Black rapper when the music starts, the answer is pretty clear: it sells. In January, Iggy Azalea passed Lil’ Kim as the female rapper with the longest-leading number one single on the Billboard Hot 100. What this tells us about contemporary American culture is that Blackness sells, no matter who is selling it. In fact, Blackness does not sell *despite* white people being the face of it... it sells *better* when white people are the face of it. This was shown when Macklemore won the Grammy for Best Rap Album in 2014 over four Black artists (Kang, 2015: 5).

A contrary point of view was advanced by Luke Gibbons in his 1996 collection, *Transformations in Irish Culture*. According to Gibbons, ‘modernization is not solely an external force, but also requires the active transformation of a culture from within, a capacity to engage critically with its own past’ (Gibbons, 1996: 3). Gibbons drew on postcolonial and postmodern cultural theory to argue that the Irish should embrace ‘post-colonial strategies of cultural mixing, that is, embracing notions of hybridity and syncretism rather than obsolete ideas of nation, history or indigenous culture’ in order to understand the complex and diverse nature of Irish identity (1996: 171). In a later passage, Gibbons argued that ‘hybridity need not always take the high road: where there are borders to be crossed, unapproved roads might prove more beneficial in the long run than those patrolled by global powers’ (1996: 180).

This research project is rooted in such debates, and in a desire to travel the 'unapproved roads' in the borderlands where differing stances about cultural appropriation, assimilation and homogenization are contested.

1.2 The Rationale for a Practice-Based Methodology

Methodological issues were a major preoccupation during the early years of this doctoral programme. This is not unusual in practice-based research in the arts and media, not least because of its relative novelty, but also because of the unstable and contested nature of such research within the academy. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, however, it can be summarized as leading to a decision to adopt a 'generative performance' approach (Bell, 2006, and Davies, 2004), in which an examination of the creative process of making art is used as a methodological framework for a practice-based doctorate integrating practice and theory in iterative cycles of theorizing, production, and critical reflection.

The rationale for adopting this practice-based approach to an investigation into the possible impact of cultural globalization on minorities draws on the importance of the visual in contemporary culture. Visual representations, and media in general, are key sites where issues of identity, language and culture can be investigated in the social world, and where particular power relationships can be understood and analysed. This is especially true of minority-language communities, whose media play a key role both in language transmission and in establishing the status and legitimacy of the language among its own speakers and in the wider community.

Drawing on the work of Candy (2006), Leavy (2009), and Freeman (2010), this research project in digital media was designed to 'adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined' (Leavy, 2009: 2-3). According to Leavy (2009: 217-219), visual art has the potential to reveal subjugated perspectives and intervene in historically oppressive processes of representation. This is because 'where struggles over identity and representation are played out, visual culture is a space of contention where ideas of normalcy are created, and out of which the idea of the "Other" emerges' (Leavy, 2009:

221). For this reason, practice-based work in film and digital media can be useful in examining how cultural products in a dominant global language, such as English, can help shape and influence identities and cultural forms in a lesser-used language, such as Irish.

In her 1995 book, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, the American author, feminist and social activist Gloria Watkins, who is better known by her pen name, 'bell hooks', details a number of macro contexts in which struggles over representation may occur.⁶ She suggests that the use of visual art in social research may appeal to researchers working from feminist, postcolonial and other critical perspectives. In a key statement, hooks writes: 'Representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed people asserting subjectivity and decolonization of the mind' (1995: 3).

Further inspiration was found in the 2016 compilation *Mind the Gap! Working papers on practice-based doctoral research in the creative arts and media*, edited by Desmond Bell with assistance from Rod Stoneman, Alan Grossman, Anthony Haughey and Cahal McLaughlin. In particular, Bell and Stoneman's claim that 'the autonomous aspects of art reinforce the notion of aesthetic activity, both process and product, as subversive', and their insistence that 'criticality can take many different forms' (Bell and Stoneman, 2016: 22) encouraged the researcher to persist in his exploration of the 'unapproved roads' mentioned earlier. Their plea for a more eclectic and pluralistic approach to epistemological issues is succinctly captured by the following remark:

Certainly it often seems to us that the parts of the natural sciences and the social sciences are moving much closer to the creative arts disciplines - whether in the acknowledgement of the role of intuition and creative play in the generation of hypotheses and basic concepts with regards the physical world, or by the incorporation into the qualitative methods of the social sciences of performative and constructivist strategies significantly influenced by arts practice (Bell and Stoneman, 2016: 22-23).

⁶ Gloria Watkins adopted her great-grandmother's name 'bell hooks', and put the name in lowercase letters for ideological reasons, and also to distinguish herself from her great-grandmother.

1.3 Conclusion

In summary, this practice-based approach to a research project in film and digital media aimed to investigate issues concerning globalization, media and culture in the particular contexts of Ireland. These contexts include the historical experience of colonization, which led to the near-loss of the Irish language and its displacement in dominant discourses by the language of the colonizer. They also include the contemporary cultural and economic context, where successive governments in the Republic of Ireland since the 1950s have embraced globalization as a central tenet of economic policy, and where a process of liberalization in social policy has gathered pace since the early 1970s.

The written part of this practice-based research project consists of an exegesis whose purpose is to illuminate and clarify aspects of the 'generative performance' of conceiving, researching, shooting and editing an hour-long essay film which interrogates the production of YouTube videos at an Irish summer college, as a means of investigating wider questions of culture, globalization, and identity. Accordingly, in Chapter Two the doctoral research is contextualised in terms of the academic literature concerning globalization and culture. This is followed in Chapter Three by a review of the 'state of the art', in other words, a review of theoretical work on the nature of the essay film. In Chapter Four a number of methodological issues are addressed, while in Chapter Five an extended critical reflection is offered on the 'generative performance' mentioned above. The results and conclusions arising from the doctoral research are presented in Chapter Six. A number of key documents generated during the research programme are offered as appendices. While not essential for a full understanding of the research, these appendices offer a contemporaneous glimpse into certain critical moments during the elaboration of the practice, and may be useful to those who wish to pursue a more in-depth study of this kind of practice-based research.

As outlined earlier, the reader is invited to view the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* before continuing to read this document, in order to come to a full understanding of the doctoral research, and its contexts.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter some of the main concepts in the academic literature on globalization are discussed and analysed, using Martell's (2010) 'four waves' conceptual framework – the hyperglobalist, sceptical, transformationalist and discursive approaches to globalization theory.¹ The decontextualized position of some contemporary scholars is critiqued, and debates about media and cultural globalization are examined. A new interpretation of the discourse of cultural hybridity is offered, in the context of the global dissemination of the English language. Finally, the chapter concludes with an revisiting of the idea of nationalism as a nineteenth century construct, and it is argued that globalization is a contemporary construct with an ideational force, i.e. one that helps bring the concept into being.

Although they differ widely in emphasis, most theorists see the expansion of media and communication networks in recent decades as central to the emergence of

¹ These terms are analysed in more detail below, but can be summarized as follows: 'Hyperglobalisers' describe what they see as the increasing homogenization of the world under the global onslaught of US or Western cultural and media products, while globalization 'sceptics' stress the continuing importance of nationalism as the bedrock of cultural identity. 'Transformationalists' agree that globalization is part of a centuries-old historical process, but argue that its contemporary form is unprecedented because it involves transformational change in national cultures. The more recent 'discursive' interpretation of globalization emphasizes social reality as a construct, and argues that the discourse of globalization helps create it: the concept has an ideational force.

global flows or networks of information and cultural products, and to the compression of time and space that may result from these phenomena. An early proponent was the groundbreaking media scholar, Marshall McLuhan. He first coined the phrase 'the global village' in the 1960s, and although much of his writing was later criticised for its technologically determinist viewpoint, it has regained popularity in more recent years with the growth of the internet and digital media.

Hopkins (2002a) and Scholte (2005) are among those who situate the development of globalization in a broad historical context that emphasises the role of trade, although other drivers of globalization include migration, imperial conquest and slavery. One example is the ancient network of trade routes known as the Silk Road that began to be developed under the Han dynasty in China (206 BC–220 AD), and which eventually linked China, India, Persia and the eastern Mediterranean. Hopkins differentiates between what he describes as 'archaic globalization' (pre-1600 AD); 'proto-globalization' (1600-1800); and 'modern globalization' (post-1800). He stresses that many of the roots of globalization may be found in the East, and develops a concept of 'mini-globalizations' to describe developments in the internationalization of trade in specific regions such as Southeast Asia. Similarly, Scholte (2005) distinguishes between 'emergent globalization' in the period up to the eighteenth century; 'incipient globalization' (1850-1950); and 'full-scale globalization' in the post-1960s period.

2.1 Definitions of Globalization

Giddens (1990: 64) defines globalization as 'the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa.' He sees this as a 'dialectical process' in which the local transformation of global forms is as important as 'the lateral extension of social connections across time and space' (Giddens 1990: 64). Robertson (1992: 8) defines it principally in terms of a developing consciousness partly due to a perceived 'compression of space' in conditions of modernity. This compression is also sometimes described as the 'annihilation' of space (Harvey, 1991). According to Robertson, the instantaneous nature of modern communications, and the ability to travel long distances quickly in jet airplanes, blurs the boundaries between one place and another and

facilitates a growing sense of 'global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole' (Robertson 1992: 8).

Similarly, Waters (2001: 5) describes globalization as a process in which spatial constraints on economic, political, social and cultural life become less important. As people become more aware of this process their actions are influenced by it, which in turn reinforces the process. Holton (2005) talks of interconnection, interdependence and cosmopolitanism as salient features of globalization, while Held et al. (1999) propound a 'transformationalist view' in which the increasing speed and intensity of cross-border social, economic and cultural interactions is transforming societies into something new and unprecedented, and whose future development is uncertain.

A different view is propounded by Scholte (2005), who argues that we do not need the word 'globalization' at all, if it merely restates what has already been described by four existing terms: internationalization, liberalization, universalization and Westernization. He says that the internationalization of trade in goods and cultural products, and other forms of cross-border transactions, is not a new phenomenon and does not need the word 'globalization' to describe it. Similarly, the liberalization or removal of regulations and other restraints on the cross-border movement of goods, capital, labour and services – a process which has been ideologically driven by right-wing or neoliberal governments worldwide since the 1980s, and by international bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – can be more accurately described by the term 'liberalization'. Neither can globalization be described as 'universalization', a term which describes how certain products such as cars, tobacco, children's toys and firearms have become near-universal features of human societies, apart from those of the most remote indigenous tribes in the Amazonian rainforest and elsewhere. Although what has commonly been described as globalization is widespread, especially in more industrialized countries in North America, Europe, Japan and other parts of Asia, it has not achieved universal status and is completely lacking in many parts of Africa and Eurasia. Scholte also says that for 'globalization' to exist it needs to be more than simply Westernization, a term which encompasses the spread of Western-based capitalism and certain cultural and social values which accompany it. According to Scholte, Westernization existed before the contemporary concept of globalization emerged, in the forms of colonialism, Americanization and imperialism, and there is no need to coin a new term to describe it. He concludes, however, that a form of

globalization *does* exist, which he defines as 'supraterritorialism'. This is a new development, he says, because of the intensity and extent of the movement of peoples, processes of production, capital, communications and cultural goods in the contemporary era.

2.2 The Political and Economic Context

According to Martell (2010), some contemporary sociologists have separated the study of cultural globalization from its political and economic context. As a result, he argues, “their awareness of conflict, inequality and power in politics and economics becomes separated from the more benign, equal and cosmopolitan picture they have of culture”. He cites as examples of this benign and decontextualised view the work of Beck (2000, 2006) and Nederveen Pieterse (2004a, 2004b), while those who incorporate political economy and therefore power, inequality and conflict into their analysis include Bourdieu (1998, 1999, 2003a).

These contrasting approaches may be understood as an ideological faultline that separates Marxist or neo-Marxist viewpoints from the more benign neoliberal view of globalization as an inevitable and emancipatory force. Martell also warns against 'fetishizing the new' in recent perspectives on globalization. He is critical of writers such as Beck (2006) and Urry (2000) who champion cosmopolitanism as “more appropriate to a new global era requiring new perspectives to fit with a world in which cultures intermingle, where *foci* on the nation-state or capitalist economic power are too methodologically nationalist or economically determinist, where societies are no longer neatly bounded within national borders, and global identities such as human rights and hybridity are taking over” (Martell, 2012: 3-4).

Goldblatt *et al.* (1977) distinguish between 'hyperglobalisers' and 'sceptics' as a way of understanding globalization literature. These categories are sometimes used to refer to the first wave and second wave of globalization theory. Hyperglobalisers or 'first-wavers' describe what they see as the increasing homogenization of the world under the global onslaught of US or Western cultural and media products. They may be writing from either a left-wing or a right-wing perspective, but both neoliberals and

Marxists often agree on the *existence* of globalization, while disagreeing about its impact.

The second wave or sceptical view of globalization theory stresses the continuing importance of national cultures and the nation-state, although not denying the growing importance of international agreements and alliances, or the deracinated nature of late capitalism. According to Smith (1995), many manifestations of global or internationalized culture are shallow and weigh less than the attachment to national or local cultures, symbols, languages or identities that most of us carry around with us. They are simply not rooted in shared history or everyday experience.

A topical example of the phenomenon Smith refers to can be seen in the efforts of policy-makers and political elites in Europe to create a new transnational identity and loyalty to European Union institutions. Despite the best efforts of the EU bureaucracy, local attachments generally remain stronger than those relating to transnational symbols such as the EU flag. Indeed, the growth of nationalism and the re-emergence of ancient nations such as Scotland and Catalonia is a key feature of recent European history. Other sceptics such as Hirst and Thompson (1996) argue that there is little new in globalization, and that the relative proportions of international trade were higher during the *belle époque* at the end of the nineteenth century. In spite of all the rhetoric, they argue, globalization remains an unrealized ideal, and the world remains far from an integrated global economy.

In the late 1990s a third wave or transformationalist approach in globalization theory emerged. This is exemplified by the writings of Held *et al.* (1999), Held and Hirst (2002), and Held and McGrew (2003). It is a more complex and nuanced view than that offered by the hyperglobalists, and while it differs from the sceptics in some important aspects there are also some similarities (Martell, 2010: 31-33). Transformationalists agree that globalization is part of a centuries-old historical process, but argue that its contemporary form is unprecedented. Globalization involves transformational change in national cultures as they become infused with a great number of international influences and representational practices in areas such as food, fashion, film and media, music and even religion (the spread of Islam being an example of transformative change brought about by processes of globalization). According to

this approach, nation-states remain strong but are 'reconstituted' and subject to the mobility of capital and the norms of international law.

The fourth wave or discursive theory of globalization is influenced by post-structuralist, postmodern and social constructionist perspectives, and by Foucauldian discourse analysis. Proponents of this view include Scholte (2005), Cameron and Palan (2004), and Bruff (2005). These scholars emphasize social reality as a construct – what we think about the world and how we describe it shapes the way we experience it. Simply put, the discourse of globalization helps create it: the concept has an ideational force. We start to behave as if it is happening, and this can facilitate its construction during international negotiations such as those conducted under the auspices of the World Trade Organization. According to this analysis, the ideal of globalization is also facilitated by real and actual globalizing developments such as the internet and satellite media. They help create or facilitate diasporic, hybrid or deterritorialized identities that are held by people who may principally, but not exclusively, describe themselves according to widely divergent categories of identity, for example, as women, environmentalists, transsexuals or Islamists – identities which are not based on geographic or territorial units.

Martell sees the development of more plural and hybrid identities, made up of sources and influences from around the world, as a process which allows other things to develop – such as global governance (Martell, 2010: 38). This constructionist view of globalization may be considered further using an analysis of power relations. In order to develop this analysis he cites Bruff (2005), who draws links between the ideational or discursive approach of 'fourth-wavers' and the political-economy analysis of the sceptics. Bruff's analysis is grounded in an economic understanding of globalization, but takes a neo-Gramscian approach to its analysis. According to Martell, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci

wanted to get away from overly economically determinist understandings of the world by developing the idea of hegemonic ideologies that could mobilize people and dominate understandings of the world. In doing so, he rightly showed that ideas, and not just economics, are determinant. But he maintained his perspective of seeing these as linked to material interests and agents in

society rather than just being free-floating and unrelated to economic and political bases (Martell, 2010: 40).

In other words, according to Martell, globalization is indeed a 'myth' or an ideational construct, but special interests lie behind the promotion of that idea.

2.3 Cultural and Media Globalization

A central theme in discourses about the impact of globalization on culture and media is whether or not globalization has a homogenising force, that is, if it tends to lead towards the creation of single 'global culture' (Tomlinson, 1996). The impact of globalization on traditional or non-Western cultures is often cited as an example of such homogenization. According to this thesis, the impact is usually negative: mass-produced ersatz or inauthentic cultural imports from the US – music, film, clothing, lifestyle choices, even language displacing 'authentic' or native culture in many areas, to the extent that the high streets of Dublin, Dallas, Durham or Dubai begin to resemble each other in the choice of shopping and food outlets and the variety and style of produce available within them.

The homogenization thesis is described using a variety of labels, such as Cocacolonization (Wagnleitner, 1994); McWorld (Barber, 1996); and McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2007). According to this thesis, a homogenization of global culture is gradually extending across natural borders and creating new cultural forms and identities, primarily through the mass media. These new cultural forms generally foreground and celebrate the conspicuous consumption² of a variety of Western products (including film, television, music, the products of the fashion and cosmetic industries, cars and food), and what is sometimes described as 'youth culture'. Many of these cultural exchanges take place through the medium of the English language, cementing and reinforcing the dominant position of English in global discourse. The global reach of this internationalized consumer culture has grown exponentially during the past three

² The term 'conspicuous consumption' was first introduced by Thorstein Veblen in 1899 in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, and refers to competitive and extravagant consumption practices and leisure activities that are designed to indicate wealth and membership of the upper classes.

decades due to a wide range of technological and regulatory change that has facilitated the penetration of media products distributed by multinational media corporations. These changes include the invention and spread of satellite communications from the 1980s onwards, the invention and use of the internet, and a wide variety of technological innovations that have facilitated the global dissemination of media content.

In his 1996 book, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World*, the American political scientist Benjamin Barber argues that more and more people in more and more countries are watching the same kind of generic television programmes, much of which is produced in the US by US media giants. These include programmes such as *The Simpsons*, *CSI Miami*, *Sex in the City*, *Friends* and so on. This is not a new phenomenon, but it grew in intensity until the second decade of the twenty-first century, when the widespread availability of high-speed broadband disrupted television markets and facilitated the growth of new platforms such as Netflix. According to the 2008 Guinness Book of Records, the largest audience to date for a television series was for *Baywatch*. During 1996 more than one in every six people in the world, or 1.1 billion, watched the show on a weekly basis.

In short, there is some evidence for homogenization and the development of a global monoculture: the spread of McDonald's worldwide, the ubiquity of Coca-Cola, the commonplace experience of hearing pop songs in English being broadcast in public places throughout the world, regardless of the local linguistic or cultural context. This homogenization is particularly visible in the popular musical choices of young people: the cultural dominance of rock and pop from the US, Britain, Ireland and other mainly English-speaking Westernised cultures was evident at mass events such as the 2007 Live Earth concert, which featured over 150 musical acts (predominantly male, white and English-speaking) in eleven locations around the world and which was broadcast to a mass global audience.

Wallerstein (1990) and Hirst and Thompson (1996) describe globalization as a new or late phase of capitalism which seeks to develop new markets worldwide in order to achieve even greater profits. As part of this profit imperative the spread of a global consumer culture is essential, they argue, in order to undermine existing or 'traditional' cultural values which might resist the importation and dissemination of a culture of

conspicuous overconsumption. According to this Marxist analysis of globalization, the spread of a global consumerist culture through a process of homogenization and assimilation is a vital part of the whole globalization project, and to this end common material and cultural goods are developed for export and promotion worldwide, using the vast economic, political and cultural power of Western media and entertainment conglomerates to further this aim.

Not everyone accepts that cultural and media globalization exists. According to Ferguson (1992), the concept is a 'myth' which is used to advance a particular ideological end. Boyd-Barrett (1998) and Sparks (1998) describe the term as a cloak which disguises or obstructs an earlier term, 'cultural imperialism', which fell out of favour in recent decades as the neoliberal agenda swept through Western political, cultural and social institutions, including universities. The term 'cultural imperialism' originated with the decolonization process in Africa and Asia following the Second World War. The intelligentsia in many of the newly-independent states at that time understood that there were limitations to their political independence. The gross inequality in international communications and media was a central part of a process of 'neocolonialism', according to MacBride and Roach:

To the developing countries it was increasingly clear that the 'flow of information' (a term that seemed to subsume ideas and attitudes and followed a one-way direction from rich to poor countries) was dominated by multinational entities based in the most powerful nations [...] A number of nonaligned countries saw themselves as victims of 'cultural colonialism' MacBride and Roach (1989: 3).

This analysis was strengthened by Nordenstreng and Varis's comprehensive study of the international distribution of television programming, published by UNESCO in 1974, and by UNESCO's seminal MacBride Report, entitled *Many Voices, One World* and published in 1980. The report highlighted, among many other items, the gross disparity in the ownership of the international news agencies (from which most of the world gets most of its international news): AP and UPI were based in the United States; AFP in France, and Reuters in Britain.

Tomlinson (1991, 1995, 1996) and others including Boyd-Barrett (1982); Schlesinger (1991); Sinclair (1992) and Thompson (1995) have challenged the cultural

colonialism or media imperialism thesis from a variety of standpoints, including two central criticisms. The first is that the 'Westernization' concept is too broad and displays 'Western ethnocentrism' (Hannerz, 1991, Tomlinson, 1991, 1995). The 'West' is many different cultures, and has been itself described, somewhat controversially, as a 'creole culture' (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995: 54). The second objection is that culture does not transfer without change: it involves mutation, translation, adaptation. Nor is it a one-way transfer of culture from the West to the rest: the West is also open to cultural influences from outside. Although limited in scope as an example, Nederveen Pieterse cites world music as one example of this. According to Tomlinson (1991: 45-50) another weakness in the Westernization argument is that it does not take sufficient regard for the resilience of other cultures.

2.4 Hybrid Culture

Tomlinson stresses the need to take account of the 'context of reception' within which imported cultural products are viewed in the developing world. Although he acknowledges the trend toward cultural homogeneity, he says it is easy to forget that people construct their own meanings, to a greater or lesser degree, out of such imported products. In other words, hybridization, creolization and the ever-present tendency towards cultural heterogeneity will ensure that no single global culture or what he terms a 'global ecumene' will develop. He also points out that Western cultural identity is changing due to the influx of migrants, and describes this as a means by which the Other is absorbed from within. He admits, however, that the arguments against Westernization or the cultural imperialism thesis do not argue away the great disparity in power relations between the West and 'the rest' – he cites the power of Western media giants such as CNN, Time-Warner and News International as an example of this disparity. He concludes that there is a 'stand-off' between the two positions, a classic divide between the political economy and culturalist approaches.

It is worth considering these objections in some detail. The concept of the West as a homogenous block is, of course, absurd. To take one example: Ireland could be considered to be an exporter of Western cultural values and products, including what is described by During (1997) as 'global popular' products such as music by groups and singers including U2, Sinéad O'Connor and The Corrs. Yet its own history is very

different to that of former European imperial powers such as Britain, France or Germany. Its history of colonialism and cultural assimilation, including the adoption of the colonial language, is aligned much much more closely with the experience of developing or post-colonial nations such as India. The homogenization thesis has also been disputed by Nederveen Pieterse (2004a) as too simplistic. Nederveen Pieterse argues for a view of the globalization of culture as a process of hybridization – a viewpoint that reflects the shift to the transformationalist or 'third-wave' view of globalization discussed above.

Nederveen Pieterse and a number of other scholars, including Hall (1992) and Robertson (1990) have emphasised the resilience of native cultures when confronted by a neo-colonial cultural 'invasion' from abroad. What cultural globalization really means, they argue, is a mutual exchange and mixing of cultures in which people have increased choices, and are free to make what they will of the rich intercultural *mélange* available to them. Nederveen Pieterse describes it as a creative process in which elements of traditional native culture are 'creolised' in a hybrid culture, and argues that we need new conceptual tools to deal with this new reality:

How do we come to terms with phenomena such as Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam, Asian rap in London, Irish bagels, Chinese tacos and Mardi Gras Indians in the United States, or Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan? (Nederveen Pieterse: 1995: 53).

A weakness in Nederveen Pieterse's argument, however, is that it does not sufficiently account for imbalances of power in the relationships between cultures. Thus, a benign view of cultural globalization emerges, one of a pluralistic *mélange* of different tastes in food and clothing, music, architecture and so on. In this view, the resulting hybrid somehow encompasses the best of many worlds while losing none of the intrinsic value and richness of any. This view can be criticised as being too simplistic, because it fails to take account of the overall political, social or economic structures within which such exchanges take place. It can also be criticised for emphasising superficial aspects of cultural and economic exchanges at the expense of a deeper analysis: if commodity culture results in a wider choice of varieties of coffee in a Starbucks outlet, or olive oil from different countries is offered for sale in a large supermarket, how real or deep-seated is the apparent diversity on offer? In contrast,

while the earlier 'cultural imperialism' thesis may be somewhat naive and lacking in nuance, it can offer a useful starting point from which to begin to examine the dominance of western consumer culture in many parts of the world today.

2.5 The Growth of 'Global English'

Following the accession of Croatia to the European Union in 2013, the European Union included 28 countries and recognized 24 official languages in which EU law had equal effect. In addition, some 60 indigenous regional, minority or lesser-used languages are spoken in Europe, along with hundreds of other languages spoken by numerous immigrant communities. On the archipelago of islands which lay off the continent's northwestern fringe, four indigenous languages continued to be spoken: English, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh; while efforts to revive the use of Cornish and Manx enjoyed some modest success.

The EU's linguistic landscape evolved rapidly during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, driven by successive enlargements and changes wrought by globalization; innovations in communication technology and media; increasing intra-European mobility; and growing trade links both within Europe and with the wider world. Alongside formal and institutional commitments to multilingualism and diversity by EU institutions, the English language became increasingly prevalent throughout Europe in a wide range of arenas, including international business, EU administration, academia, the media, arts and entertainment.

The growing dominance of English within the EU and across the world has been the focus of research by a number of scholars in recent years. These include the Belgian economist and philosopher Philippe Van Parijs, and Mark Wise, the Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration Studies at the University of Plymouth. In his 2011 book, *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World*, Van Parijs argues that the spread of a common *lingua franca* is a process to be welcomed and accelerated, most fundamentally because it provides the struggle for greater justice in Europe and in the world with an essential weapon: a cheap medium of communication and of mobilization (Van Parijs, 2011). However, he adds that the resulting linguistic situation can plausibly be regarded as unjust in three distinct senses. Firstly, the adoption of one natural

language as the *lingua franca* implies that its native speakers are gaining cost-free benefits from the learning effort of others. Secondly, as native-language speakers have a natural competence in English they are in effect provided with a valuable commercial asset free of charge by virtue of speaking English as their first language, given the dominance of English in international business and science. Thirdly, the enhanced status and privilege given to English militates against the equal respect for other European languages and cultures that is described in EU institutional rhetoric as being at the core of European identity. Another question came into focus in the aftermath of the British vote to leave the European Union in June 2016: if the current status of the English language as an official EU language derives from UK membership of the Union, then does that status change if the UK leaves the EU? The future status of English within EU institutions is likely to be a subject of some debate and uncertainty in the years ahead.

In *Celebrating Linguistic Diversity or accepting an 'English-only' Europe?* Wise (2009) argues that to a remarkable extent the EU enshrines its principle of respect for linguistic diversity in its laws. For example, the Maltese and Irish languages (spoken by relatively few people, who live in bilingual states and who generally speak English with a high level of competence) are legally recognized as official EU languages. Wise contrasts these aspirations with the *de facto* 'geolinguistic reality' that English is becoming increasingly dominant as the second language of continental Europeans, while the learning of foreign languages is in steep decline in Britain. He questions what he describes as the 'cosmetic element' in EU rhetoric about diversity:

In reality, notwithstanding its 23 *de jure* 'official' and 'working' languages, some languages are *de facto* more equal than others within the workings of the EU.³ English, French and German enjoy a privileged status as genuine 'working languages' in the hidden corridors of power of the EU, beyond the public view of plenary sessions of the European Parliament. Gradually, English has emerged as the most dominant working language of all, having overtaken French. For example, it increasingly dominates as the original drafting language for EU legislation; EU laws are ultimately translated into 23 languages but, on the

³ The EU recognised 23 official languages at the time Wise was writing, in 2004. In 2013 this number rose to 24.

lengthy and complex path to this final form, much of the negotiating work often takes place in English (Wise 2004).

Wise argues that among the general public, the EU's stated ambitions for linguistic plurality have made little progress. He notes that a substantial *majority* of continental Europeans do not speak English and that the ability to speak it varies geographically, with citizens of the northern European states noticeably more proficient than those speaking Romance languages in southern Europe. This point is taken up by Ó Riain, who notes that the growing dominance of English 'gives a considerable advantage to the 13% of EU citizens who are native English speakers, and to speakers of closely related languages (German, Dutch, Danish and Swedish), over all other Europeans', and asks how this can be 'reconciled with the concept of equal opportunity for all, a key factor in gaining popular support for European integration?' (Ó Riain, 2006: 1-2). Examples of rising political tensions within Europe resulting from this changing sociolinguistic landscape, according to Ó Riain, include the French and Dutch referenda in 2005 that decisively rejected the Constitutional Treaty. Although many factors were involved, he argues that the result was influenced by a perception among citizens in those countries that the EU elite in Brussels and Strasbourg was growing ever more Anglophone and distant.

A more economically-focused argument about multilingualism and diversity was advanced by the economists Shlomo Weber and Victor Ginsburgh in their 2011 study *How Many Languages Do We Need? The Economics of Linguistic Diversity*. They found that 63% of EU citizens did not speak or understand English, while 75% did not speak or understand German, and 80% per cent did not speak or understand French. However, because of the unique position of English within the newly Anglocentric Europe, they argue that those who do not speak English fluently risk exclusion and marginalization and are effectively disenfranchised. 'English is spoken almost everywhere around the world,' they write, 'but it is still far from being spoken by almost everyone' (Weber and Ginsburgh, 2011:1).

The historical roots of this emerging dominance are traced by Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kanga in *Linguistic Human Rights and English in Europe* (1997:36). According to them, English spread as 'an inevitable accompaniment to American economic, military and political hegemony, and through its entrenchment in

international organizations like the UN and the World Bank, and in the scientific community'. They cite research which indicates that the spread of English was greatly abetted by the expenditure of large amounts of government and private foundation funds in the period 1950-1970, perhaps the most ever spent in history in support of the propagation of a language (Troike, 1977: 2). Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kanga also cite a confidential British Cabinet report in 1956, which states:

Within a generation from now English could be a world language - that is to say, a universal second language in those countries in which it is not already the native or primary tongue. The tide is still running in its favour, but with slackening force . . . it is important that its expansion should take place mainly under Commonwealth and United States auspices (UK Ministry of Education, 1956).

This suggests that the propagation of English in the post-war era was not simply a natural phenomenon, but was actively encouraged by US and British interventions such as the establishment of British Council libraries in major cities, and other developments promoted by civil servants and politicians who were cognizant of the 'soft power' advantages the spread of English might offer.

