Queering in the Years: Gay Visibility in the Irish Media, 1974-2008

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the queer visibility and discourses surrounding that visibility as they have unfolded on Irish television, film and alternative activist media between 1974 and 2008. The thesis argues that LGBT activists originally deployed media visibility for the liberatory potential of advancing LGBT rights. However, mainstream media institutions exploited queer identities for economic purposes; that, coupled with the eruption of the AIDS pandemic in the 1980s, disrupted the mainstreaming goals of queer visibility. This resulted in queer visibility becoming caught up in a shifting power dynamic, or as this thesis terms it, a tug-of-war, between Ireland's LGBT community and media institutions.

As this thesis will argue, the development of queer Irish media visibility was informed by local activism, legal changes, viral epidemics, international media influences along with the development of Ireland's media landscape. The thesis traverses time periods, media forms and Queer and Media Studies theoretical frameworks to provide an overview of the dynamic of queer Irish visibility, pursuing connections across current affairs programming, documentary, chat shows, soap opera, television drama, film, magazines and broader print media. The methodology of this thesis is predominantly archival research, textual analysis and semi-structured interviews, a mixed-methods approach that uncovers the relationship between the proliferation of queer visibility and alternative queer media and the processes by which such media are produced.

Using these forms and practices, the thesis will explore how varying Irish gay civil rights groups influenced the types of queer media images that manifested on screen and within their alternative media economies; how the changing social, cultural, economic and legal context of the historical period saw the transition of queer visibility from current affairs to narrativised, fictionalised representations and illuminate how queer Irish visibility transformed from localised activism to aspirational attempts of participating in a global media economy.

Acknowledgments

The actual process of undertaking Ph.D. research and writing a dissertation becomes such a heavy workload and burden, that by the time you get ready to submit the 'document', the acknowledgements almost become an afterthought and something to tick off a checklist. This may be down to the fact that it will be the only part of the whole thesis that will not be subject to endless scrutiny and correction (one would hope). Of course, although the process of writing a Ph.D. can be isolating, getting it across the finish line can only happen with the goodwill, generosity and patience of many people.

I would firstly like to acknowledge my supervisors. Having walked into her office, bright eyed and bushy tailed as an undergraduate student when I had first displayed interest in pursuing a doctoral degree, Dr. Stephanie Rains has been an erstwhile and calming presence throughout this process. From her first act of supervision – a research essay during my MA in 2014 – Stephanie's advice, encouragement and guidance have been instrumental in helping me improve as a scholar.

Professor Maria Pramaggiore's supervision has been similarly instrumental in transforming a collection of scattered insights into a coherent argument. Her feedback sandwiches have been instrumental in transforming this thesis. What is more, her insights and efforts to extend my intellectual thought process from a gay to a queer framework has been exponentially beneficial. What is more, I will always be thankful for her friendship, kind support, good sense of fun and morale-boosting, particularly during the more turbulent moments of the past four years.

This project would not have taken shape had it not been for the generosity of many in the Irish LGBT community, who contributed and shared their time, resources and knowledge. In particular, I would like to thank Bill Hughes and Edmund Lynch, for the provision of programmes and materials from their personal archives. Furthermore, Tonie Walsh deserves my sincerest gratitude. His good humour and vast knowledge of queer Irish history, along with what became his friendship, played a crucial role in sculpting and shaping this project.

My thanks must go to the Department of Media Studies, particularly Dr. Kylie Jarrett and Anne Byrne, for all of their support over the past number of years. This thesis has

improved tenfold, thanks to the various individuals who devoted time to proofreading and for their contributions and thoughts: Dr. Alison Farrell in the Maynooth University Writing Centre and Dr. Anne O'Brien in the Department of Media Studies. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions were invaluable in preparing this thesis for submission.

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The stresses of the final stages of completing a Ph.D can never be underestimated. How lucky was I to have Barry Lynch come into my life during this time. His unfaltering support, encouragement, love and above all else, friendship, really helped me to see the woods from the trees and get this finished and I will always be grateful to him. It was reassuring to know that there was someone to bring me back to reality and inject any situation with ridiculous humour.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their unfaltering support over the last few years. From Kildare, Jennifer, Denis, Aisling, Michelle, Lisa, Kim, Gareth, Lauren and Laura. From Maynooth, Rachael, Áine and Siobhán. My biggest thanks of course must go to my family, my brothers Nigel and John-Paul and in laws Orlaith and David. More importantly, the biggest thanks must go to my parents, Pat and Helena, who have been unwavering and steadfast in their support over the past eight years of being a student. I am also particularly grateful that they managed (for the most part) to sequester their fret and anxiety over when I would get a real job away from me. For that I will always be thankful, but not as thankful as having the reassurance that they would always be there for me, no matter how bad things got or

whatever happened along the difficult road of postgraduate research. This goes to them.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

IGRM	Irish Gay Right Movement
NGF	National Gay Federation
LIL	Liberation for Irish Lesbians
GLEN	Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
GHA	Gay Health Action
CGC	Cork Gay Collective
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
GLF	Gay Liberation Front
TAM	Television Audience Measurement
LLS	The Late Late Show
WTF	Working Title Films
IPU	Independent Production Unit
IQA	Irish Queer Archive
NLI	National Library of Ireland
LOT	Lesbians Organising Together
WERRC	Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre
PSB	Public Service Broadcaster
PWA	Person Living with AIDS
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association

Introduction

"Did They Really Notice Us?"

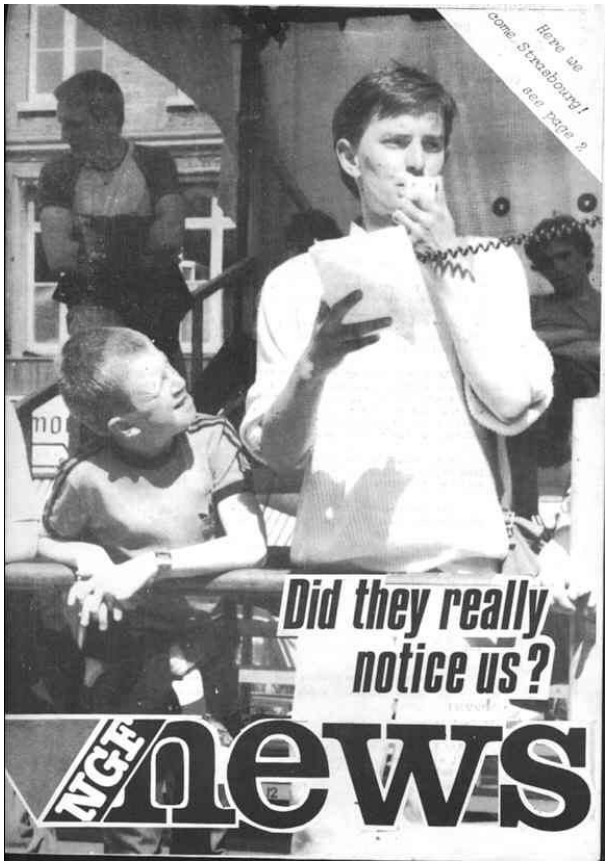

Figure 0.1: NGF News Cover following Dublin Pride, 1984

Source: *NGF News*, Vol. 3, Nr. 4, July/August 1984

In September 1982, Declan Flynn, a young gay man, was 'queer bashed' to death in Fairview Park in Dublin by a group of five young men. The murder took place during a period where violence against the gay community had become a recurring issue that culminated in a series of queer bashing incidents in Fairview Park. Following the murder of Flynn, the five young men responsible received suspended sentences from Judge Seán Gannon, as he declared that Flynn's death 'could never be regarded as murder'.[1]

[1] "Sentences on Park Killers Suspended" (*The Irish Press*, 9 March 1983).

The outcome of this case ignited public outrage within Ireland's queer community, prompting the 'Stop Violence Against Gays and Women' March, held on the 19 March 1983. This was the first major public and visible demonstration of gay rights in Ireland, considered a 'pivotal and galvanising moment' for the Irish LGBT community by Ed Madden.[2] Declan Flynn's murder has become a touchstone in queer Irish history and has been referred to as Ireland's Stonewall, a moment when the gay community not only began to claim a visible presence in the media and the public sphere, but also began to talk back to the state, be it through public protest or through the media. Following Flynn's murder, Ireland's Pride movement, which had been relatively sparse and small in size up until that point, became more organised, militant and public. The first Gay Pride march was organised for Gay Pride Week of 1983, only four months after the mass protest of Judge Gannon's decision, and over two hundred people participated. This march became the first of its kind and according to Tonie Walsh, it 'set in motion a tradition of Pride parades we are so familiar with today'.[3] The Pride march became an important means of generating visibility for Ireland's queer community, with Pride providing a way of publicly celebrating individual and collective identity and more importantly, participating in the public sphere, an arena that had eluded Ireland's queer community in the past.

The 1984 Gay Pride march continued the momentum generated by the 1983 events. A demonstration was held outside of the General Post Office, where members of the community and the centralised main activist body, the National Gay Federation, spoke about the laws still in place criminalising homosexuality, along with the spate of violence against gays and lesbians that still continued following Flynn's murder. Two such incidents occurred during the 1984 Pride March, when activists Cathal Kerrigan and Joan McCarthy were attacked during the march and demonstration, and subsequently received unsympathetic treatment from the Gardaí who seemed to think the whole thing was 'a joke'.[4] In the wake of another annual Pride parade, the then president of the NGF Tonie Walsh lamented that Pride received 'zilch coverage in any of the media afterwards'. This stunted the goal of Pride, which as Walsh notes was 'to become highly visible'.[5] This prompted NGF's primary queer publication, *NGF News*,

[2] Ed Madden, 'Queering Ireland, In the Archives'. *Irish University Review*, 43.1 (2013): 184-221.
[3] Tonie Walsh, "LGBT Landmark Moments in Ireland" (*Thejournal.ie*, June 22 2016).
[4] Bill Foley, "Violence Against Gays" (*NGF News*, Vol. 3, Nr. 4, July/August 1984).
[5] Interview with Tonie Walsh, July 22-23, 2016.

to question the role of Pride and its significance to the Irish gay civil rights movement, raising the simple question on the cover of the July/August issue: "Did they really notice us?", accompanied by a picture of NGF president Tonie Walsh, speaking from the demonstration stand on O'Connell Street as a child looks up at him.[6]

The reason why I introduce this thesis with the murder of Declan Flynn and the subsequent development of Ireland's Gay Pride movement is threefold. For one, Pride parades themselves facilitate active participation within the public sphere in an attempt to generate visibility and social recognition. Secondly, Pride parades also offer an opportunity to control the narrative of collective identity by encouraging a community solidarity, attempting to transform meanings behind stigmatised identities by challenging dominant narrative stereotypes. Most significantly, Pride is symptomatic of the means and strategies by which Ireland's gay community, and gay communities internationally, have sought public recognition, particularly from the media.

The question, "Did they really notice us?" posed by the NGF in their newsletter brings together numerous components that form the basis of this dissertation and its central argument, that the story of gay Irish visibility is not simply one of progress from oppression to liberation. Rather, the story of gay Irish visibility is one of nuance and complexity, an ever-shifting and changing dynamic between queer community activism, the state, and media bodies and institutions – a tug-of-war. In the case of Ireland's sexual minorities, visibility becomes a crucial means of promoting the presence of Ireland's gay community to various audiences, including the public, state, local and global communities. The NGF newsletter cover addresses ideas around this process of recognition and asserting a public gay identity, particularly when trying to obtain visibility and recognition from mainstream society and media institutions. As Walsh noted, not one media outlet in Ireland covered the Pride events, or the march and demonstration. Instead, it was left to the NGF and the Irish gay civil rights movement to use media forms, such as print media, to produce a means of establishing networks within the LGBT community and generating their own alternative media economy. This case of the *NGF Newsletter* not only reflects the complex and changing dynamics of gay Irish visibility, but also how this gay visibility was fostered in a variety of forms over a variety of media, in response to varying factors and influences.

[6] *NGF News*, Dublin. Vol 3, No. 4 (July/August 1984)

Such influence on gay Irish visibility arose from LGBT community activism and politics, the socio-cultural climate of Ireland and the development and growth of media and media institutions in Ireland.

These are the central ideas that underpin much of this thesis and will be explored in several chapters throughout. Queer Irish visibility is caught up in a tug-of-war power dynamic, between Ireland's queer community and media institutions, changing and shifting over the historical period of this research. In fact, visibility was not only a tool used by queer communities and activist groups to progress a political agenda, but rather was also utilised by institutions of power for the purposes of using queer identities to boost audience ratings and create televisual sensationalism. This tug-of-war dynamic defined much of the period of this research and frustrates any attempt to create a convenient, linear historical narrative of the relationship between the media and Ireland's LGBT community. This thesis thus attempts to use this Irish-based case study to complicate and problematise ideas of queer media visibility research.

This dissertation examines the queer visibility and discourses surrounding that visibility as they have unfolded on Irish television and film and alternative activist media between 1974 and 2008. The chapters traverse time periods, media forms and theoretical frameworks to provide an overview of the dynamic of queer Irish media visibility. The thesis pursues connections across current affairs programming, documentary, chat shows, soap opera, television drama, film, magazines and broader print media. These archival and popular materials are examined in the context of broader academic and popular sources. The methodology of this thesis include archival research, textual analysis and semi-structured interviews and the chapters have been organised to represent crucial turning points or moments in the history of queer Irish visibility, such as the formative attempts of procuring gay visibility on the mainstream broadcaster RTÉ, commodifying those identities for the industries' own ends, the response to the AIDS crisis during the 1980s, the incorporation of gay identities into mainstream fictional representations and the configuration of gay Irish visibility as part of a global address.

Although the discourse of queer Irish visibility does not align itself into a neat, linear historical narrative, the historical framework and loose chronological order of the chapters do reveal some overarching developmental patterns during the period in

question. The chapters attempt to identify the connection between queer media images and political change within Ireland's LGBT community. An exploration of queer Irish visibility – over thirty-four years – tracks the development of an Irish gay civil rights movement. Beginning as a small group of activists operating under the threat of criminal prosecution to becoming a more militant, organised and mainstream entity, the thesis explores how the respective development of the varying gay civil rights organisations within Ireland influenced the types of queer media images that manifested in press and on screens. In representational terms, the dissertation also marks a change in the type of visibility conferred on the Irish gay community across the time period. Initially media institutions treated Irish gays in pathological terms and so constricted visibility to news and current affairs programming. The changing, social, cultural, economic and legal context that is identified over the course of the research marks varying transformations of queer visibility, most significantly the transition from current affairs representations to narrativized, fictional representations. Finally, the examination of queer Irish visibility over this period marks a transformation from localised activism and provincially influenced media images to the eventual aspirational attempts to both participate in a global media economy and inflect queer Irish visibility with influences from varying international queer media images and products, specifically from the United States and the United Kingdom. The story of gay Irish visibility thus indicates a determined development from the local to the global.

Queer Media and Irish Studies

The period following the 1969 Stonewall riots – which has since become understood as the birth of the modern gay liberation movement – saw gay men and lesbians openly come out of the closet. As part of this process of becoming publicly visible, gay men and lesbians began to protest the ways that they were being depicted across media forms. As Alfred L. Martin Jr. notes within the US context, the 'early to mid-1970s saw organisations […] trying to pressure networks and studios to rehabilitate the ways gayness was mediated'.[7] Martin goes on to note that following this activist turn, much

[7] Alfred L. Martin Jr, 'Introduction: What is Queer Production Studies/Why is Queer Production Studies?" *Journal of Film and Video*, 70(3-4), 2018.

of the early gay and lesbian media scholarship focused on 'rhetorical analyses of LGBT media images, assessing the semiotic chain that sutured "incorrectly" feminine behaviours to gay men and "butch" behaviours to lesbians'.[8] This approach informed much of the early research within queer media studies and research on queer visibility.

The key role of media for sexual minorities has formed an increasing body of research within the field of Media Studies and what has become the sub-field of Queer Media Studies. Richard Dyer's edited collection *Gays and Film* (1977) was arguably one of the first pieces within the field of queer media studies, with the collection exploring facets that would become widely researched within the discipline, among which included the formation of gay stereotypes on film.[9] Dyer's work tended to focus on textual representations, particularly from a film studies perspective, which was continued in his later works such as *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (1990).[10] The film studies tradition has been where much of the queer media scholarship initially emerged, with Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1981) highlighting the historical contexts that the LGBT community occupied in cinema history, showing the evolution of the entertainment industry's role in shaping perceptions of LGBT lives.[11]

With origins in film studies, queer media studies began to expand into communications studies, with research focusing more on the cultural role of television and other mass media. Edward Alwood's *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians and the News Media* (1996), explored the processes by which the US gay community were represented within news stories.[12] Stephen Tropiano's *The Prime Time Closet: A History of Gays and Lesbian on TV* (2002) provided a historical survey of how gays and lesbians were represented on US television.[13] Larry Gross' 1991 essay "Out of the Mainstream: Sexual Minorities and the Mass Media" similarly addressed the minority perspective of gays and lesbians in the context of the study of mass media content and

[8] Martin, p. 3.
[9] Richard Dyer, *Gays and Film* (British Film Institute: London, 1977)
[10] Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (London: Routledge, 1990).
[11] Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).
[12] Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
[13] Stephen Tropiano, *The Prime Time Closet: A History of Gays and Lesbian on TV* (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2002).

effects.[14] From the 1990s onwards, the increased representation of gays and lesbians in the media led to further growth in academic studies on the topic, which began itself to become rather mainstream within Media Studies in 2000s.[15] This was in keeping with the normalization of queer studies in academic writing and popular culture more generally. Most of the work continued to analyse representations, focusing less on negative versus positive representations and more on their heteronormativity.[16] Gradually, however, some authors started to explore how LGBT audiences read and used media in the process of developing various gender and sexual identifications.[17] In this respect, Alexander Doty's *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (1993) explores the development of queerness in mass culture, specifically in relation to influences on the production of texts along with adopting queer reception positions.[18] This area of scholarly research also relates to audiences as meaning makers, and much research has looked towards how queer subcultures reclaim media (or style) and make it their own. The development of scholarly interest and criticism in New Queer Cinema has been one such example.[19] Other research has also begun to go beyond textual analysis and question the role and queerness of the medium in shaping queer identities, such as Glyn Davis and Gary Needham's *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics* (2008), which included essays on the production, consumption and reception of television, as well as its textual and aesthetic dimensions.[20] Amy Villarejo similarly calls for an extension of queer media studies

[14] Larry Gross, 'Out of the Mainstream: Sexual Minorities and the Mass Media', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 21:1-2, 19-46, 1991.
[15] See Kevin G. Barnhurst, *Media/Queered: Visibility and its Discontents* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); C. Lee Harrington, 'Homosexuality on *All My Children*: Transforming the Daytime Landscape, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47:2, 216-235.
[16] Guillermo Avila-Saavedra, 'Nothing Queer About Queer Television: Televised Construction of Gay Masculinities', *Media, Culture & Society* 31(1): 5-21; Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow, 'Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces: Will and Grace and the Situation Comedy Genre', *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* 19(1), 2002; Fred Fejes, 'Making a Gay Masculinity', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17(1), 2000.
[17] Susan Driver, *Queer Girls and Popular Culture: Reading, Resisting and Creating Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Beth D. Kivel and Douglas A. Kleiber, 'Leisure in the Identity Formation of Lesbian/Gay You: Personal but Not Social', *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 22(4), 2000.
[18] Alexander Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1993.
[19] Michele Aaron (ed.), *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Maria Pramaggiore, 'Fishing for Girls: Romancing Lesbians in New Queer Cinema', *College Literature*, 24(1), 1997: pp. 59-75; B. Ruby Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013).
[20] Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, *Queer TV: Theories, Histories and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2008).

beyond representation in *Ethereal Queer* (2014), when she suggests that queer stereotypes are the units of time in which television transmits ideas about identity and desire and argues that queer television criticism should look towards production practices, circulation and funding.[21]

Considerations of queer visibility have also formed the basis of much Queer Media Studies research. In 2001, Gross published the seminal work, *Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Media in America*, in which he addressed the key importance of media in creating visibility for gay and lesbian communities.[22] Gross' study marked a turn in Queer Media Studies towards discussion of visibility, continuing with Suzanna Walters' *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America*, where she argues that 'visibility is, of course, necessary for equality. It is part of the trajectory of any movement for inclusion and social change'.[23] Rosemary Hennessy similarly discusses queer visibility in her book *Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture*, arguing that visibility can both 'prepare the ground for gay civil rights protection' and 'empower those of us who have lived most of our lives with no validation at all from the dominant culture'.[24] Melanie Kohnen's *Queer Representation, Visibility and Race in American Film and Television* (2015) further complicates ideas of queer visibility by tracing its crucial historical turning points, arguing that previous definitions of queer visibility have been far too limiting and structured around the embodiment of progressive LGBT media representations.[25] Within the British context, Natalie Edwards' Ph.D thesis examined queer visibility on British terrestrial television, arguing that the increase in queer visibility during the period from 1997-2007 correlated with a liberalisation in UK social policy, wrought by the election of Tony Blair's Labour government in 1997.[26]

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[21] Amy Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013).
[22] Larry Gross, *Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Media in America* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2001).
[23] Suzanna Danuta Walters, *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 13.
[24] Rosemary Hennessy, 'Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture'. *Cultural Critique*, No. 29, p. 31.
[25] Melanie Kohnen, *Queer Representation, Visibility and Race in American Film and Television* (London: Routledge, 2015),
[26] Natalie Edwards, 'Queer British Television: Policy and Practice, 1997-2007' (PhD Thesis: University of Nottingham, 2010).

A brief review of the literature reveals a strong focus on queer media studies within the US and to a lesser extent, other Western countries such as the UK. This is similarly noted by Alexander Dhoest, Lukasz Szulc and Bart Eeckhout in their timely edited collection *LGBTQs, Media and Culture in Europe* (2016).[27] As the authors note, there has been some recent important studies on the uses and the roles of media for LGBT individuals in other parts of the world, but the field strongly gravitates towards North America. Much of the European context is absent from the picture. There has been some recent research beginning to redress the paucity of queer media research in Europe, particularly within national contexts. Lukasz Szulc's *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland: Cross-Border Flow in Gay and Lesbian Magazines* (2017) traces the history of the first Polish gay and lesbian magazines, which details the emergence of a homosexual movement through these magazines along with the globalisation of LGBT identities.[28] Andrew DJ Shield's *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution: Perceptions and Participation in Northwest Europe* (2017) uses multilingual newspapers to demonstrate how immigrants in the Netherlands and Denmark held a variety of viewpoints about European gender and sexual cultures.[29]

Much like these recent studies, this dissertation explicitly aims to contribute insights from an Irish perspective to the literature on LGBT media representations, queer visibility and queer media economies, going against the implicit universalism in this literature and adding, through this nationally-based case study, localised forms of knowledge which are anchored in a specifically Irish cultural and historical context. The dissertation will explore a variety of connections between the Irish LGBT community and the media, ranging from the Irish LGBT community being the objects of representation, to their consumption and creation of media content. A wide range of media is discussed, primarily television, film and press, all building an argument and understanding of the connection between media, culture and sexuality within an Irish context.

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[27] Alexander Dhoest, Lukasz Szulc and Bart Eeckhout (eds.) *LGBTQs, Media and Culture in Europe: Situated Case Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016).
[28] Lukasz, Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland: Cross-Border Flow in Gay and Lesbian Magazines*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
[29] Andrew DJ. Shield, *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution: Perceptions and Participation in Northwest Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Similarly to the early beginnings of queer media studies in the US, much of the discussion around sexuality and queerness in Irish academia is embedded within film studies. This has been predominantly through journal articles and book chapters in edited collections.[30] More recently, the publication of Allison Macleod's monograph *Irish Queer Cinema* (2018) offered a focused examination of queer identities within Irish national cinema, interrogating the relationship between on screen visibility and sexual politics.[31] This thesis will hopefully extend the scope of queer media studies in Ireland beyond cinema and open up television and print media as avenues for exploring queer representation, visibility, modes of production and reception practices.

This dissertation not only intends to contribute a localised, Irish specific study of queer media visibility, but also extend the discussion of queer media, visibility and representation within Irish media and sexuality studies. Explorations of the cultural production of sexuality in Ireland have centred around fiction, theatre and poetry. A significant amount of queer academic work has been carried out in these fields over the past number of years. Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis' book *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* (1997) marked the development of sexuality and queer studies within the field of Irish Studies, exploring ideas of gender and sexuality within the context of Irishness, primarily in fiction, poetry, drama and history.[32] Similarly, the publication of special issues of *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies: Queering Ireland* (2010) and the *Irish University Review: Queering the Issue* (2013) signalled the depth of work happening within literary and cultural studies, but had a noteworthy lack of any contributions from Media Studies.[33] Much of the queer scholarship within Ireland has tended to focus on the literary and historical aspects of Irish Studies. Notions of queerness and Irishness are interrogated by Kathryn Conrad, Ed Madden and Joseph Valente, where they respectively explore the interactions and

[30] Allison Macleod, 'Compartmentalized Cosmopolitans: Constructions of Urban Space in Queer Irish Cinema', in Conn Holohan and Tony Tracy (eds.) *Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger's Tales* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2014); Fintan Walsh, 'Mourning Sex: The Aesthetics of Queer Relationality in Contemporary Film', in Claire Bracken and Emma Radley (eds.), *Viewpoints: Theoretical Perspectives on Irish Visual Texts* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2013).

[31] Allison Macleod, *Irish Queer Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

[32] Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

[33] 'Queering Ireland', Special Issue of *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 36(1), 2010: pp. 17-223; 'Queering the Issue', Special Issue of *The Irish University Review*, 43(1), 2013: pp. 1-221.

intersections between Irishness and queerness.[34] Much research within Irish Studies also pertains to key figures within queer Irish history, in particular Oscar Wilde and Roger Casement. Éibhear Walshe's book, *Oscar's Shadow: Wilde, Homosexuality and Modern Ireland* (2011) uses the figure of Wilde to explore Irish perceptions of sexuality, specifically within a legal and cultural context.[35] Brian Lewis and Patrick Mullen have similarly explored how Casement has become venerated as a queer cultural figure within Irish Studies.[36]

Irish queer scholarship has also focused on the history of homosexuality in Ireland and the history of the Irish gay civil rights movement. Brian Lacey's *Terrible Queer Creatures: A History of Homosexuality in Ireland* (2015), attempts to provide an overview of the place of homosexuality in Irish history from some of the earliest written records to the late twentieth century.[37] Kieran Rose's *Diverse Communities: The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland* (1994) examines and analyses the social movements and activism within the Irish LGBT community, particularly in light of the campaigns leading up to the 1993 decriminalisation of homosexuality.[38] Patrick James McDonagh and Maurice J. Casey have recently looked towards diversifying the historical record by looking beyond the campaign for decriminalisation, instead investigating radical politics and local activism.[39] Lesbian histories have generally tended to become incorporated into these historical accounts but also within feminist histories, such as Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole's chapter on lesbian activism in *Documenting Irish Feminisms: The Second Wave* (2005).[40]

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[34] Kathryn Conrad, 'Queer Treasons: Homosexuality and Irish National Identity', *Cultural Studies*, 15(1), 2001: pp. 124-137; Ed Madden, 'Get Your Kit On: Gender, Sexuality and Gay Rugby in Ireland', *Éire-Ireland*, 48(1&2), 2013: pp. 246-281; Joseph Valente, 'Self-Queering Ireland', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 36(1), 2010: pp. 25-43.

