

Tapping the Tourism Potential of the northwest midlands of Ireland Through the Lens of John McGahern's work.

John McGahern (1934-2006) is rightly considered one of Ireland's foremost prose writers of the twentieth century. His ability to make of one place an everywhere, to transmit through his elegant, chiselled prose the remarkable beauty of the Leitrim/Roscommon landscape, the customs and practices of the inhabitants there, is frequently cited as being one of his primary literary achievements. But this paper will argue that McGahern's writing could also act as a conduit to attract visitors to the area that is synonymous with his work.

Leitrim and Roscommon are situated in the northwest midlands of Ireland, one of the least densely populated parts of the country. The land there is not good, but the lakes, mountains and natural landscape are absolutely stunning. McGahern's *Memoir*, published in 2005, the year before his death, revealed what a lot of commentators had already strongly suspected, namely that the writer drew inspiration from the people and places he encountered in his daily life.

Concentrating mainly on *Memoir*, this paper will foreground the manner in which McGahern's oeuvre could possibly do for Leitrim what Yeats has done for Sligo, or Joyce for Dublin, or Heaney for Derry, namely, encourage people to visit his homeland in order to find traces of the writer in the places he mined for his inspiration.

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