A particular aspect of this general sociolinguistic mapping of the growing dominance of English concerns the position of Irish and English on the island of Ireland. Despite official recognition and state support from the early years of the Irish Free State, the number of native speakers of Irish has continued to decline from an estimated 250,000 in 1922 to less than 100,000 in the early years of the twenty-first century. Irish was formally recognized as an EU official language in 2007, but despite decades of official state support, and a policy of language revival, it continues to lose ground to English, although there is a growing interest in the language in urban areas and significant numbers of people learn it as a second language for a variety of cultural, social or ideological reasons. There are some indications that the decline in native-language ability in Irish has gathered pace in recent years, with the increasing dominance and higher status of English both at home and abroad in an increasingly globalized and networked world.

2.6 Conclusion

If nationalism can be seen as a largely nineteenth century construct – nations as 'imagined communities', as described by Anderson (2006) – globalization can also be described as a construct that has gained in popularity since the 1980s and is now widely accepted, even if poorly understood or open to many conflicting interpretations. The growing consciousness of globalization, rather than the imperfect reality of it, facilitates its construction through discourse. From the 1980s onwards, alongside traditional national identities, new supra-national, regional or global identities have gradually emerged (for example, in the environmental movement, or in the growing sense of being 'European' that has developed among some sections of the youth of continental Europe). If nationalism is 'imagined communities', then one impact of globalization can be described as facilitating the 'imagining' of a global community. If nationalism can be conceived as a 'myth' – an artificial construct that holds together as long as we believe in it – then so too can globalization be described as a 'myth', one that either acts as a smokescreen to disguise a neoliberal agenda promoted by powerful Western nations in order to further their own economic interests, or else a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In this analysis, the spread of a unitary consumerist culture is seen as an integral part of the drive towards the creation of global markets and the dismantling of trade barriers. In this way, a neoliberal agenda goes hand-in-hand with the promotion of consumerism and the construction of a society which emphasises 'celebrity culture' in place of news about economic, social or political developments; which values rampant individualism above collective action; in which the governments of nation-states are rendered impotent by international finance; and in which native or minority-language cultures are diluted or overwhelmed by the cultural products of industrial modes of production in English or other culturally-dominant languages.

In summary, as scholars such as Giddens (1990); Hall, Held and McGrew (1992); Harvey (1991); and Castells (1996-98) have shown, one cannot understand contemporary society without taking account of the impact of globalization on social, economic, political and cultural life, with the media playing a central role. Ideas such as hybridization, heterogeneity, localization and glocalization have formed part of the analysis of the cultural impacts of globalization by many scholars, including those mentioned above. They clearly undermine the idea of cultural globalization as a uniform and unilinear process of homogenization tending to the formation of an ersatz 'global

culture'. But some more recent arguments are equally simplistic. Some recent writers on culture and globalization take insufficient account of the economic, political and social structures within which such cultural change occurs. As a result, insufficient attention may be paid to the fact that many cultural products are produced by or on behalf of multinational media corporations owned by western-based financial interests, even allowing for new 'regional' patterns of television production, consumption and ownership in Brazil, India, Mexico and other countries. Thus, the 'creolization' or 'hybridization' of cultures does not take place on a level playing field: in some cases elements of native cultures may be 'cannibalised' in order to provide an exotic flavour or spice to a strand of an emerging quasi-global world culture, and the underlying richness of the native cultures may become watered-down and may eventually be discarded.

The example of world music cited by Tomlinson is a case in point. Although Tomlinson regards it as positive evidence of how hybridity enriches culture, further analysis indicates that the use of the term 'world music' to describe widely differing types of traditional music repackaged (or reworked with elements from other cultures) for a modern audience may obscure the implicit and explicit power relationships that govern such exchanges. Tomlinson sees world music as 'a counter-flow of cultural influence from the periphery to the centre' (in itself an ethnocentric position) and cites Abu-Lughod (1991) in this respect. Hesmondhalgh (2006: 54-56) argues, however, that much of what is currently described as 'world music' is better described as the end result of a process of appropriation and exploitation of traditional cultures by rock stars from the West. He cites Feld (2000a), who detailed the extensive borrowings by Western musicians of the indigenous folk music of the Mbuti, Aka, and Binga peoples in the equatorial forests of Central Africa. In one example, a 1966 ethnomusicological recording of a BaBanzélé man (a tune celebrating the successful return from the hunt) was appropriated by the U.S. jazz musician Herbie Hancock for his track 'Watermelon Man' on his 1973 album *Headhunters*. (Ironically, the use of ethnomusicological recordings from Africa by black musicians in the U.S. derived from the pan-Africanist roots movement in the early 1970s.) In turn, Hancock's 'Watermelon Man' was later sampled by Madonna and her producer Nellee Hopper for the song 'Sanctuary' on Madonna's 1994 album *Bedtime Stories*. Feld also outlines other examples of how what he describes as the 'commercial potential of world music' has developed, from the 'promotional relationship' of the Beatles to Ravi Shankar in the 1960s to Paul Simon's

Graceland (1986), with its collaboration with South African musicians, and David Byrne's 1989 album *Rei Momo*, which was inspired by Latin music (Feld, 2000a: 149).

Although in some cases such hybrid cultural products had a collaborative focus which, at times, benefited the indigenous musicians, other instances were more clearly exploitative, including the unauthorized use of an aboriginal Taiwanese chant in Enigma's chart-topping 1994 track, *Return to Innocence*. The chant came from a 1988 recording of a Taiwanese drinking song recorded in the Maison des Cultures du Monde in Paris by two Taiwanese traditional singers, Kuo Ying-nan and Kuo Hsiu-chu. The song was later sampled by Enigma's producer Michael Cretu without the knowledge or permission of the original singers. The story had an unexpected ending: Kuo Ying-nan and Kuo Hsiu-chu heard the Enigma track played on the radio, and later sued Cretu, Virgin Records, and a number of recording companies for the unauthorized use of their song. The case was settled out of court for an undisclosed amount of money. All further releases of the song were credited to the Kuos, who were also paid royalties.⁴

It can be seen from the above that the question of world music is a complex one, with both positive and negative impacts. When placed in this more nuanced context, Tomlinson's analysis of world music (as showing positive evidence of how hybridity enriches culture) can be described as too simplistic. In a wider sense, this criticism may also be made of the arguments of scholars who describe cultural hybridity in broadly positive terms, without examining the power relationships that underpin them, or their political, social and economic contexts.

⁴ According to a news report broadcast on Channel News Asia on the 28th of March, 1998.

3 THE ESSAY FILM

This chapter complements the literature review in Chapter Two by reviewing some of the relevant academic literature on filmmaking practice, in order to situate and contextualise the artistic practice at the centre of this doctoral research.

According to Nichols (2001: 21), documentary film practice 'is an arena in which things change', and definitions as to what constitutes documentary film are fluid and evolve over time. This is arguably even more true in the case of the essay film, an experimental, hybrid and self-reflexive form that is associated with an eclectic and diverse group of films that are otherwise difficult to categorize. Michael Renov describes a 'resistance to generic encirclement' in such films (2004: 72), while according to Réda Bensmaïa it is 'perhaps not a genre at all' (1987: 91-2), and Laura Rascaroli suggests that 'we should resist the urge to... crystallize [essay film] into a genre' (2009: 2).

Because of this hybrid nature that resists classification, any definition of essay film as simply a form of documentary is incomplete. Attempts to define what an essay film *is* range from Louis D. Giannetti's description as 'not fiction nor fact but a personal investigation' (1975: 26) to Nora M. Alter's 'transgressive, digressive, playful, contradictory and political' (2002: 7) and Renov's assertion that it encompasses 'digression, fragmentation, repetition, dispersion' (2004: 70). As Paul Arthur describes, it is 'galvanized by the intersection of personal, subjective and social history', and has come to the fore as 'the leading nonfiction form for both intellectual and artistic

innovation' (2003: 58). It can be seen from the foregoing that even though many essay films incorporate aspects of Nichols' performative, interactive and poetic modes in documentary filmmaking, the scope and range of essay films is so wide as to transcend the boundaries of documentary and encompass elements of fiction or creative narrative and comment.

Rascaroli (2008: 26) and others trace its literary antecedents as far back as the work of the sixteenth century writer Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), whose collection *Essais* (1580) reflects in its title the provisional, unorthodox and experimental nature of his writing, as it derives from the verb *essayer* meaning 'to try', 'to attempt', or 'to assay'. Theodor Adorno wrote that 'the essay's innermost formal law is heresy' (Adorno, 1991: 23). The similarly heretical, transgressive and non-genre nature of the essay film has been analysed by film theorists in critical texts including Rascaroli's *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (2009); Timothy Corrigan's *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (2011); and *The Essay Film: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia* edited by Elizabeth A. Papazian and Caroline Eades (2016).

3.1 The origins of essay film

The essay film is normally thought to have its origins in pre-war avant-garde cinema in Europe, drawing on elements of subjectivity and reflexivity in works such as Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). According to Tracy (2013: 7), Soviet montage contributed the sense of a 'directing intelligence', intent on using montage to make legible underlying social and economic structures. Eisenstein and Pudovkin 'sought to crystallise abstract concepts in the direct and purposeful juxtaposition of forceful, hard-edged images' (Tracy, 2013: 7).

Midway on their Marxian mission to change the world rather than interpret it, the montagists actively made the world even as they revealed it. In doing so they powerfully expressed the dialectic between control and chaos that would come to be not only one of the chief motors of the essay film but the crux of modernity itself. (Tracy, 2013: 7).

The French filmmaker and theorist, Jean-Pierre Gorin, somewhat controversially selected D.W. Griffith's *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), while drawing up

the programme for his retrospective look at the essay film at the 2007 Viennale entitled *The Way of the Termite: The Essay in Cinema 1909–2004*.¹ The inclusion of Griffith's early silent film was controversial, as it was not normally considered to be an example of essay film until then. *A Corner in Wheat* has been extensively analyzed for its innovations in parallel editing and composition, and the dialectic between different types of shot (close-up vs. medium shot). There are three narrative strands in the film. In the first strand a farmer sows his seed, goes to market, comes home with little profit from his labour, is forced to sell off his team of horses to provide for his family, and sows again the following spring. In the second strand a capitalist speculator manipulates and schemes to 'corner' the market in wheat, becomes very rich as a result, celebrates with his friends and, in an unexpected twist, dies when he visits a grain silo and is buried under a pile of wheat. In the third strand, impoverished workers in the city go hungry as a result of the inflated price of wheat, riot, and are confronted by a policeman and a shopkeeper. The policeman shoots one of the rioters.

The film is of interest for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that as a silent film it defies Phillip Lopate's later and somewhat prescriptive description of an essay film as one in which the central argument is usually conveyed via an extensive narrative text which should be 'as eloquent, well-written and interesting as possible' (Lopate, 1998: 282). By contrast, in *A Corner in Wheat* the authorial voice is conveyed both by the juxtaposition of visual images - the speculator's banquet contrasts with the penniless and hungry mother and child - and by the use of intertitles which are by turns both ironic and critical, and which provide a subtle counterpoint to the pictures. It is very clearly polemical and subjective, yet it is also elegant, artistic and economic in its use of just 32 shots over 14 minutes to tell a rich multi-stranded story that puts individual distress into a wider political and economic context. This juxtaposition of images and scenes as a way of developing a polemic, and use of ironic intertitles to disrupt the narrative flow of the work, are elements which were later used by

¹ The Way of the Termite: The Essay in Cinema 1909–2004 comprised some 60 works from 20 nations including, notably, Godard and Gorin's *Lettre à Jane/Letter to Jane* (France, 1972). It was offered as a joint retrospective of the 2007 Viennale (the Vienna International Film Festival) and the Austrian Film Museum.

filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker as part of a reflexive impulse in their essay films.

A Corner in Wheat is one of the earliest examples of a film made from an overtly political viewpoint, while remaining lyrical and poetic in style and execution. This emerging tradition is also seen in certain impressionistic and poetic documentaries in pre-war Europe, such as Alberto Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures/Nothing But Time* (FR, 1926) and Luis Buñuel's *Las Hurdes/Land Without Bread* (SP, 1932). Although quite diverse, they showed how the boundaries between fact and fiction could be blurred in the pursuit of a higher 'truth', in marked contrast to the 'creative treatment of actuality' espoused by the Griersonian school in Britain at the same time. Although not overtly political, the lyrical *Night Mail* (UK, 1936) also stretched the boundaries of the creative and the poetic in film, with a narration in verse by the poet W.H. Auden and a musical score by the composer Benjamin Britten. This mixing of the cinematic language of montage with a literary narration re-establishes the individual voice as the vehicle of meaning, as Auden's poetic musings - in an elliptical metre that quickens and slows to match the rhythm of trains in motion - connect 'horizontally'² to the images on the timeline and give the film its shape and coherence. A hymn of praise to life in peacetime, the film also carries dark undertones of impending war, as daytime turns into night and the poet wonders about the nocturnal visions of the dreamers in the houses slipping by, dreamers who awake listening for the postman's knock with a 'quickening of the heart/for who can bear to be forgot?'

3.2 Historical development in the post-war era

Timothy Corrigan (2011) and Rick Warner (2016) are among those theorists who emphasize the significant development of the essay film in France during the years following the end of World War II, with important work including *Les statues meurent aussi/Statues Also Die* (Alain Resnais, Chris Marker and Ghislain Cloquet, FR, 1953); *Nuit et brouillard/Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955); and *Lettre de Sibérie/Letter*

² See Bazin's concept of 'horizontal' editing discussed later in this chapter in the context of Bazin's engagement with *Lettre de Sibérie*.

from Siberia (Chris Marker, 1957). The groundwork for this pivotal moment was laid with structural changes in the funding of French film, which led to the production of thousands of films in France during the 1940s and 1950s. Rascaroli (2008: 30) notes that the production of non-fiction films in France rose significantly following legislation by the Vichy government in 1940. While some 400 documentaries and propaganda films were made during the German occupation, approximately 4,000 documentaries were made in France between 1945 and 1955. In her 2006 book, *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, Catherine Lupton also notes a further increase in the making of short films in France between 1955 and 1965 that was facilitated by the introduction of a new grants system. These developments gave many new directors the opportunity to work in an artistic milieu in which creative innovation was encouraged. Technological developments which led to smaller and more mobile cameras aided this increase in film production, while political upheaval and a perceived crisis of representation in art and film in the post-war era also contributed, as Corrigan notes:

The crisis of World War II, the Holocaust, the trauma that traveled from Hiroshima around the world, and the impending cold war inform, in short, a social, existential, and representational crisis that would galvanize an essayistic imperative to question and debate not only a new world but also the very terms by which we subjectively inhabit, publicly stage, and experientially think that world (Corrigan, 2011: 63).

In the years following the war Resnais and Marker worked on a series of collaborations with artists from other realms, including writers such as Jean Cayrol, Paul Éluard and Raymond Queneau, and composers such as Darius Milhaud. The resulting work was frequently challenging and subversive, leading at times to difficulties with state agencies. *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953) was substantially cut by French censors before it was screened due to its critique of French colonialism, with its use of shots of masks, sculptures and traditional art from Sub-Saharan Africa on display at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris to comment on France's legacy of war and

genocide in Africa.³ A specific shot in *Nuit et brouillard*, which showed in the corner of a frame the kepi of a French *gendarme* guarding Jewish deportees en route to death camps in Germany, was also censored, in a futile attempt by French authorities to excise an unpalatable truth from the historical record.

Finally, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronique d'un été/Chronicle of a Summer* (FR, 1961) contains certain performative and self-reflexive elements that are also found in many essay films. It is based on a series of interviews with factory workers, students, immigrants and a Holocaust survivor. Far from being situated as invisible and 'objective' observers, the interviewers put themselves in the frame from the beginning, emphasizing their role as participants and shapers of the film. This performance of reflexivity and subjectivity was, of course, very deliberate, and includes a sequence in which Marceline, a woman in her thirties, is shown to have a number tattooed on her arm. Prompted by the interviewer, Marceline later talks, as she walks through the Place de la Concorde and Les Halles, about her tragic wartime experiences as a concentration camp prisoner.

Renov points to the key role of the camera in this anguished monologue. 'Replying to an interviewer's question regarding camera influence in 1969, Rouch replied: "Yes, the camera deforms, but not from the moment that it becomes an accomplice. At that point it has the possibility of doing something I couldn't do if the camera wasn't there: it becomes a kind of psychoanalytic stimulant which lets people do things they wouldn't otherwise do" ' (Renov, 2004: xviii). Renov implies here that the presence of the camera may have in a sense enabled the Holocaust survivor to access painful memories and talk about a subject not normally spoken about in day-to-day life, in a postwar France where the complicity of many French people in the genocide remained a guilty and unacknowledged secret.

³ According to Resnais, the original intent was to make a film about African art. However when the filmmakers started their research, they were struck by the fact that African art was exhibited at the ethnological Musée de l'Homme, and not the Louvre, unlike art from other countries.

3.3 Theoretical Issues

The theoretical discussion of the essay film draws on two foundational works: Hans Richter's 1940 manifesto, *Der Filmessay: Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms* (The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film), and the idea of the *caméra-stylo* or 'camera-pen' propounded by Alexandre Astruc in his 1948 essay *Naissance d'une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo* (Birth of a new avant-garde: the camera-pen). Richter refers to a new type of film that was not only intellectual but also emotional:

In this effort to give body to the invisible world of imagination, thought and ideas, the essay film can employ an incomparably greater reservoir of expressive means than can the pure documentary film. Freed from recording external phenomena in simple sequence the film essay must collect its material from everywhere; its space and time must be conditioned only by the need to explain and show the idea (Richter, cited in Leyda, 1964: 31).

Citing works by Renoir, Welles and Bresson, Astruc wrote about a new 'tendency' which was distinct from silent film, Soviet montage, conventional fiction film, or the Surrealist avant-garde. Cinema was 'gradually becoming a language' he argued, with the birth of a *cinéma des auteurs* who subsumed the roles of scriptwriter and director and who 'wrote' with their camera-pens in a variety of discursive registers, including fiction and the essay film:

By language I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel. That is why I would like to call this new age of the cinema the age of *caméra-stylo* (camera-pen). This metaphor has a very precise sense. By it I mean that the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language (Astruc, cited in Corrigan, 2011: 159).

According to Rick Warner, there is a tension between the fictional and non-fictional aspects of essay film, with some scholars siting it within the boundaries of documentary, and others arguing for a wider view. As an example of this tension, he cites Astruc's manifesto as one which is often used to bolster a documentarian view of

the essay film and its historical development, 'when in fact Astruc's notion of an emergent cinema of complex ideas takes its cues from the inventive exploits of filmmakers who were not documentarians, namely, Orson Welles, Robert Bresson and Jean Renoir' (Warner, 2016: 29).

Perhaps the first article that offered an analysis of a film as an essay film was the review by André Bazin of Chris Marker's film *Lettre de Sibérie/Letter from Siberia* (FR, 1957). The review was published in *France-Observateur* in 1958. With an extensive and elliptic narrative that runs to over 6,400 words, *Lettre de Sibérie* is regarded as one of the earliest examples of the post-war essay film in France. Bazin described Marker's film as 'an essay documented by film' in which the spoken narrative was the main organizing impulse:

Generally, even in politically engaged documentaries or those with a specific point to make, the image (which is to say, the uniquely cinematic element) effectively constitutes the primary material of the film. The orientation of the work is expressed through the choices made by the filmmaker in the montage, with the commentary completing the organization of the sense thus conferred on the document. With Marker it works quite differently. I would say that the primary material is intelligence, that its immediate means of expression is language, and that the image only intervenes in the third position, in reference to this verbal intelligence (Bazin, 1958: 44).

According to Bazin, the film is first and foremost a political and historical essay, written by a poet, with its sense conveyed through a narrative which originated firstly as a written text. Although neither as literary nor as complex visually as his later film *Sans soleil/Sunless* (1983), whose narrative runs to over 10,000 words, *Lettre de Sibérie* exemplifies what Bazin describes as a new form of montage, which he calls 'horizontal'. Instead of the lateral relationship between one shot and another, a particular image does not necessarily bear any relationship to the one immediately before or after, referring instead to the words in the narrative to give it meaning and context. In other words, the images on the main timeline refer horizontally to the words in the narrative that runs alongside on a separate soundtrack. In a celebrated scene in the film which demonstratively undercuts any notion of objectivity, the same shots of a street scene in Yakutsk are shown three times: once with a pro-Soviet propagandistic

commentary which describes the heroic efforts of the workers to develop a modern city; a second time with a virulent anti-communist commentary which seeks to portray the suffering and misery of its inhabitants; and a third time in a more neutral yet still subjective manner. The images are relatively nondescript; their meaning is constructed and framed by the accompanying words.

In *Sans soleil* Marker uses the device of a fictional character, a woman, reading passages from the letters from a friend to give the narration a certain solemnity and distance it might not otherwise have if he had narrated it in the first person. It could also be argued that the sonorous weight of the French language in this and other films such as *Nuit et brouillard* or Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (FR, 1998)⁴ contributes to the sensory or somatic encounter of the viewer with such films, although this in itself may be a value judgement from an anglophone perspective. Lopate points to the impact of Jean Cayrol's stark and subtle script, emphasizing the inadequacy of language in the face of horror:

Sometimes a message flutters down, is picked up. Death makes his first pick, chooses again in the night and fog. Today, on the same track, the sun shines. Go slowly along it... looking for what? Traces of the bodies that fell to the ground? (Lopate, 1992: 19)

For Lopate, it is a 'self-interrogatory voice, dubious, ironical, probing, like a true essayist's, for the heart of its subject matter' (Lopate, 1992: 19), with Resnais's slow tracking shots forming a visual analogue of this patient searching for historical meaning. As Lopate notes, it may seem grotesque to focus on the narration of a film with such a harrowing topic. However, its dubious, ironic and interrogatory tone provides a template for how a narrative might be used to shape the experience of a film and highlight the subjectivity of both gaze and author. This dubious and interrogatory tone is perhaps more evident in the original French:

*Un message tombe, quelquefois ramassé. La mort fait son premier choix.
Un second est fait à l'arrivée dans la nuit et le brouillard. Aujourd'hui sur*

⁴ *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is usually referred to by its title in French only, remaining untranslated because of the word play implied by the word 'histoire', which means both 'story' and 'history' in French.

*la même voie, il fait jour et soleil. On la parcourt lentement... à la recherche de quoi? De la trace des cadavres qui s'écroulaient dès l'ouverture des portes?*⁵

3.4 Contemporary Issues

According to Lopate (1992: 20), one might have expected technological innovation from the 1970s onwards to usher in a golden era for the essay film, but this is not what happened, at least not immediately:

It was the bad luck of the essay film that, just as its technical moment arrived, the intellectual trends of the hour - deconstructionism, post-modernism, appropriation art, the new forms of feminism and Marxism retrofitted with semiotic media criticism - questioned the validity of the single authorial voice, preferring instead to demonstrate over and over how much we are all conditioned and brainwashed by the images around us. Not that these points aren't valid, but they happen to mute the essayistic voice: for, if the self is nothing but a social construct, and individuality a bourgeois illusion intended to maintain the status quo, then the hip, 'transgressive' thing to do is satiric quotation, appropriation, collage (Lopate, 1992: 20).

Of course, Lopate was writing in an era before the ready availability of cheap digital technology and widespread access (at least in the developed world) to fast broadband, a factor which in the twenty-first century has facilitated the exponential growth in the creation and dissemination of essay films with a very wide range of individual perspectives. Indeed, if the work of Rive Gauche filmmakers in France in the post-war period can be considered the first 'golden age' of the essay film, this moment of exponential growth may be considered a second 'golden age'. As in the earlier period, the impetus for this has its roots in a contemporary crisis of representation and legitimacy, and it should therefore be understood in its social, economic and political

⁵ French script available at <http://www.cineclubdecaen.com/realisat/resnais/nuitetbrouillard.htm> [accessed 4 December 2016]. The translation of the passage is on the previous page of this document.

context, and not merely in a technologically determinist manner. The development of the internet and the widespread availability of relatively inexpensive digital recording and editing equipment is, of course, a major enabling factor, but so too are discourses of resistance to globalization and other contemporary social and political issues.

The generally accepted theoretical and historical narrative about the origin of essay film has also come under scrutiny in recent years. Papazian and Eades (2016) challenge the usual classification of the essay film as a self-reflexive, subjective and frequently subversive form of documentary. They see the 'essayistic' as a mode that can emerge from or form part of films that are otherwise categorized as various genres of fiction or non-fiction film, and propose new ways of looking at essay film in terms of dialogue/metadiscourse; experiment/experience; and utopia/impossibility. They describe the dialogic/discursive approach as allowing the essayistic 'to create connections and tensions while probing the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, subject and object, narration and reflection, image and thought, whole and fragment, stasis and movement' (Papazian and Eades, 2016: 5); while they categorize the experimental and fluid approach of Pier Paolo Pasolini as illustrating the potential of the essay film as a tool for political action. They also question the usual narrative of its historical development in post-war France, arguing instead for a wider and less Eurocentric narrative which encompasses (among others) perspectives from Cuban, Israeli and Russian cinema. Finally, they examine Laura Marks's analysis of the utopian impulse in some essayistic cinema:

Laura U. Marks considers the Civil War trilogy (1998-2002) of Lebanese filmmaker Mohamed Soueid through the lens of 'atomism', a model of immanence drawn from an ancient strain of Islamic thought through which, Marks argues, films approach the unencompassable and unknowable subject – engaging with politics indirectly, through a consideration of its fragmentary singularities (Papazian and Eades, 2016: 6-7).

Globalization and Essay Film

Many contemporary films about globalization focus on its economic impact on individuals or communities, rather than on the cultural or social. One example is *Roger*

and Me (Michael Moore, US, 1989), which is structured around attempts by the filmmaker to get an interview with the CEO of General Motors, in order to discuss the closure of the company's plant at Flint, Michigan, and its impact on the local community. As the impact of globalization is felt on the US car industry, some 30,000 jobs have been lost in Flint, while GM opens new factories in Mexico. According to Lopate (1992), *Roger and Me* is a flawed and ultimately unsatisfactory example of the essay film. In the film Moore first sets up a strongly authorial voice and autobiographical tone: we meet his parents, and wander around the town he grew up in. After about 20 minutes, however, this is largely discarded in favour of a series of interviews with characters in the town, interspersed with attempts to interview Roger Smith. According to Lopate, the personal tone is jettisoned in favour of a quirky and breezy tabloid journalism which, although it may appeal to a wider audience, privileges the political over the personal and abandons the form of the essay film in the process.

Globalization, consumerism and late capitalism come under scrutiny in a creative and poetic way in the work of the contemporary Czech essayist, Harun Farocki. One example is Farocki's essay film *Still Life* (Poland, 1997), in which commercial photographers fussily arrange a platter of cheese, beer and an expensive wristwatch, while, in an ironic voice-over in German, the theorist Kaja Silverman discusses seventeenth century Dutch masterpieces.

The above essay films can be understood as exceptions rather than the rule, however. More often than not, themes related to globalization are dealt with in a more conventionally documentary style, or as fiction drama, and not by way of an essay film. The impact of economic globalization is examined in Stephanie Black's *Life and Debt* (UK, 2000) and Raoul Peck's *Profit & Nothing But! Or Impolite Thoughts on the Class Struggle* (US, 2001); while links between advertising, globalized mass media, and violence against women are the focus of Sut Jhally's *Dreamworlds II: Desire, Sex, Power in Music Video* (US, 1997). Other documentaries focus in a more general way on the economic impact of globalization, such as *Globalization is Good* (Johan Norberg, UK, 2003), or *The Corporation* (March Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, Canada, 2003). Rustin Thompson's *30 Frames a Second: The WTO in Seattle* (US, 2000), and *Battle in Seattle* (Stuart Townsend, US, 2007), both focus on a particular event. Thompson's film is largely based on news footage and other actuality shot at the scene of a major

confrontation between anti-globalization protestors and police, while Townsend's film is a fictionalized version of the same event.

Some films touch on cultural issues, but generally through the prism of a strong central character. In *Nalini by Day, Nancy by Night* (Sonali Gulati, India/US, 2005) the filmmaker examines how workers in Indian call centres acquire American names and accents in order to service US customers. In *The Cup* (Khyentse Norbu, Bhutan/Australia, 1999), a fourteen-year-old boy who is obsessed with the Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo attempts to bring television to a Buddhist monastery in Bhutan in time for a World Cup match. As can be seen from these and other examples, most films which have globalization as a theme focus on human interest stories, in other words, they tell stories on a human scale that are meaningful to an audience and easily understood. They avoid a more generalized intellectual or abstract engagement with discourses about the cultural impact of globalization, or a discussion of the imbalances in power and influence in global exchanges of cultural and media products.

Performing the Self: autobiographical and autoethnographical elements in essay film

Renov notes that from the mid-1980s onwards there is a 'growing prominence of work by women and men of diverse cultural backgrounds in which the representation of the historical world is inextricably bound up with self-inscription' (Renov, 2004: 176). The disparate cultural identities and backgrounds of the filmmakers came to increasingly inform their work, and were in part a response to critiques of ethnography from the 1960s onwards. According to Renov, the gradual shift between objectivity and subjectivity that occurred between 1970 and 1990 can be traced to the change in emphasis from the social movements of the 1960s (for example, civil rights campaigns in the United States and Ireland) to a shift towards the 'politics of identity' championed first of all by the women's movement but also by a range of identity-focused issues and campaigns centred on issues to do with race, sexuality and ethnicity. Some people saw this emergence of identity politics as a retreat from social action, from a collective effort to improve the world. Others applauded the new emphasis on multiple and fluid identities as consistent with Foucauldian discourse analysis and the 'discursive turn' in the social sciences alluded to earlier. Renov writes:

If indeed we now live in an age of intensified and shifting psycho-social identities, it should surprise no one that the documentation of this cultural scene should be deeply suffused with the performance of subjectivities (Renov, 2004: 177).

An early example of this new emphasis on subjective, personal or autobiographical material is found in the work of video artist Wendy Clarke. In her 1977 *Love Tapes* project, she uses the video diary format to reveal how individuals from varying ages and backgrounds feel about love and other issues. It is a format that is banal nowadays, following the success of the Big Brother television series in the UK and US at the start of the new millennium, but Clarke's project and the films of Jean Rouch can be seen as precursors of the autobiographical and autoethnographical emphasis that came to the fore in documentary and essay film during the 1980s and 1990s. What was new in the 1990s, according to Renov, was the extent to which new forms of documentary self-inscription enacted 'fluid, multiple, even contradictory' identities, while 'remaining fully embroiled in public discourse' (Renov, 2004: 176).

He cites the work of Annette Kuhn, who offers a rationale for the use of family photographs as case studies for work of personal and popular memory. In an echo of the feminist slogan 'the personal is the political', Kuhn argues that public and private concerns merge in this kind of memory work, subjective yet containing social commentary at the same time (Renov, 2004: 180). Other films in which autographical elements are situated within a broader ethnographic or autoethnographic context include Jonas Mekas's *Lost, Lost, Lost* in 1975, which focuses on the dispossession and alienation of a community of Lithuanians in Brooklyn, a community to which the filmmaker belongs. The film focuses on a community of Lithuanian exiles, who flee Stalinist persecution in the aftermath of World War II only to experience profound dislocation and dispossession - of land, language and cultural context. Starting from an autobiographical narrative based on Mekas's personal history and experience, the film is richly contextualised by its references to the historical and cultural context in which the Lithuanian community attempts to put down new roots in an alien land over a number of decades.