[35] Éibhear Walshe's, *Oscar's Shadow: Wilde, Homosexuality and Modern Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011).

[36] Brian Lewis, 'The Queer Life and Afterlife of Roger Casement', *Journal of the History of Homosexuality*, 14(4), 2005: pp. 363-382; Patrick R. Mullen, *The Poor Bugger's Tool: Irish Modernism, Queer Labor, and Postcolonial History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[37] Brian Lacey, *Terrible Queer Creatures: A History of Homosexuality in Ireland* (Dublin: Wordwell, 2015).

[38] Kieran Rose, *Diverse Communities: The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland* (Cork, Cork University Press, 1994).

[39] Patrick James McDonagh, '"Homosexuals Are Revolting" – Gay & Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1970s – 1990s', *Studi irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 7, 2017: pp. 65-91; Maurice J. Casey, 'Radical Politics and Gay Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1974-1990', *Irish Studies Review*, 26(2), 2018: pp. 217-236.

[40] Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminisms: The Second Wave* (Dublin: Woodfield Press, 2005).

Orla Egan's book *Queer Republic of Cork* (2016) similarly attempts to diversify the historical record of queer Irish history by providing a locally situated history of LGBT activism and socialisation in Cork, from the 1970s to the 2000s.[41]

Que(e)rying Irish Media Visibility

At this point, it is important to establish how queer, gay and lesbian will be deployed in this thesis. Throughout, I use the term queer to refer to all those identities that fall onto a spectrum of sexual variance from the heterosexual norm. Originally used as a marker of oddness and then later adopted as a pejorative term for gay men, queer has been 'reclaimed in recent decades with anger and Pride to signal an activists insurgence against homophobia and other forms of oppression, especially those related to gender and sexuality'.[42] 'Queerness' often operates as an all-encompassing framework and term for sexual identities outside of heteronormativity. It has also become intrinsically linked, as Giffney argues, 'to a fundamental questioning and challenging of normative assumptions around desire, actions, feelings, subjectivities, norms, identities and ethics'.[43] While the various primary media texts use gay, lesbian or homosexual to refer to all such identities, queer is partly encoded with a history of self-conscious resistance, and in my use of it, I hope to draw attention to the limitations of using 'gay' or 'lesbian', terms which, when used on various occasions in these media texts, are not exactly representative of queer lives more generally. For the most part, gay and lesbian are the terms used in this thesis, as that is how the individuals within the texts, archival sources and semi-structured interviews identify. None of these terms presuppose the existence of a clear group or identity, but they refer to some widely used discourses and categorisations, most dominant in this thesis being lesbian, gay, LGBT (as the most commonly used term for sexual and gender minorities) and queer. Furthermore, we can also discern queerness, I propose, in aesthetic enactments in the media that gesture towards innovative ways of imagining queer subjectivity through the media form itself.

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[41] Orla Egan, *Queer Republic of Cork: Cork's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities, 1970s-1990s*, Pompano Beach, Florida: Onstream Publishers, 2016.
[42] Noreen Giffney, 'Introduction: The 'q' Word' in Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*. (Burlington and Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 2.
[43] Ibid.

In establishing how these terms are set up and deployed throughout the thesis, it should be noted that the project is dominated by gay male material. This is not by design, but is rather more reflective of the content of the archival material and the structures of the Irish gay civil rights movement. The movement and its various forms, for the most part since its foundation in 1974, has been dominated by men in terms of the administration, leadership and public visibility. Key organisations such as the IGRM, NGF and GLEN had boards that were predominantly male. Subsequently, these structures became reflected in the gay male visibility that proliferated in the media. Secondly, this male dominance can be attributed to the fact that the criminal laws in place pertaining to homosexuality were specific to gay male sex acts. Subsequently, much of the media visibility discussed throughout pertains to the decriminalisation campaign, an issue that exclusively encompassed gay men. This very issue controlled the terms of debate and visibility for the first number of years discussed in this thesis. Queer visibility in terms of fictional representations are entirely centred around gay men. Popular mainstream shows indicated interest in the gay male experience only, with lesbian visibility lagging significantly behind in terms of fictional representations. The archival material further reflects a gay male dominance, both in the RTÉ Archives and the Irish Queer Archives (IQA) in the National Library of Ireland. Lesbian visibility is present in both archives, but not as dominant. In particular, the IQA holds specific collections pertaining to lesbian organisations, such as Lesbians Organising Together (LOT) and the Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre (WERRC). The materials in these respective collections contains very littler pertaining specifically to that of lesbian media activism or broader media press in general. Lesbian archival material is therefore lacking and scant. The Cork LGBT Archive has begun to restore this history by beginning to compile various lesbian specific collections pertaining to lesbian activism in Cork, but much still remains omitted from the archives.

The case studies selected for examination in this thesis are accordingly dominated by mostly gay men, partly lesbians and to some extent queers. The queer cases arise in the latter chapters, specifically around fictionalised representations where characters are specifically marked as queer and their gay sexualities are never conveyed or explicitly disclosed, mainly on the sitcom *Upwardly Mobile* (Chapter 5) and the TV series *Proof* (Chapter 6)

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach of this dissertation has been grounded in historiographical research, as it attempts to systematically recapture the complex history of queer Irish media visibility. Based on archival research and the gathering of primary media texts, this dissertation has focused on the construction and circulation of gay Irish cultural identity within the specific context of the Irish media and the broader historical and cultural context. The thesis has been researched with a particular weight on the representational strategies and modes of visibility within the archival and popular materials gathered, which can therefore be read in terms of their production and consumption within the wider circulation of other interconnected texts and practices. Accordingly, the methodology also involves textual analysis of archival and popular materials, that is situated within the broader social and political context in which they were produced.

Researching this topic revealed at an early stage that textual analysis could reveal very little about the modes of production and the processes of reception relating to queer media visibility. Accordingly, this project became interested in the processes that led to the production and circulation of particular types of queerness on screen. As a result, this thesis throughout goes beyond archival and textual research and incorporates practices from the growing sub-field of Queer Media Studies known as Queer Production Studies. Queer production studies is a relatively new field that derives from the broader discipline of production studies. Key theorists Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks and John Caldwell define production studies as

> the lived realities of people involved in media production as the subjects for theorizing production as culture. Production studies gather empirical data about production: the complexity of routines and rituals, the routines of seemingly complex processes, the economic and political forces that shape roles, technologies, and the distribution of resources according to cultural and demographic differences […] Articulated from various disciplines […] production studies privileges but also interrogate research methodologies that

> place the researcher in dialogue with subjects usually charged with representing us.[44]

Caldwell's *Production Culture*, one of the seminal texts of production studies, investigates the cultural practices and belief systems of Los-Angeles-based film and video production workers, including what he refers to as "below-the-line" labourers, such as camera operators and editors. This research examines the narratives and rituals through which workers make sense of their labour and methodologically, draws on interviews, ethnographic observations and analyses of industry documents and promotional materials.[45] Mark Deuze in his study on media work in the age of media convergence, examines how media workers and the nature of media work is transforming in light social, economic and technological developments.[46] Despite this large body of research, key texts within production studies have not necessarily addressed sexuality as a dimension of production or media work. Miranda Banks and Mark Deuze acknowledge gender disparities within their work, but make no mention of sexuality as a further potential dimension in screen production.

There are some exceptions that have begun to promulgate the sub-field of queer production studies. One such case is Candace Moore's interrogation of peripheral sites of production in the TV series, *The L Word*, where 'queer female consumers become incorporated into the production process'.[47] Moore examines how *The L Word*'s collaborative viewing events blur the boundaries between producer and consumer. In relation to casting, Mayer addresses how the many amongst the male minority working in casting self-identify as gay and draw on 'cultural scripts that reinforced the tight correspondence between the feminised discourses of emotional labour and casting'.[48] This burgeoning development of a sub-field termed queer production studies was marked by the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of Film and Video*, titled Queer Production Studies. One of the key aims of this special issue was to 'help

[44] Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks and John Caldwell, *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.4.
[45] John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film/Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
[46] Mark Deuze, *Media Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
[47] Candace Moore, 'Liminal Places and Spaces: Public/Private Considerations', in Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks and John Caldwell (eds.) *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 136.
[48] Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 132.

illuminate the relationship(s) between the proliferation of LGBTQ media and the ways such media are produced', along with positioning queer production studies as an offshoot of broader production studies.[49]

For the purpose of this thesis, queer production studies offers modes of examining the ways LGBT activists use media as a counterpublic, the campaigning and lobbying performed by varying Irish gay rights groups in obtaining visibility, and the utility of paratexts in shaping queer visibility. Although production studies as a field has been concerned with media labour, work cultures, casting and crew-makeup, this thesis fosters production studies methodologies for the purpose of uncovering the processes of decision-making around representation and gay visibility over the course of this thesis. This encompasses decision-making by stakeholders within broadcasters, production units, independent producers or activists within the Irish gay civil rights movement. In order to capture this activity, the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews with political activists, media participants and industry professionals was included. This methodological approach helps to illuminate the relationship between the proliferation of queer visibility and alternative queer media and the processes by which such media are produced. These activist and industry interviews are incorporated into Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 to examine the structures and processes that led to the emergence of queer visibility within the Irish media. Queer Production Studies is as much concerned with the processes of queer authorship as it is with broadcasters and their interaction with queerness and queer content, borrowing, as Hollis Griffin and Alfred L. Martin Jr. have noted, from methodologies within Feminist Media Studies.[50] Alongside these semi-structured interviews, this research brings together a diverse range of sources to provide further context to the specific textual and media examples, such as memoirs and promotional material to consider the broader circumstances surrounding the production of queer Irish media visibility.

The original historical scope of this research was 1974-2014. 1974 was formally designated as the starting point of this research, given that the Irish Gay Rights Movement (IGRM) was founded in that year and actively began to engage with the Irish media, demanding visibility. There are some scant examples prior to 1974 of

[49] Alfred Martin Jr, 'Queer Production Studies', *Journal of Film and Video*, 70(3-4).
[50] Martin Jr, *Journal of Film and Video*, 70(3-4), 2018; Hollis Griffin, 'Queer Media Studies', *Feminist Media Studies*, 4(2), 2018: pp. 167-172.

queer media visibility, with this predominantly being found in print media as features in Dublin consumer titles like *Creation Scene*. In 1967, *Creation Scene* included an article anonymously written by a twenty-seven year old gay man, an early article that illuminated many of Irish society's prevailing attitudes and prejudices toward homosexuality.[51] 1974 specifically marks a turn in media visibility towards screen media such as television and later film. Prior to 1974, television was coming into its own as a mass medium in Ireland, as a 1973 Annual Television Report from RTÉ noted that 77% of households (542,000) had a television set.[52] Television and film texts form the basis of the primary media sources examined in the thesis. However, print media is incorporated throughout where relevant to these texts, particularly alternative queer media produced to contest and question mainstream representation and visibility around homosexuality. 2014 was originally designated as the endpoint, due to the fact that it brought the research up until the point where Marriage Equality debates were beginning. However, given the nature of archival research, this historical framework recalibrated when RTÉ released television dramas, *The Clinic* and *Proof*, produced by independent production companies for the public service broadcaster in early 2000s. These dramas were released on RTÉ's streaming service, RTÉ Player and contained gay representations that opened up queer Irish visibility to explorations of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. Accordingly, 1974-2008 became the revised parameters of the research, ending just before the financial crash and the Irish banking crisis.

The theoretical and analytical investigations are both queer and media studies frameworks, drawing on concepts used frequently within queer media studies research. These conceptual frameworks include mainstreaming, respectability, homodomesticity, televisual sensationalism, counterpublics, cosmopolitanism and globalism. These concepts are used as a road map to understand the shifting dynamic of queer Irish media visibility over the historical period in question. The study of visibility and representations have been led by prominent queer theorist Eve Kosofksy Sedgwick. Sedgwick's work, which radically introduced the concept of the epistemology of the closet, has become central to discussions of visibility and influential in the broader field of queer theory, providing a key theoretical

[51] Anonymous, "Homosexuality in Ireland" (*Creation Scene*, April 1967)
[52] RTÉ TV50 History, Available at: https://www.rte.ie/tv50/history/1970s.html

consideration to several texts throughout the thesis. Similarly, Michel Foucault's concept of the confessional and surveillance provide opportunities to explore the power dynamics at the crux of many moments of queer Irish media visibility.

Structural Approach

The structure of this thesis is predominantly chronologically driven. Each of the six main chapters considers a textual touchstone in the history of queer Irish visibility and the relationship between Ireland's gay community and the media industry. The first chapter, "'Lavender Flying Columns' and 'Guerrilla Activism': The Politics of Gay Visibility", explores the theoretical context in which queer Irish media visibility is discussed throughout the thesis. Beginning with an analysis of how visibility studies – and in some contexts, queer media visibility studies – has developed, it then moves on to how this fits in with the approach to the definitions of queer visibility within this thesis. The chapter further provides a framework for how the terms gay, lesbian, queer and LGBT are employed throughout the thesis.

The second chapter, "Respectably Gay: Queer Visibility on Broadcast Television (1975-1980)" is a detailed discussion and exploration of the processes by which the early Irish gay civil rights movement devised strategies for achieving visibility within the mainstream Irish media. Focusing specifically on the earliest examples of gay men appearing on current affairs programming, three media texts from the period are analysed: *Last House* (1975), *Tuesday Report* (1977) and *Week In* (1980). Specifically, the chapter argues that early Irish gay visibility was confined to current affairs programming, where gay visibility fostered a political valence as gay individuals sought legal change, public recognition and social acceptance. The core of the chapter argues that media visibility evident within these early examples fostered mainstreaming and confessional modes, which were central political and representational strategies of the Irish gay civil rights movement. Respectability politics further becomes inexorably caught up in these processes of mainstreaming. The exploration of the confessional mode draws from the theoretical framework and concept of Michel Foucault's confessional, which served as a production of knowledge which would tell the 'reality' of sexuality. Both the mainstreaming and the confessional approaches operated together and reinforced each other, working in

tandem towards an affirmative goal of obtaining a queer Irish media visibility that would change social attitudes and progress the political agenda of Ireland's gay civil rights movements.

The third chapter, "Fifty Shades of Gay – Queer Visibility on *The Late Late Show* (1980-1989)" discusses the importance of the talk show format, specifically RTÉ's flagship programme, *The Late Late Show* (*LLS*). This textual example has been singled out as a case study, due to the fact that it incorporated queer visibility centrally onto the show. Further, the *LLS* format and its presenter Gay Byrne provided a reconfiguration of queer media visibility, particularly through televisual sensationalism. Three textual examples of queer visibility have been selected from *LLS* episodes, the first public appearance of a lesbian on Irish television in 1980, the appearance of two American nuns in 1985 and a soapbox debate on homosexuality held in 1989. Sharing the mainstreaming and confessional approaches explored in Chapter One, these broadcasts reveal how queer Irish visibility became caught up in a shifting power dynamic between media institutions and the Irish gay community. The chapter explores how queer Irish visibility was not just exclusively deployed as part of the Irish gay civil rights movement's liberatory agenda, but could also be utilised by media institutions to produce and represent queerness as sensational. Framing gay Irish identities through controversy revealed the economic dynamics affecting queer visibility, as gay Irish identities were used to generate high ratings and maintain *LLS*'s position as Ireland's top-rated programme. The historical and cultural context of the period are also taken into consideration, through an exploration of the culture wars taking place in Ireland during the 1980s, which witnessed an active public mobilised in resistance to queer lives in Ireland.

The fourth chapter, "AIDS and the Disruption of Queer Irish Visibility (1983-1994)" considers how the AIDS epidemic disrupted queer media visibility. Several media examples over the course of this historical period are used to explore how AIDS troubled assumptions about queer Irish visibility. AIDS served to recalibrate queer visibility from the mainstreaming, confessional and economic spheres of influence to a media presence that catered more specifically to the gay community's public health needs. The chapter argues that both current affairs programming on RTÉ and the mainstream Irish press followed the suit of the international media and framed AIDS as a gay disease. Subsequently, the chapter explores how this resulted in a direct

response from the gay community, who began to orientate their activism towards AIDS, becoming authority figures and obtaining media visibility through acquiring such expertise. Using the case study of *OUT* magazine, this chapter also explores how the Irish gay community attempted to rehabilitate the image of gay men as diseased and decaying by developing their own media economies through the development of alternative queer publications, which became a crucial counterpublic that contested mainstream media narratives and held public institutions accountable for their role in proliferating the Irish AIDS crisis. The current of localised activism evident with *OUT* magazine carried over to independent documentary production during the period, as the chapter examines how two texts, Alan Gilsenan's *Stories From the Silence* (1987) and Bill Hughes' *Fintan* (1994), provided a provincial, local response to the dominant US/UK central AIDS media circulating within Ireland.

The fifth chapter, "Coitus Interruptus – Queer Visibility on the Sitcom and Soap Opera (1995-1998)" marks a significant transformation for queer Irish visibility due to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland in 1993. This chapter notes how the cultural touchstone of decriminalisation finally led to the transition of queer visibility from current affairs to fictional representation. Transitioning from community-led-activism to becoming incorporated within the broader structures of Irish television, specifically the sitcom and the soap opera, queer Irish visibility during the 1990s began to map a new sexual landscape that was beginning to emerge in Ireland. Using the sitcom *Upwardly Mobile* (1995-1998) and soap opera *Fair City* (1989-), this chapter will contend that queer Irish visibility on these programs revealed the anxieties surrounding the depiction of queer characters on Irish television. Despite an obvious nod to decriminalisation through these fictional representations, queer visibility was ambivalent and conservative, in part due to the genre conventions of both the sitcom and soap opera. Using Alexander Doty's theorisation of queer reception, this chapter will further argue how both of these texts deployed subtle extra-textual knowledge that spoke to queer audience and queer cultures. By using Doty, the chapter indicates the more implicit mechanisms by which queer visibility was articulated, specifically during this post-decriminalisation moment.

The sixth and final chapter, "Queer Visibility, Globalism and the Celtic Tiger (1999-2007)", follows on from the previous chapter where LGBT identities had become incorporated into fictional representations and became more mainstream. The Celtic

Tiger era marked an evolution for queer Irish visibility, where LGBT identities not only became more frequent on Irish screens, but reflected a process of becoming more international. These globalizing forces resulted in a positive configuration of queer media visibility in order to project an image of Ireland that was progressive and modern, with a new sexual landscape. Globalisation is also considered in terms of the industrial context and how the new economic landscape influenced the production of gay identities on screen. Two television dramas, *Proof* (2004-2005) and *The Clinic* (2003-2009) are explored and the chapter argues that these texts embraced and conferred queer Irish media visibility within an international, cosmopolitan vision of sexual expression, utilising queerness as part of an international, cosmopolitan address. This reflected international trends in queer media visibility and representation. In particular, the chapter will argue that these texts interact with international gay identities that were forming during the period in television, borrowing tropes and conventions from international texts, primarily from the US. Although the chapter argues that queer media visibility during the Celtic Tiger has become a triumph of global capitalism rather than a movement of social and sexual resistance – as seen with the earlier chapters – the television dramas provided a space for queer media visibility to critique the new economic and sexual landscape that proliferated as a result of the Celtic Tiger.

Chapter One

'Lavender Flying Columns' and 'Guerrilla Activism': The Politics of Gay Visibility

Introduction

Reeling in the Years is a television series broadcast on RTÉ. Each episode, running for about twenty-five minutes, reviews the events of a particular selected year from 1962 to 2009. The programme makes extensive use of RTÉ's archival footage of visual material, along with using subtitles as the means of narration, to recount important national and international events of the particular year in question. A 2008 poll conducted by the *RTÉ Guide* of Ireland's top 100 television programmes resulted in *Reeling in the Years* being voted 'most popular home-produced TV programme ever'.[53] As a result of this accolade, *Reeling in the Years* might be a suitable site and starting point from which to examine and historically situate instances of gay visibility in Irish broadcast media.

Out of 47 editions of the show, there are only three instances of gay visibility: they depict the ECHR ruling in favour of David Norris' case to decriminalise male homosexual acts, the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, and the first gay kiss on Irish television in soap opera *Fair City*. The show would suggest that RTÉ's archives are thus lacking material related to Ireland's LGBT community. However, an excavation of RTÉ's archives reveals that there is a larger body of substantial material pertaining to Ireland's LGBT community than *Reeling in the Years* implies. The reason why I am referencing *Reeling in the Years* is that the omission of these particular moments of visibility would suggest that they are not considered a part of Ireland's and RTÉ's historical narrative. This lack of recognition raises some central questions around gay and queer visibility in the Irish media; when is visibility conferred to the LGBT community? Under what conditions? Over what types of media?

[53] *RTÉ Guide*, 9th October 2008.

The relationship between visibility and sexuality has been a central concern of sexuality researchers and scholars interested in understanding the formation of LGBT identities and culture. With the foundation of what has become referred to as 'gay liberation', discourses about homosexuality have emphasised the significance of visibility.[54] A presence within the media has become a key goal of various gay, lesbian and queer groups, as media representations have the potential to reach society at large. Barnhurst and Gross both argue that due to the fact that heterosexuality is the accepted norm within heteronormative society, lesbians and gay men seeing themselves in the media accordingly has huge value.

The lesbian and gay movement in Ireland, following on from the liberation movement in the US and the UK, gained momentum in the early 1970s, a period when mass media such as film, and since 1962 with the establishment of Telefís Éirean, television, were key sources of representation. Meanwhile, as Ireland's media landscape began to develop significantly with the advent of a television service, in the US the Stonewall Riots occurred at the end of the decade in 1969. The Stonewall riots proved to be an important cultural moment that led to the gay liberation movement and also proved to be a pivotal moment of visibility for the LGBT community. Melanie Kohnen argues that 'the raid and the protests at the Stonewall Inn have become recognised as both the origin of queer visibility in the popular imagination and perhaps the most visible event of gay and lesbian history'.[55] Stonewall was not only a significant event in that it ignited queer visibility within a US context, but it also promoted the growth of gay liberation movements internationally, particularly in Ireland.

Visibility as Social Recognition

Achieving visibility was recognised as an important strategy for the gay Irish civil rights movement. Even in their own publications, Ireland's gay press considered how they were being perceived by mainstream media as important and thus required critique and challenge. *OUT* magazine contained a column in every issue by David

[54] Kevin Barnhurst, 'Visibility as Paradox: Representation and Simultaneous Contrast' in Kevin G. Barnhurst (ed.), *Media Queered: Visibility and its Discontents* (New York: Peter Lang), pp. 1-20, Larry Gross, *Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Media in America* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2001).
[55] Kohnen, 2015, p. 31.

Norris, entitled 'It Must be True, it Was All in the Papers', where Norris would search national and local newspapers for any references to gay issues and critique this in the column. Similarly, *GCN* had a 'Mediawatch' feature that kept abreast of newspaper articles, along with television news reports and representations. This was very much like the UK magazine *Gay Times*'s 'Media Watch' section. Visibility was thus clearly important to the gay liberation movement in Ireland, with it often being considered for its liberatory potential.

As Phillip M. Ayoub argues, it is the 'process of "coming out" that leads to the socio-political recognition of rights that alters the situation of such groups'.[56] What is more important for the study of visibility in this thesis is that it facilitates the 'construction of politically salient identity markers and can inspire marginalised people to create networks of trust and solidarity that lead to mobilisation'[57]. Ayoub helpfully formulates visibility into two components: interpersonal visibility and public visibility. The former 'brings individuals into interaction with people identifying as LGBT…It is about members of the group seeing each other and being seen by segments of their other communities'.[58] As this thesis will highlight, particularly in Chapters Two and Three, queer visibility was mediated to ensure consciousness-raising and coming out and being seen, letting Irish LGBT people realise that there was a burgeoning queer community out there. Furthermore, the visibility in these instances worked towards demystifying homosexuality for the Irish audience watching.

At an AGM for the NGF on 18 September 1982, just nine days after the brutal murder of Declan Flynn, David Norris argued that the Irish civil gay rights movement as it were, needed to form what he referred to as 'lavender flying columns'. By this, Norris intended for the gay rights movement to 'fill the airwaves' and influence professional groups to counteract the claims of 'these crypto-fascist groups in Ireland who have always claimed that the decriminalisation of homosexual acts is the thin end of the wedge'.[59] It is clear then that visibility was an integral goal of most gay movements

[56] Phillip M. Ayoub, *When States Comes Out: Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 4.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ayoub, p. 23.
[59] NLI, IQA, Box 228, NLGF, 'Report of Political Co-ordinator David Norris to the Third Annual General Meeting of the National Gay Federation (NGF), Liberty Hall Dublin', 18 September 1982.

within Ireland. Norris' comments at the NGF AGM were fuelled by the anger within the gay community at the murder of an individual because of their queer sexuality. Arguably then, the murder of Declan Flynn promoted a new way for the Irish gay community to engage with the media landscape.

Although visibility is often equated with a liberatory politics, and often justifiably so, it is still pertinent to question the role of this visibility for Ireland's gay community, and investigate whether this visibility was entirely for a political progression of rights. If one is to examine visibility in terms of queer theory, then its role in the appearances of gay people in the Irish media becomes all the more complex. This chapter aims to argue that visibility is not simply a signal of liberation and progress. Although it is quite valid to conclude that most of the early broadcasts (1974-1985) were concerned with this liberatory project, the story of queer Irish visibility cannot be confined to this linear progressive narrative. This chapter will illuminate the various approaches to queer Irish visibility – in the media, prompted by activists, curated by broadcasters – which in some cases was often subject to a disciplinary and regulatory regime, often limiting and sometimes obscuring gay lives.

Theorising Queer Visibility

In *All the Rage*, Suzanna Walters argues that 'visibility is, of course, necessary for equality. It is part of the trajectory of any movement for inclusion and social change'.[60] Rosemary Hennessy states in *Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture* that visibility can both 'prepare the ground for gay civil rights protection' and 'empower those of us who have lived most of our lives with no validation at all from the dominant culture'.[61] Gross develops the common 'visibility = equality' equation further by presenting a detailed, three-pronged argument. Here, Gross asserts that images of queer people in popular culture will proclaim their substantial presence within the population and in so doing, disprove the myth that queer people constitute a tiny, insignificant minority; that images of queer people whose lives are not scandalous will contradict stereotypes that define homosexuality as psychologically and socially deviant; and that visible

[60] Suzanna Danuta Walters, *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 13.
[61] Rosemary Hennessy, 'Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture'. *Cultural Critique*, No. 29, p. 31.

queer people offer role models to young people who suffer emotional disorders because they are unable or unwilling to conform to heteronormative standards.[62] The sources here vary significantly in their outlook to visibility, but all concur that it provides the best means to achieve emancipation from homophobic oppression and queer self-acceptance. Furthermore, most, if not all of these writers, are working within the discourse of queer representation and visibility from a 'positive images' approach.

