THE MERMAIDS DIVE FOR FREEDOM: VOICES OF FEMINIST COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS PLUNGING THROUGH NEOLIBERAL TIMES

Volume II of II

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Part III

*Na Murúcha a Thriomaigh/*The Merfolk Who Were Dried Out

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, my transl.

Chapter 9

The Cosc Strategy and the Dis-appearance of Who

In 2010, Cosc[1], the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, produced the Irish government's first strategy for a 'whole of Government' response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. *The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010 – 2014'* (Cosc, 2010), is a comprehensive document of seven chapters, setting out an analytical and policy framework, as well as interventions for 'tackling the problem more effectively' (p. 69). It addresses violence against both women and men, recognising that VAW (violence against women) is rooted in gender inequality: 'the majority of severe and chronic incidents are perpetrated by men against women and their children' (p. 21). The strategy was broadly welcomed and indeed campaigned for by feminist organisations specialising in VAW, with the proviso that it be properly resourced. However, a review of submissions in preparation for the Second Strategy (Spain et al., 2014) shows that the promises of the first strategy have not been realised: 'Survey participants have reported re-traumatisation and re-victimisation as a result of contact with some response services, both at the time of initial disclosure of violence and while navigating the response system' (p. 14). Respondents also highlighted 'persistent under-funding and cumulative cuts' impacting on their capacity to respond to increasing demand (p. 43).

[1]Cosc was established by the Irish government in 2007 to ensure the delivery of a well co-ordinated 'whole of Government' response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. *Cosc* is an Irish word that means 'to stop' or 'to prevent'. See www.cosc.ie.

In 2016, the *Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2012* (Cosc, 2016b) was launched. It highlights that the first strategy 'began to build and strengthen ties across the public sector and between the public sector and the community and voluntary sector' (p. 1). It is necessary therefore to 'build on the initial steps taken by all sectors to work together under this new strategy' which 'focuses on what is possible' (p. 1). The focus on 'what is possible' is expressed in a different documentary format: a six-page document which presents the issues (Cosc, 2016b), and a separate action plan (Cosc, 2016a), so that 'actions will continue to be revised, added to and updated on an ongoing basis' (Cosc, 2016b, p. 1).

Although it is to be hoped that the second strategy will see significant improvements in responses to survivors, I argue that this is a policy regime of government at a distance constituted through silencing survivors' voices – the dry land of the discursive register of 'what' which needs the silencing of 'who'. The first strategy will be the object of my analysis. This is partly for pragmatic reasons since it has coincided with the writing of my thesis. Given its extended analysis, it also affords a more 'transparent' rendering of the rationalities at stake. The current chapter then is the first of two which focuses on *The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010 – 2014'* (Cosc, 2010), which I will denote as 'the Cosc strategy'. The Cosc strategy also incorporates the (still current) *'HSE Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence'* (Health Service Executive, 2010).

The purpose of this chapter is to frame key dimensions of my analysis of neoliberal government at a distance and counter-rationalities, informed by the critical narratives of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare. Firstly, I contest the criminal justice discourse of violence against women as normalising social control, including by discursively regulating the terms of social justice. Secondly, I critically analyse the epistemic regime of the Cosc strategy based on neutral linear time, technologies of calculation, as well as the devocalisation of the logos. Thirdly, I discuss the implications of this for understandings of 'gender', and analyse the Cosc discourse as neutralising feminist struggle. Finally, I critically discuss how the Cosc strategy organises silence through deploying 'voice' and 'story' as carriers of neoliberal rationalities. However, I also open up the strategy as a site of ideological struggle with the counter-rationalities of narratable selves.

A Rebellious Statement

By the time of my third conversation with Clare, I had decided to focus on the issue of violence against women. As I discuss this with Clare, she makes the following statement:

C and This is a Really unPopular thing to say

S yeah

C because This would be Seen as
Just "reBellious" almost to Say this is is that
What for Me what it boils Down to
i See this with sexual aBuse as Well
what it Boils Down to for Me
is a an acCeptiBility around Violence against Women

S yeah

C that we Haven't Actually Challenged

S no

C our Inner

S yeah

C Cores
about Violence against Women

S yeah yeah no i aGree with you

C umm
that
there is Some Part
Of us
that Thinks
"it's O-Kay"

S that "it's Okay" yeah

Clare produces a distillation of what she regards as the central issue regarding violence against women: its 'acCeptability'. For her, this acceptability concerns a failure to challenge 'our Inner Cores', and that there is 'Some Part/Of us/that Thinks/it's O-Kay'. She introduces this statement with a statement of how her utterance would be Seen: as reBellious and unPopular. Her statement regarding acceptability is one which self-consciously breaches a consensus, so that her

rebellious voice is one which refuses to be assimilated. Alongside the issue concerning the acceptability of violence against women is another issue which is about the unacceptability of *naming* this acceptability.

My transcription practices attempt to highlight how Clare's statement emerges and grows in the embodied time of its being spoken. So too does the response which the utterance calls out from me, as I am drawn into each new level, each new breath and phrase of her utterance. When Clare moves to voicing this challenge as one of 'our Inner/Cores', I respond: 'yeah yeah no i aGree with you'. Her rebellious voice then secures violence against women to 'Some Part/Of us/that Thinks/it's O-Kay'.

Yet afterwards, in the reverberations of Clare's statement in my own consciousness, an awful question surfaces for me with more acute clarity. Alongside the part of me that protests against violence against women, I wonder: is there a part of *me* that also accepts violence against women? What are the limits of my own consciousness and complacencies with regard to violence against women, and my own immersion in received truths? To what extent indeed am I *really* aligned with the depths of Clare's rebellion, and has my agreement merely worked to stifle its full meaning?

Clare's breach with consensus opens out onto a new landscape of provocative questions. In the move from naming 'an acceptablity', to locating this acceptability in 'Some Part of us', she implicitly disturbs any easy distinctions between 'us' who *know* that violence against women is unacceptable, and those 'others' who still think it is acceptable. The terms of her challenge open the disturbing vista that the acceptability of violence against women does not simply reside 'out there' in some 'bad,' – say, patriarchal – world we refuse to participate in, but seeps into 'our Cores'. She introduces a fractured notion of subjectivity in 'a part Of us' which stretches the limits of rational discourse, and where the unthinkable is thought. The challenge complicates notions of feminist thought and politics: how do we construct the objects of our critique if part of what we must challenge lies in our Inner Cores? Who or what do we rebel against? Who or what indeed is the collective 'We' if its constituent subjectivities are unstable and fragmented?

Clare's statement also opens up questions about how a core sense of 'it's O-Kay' is constituted by the boundaries of acceptability/unacceptability. It therefore points to ethical limits which contain and circumscribe the sense of wrongness of violence and abuse, the contingent framing of questions of justice and injustice, and thus the terms of political contestation. Yet, the very event of Clare's articulation opens too onto questions regarding the historical conditions of a questioning which might be heard as reBellious, of rupturing consensus, and of alternative critical possibilities of ethico-political thought and action.

Unacceptability as Criminality

The *unacceptability* of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is announced by the Cosc strategy as follows:

> It was clear that there was a need for change: change at organisational level for those organisations involved in tackling domestic and sexual violence; change at individual level for the relevant employees of those organisations to ensure that they are fully aware of the best methods of dealing with such tragic cases; change at societal level so that all people in Ireland would recognise *the unacceptability and criminality of domestic and sexual abuse;* and change at national policy level so that countrywide action directly by the State and via NGOs would be clear, consistent and coherent in order to produce the most effective response at best public value (Cosc, 2010, p. 51, italics added).

Here, the weight of ethical recognition through which wrongness is constructed relies on the notion that domestic and sexual violence *are crimes.* This is intrinsic to the very definition of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence as 'crimes that can occur in all social classes, all ethnic groups and cultures and among people of every educational background. These crimes affect men and women, children and older people' (Cosc, 2010 p. I). This institutional recognition of criminality is of course of immense historical significance. It carries the mark of historical hard-fought feminist struggles for major legal reforms. In addition to improving services, on-going lobbying to reform the criminal justice system is central to the political strategies of organisations such as Women's Aid, Safe Ireland and the Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI). This focus on lobbying for further legal reforms and improving services reflects mainstream Western feminist strategies to addressing violence against women.

Nonetheless, the criminal justice strategy has been contested. The US-based feminist organisation, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, which emphasises grassroots organizing over professionalised responses, has been particularly influential in broadening the debate:

> **We call social justice movements to develop strategies and analysis that address both state AND interpersonal violence, particularly violence against women** ... It is critical that we develop responses to gender violence that do not depend on a sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic criminal justice system. It is also important that we develop strategies that challenge the criminal justice system and that also provide safety for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. To live violence-free lives, we must develop holistic strategies for addressing violence that speak to the intersection of all forms of oppression. (INCITE!, 2001, their emphasis)

A range of activists and scholars have highlighted law-and-order approaches as ill-suited to the needs of a diverse range of marginalized women. It opens the way for greater state intrusion into their lives, tending to replicate the oppressions that made these women particularly vulnerable to violence in the first place (e.g. Arnold & Ake, 2013; Bumiller, 2008; Coker, 2006; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007). The *An Garda Síochána Human Rights Audit* (Ionann Management Consultants, 2005) concludes that 'there is institutional racism within An Garda Síochána' (p. 95). It notes poor relationships between An Garda Síochána and the Traveller community, black community, as well as refugees and asylum seekers. In particular, the report notes 'poor service for women Travellers who were victims of domestic violence' (p. 91). Watson and Parsons (2005) report migrant women as being 'unlikely to tell any authority figure, but particularly the Gardaí, of experiences of domestic abuse' (p. 163). The review of the Cosc strategy also highlights that many respondents noted 're-victimisation experiences in the prosecution of sexual and domestic violence related offences' (Spain et al., 2014, p. 2). Safe Ireland, for example, notes that, 'Women accessing our member services consistently report that they are not taken seriously when they come into contact with the legal system. They are often not believed, their cases are often trivialised' (p. 14).

Clearly, protection for individual women is of vital importance. But a fundamental problem with the criminalization strategy is that it does not stop violence against women. It is narrowly-focused on individualistic solutions rather than seeking more comprehensive understandings, or counteracting other forms of domination in women's private and public lives. Drawing on Pence

(2001), Arnold and Ake (2013) set out the initial strategic rationale: ‘many activists in the movement supported criminalization not because they believed it would protect women, but instead because they believed it would help eliminate the cultural and institutional supports for men to abuse and dominate “their” women’ (p. 566). They note that many activists have since come to regard this as ‘a strategic error’ since it has proven ‘impossible to reorient the patriarchal criminal justice system to prioritize women’s safety’ (p. 566). True (2012) notes that the criminal justice strategy is based on the assumption that prosecution of crime prevents future crime, and therefore ‘ends the culture of impunity for violence against women perpetrated by men’ (p. 24). But she writes, ‘The obvious weakness of the criminal justice approach to violence against women is that it deals with the consequences rather than the causes of this violence’ (p. 24), noting ‘little evidence of a deterrent effect in the criminal justice response to various forms of violence against women’ (p. 24).

The state’s interest in controlling violence through the criminal justice system, argues Bumiller (2008), is not in order to address women’s systematic oppression, but is powerfully driven by social control priorities. She argues that rape law reforms in the United States were adopted in the context of a phenomenal growth in the crime control apparatus linked to the penal-welfare systems of the neoliberal state (p. 6). Ireland too has seen transformations in the criminal justice landscape (Muncie, 2005; O'Donnell & O'Sullivan, 2003), reflecting a growing similarity in criminal justice across Western societies driven by neoliberalism and the spread of penal policies, particularly from the USA (Muncie, 2005)

Bumiller (2008) contends, however, that the growth in the crime-control sector must be systematically looked at as ‘part of a larger scheme of bureaucratic control over women and groups of threatening “outsiders”’ (p. xiii). The silencing of women through bureaucracies is of course a central issue for Clare. As she elaborates on her theme of ‘when Systems receive a Story’, she turns to stories told by one particular group of ‘threatening outsiders’ – asylum seekers:

C: when you Go through the the aSylum Process

when you arRive in the country First
and you go Through the aSylum Process
and you Go into the inteGration

S yeah

C —you Go into inteGration
and you are Interviewed to Say what your Story
and the asSumption is automatically from the Very Moment you step into the room
is that you're Lying
That's the asSumption
...
These people [bureaucrats] Do not have the Skills

to be able to disCern
the Seriousness
or the Life or Death atTached to this

Research by AkiDwA (2010) documents women asylum seekers' experiences of the asylum application process, including a feeling of some officials 'just going through the motions and dealing with them in a perfunctory manner' (p. 20). Women from one region report that some officials told them they were 'lying': 'When I went for my interview, I was very badly treated. The woman interviewing me said she doesn't want to hear my tales. I cried a lot. Am only saying it now, have never shared with anyone' (p. 20).

For Clare, the ethical chasm between the seriousness of the issues at stake, and the bureaucratic processing of asylum seekers and their stories, is of such import that she appropriates a discourse of criminality to turn it against the bureaucratic state itself:

and That to Me is aKin to criminal acTivity now i'm Sorry that Does sound very dramatic
But
if Somebody is going to be
living in direct proVision for seven to nine Years because Somebody
Hasn't
Got through a bureaucratic System

S umm yeah

C i mean it's

It's for Me it's the Same as
theMagdalene Laundries
it's the same as the child Sexual abuse— within the the catholic church
they Aren't any Different
if You are
if you are conTributing to somebody's Trauma
inStead of reDucing it
you're Doing something Very Wrong

To support her charge of 'aKin to criminal acTivity', Clare invokes a larger historical and culturally-specific narrative of institutional abuse of women and children in the Magdalene Laundries and the Catholic Church. From this, she moves to place trauma in embodied social relations, underlined by her emphasis on the life and trauma of 'Somebody', and the 'You' who might contribute to that trauma or reduce it. This is a statement which powerfully disrupts 'the social imaginary in which autonomous man, invulnerable, transparent, and infinitely replicable, has been the main player' (Code, 2009, p. 329). But in appropriating the notion of 'criminal' for her own ethical and critical purposes, Clare's statement also draws attention to its *discursive* power. With regard to the issue of violence against women, the corollary of this is how the criminal justice system functions, not only through direct forms of social control, but also as a discursive power which manages and regulates a social imaginary of *wrongness* and injustice.

This discursive power is exemplified in the paragraph from the Cosc strategy quoted above. The assertion of the 'unacceptability and criminality of domestic and sexual abuse' (p. 51) works discursively to produce normative boundaries of 'unacceptability' and 'acceptability'. It is set against that which is right and proper, laudable and to be aspired to, and which establishes the galvanising terms of 'the need for a change'. This need is populated with and mobilises 'organisations involved in tackling domestic and sexual violence', 'the relevant employees of those organisations', 'all people in Ireland', 'the State' and 'NGOs'. But the concern *'to produce the most effective response at best public value*' registers a political project tied to neoliberal rationalities of efficiency and value for money. This political project is also tied to a regulatory knowledge project which involves 'relevant employees of these organisations' as being *'fully aware of the best methods of dealing with such tragic cases'.*

But what is one to make of this patronising category of '*such tragic cases*' which is encircled by all this activity? Clearly, this works to locate domestic and sexual abuse in the realm of individualised tragedy. Moreover, to inhabit this 'tragic case' position is to be disenfranchised as a knower, 'dealt with' as an object of others' knowledge of 'best methods'. The figure of 'tragic cases' casts survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the discursive register of 'what' (Cavarero, 2000), generated from the privileged perspective of the 'cloak of invulnerability' (Burstow, 2003). It is a figure saturated with what Code (2009) describes as follows:

> the polite imaginings, integral to its standard repertoire, in the orderliness of a society so privileged as to enable (some of) its citizens to imagine violence - and other 'unfortunate events' - as mere blemishes on an otherwise unsullied surface. Traumatic, albeit 'ordinary', events in women's lives count merely as extraordinary moments for an imaginary nourished to uphold such expectations, even as it relegates evidence of women's (and other Others') vulnerability to the aberrant, to places where a woman may have 'asked for it' in failing to play by the rules. (p. 333)

The conflation of 'social justice' and 'criminal justice' is premised precisely on 'polite imaginings' of orderliness and an 'otherwise unsullied surface'. It depends, in other words, on the normalisation of government at a distance. This I will argue, normalises violence against women, producing 'Some Part/Of us/that Thinks/"it's O-Kay"'.

In the next section, I explore the norms of knowledge production which underpin the Cosc strategy and which typify policy rationalities, and how these are constituted through hegemonic notions of neutral linear time.

Neoliberal Governmentality, Knowledge and Time

The Neoliberal Project of 'Rebuilding Lives'

Dragiewicz (2013) notes that competing interests and values have shaped how the problem of violence against women has been incorporated into 'the machinery of social control' (p. 183), arguing that, 'Woman abuse and state responses to it are located at the intersection of profound

cultural anxieties about crime, law, gender, economics, knowledge, and the family' (p. 178). The Cosc strategy articulates a neoliberal economic anxiety:

> The strategy is being published during a time of great economic difficulty for this country. However, the actions included in this strategy do not involve a great financial outlay but rather a new approach to working and inter-agency co-operation. Indeed, a successful implementation of this strategy will help to reduce the financial burden to the State that arises as a result of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, *in addition* to the horrific human cost**.** (Cosc, 2010, p. 1, my emphasis).

The strategy is clearly premised on the neoliberal refusal of increased public spending. The words 'in addition' may be regarded as ideologically significant. In the simple additive relationship they create between the 'burdened' State which exists alongside, but implicitly separate from, 'the horrific human cost', they suggest a removal from consideration that the State is constitutively implicated as an agent in producing the conditions of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Rather, the State is a victim too. However, the terms of this separation do not apply the other way around. The 'horrific human cost' is constitutively implicated in the 'financial burden' of the neoliberal State and its imperatives of economic progress. Cosc cites a range of '[r]esearch on the costs of domestic and sexual violence [which] leaves no doubt that these problems undermine human and economic progress' (p. 48). 'Human progress' and 'economic progress' converge in an economic rationality which emphasises 'lost economic output as a result of the disruption of employment' (p. 46), including lower personal incomes, absenteeism, and the loss of profit and incurred management and administrative costs for employers.

True (2012) notes that the deployment of such economic rationales has contributed to increasing government attention in regard to anti-violence programs, particularly in Western countries. But she argues these kinds of economic rationales will not help the most vulnerable women in the world in the short to medium term. She highlights numerous calls 'to widen the violence against women framework to take account of the structural causes and consequences of violence evident in women's poverty and labour exploitation, socioeconomic inequality with men, and lack of political representation' (p. 7). These broadened definitions are politically urgent at a time when 'increasingly globalized economic power and structures reinforce gender inequalities, making women more vulnerable to violence, especially some groups of women' (p. 8). I argue however

that, not only does the Cosc strategy ignore these wider conditions, but this ignoring is in tandem with the work of producing neoliberal subjects.

Firstly, there is a clear convergence between Cosc's labour-market concern and the policy rationalities which I discussed in Chapter 2 with regard to neoliberal government at a distance. The disavowal of 'a great financial outlay' sets the context for 'a new approach to working and inter-agency co-operation' which accords with the rule of government at a distance: 'To the extent that the modern state "rules", it does so on the basis of an elaborate network of relations formed amongst the complex of institutions, organizations and apparatuses that make it up, and between state and non-state institutions' (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 274). Ultimately, in the words of Cosc itself, the point is for '[t]he High-Level Goals [to] cascade down into detailed "on the ground" activity through objectives, actions and activities' (p. 3). All this paves the way for a disciplinary regime which installs itself into mundane and routine activities.

Secondly, the emphasis is on expert knowledge: 'Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is a multi-dimensional problem requiring multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary solutions' (Cosc, 2010, p. 48). The HSE (2010) policy conceptualises this as 'a continuum of supports' which 'all families experiencing or at risk of experiencing Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence' will receive from service providers 'who will understand the issue and who will recognise and respond to the impact such violence has on health' (p. 2). It states:

> The Health Service Executive (HSE) through its primary care and hospital services manages the significant impact of domestic and sexual violence on the health and well-being of its victims. HSE staff and allied health professionals, e.g. Primary Care Teams, Practice Nurses, General Practitioners, Family Support Workers, Social Workers, Community Welfare Officers, Public Health Nurses, etc., provide a range of services to women and children and families experiencing domestic violence. (p. 12)

In Foucauldian terms, this marks the growth of a regulatory apparatus over many women's lives. Bumiller (2008) notes that the increasing importance of sexual violence to the agenda of the 'therapeutic state' has seen the development of a professional cadre of doctors, therapists, social workers and other government agents who 'increasingly assert responsibility for diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of sexual assault and family violence' (p. xvi). This has involved an

increased surveillance and management of victims through patron/client relationships, and becoming a 'dependent subject of the state' through routine forms of state control.

Thirdly, a theme of 'rebuilding lives' is central to the Cosc strategy: 'A strategy is required that operates across a broad range of areas, having regard to the inputs that are necessary to rebuild the lives of victims-survivors including economic, accommodation, health/medical, legal and many other areas' (Cosc, 2010, p. 48). The notion of 'rebuilding lives' is a resonant trauma narrative which explicitly responds to the devastating and rupturing effects of traumatic experiences. Yet, it is also a narrative which richly articulates with and is ripe for appropriation and stabilisation by neoliberal rationalities and the kinds of biographical projects I discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.

To speak of *re-building lives* invokes a life narrative which is temporally bound to assumptions of 'before' and 'after' the traumatic event, tied to norms of narrative closure. The trauma of violence can be framed as disrupting an assumed normality of *before,* which can then be restored in the 'rebuilding'. To focus on the necessity *to rebuild the lives of victims-survivors* is to assert that it is the singular life and resolutely *not* the world which must be rebuilt. This is the linear narrative which, as discussed in the previous chapter, works to reinsert trauma survivors into the social order. In other words, 'rebuilding lives' performs a central role in the production of neoliberal subjects. As I will argue in subsequent chapters, it is onto this biographical narrative that the state response to violence against women is grafted. According to this narrative, 'domestic' and sexual violence is but another 'barrier' to women's participation in the labour market, requiring the 'rebuilding of lives' and therapeutic interventions in order to reinsert women into the social order as compliant neoliberal subjects.

The assumptions of hegemonic linear time which underpin the reinsertion of trauma survivors into the social order, as discussed in Chapter 8, are also central to the Cosc epistemic regime of neoliberal governance.

The Roadmap to a Common Destination

The Cosc network is secured through the image of a ‘roadmap’:

> In order to correct the disjointedness in the system, the situation requires a national, comprehensive, research-based strategy to provide a clear roadmap by which all organisations might find their way to a common destination. (Cosc, 2010, pp. 25-26)

In the road image, consensus is fused with linear time. It is imperative that we are all on the same road, following a pre-ordained map, and arriving at the same destination: ‘There is a need for a clear direction for all this activity, a collective vision and a common view of effectiveness’ (Cosc, 2010, p. 20). The road metaphor re-enacts a quintessential image of linear time. Ermarth (1992) describes how historical linear time is typically represented as ‘a road’ and its life ‘a journey’, supporting the notion of ’passive immersion’ in neutral time. She describes the image of ‘a car on a road or a train on a track’ as recurring in critiques of linear conventions of time, ‘both mechanical conveyances that carry consciousness half involuntarily toward conventional destinations along routes already travelled’ (p. 43).

While the ‘destination’ is the realisation of the objectives, the ‘roadmap’ is ‘the research-based strategy’ for getting there. Indeed, for Cosc, the ‘first and most fundamental action required is the development of a systematic approach to data capture and collation’ (p. 5). The roadmap thus accords with Rose and Miller’s (2010) observation that key to the complex governmentalised assemblage of diverse forces is how ‘aspects of the decisions and actions of individuals, groups, organizations and populations come to be understood and regulated in relation to authoritative criteria (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 281). In this regard, the questions set out by Cosc for ‘a clear understanding of the problem’ (p. 36) serve an important regulatory function:

> What is domestic violence? What is sexual violence? What is genderbased violence? When does this violence occur? What types of behaviours are generally covered by these terms? How extensive is the problem and what are the barriers to its resolution? (Cosc, 2010, p. 36)

Such questions ultimately presuppose that the reality of ‘domestic’ and sexual violence is programmable as ‘a domain subject to certain determinants, rules, norms and processes that can be acted upon and improved by authorities’ (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 281). As an object of

government, the vicissitudes of violence are 'thinkable in such a way that their ills appear susceptible to diagnosis, prescription and cure by calculating and normalizing intervention (p. 281). Of particular interest here is how these questions construct 'domestic' and sexual violence as an intrinsically *knowable* object of policy, and one which is amenable to technologies of calculability. Here are six 'what?' questions (including, 'what are the barriers?'), a 'when?' question, and one 'how extensive?' question. They frame a domain of knowledge which establishes 'domestic', sexual and gender-based violence as an object of inquiry which extends 'out there', and which can be defined, categorised, quantified and predicted. Notably, there is no 'why?' question. It therefore excludes the kinds of structural analysis which, following True (2012), would address 'the causes of this violence' (p. 24).

This *what-is series* announces a world which is simply 'there' and where violent events happen. As Alice describes this fixed world, 'it Is what it Is'. This is time as an 'empty homogeneous medium' (Edkins, 2003, pp. xiv-xv), a neutral 'envelope' in which events take place (Ermarth, 2010). The first question, '*what is* domestic violence/sexual violence/gender-based violence?' announces 'thought' as 'a vision of pure signifieds' (Cavarero, 2005, p. 51). It relies on a language of definition and categorisation, of resemblances and abstractions, driven by the demand to erase differences:

> Inconsistent recording practices and, for example, different classification systems between agencies and across sectors are, not surprisingly, commonplace, resulting in a lack of consensus on definitions and practices around data aggregation. Such inconsistencies not only prevent the analysis of disparate sources of data but can result in a wide variety of conclusions on the incidence and prevalence of domestic and sexual violence. (Cosc, 2010, p. 95)

Here, the universal manifests itself, not only through ignoring uniqueness, but through a problem with any notion of difference which produces variation: '*inconsistent* recording practices', '*different* classification systems', a '*lack of consensus* on definitions and practices'. All these 'inconsistencies' lead to the perceived anathema of, 'a wide variety of conclusions on the incidence and prevalence of domestic and sexual violence'.

The classifying effects of language set the stage for the numerical: '*how extensive is the problem*?' As discussed in Chapter 5, the logos of the *extensive* reflects Bergson's notion of the

numerical as a linear spatialised 'field of extensive magnitudes' which allows for 'separating units, as well as of constituting them as a whole, as a set' (Grosz, 2005, p. 208). In this context, the 'whole' is the boundaries of the nation-state, so that the idealised set here is that of all individuals in the Republic of Ireland who experience 'domestic' and sexual violence, rendered as separate and abstract countable units who 'extend' into the national territory.

The 'extended' world is the spatialised world which simply 'lies in front of us' in a way that is 'stable, immobile, objective' (Cavarero, 2005, p. 37) – and of course *visible*. Here, 'tragic cases' and their problems can be laid out for inspection. Following Cavarero, the *what-is series* carries Plato's 'antiacoustic and videocentric' mark (Cavarero, 2005, p. 38). Indeed, the preferred social scientific methodology for 'measuring' the 'prevalence' of 'domestic' and sexual violence - *the survey* - explicitly invokes the videocentric logos. Its etymology is illuminating: derived from the Latin '*super*' meaning 'over,' and *videre* meaning 'to see', by the 16th century vision, measurement and space cohered: '*to take linear measurements of a tract of ground'*. By 1927, it had become 'systematic collection of data on opinions, etc.' (Online Etymology Dictionary). In this etymological story, one can locate the ambitions of a gaze which aspires to see and 'supervise' all from the distanced zone of abstraction. This is a logos which is guaranteed by the detached gaze (Cavarero, 2005), 'a horizon overseen by a detached (potentially neutral) consciousness that is "in" history but not of it' (Ermarth, 1992, p. 212).

The upshot of all this is a politics of 'need for change' (Cosc, 2010, p. 51) which secures its own destiny of reproducing the social order. Edkins (2003) puts it this way:

> For the nation-state and its so-called 'politics' to work, the linear time associated with it has to be produced and reproduced all the time. This time is not a natural phenomenon, but one that is socially constituted – it is a notion that exists because we all work, in and through our everyday practices, to bring it into being. In the main, the production and reproduction of linear time take place by people assuming that such a form of time does exist, and specifically that it exists as an empty, homogenous medium in which events take place. (pp. xiv-xv)

To return then to Clare's statement regarding the acceptability of VAW, the Cosc strategy is implicated in the normalising of relations of power through the 'double displacement' of time described by Grosz; time has disappeared at the level of representation, and also 'into events,

processes, movements, things, as the mode of their becoming' (pp. 1-2). Following Taylor (2013), the 'what-is' series may be regarded as reflecting 'a mode of intelligibility that, insofar as it requires renunciation, also requires and therefore maintains the centrality of that which needs to be renounced - in this case, the sexual violence itself' (Taylor, 2013, p. 94).

Alternative Space-Times

All of this underlines the importance of asserting alternative temporalities as integral to any politically-effective contestation of VAW through neoliberal times. Such alternative temporalities are discernible in the following conversation with Lady Gaga.

Lady Gaga introduces the issue of violence against women as follows:

> it's there's Always Somebody There that's we can Almost say that
> CateGorically
> that we Have to make Space for That for That to come in because it's Going to
> come in it's Always come In the Door

I reengage with this reference to 'making space' in a subsequent conversation, and in the new story which emerges, Lady Gaga opens up questions of space/time relations and tensions in the telling and hearing of stories of violence:

LG ...
so How does That come Out and parTicularly Working with Women
where it it Seems to be such a Huge Problem—

S
... i Think you actually used the words "CateGorically Make Space for That"

LG yeah Yes you Do

S and How do you? How do you Do that? speCifically like for

LG yeah

S for that like How do you Do that?

LG i Think just Through the reLationship

S yeah

LG i think you just alLow Time
i think you don't Rush Anything
...
I Actually
One Woman who Told me a Story of Having been Tortured and Gang Raped—
I would Came and visited me for two Years before she told me the Story

you know i Knew that—and she Often alLuded to the "the Terrible Time" and "when the Terrible Thing Happened"
And i Never asked her what "the Terrible Thing" Was
because i Felt she would Tell me when she was Ready and eventually she Told me
but it Took her Two Years y'Know

S yeah

LG And i mean she didn't have to Ever tell me but it Mattered to her and because she was Kind of Hinting At it
i was aWare that she Did want to
you know?

I don't know Patience Space

S yeah

LG yeah

i Think Not being aFraid of—

S umm

LG you know People's Lives are just they're So
All our Lives Don't fit Neatly into Anything

and you know there's there's All the different Aspects of You as
as a Person you know is the Fixer so sometimes you don't want to Hear a Story that you're not going to be able to do anything about
as a Worker is this going to be— how are you going to Manage it as a Worker?
as a Friend
you know Where does the Boundaries like it's just All so unTidy
and and— and when we Try to Tidy it!
we Cause more Chaos

In this narrative, Lady Gaga creates a space-time chronotope which radically departs from that of the Cosc strategy. Time here is not collapsed into linear space, but is central to the Making Space chronotope: 'i think you just alLow Time/ i think you don't Rush Anything ... I don't know Patience Space'. Of central importance here is that this allows for the emergence of relationship which is foregrounded in Lady Gaga's opening response 'i Think just Through the reLationship'. The importance of relationship opens onto uniqueness and plurality, defying the possibility of a generalisable answer to the question of how one 'makes space'. Lady Gaga tells of a particular telling, of One Woman who told her story.

In Lady Gaga's narrative, the two year time-frame serves as a kind of retrospective scaffolding for her story. It does not define or fix the temporalities involved: 'it Took her Two Years y'Know/And i mean she didn't have to Ever tell me'. The Oneness of *this* woman lies not in her abstract countability, but in her particularity and uniqueness in a world of plural others. Her horrific story testifies to the embodied vulnerability of such a plural world – exposed to others as an instrument for torture and rape, and exposed to Lady Gaga in the telling.

It also announces the narratability of the self. Central to recognising the discursive register of who which informs Cavarero's notion of the self as narrat*able* is an ontological distinction between the narratable self and the text of the story, a concern with a *narrating impulse ...even when it refrains from 'producing'* memories or 'reproducing' past occurrences' (p. 35, italics added).

Lady Gaga's telling opens onto an attunement to the other as a narratable self with a story, and she the necessary other. This is an attunement shaped by the other's allusions to 'the Terrible Time' and 'when the Terrible Thing Happened'. Through language fragments of hints and allusions, an embodied history irrupts in the present as the mark of a terror outside narrative. In this account of 'Through the reLationship', of being on the edges of another's reality, Lady Gaga's accent is on an openness to hearing which does not carry a compulsion to tell: 'i Never asked her what "the Terrible Thing" Was'. She centres what Mattered to the other woman, and her potential readiness to tell: 'i Felt she would Tell me when she was Ready ... And i mean she didn't have to Ever tell mebut it Mattered to her'. Indeed, part of the point of Lady Gaga's story

of a story, and one which registers the *narratable self* before ever a story is told, is that the story *as story product* is not the point. In centring the who of the telling, Lady Gaga emerges from this narrative as holding multiple temporalities, including the irruptions of history in the Terrible Time, and the unfolding moments of telling.

Söderbäck (2013) describes the repression of the irreducible status of *time* in Western metaphysics as 'an attempt to solidify presence and rid itself of mortality and change' (p. 259), therefore granting privilege to self-contained wholeness and oneness. She contrasts this 'everlasting present' with 'temporal presence' which 'is necessarily incomplete and in constant transformation' (p. 260). Following Irigaray (2002), Söderbäck (2013) argues that temporal presence 'must be understood in terms of *co-presence*: being is always *being-with*, or even *becoming-with*' (p. 260) She writes,

> Only a subject-in-becoming can approach the other reciprocally, by acknowledging his or her own incompleteness (the fact that we are not whole, not fully present *on our own*). If we forget this incompleteness - by positing a selfsame autonomous transcendental subject - time freezes, on Irigaray's account, and becomes a time of death or of the past, rather than a time of the present and the living (2013, p. 260, her italics).

Lady Gaga does not attempt to solidify the presence of either the other woman or herself. The interdependent solidifications of 'victim' and 'expert' identities involved in 'routine disclosure' (Cosc, 2010, p. 77) have no bearing here: 'All our Lives Don't fit Neatly into Anything'. Lady Gaga's relational emphasis is on keeping co-presence open and alive, so that the unrushed rhythms of the necessary other are responsive to those of the narratable self. Her chronotope of 'making space' echoes Irigaray who writes that, 'To go toward one another requires the elaboration of other space-times than those in which we, Westerners, are accustomed to living' allowing for the 'possibility of *arriving in the present, of being in the present, of being capable of co-presence*' (Irigaray, 2002, cited in Söderbäck, 2013, pp. 260-261, Söderbäck's italics).

Lady Gaga too engages in an analogous critique. Out of the utterance 'i Think Not being aFraid of—', she moves to address the 'untidy boundaries' of identity. 'All the different Aspects of You' which shape the tensions of listening include being a Person, a Fixer who might turn from a story if confronted with her own powerlessness, a Worker who must Manage it, a Friend. These

provide the basis for an ideological critique of tidiness: ‘when we Try to Tidy it!/ we Cause more Chaos’.

Gender in the Cosc Strategy

Gender as Patriarchally Imprisoned

What then are the implications of all this for the argument I outlined in Chapter 2 concerning the appropriation of ‘gender equality’ by neoliberalism?

Firstly, as mentioned above, the Cosc strategy states that, ‘the term gender-based violence acknowledges that such violence is rooted in gender inequality and that the majority of severe and chronic incidents are perpetrated by men against women and their children’ (p. 21). But the strategy fails to provide any analytical framework for ‘gender inequality’; the critical question ‘why?’ is absent from the terms of its ‘clear understanding’. Instead, ‘gender’ has been reduced to an arithmetic concept, tied to questions of ‘prevalence’ and counting individuals. This is the ultimate reduction of people to abstractions – entirely in accordance of course with a neoliberal culture of calculation and individualised interventions. The effect however is to completely incapacitate ‘gender’, feminism’s key analytic signifier, by erasing its interrogative power. Rather, ‘gender’ has been turned into an empty – and therefore malleable – tool to cohere with neoliberal rationalities and mobilised accordingly for neoliberal purposes. ‘Gender’ here seals the recuperation of women into the register of the universal. This point will be developed in the next chapter.

But secondly, this mobilisation of ‘gender’ also raises questions about the extent to which mainstream Western feminist analyses of violence against women have already been ripe for such recuperation. Thus, Mohanty (2003) critiques monolithic accounts of patriarchy based on simplistic binary oppressor/oppressed relations of power which freeze women into archetypal victims and men into perpetrators. As noted in Chapter 2, Ryan (2001) also draws attention to the dominance of these essentialist understandings of gender in Irish feminism. In Chapter 8, following Lady Gaga and Alice, I critiqued this universal logos at play in the message ‘One in

Five'. In other words, this is a politics which is already premised on the closure of the consciousness-raising group, and the move to the universal Woman (Cavarero, 2005). The move from the question 'who are you?' has already found its destination in the question, 'how many?'

Thirdly, Cavarero's (2005) de-ontologising moves expose how these binary understandings of gender are themselves derived from a much older philosophical substratum of gendered binaries. As previously discussed, this is marked by privileging the universal, and a transcendent consciousness that 'escapes time and erases (sexuate) difference since it inscribes all relations into a logic of identity and sameness' (Söderbäck, 2013, p. 258). In silencing particularity and embodied relationality, 'the intelligible is posited as a realm beyond becoming and change' (Söderback, 2013, p. 254). The alternative temporalities articulated by Lady Gaga announce this realm of becoming, while my analysis of the temporalities at stake in the Cosc strategy's reproduction of the social order demonstrate the transcendent consciousness at work. The Cosc strategy's 'guise of reason' is founded on these ancient philosophical resolutions, re-enacting the devocalisation of the logos and 'the sign as patriarchally imprisoned' (Clair, 1998, p. 103).

Fourthly, Söderback's argument that there is 'an immediate relation between our desire to think presence as static and everlasting ... and the patriarchal desire to grant subjectivity to man alone in a move that reduces women to objects marked by lack' (p. 258) finds expression then in Cosc's (2010) feminised space of 'tragic cases' (p. 51). This underlines again how neoliberal rationalities feed voraciously on an already gendered legacy of meaning, time and subjectivity. The power of such a symbolic order is realised in the discernible blueprint which it provides for idealised neoliberal subjects: 'We live under the illusion of a disembodied and universal cogito: a masculine subject, disguised as a neuter, upon which subjectivity is crafted and which consequently defines woman as negation and lack' (Söderback, 2013, p. 258).

Talking about Gender Issues

With regard to institutional responses to violence against women, however, 'the masculine subject, disguised as a neuter' takes yet another turn. This is opened up by Clare as she speaks about 'Talking about Gender issues':

C: it's Hugely Challenging when you're Talking about Gender issues

S: yeah

C: Really it's eNormously Challenging

S: in What way?

C: —it's—beCause—
it's Less challenging if you're Speaking in a in a Room full of Women

S yeah

C because
Women
Even if it's at a Conscious or a Subconscious Level

—Know The

Either Know or have exPerienced some of the ineQualities
but if You're Speaking in a in a in a Mixed Gender Room Where
where you're Bringing up a— a Women's Issue
That— or an Issue reLating to Women
...

it can be Hugely Challenging
Really challenging beCause

because for Me— in my exPerience Gender is Challenged All the Time
Gender issues are Challenged

S: so when You say "Hugely Challenging" Hugely Challenging For
the other People who are Hearing it? or for You Speaking it? or

Who is it Challenging For?

C: — I I don't necesSarily think that it's Challenging for the people in the Room
if it's a mixed Gender because Actually I think
they're quite—

they're— Generally now i'm talking about

S ummm

C —they're very Ready
and Able and Have been Able to disMiss gender issues

S ummm

C So— No it's Challenging for Me

To
Say Something
That is Quite
Normal to Me
but perCeived as "Radical" by Them

S: yeah

C: and I'm not Talking aBout a Radical Statement

S yeah

C I'm talking about
their perCeption

Here Clare evokes speaking contexts charged with the 'Hugely Challenging ... eNormously challenging ... Hugely Challenging/Really challenging' power of gendered relations. Her 'Normal' is in collision with the comfortable norm of being 'very Ready/and Able to disMiss gender issues'.

I ask Clare if she can give me some examples of 'disMissive responses', and she offers as an example trying to raise the issue of 'domestic' violence:

C: i Think Maybe
parTicularly over the Last couple of years Three to four Years
—there's— there's
Actually i could give you a very Tangible exAmple of it Maybe

S okay yeah

C Where if You for example Bring up aRound doMestic Violence

S yeah

C — it would Not be unUsual for the imMediate resPonse in the Room
and This could be From Either other Women Or men

S yeah

C —that "Oh Well— Men Men are the Victims of Violence as Well"

S: right

C: in in My in the Work that I do

S yeah

C I'm not in Any Manner or reSpect disPuting that Men are vioLated

S yeah

C but my Role
is to raise aWareness and to Highlight and to put my concenTration and Work on Women
on on on Women that are experiencing violence
and— to Maybe advoCate on Some level on— on the beHalf of Women that are experiencing Violence and not y'Know

S yeah

C —so
I think that I think that is
I would Be surPrised if there was a Feminist in the Country That Hasn't experienced that

The 'Severely Limited' Focus on Women

The discursive dynamic which Clare describes here – an utterance which takes the form of '"Oh Well— Men Men are the Victims of Violence as Well" as a *response* to the issue of violence against women is also played out in the Cosc strategy:

> While the general approach to tackling domestic and sexual violence has focused on violence against women, there is increasing recognition of the fact that men are also victims of these crimes and that strategies to assist male victims need to be in place. (p. 27)

> To date the emphasis, particularly in large-scale research, has been on men's violence towards women. This inclination has severely limited the extent to which issues relating to domestic and

> sexual violence are addressed for both women and men. Gradually, however, prevalence studies are beginning to cover the extent of domestic and sexual violence among both men and women. (p. 37)

On the surface, these quotes present themselves as a humane recognition that men as well as women experience violence, and also require strategies of assistance. However, at stake in these statements is not so much the issue of addressing the violence experienced by women and men *per se*, but rather the ideological terms of this address. While ostensibly asserting an inclusive terrain of 'both women and men', the markers of an ideological struggle are discernible in the tension established between '*the general approach'/to date the emphasis'* (focus on violence against women) and '*increasing recognition*' (focus on violence against both men and women).

The ideological position indexed by the historical 'general approach' can only be feminism, and in particular the first major survey by Kelleher and O'Connor (1995) of women's experiences of 'domestic' violence in the Republic of Ireland. As Wright and Hearn (2013) observe, a huge body of research and service provision now exists around 'domestic violence' on account of feminist women. It could perhaps be argued that the Cosc move to 'both men and women' poses a challenge to monolithic accounts of patriarchy in favour of more complex feminist theorisations of power relationships. Clair (1998), for example, analyses one man's story of sexual harassment by female colleagues, informed by theoretical understandings that both men and women produce and reproduce the existing patriarchal social order. She argues that ultimately the women in this case discursively define their own subjectivity and that of other marginalised members of society as inferior, and that their practices contribute to protecting patriarchy within a capitalist system. Clearly, however, such attention to complex conceptualisations of power is well beyond the scope of the Cosc strategy's analytical framework which is confined to counting abstracted individuals. Rather than expanding understandings of power relations, the Cosc statements are premised on merely categorising counted individuals through a readily available 'Men/Women' binary.

This lays the foundation for a new super-imposed binary – *the general approach* versus *increasing recognition* – and it is here that power relations are newly installed. The distinction depends on a crucial discursive move which constructs these positions as oppositional: 'the general approach' *has severely limited* attention to both men and women. Thus, a focus on

violence against women is now constructed as an enactment of privileged attention, and one which is newly-framed as legitimate only in relation to a consideration of violence against men. Renzetti (1993) writes that the aim of feminist work on crime and criminal justice is 'not to push men out so as to pull women in, but rather to gender the study of crime and criminal justice' (cited in DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007, p. 877). But in setting up 'the general approach' as its 'severely limited' object of critique, these Cosc statements subtly suggest an 'as if' feminist work on violence against women has 'pushed out' men.

In setting up these binary ideological positions, the Cosc strategy also adjudicates on them. It inserts itself into a narrative of progress, whereby the 'severe limitations' of 'the general approach' are being corrected. The 'general approach' is now already displaced into the past - i.e. 'has focused' – as legitimacy is conferred on the 'increasing recognition'. This implicitly references a major survey by Watson and Parsons (2005) on women's and men's experiences of 'domestic' violence. But Cosc installs a normative imperative which holds, not only that it is right and proper to attend to violence experienced by 'both men and women', but that this 'both' is constituted by rejecting a 'focus on women'.

Although Cosc positions itself here as a neutral arbitrator of 'prevalence studies', this neutrality conceals highly-charged terrain. Since Straus' and Gelles' (Straus, 1979; Straus & Gelles, 1986) controversial US studies opened up the question of 'gender symmetry', issues such as methodologies, measurement scales, and definitions have been hotly contested (e.g. DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010). 'Gender symmetry' debates must be located in the context of wider 'backlash' hostilities toward feminism (Dragiewicz, 2013). In an Irish context, this backlash has been given particular expression by the organisation Amen, founded to address violence against men, informed by an explicitly anti-feminist ideology (Mullan, 2001). Following Mansbridge and Shames (2008), Dragiewicz (2013) writes that, 'Backlash is a response to a threat to existing hierarchies of power and privilege' (p. 178) so that of central interest for her is how power is deployed in backlash efforts.