During the 1980s and the 1990s a number of essay films and documentaries explored gay and lesbian identities. In keeping with the transgressive, non-genre nature

of the essay film alluded to earlier, these films do not conform to any single expressive style or voice; while some deal with the issue of 'coming out' as gay or lesbian, they do so in a great variety of ways, and the protagonists' sexuality is by no means a central focus in them all. Those that included a strong biographical element included *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1989), and Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* (1990), both regarded as landmarks of autobiographical film.

Tongues Untied (1989) is perhaps one of the most overtly political of the gay identity films of the time, with its famous closing statement that 'black men loving black men is *the* revolutionary act'. From the start of the film, Riggs puts himself and his experience as a black gay man centre stage: the film opens with Riggs, naked, moving rhythmically against a black background, and it features a narrative that combines personal autobiography, poetry by Essex Hemphill, interviews, and a fierce first-person denunciation of racism, homophobia, and marginalization. When it was released its frank depiction of gay sexuality was considered controversial, and it attracted the attention of US Presidential candidate Pat Buchanan, who criticised the incumbent president, George Bush, for funding 'pornographic art'.

One of the more notable aspects of the film is that the autobiographical is situated within a broader ethnographic context: the central character - the filmmaker himself - is careful to place his first-person narrative within the context of interventions by a group of black rappers who reappear at different moments during the film and who anchor the filmmaker's experience within a broader community, i.e. within the repression experienced by black gays in wider American culture. In this way, by 'fusing the personal with the social, *Tongues Untied* is both a germinal political manifesto of its epoch and a paradigmatic instance of the new documentary subjectivity' (Renov, 2004: 182).

The narrator in *Sink or Swim* is a young girl, who narrates the filmmaker's autobiographical story in the third person. In one scene the narrator speaks the following lines over grainy black-and-white images of schoolgirls playing in a school hall:

On her tenth birthday, the girl's sister gave her a diary with a green cloth cover. It came with a lock and a small key, which she hid carefully under the bed. On the first page she scrawled a large note that declared: 'If anybody reads this

diary, they are very mean. It is personal!' For the most part, the girl filled it with stories about doing punishment assignments, fighting with the boys, and playing with her friends. Because she didn't write every day, there were still empty pages left when her parents told her they were getting a divorce. The girl was too ashamed to tell anyone and even kept it a secret from her best friend for more than a year, but she did confess it to her diary. It felt as if the act of writing it down would make it really come true, so she used a pencil instead of her favorite cartridge pen. The next time she looked inside, the entry had been erased. Her mother was the only possible suspect.⁶

According to the literary critic Julia Watson, women have often used autobiography to voice their 'unspeakable differences' in terms of sexuality, class or ethnic background:

For the immigrant or multicultural daughter, naming the unspeakable is at once a transgressive act that knowingly seeks to expose and speak the boundaries on which the organization of cultural knowledge depends and a discursive strategy that, while unverifiable, allows a vital 'making sense' of her own multiple differences (Watson, 1992: 140).

Although Watson was writing about literary autobiography, her remarks could equally apply to the self-consciously transgressive acts often found in autobiographical film, particularly following the huge increase in the number of authored essay films since the 1990s. This explosion in new voices ranges across a range of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and gender subjectivities, and the foregrounding of these new subjectivities at the heart of the creative project, stands in sharp contrast to the search for objectivity and the truth-claims of *cinéma vérité* in the 1960s:

During the direct cinema period, self-reference was shunned. But far from a sign of self-effacement, this was the symptomatic silence of the empowered who sought no forum for self-justification or display. And why would they need one? These white male professionals had assumed the mantle of filmic representation

⁶ Text at <http://www.sufriedrich.com/SOSbest.html> [accessed 22 July 2017].

with the ease and self-assurance of a birthright. Not so the current generation of performative documentarists (Renov, 2004: 181).

Renov contrasts the earlier, unconscious and gendered biases of the direct cinema era with 'transgressive acts' in the contemporary era that, he says, speak for the voiceless, the marginalized, the dispossessed, and other minority groups. These new subjectivities in documentary filmmaking correspond to the fifth and sixth modes of documentary film (the reflexive and performative modes) which Nichols added to his original fourfold topology of poetic, expository, observational and participatory modes (Nichols, 2010). As Nichols notes,

[...] most films incorporate more than one mode, even though some modes are more prominent at one time or place than another. These modes serve as a skeletal framework that individual filmmakers flesh out according to their own creative disposition (Nichols 2010: 143).

In many contemporary self-reflexive essay films, the autobiographical voice is rendered through lines spoken by the filmmaker in his or her own voice and accent. One key example is Agnès Varda's *Les plages d'Agnès/The Beaches of Agnès* (2008), in which the avant-garde filmmaker is filmed walking on various beaches and speaking directly to camera, sometimes in French, sometimes in English spoken with a French accent. This performative style gives free rein to the filmmaker's expressiveness, and allows her to address the audience in a vivid way. The film opens with a shot of Varda walking backwards on a beach and saying '*Je joue le rôle d'une petite vieille, rondouillarde et bavarde, qui raconte sa vie...*' ['I am playing the role of a little old lady, pleasantly plump and talkative, who is telling the story of her life...'] Later in the film, she is interviewed about her childhood while lying on the sand and holding a number of photographs. The effect is to create a personal and intimate reflection, but not a didactic one. This is reminiscent of what the film critic Stella Bruzzi refers to as the female 'voice quality' which, she says, may at times convey a more personal and intimate tone in narration, as opposed to a more masculinist or authoritative style (Bruzzi, 2005: 65). Rascaroli agrees with Bruzzi that voiceover does not necessarily lead to the authoritative 'voice of God' type of narrative familiar from previous decades, focusing instead on its aesthetic qualities (Rascaroli, 2009: 44-60).

In other essay films, the autobiographical voice is rendered differently: as noted earlier, Chris Marker famously chose a woman to narrate his richly complex and partly autobiographical *Sans Soleil*; while the principal narrator in Mark Cousins' *I am Belfast* (2015) is a fictional character: a 10,000 year old woman played by Helena Bereen. This is despite the strongly autobiographical nature of much of the film's content, and the presence of a second voice, that of the filmmaker, who speaks in the first person. In *L'Image manquante/The Missing Picture* (2013) the Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh goes a step further: the central characters in this autobiographical memorial are the absent members of his own family, who were killed by the Khmer Rouge. By using clay figurines in place of real people, and a narrative in the first person, Panh emphasizes their absence and elaborates a moving response to two central questions: how do you make a documentary about the Cambodian past when the nation's film archive has been systematically destroyed by those who carried out the genocide? And how do you talk about the death of your parents and siblings when you have witnessed their murder?

From the foregoing it can be seen that the autobiographical and self-reflexive voice in the essay film has been enunciated in a wide variety of ways in recent decades. Although the first-person narrative, told in the voice and accent of the filmmaker, is the most common and straightforward approach, it is by no means the only one. It follows that if the essay film is by its nature transgressive and non-genre, as outlined earlier, it would be a mistake to adopt a narrowly prescriptive approach to the construction of its narrative.

3.5 Conclusion

Jean-Luc Godard defined himself as an essay filmmaker in a well-known interview with *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1962:

As a critic, I thought of myself as a film-maker. Today I still think of myself as a critic, and in a sense I am, more than ever before. Instead of writing criticism, I make a film, but the critical dimension is subsumed. I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form or novels in essay form: only instead of writing I film them. (Godard, 1972d: 171)

A key question is the question of authorial voice. Although this can be established in a number of different ways, either visually through the juxtaposition of images to make a political point, or aurally through the use of spoken narrative or other audio, much critical attention has focused on the role of the narration or voice-over as its principal vehicle. Bruzzi criticises the somewhat negative portrayal of voice-over in earlier writing by Nichols and others as being too restrictive: 'The negative portrayal of voice-over is largely the result of the development of a theoretical orthodoxy that condemns it for being inevitably and inherently didactic' (2006: 47). This stems from Nichols' portrayal of voice-over in the expository mode of documentary as an omniscient 'voice-of-God' presence. This may have been a valid way of describing some of the narrative or expository documentaries in the post-war Griersonian era - with their implicit ideological assumptions and hidden subjectivities based on the prevailing and gendered orthodoxies of the time. It is, however, not the only result of such an approach: such a narrow view may not give sufficient weight to advantages of telling a story simply and cleanly and with an economy of language which is sometimes absent in contemporary observational documentaries in which the narrative is based on interviews which may or may not be compelling or complete. In that context, Bruzzi critiques the manner in which Nichols places in the one category expository documentaries that contain evidence of a wide variety of expository styles, ranging from the poetic to the formal, and questions the categorization of these very diverse films as simply expository (Bruzzi, 2006: 46-48).

In short, there is an argument for re-examining and reworking expository narrative in the modern media-driven era, where complex issues are frequently reduced to their most simple in mainstream broadcast media in order to appeal to the widest audience (for commercial reasons), and where the overuse of 'vox pop' interviews in broadcast news may at times displace more insightful commentary and analysis. In a world awash with information and media 'noise', and where the ability to put events in a considered historical context is less common, not least in mainstream media, a rehabilitation of the use of expository voice-over as a valid vehicle for explication and analysis may be justified. This is all the more so in an era where the institutional voice of major broadcasters has been greatly weakened and is increasingly challenged by a plurality of new voices, using social media to disrupt and dispute accepted orthodoxies, as was seen in the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States and the British

referendum vote to exit the European Union the same year. In this context there may be a place for a clearly authored expository narrative, written from an openly expressed subjective and reflexive point of view. This approach is not without its pitfalls; despite this, as Bruzzi reminds us, an authored voice may be used in an ironic way, and not simply as a vehicle for 'telling people what to think' (2006: 36). Similarly, Catherine Lupton argues that the essayistic voice-over has the potential to undermine from within 'the notorious authority of the singular, omniscient, voice-of-God documentary narrator' (2011: 159).

In conclusion, therefore, it could be argued that there is potential to rework or renew the expository mode in documentary film, and as an aspect of essay film, but in a reflexive way that takes account of the contingent and discursively constructed nature of the social world, as it has been described. There is scope for a creative approach to the modern essay film that uses expository voice-over as a valuable storytelling tool, one that is economic, elegant and perhaps even lyrical at times, while at the same time taking conscious steps to question, undermine or otherwise problematize the authorial (and, at times, gendered) subjectivity that gives the *essai* its shape and focus.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the variable and contested nature of practice-based research in the arts and media is briefly contextualised. The rationale for choosing a practice-based research approach to the research question is discussed, and the researcher's social and ethnographic relationship to the subject matter is outlined. Finally, key methodological issues arising out of the researcher's approach are analysed in the context of the thesis question.

4.1 What is practice-based research in the arts and media?

According to Leavy (2009) arts-based research practices 'are a set of methodological tools ... [which] adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined' (Leavy, 2009: 2-3). They involve, *inter alia*, creative writing, music, performance, dance, visual art, film and creative practice in other media. Freeman (2010: 7) holds that practice-based research 'offers a clear challenge to conventional thinking in its premise that the practice of performance can be at once a method of investigative research and the process through which that research is disseminated.' Candy (2006: 1) defines practice-based research as

An original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. In a doctoral thesis, claims

of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes (Candy, 2006: 1).

Situating practice-based research in film and digital media within a relevant epistemological framework is not an easy task. Indeed, the process of elaborating a relevant and useful methodology was a major preoccupation during the early years of the doctoral research. This is not unusual in practice-based research in the arts and digital media, not least because of the unstable and contested nature of such research within institutions which comprise the academy. This investigation of method led to a decision to adopt Bell's (2006) reworking of the idea of 'generative performance' as a methodological framework for a practice-based doctorate integrating practice and theory in iterative cycles of theorizing, production, and reflection.

In his investigation of the historical development of practice-based research in the arts and media in UK institutions, Bell endorses the performative approach to understanding art which was proposed by the American philosopher David Davies in his book *Art as Performance* (2004). According to this approach, art practice should be understood as a 'generative performance' which addresses the relationship 'between the generative act that brings a work into existence and the receptive act that is a proper appreciation of that work' (Davies 2004: 26).

In the initial three chapters of his book, Davies first of all critiques the commonsense or 'empiricist' view of art appreciation which is based on an ontological understanding that the artwork is the material object (or visual or aural process or structure, or the utterances of writers), viewable or playable or readable in front of the observer or listener; and an epistemological approach that holds that it is enough to perceive it to be able to appreciate it. According to Davies, one of the key shortcomings of aesthetic empiricism is that it does not provide a clear epistemological framework with which to engage with some late modernist or postmodernist forms of art practice. This is because such practice frequently has a conceptual or performative basis, or non-material forms where no clear art product exists apart from concepts, gestures, or performances. He describes how this 'aesthetic empiricism' has been largely supplanted

by a ‘contextualized’ ontology, in which the context of origin of a work informs the process of its appreciation, before going on to contend that this contextualized approach is, in itself, not sufficient. Davies then builds a ‘cumulative argument’ (Chapters 4-6) against contextualism in favour of his performative approach, and in subsequent chapters strives to show how this performative approach may lend itself to a fuller understanding of conceptual and postmodern art. Davies argues that we should reject the idea that what the artist achieves is the product of his or her creative actions, which he describes as the ‘work product’. This is

tantamount to giving up the idea that the work is the product of the creative process and saying, rather, that the work – what the artist achieves – is the process eventuating in that product (Davies, 2004: 98).

Davies’ cumulative argument for the performative approach can be broken down into three segments or premises, according to the philosopher Robert Stecker (2005: 75). The first is a rationale based on intention: Davies argues that an artist can have a particular intention in the creation of a piece of work which is not realized, creating instead a different piece of work with a different meaning. Nevertheless, this original intention is ‘still relevant to the appreciation of the work’ (Stecker: 2005: 76). The second segment centres on the idea of modality, the idea that ‘whether a property is constitutive of a work depends on what is to be appreciated in a work’ (Stecker: 2005: 76). The final premise which underlies Davies’s performative approach is that one may attempt to reconstruct the original performative act during which the ‘work product’ was created, in order to understand how it may be appreciated.

According to Bell (2006: 85), Davies’ approach helps researchers to identify ‘an appropriate research paradigm’ for arts practice, including film and photography. He argues that if art practice is a ‘generative performance’ it follows that it is best justified through a ‘patient codification of that practice and of innovations within it’ (Bell, 2006: 96). He adds:

This codification or theorisation can only be arrived at through an attentive understanding of what artists actually do when they make work. This seems like a useful methodological tip for constructing an effective research paradigm for the creative arts’ (Bell, 2006: 96).

The 'great virtue' of Davies' view of art as a generative performance, according to Bell, is that it 'abolishes the demarcation which has bedevilled the creative arts in their relationship to critical theory, namely that between the act of aesthetic judgement of a manifest work and the acts of practice and reflection (performance) through which a work is produced' (Bell, 2006: 96). This is contrasted with a poststructuralist understanding of art that emphasizes its semiotic readings and discursive analysis, and which in so doing underplays the role of authorship and artistic intent in its production. In a key passage, Bell notes that in order to properly understand the creative work it needs to be seen

[...] not as an objectified sign structure but as an embodied and historically situated performance. In particular, we must appreciate how an artist employing specific media and artistic means and conditioned by specific historical conditions gives form to a creative intention which may or may not be realized in the generative act of making the work (Bell, 2006: 98).

Artists and art historians have debated for decades whether or not Renaissance and post-Renaissance painters such as the Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer used certain innovative optical technologies, including the camera obscura, in the creation of their work. Some have argued that Vermeer used the camera obscura (essentially a prototype of the photographic camera without the light-sensitive film or plate) to project an image of a landscape or room onto his canvas, which he then painted. The debate has focused not just on the question of whether such technologies were actually used, but on their implications for a 'purist' understanding of the artist as a sole genius working unaided in his *atelier*, and also their implications for the monetary value placed on the art works today in the marketplace. Davies comes down firmly on the technologist side of the debate, and argues that Vermeer's work, including *The Art of Painting* (1666-1673), may only be fully appreciated when the context of its production is taken into account, including the still-disputed use of the camera obscura. In other words, in order to fully appreciate the painting, it is not enough to merely look at it; an understanding of the processes the artist used in its creation can enrich our understanding and our experience of it.

In conclusion, Davies' performative approach provides us with a heuristic tool with which to rethink the epistemology of art. As Bell argues, an evaluation of practice-

based research in the arts and media should be based not just on the 'work product' presented for exhibition, as is the case in aesthetic empiricism, nor on the semiotic codes and structures which have formed the substance of much critical study in film studies in the past, but on the 'embodied and historically situated performance' of its generation (Bell, 2006: 98):

The primary focus of this creative intention on the part of the artist is the production of an art object. In the case of art practice concerned with research outcomes, the primary focus is understanding the generative performance of the art work. This, I would argue, is the appropriate knowledge object of creative practice research [...] We have not as yet delineated the appropriate 'research model' to guide this pedagogically inspired search for communicable knowledge about art practice. However, it is more likely to take the form of an ethnography, rather than a physics or poetics of practice. And because the artists themselves will take the lead in this knowledge gathering (as they historically have done), and because they are both the subject and object of his investigative process, this research process is more likely to take the form of *auto-ethnography* (Bell, 2006: 98-99; italics in original).

4.2 Why a practice-based approach to a study of cultural globalization?

An initial review of ways of investigating the impact of cultural globalization on minorities found there was a strong rationale for adopting a practice-based approach to such an investigation. Visual representations, and media in general, are key sites where issues of identity, language and culture can be investigated in the social world, and where particular power relationships can be understood and analysed. This is especially true of minority-language communities, whose media play a key role both in language transmission and in the elaboration of discourses in and about the language.

Leavy (2009) refers to the use of film and still images in visual anthropology, including three genres of visual images identified by Holm (2008). These are: (i) subject-produced images; (ii) researcher-produced images; and (iii) pre-existing images. The importance of providing context for images is stressed, and a number of ways of doing this are suggested. According to Leavy, visual art is a 'significant source' of information about the social world, including 'cultural aspects of social life; economic

and political structures; identity issues at the global, national, group and individual levels; and many other issues' (Leavy, 2009: 217-219). He cites Rolling's 2005 research on the African American experience of 'Other' as showing the potential of visual art and media 'to reveal subjugated perspectives and intervene in historically oppressive processes of representation', and points to visual culture as a site 'where struggles over identity and representation are played out [...] where ideas of normalcy are created, and out of which the idea of the "Other" emerges' (Leavy, 2009: 221).

In her 1995 book, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, the American author, feminist and social activist Gloria Watkins, who is better known by her pen name, 'bell hooks', details a number of macro contexts in which struggles over representation may occur. She suggests that the use of visual art in social research may appeal to researchers working from feminist, postcolonial and other critical perspectives. In a key statement, she writes: 'Representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed people asserting subjectivity and decolonization of the mind' (hooks, 1995: 3).

In considering such issues of representation, it is important to situate the particular ethnographic position of the researcher in a transparent manner. Born and raised in an English-language context in Dublin, I learned Irish as a young adult and have lived for a large part of my adult life in a complex and transitional linguistic context in Connemara, where the status of Irish as the principal community language is being eroded by the increasing prevalence of English. As a journalist working through the medium of both English and Irish, in a previous professional capacity I reported extensively on developments regarding the Irish language during the 1990s, and, in particular, on the campaign to establish an Irish-language television station.¹ It cannot be said, therefore, that I come to the research project as a disinterested observer.

Marwan Kraidy, in his study of media reception among Maronite Christians in Lebanon (Kraidy, 1999), described his study as a 'native ethnology', as he was a native-born member of the particular bilingual community he investigated. Unlike Kraidy, this

¹ Initially as a general reporter and later as Irish Language Editor and Western Correspondent with *The Irish Times* (1990-1998).

researcher is not a 'native' speaker of the linguistic community that is the focus of his study, as his first language is English. Neither can he be considered to be a complete outsider, however, having lived in Connemara since 1998 and by virtue of the fact that the majority of his daily interactions with family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and others take place through the medium of Irish. Drawing on the work of Styles (1979) and Freilich (1970a) on the various stances researchers can take in ethnographic research, it is appropriate, therefore, to situate this research as coming from the perspective of what may be described as a 'marginal native ethnographer'.

Styles (1979) refers to 'outsider and insider myths' in his discussion of the ethnographer's stance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 86). According to the proponents of outsider 'myths', ethnographic research should be conducted by outsiders in order to ensure objectivity; while those who favour insider 'myths' take the view that only insiders can truly know what is going on. Lofland (1971: 97) writes of the creative benefits of being simultaneously in both camps (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 89), while Freilich (1970a) suggests the ethnographer can in some circumstances be described as a 'marginal native' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 89). During this research project, the researcher situated himself as simultaneously an outsider and an insider: an outsider by virtue of the fact that he comes from Dublin and his first language is English; and a partial insider by virtue of living and working for many years in a small rural community where Irish is still the dominant language, although it is fast being displaced by English. It is perhaps inevitable, therefore, that ethnographic and autoethnographic concerns were to the fore in the consideration of methodological approaches.

Freeman (2010: 178) notes that reflective practice 'embraces notions of heuristic research methodologies'. He traces the etymological roots of the word Greek word *heuriskein*, a verb meaning 'to discover, find', and states that a heuristic approach is associated with the idea of a search for information and knowledge 'which is as closely linked to internal and personal development as it is to the key principles of fact-finding most commonly associated with research'. He adds:

In this sense, heuristic research is not necessarily concerned with whether or not a thesis can be shown to contain something that is innately correct so much as the extent to which it produces a potential solution: this creates an embrace of

trial-and-error procedures that sees error as being no less valuable than success (Freeman, 2010: 178).

According to Freeman, autoethnography challenges the conception of art as being essentially inexplicable and unknowable. He describes autoethnography as a research method 'that seeks to connect the personal to the cultural, placing the self at all times within a social context' (Freeman, 2010: 181). He cites Marjorie DeVault (1997: 226) and Ann Oakley (2000, 291) to support his claim that the kind of experiential knowledge implied by autoethnography is valuable in an increasingly globalized world, where the investigation of personal narratives can yield insights into the nature of changing and destabilized national and cultural identities. This approach is supported by Norman Denzin's definition of autoethnography as 'a turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self (auto), while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self experiences occur' (Denzin, 2003: 258).

4.3 Theorizing objectivity and subjectivity in the practice

A key methodological issue was how to address the question of objectivity and subjectivity in the practice. In this context, Brian Winston's analysis of the differences between the French view of *cinéma vérité* in the 1960s, and U.S. direct cinema, in his chapter 'The Documentary Film as Scientific Inscription'² proved invaluable. Renov's 2004 chapter, 'New Subjectivities: Documentary and Self-Representation in the Post-Vérité Age' also proved useful in considering issues relating to objectivity and 'truth', and in situating the self-reflexive elements of the creative practice (Renov: 2004).

Winston analyses the disputes between U.S. proponents of direct cinema such as Richard Leacock and Albert Maysles on the one hand, and French advocates of *cinéma vérité* such as Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin on the other, which took place during a conference on documentary in Lyon in 1963. Erik Barnouw summarizes the conflict between the two parties in the following terms:

² In Renov's 1993 book, *Theorizing Documentary*.

The direct cinema artist aspired to invisibility; the Rouch cinéma vérité artist was often an avowed participant. The direct cinema artist played the role of an uninvolved bystander; the cinéma vérité artist espoused that of provocateur (Barnouw, 1981: 254-255).

Such debates may seem somewhat dated when viewed from the perspective of the early years of the twenty-first century, when, following theoretical developments in the social sciences in recent decades, the social world is increasingly perceived as contingent, reflexive, and formed through discourse. Nevertheless, questions about objectivity and subjectivity remain as important as ever in documentary film-making. Renov (2004: 173-177) traces the gradual shift towards subjectivity in documentary filmmaking that occurred between the 1970s and the 1990s. He first gives an example of ‘purist’ direct cinema orthodoxy from the shooting of D.A. Pennebaker’s 1962 film on Jane Fonda: at one stage a dispute arose between Pennebaker and the producer, Robert Drew, over the noise of the camera, which could be heard during a sequence with Fonda sitting alone by her dressing room mirror:

Pennebaker felt that the noise should remain, making it clear that the audience was not seeing Jane alone in her dressing room, but Jane alone in her dressing room with a camera observing her (Renov, 2004: 175).

Renov then examines the evolution of Alan and Susan Raymond’s 12-part documentary series *An American Family*, which was made in 1971, and *An American Family Revisited*, which was broadcast in 1983 and updated again in 1990. Over the course of the series the invisible wall between film-maker and subject becomes porous and finally collapses, as the father reacts to the mother’s on-camera announcement that she is filing for divorce by saying that he felt the announcement was 90% spontaneous, and 10% for the camera. Renov comments:

Covering nearly two decades, the updated *American Family* saga offers dramatic evidence of the shift away from a self-consciously observational approach to a more interactive, even reflexive, modality (Renov, 2004: 176).

In other words, the subjectivity that earlier had been seen as a ‘contamination’ of a pure form of observational documentary later came to be seen as more valuable:

The documentative stance that had previously been valorized as informed but objective, was now being replaced by a more personalist perspective, in which the maker's stake and commitment to the subject matter was foregrounded (Renov, 2004: 176).

As discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, Renov notes that from the mid-1980s onwards there is a 'growing prominence of work by women and men of diverse cultural backgrounds in which the representation of the historical world is inextricably bound up with self-inscription' (Renov, 2004: 176). The disparate cultural identities of the filmmakers came to increasingly inform their work, and were in part a response to critiques of ethnography from the 1960s onwards. According to Renov, the gradual shift between objectivity and subjectivity that occurred between 1970 and 1990 can be traced to the change in emphasis from the social movements of the 1960s (for example, civil rights campaigns in the United States and Ireland) to a shift towards the 'politics of identity' championed first of all by the women's movement but also by a range of identity-focused issues and campaigns centred on issues to do with race, sexuality and ethnicity. This approach, which emphasises forms of documentary self-inscription which enact 'fluid, multiple, even contradictory' identities, while 'remaining embroiled in public discourse' (Renov, 2004: 176) was used as a template for the merging of both subjective and objective elements in the narration or voice-over for *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* which was developed through a process of experimentation in the practice. This transgressive and self-referential strategy is in keeping with the explosion of new subjectivities, personal essays, diary films and the like in recent years which Renov describes as 'self-consciously transgressive acts'. During the heyday of direct cinema in the 1960s, self-reference was taboo, but, says Renov,

[...] far from a sign of self-effacement, this was the symptomatic silence of the empowered who sought no forum for self-justification or display. And why would they need one? These white male professionals had assumed the mantle of filmic representation with the ease and self-assurance of a birthright. Not so the current generation of performative documentarists (Renov, 2004: 181).

Renov contrasts the earlier, unconscious and gendered biases of the direct cinema era with 'transgressive acts' in the contemporary era, which, he says, speak for

the voiceless, the marginalized, the dispossessed, and other minority groups. These new subjectivities in documentary filmmaking correspond to the fifth and sixth modes of documentary film (the reflexive and performative modes) which Nichols added to his original fourfold topology of poetic, expository, observational and participatory modes (Nichols, 2010). As Nichols notes,

[...] most films incorporate more than one mode, even though some modes are more prominent at one time or place than another. These modes serve as a skeletal framework that individual filmmakers flesh out according to their own creative disposition (Nichols 2010: 143).

4.4 Conclusion

One consequence of an approach that asserts the primacy of the 'generative performance' of the artwork (see section 4.1 above), and reflection on the process of its creation, is that it is essential to document as fully as possible each stage of the development of the research project. In practical terms, this meant that detailed notes were kept of ideas, comments and reflections (however insubstantial or incomplete) that surfaced during the course of the investigation. As a result of the part-time nature of the doctorate, work progressed in spasmodic and intermittent acts of creation followed by long periods of reflection and theorizing that were frequently punctuated by the quotidian demands of work and family life.

In order to deal with this intermittent rhythm, and as an integral part of the process of reflection, hundreds of contemporaneous notes and reflective diaries were gradually amassed during the various stages of pre-production, production and post-production of the film at the heart of the creative practice. These later became a key resource. They usually took the form of short written notes, or, more frequently, brief audio recordings using a pocket digital recorder. Over time, a considerable corpus of such contemporaneous reflection was built up, consisting in total of several hours of audio recordings. This later posed its own challenges in terms of data management, retrieval and archiving. The preparation of a number of longer documents, including presentations at post-graduate seminars, published articles, funding applications, draft treatments, storyboarding and other writings also created opportunities for a more

sustained reflection and analysis at various key intervals. In turn, this copious documentation proved invaluable at the writing-up stage.

The pre-production stage encompassed a slow and deliberative process of experimentation designed to answer a central dilemma: how do you make a film about a broad societal issue such as cultural globalization, include a strong element of reflexivity grounded in relevant theory, and at the same time follow the artistic and creative impulses which make a film a satisfying piece of work from an aesthetic point of view? In other words, how do you make a film that makes sense both visually and thematically, and also in terms of rhythm and pace, holding the attention of the viewer without compromising on its intellectual and academic content?

During the course of this experimental stage a methodology and a structure for the practice gradually emerged which encompassed both autoethnographic and observational elements. Simply put, it was decided to shoot footage at a particular time and place (a summer course at an Irish summer college in Connemara) using the tenets of direct cinema: to observe and record the activities at the college as faithfully as possible, without a pre-planned script, from morning to night during the three-week duration of the course. The subsequent elaboration of an essay film from that raw footage became an exercise in performative subjectivity and experimentation, with an overall editing script and a separate voice-over gradually taking shape in response to both theoretical issues and the roughly-assembled sequences on the timeline, in an iterative process in which the practice was informed by the critical reflection and vice versa.

Although the subjective nature of the film is explicitly recognised, both in the voice-over and in visual terms (when, for example, I appear in the frame gesturing to students at the college that the camera is recording), another important aspect is the fidelity of the recording of observed events. No attempt was made to construct or 'set up' particular shots or sequences; all the footage used in the film (apart from the extracts from YouTube videos) was shot exactly as the events unrolled, albeit from an individual and subjective perspective. It could scarcely be otherwise, as much of the day-to-day activity at the college, particularly that relating to the creation of the music videos, occurred on an ad-hoc and flexible manner, depending on the exigencies and contingencies of the day. The choice of shots to use in editing was, of course, also a

highly subjective exercise, yet here again no attempt was made to edit the raw footage in a way that might misrepresent what participants were saying or doing.

In this effort I was guided by my previous professional experience as a journalist: while recognizing that absolute objectivity, impartiality and truth are elusive concepts that can never be fully grasped or realized, particularly in the cut-and-thrust of a busy newsroom, ethical considerations demand that one strives to attain as complete a measure of objectivity, fairness and balance as is humanly possible. The news reporter who has given up trying to be as objective as he or she can be, whilst acknowledging the impossibility of achieving complete objectivity, is traducing a basic tenet of the craft of journalism. Although this project was, of course, not an exercise in basic reportage, it was informed by a similar concern for accuracy and fairness, and a scrupulous attention to detail.