However, this dichotomy of positive versus negative queer visibility, as Amy Villarejo argues, is problematic, as she critiques the idea that 'it is simply better to have more gay people on TV than fewer'.[63] Villarejo extends this further by arguing that such discourses of visibility do not 'ask enough about the *costs* of such images or likeness, particularly the ways in which conformity to normative representations and image repertoires can have devastating psychic and political consequence'.[64] Even within an Irish context, many of the gay rights activists who put themselves forward into the public sphere through the popular mediums of television and newspapers suffered personal consequences for their visibility, be it in terms of their families or employment situations. Villarejo concludes her chapter by suggesting that queer media studies return to the models 'provided by cultural studies research, whereby readings of individual texts nestle within rigorous and fully elaborated contexts, including material/industrial contexts'.[65] This is the approach that will be taken over the course of this thesis. Although it is important to analyse and discuss the queer visibility represented by the various instances in the Irish media, it is also important to position such a conversation and have it speak to a broader cultural context that will be established through archival material and interviews. These resources provide a depth and further context to the broadcast material, both in terms of the background politics to the various cases of visibility and the reception this received from the

[62] Larry Gross, Out of the Mainstream: Sexual Minorities and the Mass Media. *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 21, No. 1-2.
[63] Amy Villarejo, 'Materiality, Pedagogy and the Limits of Queer Visibility', in George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry (ed.) *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2015), p. 389.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

audience, be it through Television Audience Measurement (TAM) ratings or mobilised protest at the appearance of gay people on television.

Visibility is both the cause and effect of the growing queer presence in Western culture and the battle for this visibility has been primarily waged in the realm of popular culture. Newspapers, film and television constitute the bulk of Ireland's media landscape, and it is important to understand that they have influenced and been influenced by Irish queer movements. As Stuart Hall argues in "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular", 'popular culture is one of the sites where the struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also a stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of contest and resistance'.[66] The notion of struggle is important; just as visibility has the potential to disrupt accepted beliefs and propose new kinds of categories, it is never out of reach of dominant forces, since popular culture is 'partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured'.[67]

A theorisation of queer visibility necessarily draws on the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in particular her seminal queer text *Epistemology of the Closet*. Here, Sedgwick introduces the metaphor of the closet, which she argues is a 'shaping presence' in the lives of gay people, while providing an 'overarching consistency to gay culture and identity'.[68] In particular, she notes how the closet is a governing force in both the public and private realms when she argues: 'the image of coming out regularly interfaces the image of the closet, and its seemingly unambivalent public siting can be counterposed as a salvational epistemologic certainty against the very equivocal privacy afforded by the closet'.[69] The coming out that Sedgwick refers to here is a spatial transition, from a realm of privacy to a public declaration, that is, transitioning from being invisible to visible. However, Sedgwick is keen to note that this transition is not just one simple finite action from one sphere to another, and that coming-out and being visible is an incessant process: 'even at an individual level, there are remarkably few of even the most openly gay people who are not deliberately in the closet with someone personally, or economically or institutionally important to

[66] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "The Popular" in John Storey (ed.) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, Volume 1* (Essex: Pearson, 2006).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (California: University of California Press, 2008), p. 68.
[69] Sedgwick, p. 71

them'.[70] Former Irish President Mary Robinson notes this very issue surrounding queer visibility in her memoir when she refers to a 1993 meeting with the Irish gay and lesbian activist groups:

> It was a particular pleasure to welcome members of the Irish gay and lesbian community to the Áras[71]…We chatted and took tea together and there were short speeches marking the occasion as of deep significance to them…Then I suggested that we go outside…so that photographs could be taken. Immediately there was a nervous reaction from several people who moved back instinctively. It became clear that half of those present (these leaders of the Irish movement) were not "out" to some individuals, be it a family member or perhaps an employer and so did not wish to be photographed with the President in that capacity. This, more than anything that was said, brought home the pain of the group's exclusion and stigma.[72]

Not only does this speak to Sedgwick's closet as a shaping presence governing visibility politics, but it also underpins the argument made by Ayoub, who divided visibility into two components: interpersonal visibility and public visibility. Although these Irish gay rights activists played an important and visible role within the sphere of gay and lesbian politics, this remained only at what Ayoub described as an interpersonal level. They could not risk the consequences of becoming publicly visible beside the head of the Irish State. Queer visibility is a continuous process and at points may only register with particular media audiences. As Kohnen argues, the 'dynamics of the closet are more visible to queer people than to straight people'. Kohnen develops this further and suggests that 'it is more productive to ask which forms of queer expression have existed where, when, and for whom, rather than holding on to a strict distinction between visible and invisible'.[73]

As this chapter has already argued, coming-out and becoming visible is not always a liberating process that feeds into a progressive narrative. The notion of visibility becomes problematised when read through a Foucauldian lens. The work of Foucault on surveillance has unpacked the integral role of visibility in understanding power and

[70] Sedgwick, pp. 67-68.
[71] Home of the Irish President.
[72] Mary Robinson, *Everybody Matters: A Memoir* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), p. 193.
[73] Kohnen, p. 46.

control. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault notes that the use of examination is pervasive and an important element to surveillance. Its capacity to facilitate social control makes the subject visible in order to control him or her.[74] On the one hand, it 'constantly sifts the members of society through a strainer, making them visible in order to evaluate and categorise them according to established criteria'.[75] In this way, the examination distinguishes, divides and ultimately isolates the different members of society. This links back into the Irish media landscape, particularly around its modulation of queer visibility. RTÉ, which is a body of the state, and influenced to a lesser degree by the Catholic Church, in its early attempts, tried to categorise Ireland's gay community in a way that conformed to commonly circulated stereotypes and myths surrounding queer lives. The interviews carried out for this thesis reveal the modes and methods of control by the press and broadcasters to try and subject queer people to particular narratives for entertainment purposes. For example, lesbian activist and queer archivist Orla Egan appeared on *The Late Late Show* in 2006 with her partner Catherine Morley following the birth of their son, Jacob, becoming one of the first gay couples in Ireland to have a child through artificial insemination. Commenting on her appearance, Egan noted that the production team: 'were thinking about it in terms of the traditional adversarial thing that they do on *The Late Late Show* and I just made it really clear that we wouldn't do it'.[76] She went on to state that the team 'had planted somebody to say negative comments' in the studio audience.[77] From this instance, it is clear how *The Late Late Show* team attempted to control the terms of the debate and utilise the visibility of this family to generate not only a heated exchange, but generate good TAM ratings. This lesbian family also had to appear on the show, to be examined, scrutinised and categorised according to the established criteria of an Irish family. Foucault also argued that in order to succeed in passing the examination, individuals are required to appropriate an already determined field of knowledge and behaviour, which both Orla and Catherine had to do in this instance as a lesbian family. However, within these moments of queer visibility, there does lie a certain amount of power for the subject when read through a queer lens. Noreen

[74] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).
[75] Neve Gordon, 'On Visibility and Power: An Arendtian Corrective of Foucault'. *Human Studies*, 25.2 (2002): 125-145.
[76] Author interview with Orla Egan, conducted July 28 2016.
[77] Ibid.

Giffney argues that 'queer theorists refuse to "play the game" of the dominant culture, and instead of asking what is wrong with queers, turn an interrogative gaze toward societal norms and the assumptions which underpin those norms'.[78] This reading through queer theory also indicates the power by which queer visibility can challenge the norms and the heteronormativity of Irish society, promoted by normative institutions such as RTÉ.

This is just one instance of many that indicates the links between Foucault's idea of visibility and control. As Neve Gordon reflects on Foucault's work in relation to visibility and power, he argues that 'visibility is essential to power not only because it is put to use by power in order to control people, but perhaps more importantly because it is power's condition of possibility'.[79] He goes on to note that 'discursive practices are meaningless and powerless if they are not visible'. As valid as Gordon's argument is to a lot of cases in queer Irish visibility, it must also be noted that the more visibility brought to bear on a particular queer individual, the greater the surveillance and scrutiny visited upon them. For example, many of the publicly visible queer activists throughout this period have been subjected to disciplinary consequences as a result of their public personas, such was the case with lesbian activist Suzy Byrne:

> Not surprisingly, my decision to come out so publicly involved a certain amount of personal cost. My relationship with my family has suffered because of my visibility, and I have experienced a lot of verbal, and some physical, abuse from homophobes. After an appearance on *The Late Late Show*, I was kicked to the ground by three lads who recognised me and decided to "teach the lezzer a lesson". I also received a death threat, which has simply added to the mental anguish I felt after the attack.[80]

Suzy Byrne's experience of being active within the public sphere of the media underscores how 'permanent visibility enables the maximum intensity', and how means of control and discipline also occur within the wider community outside of the gaze of the media.[81] Visibility then is not simply a process of coming into being

[78] Noreen Giffney, 'Quare Theory' in Noreen Giffney and Margrit Shildrick (eds.) Theory on the Edge: Irish Studies and the Politics of Sexual Difference (New York: Palgrave, 2013), p. 244.
[79] Gordon, 2002, p. 143.
[80] Suzy Byrne, 'Glimpses', in Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins (eds.) *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 117.
[81] Gordon, p. 133.

accompanied by recognition and identification. In other words, the process of who and what becomes visible, in which ways and to whom involves a multi-faceted negotiation with and within established regimes of power and knowledge. The same dynamic also regulates that which supposedly stays invisible.

Visibility and Irish Media History

Visibility as a political strategy plays an important role within the LGBT movement and queer politics generally. In the Irish context, queer visibility in the media has a particular significance and resonance. Ireland's culture of 'lace-curtain respectability', manifested in conformity and adherence to social and especially moral strictures and 'often the hypocritical discrepancies between public and private rhetoric, expression and behaviour' have been the subject of many Irish media representations.[82] Queer visibility was particularly potent during this forty year period as it participated in a tug-of-war dynamic between various gay and lesbian organisations and media institutions. Moments of queer visibility, as mentioned in light of Foucault's theory of surveillance, are subjected to regulatory forces, be it the Irish gay civil rights movement itself or broadcasting regulations. Predominantly for most of this thesis, reference is made to Ireland's national public service broadcaster (PSB) RTÉ. For much of the period of this research, Ireland's media landscape is relatively small, with only one channel from 1962 until the launch of RTÉ 2 in 1978, also still a part of the main broadcaster and then the addition of Teilifís na Gaeilge (later TG4) in 1996 and Ireland's first commercial channel, TV3, in 1998. Within the context of this small media landscape, RTÉ, much like its European counterparts, strived towards nation building, thus operating in normative codes and normalising practices.[83]

Given the preponderance of PSBs within varying national contexts, it should be noted what public service broadcasting means in relation to RTÉ and Irish television. Public service broadcasting in Europe has conventionally attempted to be 'largely and widely protected from market forces and expected to use its monopoly position to fulfil social functions, which include giving access to diverse voices and reaching minorities with

[82] Jeannine Woods, 'Trans-formations of Gendered Identities in Ireland' in Conor Holohan and Tony Tracy (eds.) Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger's Tales (New York: Palgrave, 2014), p. 27.
[83] Wolfgang Truetzschler, 'Broadcasting Law and Broadcasting Policy in Ireland', *Irish Communications Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

information, education and culture'.[84] Since its inception, RTÉ as a PSB operated in a more competitive environment than most of its European PSB counterparts, due to the situation of dual-reception, which meant that British television channels were widely available. Accordingly, RTÉ is dually funded with a licence fee and advertising comprising almost all of its revenue. RTÉ has provided a radio service since 1926 and a television service since 1961. The institution broadcasts three television services, RTÉ One, RTÉ 2 and TG4 (an Irish language service). The role of RTÉ is informed by its 'Public Service Broadcasting Charter'. Within that charter is a remit to 'reflect the democratic, social and cultural values of Irish society and the need to preserve media pluralism' and 'reflect fairly and equally the regional, cultural and political diversity of Ireland and its peoples'.[85] As a PSB and under the Broadcasting Authority Acts (1960 – 2001), RTÉ is mandated to provide programmes that entertain, inform and educate; programmes of news and current affairs; coverage of sporting, religious and cultural activities and coverage of the Oireachtas and European parliament.[86] As Wolfgang Truetzschler notes, RTÉ is subject 'to fairly close regulations and even closer scrutinization by politicians'.[87] The Minister for Communications in the Irish parliament reserves some central powers in the functioning of RTÉ. They could appoint nine members to the RTÉ Authority (up until 2008), has a stake in the appointment or removal of a director-general and also has some powers regarding finance, such as deciding the level of the licence fee. RTÉ as a PSB was thus tied to certain expectations and obligations.

Unlike the US and the UK, Ireland's media landscape was defined through a national lens and thus the discourses of nation and also religion were inevitably always informing representations of gender and sexuality in quite overt, disciplinary ways. The Catholic Church in Ireland viewed the arrival of a television service with concern, as it may not only 'corrupt the morals of the Irish people, but also compromise the

[84] Denis McQuail, 'Commercialization', in Denis McQuail and Kren Siune (eds.) *New Media Politics* (London: Sage, 1986), p. 164.
[85] Public Service Broadcasting Charter, Department of Communications, Marines and Natural Resources. Available at: https://www.rte.ie/documents/about/public-service-broadcasting-charter.pdf
[86] Oireachtas refers to the legislature of Ireland, which consists of the President of Ireland and the two houses of parliament, Dáil Éireann (lower house) and Seanad Éireann (upper house). The directly elected Dáil is the most powerful branch of the Oireachtas.
[87] Truetzschler, 'Broadcasting Law and Broadcasting Policy in Ireland', *Irish Communications Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

teachings of the Church, ultimately undermining its influence'.[88] Television threatened the power of the Catholic Church, which had already contributed to the extraordinary censorship that had occurred in Ireland. When conversations around the introduction of the television service began, the Archbishop of Dublin John Charles McQuaid set up his own diocesan Television Committee 'to explore how the new medium could enhance the work of the Church and defend its interests'.[89] On the opening night of Telefís Éireann, McQuaid was invited to the studios at Donnybrook to provide a benediction. However, McQuaid intended this involvement with Telefís Éireann to stretch beyond rituals and staunchly attempted to formally appoint a member of the Catholic clergy to the staff of the new station. Director-general Edward Roth attempted to resist this influence from the Catholic Church, but eventually gave in when Fr. Joseph Dunn was appointed the 'whole time executive assistant for religious broadcasting'.[90] From the inception to the launch of Ireland's PSB, then, the Catholic Church attempted to control the new medium. Evidence of this can still be seen in the early examples of gay visibility, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Although it could be argued that queer media appearances aimed to disrupt, destabilise, deconstruct and effectively queer what was considered normal, commonplace, taken-for-granted or the 'natural order of things', it must also be highlighted that the appearance of gay people on television and in the broader media may not have always aimed to disrupt, but to normalise, to simply attempt to add gay people to the citizenry. Often times in such instances, a respectability politics was deployed, to indicate to the watching Irish population that the values of many of Ireland's gays and lesbians were in line with their own. This point will be explored further in Chapter Two. Be it through means of disruption or normalising, the aim of examining these instances of queer visibility is to contest the normativities of Irish society in part by exposing the regimes of the normal put forward in the media and the normalising mechanisms of state power evident in RTÉ.

This thesis will also take into account the conditions for gay visibility in the Irish media. Often, queer visibility was dictated by both legislative and moral strictures of

[88] Robert Savage, *A Loss of Innocence? Television and Irish Society, 1960-72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 163.
[89] Savage, p. 172.
[90] Savage, p. 186.

the state. At points for example, queer publishing was censored under the Censorship of Publications Act, 1929, which in a lot of cases made it difficult for queer visibility to even articulate itself in the print media in particular. In 1982 for example, the circulation of gay British magazine *Gay News* was refused by the Office of Censorship of Publication. As the interviews carried out for this thesis also reveal, there were cases of refusing to enable queer visibility on broadcasting platforms such as RTÉ as a result of internal structural decisions. In other instances, queer visibility was not utilised for its liberatory potential, but deliberately deployed to manufacture a media event and generate good television ratings. Furthermore, cultural events, such as that seen with the AIDS crisis, shifted queer visibility. The broadcasts discussed from 1974-1985 were a part of the original liberatory project of the Irish gay civil rights movement, aiming to convey the Irish LGBT community as good citizens. After 1985 however, this liberatory project towards civil rights becomes interrupted as a result of the AIDS epidemic, with AIDS beginning to become the dominant narrative in the media. Much of the gay social movement's and the gay community's press attempted to disentangle queer sexualities from AIDS and HIV, as the mainstream media pedalled stereotypes of the gay community being a high risk group. This will be explored more fully in Chapter Four.

More significantly, the legislative changes seen in 1993 regarding the decriminalisation of male homosexual acts saw the contours of queer visibility shift again, as with this change in the law came a greater, more liberal dispensation that served to enable the incorporation of queer lives more frequently into mainstream press and broadcast media. The gay community also became ripe for commodification following decrminalisation, which contributed to a surge in visibility not only in the broadcasting sphere, but the commercial sphere also. Meanwhile, the advent of the Celtic Tiger shifted queer visibility again, as Irish queers become aligned, particularly in Irish cinema and television drama during this period, with consumer culture, along with being presented as modern, progressive and European. Fintan Walsh argues that during this period 'LGBTQ community politics had suffered from relative complacency'.[91] Interestingly, following discussions surrounding the Civil Partnership Bill, there was a 'rapid establishment of a number of volunteer

[91] Fintan Walsh, 'Pride, Politics and the Right to Perform', in Giffney and Shildrick, *Theory on the Edge*, p. 105.

organisations that sought to raise awareness, give advice, and promote the recognition of same-sex unions' after the Irish government voted down the Civil Union Bill in March 2007. The Marriage Equality movement officially began from these circumstances and began to formally canvass in 2008, just as this thesis comes to a conclusion.

Discourses of Queer Irish Visibility

As has been established in the introduction of this chapter, there are numerous potential approaches to researching queer visibility in the media. This section will define the various approaches to visibility that are relevant to an Irish context.

(i) Visibility as Activism and Liberatory

In terms of 'lavender flying columns', many of the instances of visibility analysed in this thesis, particularly in Chapters Two and Three, were instigated at a grass roots level with gay activism and assumed a place on the national stage through securing broadcasting slots on RTÉ programming. As mentioned earlier, visibility was considered as an important political strategy. The maintenance of some sort of a media profile was thus one of the early aims and in the early 1970s, a few strategically placed individuals within the gay rights movement could have a major impact. Founding member of the IGRM Edmund Lynch had joined RTÉ in 1969 and accordingly became a useful conduit by which newsworthy stories could be carried from the IGRM to journalists in RTÉ. Lynch himself notes that David Norris' role as lecturer in Trinity College Dublin was pivotal to gaining visibility in the media: 'he taught an awful lot of people who ended up in the media. He happened to have that sort of way about him and meant that he had contact with them and they might ring him for story'.[92] Lynch's position in RTÉ opened him up to a vista of journalists, where he was in a position where: 'I'd have their telephone numbers [...] you used it if you wanted to get them to do a story'.[93] It is important to note that the key players in the early IGRM, David Norris, Edmund Lynch and Bernard Keogh worked for state organisations. As a result of this job security, they had a greater opportunity to fulfil a public role as part of a gay organisation as many others 'felt being visible in the media

[92] Author Interview with Edmund Lynch
[93] Ibid.

wasn't good for them, there would have been fear, fear of being beat up, fear of being rejected'.[94]

It was Lynch's role in RTÉ in particular that seemed to have an influence on the commissioning of programmes pertaining to gay content. In a report following David Norris' appearance on *Last House*, which will be discussed in Chapter Two, Lynch wrote that 'in the near future both the radio and television sections of RTÉ have projected plans to include in their programming policy programmes about homosexuality'. Lynch goes on to conclude the report by stating the intentions of this visibility on broadcast media:

> 'it is hoped for better coverage of news and items of interest to the homosexual members of the community, in order that they may become more informed and aware of the policies and aims of the Irish Gay Rights Movement in furthering just rights for all the homosexual men and women in Ireland.'

From Lynch's report, it was clear that the IGRM were adopting a conventional liberal strategy with a mainstreaming political programme, lobbying the media to progress the politics of the IGRM. This would become a recurring trope for queer visibility during the 1974-1985 period.

Visibility continued to be an essential factor in activism, particularly in the NGF's politics. Former president of the NGF Tonie Walsh states that gay visibility was vital as 'it was a very conscious, determined, deliberate attempt to create channels of communication between all of the disparate elements in civil society and also in the political system and within the media, print and broadcast media'.[95]

As is noted at the beginning of this chapter, there are numerous approaches that attempt to define visibility, with many queer theorists and media scholars adopting different approaches and stances. In light of this, this thesis will attempt not simply to examine visibility through simple dichotomies such as positive and negative and visible and invisible, but will attempt to highlight the various strands of visibility specific to an Irish Media Studies context.

[94] Ibid.
[95] Author Interview with Tonie Walsh.

The equating of visibility in the media with power and liberation was one of the first stances taken by the Irish civil gay rights movement. This is evident from the aforementioned call to action by Norris when he referred to lavender flying columns. Norris' statement regarding lavender flying columns signalled a nationalist frame of politics for the Irish gay rights movement, and in itself evoked the importance of visibility, as much like the flying columns that operated during the Irish War of Independence, these lavender flying columns would operate invisibly and anonymously in some cases. Framing gay visibility and liberation in a nationalistic framework appeared to be frequent among Irish gay activists during this period. Former President of the NGF Tonie Walsh argues that the early days of lesbian and gay activism

> […] seem a little bit like […] guerrilla activism […] The regular rules of play, the regular rules of war, the regular rules of engaging with the other side, legislators, civil society, those rules [did not] exist, there was no rule book because, first of all, we were criminalised [and] constantly operating outside sort of societal norms effectively […] so […] we had to make it up as we went along […] and be a bit more politically savvy about how to engage with people […] the church, how to try and have conversations […] with civil society'.[96]

The use of the word guerrilla in relation to gay liberation yet again speaks to Irish political history, particularly during the Irish Civil War, where irregular warfare in the form of small groups of combatants mobilised to fight a much larger military, again through the guise of anonymity and small groups. Traditionally, a guerrilla army would avoid a large confrontation with a number of enemy troops, instead favouring to eliminate small groups of troops so as to exhaust opposing forces. Similarly, the Irish gay rights movement deployed a guerrilla activism in how they engaged with the media. When Walsh was President of the NGF for example, instead of a blanket approach to canvassing the media, he considered it more effective to target the likes of newspapers such as the *Sunday Independent* because:

> They were purveyors of really reductive stereotyping, so they were the ones that needed the most work, the most challenging. So I made a point of actually going after the red tops and cultivating and deepening personal relationships

[96] Author Interview with Tonie Walsh.

> with their chief reporters and with their feature writers […] Cultivating really good relationships with them to the point that I could actually give them a story and guarantee that it would actually appear the following weekend.[97]

Visibility was thus seen as a crucial political strategy during this period. This strategy targeted specific sites of media production to not only ensure accurate portrayals that did not prop up commonly circulated stereotypes, but served as a disciplinary tool in challenging Irish media institutions such as the *Sunday Independent*. It also encouraged Irish media institutions to utilise the information and networks being established by the likes of the NGF during the period. The historical references to a nationalist frame of politics similarly aligns the struggle for LGBT rights and freedoms alongside that of Irish Independence, with both movements motivated by an identity politics.

Furthermore, one only has to look to some of the early literature by gay civil rights groups in Ireland to recognise how visibility was envisaged as an important strategy. Take for example the Cork Gay Collective's manifesto from 1981, where it stated that 'society's view of sexuality and the structures reflecting that view, must be altered, […] underlying this fight is the need for access to a dissemination of positive information about sexuality in the media'.[98] Whereas the Irish gay rights movement believed in the importance of information dissemination about sexual identities, theorist Peggy Phelan criticises identity politics for its assumption that a lack of media visibility of a minority group reflects and reproduces inequality, and accordingly, these groups should seek greater power through increased visibility. Phelan argues that, 'if representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western Culture'.[99] She recognises that equating visibility with power is problematic, for in its supposed promise of liberation it invites increased surveillance. As this thesis will elucidate, despite some major progressions and milestones in terms of queer visibility in the Irish media, often, visibility could be equated with surveillance or as a carefully manufactured media event, designed to be inoffensive – or in some instances sensational – to the middle Ireland that were consuming these media texts. Even at that, visibility, as cited by a variety of media

[97] Ibid.
[98] Cathal Kerrigan, Private Archive, 'Cork Gay Collective: Manifesto', 25th January, 1981.
[99] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 10.

critics, often only functions to make a certain type of gay or lesbian identity natural or normal. The discourse of visibility reveals a more complicated formulation of power than the simple equation that invisibility equals powerlessness and visibility equals empowerment.

(ii) Creating Alternative Visibility

Despite the fact that the Irish civil gay rights movement were making significant gains in terms of visibility, there was still significant silence surrounding the LGBT movement. This became all the more evident once AIDS had arrived in Ireland. As Walsh states, 'seeing our stories not advanced or facilitated by the mainstream media' was one of the igniting factors that encouraged him to get involved with *OUT* magazine and later found *GCN*.[100] During the period of research in question, this thesis will also examine the alternative forms of media generated by the gay community, as it operated within a media system that did not account for the community's experiences. Alternative media were essential to the formation of a gay consciousness in Ireland. As Tim O'Sullivan argues, alternative media 'avowedly rejects or challenges established and institutionalised politics, in the sense that they all advocate change in society, or at least a critical assessment of traditional values'.[101] Particularly during the AIDS crisis, *OUT* magazine proved how alternative media compensated for the Irish State in its failure to effectively deal with AIDS and HIV. These forms of media voiced the concerns of the gay community, whose viewpoints and concerns were not sufficiently represented within existing local and national media. It was a site where 'oppositional cultural values were formed and took shape in the context of their struggle with dominant culture'.[102] The alternative media was also one of the few spaces where Ireland's gay community could control what was being said about them.

(iii) Visibility as Democratic and Modern

As the research of this thesis progresses into the 1990s and early 2000s in both Chapters Five and Six, there is a notable shift in how visibility is being deployed. Having transitioned from equating visibility with liberation, queer visibility was soon

[100] Author Interview with Tonie Walsh.
[101] Tim O'Sullivan et. al., *Key Concepts in Communications and Cultural Studi*es (London: Routledge, 1992), p.10.
[102] Ibid.

deployed as a means of equating LGBT rights in Ireland with a particular brand of development and progress and part of a new social milieu. Queerness itself began to become normalised, in particular in Irish film during the Celtic Tiger period. Thus queerness was promoted in the Irish media through the teleological lens of progress and modernisation, at a time when stark inequality still existed in Ireland, particularly surrounding civil marriage rights for LGBT people.

Not only will this thesis examine the changing role of visibility over the course of the historical period in question, but it will also account for the changing mediascape and media forms also. The period at the beginning of this research is defined by what John Ellis refers to as the 'era of scarcity', where there were very few options in terms of media availability, particularly in an Irish context.[103] Over the course of this period, this substantially changes, as Ireland's media in the later 2000s and 2010s becomes much more dense. Thus, the implication of this for queer Irish visibility will be accounted for. Beginning with singular, one-off broadcasts on the PSB RTÉ and appearing occasionally in newspapers throughout the era, queer visibility eventually became modulated in a multi-media environment, particularly becoming the centre of media events, which the latter part of this thesis will consider.

