

Doctor of Philosophy

# The Forgotten Mothers in the Cillín:

spectral traces in the landscape and memory,  
woven in sound

Sheena Graham-George

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**THE GLASGOW  
SCHOOL OF ART**



To D.J. and M.H. Graham  
*With deepest gratitude*



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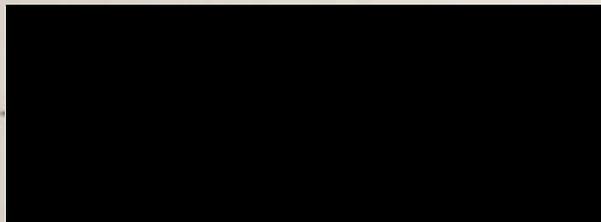
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The Forgotten Mothers in the Cillin: spectral traces in the landscape and memory,  
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\_\_\_\_\_



## Abstract

Dating from the sixteenth until the latter part of the twentieth century, cillíní are un-consecrated children's burial grounds found throughout Ireland where unbaptised babies and infants condemned to limbo lie alongside adults expelled for contravening social taboos or religious rulings.

Archaeologists and historians have largely focused upon the burial of the un-baptised babies and infants with little investigation into the marginalised adults interred here. Collective and cultural memory in the form of oral history tells us that suicides, strangers, shipwrecked sailors, the famine dead, murderers and their victims, criminals, those with learning or physical disabilities and mothers who died in childbirth were at times buried in the cillín.

Likewise the last four decades has seen a growing acknowledgement by communities throughout Ireland to recognise, remember and embrace the cillíní within their midst as an important part of their heritage yet invariably these commemorations and media reports are largely focused upon the babies and infants with minimal attention paid to the adults.

Only a limited number of cillíní have been excavated yet evidence of women who died in pregnancy, childbirth or early motherhood has been unearthed, but this group of adults is not consistently acknowledged in the academic discourse similarly within the popular media and thus the collective consciousness of society.

Set against the backdrop of Ireland over the last two centuries as a patriarchal society governed by Church and State which controlled the moral welfare of women's lives and deaths; this interdisciplinary research uses auto-ethnographic fieldwork and archival materials from the National Folklore Collection to create a sonic deep-map based on nine case-study cillíní within the Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas.

Sound, according to David Toop is an already haunted medium, thus ideally placed in this context to connect and uncover the spectral traces locked within the physical landscape of the cillíní and the cultural and collective memory stored within the local community; accessed through field-recordings and recorded oral history interviews.

*Requiescat* sonically overlays the past with the present, giving voice to the presence of absence as it weaves together the threads of evidence found within the landscape with the wisps of collective memory of traces left behind by the mothers of the cillíní. Within the process both artist and listener become secondary witnesses to these testimonies with responsibility to relay the story of these women; achieved by public art exhibitions to widely disseminate *Requiescat* along with the gifting of CDs and accompanying booklet to libraries throughout County Kerry and donating fourteen of the original recorded interviews to the National Folklore Collection of Ireland. In this way raising awareness whilst contributing to the current debate concerning the negative ways in which the Catholic church eschewed female sexuality, childbirth and unmarried mothers, finding parallels with the treatment in death of the Magdalen Laundries mothers and those from the Mother and Baby Homes.

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## Introduction

West coast of Ireland 2009, a low windswept headland on Achill Island, waves relentlessly crash against the exposed burial site. Yellow bones protrude from the eroded sand bank, others invisible, undisturbed under the wind-shorn grass; just a few hummocks and stones marking the graves of these un-named individuals. Standing there by the sea I reflect upon my own experience of motherhood, of birth, and the overpowering fear of losing one of my (then) small children.

South west Ireland 2017, a grey damp day, the sky heavy over the cillín. Standing in this cold desolate field gazing down at the stones by my feet I wonder how many mothers lie buried in these sites, silent and anonymous, and what their lives had been like. Once again, I am thinking about motherhood, but this time of death, and loss, as I gradually come to terms with the death of my own mother and the recognition that '*...one does not bury the mother's body/in the ground but in the chest.*' (Trethewey 2020. emphasis in the original)

A number of years ago I asked several people I was acquainted with in County Kerry if they knew anything about mothers who died in childbirth being buried in the cillíní. None had heard of such a practice and were appalled at the idea, believing firmly that local people or church teachings would not have allowed such a travesty. Their inability to believe emphasised the need to highlight the story of these marginalised women to the wider community through my art practice.

### **The Cillíní – Burial of Adults**

Referred to as *Children's Burial Grounds*, cillíní, which lie hidden within Ireland's rural landscape, were primarily used for still born, miscarried babies, sometimes illegitimate children and victims of infanticide (Dennehy 2016: 213), along with those who died without baptism. All ineligible for consecrated ground.

Study and popular interest of these sites has principally been within this context with limited attention focused on the other categories of individuals also buried here. Yet we know from oral history and evidence from the few sites that have been excavated that adults were also at times interred here. Little research has been done around these burials, yet we know that most were for contravening social or religious mores of the time, resulting in exclusion from burial in a kirkyard. This included those whose religion was unknown, strangers, suicides, shipwrecked sailors, murderers and their victims (Finlay 2000: 409); famine victims (Donnelly & Murphy 2008: 191), those with mental disabilities (Dennehy 2016: 213) and women who died in childbirth (Dennehy 2016: 213 ).

### **The Cillíní – Women who Died in Childbirth**

My thesis is concerned with this last category, which only some papers cite (Channing & Randolph-Quinney 2006: 124; Dennehy 2016: 213; Garattini 2007: 194; Nolan 2006: 90). Not all articles include this grouping and it is not clear why this discrepancy exists. This might partly be due to the limited class of ‘died in childbirth’ and the difficulty of securing excavated evidence to support this as opposed to a more inclusive description reflecting the reality for women, that of dying through complications in pregnancy or post-childbirth. Interestingly, the most cited of adult categories within academic papers is that of ‘stranger’ or ‘unknown religion’ (Channing & Randolph-Quinney 2006: 124; Cuppage & Bennett 1986: 347; Dennehy 2016: 213; Donnelly & Murphy 2008: 191; Finlay 2000: 49; Garattini 2007: 194; Hamlin & Foley 1983: 43; Nolan 2006: 90; Sheehan & O’Sullivan 1996: 323) even though this group is the most problematic to evidence from skeletal remains.

Oral history relays that women who died in childbirth could be buried in a cillín, likewise it speaks of suicides, shipwrecks etc. also buried here. My contribution to knowledge has been to use creative practice to verify that these mothers were indeed buried here. Through the wide dissemination of my research, my aim is to ensure that they be consistently included in the same way as that of ‘strangers’ or those of ‘unknown religion’ etc.

To filter these women from the discourse surrounding these sites is concerning and misrepresentative, as continued non-inclusion will result in the continuation of editing out from

the history books. Their story is an integral part of a much wider national current debate within Ireland and much further afield concerning the historic injustices suffered by women meted out by a society presided over by Church and State. The historic influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland has been well documented, and one cannot engage with the topic of women and the cillín without exposing the more controversial aspects of the Church within this context.

### **Research - The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillín**

Equally important as verifying the burial of these mothers in the cillíní was defining the most suitable medium in which to frame and widely broadcast my research findings. Through creative practice my research looked to establish the reasons why these women are almost absent from the official historical record and to question who they were and the circumstances that facilitated their burial in these sites.

To answer these questions, sound was my primary medium which I used to deep-map the nine case-study sites in south-west Ireland. I also used historical research combined with audio interviews with members from the local community to uncover spectral traces of these mothers. My definition of spectral traces is based on Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (2006) where the term hauntology (2006: 63) originates and the idea that elements from the past, spectral traces, continually return to haunt the present.

Memory stored collectively and culturally within the landscape of the cillíní and the community is where these traces can be found. Traces lurk within the folklore associated with the cillíní, women, pregnancy and birth; the Church's attitude towards un-married mothers, baptism, birth and death; all inscribed and held within the archival landscape of the cillíní.

Sound is the perfect medium to make audible these intangible and invisible traces to define the presence of these mothers. On spectral traces Karen Till writes:

‘If traces are present yet not always visible, define the “thing” through a web of relations between listener and teller yet are not animated until they come alive in particular settings, are always already known but not recognisable until they are brought out again

in yet new but familiar forms, then the concept of spectral traces may provide us with a language of belonging, even as such traces speak of past loss.’ (Till 2010: 1)

Sound can define the spectral traces of these mothers by sonically weaving together the multiple threads of story in a new, yet familiar form. As sound is not confined by space or time, can travel, transmit and broadcast it was therefore a perfect medium for *Requiescat* – a sound-work formatted as both a portable gallery exhibition and CD with contextualising booklet freely available on-loan from Kerry County Council libraries. To further accessibility as an educational and research resource my original interviews have become part of the sound archives with the National Folklore Collection of Ireland.

### **Thesis Overview**

Each chapter is divided by an auto-ethnographic description of a cillín. The purpose of these within the structure is to presence my fieldwork, captured through creative non-fiction to give an experience of site specificness for the reader. Yet these interruptions and change in voice also mirror the nature of the spectral ‘**which disturbs, displaces and conditions our understanding of space and time, absence and presence**’ (Hill 2013: 379).

To gain understanding of the complexities surrounding the cillíní and the mothers buried here, a contextual framework was required. **Chapter 1** explores the history and landscape of cillíní drawing parallels with other examples of women’s segregated burials within Ireland and Scotland. The reasons why mothers who died in childbirth were buried in a cillín is viewed against the backdrop of the all-pervading Catholic Church’s attitude towards women and procreation and the implications of such for postpartum women, childbirth, un-married mothers and those who died in childbirth. The final section of this chapter discusses the relationship between sound and the cillíní as sites of collective and cultural memory and the ways in which sound has been used to capture and listen to memory and place.

As already stated, the cillíní are historically and culturally complex as are the reasons surrounding the mothers buried here. **Chapter 2** addresses the methodological choices of using deep-mapping, spectral and memory studies to underpin and untangle the various threads of the story and why creative practice was used as an over-arching method of enquiry.

The cillíní are physical locations of absence yet the presence of the mothers and those interred alongside them can be sensed. **Chapter 3** describes the search for the story of these mothers within the spectral landscape of the cillín where time is disturbed and the past coincides with the present, marking the future. These sites are storehouses of collective memory laid down over centuries. The chapter discusses how sound, as an already haunted medium can give access to this memory inscribed onto and locked within the landscape and how I recorded the sonic memories of these spectral mothers. In the process these recordings give a sense of place enabling an embodied listening experience.

Local communities associated with the cillíní are also places where collective and cultural memory and traces of the mothers can be found within lived experience. **Chapter 4** considers the role of oral history as an alternative re-telling of past events and as a way to uncover these traces which are often absent from official histories. The chapter details the use of my own audio interviews to access collective memory from individuals within communities in South west Ireland which share the same cultural memory and heritage as the mothers.

**Chapter 5** contemplates my role as artist and the inherent responsibility for both listener and artist to speak out on behalf of the mothers in the cillíní who no longer have a voice. The chapter explores testimony, witnessing and secondary witnessing in relation to the recorded collective memories which were woven together to form *Requiescat* and the story of these women and the importance of disseminating their story.

Finally, **Chapter 6** reflects upon the implications of my findings for future research and collaborations.

### **Notes on Terminology**

There are numerous names for the un-baptised children's burial grounds, within this thesis they will be referred to as cillíní (plural) and cillín (singular). Women who died in childbirth, encompasses both women who died in pregnancy, childbirth and as a result of the birth. To encompass all statuses, I have in many places simply referred to them as the cillín mothers.



# Dromkeare Cillín





Figure 2: Dromkeare, Co. Kerry, Sheet 98.

'The river skirts the site from NE to E, where there is no trace of the bank. Internally the enclosure measures 29m N-S x 25m E-W. The interior of the site is littered with small boulders and upright grave-markers, which presumably relate to its period of use as a ceallúnach. Brash recorded that the site was 'devoted to the burial of unbaptized and baptized children to the ages of six or eight months. No grown-up children or adults are ever interred here' (1879, 215).' (Sheehan & O'Sullivan 1996: 276)



*Wow! In a cattle field near mink farm, circle of Holly trees, very old, loads of stones covered in moss, most round like river stones, couple flat, one in particular – sound – rushing river – sounded like a river in spate. Late afternoon, sun low in the sky, long shadows, orange light, snow on the ground.... beautiful place – loved the place – very, very special.*

Sketchbook December 2010

Skirting the edge of the field through grass, grown high over the summer, large spiders have spun their webs at the top of the stalks, white gossamer globes. Reaching the enclosed holly ring I look down and see a spider dislodged from its home now fastened to my jeans. It is early September, a different year, a different month. The light a warm golden glow, a solitary red damselfly flits past me.



Figure 3: Graham-George, S. (2013) Dromkeare I 360 Degrees. [Pinhole photograph]

Small shafts of weak light vainly attempt to illuminate the murk of this inner sanctum. Enclosed by a circle of ancient gnarled holly trees they create a leafy protective wall encircling those within. Thickets of bramble tumble around the perimeter further fortifying and discouraging any casual visitor who might stray in here by chance through the surrounding cattle field. An additional deterrence, if one were needed, comes in the guise of a Polish gatekeeper and guard. With limited English and a stern countenance, his job is to deter would-be visitors from prying into the business of the incongruous mink farm that lies out of sight just beyond the gates, its low corrugated roofs and chimneys only just discernible above the brow of the field.

I hunker down amongst the stones to avoid detection. The loud rushing noise of the nearby Cumberagh river as it tumbles over boulders and through the ravines, from whence its name derives, is on its fast-flowing journey to nearby Lough Currane. The occasional call of a bird in-flight as it passes fleetingly overhead and the creaking of aged branches moved by the wind are the only sounds that keep me company in this place. Silence there is not. Colour is muted. The earthy hues of stone, bark, hoof-churned mud and decaying leaves form an almost monochrome palette. Colour is barely discernible in the gathering gloom inside the cillín.

Tom had brought me here three years previously on the first day of the last month of the year. He had saved Dromkeare for last as he knew I would be astounded by the place, and he was correct. On that cold December afternoon, we had stepped into the roughly circular site to be greeted by approximately 100 small upright moss-covered grave markers, the light filtering through, illuminating the moss making it look like the stones were upholstered with rich dark velvet.

The sound of the river as it curved around the NE and E of the site held those interred within its watery embrace. Here only babies aged six to eight months were buried, both baptised and unbaptised, no adults or older children alongside to keep them company. Over towards the NE bank of the enclosure just before it sloped away to the river, standing watch over all these babies Tom showed me a tall solitary stone just shy of two metres in height. It was inscribed with Ogham letters and a large cross potent carved into the rough stone as it faced towards the little graves, protecting.



Figure 4: Graham-George, S. (2015) Dromkeare Standing Stone. [Photograph]

Amongst the numerous small stones that lie scattered in the interior of this holly ringed space I crouch, fingers gently sifting through the loose layers of accumulated stratum of leaves that blanket the ground. The pungent aroma of organic decay, always reminiscent to me of unlit, closeted, musty interiors of old churches, rises as I carefully lift each leaf, the stored memories of previous autumns marking time. A hint of green catches my eye against the sombre backdrop. In the dark and warmth of the decaying leaf litter a minute seed germinates, the frail yellow green leaves protrude from a spindly white stalk that looks too weak to support them; the bright colour of life amidst all this decay.



Figure 5: Graham-George, S. (2013) Dromkeare Leaves. [Photogram]

Under mother nature's protective blanket lie the skeletal remains of leaves as intricate as lace. Laying each one out carefully in a row I marvel at the beauty of their white tracery sharp against the black earth. Time and decay have slowly removed the green flesh from the leaf so all that remains is the delicate structure upon which it once hung. Studying my line of ever-growing leaf remains I observe that even though they share the same genus each holly leaf is uniquely different from its neighbour. From the curl of the spiked edges, the length of spine, the smoothness of outline, the elaborate patterns and arrangements of the underlying framework of each is distinctly individualistic.



Figure 6: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2015) *Voices from the Cillín*. [Film still]

A different year, a different season. I stand watching the winter full moon rising, white globe in an inky darkness, glimpsed briefly through the bare branches of the trees that line the banks of the river. Keeping the cillín company this night-time is comforting, the sounds of the river tumbling over the rocks a lullaby. We stand side by side filming the timeless moon on its trajectory across the heavens on this mild dry night.

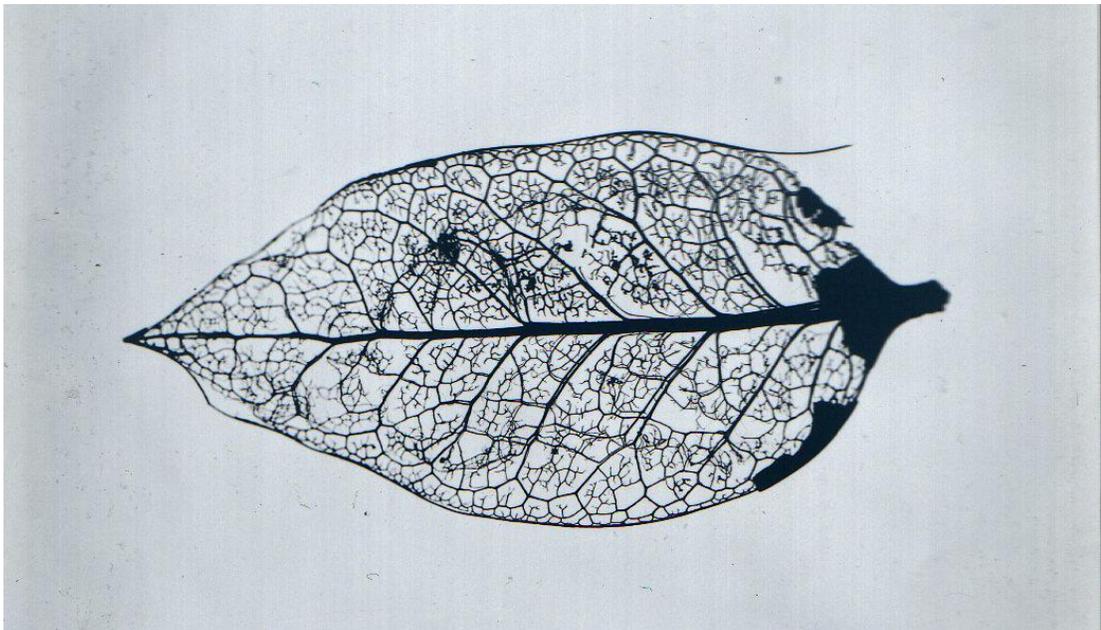


Figure 7: Graham-George, S. (2013) *Dromkeare Leaf*. [Photogram]

Later today I will take these fragile structures to the darkroom; the dark room with the little metal crucifix at the door. I had used this space for several days, coming and going through the heavy grey blue wooden door before I had noticed the crucifix discreetly nailed to the left of the doorframe just below my eye height. Measuring about 12 centimetres in length the gold metallic paint of the cross had started to peel away in places to reveal an underlying leafy green, the silver figure of Christ undergoing the same transformation. The small white screw-topped bottle of holy water



Figure 8: Graham-George, S. (2013) Darkroom. [Photograph]

embellished with a fading transfer of the Virgin Mary had equally surprised me by its quiet presence on a shelf just above the bank of enlargers. Travelling over 3,000 kilometres from the pilgrimage site of Medjugorje where the apparition of the Virgin has appeared before the faithful numerous times she now gazed down as I captured the delicate shadows of my leaf skeletons through the alchemy of photography. Before I left the dark room for the final time, I carefully

suspended the deep red rosary I had made, strung with scarlet holly berries collected from the cillín, over the little crucifix to keep it company



Figure 9: Graham-George, S. (2013) Berry Rosary and Crucifix. [Photograph]



# Chapter 1

## Situating the Mothers



## Introduction

In this chapter I explore the reasons why mothers who died in childbirth were buried within a cillín and discuss how sound art can make audible, traces of memory which remains stored within the spectral landscape of the cillíní and the community.

To give a clear understanding of how the cillíní, women and sound art interconnect, I have chosen to divide the chapter into three sections each addressing these aspects individually. In the first of these sections I give a historical overview of the cillíní and the importance of its positioning within the landscape as the final resting place of the spiritually and morally marginalised within society. Within this context I also examine examples of the separate burial of women. Against the historical backdrop of the first section I then move onto presenting the spiritual and social reasons which might have precipitated the burial in a cillín of women who died in childbirth and unmarried mothers. In the process I look at the attitude within the Catholic Church and consequentially Irish society towards childbirth, pregnancy and unmarried mothers. The final part of the chapter considers the different ways in which sound as a creative medium has been used by artists to record and listen to the sound of memory. I continue by defining the landscape of the cillíní as spectral sites of absence/presence where collective and cultural memory is stored and that displaced field recordings and auto-ethnographic narrative can be used to create a sonic link with the past to be heard in the present.

## The Cillíní

The word cillíní describes sites which have distinctly different histories in relation to their landscape contexts, narrative within the communities which they served, and the multiple temporalities which underlay each site. Exact dating is difficult due to the relative few that have been excavated and the sensitivity within local communities, as often sites have been in use within living memory (Nolan 2006: 89). Evidence suggests that cillíní were in use from the medieval period (Dennehy 2016: 13; Finlay 200: 408) until the late twentieth century when the custom waned after the Second Vatican Council in 1962–1965. However, burial within a cillín has been recorded after this time as late as 1981 (Graham-George 2016).

Dennehy states that there are 1,400 officially recorded cillíní throughout Ireland (2016: 213), yet this number is likely to be a conservative estimate as many have disappeared from living memory or have been lost under new developments (Aldridge 1969: 83) even though they are protected under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Throughout Ireland cillíní are known by different regional names, calluraghs, caldragh or ceallunacha (Cuppige & Bennett 1986: 347), reilig, reilicín, cloranan, cahir, cahiree, teampaillin (Crombie 1987: 150).

## Location

The author and antiquarian, W. G. Wood Martin refers to keels as ancient pagan burial grounds, disused once Ireland became Christianised and then subsequently used for the burial of unbaptised babies, suicides and strangers (Wood Martin 1902: 322). Irish folklorist and former archivist with the Irish Folklore Commission, Seán Ó Súilleabháin compiled a list from sources in the folklore's collection of twelve further locations of where burials of this type were found:

1. In the haggard near the house.
2. In lisses. [forts]
3. In a garden near a house.
4. In fields.
5. In fences (always in boundary fences it seems).
6. At crossroads.
7. In the shelter of a bush.
8. In cliff ledges.
9. Outside the fence of the graveyard.
10. At the edge of the tide.
11. On a river or sea cliff.
12. Near a well.

(1939: 148)



Figure 10: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2018) Caheravart Cillín. [Photograph]

Dennehy complemented this with five further locations including, townland boundaries, the corner of fields, beside wooded or marsh ground, the top of a hill and within ‘all types of pre-existing archaeological monuments’ (2003: 12) (Fig 10). Several locations where cillíní are found are also closely associated with folklore beliefs and faery-lore, a subject I discuss further in Chapter 4.

There is the belief by some that there is an association between the apparent liminal positioning of these sites within the landscape and the spiritual state of limbo of the unbaptised baby (Crombie 1987: 151; Dennehy 2016: 219; Finlay 2000: 408). Murphy has suggested that this spiritual mirroring within the landscape is too simplistic and that it was only the Catholic Church who saw these individuals as spiritually marginalised and offers the hypothesis that the location of these sites is an indication and expression of parental grief (Murphy 2011: 417). However, this theory is problematic as it does not take into account the fact that cillíní were also used for the

burial of adults who were considered beyond the spiritual or societal pale for contravening social or religious rules.



Figure 11: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2018) Emlagh Bog Cillín 360 Panorama. [Photograph]

The relationship between the living and the dead of the cillíní was one of fear intermingled with superstition (Ó Suilleabháin 1939: 148). Tales of bad fortune or supernatural happenings befalling anyone who might interfere with a cillín and passed on through cultural memory (See Appendix 2: 330) helped to protect these burial grounds from interference. Sadly, not always the case in later years, as cillíní have been built on or interfered with (Appendix 2: 236).

### The Homeless Dead

The fear of these outcast dead relates to the manner of their death, often violent, unexplained or seen as un-natural. Parker Pearson notes that the location of burial is representative of the social and moral order of a culture that ‘deviants such as witches, executed criminals, suicides, and women dying in childbirth were among the social groups whose treatment in death set them apart from the worthy dead’ (1993: 207). These were individuals who in life or death had in some way threatened the social order and values of society.

Adults such as the above, and for many of those buried within the cillín, were further punished by the lack of funeral rituals which were considered an essential rite of passage to join the world of the dead (funeral rites have been recorded in some regions for babies (Flower 1983: 85-86; Ó Suilleabháin 1939: 148). Van Gennep describes the fate of such individuals as ‘condemned to a pitiable existence, since they are never able to enter the world of the dead or to become incorporated in the society established there’ (1960: 160).



Figure 12: Graham-George, S. (2019) Spirit House - Cill Rialaig. [Site-Specific]

This was the fate of those condemned to the cillíní, ‘these dead without hearth or home’ (1960: 161), denied traditional funeral rites, cast out in death as they were in life; confined to the margins of life and subsequently that of eternity. A theme I explored as part of a method of research in *Spirit House* (Fig 12) where lighted hand-stitched houses were placed within the landscape close to cillíní. A continuation of this research was in my socially engaged project, *The Homeless Dead* (Fig 13) where I invited women within my local community to knit, felt and then hand-stitch small houses in memory of the mothers in the cillín (See Appendix 3).



Figure 13: Graham-George, S. (2019) The Homeless Dead. [Socially Engaged Project]

For babies and infants who had not been baptised, limbo was believed to be where their souls resided. Even though they were born without committing sin, they had by dint of being human inherited the stain of Original Sin, which ‘comes down to us through our origin, or descent from Adam, the head of the human race’ (Carolus 1951: 22). In the eyes of St Augustine of Hippo, all innocent new-borns were tainted with Original Sin which only the ritual of baptism could redeem and save from damnation



Figure 14: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2015) *Peccatum Originali*. [Photograph]

A redemption of sorts was formulated by subsequent councils so instead of the eternal fires of hell these babies were imagined residing in limbus Infantum or limbo, a place between hell and heaven, for innocent un-baptised children without actual sin. This was an Otherworld where eventually on the Day of Judgement they would be re-united with God.

Even though limbo was never formally defined as official Catholic doctrine, this theory nonetheless was responsible for many thousands of bereaved families fearing they would never

be re-united with their babies in the afterlife. However, in 2007 the International Theological Commission under the direction of Pope Benedict did an about turn, declaring that limbo was perhaps after all a rather limited view of salvation ‘and that there was hope that infants who died without being baptised would be saved’ (Encyclopaedia Academic 2020).



Figure 15: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2015) *The Trinity: Baptism Robes*. [Photograph]

Spiritually the adults of the cillíní were punished much harsher, condemned to an afterlife most probably in the fires of hell for contravening the social or religious laws governing the culture.

### Women only Burials

The cillíní are an example of segregation in death of those who are spiritually or morally on the edges of society. It is worth examining other examples where women have been segregated in death and in which the reasons for such are not categorical. Within Ireland and the British Isles instances of women only burial sites can be found on Inishmurray in County Sligo (Hamlin & Foley 1983: 44) and Taransay in the Hebrides; both with burial grounds for men and women (O’Sullivan

et al. 1994: 360). Both these islands were home to religious communities, leading to the supposition that these sites were related in some way.

Yet the evidence is not conclusive. On Iona in the Inner Hebrides there is another women only cemetery at St Ronan's, a medieval church also used as a burial ground (O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 348). From later burials excavated from the site it appears that it was exclusively used for women and some young children. Rather than being for just a religious community it appears from the burials exhumed that the whole 'female population of the island between c AD 1600 and 1800' (O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 358) was buried here. However, once again there is speculation but no definitive answer as to why segregation occurred.

At Carrickmore in County Tyrone there is a women's only burial site known as Rellig-na-man (Hamlin & Foley 1983: 42). What makes this site interesting is that close by there are three other segregated burial grounds, a site for children, an area for suicides (Hamlin & Foley 1983: 43) and a separate site for slain men. As Rellig-na-man has not been excavated there is no true understanding of the type of individual buried here. The site is thought to relate to a religious order, yet the presence of the other three burial sites lends credence to the hypothesis that it was 'an unconsecrated graveyard built in a rugged, remote spot for special burials' (Hamlin & Foley 1983: 45) and would fit with the other three categories of burial sites, children, suicides and slain men, all potential outcasts for social or religious reasons.

As Elizabeth Craig-Atkins states in her article about eaves-drip burials and the differential treatment of babies, young children and neonates in early Christian cemeteries in England '[i]t is apparent that the early Christian period saw an increasing emphasis on the active exclusion of certain individuals from consecrated ground' (2014: 11). In her paper she discusses the burial of women who died in pregnancy, childbirth or the early stages of motherhood also being buried alongside babies and neonates within eaves-drip areas (Aries 1991: 52) and queries whether 'the use of a special cemetery zone for infants is a prerequisite for the differential treatment of women who may have died in childbirth?' (2014: 13).

Van Gennep in his *Rites of Passage* recognises that within certain cultures pregnancy and childbirth made a woman 'impure and dangerous' (1960: 41). This attitude is a factor worth

remembering as a possible contributing factor in the differential burial practices for maternal death in childbirth, pregnancy or post childbirth and the cillíní.

## Eve's Punishment



Figure 16: Graham-George, S. (2019) Ballinskelligs Church. [Photograph]

The fact that burial could differ for women who died as a result of child-bearing points to the uneasy relationship that the Christian church had with women's bodies and procreation. A relationship that was about control and power. The Christian Church's perception of women's fertility stands in stark contrast to that of other cultures and beliefs. Pre-Christian cultures often viewed childbirth as sacred. The Aztecs saw childbirth as a heroic act equivalent of going into battle. If a woman died in childbirth, then she was believed to have become deified. And if after a difficult birth she died, she was given the equivalent of a warrior's funeral (Shelton 1989: 262) as death in childbirth was seen as a heroic act. Historian Christine Dodds Pennock highlights the difference in attitudes between these two cultures, '[w]hile Christian Europe punished women's sinful nature through the pain of childbirth, indigenous Mexicans valued female fertility, as a direct link to nature and the earth' (2018: 277).

in Christianity the pains of childbirth were perceived as Eve's punishment (Genesis 3: 16) for luring Adam in the Garden of Eden and their ensuing fall from grace. Menstruation (Leviticus 15: 19) and childbirth were equated with impurity, pollution and defilement (Leviticus 12: 1-8); the ceremony of churching after childbirth a cleansing and purifying ritual even though it was supposed to be thanksgiving for the birth of the child. This is further substantiated in that women were not allowed into church until they had undergone the ritual.