How can these two conflicting desires – the intention to craft a subjective and personal reflection, and a wish to be as faithful as possible to the actuality in front of the lens – be reconciled? One solution which emerged in the experimentation was to conceive of the film as episodic in structure, with a poetic introduction and chapters which encompassed by turns didactic or even expository elements (as in the historical contextualising), and reflexive elements in the voice-over which served as a kind of filmic exegesis to uncover, dissect and even dispute the overall argument from an entirely subjective point of view. Within this Brechtian framing, the actuality presented on screen preserves elements of *cinéma vérité*, a hybrid process that presents its own methodological challenges.

Alan Rosenthal (2002) describes some of the practical difficulties filmmakers encounter when they undertake an unscripted *cinéma vérité* project. The high shooting ratio which is a feature of such projects (and one which is greatly exacerbated in the digital era) can be a challenge, firstly in terms of the time and cost of the actual shoot, and subsequently in the amount of rushes the editor needs to go through in order to find and build the film in the edit suite:

The problem the filmmaker often faces is that having weighed all the changes and come to the conclusion that the subject matter is interesting, even fascinating, the film still goes nowhere. Nothing seems to happen. Nothing seems to develop. And in the end, one is left with a mass of material without

center or focus, which, if the truth be told, looks pretty boring (Rosenthal, 2002: 268).

He cites Charlotte Zwerin, the editor of the Maysles brothers' film *Salesman*, who describes how attempts to edit a story structured around four Bible salesmen floundered for about four months. 'Gradually we realized we were dealing with a story about Paul, and that these other people were minor characters in the story,' she said (Rosenthal (2002: 268).

Working in such a context demands a high level of attentiveness and responsiveness on the part of the filmmaker, and an ability to anticipate potential conflicts or other situations that might provide useful footage. In a situation where the cameraperson is working on his or her own, 'You go for the most important sync dialogue and try to anticipate where the next main dialogue is going to come from. Afterward, you try to get the cutaways, so that the editor will have something to work with, hoping that while doing this you're not losing too much sync' (Rosenthal, 2002: 269).

Although the creative practice was not focused on producing a 'pure' *cinéma vérité* film, Rosenthal's ideas were useful in preparing for the practicalities of the shoot at Coláiste Lurgan. They also inspired the idea of using two cameras, one of which would be static or 'locked down' on a tripod, and the second either hand-held or on a smaller and more portable tripod, in order to gather material for cutaways.

One implication of the heuristic approach to the project is that the form of the practice is not set in stone at the outset, but gradually emerges through a process of experimentation and trial and error. The experimentation during this project encompassed attempts at straightforward expository documentary, including interviews with a wide range of potential participants including students, staff, media workers and academics. The idea of using historical reconstructions, still photographs, archive documents and other graphic or illustrative material to convey some of the social and historical context was also investigated, before being discarded on grounds of cost.

In light of the earlier discussion of reflexivity and subjectivity, I also experimented with different methods of inserting myself in the frame, inspired by the work of Edgar Morin and Jean Rouché in *Chronique d'un été/Chronicle of a Summer* (FR, 1961). At one stage I considered an ending which might feature a round-table

discussion with students, in a partial *hommage* to that film. Another idea was to conceive of the film as episodic in structure, with a poetic introduction, a didactic expository segment, and a separate reflexive element that might serve as a kind of filmic exegesis to uncover and dissect the overall argument from an entirely subjective point of view. Yet another idea was to construct a series of episodes using different filmic styles that would be punctuated by short interviews whose purpose would be either to problematize or to contextualize what had gone before or what was just about to unfold on screen.

There remained the problem of overall structure or thematic unity. In that context, inspiration was drawn from the guidelines to proposal writing contained in the opening chapters of Alan Rosenthal's 2002 book, *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*. Rosenthal stresses the importance of an overall 'narrative train' or spine in a documentary. He suggests filmmakers should attempt to construct an overall story arc that builds towards some sort of satisfying finish, while not necessarily conforming to the strictures of the Hollywood three-act built on increasing conflict and rising tension. Jumping-off points he suggests include situational or personal conflicts, and strong and charismatic characters who change over time or go through some kind of transition (Rosenthal, 2002: 26). He recommends that documentary filmmakers in the early stages of developing a proposal or treatment ask themselves the following questions: 'Where is the drama in your story? Where is the conflict? Where are the emotions and character development?' (Rosenthal, 2002: 36-37). This advice is sometimes ignored in film essays or experimental films, and some may ask if it is not advice primarily aimed at fiction screenwriters. However, it could also be argued that Rosenthal's 'narrative train' is part of an underlying logic of storytelling, a logic that may be all the more important if the filmmaker decides to make use of the loose episodic-type structure suggested earlier. Otherwise the work may risk collapsing into a number of disparate elements, and lack coherence as a work of art.

Rosenthal describes how the shape of a *cinéma vérité* film can emerge gradually during the edit:

I start by cutting scenes I like and seeing what makes them work and what they reveal to me. At that stage, I don't bother with the placement of the scenes within the overall film. When I finish a scene, I write the details about it on a card and

pin it to the wall. This work might go on for weeks or months, depending on the film. During this time, a process of clarification is taking place; I am beginning to see connections, lines, meanings. Sometimes this happens in the editing room itself, sometimes when I'm relaxing. It's certainly not a linear process (Rosenthal, 2002: 271).

These and other practical issues discussed by Rosenthal proved invaluable in elaborating an approach to the essay film that combined elements of *cinéma vérité* with a reflective and subjective narrative and extracts from the YouTube videos made by students at the college.

In summary, therefore, each stage of the process of experimentation can be understood as a way station on the road to the heuristic 'discovery' of the final art form. Both written and practice-based elements of the experimentation were essential components of a methodological journey that began with an investigation into the nature of practice-based research in film and digital media. A rationale for a practice-based approach to a study of cultural globalization was then developed, and questions of objectivity and subjectivity in such practice were considered in the context of efforts to reconcile a *cinéma vérité* approach to the shoot with a subjective and personal engagement with the footage in the edit suite. A more detailed reflection on this process follows in Chapter Five.

5 CRITICAL REFLECTION

This chapter comprises a critical reflection on the evolution of the practice-based research project that resulted in the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge*, and on the film itself, including its pre-production, production and post-production stages as well as the final piece of work. It also contains elements of autoethnographic reflection on process.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the work is situated in the context of a broader ‘generative performance’ based on themes elaborated in this thesis document, and is justified through a ‘patient codification of that practice and of innovations within it’ (Bell, 2006: 10). This ‘generative performance’ encompasses two short precursor films: *Cochaillín Dearg/Little Red Riding Hood* and *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia*, as well as the main work, the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge*. The making of these films facilitated creative experimentation and the exploration of ideas and approaches later developed in the main project. The reflection on the main project begins with an analysis of the genesis and development of the creative approach during pre-production, an approach that moved from an initial desire to make a conventional television documentary to the emergence of a more creative, unorthodox and reflective style. It then moves to a reflection on production issues, including the constraints imposed by the nature of the shoot and the impact this had on the kind of film that could be made. Following that, the section on post-production focuses on how the structure of the final film emerged in the edit suite through processes of trial and error, through ‘rituals of

making' (Kentridge, 2016) rather than in a pre-planned way. Finally, the chapter concludes with a general reflection on the evolution of the project.

One of the implications of the 'generative performance' approach to practice-based research in film is the imperative to describe the work as 'an embodied and historically situated performance' in order to understand it (Bell, 2006: 12). Accordingly, this chapter documents and analyses the various stages in the development of the practice, from early experiments with short films to the development of documentary and research ideas submitted to the European Commission; An Chomhairle Ealaíon / The Arts Council of Ireland; TG4 (the Irish-language television station based in Connemara); and RTÉ (the main public service broadcaster in Ireland). This is necessary in order to understand the full context, origin and development of the essay film that eventually emerged from this process.

5.1 Pre-production: the slow gestation of an idea

This section reflects on the genesis and development of an idea that moved from an initial desire to make a conventional television documentary (incorporating an observational approach and using interviews as voice-over to carry the narrative), to the emergence of a more creative, reflective and experimental approach based on a developing understanding of the nature and potential of the essay film. The approach which eventually emerged incorporated a poetic and questioning narration in a third language (French), while at the same time employing various visual stratagems to subtly undercut and bring into question the position of the narrator. The primary dimension was, of course, the visual one: over time, as the experimentation developed, I became more confident of using visual elements and juxtapositions in order to explore the research question through filmic representation, and in so doing use digital media to examine some of the contemporary questions and contradictions which arise from cultural practice in a globalized world. It is worth noting that in parallel with this journey I gradually began to move from the standpoint of a former journalist who was familiar with the means of exploring ideas through written discourse, to that of someone who was gradually discovering ways of exploring them through visual and filmic representation.

From an early stage I had a clear idea about the kind of film I *didn't* want to make, but the shape of the one I wanted to make eluded me for a long time. As discussed more fully in the 'state of the art' review (see Chapter Three), many films which have globalization as an overt theme tend to focus on the economic aspects of globalization on an individual, a family or a community. Many of the films focus on human interest stories, in other words, they tell stories on a human scale that are meaningful to an audience and easily understood. However, they lack a more intellectual or abstract engagement with discourses about the cultural impact of globalization, or a generalized discussion of the imbalances in power and influence in global exchanges of cultural and media products. I hoped to examine these larger, more general issues in a way that would interest a relatively young audience.

I was also interested in the role of language in these processes, and in examining the relationship, if any, between the spread of English as a global language in recent decades and the worldwide dissemination of Western consumer goods and cultural products such as films, television programmes and music. I was curious to see if there was a link between this linguistic dominance and the spread of neoliberal consumerist ideologies in countries and cultures where consumerism was not historically the norm, and on the impact the increasing linguistic dominance of English might be having on lesser-used languages like Irish. Was it possible, or even desirable, to explore such questions through the medium of film?

Thus, the pre-production stage encompassed a long and productive process of experimentation designed to answer a central dilemma: how to make a film about a broad societal issue such as cultural globalization, include an element of reflexivity and theoretical analysis, and at the same time follow the artistic and creative impulses which make a film a satisfying piece of work from an aesthetic point of view. In other words, how to make a coherent film in both a visual and thematic sense, and also in terms of rhythm and pace, without compromising its intellectual rigour?

The search for an answer to that question proceeded in tandem with two other concerns. The first was the search for funding to allow the production of a substantial documentary film with a crewed production team. The second was a comprehensive methodological investigation of the relationship between practice and theory in practice-based research in the arts and media. The search for funding led initially to the

preparation of an application for EU research funding which was submitted in November 2012 to the European Commission as a joint project between *The Guardian* newspaper in the UK and the Huston School of Film & Digital Media in Ireland.¹ Although it was not funded, the six-month process of preparing the application was useful in terms of clarifying ideas, developing certain ethnographic elements, and situating them within a broader European and global context. The idea of focusing on a particular case study as a means of illuminating wider trends and issues dates from this time. It led me to engage with a wider literature than might otherwise have been the case, in particular with the work of the Belgian economist and philosopher Philippe Van Parijs,² and with that of Mark Wise, Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration Studies at the University of Plymouth.³ The impact of this research was to raise awareness of the global context in which my practice-based project might usefully be situated.

During this period, my practice as a filmmaker developed through the production of a number of short films. The most relevant of these were *Cochaillín Dearg/Little Red Riding Hood* (2011), a reflexive dialectic on an musical based on the European folk tale; and *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia* (2011), a poetic monologue based on a research trip to Vietnam.

1 The project was called VARIETAS - An Innovative Industry-Academia Partnership in Digital Media Research Training. It was submitted as part of a new European initiative to fund 'industry doctorates' under the Marie Curie Initial Training Networks scheme, a part of FP7, the European Union's Research and Innovation funding programme for 2007-2013.

2 In his 2011 book, *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World*, Van Parijs argues that the spread of a common lingua franca can facilitate communication and mobilization between different groups who struggle for greater justice in Europe and the world. However, he adds that the resulting linguistic situation is unjust in a number of ways. The native speakers of the lingua franca are economically advantaged compared to the speakers of other languages - they are, in effect, given a valuable commercial asset 'on a plate' while benefiting from the learning efforts of non-native speakers. Also, the enhanced status and privilege given to English also militates against the equal respect for other European languages - a paradox which Wise (2009) describes as the 'cosmetic element' in EU rhetoric about multilingualism and diversity.

3 See Wise, M. (2009) 'Celebrating Linguistic Diversity or accepting an "English-only" Europe?' in *Celebrating Geographical Diversity, Proceedings of the HERODOT Conference*, Ayvalik, Turkey, 28-31 May.

5.1.1. Cochaillín Dearg

Cochaillín Dearg/Little Red Riding Hood is short essay film of just under three minutes' duration which was shot and edited in Connemara during March-April 2011. It uses as its raw material footage recorded during two performances of the school musical *Cochaillín Dearg Ar Strae* ('Little Red Riding Hood Astray'), a newly-written work by Méadbh Ní Fhoighil and Úna Uí Dhireáin, teachers at Scoil Cholmcille primary school in An Tulach, Baile na hAbhann, Co. Galway. The musical was performed by First and Second Class at the school and entered into competition in the 2011 Féile Scoil dramaíochta, a national school drama competition, where it won first prize in its category.

The musical is a retelling of the folk tale with the addition of a number of additional characters, references and musical elements from contemporary popular culture. These include Shrek, from the 2001 DreamWorks film of the same name; the Oompa Loompa characters from the 2005 film adaptation of the Roald Dahl novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; and the adaptation into Irish of the pop song *I Gotta Feeling* by the Black Eyed Peas, which was translated as *Tá Mé Ag Ceapadh*. There is a reference to Coca Cola in the same song as well as some informal code switching, with the use of the English slang expression 'class' (meaning 'classy') in the following lines, which were sung by the entire cast:

Líon suas í seo, le Coca Cola

Breathnaigh orm ag damhsa, nach mé atá class...⁴

(‘Fill this up, with Coca Cola

Look at me dancing, amn't I class...’)

I conceived of the film as a visual means of introducing an abstract theme such as 'cultural globalization' to a wide audience in a way a child might understand. I decided to attempt to capture these images and use them in a polemical or didactic manner with a simple open-ended question at the end.

⁴ At 00:00:36 on the timeline.

The shoot was constrained by the needs and requirements of live performance: I was given permission to film the performance as long as I didn't get in the way or disrupt the live performance in any way. To this end I recorded the performance on a Sony NX5 camera which was 'locked off' on a tripod near a side wall of the auditorium. Additional footage (for use as cutaways) was recorded on the following night. The intention was to record what transpired rather than to intervene in any active way during the recording. Thus, the footage reveals that the children on stage seem completely unaware of the camera's gaze, and can be seen to be looking to the right out of the frame at several points, rather than looking directly at the lens. This lends a slightly voyeuristic aspect to the footage.

The construction and editing of the film from this simple footage prefigures the approach I was later to adopt in the main body of practice. Most of the film is based on a single shot, but with some cutaways from the second night's performance, which was recorded from a different position in the auditorium. Although there is an obvious observational element to the film, it clearly differs from standard observational documentary practice: the voice-over is dialectic, commenting on what is being viewed and posing a question at the end:

One day I went to see a boy and a girl in a school play

I already knew the story, but I didn't mind

I settled back in my seat, and, proud as Punch, waited to catch a glimpse of my two youngest children.

Here's Maidhc, the warrior pig, coming to the rescue

And Aobh, the granny who's still very much alive...

The play was a huge success, and won a national award

Everyone laughed at the clever little twists

The cultural references

The rhythmic music

And, of course, the traditional product placement.

Now, I don't want to spoil the party

But is there something more going on here

Than meets the eye?

Nichols describes commentary as ‘distinct from the images of the historical world that accompany it. It serves to organise these images and make sense of them, just as a written caption guides our attention and emphasises some of the many meanings and interpretations of a still image’ (Nichols, 2001: 107). This editorialising impulse extended to the actual editing process itself: the choice of shots, for example, deliberately focused on Shrek and the Oompa-Loomas in order to construct in a visual medium an argument that the influence of a global consumerist culture (a facet of cultural globalization at the macro level) extends to the most mundane instances of daily life, including the production of a school musical in a lesser-used language in a rural community on the west coast of Ireland in 2011.

A first draft or exploratory voice-over was written before the editing process began, but it was used only as a rough guide, in order to ‘discover’ the overall intent of the film *as it was being made*. This initial voice-over was then discarded, and the footage was edited into sequences in a way that made sense in terms of visual grammar. A new voice-over was then ‘written to the images’ in a way that maintained the supremacy and flow of the visual images while telling a particular story. The final result was a sparse voice-over much shorter than the first draft, one which was dictated by and subordinated to the images which it accompanied, and which commented obliquely (and with a certain amount of humour) on the images on screen. It ended with an open question, which was emphasised by the slow motion finish and the open-mouthed look of astonishment on the face of the girl in the Dalmation costume in the lower left corner of the frame. The applause at the end was also deliberately left to linger for a second or two longer than strictly necessary, and in so doing acted to subtly subvert the ‘voice of God’ narrative. The implication was that the captive audience of parents and relatives loved the show, regardless of whatever the commentator might say.

On later reflection, it is clear that this short film was an important milestone on the way to discovering an authorial style or form that reappears in the final project. It incorporates elements of observational and expository documentary, but can more properly be considered to be a poetic statement, not the least because of the decision to remain within the natural framing of the musical, without the addition of interviews or

footage from another location. This search for a certain poetic unity was replicated in the final project, as were other elements.

5.1.2 Aisling san Áis

During the summer of 2011, as my methodological investigations deepened, I decided to investigate how some of the theoretical analysis of cultural globalization I had read might be developed around a particular case study. I secured a modest travel bursary and undertook a field trip to Vietnam in order to make a short film as part of a practice-based investigation. Vietnam was chosen for two reasons, the first because of its historical resistance to US, French and Chinese imperialism; and the second because, like Ireland, in the latter years of the twentieth century Vietnam had chosen to become integrated into the globalized economic and communication systems that dominate the world today. The tension between historical memories of resistance, and the communist regime's decision to open its doors to a globalized consumer culture dominated by US interests and corporations, was the primary focus. In short, I wanted to ask if, having 'won' the American war in the 1960s, Vietnam had, in a sense, 'lost' the peace.

The project was modest in scope. Travelling openly to Vietnam as a filmmaker is difficult without the backing of a large media organization and a substantial engagement with the security apparatus of an authoritarian state. Because of these logistical issues, and potential constraints on creative freedom, I travelled with a small hand-held Panasonic SD90 HD digital video camera at the mid point of the 'prosumer' range, one which looked like a standard tourist camcorder but which recorded high-definition video in the then-emerging HD standard (1280 x 720 pixels), as well as high-quality ambient sound. A small portable tripod, a lapel microphone for interviews, spare batteries, a charger and some camera cards completed the kit.

During the trip I moved further away from the expository or observational styles I was more familiar with, both as a media practitioner and as a viewer of mainstream broadcast media. I experimented with different modes of documentary filmmaking, while mindful of Nichols's assertion that categories such as the poetic, expository, participatory, observational, reflexive or performative modes are not necessarily exclusive. Thus, 'a reflexive documentary can contain sizable portions of observational or participatory footage; an expository documentary can include poetic or

performative segments' (Nichols, 2001: 99-100). The resulting piece of work is called *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia* and is perhaps best described as a poetic or experimental film. According to Nichols, the poetic mode of documentary filmmaking eschews continuity editing in order to 'explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions' (Nichols, 2001: 102). Unlike most broadcast documentaries, poetic work tends to explore particular themes in an allusive or allegorical manner. These films are subjective, and generally aim to evoke a particular mood or tone rather than follow a traditional linear narrative based on the crisis of a central character or a particular series of events. *Aisling san Áis/A Vision in Asia* has these characteristics. The word 'aisling' in the film's title references the *aisling* or vision-poem in eighteenth century Irish poetry. The opening sequences of the film are based on footage of a female Vietnamese singer, who is singing in the traditional Ca Trù style in a Hanoi folk club, accompanied by musicians playing the lute and praise drum. This is juxtaposed with a declamatory narrative in Irish which includes lines from Aodhagán Ó Rathaille's stark *aisling* or vision-poem called *Mac an Cheannaí*, which was written in Munster in 1709:

*Aisling ghéar do dhearcas féin
ar leaba 's mé go lagbhríoch
an ainnir shéimh darbh ainm Éire
ag teacht im ghaor ar marcaíocht,
a súile glas, a cúl tiubh casta,
a com ba gheal 's a mailí,
dá mhaíomh go raibh ag tíocht 'na gar
a díogras, Mac an Cheannaí.⁵*

(A bitter vision I beheld
in bed as I lay weary:
a maiden mild whose name was Ireland
coming towards me riding,
with eyes of green, hair curled and thick,

⁵ At 00:00:17 on the timeline.

fair her waist and brows,
 declaring he was on his way
 her loved one, Mac an Cheannai.)⁶

Ó Rathaille, a famous poet from the Sliabh Luachra region of County Kerry, lived at a time of great political, social, cultural and linguistic upheaval in Ireland, during which both the English language and English ways and customs were spreading rapidly. Like Ca Trù, the *aisling* is a form of sung poetry, and by putting the two together I hoped to interrogate, in an oblique and subtle way, whether there were certain parallels which might be drawn between the dissemination of English in eighteenth century Ireland, as part of a process of colonization and conquest, and the contemporary experience of the spread of English in Vietnam as it opens its doors to a global consumer culture.

The utopian longing which is a feature of *aisling* poetry (Nic Dhiarmada, 2007) is reflected in Ca Trù poetry. Both are replete with references to grief and loss due to the dislocation and upheaval that accompany colonial conquest: in the case of Ireland, the collapse of the Gaelic polity and the loss of sovereignty following the Tudor conquests, and, in Ca Trù poetry, the subtle and metaphoric references to the impact of Chinese colonialism in Vietnam during the middle ages.

Other juxtapositions in the film included footage of conspicuous consumerism, filmed in and around the historic centre of Hanoi, which are contrasted with footage from a silk factory in the Da Lat province in the Central Highlands, where young women work for a minimal wage for 10 hours a day in conditions reminiscent of an eighteenth century cotton mill in Lancashire.

To accompany this footage I chose a text which has a particular resonance in Vietnam, an extract from the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. This seminal text was written within a year of the 1847 naval intervention in Đà Nẵng in Vietnam by two French warships, ostensibly in order to obtain the liberation of two

⁶ Translated by Thomas Kinsella and published in Ó Tuama, S. and Kinsella, T. (2002) *An Duanaire 1600-1900: Poems of the Dispossessed*, Dublin: Foras na Gaeilge, pp.156-57. In Kinsella's translation the term (and title) 'Mac an Cheannai' is left untranslated; it is a term of endearment which may be literally translated as 'the Merchant's Son', but which refers to a heroic Christ-like saviour figure.

imprisoned French missionaries. This event marked the start of a sustained effort at conquest that ended with the formation of French Indochina in 1887 from territories in Vietnam and Cambodia. Because of this temporal connection with French colonial expansionism in the region, I decided to use the French-language version of the *Communist Manifesto* for this section of the voice-over:

Poussée par le besoin de débouchés toujours nouveaux, la bourgeoisie envahit le globe entier. Il lui faut s'implanter partout, exploiter partout, établir partout des relations. Par l'exploitation du marché mondial, la bourgeoisie donne un caractère cosmopolite à la production et à la consommation de tous les pays. [...] Les vieilles industries nationales ont été détruites et le sont encore chaque jour. Elles sont supplantées par de nouvelles industries [...] qui n'emploient plus des matières premières indigènes, mais des matières premières venues des régions les plus lointaines, et dont les produits se consomment non seulement dans le pays même, mais dans toutes les parties du globe (Marx and Engels, 1848).⁷

(The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country [...] All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries [...] that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe.)⁸

This particular extract was chosen because of the mid-nineteenth century reference to an economic and cultural phenomenon now referred to as globalization,

⁷ At 00:03:05 on the timeline.

⁸ Authorized English translation by Samuel Moore published by Charles H. Kerr & Co. in Chicago in 1888.

although this term did not have widespread currency before the 1990s. The use of the French language in narration, as a means of commenting in an oblique way and creating a distinct 'voice' for the narrator, was a device which was later developed in the main work.

One of my aims in making these kinds of connections and juxtapositions was to explore some of the epistemological issues that can arise during this kind of practice-based research. Bell (2004) references how the impact of lens-based practices in anthropology helped to undermine the positivist certitudes of a previous era, by encouraging reflexivity and ethical engagement on the part of researchers:

Harvard historian Robert Rosenstone (1995) has gone so far as to suggest that is in the experimental and creative documentary films dealing with memory, subjectivity and the fragility of truth claims about the past that a concrete example of a postmodernist historiography is being forged. In documentary film practice the appearance of what Bill Nichols (1994) has christened a 'performative mode', characterized by a greater degree of reflexivity on the part of the film maker and a blurring of the boundaries between the factual and the fictive, has occasioned a serious debate about the production of truth within film and photography (Bell, 2004: 745).

In making a short film in Vietnam, based on a necessarily brief engagement with the country and its contemporary context, I was conscious that I needed to find a way to emphasize the inherent subjectivity of the film. This is mainly achieved in the voice-over. On reflection, I feel that the film would work better if it succeeded in problematizing in a more overt way the standpoint of the filmmaker. It would be easy to imagine, for example, going to Vietnam and coming back with the opposite thesis to the one I constructed: one that suggested that Vietnamese culture and traditions remain strong despite the superficial encroachment of a global consumerist culture.

The principal lesson I drew from this instance of practice-based research was that questions about reflexivity and the social construction of reality are thrown into sharp relief once the process of editing images on a computer begins. The limitations of the medium, as well as its strengths, gradually became more evident to me: its linear nature in particular was a source of frustration, as I wanted to suggest contingent, potential and complex answers that refused binary formulations.

5.1.3 Finding a filmic 'universe'

During the period October 2013 – March 2014 I developed and submitted two substantial funding applications: one to An Chomhairle Ealaíon / The Arts Council of Ireland under its 'Reel Art' scheme for creative or art film; and the other to the Irish-language television station TG4, for a broadcast documentary. I wrote two detailed treatments for two very different kinds of documentary during this time, one creative and experimental, and the other for a conventional character-driven human-interest story aimed at a television broadcaster. I also developed an informal pitch to RTÉ (the principal public service broadcaster in Ireland), and spent long hours storyboarding ideas, meeting potential collaborators and brainstorming various ideas with them.

Although this process did not result in a commission from any of the funders, it helped to develop my thinking about the nature of abstract filmic interrogation, and the shape of the final project. Through it I discovered a way of approaching a creative documentary that offered the potential to interrogate the research question in a way that might resonate with a younger audience as a striking piece of visual storytelling, but yet did not compromise intellectually with what I wanted to say. At the start of the process I was intent on making a documentary that would be broadly similar to a mainstream broadcast documentary, with the use of interviews with experts on the one hand, and participant interviews on the other. By the end of the process, however, my thinking had evolved to the extent that I felt comfortable about making a creative essay film, incorporating personal reflection.

I decided to take as my starting point Martell's argument in 2010 that the study of cultural globalization in recent years has become separated from its political and economic context (see Chapter Two), and to contrast his view with Nederveen Pieterse's analysis of the globalization of culture as a process of hybridization and benign cosmopolitanism (2004a). From my own limited practice as a documentary script writer and editor in my previous professional life, and drawing on my own more recent practice as a filmmaker, I hoped to build the film around a strong narrative thread so that it might have a coherent structure and prove reasonably accessible to a mainstream audience. In that way I hoped to avoid making a film that interrogated aspects of cultural globalization through a collection of abstract ideas and interviews, but lacked a compelling visual structure.

As I was searching for a visual metaphor or narrative thread, I came across an engaging story about Coláiste Lurgan, an Irish-language summer college in Indreabhán in Connemara. In July 2013 Coláiste Lurgan attracted media attention in Ireland when a YouTube music video made at the college was disseminated widely on the internet within a short number of weeks. The video was based on an Irish-language version of the pop anthem *Wake Me Up* by Avicii, and was shot on location in Connemara using students and teachers as musicians, singers and dancers. The video featured engaging and lively performances and a high quality audio track, as well as visual production standards that rivalled the more polished and expensive productions financed by the music industry to promote its stars. It garnered over 1.5 million hits within a matter of weeks. At the time of writing (in late 2016) the video had been viewed more than 5.3 million times, a previously unimaginable figure for a single video in Irish.⁹

Examining the Coláiste Lurgan YouTube phenomenon more closely, I felt that here was a potential narrative that could be used in a variety of ways to explore wider and more abstract ideas. On the one hand, the reversioning of English-language popular music into Irish, and the creation of new music videos using the Irish versions of the songs as the soundtrack, seemed to be a strikingly visual and aural example of the kind of hybridity described by Nederveen Pieterse and others as evidence of cultural vigour. On the other hand, the phenomenon could also be interrogated as potentially an act of assimilation, by reworking cultural products which originated in a hegemonic language in a lesser-spoken language threatened with erasure due to the actions of various social, political, economic and cultural factors, not least of which was the increasing dominance, in the era of globalization, of the hegemonic language.

It seemed to me that some of the issues raised by the videos could be summed up by the following question, which eventually became the thesis question: 'Does the production of Irish-language versions of popular US music videos in English represent an act of resistance to cultural globalization, or is it a surrender to that process, a form of localized appropriation in which dominant global cultural forms are internalized and reworked in a minority language?' I felt that by framing my wider questions about

⁹ The video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A6__HssHW8

cultural globalization in the context of a specific narrative I could give my documentary the coherence I was seeking. In other words, I could use a story about a group of teenagers making a pop music video in Irish as a vehicle or a means of exploring some of the more abstract themes I was examining in a way that might, if successfully told, connect with an audience in an emotional and visceral way, as well as on an intellectual level.

I wrote detailed drafts of a treatment as part of the application process under the 'Reel Art' scheme, as I attempted to comply with its onerous, and what seemed overly specific and bureaucratic, requirements. An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council sought a detailed account in advance of everything that would be in the film, an approach that left little room for working in a spontaneous and creative manner with the material as the shoot was progressing. This seemed ironic, as 'Reel Art' was flagged by it as a scheme to promote the production of art house film in its own right, and not just the biographies of established artists that were common during its early years. There were difficulties in marrying the original creative intent with the application process, as the nature of the project I had originally envisaged was deliberately loose and open-ended, in order to leave room for the ideas that might emerge during the shoot.

I called the proposed film *Seomra na Macallai* (which may be translated as 'The Room of Echoes'), and described it as a personal, ideas-driven, experimental and poetic essay film that aimed to interrogate the contradictions and creative tensions inherent in making Irish-language versions of mainstream pop music videos in English, and by so doing ask wider questions about the nature of art and culture in an era of globalization and hybridity. In the treatment (the text of which is included in the appendices), I proposed a reframing of questions about language, identity and art, drawing specific comparisons between contemporary debates on these issues and similar debates discussed during the period of the Gaelic Revival in Ireland during the early years of the twentieth century. Some of the issues I wrestled with at the time were noted in a reflective diary I wrote on the 13th of October, 2013:

It seems to me there is too much talking and not enough action, but then I'm also struggling with the idea that it doesn't have to be a three-act drama, it doesn't have to be people-driven with a dramatic arc and so on. Maybe the type of film I'm going to make is going to be very wordy and about ideas, and ideas

presented in sequence. And I suppose the question is: does it make a coherent whole? [...] It isn't a straightforward narrative. It isn't a 'story', but perhaps I can use as a narrative spine or a metaphor this college group making a music video, and hang stuff around it. That was my original idea and I need to keep it in sight because it's easy to lose sight of it. So for example I wanted [a reconstruction featuring Douglas] Hyde near the start and the students talking about it, but the question is do I need the Hyde reconstruction near the start? Do I need the Hyde reconstruction at all, or would an intertitle not do the job?