(iv) Mediating Visibility

In their book *Queer TV*, Glyn Davis and Gary Needham criticise queer television, as it often focuses on 'the handling of queer people, characters and stories'.[104] They extend this, to argue that much criticism on queer visibility and representation on television 'ignores the complexity of the medium, and the ways in which it is designed, produced, distributed and consumed in queer ways'.[105] Feeding back into Villarejo's earlier criticism of queer media studies and queer visibility research, it is also important to recognise and integrate arguments around the particular mediums in question, as they can add numerous nuances to a discussion of visibility. For example, a lot can be discerned about visibility from the temporal experience of television. The scheduling of a particular broadcast is often indicative of queerness and it can be a regulatory practice that renders queer lives 'as an evening affair that exists on the

[103] John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).
[104] Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 7.
[105] Ibid.

margins of the television schedule'.[106] This is very much applicable to an Irish context, where all of the queer programming and content was broadcast in late evening schedules. Other structural features of television production are crucial to visibility, particularly liveness. According to Gary Needham, 'liveness is an ideological effect; it is rendered through a very specific textual organisation and mode of address' and I argue that it can influence gay visibility when there is an in-studio audience.[107] Such is the case with *The Late Late Show*, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Television as a medium, Lynne Joyrich argues, is a 'crucial site for the exploration of the logic of the closet', because it is 'located at the intersection of many of the same conceptual divisions that Sedgwick described'.[108] Joyrich notes that:

> By both mediating historic events for familial consumption and presenting the stuff of 'private life' to the viewing public, the institutional organisation of […] broadcasting situates television precisely on the precarious border of public and private […] Here it constructs knowledges identified as both secret (domestically received) and shared (defined as part of a collective national culture).[109]

The role of television, particularly in Irish society during the 'era of scarcity' served as a means of bringing both the public and private spheres together. Particularly for the Irish queer community, the experience of consuming queer programming within the private domestic space of the home helped to make them feel a part of a collective national culture. Cathal Kerrigan notes the particular significance of the early broadcasts of gay content on television when he states that 'getting images that said we are Irish and we are gay and we are here was a huge step and was very important'.[110]

The particular focus on television in this instance is attributed to the fact that it is the predominant media form considered in this thesis. However, Chapter Five will

[106] Gary Needham, 'Scheduling Normativity: Television, the Family and Queer Temporality', in Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (eds.) *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics*, p. 146.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Lynne Joyrich, 'Epistemology of the Console', in Davis and Needham (eds.) *Queer TV*, p. 23.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Author interview with Cathal Kerrigan.

specifically deal with queer Irish cinema and will accordingly recognise the medium of film and its unique representational strategies also.

(v) Complexities of Visibility

Visibility also proved to be a problematic term within the gay community. In the early 1980s, the women's co-ordinator of the NGF produced a pamphlet entitled 'lesbian women'. Within this pamphlet, the co-ordinator staunchly criticised the 'media stereotype of tweed-suited, cigar smoking hard woman' and argued that 'lesbians represent a typical cross-section of the female population'.[111] The pamphlet identifies that the main problem that was facing Irish lesbians was invisibility. The article attributes this to the fact that gay civil rights in Ireland was dominated by men and that 'women were discouraged from recognising and asserting an independent sexuality'. There is a great paucity of lesbian visibility within the media texts researched for this thesis and this is not due to the fact that there was no socially cohesive lesbian movement. In fact there were many activist and social organisations, such as the Liberation for Irish Lesbian (LIL), Lesbians Organising Together (LOT) and the Cork Lesbian Collective. Writing in 1995, lesbian activist Izzy Kamikaze attributed this paucity to the fact that organisations such as the NGF were 'composed mainly of middle-class men' and that the word lesbian did not even appear in the name of the organisation until 1990, when it changed to the NLGF. Furthermore, she argues that the likes of the NGF were attempting to 'project a "respectable" image of homosexuality' into which lesbians did not fit.[112] Kohnen argues that 'coming out of the closet is often imagined as enabling the revelation of communities and identities that have previously been hidden', arguing that this can also obscure as much as it can reveal.[113] This certainly applies to the visibility of gay men in the public sphere, which problematically obscured queer lives more broadly in Ireland, particularly that of lesbians. This becomes even more of an issue with the onset of the AIDS crisis in Ireland in 1982, when for most of that decade, gay men were the media shorthand utilised in news reports and press reportage. Thus, these factors may partially explain the massive gap in terms of lesbian visibility in the mainstream Irish media. Even at

[111] 'Lesbian Women' – National Gay Federation Pamphlet (Irish Queer Archive, National Library of Ireland).
[112] Izzy Kamikaze, 'I Used to be an Activist, But I'm Alright Now'. *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century* . p. 117.
[113] Kohnen, p. 58.

that, most broadcasts consisted of gay men as panellists. In the instances where there was lesbian visibility, a vehement public reaction manifested, which will be explored further with the case of the lesbian nuns on *The Late Late Show* in Chapter Three. However, this research will attempt to redress the gap of lesbian visibility.

Transnational Queer Visibility

In several interviews carried out for the purpose of this thesis, the first question asked to most participants was: what were the first moments of gay visibility in the media that you can remember? Interestingly, several interviewees named the character Mr. Humphries (John Inman) from BBC sitcom *Are You Being Served?*[114] Another mentioned the character Daniel Hirsh (Peter Finch) from the 1971 film *Sunday Bloody Sunday* as the first instance of seeing anything queer, while others pinpointed Kenneth Williams and his performance in the *Carry On* film and television franchise.[115] What struck me most from these responses was the fact that in a thesis talking about queer Irish visibility, none of these queer instances were Irish or derived from any Irish productions. Not only do these interviews reveal the fact that Irish audiences were consuming Anglo-American popular culture, be it through their television screens or cinemas, but it also indicated that Ireland's media landscape had a situation of dual-reception. Accordingly, it is important as a result for this thesis to be sensitive to non-Irish instances of queer visibility.

Ireland has consistently been receiving media programming from the UK since the early 1950s, and it was because of 'the overspill' from the BBC and the launch of Ulster TV in 1959 that ignited discussions for a television service in the country. [116] In 1956, it was estimated by state sources that some 7,000 television sets were already owned by people in the Republic who were receiving British broadcasting. Ireland's media landscape has always had a situation of dual-reception, with British television output from the BBC and ITV being considered as an 'external threat' to the 'national project of RTÉ's programming'.[117] As has been established by media scholars such as

[114] Author interview with Cathal Kerrigan, conducted July 27 2016,
[115] Author Interview with Tonie Walsh, conducted July 22-23 2016.
[116] Lance Pettitt, *Screening Ireland*, p. 145
[117] Pettitt, p. 150

Lance Pettitt and Robert Savage, the costs of maintaining a hybrid institution such as RTÉ (which had a public service remit and a significant commercial element) was high, so as a cheaper alternative to making its own programmes, it bought in pre-recorded US and British programmes to fill air time. So even homes that had access to only one channel were still exposed to Anglo-American popular culture.

Access to cable television in Ireland also brought further Anglo-American content into Irish people's homes. By the 1980s, cable television was well-established as the most popular multi-channel television reception system in Ireland. In addition to providing Irish and British terrestrial television, Irish cable systems generally began adding additional services during the 1980s as English-language services started to appear on European satellites that were receivable in Ireland. This greatly enhanced the number of channels available to customers. Property developers also began to pre-wire new homes for cable service where it was available. By the end of the 1980s, cable television was more popular than both direct reception of UHF television from the UK and satellite television. This was more than likely attributed to the founding of Cablelink in 1986, which, according to an RTÉ news report, was 'one of the five biggest cable operators in Europe'.[118] Cablelink was formed as a result of RTÉ merging all of its cable operations (including two other cable companies, Galway Cablevision and Waterford Cablevision) to form Cablelink Limited. In the same news report, Cablelink announced that they were investing £2 million in improving the cable services in the Dublin region. Subsequently, Cablelink became Ireland's largest cable company and gradually during the 1990s, expanded from an original six channel service to a fifteen-channel service. The traditional six channels shown by cable companies in Ireland were RTÉ 1, RTÉ Network 2, BBC1, UTV, BBC2 and Channel 4. It must also be noted that throughout much of the seventies and eighties, access to cable television largely depended on the geographical location, with this often being confined to Irish cities, such as Cork, Waterford, Galway and Limerick. MMDS rollout began in 1989, with the network of 29 cells forming a "national grid" being regulated for, if not intact, by 1998.[119]

[118] RTÉ News Report, 29 May 1986. Available at: https://www.rte.ie/archives/2016/0526/791156-cablelink-and-satellite-tv/?imz_s=f3de1sd2n7msp4uun2jm9ie053

[119] Lally, M. (1990). Report into MMDS TV providers. *Six O'Clock News*. RTÉ 1. 12 April 1990

The reason for foregrounding and establishing the extent to which Irish television audiences had access in a lot of instances to UK programming in the context of this thesis is to clarify that Irish audiences were not only susceptible to queer images being presented to them from Irish broadcasting. Although this thesis examines queer visibility in Irish media and cultural productions, it will also be sensitive to other instances of queer visibility being imported in programming and broadcasting directly from the UK and the US. It is often the case in Irish Media Studies that the unique hybridity of Ireland's mediascape is overlooked. Although this thesis is not proposing to entirely redress this gap in media studies scholarship in Ireland, it will work towards establishing some scholarship on queer visibility that is sensitive to Anglo-American popular culture.

Conclusion

After introducing the broad historical and theoretical framework in this chapter, the factors shaping queer visibility in Irish culture will be explored in the various chapters that follow. In particular, this chapter noted the particular intersectionalities between Irish Media Studies, Visibility Studies, Irish Media History and Queer Theory. As indicated already, this thesis will not work off of the basis of a single theory on or notion of queer visibility, but rather argue that there are various approaches to queer visibility that are relevant, particularly to an Irish context. Pivotal cultural moments occur over the course of the forty year period of this thesis that at varying points, shift visibility. This once again underlines visibility as an unstable, contested category that is historically and culturally specific. One of the most contested social sites in which queerness manifests itself is the media and it is film, television and the press that have had a decisive impact on how Irish audiences, particularly queer constituencies, understand queer identities. The following chapters will this offer a new way of understanding and conceptualising the relationship between visibility, sexuality, activism and the media landscape.

Chapter Two

Respectably Gay?: Queer Visibility on Broadcast Television (1975-1980)

Introduction

In 1983, David Norris approached the writers and producers of one of RTÉ's most popular drama series *Glenroe* (1983-2001), suggesting that they incorporate a gay character into the cast. Media visibility was one of the key strategies of Irish gay activism and Norris considered that incorporating a gay character into a mainstream drama series would normalise homosexuality for mass audiences, or at least help mobilise a shift in attitudes. RTÉ at that point refused to commit to the production of a queer character. In fact, as Norris describes it, his suggestion was met with a 'paroxysm of laughter' and 'the idea of having a gay character in an Irish soap opera was just an anathema' to the producers.[120] This exchange between Norris and RTÉ reveals that queer visibility was tempered by outright refusals to provide platforms for a mediation of queer subjectivities. This is symptomatic of two things. Firstly, queer identities were not considered appropriate for representation within RTÉ's light entertainment programming. Secondly, it also highlights the strategies developed by the Irish gay rights movement in soliciting the media to acknowledge and represent queer Irish lives on screen. As a nascent Irish gay civil rights movement began to develop in the 1970s and into the 1980s, they demanded greater representation on Ireland's public service broadcaster.

This chapter analyses the earliest moments of queer visibility on Irish broadcast television as well as the queer production context. The period between 1975 and 1980 saw three seminal and culturally important broadcasts occur on RTÉ, among which many 'firsts' for the queer community in the media occurred. The first instance of any kind of visibility arose when David Norris appeared on the RTÉ magazine show *Last House* in 1975, becoming the first self-identifying Irish gay man to appear on television. It is important to note that closeted queer fictional characters had been appearing on Irish television for a number of years as a result of dual-reception with

[120] Author interview with Norris.

the UK, with programming such as *Are You Being Served?* (1972-1985) and the *Carry On* (1958-1978) franchise. However, the appearance of an actual Irish gay man on an Irish production provided recognition and legitimacy to a burgeoning local queer community. Two years later in 1977, RTÉ produced an in-depth documentary as part of a current affairs documentary series. *Tuesday Report: Homosexuality in Ireland* interviewed members of Ireland's gay community, their families and public representatives of the Catholic Church. As this chapter will demonstrate, the documentary represented a much broader lesbian and gay community than *Last House* had. Finally, the chapter will analyse an edition of the current affairs programme *Week In* from 1980, which broadcast on the newly formed second channel of the public service broadcaster, RTÉ 2. *Week In* was crucial for visibility as it interviewed Laurie Steele and Arthur Leahy, a gay couple living in Cork. This programme depicted Ireland's first self-identifying gay couple in the media, which was an anomaly in a media landscape that had traditionally celebrated the heteronormative family structure.

These programmes were the product of media activism by the growing community of gay liberation movements within Ireland. What makes these three broadcasts ripe for analysis is the mainstreaming approach the gay and lesbian participants fostered on the programmes, as well as what would become the confessional coming-out genre. The media texture of a broadcast from a live studio is significantly different to that of a documentary. These distinctions and production contexts frame mediations of queer visibility with distinct characteristics and representational strategies that this chapter will note. *Last House* was a magazine-style programme broadcast live from a studio, that ran over the summer season in 1975. *Tuesday Report*, as described by the presenter Cathal O'Shannon, was 'a sociological series' running for a total of fifty minutes each week, with an episode investigating a specific aspect of Irish society. *Week In* was another documentary-style show that looked at current affairs topics around the country, with episodes usually lasting twenty minutes.

It is important to note that these programmes comprised less than ninety minutes of broadcasting time within a five-year period and fell within the current affairs remit. Accordingly, a documentary style was the pre-dominant approach taken by RTÉ and this suggests that queer lives and identities were confined to a specific form by the public service broadcaster. This was not necessarily unique to the Irish context; Kylo-

Patrick Hart and Edward Alwood note that much of the early representations of gay men on US television was also restricted to current affairs programming.[121] On US TV shows, Hart argues, many of these queer subjects (primarily gay men) were represented as 'objects of ridicule'.[122] Strikingly, this was not the case in the Irish context, where instead the mainstreaming and confessional approach of these three programmes did the cultural work of demystifying stereotypes surrounding queer lives.

Mainstreaming and the Confessional

The mainstreaming and confessional modes were central political and representational strategies on these formative broadcasts. Mainstreaming, as defined by Urvashi Vaid, aimed to 'integrate LGBT people within the status quo'.[123] Such a process required approaches situated around logical, rational arguments regarding homosexuality. These arguments tended to frame homosexuality as 'legitimate and respectable'.[124] Irish gay activists evoked this legitimacy through a normalising rhetoric, that aimed to frame homosexuality in a way that sought approval from heteronormative Irish society. Central to this mode of mainstreaming was respectability politics. The deployment of respectability has been central to many social movements involving oppressed minorities. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham argues that a politics of respectability dictates that 'in order to counter negative views of the dominant group, members of the oppressed minority must aggressively adopt the manner and morality that has been deemed virtuous by that group'.[125] In the Irish context, the self-presentation of many of the queer activists, both in their physical appearance and what they said on camera, strove towards this performance of normative social mores. While mindful of the advantages of this mainstreaming strategy of respectability,

[121] Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbian and the News Media* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1996, Kylo-Patrick Hart, *Queer TV in the 21st Century: Essays on Broadcasting from Taboo to Acceptance* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2016).
[122] Kylo-Patrick Hart, 'Representing Gay Men on American Television'. *Journal of Men's Studies* 9.1 (2000): 59-79.
[123] Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation,* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 54.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Deva Woodly notes 'this kind of politics allows the images and interests of the most assimilable parts of the population to stand in for, and therefore obscure, the whole'.[126] This chapter will note the shortcomings of these mainstreaming, respectable approaches, particularly within the context of Irish lesbian activism.

The confessional is the second mode of representation that structured these three moments of queer visibility. It played a crucial role in what would become the ritualistic coming-out genre on Irish television's news and current affairs programming. Foucault argues that 'the confession became one of the 'West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth' and was invented to serve as a production of knowledge which would tell the 'reality' of sexuality.[127] In considering the potential of the confession, Foucault argues that it is

> the ritual of the discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also the ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile.[128]

The confession through a Foucauldian lens implies a binary between the confessor and the authority with whom they are involved. The emergence of forms of knowledge around sexuality are enmeshed in the practices of power, the social government and the management of individuals. The confessor is the subject that has been caught in relations of power which as a result, may allow the confessor to speak back to these power bases. The power bases at work during the period of these broadcasts include: the Catholic Church, the government and media institutions, specifically RTÉ. The confessional mode on these programmes aims to uncover previously 'concealed' information. In the exchange between the one who asks and the one who answers, the 'truth' about a subject's inner self is brought to light and rendered visible, but also becomes open to potential surveillance and disciplinary action.

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[126] Deva R. Woodly, *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movement Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[127] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (New York: Vintage Press, 1978), p. 59.
[128] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 61.

When audiences witness the confession of an Irish queer individual as they disclose their sexuality on national television, they engage in a power dynamic. This dynamic not only involves the individual confessing and the interviewer, but also the audience members, who become part of this process. As Christopher Pullen puts it, they are the 'authorities' who require the confession.[129] This 'engenders a matrix of power possibilities', which in Foucauldian terms allows all those involved to possess discursive agency.[130] Through the confession, many gay activists and participants on these programmes attempted to engage with various authorities and audiences to create discursive possibilities that would change the attitudes of the audiences and institutions of power. The confession on these three programmes utilised a direct to camera approach, an aesthetic Lee Atwell notes as significant to this mode of representation, describing it as

> the static stationary camera angle which is constantly a frontal medium-close to close shot giving the impression of a talking portrait in which the subject directly addresses the camera/audience, creating an intimate, engrossing and often emotionally charged rapport between subject and viewer.[131]

The confession becomes central in the affirmative aims of much of the programming, as many of the queer participants revealed their inner truths and authentic selves for the Irish audience. As Atwell notes, this aimed to foster an intimate, emotionally charged rapport that was directed between the queer subject and heterosexual viewer. The queer confessor narrated personal struggles focused towards sympathetic identification with the heteronormative audience. Concerns of addressing the normative audience aside, the confessor also spoke to queer audiences. Given the Catholic dogma that governed sexuality in Ireland, the Catholic confession had been associated with shame and anonymity. Media visibility provided a reconfiguration of this as a publicly mediated practice rather than a private one. This subsequently led to the formation of a collective queer subjectivity in the moment of confession, an indication of a shared Irish queer experience.

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[129] Christopher Pullen, *Gay Identity, New Storytelling and the Media* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 70.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Lee Atwell, 'Word is Out and Gay USA', in Alan Rosenthal (ed.) *New Challenges for Documentary* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

Notwithstanding the thematic links, I have selected these programmes for analysis not only because they were crucially important to Ireland's queer community, but also because they were produced during the 'era of scarcity', as John Ellis terms it, when there were no other available broadcasts to consume.[132] Ireland's media landscape initially only offered one channel, and later in 1978 a second emerged from the same national broadcaster in the form of RTÉ 2. Ellis characterises broadcasting during this period: 'most households had a television set, and most countries had just one or two television channels […] a large proportion of the population would watch a programme on one or other of those channels every night'.[133] Television was the dominant mass medium in Ireland during this period. A 1973 RTÉ Annual Report indicated that 77% (542,000) of households in the Republic had a television set.[134] This was to increase to over 900,000 by the early 1980s, which was a sizeable television audience relative to the overall population of the time, which was just over three million.[135]

The instances of queer visibility in this chapter are certainly anomalies within RTÉ's broadcasting history, given the role of the Catholic Church in the administrative structure of the organisation. Archbishop McQuaid's papers in the Diocesan Archives reveals the frequency with which he wrote to various director-generals at RTÉ regarding what he believed to be sexually inappropriate content, particularly on *The Late Late Show*. This is considered in some detail in Chapter Three. There were also anxieties among certain decision-makers within the broadcaster regarding the inclusion of LGBT topics and participants on programmes. The National Song Contest was one such example. The event was a contest where singers competed against each other to be Ireland's representative at the Eurovision Song Contest. In 1979, singer Johnny Logan entered the competition with a song called 'Andy'. Logan recalls the 'homophobia' in RTÉ at that time, as the producer of the contest forced him to change the title and words of the song to 'Angie'. This was to avoid any suggestions of same-sex intimacy between men to the viewing Irish audience.[136] The National Song Contest incident reflected the national broadcaster's anxieties regarding the transmission of

[132] John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. 39
[133] Ellis, p. 45.
[134] RTÉ Annual Television Report, 1973. RTÉ Archives.
[135] Eurostat, *Audio-Visual Statistics Report 1995*, Brussels, Office of the Official Publications of the European Community. 1996.
[136] *Johnny Logan: Hold Me Now* (Dublin: RTÉ Productions, 2016)

potentially queer content and further implied that queerness had no place in RTÉ's remit outside of news and current affairs.

Another essential characteristic that Ellis associates with this era of scarcity is that programmes became 'an unparalleled experience of witness to the homes of the […] population'.[137] This experiencing of 'witnessing' through television is twofold and it expands Ayoub's formulation of queer visibility which was considered in Chapter One. As part of this witnessing, Ellis argues that viewers were brought into contact with new situations that could bring about 'positive action' and spark a 'national debate'.[138] The brief acts of witnessing on these programmes during the 1970s brought straight and queer Irish audiences into contact with people identifying as LGBT and also made isolated LGBT people aware of shared existences and desires. It also enabled a widespread public visibility, which brought the politics of the Irish gay civil rights movement into the public sphere, which now included televisual space. These three programmes opened up discourses surrounding sexuality, both in the popular press and in the public sphere.

These broadcasts reveal the significance that early gay liberationists placed on using media visibility as a tactic of political consciousness-raising, a necessary first step in the process of confronting oppressive, normative institutions. Using respectability politics was a central strategy on these early broadcasts, as the Irish Gay Rights Movement and the Cork Gay Collective attempted to explain their cause and critique and challenge the dominant perceptions of being gay in Ireland. This respectability was part of the strategy of mainstreaming being deployed by gay liberation movements, which attempted to logically explain the experience of homosexuality in Ireland. However, the confessional approach also played a crucial role. Both the mainstreaming and confessional modes, although at points in tension with one another, worked towards an affirmative, political goal of obtaining equal treatment, social recognition and procedural justice for the Irish gay community. The socially respectable, emotionally well-adjusted queer individual on the broadcasts was the happy outcome of the unhappy personal story they were relating to the audience – of

[137] Ellis, p. 46.
[138] Ibid.

struggling with illicit desire; of overcoming challenges; of moving towards a difficult-to-achieve identity that they were finally openly asserting.

The mainstreaming and confessional approaches operated together for the most part and reinforced each other. Respectability-sympathy-identification is the circular and reinforcing dynamic that the IGRM sough. The confession attempted to address the heterosexual viewer and get them to sympathise with the personal struggle being narrated and identify the speaker as human, and this identification was further reinforced by respectability, since these queer subjects looked just like anyone else. This chapter argues that the mainstreaming and confessional modes worked predominantly in tandem as central political and representational strategies in the early moments of televisual queer visibility in Ireland.

Coming-Out of the Closet on *Last House* (1975)

Queer visibility was initially established through informal connections between activists and decision makers in RTÉ. Edmund Lynch's role as a soundman within the broadcaster and as a prominent member of IGRM brought him into contact with numerous influential producers and commissioning editors. Among these was John McColgan, who was the producer of *Last House*. After Lynch approached him with a potential item on the IGRM for the show, McColgan agreed to allow David Norris to appear in his capacity as chairman of the gay rights group.[139] A television report compiled by Lynch after this broadcast indicated the mainstreaming aims of the IGRM on this crucial first appearance on Irish television, when he noted that the broadcast was an 'opportunity to explain to the viewers of Irish television the true facts about homosexuality'.[140] From this, it was clear that the IGRM pursued what John D'Emilio referred to as 'mainstream methods of lobbying, education and negotiation' in contrast to 'more confrontational, militant tactics' in their liaising with the media in an attempt to gain crucial visibility.[141] It also indicated the politics of respectability that was to

[139] Interview with Edmund Lynch.

[140] 'Television Programme Report on Last House'. Box MS 45,951/1, Irish Queer Archives, National Library of Ireland.

[141] John D'Emilio, "Cycles of Change, Questions of Strategy: The Gay and Lesbian Movement After Fifty Years', in Craig A. Rimmerman, Kenneth Wald and Clyde Wilcox (eds.) The Politics of Gay Rights (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000). P. 46.

be used on these formative appearances in the Irish media as Ireland's gay community began to publicly come-out of the closet through television.

RTÉ's anxieties regarding providing this visibility to the gay community was also reflected in Lynch's report, which indicated the level of preparation that went into pre-production on this particular item for the edition of *Last House*. Specifically, the report noted that presenter Áine O'Connor was briefed to read 'as many books and reports that were available on homosexuality'.[142] Despite this level of preparation on behalf of the producers, David Norris in his autobiography recounted a different experience and negotiating process with the broadcaster, when he describes:

> it was suggested that I do the interview in shadow, with my back to the camera and my voice disguised. I told them that if they did that, they could do it without me, because the whole point I wanted to make was that I was a perfectly normal, ordinary person – and if I accepted [being] on air looking furtive, then it would destroy the message.[143]

Despite a determination by the IGRM to take a mainstreaming approach to the interview, this instance reflects Sedgwick's spatial metaphor of the closet and indicates the tendency to pathologise homosexuality during this period. Norris' refusal of anonymity not only spoke to the mainstreaming, rational mode of countering stereotypes, it also underscored the rejection of the confessional mode. Furthermore, it affirmed the ability to be a rational, named speaking subject in discourse, but it also refused the literal Catholic confessional – where the individual is anonymous, sitting in the dark and confessing sins. This moment highlighted an opposition between the mainstreaming methods and the confessional modes. Norris refused the formal mode of the confession suggested by RTÉ in favour of coming-out as a gay man publicly. The outright resistance to any kind of concealment rejected RTÉ's attempts to position queer media participants as objects of shame and also broke away from the shame and privacy traditionally associated with the Catholic confessional. Norris' performance exemplified a 'particular kind of visibility', as D'Emilio argues in a different context, that 'did not make headlines about sex deviants and perverts. Nor was it simply a matter of ending silence. Instead, who spoke and what they said mattered at least

[142] 'Television Programme Report on Last House'. Box MS 45,951/1.
[143] Norris, p. 87.

much'.[144] Physically being visible on screen and presenting himself as well-spoken and middle class was thus crucial to the representational strategy deployed on the show.

