

<b>Institution:</b> Queen's University Belfast		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> <i>The Rule of the Land</i> : Politics, Landscape and Identity on Ireland's Border		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012-2017		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Dr Garrett Carr	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> September 2012-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014 to 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Carr has explored the UK-Irish border through a range of media, including innovative maps, a radio documentary and a book, <i>The Rule of the Land: Walking Ireland's Border</i>, shortlisted for the Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year Award. Carr's research has transformed public perception of the UK-Irish border in Ireland, Britain, Europe and beyond. Reaching millions of people through diverse media, it has shed light on complexities that have enabled a deeper understanding of political issues central to the Brexit process, while also giving a public platform to its residents. In doing so, Carr's research has also challenged conventional notions of place and mapping, enabling the general public to consider the role and influence of maps in their lives.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Carr's awareness of widespread misunderstandings surrounding the UK-Irish border provided the initial stimulus for the development of a body of research which, since 2012, has taken the form of the creation of a number of alternative maps, the curation of a touring exhibition, and the authorship of a literary travelogue. He has brought fresh perspectives on how the border is represented, both visually and in public discourse, and has raised awareness of the on-the-ground reality of the border to millions of people worldwide. In doing so, his work has challenged the way people think about the border: no longer a line on a map but a region distinct from Ireland north and south with its own landscapes, history, customs and people.</p> <p>As an alternative to traditional border representations, Carr's <i>The Map of Connections 3.1</i> (1) charts 77 unofficial crossing points on Ireland's border, such as gates in hedgerows, stepping stones and community-built bridges. These informal crossings are not on any other map. They were discovered and documented by Carr while walking along the border over the course of almost 3 years (January 2014 to September 2016). This journey and the process of creating <i>The Map of Connections 3.1</i> were explored by Carr, at an early stage, in a radio documentary, which he exclusively wrote, 'Charting the Border', broadcast by BBC Radio 4 in June 2014 (4).</p> <p>Carr's research brought him into contact with other independent map-makers. In 2014, he collaborated with 14 fellow map-makers to curate an exhibition he called 'Mapping Alternative Ulster' (2) (3). The exhibition was hosted by the Ulster Museum in Belfast over six weeks in May and June 2014, before travelling to two other venues in Northern Ireland. It showcased 17 original maps by an interdisciplinary range of cartographers – including artists, social historians, architects and urban designers. The exhibition aimed to challenge not only conventional ways of representing people and places, but also the entrenched, sectarian frameworks employed by the media, public authorities and sometimes the general public when thinking about community and place in Northern Ireland and the border region.</p> <p>Carr could see that conventional notions of the border failed to capture the richness and diversity found along its 300-mile length. Moreover, traditional representations did not convey</p>		

the extent to which the border is a place apart from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. He began to write about the people living along the line, the 'borderlanders', as he termed them, and the history of places along the route. The result was a travelogue, *The Rule of the Land: Walking Ireland's Border* (5). It was published by Faber & Faber in January 2017, six months after the UK's historic and divisive referendum on leaving the EU. The book also incorporated photographs by Carr and a new map, 'A View of the Border' (4). It was described by Colm Tóibín in the *Guardian* as 'Great writing about landscape and history' (8 July 2017) [C].

The book blends research (historical, literary, architectural and more) with conversations with border residents and Carr's on-the-ground impressions. This approach is encapsulated by the description of the first landmark he encountered:

"Haulbowline Lighthouse stands off shore. Waves crash at it from all sides. I think of it as the beginning because the lighthouse – smooth stone, seamless from a distance – is a fine spool from which to unwind the border. I imagine the line as three hundred miles of oily black cable, wrapped around the lighthouse, waiting to be drawn out." (5)