In retrospect, the treatment was skewed by my attempts to 'write it up' in a way I imagined might find favour with the funders. In the event the application was rejected. Following the failure of the 'Reel Art' application, during the early months of 2014 I worked on drafting a funding application to TG4, and on a short treatment which might be used as the basis for an informal approach to RTÉ. These proposals were also rejected, and I was forced to come to terms with the fact that I would not have the funding to make the kind of crewed documentary I had originally envisaged. However, I had learned a number of valuable lessons from the process. My original intent had been for a creative and experimental approach, which by its nature is a challenge for funders to support, because of the expectation that the purpose of any expenditure from the public purse should be described in great detail in advance. Ironically, the refusal of funding ultimately forced me to focus more, not less, on an improvisational, contingent and experimental approach, as a filmmaker working on his own. More importantly, by insisting I write a detailed treatment (whatever its merits), the process also forced me to engage in a sustained period of reflection and experimentation as to how I might proceed with a film that interrogated the research question.

Although unsuccessful, this developmental process was useful (even without any feedback from any of the funders, which was surprising), as it forced me to clarify further and articulate in different ways and in different documents various ideas about content, approach and form. By the end of this stage I felt I had found a suitable filmic form in which I could interrogate the research question with depth and substance. Henceforth, I would make a smaller-scale film, fulfilling the roles of writer, director, producer, cameraman and editor on an artisanal basis.

5.1.4 Ethical considerations and approach to ethnographic fieldwork

In preparation for the proposed filming at Coláiste Lurgan, a number of ethical guidelines and codes of practice were consulted, including the *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice* published by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (2011), and the *Statement of Ethical Practice* published by the British Sociological Association (2002). These guidelines were followed to the letter, both in the design and in the implementation of the shoot. According to the *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice*, it can be difficult to prepare detailed data collection instruments for approval in advance, given the variety of methods used during ethnographic fieldwork and the diversity of the likely scenarios involved. As a result, 'ethical decision-making has to be undertaken repeatedly throughout the research, and in response to specific circumstances' (ASA Guidelines, 2011: 2). Nevertheless, there is a consensus over specific measures to be taken, including the necessity to obtain informed consent and the need to protect research participants and honour their trust, based on the 'paramount obligation' of researchers to place the interests and rights of those studied above those of the researcher or the research project. Similarly, the British Sociological Association's *Statement of Ethical Practice* emphasises the need for professional and personal integrity, and for the researcher to take all necessary steps 'to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research' (BSA Statement, 2002: paragraph 13). In particular, the BSA's Statement notes the following:

Research involving children requires particular care. The consent of the child should be sought in addition to that of the parent. Researchers should use their skills to provide information that could be understood by the child, and their judgement to decide on the child's capacity to understand what is being proposed. Specialist advice and expertise should be sought where relevant. Researchers should have regard for issues of child protection and make provision for the potential disclosure of abuse (BSA Statement, 2002: paragraph 13).

Relatively little has been written in the academic literature to date regarding the particular ethics of essay filmmaking; this is perhaps due to the idiosyncratic, transgressive and non-genre nature of the essay film, and the very wide range of exemplars (see Chapter Three). However, logic dictates that generalized ethical

considerations and norms in documentary filmmaking are also appropriate in making an essay film. Accordingly, and drawing on my previous professional experience as a journalist and scriptwriter, it was decided to adopt an ethical approach consistent both with the guidelines mentioned above and the norms of documentary filmmaking. Although it was not proposed to make a television documentary, due regard was also taken of the relevant statutory codes and broadcasting standards for television programme-makers in Ireland, including the *Code of Programme Standards* published by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (2015) and the *Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs*, also published by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (2013). Due regard was also taken of the code of conduct drawn up by the National Union of Journalists, which has guided professional journalists in the UK and Ireland since 1936. The rationale for this broad-based ethical approach was both historical and moral: it was deemed appropriate to adopt an approach consistent with my previous professional practice as a journalist, and strive not to distort or suppress information, or misrepresent participants or their actions, particularly given the age range (16-18 years) of students on the course being filmed.

A common theme in the guidelines and codes of practice referred to above is the necessity to obtain the informed consent of participants, and to do nothing that might harm the interests of children. The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's guidance notes regarding its *Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs* notes that Irish and European legislation defines a child as being a person under the age of eighteen. However, it draws a distinction between those aged sixteen and over, and those under the age of sixteen. It states:

The nature of the subject matter will impact on the issue of consent, so, for example, while a report on exam results from a school might generally require the consent of the school principal, a report on youth suicide or anti-social behaviour will require much more careful consideration [...] The Code deals primarily with issues of consent relating to those under the age of sixteen, in recognition of both maturity of young people, particularly those aged sixteen and over, and of the wide variety of circumstances where a child might be interviewed ranging from less serious to more serious content. The guiding principle is that the more serious or controversial the subject matter, the more

caution required in relation to consent of a young or vulnerable person (2013: 16).

Accordingly, in approaching the issue of consent for this project, a 'triple lock' approach was developed and implemented: consents were obtained at a parental, group and individual level, as appropriate. The parents or guardians of all students who attend Coláiste Lurgan are notified at the application stage that the nature of the course is such that photography and video recording will be a frequent and central part of the activities there, and they are required to sign a broad waiver consenting to such recording for a variety of purposes, including film and media work, publicity, and the videos made and uploaded to the college's YouTube channel. The college also informed parents of students attending 'Cúrsa C' in the summer of 2014 that a researcher would be undertaking some filming as part of a doctoral project. In addition, at a group level the entire student body was given details of the research by the researcher at a mass meeting of the students on the first day of the course; this included details of the nature and purpose of the research, and the kind of film envisaged (an educational film for the purposes of doctoral research). At that stage it was emphasised that filming would only take place with the consent of the students, and that if any individual student was uncomfortable or unwilling to be filmed he or she was asked to contact a staff member, who would pass on the information, and care would then be taken to ensure that the student was not filmed. In the event, no one came forward asking not to be filmed; in fact over the next few days a number of students specifically asked if they 'could be part of the film'. Finally, individual release forms (see Appendix One) were drawn up, and all students or staff members interviewed, or who featured prominently in the recorded footage, were asked to sign them. No one declined to sign. In particular, all those who participated in the magazine item on the *Miriam O'Callaghan Show* on RTÉ signed consent forms, as did all those who sang or directed the work of the students, including the members of the Seo Linn music group. A total of 246 individual consent forms were signed and filed, out of a total population of approximately 400 students and staff.

Sanders (2013) argues that the discussion of documentary film ethics has yet to come to terms with changes in the nature of contemporary documentary filmmaking. The discourse on documentary ethics dates from the era of Robert Flaherty's fictionalized narrative *Man of Aran* (1934) and is grounded in the Griersonian tradition in the UK, in social documentaries such as *Housing Problems* (1935) and *Drifters*

(1946). It is based on 'the traditional premise of an all-powerful filmmaker who controls the process and possesses access to as well as knowledge of production processes and facilities, and a lack of such understanding, access, and knowledge on the side of the participant' (Sanders, 2013: 223). This is no longer always applicable in contemporary society, she argues, where video production knowledge and skills are widely diffused. She proposes a rethinking of traditional ethical considerations to include an alternative documentary filmmaking practice, where the participants play an active role in the project, and approach issues of representation with a degree of sophistication and understanding not previously allowed for in the drafting of ethical guidelines. While it remains the case that particular care needs to be taken in dealing with issues of consent, the later experience of the researcher at Coláiste Lurgan during the shoot bears out Sanders' findings: the majority of the students on the course displayed both a sophisticated understanding of issues of filmic representation and context, and an ease and familiarity with the processes involved. This was in part due to a high level of media exposure (both RTÉ and the BBC filmed magazine items during the three-week course), but also due to the nature and success of the college YouTube channel, TG Lurgan.

5.2 Production: the constraints of the shoot

Following negotiations with the manager of Coláiste Lurgan, Mícheál Ó Foighil, covering various issues such as the nature of the project, ethical considerations, logistical demands and other practical concerns, I was given permission to shoot video at the college during three weeks in July and August 2014. Permission was granted on the understanding that I could observe and record what I liked, as long as it was relevant to the research project as outlined and that there was no interference with the normal running of the course. This meant there would be no 'set-ups' or pre-planned shoots.

Over the three weeks of filming, while over 200 students were attending the 'Cúrsa C' course, I shot some 22 hours of footage on two cameras. The first one was a Panasonic P2 HD (AG-HPX171EJ) television camera mounted on a tripod, and the second the Panasonic SD90 HD digital video camera I had used during the research trip

to Vietnam. This smaller camera was either mounted on a tripod or hand-held, depending on the circumstances. I also recorded ambient sound on a portable high-quality Zoom Handy sound recorder, with the intention of syncing this high-quality audio recording to the camera sound during the editing process.

As my previous documentary experience was mainly in the areas of scriptwriting and storyboarding (although I had some video journalism experience), and as I was working on my own, I adopted a pragmatic approach to deal with both my own relative inexperience as a cameraman, and the *cinéma vérité* nature of the shoot, which meant I could observe and record what transpired, but not organize pre-planned sequences or go back afterwards for cutaway shots. In order to get covering shots and to have more choice during the edit, I decided, as far as possible, to set up both cameras in different positions during a shoot, 'locking off' one of them while I occupied myself with the other, while checking the locked off camera from time to time, and sometimes switching from one camera to the other. As I was working alone for the most part I did not use lights, although for some classroom scenes I experimented with a small portable lighting kit, with mixed results.

As I did not have a prepared script, or a clear idea in advance about what I was looking for, I adopted the position of non-participant observer, shooting whatever I thought was interesting seven days a week in three segments each day (morning, afternoon, and evening), and doing my best not to interfere with the normal running of the college, or get in the way. This approach was relatively unobtrusive, and after the first few days, once the students and staff had become used to my presence, I was largely ignored. I was allowed to shoot at will whenever and whatever I wanted, indeed, it was a measure of the trust accorded me by both staff and students that at no point during the entire three weeks was I asked not to shoot a particular scene, and neither was any attempt made to 'direct' or control what I was recording. Although I did not have a script, I had decided to focus on all aspects of the production of YouTube music videos at the college – from planning and pre-production to the preparation of Irish-language versions of the lyrics, rehearsals involving dozens of musicians and singers, the creation of backing tracks, studio recordings, live recordings at evening concerts and at two outside locations (a local beach and Barna Woods), and the editing of the YouTube videos by the college's resident cameraman and editor, Éamon 'Muzzy' Mac Mánaís.

Life at the college was extremely busy: there were classes in the morning; sports and leisure activities during the afternoon and evening; 'town hall' type discussions in the main hall during which the plans for making the videos were outlined; rehearsals involving student musicians, dancers and a large choir; a talent show, concerts and other events during the evenings. Much of the activity at the college was organized on a day-to-day basis, depending on such variables as the weather, the amount of progress made on various videos, the availability of staff and other resources, and so on. This gave the staff a lot of flexibility to respond quickly and creatively to developing and changing circumstances, but it also meant that it proved difficult if not impossible to plan ahead, as the video production activities did not follow a set timetable. It gradually became clear to me that the best way for me to operate was to turn up each morning, find out what was happening, and look for interesting material to shoot. This very high degree of flexibility was only possible because I was working on my own: ironically, had I managed to secure funding for a fully crewed shoot it is likely that the logistics of managing a more complex operation would have proved formidable.

The college had its own resident rock band, called Seo Linn (a colloquial exhortation which may be loosely translated as 'Here We Go'), which had come together in previous years from former students at the college. Band members were key temporary members of staff during this period, and I recorded their involvement in various aspects of the pre-production and production of the videos, including the recording of audio tracks in a makeshift studio. I also recorded a number of interviews and debates with students during which I asked them about their ideas and impressions about the process, and more general questions about culture, language and identity. Staff members were also interviewed. I took extensive notes during the shoot, and recorded dozens of short reflective diaries 'on the fly' on a small portable digital recorder. Altogether, the 22 hours of footage and ancillary information I accumulated over the three-week shoot amounted to over 2TB of data, when downloaded to a hard drive.

5.3 Post-production: discovery through editing and the struggle for coherence

In Joseph Campbell's account of the 'hero's journey' – the underlying structure of mythic storytelling which is generally accepted as the basis for the conventional three-act drama in film – there is frequently a moment of indecision or paralysis at the start of the journey, as the hero or protagonist considers the challenges ahead and tries to summon up the courage to cross the 'threshold of adventure' (Campbell, 1949: 54-63). Once that threshold is crossed the initial hesitation generally ceases, and the protagonist begins to confront the various challenges he faces on the journey. This threshold moment lasted for a considerable period during the process of elaborating and editing the film. Indeed, once the intensive period of the shoot was over there was a long hiatus during which I puzzled over what to do with the significant amount of footage I had accumulated, and how I could relate it to the overall research question. I was overwhelmed and discomfited by the sheer volume of material, and daunted by the task of sifting through it in order to come up with a coherent narrative. I also undertook to train myself to use the new Final Cut Pro X editing software, largely through a process of trial and error, searching for YouTube videos posted by Final Cut Pro X users on particular topics when I ran into difficulties, and attempting to pull some sequences together from the footage.

From late autumn 2014 I slowly began to accumulate potential sequences for the film. The editing was carried out on a 27" iMac computer using various iterations of the Final Cut Pro X editing software, and continued until December 2016. During this time work progressed in tandem on the development of the editing script and the written thesis document, as I looked for a narrative thread that would give the film coherence, and began to critically reflect on the creative process.

Eventually, through a process of trial and error, I started to find a way to navigate through the footage, and look for material that allowed me to be reflexive about what was going on at the college as well as retaining elements of *cinéma vérité*. I was not satisfied simply to construct a straightforward ethnographic story or observational documentary, seeking out the most compelling footage and the best audio, and discarding whatever would not be deemed to be of broadcast standard by a national broadcaster or by a professional gatekeeper. Something else was needed, I felt. However, the absence of an overall plan or storyline, coupled with my own lack of

experience in editing, proved to be a formidable challenge and meant that that ‘something else’ remained elusive for some time. The initial approach resulted in a period of paralysis when confronted with a vast bulk of formless footage at the start of the edit, mostly due to the psychological impact of this uncertainty, although events in my personal life also contributed to the delay.

I had intended, in the conventional style favoured by broadcasters, that the interviews I had conducted with both staff and students would form the basis of the voice-over or narrative thread. However, I gradually came to realize that the perspectives and opinions of the staff and students, although interesting in themselves and useful for someone editing an observational documentary, did not fit the semi-abstract discussion of wider themes concerning cultural globalization that I hoped to construct, both through the juxtaposition of visual images in the edit, and in a more explicit way through a combination of interview and voice-over. I mused for a long time over the question of form; what form the film I was making could usefully take while placing the research question at its centre. Over time, as my reading of critical film theory deepened, and as I was exposed to examples of avant-garde and creative film-making at the Huston School of Film & Digital Media, I became more comfortable with moving away from the conventions of broadcast media (see also Chapter Three).

As I reviewed some of the academic literature on the essay film, I realized that its non-genre and transgressive nature offered a template for a film structured around an authored voice rather than the type of interview-based voice-over with which I was familiar. There was, however, a problem: I was working in 2015-16, not in 1936, and the paternalistic and didactic Griersonian approach of eighty years earlier seemed inappropriate in the light of discourse theory and the contingent and reflexive understanding of the social world that had emerged in the social sciences in more recent decades. The solution seemed to lie in finding a narrative that was tentative, questioning and self-reflexive, rather than overly didactic.

As I wrestled with these questions one morning I was working with a sequence of images from the summer college. The footage was of students putting face paint on each other in preparation for the recording of one of their YouTube videos in Barna Woods near Galway. As I played with the images I was struck by their dream-like, almost fairy-tale quality, and the French words *il était une fois* ('one upon a time') came

spontaneously into my mind (I lived in France for a year in my youth). It was an 'eureka' moment - a sudden insight or epiphany when the solution to a previously unsolvable puzzle presented itself in clear terms. I followed the apparent 'gift' from my subconscious, and over the next hour or so I elaborated a few lines in French:

Il était une fois

un tribu d'Irlandais fous,

qui parlaient l'ancienne langue du pays,

en dépit de tout ce que le monde moderne et lumineux leur disait.

Un beau jour d'été

ils ont décidé de se peindre de toutes les couleurs de l'arc en ciel.

Ils ont ramassé leurs tambours et leurs violons,

et ils sont partis à l'aventure dans le fameux bois de Barna.¹⁰

(‘Once upon a time/there was a crazy Irish tribe/who spoke the ancient language of the country/despite all that the shiny modern world told them. One fine summer’s day/they decided to paint themselves in all the colours of the rainbow. They gathered their drums and their fiddles/and went off on an adventure in the famous Barna Woods.’)

I made a rough recording of these lines and ran the audio under the images, as an experiment, in order to see what the effect might be. It seemed to offer the possibility of constructing a poetic narrative that might place the film on another plane, and give me an opportunity to escape from the stilted and worn Irish *versus* English narratives that often characterize the language question in Ireland, by placing the use of language within the film within a wider international context. The cultural dominance of the English language in film and popular culture - and in particular in the music industry - is widely debated in France and in other non-English speaking countries. However, by

¹⁰ At 00:02:20 on the timeline. The voiceover was subsequently reworked in Irish.

conceiving the 'original' version of the film as being in Irish and French, without subtitles (while preparing a secondary version with English-language subtitles for an Anglophone audience), I seemed to have found a 'third voice' for the narrative that might be perceived as being detached and at a distance from the images, but also poetic and interrogative.¹¹ In this I was influenced by the use by Chris Marker of a woman to represent a male author (himself) in the narration on his film *Sans Soleil*. It also seemed to me that the specific signifying practice of having a voice-over in French spoken by a non-native French speaker (myself) had the potential to add a further layer of meaning, as an oblique and subtle reference to the fact that in Ireland today there are more non-native speakers of Irish than there are native speakers.

I was conscious that to certain Breton, Basque or Guadeloupian ears – and, indeed, to many others in Africa or the Caribbean – the French language carries its own connotations of imperialism and the desire of successive French governments to promote and extend a global *Francophonie*. Despite this, and on further reflection, the use of French seemed to offer a way of widening the lens at a timely moment when the global reach of English had become the focus of debate in many countries, and when the European Union was faced with a dilemma about the future status of the English language within the Union. During the latter half of 2016, and the early months of 2017, media and political elites throughout Europe considered the implications of the UK referendum vote in June 2016 to leave the European Union. They were faced with an incongruous scenario where English would remain the dominant language of bureaucratic discourse within European institutions, yet might no longer be the first language of any member state once the UK departed the Union. Irish was granted the status of an official EU language in 2007 following lobbying by the Irish government and other interests, lobbying that was based in part on the understanding that English,

¹¹ I also considered offering a third version for a Francophone audience, with subtitles in French of the actuality in Irish, as a means of disseminating the research more widely. One of the side-effects of conceiving the film as one made in French and Irish was that this relegated the use of English in the film to a brief intervention by a floor manager in a television studio – an act that, in itself, highlighted the dominant position of English in mainstream media discourse in Ireland.

being the official language of the UK, would also remain as an official working language.¹²

Another reason for the use of French was that I felt the kind of film I wanted to make risked coming across as being somewhat pretentious and ‘arty’, if seen primarily in an Anglophone context. In Ireland, Britain and the United States, popular culture in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century was heavily influenced by the kind of sneering anti-intellectualism that was the default position of the tabloid press at the time. In France, on the other hand, there was a long and respectable tradition of intellectual discourse in the media and other public fora, and the use of documentary and creative filmmaking as a means of articulating complex ideas. As an example of these linguistic niceties, the following lines from the voice-over seemed perfectly normal and acceptable to me in French, but sounded somewhat odd or incongruous when I read the translation aloud in English:

Il y a cent ans un révolutionnaire irlandais dénonce le système scolaire comme une machine du meurtre qui écrase la curiosité et la joie de vivre de la jeunesse.

Ici, par contre, on utilise l'énergie et l'enthousiasme naturel des jeunes d'une manière qui offre beaucoup de possibilités créatives.

Nous avons besoin de cette créativité plus que jamais.

Après tout, la modernisation ne s'impose que de l'extérieure.

Elle réclame aussi la transformation active d'une culture de l'intérieur.

Cette capacité d'engagement critique ne se trouve pas partout, mais ça change.¹³

(‘A hundred years ago an Irish revolutionary denounced the school system as a ‘murder machine’ which crushed curiosity and youthful exuberance. Here, by

¹² According to the Irish constitution, Irish is the first language of Ireland, although English is accepted as a second official language.

¹³ At 00:18:50 on the timeline. The voiceover was subsequently reworked in Irish.

contrast, one uses the energy and the natural enthusiasm of youth in a manner that offers many creative possibilities. We need this creativity more than ever. After all, modernization is not solely imposed from the outside. It also needs the active transformation of a culture from within. This capacity for critical engagement is not found everywhere, but things change.')

As the editing continued, I decided to introduce a further element of reflexivity by using the Brechtian device of breaking the film into a number of named chapters, or episodes. This aimed to break, in a deliberate manner, the 'dream-like' flow of the film, thus giving the audience an opportunity to step outside the 'dream' of the film for a moment and reflect on the ideas that were being explored. This distancing effect, which is sometimes known as 'defamiliarization' or 'making strange', was part of a number of *mise-en-scène* elements described by the German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht using the term *Verfremdung* (estrangement). In his essay, 'On Chinese Acting', he described these and other techniques as 'playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious' (Brecht, 1961: 130-134).

I decided to give each chapter a heading that related in a particular way to the notion of the ebb and flow of the tide, and in so doing make an oblique comment on the content of the chapter it framed. Thus Chapter One was called *La marée basse* (low tide) in a reference to the low point in the fortunes of the Irish language in the years immediately preceding the formation of the Gaelic League at the end of the nineteenth century, a historical context which is reflected in the voice-over.¹⁴ Chapter Two was called *La marée montante* (rising tide) and begins with the arrival of the students on the beach at the start of the *Taoide* sequence referred to below. It refers in an oblique way both to the energy and enthusiasm of the students (despite the impact of what Patrick Pearse called the 'murder machine'), and in a more general sense to the vitality and creativity of the early years of the revival movement. Chapter Three was called *La marée qui noie* (drowning tide) in a reference to more contemporary concerns about the

¹⁴ The chapter titles were translated into Irish during the final revisions.

impact of globalization on linguistic and cultural minorities - concerns which are again reflected in the voice-over. The final chapter was called *La contre-marée* (counter-tide or countercurrent) in a reference both to discourses of resistance to globalization in general, and to contemporary efforts to sustain Irish which are illustrated on screen by the energy of the singers singing in Irish on stage, and the reaction of the audience to them.

The tide has been a metaphor for language conflict and change for me ever since, as an undergraduate student in UCG in the 1980s, I read Aidan Mathew's three-line poem *Death of Irish*.¹⁵

The tide gone out for good,

Thirty-one words for seaweed

Whiten on the foreshore (Mathew, 1990).

Another tidal reference is the song *Riptide* by Vance Joy which features in the film, as it was one of the songs reworked at the college that summer. The song is translated as *Taoide* ('Tide') and there is a scene in the film where a large group of students gather on a beach in Connemara and sing their version of the song in Irish.¹⁶ As often happens in Ireland, the weather that day was poor, and for a while it looked as if the shoot would have to be called off. However, the rain cleared as the afternoon progressed, and the shoot went ahead. In editing this section of the film I decided to contrast the actuality I had captured - including moments of *joie de vivre* and sheer exuberance from the students despite the poor weather, and others where the college cameraman Éamonn Mac Mánaís complains that he can't see the screen properly because of the rain - with an excerpt from the music video which resulted from the day's efforts.

In an interview with the school manager on the coach trip to Dublin, which appears later in the film, Mícheál Ó Foighil refers back to the *Taoide* shoot in a way that

¹⁵ UCG, or University College, Galway, is the former name of the National University of Ireland, Galway.

¹⁶ At 00:20:20 on the timeline.

illustrates the difference between what actually happened on the beach during the shoot, and the finished YouTube video, which was edited in a typically pop video style, with the seemingly indiscriminate use of saturated colour and black and white shots. The manager refers to the wooden stands on which the students were standing ‘sinking into the sand’ as the tide came in, yet despite these difficulties the shoot was successfully completed.¹⁷ I attempted to capture some of this entrepreneurial, collaborative and risk-taking spirit in the film, and also some of the dynamic and creative energy I witnessed at the college, first of all by using a speeded-up section at the start of the sequence (when the students gather on the beach and help each other assemble the stands) to suggest the abundant energy there; secondly by contrasting the uncertain and somewhat chaotic start to the shoot – uncertain because some early rainfall threatened to derail their plans – with the dream-like sequences that appeared in the edited YouTube video. Finally, the sequence in the film ends with a return to the filmed actuality at the scene, giving a renewed suggestion of the improvisational spirit of the day, as the drummer from the rock band Seo Linn (who has been leading the student drummers and helping them to keep in rhythm) finds that one of his feet has become stuck in the soft sand as he drummed.¹⁸

5.4 Conclusion

The pre-production, production, and post-production of the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* evolved during a long and deliberative process over several years. The form (the essay film); the content (a personal reflection on globalization, language and culture set against the backdrop of a visually-appealing series of events at an Irish summer college); and the style, pace and rhythm of the film (by turns dynamic and reflective) gradually emerged through experimental practice that combined elements of *cinéma vérité* with Brechtian *Verfremdung*, and included an authored voice-over in a third language (French) that strove to subvert its own inherently didactic position through the use of an interrogatory tone.

¹⁷ At 00:27:10 on the timeline.

¹⁸ At 00:23:50 on the timeline.

In the event, the use of a French voiceover proved problematic: at the viva the external examiners expressed strong reservations about it, and, although a decision to award the PhD was made, the thesis corrections required included the stipulation that 'the voice-over in the film to be changed from French to Irish'.¹⁹

It is for others to judge the artistic merit, or otherwise, of the final film submitted, with a new version of the voiceover in Irish. As noted in the concluding remarks in Chapter Six, the film's reception by different audiences could usefully form the basis of post-doctoral research, but it is beyond the scope of the current project. As part of such research, the reception of the version initially submitted (with a voiceover in French, and subtitles in English) could be compared with the reception of the final version (with a voiceover in Irish) and the reception of this final version, with added subtitles in English, French, or other languages, as appropriate according to context. The cultural and linguistic backgrounds and points-of-view of potential audiences might form an integral part of such reception theory research (for example, with audiences of monoglot English speakers, or bilingual Irish and English speakers, or non-Irish non-English speakers). It is possible to envisage, for example, a scenario in which the version with a voiceover in French might be screened at a French film festival, where the decision of the filmmaker to record the voiceover in French might be perceived in an entirely different manner to its reception in a largely English-speaking environment. It is equally possible to envisage a scenario where a version of the film might be made with a voiceover in Scottish Gaelic, given the close linguistic and cultural ties between Ireland and Scotland, and the film's subject matter.

Although no substantial research has yet been undertaken into the film's reception, a questionnaire was distributed at an initial screening at the annual Huston School of Film & Digital Media postgraduate research seminar in May 2017. The comments about the use of French vary: according to one respondent 'the use of French keeps the issue of translation and communication to the fore, and prevents it

¹⁹ The objections centred on the assertion that the creation of what was perceived to be a 'fictional' character speaking French on the soundtrack was confusing to a potential audience, and did not follow the norms of first-person autobiographical narrative in essay film.

disappearing as a formal device into transparency'. Another said 'I liked the disjunction with the three languages', while a third asked 'Why French? Intellectually, I understood the historical relevance, but...' A fourth respondent said he was 'Initially perplexed: was it for French TV? But gradually I got it: the point about avoiding the current lingua franca (i.e. English).'²⁰

In conclusion, the nature of the project changed from an initial desire to make a conventional television documentary using a crewed production team funded from external sources, to a more experimental and artisan approach which was born out of necessity (the failure to secure funding), but which eventually proved to be a more fruitful, creative and robust way of examining the themes at the heart of the doctoral question. This approach developed over time, both through theoretical work and a reading of the literature on the essay film, and through exposure to a wide variety of filmmaking styles at the Huston School of Film & Digital Media.

A key characteristic of the resulting film is its self-reflexive and questioning style, a characteristic that derived in part from an examination of the nature of the essay film. This style was also influenced by my own biographical background, firstly as a child growing up in a family where dissent and debate were actively encouraged, and in my later professional life as a journalist, where the ability to parse the (at times) obscurantist utterances of politicians, and penetrate the dense language of officialdom in ways that might make sense to a wide readership, were valued tools. When I was a child, my father would recount how the power, wealth and status of the high priests in ancient Egypt derived from their ability to predict the annual Nile floods, essential to the country's agricultural economy. The priests derived this knowledge from astronomical observations and a system for monitoring river levels, but hid it in arcane language and religious symbolism in order to maintain their power, and pass it on to their children. He told us this story in order to teach us to question the language the

²⁰ There does not appear to be a consensus within the academy as to whether or not examiners of practice-based work may *require* fundamental changes to the art practice submitted (rather than 'strongly recommending' such changes). In the absence of clear guidelines on the examination of practice-based research at NUI Galway, the researcher had no option but to comply with the requirement, regardless of any aesthetic considerations, justifications in the exegesis, or any consideration of the idiosyncratic and transgressive nature of the essay film, as outlined in Chapters Three and Five.

elites use in order to preserve their own privileges. In turn, this impetus to question the ways in which language may be used influenced the filmic approach, and also led to a desire to write this dissertation in a lucid manner.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the principal results and conclusions arising from the creative practice are presented, including new knowledge about the process of making Irish-language versions of popular songs in English, and wider social and theoretical considerations that arise from the research project. Other findings focus on the nature of creativity, its role in identity formation and language learning, and its potential in encouraging teenagers to learn and speak Irish. Finally, the implications of these findings for public policy are analysed.

Candy (2006) describes the difference between practice-based research and practice-led research in the following terms: ‘If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is *practice-based*. If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is *practice-led* (Candy, 2006: 1). Accordingly, any claim to originality and contribution to knowledge in this thesis dissertation must rest primarily on the outcome of that practice, which in the case of this doctorate is the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* (Ireland, 2017). It is for others to judge the artistic merits or otherwise of the film: this chapter will focus on describing the basis on which a claim to an original contribution to knowledge may be made, together with implications for public policy and practice which arise from this new knowledge, and indications for further research.

The research question investigated at the heart of this doctorate was the following:

Does the production of Irish-language versions of popular US music videos in English represent an act of resistance to cultural globalization, or is it a surrender to that process, a form of localized appropriation in which dominant global cultural forms are internalized and reworked in a minority language?