I assert that of central importance in this deployment is the discursive power of 'statistics' which mark the 'rational' stage upon which 'prevalence' debates are played out. Watson and Parsons (2005) conclude, for instance, that

> If the figures for minor and severe abuse are combined ... the levels for women and men are much closer (about 29 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively, overall), and particularly for physical abuse (about 13 per cent for both women and men). This combination of groups, however, would deny the importance of the impact of the behaviour on the person experiencing it and would not be in keeping with the concept of domestic abuse developed here ... The figures in Table 2.1 help to clarify one of the core debates in the area of domestic abuse: the issue of gender symmetry or asymmetry in prevalence. It is clear from the table that when we focus on severe abuse women are more than twice as likely as men to be victims. (p. 53)

Despite such clarifications, however, the statistics assume an ideological life of their own to feed the simulacrum of women's privilege. For example, of Watson and Parsons' research, O'Sullivan (2010) writes, 'Among their findings were these: 29% of women, and 26% of men suffer domestic abuse of some kind; 13% of women, and 13% of men suffer physical abuse at home' (p. 294). His article addresses perceived injustices against men in relation to women: 'There are few support groups for male victims of domestic violence. There are no refuges for battered husbands, while there are many for women' (p. 297). Thus, he poses a question and its answer: 'What human basis is there for such a double standard? To change the situation we need to start by looking at the full picture with open eyes, not only at half of it' (p. 297). O'Sullivan concludes his article by referring abused men to Cosc and Amen for help.

This Cosc-Amen convergence serves to underline a coherence between neoliberal and backlash rationalities, since both derive their 'human basis' from 'a masculine subject, disguised as a neuter' (Söderback, 2013, p. 258). It also points to Dragiewicz's (2013) argument that backlash forms of resistance to feminism include institutional processes which work to regulate 'domestic violence' by concealing and/or subsuming feminism and the feminist struggle. Wright and Hearn (2013) similarly argue that gender-neutral discourses of 'domestic violence' have gained discursive currency and provided a new rhetoric to draw on: 'The symmetry discourse of "domestic violence" assists the gender neutrality that is now found in definitions at institutional levels. Together, these two factors play a significant role in helping to neutralize feminism' (p. 37).

Clare also draws attention to the challenges posed for feminists: 'I would Be surPrised if there was a Feminist in the Country That/ Hasn't experienced that'. For her, these challenges are located, not in the domain of statistics, nor in a monolithic Feminism, but in the embodied micro-spaces of Speaking in a Room about violence against women. But into the Room to reassert its powers to dismiss women, newly engorged, one might say, with the myth of statistical presence, enters 'Men' – the 'disembodied and universal masculine subject, disguised as a neuter':

S: and What is the efFect? so when Somebody
so
when You're when You're Trying to Raise this the Issue of
Violence against Women

C umm

S and Then somebody says "well Men experience domestic violence as Well"
for example

C umm

S like
What is the efFect? How does that w- What is the efFect of That on
What it is that you want to Say or?
How do you exPerience that when That resPonse comes Back to you?

C: — i i Find it i Find it very Difficult

—

...

it's AbsoLutely inValid to me because it's a Separate it's an enTirely
separate Issue
which deServes
as Much Time
as the Issue which i'm Speaking about
but i'm Speaking about the issue which i'm Speaking about
so When they Say to Me When they resPond with that and that's a very
Frequent response—
I Feel "so does That mean then that the Women

that I'm working with that are Being Violated
—that Somehow we should
forGet about them because
or we Shouldn't Focus our atTention
On their Needs because Men are being Violated as Well?"
So it
UnderMines
the vioLation that's Taking Place aGainst those Women

For Clare, this is about the Time of Speaking – the making of time for an actual relationship with actual women who are actually *being* violated: 'the Women/that I'm working with that are Being Violated'. For her, this is not a negation of time for speaking of men who are 'being Violated.' But the response 'Oh Well— Men Men are the Victims of Violence as Well' shifts the discursive space from the particularity of Clare's relationship with these women, into a male-referenced generality which swallows all particularities, including the Time of Speaking. For Clare, the effect is a 'forgetting' and an 'undermining' of women's ongoing embodied realities: 'the vioLation that's Taking Place aGainst those Women.'

Moreover, she locates these silencings in a new official discourse of gender neutrality:

S: but You've Said that "in the Last Three or four Years" you find inCreasingly that
\This is\ something that comes up
C: yeah \ \yeah it Is yeah
yeah Yeah
—what i'm Finding in the Last couple of Years
Is that no matter What the issue Is you're Talking about
People of an ofFicious nature
Want to Bring it
to a Gender neuTrality
a Gender Neutral
— poSition

S ummm

C And
the Whole iDea for me of "Gender"
Is
it's a Lack of neutrality
it Hasn't got a Neutral Space

The dislocations which Clare voices here, and the epistemic gap which they open up between the political as embodied and politics as 'prevalence', brings into sharp relief the binary of the Personal Voice and the Policy Voice which I discussed in Chapter 2. In the next section, I explore how this binary is inscribed into the text of the Cosc strategy itself, and the ideological struggles through which it is constituted.

Listening to the Voices?

> Tyrants, if they know their business, may well be 'kindly and mild in everything'... [T]heir measures may sound very 'untyrannical' and beneficial to modern ears [...].
>
> (Arendt, 1958, p. 221)

Disclosure

Arendt (1958) writes of 'disclosure' as 'the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: "Who are you?" (p. 178). Alcoff and Gray (1993) write that, 'The principal tactic adopted by the survivors' movement has been to encourage and make possible survivors' disclosures of our traumas' (p. 261). But they caution that, 'the formulation of the primary political tactic for survivors should not be a simple incitement to speak out, as this formulation leaves unanalyzed the conditions of speaking and thus makes us too vulnerable to recuperative discursive arrangements' (p. 284). Clair (1997) also writes, 'we must be careful not to see the metaphor of voice as the ultimate path to empowerment. It has failed us in the past' (p. 332).

These cautions are of particular relevance under conditions of neoliberal governmentality where 'disclosure' is the medium through which survivors of 'domestic' and sexual violence become inserted into the neoliberal disciplinary regime of government at a distance. The whole edifice of the Cosc strategy turns on 'disclosure', defined as, 'the term used to refer to when the victim reveals his/her experience of domestic or sexual abuse to a service provider, for example a person operating in the health sector' (Cosc, 2010, p. 33, f.n. 7). The strategic centrality of 'disclosure' is registered in the 'key headline indicators' which include an 'increase in the level of disclosure and reporting' and that 'people in the community and in service provider

organisations are better informed about how to respond to disclosures' (p. 33). A lack of 'disclosure' is constructed as a key problem: 'victims are not reporting or disclosing and ... their trauma is not being adequately identified by key services' (p. 48). Therefore, 'Ensuring reasonable opportunity for disclosure and promoting routine disclosure is vital for effective service response' (p. 77)

'This Government Strategy Listens'

A key section in Chapter One of the Cosc strategy is entitled 'Listening to Victims'. It introduces three short quotations with the statement, 'The following people who related their experiences of domestic and sexual violence provide an insight that may help to understand these crimes' (p. 21). The first two quotations are:

> I put up with an awful life. I was afraid to go to the Gardaí. I was afraid it would get out and he'd kill me altogether. (Survivor of domestic violence, as quoted in Watson and Parsons, 2005)
>
> If the husband was taken away like, the children would not have anything to feed on as he is the breadwinner; a lot of times when women tend to cope with domestic violence (it) is sheer poverty. (Survivor of domestic violence, as quoted in Watson and Parsons, 2005)
>
> (from Cosc, 2010, p. 21)

It could be said that these foundational premises in voice and story draw on the rudimentary intuition of the narratable self: 'the unreflecting knowledge of my 'sense-of-self', I know that I have a story and that I consist in this story' (Cavarero, 2000, (p. 35). But in opening 'the possibility of a thought of the *one'*, the strategy also partakes in what Cavarero calls 'the untrustworthy promise that the "subject" has made to her for centuries ... seduced by a universality that makes it into an abstract substance' (p. 38)

The Cosc narrative does not linger to acknowledge or suggest the *particular* insights offered by these quotations. It moves immediately to announce its own listening:

> These are the words of people living in Ireland who are or have been victims of domestic and sexual abuse. Their stories are replicated on a daily basis in our communities. This government strategy

> listens to those voices and sets out specific actions which will be taken by State bodies to ensure that the possibility for such violence is reduced and that, where it does occur, those voices are understood and given the support and services necessary to rebuild their lives. (p. 22)

Here, the notion of 'voices' works to construct a 'listening government'. The document speaks in the assured tone of a caring government which, having listened, is now responding with understanding action, evoking the promise of happy endings where lives can be 'rebuilt'.

This section does not wholly rely on these narrative fragments in order to construct the listening government. The substantive content of this section is composed of six extended narratives (100 to 302 words) 'as told to Cosc' – the stories of 'Jenny', 'Anna', 'Joe', 'Norah', 'Helen', and 'Denise'. The stories are introduced: 'The following scenarios are drawn from recent interviews with victims/survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. They provide an understanding of the impact of the current system' (p. 23). After presenting the narratives, the document moves without further comment into the next section entitled 'Government response' (p. 23) which opens as follows:

> The Government is concerned at the consistent prevalence, and the high level of non-disclosure or non-reporting of situations such as these. The current critical problems of lack of overall policy direction and co-ordination across the system create real and practical obstacles for people such as Norah and Helen. (p. 23)

The narrative of 'Government *response'*, which represents voices and stories as *opening* up issues which *then* form the basis of the Government's response to 'real people', is then galvanised into the political purpose of 'direction' and 'co-ordination'. But I suggest that this representation of the voices and stories is *already* ideologically pre-constituted by the terms of the response - a response which is itself constituted through neoliberal government at a distance.

Firstly, the representation of the stories already assumes the individualised subjectivities on which neoliberalism depends. Each story stands singly, as if emanating pre-formed from an already self-present and pre-constituted subjectivity. Beyond 'as told to Cosc', we are not told about the dialogical contexts of telling the stories, who the stories are told to, and how they came to be told. The unproblematised notion of 'a description of the experiences of individual victim-

survivors' is already bound to language as a transparent reflection of reality. These assumptions are not politically neutral.

Secondly, the structures of the narratives also open up political questions. With the interesting exception of Denise's story[2], and notwithstanding variations in detail and length, each story is retold by an unacknowledged other in the third person and is characterised by a relatively orderly unfolding narrative structure. This takes the form of: a story of abuse and silence; then a contact with outside agencies such as guards, doctors or what are referred to in three of the stories as 'support services'; and then an aftermath e.g. 'Jenny is rebuilding her life' (p. 22) or 'Norah is still afraid and does not go out anymore' (p. 23). Questions of power enter here with regard to what may have been left out of or de-emphasised in these narratives, and in general the kinds of narratives which receive privileged attention. Notably, for instance, the possibility of collective action is not recognised in any of the story presentations. The very notion of a narrative with a linear trajectory headed towards a normative 'end' of closure raises its own questions of power, including that of 'an overarching meaning derived from a central organizing narrative authority or character' (Tamboukou, 2011, p. 628).

Thirdly, of particular interest in this regard is a discernible 'fit' between this narrative form and the unfolding political meta-narrative of 'the government response'. Firstly, the 'listening government' asserts the need for 'support and services necessary to rebuild their lives' (p. 22). In 'response' to the longer narratives, it then sets up the problem to be overcome: 'the lack of overall policy direction and co-ordination across the system' (p. 23). Therein lies the source of a deeper 'voice' problem: 'non-disclosure or non-reporting' (p. 23). This political narrative performs its own recuperation of the stories, as they become increasingly reduced to this one dimension: 'concerned at the consistent prevalence, and the high level of non-disclosure or non-reporting of situations such as these' (p. 23). Notably, for instance, the Cosc concern with 'real and practical obstacles' (p. 23) evades the concerns expressed in one of the opening quotations that, 'a lot of times when women tend to cope with domestic violence (it) is sheer poverty' (p. 22). The 'system' which the Cosc strategy sets out to 'improve' is not one which addresses

[2] Denise's story differs from the others in being an ensemble of quotations in the first person which do not reflect a linear narrative.

social, economic, political and cultural rights, but rather one which provides the networking conditions for government at a distance. The terms of subjectivity necessary for the realisation of this political project are already established through the Cosc discourse of voice and stories and the valorisation of expert interventions.

The significance of these narratives lies not in the uniqueness of she or he *who* has spoken them. The point is to highlight that any story can in principle be substituted for any other since they are 'stories [which] are replicated on a daily basis in our communities' (p. 22). As national replicas, 'those voices' are emptied of their own uniqueness and particularity. The government response signals a recuperation into the universal which, 'logically transform[s] itself into an act of erasure' (Cavarero, 2000, p. 53). It is on the basis of this erasure – the dis-appearance of who – that the Cosc strategy generates its 'kindly and mild' political narrative. The strategy signals Ni Dhomhnaill's 'dry land' onto which the mermaids have been ejected, and which sets the conditions for their being 'dried out' – *a thriomaigh* – as neoliberal subjects.

Ontological, Epistemological and Political Violations

Having regard for Arendt's philosophy of the human condition then, the Cosc strategy enacts a *violation* of the human condition, with ontological, epistemic and political dimensions.

Firstly, in the swift move to centre its own listening, the Cosc narrative shatters the ontological conditions of Cavarero's narratable self. This 'elementary reality of an existent being' is starkly announced by the woman who says, *'I was afraid it would get out and he'd kill me altogether*' (p. 22). This is a fear whose meaning is irrevocably bound to the vulnerability of embodied existence, and the unique existence of the *I* who speaks of fear. Her speech is fixed and solidified into the whatness of 'survivor of domestic violence'. Her own unique presence then gets further lost as her words, already separated from her embodied voice, are merged into the general pool of 'words of people living in Ireland'. In addressing trauma, the policy narrative repeats the ontological rupture which already marks the site of trauma, turning a unique, embodied, relational existent into a substitutable object of surveillance.

Secondly, the refusal of ontological acknowledgement translates into a refusal of epistemic acknowledgement. Alcoff and Gray (1993) argue that, 'autonomy over the conditions of our speaking out' is a precondition to developing the subversive potential of survivors' speech, and this requires 'the disenfranchisement of outside expert authority over our discourse, obstructing the ability of "experts" to "police our statements", to put us in a defensive posture, or to determine the focus and framework of our discourse' (p. 284). But the Cosc definition of 'disclosures' institutionalises the *a priori* advantage of a network of professional responders, pre-equipped with coordinated inter-disciplinary interpretations and solutions. It is already infused with 'judgments about who counts as a knowledgeable, reliable witness, whose speaking deserves a hearing and whose is unworthy of notice, whose putative knowing achieves uptake and whose is thwarted by incomprehension and intransigence' (Code, 2009, p. 327). This is exemplified in the Cosc address to its audience:

> With the echoes of the voices of the victims/survivors fresh in our minds, we recognise the importance of primary prevention measures that increase people's understanding of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, particularly among high-risk groups. We know that, given the prevalence of this violence, services are encountering such voices on a frequent basis but that particular service interventions are needed to encourage and support disclosure and safety. (p. 48)

'The voices' have now become 'echoes' to freshen and confirm 'our minds'. An epistemic and agentic community of *we* materialises, threaded through *'our minds ... we recognise ... We know.'* The knowledge of '*We know*' is from the perspective of 'services ... encountering such voices', where 'such voices' now performs its generic work. The paragraph is premised on an assumed domain of knowledge, which in turn is assumed to be shared by the readers of the Cosc strategy, who in turn are assumed to inhabit the defining domain of action: '*primary prevention measures ... [and] particular service interventions'*. But these privileged terms of 'our minds' depend on the constitutive exclusion of 'such voices', of 'victims/survivors', and particularly of 'high-risk groups', from the epistemic order. As mere 'echoes', the voices are 'absent presences' (Ahmed, 2004).

Thirdly, these 'echoes' also mark 'the banishment of the citizens from the public realm and the insistence that they mind their private business while only "the rulers should attend to public

affairs"' (Arendt, 1958, p. 221). The 'private business' here of course is that of 'rebuilding their lives'. Arendt's analysis of privatisation and the 'privation of privacy' discussed in Chapter 3 has particular implications for 'domestic' violence and sexual abuse which depend upon structures of privacy and secrecy. Clair (1998) writes that, 'women, women's work, and sexuality have all been privatized. Privatizing women, their work, and sexuality sequesters abusive and oppressive behaviour' (p. 102). In her analysis of sexual harassment, she describes as 'ironic' that 'much of the public discourse surrounding sexual harassment acts to privatize or silence the issue' (p. 121). She cites Cockburn (1991) that, 'Women's oppression takes the form of an open secret that is continually exposed to view yet remains forever unseeable and unsayable' (in Clair, 1998, p. 117). The Cosc strategy is based precisely on this institutionalisation of privatised relations, where women's disclosures are disciplined through privatised relations with the state. The 'public' here is a privatised public sphere which denies the appearance of *who* one is.

The point here is that this dis-appearance is relationally *produced* by denying the human condition of uniqueness in plurality – institutionalising the forgetting about water. At stake here is a kind of mutually constituted double-production of subjectivity. On the one hand, neoliberal rationalities involve the positive production of neoliberal individualistic subjects in the register of what. Clair's (1998) application of Baudrillard's (1994) notion of simulacrum' to sexual harassment is relevant here. She employs it to conceptualise the distinction between the material effects of sexual harassment, and the additional effects of the 'corrective' discourses surrounding these events. Similarly, the 'corrective discourses' of the Cosc strategy contribute to generating discourses and signs *about* violence against women which take on their own life and their own exchangeable value as 'operational doubles' posturing as 'the real' (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 2). But, alongside and complexly entangled with this 'what' production, is the simultaneous production of an absent presence of 'who'. A key point of my argument is that the 'what' and 'who' are constituted through ideological struggle.

Clair's (1997) notion of 'silence ∧ voice' is useful here. She employs the symbol ∧ to indicate that opposites are at times self-contained, to go beyond binary understandings, and to reflect a sense of 'silence as voice and voice as silence' (p. 315). 'Sometimes', she writes, 'voice can silence, and other times, silence can speak ... [W]e should not always view silence as a form of

oppression. Sometimes, silence is resistance' (p. 332). The notion of silence as *organised* links the micro and the macro through complex and dynamic discursive processes, referring simultaneously to 'the ways in which interests, issues, and identities of marginalized people are silenced and to how those silenced voices can be organized in ways to be heard' (p. 323).

I argue that the claim to be both neutral and rational which constitutes policy discourses is central to the organisation of silence. Wedel et al (2005) argue that the field of policy studies has often evaded serious critique because of an inadequate exploration of 'how policy narratives mobilize the language of science, reason, and "common sense"', appealing to 'seemingly neutral scientific reasoning or incontestable assertions about human nature' (p. 37). But the claim to rationality, of course, relies on the opposition between 'emotions' and 'rational thought' (Ahmed, 2004). Running through the 'reasoned' voice of the Cosc strategy is the projection of 'emotion' onto others – the 'tragic cases', the traumas that are not being disclosed, their 'echoes' when they are - so excluding them from the realms of rationality. Alcoff and Gray (1993) write that emotional disclosure is used to establish the hierarchy between expert and survivor, but also to discredit survivors in a variety of ways:

> Some scenarios demand that survivor discourse be intensely and explicitly emotional before it will be credible. If the survivor does not cry when she tells her story, she will not be believed ... In other scenarios, however, the emotional content of survivor discourse has to be toned down to be accepted ... 'Too much' emotion is often viewed as conscious manipulation, evidence of lack of control, or as simply inappropriately personal. The emotional content of survivor discourse is policed in regard to certain rules and codes, which vary from context to context. (p. 285)

But the other side of the claim to rationality is that it works 'to conceal the emotional and embodied aspects of thought and reason' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 170). In this concealing, '[i]t is not so much emotions that are erased ... but the processes of production or the "making" of emotions. In other words, "feelings" become "fetishes", qualities that seem to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production and circulation' (p. 11). For Ahmed then, what is 'repressed,' 'always leaves its trace in the present, so that "what sticks" is bound up with the "absent presence" of historicity' (p. 45).

In the next section, I explore this 'absent presence' of historicity in the Cosc strategy with a particular focus on Traveller women's voices. In this regard, Bakhtin's notion of 'ideological struggle' provides for an understanding of the Cosc strategy as a volatile site of socio-ideological contradictions, operating in the midst of heteroglossia, even as it tries to fix meaning through its authoritative 'rational' discourses.

Organising Silence

Mobilising Science, Reason and Common Sense

Traveller women and migrant women are 'whatified' as among Cosc's 'high-risk groups', and in statistics reporting that '13 per cent of users of gender-based violence services were non-indigenous minority ethnic women. Traveller women comprised 15 per cent of service users' (Women's Health Council, 2009, cited in Cosc, 2010, p. 41).

The following paragraph in the Cosc strategy sets out its analysis of the issues at stake for Traveller women and migrant women:

> [I]n communities where the status of men is dominant or where violence against women is considered acceptable, challenging these norms is complicated and doing so will entail a high degree of risk of being rejected by members of one's own community. Barriers to talking about domestic and sexual violence present disproportionately among women in the Traveller community (Watson and Parsons, 2005). Belonging to a community where members experience certain barriers in relation to the wider community means that women, in order to cope, are strongly dependent on informal and mutual support from other women (Watson and Parsons, 2005). Similar problems are faced by immigrant women from gender unequal cultures (Watson and Parsons, 2005).
>
> (Cosc, 2010, p. 45)

In these statements, the Cosc strategy constructs a political discourse of violence against women and gender inequality in the Traveller community, attaching the same analysis to 'immigrant women from gender unequal cultures' who are deemed to face 'similar problems'. The discursive effect however is an ideologically-charged reification of 'communities,' 'cultures' and 'gender'. The statement, 'in communities where the status of men is dominant or where violence

against women is considered acceptable', constructs a binary world of 'communities', differentiated by whether or not male dominance and an acceptability of violence against women prevails. There is an implicit norm then of a dominant, settled, indigenous Irish 'wider community' which is 'gender equal.' The problems to be addressed are demarcated and contained 'in [Traveller and migrant] communities' as spatialised and reified 'gender unequal cultures'. While there is a muted allusion to unnamed 'certain barriers in relation to the wider community', the risk for Traveller women of 'being rejected' is considered only as emanating from 'members of one's own community'. The notion of 'gender inequality' is therefore appropriated here with highly racialised effects. It accords with what Burman and Chantler (2005) describe as, 'explanations in terms of particular cultural practices and norms relating to gender relations' (p. 72), in their analysis of state responses to gender based violence against ethnic minoritised women in the UK. They argue that such explanations commit an 'error of cultural pathologisation that obscures more systemic state responsibilities and collusion with violence' (p.72), reinforcing the institutional neglect and marginalization of the most vulnerable women (p. 64).

The paragraph mobilises 'science, reason and "common sense"' (Wedel et al., 2005, p. 37), claiming its authority through the academic genre of research citations: a triple citation of Watson and Parsons (2005). But the Cosc analysis departs significantly from the cited text which included focus groups with Traveller women and migrant women. While the Cosc strategy avoids any reference to *racism*, Watson and Parsons contextualise their analysis by citing Fay (1999) that 'Traveller women, alongside women of colour, experience a particular form of oppression as a result of the fusion of racism and sexism (cited in Watson & Parsons, 2005, p. 150). The issues they report, as raised by the focus group participants, echo those of Black and minoritised women elsewhere who have similarly drawn attention to the vulnerabilities to racism and 'the profound connections within extended families and communities which compound the problem of secrecy and loyalty for women living with domestic violence' (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010, p. 150; c.f. Pavee Point, 2011a; AkiDwA, 2012).

Of special interest is how the racialised discourse of 'gender inequality' works as a subtle carrier for a particular kind of appropriate 'talking'. The notion of 'barriers' is important here: there are

'[*b]arriers to talking* about domestic and sexual violence [which] present disproportionately among women in the Traveller community', and there are 'barriers in relation to the wider community'. Interpreting this 'talking' through the Cosc definition of 'disclosure' as 'the term used to refer to when the victim reveals his/her experience of domestic or sexual abuse to a service provider' (Cosc, 2010, p. 33, f.n. 7), a picture emerges here of the salient 'barriers' being those which prevent *talking to professionals* in the (implicitly settled) 'wider community'. This is underlined by the attention in this paragraph to Traveller women's perceived dependency on '*informal and mutual support from other women*'. This normalises *formal* talk as 'proper talk', but also pathologises 'informal and mutual support from other women'- a pathologisation which is reinforced by the immediate slide into the statement, 'Similar problems are faced by immigrant women from gender unequal cultures'.

I suggest that, in this casual diminishment of informality, mutuality, and relations between women, is a key site of ideological struggle; 'Informal and mutual support from other women' is presented as the opposite of formal and expert-based relations, outside the domain of 'proper talking'. At best, these relations are a poor substitute, but ultimately such 'dependency' is a problem. From the perspective of neoliberal government at a distance, this informal and mutual support may be regarded as potentially disruptive to the extent that it is outside the disciplinary networks of the interagency 'continuum of support'. The prospect of 'informal and mutual relations between women', precisely the domain of the Arendtian political, therefore opens up a central discursive tension with the formalised relations required for neoliberal government at a distance. The discursive moves which accomplish the invalidation also illustrate Wedel et al.'s (2005) assertion that policy makers 'can mute opposition not through crafty Machiavellian maneuvers but by simply casting counterarguments as "irrational" or "impractical"' (p. 37).

Informal and Mutual Support from Other Women

But to further open up these socio-ideological contradictions, the invalidation of mutual relations between women now places the Cosc analysis in a deeply paradoxical relationship with the academic authority it claims; it is precisely 'informal and mutual support from other women'

which provides the conditions of possibility for the focus groups of Watson and Parsons' (2005) research. The migrant women who participated in one focus group were a group of eight women regularly meeting together at the Vincentian Refugee Centre in Dublin (p. 150). The three focus groups with Traveller women were organised and facilitated by the Violence Against Women Programme of Pavee Point, drawing on already existing relationship networks: in the Pavee Point centre in the North Inner City Dublin; in Tallaght 'in the group's regular meeting room' (Watson and Parsons, 2005, p. 149); and in Galway with women from the Primary Health Care Programme – an initiative which centres peer-support between Travellers. The transformation in the representation of women's voices in the move from Watson and Parsons' report to the Cosc strategy provides an illuminating example of the devocalising of the logos.

For a start, the two opening quotations through which the Cosc strategy stages its declaration that it has '*listened to these voices'* are taken from Watson and Parsons' account of the focus groups. The first is the voice of a Traveller woman: 'I put up with an awful life. I was afraid to go to the Gardaí. I was afraid it would get out and he'd kill me altogether' (in Watson & Parsons, 2005, p. 155*)*; The second is the voice of a migrant woman: 'If the husband was taken away like the children would not have anything to feed on as he is the breadwinner, a lot of times when women tend to cope with domestic violence is sheer poverty[3]'(in Watson & Parsons, 2005, p. 164). The government claim to having *listened* relies on positioning each speaker as a, 'Survivor of domestic violence' (Cosc, 2010, p. 22). Yet, Watson and Parsons clarify that, 'These focus groups ... were with women who may *or may not have experienced domestic abuse'* (p. 149, my italics). Although the first quotation testifies to the speaker's personal experience of 'domestic' violence, the second quotation provides no basis for such an assumption. This is an extraordinary misreading, and a gross and careless act of inattention to these women. The claim to listening becomes a function of the desire to fix identities into categories amenable to the claim itself, and is thus an ironic but concealed performance of not-listening.

Indeed, the positioning of each quotation as a 'survivor of domestic violence' is tied to the universalising narrative whereby *these voices* are decontextualised as those of 'people living in

[3] The insertion of an 'it' in brackets in Cosc's quotation of this speaker is suggestive of another 'normalising' and 'devoicing' gesture.

Ireland' whose stories are 'replicated' (Cosc, 2010, p. 22). But the contexts from which *these voices* emerge are not replicable. The first quotation is part of a wider political discussion by Traveller women, including critiques of the failure of state institutions to listen to and to support Traveller women. With regard to the Gardaí, Watson and Parsons (2005) summarise these responses: 'The main reasons for not reporting their experiences to the Gardaí were based on a concern that the Gardaí could or would not do anything, that the Gardaí would not believe them or would not take it seriously and/or fear of reprisal from their partner' (p. 154; see also Pavee Point, 2011a, 2011b).The second quotation is part of a discussion where the migrant women raised the issue of dependency on a male breadwinner as a consequence of their insecure legal status in Ireland: 'This dependence would make the woman more inclined to stay with their partner to try to make the relationship work and less inclined to report his behaviour' (Watson and Parsons, 2005, p. 164). This quotation therefore opens onto how state immigration policies increase migrant women's vulnerability to violence (AkiDwA, 2012; Joint Committee on Justice Defence and Equality, 2011; MCRI, 2012). All of this underlines what Burman and Chantler (2005) describe as 'systemic state responsibilities and collusion with violence' against minoritised women (p. 72). The universalising government claim to have '*listened to these voices'* abstracts and individualises each voice, working to conceal the state's political involvement in the production of women's vulnerability to violence.

But the rush to secure the identities of *these* women, whose *actual* identities elude such easy fixing, also suggests an unthinkability with regard to hearing women, and particularly Traveller women and migrant women, as political actors and as knowers of their own contexts and situations. In disembedding each voice from its plurality with other women's voices, an ontological rupture is performed with the narrative conditions of mutual appearance and relationality, bolstering the neoliberal privatisation of politics and the public sphere (c.f. Arendt, 1958). However, while Traveller women are represented in the Cosc strategy as somehow disempowered because of a dependency on 'informal and mutual supports of other women', Watson and Parsons (2005) report that, 'Whereas previously on the road side or in a halting site the women would be able to provide informal supports to one another there was the impression that now women were more isolated from one another and so the same level of support could not be offered' (p. 151). In this regard, they quote one Traveller woman:

> There was a more open life on the road, now we're living more private than we did years ago.
> (in Watson &Parsons, 2005, p. 151)

This statement carries the historical mark of anti-nomadic state policies of cultural assimilation deployed against the Traveller community (Donahue et al., 2005; McVeigh, 1997). But it is also a dynamic narrative moment which draws on cultural nomadic memory as a resource in the present for subjecting practices of 'living more private' to critical scrutiny - and on terms which assert the importance of mutual relations between Traveller women. This harbours a profound threat to the rationalities of neoliberal government at a distance.

Moreover, this 'absent presence' of historicity, through which the 'rational' policy voice erases emotional processes (Ahmed, 2004), becomes powerfully present in the narratable selves who hold these embodied histories. Thus, while the Traveller women from Galway who participate in the focus group are with the Primary Healthcare Programme, three of the founders of the first such programme in Dublin – Bridgie Collins, Nelly Collins and Missey Collins – tell the story of its 'first-ness' in a video produced by Dublin Community TV (DCTV, 2010). Their tellings disrupt the entire matrix of universalising rationalities which hold the Cosc strategy together: the sedimentations of linearised time, expert knowledge, rational/emotional binaries, the privatisation of the political, the invalidation of uniqueness, and the disqualification of relations of mutuality between women.

The women tell of their participation in a community education course organised by Pavee Point in the early 1990s. They tell in particular of the extraordinary effect a module on health had on their thinking, because of the hard conditions endured by their own mothers and other Traveller women. Nelly Collins describes the death of her own mother in childbirth at age 41, and the question she carries:

> My mother died at the age of 41. And she died at the birth of a baby. That memory always sticks in my mind. To know why was there no help, to help her?

Out of such questions, Bridgie Collins describes the formation of a desire to take an initiative for change:

> We'd love to do something to help our own women, including ourselves.

And Nelly Collins articulates this desire in the realm of unknown possibilities:

> If it's possible - could it be possible? - that we could get something done? Without trying, we won't know. So we tried.

Missy Collins describes her encounters with a (then) Health Board official in 1992 on approaching the board for funding to start a community health education project for Travellers, funding Travellers as community health workers:

> I was practically told, 'No. It wouldn't work'. I says, 'Why? Why will it not work?' [He said], 'Because it's Travellers going out talking to Travellers. And moreover, that ye're not educated yerselves'. All I simply said was, in a couple of words, I said, 'You can't tell me that. Because you know why? I know our needs up here [touching forehead]'. And I said, 'I'm not giving up. I'll be back again'. ... And our strength was to stay together. Close together, and keep, keep, keep it going. So then after that we went again. The man that practically told me that it wouldn't work, 'Right Missy', he said, 'I'll pilot ye for nine months'.

The Chief Characteristic of This Human Life

At one level, it could be said that the story these Traveller women tell has resolved itself into social partnership. But that would be to transform the story into one of an 'ending' rather than one of new beginnings. At a deeper level, it suggests that counter-rationalities already inhere in the history of social partnership which exceed the neoliberal rationalities of social partnership itself. Nelly Collins, Bridgie Collins and Missey Collins invite attention to narratable selves, and to forms of embodied knowledge with histories of questions, openness to uncertainty, the strength of human relationships, and how this galvanises resistance. They articulate the Arendtian political of action, and in particular that, 'The chief characteristic of this specifically human life, whose appearance and disappearance constitute worldly events, is that it is itself always full of events which ultimately can be told as a story' (Arendt, 1958, p. 97)

The governance regime of the Cosc strategy, and the worldly encounters which emerge from it, also leave behind events in women's lives that can be told as stories. Listening to these stories informs the critiques of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare.

Alice sets her hearing of stories in the context of what the HSE describes as a 'continuum of care':

A and—
i suppose in in the case Often in terms of the
Issues that i would Hear around domestic Violence
they're Happening or they're From women
Who are alReady— In a supportive enVironment around
abuse and who Would have like
Social workers Key workers a Supervisor you know
They would have supPort Groups
so they're Going through a Whole Process d'you Know and
and Often kind of by the time I've Heard it
they've alReady—
they've started to Deal with it or they've Dealt with it in terms of in a Group or

S uhum

A y'know or with a Counsellor or— d'you Know what i Mean?

S yeah

A it's Almost y'know we
It's It's It's just an Anecdotal Story by the time it gets to Me sometimes

...
so in That scenario I would Rarely Hear kind of
oRiginal Stories if you like or
—Fresh information would would Rarely Come to me they've alReady
kind of— Done a lot of their Work

In this narrative, Alice evokes a sense of the life of stories through repeated tellings, as stories travel through the 'intensive support' network of the 'continuum of care'. There is a sense that the stories she hears have already taken on a fixed and definite form: 'It's just an Anecdotal Story by the time it gets to Me sometimes'. But, as registered in Alice's references to 'Social workers Key workers a Supervisor ... a Counsellor', these sedimented 'anecdotal' stories of

violence also accumulate stories of the contexts of their tellings. Such hearings allow for events left behind to be heard differently:

> And Hearing women's Stories where they don't even Realise that they Haven't been Heard
> do you Know when where they don't Realise that
> they Went to a Doctor with a Story and they were given Tablets

In this chapter, I have set out key dimensions of neoliberal rationalities as reproduced in the Cosc strategy, with implications for the question, 'whose political voices can become possible through neoliberal times?' Firstly, I have contested the 'criminal justice' discourse on various grounds, but in particular how it works to normalise the 'rightness' of neoliberal government surveillance in women's lives, regulating and silencing critical alternatives. Secondly, I have analysed this reproduction of the social order through an epistemic regime based on the hegemonic assumption of neutral, linear time, and the devocalisation of the logos. Thirdly, the analysis of this chapter demonstrates how the feminist concept of 'gender' has been appropriated by neoliberal rationalities; reduced to an arithmetic category, it has been emptied of its ability to critically interrogate the world. Relatedly, the arithmetisation of the social world has also facilitated an alliance between neoliberal rationalities and the 'backlash' against feminism, manifested in commitments to a 'gender neutral' discourse of 'domestic' and sexual violence. Fourthly, I have analysed the concept of 'voice' as a carrier of neoliberal rationalities in the Cosc strategy, and as the opening for inserting survivors into the social order. All of this is based on an injunction against uniqueness, and on already gendered binaries of reason/emotion. With regard to Arendt's ontology of the human condition, I have framed the effects of this on 'who' someone is as enacting ontological, epistemic and political violence. The Cosc strategy represents the mermaid logos of being 'dried out'.

However, I have also identified informal and mutual supports between women as a key site of ideological struggle in the Cosc text. Throughout this chapter, I have also opened up counter-rationalities of 'rebellious voices,' of narratable selves in alternative times of becoming. These establish the conditions of possibility for contesting neoliberal rationalities. In the next chapter, I

interrogate the routine and mundane reproduction of the social order in the Cosc strategy informed by the epistemic protests of Alice, Lady Gaga and Clare.

Chapter 10

Three Knowledge Contestations

In the previous chapter, an important theme in discussing the Cosc strategy as a technology of neoliberal government at a distance was the epistemic project as articulated in the need for 'knowledgable care', a 'scientific approach' and 'data collection'. In this chapter, I unpack this epistemic theme and in particular the emphasis on expert knowledges, interrogating the Cosc knowledge through categories of inquiry provided by Alice, Lady Gaga and Clare. I draw particularly on the work of Bumiller (2008) who argues that mainstream state and feminist responses to violence against women (VAW) mark the appropriation of the VAW agenda by neoliberalism.

My focus in this chapter is on the routine and mundane micro production of neoliberal rationalities. I start by interrogating the hegemonic discourse of 'mental health' critiqued by Alice as the key governmental discourse for rebuilding lives in medical and therapeutic interventions. I further develop this through Lady Gaga's problematisation of academic knowledge production. Disciplinary discourses of health are linked to an epistemic project which sees survivors of violence as special populations of academic knowledge production. In particular, I interrogate statistics based on the devocalisation of the logos. The mobilisation of these knowledges depends on bureaucratic systems critiqued by Clare. I argue that bureaucratic solutions to violence against women reproduce and intensify the objectification of women. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how Lady Gaga's, Alice's and Clare's protests are themselves silenced but how those silences carry the possibilities of voice.

Health Discourse

Public Health/Mental Health

The *HSE Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence* (HSE, 2010) articulates the normative view of 'domestic' and sexual violence as follows:

> It is important to understand that Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence is situated in a medico-legal context, based on both public health and criminal justice approaches. (HSE, 2010, App F, p. 38)

Bumiller (2008) argues that, 'it has become nearly impossible to understand the causes and consequences of being a victim of violence in terms which do not fit squarely within the purview of medicine or criminal justice' (p. 13). Thus, as 'a leading cause of death for females aged 10-44 years' (HSE, 2010, p. 5), 'domestic' and sexual violence is described as a 'health burden' which is 'comparable to diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, cancer and cardiovascular disease' (p. 6). This discursive framing transforms violence against women into a chronic but treatable medical condition, the effects of which can be understood as treatable symptoms (Bumiller, 2008). It sets the stage therefore for individualised intervention and government at a distance.

This framing sees a radical shift from earlier feminist analyses of patriarchal structures of power. The discourse of 'health' can be regarded as playing a key role in this shift, since the growing recognition of sexual violence as a 'public health crisis' brought legitimacy to the work of feminist organizations (Bumiller, 2008, p. 4). However, it also limited options for survivors outside of the expanding systems of medicalization and criminalization. When feminist ideological concepts, such as 'patriarchy' or 'sexual domination', are introduced in these contexts, it is 'mainly because of their applicability within the language of surveillance, diagnosis, and social control' (p. 14).

This serves to situate the radical political significance of Alice's protest about the framing of violence against women as a 'mental health' issue. The discourse she contests is reproduced as matter of fact by Cosc (2010), which notes,

> mental health problems including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression (McGee et al., 2002) and suicide (Dutton et al, 2006). Around the world, mental health problems, emotional distress, and suicidal behaviour are common among women who have suffered domestic and sexual violence (Krug, 2007). *If these problems* are not acknowledged and support not provided at an early stage, there can be prolonged consequences for the health and well-being of those affected (p. 46, italics added)

In this paragraph, the construction of '*these problems'* is mediated by the psychiatric text. Violence is a de-historicised, reified given, akin to a disease which its sufferers are '*affected'* with. The 'emotional distress' referred to is not a knowledged response to the world, but a clinical symptom of a disorder (Burstow, 2005). At work in this paragraph is the activity of 'putting women's experiences of violence in a box' and naming them without consequences for institutional power (see Letter to Alice). Like Alice, the HSE notes a connection between diagnoses of depression, and domestic and sexual violence: 'in a study of Irish general practices, it was found that among women who were depressed, 67% had experienced Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence (Bradley, 2002)' (HSE, 2010, p. 34). For Alice however, this scenario and the naming of 'depressed women' speaks of 'an epidemic of silenced women':

> —d'you know for Me i Just i Have this Image of
>
> Thousands of Women
>
> Medicated into Silence

S yeah

A Y'know because What i What i
exPerience or
See aRound me

S umm

A i Know is Replicated
Up and Down the Country and i just

Have this Sense of an EpiDemic of

S um

A Silenced Women Who are

who are Medicated or who are Self-Medicating y'know

Neither the Cosc strategy nor the HSE strategy explicitly suggest medication as a solution to women's emotional distress, but nor do they problematise it. Clearly, as highlighted by Alice, a routine 'take a tablet' response is already legitimised by the psychiatric discourse itself. O'Connor (2002) writes that, 'the reality for too many women following disclosure and intervention remains psychiatric referral and admission' (p. 584).

Counselling and the Psy-Complex

It could perhaps be argued that the Cosc strategy contributes to interrupting the power relations at stake in medicalisation. The role of general practitioner to be promoted is that of 'key "first port of call"' in a system of referral (Cosc, 2010, p. 66). A key accent is on counselling: 'Counselling is an important part of the holistic approach that many support services offer to victims of domestic and sexual violence' (p. 84). This emphasis on a *holistic* approach suggests the enlightened attention of psychological intervention, and is in accordance with established understandings of appropriate intervention: 'The need for counselling and psychological services is set out in a number of international documents' (p. 84). Cosc also notes relevant 'minimum standards' for counselling services, including 'the creation of individual action plans for clients that address safety, support and practical needs, and referrals' (p. 84).

But this taken-for-granted emphasis on counselling as an unqualified good is also ideological. At stake here is what Rose (1998) calls the 'psy-complex', referring to the regulatory role of psy-sciences such as psychology and psychiatry in the neoliberal practice of freedom i.e. the production of self-governing subjects. Following Bondi (2005), this is not to suggest that counselling and therapeutic practices are 'relentlessly malign' (p. 498). Bondi argues that it is necessary to consider politically-effective ways of engaging with counselling, noting that many voluntary sector practitioners position themselves as politically engaged. Nonetheless, as Ryan (2001) argues, any engagement with subjectivity is always ideologically precarious. This is

particularly so under neoliberal conditions (Stephenson, 2006). For Bondi (2005), too, 'The scope for resistance may seem puny and marginal relative to the broad impetus of counselling as a psychologising, subjectifying, individualising and professionalising technology' (p. 512).

It is this 'broad impetus' which finds privileged recognition in the Cosc strategy. The focus is firmly individualistic. This is not to suggest that initiatives such as 'individual action plans for clients that address safety, support and practical needs' (Cosc, 2010, p. 84) are unimportant – clearly there is a need to support individual women and children who are escaping 'domestic' violence. But this support is part of a larger discourse 'which individualises the problem and strives to meet clients' therapeutic needs through case management' (McDonald, 2005, p. 282).

Of course, how and by whom 'therapeutic needs' are defined opens up questions of power. Cosc (2010), noting that '[t]he structure and content of counselling services can vary from organisation to organisation', lists, 'e.g. *cognitive restructuring therapy, assertive communication, problem solving, body awareness, gender socialisation, self-esteem building, trauma therapy, grief-resolution-oriented counselling'* (p. 63, my italics). Of course, each approach has its own internal diversity, and ontological and epistemological assumptions which might render it more or less amenable to critical and transformative interpretations. But critical therapeutic possibilities are not recognised, so that the show of variety of the list serves to underline a common focus on intervention at the intrapersonal or interpersonal levels.

Indeed, the list itself tells its own story of an imagined subject as it slides across these various therapeutic domains according to the perspective of the therapist. This is a tale of an abstracted, asocial, apolitical individual who shape-shifts in the slide between diverse experts – now a rational cogniser ... now a body ... now an intensely emotional griever. It marks the Foucauldian 'confessional', whereby, 'the speaker discloses her innermost experiences to an expert mediator who then reinterprets those experiences back to her using the dominant discourse's codes of "normality"' (Alcoff & Gray, 1993, p. 260). The speaker is therefore inscribed into dominant structures of subjectivity so that 'her interior life is made to conform to prevailing dogmas' 9p. 260). This is certainly not the scene of the narratable self where 'the uniqueness that exposes itself brings to the scene a fragile and unmasterable self' (Cavarero, 2000, p. 84). The story told

by this list is that, before a woman ever tells her own story, she is somehow already known, already *masterable* by another. The ultimate address of the list is to an ideal of invulnerability – a subject who is cognitively restructured, assertive, can solve problems, and is herself emotionally re-solved.