The discourse of pathology surrounding queer identities was confronted directly in the opening question of the interview. The presenter, Áine O'Connor asked: 'Are homosexuals sick people?' and Norris eloquently deconstructed perceived stereotypes: 'no, indeed they're not. We're neither sick, ill, pathological, neurotic, or any of these emotive terms that are occasionally used by people […] to conceal their own prejudices'.[145] In fact, most of this interview rejected the idea of homosexuality as an illness and interrogated the role of religion in the formation of queer subjectivities. The programme was aimed towards heteronormative Ireland. Norris attempted to disentangle queer sexualities from the perceived stereotypes associated with the community, particularly underscoring the fact that homosexuality is not just concerned with sexual acts. This is evident when he noted that there is 'nothing evil about relating affectionately and sexually to a member of one's own sex'.

This Irish televisual treatment of sexuality was indicative of the gay politics taking place in Ireland at the time. Unlike radical groups that had proliferated in the US post-Stonewall, such as the American Gay Liberation Front (GLF), the IGRM, and Norris in particular, adopted a strategy of negotiation rather than confrontation. This approach aligned with the public image of respectability that the IGRM was attempting to create through the media. This alignment became particularly striking when O'Connor questioned Norris on the stance of the Churches in Ireland towards homosexuality, and he noted that 'we recently invited all the major Christian churches in Ireland to enter into dialogue with us, so that they may understand before they judge'. Rather than criticise the Church for its views on homosexuality, the IGRM announced its attempt to create an understanding between the Churches in Ireland and a gay politics that was being built by activists. The Church of Ireland proved receptive to such attempts made by the IGRM to enter into dialogue, made clear in a 1975 letter from Archbishop Alana Buchanan received by the IGRM, in which he stated:

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[144] John D'Emilio, 'Progress and Representation' in *Media/Queered: Visibility and its Discontents* (ed.) Kevin G. Banhurst (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 23-27.

[145] *Last House*, 24/07/1975 (Dublin, RTÉ Productions).

> our standing committee have decided to ask our Social Responsibility Committee to examine the question [regarding religious attitudes to homosexual rights] you raise. We are also doing so at the Role of the Church Committee. I believe that we are unwilling to shelve the problem that you set before us.[146]

This cultural and indeed Christian respectability discourse was operating within a system where reproductive, monogamous, heterosexual sex was considered above all and was the standard by which sexual normalcy was measured. Homosexual acts between men also remained illegal during this period. Accordingly, it was crucial that Norris waged this respectability politics on screen, as the dialogue between the IGRM and the Church began to play out in the public domain through the media.

The inclusion of Franklin Kameny as the opening to the Norris interview was significant not only in highlighting the fact that there was an international as well as an Irish gay community, but it also reflected the IGRM's appeals to notions of respectability, professionalism, integration, inclusion, cooperation, engagement, acceptance and finding common ground with the dominant culture; to 'be given a place at the table' as Richard Goldstein writes.[147] His inclusion during this interview revealed the networks of solidarity that had been established by the gay liberation movements in Ireland and the US, whose gay liberation movement had significantly been bolstered by the events of Stonewall in 1969. Kameny rose to notoriety as an activist with the homophile organisation The Mattachine Society and had established a public persona through his public appearances on US current affairs shows. The item on *Last House* began with Kameny's address to the Irish people, where he fostered a mainstreaming strategy: 'homosexuality is a preference for entering into close, intimate, affectional sexual relationships with persons of the same-sex'. He then repeated the now famous slogan 'gay is good'. Norris followed Kameny's lead regarding the mainstreaming approach. In the interview, O'Connor questioned Norris on what it 'really means to be a homosexual in Ireland'. Norris' response was indicative of the IGRM's appeal for inclusion and integration by noting that 'it is a perfectly ordinary thing'.

[146] Letter from Archbishop of Dublin, Alan Buchanan. Box MS 45,951/1, IQA, NLI.
[147] Richard Goldstein, *The Attack Queers: Liberal Society and the Gay Right* (London: Verso, 2002).

The mainstreaming mode of representation on *Last House* evidently obfuscated and avoided a dialogue surrounding sex, with Norris focusing entirely on gay rights. This is noticeable, given that the laws in Ireland criminalised sexual acts between men specifically. Avoiding mentions of same-sex intimacy was a deliberate strategy utilised to maintain a public image of respectability and safety for the IGRM and gay people more broadly. Michael Warner notes this queer political trend when he argues that making homosexuality respectable requires representational strategies that attempt to divorce gay identity from the shame of gay sex.[148] We must recognise the historical significance and effectiveness of respectability politics in attempting to come-out of the closet through media visibility. Nevertheless, as Vincent Doyle points out, 'strategies that seek equality on the basis of respectability do little to disrupt the cultural underpinnings of the exclusions that movement actors seek to rectify'.[149] As Doyle suggests, implicit within this politics of respectability is a process of assimilation, where the disenfranchised gay community attempted to recuperate, or at least leave intact, the social mores of wider heteronormative Irish society as it seeks their approval, but without disrupting the systems of power that caused their disenfranchisement. Respectability politics can obscure as much as they reveal, but, as Warner notes, 'the more you are willing to articulate political issues in a way that plays to a normal audience, the more success you are likely to have'.[150]

The use of David Norris in this instance as the public face of the IGRM, and of gay visibility more broadly, was a crucial decision that confirmed the mainstreaming strategy of respectability as well as insuring the spokesperson's security. Norris was one of few within the movement who could afford the cost of becoming the public face. Regarding his media presence during this period, Norris noted: 'I had a fairly wide margin of freedom because of my background, and because my parents were dead; I had a job that was reasonably secure…So I could speak out and became a spokesman'.[151] Lynch also notes that Norris was the natural fit for the role since he was 'the most articulate' out of the group. It was this quality, along with his

[148] Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).
[149] Vincent Doyle, Making Out in the Mainstream: GLAAD and the Politics of Respectability (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016).
[150] Warner, p. 219.
[151] Author interview with Norris.

entertaining persona, that resulted in Norris drawing attention to the movement in various ways.

Norris' tactful ability to court the media and field interview questions in an entertaining and informative manner can be seen with his interview on *Last House*. When asked by O'Connor if homosexuals were sick people, Norris quipped that 'we are of course subject, as ordinary other people are, to head colds, influenza, to a hangover, but in the basic sense, we are not sick'. This quip was characteristic of Norris' raconteur style, which was very similar to that of English writer and queer figure Quentin Crisp (they would later appear together on *The Late Late Show* in 1984).[152] Paul Ryan notes that Norris drew attention to gay rights as 'he was perceived by many as exotic in Irish society'; from the Southern Protestant minority and a scholar of James Joyce.[153] Further to this, Norris self-consciously created and performed an upper-middle class identity. Conveyed through his distinct Anglicised accent, his Church of Ireland background and public campaigns to preserve Georgian Dublin, Norris' media persona was carefully manufactured around his Anglo-Irish background. Given this emphasis, Norris arguably had more latitude in performing his queer sexual identity as a public figure. His persona and background did not directly conflict with the Roman Catholic base of Irish society and by foregrounding these differences in the media, Norris arguably comes across as 'un-Irish'. Kathryn Conrad has argued that identifying as homosexual has historically been at odds with Irish identity.[154] This un-Irishness, coupled with Norris' fashioning of an Anglo-Irish class and religious identity, potentially provided him with more flexibility and freedom to publicly identify as gay and campaign for queer causes.

However, Norris' public appearance – and the persona he cultivated – carried a political cost for the IGRM during these early days. On the one hand, he was very positively received by the press following his appearance because of his calm and entertaining demeanour. On screen, Norris appeared in a three-piece suit accompanied

[152] Quentin Crisp was a British gay icon and author of the seminal autobiography *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968), which was later adapted into a 1975 film the same name starring John Hurt,

[153] Paul Ryan, 'Coming Out of the Dark: A Decade of Gay Mobilisation in Ireland, 1970-80' in Linda Connolly and Niamh Hourigan (eds.) *Social Movements and Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 94.

[154] Kathryn Conrad, 'Queer Treasons: Homosexuality and Irish National Identity'. *Cultural Studies*, 15.1: 124-137, 2001.

by a tie and a pocket handkerchief and was particularly articulate in his responses to the various questions put to him. Both his appearance and what he said conveyed respectability. The studio environment and the professional and competent display during the interview further galvanised Norris as a political figure. This competent display of political prowess was noted by the Irish press. The *Evening Herald* referred to the interview as 'dispelling the myths and shibboleths surrounding homosexuality […] Mr. Norris made an interesting and persuasive voice on behalf of a sexual minority that are so often thought to be at worst "sick" and at best "not normal"'.[155] An *Irish Times* review was similarly positive and surprised as to how much Norris did not adhere to perceived stereotypes, 'no camp, completely relaxed'.[156] The production of queerness in this instance was certainly governed by the respectability politics favoured by the IGRM during this period. However, the queer visibility presented may also have been the product of the conservative style at RTÉ, as it attempted to control the parameters by which Norris was depicted on screen. This control was clearly evident from the negotiation between the IGRM and the production team of *Last House* prior to the broadcast. Despite this positive reception, Norris' visibility and growing popularity resulted in mounting tensions within the IGRM. Looking back on this period, Norris notes that many within the organisation worried that the public campaigning in the media would result in increased political agitation that would 'bring gay men under police surveillance'.[157] The celebrity attention being brought to the IGRM by Norris threatened other IGRM members' privacy. Accordingly, many were happy to maintain the social infrastructures such as the weekly disco established by the IGRM, but considered the media activism a threat to their privacy.[158]

[155] *Evening Herald*, 2 August 1975.

[156] *The Irish Times*, 4 August 1975.

[157] Norris, *A Kick Against the Pricks* (Transworld, Dublin, 2012), p. 121.
[158] Norris, p. 89.

Figure 2.1: David Norris's respectable aesthetic on Last House

Source: *Last House*, 24/07/1975 (Dublin, RTÉ Productions).

The historic moment of a self-identifying gay man coming-out on a state broadcaster, in a country entrenched within the moral habitus and ethos of the Catholic Church, proved an important moment for gay visibility for several reasons. It provided a marker for homosexuality in both visual and linguistic terms and also provided a discussion of homosexuality that attempted to demystify the sexual orientation, whilst trying to navigate the cultural pressures and prejudices evident in both the interview on the show and the production context surrounding it. The coming-out process and confessional mode present themselves as a production of truth and as Mimi White argues, 'confessional discursive strategies carry possibility for meaning, pleasure and engagement for viewers. The modes of therapeutic discourse constructed through television […] participate in the production of social and cultural identities'.[159] Although the confessional was a significant mode of representation in the media activism of the IGRM, this coming-out process continually asked queer individuals 'to vocalize and accept themselves as different than "normalised society"'.[160] Although Norris in this instance had arguably been relegated to the position of object rather than subject, this coming-out moment presented itself as a site for the production

[159] Mimi White, *Tele-Advising: Therapeutic Discourse in American Television* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 19.
[160] Evan Brody, 'Categorising Coming Out: The Mode Televisual Mediation of Queer Youth Identification'. *Race, Sexuality and Television*, 31.2 (2011): 35-44.

of truth regarding gay Irish lives and provided some understanding of what it meant to be a homosexual in Ireland.

The mainstreaming and confessional modes on this first appearance of a gay man on Irish television generated a positive reception. According to Lynch's 'Television Programme Report', the broadcast was one of the most watched on Irish television that week. *Last House* 'achieved the second highest ratings […], pipped by Kojak in first place'.[161] Norris' visible presence catalysed general praise in the press, but garnered a strong telephone reaction, predominantly negative This included: 'Caller said he was not paying a licence [fee] to see a programme like this'; 'Lady objected to national broadcasting network transmitting propaganda for homosexuality'; 'A very angry gentleman from Castlebar objected to this discussion on homosexuality and said he would keep ringing RTÉ until he could speak to somebody in authority. His wife also objected'.[162] Although visibility provoked hostile reactions to homosexuality making its way into the public sphere, it also put the IGRM on a public footing and RTÉ received numerous letters 'requiring more information about the IGRM'.[163] Not only that, but a congratulatory telex was sent to the production team by Gerard Lawler of the European Human Rights Commission in Geneva. Norris' visibility and respectability on the show seemed to have paid off, with this note from Lawler a form of recognition of the IGRM as a political entity. This is significant in that this queer media presence on RTÉ provided an indexical sign of queer lives in Ireland and that other Irish gay people existed. Overall, the conclusion to Lynch's report acknowledged that Norris' appearance received a 'generally favourable reaction by the media and audience to both the interview and the IGRM'.[164] Significantly, the report claimed that *Last House* resulted in 'good contacts made with members of the National Press', and voiced the hope that this would produce 'better coverage of news and items of interest to homosexual members of the community'.[165] Lynch also states that RTÉ projected plans for future queer programming.[166] The activism of the IGRM and the positive response of Norris' appearance on the show can be read as promoting

[161] Edmund Lynch, *Television Programme Report*, TV/1144/75 Wk. 30.

[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.

further visibility, with RTÉ consciously attempting to produce more programming about and containing topics relating to homosexuality. The report mentioned that on this note, there were already plans for '(1) A documentary on homosexuality, (2) a phone-in programme to a panel in studio to answer questions on homosexuality put to them by the listeners'.[167] The upward pressure and media activism seemed to be paying off, as a gay rights movement was finally on its way onto television screens in Ireland.

Documenting the Confessional: *Tuesday Report* (1977)

The notion of the discourse of gayness in Ireland as mainstreaming and confessional continued as queer visibility developed during this five-year period. In 1977, RTÉ commissioned a documentary as part of the *Tuesday Report* series to examine homosexual life in Ireland. Along with a mainstreaming slant, the confessional mode was central to this broadcast that took a specifically ethnographic approach in isolating gay subjects and studying them to learn about their situation and explain them to the presumed heteronormative viewing audience. An article in the *RTÉ Guide* prior to the transmission of the programme revealed this ethnographic purpose: 'In Tuesday's television programme we talk to homosexuals […] They are accountants, civil servants, shop-workers, manual workers, office-workers. The only difference is that their sexual orientation is towards their own sex. In a short space of time we seek to examine some aspects of their life'.[168] The process of examination on this documentary notably forged a particular relationship between the filmmakers and the subjects. The programme was considered so culturally important by the broadcaster that in 1992, RTÉ rebroadcast the episode to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the original transmission. On that occasion, the original presenter Cathal O'Shannon introduced the programme, stating that 'for the first five or six years of its existence, RTÉ almost ignored the gay community in Ireland'. O'Shannon's comments were symptomatic of the fact that the IGRM had to give priority to negotiating with mainstream institutions such as RTÉ to open up to gays and lesbians, as it sought inclusion within the only broadcaster in the country.

[167] Ibid.
[168] *RTÉ Guide*, 1977, RTÉ Archives.

Tuesday Report is not necessarily a gay and lesbian documentary, but a documentary produced about gay and lesbian people, with gay and lesbian participants. The documentary was authored by a heterosexual production team consisting of director Chris Darby and presenter Cathal O'Shannon. Arguably the parameters of visibility in this instance were controlled by the production team and the broadcaster, as they subjected the gay and lesbian participants to the gaze of the camera lens. Edmund Lynch argues that 'it was very important that the programme was made by heterosexual people and not a gay person' and this did in fact fit the mainstreaming agenda and respectability politics being advanced by the IGRM, as there was a notable collaboration between O'Shannon and the gay participants on screen.[169] This is indicative of what Beverly Seckinger and Janet Jakobsen refer to as 'interactive' documentary making, where the 'producer-subject relations are reconfigured to encourage a shared, mutually participatory process'.[170] The notion of collaboration, as Thomas Waugh argues, is a dominant feature of lesbian and gay documentaries. He notes that 'the self-expression of documentary subjects for the camera in collaboration with the filmmaker/director was the basic ingredient of the classical documentary'.[171] In the Irish context, having a visibly straight presenter navigate the realms of queer life in Ireland provided a subject within the documentary that directly addressed the heteronormative spectators, who could similarly share in O'Shannon's journey of discovery.

The fact that the conservative broadcaster in Ireland produced a whole programme to be transmitted on the nation's only station is a stark contrast to the US experience. Waugh argues that the gay and lesbian documentaries produced post-Stonewall during the 1970s in the US were subjected to a 'blackout in public broadcasting and in the funding bodies' due to anxieties around representing gays and lesbians.[172] Even in the

[169]Author interview with Edmund Lynch, July 8 2016.

[170] Beverly Seckinger and Janet Jakobsen, 'Love, Death, and Videotape: Silverlake Life' in Chris Holmlund and Cynthia Fuchs (eds.) *Between the Sheets, in the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 148.

[171] Thomas Waugh, "'Acting to Play Oneself'": Notes on Performance in Documentary", in Carole Zucker (ed.) *Making Visible the Invisible: An Anthology of Original Essays on Film Acting* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Sarecrow) 1990.

[172] Waugh, "Walking on Tippy Toes: Lesbian and Gay liberation Documentary of the Post-Stonewall Period 1969-84" in Holmlund and Fuchs (eds.) p. 110.

1980s, only 'alternative distribution outlets would take on gay and lesbian titles'.[173] The adoption of the documentary form as a mode of representation on RTÉ could be attributed to the upward pressure being applied on the broadcaster by the IGRM and by influencers such as Edmund Lynch within the organisation. It was also an indicator of RTÉ's mission as a public service broadcaster, as opposed to the commercial channels in the US. Further, it highlights that some decision-makers in RTÉ were willing to create potentially controversial content. Lynch was also a close friend of O'Shannon and Darby and helped them to source participants to speak on the show. This was a great challenge because of the potential repercussions to participants in the workplace and from the criminal laws.[174] The public service remit of RTÉ could also have been an influencing factor in providing visibility in this instance, due to the organisation's obligation 'to reflect fairly and equally the regional, cultural and political diversity of Ireland and its peoples'.[175]

Irish television also had a strong documentary tradition that was not necessarily present in the US media landscape. Since the founding of RTÉ in 1962, film documentary was incorporated largely into the structures of broadcasting, resulting in 'cross-fertilisation of film, broadcasting and journalistic reportage'.[176] Ironically, it was the Catholic Church that significantly contributed to the development of the television documentary. Archbishop McQuaid created a documentary film unit staffed exclusively by Catholic priests. Out of this production unit came *Radharc*, which broadcast from 1962 until 1996. *Radharc*'s output fostered a social justice approach, with documentaries focusing on prostitution in Cork harbour, alcohol abuse and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, mother of the US Kennedy dynasty. *Tuesday Report* then, as a gay and lesbian documentary, was coming from a documentary tradition that had largely been engendered by Roman Catholic production crews.

The television documentary presented a wealth of audiovisual documentation of a newly visible gay public life in Ireland in the late seventies. One of the crucial aspects

[173] Ibid.
[174] Interview with Lynch.

[175] Public Service Broadcasting Charter, Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. Available at: http://www.rte.ie/documents/about/public-service-broadcasting-charter.pdf

[176] Lance Pettitt, *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 72.

of this new documentation was the confessional, which attempted to capture a moment of revelation and inner authenticity. As Waugh has argued on documentary confessionals, 'coming out requires the interactive mode of the interview and monologue by its very nature, and its confessional operation also requires the presence of the spectator, mediated through camera and crew'.[177] The confessional transgressed the public-private divide and engendered a relationship with the viewer, using an interactive realism as the aesthetic strategy of choice. Interactive realism, refers to the formulaic mix of interviews joined by the mortar of observational verité, musical interludes and the voice of the narrator.

Although the confessional has associations with anonymity and shame, particularly in a Roman Catholic sense, this television documentary reconfigured confessional form. In addition to putting a public face to the subject that was confessing, it also utilised representational strategies and visual cues to anchor the confession. The case of Seán Connolly on *Tuesday Report* reflected this. The notion of confession was introduced by O'Shannon, when he narrated: 'How does a man or a woman even admit to themselves that they are homosexual?' He went on to state that Seán is someone who has 'come out in homosexual parlance' and that homosexuals are 'everywhere, in every type of work, in every creed and class'.[178] The visual details during this narration are significant for their engagement with a mainstreaming mode of representation. A mid-shot is provided of a man lying beneath a car as he carries out maintenance work. As the shot zooms out, a close-up is provided of the man as he fills the engine of the car with petrol. The narrator reveals that he is Seán Connolly and is 'prepared to admit and talk about his homosexuality'. The fact that Seán is depicted as a mechanic as he engages with the maintenance of the car is clearly attempting to produce visual cues not only of traditional masculinity and respectability, but also attempts to visually disentangle associations of gay men as theatrical and feminine. This is addressed directly by O'Shannon through the voice-over narration during this series of shots with Connolly, as he states 'Odd isn't it that most of us associate homosexuals with actors, the stage and somehow we're supposed to accept that'. Clearly in this instance, the visual cues of Connolly's interview convey an anti-stereotype rhetoric that attempts to communicate the individual experience, but also works towards the mainstreaming

[177] Waugh, 'Walking on Tippy Toes', p.110
[178] *Tuesday Report*., 22/02/1977, RTÉ Archive Reference 99D00490. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

strategy of respectability being forwarded by the IGRM, of which Connolly was General Secretary during this period.

Figures 2.2-2.5: Series of shots of Seán Connolly working as a mechanic and a General Secretary of IGRM.

Source: *Tuesday Report*., 22/02/1977, RTÉ Archive Reference 99D00490. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

Following this series of shots, the documentary transitions to a more formal interview setting with Connolly. This time he is out of his overalls and is wearing a suit, conveying a political sensibility similar to that of his IGRM colleague David Norris on *Last House*. Connolly is very rehearsed in his confessional. On being asked when he first realised he was gay, he responds by saying that is like asking 'when did he first realise he was Irish'. Extending from this, he states that he had 'certain relationships to form and had certain interpersonal needs' which included companionship, emotional stimulation and satisfaction. The confession is edited through a talking heads format. Using Connolly as a point of departure, a series of mid-shot framed interviews with gays and lesbians follows as their autobiographical enactments recount their personal histories. From this, we see an LGBT youth and

also the first lesbian to be represented on screen, Fil Carson. The talking heads form in this case works towards highlighting how the confession is a shared practice within the queer community, as it attempts to reveal authenticity and an inner truth. The talking heads footage relies largely on the medium close-up and within these interviews, there is a sense, as Richard Dyer argues elsewhere, that 'the film-maker is laying down the agenda'.[179] The agenda in this instance attempts to frame queer sexualities through the lens of heteronormativity. A particularly revealing instance of this occurs between O'Shannon and Fil Carson. O'Shannon prompted Carson to reconsider her homosexuality when he asks her whether she wishes she were like the girls she works with, 'out chasing fellas at dances'. Carson uses this moment to confront O'Shannon's suggestion by saying she 'wouldn't change [her] life or [herself] for anything'. O'Shannon continues to frame homosexuality as a problem to be dealt with when he responds to Carson by stating: 'Presumably there may be problems ahead of you that you wouldn't have if you were homosexual?' to which Carson retorts, 'but there again, there could be problems ahead of me if I were heterosexual'. These moments wrought by the collaborative form of this documentary provide the interviewees the space and opportunity to resist the frameworks that the film-makers brought to bear, while also forwarding the mainstreaming approach of 'gay is good' that was seen with Frank Kameny on *Last House*.

Figure 2.6: Medium Close-up of Fil Carson, which was representative of talking-heads format

[179] Richard Dyer, *Now You See it: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (Routledge: London, 1990), p. 239.

Source: *Tuesday Report*, 22/02/1977, RTÉ Archive Reference 99D00490. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

Remarkably, *Tuesday Report* also depicts semi-public queer spaces, specifically the headquarters of the IGRM on Parnell Square in Dublin, which also served as a social space and a disco. As Waugh argues, the representation of such spaces in queer documentary films requires 'highly contrived dramatisation' and other 'performance aesthetics'.[180] By contrast, *Tuesday Report* adopts a style of observational verité and interactive realism. One particular scene in the bar opens with a wide establishing shot of a man at the bar buying a drink, with members of the IGRM and the gay community behind him (with Fil Carson relegated to the side, her back to the camera). Picking up his drink, the camera follows him and zooms in on the group of men, framing O'Shannon in the middle of them, drinking and smoking. This is a provocative image, given the casual identification of the straight filmmaker with gay people in this queer space. The conversation is spontaneous given the fly-on-the-wall format and shifted around the table as O'Shannon asks various questions, which clearly position him in an ethnographic role, as he discovers queer Irish life along with the viewing Irish audience. In one exchange, O'Shannon remarks: 'I wonder why you use this expression gay […] because after all, it isn't very gay, is it?' This is met with laughter from the group, as Connolly quipps 'I don't know how much you know about the gay world of course'. O'Shannon playfully responds: 'Well, I am learning fast'. Echoing the discussion of the talking heads approach above, the collaborative form of the documentary again enables the filmmaker to immerse himself within this queer space and community as he discovers the particular identity politics of the Irish gay community, while also enabling the gay community on screen to engage with commonly circulated prejudice.

Such is the case when Norris enters the conversation regarding the word gay, stating that 'it is our own word […] and it says something about a lifestyle rather than just a sexual condition'. The very use of the word gay itself suggested a mainstreaming politics and a departure from what was considered the more clinical connotations of

[180] Waugh, 'Walking on Tippy Toes', p. 115.

homosexual. Bringing people together on camera like this as part of a group in conversation is a crucial factor in the 'consciousness raising' that is symptomatic of gay and lesbian documentary.[181] The framing and format of this particular scene serves to counter the talking heads approach that dominates most of the programme. This is significant considering that the scene does not privilege an individual speaker as such, but advances the notion of a collective gay community that had not only formed its own means of socialising in semipublic spaces, but also established a collective identity and politics.

Figure 2.7: Wide Shot of O'Shannon with IGRM in a bar.

Source: *Tuesday Report*., 22/02/1977, RTÉ Archive Reference 99D00490. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

The depiction of the gay disco in the basement of the headquarters of the IGRM on Parnell Square reveals the complexities of queer visibility, particularly in representing

[181] Dyer, *Now You See It*, p. 238.

semipublic space in the documentary form in the 1970s. The scene itself contains some disco music, with gay men and women dancing together, embracing and holding hands, which was challenging visual fare for such a mainstream broadcaster at that time. More importantly, it also positioned the Irish gay community as not just a political entity, but a social group. Prior to the shooting of this disco scene, camera crews announced they would be filming so that those who did not want to be depicted on screen could avoid the event. Norris noted that on a night when the disco 'would be packed to the rafters, only a handful appeared, such was the fear of being outed at home by the programme'.[182] This particular moment highlights the complexities of visibility. Sharif Mowlabocus argues that appearing in a queer venue, such as the IGRM disco, 'confers queer status upon the subject […] the space itself acts as a form of "outing", where the crushing and oppressive presumption of heterosexuality that gay men and women continue to suffer is momentarily suspended'.[183] Mowlabocus' point reflects Sedgwick's spatial metaphor of the closet. Sedgwick argues that the closet governs both the public and private realms of queer existence. The previously invisible realms of this queer subculture was subjected to public scrutiny by being broadcast on RTÉ. The presence of a media production crew disrupted the traditional moderate privacy of the space and threatened the interpersonal visibility of the Irish gay community. The visibility being offered to the IGRM through *Tuesday Report* aligned with the group's mainstreaming goals, but also potentially exposed more vulnerable members of the queer community who could not afford the potential retribution of being seen in this queer space on national television.