There has been speculation as to whether a woman who died in childbirth was allowed burial in consecrated ground as she had not undergone the ritual cleansing of churching and was still in her defiled state. The Council of Treves in 1310 advised that:

“Should a woman die during childbirth her body should be opened immediately and the child be baptized if it is still alive. If it is already dead, it has to be buried outside of the cemetery. However, if one can assume that the child is already dead in its mother's body both of them should be buried in consecrated ground.” (Blumenfelt-Kosinski 1990: 26)

However, this is likely to have been open to interpretation and local custom, as Natalie Knodel writes 'in a number of cases they were buried in a special part of the graveyard' (Knodel 1997: 118). This sometimes meant the north side of the church reserved for those 'whose spiritual credentials were in doubt' (Hamlin & Foley 1983: 43), outside consecrated ground around the perimeter of the churchyard or within a cillín, as there is evidence of women, pregnant or with neonates buried here and the following section highlights examples of such burials.

### Burial in a Cillín

To give birth was not without risk and many mothers died either in pregnancy, during childbirth or after giving birth. In considering maternal death in the Middle Ages, maternal death could be due to any number of factors including 'infection, haemorrhage, sepsis and eclampsia' and could occur 'up to forty-two days post-partum' (Sayer & Dickinson 2013: 286).

In the context of the cillíní, the category of adult defined as 'women who died in childbirth' overlooks the much broader picture concerning maternal death and also the social factors affecting the burial of mothers in these sites. These circumstances included women who were

pregnant, died in childbirth, in early motherhood or as oral history reveals, mothers of illegitimate children (Delay 2012: 72) and children born out of wedlock (See Appendix 2: 284). Many were buried in these un-consecrated sites alongside other outcasts from society. Glenn Gibney in his Masters dissertation addressed this rather narrow classification and suggests that the title for these type of burials should rather be 'women accused of social, religious or sexual transgressions' (Gibney 2018: 4) as a more inclusive categorising.

As stated earlier regional differences, and traditions must be taken into consideration with cillíní. Not all women who suffered maternal death would be interred within a cillín. As noted earlier, few cillíní have been fully excavated and without further investigation of these burial sites it is difficult to gain an accurate picture of how extensive the practice was. However, below are two examples of excavated cillíní where mothers have been discovered.

The excavation of a site at Ballykilmore in County Westmeath unearthed the body of a woman in the enclosure ditch outside the consecrated area of the cemetery. The way in which her body was lying was 'consistent with the dumping of the corpse' (Channing & Randolph-Quinney 2006: 125). The young woman had been heavily pregnant at her time of death, and the remains of her almost full-term baby were found partially inside and out of the mother's body. Channing and Randolph-Quinney questioned why her body had been treated in such a disrespectful manner and speculated on whether social factors such as paternity might have played a part and conjectured that death in childbirth might be the reason she was buried there.

A cillín in the townland of Tonybaun close to Ballina in County Mayo was excavated as part of the N26 Ballina to Bohola Road Scheme. In her report, Joanne Nolan made the link between the high incidence of female remains found in the cillín and death in pregnancy observing that '[w]omen were more susceptible to earlier death possibly owing to the danger of death during pregnancy' (2006: 97). One of these women was found with foetal remains inside, suggesting she had been pregnant at the time of death. She also had suffered three cut marks to the skull signifying, a violent death by murder. Nolan concluded that the woman had probably been placed in the cillín due to both her status as murder victim and the fact she was unchurched as both states 'would

have made her doubly ineligible for burial in consecrated ground—both as a murder victim and because she could not have been ‘churched’ prior to her death’ (2006: 97).

The fact that a woman who died in pregnancy, childbirth or early motherhood was buried in the cillín leads one to question the assumption that it was because she was unchurched. The reasons for her burial here could be because of local custom, superstition or the fact that recommendations from The Council of Treves applied only to married women. Sadly, this is unclear, along with knowing whether these women were married or not.

### Secrecy and Shame - Pregnancy Outside Marriage

When we look at historical attitudes to pregnancy outside marriage within Irish society it is possible that there is a link between the presence of these women within the cillín. For women, sexual relations were confined to marriage only. To become pregnant outside marriage meant social exclusion and potential destitution; shunned as they often were by their own family and certainly the Church. According to Dymphna McLoughlin Irish women during the nineteenth century were confined by a specific code of conduct which included the importance of life-long marriage in which the women would be dependent, subordinate and reproduce within this domestic sphere and that ‘women’s sexuality was totally contained in marriage’ (1994: 266). She also makes the point that unmarried mothers, along with prostitution, infanticide and child abandonment were issues long before the nineteenth century and not, as society would like to believe, a recent phenomenon; that Ireland turned a blind eye and filtered out the reality of the situation (1994: 274). Part of this filtering out was achieved by institutions such as the Magdalene Asylums designed to assist women who were pregnant out of wedlock.

The Magdalen Asylums were religious institutions run for women considered sexually deviant, un-married mothers and prostitutes. The first of many of these institutions opened in 1765 in Dublin with the last finally closing as late as 1996. These women were seen by society as ‘grossly immoral’ (Luddy 2011: 110) due to their real or imagined sexual conduct. These were places whereby women could turn to to keep their pregnancy secret. Meanwhile the shame they had wrought upon their families could be hidden safely away from the prying eyes of the rest of the community as ‘[w]ithin these homes women, and often more importantly their families, could

hide their shame' (Luddy 2011: 117). They were places of moral discipline and containment designed to govern and control female sexuality in an attempt to make it appear invisible.

Many women housed in these institutions died and were buried within their confines often in unmarked graves or they became untraceable. An article in the Irish Times (Humphreys 2013) relates details of the exhumation of women's bodies from a site which had formerly housed a laundry in Drumcondra as the land was being sold for development by the order of nuns who owned it. As undertakers were exhuming the 133 bodies which were already known to be there, they discovered a further twenty-two, unaccounted for women's remains, even though Irish law stipulates all deaths to be registered and the location of the burial stated. As these women had no registration relating to their deaths, the General Register Office referred to them as, 'no-trace' women. The situation at Drumcondra is one that was replicated at the Mother and Baby Home run by the Sisters of Bon Secours in Tuam where an unmarked mass grave was found to contain the bodies of mothers who had died at the home. Similar to Drumcondra, out of nine bodies, records only existed for four of the women (O' Reilly 2015).

These unmarried mothers were treated by society and by the religious institutions in which they were incarcerated, as second-class citizens both in life and in death. Their burial in unmarked mass graves and their un-recorded deaths, demonstrates the shocking lack of status these women held within society, to the degree that many have become 'no-trace' women; invisible.

The treatment of these women's bodies in death is not dissimilar to the ways in which women were buried within the cillíní. Both places associated with shame, secrecy, social stigma and marginalisation as a result of transgressing social and or religious rules.

## Hearing Memory

'How we can best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves.' (Hirsch 2008: 104)

The quote by Marianne Hirsch reminds me of the careful balance required of me as an artist to find the most appropriate way of making heard the story of these women, virtually absent from official documentation and the historical record. Sound can make audible the cultural memories inherent within communities as well those stored within the spectral landscape of the cillín.

For the listener of these stories, it necessitates 'deep listening' (Bull & Back 2003: 3), requiring the listener to re-think their relationship to power, others, themselves, their environment, community and their social experiences (Bull & Back 2003: 4). Yet it is through this type of 'agile listening' (Bull & Back 2003: 3) that the story of the mothers in the cillíní will touch and impact upon the listener and society.

### Absence/ Presence

The cillín is a spectral topography where a 'nagging presence of an absence' (Adey & Madder 2008: 292) is felt and witnessed through the traces visible in the landscape; the stone markers (Finlay 2000: 409), quartz stones and pebbles (Sheehan and O Sullivan 1996: 323). Absence itself reminds us of the dead, their presence felt everywhere in a 'landscape whose presence brings absence to mind' (Baptist 2013: 36). Paradoxically even though the dead are absent, they are internalised within the living being 'both present and not present at the same time' (Perry 2009: 43).

Brandon LaBelle in his article *Acoustic Spatiality*, discusses the characteristics of sound, the impact on the listener and what he describes as the acoustic paradigm of sound and 'how it articulates temporal and spatial geographies' (2012: 1). The ability of sound to communicate the relationship between 'place and emplacement' (2012: 1) as well as act 'as a *hinge* by bringing into contact contradictory or divergent forces, spaces, bodies or materials' (2012: 2 emphasis in the original) which makes sound an ideal medium to express the complexities of the cillín mothers and the paradox posed by their absence and presence (2012: 13).

These qualities have been utilised across disciplines to investigate a range of concerns. Within cultural geography soundwalks have been used to re-animate the ghostly presences within a landscape (Butler 2006; Foreman 2014; Gallagher 2015; Holloway 2017). In cultural archaeology and anthropology sound is used to explore the past using the sonic environment (Cox 2010; Devereux 2001; Goh 2017; Mills & Burton 2014). In a similar way, artists use sound to explore cultural, political and social concerns which are presented as soundwalks and narratives as in the work of Andrew Brown (2017), Graeme Miller (2020) and Janet Cardiff (Gorman 2003). Hildegard Westerkamp (2015) presents using installations and radio whilst examples of public soundscape

projects can be seen in the work of John Levack Drever (2009). All these artists use field recordings within their work but for their different purposes.

In *Field Recording and the Sounding of Spaces* Michael Gallagher defines field recordings 'as the production, circulation, and playback of audio recordings of the myriad soundings of the world' (2015: 560) and discusses how these recordings affect time and space and 'reconfigure present space, with acoustic traces from the recorded space' (2015: 561). He concludes that field recordings are 'not politically neutral' (2015: 574) imbued as they are with implied meaning. Gallagher makes a distinction between 'transpositional works' (Gallagher 2015: 316) where a recording is replayed in an alternate setting as opposed to in-situ listening. A method employed within acoustic ecology was founded by R. M Schafer in the nineteen-seventies (Schafer 1994) and used by artists like Chris Watson (Chapman 2017: 48), Barry Truax (Truax 1992), Jana Winderen and Miki Yui (Pezanosk-Browne 2015) to give an embodied experience of a landscape. Sound used transpositionally juxtaposes one environment, time frame and space against another to create a sense of unease (Montgomery 2009: 149). In *Requiescat* field recordings are replayed and listened to inside a domestic setting continuing this feeling of disquiet felt by the listener, reflecting the sense of dislocation from society, hearth and home experienced by these mothers in death.

## Hearing Voices

The use of the spoken word combined with field recordings within a sound work can project multiple layers of meaning onto a landscape. In the soundwalk, '*The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*' Janet Cardiff uses recorded overlaid sound combined with auto-ethnographic narrative to physically guide the listener (Gorman 2003) by using the personal perspective of the artist from which to view the environment. A device also used by Hildegard Westerkamp in her work, *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (Kolber 2002) which uses field recordings and narration in which she describes her work and situates the listener. Unlike Cardiff's site-specific piece which is dependent upon listening in-situ, Westerkamp's work is accessible for private listening, where the outdoors is aurally accessible indoors. Westerkamp's soundwalking was originally designed in the 1970s for the radio, to bring outdoor soundscapes into people's homes (Westerkamp. 2015: 4). Listening in

this way opened out familiar landscapes through the uncanny displacement of sound. Most importantly though, the sound experience becomes widely accessible and easily disseminated for all listeners, abilities and geographic locations which I also achieve with *Requiescat* being available as a CD from local libraries in County Kerry and more recently aired on the radio with Radiophrenia (Radiophrenia 2020).

Both Cardiff and Westerkamp use auto-ethnography within their works as narrative devices. Cardiff as a form of storytelling to guide the walker whereas Westerkamp uses it to re-present the experience of being in the field through her own encounters. Through the combination of field recordings, which encapsulate a sense of place by threading the 'social, acoustic, cultural, historical and natural elements '(Meireles 2018: 101) together with personal accounts, these auto-ethnographic soundscape compositions become 'layered spatial narratives '(Finlay-Walsh 2017: 121). This type of storying which I have used in *Requiescat* can accommodate a multiplicity of voices, spoken and environmental, as well as encompass a diversity of perspectives guided, blended and negotiated by the auto-ethnographic narration. Thus, becoming a collated testimony about the absent mothers whose presence is discerned through the stories and experiences told.

## Sound and Memory

Leslie Morris explores sound and collective memory in the context of Jewish memory in Germany, posing the question of what it might sound like and if it can be encapsulated, played back as an act of remembrance to memorialise the dead. In her paper, *The Sound of Memory* she speculatively inquires whether something as ephemeral, fragile and elusive as human memory can be captured through sound to become a memorial site (2001: 376); whether there are iconic sounds, an 'acoustic echo of prior sounds '(Morris 2001: 369) which can trigger and depict a culture's collective memory. Ideas explored by artist Bill Fontanna whose work *Pigeon Sounding* (Kolumba n.d) and *Distant Trains* (Stokowy 2017) investigates cultural memory and the sonic dislocation of memory and place between past and present. In *Distant Trains* Fontanna abstracted live sound from Cologne's busy main rail station and relayed this through speakers to the ruined shell of the iconic Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin; a ghostly and unsettling experience for

many as the shattered remains of this structure once echoed with the sounds of people and trains. Interestingly, Fontanna mixed *Distant Trains* as a separate piece that was aired on radio (Stokowy 2017: 118), dislocated once again from the source but giving greater accessibility albeit a different listening experience. A similar approach is taken by Mark Peter Wright who in an interview described his interest in '[t]hings that speak of the place itself, its past and possible future' (Cowley 2012). In *Where Once We Walked* (Allen 2012) Wright evoked the lost collective sonic memory of a group of young Polish boys, survivors of the Nazi concentration camps, who were relocated to Windermere in 1945. To conjure a sense of place he used field-recordings from the landscape and villages of the boy's homes in Poland to be composed and played back in Windermere. In this way the dislocated spectral sounds mirrored the children's own displacement.

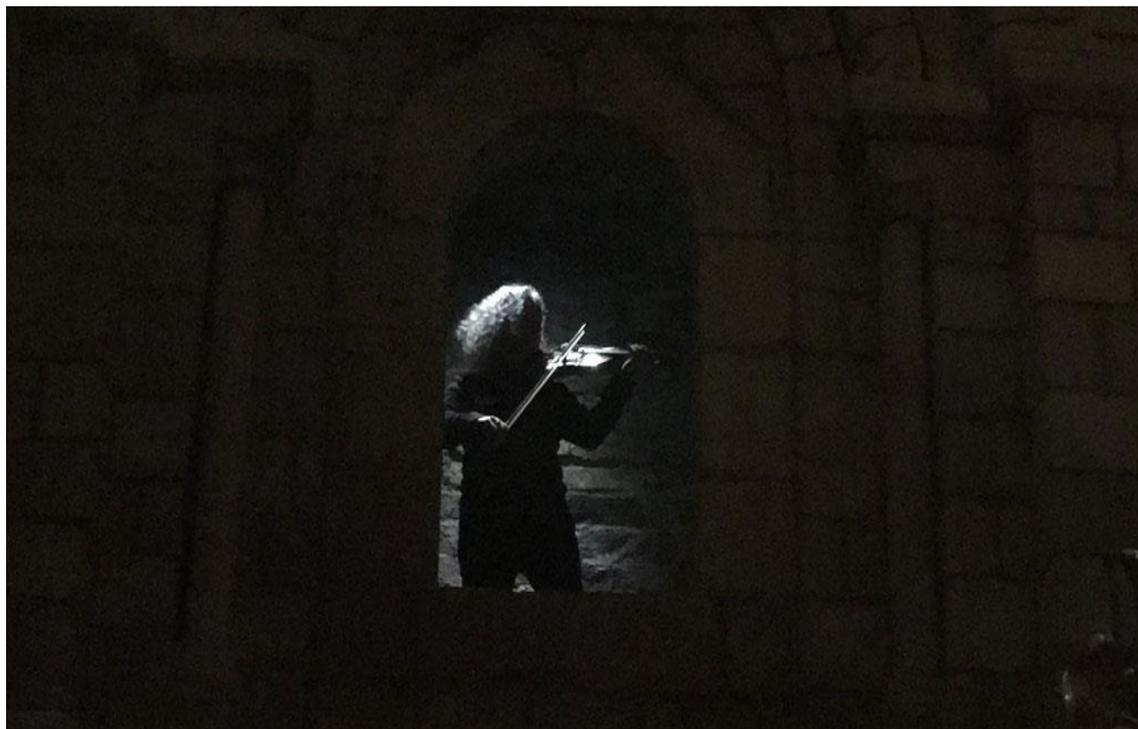


Figure 17: Graham-George, S. (2017) *Echoes from the Past*. [Site-Specific Installation]. St Magnus Cathedral

Within my own work I have also used sound to capture the sonic collective memory within a community, a building and landscape to access the past and inform the future.



Figure 18: Graham-George, S. (2017) *Echoes from the Past*. [Site-Specific Installation]. St Magnus Cathedral

In my site-specific *Echoes from the Past* (Graham-George 2018) live sound (fig 17; Fig 18) was combined with field recordings and oral testimonies from women in the community as a means of connecting with those accused and held captive in St Magnus cathedral centuries before, charged with witchcraft. All of these works use sound to provide a link with the past, to conjure the spectral using the cultural and collective memories of a specific community.

## Conclusion

Alongside unbaptised infants and babies the cillín was the final resting place for some adults. Inconsistency in the inclusion of women who died in childbirth in academic discourse stands counter to oral history and the archaeological evidence which shows that women who died in pregnancy, childbirth or early motherhood were buried within the cillín.

Academic research into these adult burials has not been extensive, nor has it furthered understanding of the cultural or social reasons which facilitated adult burials here. Lack of in-depth academic research into this area means that communities are only partially aware that certain categories of adults, such as women who died in childbirth, lie interred within the cillíní.

The history of segregated burial of women should not always be presumed to be explained by an association with a religious order. As many of these sites have not been excavated it is only possible to speculate. However, segregation could potentially be as a consequence of a woman's sexual status within society as there is evidence that women's remains were at times treated differently if they died whilst pregnant.

The presence of women who died in pregnancy, childbirth or early motherhood within the cillín is not fully understood, partially due to the lack of research and excavations of sites. However, if one looks at the way in which women's sexuality and childbirth were controlled and viewed by the Catholic Church and sanctioned by the community it is possible to find reasons supporting why women would be buried in a cillín. The Magdalene Asylums and Mother and Baby Homes of the mid eighteenth century into the mid twentieth century are a concrete reminder of this attitude especially when one also considers the women buried in un-marked graves.

Traces of these women's lives is held within the sonic collective and cultural memory of communities within Ireland as well as within the spectral landscape of the cillíní. Sound in the form of field recordings combined with auto-ethnographic narratives and oral history dialogues can be transposed from the source creating a sense of dislocation, juxtaposing the outside/inside, the past/present the silent with the audible. Sound that is not listened to in-situ as part of a site-specific installation or artwork is accessible to a wide listening audience.

As Ireland continues the journey of reconciliation with the past and its treatment in death of the disenfranchised women within society, sound art is a viable means to recognise and remember the forgotten whilst creating a space for dialogue.

# Glin North Cillín





Figure 19: Glin North, Co. Kerry, Sheet 43

'This circular enclosure, in use until the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a calluragh burial ground ... is situated on the S side of the valley that lies between the W spurs of Brandon Peak and Ballysitteragh mountain.' (Cuppige & Bennett 1986: 290)



*Walk up road – yellow line – grass in the middle – smell of burning – something – gateway in – 2 old palettes – climb over – long wet rushes – toadstools – small clumps – gorse – yellow still in flower – watch your ankle – sprawling site.*

Sketchbook December 2015



Figure 20: Graham-George, S. (2016) Road up to Glin North Cillín. [Photograph]

As we drive along the R549 out of Dingle, the surrounding landscape is awash with shades of grey, the cloud too low for comfort. The weather these last few days has been very hard for me. The low cloud feels like wearing a hat that has been pulled firmly down almost covering my eyes, creating an endless, oppressive, half-light which makes me feel trapped and pinned to the earth.

It is the first day in December, the start of the liturgical year in the church calendar. An important month as Christians worldwide prepare for the coming of Christ into the world and into their own lives. In seven days' time it will be the Feast of the Immaculate Conception when Mary the

mother of Christ was believed to have conceived her son without sin, thus he was believed to have been born free from the stain of Original Sin.

We are on our way to a cillín just north west of Dingle. On this first week of Advent it seems an appropriate destination to visit those who, because of a doctrinal belief in Original Sin, were consigned to burial in un-consecrated ground.

Just before the tight corner and narrow bridge we turn off right following the single-track road past a few bungalows and continue uphill before parking beside a small wood of conifers.

The vegetation of autumn has slowly made way for winter, brown shriveled brambles and one solitary pink flower still cling to thorny branches. Brown bracken hangs bent and dripping with the wet. The smell of burning hangs in the damp, unmoving air. The dull red of a rowan leaf against stone. Sheep graze in a far-off field.



Figure 21: Graham-George, S. (2016) In Glin North Cillín. [Photograph]

Late spring had been the last time I had visited this site in the company of a poet/ archaeologist and his young son. I had been finding it difficult to locate any cillíní on the peninsula and he had kindly agreed to show me a few as he had an interest himself in these sites. The first thing that

had struck me about the site was its size. It appeared to sprawl from the road and up the side of the valley. Unlike the sites in Iveragh which lay hidden deeply from view behind thickets of trees or on isolated windswept hillsides, this site appeared completely open, close to the road and nearby houses.



Figure 22: Graham-George, S. (2016) Panorama Glin North Cillín. [Photograph]

According to my companion this had once been the site of a large important ecclesiastical settlement connected by an old footpath to holy Brandon Mountain. Remains of its Christian past could just be discerned in the low, collapsed stone wall and the two cross slabs on the site. However, the majority of the enclosure's interior was filled with low mounds, graves in fact as this site had been used as a cillín up until the nineteenth century. In the archaeological survey notes, Cuppage and Bennett record the size of each mound being roughly about '1.25 to 1.5m long and .5m high, often defined at their E and W ends by low upright stones' (1986: 290).

The size of the mounds made me wonder how many adults might be buried within this area alongside the many babies. One of the mounds had partially collapsed exposing the drystone construction of the tomb. The structure and shape reminded me of the many family vaults found in country kirkyards here in Kerry and which I haven't seen anywhere else.



Figure 23: Graham-George, S. (2016) Drystone Tomb – Glin North Cillín. [Photograph]

A flash of yellow from the gorse bush in flower brightens up this otherwise grey wet December day. Rooks call to one another from a stand of skeletal winter trees bordering the cillín. We thread our way through the dripping grasses to a grave marker located in the middle of the site. Searching hard amongst the rubble of stones I spy it, low, horizontal, crudely carved into the shape of a coffin cemented into place. Into its surface a cross has been inscribed, no words, name or date just the mark of the cross.



Figure 24: Graham-George, S. (2016) Headstone Glin North. [Photograph]

The stone is an anomaly, carefully crafted and secured into the ground by a bereaved relative. Though lacking the name of the individual interred the stone sets this grave apart from the tumble of all the other stones. The crafting and care giving it and the individual here some form of identity.

Walking back towards the makeshift palette gate a small bird is chirruping away. At times like this I berate myself for not recognising bird species by their individual song. Standing listening I look down to watch a small grey slug make its slow journey across one of the large boulders that sit either side of the narrow path.

I think about the changing colours of the seasons. The grey, browns and white of winter, the gradual move through greens, yellows, pinks and purples of spring into summer before the warm

russet palette of autumn returning to winter once more. Nature's rich colour scheme so far removed from the symbolic colours of the liturgical year where pink, rose, purple, blue and gold dominate the month of advent. As I think about the small cross-inscribed coffin-shaped stone I reflect that only the symbolism of white used in advent corresponds with the natural world around me and all that is innocent.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology and Ethics



## Introduction

*'... the echoes from the past, from the many babies, infants and adults who lie interred within the cillín call out from the past ... their stories clamour to be heard and my dilemma is how to give voice to the voiceless, how to give form to the formless?'* (Graham-George 2016)

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods which I selected to frame my practice-based inter-disciplinary research uncovering traces of the cillín mothers within the landscape and collective memory of the community.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first part describes the choice of deep mapping as a concept to underpin my creative practice. In the second part I discuss my fieldwork and the reasons behind why sites were chosen and the methods I used to investigate the cillíní which I denote as spectral landscapes and sites of memory. The third section concerns the interviews I undertook and the process of selection of participants, the interview structure, ethical issues and how these interviews form part of memory work. Within the final part I focus on sound within creative practice and the creation of *Requiescat* and dissemination of the work.

## Deep Mapping Through Creative Practice

In their introduction to *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives*, Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris describe deep mapping as an intimate multimedia interrogation of place, and everything contained within it (2015: 3). That this form of mapping is so much more than traditional cartography as deep maps accommodate the human interaction with that landscape. These maps combine the objective with the subjective, recognising what we and others project onto place including our memories and dreams (2015: 3).

The earliest forms of deep mapping used writing to interrogate place combining oral history, first person narratives and ethnography centred around a narrowly defined geographic area. In *Prairie Erth* (1991) William Least Heat Moon created a literary map of a small area of rural Kansas to give a 'spatially explicit narrative of place' (Eanes 2019: 9). In a similar way Tim Robinson has created textual maps through his embodied writings about Aran (Robinson 2007: 2008). Deep mapping's

move towards a cross-disciplinary methodology has allowed for a greater language to evolve in which to describe the spatial narratives of place using linked and thematic multimedia approaches (Bailey & Biggs 2012: 318; Biggs 2011: 13; Pearson & Shanks 2001) to give a multiplicity of voices, stories and memories (Bodenhamer, Corrigan & Harris 2015: 5). Les Roberts draws a distinction between the final map and the importance of the process itself which he describes as an embodied, immersive and reflexive experience, '[a] *diving within*' (2016: 6 emphasis in the original).

In *Art, memory, and the city in Bogotá: Mapa Teatro's artistic encounters with inhabited places* Karen Till describes a project in Bogota where deep mapping combined with creative practice produced an alternative artistic mapping of an area through performative means to unveil the hidden histories encoded within a place (2014: 149-150). In my research I created alternative maps of my study areas to uncover the hidden stories by using sound, ethnographic fieldwork, audio oral histories, writing, historic research, folklore, photography, ceramics and film, to create a richly textured sense of place which:

'attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual.' (Shanks & Pearson 2001: 65)

Within *Requiescat* I created depth of place, where time and memory are woven together as 'a multiplicity of voices, information, impressions and perspectives as a basis for a new connectivity' (Biggs 2011: 6) from which to contextualise the socio-cultural reasons behind why these women were buried in the cillín. This process encompassed numinous cross-disciplinary facets and the 'juxtaposing of disparate objects and ideas' (Barrett & Bolt 2009: 7) to create an alternative understanding of the cillín. In this way I have employed creative practice as 'a mode of investigating human understanding, as much as it is of producing something new' (Dallow 2003: 50) and using it as an innovative and alternative means of research enquiry (Barrett & Bolt 2007: Higgs 2007; Skains 2018; Smith & Dean 2009).

Throughout my work I have utilised core principles which underpin feminist research methodologies (Beckman 2014; Hesse-Biber 2012; Landman 2007;2006; Letherby 2003; McHugh

2014))which have included addressing power imbalances both culturally and within my role as researcher, listening to and making heard women’s voices and experiences, using multi-disciplinary and mixed method styles of research, using reflexivity and consideration of the importance of application and dissemination of the final research. The question of gender is at the centre of my research as I focus on the lives of these mothers and aspects of gender inequality experienced by them, and my aim has been to advocate for consistent recognition of these mothers within the cillíní.

## Fieldwork



Figure 25: Graham-George, S. (2018) Eyeries Cillín. [Photograph]

My first step was to identify nine case study sites to gain a greater understanding of these spaces, their relationship within the landscape and their respective communities. The cillíní selected were in Dingle, Iveragh and Beara, south-west Ireland, areas with well-preserved cillíní. Information relating to site distribution, geographic location (Fig 26), grid references and site visits shown in (Table 1).

The sites were selected as being sufficiently diverse either through subtle regional differences or geographic location, history, usage, link to the community or presentation within the landscape yet still representational of cillíní throughout Ireland. Four of the sites were already known to me through previous work prior to my doctoral research.

To situate the sites within a localised historical context I spoke with local historians and carried out library searches in Iveragh, Dingle and North Kerry focusing on local publications and biographies pertinent to the cillíní. As cillíní are protected under the Irish National Monuments Act 1994 (Electronic Irish Statute Book 2020) all my field visits conformed with legislation. The sites I visited were located within a mixture of public access and private farmland where I sought permission either directly with the landowner or through a third party within the local community.

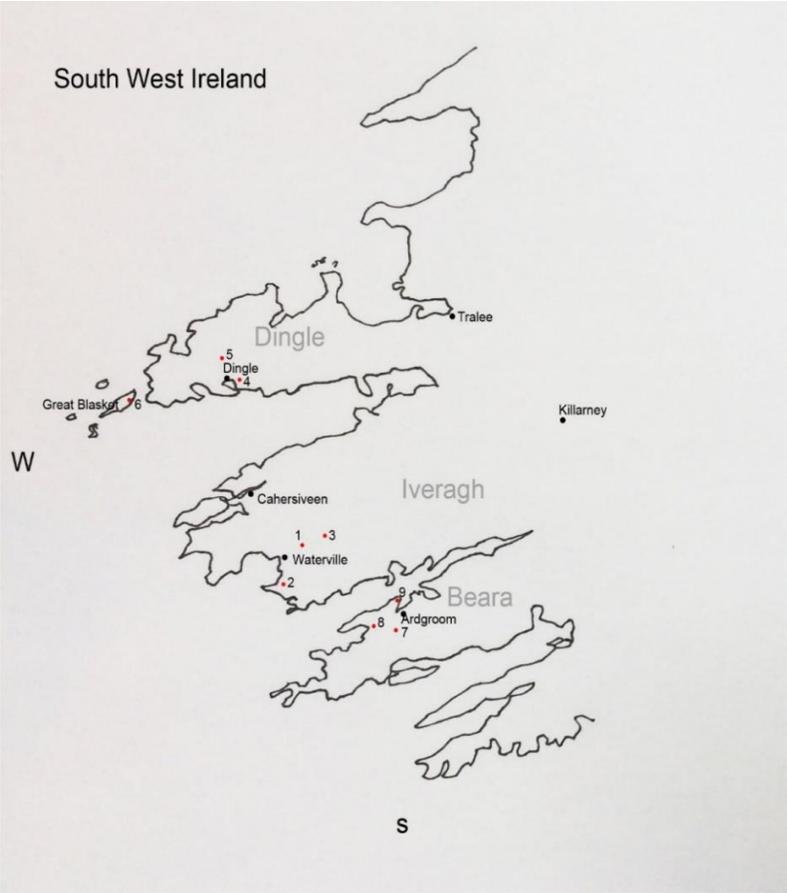


Figure 26: Distribution of Case Studies

No.	Name	Area and County	Map Ref: Discovery Series O.S Ireland	Archaeological Survey of Ireland Database Ref	Site Visits 2014- 2019	Site Visits Pre 2014
1	Dromkeare	Iveragh, Co. Kerry	Map: 83 545 684	KE098-021001	5	6
2	Cill Draighneach	Iveragh, Co. Kerry	Map: 83 508 618	KE106-007001	5	6
3	Ballynakilly	Iveragh, Co. Kerry	Map: 83 621 768	KE81-023	5	6
4	Ballintaggart	Dingle, Co. Kerry	Map: 70 464 993	KE053-033003	3	1
5	Glin North	Dingle, Co. Kerry	Map: 70 438 063	KE043-028004	2	
6	The Rinn - Great Blasket	Dingle, Co. Kerry	Map: 70 391 042	KE051-002003	1	
7	Caheravart	Beara, Co. Cork	Map: 84 675 508	CO102-024002	2	

8	Eyeries (behind the church)	Beara, Co. Cork	Map: 84 648 508	No Ref	2	
9	Above Pallas Harbour	Beara, Co.Cork	Map: 84 701 578	CO102 A 001001	2	

Table 1: Key to case study distribution map

### In the Cillín

*'[O]ne enters a place removed from the world, a place that does not belong – an in-between place...The gateway be it a metal gate adorned with the Christian cross or a simple opening in the trees or earthen bank opens into this 'other' space.'* (Graham-George 2016)



Figure 27: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2015) Gateway to Teampall na Cluanach Cillín.  
[Photograph]

The entry way into the cillín bridges the world of the dead and that of the living existing in this liminal space, a threshold between dual states, binaries which define each other in their co-existence, past/present, seen/unseen, absent/present, remembered/forgotten. There is a tension between these dualities which defies categorisation, being neither visible or invisible, the living and the dead (Del Pilar Blanco & Peeren 2013: 2) with the cillíní as the meeting place or boundary line where these two states meet and merge.