In particular, the list is a litany which, however benignly, reiterates a symbolic message of flawed subjectivity; there are faulty cognitions, a failure to be assertive, inability to solve problems, inadequate gender socialisation, a lack of self-esteem, uncomfortable/unruly emotions which must be reduced and resolved. Thus, although 'the new professional discourse ... positions itself against the masochist hypothesis of self-blame' (Bumiller, 2008, p. 85), the historical trope of women's pathologised subjectivity (Stephenson, 2006) remains. Inevitably, it can find expression in the blaming of women who do not self-manage their situation. Alice tells of how,

> we Hear stories horRific stories from kind of from people who've gone
> —for— for Counselling and stuff d'you Know in in terms of
> and aGain going Back to like Women who are— surVivors of domestic aBuse
> y'know being Told
> d'you Know—
> From the Counsellor "well were you beHaving yourself?" d'you know?
> it's Almost like They're reSponsible for
> the Violence— d'you know that their beHaviour can Mitigate in Some cases
> y' know the Violence that's that's Happening

S yeah

A y'know so there's This kind of—

> the Women Judge themSelves i think First

Neoliberal government at a distance however depends on the construction of a lack, since this can then be filled in with expert knowledge. As McKee (2009) writes, 'By defining welfare subjects in terms of what they lack (i.e. their inability to mobilize in their own self-interest), such "technologies of citizenship" embody a productive form of power that aims to put others into action' (p. 472).

Clare's Story

Clare tells a story which illustrates this productive power. This is of her own encounter with a therapist when she first got involved with women's issues through being on a Community Employment scheme:

C Then a Therapist said to me i Might as well Tell you This
a Therapist said to me she said!—
'Oh Well' she said "it's because you're so enGrossed In Issues afFecting
Women" she Said—
"that you've Chosen this Line of Work" she said "you Won't be doing this
Work in Two years Time"

Twenty Two\ years
S \Famous Last Words!

(we laugh)

C and I I said Oh my God i Wish i could see her Now!
three Hundred years Later!
Still doing it y'Know?!

S isn't that wow God there's So much that could be Said about That isn't it?

C Ummm

S How did you Hear it when She Said that?

C i Heard it kind of a Bit as a Negative

S yeah

C yeah i Heard it as a little bit of a Negative

S what was Negative about What?

C Negative insoFar as like that
Somehow was a Focus
On my Own—?
like it was Where i was At in my Life\ and in Three years Time\ i'd Be
S \right \a "Phase" you
were going through

C (*laughing*) Like i Said it's Like "a Phase" Yeah! and—

In this therapeutic discourse which Clare re-voices, Clare's involvement in women's groups out of the story of her 'Spark' appears to be rendered as indicating an underlying pathology. Her own political responses and initiatives are absorbed into a causality, a 'because' which is discernible only by the therapist. The therapist's voice establishes a discourse of Clare's involvement in women's issues which appears to position her political response to discrimination as itself a symptom of a temporally-bound condition, of 'Where i was At in my Life'. This sets the terms of a narrative of closure which invokes a future 'rebuilt Clare', exemplified in the therapeutic voice, 'you Won't be doing this Work in Two years Time'.

As I re-voice Clare's re-voicing of the therapist – 'you Won't be doing this Work in Two years Time', she responds again to this re-voicing, highlighting a voice with no room for doubt:

C "i Know you'll be doing something different" is what she said i mean there was No there was Absolutely No room for Doubt in her voice

S wow

C i don't it wasn't "i Think you'll be doing something"
"it's Likely that you'll be doing something" it was
"i Know you'll be doing something different"
it was Like it it was Almost like she—
was Acting in a Psychic sort of a way that she could See that i would be doing something different

S umm

C of Course what i beLieved at the Time!
you Know? but

S yeah

C and i Really beLieved that she was Right—
Not "beLieved that she was right" but i beLieved her you know?

S yeah

C very interesting Now you know as well

Clare's utterance, 'i beLieved her', in favour of 'beLieved that she was right', actively draws attention to how the therapeutic voice is already, following Bakhtin (1981), 'indissolubly fused' with authority and 'demands our unconditional allegiance' (pp. 342-343). But Clare's

positioning of these truth claims as ‘Acting in a Psychic sort of a way’ works to subvert the epistemic authority. By highlighting what was not said, Clare opens an alternative temporality of doubt and an open future. Of course, Clare’s embodied voice in the present, telling this story as a feminist activist ‘two Hundred years later’ already shatters this predictive power and its narrative of closure.

Knowledgeable Care: The 3R’s

Bumiller (2008) acknowledges that improvements are made when professionals are taught and apply new forms of knowledge about sexual violence, particularly when these support abandoning women-blaming notions. Employees of the state are required to be ‘fully aware of the best methods of dealing with such tragic cases’ (Cosc, 2010, p. 51). As stated by the HSE (2010), ‘The health consequences of Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence reach far beyond immediate injury and therefore require knowledgeable care’ (p. 6). Cosc (2010) emphasises ‘developing and implementing training programmes to ensure that front-line staff and professionals provide an effective response’, including ‘the inclusion of suitable material in course curricula in third-level courses such as medicine and social science (p. 72); the HSE (2010) also emphasises training for all practitioners ‘at different stages of their professional lives’ (p. 15).

But the education of professionals is neither value-neutral nor proscriptively feminist: ‘it is part of complex sociological processes in which certain forms of knowledge are accepted because of their usefulness to the status of the professions and their reinforcement of internal hierarchies’ (Bumiller, 2008, p. 65). Lady Gaga similarly, speaking of her discomfort in an academic context, links academic knowledge *about* others to career development and progress, highlighting also the differentials of class and privilege between those who are the knowers and the known. For Rose and Miller (2010), ‘the humble and mundane mechanisms by which authorities seek to instantiate government’ include ‘the standardisation of systems for training and the inculcation of habits; the inauguration of professional specialisms and vocabularies’ (p. 281).

The fundamentals of this professional knowledge are 'the 3 Rs': 'Training will also aim to highlight the need to include Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence firmly on the agenda of all frontline health professionals and to equip them with basic skills and tools to enable them to recognise, respond and refer (the 3Rs)' (HSE, 2010, p. 15). In other words, professionals must 'Recognise the signs, indications, nature and consequences of abuse', 'Know how to respond appropriately and effectively to ensure victim safety' and 'Know how to make a referral to an appropriate service/agency' (p. 15). But, as Bumiller (2008) states, 'professionals ultimately exercise the power to make characterizations about the signs and symptoms of trauma, to educate women about the true nature of their victimization and to define successful recovery' (p. 68).

The *HSE Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence* (HSE, 2010) includes in its Appendix G the 'Quick Reference Guide for Primary Care Staff' (pp. 44 – 46), a leaflet distributed to frontline health professionals which explains the '3Rs'. This leaflet affords an exploration of some of the power relationships at stake in supporting women in leaving 'domestic' violence situations. Its substantive content is under the heading, 'Readiness to Change', with an analytical framework in the form of a pie chart (Fig. 1 below) depicting a cycle of 'contemplation', 'preparation', 'action', 'maintenance' and 'relapse'. The individualistic assumptions underpinning the cycle are demonstrated by the 'I' statement which defines each stage of the cycle, from the 'contemplation' phase of 'I know that violence is a problem but I need to stay in the relationship', to the 'maintenance' phase of 'I have adapted to the changes'. The focus on the 'I' underlines the responsibility which is imposed on women, with direct consequences for blaming women marked by the 'action' stage of 'I am making changes to end the violence' and the 'relapse' stage of 'I cannot maintain this change'. The Collins English Dictionary definition of 'relapse' is illuminating:

1. *to lapse back into a former state or condition, esp. one involving bad habits*
2. *to become ill again after apparent recovery*

The notion of 'relapse' explicitly locates domestic violence in the medical discourse of a personal illness, and also carries the pathologising charge of 'bad habits'.

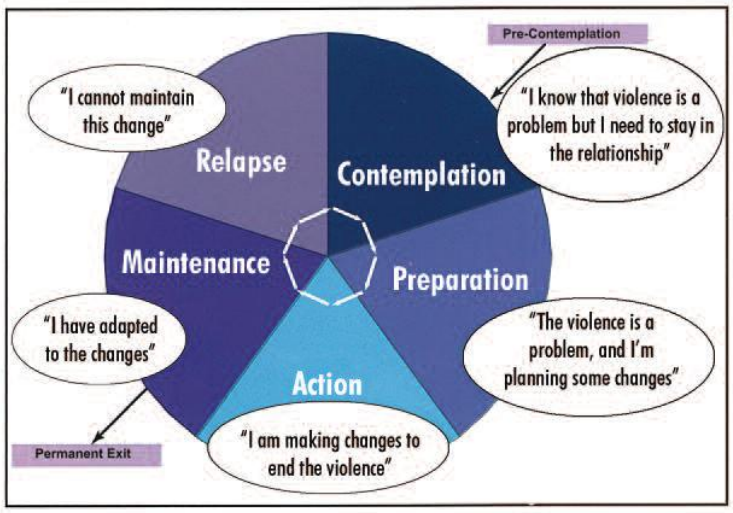

Figure 1from HSE (2010), Appendix G, p. 45

The leaflet states that it was produced in consultation with Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Network, Safe Ireland and Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, as well as Cosc, and these consultations are suggested in the surrounding text, with messages such as, 'The most dangerous time for a victim of violence is when she is on the verge of leaving, and for six months afterwards. Urging her to leave may precipitate a catastrophic event' (HSE, 2000, p. 45). However, 'domestic violence' is completely abstracted from any wider social, cultural, political and economic context. The accompanying diagram ensures that it is turned into psychological characteristics of the victim. In fact, the diagram is based on Prochaska's and DiClemente's (1983) stages model of behavioural change which is used throughout the health and social care system (Health Service Executive, 2011). An identical diagram, for example, is reproduced in the *Brief Intervention for Smoking Cessation: National Training Program* (Health Service Executive, 2012, pp. 13-14). Like a person addicted to smoking, a woman in a situation of 'domestic' violence must also learn to change her behaviour.

The last section of the leaflet, 'Dealing with your frustrations', is addressed to general practitioners:

> People victimised by domestic violence very often stay in abusive relationships.
> They may seem to ignore your advice and any intervention may seem like a waste of time. This can be exhausting, frustrating and difficult to understand.
> Though you may feel frustration, you may be the first and only point of contact and the following is worth bearing in mind:
>
> - Realise that they may never leave the abuser.
>
> - Recognise that leaving is a process, not an event; the timeline from the beginning of abuse to the point of leaving may take decades.
>
> - Get to know as much as you can about how DV is being responded to at a local level. At a bare minimum you should know the DV support agencies in your area so that you can provide accurate information for your patients.
>
> - Look after yourself

This is a pedagogical statement which explains 'People victimised by domestic violence'. Frustration is linked to how 'they may seem to *ignore your advice*'. Frustration is therefore implicitly tied to an investment in, and then the interruption of, expert authority. The 'patient' who ignores advice 'may seem like a waste of time'. The document sets out to educate – 'realise that they may never leave' – and in the reframing restores the position of expert whose new task is 'to provide accurate information'. The objects of expertise are the absent presences in the disembodied generalised category of 'people victimised by domestic violence.' Her not leaving, and her ignoring *your* advice, does not register as an expression of *her* knowledge or agency. It is rather an explainable phenomenon exhibited by a *category* of person. The explanation for the disregard of expert opinion is to be found by consulting other expert agencies.

Bumiller (2008) writes that, 'The creation of a professional language to account for, intervene in, and prevent rape and domestic violence is a major part of this apparatus and is regularly used as a means by which violence against women is rationalized as a chronic yet treatable problem' (p. 13). The role of professionals in addressing violence against women is asserted by 'owning special knowledge about the identification and treatment of distinct forms of abuse' (p. 64).

But the material production of leaflets such as the 3Rs Quick Reference Guide, and other resources about violence against women, is also part of the circulation of 'domestic' and sexual violence *discourse*, so that 'it has reached the level of hyperreal in the sense that it takes on a

reality of its own' (Clair, 1998, p. 105). Clair writes of how sexual harassment discourse, for example, 'is now exchanged as if it too were a commodity' (p. 105). This includes videos, 'how to' prevention books, and articles on the legal and liable aspects of organizations. The proliferating paraphernalia around domestic and sexual violence is therefore part of the objectification of the discourse itself as a commodity of exchange.

Expert Knowledge and Expanded Surveillance

The transformation of sexual violence into a health problem has resulted in 'the broad-scale expansion of the instrumental capacities of the state to address sexual violence' (Bumiller, 2008, p. 4). As previously noted, Cosc identifies the role of general practitioner as that of 'key "first port of call" for those affected by domestic and sexual violence' (p. 67). Bumiller (2008) describes this role as 'begin[ning] the process of "netting in" women for professional treatment' (p. 73). The very act of defining violence against women as a public health issue means 'identifying female victims of intimate violence and channelling them into appropriate services' (p.69). Thus, she notes how, 'Now with enormous predictability, women's experiences with violence quickly result in their introduction into a maze of patron/client relationships' (p. 95). The status of 'victim of violence', notes Bumiller (2008), 'is similar to, or in conjunction with, other categories of dependency, such as welfare mother, juvenile delinquent, unwed mother, substance abuser, and the homeless. These dependencies are the primary means by which the modern welfare state asserts its authority over potentially unruly women' (pp. 96- 97).

The HSE (2010) Strategy which aims 'To promote primary prevention of Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence and invest in early intervention' includes the objective of 'screening for Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence in different healthcare contexts/environments and with specific target groups' (p. 21):

- Child Protection & Welfare
- Pregnant women
- Addiction services
- A/E services

- Mental Health services
- Community Welfare Services
- Primary Care Services
- Maternity Services
- Social Inclusion Services etc.

Bumiller (2008) describes how, under these systems of expanded surveillance, 'when women seek any kind of professional help they can be identified and treated as victims even without seeking out a specialized program or initiating legal action against a perpetrator' (p. 95). The debilitating consequences of this for the vast range of women who have contact with social and medical services are enormous: 'they are routinely subject not only to the authority of experts but to compulsory reporting to public health officials, unwanted lab tests, and mandatory child reporting' (p. 95). In an Irish context for instance, Holt (2003) describes the 'dilemma that an abused mother faces, in that she cannot protect her child unless she herself is protected, but if she asks for that protection, her child may be removed' (Holt, 2003, p. 57). Spain et al. (2014) report 'high anxiety levels amongst victims when deciding whether to leave DSGBV [Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence] situations with children', a key component of which is 'fear of social workers removing children from the victims care' (p. 11). This is a major reason identified by Traveller women for not reporting experiences of domestic abuse (Watson & Parsons, 2005). Watson and Parsons (2005) also note the disproportionate numbers of Traveller children being taken into care and concerns raised by Pavee Point over racial discrimination by social workers working with Travellers.

Empowerment

The previous chapter highlighted a central theme of 'rebuilding lives' in the Cosc strategy. The HSE (2010) 'continuum of supports' articulates this rebuilding through the principle of 'Empowerment':

> (Empowerment:) Supports should help victims of Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Violence to determine their own needs by involving them centrally in decision-making and choices affecting them, and supporting them with their choices to move from crisis to safety, independence and self-help (HSE, 2010, p.13).

McKee (2009) cites Cruikshank's (1994, 1999) work on *The Will to Empower* as illustrating how, rather than being aimed at enhancing citizen control, empowerment is 'itself a strategy of government and relationship of power concerned with creating self-governing subjects' (p. 472). The HSE 'empowerment principle' illustrates how, '[a]s a form of governmentality, neoliberalism works by installing a concept of the human subject as an autonomous, individualised,self-directing, decision-making agent at the heart of policymaking' (Bondi, 2005, p. 499). In this empowerment script, the crisis in women's lives is premised on the notion of a lack. This is politically necessary to the project of 'rebuilding lives' since it mobilizes builders as well as lives. The 'move' to 'independence and self-help' is one which idealises a reabsorption into the neoliberal social order, based on restoring the Pollyannaish 'cloak of invulnerability' (Burstow, 2005, p. 435). Thus, the rebuilding process idealises an autonomous self-governing subject who can accommodate herself to and for the *given* world.

White (1997) critiques the culture of the professional disciplines and expert knowledge discourses as working to 'marginalise and disqualify local culture, and introduce a professional monoculture' (f.n. 4, p. 20). Alice also critiques the culture of the professional disciplines through which each particular telling is heard as if 'heard it beFore'. She opens up the possibility of different hearings:

A All those kinds of Things

because Nobody is ready to Hear it

y'know and beCause
that y'know Doctors and the Medical proFession and the y'Know
mental Health professions They've Also "heard it beFore" d'you Know what i
Mean? and They Also
so y'know there's—
Many of the the— the the People who are Treating People
Also came through the Same mediCation system or Came through the Same
Church System

S ummm

A d'you Know?

S ummm

A And so are Part of that colLusion of "Yeah but sure Everybody was that" you Know what i Mean?

S Yeah yeah yeah Yeah

A —

so it's Only
i think a very Small number of People

Who are in a poSition Like Ours as Workers

S ummm

A to See it as something Different

She locates this different understanding in a political analysis which contests the notion of 'Everybody is responsible for themselves':

A And
and it Just it it it's So Linked into the kind of the Whole Thing of Capitalism
d'you Know that that
y'know "Everybody is reSponsible for themSelves" and that do you Know?

S umm

A **"**If people are Strong they'll surVive"

S umm yeah

A d'you know that That we Have a Blaming

S umm

A —enVironment where y'know if Somebody is Failing in our soCiety by Standards of Housing or whatEver

S yeah

A Wealth emPloyment whatEver it Is

S yeah

A then "it's the Person that's Failed"

S yeah

A and there's no Mechanism to Look at it From

S yeah

A —"we're Not all starting off Equal"

S yeah

yeah

A do you Know?

S yeah

A and that Simple Things can make a Huge Difference in terms of y'know
Lives can go in comPletely Different diRections

Knowledgeable Care for Rebuilding Lives

A Hot Topic

But the issue of 'knowledgeable care' and 'awareness of best methods' in turn opens the questions: where does this knowledge come from? how is it produced? These are not neutral questions. With them, we enter the territory of academic knowledge production problematised by Lady Gaga.

The HSE (2010) emphasis on 'different healthcare settings' (p. 20) connects with a recognition of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence as 'a multi-dimensional problem requiring multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary solutions' (Cosc, 2010, p. 48). Since professionals respond with 'knowledgeable care' (HSE, 2010, p. 6) from within their own disciplinary frameworks, this knowledge too is established through the dominant 'scientific picture' epistemology of mainstream social science disciplines. Such epistemological congruence is an important aspect of the power/knowledge network necessary for government at a distance.

True (2012), for instance, highlights a systematic neglect of societal/structural causes of violence in the social science of population health. She attributes this neglect to the historical disciplinary and professional bias of health researchers oriented toward treating individuals or targeted groups of individuals rather than analysing social relations and structures. Similarly, with regard to the consistent finding that women experience higher rates of depression than men, Ussher (2010) describes how competing biomedical, psychological and sociocultural models adopt a realist epistemology and a discourse of medical naturalism which positions depression as 'a naturally occurring pathology existing within the sufferer, which can be objectively defined and measured' (p. 10). She draws together feminist critiques which argue that this epistemological base medicalises women's misery, legitimizes expert intervention, and negates the political, economic and discursive aspects of experience.

For Lady Gaga, the production of academic knowledge harbours profound and troubling ethico-political questions. She highlights an ontological dislocation between Fancy Theories and the messy, complex realities of embodied lives – 'that's Her and She's Out There'. This is one aspect of a larger critique concerned with the appropriation of grassroots women's stories by researchers. Lady Gaga speaks of how community organisations often present for academia a 'great source' of research subjects, suggesting a particular academic interest in Travellers and people from the new communities. She protests against abstracted discussions about the lives of 'other' women who are not participants in those discussions, raising questions about exclusions based on class, ethnicity and income. Lynch and O'Neill (1994) similarly write:

> And it is true to say that the vulnerable and the relatively powerless are the ones who are most often the subject of social scientific investigation as they lack the resources to protect themselves from scrutiny. Exploited and oppressed groups such as women, children and working class people become the subjects of theory and data analysis ... Theoretical constructs and data analysis about their position/condition circulates among professional intellectuals, and those who are the subjects of the discussion are generally excluded from the dialogue about themselves. (p. 308)

In this context too, Lady Gaga highlights the issue of violence against women as 'a Hot Topic' for academic researchers. Such questions provide a critical lens on the knowledge-intervention social nexus of the Cosc strategy. Thus, the production of knowledge about violence against women is primarily a privileged middle-class academic activity for the purpose of supporting the knowledge of mainly middle-class professionals, while the 'high-risk' marginalised women who

are the objects of academic research and expert interventions are also women who are generally excluded from the academic production that knowledge (Lynch and O'Neill, 1994).

Bumiller (2008) similarly describes how, as violence against women has increasingly gained mainstream attention, there has been a corresponding burgeoning of research in specialist journals, including social work journals and medical journals. As well as being a 'special population of clients' of medical practitioners, therapists, social workers and other health professionals, survivors of rape and 'domestic violence' have increasingly become a special population for social scientific researchers (Bumiller, 2008, pp. 68-69). This burgeoning research base establishes the truth claims for the Cosc strategy: it is founded in 'the foremost and prominent research in both national and international contexts' including 'scientific and other literature such as major research, key journal articles and published statistics' (p. 29). It states:

> It is important to remember that the statistics represent real people. It is equally important to examine and study robust research on the lives of real people in order to build a scientific picture of domestic and sexual violence. The strategy has been developed using an evidence based approach while respecting the human voices behind the statistics. (p. 48)

Following Lady Gaga, my purpose in the following sections is to interrogate this ontological gap between the human voices of 'real people' and the 'evidence-based approach' of statistics through the lens of the devocalisation of the logos.

The Production of 'At Risk Groups'

Arendt (1958) writes that, 'Statistical uniformity is by no means a harmless scientific ideal; it is the no-longer secret political ideal of a society which, entirely submerged in the routine of everyday living, is at peace with the scientific outlook inherent in its very existence' (p. 43). The importance of a 'scientific picture' for the Cosc strategy is inextricably linked to its 'political ideal' which finds its immediate expression in the aim to 'stem the occurrence or incidence of domestic and sexual violence in Ireland' (p. 48), through 'primary' and 'secondary' interventions. Primary interventions aim 'to prevent a problem from occurring or, when it has taken place, to prevent its recurrence' (p. 70). This requires interventions which focus on 'high-risk groups'. These various 'high-risk groups' populate the text of the Cosc strategy. It reports 'a

heightened risk among some groups such as younger women, pregnant women, women with children, disabled women, and women from marginalised communities' (p. 47). It emphasises interventions which target 'particular high-risk or marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, migrants, members of the Traveller community and older people' (p. 72). A key assumption is that to *prevent* violence it must first be *predicted*. The notion of 'high-risk groups' responds to this need for prediction, constructed through statistical correlations which predict risk. In this way, 'a scientific picture' affords the answers to the problems of 'domestic' and sexual violence, linking scientific knowledge and 'knowledgeable care' through these targeted interventions.

As Arendt (1958) suggests, however, the 'peace with the scientific outlook' which inheres in the notion of 'at risk groups' is a historical accomplishment. 'Nowadays', writes Hacking (1990), 'we use evidence, analyse data, design experiments and assess credibility in terms of probabilities' (p. 4). The taken-for-grantedness of statistics is what Hacking calls 'this imperialism of probabilities' (p. 5). Such imperialism could occur 'only as the world itself became numerical' (p. 5), which Hacking traces to 'the avalanche of printed numbers at the start of the nineteenth century' (p. 3). For Hacking, probability is '*the* philosophical success story of the first half of the twentieth century' (p. 4). He names this historical success story as 'the taming of chance' which is 'the way in which apparently chance or irregular events have been brought under the control of natural or social law' (p. 10). Hacking sets his account of 'the taming of chance' against the Enlightenment philosophy which had cast chance as 'the superstition of the vulgar' and belonging to the realm of unreason: 'The world, it was said, might often look haphazard, but only because we do not know the inevitable workings of its inner springs' (p.1). By the end of the nineteenth century, chance had attained 'the respectability of a Victorian valet, ready to be the loyal servant of the natural, biological and social sciences' (p. 2). Society had become statistical: 'A new type of law came into being, analogous to the laws of nature, but pertaining to people. These new laws were expressed in terms of probability' (p. 1).

Hacking (1990) argues that this shift was associated with a corresponding change in psychological understandings. The Enlightenment notion of 'human nature', with its connotations of the lawful inner workings of 'nature', was replaced by the idea of 'normal

people', as probabilities carried connotations of normalcy and of deviations from the norm (p. 1). Importantly, Hacking argues that statistical information developed for purposes of social control: 'the roots of the idea lie in the notion that one can improve - control - a deviant subpopulation by enumeration and classification' (p. 3). Most of the law-like regularities were first perceived in connection with deviancy – with suicide, crime, vagrancy, madness, prostitution, and disease. Thus, nation-states classified, counted and tabulated their subjects and their habits anew (p. 2). Such statistical laws, whereby people who conform to central tendencies are 'normal' and those at the extremes are pathological, could also be self-regulating: 'Few of us fancy being pathological, so "most of us" try to make ourselves normal' (p. 2).

Clearly, this links with Foucault's account of the working of modern power and the conditions for the production of neoliberal subjects (Foucault, 1991; Rose & Miller, 2010; Walkerdine, 2003). A key theme for Hacking is 'the idea of making up people' (p.6). He writes that 'defining new classes of people for the purposes of statistics has consequences for the ways in which we conceive of others and think of our own possibilities and potentialities' (p. 6). Enumeration, as Hacking notes, requires categorization. There is a historical linkage too between these 'taming of risk' conditions for classifying, counting and tabulating subjects, and the 'techniques of notation, computation and calculation' which are among the 'humble and mundane mechanisms by which authorities seek to instantiate government' (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 281). In this context, the Cosc act of naming 'at risk' groups such as '*minority ethnic women', 'women living in poverty', 'disabled women', 'migrant women', 'Traveller women',* is not neutral.

The notion of 'at risk', tied to statistical probabilities, is detached from Arendtian informed understandings of embodied vulnerability as inherently social and political. As statistical risk, vulnerability is not linked to the human condition of uniqueness in plurality, but is a condition somehow inevitably attached to named 'what' groups – to the very condition of being a woman, a Traveller woman, a migrant woman, a disabled woman, a poor woman. Rather than addressing the political conditions which expose people to wounding and so which heighten vulnerability, these namings serve as administrative classifications to establish targets of intervention. Clair (1997) argues that such naming, labelling, or identifying processes may contribute to the silencing of already marginalized individuals and groups (p. 324). For Alice too, the act of

labelling women as 'alcoholic' or 'drug addict' works to silence personal histories (see Letter to Alice, Chapter 7**).** And Clare's political narrative of realising discrimination as a lone parent also draws attention to 'the labels and Tags that women have carried that men don't have to carry (see Letter to Clare Chapter 7).

The possibility of probabilities and measurement depends on a language of abstract concepts, which in turn depends on the voice reduced to an 'acoustic robe'. Hacking's (1990) account of the taming of chance joins then with Cavarero's (2005) account of the devocalising of the logos. In this sense, the taming of chance becomes the taming of sonorous events in order for thought to be capable of capturing them and 'freezing them as abstract and universal images' (p. 81). The 'taming of chance' is also part of the taming of time, and the silencing of embodied, relational particularities of becoming. This is central to the reproduction of linear time. The 'taming of chance' translates into 'the taming of women' so that 'gender-based violence,' tied to statistical risk and abstract individuals, establishes 'women' – and especially women of certain 'types' - as a 'risk' category of disciplinary interventions.

The Survey and the Devocalisation of the Logos

In the previous chapter, I identified the survey, the prime methodology of prevalence and risk, as instantiating the linearised time of the transcendent gaze. To further explore the devocalisations at stake in survey methodology, I turn to Watson and Parson's (2010) survey on 'domestic' violence in Ireland among women and men. The importance of this particular study in the Cosc (2010) narrative of 'scientific picture' is attested to by its 20 citations in the text. Nonetheless, my analysis here is not focused on Watson and Parsons'study *per se*, but rather on the study as an exemplar of the survey method. Indeed, it is precisely because of the authors' rigour and care with regard to both methodological and ethical considerations that their study provides such an exemplar[4].

[4]Watson and Parsons explicitly reject the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), widely used in the United States, which invariably finds that women and men are equally likely to use and to initiate violence in conflict situations: 'The apparent gender symmetry is largely due to the fact that "it is only necessary for a man or a woman to indicate that they have committed one single 'act' on the list in order to be defined as 'violent'" (Dobash and Dobash, 2004: p.

My particular focus is a table reproduced from the report (see Fig. 2 below).

As Rose and Miller (2010) highlight, the humble and mundane practices of neoliberal governmentality include 'the invention of devices such as surveys and presentational forms such as tables' (p. 281). The table below is reproduced from Watson and Parson's (2005) study, and represents percentages categories of 'not abused', 'minor abuse' and 'severe abuse' with regard to questionnaire items designed to measure physical abuse (p. 47). The other measures focused on sexual abuse (p. 48) and emotion/psychological abuse (p. 49).

This particular table has been selected because of its resonance with Lady Gaga's critique of 'Sterile Language':

> they Don't See their— Maybe it's just you Don't see your Life exPerience in
> the kind of Sterile Language we Use aRound
> domestic aBuse or domestic Violence Even That you know they Don't See
> —getting a Slap across the Head or
> a Kick y'Know and and i Know that people enCourage
> they'd Say y'Know "Say it for What it Is and Do That"
> but it's it doesn't Happen it's Just Too Harsh and and People Shy aWay from it
> and So
> it Closes People In to their Own experiences "and say domestic aBuse" "abuse" is a
> Very SteRile Thing to Talk about
> which "is That what He does to Me or what He Says to Me?" that's it's
> Course they think it's something Different cos it Is something Different it's Their's!

330). Hence, the CTS approach counts every act of violence as being of equal importance regardless of the impact upon the victim or context in which it occurred' (Watson and Parson, 2005, p. 33).

Table 1.4: Structure of Latent Classes for Physical Abuse Items

	Latent Class -Physical		
	Not Abused %	Minor %	Severe %
Per cent of population in this class	87.6	6.9	6.5
Per cent in each class where incident experienced...			
Threaten to hurt you or someone close to you	0.3	13.1	57.7
Threaten you with an object (knife/stick)	0.1	8.5	39.4
Slap you across the face	1.0	46.9	64.8
Kick you	0.0	17.9	53.4
Punch you	0.0	25.2	57.0
Push or shove you	1.5	35.7	72.8
Hold you down against your will	0.6	6.6	41.4
Bite you in order to hurt you	0.2	4.1	13.7
Throw you against something that could hurt you	0.0	7.6	54.0
Try to smother, suffocate or choke you	0.0	0.7	23.7
Other physical abuse	0.1	2.6	4.3
Per cent in each class where ...			
Quite/very often	0.4	8.1	54.5
Very frightened/distressed	2.6	44.6	85.2
Major impact on life	1.5	23.1	64.6
Physical injury	0.0	0.0	82.2
Severe impact	0.0	0.0	93.1
Average number of different types of incident	0.0	1.7	4.8

** severe impact = (quite/very often AND very frightened) OR injury.*

Figure 2 from Watson and Parsons (2005) p. 47

Analysing the table from the perspective of particularity of 'is That what He does to Me or what He Says to Me?' and 'Course they think it's something Different cos it Is something Different it's Their's!' opens questions about the ontology of 'you'. I suggest that the address to 'you' in the questionnaire items e.g. '*Slap you across the face', 'Kick you,'* opens onto a double ontology of 'you.' There is the particular embodied *you* which I will denote by You to distinguish this embodied presence from the general 'you' who could be anybody. The embodied 'You' to whom these questions have been addressed has its genesis in an embodied voice on the

phone. Cavarero (2005) uses the example of the banal everyday occurrence of a telephone conversation to illustrate the unmistakeable uniqueness of the voice, 'where one asks "Who is it?" – and I respond without hesitation "it's me"' so that 'the depersonalized function of the pronouns "I" or "me" – highlighted here by the fact that the speaker does not show her face – gets immediately annulled by the unmistakeableness of the voice' (p. 175). For Cavarero, uniqueness has its corporal root in voice as, citing Calvino (1988): 'A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices' (cited in Cavarero, 2005, p. 4).

But a phone-call from a researcher is not a banal everyday occurrence. The voice that responds to the research call is randomly selected from the telephone book (Watson & Parsons, 2005, p. 181), so that the *You* of particularity is simultaneously the 'you' of substitutability. Thus, whilst having its vocal origins in the uniqueness of *Your* voice, the survey methodology determines that this unrepeatable '*You*' must become permanently fixed out of the flux of meaning in 'the instant of their appearing' (Cavarero, 2005, p. 48). The epistemic address i.e. the administration of the questionnaire, is based on a series of questions, carefully predesigned as part of a constellation which adds up to a *measurable* concept of 'domestic violence' (Watson & Parsons, 2005, p, 39). The uniqueness of *Your* voice then is heard only through the 'methodological filter of the linguistic ear' (Cavarero, 2005, p 10), 'whose semantic soul aspires to the universal' (p. 10). The survey questionnaire is a descendent of Plato, and must be 'capable of capturing sonorous events and of freezing them as abstract and universal images, characterized by objectivity, stability, and presence, and organized in a coherent system' (p. 81). The role of the voice is relegated to 'acoustic signifier' (p. 35). Ultimately the survey address is to a general 'you', so that a summation of 'you's' can be turned into *them.* The '*who* of saying' (p. 30) evaporates into anonymity. But with this evaporation, the relational ontology of trauma as an assault on *who I am* is also elided, as it becomes reduced to an objectivised set of behaviours. Yet, it is the 'you-ness' of *you*, in phrases such as 'Held *you* down against *your* will', 'Try to smother, suffocate or choke *you*', which carries the mark of trauma: of *my* body, *my breath, my* throat, chest, feelings, *my* embodied encounter with another in the world, *my* existence on the edge: '*is That what He does to Me or what He Says to Me?'*

My point here is certainly *not* that this particular research lacks care about these experiences, or indeed about the consequences of addressing potentially traumatic questions to another person. On the contrary, this study is highly conscientious with regard to the selection of telephone interviewers, and with clear ethical protocols, including appropriate referrals for those who disclose experiences of abuse. But the survey need to bracket embodied trauma responses into the category of the 'ethical' rather than 'epistemic' underlines the exclusion of *who* from its domain of knowledge, and the role of the therapeutic in supporting this epistemic divide by safely capturing the traumatic excess. These divisions map onto Cavarero's (2005) devocalisation of the logos: of the Platonic transformation of 'thought' as 'a vision of pure signifieds' guaranteed by the detached gaze (p. 51). The survey methodology renders imperceptible the uniqueness of the embodied voice. What is also then imperceptible is the disruption of the semantic which is part of the fabric of trauma itself, straining the very possibility of representation.

Instead, these ontological and epistemological divisions support the rationalised and universalised promise of meaning. It is a promise that finds material expression in the table which calls upon the detached gaze. This is a tidy, orderly assembly of categories and numbers, arranged in rows and columns. To render these tabulated items of abuse as fully meaningful requires horizontal and vertical movements of the eye, as one compares and contrasts numbers. Following Cavarero (2005), the sense of sight and the objects of the gaze provide secure coordinates for meaning. The three columns of percentages on the right of the table signal the ultimate epistemic goal which is that of measurement for the purpose of prediction[5]. There is no question of any breakdown or collapse of language.

The goals of prediction depend therefore upon re-enacting a devocalisation of the logos. From the first address, You have already been inserted into a series of other *random* 'you's', where

[5] Watson and Parsons (2005) employ Latent Class (LC) analysis which involves identifying population subsets based on a set of related indicators. LC analysis 'allows us to explicitly include a measure of impact on the person abused, and to consider a number of different types of behaviour simultaneously in a manner that is more sophisticated than simply summing them. It allows, for instance, for the fact that not all of those who are called hurtful names by a partner would fall into the "abused" group' (p. 46).

each is in principle substitutable for any other. Pain is a summative phenomenon. The 'you' in these statements marks the ontological transformation of *who You are,* as the site of an absent presence. The survey is premised on the expulsion of uniqueness as epistemically inappropriate (Code, 2009), with the resultant 'you' detached from any particular body (Ahmed, 2004). But this detachment is also a temporal one secured to linear time, since *Your/your* pain, even in its summative generalised mutated form, is ultimately not the point at all. The purpose of *Your/your* pain is in order to predict the violence inflicted on future others. They too have an absent presence as a sort of future analogue 'you', albeit a new 'improved' version since this future 'you' will be the focus of 'our' interventions.

Ultimately then, to 'stem the occurrence or incidence of domestic and sexual violence' depends on linear epic time, in which *You* are outside of history and of time. The resultant 'Sterile Language' of the Cosc strategy casts an objectifying gaze as it surveys women's damaged bodies and damaged psychologies; it classifies and enumerates women, fixing them into forms amenable to expert interventions, and as human voices whose place is secured 'behind the statistics'. Thus, Plato's ancient gripes work their way into 'the humble and mundane mechanisms by which authorities seek to instantiate government' (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 281), submerged in the routinisation of how 'the problem of violence against women has been incorporated into "the machinery of social control"' Dragiewicz (2013, p. 183).

Parallel Paths: Theory and Sharing Stories

For Arendt (1958), the key assumption of a society at peace with the 'scientific picture' is that people 'behave and do not act with respect to each other' (pp. 41-42). This assumption 'lies at the root of the modern science of economics, whose birth coincided with the rise of society and which, together with its chief technical tool, statistics, became the social science par excellence' (p. 42). The consequences of this are a conformism whereby 'deeds will have less and less chance to stem the tide of behaviour and events will more and more lose their significance, that is, their capacity to illuminate historical time' (p. 43)

When Cosc (2010) declares then that ‘it is important to remember that the statistics represent real people’ (p. 48), the form of ‘remembering’ here is the enactment of a dis-memberment (White, 1997) – a rupture with the historicity of real people acting towards each other as someone. As ‘survivors [who] have been active in the movement of survivors for justice and empowerment’, Alcoff and Gray (1993) write that, ‘We have ... been affected by the distancing and dissonance that institutions enforce between “theory” and “personal life”, which splits the individual along parallel paths that can never meet’ (p. 261). Lady Gaga too challenges the dissonant ‘parallel paths’ of ‘theory’ and ‘personal life’ as she moves between a university women’s studies course, and her work with low-income, educationally- disadvantaged grassroots women. For her, these institutional splits open up larger questions about the class politics of academic knowledge production:

> and i just thought “Oh god it’s just So Separate! this is Not our Lives!”

In this alternative imaginary, women are not frozen into abstract categories, but are alive in the particularity of embodied encounters:

LG and That’s what i would Say you know I I—
Couldn’t talk about “Prostitutes” but I had
Three Prostitutes in my Head I couldn’t Talk about “Women’s exPerience” because
i Had them in my Head and i was going to be Meeting them

To assert the importance of ‘i was going to be Meeting them’ is already to illuminate historical time in the space of action between people. But furthermore, the splits institutionalised through a devocalised logos find a counter-rationality in women’s community education spaces which privilege uniqueness in plurality through women sharing their stories:

S and How imPortant Then
you know in Terms of
you know so would You see then that Kind of
the Women Creating Changes together Course was in Some way breaking Down that
DisconNect between you know acaDemia if you Like and
you know like Women in the comMunity?

LG Yeah
it was

it was Some Way for Us to Start
—First of all making the Link beTween acaDemia and These Women
but Some way for These
Some way for Those Women to Bring Their Stories and for Their Stories
to be Something about Them getting On
so you could Come into this Course and we used to Write out and we'd Say
"you Don't need to bring Anything Only yourSelf
and a Willingness to Share your Stories"

And as we have seen, for Lady Gaga, this sharing in an explicitly feminist space is the site of new beginnings and 'whole new meanings:'

Absolutely Seeing themselves and seeing
Women Differently you know?

Bureaucracy

C This is y'Know How
soCiety is set Up to igNore a lot of things y'Know?\ and
S \yeah

C —and that
we

we're Very Slow in soCiety
to Look For soLutions
we See we See y'Know and aGain and i Don't want to Keep i suppose
reFerring to bureaucracy but i mean in our Everyday lives
...
y'Know you'll Have to Fill in a Form for This or you'll have to
so we're inVolved we're imMersed in buReaucracy

Bureaucracy and Government at a Distance

The two areas of knowledge critiqued respectively by Alice and Lady Gaga, mental health and academic discourses, also mesh with the bureaucratic rationalities challenged by Clare. Accordingly, when Cosc (2010) defines disclosure as 'the term used to refer to when the victim reveals his/her experience of domestic or sexual abuse to a service provider, for example, a

person operating in the health sector' (p. 33), the politics of this speech situation also opens onto questions about a *health sector* which mobilises bureaucratic modes of '*operating'*. Central to the reach of state power in women's lives is how domestic and sexual violence have become 'part of the routine business of social service bureaucracies' (Bumiller, 2008, p. 7). Women's experiences of violence are cast, not only in therapeutic language, but in the language of administration. Like Clare who argues that we are 'imMersed in buReaucracy', Ferguson (1984) describes how we live in a 'bureaucratic society, a society permeated by both the institutional forms and the language of instrumental rationality' (p. 6).

The Cosc strategy is premised on the *a priori* assumption that effectively addressing domestic and sexual violence involves mobilising the administrative apparatus of the state. This is what is at stake in 'change at organisational level' with consequences for 'the relevant employees of those organisations' (Cosc, 2010, p. 51). Administrative bureaucratic control, as Clair (1998) notes, is achieved primarily through institutional discourse that arranges the social organization of jobs, and the 'change' here is the purposive integration of domestic and sexual violence into such a system. Ferguson (1984) argues that bureaucratic ways of thinking and acting constitute and reflect our experience: 'Like the language of other regulatory disciplines, bureaucratic language is expressive of certain political activities, activities in which the distribution of power is both expressed and hidden within the discourse itself' (p. 59).

As Clare highlights, bureaucracy is visibly manifested in form-filling practices. This is one of the 'mundane technologies' (Rose & Miller, 2010) of neoliberal governmentality. Cosc's interagency referral network is held together by protocols which regulate conduct designed to '[p]romote and further develop practices and protocols on inter-agency referrals and co-operation', as one Cosc action measure is articulated (2010, action 7.1, p. 10). Forms provide the glue through which behaviours can become routine: to 'agree an assessment form with DV questions for routine use by all staff in different community and hospital contexts/ environments and with specific target groups', states the HSE (2010, Obj. 1, p. 21). The central importance of such documentary practices is reflected in Cosc's (2010) observation of '[i]nconsistent recording practices ... between agencies and across sectors' (p. 95) As Rose and Miller (2010) note:

> [M]aking people write things down, and the nature of the things people are made to write down, is itself a kind of government of them, urging them to think about and note certain aspects of their activities according to certain norms. Power flows to the centre or agent who determines the inscriptions, accumulates them, contemplates them in their aggregated form and hence can compare and evaluate the activities of others who are merely entries on the chart. (p. 297-298)

These writing practices enable power to flow 'via a multitude of calculative and managerial locales' (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 298). As discussed in Chapter 8, 'inconsistent recording practices' are also tied to technologies of calculation. The accumulation of disclosures is the condition for the following 'key headline indicator:'

> An increase in the level of disclosure and reporting, as a result of improved opportunities for disclosure and confidence in the response system. (Cosc, 2010, p. 5)

The statement illustrates the taken for granted truth claims of administrative discourse, and how such discourse regulates the emergence of domestic and sexual violence as an object of government attention. It is premised on particular relationalities, positioning 'disclosers' and 'responders' within the 'response system' network of social, political and administrative arrangements. These relationalities are secured through 'an increase in the level of disclosure and reporting'.

This valuing of numerical targets is the government medium for transposing the abstract values of a rationalistic, market-orientated world into wider social practice (Couldry, 2010; Lynch, 2012; McDonald, 2005; Rose & Miller, 2010). Couldry (2010) notes how the 'audit explosion' in Britain from the late 1980's speaks to neoliberal doctrine's need for increased, not decreased, regulation as the means of securing market conditions. Rose and Miller (2010) describe how the accountancy events of 'private' enterprise, have been opened up to government: 'Government here works by installing what one might term a calculative technology ... producing new ways of rendering economic activity into thought, conferring new visibilities upon the components of profit and loss, embedding new methods of calculation and hence linking private decisions and public objectives in a new way – through the medium of knowledge' (pp. 284-285).

Central to these new procedures of decision-making which assume the efficacy of different forms of auditing is a 'managerial transformation of organizational governance' (Couldry, 2010,

p. 54). Managers have become the powerful actors in this new governmental network. Managerialism, writes McDonald (2005), involves 'the processes whereby public sector managers have, in the interests of greater efficiency, asserted their claims to control the provision of publicly funded services' (p. 280). Lynch (2012), citing Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005), highlights that this is not a neutral management strategy, but 'was and is a political project, borne out of a radical change in the "spirit of capitalism"' (p.89). This is 'management strategy for neoliberalism' (p. 89), exported 'through the veins of neo-liberalism between countries' (p. 90). New managerialism is underpinned by a dominant 'value for money' discourse (Couldry, 2010), as registered in Cosc's (2010) concern 'to produce the most effective response at best public value' (p. 51). Central to managerial government at a distance is a 'performance-led' organisational form involving 'a control technology of "performance indicators" which measures only what can be counted' (Lynch, 2012, p. 90).

As an 'indicator,' the statement above is also a carrier of managerial discourse. The numerical target of 'an increase in the level of disclosure and reporting' may be linked to its function of establishing the conditions for measuring the performance of employees. Through this Cosc indicator, therefore, a rationality is installed which secures government action on domestic and sexual violence to the values and interests of a market-orientated world. At once, it produces both 'disclosers' and 'responders' as neoliberal subjects of surveillance. Imbued, however, with the progressive glow of 'improvement' and 'confidence', these power-relations are rendered 'ideologically invisible' (Ferguson, 1984, p. 16). They are rather clothed in the guise of science: in the centrality of quantification and the logic of predictable cause and effect – '*as a result of'*. The statement reproduces what Ferguson calls 'the myth of administration' whereby organizations are defined as 'efficient and effective instruments for the realization of publicly proclaimed goals' (p. 16).