A close reading of the film offers a number of insights into that question. One insight, which may serve as a useful point of departure, is the difficulty in interpretation and analysis that arises when one attempts to reduce a complex social process to a simple binary either/or question. While doctoral programmes encourage researchers to be precise and careful in delimiting the boundaries of their research projects, for very good reasons, it can also lead to a situation where the polysemic and fluid nature of such processes is understated. Accordingly, the answer tentatively offered by this researcher, for reasons that will be elaborated further in the paragraphs below, is the following:

The practice-based research reveals how the production of Irish-language versions of popular US music videos at Coláiste Lurgan in 2014 was a complex and polysemic process that indicates at one and the same time resistance to the dominant and globalizing logic of English in the context of Ireland, *and* at the same time an implicit acquiescence or collusion with processes of cultural globalization. This process can be understood as a form of localized appropriation, in which dominant global cultural forms are internalized and reworked in a minority language. This may be valorized as either positive or negative, depending on the subjectivities of the observer, and may be seen to have both positive and negative results.

The film also reveals new knowledge and *prima facie* evidence that the use of the creative arts and media can enhance language learning. This has significant implications for public policy and practice regarding efforts to motivate young people to learn and speak Irish.

Petelin (2013) examines the form research questions in practice-based doctorates in the visual arts might be expected to take. He notes that 'a

question that seeks empirical knowledge is often inappropriate for studio-led research and is better answered through sociological, psychological, or educational research that may, or may not, also incorporate a studio-based component' (Petelin, 2013: 4). In a similar fashion, it would be inappropriate to delineate or encompass any description of the findings of this doctoral research in terms of new empirical knowledge which might be described as a definitive or positivist answer to the research question.

The particular difficulties faced by practice-based doctoral students in film and digital media, due to the relatively uncertain and contested place of such practice-based research within the academy, are discussed by Bell and Stoneman (2016: 14-23). They note that PhD candidates pursuing their studies via creative practice

[...] still feel themselves under institutional pressure to produce a written dissertation not significantly different in scholarly ambition from the theses of academic film studies students while tackling a major project of studio work, hence the "double PhD" jibe that they are in effect undertaking two advanced graduate programmes at the same time (Bell and Stoneman, 2016: 20).

Although not a central part of the results and conclusions presented in this chapter, an ancillary conclusion is that a more precisely delineated structure for practice-based research in the creative arts and media at NUI Galway might help future doctoral research students to avoid some of the pitfalls involved in tackling a many-headed project of such a scale. In this particular instance of doctoral research, the artist-researcher fulfilled the roles of academic researcher, scriptwriter, director, producer, cameraman, and film editor in a broad multidisciplinary project encompassing digital media practice and the humanities. These included aspects of cultural and media studies, sociology, history, globalization studies, Irish-language and minority language studies, the study of English as a global language, film theory, and the theory of practice in arts, performance, film and digital media. A more clearly-defined pathway for such practice-based research at NUI Galway might usefully encompass the possibility of individual artist-researchers working on their own doctoral research while contributing in specific roles towards a larger,

multistranded project. Such an approach is more common in the physical sciences, but could usefully be extended to research in the humanities. Filmmaking is essentially a collaborative project: it should be possible to envisage, for example, a scriptwriter-director, a cameraperson and a film editor collaborating together on a significant instance of practice-based research which might lead to the type of outcome (in practice terms) not normally within the means of a single individual, while complying at the same time with the rigours of academic research and writing.

6.1 The making of Irish-language versions of popular songs in English is a polysemic process that indicates both resistance to *and* acquiescence with processes of cultural globalization

The film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* opens with a sequence in which students at Coláiste Lurgan put on face paint and prepare to record video footage in Barna Wood near Galway. The events will later form part of the college's reworking of the 1998 World Cup theme song *Carneval de Paris* as a song in praise of local allegiances and the Gaelic Athletic Association called *Carnival na nGaedheal* ('Carnival of Gaels'). The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly; the students laugh and joke amongst each other as they get ready and practice their moves, and then go to the woodland to set up.¹

The 1998 World Cup was held in France, and *Carneval de Paris* was the FIFA corporate theme song heavily used by the organisation to market and thereby monetize the competition around the world. With its colourful images of multimillionaire soccer players from the world's richest nations happily playing soccer barefoot in the dirt against players from impoverished developing countries, the corporate video elides and obscures economic and power disparities between the rich North and the poor South, reflecting a more general neoliberal discourse about globalization as an emancipatory and

¹ At 00:02:20 on the timeline.

equalizing force.² The subtext is that soccer, and the World Cup in particular, represents a benign force that transcends barriers of race, religion, gender and nationality to unify mankind in one great big happy family.

The reworked video in Irish produced at the summer college contradicts this discourse. It features students from different counties in Ireland wearing the colours of their local Gaelic football and hurling teams and singing

Na Gaeil, na Gaeil,

Cumann Lúthchleas na nGael

Caith do gheansaí, lean do chontae,

Cumann Lúthchleas na nGael.

(‘The Gaels, the Gaels,

The Gaelic Athletic Association

Wear your jersey, follow your county,

The Gaelic Athletic Association.’)

It is a powerful and subversive moment in which a corporate video, which preaches a globalizing message in English, has been hijacked and turned on its head to promote a discourse, in Irish, about being proud of local identities. This seems to be an attempt to reassert the centrality of a strong ‘sense of place’ in identity formation and expression, which is an enduring theme in literature and song in the Irish language over many centuries. It also subtly undermines the dominant cultural discourse in Ireland since the 1970s, which is that globalization and the liberalization of social policy is part of a modernizing trend designed to ‘liberate’ the Irish from a narrow-minded and conservative

² For more on this see the literature review in Chapter Two. The song was performed by the English dance group Dario G, and features a melody that is in itself an interesting example of cultural hybridity. It is a slight reworking of the US folk song *Oh My Darling Clementine*, the origins of which have been attributed to an earlier folk song sung in Spanish by Mexican gold miners during the 1849 Californian Gold Rush.

past. This contra-hegemonic discourse celebrates local allegiances and the GAA, not as narrow and stifling forces, but as vibrant and dynamic expressions of local identities. Further sociological research is needed to establish to what extent this contra-hegemonic discourse about globalization and culture is embedded in the norms and social practices at the college.

As part of the critical reflection on the 'generative process' of the film (see Chapter Five), the possibility that this segment represented an example of *détournement* was investigated. It was later concluded that this was not the case, but that there were certain resonances with it which merit further investigation. Further research is needed to establish if the decision to rework a music video which promotes the neoliberal concept of globalization as a benign and unifying force (the original *Carneval de Paris* video) into a song which proudly reasserts the importance of local identity (the Irish version, *Carnival na nGaedheal*) was formed by an implicit ideological impulse that, although not representing a conscious act of *détournement* in the classic sense, resonates with it.³ It could be argued that the idea of reworking pop videos in English, as a tool to promote the use of Irish among teenagers in terms that appeal to them, is intrinsically in itself an act of resistance - as it uses 'against itself' one of the most visible and powerful means in which the position and status of the English language among young speakers of Irish is strengthened in the contemporary world. In this sense, the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* indicates that what goes on at the college may be understood as an act of 'resistance to the dominant and globalizing logic of English' as described in the response to the original research question at the start of this chapter.

3 *Détournement* is a term used to describe the process by which media texts and other cultural products are subverted and reworked, a method which was first elaborated by the theorist Guy Debord and the Situationists in Paris in the 1950s. The idea was to lay bare the implicit ideological assumptions that underlie popular discourses, and by doing so disarm or subvert the underlying 'spin' or message they carry. This kind of semiotic sabotage or 'culture jamming' has been used to describe some of the activities of the anti-globalization movement. A contemporary example of *détournement* is the work carried out by the Vancouver magazine and organisation Adbusters, whose sustained critique of consumerism is exemplified by its response to the Levi *Go Forth* advertising video. When Levi used 'chic' images of youthful rebellion to sell jeans, Adbusters responded with a mock video advertisement entitled *Go Forth and Revolt* using the same expensively shot and edited footage as the original campaign, but with subtitles urging actual revolt against the capitalist system.

A close reading of the film reveals some evidence to back up the second assertion contained in that response - that it also indicates 'an implicit acquiescence or collusion with processes of cultural globalization'. As discussed in Chapter Two, the homogenizing impact of the spread of a global consumerist culture is illustrated by the efforts of a multibillion global music industry to disseminate and monetize its products through powerful marketing campaigns that rely on a vapid and decontextualized 'celebrity culture'. In using such 'global popular' products, even for benign or altruistic reasons such as the promotion of the use of Irish, the college appears to implicitly collude with processes of cultural globalization that encourage the growing dominance of the English language in Ireland and elsewhere. This is illustrated by the following (translated) exchanges in the film, where two local youths who are working as language assistants during the course are interviewed:⁴

INTERVIEWER: Do you think US music has too much influence over us, or are you happy with it?

FIRST YOUTH: I'm happy with it, because it's new and fresh, songs coming in... it's what people like these days.

SECOND YOUTH: Yeah.

FIRST YOUTH: It makes a lot of sense.

INTERVIEWER: You don't see any problem with it?

FIRST YOUTH: I don't.

SECOND YOUTH: No, because if we were learning songs through translation... I mean, not translation, *sean-nós* [traditional] songs - and I sing some *sean-nós* songs myself... but I prefer songs that come from America. But we put a kind of a Gaelic twist in them, with accordions and tin whistles, in the contemporary songs.

⁴ The exchanges start at 00:37:40 on the timeline.

INTERVIEWER: Is that enough, do you think?

SECOND YOUTH: Yes, I think it is.

6.2 The practice reveals new knowledge as to the role of creativity in language learning

As discussed earlier, one of the advantages of practice-based research in visual media is that it may reveal new knowledge about the polysemic complexities of the social world in an innovative way that complements other knowledge discovered through conventional sociological or anthropological research. One of the most striking examples of this in the film is where a young male student from Cavan plays guitar and sings a love song he has composed in Irish with the help of a friend.⁵ It is a poignant moment: during the interview afterwards the student struggles to understand and respond to questions put to him by the interviewer. Despite this linguistic hurdle, the student has been inspired by his experiences at the college to compose a song in a language he has not yet mastered. It is an achievement made all the more remarkable when one considers that non-fluent speakers of Irish typically exhibit a certain amount of reticence or inhibition when speaking the language in public, for complex psychological and social reasons that have been partly attributed to a postcolonial sense of shame at the perceived 'loss' of the language, but which may also be attributed, in part at least, to some of the methods employed to teach the language in the school system. Here, by contrast, the evident unleashing of creativity in arts practice at the college (as shown in numerous sequences during the film) has inspired a young teenage male not only to compose and sing a song in Irish, but to consent to be filmed singing it.

Little sociological research has been carried out to date on the impact of the Irish summer college phenomenon on attitudes towards the

⁵ At 00:19:16 on the timeline.

language, and on competencies in speaking it. The film does not fill that lacuna, but it does illustrate in a graphic and visceral way the impact on the students of a dynamic and creative approach to language learning, one which uses a powerful and seductive mix of instrumental music, singing, dancing, acting and other artistic endeavours which are recorded using high-end digital cameras and high-fidelity audio recording equipment, which are subsequently edited as short music videos using professional digital editing software, and which are finally disseminated internationally on the YouTube platform. The film offers *prima facie* evidence of a high level of motivation among students at the college. Another issue is the significant reach of the videos, which is far beyond the normal reach of material in the Irish language. The videos uploaded to the college's YouTube channel (TG Lurgan) are thought to have been viewed over 20 million times.⁶ They have also garnered consistent and continuing attention on social media, a factor that has significant implications for public policy and practice as regards the language (see section 6.4 below).

6.3 Theoretical insights

This section focuses on some of the theoretical insights that emerged during the doctoral research, with an emphasis on cultural globalization and hybridity theory on the one hand, and the theory of documentary practice on the other. Lacunae in current theory are identified, and lines for further research and enquiry are suggested.

⁶ By late January 2017 over 200 YouTube videos had been uploaded to the college's YouTube channel, TG Lurgan, which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/user/tglurgan>. The 20 million figure for overall viewership is an estimation given by Mícheál Ó Foighil, the manager of Coláiste Lurgan, in a personal interview with the researcher on the 3rd of August, 2014. This figure is not unrealistic, when one considers the high viewership of some individual videos. For example, *Lig Mé Saor*, the Irish-language version of *Wake Me Up* by the Swedish producer and DJ Avicii, which was uploaded to TG Lurgan on the 9th August 2013, had amassed 5,465,516 views when the video was accessed on the 26th of January, 2017. *Amhrán na gCupán*, the Irish version of the *Cup Song* covered by Anna Kendrick in the film *Pitch Perfect* (Dir. Jason Moore, UK, 2012), which was uploaded to TG Lurgan on the 3rd of July 2013, had amassed 3,485,476 views by the 26th of January, 2017. *Taoide*, their version of *Rip Tide* by Vance Joy, an extract of which features in the doctoral film, and which was uploaded to YouTube on the 26th of October, 2014, had reached 528,697 views by the 26th of January, 2017.

Cultural globalization and hybridity theory

In enunciating his postcolonial theory of hybridity, Homi Bhabha writes of the concept of the 'in-between' (Bhabha, 1994), which he defines as 'the third space that enables other positions to emerge' (Bhabha, 1990: 211). According to Bhabha, this 'process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of meaning and representation' (Bhabha, 1990: 211). Other scholars including Giddens (1990); Hall, Held and McGrew (1992); Harvey (1991); and Castells (1996-98) have undermined the idea of cultural globalization as a uniform and unilinear process of homogenization tending to the formation of an ersatz 'global culture'. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, the cosmopolitanist analysis of Tomlinson (1991, 1995, 1996) and Nederveen Pieterse (2004a) may also be criticised as being somewhat simplistic, as it elides or obscures the power relationships at the heart of many cultural exchanges. Some contemporary writers on culture and globalization take little account of the economic, political and social structures within which cultural hybridity may occur. In such a situation it becomes easy to overlook the fact that much of the dominant cultural and media product worldwide is produced by multinational media corporations owned by western-based financial interests, even allowing for new 'regional' patterns of television production, consumption and ownership in Brazil, India, Mexico and other countries. Thus, the 'creolization' or 'hybridization' of cultures does not take place on a level playing field: all too often what seems to happen is that some elements of the native culture are co-opted in order to provide an exotic flavour or spice to a strand of the dominant world culture. In this process the underlying richness of the native culture may become watered-down and may be eventually discarded.

To return to Bhabha, if cultural hybridity can be defined as a sense of inbetweenness in which new and interesting forms can emerge, then the new knowledge articulated by this instance of practice is a deeper understanding of this process, in that there may also be a loss as well as a gain in some cases, particularly at the interface between a dominant or global language, such as English, and a minoritized language facing future non-viability as a community language, such as Irish.

In this context, the 'cultural imperialism' thesis of earlier decades may be worth revisiting in the light of the greatly increased power of global media and entertainment corporations in the twenty-first century. As discussed more fully in Chapter Two, the concept of cultural imperialism has been criticised as being rather simplistic and lacking in nuance. However it may offer a useful conceptual framework from which to critique the ahistorical and decontextualised analyses of some contemporary sociologists and theorists of cosmopolitanism, particularly in relation to the inequality in power relationships between rich and poor nations, or dominant and minoritized cultures.

Theorizing documentary practice

Catherine Lupton argues that the essayistic voice-over has the potential to undermine from within 'the notorious authority of the singular, omniscient, voice-of-God documentary narrator' (2011: 159). Indeed, in the light of contemporary developments in digital media, both in terms of the ready access to inexpensive high-quality film production tools and editing software, and the ease of dissemination facilitated by the internet, it seems worthwhile to revisit the theory about the expository approach to documentary. In an age where digital soapboxes amplify the hysterical and the extreme, and balanced media content and commentary seems to be becoming more rare, the value of a curated and self-aware expository commentary in documentary may be worth reassessing.

As analysed in Chapter Three, Bruzzi criticises the somewhat negative portrayal of voice-over in earlier writing by Nichols and others as being too restrictive: 'The negative portrayal of voice-over is largely the result of the development of a theoretical orthodoxy that condemns it for being inevitably and inherently didactic' (Bruzzi, 2006: 47). This stems from Nichols's portrayal of voice-over in the expository mode of documentary as an omniscient 'voice-of-God' presence. This may have been valid in describing the many straightforward narrative documentaries in the pre-war Griersonian era, with their implicit ideological assumptions and hidden subjectivities based on the prevailing and

gendered orthodoxies of a time that was more authoritarian and paternalistic. But it is by no means the only result: such a portrayal does not give sufficient weight to the simple journalistic imperative of telling a story simply and cleanly and with an economy of language which is sometimes absent in the contemporary fashion for observational documentaries in which the entire narrative is carried on the shoulders of interviews which may, or may not, be compelling or complete. In that context, Bruzzi (2006) critiques the manner in which Nichols places in the same category documentaries that contain evidence of a wide variety of expository styles, ranging from the poetic to the formal, and questions the categorization of these very diverse films as simply expository.

6.4 Implications for public policy

The new knowledge revealed through this practice-based doctorate has two principal implications for the manner in which public policy is implemented in Ireland. The first is that the manner in which creative filmmaking is funded through the public purse may be overly prescriptive and bureaucratic, and may hamper creativity in some instances. It is recommended, therefore, that An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council undertake a review of the 'Reel Arts' film funding scheme in order to introduce a greater degree of flexibility and give greater weight to the creative development of the projects as they unfold, whilst still preserving the need for accountability. The second implication arising from the research is that efforts to promote the acquisition and use of the Irish language might benefit from a rebalancing which directed a greater proportion of available resources towards the learning and use of the language in a dynamic manner through increased participation in the creative arts and media.

Implications for the funding of creative filmmaking

As noted in Chapter Five, the critical reflection on the practice reveals how the structure of the final film emerged through processes of trial and error, through 'rituals of making' (Kentridge, 2016) rather than in a pre-planned way. This was

at odds with the approach demanded by An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council in its application process under the 'Reel Art' funding scheme for creative or art film. As part of the application process, several detailed treatments were drafted in an attempt to comply with the onerous, and what seemed overly specific and bureaucratic, requirements under the scheme. An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council sought a detailed account in advance of everything that would be in the film, an approach that left little room for working in a spontaneous and creative manner with the material as the shoot was progressing. This seemed ironic, as 'Reel Art' was flagged by the council as a scheme to promote the production of films as works of art, and not just the production of biographies of established artists (as was typical of the films funded through the scheme during its early years). There were difficulties in marrying the original creative intent with the application process, as the nature of the project originally envisaged was deliberately loose and open-ended, in order to leave room for the ideas that might emerge during the shoot.

In retrospect, the treatment was skewed by attempts to 'write it up' in a way that might find favour with the funders, and was therefore compromised. In an age of increased media surveillance of institutions and their operations, particularly as regards public spending, it is easy to understand the impulse on the part of funders to seek a detailed account in advance of everything that might be in the film. However, as funding creative work in the arts is inherently risky and with uncertain outcomes, some rebalancing in the approach taken by An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council to its 'Reel Arts' scheme seems opportune.

Implications for Irish-language funding

Considerable resources are made available by the Irish state each year for funding initiatives aimed at promoting the acquisition and use of the Irish language. These range from a variety of schemes designed to increase the visibility and use of the language in public life to the funding of a television station. Other areas to which considerable resources are allocated include the

teaching of Irish in the education system, and institutional supports arising from its role as the first constitutional language and as an official language of the European Union.

The film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* gives some *prima facie* evidence of a particular ethos at Coláiste Lurgan in which creativity is allowed to flourish, and illustrates the striking impact this seems to have on the motivation of students to learn and speak the language. The manner in which this ethos is developed and maintained could usefully form the focus of a substantial sociological or sociolinguistic research project, but some tentative ideas arising from this practice-based research may be advanced. Some of this motivational impact may come from the improvised and relatively unstructured play that seems to lie at the heart of many of the activities, and the anarchic and somewhat rebellious spirit cultivated at the college, a spirit that seems to connect well with the teenagers who attend it. There may be a certain freedom in the absence of the hierarchical officiousness or bureaucracy that is sometimes associated with the experiences of many young people as they participate in other efforts to promote the learning and use of Irish through state-sponsored activities. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that an approach to Irish-language funding which devoted a greater percentage of available resources towards the encouragement of creative practice in the arts and digital media (including singing, music, dance, drama and the production of music videos and other media artefacts) would give the state a greater return on its investment.

6.5 Conclusion

During this practice-based research project an aspect of cultural globalization was investigated through the construction of a complex polysemic narrative, using the format of the essay film in which reflexivity and subjectivity were foregrounded, about certain events during the summer of 2014 at Coláiste Lurgan, an Irish-language summer college in Connemara in the west of Ireland.

The intention was to take some of the concepts and insights uncovered during an extensive reading of the academic literature on

globalization and culture, and examine them through the prism of a creative essay film in a way that might generate new ways of understanding the social processes involved, and which might also have the potential to engage with a particular audience. This potential audience can be described as having two elements: on the one hand, teenagers who are nominally growing up as native speakers of Irish in the second decade of the twenty-first century in the fractured and shifting sociolinguistic landscape of south Connemara, and who can be described as having an 'impaired acquisition' of their first language due to the impact of English on their linguistic environment (Péterváry *et al.*, 2014),⁷ and, on the other hand, the hundreds of native English speakers who come to Coláiste Lurgan every summer to enhance their acquisition of Irish through participation in a dynamic arts practice. The film's reception by these two audience groups could usefully form the basis of post-doctoral research, but it is beyond the scope of the current project.

As is sometimes the case in research in humanities and the social sciences, the process of conducting the research led to a slowly developing realization of the complexity of the research question. This complexity was not reflected in the simple binary terms used to describe the question at the outset. Nevertheless, the project, and the critical reflection on the creative process, led to a range of conclusions about the dynamic interplay between global and local cultures; the role of creativity in language learning; and the implications of this for public policy as regards the Irish language.

⁷ See Péterváry, P., Ó Curnáin, B., Ó Giollagáin, C. and Sheahan, J. (2014) *Iníúchadh ar an gCumas Dátheangach: An sealbhú teanga i measc ghlúin óg na Gaeltachta/Analysis of Bilingual Competence: Language acquisition among young people in the Gaeltacht*, Dublin: An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta.

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APPENDICES

RELEASE FORM FOR SHOOT	129
OVERALL EDITING SCRIPT OF FILM.....	130
IRISH VOICE-OVER SCRIPT	134
FRENCH VOICE-OVER SCRIPT	139
SCRIPT FOR SUBTITLES (FRENCH VOICE-OVER).....	145
‘REEL ART’ FUNDING APPLICATION	150
TG4 FUNDING APPLICATION.....	164

RELEASE FORM FOR SHOOT

SCANNÁN OIDEACHASÚIL FAOIN mBEALACH A DHÉANTAR NA FÍSEÁIN CEOIL i gCOLÁISTE LURGAN

Léiritheoir/stiúrthóir: Uinsionn Mac Dubhghaill

Teideal (sealadach) an scannáin: *Ar Do Thaobh*

Cineál: Scannán oideachasúil faoi dhéanamh na bhfíseán ceoil i gColáiste Lurgan

Ainm an Rannpháirtithe: _____

Seoladh	Ríomhphoist	nó	Seoladh
Baile: _____			

Comhaontaím go ndéanfaidh Uinsionn Mac Dubhghaill scannánú agus taifeadadh fuaime ar mo rannpháirtíocht sna físeáin agus in imeachtaí agus díospóireachtaí eile a bheas ar siúl le linn Cúrsa C i gColáiste Lurgan in Iúil/Lúnasa 2014. Comhaontaím agus tugaim cead dó an taifeadadh sin a úsáid sa scannán oideachasúil a dhéanfaidh sé mar chuid dá thaighde dochtúireachta faoin domhandú cultúir. Comhaontaím go mbeidh mo rannpháirtíocht faoi réir a rialú eagarthóireachta agus comhaontaím leis na téarmaí thíos a bhaineann le cóipcheart agus (má bhaineann) le cearta taibheoirí.

Síniú an Rannpháirtithe: _____

Aois: _____ Dáta: _____

SANNADH CÓIPCHIRT AGUS CEARTA MÓRÁLTA

- Sannaím ar an Léiritheoir gach ceart as mo rannpháirtíocht lena n-áirítear, ach ní sin amháin, gach cóipcheart (faoi láthair agus amach anseo) agus (*má bhaineann) cearta taibheoirí.
- Comhaontaím go bhféadfadh an Léiritheoir mo rannpháirtíocht a úsáid in aon mheán nó aon fhormáid agus ceadúnú a thabhairt i leith na gceart sin nó iad a shannadh ar bhealach ar bith is cuí leis, ar feadh thréimhse iomlán an chóipchirt (lena n-áirítear aon síneadh ar an gcóipcheart) ar fud an domhan; lena n-áirítear, ach ní amháin, gach cineál tarchur teilifíse agus ar an idirlíon.
- Tarscaoilím aon cheart morálta a bheidh agam ar mo rannpháirtíocht faoin Acht Cóipchirt agus Ceart Gaolmhar 2000.
- Baineann na téarmaí seo go comhionann le haon chuid de mo rannpháirtíocht nó le mo rannpháirtíocht go hiomlán.
- Sannaím ar an Léiritheoir gach ceart lena n-áirítear cearta dáilte, cíosa nó iasachta a bhainfeadh le mo rannpháirtíocht
- Comhaontaím nach mbeidh aon oibleagáid ar an Léiritheoir socrú a dhéanamh do chraoladh mo rannpháirtíochta.

TARSCAOILEADH AR CHEARTA TAIBHEOIRÍ

**[Ni bhaineann ach le 'taibhithe incháililthe' taibheora faoi Chuid 111 den Acht Cóipchirt agus Ceart Gaolmhar, 2000 ('An tAcht') agus sin amháin]*

Tarscaoilim aon cheart taibheora a d'fhéadfadh a bheith agam i mo rannpháirtíocht faoin Chuid 111 den Acht a mhéid is incheadaithe faoin Acht. Sannaím ar an Léiritheoir gach ceart lena n-áirítear cearta dáilte, cíosa nó iasachta a bhainfeadh le mo rannpháirtíocht.

OVERALL EDITING SCRIPT OF FILM

The Overall Editing Script for the film *Dúshlán Lurgan/The Lurgan Challenge* was largely developed during the latter half of 2015, although it incorporates ideas and segments developed during the period September 2014 - December 2015. The film is divided into four chapters, with four main themes, as follows:

Chapitre 1 – La marée basse (Low Tide). A poetic introduction.

Chapitre 2 – La marée qui monte (The Rising Tide). Reflections on creativity.

Chapitre 3 - La marée qui noie (The Drowning Tide). Reflections on the hegemony of 'global English'.

Chapitre 4 - La contre-marée (The Countercurrent). *Caomhnaigh an dúchas ach ná lig dó thú a thachtadh.* (Cherish your cultural patrimony, but do not allow it to choke you.)

The completed film largely follows this Overall Editing Script, although some changes were made, based on a more extensive and detailed version of the script used in daily editing. Chapter titles were changed to reflect the change in voiceover from French to Irish. Late revisions made directly on the timeline of the editing software are not reflected in the written script. For example, some superfluous text in the voice-over was cut from the closing sequences of the film.

VISUAL	VO SCRIPT & IVs	IDEA/Audio
<p>CHAPTER ONE: Preamble & Title Credits.</p> <p>Rolling script on black background</p> <p>CHAPTER TITLE: Chapitre 1 La marée basse</p>	<p>Au dix-neuvième siècle, Irlande subit un choc psychique extraordinaire: la perte, ou presque, de sa langue indigène [...] Mais ceci n'est pas une histoire simple, et il y en a bien plus qu'une seule fin...</p>	<p>Idea - historical 'back story' in French situates the film in an international and historical context. Also hints at end at ambiguity and non-binary conclusion.</p>

Barna Wood scene: Students putting on face paint, getting ready, practicing in wood, cameramen filming.	Il y était une fois un tribu des irlandais fous [...] Ils vont trouver quelque chose d'autre, quelque chose de très précieux.	Gentle introduction, in French, full of life. Relaxed carefree atmosphere. Creative spontaneity in action.
MUSIC VIDEO: First peak moment with edited version of Carneval video.	Na Gaeil, Na Gaeil, Cumann Lúthchleas na nGaedheal. Caith do gheansaí, le do chondae, Cumann Lúthchleas na nGaedheal.	Song - Carneval na nGael. 'YouTube' logo at top right of screen.
HALL: manager talks with microphone; students watch pictures on big screen	MOF IV - we are going to do our own version of Carnival de Paris. It will be wilder, more craic. We're going to go down to the wood, we've never done this before, we'll see what happens... OR MOF IV talks about what's going to happen over the next three weeks.	We get an initial feel for the manager's personality, and a glimpse of the life of the college.
Historical background - VO over a simple set-up scene at college. Students getting ready, or assembling stage for concert night etc.	Le déclin de l'irlandais suscite un vive débat chez les Irlandais à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle [...] Il dit cela en mille huit cents quatre-vingts douze.	Narrator VO or text against black background gives historical context re nineteenth cent language shift. Maybe run sound from college activities below? This VO segment lasts about one minute.
CHOIR + IV JENNY Show don't tell what's going on - Irish versions of popular English songs - overall context. Jenny Ní Ruiséil talks about how what they do engages people. Interview shows passion of those involved and efforts to teach Irish in a lively way.	Féach inniu im' shúil níorbh seo mo phlean Ach a stór sin an grá 's bíonn sé ar lean Níl leigheas ar bith gur thú mo ghrá Ach ní fhágfaidh mé riamh, 'nglacfaidh tú mo lámh? Oh fan liom ar mo thaobh Do ghrá de dhíth Nach é seo 'tá i do chroí? Ach fan liom ar mo thaobh	Jenny rehearsing the choir for 'Ar Mo Thaobh' shows what they are doing, i.e. making Irish versions of songs in English, particularly when the text on screen in the karaoke version of the song is in English, and they have the Irish script in their hands. So explains visually what the story is all about.
Chalk wall and other creativity stuff at college, students playing guitar in hall etc.	Au début du vingtième siècle la ligue gaélique est un des plus grands mouvements culturels en Europe [...] Jusqu'à maintenant.	More historical background in VO, set against a simple scene.

Appendices

		This VO segment lasts about 1 min 15 sec.
Cut to drum teacher on words 'Jusqu'à maintenant'		Visual illustration of the dynamic approach.
Students practice guitars and mandolines. Footage from studio if needed. A minute or two of 'show don't tell' showing some of the creativity that goes on.	Ici, dans cette colonie de vacances, on cultive l'esprit de la révolte. C'est peut-être que la créativité pousse dans les espaces où la liberté et la poésie se mélangent. On s'inspire même d'écrire des chansons dans une langue qu'on ne parle pas encore très bien.	Various ideas which illustrate the creativity and dynamism at the college.
Ends with quiet scene as Cavan Man plays song. Fade to black as Chapter One ends.	[Audio of Cavan Man song]	Creativity and its impact on language learning

VISUAL	SCRIPT	IDEA
Chapitre 2 <i>La marée montante</i>		
Taoide beach sequence. Students arrive on beach to shoot video for Taoide song. The rain is a problem for the cameramen. The footage merges with shots from the edited video. Fade to black at end.	Il y a cent ans un révolutionnaire irlandais dénonce le système scolaire comme une machine du meurtre qui écrase la curiosité et la joie de vivre de la jeunesse [...] Nous sommes tous des hauts prêtres maintenant, et les églises se multiplient chaque jour.	Creativity and spontaneity.
Fade up to RTÉ trip	IV MOF on bus sets the scene	
Bus arrives in Dublin. Arrival at RTÉ. Students in studio etc. Rehearsals. Performance of song in RTÉ studio.	Quand j'étais ado à Dublin, je détestais cette petite ville de province [...] Et tout cela dans une langue que beaucoup de gens considèrent comme une langue qui se meurt.	
Performance of song in RTÉ studio		

VISUAL	SCRIPT	IDEA
Chapitre 3 <i>La marée qui noie</i>		Impact of cultural globalization
IV Student Assistants	Two teenage boys describe their love for US pop music	
MOF in hall [possible add, may not be needed]	MOF describes what will happen that night, possible reference to the C&W singer Garth Brooks who cancelled a planned concert in Croke Park.	
Concert Night - set up etc	Quand les savants parlent de la mondialisation culturelle, ils parlent de l'hybridation [...] Un peu comme un curry indien édulcorée dans un resto à Londres, quoi.	