This is an inscribed landscape sculpted by human interaction over centuries, chronicling time in religious, historical and mythical increments becoming a temporal archival space. This is also a spectral landscape, one that is haunted by these memories in which timeframes co-exist. In describing spectral landscapes as archival, Wall writes:

‘It is this worked over quality of landscape which enables it to be considered as an ‘archive’. This extends beyond the physical, human inscription of place and is epitomised by the sense of temporality in the landscape, arising from the carryover of one timeframe into the next.’ (Wall 2013: 241-242)



Figure 28: Graham-George, S. (2015) Kildreenagh cillín. [Pinhole 360-degree solargram photograph]

### Walking, Writing, Knowing

Within my research I used walking as a method of interpreting the landscape (Sidaway 2009; Vergunst 2010; Wylie 2005) combined with photography and field recordings. Writing enabled me to coalesce the ‘inside and outside, self and landscape, precipitate and fold’ (Wylie 2005: 236) of the embodied experience (Fulton 2002; Ingold 2010; Long 1997) of walking to and being in these spaces, whilst engaging with the spectral within the landscape (Hill 2013; Wylie 2009).

Walking to each site became at times a form of pilgrimage or meditation ‘on the relationship of the self to the world that is investigated’ (Dauphinee 2010: 806). Journeying to the cillíní at different times of the day and year noting the effects of cyclical, linear and spectral time on these sites and upon myself. To document this process, I placed myself as witness detailing my own perceptions using narrative audio field recordings, and a personal blog (Graham-George 2020). I kept the blog as a reflexive tool to record my thoughts on spectral landscapes, memory and creative practice.

Using autoethnography as a research tool, I employed my own experiences as a source of knowledge to reflect upon, give meaning and accessibility to (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011: 274; Hughes & Pennington 2017) the ‘cultural, social and political’ (Ellis & Adams 2014) within my subject. Through my use of first-person dialogue, I intended to involve and immerse the listener within my physical and emotional landscape to ‘critique[s] the situatedness of self with others in social contexts’ (Spry 2017: 710).

My use of autoethnographic methods of enquiry included using reflexivity to bear witness (Adams & Holman Jones 2011: 111) through my thinking, writing and creative practices. Writing and the use of narrated sound in *Requiescat* as an investigative tool also gave me an opportunity to consider the ‘issues of identity politics’ and ‘experiences shrouded in silence’ (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011: 274) in relation to the cillín mothers, whilst also making me cognisant of the personal spectres influencing my own practice. In terms of reflexivity, I have had cause to reflect upon my position as a researcher from a nation that had formerly colonised Ireland (Connolly 2013: 28) and the ensuing legacy and impact this has had upon the culture, religion and language and the ongoing debates surrounding this (Howe 2002: 9). Consequently, there have been some instances during my fieldwork where this has been problematic, yet through sensitivity to the subject, I have negotiated these difficulties.

In conjunction with this are the politics surrounding the Irish language, bound up with colonist history (Crowley 2005) (Cleary 2005: 262). During this period and beyond, Irish would have been the language of those buried within the cillíní. Most of my interviewees live within the Gaeltacht, Irish-speaking regions of Iveragh and Dingle with Irish being the first or preferred language of

many. Ideally *Requiescat* would have been bi-lingual, however, as a non-Irish speaker, it felt appropriate in this instance that the project be in English and any Irish used within the research has been within context.

Autoethnography has also given me an awareness of the relational ethics (Ellis 2007) which exist between myself as researcher and my subjects. Early on in my project I was made aware of local disapproval regarding an ethnographer who had worked in the same rural locations. In 1974 *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* was published by an American ethnographer, Nancy Scheper-Hughes concerning the high incidence of mental health cases in a rural village on the Dingle peninsula. The book received critical acclaim in academic circles in America whilst in Ireland the media saw it as a violation (Scheper-Hughes 2000: 117) and betrayal of confidences and friendships. Outrage was such that on her return to the village twenty years later she was expelled and forced to flee in the night (Scheper-Hughes 2000: 136). Against this backdrop I was acutely aware of my own accountability and sense of responsibility to the families and communities associated with the cillíní as well as the many individuals who trusted me with their thoughts, experiences and views. As the case above demonstrates there is a delicate balance between exploitation, research honesty and responsibility to the subjects of that research.

During my recordings there were times when participants shared confidences or an opinion but requested, they not be used. Even though the information further illuminated my subject I was respectful of their wishes and redacted this from the transcripts and deleted the comments in the audio. Throughout my research I endeavoured to be considerate in my behaviour, written work and creative practice but without compromising my integrity as a researcher or that of the project. I believe that I achieved this through being open about my research aims, seeking clear written consent and by updating my participants throughout the project.

*'Markers in the landscape which we walked ever so slowly together as we talked interminably, rip off the sticking plaster which covers the open wound of my hurt.'*

(Graham-George 2016)

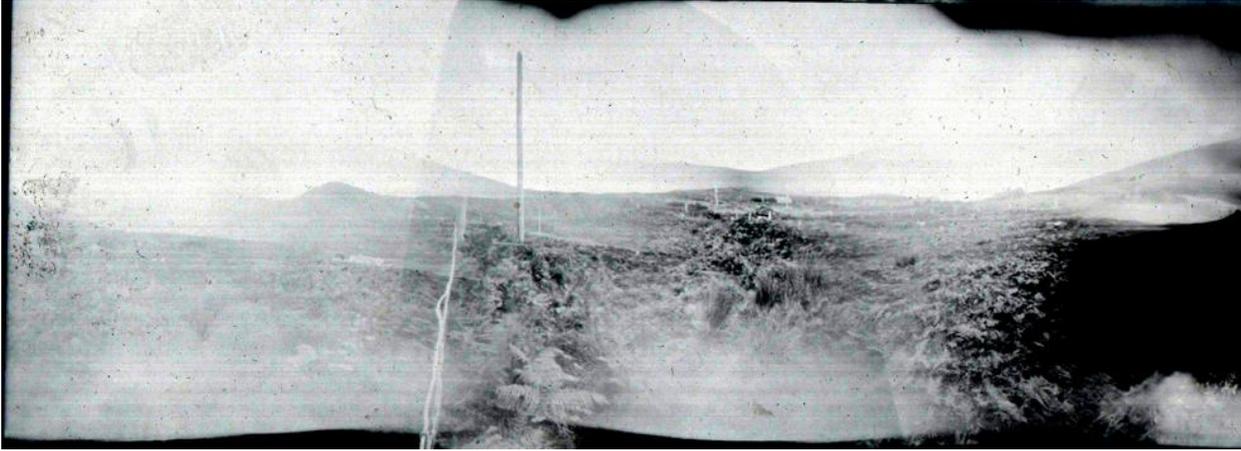


Figure 29: Graham-George, S. (2013) Killdreenagh Cillín. [Pinhole 360 degree photograph]

In August 2016 I suffered two significant bereavements just days apart. In my research and visits to sites I realised it was important to acknowledge my own ghosts alongside those already present in the cillín. Through my autoethnographic writing and recordings, I articulated my understanding that ‘places become haunted as a consequence both of our ascription of meaning (fulness) to them and of our embodied capacities to retain, recall and contextualise’ (Stevens & Tolbert 2018: 29).

Alongside my own ghosts with me in the cillín I was aware of the ever-present watchful dead which could be sensed as my body became ‘an instrument for sensing haptic and sensual aspects of past practice’ (DeSilvey & Edensor 2013: 472). Wylie captures this sensation in his paper on the memorial benches at Mullion Cove in which he describes the feeling of, ‘*looking - with – a host of ghosts and memories*’ (2009: 277: original emphasis); a feeling not dissimilar to that felt in the cillín. One can feel presence through absence; of being watched, that the landscape is merely, ‘a series of tensions between watcher and watched, interior and exterior, the invisible and the visible’ (2009: 278). Once again writing enabled me to express this element felt within the cillín, the tension between being watcher and watched from within and without.

*‘What sets this cillín apart from all the other sites I have visited is the large tomb which squats at the entrance to the site as though keeping watch over all the smaller inhabitants. Engraved into the top of the stone is the name John Broderick 21-08-1869, a sailor whose ship arrived in Ardgroon Harbour.’* (Graham-George 2020)



Figure 30: Graham-George, S. (2018) Above Pallas Harbour Cillín. [Photograph]

Cillíní are memory-places where the small upright stone grave-markers, symbolic trees and pieces of white quartz are all ‘material manifestations of memory’ (Wylie 2009: 278). These physical reminders store the memories laid down by the communities for which these sites served. The story associated with the cillín above Pallas Harbour (fig 30) is one that has been passed down through the collective memory of the community.

John Broderick’s tomb like all memorial markers in the cillíní, represents the ‘convergence of material and personal memory’ (Edensor & DeSilvey 2013: 471). The past is constructed from that which is left behind either physically within the material world and/or within the memory of an individual as a social construct from which to view the past:

‘The past exists, if it can be said to exist at all, in a double form: as a sedimentation of relics, traces, and personal memories and as a social construction.’ (Assmann 2010:15)

The social construction in this respect serves to connect communities, individuals and societies throughout history giving identity, 'both socially and temporally' (Assmann 2010: 15).

## Interviews

To access collective and cultural memory associated with the cillíní I conducted fourteen recorded oral history interviews with fifteen individuals, eight men and seven women aged between thirty and eighty-five (Table 2 and 3).

The foremost reason why participants were selected was based on their personal or professional connection with the cillíní or knowledge pertaining to the historic treatment of women in Ireland. The background of the subject group ranged across the arts, history, agriculture, the church and politics (Table 2 and 3). All except one of the participants lived in or were originally from south-west Ireland.

Out of the fifteen participants, I already knew six through my previous work on the cillíní and a relationship of trust had been established. Of the remaining nine, I partially knew four of these individuals, again through work and the remaining five I had not met before and was introduced through friends. I was aware of the careful balance to be maintained between bias and objectivity as a result of these prior relationships. As a methodological tool, reflexivity (Pillow 2003; Hewitt 2007; Edwards & Hollands 2013) enabled me to address the tension between empathy, detachment and objectivity (Sarsby 1993: 129; Petty 2017). However, relationships, temporal, lasting and personal do develop between the researcher and the subject, as work of this type is essentially a humanitarian endeavour (Bornstein 2007: 504). Conversely, I believe my prior relationships which were based on trust, my behaviour as a researcher and reciprocity (Delamont & Atkinson 2018: 124) benefited the research and facilitated the personal stories disclosed. As my case studies were sited in small rural communities and I was conscious of the sensitivity of my subject for my participants (Dempsey et al. 2016), I was aware of the importance of establishing a good relationship with them. This would hopefully obviate any potential difficulties in their discussions with me as an outsider to their community.

*Requiescat* does not attempt to present a definitive view on either the cillíní or the story of the

mothers interred here. Instead it presents the collective memories, experiences and opinions of a small group of individuals with a shared cultural background not dissimilar to Gould's, *The Idea of North* where only six main characters are heard. I am aware that a larger sample group and perhaps wider age range might have precipitated a different result. For instance, younger members of the community along with those with no knowledge of the cillíní might have created a different balance within the sound work. However, this would have been an extensive undertaking in time to establish connections and grow relationships which were beyond the limitations of this research project. Nevertheless, this is an approach I would like to build upon in future research projects as it could further substantiate my belief that a knowledge gap concerning the mothers in the cillíní exists.

Participants were given the choice of where the interview would be conducted with the majority choosing to invite me into their home. Of my fourteen interviews, eleven took place within the home of the participant, two in public settings due to necessity and one in my own accommodation. Recording in the subject's home setting lent a relaxed and informal feel to the interview and between myself and the participant. The interviews were semi-structured, tailored to the individual's specific connection with the sites or subject. I found that a semi-structured approach kept the subject central yet allowed for tangents and flexibility (Adams 2015: 494; Wengraf 2001).

Name	Age	Role	Date/place	Duration
Ailbhe Smyth	70-75	academic feminist activist	December 20, 2018 Dublin	34.48
Angela Griffin	30-40	Unknown	January 14, 2018 Co. Kerry	03.08

Tony Guerin	75-80	Playwright	December 7, 2018 Dublin	26.07
Tom and Mary Horgan	75-85	Local Historians	January 19, 2018 Co. Kerry	76.79
Dr Billy Mag Fhloinn	35-45	Folklorist	January 16, 2018 Co. Kerry	07.88
Emer Dennehy	35-45	Archaeologist	December 8, 2018 Dublin	08.06
Father Tomás Ó Luanaigh	75-80	Priest	January 20, 2018 Co. Kerry	40.12
Simon Ó Faoláin	45-50	Poet & archaeologist	January 10, 2018 Co. Kerry	12.33
Zoë Uí Fhaoláin Green	35-45	Artist	January 12, 2018 Co. Kerry	33.48

Table 2: Non-anonymised Interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Role	Date	Duration
Jimmy	70-80	Farmer	January 15, 2018 Co. Kerry	20.37
Bridie	80-85	Artist	January 11, 2018 Co. Kerry	18.53
Patrick	70-80	Local historian	January 15, 2018 Co. Kerry	11.35
Margaret	65-75	Poet	January 20, 2018 Co. Kerry	09.72
Christy	65-75	Farmer	January 16, 2018 Co. Kerry	03.52

Table 3: Anonymised Interviewees

### Ethical Responsibility

Prior to conducting my interviews Enhanced Ethical Clearance (#) was sought and given by the GSA Research Ethics Sub Committee on 30 November 2017. Interviewees were contacted by email, letter or telephone followed by face to face dialogue and email contact. A detailed printed information sheet (See Appendix 2: 335) was sent by email or post then later discussed face to

face ahead of recording. The information clearly outlined the project aims, eventual output, possible consequences, risks /or advantages of taking part, project funding, contact numbers and information relating to official complaints or concerns. The letter also highlighted the potentially distressing nature of the subject matter and that support would be forthcoming if required.

Each participant was informed both in writing and verbally that their contribution was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any point without being penalised and in such an event their recordings would be erased. Written consent (See Appendix 2: 338) was secured from all participants prior to interviews taking place and for subsequent work to be used for the Doctorate as well as post Doctorate. Periodically I updated participants by email or letter on the progress of my research.

As *Requiescat* is composed of fragments from the interviews, participants were made aware that their voices would be heard and might be identifiable. For those who wished to remain anonymous the option of using an actor's voice was offered which only one participant requested and which I complied. However, I found that the read script aesthetically jarred against all the other recorded conversations so made the decision to remove that section.

Names rather than numbers were chosen to maintain the personal feel underpinning the work with a mix of pseudonyms and actual names. I felt it important to extend the courtesy of identifying those who had chosen to relinquish their anonymity (Scheper-Hughes 2000: 128). Nine individuals chose to disclose their identity while first name pseudonyms which corresponded to the gender of the individual were used for the five individuals who requested anonymity. Within the transcripts, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of any third person referred to by an interviewee.

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim using a naturalised format to convey a complete picture of the interview and greater sense of each individual (DeBlasio 2009: 85). To aid readability I maintained a careful balance between punctuation and grammar and the essence of the speaker to allow for individual idiosyncrasies of speech (DeBasio 2009: 85).

All personal information resulting from the interviews was stored in adherence with GSA policy concerning the General Data Protection Regulation of May 2018 (GDPR). As such, audio files from

the recorded interviews were downloaded after interview and saved on a secure drive then deleted from the collecting device.

Near the completion of my research participants were once again contacted to request whether their audio interviews could become part of the Irish National Folklore Collection and written consent was given by fourteen participants.

## Memory

Each participant had their own personal story bound into the collective memory which connected them to the cillíní, and consequently gave the lives of the mothers buried in the cillíní a cultural context. Jan Assmann splits memory into three distinct areas, individual, communicative and cultural. My interviews invariably recorded personal memories, those unique to each of us and viewed through subjective time yet mediated through interaction with others whilst recognising that each individual's biographical memory is distinct from that of another. Yet each story I recorded was also a communicative memory, formed by that individual's interaction with others within family and social groups where memory binds and bonds, thus becoming a collective memory (Assmann 2010: 126).

As all my participants were from the same cultural background they had a shared cultural memory, a form of shared collective memory where people from the same culture share collective memories nationally, politically and culturally giving them their cultural identity and sense of belonging (Assmann 2010: 130). Shared religious belief and rituals are also a form of cultural memory and as all of my interviewees were Catholic, practising or not, their understanding of the Catholic faith further bound them together.

*'A second butterfly floats around the upstairs bedroom; we release them out into the warm air outside. I wonder fleetingly if the butterflies are some sign or incarnation of my mother's soul.'* (Graham-George 2016)



Figure 31: Graham-George, S. (2011) Lullaby. [Photograph]

In Irish folk belief the soul was believed to be a white butterfly or moth which upon death would be seen to fly out of the mouth of the deceased (NFC 1955: 145) and that of an unbaptised infant ‘as a dim flickering light’ (Scheper-Hughes 2001: 238). As a form of oral history, folk belief was once traditionally part of the oral culture where stories linked the past with the present giving a sense of place and a strategy that made ‘sense of contemporary existence, linking past and present through emplaced narrative’ (Stevens & Tolbert 2018: 36).

Folk belief can be widespread and shared within a culture becoming part of cultural memory. A community’s collective memory associated with folk belief and specific landscapes and practices are passed down through communicative memory:

‘folklore, long engaged in the analysis of vernacular belief, can together contribute meaningfully to discussions of hauntings by re-centering those debates on issues of materiality, the numinous, and embodied/emplaced experience itself.’ (Stevens & Tolbert 2018: 29)

The National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin is one of the largest cultural and oral history archives in Europe. In 2018 I was awarded a British Association of Irish Studies

Postgraduate Bursary to visit and research folklore associated with women, churching, illegitimate and un-baptised children, the cillíní and faeries, within the numerous transcribed interviews and audio collection collected by the Irish Folklore Commission dating from the 1930s. As a deep-mapping exercise the material gathered gave greater depth and breadth to the cillíní and the mothers seen through the lens of cultural memory in relation to folklore, geography, topography, stories, memories and personal narratives; and in turn source material for my writing and sound work.

## Sound

*'Sound brings the past alive, memories live again becoming intermingled with our present; that strange juxtaposition of sound captured from one place then played back in a completely different context. Not only does the past meet the present but one landscape overlays another.'* (Graham-George 2017)

The aim of my research was to animate the silence surrounding the mothers in the cillíní. Adams, Hoelscher and Till write that place has texture with both depth and surface (2001: xiv), that by studying place within context we can observe 'the weaving together of social relations and human-environment interactions' (2001:xiii). Recorded sound, its uncanny ability to capture 'emergent and passing time' (Toops 2011: xv), enabled me to thread together audio fragments collected from the landscape, fieldwork and interviews, to gain an understanding of the cillíní through the multitudinous layers that constitute and comprise place. The recorded collective, personal and autobiographical memories of my interviewees created a neonarrative from which to construct new knowledge about the mothers in the cillíní, incorporating 'the subjective and intersubjectively gained knowledge of the life experiences of individual participants including the researcher' (Steward 2002: 223).

A pre-requisite of my research was to find a medium which could communicate on an emotional level with the public whilst broadcasting the story of these mothers far and wide. In my attempts to find a suitable medium I experimented with ceramics, creating small hollow porcelain touchstones containing natural materials collected close to my sites. I also worked with film exploring folk-belief as well as women in the cillíní portrayed as 'the homeless dead' (Van Gennepe

1960: 161) contrasting the domestic interior with that of the cillín and conversely the church. A further extension of this idea was through a socially engaged project trialed in Orkney with local women creating hand knitted felted *spirit homes* to become part of an installation (See Appendix 3: 347). I felt that each of these methods of enquiry addressed only a limited aspect of the intricacies bound up in the story of the cillíní and the mothers buried here whereas sound accommodates the multifarious nuances whilst conjuring the ethereal and fleeting nature of memory, place and absence, 'sound unfolds in its own time and then it's gone .... forever. Only a memory survives' (Worby 2020). I found that sound combined with deep mapping facilitated new conversations about the past. In the same way that writer and cartographer Tim Robinson 'has trained himself to "hear" a range of Irish voices' (Smyth 2016: 179) which he describes as "'the echo of that terrible shouting from the past'" (Smyth 2016: 17), my use of sound gave me the opportunity to capture/re-create and animate the forgotten histories associated with the mothers in the cillín.

Sound can be felt on both a physical and emotional level as it reverberates through, with and beyond, connecting the listener with their environment, to become one with their surroundings, as French psychiatrist, philosopher and phenomenologist Eugène Minkowski notes in relation to soundwaves:

'And this life itself will reverberate, to the depth of its being, through contact with these waves, sonorous and silent at the same time, will permeate within, will vibrate in unison with them, will live through their life, intermingling with them all the while. This will be the very essence of the phenomenon "to reverberate."' (1999)

In this way sound as a medium has the capacity to travel through space and still retain a potency to reach, affect and connect with the listener and it is this ability which I have harnessed through my sound piece, *Requiescat*.

Sound art is problematic to define due to its diversity (Licht 2009: 9). Toop makes the distinction between 'new musics, sound art and art and sound' (Toop 2005) each with separate trajectories, addressing different issues. Within this framework I define *Requiescat* as sound art which combines spoken word as new oral histories, field recordings, soundscapes with composed music

and closely aligns to the work of Cathy Lane (Lane 2006; 2016), Hildegard Westerkamp (Westerkamp 2015), Glen Gould (Gould 2014) and Mark Peter Wright (Cowley 2012) .

### *Requiescat* - Structure

*Requiescat* was structured as a triptych comprised of three main sections divided by musical and narrative interludes:

Prologue – Narrated auto-ethnographic description of a journey to a cillín with adult graves.

Birth - discussed the fine line between birth and death - the ritual of churching after birth and the Catholic church's attitude towards women.

Interlude 1 – a narrated description of my own fear of dying in childbirth.

Limbo – addressed attitudes and personal experiences of the cillíní.

Interlude 2 – The narration speaks of maternal death.

Stories – considered the nature of storying, our own personal stories and those passed on in relation to mothers, death and attitudes towards pregnancy outside marriage.

Epilogue – Closing remark about remembrance.

Both *Birth*, *Limbo* and *Stories* comprised fragments from the audio interviews, intertwined together to create a conversation around the subject of a particular theme within each segment. Selective editing of the audio interviews allowed me to present the different views, opinions and experiences of my interviewees which at times contradicted each other. Similar to Gould's *Solitude Trilogy*, *Requiescat* used recorded interviews to explore a subject through place, layering the voices as Gould does 'to achieve a sense of dialogue and ideological conflict between those voices and within the work itself' (Jordan-Baker 2014: 1). Juxtaposing these contrary views also symbolised the historical ambiguity of these sites.

To aid navigation of the work the theme of each section was introduced by my personal narrative which threaded each part together as a whole whilst moving the listener through the piece.

After introducing the programme Gould's voice is silent in the *Solitude Trilogy* with just the voices

of his interviewees, in *Requiescat* my own voice and position within the work is clear, both as a participant and as witness to the sites and stories told to me. In this way all voices have equal presence regardless of who they are, further reinforced through my auto-ethnographic narratives.

These narratives situate the listener within my physical and emotional environment. At times these personal disclosures were uncomfortable to record yet felt a necessary form of reciprocity to equalise the power relationship (Pillow 2010: 179) between myself and my participants. Using the narratives as methodological tools of self-reflexivity clearly established where I as a researcher connected with the subject (Peshkin 1988: 17).

Together with the narration the composed music gives continuity and punctuates each segment. The fiddle piece was composed by Anne Wood to represent a flock of wild birds, a motif which echoes the field recordings throughout *Requiescat*, echoing the Irish folk belief of birds as soul carriers (pg. 117) *Requiescat* brings together a plethora of different types of recordings; the spoken word, the ambient sound of place – a kitchen, an empty church, the seashore, a cillín secreted within farmland and music composed for the fiddle melodic against the electronic soundscapes. Some sounds are hauntingly familiar and jar at the memory whilst others such as these later soundscapes cause disquiet in their unfamiliarity. Throughout the composition I played with electronic soundscapes to build tension, discomfort, and disharmony around the difficult subjects being discussed. Shifting tempo was also a device to keep the listener alert and engaged whilst conveying them through the work. I was keen that sound would conjure the feelings of outside/inside, domestic space/outside space, cillíní and church to illustrate the position of the mothers in society and within the cillíní.

## Dissemination

To enable extensive and inclusive dissemination of the work within public and private settings, it was essential that the resulting artwork be portable and widely accessible to the community. Sound fulfilled this brief as it is compact, not confined by space or time and is independent of visual stimuli to create mental imagery within the mind of the listener (Rodero 2012: 459). To achieve this aim *Requiescat* was designed in several different formats.



Figure 32: Graham-George, S. (2020) *Requiescat I*. [Sound work]. [Photograph Anias Kroeger]

For exhibition within gallery and public settings *Requiescat* was contextualised within a small ecclesiastical suitcase which at one time had contained the sacred sacraments for administering the last rites to the sick and dying. An artefact once charged with potency as it held the promise of salvation, something which folk belief reminds us was at times withheld from un-married mothers of illegitimate children (NFC: 389: 340-344).



Figure 33: Graham-George, S. (2020) *Requiescat II*. [Sound work]. [Photograph Anias Kroeger]

As a receptacle for *Requiescat* and the stories and memories surrounding the mothers in the cillíní, the ecclesiastical case, a reminder of the all-powerful patriarchal Church, became a site of transfiguration, folk-belief inter-mingled with Christian symbolism. Further subverted through hand embroidery of the interior, an art often associated with women and female sexuality

(Parker 2010: 2). The embroidered daisies continue the folk-belief symbolism often with women and un-baptised babies. A motif replicated with the planted daisy within the small pressed glass receptacle which once held holy water as well as the old embroidered linen tablecloths covering the hand bound artists books. Red ribbons secure the books and reference the belief that these could ward off faeries (Ó Duilearga 1937: 175). The milk in the holy water glass bottle a reminder of birth, mothering and when milk as opposed to water was used for baptism (Dennehy 2003: 18).



Figure 34: Graham-George, S. (2020) *Requiescat* – Artist Books. [Photograph]

Each book contains a pinhole image of a cillín alongside a line from Oscar Wilde's poem *Requiescat* typed on semi-transparent vintage onion-skin paper:

'Tread lightly, she is near  
Under the snow,  
Speak gently, she can hear  
The daisies grow.' (Poetry Archive: 2002)

The purpose of the books was to provide a meditative visual focus for the listener if required as the sound-work is a stand-alone piece. The interactive exhibit was designed to accommodate two listeners at any one time with the sound-work stored on an MP3 player hidden away in the base of the case.

Containing *Requiescat* within the case (fig 32; fig 33) was inspired in part by the traveling landscapes of the nineteenth century, the concept of ‘the world in a box’ (della Dora 2007: 293), as well as Duchamp’s, portable exhibitions, *La Boîte-en-Valise*. As Judovitz comments in relation to Duchamp’s work, this way of working gives ‘freedom of display outside the confines of the museum, while its flexibility and hence capacity for folding opens up new ways of thinking about the nature of art objects’ (Judovitz 2005: 4).

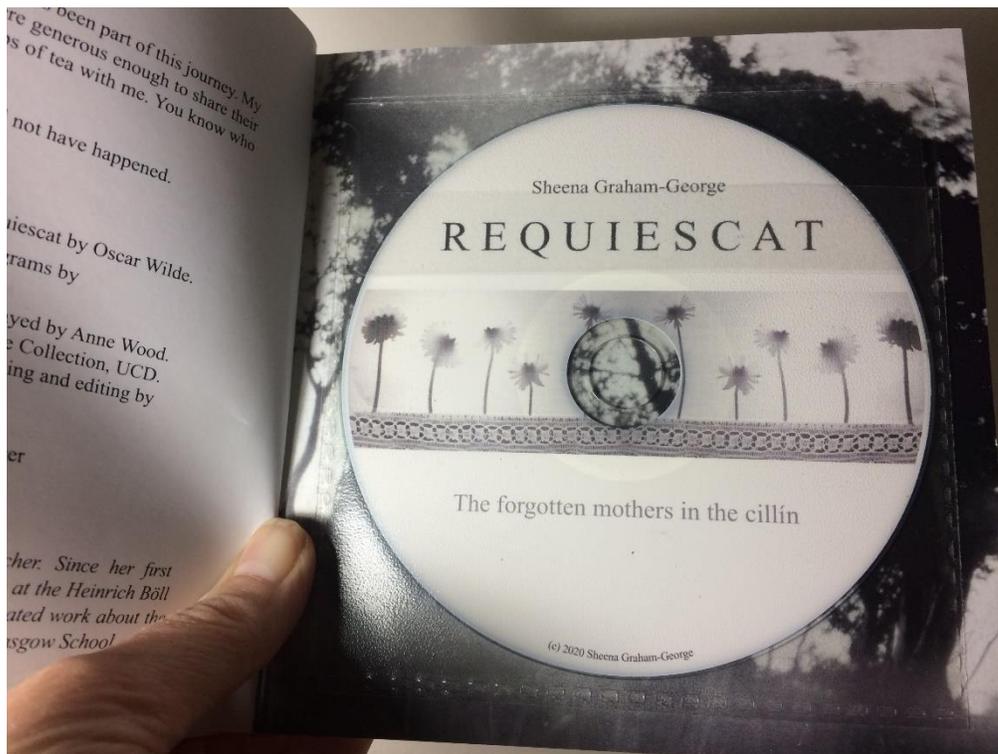


Figure 35: Graham-George, S. (2020) Booklet. [Photograph]

To make *Requiescat* publicly and freely available outside of traditional exhibition venues I designed and published a thirty-five-page perfect bound booklet with accompanying CD (fig 35). The booklet contained a short text outlining the aims of the project alongside the same imagery

and poetry contained within the artist books. These booklets were then gifted to all nine libraries throughout County Kerry.