In this regard, it is worth recalling Arendt (1970): **'**the latest and perhaps most formidable form of such dominion [is] bureaucracy or the rule of an intricate system of bureaus' (Arendt, 1970, p. 38). This, she writes, is 'rule by nobody [which] is not necessarily no-rule, it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its cruellest and most tyrannical versions' (Arendt, 1958, p. 40). This reflects Clare's thinking about bureaucracy. Her questions offer new

insights into what is at stake in the Cosc indicator above and, by extension, neoliberal managerialism. Firstly, I recapitulate Clare's thoughts (as also documented in Letter to Clare), and then draw on these to interrogate the Cosc indicator.

What Bureaucratic Society is Set up to Ignore

Firstly, Clare's critique of bureaucracy is linked to the incapacity to make a connection with a person. This is expressed through the 'desensitisation' of stories:

C y' Know? so
so That's what i Mean i Feel women are
very Silenced
that they don't Get to tell their story
or they Get to t- or they Tell their Story

and— and— People neither Have
the caPacity Nor the Will someTimes
to Feel! i supPose you know to

to Make a— a conNection with that per- you know Just to Feel

it's Like a

it's Like A
it's Not just about the voice it's about the
deSensitising of Stories in a way
if you Ever Actually Get to Tell your Story
to— there's a DeSensi-tiSation
if if if You Or or maybe a Judgement or a Lack of
underStanding or comPassion y'Know?
toWards people and i Think that that has a huge Impact on people's lives

Clare further expands upon her own unfolding critique in our second conversation in a move from 'when people are Getting a story' to 'when Systems reCeive a Story':

C so so Even
so Even when you're getting
Even when people are Getting a story
Or
let's Systems i'm going to call them "Systems"!
[*illeg]* going to call them "People" because i Don't!

S yeah no yes

C y'know but when Systems reCeive a Story

S Yes

C From a Woman
y'Know? they don't Even— they— they Won't Be Getting the Story they'll be Getting
the Basics
that asSists or enAbles the Woman to Get what she Needs
at that Given Time

S yes

C whether it be a House or a Room

S yes

C or Food or whatEver it may Be you know?

S yeah
yeah

She narrates 'varying contexts' of story-telling, and of how sometimes these involve 'forced' tellings. She distinguishes between 'opportunities' and 'supports' in order to highlight the need for safety for the unfolding of stories:

C yeah
and or Sometimes they're Telling them under Varying Circumstances like
Some people are Telling them
their Story because they have no Choice but to tell their story

S yeah

C —they Must give some Details to— Justify Why they need a House if it's a domestic Violence situation or

S yeah yeah

C —And— and and Some people are Not
not Only
or they're Not so Some people are Forced to tell a Story that they don't Want to tell

S umm

C And—

and then Some people
Simply
Don't
Want
to Tell their Story

S yeah

C For
i think it came Up there in the Diagram
most Likely in my Mind to be for trauMatic reasons because it's too Painful
to speak about or because
they Haven't
Got
the—
the— i supPose the—
it's Not "opporTunity"
they Haven't got
the supPorts

S yeah

C they Need

S yeah

C to enAble that
Story Even to unFold in a hoListic

S yeah

C Natural environ- Safe environment Safe being the First thing
—people Must feel Safe to tell a Story

The Desensitisation of Unfolding Stories

Clare's concern is with the process of *telling* a story as a relational and embodied act of human vulnerability. She highlights in particular that 'Some people/Simply/Don't/Want/to Tell their Story' because of the pain of telling a traumatic story. Her concern here echoes that of Lady Gaga's accent on creating space for telling traumatic stories through a relationality which does not depend on the story being told (see Chapter 9). Clare's account of story-telling has a similar ontological resonance with Cavarero's (2000) insistence that the narratable self is not a result of the text, and does not lie in the story construction. It lies 'in a *narrating impulse* that is never in

"potentiality" but rather in "actuality," *even when it refrains from "producing"* memories or "reproducing" past occurrences' (p. 35, italics added). Clare explicitly opens up the power relations at stake when one is institutionally 'forced' to produce traumatic memories. She offers the example of a woman who must tell the story of her experience of 'domestic' violence as a precondition for obtaining the security of a house, or a room or food. These power relations are institutionalised in the aim of 'an increase in the level of disclosures and reporting'. The indicator turns on stories told. It assumes these tellings, and requires these tellings as *routine*. The successful implementation of the strategy therefore depends upon – and produces – the imperative to tell. The indicator then installs and conceals the tragic paradox whereby to insist on the story is itself to violate the human condition of the narratable self.

What is at stake here for Clare is a 'desensitisation of stories'. In further developing this, she moves from the notion of 'people' to 'when Systems receive a story'. In this move, the very notion of 'story' is unsettled and evaporates: 'they won't be getting the story'. The form and semblance of a story is required, but this is a story which is not a story, inserted as it is and negotiated in a context of instrumentalised relations. Like Alice, Clare too attends to the turning of voice or story into something else, assuming a form which is amenable to 'the response system'. The shift from 'people' to 'systems' underlines the register of the universal rather than the particularity of someone. In the Cosc indicator, 'disclosure' is emptied of particular voices, registered in the universal of 'levels of disclosure'. As an abstracted, generalisable phenomenon, it finds its answer in the corresponding depersonalised generality of '*the response system'*.

Clare's analysis facilitates an understanding of the working out of this abstract register, opening up questions about the *process* of receiving and responding to stories which expose the silences through which *'the response system'* and the '*level of disclosures'* are constituted. The Cosc indicator focuses on 'improved opportunities for disclosure'. But Clare rejects 'opporTunity' in favour of 'the supPorts ... to enAble that/Story Even to unFold in a hoListic/Natural environ- Safe environment'. Her distinction rests on the relationality of story-telling as an unfolding process. Attention to process subverts the ontological foundations of the imperative for 'an increase in the level of disclosures'. The 'increase' depends on the assumption that

‘disclosure’ is a discrete, individualised and countable phenomenon. Therein lies its importance and significance. But how might one contain in order to count an *unfolding* story?

The critical question here is not only how managerialist discourse requires focusing on ‘what could be counted’ (Lynch, 2012, p. 90), but the ontological moves according to which unfolding phenomena are rendered countable in the first instance. In order to be rendered count*able*, ‘disclosure’ must be ontologised as a reified noun rather than a verb. It depends, in other words, on the notion of story-as-product. The text of the story must be dissociated from the who of telling, and abstracted from the relational immediacy of potentiality. The reification of ‘disclosure and reports’ requires occluding the temporalities of story-telling as an ‘unfolding’ process. This fixing in turn supports a linear narrative of closure, so that ‘to disclose’ or ‘to report’ becomes the end of the story. Clair (1998) argues that the ‘report it’ instruction ‘promotes the idea that once the incident is reported (i.e. exchanged) the victim is rid of its pernicious effects’ (p. 117). The Cosc headline indicator of an ‘increase’ is also temporally bound to the linear timeframe of the strategy, premised on its temporalities of ‘before’ and ‘after’. There must be more disclosures in 2016 than there were in 2010. The displacement of a dynamic embodied temporality is accomplished then through collapsing all these tellings into one collectively rationalised time. This normalised reproduction of linear time is also the reproduction of ‘domestic’ and sexual violence as normal and ‘routine’.

The effect of this is to install a relationality which violates the ontological conditions of the human condition. The ‘response’ of the ‘response system’ is not to the particularity of one who tells a story. The ‘not-people’ of Systems speaks to a theme of de-personalisation, underlined by Clare’s characterisation of bureaucracy as marked by a lack of compassion. This is Arendt’s (1970) ‘rule by Nobody’ which produces embodied encounters in the world with relational effects:

C —Why Why would we make it so Hard for people you Know?
by Putting them Through
—y’know If your— If your Life is
is is Burdensome or Difficult
Why Would a “Kind and Caring soCiety”

Choose
to Make it
More difficult? Is it beCause
it's Bureaucratically Simpler?

The Bureaucratisation of Violence against Women

The administrative regulation of violence against women therefore has specific consequences. The bureaucratization of domestic and sexual violence involves 'rationalizing the anxiety associated with often brutal and persistent violence between intimates' (Bumiller, 2008, p. xvi). This is to already construct violence as 'an easily manipulated, rational phenomena, controllable through layers of hierarchical discourse, rather than as an emotional, complex problem' (Clair, 1998, p. 117). With regard to domestic violence services, McDonald (2005) reports that government imperatives for high outputs, as measured by the number of women who receive a service, 'compromises an agency's capacity to meet the complex needs of women escaping violence' (McDonald, 2005, p. 281). While these needs often require intensive work over extended periods, 'the quality of the work and the outcomes for the women are subordinated to managerialist formulae concerned with unit costs and throughput' (p. 281).

More broadly, Clare's critique links with other feminist critiques of bureaucracy as a patriarchal and hierarchical form of organising (e.g. Clair, 1998; Ferguson, 1984; Mumby & Putnam, 1992). Clair (1998) notes how, since bureaucracy is rooted in 'the ethics of rationality and efficiency', it promotes 'a logical and passionless perspective of organizing' (p. 103). This is a rationalization which 'constrains emotionality, excluding alternative modes of organizational experience' (Mumby & Putnam, 1992, p. 480). In the area of education, Lynch argues that, 'Relentless outputted monitoring ... undermined the care and nurturing dimensions of teaching and learning due to their immeasurability within the confined time frames of performance indicators' (Lynch, 2012, p. 90). As Ferguson (1984) argues, 'People whose lives and work are ordered bureaucratically experience both the unconnectedness and the unfreedom of "anonymous social relations"' (p. 12). Bureaucracy 'disguises power imbalances in the organization behind a mask of rationality; behind discourse tangled with detail and stripped of emotion' (Clair, 1998, p. 104)

The terms of these critiques highlight then how bureaucratic discourse draws on and is saturated with an *already* gendered discourse of reason/emotion binaries. Grummell et al. (2009) argue that the intensification of a market-oriented citizenry under neoliberal conditions 'builds on the long history of gendered liberal political thinking that underestimates the role of dependency and interdependency in human relations' (pp. 193-194). The liberal tradition 'does not recognise fully the role that emotions play in our relationships and actions (including teaching and managing), and is largely indifferent to the centrality of care and love relations in defining who we are' (p. 194). The 'new approach' of the Cosc strategy sustains the centuries old story of the triumph of reason, the ability to control emotions, and the gendered hierarchy upon which this is premised (Ahmed, 2004). Clair (1998) highlights the irony that a patriarchal means of organizing (bureaucracy) which has marginalized and subjected women and minoritised people, is used to frame the solution of the problem: 'the *irony* here is that the original acts of sexual harassment that perpetuate patriarchy (generally through displays of male dominance) are proposed to be rectified through bureaucratic control, which is simply another form of male dominance' (p. 104).

The Emotionality of Performance Indicators

Nonetheless, to follow through the implications of contesting the rational/emotional binary, the emotionality of what gets called 'rational' needs to be exposed. It cannot be said therefore that the Cosc indicator is *un*emotional. The notion of 'confidence in the response system' brings it into the affective domain. The question then arises: what is the work of this 'confidence' in the framing of the indicator? Since the 'response system' is constituted through *not* responding to 'who' one is, reflecting on this question helps to illuminate the question of *what* the 'response system' is responding to.

'Confidence in the response system' invokes a 'consumer confidence' which positions those who disclose and those who respond in a marketised discourse of exchange. 'Confidence' begs assumptions of 'choice', working to conceal the power relations of 'forced' story-telling highlighted by Clare: to disclose *is* to be 'confident' in the response system. Such imputed confidence is, of course, but a projection: *our success*, as registered in the 'increase in the

number of disclosures', becomes a reading of *their confidence.* This is a generalised confidence which is 'detached from particular bodies' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 47).

In this sense, the indicator is part of what Ahmed calls an 'affective economy'. The figure of the 'victim-survivor' in the Cosc strategy, however benignly, is similar to Ahmed's 'bogus asylum-seeker' as 'a ghost-like figure in the present' (p. 47), fixed and attached to this 'confidence'. This attachment of emotion to others works to conceal the emotionality of 'an increase in the level of disclosures and reports'. As Lady Gaga highlights, performance indicators involve emotional investments:

> ...and Your Story is going to help Me get On and
> ...and i could Tick a
> Box so "Oh you're
> aBused? grand i can Tick that i've aNother aBused Woman in mine and the More
> opPressed they Are the Better because we're supposed to be working with the Most
> Marginalised so your Story can Never be Bad eNough it's Only aNother"

More specifically, what Lady Gaga highlights here is how performance indicators are linked to emotional investments in the commodification of women's stories. As Ferguson states, 'When our circumstances are increasingly bureaucratic, then the process of creating oneself through interaction with others is debased and the self that is created is simply a rationalized commodity readied for exchange in the bureaucratic market' (p. 20). Managerial discourse, in other words, reproduces, intensifies and *normalises* the objectification of women which is central to the violence and abuse women are subjected to in the first instance. Clair (1998) writes that 'women have been oppressed through a bureaucratic structure of organizing, through the objectification of their bodies as exchangeable commodities, and through the privatizing of their work and concerns' (p. 102). As Lady Gaga highlights, this commodification is further intensified for those already objectified as 'target groups' and 'at risk': 'and the More/ opPressed they Are the Better because we're supposed to be working with the Most Marginalised'. Lady Gaga also highlights the lost *you* which accompanies this escalation of ontological violence: 'so your Story can Never be Bad eNough it's Only aNother'. The successful neoliberal subject of performance indicators thus depends on the objectification and commodification of survivors of domestic and sexual violence through the calculated appropriation of their stories.

All of this has implications for feminist strategies which appeal to bureaucratic state apparatuses to address VAW. Of course, both Lady Gaga and Clare highlight how funded women's organisations are already implicated in bureaucratic structures: 'we're involved, we're immersed in bureaucracy' (Clare). Over twenty-five years ago, Walker (1990) wrote: 'Once the problem of woman abuse had reached the governing apparatus, feminists found themselves devoting more time to bureaucratic processes – collecting statistics, filling out paperwork, filing reports – in order to access government funds' (in Poulin et al., 2003, p. 87). For Walker then, the cost was a socially-transformative strategy involving a diminution of 'the consciousness-raising elements of linkages with a fully mobilized women's movement' (in Poulin et al., 2003, p. 87). Clarke et al. (2000) note that government funding changes how professionals within funded organisations are expected to think and behave: 'Within the service system, organisations have become more "contractual, competitive and calculative"' (cited in McDonald, 2005, p. 280). For Bumiller (2008), this is part of the appropriation of the feminist movement by neoliberalism. As Motta et al. (2011) note, given how institutionalised and professionalised prominent sectors of the women's movement have become, serious questions have been raised about how they can defend women from neoliberalism. Arendt (1958) writes, 'If ... we identify tyranny as government that is not held to give account of itself, rule by Nobody is clearly the most tyrannical of all, since there is no one left who could even be asked to answer for what is being done' (pp. 38-39).

I Don't Think it Needs to Be That Way

Ferguson (1984) argues that an adequate feminist theory of domination and liberation must address bureaucratic modes of power: 'Once bureaucracy itself is seen as an *issue*, rather than as simply a fact of modern life or a neutral method of organizing activity, questions about it appear in a fundamentally different light' (p. 6). Clare, of course, names bureaucracy as an issue linked to the silencing of women's voices. Her act of naming points, not only to the pervasiveness of bureaucratic discourses and practices, but also their incompleteness. As Ferguson (1984) writes, 'Those who do rebel against bureaucracy, in protest against personal dishonor, injustice toward themselves or others, incompetency, or generally immoral politics,

demonstrate that the official version of reality does not exercise complete control over the bureaucrats and clients who encounter it' (p. 16-17).

In actively distancing herself from the normalisation of bureaucracy, Clare's protest is crucially intertwined with a sense of alternative possibilities: 'i Don't Think it Needs to Be that way'. She identifies the conditions of possibility of her own critique as linked to hearing women's stories:

and i supPose because of the Nature of the way we do Business in— Society
I just feel that i'm in Probably a very Privileged poSition
—both— Personally and proFessionally
in terms of Hearing people's stories

S yeah

C Or getting the opportunity to Listen to people

S yeah

C And i Don't think That Happens Generally for
for People
—for public Servants for
People Who Are
Here to Serve soCiety
As in they get Paid to Serve soCiety
So i Don't think that
Women's—

sometimes or Often
HeartBreaking Stories
or Difficult stories
or disTurbing stories
are Heard
y'know?

Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare collectively breach the ontological and epistemological assumptions upon which this institutional consensus is founded. Following Clare, one might indeed say that they are located on a site of rebellion. In effect, they deny to the Cosc consensus the last word in Ireland on violence against women, opening up critical spaces which invite more to be said: 'Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 166). Yet, while Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare voice the silencing of women's voices, their own voicings of silence are themselves silenced. This is articulated by Alice whose many questions prompted me to ask her about the asking of questions itself:

S so these Questions! and this
y'Know

but Also
y'know not Only like not only Asking these Questions but you Also seem to
place a a Value on on actually Asking these Questions

A How do you mean?

S on the Asking of Questions
— y'know as disTinct From
y'know acCepting
y'know the Answers that are that are\ are Given but
A \umm umm

S y'Know that
y'Know that there Isn't or y'know i don't Know
it's Just is there
would you Think that there isn't Space to actually Ask these Questions?
or do you Think that Asking them

A No
i Don't think there i Don't think there is a
we have Too many Answers Easy Answers alReady

d'you Know or—

i Don’t Know i just

For Alice, the possibility of asking questions is silenced by the givenness of answers which are both too many and too easy: ‘we have Too many Answers Easy Answers alReady’. And then there is a long liminal silence between us (16 seconds) which Alice breaks and bounds by saying, ‘i Don’t Know’ (opening up then another silence).

Yet, it seemed to me afterwards that the silence, the pausing, the ‘i Don’t Know’, all seemed to positively voice with powerful eloquence the lack of availability of ‘Easy Answers’. In our next conversation, I suggest this to Alice:

S —
so it’s Just so That kind of just seemed to me there it Almost seemed like the Silencing
supPorted what you were Saying

A Yeah
Yeah

S and it’s like the “I don’t Know”

do you Know what i Mean? it’s like

A ummm

yeah i Think we we Kind of think we alReady Have the answers?

S Yeah

A y'Know and
and it's like the the Consequences of Really Asking the Questions are Just too Big and too
and— and Hopele- Not "Hopeless" they're Not "Hopeless" but

S umm

A Complex

S Yeah

A y'know and How do you do that? Say for example How do I do that in a little Group?
i Don't mean "a Little group" i mean
i mean Physically a Little Group
with a Limited\ aMount of Time and
S \i understand yeah

A d'you Know?—

Here, Alice suggests and challenges the illusions of given answers: 'we Kind of think we alReady Have the answers?' In countering this with the possibility of asking questions, she skirts on the edges of, and then pulls away from, a sense of hopelessness in favour of complexity. But for her, this complexity is located in the space of a small group of women. The smallness is not one of diminished importance, but linked to embodied physicality, and to the temporality of a limited amount of time. Here is a radical ontological, epistemic and political shift from the neoliberal rationalities of the Cosc strategy, which relocates to the Arendtian terms of the political and the space of women's community education.

In this chapter, I have interrogated the Cosc strategy through each of the particular forms of knowledge critiqued by Alice, Lady Gaga and Clare i.e. health discourse, abstracted academic knowledge, and bureaucracy. I have argued that, as expressed in the Cosc strategy, each form of knowledge produces the privatisation of relationship, the abstraction and commodification of particular embodied unique existents. I have also highlighted the destructive consequences for the human condition. All of this instantiates a 'gender equality' agenda which reproduces the

patriarchal relations productive of violence and abuse in the first instance. However, Alice's, Lady Gaga's and Clare's challenges also highlight that such discourses do not have hegemonic power.

In Part IV, …*as tobar gan tóin*/…from a bottomless well', I explore the conditions of possibility of these critiques in hearing the stories of women's lives in the feminist spaces of women's community education.

Part IV

. . . *as tobar gan tóin*/ . . . from a bottomless well

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Paul Muldoon transl.

Chapter 11

The Mermaids Dive for Freedom: Feminist Community Action

In this chapter, I will engage with the nomadic narratives of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare, generated through their engagements with the voices of other women in community education spaces. It is these voice hearings which have created the conditions of possibility for the critiques which informed my interrogation of the Cosc (2010) strategy. Lady Gaga's, Alice's and Clare's voices in this chapter are in a 'dance between power and desire' (Tamboukou, 2008). The power here is the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) (Pobal, 2011) which set the terms of funding at the time of our conversations, based on the same neoliberal rationalities which inform the Cosc strategy. Like the first Cosc strategy, the LCDP has marked a key moment in the consolidation of neoliberal governmentality. It has imposed a highly destabilising 'cohesion' process, the result of which has been the integration and assimilation of relatively-independent, autonomous local organisations into larger entities[6] (Harvey, 2014). As Meade (2012) puts it, 'the principle of local management of projects was deposed in the interests of greater centralisation and state oversight,' so that projects have 'effectively become the eyes and arms of local partnerships' (p. 904)

In this chapter, however, the LCDP is confronted with the desires of the narratable self which erupt as a counter-rationality through the disciplinary regime.

[6] In 2016, the LCDP was succeeded by the even more restrictive *Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme* (SICAP) (Pobal, 2016)

The Consultation

The Local and Community Development Programme

Lady Gaga announces the LCDP in speaking of a consultation with local women:

LG Yeah—
Last year We were Drawn into a ConsulTation that We had to take part in
a Process that We didn't deSign

S yeah

LG so it was a ConsulTation where we were Given a Form and you had to go Out and
y'Know you had to Ask people

S yeah

LG mySelf and Alice aDapted it
as Much as we Could

S umm

LG but we Did have to Ask
People Under Four Goals which is the New way you know and That was
your ConsulTation had to fit Into
your Workplan had to be Guided by These Four Goals
and That's what you had to go out and Ask about

...
the Four Goals are the ones Set by the dePartment now This is how we Have to
rePort on our Work and These are the Areas of Work

S okay

LG and dePending on how much Work you Do in the different Areas
you know the Funding it's it'll be Linked to our Funding in the Future

S okay

LG right?

S ok yeah

LG so— we were Very reStricted by it Now we Did try to reSist in that
We aDapted it first of all we didn't like the Language We aDapted it
We went Out and we had more of a converSation And we— kind of Kept it we'll
Say

Really Broadly inStead of asking speCific Questions

S umm

LG —we kind of Kept it really Broad and Tried to allow a converSation but Even Still

when when when i was After that Session with the Training for transformation i was Thinking about it and i thought "God you Know it it Isn't What we Really would have Set Out to do you know when We Started when we Came toGether Years ago

The four goals of the LCDP referred to by Lady Gaga are as follows: 1) Promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services; 2) Increase access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural development activities and resources; 3) Increase peoples' work readiness and employment prospects; 4) Promote active engagement with policy, practice and decision making processes on matters affecting local communities (Pobal, 2011, p. 6). Goals 2 and 3 receive approximately 40 per cent of programme funds each, reflecting the labour market emphasis on neoliberal governance.

The people who are the target populations of these interventions are called '*beneficiary groups'* as set out in the following table (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 4. Table of LCDP Beneficiaries

LCDP Beneficiaries	
• Individuals who are unemployed (with particular focus on the long term unemployed within goal three*)	• Early school leavers
• The underemployed (seasonal workers/ low income farm families etc)	• Homeless people
• Low income families	• Drug/ alcohol misusers
• Disadvantaged Women	• Offenders/ ex-offenders
• Disadvantaged Men	• Older people
• Lone parents	• Family carers
• People with disabilities[7]	• Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People
• Travellers	• Non-Irish Nationals
• Disadvantaged young people	• Refugees/ Asylum seekers

* The long term unemployed are defined for the purposes of this Programme as individuals who have been out of the labour market for one year or more.

Figure 3 from Pobal (2010) p.16

This concern for tabulation and classification is of course in the discursive register of *what*. It reflects the role of policy as a state aid 'in shaping, controlling, and regulating heterogeneous populations through classificatory schemes that homogenize diversity, [and] render the subject transparent to the state' (Wedel et al., 2005, p. 35). The notion of 'beneficiaries' is itself far from neutral, positioning the State as 'benefactor'. The political effect of this beneficence is to conceal the power relations involved so that, 'feelings of pain and suffering, which are in part effects of socio-economic relations of violence and poverty, are assumed to be alleviated by the very generosity that is enabled by such socio-economic relations' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 22). So the state 'gives, *and in the moment of giving repeats as well as conceals the taking'* (p. 22, her italics). The LCDP's concealed 'takings' open up multiple histories including imposed austerity, welfare cuts, unpaid and invisible work of care, low paid work, direct provision, state anti-nomadic policies of cultural assimilation, and so on.

Arendt (1958) also discusses the notion of benefactor. She cites Aristotle that 'the benefactor always loves those he has helped more than he is loved by them' (p. 196). This is because, for Aristotle, 'the benefactor has done a work, an *ergon*, while the recipient has only endured his beneficence' (p. 196). According to Aristotle, the benefactor 'loves his "work", the life of the recipient which he has "made"' (Arendt, 1958, p. 196). For Arendt, the explanation is of interest in showing that Aristotle considers relationships between people 'in terms of an accomplished "work"', illustrating for Arendt '[h]ow this remedy can destroy the very substance of human relationships' (p. 196). This understanding contributes to Arendt's critique of substituting end products for action, which she links to a delusion or a utopian hope 'that it may be possible to treat men as one treats other "material"' (p. 188).

The same rationality of 'making' its subjects is at work in the LCDP. This too depends on rendering the 'immaterial' into material form. Like the Cosc strategy, the LCDP worries about data:

> One of the primary weaknesses in proofing processes is the lack of quantitative data used to establish an accurate baseline against which to measure progress. It is possible to collate

> reasonably accurate information based on a range of sources for example, Government and NGO commissioned reports, CSO data, Small area data, empirical evidence arising from best practice models. This will provide a good foundation for coherent planning and the development of verifiable progress against indicators. Baselines may be established through the provision of:
>
> a) A qualitative statement on the current status of the beneficiary group - based on existing research documentation, policy papers, government policy documents etc.
> b) A selection of quantitative data to support/ illustrate qualitative statements - selection or compilation of documentary evidence to make a number of broad quantitative statements on beneficiary groups [...]. (LCDP, p. 43).

In this elaborate concern to generate 'statements on beneficiary groups', the simple expedient of inquiring of people about the conditions of their own lives is a glaring omission. As in the Cosc strategy, the subjects of intervention are epistemically disenfranchised. Again, the 'scientific picture' of 'data' has unquestioned privilege. As with the Cosc strategy, these exalted truths and their constitutive silences are inextricably linked with the reproduction of linear time. This is conveyed in phrases such as 'measure progress', 'coherent planning' and, of course, 'verifiable progress against indicators'. They all turn on the epistemological imperative to '*establish an accurate baseline*' in order to 'identify the "starting point" for work' (LCDP, p. 49). In such a scenario, history is expelled. Poverty, like violence, simply *is* and, thus reified, '*it requires a threshold to measure it'* (p. 47). Through this governmental gaze, crossing the threshold means that 'beneficiary groups' enter the world of the LCDP as people without their own histories, absent as historical subjects.

The Cosc strategy's concern for 'rebuilding lives' finds an answering resonance in the LCDP's aim 'to help people make improvements in their lives' (p. 49). The forms of improvement here are linked to labour market imperatives, most explicitly in goal 3's focus on 'work readiness' (cf. Letter to Clare). The LCDP similarly relies upon a discourse of a deficit which finds expression in the definition of poverty itself: 'Poverty is *deprivation due to a lack of* resources, both material and non-material, e.g. income, housing, health, education, *knowledge and culture*' (p. 13, my emphasis). This slide between the 'material and non-material' is highly ideological. Positioning its targets as lacking 'knowledge and culture', this is a gaze which privileges particular forms of knowledge and culture allied to the normative terms of 'improvement'. Since the 'immaterial' of subjectivity and self-improvement is the locus of intervention, the ultimate

significance of this slide between 'material' and 'immaterial' is to locate the causes of poverty within individuals. It is this deficit which the four goals move to remedy.

In the previous chapters, I analysed the Cosc strategy's focus on employees of the state as part of a governmentalised referral network for government at a distance. The LCDP, too, positions community organisations as agents of government, its aim being 'to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and *its agencies* and people in disadvantaged communities' (p. 11, my emphasis). A key technology to 'measure progress' is a database system to 'track' individuals called 'IRIS[7]': 'The detail of on-going interventions and progression for these individuals will be tracked and recorded on IRIS. Individuals supported must belong to the beneficiary groups of the programme and they should be registered on IRIS if receiving on-going supports from the programme' (p. 38).

Goal 4 sets the terms of Lady Gaga's consultation process: 'Each company will, through consultation and planning with the local community, *translate the goals above* into a series of local objectives and actions. Each year actions such as life-long learning initiatives, employment supports and other community-based initiatives will be delivered' (p. 6, my emphasis). As Lady Gaga highlights, the agenda for the consultation is already fixed. The LCDP policy dimension is explicitly *not* about the critical development of *new* policy, but focuses on the 'promoting' and 'enactment' of existing policy. One of its overarching principles is that of, 'Promoting active and constructive engagement between the State and disadvantaged communities about the development and enactment of public policy priorities at local level' (p. 11). Such 'public policy priorities' are already predetermined by 'The National Programme outcomes [which] *give direction* as to what the programme has been established to achieve' (p. 43, my emphasis).

Additionally, the LCDP's 'stages of community development' (Figure 4) sees the political subject on a linear trajectory from 'Pre-Development' to becoming a sophisticated 'Strategic Player:'

[7] IRIS is an acronym for Integrated Reporting Information System

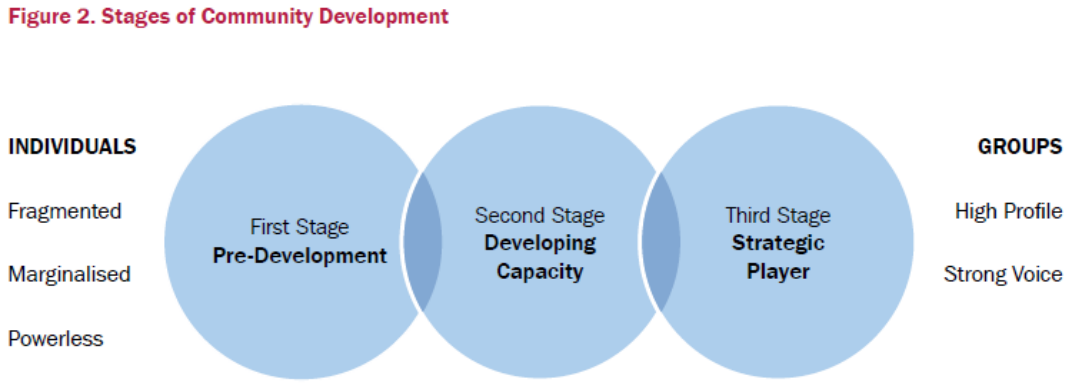

Figure 4 from Pobal (2011) p. 14

This is not an innocent narrative. The 'Strong Voice' of the 'Strategic Player' is part of 'coherent local social partnership structures' and is '[f]eeding into national, European and global policy agendas' (p. 14). All of this is premised on reproducing the existing social order. This is a political subjectivity already far removed from the Arendtian space of appearance – an accomplished work which 'can destroy the very substance of human relationships' (p. 196)

The Form as a Site of Struggle

In Lady Gaga's story, the mundane and routine practice of being 'Given a Form' is a micro-site of neoliberal government at a distance. As a template for the order of the Same, the Form insinuates community workers as 'translators' of government. As government at a distance, these acts of translation incite the voices of 'beneficiary groups' into government categories, procedures and an expanded governmentalised network of service delivery. Following Bakhtin (1981), the form is constructed through a desired address to the state, and is therefore *already* profoundly influenced by and structured in the direction of the state-as-listener. Of particular importance are its 'conceptual horizons,' the 'expressive accent' and the social languages (p. 282).

However, in Lady Gaga's narrative, the LCDP consultation form is a site of ideological struggle. It is orientated towards the voices of other women, of allowing a conversation, of adapting the

language, of refusing specific questions, of broadening and loosening. This is a dance between power and desire (Tamboukou, 2008).

I inquired of Lady Gaga about the act of resistance in her tale of the consultation:

S yeah

and so Then when Ye when so
so when You and Alice
so when so when ye Got this First of all so How did ye What Steps?—

How did ye Start having a conversation about Changing Changing or "aDapting" these?

LG well We looked at the Language and And Thought that the Language was Not the lang-
was Not a Language that the Women would Really reLate to that We Met with and
We didn't relate to it

S yeah

LG it was—
so we Tried to—\
S \What was it aBout it that ye didn't "reLate" to?

LG Just some of the Jargon in it Partly
and Just it was Very Sterile and and you know when you Ask about eduCation Women don't Always Think about doing their Cookery Class as eduCation whereas We would Think about it in terms of comMunity eduCation We'd think about being Part of a Management committee as eduCation and UpSkilling and all
—This you Know when you Asked the way This is they Think about Going to Formal Courses that have acCredited—
that get a cerTificate or a diPloma or That so it was
y'Know We wanted people to think Very Broadly about the Kind of PossiBilities that we could Offer to Help People
to be EduCated to be Part of comMittees to be part of Residents' associations to be part of whatEver y'Know but to be just more Active

S yeah

LG so We were thinking More Broadly about eduCation

S okay

LG so That—and the Same around All All the Goals it was the Same sort of they would— Kind of

Could have been very Narrowly inTerpreted

S ummm

LG yeah
so we Tried to Loosen that Up but it Still like as i Say the Things aRound emPloyment
it was just "What were they Happy with?" y'Know with the local emPloyment
service the This the That

Lady Gaga problematises the language of the LCDP form in relation to the speaking possibilities afforded to particular women as 'Not a Language that the Women would Really relate to that We Met with'. She also aligns herself and Alice with the other women in this: *We* didn't relate to it'. The lack of relationality in the language is identified by Lady Gaga as linked to the Jargon, its being Sterile, and also the discursive containments of the four goals. The terms of her resistance and adaptations open onto important ontological questions of voice and subjectivity. She implicitly challenges assumptions of women's voices as immediately given and self-present, and of language as a transparent account of an authentic inner self. She describes conversations which support women to question a dominant discourse of education as pertaining to formal, accredited courses, in order to open a discursive space for the women in narrating the diverse contexts, commitments and possibilities of their own lives. In this destabilisation, the category of education is expanded to support forms of thinking 'Very Broadly' so that 'education' is newly reclaimed for non-accredited activities such as 'their cookery courses', for community education, for developing skills to be 'more Active', and in general for expansive thinking about 'the Kind of PossiBilities that we could Offer'. Thus, rather than being co-opted into the four goals as 'Narrowly inTerpreted', the discursive containments of the goals become unsettled and Loosened.

Yet, hanging over all of this is the shadow of 'but Still' and the lingering questions it holds:

S you were Talking about when yourSelf and Alice were doing this consulTation

LG uhum

S Last Year
and you were Given the very "Fixed paRameters" if you like around that
and Ye "aDapted it" yourSelves

LG uhum

S Then went Out and "tried Kept trying to keep it more Open"\ than
LG \uhum

S but Still Had Then had Questions around it

is That right?

LG Yeah Yeah because Still Some of the Stuff that the Women
Told us
there was Nowhere for Us to reCord it there was Nowhere for us to Feed that Back

S ummm

LG cos you Know it Just didn't Fit
and we Tried to exPand as Much as Possible but
We had to Send These reSults into the [*agency]* kind of thing so
it's just (*sigh)*

Here, Lady Gaga opens an account of women's tellings which so exceed the terms of the form, that what now materialises is the negative space of 'Nowhere for Us to reCord it there was Nowhere for us to Feed that Back'. The expansion of meaning confronts the problem of 'it Just didn't Fit', and here her own voice tapers off into a sigh.

Lady Gaga's question of a lack of fit between women's stories and the political frameworks for receiving, hearing and responding to women's voices opens up questions with regard to the systemic exclusions and silencing of the LCDP.

The Political Engendered by Governance

Sharma's (2008) analysis is helpful here. Her specific question is this: 'what kinds of subjects are being produced by the governmentalization of empowerment and the resulting increase in interfaces between subaltern women and state agencies?' (p. 236). Noting the layered histories and multiple avatars of empowerment, 'a leftist strategy for political conscientization and class-based politics, a feminist strategy for awareness raising and gender equality, and now an entrepreneurial strategy for development and self-improvement' (p. 199), she argues that the

outcomes of these intersections are neither given nor unproblematic. Pointing to 'the troubled travels and contradictory effects of neoliberal ideologies' (p. 189), she argues that the governmental strategies are 'a double-edged sword that is both promising and precarious' (p. 237):

> Disenfranchised subjects ... refuse to inhabit a legal identity that is abstract (decontextualized), generically equal, and self-interestedly entrepreneurial. Rather, by basing their rights claims in their unequal and different status and by using moral notions of personhood, community, and solidarity to appeal to the powerful, subaltern actors fill the legal container of citizenship with locally meaningful, ethical content [...].(p. 198)

One area Sharma identifies for on-going examination is how neoliberal ideas 'confront other political rationalities and histories in different places, recuperating them or sitting uncomfortably with them or not fitting at all' (p. 189).

The issue of 'not fitting at all' brings us back to Lady Gaga's story of the LCDP consultation, and how what the women told 'Just didn't Fit'. I move into the space of her sigh which concluded the last extract in order to inquire about the un-reportable. Her response newly illuminates how the ontological, epistemological and political terms of this lack of fit can be understood as a clash of rationalities between the women's tellings, and the four goals of the LCDP:

S can i Ask what kind of Things might it have Been that where there Wasn't a Space to "bring it Back"

LG yeah i'd Say around the eMotions
so— there was Nowhere to reCord the Level of Anger that People were Feeling

S okay

LG the Level of exClusion that they were Feeling from the whole **[**local development] Process

S can i Ask what kind of Things might it have Been that where there Wasn't a Space to "bring it Back"

...

there was Loads More for Women there was Loads of Safety issues
there was Issues about—
Outsiders coming in Working in their comMunities when their Own Children were unemPloyed

...

so there was a Whole
Anger but there was Nowhere under Our Four Goals that we could report That but
That was the Issue for That comMunity
it was a Big issue for That community
one of the Women In the group
—Hadn't been Told about a Vacancy that came Up and some Other and she
would have been Qualified to Get it
you Know on one of the c.E. schemes you know so there was but there was
Nowhere to be able to reCord That it was just—
"What did they Want us to Do?" like in Terms of—
y'know Courses and
—around goal Three is all around employment Interview skills and "Don't they
know the L.E.S. is There and the Action Centre is There and Welfare Rights" and that
...
but there was Nowhere that you could Tell that Story that there was Two
People There and that
and One particular Group we Went into were Absolutely Raging
That
y'Know that [local development process] Hadn't provided opportunities for
emPloyment in their comMunity when it Could have
y'Know

and that they were being exCluded from some of the oppor- they weren't being
Told about them and stuff wasn't being put their Way

The women of Lady Gaga's story, like the subaltern women in Sharma's (2008) study, are far from being 'bureaucratized and passive state subjects' (p. 196). In this narrative, the LCDP governmentalisation program has become a contentious and unpredictable site producing unruly subjects, communities, and struggles. There is of course a double set of refusals, and a double mobilisation of 'unruly subjects' of the LCDP, involved here. The refusals of Lady Gaga and Alice to 'stick to the script' in order to address the women as narratable selves, are matched and further intensified by the women's refusals. Their stories erupt to disrupt and exceed the logic and terms of the LCDP.

Here, Goal Three for 'work readiness' takes on a life of its own as 'a moving target whose meaning is continually redefined through subaltern women's struggles' (Sharma, 2008, p. 197). Rather than abstract individuals to be 'filled' with knowledge ("*Don't they know ...?")* and information about services and job interview skills as a source of happiness ("*What were they Happy with?" y'Know with the local emPloyment service the This the That*), the women's voices reported by Lady Gaga contest instead localised structural exclusions already built into

the conditions of the labour market. Like the Indian women, these actors also 'fill the legal container of citizenship with locally meaningful, ethical content' (Sharma, 2008, p. 198), basing their rights claims in their unequal and different status as members of communities actively being excluded from opportunities.

Of particular importance here is Lady Gaga's account of the women's story-telling as itself an *event,* and that such eventfulness is marked by the significance which she attaches to the emotions of anger and rage. Her point is that it is not only the story content which is unreportable, but the emotionality involved in the tellings. Citing Audrey Lorde's (1984) description that anger is 'visionary', Ahmed (2004) writes that 'the fear of anger, or the transformation of anger into silence, is a turning away from the future (p. 175). This is the turning away which is contested by Lady Gaga, as she disrupts emotion/reason binaries. Her reporting of these voices refuses the devocalisation which would separate the semantic from embodied speech. For her, rage and anger are integral to the expressivity of the stories, and the narratability of the selves she describes. They serve a critical interpretative function with regard to an ethical and political sense of being wronged and claiming rights.

The denial of appearance symbolised by the negative space of 'Nowhere to tell that story' is itself exposed by the narrative conditions which facilitate women's appearance. The Nowhere to report stories of rage and anger turns on a more fundamental ontological refusal to recognise embodied and particular voices. Thus, while the local development process produces the conditions for this critical anger, it simultaneously imposes closure. More specifically, Lady Gaga's epistemic attention is to 'specific, unique vulnerabilities' rather than the 'overblown, hyperbolic autonomy ideal' of the hegemonic, epistemic imaginary of the western world (Code, 2009, p. 328). The voice of the benefactor-state sets the terms of 'appropriate' knowledge for subjects it assumes to be lacking in knowledge – *don't they know?,* and denies a space for the women's actual particular and shared knowledge of their social world: 'there was Nowhere that you could Tell that Story'. Such ethical content is also a function of course of Lady Gaga's telling, and of her voice as it is interanimated with other women's voices. It her through her voice that these voices come to life as embodied voices as she highlights the emotions of rage

and anger which infuse them, calling up Hall's 'absolutely, bloody-unending row' (Hall, 1997, cited in Sharma, 2008, p. 197).

But this narrative is also infused with ideological struggles specific to Lady Gaga's negotiation of the role of community worker, punctuated as it is with the notion of 'Nowhere' to retell or to report these stories. Here, the consultation which emerges from a critical engagement with language as a site of ideological struggle now erupts into a breakdown of official addressivity – a breakdown which is itself occluded by the terms of the address.

S and so What Happened then After? so then After ye ye Did that ConsulTation

LG yeah

S and then Then ye Had this Sense of Where "there's No Space for Feeding this Back"

LG Yeah
well we fed- well we Did you see we Fed some Back but we put In other Comments

S okay

LG so We sort of Got it in That way but That's probably sat on a Shelf Nobody
could Do anything about that

S yeah

LG you Know
So Like you were Putting that back to the [*agency]* but They couldn't do
anything about That That was an emPloyer and an emPloyed

S ummm

LG you know This is what i Mean is like All this Stuff!

S ummm

LG they're i don't know What it Is it's just that there's So many Things
that because This is the way it's Always been Done you Can't do Anything
aBout it is— d'you Know to just Open Up and
Let a Space for Some of this Out and Somebody Might Think about it "well
Hang On" you Know
now we Did sort of Speak to [local agency] Afterwards— at aNother Meeting and
say "y'Know like opporTunities for local People around emPloyment"
but That's only kind of One exAmple it's Like it's the Whole

it’s the Whole

like it’s No-one’s Job
So much! or it’s it’s Nobody’s resPonsiBility

In one sense, Lady Gaga’s story appears to have its conclusion in the reduction of these passionate stories and commitments to the sad image of a document sitting on a shelf. The space of Nowhere now finds its correlate in Arendt’s (1958) ‘rule by Nobody’ as ‘the most tyrannical of all, since there is no one left who could even be asked to answer for what is being done’ (pp. 38-39).

Lady Gaga’s draws attention to the temporality of structures through sedimented histories and routinised normative practices which block agentic possibilities: *‘because This is the way it’s Always been Done you Can’t do Anything aBout it’*. Following Butler (1993), Ahmed (2004) also highlights how worlds materialize through the repetition of norms and that ‘[s]uch norms appear as forms of life only through the concealment of the work of this repetition’ (p. 12). Lady Gaga opposes this fixity with a desire to ‘*Open Up and/Let a Space for Some of this Out’,* opening the possibility of imagining something other than a repetition of history. She narrates this as an interruption, a pause in the business as usual where ‘Somebody might Think’. But this hopeful vista of Somebody serves to draw attention to its present negative and yet powerful other of Nobody.

This is not however ‘the end’ of the story. Nor indeed is it the beginning. It is a story which emerged out of another story.

Go Girl Go!

Lady Gaga's story is a story which is already 'on the move', being told as it is by a nomadic narratable self. The story of the consultation grew out of the story which Lady Gaga told me when we first sat down to talk, and which began with, *'as Part of Training we were Talking about ConsulTations'*. This deceptively simple utterance involves a highly-layered vocality, consisting of 'consultations' as a 'voice-object' of discussion, but also the *Talking about ConsulTations'*.