VISUAL	SCRIPT	IDEA
Chapitre 4 <i>La contre-marée</i>		Cultural resilience despite globalization
Visuals based on Féile footage or Seo Linn concert night. Féile setups, chat in office or hall about what they are going to do. Getting ready, BBC crew arrive Atmos, hot dog stand etc. Intersperse this with IV with MOF at tent, especially his reaction to the question about songs such as Báidín Fheidhlímí.	Les beaux jours de l'été sont fini, la colonie se ferme [...] Pourquoi, alors, ce sont les chansons de masse qu'on entend dans la rue ?	
Performance	Musical / aural climax of film is outdoors rave night with fireworks, BBC crew with big boom camera, lots of atmos, hot dog stand, rock concert vibe	
		Upbeat conclusion to film

IRISH VOICE-OVER SCRIPT

Réamhrá

Bhí treabh ann fadó 's fadó 'bhí / dá mbeinnse an uair sin ann / ní bheinn anois ann / dá mbeinn anois agus an uair sin ann / bheadh scéal úr nó seanscéal a'm / nó bheinn gan aon scéal. Seo é mo scéal-sa, mar sin / agus má tá bréag ann, bíodh...

Caibidil a hAon – Lag Trá

Bhí treabh ann fadó, aos dána agus ceoil. Labhair siad teanga ársa na tíre, in ainneoin gach a thug an saol lonrach luaineach le fios dóibh. Lá breá samhraidh, shocraigh siad iad fhéin a phéinteáil i ngach aon dath faoin spéir. Bhailigh siad a gcuid drumai 's a gcuid fiddleachaí, agus as go brách leo ar lorg na n-iontas i gCoill Bhearna.

'Acha na hógánaigh dána seo, ag góil fhoinn 's ag pocléimneach thart. Tá físeán YouTube á dhéanamh acu, a leagan fhéin d'amhrán Béarla, a thugann luach agus comhthéacs nua don teanga a labhrann siad. 'Bhfuil siad ar strae, meastú, ar fánaíocht sa gcoill, faoi mar a rinne Suibhne bocht fadó? Nó an bhfuil a' pota óir ag bun a' tuair cheatha á lorg acu, faoi mar a dhéanfadh Poncánach de thurasóir agus é ina choimhthíoch ina thír fhéin?

Ní aimseoidh siad an pota óir, ach cén dochar? Tiocfaidh siad ar rud eicínt eile, rud eicínt atá i bhfad níos luachmhaire.

* * *

Ag deireadh an naoú haois déag, cuireadh tús le díospóireacht in Éirinn faoi mheath na Gaeilge. Ag pointe amháin, thug bailitheoir amhrán léacht cáiliúil dar teideal *The Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland*. Na blianta ina dhiaidh sin ceapadh an fear céanna ina chéad Uachtarán ar Éirinn.

Ina léacht, thug Dúglas de hÍde fogha faoi mhuintir na hÉireann. Dúirt sé go gcaillfeadh siad a bhféiniúlacht shainiúil mar Éireannaigh dá leanfadh siad ar aghaidh ag déanamh aithrise ar nósanna eachtrannacha. Dúirt sé: 'We will become a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative, and alive only to second-hand assimilation.'

Dúirt sé an méid sin sa mbliain Ocht Déag Nócha Dó.

* * *

Faoi thús an fichiú haois bhí Conradh na Gaeilge ar cheann de na gluaiseachtaí cultúrtha is mó san Eoraip. Bhí aidhm shimplí ag lucht na hAthbheochana: athréimiú na Gaeilge mar theanga labhartha na tíre. Ag barr a réime bhíodh os cionn céad míle duine sa gConradh, cumann i mbeagnach gach uile pharóiste sa tír.

Ach níor mhair an spleodar a bhain le blianta luatha na hAthbheochana. Faoi mar a tharla don chruthaitheacht a bhain le ré na réabhlóide, chuaigh sé i ndísc de réir a chéile sa stát seicteach coimeádach a tógadh ar luaith Chogadh na gCarad. Tionscnamh tur stáit ab ea an t-athbheochan feasta. Scartha óna bhfréamhacha réabhlóideacha, ní raibh ann níos mó ach dualgas trom, rialacha dochta, cáineadh diúltach, agus milleánú síoraí.

Go dtí anois.

Sa gcoláiste samhraidh seo tá spiorad na réabhlóide beo i gcónaí. D'fhéadfá a rá go dtagann an chruthaitheacht faoi bhláth san áit a mbíonn an tsaoirse ag daoine éisteacht le filíocht a gcroíthe. Seift dhána ainrialta, b'fhéidir, a chuireann olc ar na húdaráis ach a thugann cead gan náire d'ógánach é fhéin a chur in iúl i dteanga nach bhfuil ar a thoil aige go fóill.

Caibidil a Dó – Ní Trá go Tuile

Céad bliain ó shin, rinne réabhlóidí Éireannach cur síos ar an gcóras scolaíochta. Inneall gan trócaire nó 'murder machine' a bhí ann, dar le Pádraig Mac Piarais, chun fiosracht agus *joie de vivre* na hóige a scrios. Scéal eile atá anseo. Baintear leas as fuinneamh agus as díocas nádúrtha na hóige ar bhealach a osclaíonn an doras ar an iliomad deiseanna cruthaitheacha.

Tá an chruthaitheacht sin de dhíth orainn níos mó ná riamh sa lá 'tá inniu ann. Tar éis an tsaoil, ní ón taobh amuigh amháin a thagann smaointe nua chugainn a chabhraíonn linn dul i ngleic le saol éiginnte aisteach iar-nua-aoiseach na linne seo. Is gá an cultúr a mhúnlú go gníomhach ón taobh istigh freisin, trí athbhreithniú síoraí féinchriticiúil a dhéanamh ar na tuiscintí seanda atá a'ainn ar an dúchas agus ar an stair.

* * *

Maireann muid arís i ré na réabhlóide. Tá árdsgairt agus cairdinéil na meán náisiúnta - an aicme siúd a sheasadh sa mbearna baoil is a d'inseodh dúinn cén bhrí ar cheart dúinn a bhaint as imeachtaí an tsaoil - tá siadsan á scuabadh chun siúil ag YouTube, ag ceamaraí digiteacha ar phraghas íseal, agus go mórmór ag an Idirlíon.

Tá deis a'ainn ar fad anois a bheith inár gcairdinéil fhéin agus eaglaisí nua a chur ar bun gach aon lá.

* * *

Baile beag ab ea Bleá Cliath sna seachtóidí, baile beag cúngaigeanta ina mbíodh daoine ag umhlú síos guh shíor roimh nósannaí na sean-mháistrí. An cúbadh iarchoilíneach cultúir a thugtar air sin. I dtreo Londan a bhíodh daoine a' breathnú

don cheol is déanaí. Ba bheag an meas a bhíodh acu ar an gceol Éireannach comhaimseartha, san am a mbíodh U2 ag casadh ceoil i bpubannaí suaracha 'na mbíodh boladh bréan na beorach stálaí in iomaíocht le plúchadh na dtoitíní.

Ó shin i leith, tá athrú ar chúrsaí. Baile beag domhanda is ea Bleá Cliath anois, lúb bheag aonchineálach ar shlabhra trádála an airgid idirnáisiúnta. Seachas Londain, is i dtreonna Nua-Eabhrac agus Beirlín a bhíonn daoine ag breathnú feasta.

Ar leibhéal amháin tá an rud atá ar siúl anseo simplí go leor. Táthar ag baint leasa as popcheol Meiriceánach in iarracht daoine óga a spreagadh le teanga neamhfhorleathan a fhoghlaim agus a labhairt. Ach ar leibhéal níos doimhne, an bhfuil rud eicínt eile ar siúl i ndáiríre?

Le linn na n-ochtóidí, nuair nach raibh ag éirí le U2 'briseadh tríd' a dhéanamh sa mBreatain, ceapadh plean cliste le saineolaithe féincheaptha an New Musical Express a fhágáil ar leataobh. Chuaigh U2 díreach go Meiriceá seachas díriú ar an mBreatain, faoi mar a rinne gach grúpa ceoil Éireannach roimhe sin. D'éirigh leo a lucht leanúna fhéin a aimsiú thall sna Stáit. Threabh siad a n-iomaire fhéin, d'fhéadfá a rá: ní dhearna siad aithris ar an gceol tráchtála a bhíodh á dhíol ar na margaí domhanda ag na comhlachtaí móra. In áit leagan áitiúil a dhéanamh den cheol tráchtála domhanda, rinne siad coilíniú ar na coilínithe iad fhéin, agus d'athraigh siad an stair.

Meastú a' bhfuil rud eicínt cosúil leis sin ar bun anseo, ach ar scála eile? Tá na hógánaigh seo ag leagan na gclaíocha seanchaite a choibhrigh an ceol comhaimseartha Gaeilge le fada. Ní thaitníonn sé sin le caomhnóirí móra an dúchais, ach meastú an bhfuil siadsan dall ar a bhfuil ag tarlú i ndáiríre? Aimsíonn na daoine óga seo deiseanna cruthaitheacha nua. Leagan siad na seanchlaíocha agus osclaíonn siad bealaí nua len iad fhéin a chur in iúl.

Caibidil a Trí – Rabharta

Nuair a labhrann na saineolaithe faoin domhandú cultúir, labhrann siad faoin hibridiú: meascán nó hibridiú cultúir, féiniúlachtaí hibrideacha. Go minic, leagtar béim ar a thréithe dearfacha, a chuirtear inár láthair mar chodarsnacht ar fhéiniúlachtaí traidisiúnta primitíveacha a bhíonn, más fíor, reoite san am atá caite agus doicheallach roimh an malartú cultúir. Deirtear gur rud luachmhar é an hibridiú mar phróiseas íltíreach nó cosmapolaiteach a réitíonn an bealach don imeascadh traschultúrtha.

Ach, a' bhfuil an dioscúrsa sin róshimplí? Déantar neamhaird, rómhinic, ar an easpa cothromaíochta ó thaobh na cumhachta de a bhíonn ann nuair a bhíonn teangachaí agus cultúir á meascadh.

Cuireann an hibridiú cultúir, in amantaí, le díothú na gcultúr lagaí, agus é a' gníomhú mar fhórsa chun iad a cheannasú nó a shuaimhniú. Mealltar daoine le dul ar an éascaíocht, gan cur i gcoinne cultúr ceannasach an mhóraithe. Cuirtear inár leith é mar mélange na n-iontas ina mbíonn gnéithe cultúir amháin ag saibhriú cultúir eile, agus á n-athchruthú mar rud nua, beoga. Ní tharlaíonn an mélange seo ar bhealach cothrom. Go minic, baintear leas as gnéithe gun chultúr dúchais mar anlann chun blas exotique a thabhairt ar ghné éigin den mhórchultúr ceannasach domhanda atá á nochtadh de réir a chéile. Cosúil le curaí Indiach i mbialann Shasanach, tá baol ann nach mbeidh fágthaí ar deireadh ach anlann uiscealach gan blas ar bith air.

Paradacs na linne is ea go bhfuil an hibridiú cultúir atá á scaipeadh go rábach ar fud an domhain ag gníomhú chun mórchultúr aonchineálach amháin a chruthú. Ach a' bhfuil bealach ar bith ann le seasamh i gcoinne an rabharta?

Ba é George Bernard Shaw a dúirt go mbíodh sé ag brionglóidí faoi rudaí nach raibh ariamh ann, agus go gcuireadh sé an cheist, cén fáth nach mbeidís ann? Aisling an ghrúpa ceoil Seo Linn a spreagann an fuinneamh dochreidte sa seomra seo. Ní fheicfidh tú radharc mar seo rómhinic i saol na Gaeilge. Cén fáth é sin? Cén fáth nach dtarlaíonn a leithéid níos minicí?

Caibidil a Ceathair – In Aghaidh an tSrutha

Tá laethanta breátha a' tsamhaidh thart. Tá an coláiste samhraidh ag críochnú. Tá sé in am slán a rá leis na cairde. Tiúnálann an giotáraí a ghiotár. Tá na burgair ag giosáil ar an mbarbaiciú. Beidh deora ann amárach, ach anocht tá muid ag ceiliúradh an tsaoil, an grá is an ghruaim, is an t-am a chaith muid le chéile.

* * *

Maireann muid faoi dhraíocht na teicneolaíochta. Insíonn na milliúin ógánach a scéalta fhéin don saol mór lena gcuid fónachaí póca. Ag an am céanna, bíonn na milliúin eile ag éisteacht leis an gceol tráchtála céanna a dhíolann na comhlachtaí móra. Tig linn ar fad ár gcuid amhrán fhéin a chumadh. Cén fáth, mar sin, nach geloiseann tú ar an raidió ach amhráin na coitiantachta?

* * *

Níl mórán eisceachtúil ag baint leis an nGaeilge. Théis an tsaoil, tá bealaí ar leith ag na céadta teanga bhundúchasach ar fud an domhain le léargais éagsúla a thabhairt ar an saol. Tá ceathracha focal ag na hInuit le cur síos a dhéanamh ar an sneachta.

Tá ceathracha focal ag na Gaeil le cur síos a dhéanamh ar an mbáisteach, ar ndóigh, agus ceathracha eile ar chineálachaí feamainne.

An rud sainiúil a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge ná an ceangal rúndiamhair sin a théann siar na mílte bliain le tírdhreach na hÉireann, le hanam agus le spiorad na muintire.

* * *

Ní feiniméan nua é díothú na dteangacha, go háirid ó ré na n-ionraí Eorpacha coilíneacha. Le trí chéad bliain anuas, an fhad is a cailleadh scór teanga Eorpach nó mar sin, cailleadh na céadta teanga i Meiriceá Thuaidh, san Astráil agus sa mBraisíl. San Afraic, sa lá 'tá inniu ann, tá os cionn dhá chéad teanga ann a bhfuil níos lú ná cúig chéad cainteoir dúchais fágthaí ag aon cheann acu. Sin briseadh mór leis an stair agus leis an gcuimhne.

Is é an dúshlán ná an ceangal sin leis an stair a shlánú ar bhealach atá beo agus spleodrach agus nach bplúchann an chruthaitheacht. An féidir é sin a dhéanamh leis an spiorad oscailte agus an *joie de vivre* atá le feiceáil anseo? Ní mar dhualgas trom a chuireann náire agus milleán orainn. Tarlaíonn sin rómhinic fós in Éirinn.

Nach é sin, b'fhéidir, an dúshlán is mó: dúshlán Lurgan?

FRENCH VOICE-OVER SCRIPT

Le préambule

Au dix-neuvième siècle, l'Irlande subit un choc psychique extraordinaire: la perte, ou presque, de sa langue indigène. En mille huit cent la plupart des gens ne parle que le gaélique irlandais. À la fin du siècle la plupart parle seulement l'anglais. Ce qui arrive à l'irlandais est comme le canari dans la mine de charbon: un avertissement.

Aujourd'hui, quand le capitalisme de laisser-faire renaît comme le néolibéralisme mondialisé, beaucoup d'autres cultures affrontent l'avancée inexorable de l'anglais comme lingua franca mondiale.

Mais ceci n'est pas une histoire simple, et il y en a bien plus qu'une seule fin.

Chapitre 1 - La marée basse

Il y était une fois un tribu d'Irlandais fous, qui parlaient l'ancienne langue du pays, en dépit de tout ce que le monde moderne et lumineux leur disait. Un beau jour d'été ils ont décidé de se peindre de toutes les couleurs de l'arc en ciel. Ils ont ramassé leurs tambours et leurs violons, et ils sont partis à l'aventure dans le fameux bois de Barna.

Regardez-moi ces jeunes qui chantent, qui dansent. Ils font une vidéo YouTube en retravaillant une chanson en anglais pour mieux valoriser la langue qu'ils parlent. Ils sont à la recherche de la toison d'or, peut-être. Ils ne vont pas la trouver, je crois, mais c'est pas grave. Ils vont trouver quelque chose d'autre, quelque chose de très précieux.

Le déclin de l'irlandais suscite un vif débat chez les Irlandais à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle. À un point bas, un collecteur de chansons folkloriques

donne une célèbre conférence intitulée « la nécessité de désangliciser l'Irlande ». Plus tard, il devient le premier président de la République Irlandaise.

Dans sa conférence, il critique le provincialisme de Dublin à l'époque. Il dit que les Irlandais vont perdre une identité distinctement irlandaise, s'ils continuent à suivre les modes importées de l'étranger. Il dit : « Nous allons devenir une nation d'imitateurs, les Japonais de l'Europe occidentale, qui ont perdu leur initiative natale, vivant seulement de l'assimilation d'idées d'occasion ».

Il dit cela en mille huit cent quatre-vingt douze.

Au début du vingtième siècle, la ligue gaélique est un des plus grands mouvements culturels en Europe. Elle a un but simple mais difficile : la restauration de la langue irlandaise comme langue parlée du pays. À son apogée, la ligue a plus de cent mille membres. C'est-à-dire une section dans presque toutes les paroisses du pays.

Mais l'enthousiasme du renouveau gaélique ne dure guère. Tout comme la créativité de la période révolutionnaire, il meurt petit à petit dans l'état réactionnaire et conservateur qui émerge des cendres de la guerre civile. Le renouveau gaélique devient un projet d'état. Plus un mouvement révolutionnaire et joyeux, il devient un devoir, sombre et lourd, sous l'emprise des institutions patriarcales et conservatrices.

Jusqu'à maintenant.

Ici, dans cette colonie de vacances, on cultive l'esprit de la révolte. C'est peut-être que la créativité pousse dans les espaces où la liberté et la poésie se mélangent. On est même inspiré d'écrire des chansons dans une langue qu'on ne parle pas encore très bien.

Chapitre 2 - La marée qui monte

Il y a cent ans un révolutionnaire irlandais dénonce le système scolaire comme une machine du meurtre qui écrase la curiosité et la joie de vivre de la jeunesse.

Ici, par contre, on utilise l'énergie et l'enthousiasme naturel des jeunes d'une manière qui offre beaucoup de possibilités créatives. Nous avons besoin de cette créativité plus que jamais.

Après tout, la modernisation ne s'impose que de l'extérieure. Elle réclame aussi la transformation active d'une culture de l'intérieur, la capacité d'engager d'une manière critique avec son propre passé. Cette capacité d'engagement critique ne se trouve pas partout, mais ça change.

Nous vivons dans une période révolutionnaire dont les gens qui étaient autrefois les grands prêtres des médias grand-publics, les décisionnaires qui formaient les opinions et qui réglaient ce qui était acceptable aux bourgeois, tous ont été largement dépassés par YouTube, par les caméras vidéos à bon marché, et surtout par l'Internet mobilisé.

Nous sommes tous des grands prêtres maintenant, et les églises se multiplient chaque jour.

Quand j'étais ado à Dublin, je détestais cette petite ville de province qui se donnait des airs de grande ville. Mes amis du côté sud regardaient tous vers Londres pour la musique et pour la mode. Personne n'avait aucun respect pour les artistes locaux à l'époque où U2 jouait dans les pubs qui puaient la bière et les cigarettes.

Depuis lors, beaucoup de choses ont changé. Dublin est devenue une grande ville mondiale qui me semble pasteurisée et homogène, même si je sais que c'est pas le cas. Aujourd'hui, elle tire ses repères de New York plutôt que de Londres.

Si une colonie de vacances tente d'inspirer des jeunes à parler une langue moins répandue, en faisant des vidéos musicales qui imitent la musique américaine, qu'est-ce qui se passe, vraiment?

Pendant les années quatre-vingt, U2 a l'idée géniale de dépasser les grands prêtres de la musique rock en Angleterre. Ils trouvent leur propre voix et leur public aux États-Unis. Le groupe n'est pas un produit de la mondialisation de la musique, mais une contre-tendance. Au lieu de faire une version locale de

la musique commerciale mondialisée, ils « colonisent les colonisateurs » et changent l'histoire.

Je me demande s'il est possible que la même chose se passe ici, mais à un niveau différent. Ces jeunes redessinent les limites autour de ce qui est acceptable comme chanson contemporaine en irlandais. Les puristes scandalisés s'en lamentent, mais il me semble qu'il y a quelque chose qui leur échappe.

Ces jeunes créent de nouvelles possibilités. Ils font tomber les vieilles barrières et ils ouvrent la porte à de nouvelles formes d'expression. Et tout cela dans une langue que beaucoup de gens considèrent comme une langue qui se meurt.

Chapitre 3 - La marée qui noie

Quand les savants parlent de la mondialisation culturelle, ils parlent de l'hybridation : des identités hybrides, des cultures hybrides. Très souvent, ce discours met au premier plan ces caractéristiques positives, qui semblent s'opposer sainement à la réification des identités collectives, et à la fermeture aux échanges entre cultures. On la valorise tout simplement comme processus cosmopolite qui stimule l'intégration multiculturelle.

Mais ce discours me semble bien trop simple. Il se trouve à l'écart de toute considération des rapports de pouvoir ou de l'inégalité. L'hybridation peut aussi accélérer la dissolution de cultures affaiblies, en agissant comme une force « apaisante » au service du goût occidental, qui réduit les points de résistance associés à d'autres cultures.

Ce qui arrive, parfois, c'est la cannibalisation de certains éléments culturels par la culture mondiale dominante, pour lui donner un peu de saveur. Un peu comme un curry indien édulcoré dans un resto à Londres, quoi.

D'où ce paradoxe : c'est par la diffusion planétaire normative de l'hybridité culturelle qu'on risque de réaliser une homogénéité culturelle ne rencontrant que très peu de résistance. L'hybridation mondialisée est, peut-être,

le rouleau compresseur qui produit l'homogénéisation des cultures, et l'affaiblissement de la diversité culturelle.

Chapitre 4 - La contre-marée

Les beaux jours de l'été sont finis, la colonie se termine. On fait la fête avec des copains. Le guitariste accorde sa guitare. Les burgers grésillent sur le grill. Nous prenons le temps de vivre, d'être libre.

Nous vivons dans une époque de magie. Une jeune fille peut se servir de son portable pour raconter son histoire à tout le monde. Et en même temps, des millions de gens dansent sur la même musique, produite et emballée par les grandes sociétés multinationales. Tout le monde peut chanter sa propre chanson. Pourquoi, alors, est-ce que ce sont les chansons de masse qu'on entend dans la rue ?

Il n'y a rien d'exceptionnel au sujet de la langue irlandaise. De nombreuses langues autochtones à travers le monde incarnent des façons particulières de véhiculer le savoir. Les Inuits ont quarante mots pour décrire la neige. Les Irlandais en ont quarante pour la pluie, évidemment, et une autre quarante pour les algues de mer.

Ce qui fait du gaélique une langue unique, c'est qu'elle s'enracine dans le paysage irlandais. Elle est en lien avec le récit et l'âme de ce lieu et de ces gens depuis des milliers d'années.

La mort des langues n'est pas un phénomène nouveau, surtout depuis les conquêtes colonialistes européennes. Au cours des trois derniers siècles, pendant que l'Europe perd une bonne dizaine de langues, l'Amérique du Nord, l'Australie et le Brésil en perdent plusieurs centaines. En Afrique, plus de 200 langues comptent déjà moins de 500 locuteurs.

La mort des langues s'accélère au cours du vingtième siècle. Elle va atteindre des proportions sans précédent au cours du vingt et unième siècle. Déjà, on dit qu'une langue disparaît « tous les quinze jours », c'est-à-dire vingt-cinq chaque année.

Tout cela signifie une rupture énorme avec le passé, avec la mémoire, et surtout avec le souvenir d'un temps où l'homme entretenait un lien étroit avec la nature. Le défi, c'est de garder ce lien avec le passé d'une manière à la fois créative et vivante. J'espère qu'on peut le faire avec l'esprit ouvert et la joie de vivre que je vois ici. Pas comme un lourd devoir qui nous inspire la honte. Ça se passe trop souvent encore en Irlande.

C'est ça, peut-être, le vrai défi : le défi de Lurgan.

SCRIPT FOR SUBTITLES (FRENCH VOICE-OVER)

Explanatory Note

The subtitles used in the first version of the film (with the French voice-over) were largely based on this draft script. In some cases the text was abbreviated or other minor changes were made during the editing process, in order to match the subtitles to the rhythm of the spoken word and the images on screen.

Preamble

During the nineteenth century Ireland went through an extraordinary psychic shock: the near loss of her language. In 1800 most of the people spoke only Irish. By the end of the century most of them spoke only English. What happened to Irish was like a canary in the coal mine: a warning. Today, when laissez-faire capitalism is reborn as globalised neoliberalism, many other cultures confront the relentless advance of English as a global lingua franca.

But this is not a simple story, and it has more than one ending...

Chapter One - Low Tide

Once upon a time there was a crazy Irish tribe, who spoke the ancient language of their country, despite all that the shiny modern world told them. One fine summer's day they decided to paint themselves in all the colours of the rainbow. They gathered their drums and their fiddles and they set off on an adventure in the famous Barna Woods.

Look at these youths who sing, and dance. They are making a YouTube video, by reworking a song in English to revalue the language they speak. They are searching for the Golden Fleece, perhaps. They won't find it, I think, but it's no big deal. They will find something else, something very precious.

The decline of the Irish language provoked a lively debate in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. At a low point a collector of folk songs gave a famous lecture called *The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland*. He later became the first President of Ireland.

In his talk he criticized the narrow provincialism of Dublin at the time. He warned about the loss of a distinctive Irish identity if people continued to follow the latest imported fads and fashions. He said: “We will become a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation.”

He said that in 1892.

At the start of the twentieth century, the Gaelic League became one of the largest popular cultural movements in Europe. It had a simple but difficult aim: the restoration of the Irish language as the spoken language of the country. At its peak the League had over 100,000 members and a branch in almost every parish in the country.

But the enthusiasm of the Gaelic revival did not last. Like much of the creativity of the revolutionary period, it gradually withered away in the reactionary and conservative state that emerged from the ashes of the Civil War. The revival of Irish became a state project. No longer a joyous voluntary movement, it became mostly a dour and heavy duty supported by the dead hand of patriarchal and conservative institutions.

Until now.

Here, at this summer college, a certain rebelliousness is encouraged. Creativity flourishes in the spaces where freedom and poetry mingle. One is even inspired to write songs in a language one has not yet mastered.

Chapter Two - The Rising Tide

A hundred years ago an Irish revolutionary denounced the school system as a 'murder machine' that crushed curiosity and the joie de vivre of young people. Here, in contrast, one uses the energy and the natural enthusiasm of young people in a manner that offers many creative possibilities. We need this creativity more than ever.

After all, modernization is not imposed solely from the outside. It also requires the active transformation of a culture from within, a capacity to engage critically with its own past. We live in a revolutionary period in which the 'high priests' of mainstream media, the gatekeepers who formed opinions and determined what was acceptable to the bourgeois, have been largely displaced by YouTube, cheap digital cameras, and the Internet. We are all high priests now, and the churches multiply daily.

When I was a teenager in Dublin I detested this small provincial town that gave itself the airs of a large city. My friends on the south side all looked to London for their music and fashion. No one had any respect for local talent, in the days when U2 were just a garage band playing gigs in pubs which stank of beer and cigarettes.

Since then, much has changed. Dublin has become a global city that seems to me to be pasteurized and homogenized, even if I know that that's not the case. Today, she takes New York as her reference point, rather than London.

If a summer college tries to inspire young people to speak a lesser-used language by making music videos based on American songs, then what's really going on?

During the 1980s, U2 had the clever idea of bypassing the 'high priests' of rock music in England. They found their own voice and their audience in the United States. The group is not a product of the globalization of music, but a countercurrent. Instead of making a local version of a commercialized global music, they 'colonized the colonisers' and made history.

I wonder if it is possible that the same thing is happening here, but at a different level. These young people redesign the limits of what is acceptable as a

contemporary song in Irish. The scandalized purists complain about it, but it seems to me that something escapes them. These youths create new possibilities. They knock down old barriers and open the door to new forms of expression. And all that in a language that many people consider a dying language.

Chapter Three - The Tide That Drowns

When the experts talk about cultural globalization they talk about hybridization: hybrid identities, hybrid cultures. Very often, this discourse highlights its positive characteristics, which seem to provide a healthy contrast to the reification of collective identities and a rejection of cultural exchanges. It is valued simply as a cosmopolitan process that stimulates multicultural integration.

But this discourse seems to me to be far too simple. It leaves aside all consideration of relationships of power or inequality. Hybridity may also accelerate the dissolution of weakened cultures, acting as a 'pacifying' force at the service of Western tastes, one that reduces the potential resistance of other cultures. It is seen as an exciting *mélange* in which elements from one culture are combined and born again as something new and vibrant.

But this *mélange* does not take place on a level playing field. All too often what happens is that some elements of the native culture are cannibalised in order to provide an exotic flavour or spice to a strand of the dominant world culture. A bit like an Indian curry in a London restaurant. And how can you talk about all this without asking fundamental questions about conflict, inequality and power?

Chapter Four - The Countercurrent

The heady days of summer are drawing to a close. It's time for one last celebration with friends old and new. The rock band is ready. The hamburgers are sizzling on the grill. Time to be free, to dance, to create new dreams.

We live in a time of magic. When a girl can use her phone to tell her story all over the world. In this new world almost everyone has the chance to sing out loud and make up their own songs. Why then, is it the mass-produced songs that you hear in the street?

There is nothing particularly special about the Irish language. Many native languages across the globe embody elements of traditional culture, pre-industrial ways of looking and thinking about the world, unique ways of singing and expressing our human nature in all its dimensions. The Eskimos have 40 words for snow. The Irish have 40 words for rain and another 40 for different kinds of seaweed.

What is unique about the language is that it is rooted in the landscape of Ireland and connected intimately with the story and soul of this place and these people for millennia.

They say that 90 per cent of the languages alive today will no longer be spoken by the end of this century. That means a huge disconnect and rupture with the past, with memory, with the recollection of a time when man lived much closer to nature than we do now. The challenge is to keep that connection with the past in a way that is creative and vibrant. Not as something stilted and heavy with obligation and shame.

That is, perhaps, the real challenge, the Lurgan challenge.