In April 2020 *Requiescat* was to be publicly launched as a traveling exhibition at the *Feile na Bealtaine* festival in Dingle. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic the festival was cancelled. As a consequence, I chose to make *Requiescat* publicly accessible through The Wild Geese history website, a worldwide site dedicated to Irish history and culture based in America. The site carried the work as a featured blog but did not generate the engagement I had anticipated. As a society we are prone to privilege sight above sound (Toop 2005), to engage with sound demands active participation by the listener which perhaps limits the appeal of sound-based work for some and is perhaps a potential limiting factor of *Requiescat*. This online experience encouraged me to reflect on the importance of selecting the appropriate platform and audience, which is the local communities within Ireland engaged with these sites and academic and artist peer groups.



# Ballynakilly Cillín





Figure 36: Ballynakilly, Co. Kerry, Sheet 81

'located in level pasture on the S bank of the Inny river. It consists of an approximately semicircular enclosure which measures 27m N-S x 54m E-W. It is formed on its N side by the river's 2m high meander scarp and is defined elsewhere by a gapped earthen bank which is preserved to an average height of 1.2m and measures 1.8m wide.' (Sheehan & O'Sullivan 1996: 325)



*Gateway of two arched Holly trees as enter – (thought of Dachau). Another arch and step up into a gathering circle of Holly trees - red and green should never be seen except upon the head of an Irish Queen – robin in the Holly tree – sound of running water – a peaceful place*

Sketchbook November 2010

Bright blue skies, biting cold, steering wheel freezing, and I am desperately trying to read the map while keeping the car on the icy, narrow country road. I am winding into the interior up the Inny Valley towards the protective ring of mountains which 'watch over our sleep/ Like parents caring for their dear ones' (Ní Mhóráin 2015: 7). They encircle this valley and the cillín which lies there.

Several days earlier Tom had introduced me to Ballynakilly and numerous other cillíní buried deep in the heart of rural Iveragh. In-between visits we had returned to his house to warm ourselves and be fed by his wife Mary who sang sean-nós songs and read poetry, in-between feeding me pizza and copious cups of strong tea around which I had cradled my frozen hands.

Emerging from the warmth of the car into the bracing cold I am glad of my thermal layers, hat, gloves and hot water bottle inside my rucksack to keep myself and my camera functioning in the minus temperatures. Today I am on my own, with my own thoughts. Each cillín visited has felt intensely special; uncovering secrets hidden deep within the land and landscape, away from prying eyes.



Figure 37: Graham-George, S. (2010) Walking to Ballynakilly Cillín I. [Photograph]

Holly trees in the hedgerows red and green, smell of peat smoke in the air from the farmer's house on whose door Tom and I had knocked to ask for permission to walk his land. He kindly accompanied us into the site, telling us about the rounds performed by the local community each Easter and the holy wells located within.

*A wet winter's day in December, a different year, a different month, rain dripping from the metal gate, I try to locate the wells. The ground underfoot is wet, muddy and soggy. Rain drops from the holly trees and every so often a hail shower sweeps across the open and bare site. For the very first time I can see all the stones clearly, it has lost that enclosed hidden feel, everything stands naked and exposed. The moss-covered grave markers cluster in a small huddle as though in deep conversation, under the semi-circle of holly trees at one end. Sheep from the adjacent field have wandered in to graze, leaving strands of hair caught on the stones. A robin fleetingly visits. I find no stone lined wells only a small*

*hole in the middle of the site.*



Figure 38: Graham-George, S. (2010) Walking to Ballynakilly Cillín II. [Photograph]

Achingly cold to the touch the metal gate echoes with a metallic ringing sound as I climb over and into the field. The pasture is blanketed in virgin snow, my footprints leave deep marks as I plough a path towards the gateway of trees waiting at the other end.

A gateway into another world, the 'otherworld'. Standing on the threshold of this liminal space I step through and into what feels like another realm, an 'in-between' place. I feel invisible when on the other side of the gateway, crunching through the snow, entering an enchanted kingdom. The lines, '[f]or he comes, the human child/To the waters and the wild/With a faery, hand in hand,' (The Literature Network 2016) from Yeats poem *The Stolen Child* float into my memory.



Figure 39: Graham-George, S. (2013) Gateway into Ballynakilly Cillín. [Pinhole photograph]

*A September day, a different year, a different season, summer ever so slowly giving way to Autumn, the air is warm the rowan trees are laden with scarlet berries. The ivy that twists around the holly trees that stand sentinel over the stones is starting to flower, the holly berries still green. The bright green of fern covers the interior of the site, splashes of colour here and there from purple scabious, yellow furze, heather and small yellow flowers whose name eludes me are dotted here and there.*

The ground carpeted with snow and berries muffles sound. In the stillness, I listen to a bird singing, all is calm, peaceful and quiet. The distant sound of the farmer's dog barking every so often punctuates the air, still and expectant reminiscent of being in an enclosed building like a

church, yet that is where the comparison ends. I had recently spent time in Cahersiveen church to study the Stations of the Cross. A Cold austere lump of a building squatting in the centre



Figure 40: Graham-George, S. (2010) Ballynakilly Cillín I. [Photograph]

of the town, grey and forbidding. Sound echoes inside like a tomb, the cold even colder there than it is out here in the snow. The previous year I had become familiar with Austin Clarke's poem *The Blackbird of Derrycainn* which speaks of the contrast between the joy of the natural world illustrated by the joyous song of the blackbird '[m]y throat rejoicing from the hawthorn', in contrast to the sound of the church bell, 'no handbell gives a glad sound' (Corvid Corner 2020) and the alienation from nature when seen from a Pagan/Christian perspective.

Stepping up and through the gap in the earthen bank I emerge into an enclosed site, an inner sanctum where I crawl in around the dried bracken to uncover the stones. Most of which are located around and under the holly trees. One tall stone stands out from the all the others, small lumps of quartz nestle at their feet.



Figure 41: Graham-George, S. (2010) Ballynakilly Cillín II. [Photograph]

I sit on a raised bank of green moss, white snow and red berries. I am struck by the contrast between the beauty and peace of this place and the numerous church graveyards I have recently wandered around with their hard-austere stones and plastic grave decorations. There is a softness and beauty here which the Irish Gaelic poet Simon Ó Faoláin perfectly captures when he says:

‘Better a single light, fine, green sheet / B’fhearr bráillín mín-éadrom uathne amháin,  
speckled yellow with celandines in spring, / Breac-bhuí leis na searraigh um earrach,  
the blackbird’s babble for a rattle/ Le gliogar loin mar ghligín,  
the company of romping lambs. / Comhluadar na n-uan lán teaspaigh.’

(O’ Faolin 2011: 39)

## Chapter 3

### Spectral Traces of the Mothers in the Cillín



## Introduction

This chapter looks at how sound can be used to locate spectral traces of the forgotten mothers within the landscape of the cillín, and how remnants of collective memory stored within the physical landscape, as ‘ghostly traces of the past remaining in time and space’ (Lane 2015), can be detected and recorded.

To gain an understanding of how women were historically perceived, the chapter opens by placing the mothers within a socio-historic context illustrating the inextricable cultural relationship linking women with the Irish landscape and ideas of nationhood defined in part by the Church and State. Within this framework I also discuss the unjust treatment of women by these institutions and make a connection between the appearance of spectral traces and the gradual shift in the cultural landscape of Ireland. I then go on to define the cillíní as spectral topographies haunted by the presence of absence especially in relation to the cillín mothers and consider how sound can negotiate these spaces to create a sense of place using collective memory laid down within the landscape. Finally, the chapter discusses my field recordings in relation to the folk belief intrinsically bound into the cillín.

## Women, Landscape and a Changing Ireland

*‘Women did not have a public voice. And the women who did have a public voice, and there were some, and they were wonderful and brave but they kind of got written out of history as well.’* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

This quote comes from one of the audio interviews I conducted where we discussed the historical treatment of women within Ireland over preceding centuries. The discussion provided a social framework to decipher why mothers might be placed in a cillín, adding another strand to the intricate social connections and storying associated with these sites.

Cillíní are historically, emotionally and politically complex sites ‘precariously balanced on the edge of memory’ (Smith 2015). Personal sites of mourning and remembrance of ‘shadowy province’ (Robinson 2007: 94) where family stories of bereavement have, in many cases, remained hidden away, as part of the burying process of a difficult history. As they emerge from the shadows of the past, cillíní and the mothers buried here are a stark reminder of these darker times often at

odds with either present day sensibilities surrounding maternal death or the historic romanticising and politicising the landscape of rural Ireland:

‘landscape, particularly the romantic undulating topography of the West of Ireland, came to be mythically bound up with notions of Irish identity and nationhood; its mythic and symbolic status superseding its existential reality.’ (Mollaghan 2015: 123)

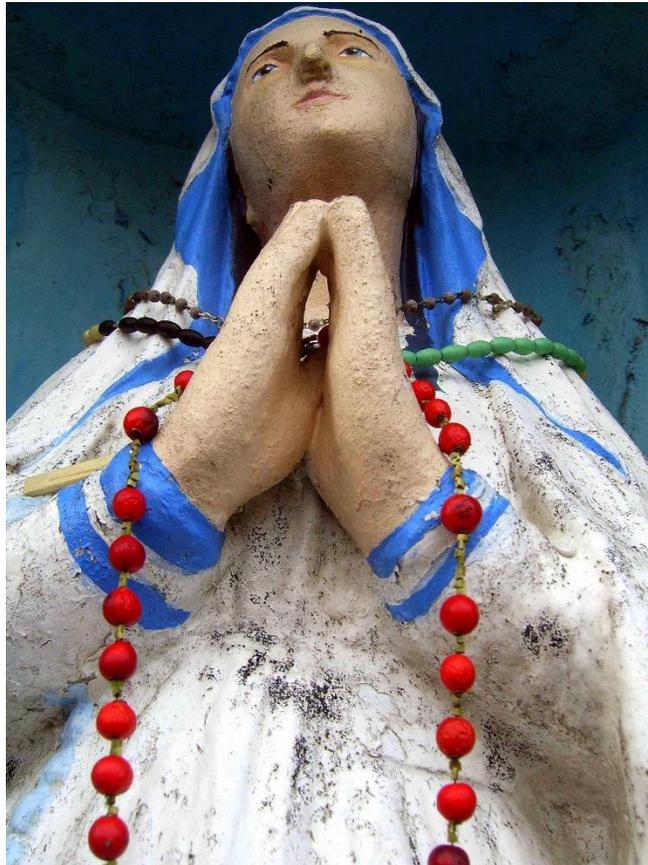


Figure 42: Graham-George, S. (2010) Holly Rosary – Coomanaspig, Iveragh. [Site-Specific]

Part of this identity of nationhood connected women with the landscape and the romantic image of Mother Ireland, personified as the epitome of idealised womanhood allegorised in Irish literature as ‘the Shan Van Vocht, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, or Mother Eire’ (Cullingford 2008: 1). Gendering in this way ‘is to confirm and reproduce the social arrangements which construct women as material possessions’ (Cullingford 2008: 1) of a patriarchal society. A view consolidated by Church and later by the newly formed State which defined the quintessence moral and spiritual ideal of women as the pivotal centre of the family ‘the ideological mother and heart of

the nation' (Wills 2001: 37). Thus 'the image of the Virgin Mary was regarded as the ideal role model for women, while the image of the mother was considered to be the prototype of Irish women' (Ryan 2011: 112).

In 2018 I presented a paper at Maynooth University in Ireland examining the social and cultural context which allowed mothers who died in pregnancy or childbirth to be buried in the cillín. Scattered throughout these chapters are extracts from this published paper by Maynooth University.



Figure 43: Ó Muircheartaigh, T. (1938) The Mass, Dunquin Church (Photograph). National Folklore Collection, UCD

Over the past 120 years Ireland has undergone significant changes, including the weakening of power exerted by the Catholic Church over Irish society, largely due to the numerous scandals which have beset the church and catalogued in The Murphy Report in 2009, The Ferns Inquiry 2005 and The Ryan Report 2009. Other scandals focused on the historic treatment of women by the Church/State run Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes; institutional places of containment (Smith 2001: 111) designed to govern and control female sexuality and attempt to 'render invisible segments of the population whose very existence threatened Ireland's national

imaginary, the vision of Ireland enshrined in President Eamon de Valera's 1937 constitution' (Smith 2001: 112). A legacy which sowed the seeds for the 1984 scandal of the Kerry Babies (Maguire 2001: 336) and the teenage death of Ann Lovett (Luddy 2011: 109).

In *Mapping Spectral Traces* Karen Till observes that during times of change reminders of the past appear to surface into the present, especially reminders of violence or injustice '[s]pectral traces, especially at places marked constitutively by acts of violence and injustice, often re-emerge when a society is undergoing change' (Till 2010: 1). The cillíní are landscapes marked by injustice, and as communities reclaim and remember their dead through acts of remembrance, the time is right for the mothers in the cillíní to emerge from the past and be remembered alongside those from the Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes.

The cillín mothers appear more invisible and spectral than any other group within social history, all that remains is their spectral presence, their mark or imprint left behind (Derrida 2006: xx). Like the marginalised characters from a W. G Sebald novel whom John Wylie in his article, *The Spectral Geographies of W. G. Sebald* describes as individuals 'made spectral, made almost invisible through expulsion and exclusion' (Wylie 2007: 175). Yet though largely forgotten, memory of these mothers continues to slowly fracture into the present, haunting the wider social memory of communities and contemporary Irish society, as Till observes '[t]aken-for-granted qualities of place may be unsettled as a society witnesses, listens to, and acknowledges how spectral traces belong to the present day and a society's possible futures' (2010: 2). *Requiescat* engages with this process by presenting to communities the audio traces of these mothers within the cillíní landscape, to be listened to and witnessed.

## **In the Cillín – Listening to the Dead**

*Been to some dark places these last 2 weeks – been in churches up hillsides, in fields and woodland clearings – talking and listening to the dead*

Sketchbook January 2012

The quote above is from an old sketchbook of fieldnotes and relates to the exceptionally cold winter when I first became acquainted with the cillíní in Iveragh, daily visiting sites whilst trying to

find ways to capture the unique nature of each. Initially the sites felt bleak and silent, just places of absence. Yet with time and subsequent visits I started the process of talking and listening to the dead, to the shadowy presences dwelling there. The absence and emptiness eventually becoming, 'crowded with remembered and imagined impressions of that which used to fill the absence' (Edensor 2008: 325) the more familiar I became with the layers of history and stories connected with their past.



Figure 44: Graham-George, S. (2013) Ballynakilly Cillín 360 Degrees. [Pinhole photograph]

The journey of my research involved giving form to these 'remembered and imagined' (Edensor 2008: 325) presences whilst making audible these conversations with the spectral mothers, to share with others. Through my fieldwork and research, sound presented itself as capable of encapsulating and relaying these deeply felt resonances of absence and presence, reasons I will discuss later in this chapter.

The cillíní landscape is heavy with presence, memories over-layering memories, the invisible in attendance, haunting the physical landscape and the inner memory-scape of individuals and local communities. As John Wylie reflects upon W. G. Sebald's writings on spectrality:

'Pasts and futures, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet, still haunt the present, and are, in a supplemental relation to it, always *coming back*.' (Wylie 2007: 172)

The past is not static, it cannot be erased, buried or forgotten about as it is 'apt to erupt at different times and places' (Edensor 2008: 326) reminding us of what we would sometimes rather forget, as memory is 'open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting' (Nora 1998: 8). History is also challenging, as it 'is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of

what is no longer' (Nora 1998: 8). Regarding these mothers, history is deficient with the threat that over time this omission will become part of collective memory, erasing the original memory and replacing it with a 'past without lacunae or faults' (Nora 1998: 9).

Fragments of memory about these mothers does however remain and continues to surface, haunting the wider social memory because:

'where there is absence there is still energy, engagement and longing.....The word absent has its roots in Latin 'ab-esse' which means to be elsewhere. To be away from a person or place. Whatever or whoever is absent has departed from somewhere they belong. Yet their distance is not indifferent to the place or person they have left... Absence seems to hold the echo of some fractured intimacy.' (O'Donohue 2000: 316-17)

O'Donohue perfectly summarises the essence of the cillíní and their relationship with the local and wider communities. These are places which hold the memory of intimacy cleft, relationships severed through loss, of mothers, daughters and wives whose death in pregnancy or childbirth left an absence within the domestic setting yet whose spectral presence continues to linger.

### **Acknowledging Ghosts of the Past**

*'My grandfather would've taken them down to the children's burial ground, the cillín in Dooks and – would've, and buried them there. He would make journeys down to see them over the years to visit their graves.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

Visiting a cillín one can sense the weight of the past all around, the collective burden of sorrow which inhabits these spaces; the ghosts of those who lie interred and those who laid them to rest. The land holds the memory of those who worshipped, prayed, grieved, planted or dug. The female informant whose great aunts were buried in their local cillín described the journey from their birth to their subsequent death and burial. During the interview her mother sat listening to the re-telling of her own story and that of her deceased sisters. A story handed down through the generations, acknowledging the presence of these two deceased baby girls, keeping their memory alive within the shared memory of the family. Stories of this kind are difficult to locate concerning the mothers buried in a cillín making it even more important to acknowledge their presence here, albeit a spectral one.

Stepping into the cillín one moves seamlessly from the realm of the living to that of the dead. The threshold a limbo place, between the spiritual and the earthly, where one is neither of this world nor the other. This is a landscape inscribed by death where one moves ‘from the everyday into the memorial space’ where ‘thresholds mark a liminal shift from one corporeal experience to another’ (Baptist 2013: 44-45). Cillíní are portals into the past where we can connect with memories of the deceased and where we can ‘create the spaces and time for ghosts’ (Till 2010: 2).



Figure 45: Graham-George, S. (2013) Headstone Ballynakilly Cillín. [Pinhole photograph]

But what do we mean by ghosts? In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida defines ghosts as those no longer living or present ‘either to us, in us, or outside us’ (2006: xviii) presences we must learn to not merely accept but live with, speak to and about (2006: xvii/xviii). Yet he cautions that to live with them is not enough. We must also live ‘more justly’ (2006: xviii) with them, with a sense of responsibility as they are forever in attendance, past, present and future, thus, the importance of acknowledgement:

‘It is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and just that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet there, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born.’ (2006: xviii)

Within *Requiescat* I address my own sense of responsibility and need to speak with and of the dead and to justly re-establish the memory of these women within social history.



Figure 46: Graham-George, S. (2013) In the Cillín. [Pinhole photograph]

In the cillín I am both the observer and the observed, I see yet am blind. I can feel the weight of the gaze and subsequent responsibility as I am observed by the spectral inhabitants of the cillín. Yet the bereaved of the cillín, whose spectres I sense watching me as I move through the landscape, are located within me. In *The Work of Mourning* Derrida describes how the dead inhabit us, that all we have left are images and memory (2003: 159). Mourning has internalised the other whose image 'looks at us, looks "in us"', but at an infinite remove'; we are observed and watched by the dead within, by their spectral gaze, yet 'there is no symmetry in the gaze', we cannot return it, it is unequal, unbalanced (2003: 11). In this way the spectral gaze can be personal, societal and collective.

These spectres are 'always *there*' (2006: 221) which we carry with us or are conscious of being in their presence. They haunt the physical spaces of the cillíní, one senses their presence, feel observed by something we cannot name or see 'we feel ourselves being looked at by it, outside of

any synchrony, even before and beyond any look on our part' (2006: 6). Derrida refers to this as the '*visor effect*' (2006: 6) where we are looked at but are unaware by whom we are observed, 'spectral asymmetry' (2006: 6), the uneven balance between the watcher and the observed.

The spectre reminds us of those who are absent bringing to mind their presence and, in the process, displaces our understanding of time as a linear construct '[t]he spectral not only displaces place and self through the freight of ghostly memories; it works to displace the present from itself' (Wylie 2007: 172). In the presence of the spectre we become estranged from the present as it becomes ruptured by the past, time no longer a 'successive linking of presents' (Derrida 2006: 87) but a shifting disorientation between time, space and place. The past arrives unannounced into the present it 'moves in eddies, is marked by episodes of congestion and irruption' (Wylie 2007: 176). Within the cillíní past and present co-exist; time, space and memory fold in upon themselves allowing intimacy with distant presences, people and events from the past.

Spectrality is at the heart of the cillín landscape yet to capture this aspect within creative practice is problematic as there 'is *nothing* visible' (Derrida 2006: 5 emphasis in the original) to represent whether visually or by the written word, it 'comes to defy semantics' (Derrida 2006: 5). The very nature of the ghost itself as being mysterious and intangible, something both familiar yet not, defies representation. As Tim Edensor notes there is 'a sense of the ineffable and mysterious which is unavailable to representational fixing' (Edensor 2008: 330).

When mapping these traces, Karen Till further states that '[a]ttempting to map spectral traces may seem counterintuitive' (Till 2010: 2). But it is these very traces which when mapped connect place, time and memory, connecting 'lives and places in one time to those understood as being located in another' (Till 2010: 3).



Figure 47: Graham-George, S. (2013) Cillín. [Pinhole photograph and photogram]

## Sound as a Haunting

*'I couldn't go to sleep; I felt their presence around my bed. My first time, my little brothers and sisters.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

This quote from my audio interview was with a male interviewee describing how he had sensed his dead siblings as his mother had had several miscarriages. The memory of these lives which did not come to pass had a profound effect upon him and his connection with his local cillín.

Listening to this recording 'for a moment the visual, tactile reality of the present' (Toop: 2011: x) is displaced by the spectres which haunt my participant's memory.

Both Derrida and Edensor observe representing the spectral is problematic. Sound, however, is an appropriate tool to tune into these spectral traces as it is already ghostly, '[s]ound is an absence, a haunting; this is its nature. Sound is absence, beguiling; out of sight, out of reach' (Toop 2011: 170). Toop describes the mystery and wonder that sound evokes in the listener as 'eavesdropping on ghosts and their chatter' (2011: 170). He continues by stating that a tangible connection with the past can be obtained through physical objects, paintings, photographs,

diaries, journals etc. from history. These give us a continuous physical link with the past, whereas sound dissipates into the air leaving just echoes within the landscape becoming 'ghosts that haunt the tangible reality of castles and clocks, ploughshares and armour, shoes and bones, ancient books, rock formations, fossils and all other remnants of material existence' (Toop 2011: 170). Sound as a haunting lingers in the air of the cillín, within the movement of the time-old trees, the soil underfoot, the stone markers, undergrowth and quartz stones.

Toop's point that sound is a ghostly presence because its properties are not confined within a specific time or space reminds us of the French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy's comments that sound is not contained but spreads and penetrates barriers, that it 'opens a space that is its own' (Nancy 2007: 13). Sound can be used to give a sense of the spectral in so far as is possible to make manifest something that defies definition or representation, that can be sensed and must be, as Derrida points out, acknowledged. *Requiescat* allows the listener to be haunted by the ethereal as they move through time and space hearing the once silent and forgotten traces of presence within the landscape and memory.

### **Spectral soundscapes**

In his Connemara observations Robinson uses the words 'haunted' and 'echoes' (2007: 123) when referring to a specific location, acknowledging that Ireland is a landscape haunted by its past. To understand the relationship between the landscape and those who inhabit it, he pays close attention to 'the sound of the past' (2007: 3).

The complex over-layering of history and politics surrounding the burial of the mothers in the cillín haunts these sites, sound makes audible these echoes and vibrations of the past and their associated histories. As such, sound has been employed by cultural geographers to investigate landscapes of loss and absence, abandonment and the spectral, memory and remembrance. Spectral geography has developed to extrapolate the complex social and spatial relationships which exist within a landscape and decipher:

'the hidden politics that haunts spaces in intimate and complex ways, can continue to animate silenced agencies and forgotten voices and histories, while also attending to the political aspects of those voices and histories.' (Adey & Maddern 2008: 292)

In *Spectral Soundscapes: Exploring Spaces of Remembrance through Sound*, Iain Foreman describes using sound to create a sonic memorial of an abandoned village in Northern Spain. The paper addresses the difficulties associated with representing absence and its relationship with the present, that it can be no more than a spectral absence. Like Toop he concludes that '[s]oundscapes are spectral' (2014: 8) and that 'the recording is a document of absence in itself a 'memorial' which is 'haunted' (2014: 8).

Foreman's work was about preserving the sonic memories of a community who were forced to abandon their village in 1945 in favour of a proposed dam. Visiting the old village with former inhabitants:

'the ruined village became a portal into a past soundscape with children running along the cobbled streets, the treasured chime of the church bell, the acequias (irrigation channels), the well, the spring, the old blacksmith and the mill.' (Foreman 2014: 2)

As an outsider Foreman did not share these aural memories, instead of hearing echoes of a once thriving village, he heard 'absence and loss' (Foreman 2014: 3). As an outsider myself I was aware that in order to create a soundscape that would speak to and of the landscape and resonate with the local community, I needed to spend time in the cillíní, experiencing changing seasons, periods of the day, alongside speaking with the local community. I was conscious of my relationship to the sites and that of my listeners, within the context of Truax's definition of soundscape as:

'An environment of SOUND (or sonic environment) with emphasis on the way it is perceived and understood by the individual, or by a society. It thus depends on the relationship between the individual and any such environment.' (Truax 1999)

The soundscape I subsequently created was designed to speak to, engage and connect with local communities, reflecting a sense of place rooted in familiarity and memory.

### **Sound of Memory - Sense of Place**

To achieve this, I identified the iconic and ambient sounds of the landscape to give a sense of place at the same time capturing sounds which would encourage memory. As Aimee Mollaghan

observes '[o]f all of our senses, sound, in particular, has the capacity to stimulate our memories, activating associations between fragments of thoughts' (2015: 127). Some are sounds connected with specific places which R. M. Schafer refers to as keynote sounds, background noises or signature sounds associated with a specific landscape, 'many of these sounds may possess archetypal significance; that is, they may have imprinted themselves so deeply on the people hearing them' (Schafer 1994: 9-10).

For the communities associated with the cillín the soundscape of these sites is the ambient sound of the land, which also would have been familiar to the cillín mothers in their lifetime. These unchanged sonic landscape keynotes link the past with the present stimulating memories for the listener. These are the echoes from the past which Steven Feld refers to as being 'about presence, about reverberant pasts in the present, presents in the past...sound is memory, here as everywhere' (Feld 1994: 3). Feld spent time with the Kaluli people in the Bosauí forests of Papua New Guinea and realised the importance of sound for deciphering an environment, that by hearing and interacting with it we gain a better understanding '[a] way of hearing the world comes from interacting with it' (Feld 1994: 3). During fieldwork I physically interacted by actively listening and recording the ambient soundscapes of the cillíní with the intention of capturing traces of shared sonic memory locked within, belonging to both the mothers of the past and the present-day community.

Collective memory defined by Maurice Halbwachs, discussed further in Chapter 4, is a social construct where memories are shared by a group with a joint identity (Halbwachs & Coser 1992: 22). Within the context of the cillíní this refers to the community associated with these sites who lived, buried their dead, practised the same belief system together. Within this shared social framework their collective memories were forged, one which they shared with the cillín mothers.

### **Sound - Folk-belief, Collective Memory and Symbolic Landscape**

Traces of collective memories are glimpsed within the physical landscape of the cillín where pre-Christian overlays Christian. The original rituals and beliefs slowly disappearing from collective memory or intermingled and remembered through associated folk-belief practice, passed down through the cultural group 'reflected in oral narrative, social custom and popular practices'

(O'Connor: 2005: 57) giving a sense of cultural identity. Over time as collective memory fades, the landscape still retains traces of the physical expression of a belief system once shared by the community within the holy wells, sacred trees, and fairy forts. Sound is ideally placed to capture the ethereal nature of the cillín, a temporal landscape which stands witness to a culture's beliefs inscribed into the land.

During time in the field I recorded the acoustic manifestations of spiritual and folk-belief within the landscape. The following are three examples of Irish folk belief associated with the cillíní which I recorded alongside my own auto-ethnographic reflections describing the sounds experienced.

*Holly trees in the hedgerows, red and green – smell of peat smoke from the farmers house whom we met the other day. The steady throb of my feet on the wet road I hear clearly through my bi-aural recorder, hearing becomes acute. I stop – it's the sound of water. A small stream flowing fast under the road, in the direction of Ballynakilly cillín, my own destination. I stand listening, recording, as it rushes away to join the River Inny which curves protectively around the cillín and where I will shortly meet it again. Sketchbook  
January 2018*

## Water

One feels that location of this cillín was carefully selected by the community as it nestles into the bend of the river. Likewise, Dromkeare where the sound of the river rushing by is deafening. In his list of cillíní locations, folklorist and collector Seán Ó Súilleabháin noted they were often found '[o]n a river or sea-cliff' or '[n]ear a well' (1939: 148). Associated with both purity and protection against supernatural forces, water was heavily symbolic within both Christian and folk belief.



Figure 48: Graham-George, S. (2013) Cumberagh River beside Dromkeare Cillín. [Pinhole photograph]

In Christian belief water was central to the ritual of baptism, spiritual purification and cleansing. Biblical references abound 'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities' (Ezekiel 36: 25) and 'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean' (Hebrews 10: 11). At Ballynakilly it was believed that baptisms were performed using a bullaun stone (Sheehan, O'Sullivan 1996: 325). Stones of this type were also associated in the symbolic folk mind with fertility worship as '[w]ater in a rock-basin was possessed of a special power and accordingly was a favourite resort of childless women until about a century ago' (Crozier & Rea 1940: 105).

Within Ireland sacred wells were used for baptism of babies. In St Vaux in County Wexford there was a '[b]lessed well in which children used to be baptised' (NFC 96: 317). Ballynakilly cillín was also at one time home to two stone-lined wells (Sheehan, O'Sullivan 1996: 325). Tobar Olla Bréanainn (Fig 49), the site of a cillín on Valentia Island also has a well, still revered within the area.