Lady Gaga tells of the theoretical basis of the training, dialogising her own voice with that of Paulo Freire:

LG and we Did it in Terms of— Paulo Freire's
"Active Listening"

S okay

LG you know i'm Sure are you faMiliar with that— sioBhán you know that He
would say— He'd Say that
you Know you "you Just go Out and you Listen to People"
you Actually don't go out asking Any questions you Just go out and Listen to Start with
and Then
when They identify the Issue
Thenyou can start asking Questions and Building up about it but Let the issue
Come from the People

The training in question is the Freirean-based Training for Transformation which Lady Gaga co-facilitates. It involves the creation of 'codes' such as a mime (Freire, 1970) rooted in the knowledge of everyday life:

And and it Has to be Generative
in other words it has to be able to
Be so— This is something you would Also see in Real Life this is something that
you would—
that People would have Lots of vaRiety of exPeriences about

Lady Gaga tells of a particular mime performed by one group, and the response of everyone present:

So One of the things they Did— One of the Groups Did this Thing and it was
People sitting around a Table
And Somebody Coming in with More Power and the Local comMunity
being Marginalised

Not being alLowed to get their Issue Out
And— the ofFicials Hiding behind the Rules and
you Know and
and Then Somebody Getting Up—a Woman Getting Up and being Really
Angry and Walking Out and slamming a Door
and aNother woman doing the Same
...
when we Knew it wasn't over and the Woman Stood up to Storm out the Door

S yeah

LG All the rest of the Group started cheering "Go Girl! go Go!"

S right *(laughs*)

Lady Gaga puts this extraordinary moment of eruption in the context of her own facilitation experience:

LG it was you Know it was like the First time i've Seen it Done
we Do those Codes

S yeah

LG and you can See and Lots of people say "oh yeah yeah yeah that Resonates that's
Good" and all the Rest
but it was the First time i've seen Any like a Whole Group just like Literally
Interrupting in the Middle of it

S Wow

LG and just Sucked in it was So Real

S yeah

LG it was AbsoLutely Real that was Not a Roleplay

S yes

LG that was just Everybody Looked at it and Everybody RecogNised it

The tidy governmental indicators of '[e]vidence of progression of local community groups through stages (1 to 3)' (Pobal, 2011, p. 10) and '[r]epresentation by key target groups on governance structures of LDC-supported projects' (p. 10) are thrown into disarray by the mime.

A woman slams the door upon it to the cheers of *'Go Girl! go Go!'* This is 'a politics engendered by governance' (Sharma, 2008, p. 185) which marks the site of Arendt's political. The governmentalisation of the political space has itself produced dissident, political actors, and has become the site of a molecular counter-formation 'escape' from the LCDP molar formations (Tamboukou, 2008). The linear time of the LCDP's standardised political process, to be reproduced by standardised stage-defined political subjects, is unsettled. The mime becomes 'the arena of innovation and revolution, a field of sudden, unexpected and abrupt change, a point at which the status quo is challenged' (Edkins, 2003, p. xiii). It sees the resurfacing of the 'real politics' which challenges 'the claims of the imposter that has taken its place' (pp. xiii-xiv). This radical shift in the boundaries of 'the real' is underlined by Lady Gaga's observation that 'it was AbsoLutely Real/that was Not a Roleplay.'

Isin's (2009) distinction between 'active citizens' and 'activist citizens' is relevant here. While active citizens 'act out already written scripts', activist citizens 'engage in writing scripts and creating a scene' (p. 381) where to create a scene means 'to call into question the script itself' (p. 379). Drawing on Arendt's notion of 'beginning', Isin writes that, 'Acts are ruptures or beginnings but are not impulsive and random reactions to a scene. Acts are always purposive though not always intentional' (p. 379). He argues that

> thinking about citizenship through acts means to implicitly accept that to be a citizen is to make claims to justice: to break habitus and act in a way that disrupts already defined orders, practices and statuses ... The emerging figure of the activist citizen calls into question the givenness of that body politic and opens its boundaries wide. (p. 384)

The active image of 'a Woman Getting Up and being Really Angry and Walking Out and slamming a Door/and aNother woman doing the Same' effects such a rupture. The slamming of the door as an act of anger is also purposive, embedded in and a response to a newly made scene which enacts the power relations at stake in an official meeting with community members. The slamming of the door involves a reading and an interpretation of the social world which culminates in a refusal of the routine and habitual processes of the official script. In considering the disruption of the 'body politic' enacted here, Ahmed's (2004) discussion of forms of feminist politics as emotional responses to 'the world' which contest social norms is also pertinent. Such contestations involve forms of response based on 'a reorientation of one's bodily relation to

social norms' (p. 171). While anger as 'embodied thought' already involves such a reorientation, this bodily reorientation is further followed through in the mime through the act of departing from the table and slamming the door. Following Isin (2009), the rupture enacted by this slamming is also of course simultaneously an opening wide of the boundaries of the body politic, and an opening of the future too, even if such an opening 'has yet to be articulated or is not yet' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 175).

As an activist act of rupture, the performance of the mime is highly significant on its own terms. But, as Lady Gaga highlights, the surprise, the unexpected, the never-before-seen, is in the answer it calls out. Whatever unknown political future might exist beyond the slammed door, it is enthusiastically endorsed by the cheers of 'Go Girl! go Go!' The refusals at stake are affirmed, amplified and intensified in this volcanic eruption where everyone is 'Sucked in it was So Real'. In a sudden moment of shared recognition where 'Everybody everybody Looked at it and Everybody RecogNised it', a chorus of voices ignites to interrupt and collectively claim the new script.

Of importance here, as Lady Gaga highlights, are the generative possibilities of 'Lots of vaRiety of exPeriences' from Real Life. What Bachelard (1969) calls the 'resonances ... dispersed on the different planes of our life in the world' (p. xxii) opens onto Lady Gaga's description of the key moment as 'Everybody everybody Looked at it and Everybody RecogNised it'. These acts of re-cognition, the etymological root of 'recognise' being '*to know again'*, connect the moment of looking to a reengagement with multiple histories of living in the world. The rupture represented by the slamming of the door is not a simple negative erupting out of nothing. But if this is a moment of being which animates a multiplicity of historical connections, then so too is it a moment of sheer togetherness which is 'bound up with politicisation, in a way that reanimates the relation between the subject and a collective' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 171).

In this, the moment of being is not fixed in the cheer, and the cheer does not stay still. It rather marks a new becoming which creates 'conditions of possibility for more stories to emerge' (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 284), and speaking positions for naming and newly narrating the object of

critique. This is where Ahmed (2004) identifies anger as creative, in working 'to create a language within which to respond to that which one is against, whereby "the what" is renamed, and brought into a feminist world ... allowing an object of knowledge to be delineated' (p. 176).

Thus, Lady Gaga describes the collective narrative newly emerged from the performance of the mime which delineated 'consultations' as an object of critique:

> and then the converSation then was with the Bigger Group and it was like that
> Whole iDea of How
> that you Know Women Some women Are making it to the Table on the [agency]
> comMittees
> and they Are making it to the Table on some of the Subgroups of the [agency]
> and other things
> but they Still aren't being Heard
> beCause there is So many Rules and
> you know around How you get to Speak and if you Don't Know the Rules or if
> you're not Setting the Rules
> which the Women Weren't—
> it's Really Difficult for them
> and Yet they're kind of being
> HoodWinked into Almost like do you know "well What are you Moaning about?
> you're At the Table you're Equal we're all Equal Here"
> but the Way they Set up this Mime was Showing well AbsoLutely This is Not
> what they're Feeling

In this narrative, Lady Gaga opens up a chasm between being 'At the Table,' and 'being Heard'. Such a chasm is mediated through a highly regulated regime of speech, and a priori historical relations of power and exclusion sedimented in the creation of the Rules. Yet, grassroots women's presence At the Table becomes the official guarantor of 'we're all Equal Here', so that any protestations are invalidated as 'Moaning'. Lady Gaga expands further on this intricate web of silencing, and the hierarchies which are sustained and reproduced in the micro-politics of language and bureaucratic officialdom:

> **LG** because they Sometimes the agendas are Set before the Women get In
> and then a Lot of it Is that it is
> the ofFicial Language
> and the ofFicial Rules
> and "Through the Chair and Over and Under the Chair" you know that Crack that goes On
> And—
> "Well That's not for This Meeting well if you've a comPlaint" and the Women
> you know were were

like if you If they want to comPlain they'll say "well
Hang on" they'll say "oh we'll Put that on the aGenda for Next Month"

S umm

LG and Then maybe somebody doesn't Come the next Month One of the ofFicials
and somebody Else says
"yeah well That's not Me now you'd have to talk to Them"

A central aspect of the critical political discourse which Lady Gaga opens up here out of the collective narrative is one which constructs official political spaces, including local consultations, in the language of the 'unreal'. Thus, alongside the notion of being 'HoodWinked', is that of 'Not Real', 'So False' and 'preTence:

So— People coming In doing Consultations come In with Lists of Questions
...
That Level Of comMunity inVolvement that We would see is
That's the Kind of Space that Women use
...
it's Usually
you know Where it's kind of Giving the imPression that "it's Up for Grabs"
...
—but it's it's like it's So False
because it's Just so unFair that that's— That's the way it's Sold and Yet
it Never works Out like that

...
we're you—you know you can Say well it's it's Not Real
it's exTremely fruStrating for the Women
...
this Is preTence of it being their Space

As Edkins (2003) argues, it is in the eruption of 'real politics' that the imposter politics is exposed (p. xiii). In this shift, political subjectivity refuses the fixed categories as set out in the LCDP, moving to 'the struggles through which these categories themselves have become stakes' (Isin, 2009, p. 383). In Arendtian terms, it is a shift from the 'what' to the 'who'. In centring the who, it also attends to the stakes involved for many of the women:

LG *(through tears in a soft voice, almost a whisper)*
there was Women there who it was their Life!

S yeah *(softly)*

LG and they were just So Angry over it

While the regime of control and regulation produces its own silencings and frustrations, worst of all in Lady Gaga's narrative are the pretensions of inclusion through which these silences and hierarchies are organised. The effect is 'Soul desTroying':

> they're Almost and it's Soul desTroying
> beCause the beCause of the preTence it's nearly Worse than for them Going
> Down to City Council and you Knock on the Door and you Want to say
> something and they'll say
> "we'll Pass the message On No you Can't
> that's Not you're Not alLowed in There" This is a Thing
>
> this Is preTence of it being their Space

Lady Gaga here creates an image of the pretence invoking another image of a door as a boundary of closure. The pretence, the complex system of rules, norms and silences become fused and exposed in the image of knocking on the council door and being refused entry.

The histories animated by Lady Gaga's own recognition also introduce new inflections to the dynamics of silencing:

S —could you can you Talk to me a little bit about Your that aBility that You
Had "to RecogNise" what was Going On
Where do you
—Where do you Think that that Came from?

LG do you Mean
Well i mean it c- now i'm Not sure how to answer This siobhán but Just Kind of

S yeah sorry

LG the aBility to RecogNise it

S yeah

LG because i See it All the Time

...
And because i Know of aNother Incident where something Similar happened And
a Woman was Told at That Meeting where she Didn't walk Out she got Cross
and Angry and she was Told to "Shut Up"
by a a Man at the Table
you know and This was like a— an ofFicial Meeting she was There and she
Wasn't Sure what was going On and Didn't play it by Their Rules and so
when Something
Wasn't being Dealt with and She brought it Up and they said "No it's Not on the
aGenda" and she said "but i Want to just Say this and and Start and to Let me just
Say This"
And she was Told "You just have to Shut Up"

S and were were You there at the Time?

LG No that was Hearsay she Told us about it

In this shocking story, the woman's Cross and Angry voice, in her determination to speak, to 'just Say This' and her refusal to 'play it by Their Rules,' itself becomes an immediate and direct object of official control, regulation and closure in the demand to 'Shut Up' by the Man at the Table. And yet, this event too has become a story which can be told and retold: 'she Told us about it'.

For Lady Gaga, the Slamming the Door mime connects with this story in part through the issue of counter-reactions to women's expressions of anger, so that the 'Shut Up' story emerges out of a statement regarding the construction of women as 'hysterical':

beCause it Feeds Into that Whole Thing about Women's "hySterical" and
you know That ReAction and "sure Look isn't This why you can't Have
them at Meetings and All?"

Here, Lady Gaga identifies a discourse where women's emotionality is pathologised as 'hysterical', providing a justificatory rhetoric for exclusion of *them.* The discourse of 'hysterical' identified by Lady Gaga provides a particularly salient example of the connection between femininity and a pathological emotionality. Bordo (1989) notes how the symptoms of 'hysteria' in the nineteenth-century were regarded as an exaggeration of stereotypically feminine traits so that, following Showalter (1985), 'the term *hysterical* itself became almost interchangeable with the term *feminine* in the period' (p. 169). Alcoff and Gray (1993) also highlight how incest

survivors have often been construed 'as mad "hysterical" women who are unable to distinguish reality from their own imaginations' (p. 266).

At work of course in 'that Whole Thing about Women's "hySterical"' is the thought/emotion hierarchy. Emotionality as a claim *about* a subject or collective, argues Ahmed (2004), is dependent on relations of power 'which endow "others" with meaning and value' (p. 4). Thus, 'Shut Up' as a response to a woman's expression of anger is enabled by these relations of power which carry the mark of the ontological, epistemological and political violations already at stake in the LCDP and its neoliberal rationalities. Part of the work of these power relations is in concealing how 'Shut Up' is itself an emotional response, invested in a certain kind of 'rationality'. This is a rationality produced through the privileged comforts of invulnerability, such as that evoked in Lady Gaga's image of 'the ofFicials *Hiding* behind the Rules'.

This sets the terms for some kinds of voices to be heard and others to be devalued:

LG i think the Thing i find most frusTrating about the Whole Thing is Not the Fact
that People Don't Have a Voice
It's the Kind of—the Fact that people preTend that they Have
and Then when people Use it Say In being Angry or Stuff
that there's the thing "Oh yeah but you're not allowed That kind of Voice
it's Only This kind of Voice you're alLowed
and you're not allowed That kind of Language it's only This language"
and they're not always eQuipped with the Rules and but there's the Rules are
There

S and What kind of Voice would you Say is alLowed?

LG Anything that's Quite SteRile and Anything that Can Be— that there's Rules and
like a ToolKitand that there's
as take as Much eMotion Out of as Possible

Such a pretence, and the voice-hierarchy it produces, belongs to the rationality of The Strong Voice as the *'strategic player'* (Pobal, 2011, p. 14.), the 'active citizen' who follows the script (Isin, 2009, p. 383) to 'play it by Their Rules' (Lady Gaga). This is the cultivated and disciplined political subject who has made verifiable 'progress' through the stages deemed necessary for the polite salon of policy engagements with the state. Such a political subject of course also produces

the spectre of its other: the undisciplined self who is out of control and, in particular, who cannot display 'self-control'.

For Lady Gaga, the pretence opens onto wider questions about participating as community educators in the disciplining of women's voices and bodies for political insertion into the state interface, on terms which require the side-lining of Your Way:

> and then We end up with
> Training Almost Training Women
> In to this Language aGendas and This and—
> "Through the Chair" and d'you Know and
> "Don't get hySterical" or "Don't Bang a Door" or "you Sit there and then you
> Come Out and We'll proVide you supPort to Go Back" and
> and you Know it's Just because That's the Way somebody Else wants to do it
> that Your Way is just comPletely Sidelined

The Training for Transformation discussion also prompts critical reflection on participation in consultations:

> and Then i suppose for mySelf and my Colleague We reFlected and we said
> "God are We Part of this in Our ConsulTations?"

The story of the mime, and the nomadic flights of this story, provide another instance of politics engendered by neoliberal governance which produces unruly and dissenting voices. In very explicit terms, the grassroots women's voices animated by Lady Gaga through her own voice and narrative have exposed the pretensions of the imposter politics produced by the LCDP rationalities such reproduce the neoliberal crisis of voice. But the political conditions of these eruptions also open up alternative counter-rationalities identified by Lady Gaga. Of particular importance here in generating the political space of appearance are Freireian commitments to Active Listening, and the dialogical possibilities enabled for the voicing and hearing of women as narratable selves and nomadic political subjects in the process of becoming. Alternative heterogeneous space-time relations which subvert linear time have also been important here. This includes the alternative temporalities at stake in Lady Gaga's ideological struggles and

resistances in holding a worker identity as an active listener guided by the voices and stories of the women she works with.

But in important respects, the consultation process already registers such a breakdown before ever a word is uttered. As part of a conversation about the possibilities for voicing violence and sexual abuse - what Lady Gaga describes as 'the Very Worst Secret', a secrecy held in place by shame and denial – she again alights upon the issue of consultation:

LG and Nobody goes Into a Group
y'know
Nobody! does a ConsulTation! and Meet with a women's group and say "Now Any of you been Sexually aBused by your Father?"

S No yeah

LG do you Know what i Mean?
so How does That come Out and parTicularly Working with Women
where it\ it Seems to be such a Huge Problem—
S \Yes!

LG How do you How do you Make Sure or How do you Make Space?

With regard to violence against women, the logic of the consultation collapses completely. Lady Gaga opens up the question of a requirement for a new kind of response: 'How do you Make Space?'

Violence against Women

WCE on a Conveyor Belt

The question posed by Lady Gaga – how does one make a space in women's community education for women to voice experiences of violence? – is premised on the importance of such spaces. However, as I have argued over the course of my thesis, this space of appearance is

constitutively denied through neoliberal rationalities. To put some more shape on this, a number of strands of argument over the course of my thesis can now be briefly assembled.

In Chapter 2, I identified neoliberal government at a distance as a response to the neoliberal requirement for 'the illusion of a unitary subject' (Walkerdine, 2005, p. 241) when governments are no longer willing to provide long term support to 'prop up the fragile subject'. As Walkerdine (2003) puts it, 'a whole array of psychological supports is required to make this new subject possible without becoming a burden on the state through illness, disability and time off work (p. 49). State responses to VAW accord with this rationality. In Chapter 9, I highlighted how domestic and sexual violence is conceptualised in the Cosc strategy as an economic 'burden'. As Cosc (2010) states, 'these problems undermine human and economic progress' (p. 48). In governmentality terms, such undermining requires therapeutic practices to 'rebuild' autonomy and independence as discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

From this then, a neoliberal biographical project emerges which casts adult and community education as part of a 'conveyor belt' for rebuilding survivors of violence and abuse as neoliberal subjects for the labour market. Cosc (2010), for instance, assigns a specific role to the (then) Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as part of a coordinated response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. This is 'largely to provide core funding and support to NGOs under the Community Development Programme, including support for the provision of advice, guidance and training' (p. 62). Although Cosc does not elaborate on this, it suggests a narrative which constructs adult and community education as 'picking up' the task of 'rebuilding' the lives of survivors at the point of training for the labour market. As part of a network of responses, these labour market interventions are in tandem with psychological supports which are either provided elsewhere, or are provided to women by community and women's organisations themselves (see Chapter 4).

This division of labour is reflected in the LCDP account of 'gender equality' which splits 'main areas' and 'other areas':

> The main areas where gender equality must be addressed are decision-making, employment and career progression, education and training, access to resources, and planning and policy making. Other areas which impact negatively on women and need to be considered include childcare, workload, traditionalism, violence against women and transport (Pobal, 2011, app 2. p. 44).

Clearly, this authoritative statement of what 'must be addressed' reinforces the privatisation of women's lives, stringing together issues of the 'private sphere' along with the hoary notion of 'traditionalism'. The bottom line is that violence against women, whilst requiring 'consideration', is not a priority matter in community development and education. To Lady Gaga's question then, 'How do you How do you Make Sure or How do you Make Space?' the neoliberal response appears to be, 'This is not your problem; refer it to the psychology experts and you focus on labour market training'. The neoliberal narrative thus invalidates Lady Gaga's question.

Lady Gaga's question, in other words, emerges from a counter-rationality. In Chapter 8, I discussed mainstream psychiatric responses to trauma as being about getting rid of the knowledge of invulnerability in order to reinsert survivors into the social order. I also positioned Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare in the context of women's community education as a radical trauma praxis. This is a position which picks up the key site of ideological struggle I identified in the Cosc strategy in Chapter 9 i.e. informal and mutual supports between women.

In That Moment

To further explore the specific issue of violence against women, I turn to conversations with Alice. In the following extract, I open up an inquiry with Alice which picks up one of her opening statements about the possibilities afforded to her by her position as a worker:

S and so You were Talking about
"as a Trainer or a Worker\ being Able to See That disconnect"
A \umm
yeah

S and can you—is there—
would it be Possible for you to Tell me maybe a Story\ that
A \Umm

S that that that Shows that\ ability to see that disconnect
A \yeah
yeah One of the First— ones was we were doing—
Actually the Course that we're running toMorrow "Women creating Changes together" and there was a Woman there
y'know
Who was a Young woman
— Very bright Bubbly— Very enerGetic you know— a very Active person
And One of the sessions that we Had we brought In— a Speaker from the rape Crisis centre

S Umm

A d'you know
and—
And kind of at the End of it Just All of a Sudden this Woman
—became Troubled and Just became more and more Anxious and then Started to have an anxiety attack
y'know
And so Basically This kind of
This— and she'd been Having anxiety attacks but couldn't reLate them
her Doctor had put her on— antidePressants—
but there was Never a sense of like what the— of there Being an underlying issue
d'you know?

S Umm

A and From kind of speaking From Listening to the Person
— in the rape Crisis— speak
y'know
She was able to make the conNection between
Incidents that had ocCurred in her Childhood

S oKay

A and This Anxiety that she was experiencing kind of over the past twelve Months

S and How how How did you get a Sense that she was "Able to Make those connections"?

A because i suppose because She Verbalised it then\ d'you know?
S \Okay yeah

Alice sets her story in the context of a feminist learning environment, the 'Women Creating Changes Together' course, and an event which happened following an invited speaker from the Rape Crisis Centre. She speaks in appreciative terms of a particular young woman, and then

describes a sense of 'suddenness': an interruption in the flow of events, the young woman 'becoming troubled' and 'more and more anxious', and 'starting to have a anxiety attack'. Filling in a background history of anxiety attacks, she creates in her telling a sense of epistemic tension between the agencies of the young woman and her doctor. The woman had been having anxiety attacks, 'but couldn't relate them'. In mentioning that 'her doctor had put her on anti-depressants', Alice introduces a medicalised understandings of the anxiety attacks, and an implicit diagnosis of 'depression'. She also draws attention to limitations of this medicalised understanding: 'there was never a sense of an underlying issue'.

Alice's telling is significant in placing the emphasis on the knowledge which this woman has herself of her own experience, and her ability to make connections. As she tells the story, the woman in her story moves to becoming an agent rather than object of knowledge. From someone who is 'put on anti-depressants', and who 'can't relate', she moves to actively 'listening to the person in the Rape Crisis Centre speak' and becoming someone who, through her act of listening, 'was able to make the connection'. Implicit in this ability is a questioning of the authority of her doctor who 'had put her on anti-depressants'. In the new connections which Alice describes, the anxiety attacks become part of a life story which connects childhood and adulthood, and mind and body.

Alice's telling also draws attention to co-existing temporalities, in the sense of 'suddenly', in the act of hearing, and in the new connections which facilitate reengagements with history and memory. From the particulars of this story, she moves to share a cumulative knowledge and insight with regard to trauma, time and new realisations, developed from having 'heard it a Lot'. She describes expectations which women often bring to their listening to a person from the Rape Crisis Centre, expectations which can take the form of an understanding that the speaker will speak about rape in adult situations, rather than past experiences of childhood abuse:

A She Spoke about it and she
Talked about that that y'know that exPerience and
And and i suppose One of the things is that it's a Lack of aWareness around
Services so For example in terms of in That case with the rape crisis
and we've Heard it i've heard it a Lot
you know

is that Women don't Realise that the rape crisis centre Deal With
—Adult survivors of child aBuse

S Ummm

A you know So
They— so they're Often surPrised when That kind of comes Up In
in terms of because they Generally think they're going to hear about Rape

S Okay

A —y'know in Adult situations and it kind of Throws it can Throw women
at Times where they're brought Back to a place
because they Just weren't exPecting it Maybe that That's the Services or
y'know Hearing about those services and they
Sometimes it's like— it's like Hearing somebody else say "Yes we Offer these Services"
is the First time that they conNect what's Happened To them
as Actual aBuse

S right okay

A do you know and That's kind of the experience for this Woman it was like

S Umm

A Something that that she had completely she hadn't forGotten but she had
completely Normalised in her Head

S yeah

so so

A and Minimised

S yeah

A but yet her Body and her Mind was preSenting
kind of you know

S Yeah

A With the memory With the trauma of it
and it Took kind of the converSation to Happen

S Yeah

A —For it to come Out and Then to say

"yeah That's what it is"
...
it's Not that it's

—it's Not that she didn't reMember it

S yeah

A she's Always Carried it
and That's the experience that we Have with Women is that
they Carry stuff and Don't Realise

that This shouldn't be Happening

S yeah
yeah

A d'you Know?
and
and

d'you know so we Hear Lots of this these Types of Stories

Hearing about childhood abuse can then involve 'surprise'. In this surprise Alice describes a sense of 'thrownness' where the familiar and taken-for-granted coordinates of the past and the present become dislodged, and fused together: 'It can throw women/at times when they're brought back to a place because they just weren't expecting it.'

She links women's acts of hearing somebody, to acts of making new connections. This active in-the-moment 'hearing somebody else say, "yes we offer these services"' can facilitate a new conclusion and understanding about a past experience as 'actual abuse'. This dynamic present is inextricably linked to memory and history as social and dynamic: Alice draws attention to how this woman 'hadn't forgotten' her experience, how she still remembered it. But there is a distinction for Alice between the remembering 'in her head', and the remembering 'in her body and her mind': 'in her head' she had 'completely normalised it' and 'minimised it', whilst in her experiencing of anxiety and anxiety attacks, 'her body and her mind was presenting ... with the memory/with the trauma of it'.

In the understandings which Alice conveys about these connections, and of memory and remembering, there is an appreciation of bodily knowledge and bodily remembering. She re-

invokes again the notion of 'carrying' which she voiced in her opening statement (see Dear Alice, Chapter 7) here linking 'carrying' with a particular sense of 'remembering': 'It's not that she didn't remember it/She's always carried it'. She broadens the story out then to 'the experience we have with women is that/they carry stuff'. In this 'carrying stuff', she discerns a 'not realising', which is 'that this shouldn't be happening', which suggests that absent but implicit in the 'carrying' is a counter-position to 'it is what it is'. Crucially, Alice's accent is on change and transformation as embodied and relational: 'it took the conversation to happen for it to come out'. The transformative moment is contingent on the *happening* of the conversation as an *event* which allows the emergence of a new response of 'Yeah, that's what it is'. Here, the old 'what it is' has shifted, opening up a dynamic present which is no longer held in place by fixed or 'normalised' understandings.

When we meet for our second conversation, and speak again about this part of our first conversation, Alice expands the story further to link these temporal shifts with shifts in personal and political understandings, mediated through story retellings in a shared space:

S so it's Like you're saying "Oh Yeah That's what it is" is like a a Different sense of

One moment it was One thing

A Yes

S and Now it's like "Oh Yeah That's what it is"

A Yeah
A Lot in That "What it Is" is in Different Contexts it's about
a resPonsibility Shifting
From the Person
To
either a Person
or an InstiTution

S umm

A Do you know? so Often it's about the reAlity
is that the Person is Telling a Story where in their reAlity
They were "Stupid"
Or
They were "Bold" Or
"This happened to Everybody" or whatEver

To
a kind of a a Change in
Thought to

—Putting responsibility Back Onto something Else

S Yeah yeah

A do you know?

S Yeah

A —

S yeah

A cos That's a big Thing is that Women Blame themSelves

S so This is "the Carrying"

A yeah

S yeah

A d'you know? and it's In that Moment it's In that kind of you know when People have Shared their exPeriences
and Then you talk about the kind of the the —

the poLitical Aspect of it

S Ummm

A it it just Shifts into something Else from
it's Like what you Talked about that possiBility of it "Being something Else"

S Yeah yeah

A and Sometimes it's Not Sometimes women will Still go away saying "No No it's Me"

S Ummm

A "I was this" or

S yeah

A y'Know?

S Yeah
umm

A but Yet the Powerful kind of opporTunity to
to Link the Two and Make a Change kind of d'you Know?

Again, in all of this, the rationalities of the nomadic narratable self, and the silences which inhere in narratives (Tamboukou, 2008) confront those of neoliberal governance. But they are also engendered through neoliberal governance. The first instance, the Women Creating Changes Together course ('the course we're doing tomorrow') is funded as part of the governmental LCDP neoliberal project. As Lady Gaga puts it, 'That's how I have to Sell that to the dePartment/is that they it's "eduCation" and they "proGressed" and they did This and they did That'.

Alice's positioning in telling this story 'as a Trainer or as a Worker' is not premised on being a governmentalised agent producing 'work ready' women who have proGressed as required by the LCDP. Her narrative purpose rather is on how her worker positioning affords her the possibility to hear women's critical engagement with connections between the unnamed experiences which they are carrying, and dominant discourses of violence against women as 'mental health' and 'depression'. The sudden shifts she describes, of surprises and 'thrown' identities are not the Cosc linear narratives of 'rebuilding lives' premised on the expert demand to fill the lack of a deficient self. Her own narrative explicitly engages with questions of alternative temporalities, and the profound connections between body, remembering, emotion, knowledge and agency. She opens the making of these connections to an account of political subjectivity which presents a challenge to both the individualisation of mainstream responses around violence against women, and to the political subjectivity of policy-centric discourses. She highlights 'the Powerful kind of opporTunity to/to Link the Two and Make a Change', locating the becoming of feminist political subjects through story-telling in the transformative pedagogical space. Her story instantiates the Arendtian notion of the political as 'the beginning of someone', and of powerful nomadic becomings (Tamboukou, 2008) which erupt through the linear time of 'it is.'

It Took the Conversation to Happen

All of this is based on the condition of possibility of the conversation: it Took kind of the converSation to Happen/—For it to come Out and Then to say/"yeah That's what it is."'

In the following example, my inquiry opens up these conditions of possibility:

S How did the Woman from the rape Crisis centre
Come to be
present there?

A because Each of the— Each of the sessions that we would Do we inVite the
women to Name
a guest Speaker that they would like You know to Speak to or to Come
and give inforMation or whatEver

S right

A — and so the group had reQuested information from the rape crisis centre

S and so She was Part of of that reQuesting\ as well—
A \uhum uhum yeah
...
S ...
and—so when You were there what was— what were You doing while she
was?

A I was just Listening i suppose i was just Part of the Group i was still
faCilitating the group but kind of it was handed Over to
the- the Person from the rape Crisis centre

One of the conditions of possibility for the 'happening' of the conversation with the woman from the Rape Crisis Centre was through the collective knowledge of the women participating in the course, of who they wanted to hear speaking to them. This knowledge in turn was enabled through Alice's act of inviting an expression of this want, so that the inviting already carries respect for their knowledge. This act of 'inviting' is then followed with one of 'handing over' to the woman from the Rape Crisis Centre. These acts facilitate the web of relationships.

The agency of the woman at the centre of the story is not that of an autonomous, individualised self, but exists in this dynamic web of already existing relationships. This dynamic web is also a fusion of multiple trajectories of feminist histories, including the Rape Crisis Centre, the university-based Women's Studies, and the Women's Project. It intersects with Lady Gaga's story of the collective Dream for the Women's Project, of her uncomfortableness in the university setting of Women's Studies, and the collaborative relationship which followed with

the Director of the Women's Studies Department. All of these critical histories are constitutive of the moment where 'it Took kind of the converSation to Happen.'

Alice's narrative of how the woman became troubled and anxious, and then spoke of her realisation of historical abuse, also makes me curious about the move between these moments:

S and how did She like how did you Notice that she was "troubled and anxious"?

A —she Just all of a Sudden kind of Said that she "had a Headache" and then she Went outSide and she went outSide for and somebody else went out With her

S yeah

A —they had a bit of a Break and then and
No actually it was the End of the class and I was packing up to Go and whatever and Then
— She
Came back In

S Umm

A —and Just kind of Said that

"she'd Had this— or y'know herSelf and this other Woman were Talking about kind of this exPerience of like a Anxiety attack that she'd Had
and how Difficult she'd Found it—
y'know And and just that i suppose she had Never
Thought of her experience as Being 'aBuse' "

...

S and the other Woman went out With her

A umm like another parTicipant

S another parTicipant i underStand yeah
and How did the other parTicipant end up going out With her?

A —Just cos they're Friends kind of do you Know what i Mean? like they probably just went out for a cigaRette kind of more y'know
That would have been the the Other person
"come on i'll take you outSide we'll have we'll have a cigaRette"

In the web of existing relationships is also this story of friendship, and an act of responsive friendship which facilitates the micro-moment of disclosure: a new conversation between friends as one friend newly appears in the world through a cigarette break. Importantly here, Alice's re-voicing of the friend's voice suggests a space where women can take their own initiatives: "come on i'll take you outSide we'll have we'll have a cigaRette". There is no suggestion here, for instance, of something like 'permission' being sought. Clearly, all of this is a world away from the Cosc official definition of 'disclosure', located instead in the now central 'informal and mutual support from other women' (Cosc, 2010, p. 45).

The Wow Moment

The Cosc ontology of 'disclosure', tied to the individualistic and abstracted terms of a de-vocalised logos, is also disrupted in the following narrative of Lady Gaga. She creates this narrative as a response to my inquiry about the meaning to her of her phrase 'wow moments':

S One thing that i was very Struck With
when you were Talking about the women Creating Changes Together courses—

actually
was when you were you just you Used the Phrase
"Those kind of Wow moments"

LG uhum

S and i'd Love to hear more about What that Phrase means to You

LG —and i Think it's Always about Somebody reaLising that Their
that—their exPerience is Not Just Something that Happens
it Happened to me Years aGo

S ummm

LG like Years i'd say the First year i came to ___ i was Working with a
Women's Group
And— Something came Up in the Group One Day and One Woman
reVealed that
—y'Know that She was being Beaten by the Husband by her Husband
And— at the Same Time When she Said it and she Started kind of Justifying it
aNother Woman Jumped In
to Say "Oh No He's a Pig"
and Qualified it with says "I get the Odd Dig mySelf SomeTimes

but Only when i deServe it but i Wouldn't put Up with what You're putting Up with"
and Then somebody Else reMarked at Her
"you should Never get 'the Odd Dig' Why Would you?"
And She Said "you Know I've [distanced myself?] from my"
and reVealed that her Father
had been Sexually aBusing Her
...

[*whispering:]* and it was like a domino effect!
[*rising to ordinary voice]* you know we had to get Counsellors in and we had to get
— the refuge and we got Rape Crisis and all the Rest In as a reSult of it

S ummm

LG but it was When it was Out there we were All y'know Shell-Shocked and
Everybody was "[jesus?] Christ What did we
Happen? and How do we conTain?" or "What do we Do with this?" Not
"conTain" it you know "how do we Deal with this kind of these women [going home?] like this?"
and then All of a Sudden just a Lightness! that All of the Women around the Table
reaLised
not All but i Think there was about
like there was about Six that i would say were Serious y'Know aBuse
Incidents going on

S yeah

LG And and Realising that
"God! I'm not the Only one this Happens to"

Out of the phrase 'those kinds of wow moments', Lady Gaga weaves a story of open space/times and flux. Again, she opens a politics of voice and violence which radically departs from the ontological and epistemic terms of official policy, illuminating Arendt's notion of the political based in uniqueness and plurality.

In this story, a group of women appear newly to each other. Lady Gaga announces a Wow moment as a new realisation by One Woman which disturbs the accepted realities of those present: *'Something came Up in the Group One Day and One Woman reVealed ... aNother Woman Jumped In ...'*

In this meshwork of crisscrossing narratives, the normative order of justifications and acceptability is newly renegotiated in radical encounters with difference. Multiple perspectives are renegotiated in the moment, as stories become transformed in the tellings.

Lady Gaga conveys the sense of an extraordinary happening. It seems to come from outside in the form of a 'shellshock', and then turns to 'lightness' in the realisation that 'I'm not the only one this happens to'.

As Arendt (1958) writes, 'This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and origins' (p. 178). But she also describes the courage which is 'already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own' (p. 186). The women of the wow moment too begin a story of their own, which falls 'into an already existing web' (Arendt, 1958, p. 184) of friendship:

> and they've Done aMazing Work now that's Years ago now this group would be
> Very active around Violence against Women would be very Out there
> you Know it took Years like Obviously at the Start
> we'd the Paper down they wouldn't be seen in the Paper cos they're Locals
> and the Men are Still aRound and All the Rest
> but That was a Wow Moment for Those Women
> Not that Anybody doesn't beLieve that it goes On cos they See it on the Paper
> and all the rest
> but they Still Don't Link Their's with the
> "yeah but That would be Different that wouldn't be Quite like what Happened Me"
> but This was their Neighbours
> This was Women that they'd gone to School with
> All this group they'd All lived in the Same Area All of these
> and Then That this parTicular Woman could Look at somebody Else
> and say "well I think Yours is aBuse"

S yeah

LG but Mine is Not" and somebody Else could look at Her's and they All start
thinking "God i didn't Think of it like That"
you Know

S Wow

LG it Was a Wow\ it Was
S \yeah Definitely

Expressing how the 'Real Value' was that there was a space for stories to pour, she also opens up a sense of mystery surrounding its beginnings:

LG ...

but i think the Real Value for That and to this Day when i look Back i think that that Actual
just that They had that Space and that they Poured it Out and— howEver
the First one Started or however it Started as a Space
but That's what the Value Was

But the women of the wow moment are remembered in another story too. This remembering is of Lady Gaga's first encounter with them, under instruction from her management committee:

LG yeah
and i reMember even that First Women's group
—going Down to Them and and the Management comMitee at the Time were
diRecting me cos i was only a New Worker
and they were saying you Know "with the Women's group and you Bring them
toGether and Maybe you could Do
Maybe they could do Personal deVelopment or Maybe you could get Mabs In
the Money adVice and Budgeting service
and do Personal deVelopment"
and I went Down and suggested Mabs to the Women and They Said
"it's No problem Budgeting Money we Just haven't Got enough Money"

S yeah

LG So so i said "oKay"
so it was like Then we Looked at Personal deVelopment and Parenting
and they Said "you Know
we've Had people coming in doing Parenting classes beFore and they Told us to
'put the Kids out in the Green and
Not have them in Front of the Telly' but they Don't know our Green is full of syRinges and—
Condoms"

S right

LG you know so they said "Look
you know you Can't Bring People in to be Telling us how to Live our Lives"
and they were a Great InspirAtion the Women
to Me and

Refusing MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service) and parenting courses, these voices contest implicitly pathologising definitions of 'the problem'. The women refuse MABS because the implication is that 'the problem' is their inability to budget. They contest earlier voices of Parenting classes which implicitly pathologised them as mothers for having their children in front of the television instead of playing on the green. For the women, this is a purposeful act of care and protection, based on their own knowledge that 'our Green is full of syRinges and—Condoms'.

Thus, Lady Gaga re-voices a new address to her from the women which counters that of the management committee: 'you Can't Bring People in to be Telling us how to Live our Lives'. Out of this, Lady Gaga positions herself and her own transformation in relation to the women - 'they were a great inspiration to me' – centring their contribution to her own life.

She then creates a narrative of this shift in direction:

S Right oKay and Then there was a Shift for You

LG Yeah there was a Shift then because Then i just kind of said "well you know
okay well Then Let's just do Nothing"

S yeah

LG **"**let's Not say we'll have a Course or Anything
and Let's just get Started and we'll Sit around and we''ll drink Tea and we'll
See what Happens"
and we Did that for a few Weeks
and Then it eVolved over Time
took a Long time for All of it to you know like
with the diRection it went Afterwards it took a Long Time to build up
reLationships before that they were Open about
—what i described Afterwards you know the the Sexual aBuse that took a Long
time to come Out

The conditions of possibility for the Wow Moment then have been created through the women's own resistance to middle-class norms of the proper activities for a women's group. Through drinking tea and sharing stories, 'a Space was creAted'. In this new narrative of created space, Lady Gaga describes her own involvement through the sheer pleasure of listening to the women's stories. This is the Space of building relationality and possibility.

Witnessing Joy

Dancing Through the Office

Clare's story of the women's singing group provides an example of a group of women whose political contributions through their singing can be easily ignored within the dominant political paradigm, except perhaps in the diminished terms of aesthetic accompaniment. My research constraints did not afford me the opportunity to hear or speak with participants of the singing group, or with the facilitator as a research informant. The 'insider' meanings of participation in the singing group, and the critical possibilities thus afforded for alternative engagements with the world from these particular embodied perspectives, are therefore not available to me. This of course applies to all the reported stories and voices, but singing voices, as with the fate of Cavarero's (2005) Homeric sirens, are particularly vulnerable to the 'embodied voice Vs semantic language' split of a devocalised logos. Such a vulnerability imbues the significance which Clare attaches to the singing group with particular importance. This then is Clare's story, as a nomadic narratable self who emerges from these collectivities.

The singing group too is governed by the funding regime of the LCDP. Like Lady Gaga whose critical account of the four goals describes the negative of Nowhere to report women's stories of anger and rage, Clare's engagements with the women in the singing group similarly invoke a critique of 'what society is set up to ignore'. This is framed through challenging the 'work readiness' labour market perspective of the LCDP, which can only 'see' the women through the question, 'Is joining a singing group going to get that woman a job?' (Letter to Clare). This critique is also produced through a rationality which exceeds the neoliberal rationalities of the LCDP. Indeed, in narrating this excess, Clare highlights a sense of the miracle of becoming other, and of 'taking flight' afforded by participation in the singing, particularly for some women whose lives otherwise 'appear unnegotiable'. In my retelling of this story below, my intention is to highlight how the telling of the story itself takes off in multiple flight directions, generating its own excesses, counter-rationalities and eruptions in the story-telling space we create together, and how this produces direct confrontations with neoliberal rationalities.

Like Lady Gaga who draws specific attention to the devaluation and unreportability of emotions, emotions are also central to Clare's critique of what society is set up to ignore. In this case, rather than emotions of anger and rage, the ignored emotions are those of joy, pleasure, serenity and peace. Our point of entry here is through an inquiry around joyfulness which picks up Clare's statement about the women 'they're participating/in Something/that is Joyful to them'. Clare's framing of this is notable in that she does not locate joy as a reified emotion which resides 'in' the women, but connects 'Joyful to them' with the act of 'participating in Something'

S and can i Ask you a little bit More about the Singing group?
so That's you know so You have Talked about
that These women "participating in something that is Joyful to them"

C umm

S and you've Talked about
you know a sense of how "miRaculous" this is almost
and you've seen "Confidence SOaring"

C umm

S and Women almost "Taking Flight"

C umm umm

S and
could You Talk a little bit More about That in terms of How—
in terms of Your WitnesSing of This like say
"Joyfulness" for example
How
How
How do you Witness "Joyfulness"?

C: ...
i supPose— How i See Joy—
was— it's it was Easier to See it in the Last premises that we had
is that they'd be Singing in the Meeting room a Meeting room Similar to the one
that we're- that we're Sitting in Now
and I would be Out in the Office OutSide trying to
(laughing) Make Phonecalls!

S: **(***laughs)*

C: when i think Sweet God!
you Know! and i'm there and they're Singing in the Background! and they've
and
and Then they Might just deCide to Take a little Break for ten Minutes because they're Practicising a Song or they're Going through a Song aGain
and—
and so they'd Come Out into My Office— to put On the Kettle or to put On a cup of Tea and Somebody would Always bring a Cake or there'd be a couple of Cakes Floating

but they'd Dance through the Office! and i Literally Mean that that "they'd Dance through the Office" because When they're Leaving the Room
they're Still Singing the Song that they'd just been Singing
and they're Dancing through the Office and they're
and I just think (*whispers:*) "oh my God look!"*(normal voice:)* and the Kettle and the

S: **(***laughs)*

C: and That's
I think That's Pretty Joyful I'd and I'd be I'd be Laughing i'd be saying
— you know I'd just be Laughing at it because
for Me it gives me a Huge amount of Pleasure

S Ummm

C to See that

This beautiful evocative story powerfully embodies Cavarero's (2005) account of how the sense of hearing disrupts the secure coordinates provided by the sense of sight and the objects of the gaze. The Seeing which Clare describes is one where the eye is a follower of the ear, where dancing bodies are moving to the rhythm of the song. The image she creates is one of becoming, since 'what characterizes sounds is not being, but becoming' (Cavarero, 2005, p. 37). In this story, Clare is not the classical Platonic 'seeing subject' for whom the visible world simply 'lies in front of us' in a way that is 'stable, immobile, objective' (Cavarero, 2005, p. 37). The world she evokes is ontologically founded as an acoustic world that 'interrupts, interferes, or surprises everywhere with its sounds', and where exposure to sonorous events 'consigns us to the world and its contingency' (p. 37). Thus, Clare begins her story by locating herself in the spatially outside separateness of her office, 'trying' to make phonecalls. But this is a 'trying' which erupts out of the laughter linked to hearing voices Singing in the Background.

The ‘Singing in the Background’ then spills into ‘Dancing through the Office’. Clare narrates this as a movement where the spatial and functional boundaries between the rooms remain unobserved: ‘they’re Still Singing the Song that they’d just been Singing’. Her use of the present continuous tense here heightens the dynamic intensity of this as a continuous moving image of action, the singing and the dancing providing the connective tissue for the kettle, the tea and the floating cakes. A sense of togetherness and communal sharing is also evoked in the detail that ‘Somebody would Always bring a Cake or there’d be a couple of Cakes Floating’. Indeed, Clare’s own voice becomes song-like and rhythmic as she lingers with and repeats the phrase ‘they’d Dance through the Office’. On her third utterance, she slows the rhythm and transforms it into the immediacy of the present continuous – ‘they’re Dancing through the Office’ – whereupon she introduces to the scene her own whispering voice witnessing something marvellous to behold ‘oh my God look!’ Her voice changes then again to announce her own laughter and pleasure.The critical context of this story is Clare’s question:

> and How How do you Tell a
> —maybe a Bureaucrat a Bureaucrat
> That story and exPect them to have a Value On it?