The book explores the border's troubled past and discusses its uncertain future but it does not confine itself to Brexit or the Troubles. Rather, as examined in a subsequent journal article, 'Land and Power' it set these events the context of the much longer and deeper history of the landscape and its people (6). A central aim of the whole body of work was to show the border as a place, not just a problem, and a place with its own identity and culture, almost a third country between north and south.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Carr, G. '[The Map of Connections 3.1](http://garrettcarr.net/mappage.html)', June 2014, Belfast. Output type: other/map. See <http://garrettcarr.net/mappage.html>
2. Carr, G. '[Mapping Alternative Ulster](https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/visual-arts/mapping-alternative-ulster-exhibition)', May and June 2014, Ulster Museum, Belfast, and two other venues. Output type: exhibition. This video provides a short overview of the exhibition and its approach: <https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/visual-arts/mapping-alternative-ulster-exhibition>
3. Carr, G. '[Rethinking the Land: An Exhibition of Ulster Maps](#)', *The Cartographic Journal*, 54, 2 (Feb 2017), pp.173-180. Refereed journal article. DOI: 10.1080/00087041.2017.1285977.
4. Carr, G. '[Charting the Border](#)', BBC Radio 4, 30th June 2014. Output type: radio documentary. This documentary, produced by Rachel Hooper, and written exclusively by Carr, documents the process of researching *The Map of Connections*.
5. Carr, G. *The Rule of the Land: Walking Ireland's Border*. London: Faber & Faber, 2017. 340 pp. Selected for REF 2. **Quality:** shortlisted for the Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year Award (2018). Identified by Fintan O'Toole in the *Guardian* as one of 'five books to understand the Irish border'. Positively reviewed in the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Independent on Sunday* [C].
6. Carr, G. '[Land and Power: Making a New Map of Ireland's Border](#)' *Cartographica*, 52:3 (March 2017), pp.251-262. Refereed journal article. DOI: 10.3138/cart.52.3.4200

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Carr's research projects, notably his book and exhibition, have made a material and distinct contribution to the impact being claimed. This impact takes the form of changing public perceptions, both nationally and internationally, of the border via radio and press and through an original exhibition. Carr's work has also transformed the way that people think about the border by identifying a particular designation – 'borderlander' – that is distinctive from the more general categories of Ireland north and south.

**Changing public perceptions**

*The Rule of the Land* had a tangible impact on public perception and understanding of the UK/Irish border, and has also prompted debate. The book reached an estimated 3.2 million listeners in the UK and beyond when serialised by BBC Radio 4 for 'Book of the Week' (13 to 17 March 2017) [A]. It was selected by writer Fintan O'Toole as one of 'five books to understand the Irish border': 'His is a place that appears to be settling down, coming into its own. It matters greatly that his book does not come to seem a mere record of a short period between the wars.' (*Guardian*, 9 April 2018) [C]. In the *Irish Independent* (29 January 2017) Darragh McManus commented: 'it constantly surprises and offers new perspectives; you see things differently afterwards' [C].

The book provided new perspective for readers already familiar with the border. 'The author brings something new, something refreshing,' commented one Amazon reviewer (25 April 2017). Another said: 'While I live in Ireland, I am some distance from the border yet am sufficiently interested in the descriptions given that I plan on visiting some of the places described' (3 April 2017) [E]. A 22-member Belfast readers club, called the Blackbird Book club, selected *The Rule of the Land* for its 29 January 2018 meeting and were surveyed for their thoughts. One reader said the book gave a 'better understanding of the permeability of the border.' For another it made the border, 'a place, an identity, rather than just a line' (E).

*The Rule of the Land* was published early in the Brexit process. Readers said the book helped them understand why the UK/Irish border had become central to the EU withdrawal negotiations between the UK and the EU. As one commented, 'A good book to give to anyone who doesn't really understand the Ireland/Brexit relationship' (Goodreads, 22 January 2020), while another said: 'I never thought of the implications the divide would have on a fragile, and thin, border' (Goodreads, 10 January 2017) [E]. In the *Sunday Independent* (13 March 2017), the journalist, Deidre Conroy, commented on the nuances and complexities of Carr's account of the border's significance: 'The strength of passion and lyrical language in this exploration of a fragile borderland, gives this book an important resonance, acknowledging that the plantation province is no longer just an Irish-British issue' [C].