Figure 49: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2018) Tobar Olla Bréanainn, Emlagh Bog Cillín.  
[Photograph]

The location of both Ballynakilly and Dromkeare beside rivers is significant as water was perceived as a defence against evil or malign forces. During liminal phases in life such as birth and before baptism (pg. 152) the sprinkling of holy water was used as a protective agent. Traditional folk belief believed that spirits were unable to cross water ‘[a]spirit will never cross water’ (NFC 303: 80), that it formed a protective barrier from supernatural forces. In this way, the marginalised who existed within the shadows were safely contained within the cillín by the presence of a river boundary.

*A wet miserable day. Today I spent the best part of the afternoon along the seashore just outside Cahersiveen trying to find the cillín which hugs the shore along here. An incredibly barren and bleak place. The edge of the land ragged with the detritus from the sea, hanging in tatters from the barbed wire fencing. I did some sound recordings, the wind howling away, further adding to the feeling of being in a no-man’s land. Sketchbook January 2018*



Figure 50: Graham-George, S. (2012) Kilmore Cillín. [Photograph]

Ó Súilleabháin also mentions burials at '[t]he edge of the tide' (1939: 148). The first cillín I ever encountered was on Achill Island on the edge of the shore where sand dunes dipped into the sea (Fig 1). Kilmore cillín (Fig 50) lies just north of Tralee, situated on the seashore, bounded by a wall to keep the sea out. The shoreline along the sea edge was considered a liminal space, a place where the elements meet which is neither land nor sea, a place in-between, a no-man's land. There is evidence to suggest that some cillíní were sited in these locations for that very reason, with the thought that the liminal position in life and in death of those interred, be reflected in the choice of burial site (Dennehy 2016: 219; Finlay 2000: 408). In Norway as in Achill, the shoreline, the tidal area between low and high-tide was used for the burial of sailors or individuals considered as 'dangerous evil-doers' (Westerdahl 2005: 34) in the belief that they could not walk inland.

Life and death have been seen in rhythm and sympathy with the coming and going of the tide. In, *The Golden Bough*, Frazer catalogues numerous cultures which hold the belief that 'people are born when the tide comes in and die when it goes out' (Frazer 1993: 35); that human life was inextricably connected.

## Sacred Trees

*The day is dreich, I stand silently huddled in my waterproofs underneath the holly trees, arm outstretched trying not to rustle. My Tascam in hand, headphones in place, listening as hail gently patters down on to the shiny dark green leaves of the old holly tree; a small, light, muted, pit, pat, pit pat... Sketchbook January 2018*

Along the south wall, in the eastern section of Ballynakilly cillín up to one hundred low uninscribed marker stones lie clustered, watched over by a stand of old holly trees which appear to form a semi-circle around them. How long these trees have stood here and why and by whom they were planted we can but guess. Trees such as hawthorn and holly are often associated with the cillíní as they held symbolic value. Folk-belief associated with both Christian and pre-Christian belief gives an insight into the relationship between the burials here and the presence of these trees.

At Dromkeare (Fig 51) a circle of gnarled holly trees encloses the cillín and its inhabitants. Holly is listed as a Chieftain Tree, one of the highest classifications of the twenty-eight species of native Irish trees and shrubs under the Brehon Law (Living Tree Educational Foundation n.d.). Perhaps for this reason holly trees are often found planted near sacred sites associated with cillíní and related holy wells.



Figure 51: Graham-George, S. (2010) Old Holly Trees Dromkeare Cillín. [Photograph]

The holly tree, like water, was considered powerful against magic and planted around a field or house to give protection from evil forces. Saint Ronan was said to have a hut in Brittany which was surrounded by holly bushes which protected him from mysterious forces, the evil eye, storms and fire (MacCoitir 2016). As an evergreen holly symbolised immortality ‘the tenacity of life even when surrounded by death’ (Paterson 1996: 35). To the Celts and Druids, the holly tree was sacred due to its association with winter, seen both as a symbol of protection and hope. As a protector the tree was thought to guard against lightning thus associated with the god Lugh, of the Tuatha Dé Danann (pg. 150). Within Christian symbolism it is associated with sacrifice and everlasting life (Adams 2014: 184).



Figure 52: Graham-George, S. (2010) Hawthorn – Killeenleagh Cillín. [Photograph]

Both holly, hawthorn, and the cillíní were associated with the faeries and faery-lore, and as such were treated with caution and respect (Dowd 2018: 457). Faery-lore as we will see (pg. 152) also impacted upon mothers and babies.

### Birds as Soul Carriers

*The cillín has been relatively quiet today as I stand listening through headphones to the sounds around me. But then a single bird, high up in one of the holly trees starts a tiny stuttering song. Just a short song but it breaks the stillness of the air bringing a reminder of life. Sketchbook December 2015*

During my numerous visits to the cillíní, birdsong always sounds louder, richer and sweeter in contrast to the otherwise shadowy presences which populate these sites. From the song of the blackbird within the fields and pastures beside a site to the cry of a gull or curlew beside a cillín

eroded by the sea, it is easy to understand the spiritual symbolism which birds held connecting this life with the hereafter.

Irish folklore, like many other cultures is rich in the belief that birds are 'soul-carriers'. The Ancients believed that on death the soul left the body and transmigrated. Christopher Moreman's article, *On the Relationship between Birds and Spirits of the Dead* (Moreman 2014: 489-90) gives a detailed account of ancient cultures who believed that birds contained the spirit of the dead. Irish folklore abounds with these stories, where birds embodied the souls of individuals who died untimely, unexpected or unexplained deaths. The *Legend of the Seven Whistlers* recalls a group of birds composed of whimbrels, curlews, and plovers, and sometimes geese or swans, who call when flying overhead with the 'grief-stricken souls of un-baptised babies' or of drowned sailors (Anderson 2008: 131).



Figure 53: Graham-George, S. (2014) Song of the Sedge Warbler. [Installation]. The Pier Arts Centre. [Photograph Tom O' Brien]

The sedge warbler (fig 53) or Irish nightingale was believed to embody the soul of an un-baptised child who comes to sing to the upset parents at midnight to help ease the pain of loss (Anderson 2008: 216).



Figure 54: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2016) Lullaby for Adults. [Installation]. An Lab, Dingle

Lullaby for Adults (Fig 54) was an installation in memory of the adults buried within cillíní featuring field recordings of birds overlaid by spoken Irish. Featuring storm petrels, sea swallows (Anderson 2008: 95) and gulls (Anderson 2008: 158), all birds thought to be the souls of dead sailors or fishermen. Other birds also symbolised the dead, the linnet was said to be the voice of an unhappy soul trapped in the 'other-world' (Anderson 2008: 247) while sparrows were thought to carry the souls of the dead (Anderson 2008: 281).

Through listening and recording the symbolic landscape of the cillíní, access is gained to the coded layers of collective memory concealed within these sites and traces of the mothers interred here can be discerned.

## Conclusion

Writing about her composition *The Hebrides Suite*, Cathy Lane asks a series of questions; '[d]o past lives and past events leave sonic traces and how can we hear them in the present?' and 'can place be investigated through sound?' (Lane 2015). Both questions which I have addressed within this chapter. I have shown that the past does leave perceptible traces within the environment, that the landscape itself holds memory as testimony to the lives lived.

I have described how the recorded sound of place has the capacity to stir memory and dislocate time. As sound is 'a ghost, a presence whose location in space is ambiguous and whose existence is transitory' (Toop 2011: xv) it can uncover the spectral in the landscape to 'bring out the sense of the ghost' (Roe 2006) revealing traces of the unseen, the forgotten and the historically absent mothers in the cillín.

As a memorial landscape the cillín is a store house of collective memory centred around the social, cultural and religious practices acted out over the centuries and inscribed upon it.

Within this space I recorded 'those barely perceptible echoes from the past that have the power to move us in unexpected ways' (Hill 2013: 380) in order to uncover traces of the other, while giving careful consideration to my own ghosts which inevitably intervened, interrupting the present whilst colouring and shaping my experience of place. As Derrida adroitly observes

'everyone reads, acts, writes with his or her ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other' (Derrida 2006: 174).

However, in my journey to uncover traces of the mothers within the landscape, sonic collective memory intertwined with the land is but one part. The next part of the tale is that spoken by voices within the community and the collective memories expressed through oral history and personal narratives which give further insight into traces of the mothers and the social context which framed their burial. Chapter 4 goes in search of these voices.

## Rinn an Chaisleáin Cillín



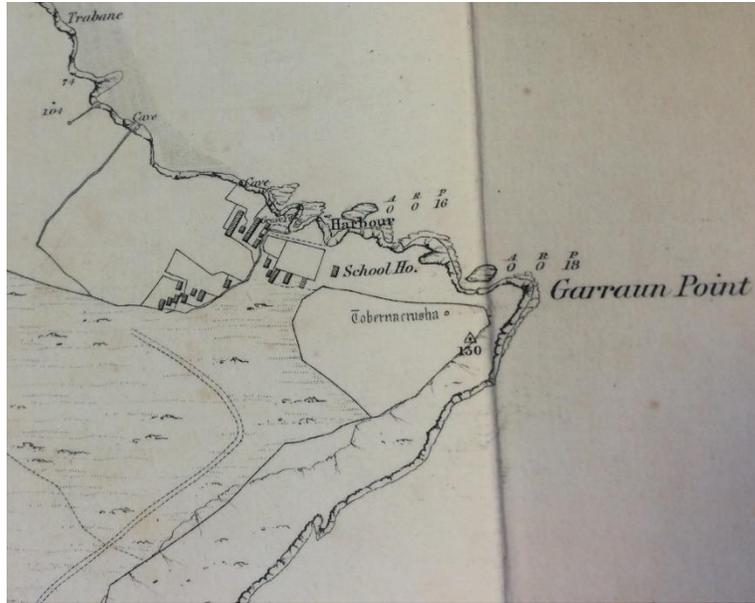


Figure 55: Great Blasket, Co. Kerry, Sheet 51

'The unconsecrated burial ground was used for the burial of unbaptized infants, shipwrecked sailors and suicides, and several grave-markers, consisting of low, upright stones, and drystone-built graves are still visible in the interior.' (Cuppage & Bennett 1986: 360-361)



*The site on the island is probably the most unusual I have seen to date as it is literally within the village – right by a ruin of a house and sits just above the landing harbour overlooking the white strand beach. Unless you know what you're looking for you would walk straight past it – very unassuming and certainly not marked. However, the small grave markers aligned east west are clearly there plus two small stone-lined graves now partially uncovered, their main slabs moved. Seeing this site now makes sense of much of the literature and eyewitness accounts of life on the island and burial of children, infants/ adults and the relationship of the islanders to this site.*

Sketchbook May 2016

2015 - The phone rings, a voice on the other end tells me that the ferry to the Great Blasket has been cancelled and no, there will be no sailings for the rest of the week as the swell is too bad. Sitting in the lay-by outside Dublin on my way down to County Kerry, the car full of camping equipment ready for the trip to the Blaskets I feel completely deflated. This was my one chance in the year to finally get across to the Islands. I had long dreamed of wild camping under the stars on this most southerly of Ireland's islands, the sound of the Atlantic lulling me to sleep. Prior to the phone call I had felt a little like James Ramsay in Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse*:

*'To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch.'* (Woolf 1969:5)

My chance of reaching the islands and the cillín had been so close yet once again was to be postponed.



Figure 56: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2018) The Great Blasket. [Photograph].

2012 – When I first set eyes on the Blasket Islands I was so astounded by its shape and presence I very nearly lost control of the hire car I was driving on the narrow Sleah Head drive which skirts the very tip of the Dingle peninsula. I had waited years to see the Blaskets, a group of seven rocky islands in the stormy Atlantic. During this time I had read many books written by the islanders about their exceptionally harsh, yet unique way of life. Seeing the large bulk of the Great Blasket come into view as I rounded the sharp bend of the peninsula brought all those stories to life.



Figure 57: Ó Caoimhín, D. (1970) Rough Seas at Sleá Head-Coumeenole. (Photograph)

And here, finally, on a late stormy afternoon was the island home of such extraordinary writers as Peig Sayers (Sayers 1983), Tomás Ó Criomhthain (O 'Crohan 2000) and Muiris Ó Súilleabháin (O ' Sullivan 2000) whose books I had devoured, glimpsing a window into their unique yet traditional island life.

2016 - Today, finally, I sit in the small boat alongside my fellow day-trippers, we face towards the island as it looms large, appearing even more impressive as we sail steadily towards its shore. Nearing the old slipway, I desperately try to get a glimpse of where I think the cillín is according to my map.



Fig 58: Ó Muircheartaigh, T. (1900) Currachs: Naomhóga, An Blascoad Mór. [Photograph]

The previous year after my aborted attempts to get to the islands I had chatted with the custodian at the Blasket Centre in Dunquin about the cillín and its location. On a large diorama of the island he had pinpointed a small area jutting out on the coast just within the village itself. This was the ‘small unconsecrated graveyard on the clifftop above the harbour, where the islanders buried any infants who died young, and any corpses that were washed ashore’ (Stagles 1982: 17).

Anchoring within the harbour we each clamber down the metal ladder of our small boat and land rather clumsily into the waiting rib. Looking up at the low cliffs as we motor towards the green algae covered slipway which leads up into the village, I try to superimpose the Blasket Centre diorama onto the landscape in front of me.



Figure 59: Waddicor, T. (1932) Great Blasket island village, Dunquin: The Village. [Photograph]

Dotting the hillside are small ruined houses clustered closely together in huddles, and just in front facing the harbour a small area that I take to be the cillín. Safely ashore I make my way towards the village and Rinn an Chaisleáin or the Temple (Ní Shúilleabháin n.d: 37), the small unconsecrated burial ground of the Great Blasket. Sometimes also known as Castle Point, it was rumoured to be the site of Ferriter's castle. This was the graveyard where, in the words of Robin Flower, 'those who had known nothing and those who had known too much of life' (Flower 1993: 86) lay side-by-side, the very young, the old, the suicides, the shipwrecked.

Unlike other cillíní I have visited where the interred lie anonymous beneath my feet, here at Rinn an Chaisleáin stories of those buried stir in my memory. The three-month-old child who died the same day as an old man; the child buried in the Temple; the old man taken across the sound for burial on the mainland with his ancestors (Ní Shúilleabháin n.d: 37). Here also lies the baby of Nell and Micil Mhors in a coffin made by Micil especially for his daughter (O' Guiheen 1982: 35). Alongside these babies lie the adults who were either washed ashore or whose mental health was such that they sought to take their own lives.



Figure 60: Von Sydow, C. (1924) Tomás Ó Criomhthain. [Photograph]

Tomás Ó Criomhthain's cousin was buried here after seeking help on the mainland at the local hospital before returning to the island and committing suicide (O' Crohan 2000: 222). Perhaps the saddest story I remember reading is a conversation between Pádraig Tyers and Sean Ó Criomhthain where the latter remembers:

'2 sets of twins who were born on the Island in my lifetime and died very soon after birth, and I saw those 2 sets of twins being carried by their parents in 4 little boxes and being buried in the graveyard where children who had been baptised and confirmed were also buried.' (Tyers 1998: 110)

To the many visitors who flock to this deserted island each year I wonder how many are aware of this small piece of ground which appears completely innocuous to the unknowing eye.



Figure 61: Graham-George, S. (2016) The Rinn. [Photograph]

None of my fellow boat companions stray to this special little area even though we are right by the village. They are perhaps unaware or not interested in the mounds in the grass, the handful of small tell-tale upright stones marking the graves of those buried years before. Two odd stone lined openings in the ground are thought by some to be stone-lined graves, part of an ancient souterrain (Coyne 2010). They are undoubtedly another physical reminder of the archival qualities of this landscape. As Nóra Ní Shéaghda says in her memoirs and which my friend Aine Moynihan kindly translated, '[p]eople don't take much notice of The Rinn' and goes on to say:

'[S]urely if the dead have any sense, it would be no wonder if they went breathing in the air to themselves up at the Rinn, as it is a grand airy patch of ground.' (Ní Shéaghda 2015: 129)

'Grand [and] airy' it certainly is. The wind is starting to build, the sea looking more agitated than when we crossed initially only a few hours previously. Rain starts to fall, and we all make our way once again to the slipway, now keen to escape this barren and exposed island.



Figure 62: Ó Muircheartaigh, T. (1900) An Blascaod - an Caladh [Photograph]

On the journey back I am glad of my full waterproofs as sea-spray soaks us in the open boat. I can just about discern the island as it decreases in size. Through the rain and sea spray my eyes are once again searching for that small piece of ground where so many lie under the green sod now lashed by the steadily increasing rain.

## Chapter 4

### Spectral Traces of the Mothers in Collective Memory



## Introduction

In Chapter three I discussed traces left within the sonic environment of the cillín by the forgotten mothers. In this chapter I once again go in search of spectral traces, but this time focus upon the presence of these women within the collective memory of the community. These memories I accessed through conducting my own oral history recordings to uncover threads of evidence to further support the belief that mothers who died in childbirth were buried in the cillín.

To begin with I will define what is personal, collective and cultural memory based upon the theories of Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann. Building on this definition I will focus upon the importance of oral history as a depository of a community's collective memory bonded together by a shared cultural memory. I will discuss issues of bias concerning the lived experiences of Irish women in connection with the oral history archives in the National Folklore Collection of Ireland. I then consider what it means to hear oral history through the spoken word and relate this to the audio interviews I conducted as part of my fieldwork which I then go on to discuss in detail. Within the memories and opinions of my interviewees discussing the Church, motherhood, churching, the cillín, pregnancy outside marriage and faery abductions I found traces of the forgotten mothers and indications as to why they were buried in the cillíní.

## What is Memory?

*'[I]t's incredible that you can resurrect something all these years later that, as if it, as if you just experienced it only yesterday. And remember when you think about it, I'm so remote from the experience in one way.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

A childhood memory, long buried, was triggered after visiting my 2015 installation *Voices from the Cillín* (fig 63). This collaborative exhibition with film-maker Angelica Kroeger and Irish language poet Bríd Ní Mhóráin, was an immersive exploration of the cillíní.



Figure 63: Graham-George, S. and Kroeger, A. (2015) Voices from the Cillín. [Installation]. An Lab, Dingle

My interviewee was surprised how her personal memory from sixty years ago of witnessing a cillín burial, had remained hidden and forgotten until it resurfaced, jarring with the present.

*‘I’ve never questioned on - or found out anything about cillínís [sic] ever anywhere until I went to your event.’* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

As a result of the exhibition Bridie was able to understand a previously incomprehensible event from childhood. The installation enabled her individual memory to be placed within a social and cultural context which unlocked her understanding of the past.

But what exactly is memory? For historians and theorists, individual, collective and cultural memory are contested areas of thought, partially due to difficulties associated with defining memory. In basic terms memory is processing and storing information from the world around us then later recalling it. There are different ways of remembering the past even if a group has shared the same experience. Their memories will be distorted by being viewed through their own unique lens of individuality, hence, one of the complications surrounding collective memory.

As discussed earlier, Halbwachs defined collective memory as one that develops through interaction with others within a social framework (Halbwachs & Coser 1992: 22). Building on this, Jan and Aleida Assmann state that it is difficult to separate individual memory from social memory as all memory is mediated by and through social interaction (2006: 3). They term collective memory as communicative memory and oral history is part of this. Cultural memory is one that is upheld through rituals, texts and practices. For example, a shared religion binds a group together creating cultural memory.



Figure 64: Graham-George, S. (2020) Detail -Requiescat. [Sound work, Priest's Travelling case, artist books]

I used this theory to underpin my work with my participants who all shared a cultural memory founded on their Irish Catholic upbringing intertwined with folk-belief each with associated customs, rituals, superstitions, narratives, songs and taboos:

'Religious rituals are without doubt the oldest and most fundamental medium of bonding memory, and we should note that we are concerned here with bonds and communities that include the universe of spirits and the dead.' (Assmann 2006: 10)

Within *Requiescat* the subject of the cillín mothers is framed using the language of this shared cultural memory in which participants and listeners alike are fluent, eg. the priest's traveling case used to administer the last rites to the dying, the flower symbolism of the daisy, Mary's tears, embellishing the interior of the box (fig 64) limbo, baptism, churching and the Otherworld.

My interviewees shared personal memories which reflected the social framework of their collective memory of that particular community which also included the much wider cultural memory of religion, faith, and folk-belief binding them together:

'The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilise and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.'

(Assmann & Czaplicka 1995: 132)

Threads of this shared cultural memory which connect each individual are detected within the audio recordings. It is within this web of connectivity that traces of the mothers in the cillíní can be discerned.

### **Oral History as Collective Memory**

'But on the cart was a little white box, painted white box, a little coffin. Very small...probably in the early afternoon. The man on the horse and cart was all alone.'

(From recorded interview for sound-work)

We are told that traditionally burials in a cillín took place at night or twilight (Dennehy 2003: 17; Finlay 2000: 413; Garattini 2007: 195). My interviewees memory of the burial she witnessed in Dooks County Kerry contradicts these statements aligning instead with Robin Flower's detailed and very moving account of a morning burial in the rain and mist, at the cillín on the Great Blasket attended by all the islanders. The account recalls the father of the baby leading the funeral procession as it 'wound through the scattered houses of the village, always increasing' (Flower 1983: 85). Flower further notes the time as eleven o'clock when those gathered finally

dispersed and the sun returned (Flower 1983: 85-86) and he accompanied Tomás Ó Criomhthain to his house which was in the lower part of the village close to the burial ground.



Figure 65: Von Sydow, C. (c. 1924) Tomás Ó Criomhthain outside his house, Great Basket. [Photograph]

Both are oral history first person witness accounts which present an alternative perspective and, in some cases, contradicts the accepted history associated with the cillíní. As Perks and Thomson note ‘[m]emories are living histories’ (2016: 17), the raw ingredients of oral history documents the memories of individuals or groups which sometimes disputes the official historical record. Not surprisingly debate exists between historians, who question the use of memory as a reliable witness as opposed to officially documented history (Perks & Thomson 2016: 17; Green 2004: 37).

However, oral history traces aspects of the past which at times are missing from the official documentation of the past, resulting in a more democratic retelling of these events as ‘[t]he narrator not only recalls the past, but also asserts his or her interpretation of that past’ (Perks & Thomson 2016: 17).

Testimony of this type can challenge our accepted views of history as in the case outlined above, and at the same time introduce new evidence and lines of thought (Thompson 2016: 58). In the process it can ‘be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history’ (Thompson 2016: 54). My recorded, edited and composed testimonies in *Requiescat* do open

new lines of thought about the cillíní and the adults buried here. This is achieved by blending conversations not usually juxtaposed about the cillín, motherhood and the Irish Catholic church. Consequently, they raise questions and awareness about the cillíní mothers buried, a subject rarely focused upon by traditional archives in part due to who was responsible for documentation.

Paul Thompson makes the point that the making and recording of history is based on power and governance invariably involving men (2016: 55). That within history-making there has been a significant lack of interest in the female experience (2016: 55). So that the image of the past becomes one-sided and distorted because in the past '[t]he very power structure worked as a great recording machine shaping the past in its own image' (2016: 55).

A point reiterated by Historians Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O' Dowd, and Maria Luddy when concluding why the stories of Irish women in history are absent. In conjunction with male dominated historical discourses they argue that 'the training of Irish historians has led them to consider women as historically insignificant' (1992: 5). This partially accounts for why the story of the cillín mothers has been overlooked. In death these women were marginalised which historical editing has also achieved.

The National Folklore Collection in Dublin houses one of, 'Europe's largest archives of oral tradition and cultural history' (National Folklore Collection n.d.). Established in 1935 it contains over 2,400 transcribed oral history interviews. The remit of the collection was to collect and preserve the folk traditions practiced by men and women across rural Ireland with special focus on the Gaeltachts. However, the Folklore Commission only employed men as fulltime collectors. Only one eighth of part-time collectors employed were women who 'were not only not employed as full-time collectors; they were significantly under-represented among the Commission's informants' (Briody 2016: 58).



Figure 66: Ó Muirheartaigh, T. (1900) Tomás Mac Gearailt, Márthain Thoir, with collector Seosamh Ó Dálaigh [Photograph]

A similar gender disparity is recognised between the interviewees with only one sixth being female. This under representation of women resulted in a collection from a specific male viewpoint ‘very much a product of its time, a time when women went unnoticed’ (Nic Suibhne 1992: 12). This situation might also explain the small percentage of information gathered around subjects specifically about the female lived experiences, pregnancy, churching, birthing etc. Another factor at play was the Censorship of Publications Acts of 1929 (Keating 2014: 70) in line with morality issues concerning ‘sex, sexual morality, contraception and abortion’ (Keating 2014: 67) written into the act influenced by Irish Catholic teaching. As a consequence, ‘of this growing puritanism, certain types of folklore were under-collected and certain aspects of folk-life under-investigated’ (Briody 2016: 58). From my own experience using the collection, I found minimal transcripts (that were written in English) concerning churching, surprising considering that by the 1930s Ireland had the highest birth rate in Europe (Delay 2015: 8) as the Catholic church

expected married women to have large families and that churching was basically a mandatory rite of passage back into society.

It must not be forgotten that personal preference also played a part in what collectors recorded. In the case of childbirth Ciara Breathnach relates that within the first twenty years of the commission 'very few stories about birthing were collected' (2016: 37). She also mentions the attitude of one of the pivotal archivists, Seán Ó Súilleabháin towards women - 'Ó Súilleabháin's prescriptive guidance in the Handbook gave the world of women little quarter' (2016: 50). The perceived unimportance of women's lives by a predominantly male organisation, reinforced by draconian censorship publication laws, alongside employment rules regulating women's work, combined to eclipse the details of the lives of women.

Oral history can give a voice to the stories and people that may not otherwise be heard or recorded. History is composed of many differing perspectives, bringing these together creates a broader picture of past events:

'Reality is complex and many-sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated' (Thompson 2016: 56).

The history surrounding the cillíní and the narratives connected with motherhood, birth and death are complex, as they encompass politics, religion and folk-belief, filtered through the lens of personal lived experience. *Requiescat* reveals and encompasses these complexities through audible personal testimonies.

## **The Sound of Collective Memory**

The National Folklore Collection contains thousands of interviews, meticulously recorded after face to face meetings between an interviewee and interviewer (fig 67). This oral exchange forms the basis of the collection.

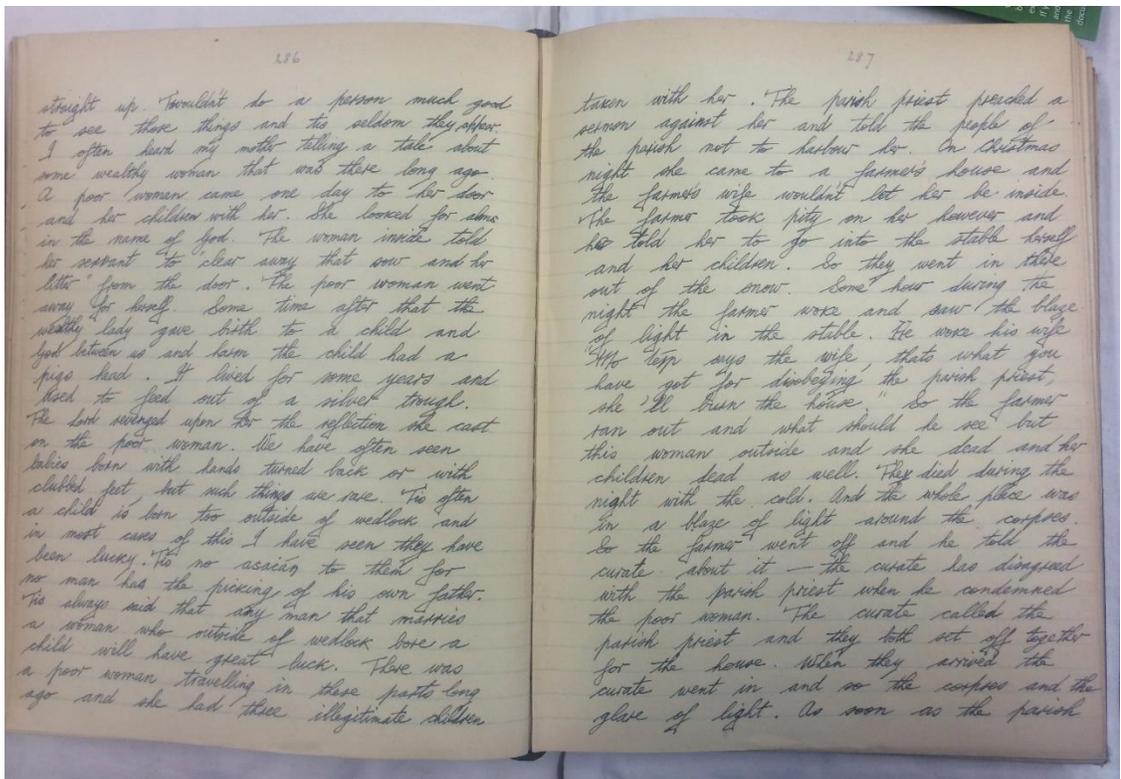


Figure 67: Graham-George, S. (2019) Ledger, National Folklore Collection of Ireland. [Photograph]

There is also a relatively small, in comparison, sound archive, but the majority of these cultural memories are transcriptions, giving no hint to the accent or timbre of the voice. As a listener, to hear the voice helps us locate a person geographically and physically within our minds eye and gain a sense of the individual.

Cathy Lane's (2006) paper, *Voices from the Past: Compositional Approaches to using Recorded Speech* sorts into three categories the way speech is used by artists and composers; speech recorded or performed from a script, recorded interviews and when archival material is utilized. It is the last two categories which are of most interest here. She goes on to explore how recorded speech is treated and designed for different outputs such as radio documentaries, an example Glen Gould's *The Idea of North*, sound walks or sound installations. Other sounds might be used within these contexts but to only 'enhance the understanding of the subject...the primary interest is in the narrative content of the speakers' (2006: 5). In *The Idea of North*, sounds of the train as it travels north mix with other ambient sounds, form the backdrop for the many voices

which weave together, sharing a collective memory of traveling, living, being north yet each with its own unique recollection.

A sense of place can be aroused through listening to a person's accent, dialect or language, a methodology which Cathy Lane explored using sound and described in *Mapping the Outer Hebrides in Sound: towards a sonic methodology* (2016). Not dissimilar to Tim Robinson's deep mapping of Aran, Lane uses sound to explore the connection between place names in spoken Gaelic, how they reflect the history and culture of the islands, becoming keepers of cultural and collective memory:

'When a place name is spoken between inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides it comes already meshed within an intangible cultural heritage and forms a network through which memory is transmitted, received, re-imagined and shared.' (2016: 356)

Lane calls her sound works '*docu-music*' (2006) where interviews, spoken text, archival oral history recordings and field recordings are combined to create sound compositions.