It resonates with Lady Gaga’s:

> there was Nowhere that you could Tell that Story

In Clare’s story, too, is a clash of rationalities, of stories that are untellable within the logic of the program of governmentalisation and thus exceed it. Joyful singing subjects of course open up a different kind of unruliness. For me afterwards, in my re-listenings to this story, I am increasingly struck by the startling contradictions held by Clare’s image of ‘Dancing through the Office,’ particularly when charged with her critique of bureaucracy. I subsequently share this with Clare:

S but you Know Just to be Honest to Me like
this Image of “Dancing through the Office”

C yeah

S is in itSelf it's almost like a subVersion

C yeah

S do you know?

C yeah

S an Office is associated with All these Officey Things

C yeah yeah yeah that's True!

S and Formal avavavaVa!
and Then they're "Dancing!\ through the Office!" it's like Isn't it?
C \yeah yeah yeah Yes it Is
Yeah Yeah it's Actually it's
it is the comPlete Opposite to neoLiberalism! *laughing*

In this exchange, the image of 'Dancing through the Office' takes on its own life. Through my suggestion that the image is a 'subVersion'm and Clare's further response that it is 'the comPlete Opposite to neoLiberalism!' we collaborate to discursively move the story-of-the-story from one where the story is silenced, to one where it supports an oppositional narrative. But this is a narrative which has been produced through the neoliberal rationalities of the LCDP governmentalisation program. In the symbolism of the image, the bureaucratic rationalities of the Office privileged by the LCDP are confronted by the alternative rationalities of Dancing. The confrontation is not one of overt conflict. Indeed, the image carries its own sense of power by relating these rationalities through the preposition '*through'*. Here, the women's dancing exceeds and subsumes the rationalities represented by the office by simply ignoring it. They are literally moving collectively to a different rhythm. As a chronotopic image, 'Dancing through the Office' then also involves a transformation of taken for granted space-time relations. Of course, this is not any office. Indeed, as Clare makes explicit by the very telling of this particular story, it is based in and made possible by the very particular spatial arrangements of the previous premises. In this regard, the focal point of convergence for the Dancing and the Office rationalities must assume its own significance. Here, the humble Kettle moves to the fore. Of the office, and yet not an 'Officey Thing', the kettle may be regarded as holding the symbolic space of the body's need for a break and a cup of tea.

The Dance of Refusal and Hope

Of course, these events enter meaning as a story narrated by Clare from her witnessing position, and the active responses involved in such witnessing. In this particular context, it is she who holds and negotiates the tensions between these different rationalities, as she laughingly tries to make her phone calls, and then moves from 'office position' to become a participant in joy:

S but there's Also Your reSponse to that because You're not like
it Could be that you might think "oh God! i'm being interRupted in my Work here
\and blah blah blah Blah"
C \yeah

S but you're Not

C yeah

S it "Gives you Pleasure and you're Laughing"

C um
yeah that's True it Really gives sure it Couldn't but give you Pleasure
Really now Even if you were

Y'know

S (*laughs)*

C Somebody who was comPletely bureaCratic y'Know kind of
you Would you know i mean i
because I'd be quite an eMotional Person i'd be quite
a Passionate Person I'd jump Up from the the Chair and i'd give One of them
a Hug or i'd be\ you Know what i mean
S \yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah

C because i can See that
you Know kind of i can See that it's Just that Sort of a situAtion

S yeah yeah

C y'Know? i'd say "Give me a Hug" y'Know? it's Just Joyous it's Just you Know?

S (*laughs)*

C Gosh!

Clare's narrative of her participation in the joyfulness of the situation echoes Ahmed's (2004) account of joy as, drawing on Roseneil (1995) 'the sense that "gathering together" is about opening up the world, claiming space through "affective bonds"' (p. 184). In her very act of telling a story of joy, we both become newly alive. Joy cannot be predicted or planned but is another moving excess, one which Clare responds to through a 'jump Up from the the Chair' to share hugs. Ahmed (2004) describes her own relationship with feminism as never reducible to the political urgencies of pain, anger or rage, but that '[i]t has felt like something more creative, something that responds to the world with joy and care, as well as with an attention to details that are surprising' (p. 179). This creative sense, including attention to surprising details, is also evident in Clare's narrative.

Clare's pleasure from the women's joyfulness also draws attention to a mutuality of contribution. As we further discuss the women's contributions, she expands this to include hope for change, and a rejection of society as it is offered:

S it's like They conTribute that to Your life\ as Well a Sense
C \um um

S of "seRenity" and "Peacefulness"
that's "So Rare"

C umm
and Hope i supPose\ which is a Very imPortant Thing Hope
S \Ummm yeah "Hope"

C because Even in All of this

S yeah

C you Could not
i Could not!
conTinue to do this Work if i Didn't beLieve that there was some Hope for Change
...
but it's the Hope— and Also i Guess it is the

—

reJection of it the reJection of this soCiety that No it Can't be like this you Can't
Tell us that This is

This is the Way it Is

S yeah

C and This is— what we we Must
put Up with and
...

S and so
would You say Then that Even you know This
the "seRenity" and the "Peacefulness" that you exPerience

C uhum

S when you Listen to these Women
and "the Hope"

C yeah

S that it Gives you and that it conFirms for you \ or maybe reafFirms or something
C \yeah
yeah Maybe "reafFirms"

S possibly—

That It you know— in re- in reJecting
you know what we're preSented as "the World" if you like or "soCiety" or
"the Way things should Be"
that in reJecting That
that These Moments of exPeriencing the seRenity and the Peacefulness
They afFirm the possiBility of something else?

C um

Yeah they Do Definitely they Do
Definitely they Do

because Everybody has a Story

S yeah

C — Everybody has a Story and everybody has the Right To—
the Right to exPress it if they Want to you know?—
but—

but Everybody has a contriBution to make to soCiety

S Yes!

C Everybody

S Everybody

C Everybody
With Out exCeption

S Everybody

C and So—
if You if You look at deCision makers or Bureaucratic Systems
What is the Message out there that "you Don't have a Right"?

S yeah

C to conTribute?
or that "you Have Nothing to conTribute"?

S yeah

C i mean Oh my Gosh you Won't
you won't get Any more Arrogant than That

S yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah

C you Know?

In this lengthy but important extract, Clare intertwines two emergent narratives of affirmation and critique in a critical dialogue with each other. The sense of hope which the women help to reaffirm for her calls out a rejection of the givenness of society. She voices this refusal as an address to a dominant societal voice: 'you Can't Tell us that This is/This is the Way it Is'. For Clare, this is also an affirmation that every single person has a contribution to make to society. From this affirmative position, Clare again moves to deconstruct and challenge the official message of 'contribution'. This implicitly reopens her critique of the LCDP, from which perspective the singing group can only be evaluated in the commodified terms of promoting 'work readiness'. From the position of affirming the women's actualised contributions to society through their singing, Clare now exposes the state position as demonstrating the height of arrogance.

As I wonder about the affirmative possibility for something else which is registered in Clare's rejection and in her sense of hope, she responds unequivocally by invoking the narratability of self as central to this sense of possibility: *Everybody has a Story.*

Chapter 12

An Obair/The Work:
A Poetic Plunge Through Neoliberal Times

Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare, their stories, and the narrative eruptions contained in those stories in the previous chapter did not appear out of nothing or nowhere. They emerged out of community education spaces for nomadic narratable selves.

Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare articulated the conditions of possibility for these spaces as ways of being in the world which are not available through the sedimented rationalities of neoliberal worker identities. This chapter engages with these alternative counter-rationalities in a number of ways. It is framed through Ní Dhomhnaill's notion of '*An obair'* which means 'the work' or, as translated by Muldoon, 'the task'. This poem, outlined in Chapter 1, opened up a double time-reality of rushing traffic and buds in blossom:

trácht trom ar an mbóthar mar a raibh an saol
Fódlach ag rith sall
is anall, ag plódú ar nós na nduilleog a bhí ag
péacadh ar gach aon chrann;
... (l. 20)

heavy traffic on the road as the entire
population of Ireland rushed here and
there,
countless as bud-blasts from the trees;
… (p. 21)

To heighten this other-worldly sense, our chapter moves away entirely from academic commentary. The narratives are distilled into poetic moments. Although my voice is not immediately transcribed, I am of course also present in the presentation of the narratives, and I am the concrete person to whom these words were addressed.

Nonetheless, an address is always also in dialogue with multiple voices and histories. To underline the sense of alternative rationalities which inhere in the voices of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare, I have crystallised this as an address to the mermaid. They each speak of their

work and its purpose. In their address, the time of homo faber is challenged, as they move to another rhythm of other space/times and possibilities —

Lady Gaga Addresses the Mermaid

The Real Work

if we'd Had the Freedom to Really Work the way we wanted
VolunTeers would have been kicking our Doors down to be Part of it

it was So Great!

but the preTend World started to Push In on us and Make us
Link In with this preTence of Filling these Forms and it it Pushed In
and it's Making our World Smaller and Smaller
and So
Management comMittee meetings became Really Business orienTated
you had to Write in a Book when you used a Stamp
you've to reCord every Stamp you Know?
and and All the Niceness and All the
what This Lovely thing was going to be aBout was Now
Filled with susPicion "were we just Wasting Money?" and the Government want to
Know "were we Robbing their Stamps?"

our Meetings we said "we'll Always have a Space
—to Talk about
you know something Real that's going On in the Real work
and we Always light a Candle we Still do to this Day
and when the Candle is Lit
you're Free to talk about Anything and
it's Not Minuted or reCorded

Just Making That Kind of Time

Sometimes a woman comes in here and she will Talk
and Every second Word is
“oh i Know you’re Busy i’m Taking up your Time do you Need to go on the Phone?”

cos They’re also Thinking
“This is not Real she should be doing her Proper Job”

We Use the local Shop

we Try and Go on a friday Morning where the Women are collecting Benefits
we Go So that we Meet the Women
we’ll Go at Times where you Hang Out

we Can’t rePort that anywhere
we Know we Do it
and we Do it for a Reason

we look Out for the Women
And It’s to conNect With them
Just Not in Our office
to conNect with them
in Their local Shop
you’re in Their space where they’re with Their friends

and just making That kind of Time

and Then when People see you in Different Settings
you Stop being One diMensional
in the Same way when We’ve somebody in here and we’re Talking to them and
and For the Start You’re the Worker and They’re listening to the Phone
until you take eNough Time
that it Stops being about That
and you conNect
and it’s One human being connecting with aNother human being
and you Have to give it Time

I Used to Sit on the Bed, And I Used To Be Talking to People

do you Know What when i'm Thinking about it
I trained as a Psychiatric and General nurse

and when I worked as a General Nurse
you'd a List of Jobs to do and That's what you Did
if I was getting somebody Ready for theAtre
there was a Checklist you went Through
And Then That was It you'd your Job Done

and I used to Sit on the Bed

so the Checklist i did Quickly
you know "Cover your Rings get your False Teeth out have you any False Limbs?"

and I used to Sit on the Bed and I would be Talking to People

And i'd be Hauled over the Coals!
because it Wasn't seen as "Work"
in a General Hospital
but it Had been my comPlete "Work" when i was in a psychiatric hospital

and i Think that's what Resonates with me— from time to time when i Hear
the Way we Talk about—
you Know the Whole the Whole Area of comMunity Work
that unLess we're Rushing out "Doing" stuff and "Fixing" stuff and "getting People back to Work"
That's it

whereas it's Much More than that for Me that Sometimes
it Is just Sitting Talking it Is Hearing
it's Genuinely Letting the People you Work with Guide the Work
—and it's Very Very Hard for us to Have that Space leGitimised

Alice Addresses the Mermaid

The Hours

and to Me my work is about Giving an opporTunity for Voice

Giving an opporTunity for women to Share
the Fetac Element of it is of Less Value to Me!
But i still have to Do it because That's what i'm Contracted to Do

a Huge element is how many Hours i have

the Hours stress how creAtive you can Be

because the asSessment element
Might be only a Tiny part
and you can Kind of get that Done
and Really use the Hours to do something Else

Women
are Very Active
People Want to Tell their Stories
In my exPerience
And
they Don't Like the the Work of the Folders and That kind of thing

so it's Always a Struggle To try to
get the Work Done!

While getting the work Done

And so i think one of the Key factors with Working with Women
is the aBility to neGotiate
and Renegotiate
the Landscape Changes all the Time

Facilitating and Holding Knowledge

Not living with my biological Parents kind of Moving aRound to different Houses
i think
That Helped in terms of faCilitating and Holding Knowledge

i suppose like when you Live in different people's Houses
it's Kind of like visiting other people's Countries
you Always kind of have to "do what the Romans do"

so if you Don't kind of Have your Own Base Set of
beHaviour and Values that's Norm
to You
that Most People would grow Up with
you Have to become very Flexible and aDaptable that y'know

So i think i Learnt from a very early Age to pick Up eMotional Cues
to Read Signals maybe that Other children of my age Wouldn't have

And i think it's Certainly something that i think Carried
Into my adult Life

The First Feminist Thought I Ever Had

—i reMember actually probably the First feminist Thought i Ever had
and Not even Recognising it at All

Somebody that i would have No resPect for
Being Quite

Critical of
do you reMember the song ‘Sisters are Doing it for themSelves’?

and Up to that Point i Didn’t really take On the Message
but it was when Somebody Else was very Patronising about it

Somebody who Certainly they wouldn’t have Treated women Well

i just reMember that Song and i reMember Thinking

Something like “What would you Know about it?”

and Then
i Think it was Then that there was this kind of Dawning in me
“Women Have issues”

and i Couldn’t kind of verbalise it any More than that

and then Didn’t kind of deVelop or Grow into anything it just

kind of Hung there i suppose for a Long time

Clare Addresses the Mermaid

The Secret

She the facilitator is quite Broad
in the Way

she Lets the Group
Almost

in Terms of the Flight that i was Speaking about
Maybe she Lets the Group iDentiFy
Their Path and Where they're Going to Go to Next

i mean she Might make sugGestions to them
but i Think
That's Probably the Secret of it
i don't know What the secret Of it is

but
I supPose—
it's Almost like
LeaderLess Leadership

Trusting Her in Her Passion

Maybe i don't Fit in the Box Really of
traditional "Management"

because i Have worked with her
and because i Do Know her
i Trust her imPlicitly

there's Absolute Trust
With Her
And of course Trusting Her
In her Passion that

i Just don't Buy i Guess y'know this Old thing that People are
"just Serving Time" when they're Going to Work Some people Go to Work and they
Thrive on the Work they Do and they Love it and they feel they're Making a Difference

and she Is making a difference withOut a Shadow of a Doubt y'know?

Early Activism!

i reMember being at a Girl guides meeting when i was Twelve
i reMember
a Big Huge Circle of Young Women Girls Standing Sitting aRound

and i reMember Listening to a Girl a Young Girl Saying aBout
Something about her Neighbours and her Friend and
Her Parents were Separated

and so i supPose I reMember even at Twelve Years of Age!
Feeling inCensed That
these Children i felt were being Judged because—For their
their Parents' Marital status or Lack of marital status or whatever like that

Yeah i felt Really Mad yeah

oh In my Body i felt it and of course i felt it in my Throat and then i felt it coming
out my Mouth!
i Just reMember saying
'well it's Nobody's Business!'

That's my first Memory
of Feeling that maybe there was an inJustice Being Done

it was like somebody was going to Die if i didn't Say this!

Well i'd Probably call it Early Activism!

Heart Pounding

i Just think the Risk for me was just Speaking out Loud

because
Even when i Went to Work Years and years Later
in This parTicular Type of Work
if i Spoke Out
whether it's a Small group Or a Conference room full of People

I would Still
Feel
my Heart Pounding or "Maybe i shouldn't Say this"

and so Everytime i would Open my Mouth
and i suppose i Did that Back Then when i was Twelve

"is the Comment i Have to Make more imPortant than the emBarrassment
i'll Feel about Speaking Loudly?"

in Case i say something that's
perCeived to be comPletely Off the Wall!

i Also Think
it's Hugely Challenging when you're Talking about Gender issues

Chapter 13

Thesis Conclusions —

Naoi dTonnán dod Fhíorghrásta/Nine Wavelets for True Grace

Dá gcaithfeá faid do mharthana iomláin'
ag cúléisteacht leis an mhurúch
b'fhéidir go bhfaighfeá leide beag anseo is ansiúd
cárbh as di.

Ó 'Leide Beag' (p. 90)

You could spend your entire life
eavesdropping on the mermaid
before you'd pick up the tiniest little clue
about where she was really from.

From 'A Tiny Clue' (p. 91)

Ansan do nigh sí an bhunóicín
is faid a bhí sí á ní
chaitheadh sí basóg bheag uisce
thar a gualainn aniar
is í á rá mar seo:

'Tonnán dod' chruth.
Tonnán dod' ghuth.
Tonnán dod' chumas cainte.

Tonnán dod' rath.
Tonnán dod' mhaith.
Tonnán dod' shaol is dod' shláinte.

Tonnán dod' sciúch.
Tonnán dod' lúth.
Tonnán dod' ghrásta.
Naoi dtonnán dod' fhíorghrásta.'

Ó 'Leide Beag Eile' (l. 92, 94)

Then she washed the newborn infant
and while she was doing so
she threw small handfuls of water over her shoulder,
chanting all the while:

'A wavelet for your lovely form.
A wavelet for your voice so warm.
A wavelet for the gift of eloquent speech.

A wavelet for good luck.
A wavelet for moral pluck.
A wavelet for a safe haven within your reach.

A wavelet for your throat.
A wavelet to help you float
effortlessly and with ease,
effortlessly and with the greatest ease.

From 'Another Tiny Clue' (pp. 93,95)

The poem, '*Leide Beag Eile*/Another Tiny Clue', tells the story of the newborn merchild, '*lagbhríoch báiteach bán/is gan anam ar éigean ann'*/ 'so weak and wan/and incapable of any movement' (lit, *gan anam* means *'*without soul'*),* who the mermaid gathers in her arms. First, she gives the child a home baptism, '*in ainm an Athar, agus an Mhic agus an Spioraid Naoimh'* / 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', with three drops of water on the child's brow. The 'tiny clue' is what follows in the extract above.

The English translation, beginning with its lullaby-like sing-song, beautifully gestures towards the principle of musicality which inheres in Ní Dhomhnaill's original. And yet, in so doing, it undoes the freedom of the original. The voice of Ní Dhomhnaill's 'tonnán dod ghuth' – literally, 'a wavelet for your voice' – must now aspire to be 'warm'. The speech of 'tonnán dod chumas cainte', literally, 'a wavelet for your ability to speak', must now be a gifted eloquence. But it is in the move from one sound-world to another that freedom really comes apart.

The sound of 'wavelet' is devoid of the deep resonant drum-beats of 'tonnán' (pronounced thu-nawn, with stress on 'nawn'). Through this sound, and the water thrown over her shoulder, the mermaid connects the newborn to the power of the sea. 'Tonnán' sets an insistent bass rhythm, and a surging resonance through three sets of three. The cumulative effect is confirmed in the almighty climax of '*Naoi dtonnán dod fhíorghrásta'*. This literally means, 'nine wavelets for true grace', with the long vowel of 'naoi' (pron. knee) moving us to an arresting new rhythm. This is no water on the brow. On the contrary, the trinity of 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', along with the rational brow, is subverted in this spiralling 3x3 which summons up all the power of connected waters for this vulnerable new life. For the mermaid, this is the answer for the child without soul.

But the English translation plays out like a patriarchal plot to subvert the subversion. The ninth wave is silently concealed under cover of the eighth. There is no surgent moment. Like each drop of water on the brow, the potential sea-power of each wavelet is ended as soon as it appears - a 'tiny clue' that is not, after all, a tiny clue.

The task then is to subvert the subversion of the subversion. This is the stuff of Cavarero (2000, 2005) drawing on Arendt's (1958) philosophy which places natality, and not mortality, as the central category of political thought. For Cavarero (2011), the infant is 'the vulnerable being par excellence' and so constitutes 'the primary paradigm of any discourse on vulnerability' (p. 30). The infant 'actually proclaims relationship as a human condition not just fundamentally but structurally necessary' (p. 30). For the mermaid, this structural necessity is proclaimed, not by the move to the interiority represented by the brow, but to the exteriority of water thrown over her shoulder. And risking her own exposure through this tiny clue, she invokes the sea through the sonic matrix of sound and rhythm.

This is the Arendtian scene of vulnerability and power, of both infant and mermaid exposed to the world, and the generative principle of newness. This principle creates the unending conditions for being 'at home in the world' (Arendt, 1994, p. 308) – of moving through the sea with true grace. This is the acoustic logos of voice and narratable selves - embodied, relational and rooted in uniqueness - which Cavarero lays claim to for feminist action. And so, too, have I.

What then of Lady Gaga, Alice, and Clare, three of all the world's passionate women? You could spend your entire life eavesdropping on them, without ever knowing where they were really from. Because they are not, after all, simply '*three women*'. Each being uniquely someone in her plurality, this is the passion of three to the power of three: nine wavelets for true grace. And like the women of old who sang the *caoineadh* as a protest against death and a reaffirmation of living, Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare have assisted in redefining the boundaries of human culture, experience and politics through the power of their embodied voices and words.

Whose Political Voices Can Become Possible Through Neoliberal Times?

Whose political voices can become possible, then, through neoliberal times? The central message of my thesis is a hopeful one: other worlds *are* possible. Moreover, the necessary knowledge for enacting them is already available between us. *But* this involves an openness to embodied uniqueness and unknowability which is radically at odds with sedimented histories of thought and practice. In the narratives of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare, I have found these alternative

possibilities. Their voices and dreams, emerging from the world of women's community education, are of the water-world of the mermaid.

Through the thesis sea of words, we have accompanied our mermaids. In Part I, '*ar snámh idir dhá uisce/*swimming between two waters', we went in search of a notion of voice and the political to sustain the watery conditions of existence against powerful neoliberal attempts to keep us fixed and land-locked. We found it in uniqueness, plurality and narratable selves, moving through other space-times. In Part II, *'bhí trioblóidí spesialta i gconaí de riamh teoranna/*she always had special troubles with boundaries', we carried these understandings into questions about the boundaries of knowledge production, and the struggles between forgetting and remembering. These struggles found expression in the tensions between hearing voices and writing voices, in three letters addressed to the you-ness of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare, and in the revolutionary possibilities of feminist community education in holding the real-world knowledge of those who have been traumatised by the world. In Part III, *'na murúcha a thriomaigh/*the merfolk who were dried out', we lingered on the dry land of the Cosc strategy (Cosc, 2010), an Irish government policy response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence: the institutionalisation of silence in the name of listening. In Part IV, '*tobar gan tóin/*a bottomless well', the struggles between two notions of 'political' came to a head. Here, the voices of grassroots women as narratable selves erupted through the official politic of the Local Community Development Program. In the final poetic sequence, the conditions of possibility of this action were evoked through the alternative space/times of work.

What then have been the contributions of this particular thesis-story? My thesis adds to a range of disciplines which I discuss under the broad interwoven categories of theoretical, methodological and political contributions. However, to take up my position in the statement, 'I have contributed to this or that field of inquiry', as befitting the PhD 'conclusion', is woefully impoverished. More fundamentally, it is to effect a profound rupture in the mutuality of contributions involved in the production of my thesis. To reconsider the question of contribution in relation to the Lady Gaga-Alice-Clare-Siobhán 'real world' announced in Lady Gaga's story in my introductory chapter - 'the "web" of human relationships' (Arendt, 1958, p. 183) – opens up other possibilities. This framing challenges the bounded terms of academic knowledge

production in favour of locating the question of knowledge contributions in a feminist politics of solidarity.

To amplify the contributions of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare is not to diminish my own. It is rather to connect with my hope for this thesis: to create a dialogical grounding for my own political practice by clearing an epistemological thicket which opens up a space for feminist grassroots epistemology. This is of vital significance for transformative possibilities which counter neoliberal rationalities. Thus, my call to Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare to 'tell me a story of voice that has some significance to you as a feminist community activist' has been responded to with a reciprocal call: to meet their passion and the urgency of their thought with an inquiry which grapples with the risky terrains of theory, knowledge production and politics.

Theoretical Contributions

LG and Then We enCourage Women to Go on these comMittees
we enCourage them On where these "oh This is Good and they're Coming Out and
it's In your local comMunity and they're There to Listen"

and then the exPerience is Just Sometimes So Negative for the Women you Know?
and then We end up with
Training Almost Training Women
In to this Language aGendas and This and—
"Through the Chair" and d'you Know and
"Don't get hySterical" or "Don't Bang a Door" or "you Sit there and then you
Come Out and We'll proVide you supPort to Go Back" and
and you Know it's Just because That's the Way somebody Else wants to do it
that Your Way is just comPletely Sidelined

My thesis has developed a theoretical framework for critically engaging with the problematic identified by Lady Gaga above with regard to the dominant understanding of 'politics', and how this sidelines and silences other ways. Its specific theoretical contribution has been a synthesis of neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 1991; Rose & Miller, 2010; Walkerdine, 2003), the narratable self (Arendt, 1958; Cavarero, 2000, 2005; Tamboukou, 2008), and time (Edkins, 2003; Ermarth, 1992, 2010; Grosz, 2005). These have been held together through Arendt's (1958) distinction between the discursive registers of what and who, with the neoliberal subject

opposing the narratable self as a site of struggle – a 'dance between power and desire' (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 285).

This synthesis in turn provides for new interpretations of neoliberal government at a distance and its effects; it extends the theoretical possibilities of Cavarero's (2000; 2005) Arendtian-informed narratable self with regard to the historical specificity of modern power (Arendt, 1958); and it contributes to feminist and postcolonial studies of time (Chakrabarty, 2000; Ermarth, 1992; Grosz, 2005; Lloyd, 2001; Mohanty, 2003). It also makes a theoretical contribution to a specific area of Irish adult education, women's community education, as a radical feminist praxis (Connolly, 2001; Ryan, 2001).

Among its specific theoretical interventions has been the theorising of policy rationalities as continuous with neoliberal rationalities, and part of a disciplinary knowledge regime. From the perspective of Arendt's (1958) vita activa, I have theorised these policy rationalities as reflecting the ascendancy of 'homo faber' and the substitution of making for acting. The consequence is a form of politics which is based on the privatisation of subjectivity – what Arendt calls 'deprivation'.

This privatisation in turn is based on assumptions about time as a neutral linear medium which is simply 'there', so that the world is reified as 'what is'. These are the rationalities through which conforming neoliberal subjects are produced. Drawing on Cavarero's (2000, 2005) feminist reworking of Arendt (1958), augmented by Ahmed's (2004) cultural politics of emotion as well as feminist theorisations of time (Ermarth, 1992, 2010; Grosz, 2005; Söderbäck, 2013; Tamboukou, 2008), I have also theorised neoliberal rationalities as sustained by a binary gender economy. The patriarchal privileging of the universal has been accompanied by a disdain for uniqueness in relationality, and for the discrete embodied moment which is tense and alive with histories and possibilities of becoming.

All of this has implications for women's community education. Reconceptualising the political in Arendt's terms allows knowledges and praxis which have been side-lined and delegitimised to come forward as the basis for a feminist counter-rationality to neoliberalism:

Lady Gaga and we used to Write out and we'd Say
"you Don't need to bring Anything Only yourSelf
and a Willingness to Share your Stories"

In this reconfiguration, the women's community education space of sharing stories is not *preparation* for politics as part of a linear telos, but it *is* the site of the political. Following Cavarero's (1995) critique of *theoria* based on the universal and the devocalisation of the logos, my theoretical framework also provides for understandings of theory-making which allow for celebrating and valuing theory 'that can be and is shared in oral as well as written narrative' (hooks, 1994, p. 70). Contesting the injunction against uniqueness as it infuses established epistemic practices allows subjects to enter theory and practice 'not as rational, self-sufficient agents, whose prototype is the Enlightenment "man of reason", but as vulnerable creatures who can live vulnerabilities well only in climates of recognition, mutual responsibility and trust' (Code, 2009, p. 328). This is the subject of feminism who emerges in collectivities as a 'nomadic narratable self' (Tamboukou, 2008), whose 'actualized narratives ... create conditions of possibility for more stories to emerge' (p. 283). While neoliberal rationalities are about capture, this is a subject in becoming poised to escape through the 'molecular counter-formations' (p. 287). This is what Edkins (2003) calls 'trauma time' where the real political erupts. Thus, a key theoretical contribution has been to argue that the 'Your Way' of women's community education, as a critical involved way of listening to voices and stories, holds the crucible of a counter-rationality to neoliberalism.

Methodological Contributions

Clare**:** someHow these Governors That's what i'm going to Call them "the
Governors of the the Law or the System"

—we Buy in— we Buy In to a Language
that apPeases them
... there is No Level of sigNificant Challenging
and i Think that's Deeply imPortant
...

it’s not Easy it’s not StraightForward
and it’s— and it’s Difficult when something is inTangible
Or when there isn’t Research done on it
And it’s difficult to arTiculate it
howEver

...
we’ve to Find

we’ve to Burrow Through

Clare highlights how challenges to the language of the Governors of the Law or the System is difficult when those challenges are intangible and inarticulable. My own research has been of the ‘Burrow Through’ rather than ‘StraightForward’ kind. The appeasements of dry land try to separate the mermaid from her own knowledge of water, but her knowledge erupts through her troubles with boundaries. This is the knowledge my methodology has attended to.

I have engaged with Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare through a vocal ontology and the narrative ethic of *you*, carried in the invitation to, ‘Tell me a story of voice that has some significance to you as a feminist community activist’. I also attended to my own troubles with boundaries. Mine was not a search for ‘inner essences’, or to understand ‘feminist community activists’ as a general category. My central commitment was to these three of all the world’s passionate women as knowers, where knowledge and ideas are embodied rather than free-floating phenomena. My thesis is a story which ‘tells the accidentality of every life’, of being ‘this and not another’ (Cavarero, 2000, p. 53). For Cavarero ‘the accidental needs care’ (p. 53).

Narrative Inquiry

This research has contributed to the area of narrative inquiry in a number of respects. Firstly, my thesis contributed to establishing the post-structuralist narrative practices developed by White and Epston (White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990) and Bird (2004a, 2004b), originally developed in therapeutic contexts, as an important critical research methodology (Speedy, 2008). It therefore expands the possibilities for emancipatory research; in this process, the important analysis and deconstruction is accomplished collaboratively rather than in the textual analysis

afterwards. Rather than privileging textual metaphors and semantic content, I have reinterpreted these practices through Cavarero's (2005) feminist vocal ontology which valorises embodied voices and language. This in turn has made the question of time and unfinalisability more explicit. The effect of all this is to support narrative inquiry approaches which contest normative understandings of narrative closure and sequence, in favour of process and openness (e.g. Tamboukou, 2010). In particular, the ontogenetic possibilities of narrative become central, with stories creating conditions of possibility for more stories. In the context of my research, this has included stories about the pedagogical conditions of possibility for story-telling. These temporalities of becoming have also provided for disrupting voice-silence binaries to engage with silences within voice (see Clair,1998).

Secondly, this contribution to contestations of narrative closure has been strengthened by a reflexive critique of two foundational norms of knowledge production. Since I too was part of this nomadic meshwork of stories and their conditions of possibility, these critiques may be understood, following Tamboukou (2008), as 'molecular counter-formations' in the process of knowledge production.

The first of these is how the hegemonic power of numbers secures closure in qualitative as well as quantitative research. After these conversations, I found myself wondering, 'How many research participants is enough?' But since my desire to dwell with the complex richness of Lady Gaga's, Alice's and Clare's narratives felt in tension with 'more participants', I wondered then about the pull of these norms which had me asking the question. I was drawn to an understanding of how the numerical question itself is premised on seeking a closure to establish sameness and order, and of the activity of counting as requiring general categories and abstracted units (Grosz, 1999). All this flouts the relationality of uniqueness in plurality. My own narrative engagements brought me instead to an appreciation of *infinity* as the proper mathematical link with uniqueness.

The second foundational norm I found myself estranged from was 'data', as a notion which would work to delegitimise the knowledge contributions of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare. Data has appeared to me as an alibi of linear time, splitting the process of knowledge production into

the sequence data-knowledge. It requires contingently a transcendental knower, or at least a researcher-knower who looks to separate from her informants into more enlightened expert heights. Cast under the symbol of 'data', Lady Gaga's, Alice's and Clare's oral narratives become discursively segregated from my written academic narrative ('knowledge') and epistemically devalued. The historical knowledge these oral narratives hold through hearing women's stories in community education spaces is therefore also delegitimised. Data, in other words, effects a chain of relational disconnections, imposing the need to forget the multiple aural/oral layers of process conditions of my own knowledge. My refusal of data was premised on affirming and remembering these connections and their boundless possibilities.

These critical reflections sensitised me to the effects of neoliberal 'audit culture' rationalities, and the counter-rationality possibilities of uniqueness. They also contribute to broader debates with regard to the foundational premises of knowledge production, and how these might be problematized, rejected or otherwise re-imagined.

The Vocal Logos and Representation Politics

While the critical interventions outlined above were based on centring the vocal matrix and dethroning the written word, the very nature of the 'thesis' appears to render them void: the destiny of all sounds is to enter the fold of writing. For Cavarero (2005), however, a vocal ontology is not premised on an oral/writing binary. The point rather is to restore the vocal roots of language to writing. This principle has provided the basis for my usage of three writing genres as interventions in the power-knowledge relations of representation: poetic transcription; novelisation; and letters.

1. Poetic transcription

The embodied voice is already the silenced other in the 'trans' of transcription, announcing the devocalised logos. My aim was for a transcription practice to install the embodied voice, breath and rhythm, in the time of becoming. My eventual practice was inspired by Emily Dickinson's rule-breaking punctuation, based in particular on my analysis of the poem, 'I felt a Funeral, in

my Brain'. Usually interpreted as an account of 'descending into a mental breakdown', I found an alternative narrative of resistance in the surface chronology encoded through punctuation, silence and 'Being, but an Ear'. Rather than 'mental breakdown', my reading is of an open, unfixable subjectivity through multiple worlds, enabled by the generative powers of silence and language. My own transcription practice adapted this punctuation. I created a poetic transcription through 'writing with an ear'. Ignoring the rules of grammar and punctuation for writing, I listened for breath, rhythm, silences, stresses, and encoded these through poetic lines, gaps, dashes, capital letters - and no full stops.

This was a very time-consuming process, involving highly-nuanced listening. However, it was of critical importance to me in holding onto the epistemic ramifications of a vocal ontology. Ultimately, the transcripts are social practices of remembering the embodied vocal ontogenesis of words. They hold a connection therefore with unknowable and ephemeral realities, and so do not make any interpretative claims. On the contrary, these are representations which work in a sense as anti-representations: the voices and subjectivities they invoke are fluid and cannot be fixed and ordered. On the page, they effect visual disruptions which unsettle the smooth 'proper' linguistic surface of the more 'academic' narrative – itself based on the language of the phallocentric logos.

My transcription practice extends critical understandings of the politics of representation through transcription. However, its relevance must be situated in the context of the ethical demands of the vocal logos and the narratable self. This ethic calls for responding rather than representing. It informs the two genres of writing I discuss below.

2. Novelisation

Immersed in the process of repeated listenings to the recordings, readings of transcripts, and deep reflection, I long wondered what the huge and intimidating puzzle of all this complexity was. Following up Lady Gaga's, Alice's and Clare's thoughts and questions, and especially expressions of wrong and injustice, of the traumatic effects on women's lives, I analysed the policy documents which set the contexts through these ethical questions, linked to Foucauldian

and Arendtian/Cavarero critiques. The *Local Community Development Program* (Pobal, 2011)set the immediate policy context for questions about political processes, the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence* 2010-2014 (Cosc, 2010) for violence against women, and the *National Women's Strategy* (Government of Ireland, 2007) for gender equality. I was concerned that critique was infused with political agency, including the conditions of possibility located in hearing women's story-telling initiatives. To amplify the emergent counter-narratives, I also connected them with supporting literature.

Bakhtin's (1981) notion of heteroglossia and novelisation made sense for me of the process I found myself engaged in. Heteroglossia refers to how language is always marked by different speech genres, including formal and informal ones, reflecting 'the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions' (1981, p. 296). While authoritative voices try to fix meaning, there are always counter-hegemonic voices that threaten to subvert them. The novel as a genre was of importance for Bakhtin in bringing these voices into struggle, and therefore attending to process rather than product, uncrowning official genres, and introducing 'semantic openendedness'. It provided me with a 'thesis genre' for subverting the normative closures of knowledge production, and setting the stage for a struggle between neoliberal policy rationalities, and nomadic narratable self counter-rationalities.

This methodology contributes to both critical policy studies and narrative inquiry, suggesting rich possibilities for an inter-disciplinary approach. It has put invalidated and delegitimised knowledge claims, founded on an ontology of uniqueness and narratable selves, at the centre of epistemic inquiry. In opening up social contradictions by interrogating the authoritative voices of policy rationalities through oral narratives, the effect has been to uncrown the heroic imaginary represented by policy discourses by exposing their silencing effects.

The process was hugely challenging, seeming to have a life of its own which was both of me and not of me. I was significantly supported in the process by ongoing collective conversations with Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare about the implications of their knowledge and political contestations. In pursuing the inquiry, and creating dialogical chains, I was concerned that perhaps at times I was crowding out their voices in the written text, and that their voices were

now fragmented and dispersed. In order therefore to 'anchor' their voices in the 'unified event of existence', I turned to the genre of letter-writing as one part of this heteroglossia.

3. Letters

Following Tamboukou's (2011) discussion of the 'epistolary pact' as based on the I-you ethic of the narratable self, I wrote a narrative letter to each woman woven around her critiques of particular knowledge discourses: Alice's critique of mental health, Clare's of bureaucracy, Lady Gaga's of academia. My letter-writing practice was guided by the linguistic practices of Bird (2004) and White and Epston (Denborough, 2008; White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990), attending especially to a process-based and relational language of agency, double-storied accounts, and historicised understandings. It took a lot of time and care. It builds on a rich tradition of narrative documentation initiated by White and Epston, based on 'rescuing the said from the saying of it' (Newman, 2008). It also builds on Tamboukou's (2011) analysis of letters as dynamic and open interventions in the power/knowledge relations constitutive of the social and the subject by deploying letter-writing as a deliberate research methodology. This strategy has facilitated and drawn on the I-you relationship to intervene in power/knowledge relations in a number of ways.

The letters position Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare as embodied, actual knowers, and knowledge itself as similarly embodied and dynamic. In addition to documenting their critiques of knowledge, the letter genre itself enacts a response to these critiques. It therefore presents itself as a political pact. The epistolary genre attends to Arendt's (1958) discussion of 'the reification which remembrance needs for its own fulfilment' (p. 95). It enables a form of remembrance congruent with the I-you of action, facilitating the democratisation of knowledge. The address to the particular 'you' actively intervenes in the politics of the epistemic address, interrupting the propensity of academic writing to address generalised academic audiences 'about' other people. Instead, the particularity of you opens up relational possibilities based on resonance and dialogicality, strengthening the knowledge resources and action possibilities of feminist community education.

The result of all this is a new and innovative methodological approach which explicitly intervenes in power/knowledge relations. I hesitate however to present these interventions as a new 'methodology' given the potential hazards of transforming them into a reified set of practices. More important was the process itself. This involved a preparedness to contest norms of knowledge production based on the affirmative spirit of sustaining a connection with Lady Gaga's, Alice's and Clare's political passions. Moving to this rhythm, I found myself 'bumping in' to normative strictures of knowledge which required dismantling.

This approach does not set out to find solutions. The effect rather is bring forward an alternative imaginary of 'a new world still in the making' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 8) with Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare at the centre of that world. In particular, it brings the web of human relationships of narratable selves in feminist community education spaces to the fore as a major generative power source for action. It strengthens feminist knowledge claims which depart from the closures of modernity, and opens onto ideological struggles of the political.

Political Contributions

Struggles for Action

Alice: And
community development Is supposed to Be about Taking the experience and and
and Making it poLitical d'you know? and
Similar to the Feminist ideologies but

but it's Not Happening

y'Know it's not happening about comMunity issues and it's Not happening about
Women's Issues and

and so i Wonder
is it Not Happening
because we're Stopping Voice?

Part of the reason why it's Not happening do you Know what i mean?

—because we're not alLowing people to feel angry
...

and Yet
revoLution!
Needs to be uncomfortable and Needs to be out of control and

and Certainly community deVelopment is about

y'know Action

but you Can't have action without Voice

To pursue our water metaphor, we might link Alice's theme of 'Stopping Voice' to a process of dam building:

> Dam: a wall built across a river that stops the river's flow and collects the water, especially to make a reservoir (an artificial lake) that provides water for an area.
> (dictionary.cambridge.com)

The power of the dam is in redirecting our water-lives to confine and utilise them for the purposes of dry land i.e. blocking possibilities for embodied relationalities of Voice and Action.

Indeed, Ní Dhomhnaill's (2007) merfolk too are preoccupied with projects of building water pumps and hydraulic systems:

[G]o bhfuilid de shíor is choíche ag lorg cosanta is díonadh *is go bhfuilid an-thugtha d'oibreacha innealtóireachta.(l. 68)*	[T[he merfolk are constantly concerned with safety and security issues and are especially drawn to vast engineering projects.(p. 69)

For Alice of course, safety and security are precisely not the issue. The issue for her rather is to allow for voices which are angry, uncomfortable and out of control. For her, this is the genesis of feminist revolution.

The 'findings' of this study clearly show a live political struggle between politics in the discursive register of what, and action in the register of who; between dry land and the sea. Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare richly articulate a feminist praxis of uniqueness, narratables selves, and

open, unfinalisable processes, against the official politics of what Lady Gaga calls 'the preTend World':

> but— the the the preTend World started to Push In on us and Make us
> Do This
> Link In with this preTence of Filling these Forms and it it Pushed In
> and it's Making our World Smaller and Smaller
>
> ...
>
> and Then All Crazy neoliberal Language started coming In
>
> and there was No Room AnyMore for what We wanted to Do
> because All that Mattered Now
> was that we got people Educated to get Jobs
> to make More
> Stuff that could be Traded
> to cause More Inequality
>
> and it just p- it's— we're reSisting as Best we Can
> but it's Pushing In and Pushing In
> and making it Smaller and Smaller

The Pretend World of 'Gender Equality'

Perhaps one of the most massive dams, and most impressive feats of neoliberal engineering in constructing a 'Pretend World,' is the 'artificial laking' of 'gender equality' for neoliberal ends. Following Fraser (2013), this is 'feminism that has gone rogue'. Neoliberalism's seizure of a key feminist signifier, combined with and enabled by social partnership with the state, has facilitated the recruitment of feminists and community workers as 'dam builders' through government at a distance. The control of the women's movement, in turn, has provided one of the most effect technologies of government at a distance for controlling women and Stopping Voice.

This imposter discourse finds its expression in labour-market imperatives and a concern to 'fix' women's psychologies – in the kinds of 'new self-belief' exhorted by the National Women's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2007). It is sustained by an episteme of the universal which must abstract, individualise, categorise, count, with an array of professionals and experts

deployed to the cause. These are the technologies of neoliberal government-at-a distance which depend on producing neoliberal subjects aligned with the social order. As the object of disciplinary practices, each voice is rendered containable, discrete, and transparent. Inserted into a predictable linear biographical narrative of either 'success' or 'failure', the normative destiny of all voices is a Job:

C Where there's a deMand on—
"job Readiness" And
"Formal emPloyment and Training"
This would be Seen as a "Soft Action"
y'Know?

S: how do you mean "a Soft action"?

C: a "Soft action" i mean
"is Joining a Singing group going to Get that Woman Ready for a Job?"

The reproduction of this disciplinary regime is secured by an all-encompassing narrative of neutral linear time, of development and progress, and of a passage from 'traditional' to 'modern Ireland'. The discourse of women's liberation as a journey from tradition to modernity which I have found in various sites, has, I suggest, provided an uninterrupted temporal site for 'feminism gone rogue' i.e. marking the passage from traditional forms of control based on male and church authority to their neoliberal variant which postures as 'gender equality'.

State and mainstream feminist responses to violence against women are grafted onto this homo faber narrative of what. Firstly, rationalisations for state intervention are tied to the neoliberal project; VAW is constructed as a 'barrier' to economic progress. 'Disclosure' is premised on public health discourses, therapeutic and psychologising interventions through 'mental health' discourses for the treatment of 'symptoms' best managed by professionals. Correspondingly, the biographical narrative of 'rebuilding lives' is about reinsertion into the social order as an autonomous individual with a job and not dependent on social welfare. The discourse of 'justice' is bound to the criminal justice system which also individualises the problem.

All of this is linked to a disciplinary regime of increased surveillance and management of survivors and victims through bureaucratic systems. It depends on expert knowledges based on

the universal rather than the particular, a calculus of pain which abstracts experiences from their social contexts. Informed by a politics of homogenisation rather than intersectionality, the ongoing search is for more and better data. The policy objectives are for increasing awareness of services, increasing disclosures, improving services, identifying those at risk, and predicting and preventing future occurrences.

The discursive register of the 'what' merely produces new forms of objectification of women as economic units. 'Only homo faber conducts himself as lord and master of the whole earth', writes (Arendt, 1958, p. 139), and all this is gender equality under his reign.