As Brexit unfolded, media outlets from around the world turned to Carr and his book to learn more about this region, bringing reflections and learning from the work to an estimated combined audience of millions. Carr was commissioned to write a number of feature articles about the border; these included articles which were published by the global magazine and website, *Economist* 1843 (3 July 2018 – print circulation, 460,000) [B]; the *Guardian* (two articles in 18 February 2018 and 15 March 2018), and the *New York Times* (2 June 2017). His March 2018 *Guardian* feature was shared 590 times on social media, and stimulated a fierce online debate on Brexit and the border, attracting a total of 1,597 comments [B]. His February 2018 *Guardian* article – a walkers' guide to a section of the border – prompted a gentler online discussion involving 108 comments. [B].

Carr has also spoken about the border and his book in a number of TV programmes and items, including: *BBC World News* (10 May 2017); *TV5Monde's* current affairs programme, 'Le Maxi Bar de l'Europe' (France, 21 May 2018); 'Toms Ireland', a documentary series about Ireland broadcast by the Dutch public service broadcaster, *NTR* (April 2019), and on the literary arts TV programme, 'Babel', broadcast by the Swedish national public service broadcaster, *SVT* (December 2017). [A]

In July 2019, Qing Wang, then Europe Correspondent for *Jiemian Global*, a leading Chinese financial digital media outlet, interviewed Carr for a special news feature on the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland [A]. Speaking from the borderland itself, Carr contributed to five *BBC World Service* programmes, including 'Newshour' (206,000 listeners in the UK and a much larger global audience) [A]. Radio listeners heard Carr talk about the book for RTE's 'Inside Culture' (27 March 2017) and BBC Radio 4's 'Start the Week' (27 February 2017, 2.16 million listeners) [A]. The book formed the basis for a radio documentary, 'Ireland's Brexit

border', broadcast by Canada's national public broadcaster, CBC (9 September 2019) [A]. Presenter Nahlah Ayed commented, 'Carr's insightful exploration of the border inspired both the episode's title and the narrative, which included readings from the book' [E].

Indeed, Carr's research has given media producers and journalists from England and overseas a richer contextual understanding of the Irish border's significance. An English BBC producer stated: 'The journey you took made me realise that this needn't be a programme about the stories we already know about [...] the current endless debate surrounding Brexit [...] but that the place itself was of interest and worth visiting in its own right' [E] while a German journalist commented, 'After reading the book and walking parts of the borderland with Garrett one can easily imagine how harmful and devastating a visible frontier post-Brexit would be' and that these insights 'helped shape the article I wrote' [E].

In May 2020, Carr was also selected, on the basis of *The Map of Connections* and *The Rule of the Land*, as one of 'ten extraordinary writers asking the questions that will shape our future'. The selection was made by the poet, author and playwright, Owen Sheers, as part of the International Literature Showcase initiative by the UK National Centre for Writing; this project was designed to highlight '...amazing writers based in the UK to programmers, publishers and teachers of literature in English around the world.' [E] *The Rule of the Land* was also shortlisted for the internationally prestigious Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year Award in 2018 [E].

### **Revealing the use and influence of maps to the general public**

While the audience of Carr's 'Mapping Alternative Ulster' exhibition was smaller, it prompted many of them to consider their landscape afresh. About 5500 saw the exhibition in Belfast's Ulster Museum during a six-week run in May and June 2014 [F]. It was also shown in Alley Arts Centre, Strabane, in June 2015 and the Marketplace Gallery Armagh in December 2016 and January 2017. We have estimates but no hard audience figures for these locations [F].

Comments left in visitors' books testify to the thought-provoking nature of the work. A former Chief Executive and Director of the Northern Ireland Ordnance Survey said it was a: 'Fascinating exhibition demonstrating the historical and cultural value of maps beyond the conventional concept of a map.' Others commented: 'A striking exhibition – provoking new insights'. 'We need these new ways to look at the land', and 'This exhibition is both fascinating and inspiring – thanks for helping me look at the map of Ulster in a new way' [E].

### **Introducing border people to the wider public**

A central aim of *The Rule of the Land* was to hear people living in the border region articulating their own sense of identity. The book quotes conversations with over 50 local residents whom Carr encountered during his travels. On the Culture Northern Ireland website, the reviewer, Hugh Odling-Smee, commented on how Carr gave 'voice to those who exist on or around the border. With genuine compassion and empathy, he picks out the lives of the "borderlanders"' [C]. In the *Daily Telegraph* (11 February 2017), Michael Kerr commented on the book's proposition that the border divides Ireland into three – the north, the south and the borderland: 'It's Carr's contention that Ireland is more divided than any of us suspected — not in two but in three...The third state, which he opens up in his marvellous book, has its own frontier-slipping people, who have their own language' [C].