In *Connemara: Listening to the Wind*, Robinson observes that aspects of the past become forgotten, overwritten or obliterated. In relation to sound he writes:

'Sometimes, rarely, a scrap of a voice can be caught from the universal damage, but it may only be an artefact of the imagination, a confection of rumours. Chance decides what is obliterated and what survives if only to be distorted and misheard.' (2007: 2)

As discussed earlier, oral history can sometimes redefine the obliterated or distorted aspects of official documenting of the past. In *Requiescat* the combination of new oral histories alongside archival sound recordings from the National Folklore Collection and auto-ethnographic recordings capture the 'abolished voices' (Robinson 2007: 3) to redefine the position of the mothers who died in childbirth within contemporary historical documentation of the cillíní.

From 2018-2019, I conducted a series of recorded interviews with fifteen individuals (pg. 74; 76). As a group they were united by a shared cultural memory connected with a sense of place - County Kerry, and religion – Catholicism. It is through the 'scrap of a voice' (Robinson 2007: 2), heard in my interviews that we discover the spectral traces of these mothers.

## Motherhood

*'[W]omen's role was specifically to ... raise children and to look after their husbands and to mind the home.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

In this interview my participant proffered her opinion on the ways in which the Catholic Church and Irish State had historically controlled and contained women. During the nineteenth and into the mid-twentieth century, Ireland was considered 'by sociologists as an extremely patriarchal society, a situation created and maintained by the institutional Church; the State; the economic structure and the social and cultural construction of heterosexuality' (O'Connor 1999: 1). Pat O'Connor's work outlines the changing role of women within this patriarchy. She describes the 'social subordination' of women up until even recent years as something perceived as a natural phenomenon which justified why women were confined to hearth and home (O'Connor 1999: 2).



Figure 68: Von Sydow, C. (1924) Blasket portraits; a family. [Photograph]

Within society marriage was of utmost importance as it was through marriage that a woman gained status, becoming a wife and mother (O'Connor 2005: 46) whose role was to legally

procreate. In writing about women and childbirth customs in Ireland from 1850-1930, Cara Delay writes that upon marriage 'the production of children was considered women's primary role' (Delay 2015: 8).

## Pregnancy Outside Marriage

*'[P]regnancy outside marriage was so profoundly stigmatized.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

For those women who became pregnant outside of the sanctity of marriage the spiritual rulings governing her actions were harsh in the extreme. The Church exerted influence over the community to ensure that she 'incurred the most severe social sanctions' (Connolly 1982: 188). In 1831 clergy in the diocese of Dublin were ordered not to church unmarried women and a similar policy was also in place in County Cork (Connolly 1982: 180) - a move which reinforced the social isolation of these women. In many cases churching would only be given after public humiliation had been suffered in front of the congregation 'in such a way that her disgrace would deter others from the same offence' (Connolly 1982: 180).

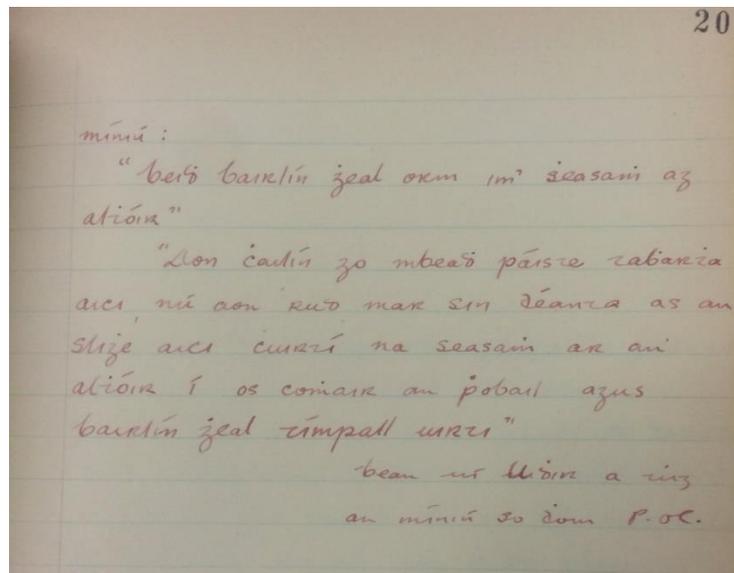


Figure 69: Graham-George, S. (2019) Handwritten song from National Folklore Collection of Ireland. [Photograph]

In 1934 Próinnséas Ó Ceallaigh transcribed a song remembered by eighty-year-old Nóra Ní Chonaill (fig 69) and translated by Claire Ní Dhubhcháin, which describes penance meted out by the church to a girl with an illegitimate child:

“I’ll have a white sheet on, standing at the altar”

Any girl who has an illegitimate child, or who has done anything untoward like that, will be made to stand at the altar in front of the community, wearing a white sheet”’. (NFC 48: 201)

Pregnancy outside marriage was punishable not just by the church but also the local community. The woman or girl would be ostracised even by her own family for bringing shame. Within this context there was an element of blame, the woman perceived as the guilty party whereas:

‘The father of the child got away lightly, by comparison with the mother at least. It was said, for example, that no attention was paid to him and that he always got away.’ (Nic Suibhne 1992: 14)

Numerous folk stories relate the fate of an unmarried mother at the hands of her local community and parish priest. This story, collected in 1937 in County Galway is about a poor woman with two illegitimate children:

‘...and did not the Priest of the parish turn against her, and not only that didn’t he turn all the people o’ the parish against her. Everyone ignored her, and wherever she went, they all turned from their door, and would give her nothing to eat. Nobody stood to her at all.’ (NFC 389: 341)

The story continues with the priest refusing to attend the woman and children to offer last rites even though they were dying. A ‘silenced priest’ (NFC 389: 344) eventually prepared her for death meaning that, ‘herself and the two children went to heaven’ (NFC 581: 344).

This mirrors the story of *Áine* a mother of three illegitimate children. On her death the priest refused the last rites or Christian burial. She was eventually buried by her neighbours ‘outside of

sacred land' (Delay 2012: 72) and it is quite conceivable that *Áine's* final resting place was a cillín, but unfortunately the details are too vague to be certain.

The 1937 story has sad parallels with that of Peggy McCarthy. In 2019 I interviewed playwright Tony Guerin whose *Solo Run* tells the 1946 story of his father and neighbour, twenty-five-year-old, unmarried and heavily pregnant Peggy McCarthy. Going into labour whilst critically ill with eclampsia and in dire need of medical assistance, local taxi man John Guerin drove Peggy to Listowel hospital where they were turned away by the nun in charge and refused medical treatment, as Peggy was unmarried. At Tralee hospital they were once again turned away. Twenty miles to a third hospital in Killarney Peggy died, a baby girl was born but with learning difficulties and subsequently raised in a Magdalene Laundry. As was the case in parts of Ireland at this time within hospitals 'unmarried expectant women were sometimes refused treatment altogether' (Rattigan 2010: 172); Kerry County Council had a rule whereby these women were not allowed admittance to the county's hospitals.

The final sad end to Peggy's story was that her local priest refused her body in the cemetery, as she had died in childbirth unwed:

'The gates of her parish church were locked against her, by the Parish Priest. And at that stage she was taken to the convent chapel from there by my father again and they were locked as well. Of course, not surprisingly word had been out they weren't to accept her.'  
(From recorded interview for sound-work)

However, Peggy was finally buried there as the local people stormed the churchyard.

The case of Peggy McCarthy is a clear example of how, during the last century the Church and State collaborated to police the moral welfare of women, by refusing medical attention and refusing Christian burials to those who had, in their eyes, sinned by conceiving a child out of wedlock. A similar case with churching, the Church acting as gatekeeper in allowing or not allowing women back into society after the birth of a child.

## Churching

*'...what happened was...you'd notified him, or he notified you that you had to do that. I believe Father, Father \_\_\_\_\_, somebody, said it was optional, I don't think it was too optional, I think it was expected of any good self-respecting Catholic (laugh) to do it right.'*

(From recorded interview for sound-work)

One of my participants, was able to give a very detailed account of her own personal experience, memory and feelings about churching. As she states, her Priest at the time expected her to be churched, it was not optional if she wanted to rejoin society after the birth of her child.



Figure 70: FitzGerald, D. (1922-23) Woman and Children. [Photograph]

Benedictio mulieris post-partum, or the Blessing of Women after Giving Birth also known as The Churching of Women, invariably referred to as churching, was a ritual dating from the early Christian period. This traditional thanksgiving ceremony welcomed women back into the church and society after a period of weeks following the birth of a child. Marking her reintegration back

into society in her new status as a mother (Van Gennep 1960: 46-47). With the advent of Vatican II 1962-65 the practice dwindled but prior to this, legally married post-parturient Catholic women were expected to undergo this ritual:

*'...it was after mass and as the people were going out the priest would come back out with the candle and you were there, kneeling and he said, whatever the prayers were, ... you know, this kind of thing.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

Churching required the woman to kneel before the priest holding a lighted candle whilst he offered a blessing on the status of her new motherhood and welcomed her back into the arms of the church:

*'...and I think Father \_\_\_ mentioned it, but I read it somewhere, that, the reason for the churching... that for a boy it was forty days but for - that it was fifty days for a girl.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

The roots of the custom originate in Leviticus (Lev 12: 1-8) in the Old Testament and related to the Jewish ritual of purification. Leviticus outlines in detail the rules associated with the birth of a male child whereby the mother 'shall be unclean for seven days' and require, 'three and thirty days' before she is purified. On the birth of a daughter the time of being 'unclean' is double that 'she shall be unclean for two weeks' necessitating a further 'threescore and six days to become pure again' (1-8).

The link between purity and the language chosen, 'unclean', 'purifying' with the association between blood and impurity in connection with childbirth (1-8) is one of the reasons why churching was not without controversy. Many deemed it a misogynistic practice implying women and childbirth were dirty and unclean, the mother requiring ritual purification:

*'The way it was, you were like a fallen woman. Like a man and a woman (together) and I was dirty because I had the child ... tainted. .... You were tainted unless you got this candle and (renounced) the devil and all his works. And it made you a Catholic again. See, you weren't a Catholic. Stupid!'* (Kearns 1996: 191 emphasis in the original)

Until a woman had undergone churching, which could be some weeks after the birth, she was unable to attend church even for the baptism of her own child or fully participate socially. Some women felt ostracised until they were churched feeling:

*'the stigma of being labelled as 'tainted' or 'dirty' after going through an often difficult but the no less life-affirming joy of childbirth was something that affected them for the rest of their lives.'* (Lewis 2020)

One of my male informants felt very strongly that it was wrong:

*'I remember as a child then at the end of mass the priest would go into the sacrosanct and come out, back out again and you'd see a mother going up to the railing there and he'd be praying over her. This thing where they had to be cleansed after having a – why they have to be cleansed after having a child! Which was so - there was reference probably to that going right back to...the old testament gospel stories. But it's, it's, it's a male idea and it is, it was ridiculous.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

Others felt the ceremony was misunderstood that it was in fact a celebration of women, a thanksgiving to God. For many other women it was considered a special time, that liminal period between the birth of the child and resuming domestic labours; an opportunity perhaps for a rare but welcome rest (Delay 2015: 13).

Regardless of the thanksgiving element, within Ireland it appears to have been viewed as a form of cleansing where 'until the mid-twentieth century 'echoes' of its earlier role as a rite of purification' (Hogan 2008: 150) still existed. A view reiterated by one of my interviewees whose wife had been churched after the birth of all four of their children:

*'But there is a chance I'd say that maybe some clergy and maybe some people ... the public in general still associate it a bit with the cleansing, you know, which was possibly the reason maybe why the process was abandoned by the Catholic Church.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

Irrespective of whether churching was purification or a thanksgiving does not eclipse the fact that in the preceding two centuries the Catholic Church in Ireland was not averse to withholding the ritual of churching from women and to use it as a form of punishment or control.

In 1780, as a means to encourage more members of his parish to attend mass, Bishop Troy of Ossory devised a rule which stated that parishioners who chose not to receive Holy Communion 'would not be married in church, permitted to act as godparents, or, in the case of women, churched after childbirth' (Connolly 1982: 90). This ruling was designed as a means of spiritual blackmail, at a time when churching was a vital route back into society and the church. To withhold was to ensure a woman remained in a permanent limbo state both spiritually and socially. A further example can be seen when on the eleventh of February 1829 a full meeting of Bishops met to discuss how to enforce discipline within their parishes. One of the recommendations made was for only married women to be allowed to receive the churching ceremony (Yates 2006: 171). This leads to an interesting divide between the rather unsubtle ways married mothers or mothers to be were treated compared to those who had broken the social taboo of pregnancy outside the protection of the marriage vows.

## Abduction by Faeries

'People believe that if a woman dies in childbirth that it is the faeries who take her.' (NFC 42: 188)

In careful neat handwriting using blue black ink, folklore collector Áine Ni Ghráinín transcribed into a hard-backed lined ledger her conversation with Mrs. Kelly from The Pike in County Cork on the eighth of April 1929 (fig 71).

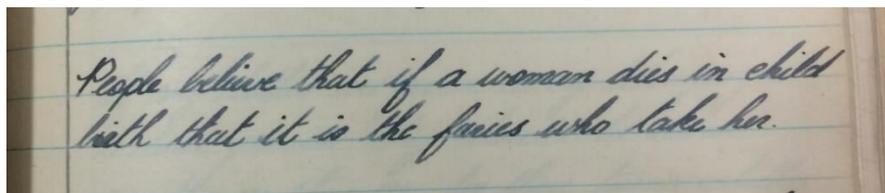


Figure 71: Graham-George, S. (2019) Page from ledger in National Folklore Collection Ireland. [Photograph]

Women who had not yet undergone churching were considered to ‘be in danger because through the process of childbirth she had come to be marginalised by association with forces of the otherworld’ (Nic Suibhne 21), no longer protected by her Catholic faith. Whilst she existed in this post-partum limbo state, she was in danger of capture by the faeries.

Within Irish culture faerie lore is seamlessly entwined with folk belief and religion. There are various schools of thought concerning the origin of faeries, either as fallen angels banished from heaven and condemned to live between heaven and hell (Dowd 2018: 453), the ancient people, the Tuatha Dé Danann (Dowd 2018: 453) who fought with the Milesians retreating underground on defeat, Eve’s hidden children (O’Connor 2005: 37) or people who had died (Dowd 2018: 453). This final point also relates to Anne O’ Connor’s note that faeries were ‘actually the souls of unbaptised children’ (O’Connor 2005: 37).



Figure 72: Graham-George, S. (2018) Hawthorne Tree in Cillín Above Pallas Harbour. [Photograph]

The cillíní, the final resting place for some women who died in childbirth, were often sited in peripheral places in the landscape; places believed to bridge the space between this world and the next and often associated with the Otherworld, the home of the faeries. In my interview with a folklorist we discussed the cillíní in relation to death, abduction and faerie belief:

‘...when you’re looking at legends to do with faeries is [sic] the blurring between the faeries and the realm of the faeries and the realm of the dead. So, you have the same legend talking about somebody dying or ... you’ll have the very same legend told about, it’s not that they died but that they’ve been abducted by the faeries.’ (From recorded interview for sound-work)

Belief of this type was a means of rationalising unexplained events or deaths such as the death of a mother during childbirth. Childbirth was when a woman was particularly vulnerable to abduction. During this period holy water was used ‘[i]n a room where a child is born holy water is sprinkled all over the room and especially on the mother and around the bed to prevent the faeries from taking the child or its mother’ (NFC 189 Mrs O’Brien).

A story associated with this belief is about a household that did not attend to this ritual. One evening a traveling woman looking for a bed for the night came knocking at the door of a house where a woman had just had a baby. The people of the house on waking the next day found the traveling woman gone and the new mother dead (NFC 190 Mrs O’Brien).

On the Blasket Islands as soon as a child was born stale urine was used rather than holy water to protect mother and child. Islander Sean Ó Criomhthain in conversation with Pdraig Tyers recalled how stale urine was sprinkled on any visitors to the house, on the mother and baby and all around the outside of the house and:

‘Before anyone left the house they got a dash of it for, ‘fear of the faeries and that the child or the child’s mother might be blighted. It was protection against the enemy, the pookas or the fairies as they were called here.’ (Tyers 1998: 124)

Not only was the mother in danger of being abducted but whilst in this transitional state she was also considered a danger to others, tainted by the experience of childbirth. Leviticus states, ‘she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled’ (1-8), explaining why it was believed that a woman could not attend church or touch items, prepare food etc. until she had undergone purification through churching. Consequently, a layer of superstition and folk belief surrounded the unchurched woman, governing her activities,

'[b]y aul [sic] tradition she wasn't supposed to go out at all after the child was born, or make a cake, or churn or do anythin' till she was churched' (NFC 1797: 338).

Associated with this were certain folk practices which insinuated that an un-churched woman embodied evil, was unlucky, and a danger to the fertility of the land:

'[I]t is still the belief in Umhall that a woman is unlucky and calculated to destroy the fertility of rivers and to blast the fruits of the earth until she is churched and purified.'  
(Cook 2004: 57)

Such beliefs where practiced were in danger of further compounding a woman's feelings of being tainted and ostracised from her community and society after giving birth. This in-between state which the new mother or mother-to-be inhabited also gave rise to questions about her suitability for burial within consecrated ground.

### **Burial in a Cillín**

'But definitely women would have been put into there because childbirth...the pain of childbirth is Eve's punishment for luring Adam. So to die in childbirth you're dying still in your evil suffering and you haven't been cleansed of the sins that you had done and you're dying an abnormal death and you're dying a bad death and a death in pain and you've had no last rites and you'd had no time to come to terms with your sin, which is having had the baby in the first place.' (From recorded interview for sound-work)

Throughout the centuries there have been differing opinions on what the burial options should be for women who died in pregnancy. One belief was that whilst pregnant a woman received the sacraments meaning that in death she could be safely buried within consecrated ground.

However, the counter argument was that the body of a pregnant woman could not be brought into a church. The Council of Canterbury (AD 1236) and the Council of Treves (AD 1310), made it a pre-requisite which 'decreed that it was unlawful to bury a woman until the fetus had been cut out' (Anderson & Parfitt 1998: 123).

In his book *'The Religious Condition of Ireland 1770-1850'*, Nigel Yates writes that in Brittany during this time the foetus was 'removed by hysterectomy and baptised, with the full

cooperation, in this case, of the local clergy' (2006: 303-4). However, it is unclear if the remains of the mother were then suitable for burial in consecrated ground.

At certain times in history there was debate around the fate of women who died in this way. The fact that there was a debate at all concerning the differing views and interpretations of these Canon Laws leads one to suppose that it was highly likely then that some women would not have been afforded a burial in a Christian kirkyard. In an article examining historical taboos and rituals associated with childbirth in England and Ireland, Susan Hogan comments 'in some areas a woman who died 'un-churched' could not be buried on consecrated ground' (2008: 147).

Folk custom further compounded the fate of women as it was often much harsher than church laws, Madeline Gray makes this very point when she says that:

'Folk custom went further than canon law in excluding not only the unbaptised and stillborn children but even women who died while pregnant, since the foetus within them was not baptised...women who had died in childbirth and even women who had died before they were 'churched' or ritually purified after the birth process were sometimes buried in un-consecrated ground.' (Gray 2009: 15)

## Conclusion

To summarise, in this chapter I have discussed how I used sound to find evidence of the mothers buried in the cillín within collective memory. I uncovered clues in the new oral history recollections which I recorded and researched about the rituals and attitudes towards women, childbirth and motherhood. Within these matters, the influence and control that the Catholic Church exercised over women's bodies and procreation is discernible. As such it is worth noting in relation to the mothers buried in the cillín, the theological debate around whether a woman who died in childbirth could be buried in consecrated ground.

Through personal experience I became aware that stories of women's lives relating to birth, pregnancy, maternal mortality etc. is underrepresented within the nation's foremost oral history archive. This is due to gender bias and personal preferences of collectors employed when the commission was established, as well as the influence of the Catholic Church's involvement with

the Censorship Publications Act 1929 affecting the types of literature which could be collected. The National Folklore Collection is of national importance and used for education and academic purposes to gain understanding of past practices. This gap in female representation within an important archive as a result of Catholic morality and gender politics aligns with, and in part explains, the gradual erasing of the cillín mothers within traditional histories as well as illustrating the forces at play controlling these histories.

In these two chapters I have discussed how sound has located and verified the spectral presence of the forgotten mothers in both the landscape of the cillín and within the collective memory of the community. In chapter five I look at how this medium can re-present this evidence to the wider community.



# Cill Draighneach Cillín



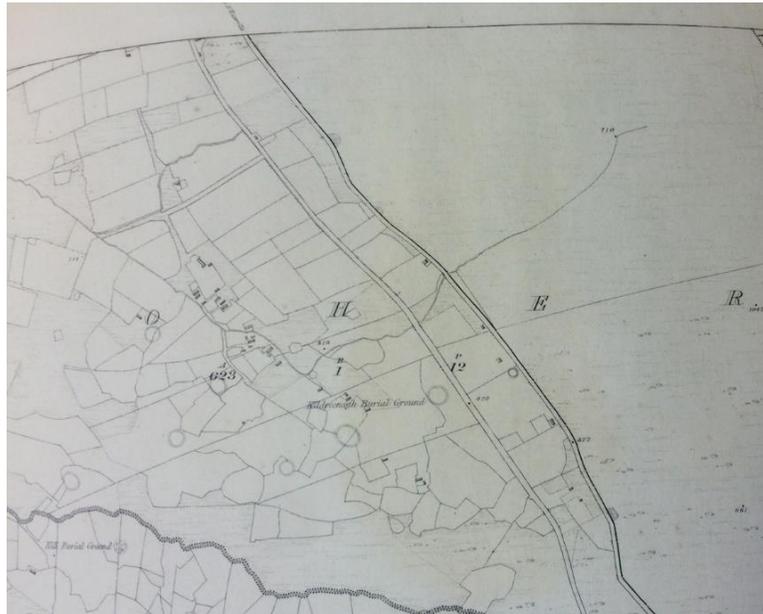


Figure 73: Kildreenagh, Co. Kerry, Sheet 106

'Kildreenagh Burial Ground/ *Cill Draighneach* or *Ceallúnach an Lóthair*: This site is located in rough pasture on the lower W slopes of Farraniaragh mountain, overlooking Ballinskelligs Bay. It is enclosed by a stone wall and contains an oratory, a leacht, three cross-inscribed slabs, a circular hut, and an area of burial.' (Sheehan & O'Sullivan 1996: 305)



*Cold, cold, so cold. Snow on the hills every day, ground frozen. Blue skies and stunning sunrise and sunset over the Skelligs. View right across Ballinskelligs Bay. Raised area with clear aligned stones and quartz. Conversation with x on way down, he said - 'let's be honest, it was a barbaric practice.'*

Sketchbook November 2010

A November day in 2010 cocooned in the warmth of Tom's map strewn car as we twist and turn and make our way slowly along narrow single-track roads between drystone walls. Fields, roads and winter hedgerows sparkling with frost move slowly past my window, the bright green and red of holly bushes punctuating an otherwise bleak palette. In the distance the ring of mountains encircling this remote corner of County Kerry are white and glistening with snow, brilliant against an endless blue sky.

This is the first of many visits that I will subsequently make to this site either on my own, in the company of colleagues or with friends, but this particular day in winter has etched itself deep into my psyche.

As the shadows lengthen the cold penetrates my bones even deeper, if that was at all possible. The day has been spent studying maps, consulting The Iveragh Archaeological Survey book (Sheehan & O'Sullivan 1996), checking map references and trying to locate sites either well hidden, forgotten or erased under brambles, building sites or trampled under the hooves of livestock.

With the sea to our right and the steep western slopes of Farraniaragh on our left Tom kills the engine and we park up beside an impressively large ninth century stone fort, but this is not our destination. Navigating through the churned-up earth of a building site of a half-built house with assurances from my companion that he knows the owner so we're not trespassing, we clamber over barbed wire fences and broken gates to ascend the grassy slope. The fort below getting smaller as we climb, its circular structure clearly visible as height affords us a bird's eye view.

The sound of the tide 'rummaging in/ At the foot of all fields, /All cliffs and shingles' (Heaney 1980: 51) carries on the air from way below and I am fourteen again hearing Miss McKinley my Irish, English Literature teacher reciting these lines from *Shoreline* about a country I never dreamt I would travel to, let alone go clambering up its hillsides on a cold November day.

To our right a green patchwork of fields, tumbling stones and scattered houses sweep away to the bay. On the far headland, the stark silhouette of an old lookout tower outlined black against the bright blue sky.



Figure 74: Graham-George, S. (2013) Cill Draighneach Cillín. [Pinhole 360-degree photograph]

Climbing to the top of a short steep embankment I am left quite simply without words by the sight before me. On a large flat oval plateau are a hundred or more small, upright stones arranged in uneven rows, where scattered tell-tale lumps of quartz further confirm this as a cillín, if confirmation was required. With the light low in the sky the stones stand out sharply against the earth, casting shadows like an army of sundials marking the passing of hours, days, months, seasons.



Figure 75: Graham-George, S. (2010) Cill Draighneach Cillín. [Photograph]

*Late summer, a different year, a different season, '[f]erns of forgetfulness/ Smother stone after stone in rows ' (Ni Mhorain 2015: 11) standing waist high, hiding from view this most precious of places the fine mizzling rain, air still, alive with clouds of midges making the thought of tarrying unthinkable.*

Walking through this miniature city of the dead I study the stones. Each one is unique in size, shape and texture yet they are united by the lack of inscribed name or epithet giving identity to the occupant buried beneath. The only stone bearing any marking is a cross slab near the rear of the site and whose surface is scored with the lines forming a Latin cross and underneath the signs of alpha and omega. The stone is known locally as *an leac chaol*. It stands guard over the avenues of small stones, a last reminder of the old sanctity of this site where an oratory once stood of The Church of the Blackthorn, Cill Draighneach and two other cross-inscribed slabs keep vigil.



Figure 76: Graham-George, S. (2013) Cill Draighneach Cillín – Skelligs on horizon. [photograph]

Like many other cillíní, Cill Draighneach lies hidden away in the landscape, difficult to find unless one is directed or taken to it or there was cause to use the site for burial. Even local people who have grown up in an area are at times unaware of these sites. A local farmer I know well did not know there was a cillín close to his land in the small community in which he grew up. However, I suspect his mother would have known as she was the handy-woman who assisted in births and deaths.

Turning my back to *an leac chaol* I face the sea looking out towards the Skelligs. The ragged outline of Skellig Michael named after Michael the Patron Saint of high places is just visible on the horizon. I visually link these two ancient and elevated Christian sites together as I stand within one and gaze out to the other, '[i]n sight of all, in the shadow of the Cross, / Over us, great wings

of the Archangel' (Ni Mhorain 2015: 11). Turning to my right I gaze across Ballinskelligs Bay to Bolus Head where my small stone cottage clings to the cliffs.



Figure 77: Graham-George, S. (2016) Guardian angel Michael. [Photogravure]

*Early Autumn, a different year, a different season, the bracken changing from green to brown, no longer waist high, the stones peeping through. A bee lazily rests on one of the stones enjoying the final days of warmth of the season. Sitting down amongst the stones of the oratory I lie with my face against the cool stone, close my eyes and listen to a blackbird sing from the top of a nearby telegraph pole.*

As we turn our backs to the site and head downhill, Cill Draighneach is once again folded and cradled within the surrounding hills yet exposed to the vagaries of the weather, sun, wind and rain sweeping in off the Atlantic. We walk back down the tussocky slope, through the building site to the car parked far below. The light is fading, the earth beneath our feet crunches with

frost but printed onto my retina are the numerous rows of small stones protruding from the earth like rows of little jagged teeth, scarring my memory.



Figure 78: Graham-George, S. (2012) Cill Draighneach Cillín. [photograph]

## Chapter 5

### Witnessing, Testifying, Disseminating



## Introduction

In this chapter I explore the sense of responsibility I have to the cillín mothers and the necessity to widely disseminate the stories I uncovered within the collective memory of the landscape and community which evidences their presence. I discuss the shifting relationship between myself as artist, my interviewees and the listener, in our roles as witness and testifier of the audio oral histories and the joint obligation we then have to transmit the story of these mothers.

To be present in the cillín is to bear witness to a clandestine memorial landscape of a practice which saw mothers who died in childbirth refused burial in consecrated ground. My oral history testimonies and field recordings re-presented through creative practice support this claim. Widely broadcasting this work is paramount to inform and engage with the ongoing dialogue concerning the cillíní and the burial of adults. Pascale Neuschafer makes the point that by widely transmitting oral history combined with creative practice renders it 'capable of provoking the transformation of thought by publicly and creatively subverting existing power relationships' (2008: 196).

In the first part of the chapter I discuss the ability of recorded spoken word to engage and connect with the listener. I consider how listening to the voice, its accent and nuances of speech in oral history recordings, gives the listener a sense of place and can prompt feelings of empathy. I examine the connectivity of sound and its ability to touch across time and space reminding us of our interconnectedness within the world, along with the sense of responsibility for the Other. Following on from this I examine how listening to these testimonies is an active experience in which the roles of the listener and artist are defined and fluctuate between that of primary and secondary witness. The final part of the chapter focuses on the responsibility which these roles entail for both artist and listener and the need to transmit the testimonies they have witnessed on behalf of the cillín mothers. I also briefly discuss the difficulties I encountered with my planned public gallery launch of *Requiescat* and the subsequent lessons learned regarding the different ways of disseminating the work.

## Ways to Engage

### To Listen is to Remember, Feel and to Empathise

‘it was only supposed to be in the - only valid in the case of an emergency. So, you know, you were terrified this little creature, that would pop (laughs) off at any moment. I mean, by the time I’d got to the fifth one like, it was an occasion for a holy life (laughs)’. (From recorded interview for sound-work)

A bright mild day in January and I am sat across the breakfast table where the remains of lunch lie between us. I sit and listen as my companion recalls memories from forty - fifty years ago when her children were born and how she performed her own lay baptism with a jug of water whilst in the nursing home.

Listening to the recording of her voice, of time captured from an exact moment in the past, haunts the present as I sit listening hundreds of miles away. Her memories linger in the air mixing with my own memories of that meeting. Of how on my leaving she rushed out to the car to bless me with the holy water she kept in an old gin bottle by the front door. The sign of the cross still wet on my forehead as I drove away. She had shared her memories with me and as a listener I felt I had a responsibility to these memories.