This analysis builds on feminist analyses of the links between neoliberalism and violence against women (Bumiller, 2008; True, 2012). These demonstrate that current solutions are not working, and occlude more expansive feminist visions for transformation. In particular, my work draws on Bumiller's Foucauldian-informed work on the governmentalisation of responses to violence against women, and the neoliberal appropriation of the U.S. women's movement against sexual violence. My thesis exposes the same rationalities at work in Ireland.

The distinctive contribution of this study is in demonstrating an ontology of uniqueness as a counter-rationality to neoliberal rationalities.

The Silencing of Who

One side of this counter-rationality is the importance of acknowledging the systemic and highly oppressive silences produced by the current hegemony of collective rationalisations, particularly with respect to the most marginalised women. This involves becoming open to the terrible silencing which surrounds the who of embodied, relational existence:

> that there are Structures in Place that supPort this to Keep Happening
>
> and there are Structures in Place
> Not even to "keep it Happening"
> there are Structures in Place to Keep Quiet about it

and That's i think the Damage that that Happens for Women
is Not necessarily the
Impact
of
the eVent itSelf
it's the Fact that they're Silenced Afterwards

and that Voice
that Coming Back to
if women Don't have a Voice about What they've exPerienced
they Don't have any valiDation that their Lives are have any Meaning
or are Real

(Alice)

The ongoing horrific multiple forms of daily violations experienced by women open onto deep and profound questions which persist at the heart of the patriarchal order. They open up the chasm between masculinist norms of 'human-as-Man' and 'Woman', and between a generic Woman and the singular, unique, embodied existent. This is a life which, following Alice, often remains without verification, validation or a sense of meaning or reality. From the perspective of this ontology of the human condition and social existence, the current disciplinary regime enacts ontological violence against many women in denying their human condition of embodied and relational uniqueness, epistemic violence in refusing to hear their knowledge of vulnerability, and political violence in denying the possibility of action.

Firstly, each *someone* is absorbed into a generality in which she can be already known and explained through the codifications of psychiatric discourses of 'mental health' and post-traumatic stress disorder. The only language available is the language of the social order. With the aim of restoring the norm of invulnerability, memory is politically controlled, and the wound cut off from the history of social relations which produced the trauma. A woman's own embodied knowledge of vulnerability through her own encounters with the world is disqualified, often pathologised as symptoms of a disorder.

Secondly, by concealing the multiplicity of particular, embodied histories, the state 'continuum of care' conceals its own collusion with, and active production of the gendered power relations which magnify women's vulnerabilities to violence from men. Although a detailed analysis of

this was beyond the scope of my thesis, these include neoliberal policies generally and austerity policies in particular which depend *inter alia* on: on the feminisation and privatisation of care work; women's low paid work, the destruction of social protection; targeting of lone parents for 'activation' measures; gendered immigration policies and 'direct provision', historical policies of assimilation committed against Travellers and the failure to recognise Travellers' ethnic identity; homelessness; the ruthless dismantling of community-based supports for women; macroeconomic policies and global alliances with consequences for women in the global context of militarisation , war and poverty. These are among the 'Structures in Place that supPort this to Keep Happening' (c.f. True, 2012).

Thirdly, the reliance on patriarchal bureaucracies to address patriarchal problems further reproduces the objectifications of women responsible for abuse in the first instance. Marginalised women, including Traveller women, migrant women, poor women and disabled women are specific targets of state bureaucracies which are organised around impersonal relations (Ferguson, 1984). As Clare contests bureaucratic procedures and norms:

> it's Not just about the voice it's about the
> deSensitising of Stories in a way
> if you Ever Actually Get to Tell your Story
> to— there's a DeSensi-tiSation
> if if if You Or or maybe a Judgement or a Lack of
> underStanding or comPassion y'Know?
> toWards people and i Think that that has a huge Impact on people's lives
>
> and i Don't Think it Needs to Be that way

This is what Arendt (1958) calls 'rule by Nobody'. Its effect is to deepen the collapse of social relations constitutive of trauma, and to magnify the sense of aloneness (Burstow, 2003; Edkins, 2003):

> if You are
> if you are conTributing to somebody's Trauma
> inStead of reDucing it
> you're Doing something Very Wrong
>
> (Clare)

Fourthly, absorbed into the apparatus of a bureaucratising and medicalising regime of control, the effect is to normalise violence against women as a mere fact of life:

Clare: because This would be Seen as
Just "reBellious" almost to Say this is is that
What for Me what it boils Down to
i See this with sexual aBuse as Well
what it Boils Down to for Me
is a an acCeptiBility around Violence against Women

that we Haven't Actually Challenged

our Inner

Cores
about Violence against Women

that
there is Some Part
Of us
that Thinks
"it's O-Kay"

The governmentalised imperative for technical solutions to the problems posed for the state by women's pain requires fixing each particular pain into the knowable realm of 'what Is', as a reified object to be categorised and counted. It reflects a form of intelligibility that 'requires and therefore maintains the centrality of that which needs to be renounced' (Taylor, 2013, p. 94). And so an elaborate network of government agents circles around women's pain as a fetishised object of intervention. This hyper-rationalisation, built on the epistemic edifice of the universal and rational/emotional binaries, works to conceal powerful affective investments in the normalisation of violence against women – what Ahmed (2004) calls 'an affective economy':

and Your Story is going to help Me get On and
you know it— Not just in acaDemia but you know in Work and i could Tick a
Box so "Oh you're
aBused? grand i can Tick that i've aNother aBused Woman in mine and the More
opPressed they Are the Better because we're supposed to be working with the Most
Marginalised so your Story can Never be Bad eNough it's Only aNother" y'Know
d'you Know?
(Lady Gaga)

Thus, the goal for an 'increase in the number of disclosures' (Cosc, 2010) ties professionals as neoliberal subjects to an audit culture which measures success in numbers of stories told to them. It requires and desires Your Story in a form where You have disappeared as 'Only aNother'. This failure of presence to the particularity of another is linked by Alice to the absence of shock:

> and i Think what's what's Happened in terms of the Medical profession and the
> supPort services and things
> is that they're Not Shocked anymore Maybe and that's Part of it it's just
> 'Oh yeah we've Heard it beFore"
>
> **"**Take a Tablet"
> (Alice)

These normalisations in turn depend on and reproduce powerful limits on the social justice imaginary of *wrong.* In this regard, the almost complete collapse of the social justice discourse of violence against women into the statist terms of the criminal justice system depends on the normalisation of bureaucratic and therapeutic interventions. It reflects, in other words, 'the polite imaginings ... in the orderliness of a society so privileged as to enable (some of) its citizens to imagine violence - and other "unfortunate events" - as mere blemishes on anotherwise unsullied surface' (Code, 2009, p. 333).

Finally, these polite imaginings of orderliness extend into the control of the political itself:

> i think the Thing i find most frusTrating about the Whole Thing is Not the Fact
> that People Don't Have a Voice
> It's the Kind of—the Fact that people preTend that they Have
> and Then when people Use it Say In being Angry or Stuff
> that there's the thing "Oh yeah but you're not allowed That kind of Voice
> it's Only This kind of Voice you're alLowed
> and you're not allowed That kind of Language it's only This language"
> (Lady Gaga)

Insofar as feminist and community organisations partake uncritically in these rationalities, we merely reproduce the symbolic order which sustains them. This study has contested the 'Policy Voice', the dominant feminist and community understanding of the political. The Policy Voice is tied to a concern for intelligibility through the dominant symbolic order i.e. through the arithmetisation of social life, categorisation, universality, linear logic of prediction, and so on.

This is politics, in other words, which prioritises connecting with the dominant social order in the register of 'what', rather than with other insubstitutable 'you's' in the register of 'who.' Following Arendt (1958), this is the privatisation of the political which destroys action and is therefore destructive of the human condition:

> if we Silence people we Kill them we Kill their Spirit y'Know?
>
> (Clare)

This Silence that Kills the Spirit is fed by new reworkings of ancient gendered binaries of mind/body, rational/emotional, universal/particular and male/female. In other words, the deep structures of neoliberal rationalities derive their power from this gendered symbolic order, newly consolidated by their institutionalisation as 'gender equality'.

Who Are You?

The corollary of this however is that a transformative feminist movement is uniquely positioned to contest neoliberal rationalities. The conditions of possibility of these critiques are based on powerful commitments to hearing the stories of actual flesh and bone women. This is the site of 'just ReClaiming it [feminism] for GrassRoots Women' (Lady Gaga). It is not a feminism derived from the what of the universal Woman, or One in Five who has no story to tell. This is a feminism of wavelets lapping around the question, '*Who are you?*' The stories of Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare show passionate care for the accidental of every life. As custodians of the narratable self, their fight is to hold critical pedagogical spaces for women as tellers of stories rooted in the realities of their lives, and the feminist possibilities for creating new meanings:

LG: so Feminism
Things Once y'Know
we beCame Once
Private Issues started being Brought into the Public doMain That was the Key
Once Stuff that was going On and they Started to
Feel Safe eNough to Talk about it
And Then Hear from Other Women
and Then
the disCussion that'd Follow
it Stopped being just
Something that Happened to You
In a Vacuum

it Started to have a Whole New Meaning

This is the political action of hearts pounding, of risk and courage, of stamina and passion, of the Drive which remembers women who have died without their stories being told, of questions generated from life which can seem like 'Chasing Windmills' against the power of hegemonic truths. This is not the fixed time of 'what is', but the becoming-time when anything is available, of intrigue and verification, of 'wow moments' and miracles, of moving together through anger, joy and fun, and a world in creation.

This is where dry land is confronted with 'naoi dtonnán dod fhíor ghrásta'.

Implications

Implications for WCE

This study positions Women's Community Education in a distinctive position for contesting neoliberal rationalities. These are the spaces where women who are the objects of surveillance of distant gazes as 'disadvantaged women' and other categories can move to the centre of creating new knowledge and new possibilities. My analysis joins with arguments and practices initiated by grassroots feminists elsewhere, in particular Incite! Women of Color Against Violence Against Women (www.incite-national.org/), for the need to reorientate the feminist movement from professionalised responses to grassroots action. To be of relevance to the most marginalised women, the movement must address state violence as well as intimate partner violence.

My study builds on the work of Ryan (2001) in challenging the dominance of liberal-humanist understandings of the person in adult and community education, and in particular on contesting the discourse of 'self-esteem.' It supports Connolly's (2003) position of the centrality of 'listening to the voices' and interrogating stories as central to social transformation. Informed by a post-colonial and deontologising position, my analysis departs from the Anglo-American terms of modernity which have informed the feminist movement in Ireland, and consciousness-raising in particular.

This study has strongly reaffirmed the ontological, epistemological and political significance of oral knowledge. With its desire to 'seek to value each unique and distinctive voice' (AONTAS, 2008, p. 116), WCE carries the generative power of the classic rule of story-telling, supported by critical praxis. Following Ahmed (2004), this is not about 'teaching feminism' as a reified form of knowledge but feminist teaching. As Lady Gaga puts it,

LG you can be a Feminist
you don't Ever have to have Heard of First Wave

or Second wave feminism you Don't need to Know Any of that

but you Know the reAlity of your Own Life

In particular, the study has highlighted the role of women's community education as a radical trauma praxis which counters the medicalisation and psychologisation of women's pain through the verification of unique embodied existence, and through building relationships and community. It highlights the radical knowledge possibilities which are available to those who have been traumatised by the world, and their unique contributions to creating a feminist movement that is vibrant, relevant and transforming.

Together, Lady Gaga, Alice, Clare and I have generated resonant narrative resources to support possibilities for new kinds of critical and hopeful conversations. Indeed, a dynamic and creative Silence+Voice Festival of Feminisms attended by over 200 women came about following a conversation Clare had with a friend after sharing her letter. At the festival, I performed a story in the persona of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's mermaid – *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* was my 'biography' – telling my story of discovering three other 'mermaids'. Hands shot up everywhere when I inquired if there were 'any other members of the merfolk community in the audience?' My account of 'my' attempts to inform myself about feminism by reading the *National Women's Strategy* was greeted with loud laughter. And the responses of women afterwards – multiple claimants of the identity of 'mermaid' - confirmed it as a resonant metaphor, drawing its resonance from the world of story. I suggest that the power of the mermaid narrative is in offering a speaking position which interrupts the labels and pathologised identities many women

are forced to carry, bringing forward the hopeful possibility of another world of openness and connection from which the hegemonic hold of dry land can be critiqued and, yes, ridiculed.

To further contextualise this, it is important to emphasise that the point here is about contesting power relations which privilege certain forms of knowledge over others, and in particular the privileging of universality over particularity. It is not about romanticising 'grassroots knowledge', or creating false dichotomies between 'ordinary stories' and 'academic theory'. This would actually be complicit in reproducing power/knowledge relations; 'the personal account,' as Rooney (2008) highlights, is itself an explanatory framework which operates through normative assumptions and silences. Indeed, on researching prostitution and sex trafficking in Ireland, Ward and Wylie (2014) describe their own silencing as academics in a hegemonic NGO-driven policy context advocating neo-abolitionism. At a parliamentary committee consultation on prostitution policy where theirs was the only presentation out of 12 to question 'the Swedish model', they report that, 'as the only academic speakers, we found our position being delegitimized by contributors who were scathing of those who do not work at what was called the "coal face"' (p. 8). Ward's and Wylie's analysis of 'the need to acknowledge "greyness" (tenuous knowledge, complex lives, diverse experiences, policy equivocation)' (p. 6) has placed them radically at odds with the dominant feminist position. Indeed I, too, like Ward and Wylie, find myself experiencing 'reflexivities of discomfort' in transgressing the dominant feminist consensus with regard to violence against women, and the 'gender equality' agenda more broadly. Nonetheless, there are already indications of emerging questions in this area; Ballantine (2016) describes how a recent summit organised by Safe Ireland exposed a new debate about the framing of VAW, noting in particular the contribution of U.S. lawyer Linda Hamilton Krieger who challenged the criminal justice framing.

Of central importance for my project, however, is Gray's (2004) argument for an ethical feminist politics of solidarity which recognises the specificity of others 'and that this specificity can never be fully present or knowable' (p. 414). It requires a politics which keeps feminist agendas open, and that 'would have "doubt" built into its very foundations' (p. 425). This is a politics which must be forged at the level of the encounter, 'in ways that do not efface imagination, forgetting

and difference, or undermine the need to keep contestation and negotiation at the heart of how memory operates in the present' (p. 420).

Implications for Contesting Neoliberal Subjectivity

I have located feminist critical pedagogy in the context of concerns that the 'personal is political' is no longer an adequate response to neoliberal forms of power which depend on subjectivity as a key site of control at a distance. My findings accord with those of Sharma (2008) in an Indian context. Her study showed that neoliberal rationalities do not only produce conforming subjects, but also unruly subjects in the confrontation with other rationalities which erupt through them. I have foregrounded Cavarero's (2000) 'narratable self' and Tamboukou's (2008) 'nomadic narratable self' as affording such a counter-rationality and confrontation. Because the nomadic narratable self is not a substance but always in potentiality and 'on the move', she cannot be so easily captured by neoliberal disciplinary strategies which rely on fixing the subjectivities of its subjects. Sharma's (2008) suggestion that feminists assume 'tactical positions within regimes of governance' (p. 235) also has implications for the narratable self. Tamboukou's (2008) description of the nomadic narratable self is relevant here: 'a threshold, a door, a becoming between multiplicities, an effect of a dance between power and desire' (p. 285). In this study, and with parallels in Fraser's (2013) account of the dance between two feminisms, the major stage for the dance is between the desires to hear stories, and the disciplinary power of organisation funding. The political commitment to sustaining conditions for women's story-telling has manifested itself in two key related sites of ideological struggle: work and time.

Worker subjectivities are the major site of neoliberal government at a distance. To sustain their connections with the women they work with, Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare are involved in a sustained resistance to the worker identities and practices imposed by fundin. The difference here, one might say, is between the dry land of 'homo faber' and the work of 'An Obair' in Ní Dhomhnaill's (2007) sense as presented in my introductory chapter. Thus, Lady Gaga holds this homo faber identity at a distance through the notion of the 'Pretend World', and tells of how at management meetings, a candle marks the symbolic boundary between the 'Pretend Work' and the 'Real Work'. Clare also resists corporate models of leadership. Her relationship with her

colleague is one of friendship and trust, and this mutuality of relationship which Clare describes as 'Leaderless Leadership' contributes to creating the conditions for the singing group. Alice similarly tells of how, in tutoring a FETAC course, there is the struggle between 'the work' of telling stories and 'the work' of filling in folders:

> so it's Always a Struggle To try to
>
> get the Work Done!
>
> While getting the work Done

It follows from this that, in maintaining the distinction between these two radically different Worlds, it is necessary to avoid the seductions which would conflate 'organisation' and 'social movement'. To further develop Sharma's (2008) suggestion about assuming tactical positions within governance regimes, I suggest that such positions could be supported by distinguishing between the 'what' of feminist organisations, and the 'who' of feminist movement. The organisations of feminism, insofar as they are constituted through corporate governance structures, tied to its hierarchical and epistemic regime, its relationalities of 'workers' and 'clients', do not constitute the Arendtian space of action. This is the neoliberal reign of homo faber, and the site of the 'imposter politics' (Edkins, 2003) which depends upon conforming subjects. The revolution which will not be funded (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007) is rather in the 'who' of embodied struggles and explosions, the unruly excesses, and the escapes from regulative logics which emerge. This is the Arendtian political which arises by people acting and speaking together as 'who'.

The second related site of struggle is with hegemonic notions of time, and normative understandings of politics which encounter the world as simply *there.* Accordingly, 'it' and its occupants must somehow then be dragged, usually through rational argument, to a more enlightened pre-determined future. But in the time of the narratable self, the world is *already* dynamic and fulsome with the possibilities enabled by uniqueness in plurality. In Cavarero's (2005) terms, this is a shift from a videocentric to an acoustic logos. In the mermaid's terms, it is a shift from a terrestrial to a fluid, pelagic world (Ní Dhomhnaill, 2007). The time of the narratable self, with its desires and its pleasures, belongs to the time of listening to *someone*, and

of building relationships. This clashes with the audit culture time of fixed objectives. The radical openness of these emergent and unfinalisable narratives dislodges the normative linear narrative which looks for the closure of a 'rebuilt' life in a job. The embodied concrete moment assumes huge significance: wow moments, light-bulb moments, shock, or times of dancing through the office. The power of such moments is in disrupting the givenness of past, present and future relations, animating reengagements with memory, history and the future. These are the 'molecular counter-formations' (Tamboukou') – the 'bud-bursts' of new becomings. Following Mohanty (2003), these temporalities of struggle also strengthen the possibilities for a feminist politics of global solidarity which does not privilege western temporal frames. Moreover, introducing temporality itself as a site of struggle provides the possibility for interrupting the easy 'linear time' passage of neoliberal rationalities from 'traditional' to 'modern' Ireland.

Asserting the discursive register of 'who' over the 'what' also has implications for the conceptualisation and praxis of human rights. I have traced a history of the neoliberal appropriation of women's human rights agreements, and how this has extended the disciplinary powers of the state - described by Clare as a 'Joke.' But this study has also opened an alternative history of human rights which links with Reilly's emphasis on bottom-up feminist praxis and transnational collaboration as pivotal in 'shaping and realizing the radical promise of human rights' (p. 90). Thus, Clare's describes her own passionate initial encounter with the Beijing Platform for Action, moving from 'that Sense of sepaRation' to

> about How
> women Can
> —Can come toGether
> Can—
>
> —create Did create SoliDarity
> it was Probably
> the Largest Global
> Shift

And for Alice, too, her learning about the BPfA was an answer which affirmed her long-held questions:

> Gives you a sense of Courage i suppose or a Sense of
> you know "i'm Not
> chasing Windmills"
> d'you know?

The discourse of women's human rights newly connected Alice with her own story and the stories of other women she knew. Suddenly, Government accountability to women came to the fore as 'opPosed to y'know "Just get On with it whatEver Way You CanOr Don't"' And for Lady Gaga too, the transnational context of women's human rights set the context for developing relationships of solidarity with Tanzanian feminists:

> and such a – a Different reLationship with somebody when it Wasn't That
> you know "the Charity and we're Giving and we're going Over there to Show them
> the Way and to Help"
> and and the Openness to Wow y'know we can Learn So Much
>
> we can exPlore our iDeas toGether
>
> we can creAte something New y'know and deVelop new iDeas and that

My thesis therefore provides a resource for strengthening bottom-up feminist human rights praxis, linked to Arendt's ontology of action and her own writings about human rights. Arendt writes that, 'The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective ... [to be] deprived, not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action'(Arendt, 1968, p. 296). Thus she argued for a more fundamental right as 'the right to have rights': 'The concept of human rights can only be meaningful if [it is] redefined as a right to the human condition itself, which depends upon belonging to some human community' (pp. 631–632). Arendt's analysis of human rights is of immediate relevance to neoliberalism as a crisis of voice, this crisis finding its most acute expression in the normalisation of self-governing human subjects who are absolutely estranged from political community. My study affirms Arendt's thinking as an indispensible resource for feminists in contesting the threats to human dignity in the late modern world.

This is the point then where we encounter the central paradox of my thesis. I find myself in a relationship with my thesis which is similar to that which Alice described with her reading:

that Seeing the
the reLationships and interconNectedness and and i suppose
Taking that Questioning around it out Into the real world

The answer to the question I have posed: '*whose political voices can become possible through neoliberal times?'* is not ultimately to be found in my thesis as a reified product. The answer lies rather in the living spirit of action that my thesis cannot absorb and fix and cannot hold. The voice phenomena of the discursive register of who are in principle uncontainable and unfinalisable. This is *an saol eile* of Ní Dhomhnaill's *tobar gan tóin*/bottomless well. My thesis has encircled this world and gestured towards it. This is the significance of the ontological crossing of my transcription practice: to tell the stories left behind by Lady Gaga, Alice and Clare, whilst simultaneously holding the recognition that in their uniqueness and in their becomings, they themselves can never be fixed or absorbed into the known –

Lady Gaga:
and That was the kind of Thing that I—that My Dream was
that it was Never going to be Dry and Stale that it was going to be Open and Fluid
that Lots of you know we Didn't have to s- Start out and say "we're going to
Work on eduCation and emPloyment" that We were just going to be Open and we were Just going to

—you Know
we were going to Go where the work Took us and we were going to be Guided
by what Women were Coming in and Telling us

Alice:
that It was about
"there are Other Worlds outSide the One that I Live
in"

...
and That i Think brought Hope
that i didn't Have to
Follow
What i Saw

Clare:
i mean Bringing— exTending that Joy
Passing on Happiness!
...
So it's
AbsoLutely conTagious

i'm Pretty Certain that!
Anybody that Hears them
Almost has this deSire to get Up and Dance you know?

We preferred to be shoeless by the tide
dancing singly on the wet sand
the piper's tune coming to us
on the kind spring wind, than to be
indoors making strong tea for the men –
and so we're damned, my sisters!

From 'We are damned, my sisters'

trans Hartnett (in Ní Dhomhnaill & Hartnett,1988)

B'fhearr linn ár mbróga a caitheamh dínn ar bharra taoide
is rince aonar a dhéanamh ar an ngaineamh fliuch
is port an phíobaire ag teacht aniar chugainn ar ghaotha fiala an Earraigh,
ná bheith fantaistigh age baile ag déanamh tae láidir d'fhearaibh, is táimid damanta, a dheirféarcha!

Ó 'Táimid Damanta, A Dheirféireacha'

Ní Dhomhnaill (Ní Dhomhnaill & Hartnett,1988)

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Glossary

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HSE	Health Service Executive
IRCHSS	Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
IRIS	Integrated Reporting Information System
LCDP	Local Community and Development Programme
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service
NWS	National Women's Strategy
NCCWN	National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWCI	National Women's Council of Ireland
VAW	Violence Against Women
WCE	Women's Community Education

APPENDIX 1

Research Study on

'Stories of Voice of Feminist Community Activists'

Some information for participants
(in the form of a dialogue with myself…)

bySiobhán Madden

1. A Little Bit About Me

Siobhán, tell me a bit about yourself.

OK. I grew up in a small village in Co. Galway called Woodford. Now I'm living outside Moycullen in Co. Galway.

I've been an active feminist for about twenty-five years. I don't think I can really summarise that. But I've had a very long involvement with Banúlacht. I also worked for a few years with Longford Women's Link as the Women's Group Action Facilitator. Before that, I coordinated a women's education programme with Ringsend Action Project.

Running in parallel with that I've been studying and teaching. Initially, I studied psychology. Then I got immersed in debates about mainstream psychology's role in social control. I taught for over a decade with the Open University (Social Psychology, Women's Studies, Social Science). All this helped me to support grassroots women in pursuing Women's Studies courses.

When I say I'm an 'active feminist', this includes a constant learning about feminism, questioning and searching for new feminist possibilities. A lot of my learning, questioning and searching has been inspired by many grassroots women.

Now I'm taking the time to try to think a few things through by doing a PhD in the Department of Adult and Community Education in Maynooth. My supervisor is Dr. Anne B. Ryan.

2. About My Research

So what exactly are you trying to 'think through' by doing this research? Do you think it'll be useful to feminist community activists?

Well, of course I'm strongly hoping that it will be useful to feminist community activists. That hope is linked to my unshakeable belief in the critical contribution which feminist community activists are making and can make to social transformation. I think that contribution often gets sidelined.

Actually, I don't think any 'real' transformation can happen without a vibrant, grassroots feminism. That's why it's important to me that the knowledge, experience, struggles, dreams and voices of feminist community activists are at the centre of my research process.

But you asked me what I'm trying to 'think through' and that's linked to my own journey. Through my involvement with Banúlacht especially, I've become more and more aware of 'neo-liberalism'. I feel very strongly about how the values of the market have come to dominate so many facets of our lives, the poverty and injustices it creates, and the effects it has on women's lives in particular. I think it denies any space for meaningful voice.

Through my own studies, I've also become more deeply aware of how this depends on particular ways of being, and of thinking about ourselves and others. It's got something to do with 'individualism'.

So what's your problem exactly?

Here's my dilemma:

At an 'intellectual' level, I'm aware of some of these things. For example, I'm aware of how a focus on 'the individual' tends to ignore the importance of relationships, and larger questions of power.

But my practice is a different matter. In my work on the ground, I often *still* find myself falling back on habitual ways of doing things, while in my heart I'm wondering how transformative they really are. I'm still trying to find ways of linking the personal and political that make sense to me - that I can have faith in as being more deeply transformative.

The part of me that identifies as being a feminist community activist and educator is looking for some kind of direction in these neoliberal times. I'm trying to find a sense of my own voice really.

I'm not sure if any of that makes sense…

Hmmmm. Tell me more about your focus on 'voice' …

Yes, well, one of my difficulties I have with this notion of 'voice' is that it's a word that is used very often by very many people from community groups to government. It has a warm, inclusive ring. It has had huge importance for feminists. But what does it actually mean?

The economic crisis has generated some important new initiatives in the search for radical alternatives. I think that's great. I also think the question of 'voice' has to be at the heart of any quest for alternatives. But I don't think 'voice' is straightforward.

I believe that feminist community activists and educators have particular knowledges of voice which isn't often recognised. And I think these knowledges are of critical importance in our current times.

3. About Stories of Voice

So how do you define 'voice' then?

Oh, that's a tricky question! Actually, I'm not referring to anything like an abstract dictionary definition of voice at all. I certainly don't think there's any agreed feminist definition of 'voice'. I'm interested in what different feminist activists think counts as 'voice'. But I want us to explore this in its particular, lived experience. Stories allow us to do that. So what I'm interested in are stories of voice of feminist community activists.

What do you think 'stories of voice' told by feminist community activists would be like?

I don't know actually. Everyone's stories are unique, aren't they? That's partly the point for me really.

But you must have some notion of the kinds of stories you want for your research?

Well, I do and I don't.

I'm guessing that the word 'voice' might speak to each woman in a way that calls up particular experiences in her own life. These may be about times when she had a sense of 'having a voice', or times when she felt she didn't or couldn't - or wouldn't, or perhaps times when these senses were somehow mixed together. She might even remember an experience and then wonder if it was about voice at all. Another person or other people will probably have been involved. The experience/experiences she recalls may relate to a sense of 'personal voice' or 'collective voice' or both. She might recall a sense of enabling the voices of others, perhaps as a facilitator.

In short, there are many possible ways the idea of 'voice' might strike a chord with a woman who identifies as being a feminist community activist, and evokes experiences from her own life.

I'd be particularly interested in experiences of voice which were in some way significant for her – some kind of turning point, maybe.

And she may feel comfortable to share an account of one or more of these experiences for my research.

Do these significant experiences of voice need to be about the physical speaking voice?

Oh no, not at all. It could be about any form of expression.

So you don't have a notion of the kinds of stories of voice you want because you're leaving it to each woman to decide a story of voice which is of significance to her…

Exactly.

And I suppose it doesn't matter how short or long the story is?

No, it doesn't matter.

And maybe it doesn't matter if it's not even like a proper story?

Gosh, what's a 'proper story?'!! But no, it doesn't matter. Say, a small fragment, a thread of experience would offer a rich starting point…

4. About My Approach

But you also suggested that you do have a notion of the kinds of stories you want. I wonder what you mean by that?

Well, that's really about my own approach. A story sort of comes to life in the telling of it, doesn't it? That's a space between at least two people. And each telling is unique also because it's a living space which happens in the moment: one person telling her story, and the other person listening. And maybe asking questions which come from that listening and which flesh out the story, possibly opening up other stories.

So in the interviews, I'll be listening and asking questions which come from my responses to her story, and my sense of curiosity about some of the details of that story.

What kind of listening will you be doing then?

Well, in a way 'listening' is the other side of 'voice'. So you might appreciate that since I don't think 'voice' is straightforward, nor do I think 'listening' is either. There's a politics involved there too.

Tell me more …

Over the past number of years, I've come to see the stories we tell, and which are told about us, as very important. They shape how we think about ourselves and the actions we take in the world. And there are always multiple stories we *could* tell.

But usually what happens is that some stories, or possible alternative stories, get marginalised or silenced in favour of more dominant stories. The knowledge which is carried in those alternative stories gets silenced too. Actually, it often doesn't even count as 'knowledge' in our society. It can be a struggle sometimes to even find a language for some of our experiences, not to mention a space to speak them.

A few years ago, I discovered that there are people all over the world - community workers, therapists and researchers - who've been developing ways of having hopeful

and liberating conversations with people based on this storied way of thinking. It's called 'narrative practice'. Narrative is really another word for story.

These narrative practices click with me because I find them very respectful of persons, very attuned to questions of power, and very informed by feminism. I've done some training myself in Ireland and Australia to develop my skills in having these kinds of conversations. I'm still learning though! The Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, Australia has done a lot of work in this area. Their website is http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au if you want to find out more about it.

You mentioned two kinds of stories – the powerful dominant ones and the alternative marginalised ones. Is that right?

Yes, that sort of captures it in summary form alright.

So do you see the stories of voice of feminist community activists as alternative stories of voice that don't get heard in the mainstream of society?

Well, the chances are definitely high that any story of voice told by a woman who is a feminist community activist isn't one that the dominant culture would appreciate! But that's not all there is to it…

5. Narrative Practice and My Interviews

OK, so tell me a bit more about this 'narrative practice' and about the questions you might be asking in your interviews … ?

Yeah sure! I don't actually have a fixed set of questions. But I mentioned earlier that I see these stories as carrying important knowledges. So what I want is that we would - she and I together in our conversation - open up and make some of these knowledges more available. So that the story itself becomes somehow fuller, thicker, richer …

What kind of knowledges?

When I say 'knowledges', I mean going against the grain of what's usually considered to be 'knowledge' in our patriarchal society, and exploring how these different knowledges have come about, and what their purposes might be.

So for example, instead of assuming that thinking can be separated from the body, I might inquire of the woman as to how a particular experience was felt in her body and through her physical senses. And because I believe that meanings are created through our interactions and relationships with others, then I'll probably be curious about how other people might be involved in the particular meanings, values and dreams of her life, and her contributions to theirs. Sometimes it can be easy to take these meanings for-granted, but there's always a history there which can be precious to remember. The same thing applies to various ideas or concepts we draw on - it can be interesting to hold them up and look at how they came into our lives, how they have developed and the effects they have.

So in that way really the story will go back and forth in time, and accumulate new – or maybe forgotten - meanings, stories and questions which can shine a light on her struggles, resistances and sense of purpose.

Another thing is language …

… Hold on. You said there that, 'it can be interesting'. But interesting for* who *exactly?

Oh now, that's actually a key question! I've been talking a bit there about *my* curiosity and what *I'*m interested in. But it's important to me that our conversation is interesting to the woman herself as well – it's *her* story after all.

Like I said before, there are lots of different directions a conversation could possibly take at any point. Some of these directions may be more interesting to her than others, or move her, or spark her curiosity more than others. So hopefully I won't get *too* carried away with my own nosiness. And she doesn't have to answer particular questions if she doesn't want to. Over the course of the interview, I plan to check in with her about the direction the conversation is taking, or might take, and be guided by that.

OK. You'd started to say something there about language …

Yes. Another thing I'll be very much guided by is the actual words spoken by the woman herself.

Language is actually a big issue for me. It's partly because many grassroots women I've worked with have found a lot of policy-type language very off-putting. And it's partly because I often get bored myself by what can seem like an exclusive emphasis on that kind of language. In many ways I can recognise the value of and need for particular language if we're to speak to the 'powers-that-be'. But somehow I wonder if an exclusiveness of language might close off other ways of being politically engaged, and if it might deflect us sometimes from other ways of speaking with and connecting with each other.

For myself, I think there's something very beautiful about ordinary every-day speech. It can be quite poetic. For example, lots of times in the course of speaking a person can come up with an image or metaphor or a lovely turn of phrase - often without even being aware of it. So I'd like to listen out for that too in the interviews.

It sounds like you'll be trying to listen out for quite a few things. Are you sure you'll be able to come up with some worthwhile questions just like that, on-the-spot?

Well no, I'm not at all! Actually, I'm pretty sure that after the interview there'll be loads of questions I'll be wishing I had asked, and probably questions I'll wish I hadn't! And when I listen to the interview again, and start writing it up, and reflect on it a bit more, I'll probably become aware of a lot of things that passed me by as the woman was speaking.

The woman I've interviewed might go through a similar process. There may be some things she might want to talk about or clarify more, or some things she might wish she hadn't said. And if she has the time and inclination to listen to the voice-

recording I send, some other thoughts might strike her that she'd like to explore. Stories never really stand still, do they?

All of that is why I'd like to do a second follow-up interview.

So that second interview would also give you both a chance to check in on the whole process?

Yes, that would be the idea.

That brings me to another reason why I'm drawn to this narrative practice as a way of doing research. I wouldn't be comfortable with a way of doing this research in a way where I as the researcher would listen to a woman's story and then go away and put my own interpretation on it. This way, because of the kinds of questions we explore, the interpreting is done together in a collaborative way - as part of the actual fabric of the interview. The second interview gives us another space to stay in touch with that collaborative approach.

How long will the interviews take?

I'd say the first interview will take about ninety minutes. The second interview shouldn't be as long – probably less than an hour.

6. Collective Practices: Group Interviews

What are the 'group interviews' about then?

Well, this is based on a particular narrative practice which brings the story-telling process to a collective level. It's about being an 'outsider witness' to someone else's story. I've participated in these outsider witness practices a few times myself and have always found them to be very valuable, especially for the person whose story is at the centre.

OK. So how does this 'outsider witness' practice work? What'll happen?

Well, for my research I'm talking about small groups of three women coming together for a good part of a day, plus myself as the facilitator-researcher. The first two interviews will have been about opening up and connecting with some of the rich alternative knowledges, meanings and histories embedded in each woman's story of voice. What happens in the group is that each woman now tells her story again – we'll have discussed in advance how she wants to do this – while the other two women are invited to listen carefully.

Then the two women in turn respond with a retelling of the story by noticing what struck a chord for them, what expressions and images from the story resonated with events or images within their own life, and how they might have been in some way moved or changed by this listening. The reflections of these witnesses are then followed by re-retellings from the original narrator – she also speaks about what struck a chord with her in what these witnesses have said.

The story becomes richer and more layered through being linked with the lives of others. Each woman in turn becomes the centre of the process, so that their three stories and lives become very richly connected. The whole process creates a well of new meanings and possibilities which could never be predicted in advance and which would never be possible with just one person.

Wow. You sound really excited about the possibilities of that …

Yes, I must say I am. I think the possibilities for this collective story-telling are huge, but I'm very excited about where it might go if it's done by a group of feminist community activists. I think it's a practice which might have a lot to contribute to creating feminist grassroots movement and solidarity. I'm looking forward to hearing the women's reflections on the process.

But talk me through some of the practical stuff - it sounds like the group interview will take a day?

Yes, it would really be a day-long workshop – probably 10.00am – 3.30pm. I'll organise a suitable venue and lunch and pay any travel expenses. I'll send out an agenda in advance as well, with plenty of time for discussing ground rules and reflecting afterwards on the process, as well as what happens next. All the women participating will be experienced in working with and facilitating groups themselves, so they'll be bringing a lot of strengths to their participation.

Will the participants need to do some kind of preparation for their roles in the workshop/group interview?

Yes, that would actually be very important so that it works well for everyone, and to realise the potential of the process. Preparation wouldn't take a long time.

What I was thinking was that I could maybe meet in advance with each participant before the group interview and sometime after the second interview. That would give us a chance to go through how she would like to tell her own story, and also to prepare for the role of outsider witness. We'd also discuss then the ethical issues involved in the group interview. But also ethical issues arising in the research as it's unfolding.

7. Ethical Issues

Talk me through these ethical issues some more.

Ethical issues are central. It's important to me that participation in this study would be a positive experience for each participant, and that she feels OK about every part of the process.

This is something of a journey into the unknown, so it's impossible to predict in advance all the issues that might emerge. Keeping lines of communication open will be crucial here.

What if someone decides midway that she doesn't want to participate anymore?

A participant can withdraw from the study at any time. That might include withdrawing everything she has already contributed.

Will you be writing everything into your study? And will it all be anonymous? What about confidentiality?

These are crucial issues. As soon as I start writing up the interviews, any names and other identifying features will be changed. The voice files and word documents will be saved in a password protected format which no-one apart from me will have access to.

These issues of anonymity and privacy will be ongoingly discussed. We'll also discuss and agree which aspects of a woman's contribution she would be happy to have included in the study. Nothing she says will be quoted in the final text without having been first seen and agreed by her. At the end of the study, the original recordings and transcripts will be deleted so that what's left is agreed with the participant.

Of course, it might be that as the research and stories take shape, a participant might actually prefer to have her own name associated with her story. So we shall see.

The group interview introduces another layer of ethical issues and we will agree these together in our ground rules. But all the participants will be very experienced in negotiating these kinds of questions. I think they'll have a pretty good idea of what might work for them at any particular time.

And a participant can contact you anytime if she has a problem?

Oh yes, I would appreciate that very much.

Is there anyone apart from you that she can contact if she has a difficulty with how you are conducting your research?

Yes. The NUI Maynooth Ethics Committee is there in the background and has this message for her:

'If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.'

What about when the research is all done? Will the women who contributed get to hear about it?

Absolutely! If they're interested, of course.

I plan to host a morning seminar for all the participants before completion of the study. That's where I'll present the study and get more feedback from the participants. Their criticisms, suggestions etc. will be important in ensuring that the study is honouring of their contributions, and is relevant to grassroots feminism.

Siobhán, good luck with it - it sounds very exciting!

Thanks but you would say that, wouldn't you? You are me after all!!

Yes. And now I think it's time to bring more voices into this conversation …

My contact details:

Siobhán Madden, The Mill, Killagoola, Moycullen, Co. Galway.
Email: siobhanjmadden@gmail.com Telephone: 091-868381 or 087-9985078

APPENDIX 2

National University of Ireland Maynooth
Social Science Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Protocol for Ethical Review of a Research Project Involving Participation of Humans
urpose of this review process is to draw attention to the ethical dimensions of research and to inspire and assist researchers to design their research in the most ethically appropriate way. It is a university requirement that research projects involving humans carried out by NUIM staff, postdoctoral researchers, and MSc / MLitt / PhD students must undergo this review before data collection begins. It is the conviction of this committee, as members of NUIM's academic community, that collegial review of our protocols for carrying out research in an ethical manner is a constructive process that will lead to better research.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete all sections below. Place your cursor inside the box that follows each question and begin to type – the box will expand as you type. While attachments may be appended, it is important that you do not simply refer to them, but that you fully address all points here in the text of this form – do not leave any section blank. Please keep in mind that your protocol could be read by someone who is not a specialist in your field, so it is important to make your explanations as clear and thorough as possible. Please submit this completed form, with all supporting documentation, to the NUIM Research Support Office Ethics Committee Secretariat: research.ethics@nuim.ie

1. Information about the researcher(s)

Name:

Siobhán Madden

Qualifications:

B.A. (Hons) Psychology, Diploma in Music (Open University), OU Postgraduate Certificate in the Social Sciences

Appointment or position held:

PhD student

Department:

Adult and Community Education

Contact details (must provide NUIM details):

E-mail:	JULIAN.MADDEN.2010@nuim.ie	Telephone:	091-868381

(If there are additional researchers, please copy the above fields and paste here as needed)

2. If the researcher is a postgraduate student:

Name of supervisor:

Dr. Anne B. Ryan

Supervisor's appointment or position held:

Lecturer

Supervisor's department:

Adult and Community Education

Supervisor's contact details (must provide NUIM details):

E-mail:	Anne.B.ryan@nuim.ie	Telephone:	01-7083308

NOTE: *If the researcher is a student, a letter from the supervisor must be included outlining how the student is suitably prepared and will have adequate support to carry out the type of research proposed.*

3. Title. Brief title of the research project:

Narratives of Voice of Feminist Community Activists: Interrupting Neoliberal Rationalities

4. Other ethical review.

a. Is the research project being, or has it been already, reviewed by any other institutional ethics committee or board? [ ] Yes [✓] No

b. If yes, please list the other committees(s) or board(s) involved, and attach relevant documentation.

5. Research Objectives. Please summarize briefly the objective(s) of the research, including relevant details such as purpose, research question, hypothesis, etc. (about 150 words).

This study explores feminist community activists' knowledge of 'voice', given their important role in community education. The context is what Couldry(2010) calls the 'neoliberal crisis of voice', referring to the undermining of effective voice by the saturation of market values. I argue that commonsense notions of 'voice' feed into 'neoliberal rationalities' by assuming that voices simply reflect and express underlying experiences, making problematic assumptions about individualistic, contained, rational selves, and language as transparent. My purposes are three-fold. The first is to develop a research process which creates alternative conditions for voice: I assume that selves are 'multi-storied' and relational, based on the narratives we tell and which are told about ourselves. These are shaped by wider cultural stories, with some stories privileged over other possibilities. The second is to open alternative stories of voice and knowledges available to feminist community activists. The third is to draw out the implications of the process and the stories for practices of voice in feminist community education which offer a 'counter-rationality' to neo-liberalism.

6. Methodology.

a. Where will the research be carried out?

The research will be carried out in Ireland in various locations. Each individual interview will be held in a quiet, comfortable and private location selected by the participant. This may be in her workplace or home, or in a room booked by the researcher. Each group interview will also be held in quiet, comfortable and private locations, in a venue convenient to each of the three participants.

b. What is the timeframe of the research project?

The timeframe of the entire research is 4 years. The narrative interviews will be completed in a 4 months timeframe.

c. Please describe briefly the overall methodological design of the project.

The methodology is a feminist narrative inquiry (see section 6d below). It is based on 2

individual in-depth interviews with each informant. This will be followed by small group interviews of 'linking narratives'. Each informant will have an opportunity to participate in one group of three participants.

d. Depending on the methods/techniques to be used, please elaborate upon the research context(s), potential questions / issues to be explored, tasks/tests/measures, frequency/duration of sessions, process of analysis to be used, as appropriate.

Below I present an account of my proposed research under the headings: (i) General Analytic Orientation; (ii) Ethic of Collaboration; (iii) Introduction to my interview approach (iv) transcription (v) reflexivity; (vi) First interview (vii) second interview (viii) Third Meeting (ix) Group interview (x) Seminar.

(i) General Analytic Orientation

My theoretical and epistemological assumptions place me in a critical position to normative science. Rather than being concerned with questions of linear causality, my concern is with multiple and unfolding possibilities. I do not therefore regard data collection, transcription and analysis as discrete stages of the research. Rather, I regard the research process as a sequence of unfolding conditions for voices. Each research moment is part of the flowering of the next, opening new possibilities to attend to even as it closes others.

The concern in this research is with both the conditions of narrative production – the how – as well as the substance of the narratives themselves – the what. This broader conceptualisation of narrative inquiry follows the narrative ethnography discussed by Holstein and Gubrium(2009). My broad analytical framework takes the form of what they call 'analytic bracketing', which means shifting the analytic focus back and forth between the 'what' and the 'how'.

This analytical orientation will be engaged throughout the research process. The process may be regarded as beginning with a story of voice. This story becomes opened and reworked through a series of retellings in individual interviews and a group interview. My concern is with the emerging stories, their transformations, and the conditions which give rise to them. My analysis therefore is a multi-layered one: a story of stories which attends to the complexities of voice.

At the core of this complexity, and of the creating of conditions to research this complexity, is a practice of language which privileges relational, fluid and contextual meanings rather than individualistic, fixed and general ones (Bird, 2008; Shotter, 2010; Speedy, 2008; White, 2007). This is a practice which has been developed in certain therapeutic settings and extended into research contexts (see subsections (iii) and (vi) below).