This instance of broadcasting within the queer coded IGRM disco establishes links with Ayoub's formulation of visibility as being divided into two components, as discussed in Chapter One. There is the 'interpersonal visibility' of seeing other members of the LGBT community, but the gaze of the camera lens also enables the potential of 'public visibility', where the camera and documentary form registers queer identities for the watching audience. To be broadcast occupying this queer space

[182] Author interview with David Norris, 20 October 2016.

[183] Sharif Mowlabocus, 'Look at Me!: Images, Validation, and Cultural Currency on Gaydar', in Christopher Pullen and Margaret Cooper (eds.) *LGBT Identity and Online New Media* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), p. 203.

would thus serve as a means of outing members of the Irish gay community, which carried even more weight considering Ireland's media landscape was within the 'era of scarcity'. Michael Bergin, who was on the board of the IGRM, recalls a family member watching the programme and saying to him: 'Did you see the chap [that] you share a flat with in Dublin was on *that* TV programme […] How are you going to deal with it if someone asks you?'[184] The exchange between Bergin and his family following the broadcast is indicative of the parochial inter-connectedness of Irish society and the potential reach of being 'outed' visibly on such a public platform. Much like Sedgwick's argument regarding the closet being a shaping presence in queer lives, the camera in this instance on *Tuesday Report* similarly governs visibility politics and recalibrates Ayoub's 'interpersonal visibility', as the camera and the documentary threatened to broadcast queer Irish lives to a wider public.

Central to many documentary modes is the use of 'the expert', who is often afforded a privileged position within such texts. This expert draws credibility from their 'official position or standing and from their access to specialised discourses'.[185] Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight argue that they are expected 'to present us with material and knowledge […] and help us discover and gain access to truth'.[186] It is no surprise then, given the cultural context, subject matter and power of the Catholic Church in Ireland in governing sexuality, that this edition of *Tuesday Report* used priests to weigh in on what was perceived as the 'moral issue' of homosexuality. However, the members of the clergy that appear in this documentary conformed to the mainstreaming politics promoted by the IGRM and the documentary more broadly. The documentary makes use of Fr. Michael Cleary, who embodied Vatican II's redefinition of the Church 'as the people and not just the clergy'.[187] Cleary had previously risen to notoriety when he appeared in Peter Lennon's landmark documentary *The Rocky Road to Dublin* (1967), where he discussed the Catholic Church's views on celibacy, sex and

[184] Edmund Lynch, *Did Anyone Notice Us? Gay Visibility in the Irish Media, 1973-1993*. (It's a Wrap Productions/RTÉ, 2003)

[185] Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 16.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Matthew McAteer, 'A Scandalous Repression in the Irish TV Documentary Series Radharc'. *Emerging Perspective Postgraduate Journal*, 2.1, (2011).

marriage. Cleary had also established a career as a broadcaster and as a singer. His viewpoints were notably more progressive than the official Church position.[188]

Noticeably, *Tuesday Report* presented multiple and dissenting voices like Cleary's from within the Church, which was symptomatic of the changes being implemented in the wake of Vatican II. For example, at the beginning of the documentary, O'Shannon questions Norris regarding 'what exactly is a homosexual', to which Norris provides what was becoming the regular mainstreaming response: 'A homosexual is a human being like anybody else, who needs affections, needs love, needs friends and needs companionship'. Following this scene, the documentary cuts to Cleary, who states: 'People fear homosexuals, I don't know why they fear them. They're normal people. Their sexual drives and urges are in different directions'. Each of the two subjects in this talking-heads format are edited speaking directly to each other, not only bringing two ostensibly opposing voices into dialogue, but emphasising that both were promoting a mainstreaming approach to discussing gay and lesbian identities more broadly. By editing these subject's statements together, the documentary recalibrated the traditional Catholic confessional of anonymity and shame, resulting in the confessional occurring in the much more open plane of the public sphere. Notwithstanding that, it almost suggests that Cleary is 'absolving' Norris of his sins, by pinpointing the sameness of his homosexuality to the straight majority. Not only did the confessional on this gay and lesbian documentary reflect what Waugh refers to as 'the transgression of the silence around difference and sexuality', but the Irish idiom provided the ritualised process of coming-out. Editing both Norris and Cleary - gay activist and priest - concurrently resulted in a mainstreaming approach that induced an ideological negotiation between what traditionally would have been polarised viewpoints on sexuality.

The inclusion of Fr. Feichin O'Doherty, Professor of Logic and Psychology at University College Dublin, was also surprisingly progressive. In contrast to the more personal approach evident with Fr. Michael Cleary, O'Doherty's contribution on *Tuesday Report* is entrenched in academic theological rhetoric. He states that sexual

[188] Following Fr. Cleary's death in 1993, national news magazine *The Phoenix*, published an article alleging that Cleary had fathered a child with his long-time housekeeper Phyllis Hamilton. This followed the 1992 discovery that Bishop Éamonn Casey was found to have fathered a son with American divorcée, Annie Murphy. These scandals marked the beginning of a series of exposés that revealed a long history of abuse and corruption within the Irish Roman Catholic Church.

pleasure 'is only legitimate in marriage' and any way of achieving it outside of marriage breaks the moral law. Thus, the official attitude of the Church and the 'Holy Father' as he notes, is that homosexual acts are immoral, because gay relationships cannot receive any formal recognition through marriage. O'Doherty is hesitant to condemn homosexuality throughout his interview with O'Shannon and at the very end, the documentary concludes with a shot of him, where he strikingly states: 'condemnation is not the answer, it is not a help to anybody and that is not the Christian way of dealing with human frailty'. Crucially, the documentary concludes on this mainstreaming note. The programme itself became a site where the voices of the Church and the IGRM are edited together to convey a mutual goal of dialogue and understanding. This did not represent the dominant attitude of the Catholic Church in Ireland, but to have Church officials state this publicly on a mass medium was crucial to the treatment of homosexuality on the programme and seemed aimed at divesting homosexuality of shame. The priests on *Tuesday Report* reflect the changes to moral standpoints within the Church following Vatican II as well as the fact that they had media acuity in terms of their viewpoints on moral issues. This programme indicates how the Catholic Church was and became integral to queer visibility, as it attempted to shape and govern debates around homosexuality in Ireland for many years to come.

The reception of *Tuesday Report* by the mainstream press acknowledged the broadcast's confessional and mainstreaming modes. Ken Gray wrote in the *Irish Times* that: 'what was most surprising […] was that the people to whom Cathal O'Shannon talked to were not as he said himself the "prancing queens" he expected to find, but very ordinary, rational and apparently well-balanced human beings'.[189] At least to particular journalists, *Tuesday Report* ruptured stereotypes of homosexuality, as Ireland's repressed minority were considered legitimate and respectable. This was also the case with the heteronormative audiences to whom the programme was addressed. Margaret Kegley, a viewer, wrote to Cathal O'Shannon and stated:

> It was with some misgivings I sat to watch the program you presented […] May I say I was impressed by your handling of such an explosive and unpopular subject. Being a viewer of the BBC I was not too unaware, but

[189] Ken Gray, 'When Boy Meets Boy', *Irish Times*, 28 February 1977.

> certainly I gained a measure of respect for the men who talked and admitted they were homosexual.[190]

Margaret Kegley's letter indicates that she even changed her position somewhat on homosexuality. The letter is one of many received by O'Shannon praising the programme and although this is not to suggest that the mainstreaming approach shifted the attitudes of an entire viewing audience overnight, it is an indication that there was at least some movement towards an acceptance of Ireland's gay community. The logs of telephones calls received by RTÉ reveal that forty calls were made following the show, twenty-six congratulating the programme, four seeking further information on the IGRM and four expressing anger.[191] Complaints about *Tuesday Report* were almost exclusively concerned with the shots of the dancing scene at the Phoenix Club disco, with Máire Breathnach formally submitting a complaint to the RTÉ Broadcasting Complaints Commission. This complaint was subsequently rejected. The mainstreaming and confessional modes of queer visibility on Irish television proved crucial in providing recognition and acceptance from heteronormative viewers, as well as identification for queer viewers, who evidently reached out to the IGRM in the wake of the show's broadcast.

Locating the Homodomestic on *Week In*

Week In (1980) signalled a shift in the configuration of queer visibility. In contrast to the previous mainstreaming discussions of gay liberation politics on *Last Hous*e and *Tuesday Report*, the episode with gay couple Arthur Leahy and Laurie Steele was the first time a programme broadcast a gay couple within the domestic space of their home. This broadcast provided an alternative to the implicit heterosexuality of the home dominant within Irish culture. More importantly, the representations of gay people in the previous two texts tended to have a political valence as they appeared in debates over sexual liberation and acceptance. Although this interview came about because of the formation of the Cork Gay Collective in 1980, its approach examined life as a gay couple in Ireland, rather than a fight for rights and recognition evident

[190] NLI, IQA, MS 45,943/2, "Letter from Margaret Kegley to Cathal O'Shannon", 23 February 1977.
[191] NLI, IQA, MS 45,943/2, 'Summary of calls received by RTÉ on Tuesday Report", 22 February – 24 February, 1977.

with the two previous broadcasts. It must be noted that despite this, the programme still utilised both the mainstreaming and confessional modes of representation, but to varying ends. The broadcast was symptomatic of a larger gay rights movement that was beginning to spread to different regions of Ireland and indicated that the gay movement was not just specifically confined to Dublin.

While gay individuals fighting for equality and social recognition were prevalent on *Last House* and *Tuesday Report*, gay couples were glaringly absent. *Week In* was particularly important in the sense that it highlighted the unsustainability of living a gay life in Ireland and the need to emigrate to form a queer subjectivity. Arthur and Laurie's eventual return from the diaspora to form a homodomestic space in their home in Cork, which was documented on this seminal programme, served to challenge perceived notions of heteronormativity in Ireland during the late 70s and early 80s. In this instance, heteronormativity refers to the way social and political institutions assume the most desirable forms of kinship to be based on a monogamous intimacy between a man and a woman, who in turn reproduce the norm through the regulative institution of the heterosexual family.[192]

In challenging this heteronormativity, the representation of the couple deployed many of the same strategies seen on *Last House* and *Tuesday Report*, particularly those surrounding respectability politics and the confessional coming-out as a central goal to early gay liberation. The coming-out in this instance however was as a gay couple. The homodomesticity represented is particularly striking. Although the Catholic faith played a significant role in the marginalisation and oppression of gay people in Ireland, the country's pervasive ideology of domesticity was equally influential on the alienating experience that led many Irish gay people to consider emigrating. The heteronormative nuclear family structure circulated centrally in the cultural discourses of Irish media in the period prior to the 1980 broadcast of *Week In*, with popular drama series such as *Tolka Row* (1964-1968), *The Riordans* (1965-1979) and *Bracken* (1978-1982) reinforcing domesticity in terms of the heteronormative family unit. These television dramas did not deliberately omit gay domesticity. They did however fail to represent, in overt or open ways, different orientations or family structures. This

[192] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, 'Sex in Public' in Michael Warner (ed.) *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 194.

domestic heteronormativity on national television went unchallenged until the surprising homodomesticity of the 1980 *Week In* episode.

The concept of homodomesticity can be traced to photographer Chad Houle's 2009 exhibition entitled *Homodomestic*. Houle's photographs featured gay men situated in domestic spaces, inspired by the fact that:

> I grew up without any real examples of love. I never was able to make the connection between being gay and the ability to be in a strong lasting relationship […] I look back not knowing who I was or how there were so few images of that life I so greatly yearned for […] with this new "homo-domesticity" the home plays an important element as a symbol for stability and commitment.[193]

Houle's concept of homodomesticity helps us to revisit the queer visibility seen on *Week In* to interrogate Laurie and Arthur's lives and to understand the political dimensions of such a representation. In the case of Laurie and Arthur on *Week In,* homodomesticity becomes a representational strategy. Whereas the representation may not have registered as political in comparison to the visibility given to the IGRM on *Last House* and *Tuesday Report*, its political effects come into view in the context of theoretical debates surrounding heteronormativity and the homodomestic. Although some scholars suggest that homodomesticity may be depoliticised and assimilationist, I argue that this is not necessarily the case with this particular historic instance of Irish gay domesticity.[194] The indexical sign of a gay couple informed Ireland's gay community that it was possible to be gay, stay in Ireland and maintain a relationship, thus positioning homodomesticity as 'a symbol for stability and commitment'.[195] It further highlights the changing borders of respectability politics over time, as it could now incorporate a gay couple.

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[193] Chad Houle, Homodomestic. Artist Statement: The Portfolio of Chad Houle. Available at: http://www.splicetoday.com/pop-culture/homodomestic

[194] Steven Doran, 'Housebroken: Homodomesticity and the Normalization of Queerness in Modern Family' in Pamela Demory and Christopher Pullen (eds.) *Queer Love in Film and Television: Critical Essays* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[195] Doran, p. 95.

Week In's approach was a fusion of an observational verité style and an interview. Once again, Áine O'Connor covered the story, as she interviewed both Arthur and Laurie in the sitting room of their home in Cork city. Much of the discussion was led by the couple, with O'Connor providing some prompts throughout. The interview begins with the familiar beats of self-determination and becoming aware of one's sexuality, as indicated by O'Connor's question to Arthur: 'How did you find out you were actually gay?' To this, Arthur replies, 'it was something I was aware of inside myself causing incredible conflicts and anxiety'.[196] Considering the centrality of the family to Irish culture, it is unsurprising that O'Connor speaks within the frame of family rhetoric when she follows up by asking Arthur about the effects his coming-out had on his family. He replied: 'they were shocked, they would probably see it in terms of inadequacy'. This response in Arthur's confessional relates to the attitudes of Irish society towards gay people in the early seventies.

Figure 2.8: Laurie and Arthur are interviewed by Àine O'Connor in their home in Cork

Source: *Week In*, 11/02/1980, RTÉ Archive Reference, TY0104171. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

One of the first major issues that the programme addressed about being gay in Ireland during the 1980s was migrating to find a more accepting society in which to live a homosexual lifestyle. Arthur explains that due to the anxiety he felt living in Ireland, he believed he had no option but to migrate to London for the opportunity to form a meaningful relationship with another man. What is poignant about Arthur's description of being pushed into a diasporic gay identity was his inability to conform

[196] *Week In*, 11/02/1980, RTÉ Archive Reference, TY0104171. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

to or assimilate into the heteronormative social milieu of Irish culture. As Alan Sinfield notes, the 'diasporic sense of separation and loss' experienced by gay people often results from being cut off from the heterosexual culture of their childhood, which becomes the site of 'impossible return and impossible memories'.[197] In Arthur's case, he had not merely lost the culture of his childhood; he faced near-total invisibility and ostracism if he did not leave the country. Given the fact that gay identities were rendered invisible by the State, it is hardly surprising that migration played a decisive role in Arthur's coming-out process.

Because of the centrality of the heterosexual family unit as a means of social organisation in twentieth-century Irish society, the *Week In* episode demonstrated how Arthur, even after migrating to London, did not find it easy to recover from the oppression of his upbringing in Ireland: 'you carry the oppression with you always and that's part of the gay consciousness'. His comments on this instance indicated how migrating geographically away from oppression does not necessarily free you from it. It was through migrating to London that Arthur met Laurie, something that he stressed would not have been possible in Ireland. After living in London for five years, Arthur and Laurie decided to 'come back to Ireland to try and make a life for themselves in Cork'. Their return from the diaspora as a gay couple openly confronted heterosexual coupling as the fundamental fabric of Irish society. Both their gay identities and more importantly, their coupling, were threats to heteronormativity. Arthur explained that this kind of relationship was 'not reinforced by the society around and you are very much on your own, you don't get a sense of identity'. Still, the couple's return from the diaspora and the broadcast of the programme played a significant role in the decision of other gay emigrants in London to return to Ireland. Among other examples, gay rights activist Marie Mulholland emphasises this about her return from the diaspora. She recalls of the *Week In* programme:

> I saw that on a visit home to Belfast. I had been living in London at the time. I was seriously thinking about coming home for good and I wanted to know what it would be like at home in Ireland and out and [Arthur's] strength, his

[197] Alan Sinfield, 'Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identity and the Ethnicity Model', in Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.) *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 102.

energy and his courage, and his boyfriend's gave me the courage to do it as well.[198]

Although *Week In* was not as politically charged as the previous cases of queer visibility, the broadcast did have an affirmative dimension that positioned Ireland as offering the possibility of living an 'out' gay life, to the extent the confessional coming-out spoke to queer Irish audiences regarding the sustainability of a queer existence within the country. In this instance, television proved instrumental for isolated queer people to become aware of shared existences. As Richard Dyer argues, mass media has the capacity to prove that other queer people do exist.[199]

The queer lives presented by both Arthur and Laurie on the broadcast also suggested a minoritising approach, which was a significant departure from the mainstreaming of gay identities evident with the IGRM's appearance on *Last House* and *Tuesday Report*. This becomes clear when O'Connor's line of questioning adopts a characteristic turn to heteronormativity, asking the couple 'Do you have a sense of husband and wife?'. Implied in this question is the expectation that gay men adopt gender stereotypes of dominant and submissive roles, while also performing identities that enable them to submit to the heteronormative family structure of Irish society. Instead of fulfilling the institutional roles of husband and wife, Laurie explained that he and Arthur had developed a relationship that operated outside of this system that appealed to the liberal subject: they had decided to put 'the importance on ourselves as individuals living together'. In accordance with the heteronormative logic of the questions, the issue of having children is broached. The couple acknowledged this as impossible, with Laurie explaining that the height of their expectations had been to arrive at a situation 'where there was straight adults and maybe their children'. When asked by O'Connor if people's opinions on 'gays threatening the family structure' are valid, Arthur denied this but also noted there was no further possibility of them assimilating into the Irish heteronormative family unit because the 'family structure just does not accommodate gay people'. The nuances and complexities of a queer relationship are highlighted by the couple, as was the particularities of such a coupling. Neither Arthur

[198] Lynch, *Did Anyone Notice Us?* (It's a Wrap Productions/RTÉ, 2003).
[199] Richard Dyer, 'Foreword', in Alexander Dhoest, Lukasz Szulc and Bart Eeckhout (eds.) *LGBTQs, Media and Culture in Europe* (London, Routledge, 2017), p. xi.

nor Laurie attempt to position gay relationships on par with heterosexual ones and in fact suggest that this affords them the opportunity to organise a different kind of relationship. Thus, this broadcast of Arthur and Laurie's return from the diaspora challenged heteronormative Irish society, while it also called into question the presumption that presenting gay relationships as a non-threatening, alternative form of coupling is necessarily apolitical.

Although what Arthur and Laurie say regarding their relationship through the interview rejects a mainstreaming presentation of their relationship, particular visual cues are deployed to convey a respectability politics, so that their relationship could be understood in terms of mainstream Irish values. The interview took place in the living room of Arthur and Laurie's home on Patrick Street in Cork. The room contains a television set and a piano, with pictures decorating the walls – all markers of traditional domesticity. The mise en scène is also worth considering. Both Laurie and Arthur sit on a couch in the middle of the living room and O'Connor sits on a stool facing them, with her back to a burning fireplace. The fact that the composition of the mise en scène is structured in this manner, and not in a studio environment, gives the programme a number of qualities. It makes the gay couple non-threatening, as they have invited the production crew into the private space of their home. One particular shot cuts away to Laurie sitting in an armchair reading a newspaper. As it slowly zooms out, it includes a wider shot of the living room within the frame. Arthur enters with a pot of tea and approaches the dining table, which is decorated with cups, saucers and flowers; he beckons Laurie over as he pours him tea. They begin to eat and talk to each other. Other shots included in the interview comprise the couple walking around Cork as city-shoppers. The homodomestic imagery produced by these visual cues silently promotes the idea of homonormativity. The latter concept refers to a 'politics that does not contest the dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency and a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity'.[200] One might certainly argue that the desire to create a domestic space as a gay couple aligns itself, particularly in Irish culture, with heteronormative standards. However, from a historic perspective this was not entirely or necessarily assimilationist. It might

[200] Lisa Duggan, *The Incredible Shrinking Public: Sexual Politics and the Decline of Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), p. 179.

also be argued that the selected visual details represent gay men reclaiming the traditional Irish home for themselves. Visually, RTÉ attempted to convey the couple in a register that recuperated the social mores of mainstream Ireland, however what Laurie and Arthur said regarding relationships was particularly important. Their coming-out on the national broadcaster indicated that it was possible to sustain a long-term queer relationship in Ireland, even if this was not supported by wider Irish society. This was important, considering that gay relationships during this period were what Laurie referred to as 'very furtive', with gay individuals only identifying as such 'a couple of nights a week'.

Figures 2.9-2.10: Producing Homodomestic visual cues

Source: *Week In*, 11/02/1980, RTÉ Archive Reference, TY0104171. (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

In the context of Laurie and Arthur's appearance on *Week In*, we might note that in much queer scholarship, the domestic depoliticises and demobilises gay populations,

promoting heteronormativity in order to tame deviant sexual subjects and render them non-threatening to a straight majority. Writing in 2013, Steven Edward Doran argues that 'for many, the presence of homodomestic representations on mainstream television signals that assimilation and normalisation of gays and lesbians into mainstream culture is complete, that the vision of gay and lesbian activism is realised'.[201] However, he argues that homodomesticity does have the potential to marginalise 'gay and lesbian identities, lifestyles and culture through the representational strategies of suppression' to the extent that it may silence and erase 'the possibility of queer alternatives'.[202] In fact, this formed much of the mainstreaming work being carried out by the Irish civil gay rights movement in the broadcasts preceding the *Week In* programme. Although *Week In* does continue to present mainstreaming and confessional modes through the visual details on screen, the actual 'queerness' of queer existence is also revealed. I would like to argue then that the homodomestic in this programme becomes a site at the threshold between queerness and normativity – at once gesturing towards an assimilationist conservatism and the domesticated version of gayness it advances, while also serving a progressive purpose of granting visibility to gays in mainstream culture. Instead of viewing Laurie and Arthur's historic appearance on *Week In* merely through the lenses of assimilation and normalisation, we should understand that the visibility extended to them and their coming out on the public service broadcaster as gay was an achievement in itself for the gay rights movement in Ireland. Because of the centrality of domesticity in Irish society, the presentation of a homodomestic scenario was a political act that challenged hegemonic representations and commonly circulated beliefs about gay people in Ireland.

The reception of *Week In*, much like its predecessors, was for the most part positive. Cathal Kerrigan, an activist with the Cork Gay Collective in the 1980s notes that: 'Laurie and Arthur were boring and that was important. They wore boring clothes and they said boring things'.[203] The ordinariness that Kerrigan speaks of is acknowledged by an *Irish Times* article:

[201] Doran, p. 96.
[202] Doran, p. 97.
[203] Author interview with Cathal Kerrigan.

> This programme examines the lifestyle of what appears to be a normal couple in a stable relationship, except that they belong to the same sex. This provides a jumping off point for a serious discussion of the failure of Irish people to realise that there is a homosexual community living in our midst and the futility of pretending otherwise.[204]

The visibility of a gay couple on Irish television was also subjected to homophobia in some local, parochial press. An article in the *Cork Evening Echo* stated: 'on Monday along comes Áine O'Connor and she has a pair of "gay boys" who must also tell their story'.[205] The visibility of the Irish gay community on RTÉ was also a source of contention within the article, when it asked: 'I want to know why all of these minorities are getting so much valuable time on our national network'. The appearance of non-normative sexualities on what was traditionally a mainstream broadcaster was evidently confronting conservatism within Irish society. Queer visibility in this instance was crucial. As alternative conceptions of kinship and domesticity were broadcast, queer visibility challenged the heteronormative idea of home and family in Ireland.

Lesbian Invisibility

Much of what has been discussed in this chapter has pertained largely to that of gay men. It would appear that the early gay Irish civil rights movement, at least in terms of public media visibility, was almost entirely dominated by gay men. There was only one instance of a woman appearing on screen in the case of Fil Carson, and even this was with limited screen time. This issue is partially addressed on *Last House*, when midway through the interview, O'Connor interjected: 'I am of course referring to lesbians as well'. Norris responded to this and stated:

> While of course lesbians in Ireland are in a difficult position, [they] don't suffer as the men do from the severe penalties of the law […] Some of the women,

[204] "Television Today", *Irish Times*, 11 Februrary 1980.
[205] "Two Rival Television Channels", *Cork Evening Echo*, 16 February 1980.

> may I say, regard that as a grievance because they feel that at least we men have something dramatic to fight about.

Norris' response acknowledges that lesbian sex was not officially criminalised under the law in Ireland and did not even receive recognition through criminalisation. Media scholarship more broadly has addressed this issue of the relative invisibility of lesbians. Suzanna Walters observes that 'the relationship of lesbians to the media has always been complex and more deeply coded by invisibility than that of gay men'.[206] Larry Gross and James Woods similarly consider that the second half of the twentieth century saw an 'increase in gay (and less often lesbian) visibility' in the US.[207] An exception to this lesbian invisibility appears in the Australian media landscape, where, according to Rebecca Beirne, there has been 'a rich history of lesbian representation on television'.[208]

The paucity of lesbian media visibility has been addressed to some degree in the Irish context by those who were active within the lesbian movement during this period. Joni Crone states that it was because of the criminalisation of gay male sex acts that gay men 'have been consistently and doggedly active in the public arena'.[209] This could be one reason to explain the dominance of gay men in the media and it is also readable as yet another instance of a male dominated media and political establishment, which was more interested in the male experience. Crone goes further to explain that the risk of visibility for lesbians was far greater than for men, because to make such a public appearance 'may have invited violence, rape or even death'.[210] This violence may also have been attributed to policing gender behaviour, as well as dissident sexualities. Lesbian activist Izzy Kamikaze provides a more scathing reason as to why lesbians were so invisible during this period, where she notes that 'like their counterparts everywhere, [gay men] were obsessed with projecting a respectable image of

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[206] Suzanna Danuta Walters, *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[207] Larry Gross and James Woods, *The Columbia Reader on Lesbians and Gay Men in the Media* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[208] Rebecca Beirne, 'Screening the Dykes of Oz: Lesbian Representation on Australian Television'. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 13.1: 25-34, 209.
[209] Joni Crone, 'Lesbians: The Lavender Women of Ireland', in Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins (eds.) *Lesbians and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-first Century* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 61.
[210] Ibid.

homosexuality'.[211] She elaborates, stating that these publicly active gay men presumed to speak for everyone 'in what they did not even bother to call the lesbian and gay communities'.[212] In some instances, the respectability politics deployed in the texts discussed in this chapter obscured the broader LGBT community as much as it revealed parts of it.