‘REEL ART’ FUNDING APPLICATION

In October 2013 an application for funding worth €79,158 was submitted to An Chomhairle Ealaíon / The Arts Council under the council’s ‘Reel Art’ film funding scheme. The application named Bríd Seoighe of the television production company Abú Media, Indreabhán, Co. Galway as producer, and Uinsíonn Mac Dubhghaill as writer-director. The application was for funding to make a film of some 60-70 minutes duration entitled *Seomra na Macallaí / The Room of Echoes*. The following is the text of the Treatment and Director’s Notes on Approach submitted as part of the application.

Treatment

The film opens with a wide shot of a large chaotic mudfight between several hundred teenagers split into two teams – the Red Team and the Blue Team. It’s on the grounds of an Irish summer college in Connemara. There is no voice-over, just action, life and colour, the teenagers shrieking with excitement and having great fun with the mock battle. The camera tracks in from on high and closes in tight to various individual contests. The people on the Red Team are shouting ‘Fág a’ bealach!’ and other slogans and war cries in Irish, and the Blue Team is taunting them with insults in English – ‘Stop speaking that dead language’, ‘Get back to your bog’, and so on.

We focus on two people, a young man and a young woman, who are deadlocked in a loose kind of a rugby scrum. They eyeball each other, inches apart. The woman manages to free her hand and scoops up a handful of mud, before smearing it on the face of her opponent with a triumphant whoop.

We cut to a messy art room inside the college. In one corner a group of teenagers are gathered around a large monitor. Next to them a woman is working on a canvas, mixing different paint colours. A contemporary pop music video is playing on the monitor, but the sound is low. The teenagers are arguing about the approach they will take for a music project they are about to start. Some want to translate the words of a well-known song into Irish, and record their own

version. Others want to record an original pop song in Irish. As they argue we hear shouts and shrieks from the fight as it continues outside. The singer bursts in the door, covered in mud and grinning from ear to ear. It is the same woman we saw at the end of the first scene.

The group carries on with the discussion about the choice of song. ‘Why don’t we do both videos, and see which one works out best,’ suggests the singer. They agree to split into two teams to work on the videos. As they are discussing the issue, something strange starts to happen to the screen. Blobs of different-coloured paint appear to fall on it, obscuring the view. The blobs merge in a swirl of colour. The sound of talking fades and we hear the start of a sean-nós song. It is *Fill, Fill A Rún Ó*, a lament.

An abstract animation follows during which an number of phrases emerge and fade into the multicoloured patterns, sometimes as disembodied voices, sometimes shown on screen as intertitles. As the song continues it gradually and incrementally changes in subtle ways. Slowly it becomes something else, and a rhythmic pulse begins. We find ourselves in the middle of a pop music video made by students at the college.

A conventionally narrated sequence begins during which we see the students dancing and singing in the video as we hear the voice of the singer giving some background on the TG Lurgan phenomenon. ‘Last year we got over two and a half million hits for our version of Avicii’s *Wake Me Up*,’ she says proudly. ‘That’s completely unheard of for a video in Irish.’ As the music ends we fade to black.

We fade up on a stage with a spare, stylized set. A male actor, dressed in period costume and lit by spotlights, is re-enacting a speech by Douglas Hyde. It is called *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*.

The character Hyde explains that his argument is meant ‘not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people, for that would be absurd, but rather to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish, and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English.’ He goes on to criticize what he describes as the narrow provincialism of Dublin,

and warns about the loss of a distinctive Irish identity if people continue to follow the latest imported and derivative fads and fashions. ‘We will become, what, I fear, we are largely at present, a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation.’

The actor comes to the end of the extract and pauses. He steps out of character and addresses the audience. He says, in a conversational voice, ‘That was Douglas Hyde at a meeting of the Irish National Literary Society in Dublin in 1892. Since then many others have spoken about the kinds of things he was talking about all those years ago. But I doubt Hyde could ever have imagined the likes of this.’ He gestures to a screen at the side of the stage.

We close up and enter the screen. We are in a hillside village in central Vietnam. A woman, who is dressed in the traditional garb of a weaver and working at a loom, is saying in basic English that she is part of the Koho ethnic minority whose first language is not Vietnamese but Koho. She explains that some of the young adults in the village are so influenced by western music videos that they can speak better English than they speak Vietnamese, and that they prefer to listen to rap than their own traditional music.

The scene ends and we are back to the actor and the stage. ‘That was shot in the Central Highlands of Vietnam,’ he says. ‘The Koho are among the poorest of Vietnam's indigenous minorities, and there are only about 100,000 of them left who speak the language. How many of those young people will pass it on to their own children?’

We cut to a sheltered spot behind a large rock on a beach in Connemara. A teenage boy is playing a chord progression on his guitar and trying to find words to fit. It’s not going well. He stops playing and slings the guitar over his shoulder, before walking away.

As he walks along he meets the singer from the other group. ‘How’s the song coming along?’ she asks. ‘Oh, fine, yeah, good,’ he says. She smiles as he walks off. ‘That bad, huh?’ she calls after him.

We cut to a large tent at the back of the Irish college where a choreographer is going through some moves with a large group of students. They are rehearsing their next music video, which is due to be recorded the following day. But there's a problem – one of the amplifiers has blown, and there isn't a replacement available locally. One of the team goes off to try and find a solution.

We cut to a busy university setting in Belgium, with students walking by in the background. A TV reporter (the director) is preparing to interview the Belgian philosopher Philippe Van Parijs, author of *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World*. From the POV of a second, handheld, camera, we see the cameraperson getting ready, the reporter consulting his notes, the interviewee adjusting his suit.

The interview begins. Van Parijs explains that the growing global dominance of the English language is one of the most pressing social, cultural and artistic issues of the early twenty-first century. He points out that the increased status, power and influence of English means that writers and artists who speak other languages, particularly minority or lesser-spoken languages, are gradually becoming 'locked out' of funding and recognition at both European and state level, and that this militates against the respect for linguistic and ethnic diversity which is one of the founding principles of the European Union. Worse, because of the dominance of global pop culture in English, young people in Belgium and all over the world are absorbing the message that English is better than their own languages.

Van Parijs finishes speaking. The reporter asks him a number of questions challenging his assertions. Don't we need English as a global *lingua franca* so we can all understand each other? We hear Van Parijs respond.

As they talk the image gradually fades and becomes an abstract animation of coloured blobs. As this happens we hear a singer start to sing a traditional song in the Frisian language. As the abstract coloured patterns continue the quality of the recorded voice also changes, becoming thinner and less distinct. Other sounds in the background gradually increase in volume and merge with the

singer's voice. Gradually a syncopated rhythm emerges. The abstract patterns lose focus and become blurred.

As the camera focuses again we find ourselves in the tent at the back of the summer college. The recording of the music video is in progress. There are dozens of teenagers dancing in the space, the sound engineer is working at the sound desk, the female singer is giving it loads and the atmosphere is intense and electric.

The song ends and everyone pauses for a beat. The singer looks at the sound engineer. 'How was that,' she asks. 'Not bad,' he answers. 'Now let's have the other one.'

The solo guitarist goes up on stage. He looks nervous. As she is leaving the stage the other singer stops beside him. 'Good luck,' she whispers in his ear.

We cut to the actor alone on the stylized stage in a different location. He says: 'According to the sociologist Luke Martell, many Western scholars have separated the study of cultural globalization from its political and economic context.'

He pauses, and in an aside to the audience he says wearily, 'Tell me something I don't know.' Then he straightens himself, adopts the role of Luke Martell, and says, in an educated English accent: 'Consequently, their awareness of conflict, inequality and power in politics and economics becomes separated from the more benign, equal and cosmopolitan picture they have of culture.'

He steps out of role and says, 'Martell was thinking about the likes of Jan Nederveen Pieterse, another sociologist, when he made those comments. What cultural globalization really is, according to them, is a mutual exchange and mixing of cultures in which people have increased choices, and are free to make what they want of the rich intercultural *mélange* available to them. Nederveen Pieterse describes it as a creative process in which elements of traditional native culture are 'creolised' in a hybrid culture.'

Another aside: 'A bit like caramelized onions in a frying pan.'

The actor turns around, tilts his hat or changes his jacket, or makes some other gesture so as to make clear he is adopting the role of a different person. In his role as Nederveen Pieterse, he says:

‘How do we come to terms with phenomena such as Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam, Asian rap in London, Irish bagels, Chinese tacos and Mardi Gras Indians in the United States, or Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan?’

The actor steps out of character. ‘All very happy clappy really. But what about language? What happens then? Does the weaker one get ‘creolised’ out of existence?’

We cut to the tent behind the summer college. The tent appears empty, apart from the teenager we saw earlier playing his guitar on a beach in Connemara. He is miked up and on a small stage in the tent, rehearsing a song he has written. It is an original pop song in Irish, with a catchy melody and an upbeat feel. The song ends on a full chord which resonates in the space.

In the ensuing silence the singer from the other group moves out of the shadows and walks up to the stage. She tells him she really likes the song. He reddens with embarrassment and pleasure. ‘Thanks,’ he mumbles.

The camera pulls back to reveal that the images we have been watching are in fact showing on the large television monitor in the art room at the college. The students and the director are sitting on a sofa and armchairs drinking tea and eating biscuits while watching the film. The director asks them for their views about the songs, and about the film they have just watched.

The first reaction is mixed. ‘I thought the love angle was a bit corny,’ says one. ‘No, I liked that bit,’ says another.

A discussion ensues during which the director asks them to talk about the pros and cons of the two music videos – one a translation, the other an original song – and their thoughts and feelings about the ideas and questions the film raises. (The discussion is fluid, wide-ranging and open-ended and the direction it takes cannot be predicted with any certainty beforehand, although certain themes can

be anticipated. Its length will be determined at the editing stage, and will depend on what emerges during the discussion.)

As the discussion ends we fade in to another abstract and dream-like sequence. As the sequence ends we cross-fade to the director walking through the streets of Galway with a small handheld camera, a gag on his mouth. He is shooting at random: peering in the window at the people sitting in MacDonald's; streetscape and buskers on Shop Street; the rushing river; tourists sitting outside Tigh Neachtain on Quay Street; other walkers, swans at the Claddagh. As he shoots and walks we hear his voice in monologue as he gives his reflections on the creative process the students have gone through, and on some of the issues raised by the film. As he continues to speak music swells in the background and gradually drowns out his voice.

The music continues as he boards a Galway hooker at Claddagh harbour, and sails out to sea. An animated dreamlike sequence follows, during which the boat transforms into a dolphin leaping over the waves and heading towards an island emerging dimly on the western horizon. We see a woman gallop a white horse along the strand, a young man grow old before our eyes and sink to his knees, and a river rushing headlong into a well. The camera follows the river into the well and the sounds of a music video intermingle with the sound of the rushing water.

We emerge from the well into the middle of the music video. It is a rock anthem with an upbeat and optimistic feel. Both the male and female singers (from the two groups seen earlier) are on stage singing together. Dozens of students sing and dance around them in choreographed sequences with passion and energy. Birth, life, death and rebirth: the eternal cycle of creation.

Director's Notes on Approach

One Line Synopsis: A poetic and experimental interrogation of the process of artistic creation at an Irish summer college, and the wider questions this poses about the nature of art and culture in an era of globalization and hybridity.

One Paragraph Synopsis: *Seomra na Macallaí / The Room of Echoes* is a personal, ideas-driven, experimental and poetic essay film that interrogates the contradictions and creative tensions inherent in reversioning mainstream pop music videos in Irish, and by so doing asks wider questions about the nature of art and culture in an era of globalization and hybridity. It reframes in a visual and cinematographic context questions about language, identity, art and culture that are as vital and as relevant today as they were in Ireland in the early years of the last century, when the Gaelic League was the largest grassroots cultural organization in Europe, with over 100,000 members and branches in practically every town and village. It does this by investigating the *process* of artistic creation by a group of students at an Irish summer college in Connemara – an investigation which is used as a narrative metaphor and which helps give the film an overall coherence, while interspersing this with interviews, dramatic reconstructions, and moments of magic realism and animation in order to visualize and examine the wider questions mentioned above. The film culminates in a key interview scene in which the students discuss their work with the director and respond to the debates raised earlier in the film, before resolving in an abstract animation sequence which leads to a final, celebratory performance.

Cinematographic Approach: The cinematographic approach I intend to take is transgressive and eclectic, combining elements of French *nouvelle vague* with fragmented, discontinuous or episodic editing, and long takes; a experimental and poetic style which includes elements of magic realism and animation; and straightforward expository narrative. The combination of objective and subjective realism and a particular authorial voice – by turns subtly inserted, parodied, or subverted, and ending on a self-reflexive note – is intended to create a narrative ambiguity that both questions the directorial vision and highlights the intent to raise questions in the film to which there are no simple or easy answers. I aim to provoke a strong emotional response – either positive or negative. There are no easy answers, but, having said that, it will not meander willy-nilly across

an inchoate landscape: some signposts are provided, and the film is driven by a strong visual metaphor.

At first sight one may raise questions about the juxtaposition of this strongly visual story – the journey of a group of young adults through a process of artistic creation, and their reflections on the process at the end – with academic interviews and social and historical contextualizing. One may ask: why not simply focus on the emotional journey of the young adults, expressed in as visual a way as possible, with as little speech or ‘talking heads’ as possible? My answer to that is that this is a serious and deliberate attempt to raise key questions about our contemporary life and art at an intellectual level as well as in an emotional and artistic manner. This will be done in a way that will be accessible to many people but that does not simply pander to the tyranny of the box office; does not treat them as infants incapable of seizing a complex and nuanced argument; and provokes a strongly visceral and emotional response. This will be achieved by drawing out and emphasizing the artistic journey of the young adults, and counterpointing this with a ‘documentary within a documentary’ approach that encompasses more complex arguments, and finally seeks their reflexive response to the issues raised.

A key moment in the film is when the camera pulls back to reveal the students watching the film itself (see Treatment, page four) and are asked to discuss the issues raised. This is a deliberate *hommage* to the collective interview scene near the end of *Chronique d'un été*, the French documentary made in 1960 by sociologist Edgar Morin and anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch. This is intended to serve a similar purpose as in the original, in terms of overall structure and thematic unity.

Elements of ‘visual music’ and animation will be used at certain liminal points to emphasize the film’s dream-like quality: at times fully submerged in an apparently unconscious flow of sound and image, at other times pulsating with energy in the style of Oskar Fischinger’s mesmeric *raumlichtkunst*.

There will be a number of narrative or quasi-narrative threads running through the film in order to achieve an overall coherence and unity. One of these will be

a simple contemporary story of a group of teenagers elaborating their own artistic response to a ‘global popular’ song. The film is not, however, in any sense ‘about’ their journey: rather, their story is a jumping-off point for a wider investigation of discourses of assimilation and/or resistance to processes of globalization, as well as deeper questions about the nature of art and the process of creation.

A second narrative thread will be historical: 1915 marks the mid-point in the ‘decade of revolutions’ in Ireland, with its many contemporary resonances in our social, political and cultural lives. It also marks a key moment in the history of the Gaelic League: the point at which Douglas Hyde found himself elbowed aside from the cultural movement he had founded. In retrospect, this action was a very significant indication of the confessional and intolerant ideology that would come to dominate the Free State a few years later. Of greater significance is the nature, ideology and contemporary relevance of the Gaelic League and the discourses it inspired (see ‘historical and contemporary context’ below).

A final narrative thread will be personal and autobiographical, although this will be largely unstated or implied. The themes investigated in the film are ones that have echoed within me since I decided in my late teens to learn Irish as part of a personal quest for identity. This was partly because of certain experiences abroad while living for a time on the continent, and learning Italian and French, and also because of my own hybrid and cross-cultural family background, which has roots in both republican and loyalist communities in Northern Ireland, as well as Munster and Donegal.

These narrative threads will be developed through a variety of methods, including dramatic reconstruction or re-enactment, personal monologue, and straightforward expository or observational documentary.

Language: The film will be made in Irish, and most of the dialogue will be in Irish, although some interviews and the Hyde re-enactment will be in English. A copy of the film with subtitles in English will be produced, in addition to the original version in Irish.

Thematic Relationship to Reel Art Objectives: This film asks searching questions about the nature of art and art practice, and the role of art in world dominated by the pressures of marketing, conformity and increasing homogeneity.

At its most fundamental, however, the film poses one simple question: what is art? What is art and what is merely derivative? It does this not through the examination and dissection of a particular work of art or the output of a particular artist, but by a creative and poetic insertion into the *process* of artistic creation and the tensions and conflicts that can arise from such a process.

It also poses some pertinent and timely questions about language and cultural diversity. It asks if *omnis traductor traditor* is sufficient to explain what happens when a group of young people take a pop song in one language and create a version of it in another. In a multicultural and pluralist world of population movements, artistic cross-fertilizations and borrowings, loan words, creative *mélange* and hybrid and hyphenated identities, are concepts such as ‘national language’ or ‘national cinema’ still relevant, or are they simply essentialist hangovers from another era? Does the Irish language, or any other language, have any particular claim on our loyalty and support, and will the world of art and expression be impoverished when, as has been widely predicted, some 90% of the languages now spoken on the face of this earth perish by the end of the century?

Historical and Contemporary Context: In 1893 Douglas Hyde, the son of a Church of Ireland rector from a village in the west of Ireland, set up the Gaelic League together with a handful of other scholars and artists. Its mission was to halt and reverse the relentless decline of Irish as a living, spoken vernacular language. It went on to become the largest grassroots cultural movement of its kind in Europe at the time: by 1905 it had 550 branches throughout the country and at its peak it had well over 100,000 members. The branches organised Irish classes conducted by *timirí* (travelling teachers) and also lectures, concerts and

Irish dances: a familiar sight on Irish roads at the time was that of the *timire*, cycling through the rain from one village meeting to another with a small bundle of books tied to the back carrier.

During the 1913-15 period the league was convulsed by a deep schism between Hyde and other leading and influential members of the organization. Hyde was alarmed by the increasingly partisan, nationalistic and ‘political’ rhetoric spreading through the movement, most of whose membership were inspired by the rhetoric of Pearse and other nationalist leaders, whose work was to culminate in the 1916 Rising. Hyde argued strongly for the original ethos of the Gaelic League: focused on the revival of the language, non-partisan, non-sectarian and inclusive of those who, like himself, came from an Anglo-Irish or Protestant tradition. He lost the argument in 1915, and resigned his post as president of the organization.

Despite this, the debate he started has continued to echo, in one form or another, through the decades of narrow sectarianism and bigotry that characterized both states on the island of Ireland for much of the twentieth century. It continues to resonate in more recent years, whenever people gather to discuss the vexed questions of language and identity against the contemporary backgrounds of globalization, migration, multiculturalism and cultural hybridity. Indeed, key debates about the impact of globalization on culture today tend to coalesce around two central arguments or points of view.

These echo the passionate and controversial debates generated by the Gaelic League and the Irish Literary Revival 100 years ago, and may be summed up as the following: is the desire to safeguard and protect a weaker language and culture from the overwhelming force of English inspired by some kind of retrograde, atavistic and obsolete impulse, or is it simply an effort to reclaim memory and originality from the erasure wrought by more powerful external forces?

Or, to put it in more contemporary terms, is the spread of a global consumerist culture largely carried and transmitted through the medium of English something to celebrate as breaking down the narrow confines of xenophobic

particularity, a global melting pot from which new and exciting hybrid forms emerge and are constantly refashioned, or is it something else: the old rags of cultural imperialism dressed up in new designer gear, an unequal struggle between those with the money, power and technology to impose their vision on the world and those who bear mute witness to the fading of the imaginings, memories and images bound up in their myriad tongues, as their children march off to a different global drum? Or can it both at the same time, in a rejection of binary oppositions for a more complex and nuanced view of human life?

Hyde was one of the founding members of the Gaelic League, and its principal intellectual architect, exemplified in his seminal lecture *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*, which he delivered before the Irish National Literary Society at a meeting in Dublin in November 1892. His argument was meant “not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people, for that would be absurd, but rather to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish, and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English.” He railed against what he saw as the narrow provincialism of Dublin at the time, and warned about the loss of a distinctive Irish identity if people continued to follow the latest imported and derivative fads and fashions: “We will become, what, I fear, we are largely at present, a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation.”

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Fast forward a hundred years, and similar concerns about imitation, assimilation and a loss of identity inform much of the scholarly writing about the impact of globalization on cultures all over the world. The growing dominance of a global consumerist monoculture has been greatly increased in recent years by the spread of new mobile communications technologies and by the increasing wealth, power and influence of a handful of transnational media corporations based in the United States.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the music industry: across most of Europe, Asia and the Americas young people are listening in ever-increasing numbers to popular music that generally conforms to a narrow range of criteria as regards style, rhythm, melody and lyrical content – and the lyrics are mostly in

American English. The contemporary buzzword is hybridization: hybrid identities, hybrid cultures, hyphenated Irish-American or Irish-Spanish heartbeats of home... but can there be hybrid languages without losing the weaker partner? Is hybridization a stable and valid *mélange*, or a half-way house on the road to the ultimate silencing of a minority voice?

In his 1996 collection, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, Luke Gibbons argued that ‘modernization is not solely an external force, but also requires the active transformation of a culture from within, a capacity to engage critically with its own past’. In a later passage, he argued that ‘hybridity need not always take the high road: where there are borders to be crossed, unapproved roads might prove more beneficial in the long run than those patrolled by global powers’. These debates and others about language, identity and culture in a increasingly globalized world are a continuing focus of a long line of contemporary Irish scholars, artists and writers, and will inform the production of this film.

TG4 FUNDING APPLICATION

In April 2014 an application for funding worth €31,990.14 to make a television documentary was submitted to TG4, the Irish-language television station. The application was written in the Irish language. It was deliberately couched in an informal and non-academic style which, it was hoped, might appeal to the station's commissioning editors. It named Uinsionn Mac Dubhghaill and Éamonn Mac Mánaís of Tree Light Pictures, Galway, as producers, with Éamonn Mac Mánaís as cameraman and Uinsionn Mac Dubhghaill as writer-director. The application was for funding to make a documentary of 26 minutes duration entitled *Dúshlán Lurgan*, which might be broadcast as part of the station's 'Cogar' documentary strand. The following is the text (in Irish) of the Treatment submitted as part of the application.

Achoimre

Agus fiseán ceoil YouTube á réiteach ag 'gaeilgeoirí' Choláiste Lurgan i gConamara, tugann an t-iriseoir Uinsionn Mac Dubhghaill dúshlán ar leith dóibh: teacht ar a bhfreagraí féin ar na ceistanna a spreag Dúghlas de hÍde agus lucht na hAthbheochana Teanga 100 bliain ó shin - agus é sin a dhéanamh ar bhealach nua, siamsúil agus spleodrach.

Tús an chláir

Osclaíonn *Dúshlán Lurgan* le radharc drámatúil atá ina mheafar físiúil ar an gcoimhlint teanga in Éirinn: dhá fhoireann scoláirí ag Coláiste Lurgan agus iad i mbun troid portaigh. Tá an dá fhoireann ag caitheamh maslaí - agus fódanna móna - ar a chéile: an fhoireann Glas ag screadach nathanna ar nós 'Fág a' bealach!' agus an fhoireann Dearg ag béicíl 'stop speaking that dead language' agus nathanna maslacha eile.

Cloistear agus feictear láithreoir an chláir ansin, an t-iriseoir Uinsionn Mac Dubhghaill, agus é ag rá go bhfuil an choimhlint seo ag dul ar aghaidh leis na

céadta blian, agus go mbíonn ar ghlúin i ndiaidh glúine in Éirinn teacht ar a bhfreagraí féin ar na ceisteanna a thagann as an gcoimhlint sin.

Inniu, beidh dúshlán ar leith á thabhairt do na daltaí Ardteiste seo, atá ag freastal ar choláiste samhraidh i gConamara. Is é sin, teacht ar a bhfreagraí féin ar na ceisteanna conspóideacha agus dúshlánacha a chuirfeas an láithreoir orthu, le linn dóibh a bheith ag réiteach físeáin cheoil le crochadh ar YouTube.

Ar na ceisteanna dúshlánacha sin beidh:

1. Tuige an mbacfa leis an nGaeilge nuair atá sí ag fáil bháis agus nuair atá an stuif is *sexyáilte* ar YouTube beagnach ar fad i mBéarla?
2. Céard é an difríocht idir Éire agus Sasana ar aon nós? Nó Éire agus Stáit Aontaithe Mheiriceá? Nach clann mhór amháin muid faoin am seo?
3. Cén bhaint atá ag seanleaid féasógach ar nós de hÍde le saol an lae inniu?

Leanfaidh muid na déagóirí seo agus iad ag cleachtadh agus ag troid faoin bhfíseán ceoil atá á chur le chéile acu, go dtí an buaicphointe nuair a chrochfar an físeán críochnaithe ar YouTube ar oíche mhór cheiliúrtha ag deireadh an chúrsa.

Ach leanfaidh muid iad freisin agus iad ag iarraidh teacht suas le freagraí a shásóidh iad féin agus déagóirí eile cosúil leo. Beidh saoirse acu féin teacht suas leis an réiteach atá acu féin ar an bhfadhb, ach shamhlóinn muid go bhféadfadh siad tarraingt ar dhrámaíocht, ar amhránaíocht, ar chlipeanna gearra físe a chur le chéile do YouTube, agus ar ghníomhaíochtaí eile. Leanfaidh muid an plé, an troid, an crá croí agus an gáire a bheas acu agus iad ag iarraidh dul i ngleic leis an dúshlán trioblóideach seo.

Agus cé *nach mbeidh* 'cloigne cainteacha' ná saineolaithe teanga le cloisteáil, ar an gcaoi thaitneamhach agus shiamsúil sin beidh muid ag tabhairt faoi théamaí atá ag croílár gach díospóireacht faoi chúrsaí cultúir, féiniúlachta agus teanga ó d'éirigh Dúghlas de hÍde as a bheith ina cheannaire ar Chonradh na Gaeilge 100 bliain ó shin.

An comhthéacs stairiúil

Leanfaidh an clár ar aghaidh ansin le *montage* scioptha ina chuirtear Dúghlas de hÍde i láthair, agus go mór-mór an raic mhór a tharla siar in 1915 nuair a d'éirigh seisean as a bheith ina cheannaire ar Chonradh na Gaeilge, eagraíocht a mbíodh os cionn 100,000 ball aici agus a bhíodh ina gluaiseacht ollmhór chultúrtha in Éirinn ag an am sin. Bhí lucht an IRB ag iarraidh uirlís pholaitiúil agus náisiúnach a dhéanamh den mhóreagraíocht chultúrtha seo – agus den Athbheochan Teanga trí chéile - agus iad ag réiteach don Éirí Amach an bhliain dar gcionn. Bhí biogóidíocht sheicteach ann freisin ar chúla téarmaí: Protastúnach ab ea de hÍde, agus chreid sé go daingean gur cheart an teanga a chur chun cinn ar bhealach neamhpholaitiúil do chuile dhuine ar oileán na hÉireann. Níor luigh a chuid tuairimí go maith leo siúd – ar náisiúntóirí Caitliceacha iad a bhformhór - a chreid go raibh cúis na teanga fite fuaite leis an gcúis náisiúnta.

Croílár an chlár

Leanfaidh an clár ar aghaidh agus muid ag leanacht gnáthphátrún *Hero's Journey* Joseph Campbell, an creatlach a bhíonn go minic ina bhunstruchtúr scéalaíochta i gcláracha teilifíse, go mór-mór i gcás na drámaíochta agus na *docusoaps*:

An Glaoch (na ceisteanna dúshlánacha a chuirfidh an láithreoir)

Sárú na gConstaicí (an físeán ceoil a réiteach agus a chur le chéile agus ag an am céanna na ceisteanna dúshlánacha a fhreagairt oiread agus is féidir agus na daltaí faoi bhrú)

An Bhuaic (na freagraí aimsithe agus an físeán crochta ar YouTube)

An Duais (an ceiliúradh mór ag an deireadh)

Cúlra

Bhí Coláiste Lurgan ina scéal mór sna meáin anuraidh nuair a bhain a leagan Gaeilge den traic *Wake Me Up* le Avicii os cionn 1.5 milliún buillí ar chaineál YouTube an choláiste, TG Lurgan. Bhí idir déagóirí, léirmheastóirí nuachtáin agus tuismitheoirí meallta ag an ardchaighdeán físe agus fuaim a bhain leis an amhrán, agus tugadh cuireadh dóibh an t-amhrán a chanadh ar an *Late Late Show* san fhómhar. Ach leanann na buillí ar aghaidh ó shin: ag an bpointe seo tá an físeán feicthe níos mó ná 3.5 milliún uaire thart timpeall an domhain, toradh dochreidte d'fhíseán Gaeilge.

Cur chuige

An rud atá nua faoin gclár seo ná go mbeidh grúpa déagóirí ag iarraidh teacht ar a gcuid freagraí féin ar cheisteanna a bhaineann le féiniúlacht agus teanga in Éirinn, le linn dóibh a bheith ag tabhairt faoi ghníomhaíochtaí atá lán le haicsean, le paisean, le dathanna agus le craic - is é sin, físeán ceoil a chur le chéile, liricí a scríobh, fuaimrianacha a thaifead, damhsaí a chleachtadh, éadaí a aimsiú, an traic a thaifead, an eagarthóireacht a dhéanamh, agus an físeán críochnaithe a chrochadh ar YouTube ag deireadh an aistir. Ar an gcaoi sin beidh ceisteanna faoin teanga á bplé ar bhealach úrnua agus spleodrach, míle míle ón mbealach tur agus tirim ina bpléitear na ceisteanna seo rómhinic.

Chun é sin a bhaint amach, cuirfear béim ar shiamsaíocht agus beidh túsáit i gcónaí ag an íomhá thar an fhocail. Beidh go leor aicsin agus gluaiseachtaí le feiceáil ar scáileán, daoine óga den chuid is mó a bheas le feiceáil, agus féachfar le mothúcháin láidre – fearg, grá, taircaisne – a spreagadh sa lucht féachana seachas díospóireachtaí nó léachtaí tirime intleachtúla a thabhairt.

Feidhmeoidh déantús an fhíseáin - aistriúchán ar phopamhrán Béarla atá go mór i mbéal an aois óig - mar mheafar físiúil agus fuaimniúil ar théama an chláir, agus mar snáth scéalaíochta tríd síos. Beidh cur chuige an láithreora dúshlánach, íoróineach agus fiú searbh in amanna, agus é ag iarraidh na déagóirí a ghríosadh agus a spreagadh lena gcuid freagraí féin a aimsiú. Tharlódh sé go mbeadh

achrann nó teannas áirithe le mothú agus na déagóirí á gcur faoi bhrú le bealaí a aimsiú chun teacht suas le freagraí a shásóidh iad féin. Agus má thagann siad suas le freagraí nach rabhthas ag súil leo, nó a chuirfeas as do dhaoine níos sine ná iad, cén dochar?

Féachfar leis na hargóintí agus leis an teannas sin a thaispeáint go físiúil, agus teachtaireachtaí á gcur in iúl ar bhonn mothúcháinach, seachas ar bhonn intleachtúil. Beidh eilimintí drámatúla ann freisin, agus na daltaí ag dul i ngleic le hídéil na hAthbheochana Teanga. Thar aon rud, cuirfear brú orthu teacht suas le bealaí leis na smaointe sin a chur i bhfeiliúint dá gcomhaoisigh féin, agus iad á léiriú go físiúil ar shlí a mbeidh gach duine in ann a thuiscint.