In the *Guardian* (1 February 2018), Mary Novakovich, one of the judges for the 2018 Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year Award, commented, 'What [Carr] uncovers is not only the lives of people of the north and the south but also a separate tribe – the border people themselves whose viewpoints set them apart from their neighbours' [C], while Deirdre Conroy in the *Sunday Independent* (12 March 2017) said the book shows the border, 'has a character of its own, populated by frontier people' [C].

In October 2018, Carr furthered this aim of giving a voice to 'borderlanders' by collaborating with the US artist/activist Suzanne Lacy and 150 border-dwellers. They created a one-day 'Border People's Parliament', an event which took place in Northern Ireland's Parliament Buildings. The group held differing political views. However, led by Carr, they created a 'Yellow Manifesto', a series of nine common principles and hopes. The *Daily Mail* noted Carr's particular contribution: 'He said the point of the artwork was to stir conversation by giving voice to those who live on the border' [D]. One online commenter described the manifesto as a 'Poetry of reasonable voices' (Twitter Reactions, Quote 5, Fay Young) [D]. The manifesto was launched on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme (23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018) and was delivered to Westminster MPs Jeffrey Donaldson (DUP) and Conor McGinn (Labour, and Chair of the All Party Irish Affairs Committee). Through the manifesto and the 'Border People's Parliament' event, residents were able to 'speak' directly to a wider public. As one border-dweller put it, 'We are not the ties that bind us. I want to see our lives known, our uniqueness, our diversity' [D].

## **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

### **A. Impact evidence: TV and Radio Interviews (collated document)**

This impact source document contains full references in all instances and links, where available, to the following items referred to above: 'Book of the Week', *BBC Radio 4*; *BBC World News*; 'Le Maxi Bar de l'Europe'; *TV5Monde*; 'Toms Ireland', *NTR*; 'Babel', *SVT*; 'The Scarred Border', *Jiemian*; 'Business Daily', *BBC World Service*; 'Newshour', *BBC World Service*; 'Inside Culture', *RTE*; 'Start the Week', *BBC Radio 4*; 'Ireland's Brexit border', *CBC*, and 'The Sunday Edition', *CBC*.

### **B. Authored Press Articles (collated document)**

This impact source document contains full references and links to the items by Carr in the following publications referred to above: *The Economist* 1843; *The Guardian* (18.02.18 and 05.03.18), and the *New York Times*.

### **C. Press Reviews of *The Rule of the Land* (collated document)**

This impact source document contains full references and links to the following review articles by the following reviewers referred to above: Fintan O'Toole (*The Guardian*); Darragh McManus (*Irish Independent*); Deirdre Conroy (*Sunday Independent*); Hugh Odling-Smee (*Culture Northern Ireland*); Michael Kerr (*Daily Telegraph*), and Mary Novakovich (*The Guardian*).

### **D. The Border People's Parliament (collated document)**

This impact source document contains a full reference and link to the *Daily Mail* item referred to above, together with comments from Border Parliament participants and a selection of Twitter reactions.

### **E. Surveys, Testimonials and Public Reactions (collated document)**

This impact source document contains items contains reading group reactions to *The Rule of the Land*; online comments from the general public on Goodreads and Amazon; TV and Radio producers' testimonials to the impact of *The Rule of the Land*; Comments book, *Mapping Alternative Ulster* exhibition, and a full reference and links to Owen Sheers' selection of ten inspiring writers in the UK for the National Centre for Writing.

### **F. Exhibition visitor numbers**

Email, dated 1 September 2014, from Ulster Museum with details of total visitor numbers for the duration of the exhibition (9 May – 22 June 2014). From the total number of museum visitors during that period (55,026), it was conservatively estimated that at least 10% would have visited the 'Mapping Alternative Ulster' exhibition (researcher's estimate).