Even in terms of RTÉ, there was an anxiety in representing lesbians on television. In 1979, the Dublin Lesbian Line was founded by activist Joni Crone, as Irish lesbians began to fight for public recognition and media visibility alongside their gay male counterparts. In one particular instance during 1979, it was agreed that Crone would appear on *The Live Mike* show, which broadcast in the prime-time slot of 9.30pm on RTÉ One. On the show, she would participate in a documentary segment about being a lesbian. However, just prior to broadcast, Edmund Lynch recalls that 'the production team got nervous about having a lesbian on the show and dropped Crone. They were really shitty about it and I remember I attacked [the] producer John Keogh, which caused a rift between us for almost six years'.[213] The first public appearance of a lesbian on live Irish television was a source of panic for the broadcaster, who shied away from the potentially controversial segment, arguing that a segment about a lesbian 'had too much adult content'.[214] RTÉ was to redress this issue a year later, when Crone made a memorable appearance on *The Late Late Show*. Prior to the *Week In* broadcast, Áine O'Connor prefaced the programme by saying that she 'would be dealing with male homosexuals, as officially, female homosexuality does not exist, surely an even greater insult to lesbians than to be described legally as criminals'. Despite this insight on O'Connor's behalf, the dominance of gay men in the Irish media was something that lesbians would contend with for years to come.

[211] Izzy Kamikaze, 'I Used to be an Activist, But I'm Alright Now'. *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland*, p. 117.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Author interview with Lynch.
[214] *GCN*, Issue 331, July 2017.

Conclusion

The three broadcasts examined in this chapter were significant in that queer media visibility established a confluence of three elements. Firstly, the broadcasts developed the very idea of queer identities that were mainstreamed and not entangled in generic stereotypes. Secondly, the growth of forms of mass distribution of queer visibility made available to isolated LGBT people awareness of shared existences and desires. Finally, and most importantly, queer visibility provided an indexicality that queer Irish people did exist and that there was a gay liberation movement taking place in Ireland, be it through organisations like the IGRM or the Cork Gay Collective.

The broadcasts also indicated the centrality of media activism to queer activism in Ireland, particularly its role in defining queer sexualities and providing what Dyer refers to as a 'glimpse of different circumstances', where the media might serve Irish queer interests rather than run counter to them.[215] Television in particular was such a powerful form during this five-year period of 1975-1980. It was the dominant mass media form in the Western world and was consumed in homes by what was projected as heteronormative nuclear families. Because of the heteronormative function of television as a medium, it provided a perfect platform for queer movements in Ireland to progress their politics and normalise queer identities for the watching audience. As has been noted throughout this chapter, respectability was key to these early examples of queer media visibility, with all three programmes being brought together by a fundamental rhetorical dialectic combining the mainstreaming approach and the confessional. Although these modes were to become recurring themes to discourses of gayness in the media within Ireland, this would change with the media activism and visibility seen in the 1980s, particularly that on *The Late Late Show*.

By the end of the 1970s, the original IGRM had imploded as a result of infighting and division over the political and social aims of gay liberation. Out of the ashes came the NGF. The NGF was to lease a building on Upper Fownes Street in the then underdeveloped area of Temple Bar, Dublin, which it called the Hirschfeld Centre, named after the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. The community centre was the first full-time lesbian and gay venue in Ireland and was set to become a hot bed of activism, particularly media activism, throughout the 1980s. As I will argue in the

[215] Dyer, p. xi.

following chapters, as Ireland's queer community became more socially cohesive, so too did their visibility and presence in the Irish media. Not only that, but the Hirschfeld became a site of alternative media production, where the gay community produced media for and by its members. The media was to become a key site where many battles of gay Irish activism were to play out, particularly in the context of the culture wars that were to become a significant part of public debate in the Irish media throughout the 1980s.

Chapter Three

Fifty Shades of Gay – Queer Visibility on *The Late Late Show* (1980-1989)

Introduction

In January 1966, Playboy's London representative, Victor Lownes was on a quest to find fifty Irish bunnies for the Playboy Club in London. As part of his search, it was reported that Lownes had been invited onto RTÉ's *The Late Late Show* (hereafter *LLS*) by presenter Gay Byrne. When Lownes revealed to the Irish media that he was going to use this appearance on the show to recruit Irish girls for his playboy clubs in the UK, the mounting scrutiny from the press and Catholic conservatives resulted in RTÉ pulling the interview. Archbishop of Dublin John Charles McQuaid wrote to the Director General of RTÉ, Kevin McCourt, condemning the proposed appearance of the 'bunny man'. McCourt's response to McQuaid indicated the influence of the Catholic Church over the broadcaster during the period, when it read: 'I am greatly strengthened in my concern to do justice in this field by Your Grace's guidance and understanding'.[216]

Despite this commitment to maintain sexual purity on the *LLS*, less than one month later, 'The Bishop and the Nightie' incident occurred, becoming a watershed moment in early Irish broadcasting. When Byrne was interviewing sets of couples about how well they knew each other on the *LLS*, he asked a Mrs. Fox what colour her night dress was on her wedding night. She playfully responded that she may not have worn anything at all. Although the response was met with laughter by the audience, this was not to resonate with wider Irish society, issuing the wrath of the Bishop of Clonfert, who stated that the incident was 'most objectionable' and 'completely unworthy of Irish television'.[217] Finola Doyle O'Neill notes that the Bishop was so outraged that he 'issued an immediate statement to the *Sunday Press*, which gave it front page treatment the following morning'.[218] The swift action of the Bishop propelled the

[216] From Kevin McCourt to Archbishop Charles McQuaid, 15 February 1966. Diocesan Archives (DDA), Archbishop Charles McQuaid Papers (xxv1/9/2/1999).
[217] Gay Byrne with Deirdre Purcell, *The Time of My Life: An Autobiography* (Gill & Macmillan: Dublin, 1989), p. 74.
[218] Finola Doyle O'Neill, *The Gaybo Revolution: How Gay Byrne Challenged Irish Society* (Dublin: Orpen Press, 2015), p. 21.

incident into the national spotlight. Byrne had initially considered the media spectacle that had erupted as a joke but was eventually forced by RTÉ to make a public apology, when he said: 'It has never been our intention that viewers would be embarrassed by the programme […] Bearing in mind, that it is an ad lib, late night show for adult viewing'.[219]

The significance of introducing this chapter with these two incidents highlights the unique cultural and production context of the *LLS*. While highlighting the extent to which the Catholic Church in Ireland attempted to control public debate and opinion, these two examples indicated how the emergence of the talk show format enabled scrutiny and discussion of various opinions and moral issues. Topics that were considered taboo by Irish society, such as sexuality, found its way onto Irish television screens. The *LLS* was to become a public site whereby polarised views on sexuality, particularly that of queer sexualities, would come into conflict on a public plane.

In light of this, it is important to note the cultural significance and historical context of *The Late Late Show*. By 1962, RTÉ senior managers considered the domestically produced content on the public service broadcaster as weak. At the time, the Australian produced *The Danny Kaye Show* proved a worldwide success in the genre of the variety show. Given the exceptional challenge and cost of attempting to compete in this field, a solution addressing the limited resources at Telefís Éireann was to 'develop programme formats capable of including variety along with debate'.[220] *The Late Late Show* was subsequently conceived by producer Tom McGrath, who returned to RTÉ from his post in Canada as the floor manager at CBC in Toronto. Having been 'impressed by the format of *The Tonight Show*, then hosted by Jack Parr and later by Johnny Carson', McGrath envisaged a similar talk show, with 'American Butt Budin as director'.[221] Originally commissioned for only thirteen weeks, *The Late Late Show* began broadcasting in the summer of 1962 on Saturday nights at 10.30pm. The show soon became popular because 'it was lively' and also embraced the new medium of

[219] 'Byrne Now Realises Show was "Embarrassing to a Section"', *The Irish Times*, 15 February 1966.
[220] Finola Doyle O'Neill, *The Gaybo Revolution: How Gay Byrne Challenged Irish Society* (Dublin: Orpen Press, 2015), p. 26..
[221] Ibid.

television, as it combined 'a home-spun intimacy with the display of studio technology'.[222]

Possibly the most integral part to the show's success was its presenter, Gay Byrne. Byrne 'reflected the optimism and vigour of the younger generation of 1960s Ireland' and he was to become one of Ireland's most celebrated broadcasters as a result of steering *The Late Late Show* as both presenter and eventual producer for the first four decades of its run.[223] Byrne's success on the show was attributed to his 'exuding of self-control, even when apparently taking risks' and his 'willingness to assume the role of devil's advocate for social reform in a tiny conservative island'.[224] Byrne had already forged a broadcasting career with Granada in the UK, where he was the first person to introduce The Beatles on television. Diarmuid Ferriter claims that Byrne's role as facilitator was significant: 'Byrne always had to protect his various viewing constituencies, so the idea of him as "host" and not "instigator" was important. Rarely did his mask, or his professionalism, slip.'[225] Throughout his tenure, Byrne's persona and public profile shaped queerness on the *LLS*. This often came into conflict with the aims of various queer groups and activists, who intended to use visibility on this flagship television show for their own political ends.

With a similar approach to chapter two, this chapter analyses queer visibility on the *LLS* and its queer production context. The *LLS* has been singled out as a case study to examine queer visibility in Ireland as it can be 'credited with introducing a public forum where the values and beliefs that dominated Irish society were challenged and held up to public scrutiny'.[226] Gay Byrne and his production team used the television medium to publicly examine and challenge the nature of Irish society and 'put a mirror up to the face of the country to reflect the transformations taking place'.[227] This mirror was placed up to the face of the country on several instances regarding LGBT questions. The discussion of such controversial issues fuelled the show's popularity and made it a ratings success. Margaret Gillian and Laurence Cox keenly note however

[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Diarmuid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex & Society in Modern Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2012), p. 375.
[226] Doyle O'Neill, p. 26.
[227] Ibid.

that an issue being made visible on the *LLS* should not be mistaken as constructing a breakthrough and that 'issues make the mainstream media as a result, not a cause, of social movements against the official state of affairs'.[228] By the 1980s, the activism of the Irish gay civil rights movement had begun to attract more attention from media institutions such as RTÉ. The founding of the NGF and the Hirschfeld Centre provided political and social engagement that became engines for social transformation, particularly around media activism. David Norris' Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform in particular was active throughout the decade, with the outcomes of various Irish and European court rulings influencing instances of visibility, in particular, the *LLS* soapbox debate in 1989.[229]

The cultural reach of the show also justifies its consideration in this thesis. John Bowman argues that:

> the most significant controversies of the twentieth century in Ireland took place on this programme and were witnessed by the largest audiences in Ireland since de Valera's radio broadcast replying to Churchill in May 1945 or Daniel O'Connell's monster meetings in the mid-nineteenth century…probably no society anywhere had such a high proportion of the population watching such a programme and over so many decades, underscoring its extraordinary reach.[230]

This clearly signifies how much of a cultural influence the *LLS* had in Ireland and consequently deserves consideration, particularly in relation to the shows treatment of queer visibility over the course of its run.

The format of the *LLS* was vital to the show's success and it is important to frame particular features of the show's organisation and style in order to analyse their importance to queer visibility. Two common conventions were used from the beginning. The first was a series of interviews of celebrity guests, prominent public figures or interesting characters, most of whom could be defined as Irish or British

[228] Margaret Gillian and Laurence Cox, 'The Birth of Indymedia.ie: A Critical Space for Social Movements in Ireland', in Rosie Meade and Fiona Dukelow (eds.), *Defining Events: Power Resistance and Identity in Twenty-First-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 12.
[229] The cases in question refer to *Norris v Attorney General*, 1984 and *Norris v Ireland*, 1988. Norris's 1984 case was originally rejected by the High Court and appealed in the Supreme Court, where it was again rejected. He subsequently took his case to the European Court of Human Rights.
[230] Bowman, p. 46 and p. 218.

and involved in the entertainment industry; the second was a defined topic involving live discussion from a panel and studio audience. Towards the latter part of the programme, Byrne would transition from entertainment into the debate segment, which tended to be far weightier in content, as people who were directly connected with the defined topic sat in the audience. The controversy usually stemmed from the latter part of the show, with sexuality often being at the epicentre of televisual debate.

There are infrequent cases of queer visibility on the *LLS* throughout the 1980s, but for the purpose of this chapter, three specific broadcasts have been selected: the appearance of Joni Crone in 1980, the appearance of two American lesbian nuns in 1985 and the soapbox debate on homosexuality held in 1989. These broadcasts share the mainstreaming and confessional approaches discussed in the previous chapter and the unique format of the *LLS* provides different dimensions and representational strategies. The broadcasts also reveal the extent to which queer visibility was deployed by the *LLS* production team to generate controversy and high ratings, which positioned queer visibility within a shifting power dynamic between the national broadcaster and the Irish gay civil rights movement. This power dynamic was further questioned in light of the fact that the *LLS* was broadcast live. Although attempts were made by both production teams and queer activists to control the terms of queer visibility on television, the *LLS*' liveness brought spontaneity and disruption that was beyond the parameters of control.

Audience participation also became an integral convention of the *LLS* format. Fintan O'Toole argues that the show 'went out of the way to make television itself a star, showing the wires, the lights, the monitors, the cameras, the technicians, and, of course, the hero of the hour, the audience', similar visually to the American late-night comedy sketch show, *Saturday Night Live* (1975 -)[231]. The *LLS* was an extremely interactive space and guests were enabled to contribute and argue against the presenter. The fact that that the show was live also encouraged such interactions between Byrne and the audience. Such examples would include when Byrne scolded the eminent Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing for appearing on the show drunk and slurring his words, when a member of the audience shouted at Byrne, 'let the man speak whatever way he wishes to speak'. By its very nature then, the *LLS* has always

[231] Fintan O'Toole, *The Lie of the Land: Irish Identities* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 148.

made the audience integral to its format, even when not designed as such. The LLS format allowed public debate to have a more visible role on Irish television. This constructs a function 'for the ordinary person…a role which effects our understanding of the public…Through the construction of social identities and circulation of arguments and rhetoric, mediation also transforms ordinary, private discourse'.[232]The audience of the *LLS* would be central in shaping queerness on the chat show.

Figure 3.1: RTV Guide advertisement for the LLS.

Source: *RTV Guide*, June 15, 1962 (RTÉ Archives)

Although the mainstreaming and confessional approaches remained dominant features of queer visibility in Ireland, this chapter will argue that the *LLS* reveals further issues at stake for queerness in the Irish media. Firstly, this chapter will argue that the *LLS* televisual treatment of lesbianism was enmeshed in what Adrienne Rich refers to as compulsory heterosexuality. Using Rich's article, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', the chapter will interrogate how lesbian visibility challenged both

[232] Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt, *Talk on Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 5.

the traditional role of women in Irish society and the dominance of gay men in the public sphere. Secondly, this chapter will argue that queer visibility was commodified by RTÉ for the economic purposes of generating good ratings through manufacturing media events. This indicates that visibility was not something exclusively deployed by the Irish gay civil rights movement, but a tool caught up in a power relationship with media institutions and civil rights groups. Finally, the *LLS* played a central role in providing visible representations of queer people for non-queer audiences in a live media environment, setting the stage for both reactionary resistance and for the eventual mainstreaming of gay identities. Mainstreaming remained an integral aim for Irish gay civil rights movements during the 1980s. Throughout these three texts, the historical period of this chapter also charts the development of Irish queer media activism, from grassroots networks made up various queer groups, to a more politically mainstream organisation in the form of GLEN, a systematic and strategic lobbying group which would become Ireland's leading gay rights organisation up until its closure in 2017.

The culture wars taking place in Ireland also shaped these three aspects of queer visibility on the *LLS*. The polarisation of opinions on moral and political issues allowed the *LLS* production team to incorporate these public debates onto the programme. James Davison Hunter provides a useful definition for the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s in the US as a 'fundamental split between orthodox and progressive views of morality', noting that this divide cuts across class, religious, racial, ethnic, political and sexual lines'.[233] The media becomes a field of conflict for culture wars, which is unsurprising, given that popular culture is 'partly where hegemony arises and where it is secure'.[234] As Stuart Hall argues, popular culture is one of the sites where the struggle from and against a culture of the powerful is engaged, an arena of 'contest and resistance'.[235] Popular culture is the site of constant struggle between the mainstream ideology and the social experience of subordinate groups, providing a space for discursive exchanges on both sides.

[233] Irene Taviss Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 3-4.
[234] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "The Popular" in John Storey (ed.) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, Volume 1* (Essex: Pearson, 2006).
[235] Ibid.

The Irish culture wars share similar traits to that seen in the US, but the cultural context that created the ideological conflict is significantly different. As a wave of new social movements proliferated in Ireland, mainstream ideologies surrounding sexuality were frequently challenged, resulting in divisive debates on queer issues. The rise of these social movements and the progressive ideology they represented was interpreted as a threat to the religious right.[236] Notwithstanding that, Ireland's decision to join the European Economic Community (later the European Union) had brought social progressions such as equal pay to the State. In the context of this modernisation and the growth of social movements, the State visit of Pope John Paull II in 1979 was considered as a demonstration by the Church of its authority and power against this wave of modernisation and questioning of cultural hegemony. Heather Ingman argues that the Papal visit was responsible for 'strengthening conservative opinion, resulting in years of conservative backlash'.[237] In *Masterminds of the Right*, Emily O'Reilly documents how a group of right-wing activists 'hijacked Ireland's social agenda for almost two decades'.[238] The 1980s were to become embroiled in debates surrounding what Hunter refers to as 'hot-button' issues, specifically abortion, divorce and decriminalisation of homosexuality.[239] Prompted by the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling in the US, which was a landmark Supreme Court decision to extend the right to privacy to a woman's decision to have an abortion, conservative elements of Ireland became concerned.[240] Conservative groups feared that a court ruling in the State could eventually provide a right to abortion, due to the fact that there was no constitutional provisions for it whatsoever. A Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) of various conservative groups formed in 1981 and lobbied the Irish government, seeking a referendum that would insert into the constitution a prohibition on abortion. This resulted in a referendum of the Eighth Amendment being put to the country in 1983. Nell McCafferty noted that the Eighth Amendment resulted in 'a virtual civil war, splitting Irish households'.[241] It also resulted in the formation of various conservative

[236] Stephanie Lord, 'The Eighth Amendment: Planting a Legal Timebomb' in Aideen Quilty, Sinéad Kennedy & Catherine Conlon (eds.) *The Abortion Papers Ireland: Volume 2* (Cork: Attic Press, 2015), p. 94.
[237] Heather Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction by Irish Women: Nation and Gender* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), p. 21.
[238] Emily O'Reilly, *Masterminds of the Right* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1992).
[239] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: the Struggle to Control the Family, Art, Education, Law and Politics in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
[240] Ibid.
[241] McCafferty, *Nell*, p. 350.

right-wing groups such as Family Solidarity, Christians Concerned and eventually the Iona Institute, which would later enter media debates on homosexuality. The issue of the Eighth galvanised the culture war that would define the hot-button topics of the decade. The 1986 referendum to introduce divorce, which ultimately failed, and the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform in the Irish and European courts further fed into the culture war during this period. The *LLS* became the site where many of these debates were broadcast. These programmes indicate how the Irish culture wars of the 1980s shaped queer visibility in varying ways, as homosexuality became a national moral issue, rather than what had previously been seen as one of human rights and equality. Gay Byrne recalls the divisiveness and combative nature of the debates surrounding homosexuality on the *LLS*:

> I do remember, and it sounds completely incredible now, that we were discussing […] the possibility of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in this country. And what I do remember fairly vividly are people walking out of the studio audience waving their fist at me and hurling abuse and detraction and threats, threats about what they would do to me if they could.[242]

Coming-out and being seen was no longer sufficient, as the Irish civil gay rights movement had to progressively become more astute in the media and engage with mobilised resistance to queer Irish lives.

Lesbians - The Lavender Women of Irish Television

On Saturday 9th February 1980, Gay Byrne introduced the final segment of the *LLS* for that night, remarking: 'Now ladies and gentlemen our final guest is Joni. I am not going to tell you Joni's surname, but Joni is a lesbian and she wants to talk to us about the situation she finds herself in being a lesbian'. This introduction by Byrne indicated the various risks of becoming publicly visible as a lesbian. Despite the fact that Crone was to appear to a viewing audience in the hundreds of thousands, she did not want her full name disclosed on national television. The stakes of being seen on a platform like the *LLS* were very high in 1980, as Crone later noted that the risk for lesbians to

[242] Gay Byrne, *Irish LGBT History Project 2015*, dir. Edmund Lynch.

make such media appearances was far greater than that for gay men.[243] Byrne's introduction of Crone also acknowledged that the confessional demands an audience, 'for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner'.[244] The refusal to fully reveal Crone's identity in this introduction signals that there was an attempt to avoid retribution from the assumed heterosexual audience for making this appearance and indicated that Crone's coming-out narrative on the *LLS* in particular was unfolding within a power relationship. This is magnified further given the huge audiences that watched the *LLS* during the 1980s in comparison to RTÉ's other programming. TAM figures for the show often peaked at just over one million viewers.

As noted previously, lesbians had been absent from the formative broadcasts of queer visibility between 1975 and 1980, with the minimal exception of Fil Carson on *Tuesday Report*. Crone's appearance on the *LLS* provided the first publicly visible lesbian in Ireland. Crone had previously been slotted to appear in a mini-documentary segment on *The Live Mike* chat show in 1979, but her piece was pulled at the last minute due to anxieties surrounding the content being 'too adult'. Despite the fact that RTÉ had up until that point been involved in broadcasts with gay men, the televisual treatment of lesbian sexualities was considered far too risqué for the broadcaster, particularly as the mini-documentary segment was supposed to broadcast before the watershed of 9pm. One year later, researchers working on *The Late Late Show* were willing to take more of a risk and contacted Crone, asking her to appear on the programme. By this stage, Crone had crafted a public persona for herself, both through her activism in the NGF and the Dublin Lesbian Line and her media appearances on various radio programmes. Crone agreed to participate on the show. For one it was a huge platform, but more importantly, she wanted to 'talk about the work we [the Irish civil gay rights movement] were doing, about the Lesbian Line, the Hirschfeld Centre, David Norris' campaign. I wanted to tell gay people looking at it that things were happening'.[245] Similar to the mainstreaming strategies evident with the case studies in Chapter Two, Joni intended to use her appearance to address Ireland's gay community,

[243] Ibid.
[244] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 61.
[245] *GCN*, Issue 331, July 2017.

specifically lesbians, and inform them that there was a community out there for them, specifically support networks for women such as the Dublin Lesbian Line.

The mainstreaming, affirmative aims of Crone's appearance were clear when asked by Byrne 'what would compel a girl like you to appear on a programme like this and blow her cover?' Even the use of 'cover' suggests that lesbianism was something to be camouflaged on the periphery of Irish society. Crone responds: 'I lived in Ireland in total ignorance of homosexuality, particularly female. I thought it was something to do with men and it had nothing to do with me'. Crone's retort is indicative of the culture of invisibility surrounding lesbianism in Ireland, given that lesbians were not even formally recognised through criminalisation in the law as gay men were. What was becoming the familiar beats of respectability politics also appeared during the interview, when Crone informs Byrne that she decided to come out to dispel the 'ignorance and to say I am gay, I'm a normal, everyday person, I hold a very responsible job, I have a family, I have friends, I'm socially active. I'm very happy, it's not a problem'. The programme's treatment of lesbianism, and Byrne in particular, attempts to resist or challenge the respectability being presented by Crone. In doing so, there are regular attempts to configure her queerness as excessive and as spectacle, which is clear when Byrne states 'we often have the impression that people like you wander around like raving wolves, seeking who you may devour […] You constantly approach people to put [sexual] propositions to them'. The choice of words on this instance conveys lesbianism as animalistic and promiscuous, caught up within heterosexist prejudice. Byrne's comments reflect the imperatives of the chat show, where serious issues such as lesbian sexuality are reduced to sensationalism as a means of entertaining, rather than informing the Irish public. This signalled early attempts by Byrne and the *LLS* to elevate queer visibility to the scale of spectacle.

This televisual treatment of Irish lesbianism further reveals a specific cultural context, particularly regarding Adrienne Rich's conceptualisation of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. This is initially raised through Byrne's questions to Crone regarding motherhood and whether being a lesbian made her 'lament the fact that she would never have children'. Her response expresses that she never had a strong desire to foster this traditional maternal role. Crone's activism with the Dublin Lesbian Line and her counselling with the Tel-A-Friend phone-line in the Hirschfeld Centre reveals the specificities of living as a lesbian in Ireland in the 1980s. She informs Byrne that

she knew a number of married lesbians and lesbian mothers 'who found out too late and thought it was a phase […] and once they get married they will be cured. Several years later and several children later they realise I was right all along'. Crone's point regarding lesbians ending up in heterosexual marriages relates to Rich's compulsory heterosexuality whereby 'heterosexuality is presumed the "sexual preference" of most women, either implicitly or explicitly'.[246] Women have traditionally been controlled by what Rich refers to as patriarchal motherhood, economic exploitation, the nuclear family and compulsory heterosexuality. Rich's essay argued that heterosexuality is a violent political institution making way for the 'male right of physical, economical and emotional access' to women.[247] She further challenged the notion of women's dependence on men as social and economic supports as well as for adult sexuality and psychological completion.

The social and historical context of Ireland provides a particular space for a version of compulsory Irish heterosexuality. Enshrined in the Irish Constitution is Article 41, which reads that 'the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved'. The article continues to state 'that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home'.[248] The Constitutional role prescribed to Irish women reflected the constrictive forms of Irish womanhood. This compulsory heterosexuality resulted in 'the Irish mother playing a crucial role in the social and economic development of Ireland' through her confined heteronormative, domestic role.[249] Rich sees lesbianism, and declaring oneself as such, as an act of resistance. As a result, Crone's appearance on Irish television was a resistance to compulsory heterosexuality expected of the Irish women, as she revealed that the lesbian experience in Ireland was profoundly a female experience, different to that of gay men, with what Rich describes as its own 'particular oppressions, meanings and potentialities'.[250]

[246] Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in Stevi Jackson and Sue Soctt (eds.) *Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 131.
[247] Rich, p. 135.
[248] Bunreacht na hÉireann, Articles 41.1.1 and 41.2.2.
[249] Inglis, p. 179.
[250] Rich, p. 136.

Byrne's questions acknowledge this compulsory heterosexuality throughout the interview, when he asks: 'Is it part of the condition that you recognise that you're not attracted to men at all?, following up Crone's response of 'no', yet again, with 'and you always found that you're not attracted to men'. Byrne's rhetoric of compulsory heterosexuality takes a notable turn when he asks:

> Byrne: You weren't turned off men in your childhood? You didn't fall into the clutches of any bad influences?
>
> Crone: A rapist or anything? No.
>
> Byrne: Nothing like that at all? No rape?
>
> Crone: I met some very nice men.