This audio interview was just one of the many interviews I recorded for *Requiescat*. Using audio recordings to hear the actual voice of participants renders these testimonies even more effective in engaging the listener. The recordings were all collected from communities within Southern Ireland. My interviewees had a range of accents including English and Anglo-Irish, with the majority being Irish speakers from County Kerry. Listening to these recordings, the accents have the potential to trigger an emotional response upon the listener in several ways. Oral Historian Tony Butler has used audio oral history combined with site-specific locational walks. Butler conducted a survey of listeners’ responses to hearing voice and accent within his recordings and found that not only did hearing a person’s voice give greater authenticity, he found that accent helped to ‘place the memories in space and time’ (Butler 2016: 574). This is the case when I listen to the recording of Mary; her accent takes me back in time to memories of my first visit to the

cillíní in the company of her husband; to the cold and the season. As an Irish speaker her accent for me is inextricably linked with the landscape, stirring memories of place in my mind.

Tim Robinson in his paper *Lestening [sic] to the Landscape* makes some interesting observations on the spoken language and its connection with the land where it has been formed. Robinson sees it as ‘an emanation of the land of Ireland, of this segment of the earth's surface and its moody skies’ (1993: 22), a unique symbiosis which is discernible in the Irish Gaelic which blends the sound of history with the noise of the land:

‘Here, in the west of Ireland, is a language and a placelore uniquely fitted to the geophany of this land, with its skies full of migrating alphabets, waves that conspire to lift the currach ashore, its mountains like teeming udders, its foot-chilling bogs, the donkey's bray of its history, its ancient words piled on hilltops.’ (Robinson 1993: 32)

Robinson's observations are especially keen as they are those of a non-native of Ireland, someone who has learnt the language by listening carefully to the land from which it is formed and those native speakers for whom it is their first language. Robinson is an astute listener whose skills have been honed sufficiently well to recognise the connection which exists between such an ancient language and the soundscape of the land, the people and animals from whence it springs:

‘[T]he wild goose-chase of the alphabet in the sky, the waves whispering to each other under the currach, the donkey uttering seanchas from the well – are little myths, to tempt you to hear the language as if it were spoken by the landscape.’ (Robinson 1993: 22-23)

These sounds which he describes are those shared by all those who inhabit this environment reminding us again, that a shared spoken language and associated sonic landscape, can create a ‘shared collective consciousness’ (Mollaghan 2015: 127) within a community. Robinson's words also remind us of the layers of history which lurk just below the surface, giving a glimpse into the past, a reminder of the ghosts which inhabit both the language and the land speaking of absence and presence simultaneously.

As well as conjuring memories of place and time Butler also found that for the listener ‘[o]ral history recordings had the power to evoke strong feelings of empathy’ (Butler 2016: 54). This is

interesting that listening to a voice as opposed to reading the spoken word elicits these strong feelings in the listener. In her book, *Listening in: radio and the American imagination*, Susan Douglas writes about how listening can be more powerful than the visual as 'listening often imparts a sense of emotion stronger than that imparted by looking' (Douglas 2004: 30). One of the reasons for this is that 'sound envelops us, pouring into us whether we want it to or not, including us, involving us' (Douglas 2004: 30).

Using multiple, interlayered voices with (in the majority of cases) accents local to the area where the case study cillíní are located, connects the listener to the landscape and history of these sites, prompting a range of emotions within the listener including empathy. In this way sound is a unique medium which can connect us with each other in ways not always possible through our other senses. It can reach across time and space to unite people through the shared experience of listening to, or hearing sounds together. Sound can act as a cultural bonding agent where soundscapes specific to an area are perhaps only shared by those living there or those who have experienced a particular time in history; points which I discussed earlier in relation to collective memory and sound). In her paper reflecting on the way in which sound is used in connection with the shared experience of landscape in Pat Collins film *Silence*, Aimee Mollaghan states that '[s]ound can stimulate a feeling, a mood. It can give us the sense of a shared collective consciousness, a sense of connection to the landscape and each other' (Mollaghan 2015: 127).

### Touch with Sound - to Listen is to Act

Sound can then be considered as a form of touching and is sensed by another. As I have discussed, listening to a recorded voice with all its nuances and accent can produce strong feelings of empathy, and shared consciousness in those who share the same experiences or landscape. The same is also true for those who share memories of the keynote sounds of a landscape. *Requiescat* uses sound as 'a way of touching at a distance' (Schafer 1994: 11) and of 'touching across time' (Mollaghan 2015: 127). In this way *Requiescat* looks to reach out sonically and connect with listeners as '[t]ouch moves and affects what it effects' (Barad 2010: 208) as all of life is interconnected. Touch recognises those invisible traces which connects all sentient and insentient beings throughout life. *Requiescat* employs sound as a means of enhancing and

reminding us of our interconnectedness and the responsibility we have to each other as a result. This responsibility is not confined in linear time but spans all time, past, present and future. As Barad states:

‘Our debt to those who are already dead and those not yet born cannot be disentangled from who we are. What if we were to recognise that differentiating is a material act that is not about radical separation, but on the contrary, about making connections and commitments?’ (Barad 2010: 266)

The dead of the cillíní cannot be ‘disentangled from who we are’ (Barad 2010: 266) likewise neither can the mothers who died in childbirth buried here. *Requiescat* is about enabling us to make that connection and a commitment to speak out on behalf of the dead.

As discussed previously sound is an already haunted medium. The recorded interviews of my participants form the basis of *Requiescat* and exist as a spectral archive of ghostly voices forever captured. A fragment of time that forever presides within the moment, which interrupts and has the potential to modify the future. In this way each interview and field recording exist as a time capsule of personal and collective memory, placed together they create an archive of cultural memory from which *Requiescat* is woven. Each recorded dialogue is a fragmentary thread of memory which is interwoven one through another, ‘knotted, spliced, fractured, each moment a hologram, but never whole . . . Time is out of joint, off its hinges, spooked’ (Barad 2010: 243); until the spectral presence of the mothers in the cillín emerge within the tapestry of sonic collected memories heard by the listener.

But what does it mean to listen, and what is it that is being asked of the listener? At this stage it is perhaps an idea to look at the subtle difference between hearing and listening. Whilst one is passive the other is active. To hear is to perceive sound as it reaches our ears. As Schafer notes, ‘[t]he sense of hearing cannot be closed off at will’ (1994: 11). In this state we are passively aware and receive the sounds around us. Listening on the other hand is an active and conscious choice which requires engagement with sound as we listen to gain understanding or interpret meaning or feeling from what we are listening to; we are looking for something which resonates between us. As Jean Luc Nancy the French philosopher writes in his book *Listening*, ‘[w]hen one is

listening, one is on the lookout for a subject, something (itself) that identifies *itself*, by resonating from self to self' (2007: 9).

To be a listener is to be an active participant. In *Requiescat* I encourage the listener 'to be in touch, in ways that enable response-ability' (Barad 2010: 208), achieved through the very act of active listening. The listener is positioned alongside me as a witness to the poly-vocal testimonies of the spectral landscapes of the cillíní and the collective memories of the community. This role as witness for both myself and the listener carries the weight of responsibility.

## Rules of Engagement

### To Bear Witness

What do I mean by being a witness? A witness is someone who has experienced an event and can attest to this through personal knowledge, giving their testimony. Throughout time artists have functioned as witnesses to events within society and culture, their art conferring form and expression to their testimony. In his article '*Our Brothers' Keeper: Moral Witness*' historian Alex Danchev writes the artist as the moral witness within society. In this role the artist is not a passive witness to events. As Danchev writes, 'witnessing is not a neutral act. It does not leave things as the witness finds them' (2015: 193). Creating art as a witness has a responsibility attached, a point I will discuss later in this chapter. Within this context, art has an obligation 'to prick the conscience, to lodge in the memory' (2015: 193), to agitate for change by drawing attention to a subject through using personal testimony, one's own or that of another.

The Columbian artist Doris Salcedo's work is about trauma<sup>1</sup> and memory and the violence, death, grief and loss experienced by individuals. As part of her practice she gathers personal testimonies, interviewing those whose relatives have died or have become the 'disappeared', the survivors and victims of violence in her native country. She has spent time with those affected, listening to their stories and observing how they live. Using these observations and testimonies, she embodies the grief of these individuals within everyday domestic spaces and objects

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<sup>1</sup> My own research project is situated within the field of memory studies and not trauma studies.

(Moreno 2010: 96). Sculptures incorporating familiar objects become personalised, enhancing the viewers empathetic response. Salcedo's working process is described by Jill Bennett in her study of Salcedo's work as:

'[A] process of allowing the pain of the other to inhabit the self' which in turn 'provides the artist with an identity and function as maker of objects that proceed from a state of embodied grief.' (2002: 336)

Salcedo's work is heavy with the spectral presence of the Colombian dead and disappeared who populate her work. As an artist Salcedo consciously aligns herself with those in grief or mourning through her empathic practice. In an interview with Charles Merewether in connection with the UNland series of work Salcedo described how 'the presence of each victim imposes itself' (1999). Salcedo describes her working process when investigating the death of victims of violence, that through her practice she metaphorically accompanies them step by step to their death and as a result the person is internalised within her. Therefore, she is invested with a sense of responsibility to those left behind, 'I assume responsibility toward the bereaved' (1999).

This internalising of the dead reminds us of Derrida's *The Work of Mourning*, a collection of funeral orations, eulogies and letters of condolence commemorating the life of his many friends and colleagues. In one letter written on the death of his friend Roland Barthes, Derrida, when referring to photographs and photography writes of '[g]hosts: the concept of the other in the same...the completely other, dead, living in me' (2003: 41-42). In the same way the ghost of the other, the victims of violence, haunt Salcedo and her work. In the same interview she describes that whilst making her work the victims 'live within me and remain in me even after the work is finished' (1999).

Through her work Salcedo feels compelled to speak on behalf of those victims as they are unable to do so themselves. Recalling Derrida's comments on justice and the responsibility that we each have to speak for the dead when they cannot, that:

'No justice seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some *responsibility*, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts

of those who are not yet born or who are already dead.’ (Derrida 2006: xviii emphasis in the original)

That the spectre of the dead haunts and lives within each of us. That we experience the spectral within the collective memory encased within the landscape of the cillíní and the community and through the lens of our own spectres. That awareness of these spectres within the land and memory-scape oblige me to speak out to redress justice through my work with *Requiescat*.

This sense of responsibility is one that Derrida repeats again in his writing about the pain of loss, and the need to speak out and ‘break the silence’ (2003: 5). And this is what Salcedo accomplishes in her work by positioning herself as a witness on behalf of the victims, by being ‘a witness of the witness’ (Merewether 1999). Through this process Salcedo proceeds to situate herself as a secondary witness. In *Requiescat* these concerns of hearing and propagating personal testimonies are vital to the primary purpose of the work, to highlight to the wider community the story of the women who died in childbirth and subsequently buried within the cillín. To achieve this aim, my role as the artist fluctuates between that of primary witness giving my own personal testimony to that of secondary witness, listening and spreading the stories of those I interviewed.

### The Self as Primary Witness

*‘I remember being so scared listening to the screams of the other women down the corridor in the Island’s small hospital and thinking, Oh God, it’ll be my turn soon.’*  
(*Requiescat* 2020)

The above lines are from *Requiescat* and my autobiographical memory within the narration. Memory of this type is often dependent upon social interaction to keep it alive (Halbwachs & Coser 1992: 24). However, with the case of something so emotionally difficult as this experience, the memory has left a clear imprint within time and space so that at times it is ‘brought to awareness again through contact with otherwise almost forgotten associations’ (Halbwachs & Coser 1992: 24). This particular memory lurks like a ghost within my mind; the traces left will never be erased, emerging unbidden into my every day and skewing time.

My use of an embodied research method combining ‘*autobiography and ethnography*’ (Adams, Ellis, Holman Jones 2017) is a form of ‘confessional tale’ (Van Maanen 1988) in which I use my own fear of dying in childbirth to present an empathetic understanding of the cillín mothers. Rather than viewing my subjects as other this method recognises that ‘our humanity is both shared and singular’ (Jackson 2008: 379).

As we have no record of the cillín mothers’ thoughts or fears about childbirth and possible death, I have chosen to be a primary witness to the story, with my personal memory as testimony so that the ghost of these women reside within and remain with me.

I also applied this form of witnessing to describe my journey to each cillín, whether meditative walking or driving, and the subsequent feeling of eventually reaching and being in that spectral landscape.

*‘I remember it was the winter and walking out along the sand-dunes towards the sea and eventually reaching the end of the sand-dunes where they met the sea. And there were all kinds of hummocks in the grass and I went down onto the beach area and it was so eroded that bones, human bones, were sticking out of the sand.’ (Requiescat 2020)*

The ambient sounds from my field-recordings situate the listener within that time and place. To be transported back and be aurally present on that winter’s day walking along the sand dunes with me becoming secondary witnesses by listening to my own personal narrative and autobiographical memory relating these memorial spectral sites.

### The Listener as Secondary witness

*‘I was born in 1945 during the second world war, I’m a war baby, therefore but I was the biggest baby born that year in the district hospital in Killarney, you know the community hospital. I learned this from my mom [sic] later on and the nun who delivered me she was a Mercy Sister, a distant cousin of ours exactly through marriage. But in any case, my mom [sic] was in hospital for a full week because it was, they’d say, a fairly laborious birth. I was baptised I think the day after I was born, so my mom [sic] was by no means able to*

*attend the baptism ceremony of her first born, which is me.'* (From recorded interview for sound-work)

The above is an extract from an audio interview I conducted whilst sitting in my interviewees lounge listening and recording this collective memory which gave me an insight into how his family group related and communicated. Assmann and Czaplicka write about collective memory as a form of communicative memory between groups (1995: 127). Yet his conversation also revealed aspects of cultural memory, of the rites and rituals; in this instance, the ritual of baptism and integration into society, which bond a group together through time (1995: 129). Listening to him, I became a witness to these memories and felt privileged to hear and share his thoughts and life events.

Within *Requiescat* my role fluctuated between that of primary witness, giving my own personal testimony as described above and as a secondary witness to the many stories I heard during the audio interviews.

It is within Holocaust Studies where most research has been generated into the theory of primary and secondary witnessing in relation to memory. However, there is much that is relevant in these theories which can be applied to *Requiescat* and my use of primary and secondary witnessing to inform the discussion into the cillín mothers. Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer in their work with testimonies from Holocaust survivors describes how the listener 'must allow the testimony to move, haunt and endanger them; they must allow it to inhabit them, without appropriating or owning it '(2009: 163).

The use of the word 'haunt' brings us back to Salcedo and Derrida and the feeling of embodying the presence of the other. Allowing the traces of ghosts which haunt the memory of the speaker to lodge within us as the listener. Even though these ghosts, which we allow temporarily to inhabit us are not our own, they remind us of our interconnectedness and responsibility.

The listener must be prepared to listen emphatically, to be moved, yet not try and own the narrative. A situation which I experienced as the interviewer and witness as I listened to these testimonies, but one that equally applies to the listener of *Requiescat*, who becomes secondary, and perhaps could even be described as a tertiary witness in some circumstances.

In her paper *'History, Memory and the Genre of Testimony'* concerning primary and secondary witnessing in relation to the Holocaust and survivors, Aleida Assmann describes a secondary witness as 'one who listens to the testimony with empathy and helps record, store, and transcribe it' (2006: 269). This statement describes the role of the listener within oral history as a secondary witness to the story being relayed by the informant. As Assmann states, '[t]he secondary witness is the point of origin not of the event itself but of its story and transmission' (2006: 269).

In the case of *Requiescat*, as the artist I am the point of origin as the secondary witness, charged with responsibility to broadcast the information that has been shared by the participants. In the same way that Salcedo preserves the testimony of victims through her work broadcasting these stories into the public realm through exhibitions of these works.

## Responsibility and Dissemination

*'Twenty-five years ago, we had that, that's the very first one that happened around - that they were honoured. And, it looked like I was involved, our kids were in their teens that time and I was involved in the youth club and it was just at the end of the year that we'd had an outdoor spiritual experience to link the natural world with the supernatural in an outdoor setting. And hearing my mother talking about where they were buried, she remembered them well like, my mother would bury [sic] there in \_\_\_\_ up in the 1940s.'*

(From recorded interview for sound-work)

When I first encountered the cillíní, a local priest put me in touch with a farmer whose deep Christian faith and strong affinity with the cillíní was coupled with a sense of responsibility to speak out on behalf of those buried here and to have them '*honoured*' (see above). An ambition he achieved, despite a difficult priest and landowner, as he eventually organised an open-air mass and blessing to be held at his local cillín. An occasion which he repeated in more recent times at a neighbouring cillín.

In her studies into Holocaust testimonies Anna Karpf mentions the responsibility felt by the researcher as a secondary witness 'charged with speaking on behalf of those who no longer can' (2013: 87). A phrase that reminds us of Salcedo's words about speaking out and being compelled

to speak on behalf of those who are now unable to; a sentiment I share, using my own work and research in this way on behalf of the cillín mothers.

Karpf goes on to further describe the researcher in this position as not only a secondary witness but also as a 'surrogate witness' (2013: 87). A situation where responsibility is even greater when there has been a systematic eradication of evidence, as was the case with the Nazi regime (2013: 87). I am not comparing my research area with the Holocaust, yet there is the same problem presented for very different reasons, that evidence has been almost erased concerning the mothers in the cillíní, points I discussed previously. For these reasons I feel an obligation to highlight the story of these women through the fragmentary traces found within the recorded collective and personal memories of the community. Also, within my role as secondary or surrogate witness I am charged with listening to the testimony of the other, with 'empathy' (Assmann 2006: 269) and to take on the responsibility to propagate their story, especially when they are no longer able to.

Within oral history the role of the Oral Historian as a secondary witness is, as Siobhan McHugh states is 'to disseminate as well as preserve oral history and to ensure that oral history is accessible to a broad range of people, not only scholars' (2016: 523). This is an interesting point made by McHugh and one shared within the autoethnographic methodology which also addresses accessibility by creating works 'that are accessible to larger audiences, primarily audiences outside of academic settings' (Adams, Ellis, Holman Jones 2017).

As an audio poly-vocal portable soundwork *Requiescat* fulfils this criteria and can be widely circulated through traveling exhibitions in galleries and alternative exhibition spaces. Outside these settings *Requiescat* can reach out to the wider general public by being available on-loan at local libraries throughout County Kerry.

In November 2019 I was invited to showcase *Requiescat* at Féile na Bealtaine 2020, one of Ireland's major Arts Festivals combining Irish culture and language with that of international works. Dingle, in the heart of the Gaeltacht has been the home of the festival for the last twenty-six years. The festival is one I know well having exhibited several times already work about the cillíní and I welcomed the opportunity to take my research back into the very community from

whence it originated. From previous experience I knew this would be an opportunity to engage in dialogue with an audience, gain feedback about the work along with collecting anecdotes and personal experiences associated with the cillíní and the mothers buried here.

The festival was to take place the first weekend in May. Ahead of this I had planned to trial the work within my local community and had arranged dates in late March with The Pier Arts Centre, Orkney's leading Art Gallery. The trial was intended to assess the technical aspects of the work as opposed to gathering feedback on the content. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic *Féile na Bealtaine* was cancelled along with the closure of all public venues locally including the Pier Arts Centre.

To address the rapidly changing situation I made the decision to put *Requiescat* out on a digital platform even though this had never been my original intention for the work. The decision was based on the need to find an alternative method of reaching an audience at a distance due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

In this format listeners could access the piece on Soundcloud through a WordPress site which contextualised the work. Listeners were also advised that a more intimate listening experience would be gained through using headphones. Within the site I embedded a digital survey to gain feedback. The benefit of this format was that listeners were not limited by geography to access the work, however, this presented other issues I had not foreseen.

Presenting *Requiescat* in this way was valuable as it clearly demonstrated for me that different listening platforms present alternating listening experiences. As stated earlier, *Requiescat* was never designed for digital world-wide listening at this stage but for slow mediated listening. This is not to say that listening online cannot be a slow immersive encounter, but it is harder to control the listening environment than in an exhibition space or domestic setting.

The same could be argued about the version of *Requiescat* which is available to the public through lending libraries in County Kerry. However, I would counter this by saying that the work, accessed through a local library, is still within its original cultural context. As material objects to be handled, read and listened to, the CD and booklet engage and navigate the listener's experience within a domestic space.

Throughout the research the targeted audience has been Ireland as a whole and the communities in which I have worked. The work is intended to speak to the cultural and collective memory of the country and the communities from whence it originated, and to engage in the ongoing discourse locally and nationally concerning the cillíní and the mothers buried here. I found that this was negated through hosting on a global platform via the internet where it was difficult to target a specific audience as it was too open and variable. Trying to capture the listeners' experience through an online survey also proved unsuccessful as the number of surveys completed were too minimal to gain any valuable data.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the importance of disseminating my research findings about the cillíní mothers through *Requiescat* in order to transform public perceptions concerning the cillín. In addition, raising awareness of these women through my sound work aims to encourage wider debate about the cillíní.

of these mothers. To truly affect change, propagation is paramount and presenting alternative histories and untold stories through my audio interviews has the potential to transform understanding of the past. By using my new oral history recordings 'a cumulative process of transformation is set in motion' (Thompson 2016: 58) to subvert the power relationship responsible for the memory of these mothers being gradually erased from history.

Underpinning my need to widely transmit the story of the cillín mothers is my obligation to speak out against injustice. History has slighted the memory of these women and we, as a society have a responsibility towards those who no longer can seek justice.

To encourage and foster a communal sense of societal accountability I described how I have used sound to connect, reach and touch the listener. Also that by listening to the voice in my oral history recordings not only gives a sense of place but also engenders feelings of empathy within the listener. To be a listener is to actively partake and become a witness to the story listened to and take on the responsibility which this entails. Listening to *Requiescat* I encourage the listener to become a secondary witness to the cillín mothers and in turn testify on their behalf.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusions



## Conclusions

My research looked to discern who these mothers were who died in childbirth and subsequently buried in the cillín, and the circumstances that facilitated this practice. I established that these mothers would have been Catholic women who lived their lives within small rural communities where an all-powerful patriarchal Catholic Church dominated and controlled the personal, social, religious and governmental aspects of life. The Church and society prescribed women's role to be contained within the narrow margins of being a virtuous wife and mother or to remain single and celibate. To stray outside of these confines invited censure by the community endorsed by the Church. The Church used its power within Irish society to constrain and repress women's bodies as well as their sexuality.

The mothers in the cillíní prior to their death, would have lived their lives under the shadow of Catholic doctrine based on the Bible which viewed all aspects of female procreation as unclean, polluting and defiled (Lev 12: 1-8). Women's bodies, rather than being celebrated for the miracle performed in bringing forth new life, were on the contrary seen as impure and tainted; the pain of childbirth described as Eve's punishment (Gen 3: 16) to be suffered by all women as retribution for Eve's sin in coercing Adam in the Garden of Eden. Consequently, postpartum women were expected to undergo ritualistic cleansing known as churching. The birth of a female child meant that the mother was unclean after the birth for double the time period for that of a male child (Lev 12: 1-8). Only through undergoing this official church ceremony was a woman sanctioned to re-join society, such was the control of the Church. Some would argue that the ceremony was one of thanksgiving for the birth of a child. However, I would dispute this considering the points raised above. Interestingly folk belief also mirrors the same viewpoint towards postpartum woman seeing them as dangerous and unclean, to be treated warily by other members of the community. It is not surprising therefore, that questions were raised within the Church Council (Anderson & Parfitt 1998: 123) regarding the burial of a woman who died in childbirth, questions which were also paralleled in folk belief (Gray 2009: 15). Pregnancy and childbirth were only allowed within marriage, and churching only for married mothers. To become pregnant outside marriage was severely taboo within a community governed by the

Catholic Church. Pregnant, un-married women were social outcasts, subject to public shaming legitimised by the Church, whose power was such that even some hospitals were not allowed to treat these mothers. Few choices were left to these socially stigmatised women except a Mother and Baby Home or Magdalene Laundry, both of which were Church run institutions designed to control, constrain and re-educate sexually active women. These women were mistreated in life and in death. At times they were buried in un-marked graves or disappeared as no official death certificate marked their passing even though a body was interred. These bodies are slowly coming to light in the same way as those of the mothers buried in the cillíní.

I unearthed spectral echoes of the mothers buried in the cillíní within the collective and cultural memory of the landscape and rural communities representative of the type of which they were once part. Using audio recordings, I captured and constructed a sonic soundscape of rural Ireland linking the past through the keynote sounds which would have been familiar to these women, whilst giving a sense of place for the listener.

As it is through the oral tradition that we know these women were buried in the cillín, I used oral history to locate traces of these women within the collective and cultural memory of the community. To access these memories, I conducted fourteen audio interviews with fifteen men and women from the same cultural background as these women. In these recordings participants discussed childbirth, baptism, the cillíní, churching, un-married mothers, women's studies, illegitimacy and the Church in relation to their own collective memories. Within these lived experiences framed by cultural memory, could be glimpsed the spectral mothers of the cillíní. In the process their recollections brought my historic research to life.

The reasons why these women are almost absent from the official historical record is perhaps due to a number of contributing factors. As no records exist for the burial of individuals within the cillíní it is through folklore and oral history that we know mothers were buried here. This form of history exists within personal, collective and cultural memory and can at times contradict the officially sanctioned retelling of history, '[h]istory is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it' (Nora 1989: 9). The official histories which retell the story of the cillíní and do not always include these mothers, are in danger of suppressing and

eradicating the memory of these women. To the modern mind the burial of a woman who has died in childbirth being refused burial in consecrated ground is inconceivable. Perhaps this is another reason to consider why this category of adults is inconsistently mentioned in relation to the cillíní.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Ireland was a male-dominated country through governance and religion which also underpinned and determined the ways in which history was collected, perceived and relayed. As a result, women's experiences and role within historical events are assigned to the margins of history.

As part of my research I spent time with the National Folklore Collection of Ireland locating stories relating to women, pregnancy, childbirth, churching, the cillín, illegitimacy and folk-beliefs around these subjects. The archives are extensive stretching from the late nineteenth twenties onwards and exist in both English and Irish. Examples of collected folk belief relating to women's lived experiences are not extensive. This gender gap in Ireland's leading national archive clearly demonstrates historic male bias. The National Folklore Commission of Ireland employed only male collectors full time with merely a small percentage of women as part-time collectors. A further disparity is evidenced between the higher percentage of men interviewed by the collectors compared to that of women. One must also not forget the role that personal preference played on the part of collectors regarding subjects for discussion. The consequences of such gender bias are that women's lived experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, death in childbirth etc. are under-represented within the archives.

Through my research I discovered that sound was the most fitting medium to frame the story of the mothers in the cillíní. As memory of these mothers has been handed down as oral history it seemed appropriate to use a recorded oral medium to relay their story.

These mothers exist as a spectral presence within the landscape and the community. Sound can capture and make heard these unseen traces within these environments. As Toop stated, sound is an already haunted medium (Toop 2011: 170) which cannot be contained within time or space. Sounds within an environment provide a sonic link with the past and recorded sound allows the past to inhabit the everyday as an ever-occurring presence.

As I discussed earlier, the story of these mothers and their relationship with the cillíní is intricate and multi-layered, bound up as they are in the social and cultural history, religion and politics of Ireland. Recorded sound can encompass and re-present all these complexities to the listener. This I achieved within *Requiescat* by carefully editing fragments from the collected audio interviews which were also combined with several recordings from the National Folklore Collections audio archive. Each fragment of collective memory was then woven together to create a neonarrative, where the story of these mothers could be glimpsed within the stories around childbirth, baptism and churcing in relation to the cillíní. Set against a backdrop of field-recordings and constructed sound-scapes, to capture the sound of memory and sense of place. My own auto-ethnographic memories of birth, death and motherhood narrated the story of these mothers threading the fragments to become one. In this way sound was used to create a collated testimony for those who are now unable to testify themselves.

Due to its portability I concluded that sound was a highly effective instrument to use to widely disseminate my research findings and give maximum exposure to the story of these women. Recorded sound can be listened to in a variety of settings and be made easily accessible to an audience. The role of the listener is that of active participant and secondary witness to the story of these mothers, encouraging a sense of responsibility within the witness to act or speak out after listening to the story of their story.

I designed *Requiescat* to be a widely accessible and transportable sound work to be listened to by the general public within either a domestic, gallery or other indoor public setting. To facilitate portability the fifty-four-minute-long sound work was enclosed within a priest's ecclesiastical traveling suitcase. Once used for administering the Last Rites, the case had been appropriated as a container to facilitate the work to travel from venue to venue transmitting the story of the mothers back into the communities from whence these women lived. In this way listeners were encouraged to bear witness to the story of these mothers and in the process become a testifier on their behalf within the community. Unfortunately, due to restrictions imposed as a result of coronavirus the planned public exhibitions had to be cancelled.

To enable the story of these mothers to reach a wide public audience, I created a booklet contextualising and accompanying a CD of *Requiescat*. These I gifted to all the public libraries throughout County Kerry to be freely available to the general public. Fourteen of my interviewees have given consent for their audio interviews to be donated to the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin to be used for educational and research purposes and extend understanding and knowledge about the cillíní and women's lived experiences.

## **Contributions**

My findings support the claim made by oral history and cited by a number of academic papers (Channing & Randolph-Quinney 2006: 124; Dennehy 2016: 213; Garattini 2007; Nolan 2006: 90) that mothers who died in childbirth were buried within the cillíní. As such my research contributes to the knowledge about this under-researched category of adults in the cillín and suggests reasons behind why they might have been interred within these sites. In this way my findings contribute to a greater understanding of these mothers and their relationship with the cillíní within the context of cultural and feminist history of Ireland.

My research also suggests that a creative approach working cross-disciplinary to investigate these sites can lead to new avenues of thought and fresh connections being forged. The findings also support the concept that oral history can be used to contest the accepted historical narrative relating to the cillíní by capturing the voices of those who are often absent from historical discourse. My recordings from primary witnesses have challenged several of the recognised statements surrounding the cillíní (See Appendix 2) supporting the notion that customs associated with these sites varied according to local custom.

The implications of my research could be of interest to disciplines engaged in academic study of the cillíní as well as to local communities working to acknowledge and restore these sites and the memory of individuals buried here. More specifically the findings may be of importance to study on Irish women and gender history. The sound recordings extend and build on the understanding of Irish cultural life associated with women's experiences, lay baptism and the cillíní and for this reason the National Folklore Collection of Ireland has gratefully accepted this contribution to their archives.

As a result of my study, further research might be done to accommodate a focused review from a feminist perspective of females buried within the cillíní in order to gain a holistic overview of this type of burial and the social context in which it occurred. In addition to this is the value of exploring the link between mothers buried in the cillíní and the segregated burial grounds found within Ireland and Scotland. As well as further establishing the connection between the mothers in the cillíní and the treatment in death of women from the Mother and Baby Homes and the Magdalene Laundries.

Another implication of my research is to encourage collaborative working across disciplines, incorporating creative practice to provide a more complete evaluation of these burials. Creative practice can also be a useful instrument to interface with the public and wider community and transmit findings.