In shifting my analysis between the 'how' and the 'what', my concern will not initially be to draw out themes of content across participants' narratives. Such a focus would entail a level of abstraction, as well as assumptions about a consensus of meaning between my participants, which are at odds with my epistemological and theoretical assumptions. The analysis of the particularities of the narratives will proceed on a case-study basis, in collaboration with each participant. This will be based on a 'double-storied' approach of, on the one hand, naming dominant societal discourses identified by the participant in her narrative and their effects, and on the other hand the 'alternative' story of her strategies of resistance, and supporting values and knowledges.

Links between narratives will be accomplished in two ways. Firstly, I will identify themes of process which address the research question of the conditions of narrative production. Secondly, connections between narratives will be based on lived 'resonances' in the context of the later group interview (see subsection (ix) below). This may retrospectively inform which aspects of the earlier narratives are foregrounded for analytical purposes.

(ii) Ethic of Collaboration

The research process is shaped by my commitment to an ethic of collaboration. This commitment is informed by feminist approaches to research (Byrne and Lentin, 2000), as well as a recognition of the social and relational basis of knowledge production. A commitment to close collaboration with my participants will also help to ensure that the outcomes of the research are relevant to women's community education. Collaborative practices include: negotiating the direction of the interviews by periodic reflections on possible avenues of further exploration; negotiating interpretations of her narrative - the second interview will likely be of particular importance in this regard (see subsection (vii) below); negotiating what is included in the research – this will be subject to her agreement; and creating spaces for participants to collectively engage with the research process through group interviews and a seminar.

However, my commitment to collaboration is not intended to mask power relationships, or my responsibility for managing the complexities of the research process. Each stage of the process will open up a multiplicity of possibilities for further inquiry and managing these necessitates a careful selectivity. While the participant's expressions regarding any parts of her narrative which she does not wish to include in the research will set some key ethical parameters for the selective choices made, ultimately the 'menu' of avenues of inquiry for further exploration in the second interview, and for inclusion in the final report, will be shaped primarily by my own research concerns. At one level, this could be regarded as a crucial distinction between narrative practice as a research and as a therapeutic inquiry, since the concerns of the narrator are at the centre of the latter process.

At the same time, the power relations at stake in this particular process of collaboration cannot be reduced to a question of whose concerns – researcher's or participant's - are more central. This is firstly because of the political context of this research, intrinsic to which is a sense of shared political purpose between my participants and me. My participants are colleagues in the women's community education sector, with shared values and political commitments. Indeed, this has informed my choice of participants. Secondly, the notion of collaboration is fundamentally informed by theoretical assumptions about power. Following Foucault, I do not assume that power is something 'possessed' by individuals – as might be implied by a framing of collaboration in terms of 'whose' concerns are more central. I subscribe rather to a more relational and fluid understanding of power. Thus, an ethic of collaboration cannot be understood or enacted according to a fixed blueprint of 'who' makes decisions at any particular time, but requires ongoing reflexive attending to the wider discourses shaping these decisions as well as the micro in-the-moment 'joint action' (Shotter, 2010) of dialogues (see subsection (v) below).

(iii) *Introduction to my interview approach*

My interview approach is based on the narrative practices developed by Michael White and David Epston (White and Epston, 1990; White, 2007), and by Johnella Bird (Bird, 2008) in the field of family therapy and community work, informed by feminist and post-structuralist thought. These practices have been developed by Jane Speedy (2008) as a method of research inquiry. Ethico-political considerations inform my choice of interview approach.

Firstly, I recognise that, through my questioning, I will be influential in the meanings which are generated. In the kinds of questions I ask, my intention will be to facilitate conditions for the emergence of particular kinds of knowledge which can offer a 'counter-rationality' to dominant patriarchal and neoliberal categories of knowledge. A key linguistic strategy will be one which responds to conventional expressions of identity as a fixed, definitive and autonomous 'I', e.g. 'I am confident/not confident', by reconstituting these expressions in 'relational language' which allows for moving beyond binary understandings (Bird, 2004). This means actively repositioning the self in relation to the thought, feeling or experience, e.g. 'this sense of confidence which you experience...'. Such a reconstitution allows for an exploration of the diverse and contradictory nature of experience, and for the emergence of knowledges which would otherwise be eclipsed by adhering to language which produces a definitive, autonomous self. The categories of inquiry which will inform this exploration are outlined in subsection (vi) below.

Secondly, a core ethical dilemma for me has been the tension between a desire not to impose my interpretations on research participants' narratives, and a concern to analyse dominant discourses. Unlike most approaches to discourse analysis which identify and analyse societal discourses after a data collection phase, my inquiry into discourses and their effects will form part of the interview process itself. In the context of my research, it means that I regard my informants as experts in the meanings of their own lives while I adopt a position of curiosity in regard to these meanings. This includes a collaborative exploration of taken-for-granted ideas, their histories, and effects (see above). In this sense, I regard the interview context as itself a site of analysis and knowledge co-production. This also has implications for informing pedagogical practices of community education.

(iv) Transcription

Because my theoretical assumptions (informed in particular by Mikhail Bakhtin) challenge the notion that language is a transparent medium of reality, I do not regard the process of transcribing the interviews as a simple technical job of writing down words. In the move from the aural medium of speaking voices, to the visual medium of written words, the sonic quality of voices is lost. Re-presenting these sounds and silences which have been produced through dialogue as visual marks on a page - through written words, commas and full-stops, organised into sentences and paragraphs – involves interpretive decisions about meaning which cannot be taken for-granted. Such decisions must necessarily be informed by my research purposes which will involve attention to a number of factors.

Firstly, because I am concerned with 'dialogicality' or the relational character of voices, I will be transcribing my own utterances as well as those of my participant. This is important in recognising that narratives are created through interaction. It also enables me to attend to the unfolding in-the-moment nature of narratives, and meaning as always created in response to another utterance. In particular, my questions and utterances will be an important focus for analysing themes of process, and the conditions under which certain kinds of narratives have been made possible/not possible.

Secondly, I am interested in the 'embodied' character of voices as carrying meaning in the flow of interaction beyond that of the actual words spoken. Certain unique qualities of the physical voice, such as timbre, clearly do not lend themselves to transcription. However, other prosodic features, such as intonation and pauses, are transcribable. Moreover, in the area of discourse analysis, there has been increased attention to the importance of this 'musicality of speech' as constitutive of meaning as it interacts with syntax and lexical meaning, and a crucial aspect of how one responds to another person's utterances

(Wennerstrom, 2001). The voice of ordinary speech, for example, creates units of meaning through the use of pauses and rhythms. These might easily be missed through a transcription method bent on fitting spoken words into the received rules of grammar and punctuation. The act of transcribing therefore will be for me itself an embodied process of 'writing with an ear' (Cavarero, 2005), involving multiple careful listenings.

However, in addition to attending to prosodic features, I also want to produce a transcript which can be easily read by my participants given my commitments to collaboration. Transcription conventions developed in this area, for example through Conversation Analysis, lend themselves to rigorous analysis because of the fine-grained nature of the transcription. But the level of in-depth technical knowledge of transcription conventions often required to read and interpret these transcripts is such that they do not lend themselves to the kind of collaborative approach I aspire to. From this perspective, I regard choices regarding transcription processes as also involving for me a level of ethical decision-making.

In order to transcribe in a way which both recognises the musicality of speech and helps to foster conditions for ongoing dialogue with participants (and readers), I will adopt a form of poetic transcription (Gee, 1985; Prendergast et al, 2009). This will involve writing interviews in stanza form by following pauses, silences, rhythms and emphases. Researchers using poetic transcription have reported that participants expressed a sense of pleasure seeing their words in poetic form. For example, Speedy (2001) quotes one participant as stating, 'I found it clearer, not so rambling and clumsy, and I could hear myself speaking in those phrases'. In addition to aesthetic considerations, I anticipate that this form of transcription will also help to draw my attention to points of entry into alternative stories. The process of transcribing the first interview therefore will provide a basis for framing the second interview.

The unfolding nature of my research methodology also points to the likely need to be selective about what I transcribe given the level of detail I will attend to. The basis for this selectivity may include: what stood out for the participant (as reported at the end of the interview), sections with a long flow of narrative, possible openings onto alternative stories, sections where my curiosity is prompted in the light of the question of interrupting neoliberal rationalities, sections explicitly focused on the meaning of voice.

(v) Reflexivity

My own subjectivity is centrally involved in all these dimensions of the research process, including in the interviews, in transcribing, and in practicing a collaborative ethic. I too am part of the participant' telling of stories of voice. Moreover, a core analytical focus will be attention to the extent to which my practices enable (or not) conditions for relational selves and alternative knowledges. This underscores the importance of reflexivity, or the explicit acknowledgement of my own presence and voice. In the practice of reflexivity, I become simultaneously subject and object to myself as a teller of the story of my research.

But how I understand my own subjectivity in these practices is not straightforward. My challenge to notions of an autonomous 'I' is one I must also apply to myself. Davies and Gannon (2006) outline two ends of 'the spectrum' of reflexive research as ranging from 'authentic', realist self-narratives to analysis of discourses which foreground the limits of researcher consciousness.

I aspire to a practice of reflexivity which recognises that my own meaning-making is constituted through a discursive web. For instance, my own social and political analysis, and my own history, will inevitably inform the kinds of wider discourses which I recognise in informants' narratives. But because I am interested in new possibilities of knowledge, then I must be prepared to challenge the limitations of what I myself take to be knowledge in order

to move beyond the certainties of what is already 'known'. This requires that I listen to what attunes my listening, troubling the edges of my own taken-for-granted certainties.

I do not underestimate the challenges involved in this. Davies and Gannon capture what I think is the nub of the challenge:

'Given the slippery theoretical ground that this takes us into, reflexivity turns out to be more complex and demanding than we had at first thought. Not only must we engage in such an apparently fraught practice as reflexivity, but we must, in our engagement with research, invent our own methods of meaning-making as we go, and catch ourselves in the act of engaging in old practices and modes of meaning-making that we are in process of deconstructing and moving beyond' (p. 90).

They highlight that such practices are not based on reliable 'methods' that produce validity but that practice is a site of innovation and 'messy texts' (Denzin, 1997). However, I am not starting from scratch in this. The same categories of inquiry which I will employ to frame my interviews with participants can also offer a basis for my own reflexive analysis. These categories are described below.

(vi) First Interview

Prior to the first interview, I will already have had a phone conversation with the participant based on the information document emailed to her. This conversation will have focused on the purpose and process of the research, including ethical understandings (see section 11e).

The first interview will begin by briefly reiterating the purpose of the interview as exploring her knowledge and experience of voice as a feminist community activist. I will also assure her again that she does not have to answer any questions she doesn't want to and that I will treat her contributions as confidential and anonymous in the process of conducting the research. I will also highlight that while the nature of the research means that confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed once the research is published, nothing she says will be quoted without her approval.

The participant will then be invited to tell me a story of voice from her own life which has some significance for her. The information sheet and our telephone conversation will already have afforded the opportunity for her to reflect on a possible story of voice she would like to share for purposes of the research (see section 11e and attached information for participants).

Apart from this opening question about 'voice', I will not have a schedule of pre-planned questions. The questions I ask will be in response to the particularities of my informant's own expression. Their purpose will be to enable further development of the story. This will be done by using the relational language described above. In general, the questions will be 'scaffolded' to facilitate movement from what is 'known and familiar' to territories of possible knowledge which may be less familiar (White, 2008).

Two broad categories of questions will frame my listening and my inquiry:

a) 'Landscape of action' questions which flesh out the descriptive details of the story. This might include details of 'what, where, when, who, how, why', but also questions which recognise the involvement of the body, such as:

Where were you at the time this happened? Who else was there? Can you remember how

you felt this experience in your body? What led up to this step occurring? What happened after that? What would you call this step? What was going on at the time to make you do this?

b) 'Landscape of intention questions' which inquire about why we do the things we do. The purpose of these questions is to enable an understanding of the foundation of the informant's action based on her judgements and preferences, and that fit with her wider hopes and plans. These kinds of questions will be about commitments, principles, dreams/hopes, values/beliefs and purposes. For example,

Why was this important to you? What was your hope in doing/saying this? Tell me more about this value of _____ which you mentioned…

Further story development will be in regard to the values and principles upon which the story of voice is founded, and which recognise meanings as socially and relationally constructed. This will be facilitated by three inter-related approaches to my questioning:

(a) Historicising: the purpose will be to open up histories of these values and commitments in the informant's life. For example, I might ask 'Can you go back in time and describe something else you did in the past that expresses the same or a similar value?' This invites new stories which locate the informant's values in a narrative of personal history.

(b) Relationships: I will also listen for and inquire about the possible contributions of others in creating the meanings through which the person understands her reality, and of her contribution to theirs'. These others might be individuals from the person's life (alive or dead), individuals in history, or characters in fiction. Possible questions for opening this up might be for example:

Is there someone in your life who might have contributed to you knowing yourself this way or being able to take this position? Who would you see as having inspired you in these values/in being able to take this initiative? Who might understand the significance of what you did? Is there anybody who would not be surprised to know this about you? What story might that person tell about you which showed the importance to them of this [ability/value] which you have/hold? What might this person say about you if they knew about the actions you are taking?

(c) Deconstructive questioning: This will entail listening for and inquiring about wider ideas and discourses which the informant draws on to construct meaning. These might be dominant societal discourses which are so taken-for-granted as to be considered 'normal' and 'natural', or they might be more marginalised discourses (for example feminist) which have some importance for the informant. Questions in regard to discourses will relate to characterising the idea/discourse, and tracing its histories and effects. Possible questions might be:

Tell me a bit more about this idea of ___ . Is there any image that comes to mind as you think of it? Can you remember how it came into your life? Can you describe some of its effects on your life e.g. on how you think about yourself, about others? Are you in favour of the effects or against them? How does this fit with what's important to you?

The first interview, including the opening conversation, will take about 90 minutes. Periodically throughout the interview, at appropriate narrative 'breaks', I will check with the participant about how the interview is going for her, will summarise some of the themes which seem to be emerging based on her words, and suggest possible directions of

conversation which she might be interested in following.

Towards the end of the interview, I will invite her reflections on the interview, opening a conversation about any themes or topics which stood out for her, and any aspects of her narrative which at this point she does not wish to have included in the thesis. The purpose of this is to inform the ensuing analysis, and to establish some ethical parameters.

I will also inquire about her experience of the interview process. The purpose of this is to check in on her well-being for ethical purposes, and to respond to any concerns or expressions of discomfort. This will also offer some valuable insights for my analysis of the conditions under which the narrative was produced, and feedback for refining my skills for subsequent interview practices. This conversation will also provide a basis for renegotiating her consent to remain involved in the research. Even if at this point there are no concerns or expressions of discomfort, I will highlight the possibility that memories evoked in the interview may reverberate in her consciousness over the next few days, and that I am available if she wishes to contact me for any reason.

The participant will be provided with a CD containing a password protected mp3 file of the interview (see section 13e). I will emphasise that this is for her own records (unless she explicitly does not want it) and does not carry any expectation on my part that she will listen to it.

The interview will be transcribed (see above) and a password protected copy of the 'transcription in progress' emailed to the participant before the second interview. This process of transcription will also inform the preparation for the second interview.

(vii) *Second Interview*

The second interview will be about two weeks later and will last about 1 hour. This will be more structured than the first interview, based on questions sparked on listening to the recording and working on the transcript.

I will introduce the interview with a retelling of the first interview. This retelling will be framed in terms of dominant societal stories identified by the participant, emerging alternative stories and values, and strategies of resistance. I will likely use a flipchart or some other visual aid for this. In the process of the retelling, I will invite responses from the participant to check if this retelling makes sense from her perspective, and to expand on the meanings e.g. names or metaphors which describe the different kinds of stories.

From this conversation, a 'menu' of possible directions for further exploration will be identified, some of which will be informed by my reflections following the first interview. The participant will be invited to express her preferences in terms of discussing these areas. The same inquiry approach will then be adopted in the second interview as in the first.

Towards the end of the second interview, we will also have a discussion about the process of transcription, including her thoughts and experience of the poetic transcription.

The second interview will conclude in a similar way to the first interview.

(viii) Third Conversation

The third meeting will have two purposes.

The first purpose will be to discuss my emerging analysis as it pertains to the informant's interviews. This will include discussion of those aspects of the narrative which she would be/might be willing to have included in my thesis, aspects which she would not be willing to have included, and conditions attaching to inclusion e.g. of anonymity and confidentiality.

The second purpose will be to prepare for the group discussion described below. Preparation will involve clarifying the purpose of this workshop, working with the informant to decide a narrative of voice she would be open to including in the thesis, and sharing with two other research participants. Preparation will also involve clarifying the role of 'outsider witness' as outlined below, and agreeing ethical issues such as confidentiality.

During this conversation, I will also flag some of the possible complexities with regard to negotiating agreement with regard to group data which is included in the study, and invite some preliminary reflections and suggestions from her in regard to this.

This meeting will also be recorded. The participant will be provided with a password protected mp3 file and subsequent transcription as above. I will also email a written summary of the discussion.

(ix) Group Interviews

After a series of individual interviews with 3 participants, a group interview will be held with the 3 participants willing to participate. In total, it is hoped that there will be three separate group interviews with 3 different groups of participants (see section 7d which addresses the case of a participant withdrawing from the study).

Each group interview will be conducted over a day from 10.00 am to 3.30pm with one hour for lunch. The purpose is to further develop narratives of voice by relating them to each other.

The methodology is based on the 'definitional ceremonies' developed by Michael White based on the work of anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff. It employs questions described by White (2007) as 'most effective in providing rich story development' (p. 192). The procedure will involve each woman being interviewed by me to tell her story, with the other 2 women assuming the position of an audience or 'witnesses' to this telling. They then respond to her story using the following four categories of inquiry:

(a) First, the focus will be on expression. I will ask each witness to identify and speak about what she heard that she was most drawn to: what caught her attention or captured her imagination.

(b) Second, the focus will be on the image. I will ask her to describe any images that were evoked by the expressions she was drawn to. I will then encourage her to speculate about what these metaphors and mental pictures might reflect about the person's purposes, values, hopes, aspirations, dreams and commitments.

(d) Third, the focus will be on personal resonance. I will encourage her to provide some account of why she was so drawn to these expressions, with a specific focus on her understanding of what these expressions struck a chord with in her own personal history.
(e) Fourth, the focus will be on 'transport'. I will invite her to identify and speak of the ways in which she has been moved on account of being present to witness these stories of voice.

The first narrator will then respond to the witness responses using the same categories.

This process will take approximately one hour.

This process will be repeated for each participant so that there will be three such definitional ceremonies in total. Reflections on process – and next steps...

The format of the day will be as follows:

10.00 am Introduction (30 mins)
10.30 am First Definitional Ceremony (1 hour)
11.30 Break (15 mins)
11.45 Second Definitional Ceremony (1 hour)
12.45 Lunch (1 hour)
1. 45 pm Third Definitional Ceremony (1 hour)
2.45 Coffee Break
3.00 pm Reflections and discussion of next steps.
3.30 pm Close.

Different options with regard to negotiating which data is included from the group interviews will be discussed at the end of the group interview under 'next steps'. The most straightforward option here is probably to negotiate in the first instance with the participant who is at the centre of each definitional ceremony, and then follow this up by negotiating with each outsider witness regarding her contributions.

Following the group interview, each of the definitional ceremonies will be transcribed. Copies of the mp3 files and transcripts will be provided to each participant as appropriate to the process of negotiation agreed.

(x) Seminar

Towards the end of the research, I will host a seminar for all 9 participants to present my findings, invite feedback and open up a dialogue about my research. This will be of two and a half hours duration and will take place approximately 6 months after the group interviews.

7. Participants.

a. Who will the participants be?

The participants will be 9 women who identify as feminists and who have a track record of being active at community level, particularly in the area of women's community education. Some of the participants will be known to me through our shared involvement with Banúlacht, a (recently closed) feminist development education organisation. The other participants will be women recommended by my colleagues in Banúlacht, including these participants.

Their experience will mean that the participants will be familiar with and skilled in the kinds of practices I employ for my research e.g. engaging in personal and social reflection with other women in group contexts. They will also be familiar with ethical negotiations in various contexts and will have a sense of their own ethical boundaries and commitments.

Two successful pilot interviews have been conducted and I plan to also included this data.

b. Approximately how many participants do you expect will be involved?

Nine

c. How will participants become involved in your project? If you have formal recruitment procedures, or criteria for inclusion/exclusion, please outline them here.

The study will require that participants are women who are self-reflective, identify as feminists, have a history of involvement in the women's community sector, and are committed to grassroots feminism and collective action.

Their involvement in the community sector may be as volunteers or paid workers, and may be in women's organisations or other community organisations which include women-specific projects.

It would also be important that participants can make time available for participation in the study, although firm commitments are not expected (consent will be negotiated ongoingly as described in section 11).

Participants will be recruited through my personal contacts in the women's community sector and some individuals have already informally expressed an interest in participating.

I will directly email potential participants with a brief description of the study and a personalised account of why I would like her to participate. I will also attach a more detailed account of the study. This will be followed up with a phonecall (see section 11e).

d. What will be the nature of their participation? (e.g. one-time/short-term contact, longer term involvement, collaborative involvement, etc.)

The nature and extent of their participation will depend in large measure on their own interest and availability of time. However, each engagement with participants will be a collaborative one. This includes:

(a) the data-collection stage: the interviews and group discussions will be regarded as co-constructed
(b) the writing up stage: I will check back with participants regarding particular interpretations of their narratives and how they may be represented.

This approach is based on a feminist ethics which aims to challenge any objectifying of research participants. It is also based on the epistemological commitments of my research which regards knowledge as socially and relationally constructed. Such collaboration strengthens the 'multivocality' of my research, by including multiple and varied voices in the analysis (Tracy, 2010).

As I reach the later stages of my research, I will host a seminar for all nine participants to present my research and allow opportunities for questions, critique, and feedback. This will also help to shape the final thesis and strengthen its relevance to women's community education.

It is possible that some participants might opt out of my research. One key issue then will be whether or not it will be possible to keep data from pre-existing participation and how this will be negotiated. No data will be inluded i.e. none of a participant's words will be quoted, without her express agreement.

Much depends on the reasons why somebody would opt out. If a participant opts out because, for whatever reason, she realises that does not want to be involved in the research at all, then this will mean that data from her prior participation will be deleted and not included in the research. If a participant who in principle wants to be involved opts out because participation is not possible for her anymore e.g. because of time commitments, then the question becomes one of whether she is in principle willing to allow data from her prior participation to be used and, if so, whether, it will be possible for her to read draft sections which include her contributions in order to agree or not agree to their inclusion. Ideally, the context for these negotiations would face-to-face discussions, but realistically, it is likely that much of it will be phone-calls or email. These scenarios underscore the importance of constantly achieving clarity at each stage of a participant's participation in the research as to, at a minimum, which data she does not want included in the thesis.

The challenges posed for the re-organisation of the research by one or more participants dropping out increase according to the stage at which someone opts out. Probably the most challenging in this regard is if a participant opts out after participating in the group interview and, in so doing, withdraws consent for any data to be used arising from her participation. The analysis of the interview would be difficult – although not insurmountable – given the deep enmeshment of all the narratives and contributions with each other. If a participant withdraws prior to the group interview, it would be possible to reorganise the group interview by inviting other women to participate as outsider witnesses. In this case, their participation would not be as extensive as those participants interviewed twice about narratives of voice. However, these outsider witness research participants would also be briefed beforehand and given information about the purpose of the research and ethical issues. (see section 11).

e. If participants will include the researcher's own students or employees, explain how the possibility of conflict of interest will be minimized.

N/A

f. Will the participants be remunerated, and if so, in what form?

Travel expenses and refreshments will be provided for participants attending the group discussions and the seminar.

8. Persons Under 18.

a. Will the research be carried out with persons under age 18? [ ] Yes [✓] No

b. If yes, will the sessions be supervised by a guardian or a person responsible for the individual(s)? [ ] Yes [ ] No

***NOTE**: If the sessions are to be unsupervised, you are required to undergo Garda vetting. Research cannot begin until Garda clearance has been completed. For NUIM researchers, this is facilitated by the NUIM Admissions Office (708-3822, admissions@nuim.ie).*

9. Vulnerable Persons.

a. Will the research be carried out with persons who might be considered vulnerable in any way? [ ] Yes [✓] No

b. If yes, please describe the nature of the vulnerability and discuss special provisions/safeguards to be made for working with these persons.

N/A

NOTE: *Depending on the nature of the vulnerability, sessions may need to be supervised or the researcher may need to undergo Garda vetting as stated above under point 4. In such cases, the researcher must also be prepared to demonstrate how s/he is suitably qualified or trained to work with such persons.*

10. Risks.

a. Please describe any possible risks to research participants that your research and the techniques or procedures involved might cause, such as: physical stress or threats to their safety; psychological or emotional distress; risk of repercussions beyond the research context, etc.

As stated in the university's Ethics Policy (EP), 'Theriskofharmshouldbe nogreaterthanthatinordinarylifei.e.participantsshouldnotbeexposedto risks greater than or additional to those encountered in their normal lifestyle' (EP section 2.1). The practices of this research, including the kinds of conversations and reflections which will be opened up by the individual interviews, and the small group sessions, mirror in many ways the kinds of practices which the research participants will be familiar with in their everyday lives as practitioners of community education. Research participants will be well equipped with the skills to negotiate these contexts and to express their own safety requirements to me as researcher.

Prior to each interview, as required by the Ethics Policy, participants will be assured that answers to questions need not be given (EP section 6.2). It is conceivable however that in some instances, relating stories of voice, particularly where this may be about an experience of not having a voice, may be an occasion of distress for some participants. A number of considerations arise in this context. Firstly, Hollway and Jeffers (2000) argue that it is necessary to distinguish between distress and harm. They suggest that the conflation of these two is based on the unrealistic principle that participants should be left unchanged by the experience of the research. Although an experience of distress can be discomforting, it is not necessarily harmful. Secondly, they argue that of central importance here is the relational context in which distress might be experienced: the conduct of the interview can go a long way towards ensuring that participants do not have a negative experience. This relational view is reinforced by a number of recent contributors to the peer-reviewed journal *Qualitative Inquiry* discussing ethics in qualitative research.

In preparation for this research, I have undergone extensive training in both Ireland and Australia in the narrative practices I now intend to use for my methodology. My competence in these practices, including training in responding to expressions of distress, will therefore help to ensure that the interview is not a negative or harmful experience. However there is also the risk that in the aftermath of the interview, participants might experience some distress e.g. the interview might stir some painful memories. At the end of each research encounter, participants will be alerted to this possibility and, consistent with university policy, with be informed of the procedure for contacting me should any 'stress, potential harm or related questions or concerns arise' (EP section 6.2).

There may be some risk involved at the group stage of the methodology given that the relational context will depend not just on me, but on how the participants relate to each other. In this case, it must be recognised that I am an experienced group facilitator myself, as will be the participants and therefore used to creating a safe interpersonal space. In addition, my methodology also ensures careful prior preparation with each participant for the group context. This includes clarity around the story they are willing to share, and their role in responding which precludes, for example, making judgements. Ground rules will also be

negotiated and made explicit at the beginning of the workshop.

The importance of the relational context goes beyond the discrete stages of data collection to the ongoing interactions between my participants and me over the course of my research. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) note that the interactions between researcher and participant are 'the substrate of the ethical dimension of research practice. In these interactions lie the possibilities of respecting the autonomy, dignity and privacy of research participants and also the risks of failing to do so, thus perhaps causing harm to the participants in various ways' (p. 275). Central to my research practice is a commitment to keeping honest, sympathetic and respectful communication and dialogue open with my participants over the course of the research – and afterwards as necessary.

b. If you anticipate the possibility of risks, how will these potential risks be addressed?

The open nature of this research means that I must responsibly assume risks as a real possibility. By the same token, this openness means that it is difficult to anticipate in advance precisely what those potential risks might be. In order to maintain an ethical vigilance and an ability to respond to such risks or 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) two dimensions of my research practice and context assume particular importance.

The first concerns the role of reflexivity. Reflexivity is 'an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, to stories, and to other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform and direct our actions, communications and understandings' (Etherington, 2007, p. 601).While reflexivity is generally regarded as important in assuring rigour in qualitative research, it is also now increasingly regarded as a central dimension of ethical practice. According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004), 'Being reflexive in an ethical sense means acknowledging and being sensitized to the microethical dimensions of research practice and in doing so, being alert to and prepared for ways of dealing with the ethical tensions that arise' (p. 278). As these authors note, reflexivity does not prescribe specific types of response to research situations, but it is 'a sensitizing notion that can enable ethical practice to occur in the complexity and richness of social research' (p. 278).

Such reflections alert one to what may perhaps be regarded as the necessary first step in responding to risk: an ability to actually recognise an occasion of possible risk. I consider that part of the preparation for responding to such risks must include a readiness to step away from the business-as-usual of the research as one possible response. For example, an ethically appropriate response to a particular expression of distress during an interview may be to turn off the recorder and engage with the expression of distress outside the research context entirely. Such ethical judgements will of course depend on the context. But linking reflexivity to ethics serves the important function of considering the concrete risks which may arise while one is in the flux of practice, and of anticipating a range of possible responses.

The second important aspect of my research context which will strengthen my ability to address risks concerns my own support network of experienced qualitative researchers and narrative practitioners. These include for example my supervisor Dr. Anne B. Ryan who has extensive experience of qualitative research. In addition, I have access to the support of three highly experienced narrative practitioners. These are David Denborough of the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide Australia who is my mentor; and Therese Hegarty and Keith Oulton who provide me with monthly support and supervision as a member of a group of Irish narrative practitioners. This network ensures that I have a range of readily available expertise to draw on for an informed anticipation of potential risks, and options for

addressing them.

11. Informed Consent. Please answer the following questions about how you inform participants about your research and then obtain their consent:

> ***NOTE:*** *Please attach the* ***information sheet(s)****,* ***consent form(s),*** *and/or* ***script(s) for oral explanation*** *to be used in this project. Please see the template at the end of this form showing standard information that must be included on all consent forms.*

a. Do research participants sign a written consent form and receive a copy for their records? If not, do they receive an information sheet that provides what they need to know before deciding to participate?

Research participants do not sign a written consent form. They do receive information beforehand which outlines in as much detail as possible the purpose, process and ethical issues of the research. This includes a clear statement of participants' right to withdraw from the research at any time, and an explicit invitation to contact the researcher for more information if they require it. However, it is a moot point as to whether even all this 'provides what they need to know before deciding to participate'.

This is because traditional assumptions regarding 'informed consent' are problematic in the context of the current research, particularly the implicit assumption that it is possible to know in advance the processes which will unfold. In a narrative inquiry, this level of knowledge is not possible: to a large extent, as I note in my information sheet, it is a journey into the unknown. While preliminary consent may be obtained on the basis of some initial information, a notion of consent is required which can do ethical justice to that which is yet 'unknown' as well to that which is 'known'.

Following Etherington (2007) therefore, I regard consent as 'an ongoing process rather than a once-off event' (p. 603). Similarly, Hollway and Jeffers (2000) emphasise that the decision to consent is 'a continuing emotional awareness that characterises every interaction' (p. 88).

b. When, where, and by whom is consent obtained?

At every stage of the research process, I as the researcher will be checking with each participant to inquire as to whether she still wants to be part of the research and, if so, under what conditions e.g. which aspects of her narrative she consents to have included in the study (see section 6).

This includes at the beginning and end of each individual face-to-face interview, and by telephone and/or email, as a follow-up to the group discussions, during the process of writing up my research, and as a follow-up to the group seminar towards the end of the research process.

The consent of participants will also be sought for the inclusion of their data in any subsequent publications, presentations or other forums for the dissemination of my research.

In regard to this, it should be noted that my relationship with my participants will not necessarily come to an end upon completion of the research as might be typical with much research. My participants and I inhabit a shared world of women's community education and feminist activism, rather than separate worlds of academia and community. Indeed, my hope

would be that the research process will strengthen these relationships and a bridging of these worlds, and that one part of this would be collaborative work with interested participants in terms of publications and presentations.

c. If children or vulnerable persons are involved, please explain your procedure for obtaining their assent.

N/A

d. For projects in which participants will be involved over the long term, how will you ensure that participants have an ongoing opportunity to negotiate the terms of their consent?

See above

e. What will the participants be told about the study?

The process of telling participants about the study will involve an initial introductory email with an attached information document, and a follow-up phone-call which will enable a conversation about the study.

1. **Introductory email**

The following is the content of my initial email to prospective participants:

'I am writing to invite you to participate in my research on the topic of 'voice' and what this means to feminist community activists and educators. The purpose of the study is to give visibility to the rich knowledge of feminist community activists, and to help strengthen the transformative possibilities of grassroots feminism.

I myself have many years of involvement in feminist activism and women's community education. This has helped to shape my passion around the importance and possibilities of 'voice'. I am hoping that you will be one of nine women willing to share with me some of your personal stories and reflections of voice.

I have chosen you because… [*personalised account of why I would like this woman's participation in my study*]

For the study, I would like to listen to and explore with you a story about an experience of voice which has some significance for you. I would like to have two interviews with you, each of which will take about 90 minutes. If you are interested, I would also welcome your participation in a day-long workshop-type group interview with two other participants. All expenses will be paid for.

Your participation in this study will not require you to read anything in advance. You are thinking all the time, and that is good enough for me. <u>You would be free to withdraw at anytime.</u>

This research is part of my PhD in Adult and Community Education in NUI Maynooth, under the supervision of Dr. Anne B. Ryan.

The attached document has more detailed information about me and my study. I have written it in the form of an interview with myself.

If you think you might be interested in participating, I would be very happy to discuss it further with you.

Thanks for your attention. I look forward to hearing from you and hopefully working with you.

Best wishes,

Siobhán Madden.

(contact details)

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.'

2. More detailed information document attached to email

The nine-page document which I attach for the perusal of prospective participants, and which is also attached to this ethics proposal, is entitled 'Research Study on "Stories of Voice of Feminist Community Activists": Some information for participants (in the form of a dialogue with myself…)'.

It includes seven subtitled sections written in a conversational style which adopts a question-and-answer format. It is not addressed directly to prospective participants, but is more like an opportunity for them to eavesdrop on a conversation I am having (with myself) about my research.

There are a number of reasons why I have chosen this particular format.

Firstly, the document is fairly lengthy because, in order to strengthen the collaborative possibilities of the research, I want to equip participants with some of the more theoretical and political understandings informing it. At a very practical level then, a readable conversational writing style is likely to be less off-putting than a dry academic one.

Secondly, the 'readability' of the document - in the sense of a document which can (hopefully) 'engage' a reader - and my self-presentation in it, are linked to my theoretical assumptions about language, thinking and selves. Since I do not regard language as some transparent reflection of reality, then the notion of providing some kind of fixed, 'objective' account of my research which is a transparent reflection of my own thoughts becomes problematic. Presenting an account of a dialogue with myself accords with my assumptions of thinking as an internal dialogue drawing on different voices. It also facilitates a style of language where I generally try to be open and fluid, rather than fixed and absolute (except where this is important, as in the case of some ethical principles). This style is intended to allow the possibility of evoking engaged responses from the reader, reflected in the last line of the document where I state, 'And now I think it's time to bring more voices into this conversation...'

Below is a brief descriptive summary of each section:

1. About Me

This section describes my own background in women's community education and my academic history

2. About My Research

This section gives a background to some of my own political and personal concerns which have drawn me to focus on 'voice'.

3. About Stories of Voice

This section introduces the notion of stories of voice, emphasising the uniqueness of each participant's story. It includes the following:

'I'm guessing that the word 'voice' might speak to each woman in a way that calls up particular experiences in her own life. These may be about times when she had a sense of 'having a voice', or times when she felt she didn't or couldn't, or perhaps times when both of these senses were somehow mixed together. She might even remember an experience and then wonder if it was about voice at all. Another person or other people will probably be involved. The experience/experiences she recalls may relate to a sense of 'personal voice' or 'collective voice' or both. She might recall a sense of enabling the voices of others, perhaps as a facilitator. In short, there are many possible ways the idea of 'voice' might strike a chord with a woman who identifies as being a feminist community activist, and evokes experiences from her own life.

I'd be particularly interested in experiences of voice which were in some way significant for her – some kind of turning point, maybe.

And she may feel comfortable to share an account of one or more of these experiences for my research.'

4. About My Approach

This section highlights that stories are created in the space between the teller and the listener, and that I will be listening to and responding to her story in a particular way. It introduces the notion of stories as important to how we think about ourselves and the actions we take on the world. I briefly describe the philosophy of 'narrative practice', and the notion of dominant and alternative stories. I also mention why I am drawn to this practice and my own narrative training.

5. Narrative Practice and My Interviews

This is the longest section (two pages). It focuses on my approach to the interview questions. This includes the fact that I do not have a fixed set of questions, but also describes briefly the kinds of questions I am likely to ask so that 'the story will go back and forth in time, and accumulate new – or maybe forgotten – meanings, stories and questions which can shine a light on her struggles and resistances' (p. 5).

I try to emphasise here the collaborative nature of the inquiry by highlighting the importance of the participant's own interest in the questions and direction of the interviews. This includes the fact that she does not have to answer particular questions if she does not want to. It also includes the importance of the second interview as an opportunity to reflect on, and possibly revise, the content of the first.

I also address the issue of language, and the importance for me of being guided by the participant's own words.

6. Collective Practices: Group Interviews

This section describes briefly the group process of 'outsider witness' practices and the

advance preparation. It also includes practical details (expected length of time from 10am – 3.30pm, that I will organise a suitable venue, lunch and pay travel expenses).

7. Ethical Issues

This section starts by emphasising the importance of participation being a positive experience, and the importance of keeping lines of communication open since it is impossible to predict in advance all the issues which might emerge.

I then address the specific issues of the right to withdraw at any time, confidentiality, anonymity and data protection. I also quote the NUI Maynooth Ethics Committee concerning who to contact if the participant is unhappy about the process.

I conclude by mentioning my intention to host a seminar for all the participants towards the end of the study in order to present my research and get more feedback: 'Their criticisms, suggestions etc. will be important in ensuring that the study is honouring of their contributions, and is relevant to grassroots feminism' (p. 9).

1. **Follow-up telephone call**

If the participant responds positively to my initial email, I will arrange to follow this up with a phone-call. I will not assume that she has read the nine-page document, but I will ask her to have it to hand. This will provide the framework for discussing the research process. I will particularly attend to the section on ethics. Any questions will be answered as comprehensively as she would like and as is possible.

f. What information, if any, will be withheld about the research procedure or the purposes of the investigation? Please explain your justification for withholding this information. If any deception will be involved, please be sure that the technique is explained above under methodology, and explain here why the deception is justified.

Participants will be informed as fully as possible about the research procedure and purposes of the research. Any questions will be answered as comprehensively as required. No deception will be involved.

12. Follow-up. As appropriate, please explain what strategies you have in place to debrief or follow up with participants.

At the end of each interview, ten minutes will be set aside to check in with the participant about her experience of the interview, to answer any questions and to discuss the next steps.

At the end of the group discussions, half an hour will be available for reflections on the process and negotiating the next stage.

During the writing-up stage, I will be touch with each participant to give feedback on the process of analysis and invite comments.

Towards the end of the research process, I will invite all nine participants to a seminar in order to give feedback about my findings, and to open up dialogue, critique, affirmation etc.

13. Confidentiality/Anonymity of Data.

a. How are confidentiality and/or anonymity assured?

Over the course of my data collection, the data will be treated at all times as confidential. In transcribing the data, pseudonyms will be used, and identifying details such as place names will be changed/excluded where possible. Nobody apart from the informant and I will have access to this data since I will be transcribing it myself (see section 13e).

However, as the treatment of data becomes one of reporting and analysing it and generally writing about it, assurances in regard to confidentiality and anonymity become more complex in the context of the current research.

Firstly, as Etheridge (2007) notes, 'people's life stories can be recognizable to others who know them (even when written about anonymously), because of the uniqueness of the narrative' (p.609). Secondly, ethical questions with regard to confidentially and anonymity must be seen as applying not only to the participants themselves, but also to other persons who are named or are otherwise referred to in participants' narratives, and who have no control over the question of their consent.

Furthermore, the important recognition of the right to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity should not automatically lead one to assume that a participant will wish to remain anonymous. She may want to claim ownership of her own stories. Moreover, my fundamental recognition that through the narrative inquiry participants are not simply contributing 'data' but are contributing 'knowledge' entails recognising the intellectual contribution which participants are making to my research. This carries with it its own ethical obligations concerning the right to choose to be acknowledged. As outlined in the Ethics Policy: 'Personswhohavecontributedintellectually tothepaperbutwhosecontributions do not justify authorship may be acknowledged. Such persons must have given their permission to be named' (section 6.4).

There are no clear-cut ethical solutions to these questions. However, it will be necessary to keep a constant dialogue open with participants in regard to these issues, to explore creative and flexible solutions, and at all times to respect participants' wishes with regard to which aspects of their narrative they are willing to have included, and under what conditions of anonymity. In addition, the importance of representing individuals – both participants themselves and individuals referred to their narratives – in a respectful manner at all times comes to the fore.

Particular issues regarding confidentiality arise in the context of the group interviews. One of my aims in preparing for the group interview with each participant will be to support her in clarifying the boundaries between what she would like to or be willing to share with the group, and what remains confidential between us. It will also include clarification on my part that I will treat all experiences she has already shared with me as confidential: I will not be sharing this with the group, or referring to it as I interview her before other participants. My questions will merely be prompts for what she has already decided she wants to tell herself.

However, ethical commitments will also be necessary between the group participants in that they must also undertake to treat with discretion all experiences and stories shared in the group context. This is the kind of undertaking with which all participants will be practiced in the context of their own work.

Willing for her identity to be shared with other participants ... Known to other participants -

b. Will you record any personally identifiable information about research participants?

[✓] Yes [ ] No

c. If yes, please explain the following: how you will safeguard this information; if identifiers will be removed from the data, at what point will they be removed; if identifiers will not be removed, why they must be retained and who will retain the key to re-identify the data.

Although final decisions will be made in agreement with participants as described above, my working assumption will be based on trying to ensure anonymity over the course of my data collection and write-up.

In transcribing, pseudonyms will be used for all individuals, and other identifiable aspects of the narrative which the participant wants anonymised (or deleted) – this will be ongoingly discussed from the first interview.

I will retain the key to re-identify the data.

d. Will you record any photographs, video or audio in which individuals could be identified?

[✓] Yes [ ] No

e. If yes, please explain who will have access to this material and how you will safeguard this material.

All interviews and discussions will be recorded using a digital voice-recorder which is my personal property.

Immediately after each interview and while we are still *in situ*, the mp3 voice file will be saved from the recorder onto my computer in a password protected format using the software Acrypt. It will then be deleted from the voice recorder. *(how long will this take?)*

The voice-file will then be saved onto a CD in password protected format which will be given to the participant along with written instructions on how to open the file. This is a very straightforward process which only takes about five minutes. It is not necessary for the participant to download the Acrypt software in order to decrypt the file.

If there is not time available to do this in situ, I will post the CD to the participant, sending a separate text with the password, and a separate email on instructions for opening it.

All written versions of interviews, including transcripts and ongoing analytic work, will also be saved on my computer in a password protected format using Windows encryption. Each participant will be emailed a password protected transcript of her own interview. In addition, each participant will be emailed sections of the ongoing analysis which pertain to her interview and which quote her words. This will be done in the course of writing up the research, though it is difficult to say in advance how often it will be necessary to do this since it will be a negotiated process.

Subject to the agreement of all three participants in the group interview (to be discussed at the end of the group interview), a voice file and transcript will be sent to each of the three participants.

Apart from enabling access of each participant to my work as it pertains to her interview, only I will have access to these files. All hard copy versions will be stored in a locked filing cabinet (in my home) which only I have access to.

y

f. After data analysis has taken place, will the data be destroyed or retained?

The data will be destroyed after data analysis.

g. If the data will be destroyed, please explain how, when, and by whom?

Electronic forms of the data will be deleted permanently from the hard-disk of my computer using the 'Shred' option of the AxCrypt software. Hard-copy forms of the data will be shredded.

This will be done by me on completion of my thesis.

h. If the data will be retained, please explain for how long, for what purpose, and where it will be stored; if there is a key code connecting subjects' data to their identity, when will the link be destroyed?

NOTE: Include this information in the consent form, information sheet, or consent script.

14. Ethics in subsequent outputs. What are your plans for protecting the safety and integrity of research participants in publications, public presentations, or other outputs resulting from this research? How will subjects' permission for further use of their data be obtained?

See section 11(b) above

NOTE: If the data is not anonymised, additional consent would have to be obtained before the data could be deposited in an archive such as the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (http://www.iqda.ie/) or the Irish Social Science Data Archive (http://issda.ucd.ie/).

15. Professional Codes of Ethics. Please append a professional code of ethics governing research in your area to this protocol, and/or provide a link to the website where the code may be found.

http://www.sociology.ie/docstore/dls/pages_list/3_sai_ethical_guidelines.pdf

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TEMPLATE FOR INFORMATION SHEET/CONSENT FORM

The form and content of information sheets and consent forms varies according to the nature of each project; however, the following standard information must be included on all forms used in projects affiliated with NUIM:

- Researcher(s) name, address and contact number (provide NUIM details only, no personal details or phone numbers should be supplied)
- Supervisor(s) name, address and contact number (if applicable)
- Details about how the data will be safeguarded, for what purposes it may be used, and for how long it will be kept.
- The following statement (verbatim):

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.