The research has opened implications within my own practice. *Requiescat* was designed as an interior sound-work. I would like to explore sound within site-specific settings where sounds are displaced from one environment to another where storying happens within an outdoor setting and a physical journey is partaken whilst listening to the sound-work.

*Requiescat* was intended as an intimate listening experience for individuals. I would like to continue with this work as a socially engaged on-going project working directly with groups throughout Ireland exploring the cillíní mothers through joint creative practice informed by dialogue. Culminating in an ever-expanding memorial highlighting the mothers of the cillíní.





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# Appendices 1

## Cillíní Sites



No.	Name	Area and County	Map Ref: Discovery Series O.S Ireland	Archaeological Survey of Ireland Database Ref	Site Visits 2014-2019	Site Visits Pre 2014	Thesis Ref
1	Dromkeare	Iveragh Co. Kerry	Map: 83 545 684	KE098-021001	5	6	
2	Kildreenagh	Iveragh Co. Kerry	Map: 83 508 618	KE106-007001	5	6	
3	Ballynakilly	Iveragh Co. Kerry	Map: 83 621 768	KE81-023	5	6	
4	Emlagh Bog Valentia Island	Iveragh Co. Kerry	Map: 83 339 757	KE078-005001	1		
5	Cill Rialaig	Iveragh Co. Kerry	Map: 83 339 757	KE097-044009	3	5	
6	Killeenleagh	Iveragh Co. Kerry	Map: 83 584 748	KE089-010003	2	2	
7	Kilmore	North Kerry Co. Kerry	Map 63 846 378	KE009-002		1	
8	Dooks	Co. Kerry	Map 78 688 937	No Ref	Viewed from distance		
9	Ballintaggart	Dingle Co. Kerry	Map: 70 464 993	KE053-033003	3	1	
10	Glin North	Dingle Co. Kerry	Map: 70 438 063	KE043-028004	2		

11	The Rinn - Great Basket	Dingle Co. Kerry	Map: 70 391 042	KE051-002003	1		
12	Lios Deargáin	Dingle Co. Kerry	Map: 70 499 032	KE043-190002	1	2	
13	Teampall Mhóire	Dingle Co. Kerry	Map: 70 324 991	KE052-022001	1		
14	Teampall na Cluanach	Dingle Co. Kerry	Map: 70 391 042	KE042-113008	3		
15	Caheravart	Beara, Co. Cork	Map: 84 675 508	CO102-024002	2		
16	Eyeries (behind the church)	Beara, Co. Cork	Map: 84 648 508	No Ref	2		
17	Above Pallas Harbour	Beara, Co. Cork	Map: 84 701 578	CO102 A001001	2		
18	Golden Strand	Achill Co. Mayo	Map: 30 697 096	MA043-004004		5	

Table 4: Distribution key to cillíní referred to throughout the thesis

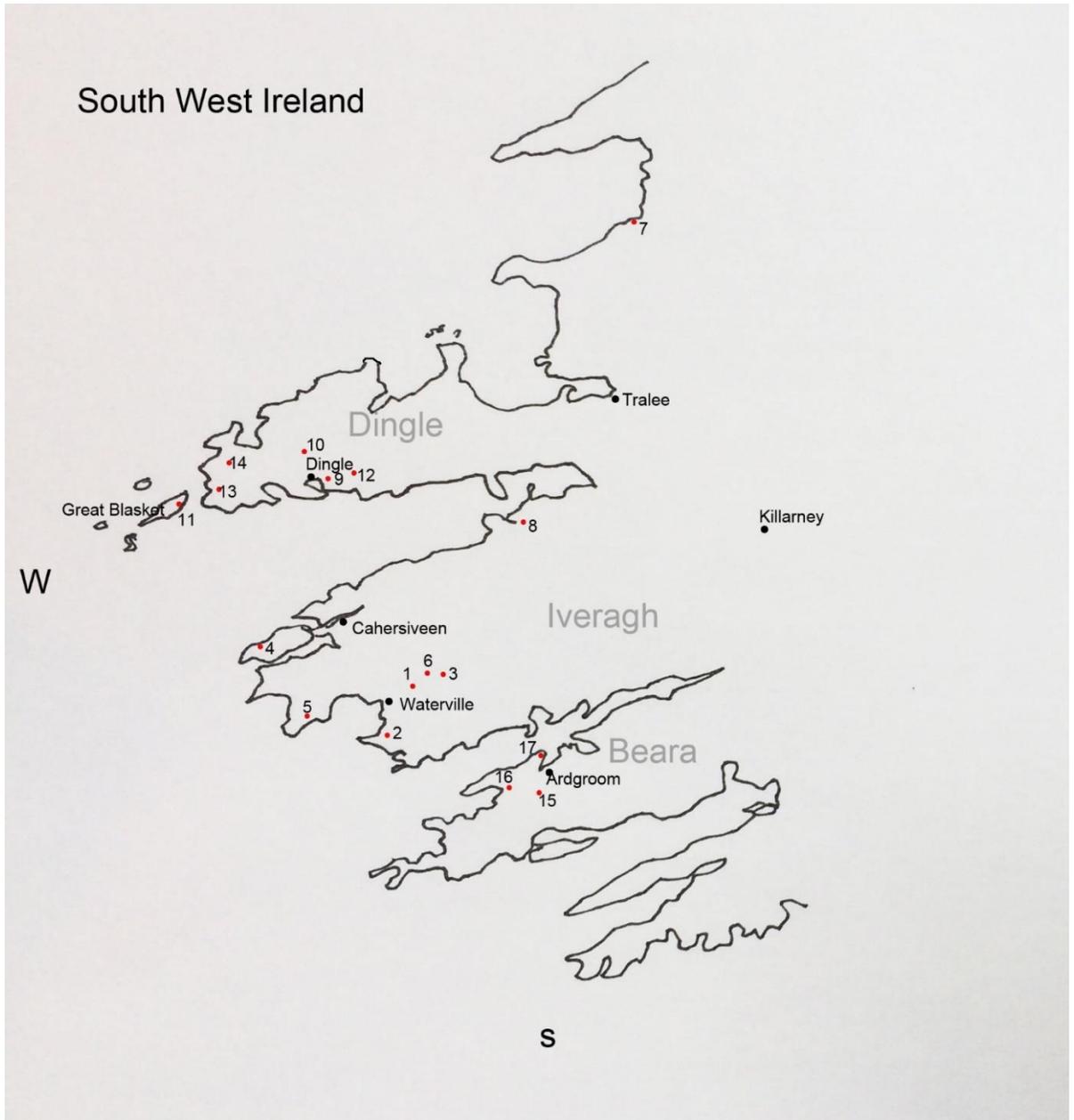


Figure 79: Distribution map of all cillíní referred to in South West Ireland

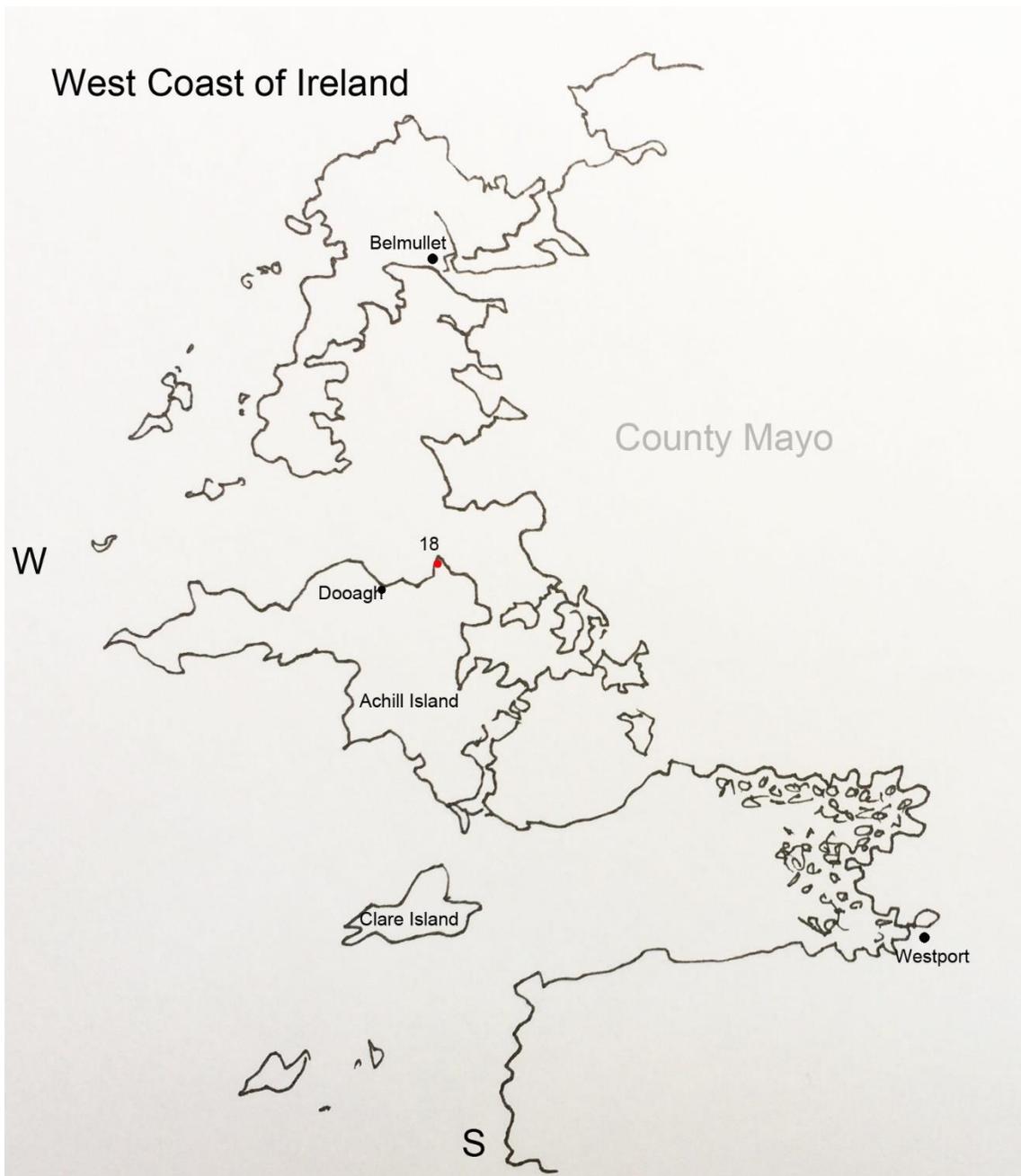


Figure 80: Map location of cillín on Achill Island



Copyright Form P3.

## COPYRIGHT PERMIT

20<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Sheena Graham-George

Dear Sheena,

Your application to reproduce *Ordnance Survey Ireland* material has been received.

I now convey authority for the reproduction of **OSi** mapping for your thesis as outlined in your recent correspondence.

*Royalties are waived in respect of this permission.*

We would however require the following:

1. Source material acknowledgement in the following form to appear as accreditation:  
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*Copyright Permit No. MP 004321*
2. **An OSi logo appears with prominence on the mapping accompanying the permit number.**
3. ~~A copy of the publication to be sent to this office for our files.~~
4. The permission applies to this specific permit and must not be used for any other purpose.
5. Further reproduction or commercial publishing is not covered by this permission.

If I can be of any further assistance please feel free to contact me at any time.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Daniel O'Connell**  
**Copyright Department**



# Appendices 2

## Interviews



## Information Sheet for Participants

Title of study : The Cillini Project

### Invitation

Over the last number of years, I have been creating installations about and researching the many cillini – the un-baptised infant burial grounds found scattered throughout Co. Kerry. With The Cillini Project I would really like to involve members from the local community to share their views, stories, experiences or words about these special sites and issues connected with them and I would like to invite you to be part of this project.

### What is the purpose of the study?

The overall aim of my work into the cillíní is to look at why it might be important for individuals, communities and cultures to recognise those of the cillíní and the possible role of art as a way of making peace with the past and the ways that art might communicate universal loss and compassion while becoming an integral part of the healing process.

As part of my doctoral studies I hope to record different members of the local community. The aim of the recording is to hear each person's view/relationship with these sites to give a multi-vocal overview of the cillíní, be it personal, artistic or academic. These recordings will eventually be used to create a sound composition as part of a sound installation and or audio recording for public exhibition and broadcast.

### Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because of either your personal or work connection with the cillíní or because of a related subject such as the role and treatment of women and unmarried mothers or mothers to be in Irish social history.

### Do I have to take part?

There is absolutely no pressure to take part in this project. If you would prefer not to take part, then just let me know when you reply to this invite and I will of course completely respect your wishes.

### What will happen to me if I take part?

If you would like to be part of the project, I will arrange a time and place suitable to record you. The whole recording process will be quite informal and relaxed, and I will let you know in advance what I would like to discuss with you.

The point of the interview is to record your own ideas, words, thoughts, personal experience etc. in your own voice. The subsequent recording of your voice will be used in a sound art piece which will go on public display in a gallery setting or be heard online as a digital documentation of the artwork or as a public broadcast on radio.

If you would prefer some level of anonymity and are happy for your words to be used in this way but not your own voice, then it is quite possible to have your words spoken by an actor.

### What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

I hope that this is an opportunity to hear individuals talk about the cillíní and related subjects and for those voices to come together as one in a final art piece/or series of art pieces, which perhaps will reach the hearts of others. I also hope that the work produced will contribute to the national dialogue and discussion around these sites.

I am aware that this is a sensitive and potentially distressing subject and I can assure you that I will do everything I can to avoid any discussion which might cause personal upset. If this happens, we will terminate the recording and I will listen to your thoughts and concerns and if need be will make arrangements for professional help to support you.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

If you would like your participation to be kept confidential then I will ensure this is the case regarding your name and voice. Please let me know clearly what you are comfortable with.

As stated above, the recordings will be used as part of a sound installation/audio artwork/exhibition/online or radio broadcast. The original recordings from which I will edit will remain in my safe keeping and will not be in the possession of a third party.

How is the project being funded?

The project is part of my self-funded doctoral studies at the Glasgow School of Art where I am registered as a student.

What will happen to the results of the study?

I plan to use parts of the recorded interviews to construct a sound work which will be publicly heard and disseminated as widely as possible. Pre-doctorate the work will form part of my doctorate. Post doctorate the work will continue to be heard in the public arena, online, radio broadcast, exhibitions and will also be part of a sound archive. I will keep you informed on completion of the doctorate and final outcome of the work.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:



What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

This study has received approval via the GSA Research Ethics Sub Committee. If this study has harmed, you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact GSA using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr Gina Wall (Deputy Head of Fine Art & PGR supervisor)/



Or

Head of Research, The Glasgow School of Art, 167 Renfrew Street, G3 6RQ; [research@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:research@gsa.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering to take part in this research. Please keep this sheet for future reference.



Research Consent Form A

Research Project Title : [The Cillíní]

Lead Researcher: [Sheena Graham-George]

Contact Details:



or mobile:



*Please initial  
boxes*

]

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study;
2. I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily;
3. I agree to being audio recorded as part of the research 
  - a. I am happy to waive my anonymity
  - b. I would prefer my name to remain anonymous   
*Optional / delete as appropriate*
4. I agree to audio recordings being made publicly available in publications, presentations, exhibitions, reports, online, examinable format (dissertation or thesis) for the purposes of research and teaching – I understand that these will remain anonymous;
5. I agree to the results being used for *future* research or teaching purposes;
6. I agree to the results being made public post doctorate, online, radio broadcast, exhibitions, forming part of a sound archive.
7. I agree to take part in the above study.

8. I am happy to be contacted about any future studies and agree that my personal contact details can be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Research Consent Form B

Research Project Title: [The Cillíní]

Lead Researcher: [Sheena Graham-George]

Contact Details: [email: [REDACTED]]

*Please initial  
boxes*

9. Anonymity

a. I am happy to waive my anonymity

b. I would prefer my name to remain anonymous  
*delete as appropriate*

10. I agree to the results being made public post doctorate, online, radio broadcast, exhibitions, forming part of a sound archive.

11. I am happy to be contacted about any future studies and agree that my personal contact details can be retained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018), GSA Research Participant Privacy Policy.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

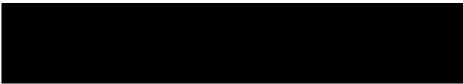
*Complaints about the conduct of this research should be raised with: [Dr Gina Wall (Deputy Head of Fine Art & PGR supervisor)/*



## RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: [The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillín]

Lead Researcher: [Sheena Graham-George]

Contact Details: [email: 

**Please initial  
boxes**

1. I am happy for my audio interview to be added to the collections of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

2. Anonymity

a. I am happy to waive my anonymity

b. I would prefer my name to remain anonymous

***Delete as appropriate***

3. I am happy to be contacted about any future studies and agree that my personal contact details can be retained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018), GSA Research Participant Privacy Policy.



## **PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title of study :** The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillíní

Dear

Back in 2018/19 you were good enough to agree to being interviewed as part of my research project into the cillíní. Each interview was recorded and parts of which were used to create my sound work, *Requiescat*.

Now that my doctorate is nearing completion, I have had time to reflect on the material collected through the various interviews I conducted and recognise that the information contained within each recorded interview is a valuable piece of Irish cultural history. For this reason, I am writing to invite you to consider giving permission for me to share your audio recording with the National Folklore Collection of Ireland and for your audio interview becoming a permanent part of the archive.

### **The National Folklore Collection of Ireland**

As you will probably already know, The National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin, is home to one of the world's largest collections of cultural and folklore oral history. The Collection is comprised of recorded manuscripts, collected transcribed interviews, film and audio recordings.

The collection houses all the material collected by the following organisations; the Folklore of Ireland Society started in 1926 -, the Irish Folklore Institute, the Irish Folklore Commission - both started in the 1930s, and the Department of Irish Folklore UCD started in 1972. The purpose of the Collection has been to document and preserve all aspects of Irish culture and heritage and contains contributions from thousands of interviewees from the 1930s onwards providing an invaluable resource for researchers and educationalists.

### **Why am I looking to share the audio recordings?**

As part of my research I spent time with the National Folklore Collection researching the archives for information on the cillíní, women and childbirth, pregnancy, baptism, churching etc. Information was there but not quite as extensive as I had hoped. For this reason, I know that the stories people have been kind enough to share would add to and enhance what already exists within the archives as well as furthering understanding of areas of research which are underrepresented. I believe that the personal stories and experiences in the recorded interviews provide a valuable insight into Irish culture and as such belong in the nations archives for all to appreciate. I know that the Collection would welcome these recordings as they also recognize their cultural and national value.

### **What will be shared?**

The entirety of the recorded interview will be shared with the National Folklore Collection.

### **What will the National Folklore Collection use the recordings for?**

The recorded interviews will become part of the audio collection within the National Folklore Collection archive where it will be preserved as a permanent public reference resource, available for possible use in education, research, lectures, broadcasting, publication and the internet.

### **What will they do with the archive material?**

The NFC will store and preserve this material, making it available to the public. The recordings will be backed up and stored on their server and paperwork regarding interviewees details will be preserved and stored in the archive of the NFC. They may create a finding aid to assist researchers in this material. This audio may eventually be hosted on one of their online platforms, or used as part of an educational resource or outreach material - in lectures, talks or podcasts etc. In general, the NFC aim to preserve, describe and control this material and to allow researchers to access it into the future.

### **Do I have to agree?**

There is absolutely no pressure for you to agree to allowing your audio recording to be shared with the National Folklore Collection. If you would prefer for it not to be shared please let me know when you reply to this invite and I will of course completely respect your wishes.

### **Permission to share the recording**

If you would like your recorded interview to become part of the National Folklore Collection archive, then I will require your permission, given on my consent form, which will then be shared with the National Folklore Collection as it shows that you have given permission to donate your recording to the archive.

### **What if I decide not to consent?**

If you have chosen to remain anonymous, please be aware that the consent form will include your name when it is signed and that this form will be shared with the National Folklore Collection administration. Within the archive itself, which is open to the public, your anonymity – if requested will be respected by the NFC. If you do not explicitly provide your consent, I will not share your audio recording.

### **Who should I contact for further information?**

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, or would like to hear your recorded interview again, please contact me using the following contact details:



**What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?**

This study has received approval via the GSA Research Ethics Sub Committee. If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact GSA using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr Gina Wall (Deputy Head of Fine Art & PGR supervisor)/ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Or

Head of Research, The Glasgow School of Art, 167 Renfrew Street, G3 6RQ; [research@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:research@gsa.ac.uk)

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering sharing your recorded interview with the National Folklore Collection. Please keep this sheet for future reference.**



## Appendices 3

### The Homeless Dead Project



Participant Information Sheet: 1

The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillíní

Thank you so much for wanting to find out more about this project and hopefully take part! I was very keen to trial this project here in Orkney amongst knitting friends and friends of friends to see how it goes.

I'm hoping that I will eventually have many felted houses as I plan to exhibit the work as a temporary installation somewhere in Orkney later this year. There is also the possibility that this work might become part of the Irish installation planned for next May down in Dingle. But I will keep you informed as plans progress.

As this is part of my Doctorate, I require permissions and consent from each person taking part. So please make sure that you have read and understood the background to the project before signing the consent form and sending back to me. My email address is [lotty\\_otterwick@hotmail.com](mailto:lotty_otterwick@hotmail.com) Completed houses I can arrange to collect easily enough at some point.

I'm looking to have all the houses collected by the end of August at the latest.

First of all, though, a big THANK YOU If you have decided you'd like to be part of this project – I just want to say that if you feel inclined to make more than one house please do. Also – please feel free to involve any other female knitting friends, family about the project – the more the merrier! Just give them my details and I'll send them the paperwork and info.



Fig 81: Knitted (then) Felted House

The aim of the project is to have all the houses looking exactly the same, same size and design and all just plain – no windows or doors or embellishment. The individuality comes from the different coloured wool which each knitter will choose making each house distinctly unique.

Each house is made from knitted pure wool which is then felted. So that the wool definitely will felt it's really important that the yarn used be 100% wool (not super wash wool). An idea to make doubly certain, if you're not, would be to knit and felt a test swatch.

To make a house you will need:

4 ply all wool yarn – (colour of your choice)

3 or 3.5 needles

Washing machine

Needle & thread or sewing machine

Scissors and pins

Chalk or pen

Paper pattern

#### Method

1. Using all wool yarn cast on 100 stitches and knit 200 rows in stocking stitch using 3 or 3.5 needles. Do please feel free to use a knitting machine. This makes for a tight knit which will, when washed, felt, giving a sturdy material.
2. Place the knitted square in the washing machine on a cotton 60-degree wash alongside something like towels to give more friction and better felting.
3. Leave to dry – it can be pinned out to stop the edges curling but not essential.
4. Once dry, using the paper pattern draw the shapes onto the felt and cut out, 2 walls, 2 roof sections, 2 gables.
5. Pin and stitch the house together leaving the seam on the outside
6. And you're done!

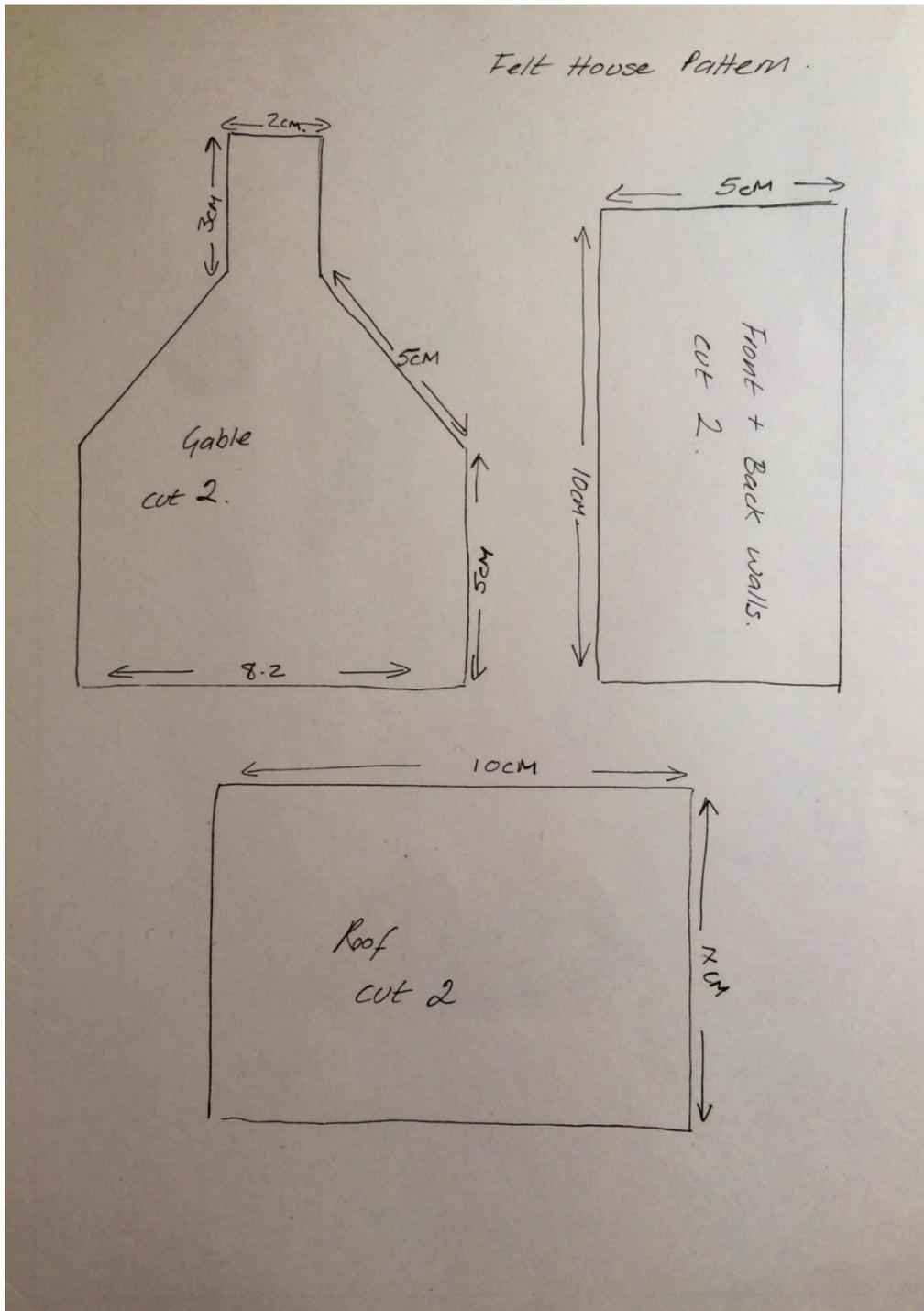


Fig: 82 Diagram

## Participation Information Sheet: 2

Title of study : The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillíní

### Invitation

Over the last number of years, I have been creating art installations about and researching the many cillíní – the un-baptised infant burial grounds found scattered throughout Ireland and particularly Co. Kerry. Over the years I have become interested in not just the babies and infants, but the adults buried within these sites especially the mothers.

Oral history sources tell us that as well as babies and infants, women who died in childbirth, unmarried mothers or in some cases mothers who hadn't been churched were also eligible to be buried within the cillíní alongside other adults such as suicides, strangers, shipwrecked sailors, murderers and their unfortunate victims, criminals, famine victims and the mentally disabled. All individuals who were considered unsuitable for burial within consecrated ground, individuals whom ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep called, 'the homeless dead' those 'without hearth or home'.

Apart from mention in oral history little information appears to have been noted or recorded in the official history books regarding these mothers whose fate has all but become erased, they have become virtually invisible. Women who once had lives, a home, and a hearth.

It is for this reason that I would like to invite you to be part of a community art installation creating handmade knitted then felted homes for these many forgotten mothers of the cillíní.

What is the purpose of the study?

The overall aim of my research into the cillíní is to look at why it might be important for individuals, communities and cultures to recognise those interred within the cillíní and the possible role of art as a way of making peace with the past and the ways in which art might communicate universal loss and compassion while becoming an integral part of the healing process.

As part of my doctoral studies I hope to create a series of public art works – The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillíní which will be a community art piece where woman from the community can contribute a small knitted/ felted house in memory of these women to help bring their story out from the shadows of the past and obscurity.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I am inviting any woman who enjoys knitting and would like to contribute to this community art installation and who is interested in the story of these mothers.

Do I have to take part?

There is absolutely no pressure to take part in this project. If you would prefer not to take part, then just let me know when you reply to this invite and I will of course completely respect your wishes.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you would like to be part of the project I will ask that you read all the information carefully then read and sign the consent form and return to me either by post or email. Four sheets of information will have been emailed, messaged or sent to you, GSA info form (this one), GSA consent form, diagram and finally detailed instructions.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

I hope that this is an opportunity for women to come together to create a communal art work in memory of a particular group of Irish women and which perhaps will reach the hearts of others. I also hope that the work produced will contribute to the national dialogue and discussion around these sites.

I am aware that this is a sensitive and potentially distressing subject. If you feel affected by the subject matter in anyway please contact me and I will listen to your thoughts and concerns and if need be will make arrangements for professional help to support you.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Yes, each maker will remain anonymous.

How is the project being funded?

The project is part of my self-funded doctoral studies at the Glasgow School of Art where I am registered as a student.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The knitted/ felted houses will be exhibited in Dingle in May 2020 as part of my doctoral studies. Post doctorate I hope that the collection of houses continues to grow and be exhibited in other places. The work will be documented and be in the public arena online, exhibitions, book.

If you would like to be kept informed of the project outcome, please do provide your online contact details with your knitted/felted house. All personal details are kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018), GSA Research Participant Privacy Policy.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

This study has received approval via the GSA Research Ethics Sub Committee. If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact GSA using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr Gina Wall (Deputy Head of Fine Art & PGR supervisor)/ [REDACTED]

Or

Head of Research, The Glasgow School of Art, 167 Renfrew Street, G3 6RQ; [research@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:research@gsa.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering to take part in this research. Please keep this sheet for future reference.

Research Consent Form

Research Project Title: [The Forgotten Mothers of the cillíní]

Lead Researcher: [Sheena Graham-George]

Contact Details: [email: [REDACTED]

*Please initial  
boxes*

]

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study;
2. I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily;
3. I agree to permanently donate my knitted/ felted house to the Researcher to become part of The Forgotten Mothers of the Cillíní art installation.
4. I agree to images of my knitted/ felted house being made publicly available in publications, presentations, exhibitions, reports, online, examinable format (dissertation or thesis) for the purposes of research and teaching – I understand that each creator will remain anonymous.
5. I agree to the results being made public post doctorate, online, in exhibitions, and forming part of a growing memorial installation.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.
7. I am happy to be contacted about any future studies and agree that my personal contact details can be retained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018), GSA Research Participant Privacy Policy.

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Name of participant	Date	Signature
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Name of person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
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Researcher	Date	Signature
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