By suggesting that lesbian sexualities are the product of an unwanted sexual encounter with a man during adolescence, Byrne not only recirculates the stereotype that homosexuality can be equated with abuse during adolescence, it also implies that heterosexuality is the natural inclination for women, unless as Rich argues, women become 'pathological, or emotionally and sensually deprived'.[251] Despite the attempts to equate lesbianism with abuse, Crone's appearance on the *LLS* resists the frameworks trying to be pushed onto her by the presenter. She produces an image of an Irish lesbian that materialises lesbianism on Irish television in a way that is affirmative, mainstream and respectable. Not only that, but she foregrounds lesbianism as entirely separate from men, similar to Rich's 'lesbian continuum', that proposes 'uniting women – heterosexual, bisexual and lesbian – in a mutual, woman-focused vision'.[252] Crone, much like Rich, notes that lesbianism is not a reaction against patriarchy or men, but in fact wants to eliminate the casting of allegiances with men and patriarchy in such a way that men become the primary signifier of meaning and value. The fact that Crone is interviewed on television in her own right as an Irish lesbian is crucial in foregrounding Irish queer visibility as not just exclusively male dominated, which had been the case with queerness on Irish television up until this point.

[251] Rich, p. 133.
[252] Rich, p. 134.

Figure 3.2: Crone on the LLS set with Byrne.

Source: *The Late Late Show*, 1980 (Dublin, RTÉ Productions).

The confessional adopts a unique form on the *LLS*, in comparison to what was seen in the previous chapter. The fact that the format was a talk-show and went out live in front of a studio audience provided a different dimension to the confessional than had been seen previously. Insofar as the confessional mode requires an audience, there is also a physical one within the studio, as well as the imagined one watching at home. The confessor is also present in the form of presenter Gay Byrne, who on this occasion is sitting behind a desk with Joni to his side (see figure 3.2). The confessional mode of the *LLS* takes on even more credence given the fact that Byrne has regularly been compared to a priest. Colm Toibín contends that 'he is like the priest who manages the affairs of the parish. Behind the mystery of the Mass lies cold hard work'.[253] In this pastoral role, Byrne has been referred to as having a contradictory public persona, 'both traditional and modern, both conservative and liberal, both Catholic and materialistic'.[254] Byrne was generally perceived to be progressive without being threatening, and candid while still remaining within the parameters of what the Irish

[253] Colm Toibín, 'Gay Byrne: Irish Life as Cabaret'. *The Crane Bag: Media and Popular Culture*, 8.2, 1984, pp. 65-70.
[254] Fintan O'Toole, *A Mass for Jesse James: A Journey Through 1980's Ireland* (Raven Arts Press: Dublin, 1990), p. 170.

considered decency.[255] The editing of the interview reveals the confessional logic that governed the interview. From the introduction of Crone seen in Figure 3.2, the shot turns to a static medium close-up of her (see figure. 3.3). For the entire twenty minute duration of this interview, the shot does not change once, to either Byrne or the audience. The only thing that is heard is Byrne's voice off-screen as he asks Crone various questions. This televisual treatment of lesbianism and queerness is unique in the sense that the editing patterns, or lack thereof, aesthetically conveys a confession. For one, we have the off-screen, invisible voice of Byrne questioning Crone, and the gaze of the camera lens and the audience focused solely on her, as she navigates through each question, prompting audiences to scrutinise her. By mediating Crone's confessional in this way and presenting her private life to the viewing public, provokes the audience to recognise the difference between straight and gay. This was not a conventional editing style on the *LLS* and reveals a particular strategy in representing lesbian sexualities. The televisual treatment of Irish lesbians was formed through specific knowledges of sexuality. In this case, the confession is arguably quite similar to the traditional Roman Catholic confessional tradition of the box and anonymity from the confessor. Crone's appearance resulted in Irish television's reconfiguration of this into a visual form.

Figure 3.3: Medium close-up of Crone.

Source: *The Late Late Show*, 1980 (Dublin, RTÉ Productions).

Crone is arguably forced into this televisual confessional. During his interview with Crone, Byrne speaks through the rhetoric of family values, questioning her about her

[255] Doyle O'Neill, p. 18.

family's reaction to coming-out. The discussion of Crone's family had not been agreed upon as the focus of her appearance and Byrne repeatedly emphasised her personal issues over political ones. Prior to the programme going to air, Crone recalls that it was mutually decided with the researcher that the interview would focus on LGBT activism. When being broadcast live however, Byrne did not honour the established verbal contract. Crone remembers:

> Up until about half way through, it felt like I was getting to say my piece, but then it began to feel like an interrogation. I wanted him to wrap up on my personal story and get on to the movement, what I was there to really talk about. Looking back on [the interview] now, there's a point when I look angry and I'm thinking "fuck this, he's not keeping with the contract, this is not what I'm here for". I felt that he was going in underneath, trying to get me to break down, and it was excruciating.[256]

This televisual treatment of Irish lesbianism identified liveness as a key element to queer visibility on the *LLS*. Byrne harnessed the power of the live broadcast, in which broadcast time and viewing time are simultaneous, to question Crone on issues that she had not agreed to. This incident also reflected the political economy of Irish television. Crone's coming-out on the national broadcaster, although intended by her for mainstreaming and activist purposes, was in fact deployed for big ratings. She later wrote that her appearance came about 'due to a rivalry between certain media personalities' for big ratings, 'rather than any desire on the part of the programme-makers to give lesbians a public voice'.[257] This incident marks that the Irish media industry, specifically the *LLS*, exploited queer visibility to generate good ratings and event television. The fact that RTÉ was dually funded through the licence fee and commercial revenues from advertisement slots, further underlined the importance of generating high TAM figures for commercial survival. The televisual visibility provided to queer subjects on the *LLS* was caught in relations of power of the broader gender, sexual and economic structures of Irish heterosexist culture. Accordingly, the mainstreaming, affirmative aims of Crone's media activism and the broader gay liberation movement becomes inexorably caught up in this power relationship, as the

[256] *GCN*, Issue 331, July 2017.
[257] Ibid.

visibility of queer subjects becomes construed in order to create a media spectacle and event. Although this is at work in the case of Crone in this instance, it is deployed much more efficiently with the appearance of the lesbian nuns in the 1980s, which in itself generated one of the largest media events in Ireland of the 1980s on the *LLS*.

The appearance of an Irish lesbian on such a public platform met some vehement reaction. One caller who contacted RTÉ complained: 'He [Gay Byrne] had a prostitute on last week and he insults us further by bringing on a lesbian'. Another caller stated: 'I do not want to pay a licence fee to see that filthy person'. On a personal level, Crone suffered rejection from her family, received threats of violence and experienced ostracism. She recalls that her parents had feared that 'their house would be set on fire or that they would be shunned by their neighbours'.[258] She also experienced abuse on the streets. Despite this overt negative reaction, Crone had brought lesbianism to mainstream Irish television, out of the margins of queer visibility.

As several scholars have documented, lesbian representations were either absent from popular television, or, if present, tended to conform to various contemporary ideologies of lesbian 'otherness'.[259] Crone's mainstreaming strategy of respectability and her appearance on Irish television served to disassociate lesbianism from the stereotypes propped up by Byrne throughout the interview. Her visibility struck a chord with other Irish lesbians. Máire Ní Bheagliach described the impact of Crone's appearance: 'Joni's coming-out on *The Late Late Show* had a dramatic effect and as a result of this, I contacted the NGF, read some literature and met my first lesbians, who surprised me by being very ordinary. Life would never be the same again'.[260] Even today, Crone states that she is often out in public and approached by members of the Irish LGBT community and told: 'I saw you on *The Late Late* and it helped me'.[261] By divorcing lesbianism from associations with men, patriarchy and gay men, Crone's seminal television appearance produced lesbian images that affirmed the existence of a women-led queer culture in Ireland and exposed the compulsory nature of heterosexuality in the country, particularly within a society that had closely regulated Irish women's lives towards men and motherhood. This was a crucial moment for

[258] Crone, p. 66.
[259] Didi Herman, '"I'm Gay": Declarations, Desire and Coming Out on Prime-Time Television'. *Sexualities*, 8(1): 7-29.
[260] Máire Ni Bheagliach, *Out For Ourselves.* Dublin: Attic Press, 1986.
[261] *GCN*, Issue 331, July 2017.

queer Irish visibility in the media. Her appearance also exposed the use of queer visibility by media institutions for economic and commercial means and not just for its liberatory potential. Crone's appearance was only a smoke signal for what was to come later in 1985. The media event surrounding the lesbian nuns on the *LLS* further underlines the deployment of queer visibility as a tool of sensationalism.

The Curious Case of the Lesbian Nuns

The visibility of lesbians on Irish television signified a confrontation with patriarchy and heteronormativity. Up until Crone's appearance, television in Ireland generally endorsed a denial of women's sexual desire. The representation of lesbianism, as was the case with Crone, was met vehement, negative responses. This could be attributed to the fact that the appearance of a lesbian in the Irish media threatened normative social mores. Such a lesbian threat to the nation was again clear with the 1985 appearance of two ex-nuns and lesbians on the *LLS*. Rollins College Professor Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan were slotted to appear on the show. They had risen to notoriety with their edited collection of essays and interviews titled *Breaking Silence: Lesbian Nuns on Convent Sexuality*. The book documented the testimonials of women who had entered convent life to discover that they were lesbians. Despite Manahan's claim that they were writing the book for a small community of feminist scholars, the publication received national attention in the US, when it was banned in Boston by the Catholic Archdiocese. The Archdiocese also pressured the Boston NBC affiliate to cancel an appearance by the co-authors. Writing in the August edition of *OUT* magazine in 1985, Nell McCafferty accurately predicted the reaction to the book's release in Ireland, when she wrote: 'an Irish publisher will next month distribute the American book *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*. The title is enough to create a furore and a minor furore there will no doubt be'.[262] The book was released in Ireland on Thursday 12 September and 1,500 copies were immediately seized by the Irish customs authorities.

The production team of the *LLS*, influenced by the international furore surrounding the book, invited the co-authors onto the show and used the appearance of the 'lesbian

[262] *OUT*, Vol.1, No. 5, August/September, 1985.

nuns' to create a media event. The production context surrounding the appearance of Manahan and Curb reveals how carefully manufactured the *LLS* piece was in creating sensationalism in the hope of ensuring high TAM ratings. The case of the lesbian nuns also reveals how queer visibility was specifically utilised by RTÉ to generate a debate within the public sphere on queer sexualities in Ireland, ensuring that the episode and the show would receive coverage by the popular press. The *LLS* has an established practice of never advertising its guests in advance of the show.[263] Breaking from the tradition, a producer from the *LLS* revealed to the *RTÉ Guide* that 'a pair of lesbian nuns would be appearing' on an upcoming episode.[264] Once this was announced, Byrne recalls that a deluge of 'the most obscene letters, telegrams and telephone calls' were being submitted to RTÉ daily.[265]

The lesbian nuns soon became a media event, as their television appearance on the 14 September approached. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz surmise that the concept of the media event was almost exclusive to television. They argued that mass media, in particular broadcast television, has a powerful influence on national public discourse.[266] This book is characterised by an emphasis on liveness and broadcast technology as conditions of eventfulness.[267] Nick Couldry further argues that 'media events are certain, situated, thickened, centring performances of mediated communication that are focused on a specific thematic core, cross different media products and reach a wide and diverse multiplicity of audiences and participants'.[268] This was certainly the case with Manahan and Curb, given the fact that their appearance on Irish television received international coverage, primarily in the US. Newspapers from Florida, Los Angeles, Maryland and Boston all featured the story during the period, indicating the international scale of the event. Douglas Kellner envisions media events as a 'spectacle'. Specifically, he considers such events as a contested terrain, where culture wars between the left and right and liberals and

[263] Katherine O'Donnell, 'Lesbian Lives and Studies in Ireland at the Fin de Siécle' in Mary McAuliffe and Sonja Tiernan (eds.) *Tribades, Tommies and Transgressives, Histories of Sexualities: Volume 1* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. 20.
[264] Byrne and Purcell, p. 187.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 9.
[267] Dayan and Katz, p. 1.
[268] Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, 'Introduction', in *Media Events in a Global Age* (eds.) Nick Couldry, Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Krotz (London: Routledge, 2009), p.12.

conservatives attempt to exploit this spectacle. He defines them further by stating 'the major media spectacles of the era dominate news […] and are highlighted and framed as the key events of the age'.[269] Kellner's argument appropriately relates to the culture wars taking place in Ireland at this time. One member of the Irish public and a Catholic attempted to challenge RTÉ by taking a case to the High Court, as he felt that the appearance of the nuns 'would greatly undermine Christian moral values' and 'the respect of the general public for nuns'. The case was very quickly thrown out.[270] Both Manahan and Curb were also thrown out of the Buswells Hotel on Molesworth Street by conservative owner, Noel Duff, who 'respected nuns'.[271] He commented that he had not read their book, but did not 'want anything to do with them'.[272] What is significant about the sources of these quotes is that they are from a local newspaper in the state of Florida, indicating the permeation of queer Irish visibility into other media economies beyond Ireland. The *Los Angeles Times* even documented how the former nuns 'who became lesbians', had also been picketed at the Buswells Hotel by 'Roman Catholics', who saw the authors and their book as a 'platform for perversion and indecency'.[273]

Queer visibility on the *LLS* played a central role in providing visible representations of queer people for non-queer audiences, setting the stage for reactionary resistance to queer identities. The resistance to the appearance of the ex-nuns physically manifested at the studios of RTÉ on the night of the broadcast. Catholic conservatives gathered outside the *LLS* studios on the Montrose campus in Donnybrook. An RTÉ news report portrayed the protestors as they erected a statue of the Virgin Mary, handed out flyers to passing cars and were led through decades of the rosary by a priest in a caravan.[274] Byrne recalls that holy water was 'showered' onto the production team and guests as they entered the studios.[275]

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[269] Douglas Kellner, 'Media Spectacle and Media Events: Some Critical Reflections' in *Media Events in a Global Age*, p.78.
[270] Damian Corless, 'The Sex Factor'. *Irish Independent*, 19 September 2017.
[271] Ruth Wallsgrove, 'Lesbian Nuns go to Europe'. *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 15, No. 10, 1985: p. 11.
[272] *The Lakeland Ledger*, September 14 1985.
[273] *Los Angeles Times*, September 15 1985.
[274] RTÉ News Report, 13 September 1985. Available at: https://www.rte.ie/archives/2015/0910/726994-protest-at-lesbian-nuns/
[275] Byrne and Purcell, p. 188.

Figures 3.4 & 3.5: Picket outside RTÉ and procession of prayers outside studio.

Source: *The Late Late Show*, 1985 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

The protest making the Irish main evening news indicated the extent to which lesbian visibility on Irish television threatened what Tom Inglis refers to as Ireland's traditional 'ethos and habitus'.[276] The LLS's televisual treatment of lesbianism and queer visibility more broadly becomes clear from Byrne's deliberate strategy in arranging the order of items on the show, when he recalls: 'I deliberately left the nun's item to the last half-hour of the show, and as a result, we got the highest TAM rating by any show in RTÉ in the history of the station'.[277] The media event that had originally leaked from the *RTÉ Guide* resulted in what became the highest rated show of the 1980s for RTÉ, with well over one million viewers, almost half of the population of Ireland in 1985. Televisual treatment of queer sexualities in Ireland then, particularly on the *LLS*, adopted strategies of creating sensationalism for high audience figures, which was crucial in a competitive media environment. In this case,

[276] Tom Inglis, Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland (UCD Press: Dublin, 1998), p. 179.
[277] Ibid.

the ex-nuns were not invited onto the *LLS* as part of any liberatory project representing the queer community. Rather, they appeared on the invitation of a broadcaster that knew it would create a reactionary resistance locally. The case of the lesbian nuns highlights that queer visibility is not something that is exclusive to LGBT communities and can be employed by other bodies and institutions for commercial and advertising gain, rather than the mainstreaming strategies evident with the case studies discussed in Chapter Two. Given the nature of the chat show itself, this is unsurprising. The chat show by its very nature, as Deborah Epstein and Deborah Lynn Steinberg contend, has the ability to generate controversy and interpolate 'a range of viewers from the oppositional to the mainstream'.[278]

What this case study reveals is the entwining of the economic demands of television with queer visibility. In his study of the economics of commercial broadcast media, Dallas Smythe concluded that the product of media was not messages, information, or images, but audiences and readerships. He argues that what advertisers buy when they purchase broadcast time for their products are: 'The services of audiences with predictable specifications who will pay attention in predictable numbers and at particular times to particular means of communication […]. As collectives, these audiences are commodities'.[279] Notably within this case then, the economic imperatives of RTÉ renders queer visibility as abstract. However, John D'Emilio maintains that the existence of gay men and women is dependent on these capitalist led economic imperatives of competition and profit-making, which have in fact created a space for queer men and women to 'organise a personal life around their erotic-emotional attraction to their own sex'.[280] This argument would suggest that despite not being part of the affirmative aims of the Irish civil gay rights movement, economic forces are crucial in producing queer visibility, albeit on the sensationalised platform of a chat show. It could be argued that gay visibility in this regard was utilised for the economic process of boosting ratings. Pan Collins, who worked as a researcher

[278] Deborah Epstein and Deborah Lynn Steinberg, Love's Labours: Playing it Straight on The Oprah Winfrey Show', in Deborah Lynn Steinberg, Debbie Epstein and Richard Johnson (eds.) *Border Patrols: Policing the Boundaries of Heterosexuality* (London, Cassell, 1997), p. 34.
[279] Dallas Smythe, 'Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism', in Lee McGuigan and Vincent Manzerolle (eds.) T*he Audience Commodity in the Digital Age: Revisiting a Critical Theory of Commercial Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), p. 32.
[280] John D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in Joyce Jacobsen and Adam Zeller (eds.) *Queer Economics: A Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 185.

on *The Late Late Show* during this period, acknowledges the use of sex and sexuality for creating good television. She claims that 'occasionally at one of our Tuesday morning planning meetings, somebody may say "We've been a bit bland lately". If nothing exciting is going on…one of us may say "well, there's always good mileage in sex"'.[281]

The media event surrounding the lesbian nuns instigated a larger conversation regarding homosexuality in Ireland. Byrne directly confronted the complaints and abuse generated by the controversy when introducing the item on the night of the broadcast, when he said: 'the next item has caused us considerable trouble this week […] We have seldom in our 23 years of the *LLS* experienced a barrage of complaint and criticism as we have experienced this week'. Following this, Byrne provides a disclaimer for viewers who might be of a conservative disposition, recommending:

> If this is the item which you think would be most upsetting to you and the members of your family, then perhaps it would be a good thing to warn you that this is going to take up about 28 minutes and you may be advised to leave us now on the LLS.

The politics of visibility at play here are revealing, considering Byrne directly addresses the family, a regulatory act on his behalf to keep the imagined audience at home protected from the unsafe viewing of two lesbians on television. As Gary Needham argues, 'the family is the cultural expression of television's representational logic' and in this instance, the visibility of lesbianism on Irish television threatens to infiltrate the domestic space that television inhabits, queerly contesting the normativeness of both Irish television and the nuclear Irish family.[282]

What was meant to be just an appearance by the ex-nuns on their own, ends up becoming a panel discussion. Both Manahan and Curb are joined by religious figureheads, Sr. Maura of the Daughters of Sion and Fr. Raphael Gallagher, a Redemptorist and lecturer in Moral Theology in Trinity College. Later in 1985, Gallagher released a booklet titled *Understanding the Homosexual*, a sympathetic reassessment of the Church's position on homosexuality. The Archbishop of Dublin,

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[281] Collins, p. 42.

[282] Gary Needham, 'Scheduling Normativity: Television, the Family and Queer Temporality', in Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 146.

Kevin McNamara, called for the removal of the booklet from the shelves of the religious book distributor Veritas, without ever providing an explanation.[283] His appearance on this edition of the *LLS* was significant in that it provided a unique point of departure from what the Church had previously said in the media regarding homosexuality, while also highlighting the divided opinions materialising within the Irish Catholic Church on the issue.

Throughout the interview, there is never a full wide shot of the panel sitting together in the studio beside Byrne. Instead, this varies between mid-shots of Manahan and Curb and the religious figures. At points, the shot changes to a mid-close up of a particular individual when they are speaking, cutting occasionally to a reaction shot from the opposite end of the panel.

Figures 3.6 & 3.7: Manahan and Curb and Sr. Maura and Fr. Raphael on LLS set.

[283] *Morning Ireland*, RTÉ Radio One, 19 August 1986.

Source: *The Late Late Show*, 1985 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

The series of shots in this instance serves to polarise both ends of the panel. Both Manahan and Curb are dressed vibrantly, whereas both religious figures appear in their conventional religious attire. The visible qualities of this interview arguably work towards a containment of the ex-nuns by the gaze of the camera, as they are subjected to scrutiny and examination by the religious figures, who criticise their book and discuss queer sexualities and lesbianism more broadly.

The televisual treatment of the lesbian nuns similarly confronts the compulsory heterosexuality evident with Joni Crone in 1980. When questioned by Byrne as to why she joined a convent in the first place knowing that she was a lesbian, Manahan responds 'if there had been more choices for women we would have made another choice, but at that time, it seemed that our alternatives were to be married, to be good Catholic mothers'. This comment relates to the compulsory roles of heterosexuality and motherhood experiences by women, which Crone had earlier referred to. Curb later interjects to provide some context to what is actually meant by lesbianism: 'when we say lesbian […] we're not speaking necessarily of sexual activity, we're speaking of a sexual orientation, but we're also speaking about a spiritual and a political commitment, to loving women'. Despite Byrne remarking that this was 'a rather vague definition', Curb's description of lesbian subjectivity is crucial, given that not only does it attempt to divorce lesbianism and queer sexualities from the physical act of sex, it forwards a notion of establishing and uniting woman, in a mutual, woman-focused vision that is not just exclusively governed by desire for other women.

The inclusion of Sr. Maura and Fr. Raphael, in response to the reactionary resistance to the appearance of the lesbians, actually resulted in them contributing towards the mainstreaming of queerness on the *LLS*. Sr. Maura confronts the staunch reaction of Catholic conservatives by pointing out that nuns 'do not leave their sexuality' behind when they enter the convent, and the protest against Manahan and Curb for declaring their sexuality was 'not complementary to our sisters'. To have an authoritative and prominent member of a religious order come out and declare this publicly on television was striking, given that it was at odds with the traditional line of the Catholic Church during the period. Fr. Raphael concludes the discussion, where he addresses the politics of sexuality in Ireland more broadly:

> I think Irish people are uneasy with their sexuality and it's not specifically a homosexual question, but a lot of people haven't come to terms with their own sexuality and because of this, they defend themselves by attacking other people […] I would also say that one of the reasons for these passionate discussions is downright prejudice, downright intolerance […] the prejudice is that people can't accept that ordinary people, perhaps people they know, might be homosexual and I would love that one of the results of this discussion would be that people would calm down a little bit.

What is clear from both Sr. Maura and Fr. Raphael's contribution to the *LLS* was the fact that there was an oddly liberal bent occurring within the Church that seemed to have superseded the Irish public in terms of their attitude towards gay people. While Fr. Raphael also addresses the mass hysteria symptomatic of the Irish culture wars during the 1980s, his rhetoric on the *LLS* aligns with the mainstreaming strategies of recognition and acceptance being advocated and forwarded by gay groups during this period.

Commenting in an article in *The Irish Times*, Carol Laing of the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Collective argued that the most upsetting part of the lesbian nuns' treatment on television was how 'once again, lesbians are being subjected to prurient curiosity and the nasty voyeuristic streak of the male establishment'.[284] Despite this claim, the media event constructed around Manahan and Curb provided a platform for lesbian visibility on Irish television, while also engendering a broader discussion regarding sexuality in Ireland. When the book was eventually released by the Irish customs authority and distributed to book-sellers nationwide, it placed at number four in the paperback charts. Ruth Wallsgrove writes that 'when staying in a working-class neighbourhood in Dublin that week, I was amazed to see 30 or 40 copies of it at a local news stand, crowding out single copies of popular novels'.[285] The book's moderate success in the Irish market perhaps acknowledges Fr. Raphael's claims of Irish people not coming to terms with their sexuality. The book, the lesbian nuns and the media event that contributed to shaping of queer visibility on the *LLS* may have contributed to a reassessment of Irish sexuality.

[284] *The Irish Times*, 13 September 1985.
[285] Ruth Wallsgrove, 'Lesbian Nuns go to Europe'. *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 15, No. 10, 1985: p. 11.

Debating Homosexuality on *The Late Late Show*

The soapbox debate on the *LLS* signalled a shift in the power relationship of queer visibility. With the *LLS* commodifying queer issues for economic gain, Irish queer movements by 1988 became familiar with the televisual conventions of the *LLS* and sought strategies to use this to their advantage. The production context surrounding the decision to have the soapbox debate reflects what was becoming political mainstreaming within queer Irish social movements. Initially however, the mid-eighties witnessed a decline in queer activism, following a litany of defeats for liberals. This was signalled by the passing of the Eighth Amendment, maintaining the ban on divorce and the censoring of abortion information. There was a number of issues that added to the decline of activism within the Irish gay civil rights movement in particular. The Liberation for Irish Lesbians was dissolved, the national gay conferences and the Pride marches ceased, and most significantly, the Hirschfeld Centre burnt down in a fire in 1987. The latter was a crucial defeat for Ireland's queer community, as the Hirschfeld served as the central point of activism for many organisations within Dublin, such as Tel-a-Friend, Gay Health Action (GHA), LIL, the NGF and many other social and political activities. Kieran Rose asserts that the Cork Gay Collective was reduced to 'a core of about four of the original members', stating that the decline of queer activism overall within Ireland could be attributed further to 'numerous gay people emigrating' as a result of the 1980s recession. Tonie Walsh further contends that 'the campaigning movement had been decimated by AIDS' and that there was 'a real need to focus the energies of all the disparate organisations under an umbrella group'.[286]

In 1988, David Norris' Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform was finally successful, when the European Court of Human Rights ruled in his favour. Ireland was now obliged under European law to decriminalise gay sex acts between men. On the announcement of this ruling, a number of queer activists became concerned with the particularities of the decriminalisation. Kieran Rose feared there would be a similar bill to the UK's Sexual Offences Act (1967) that decriminalised gay sex, but had certain caveats, such as an age of consent of 21. He wished to avoid a situation where homosexuality was only legal 'under certain circumstances' and required 'another

[286] Interview with Tonie Walsh, July 22-23 2016.

twenty years of fighting to improve it'.[287] Seeing this notable legislative gap, a series of meetings were held, under the title 'Unite for Change', to which every lesbian and gay group in Ireland was invited.[288] Chris Robson argues that this saw the founding of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) in 1988, which was given a specific mandate: 'to campaign for an equal criminal law and for new equality-based labour and civil laws'.[289] Even the name GLEN evoked positive association between queerness and Irishness, conveying a rural Irish sensibility. The new group attempted to politically straddle between the positions of respectability and 'angry activism', veering towards a programme that was 'clear, well argued, highly specific, and above all else, seen to demand no special privileges'.[290] It was this balancing act between the two styles of lobbying that fuelled a new kind of media activism that manifested on the *LLS*. Rose states that GLEN was established to 'reach out and convince middle Ireland', influencing them to campaign relevant television programmes and begin campaigning around ensuring a fair and equal decriminalisation bill.[291]

As GLEN began to lobby, Norris' ruling was receiving visibility on RTÉ's television news bulletins. The group argued that the issue needed more space on television schedules, as they considered that such a conversation would shift attitudes at home, along with ensuring a dialogue on the terms of the legislation. Initially, the group approached the flagship current affairs show, *Today Tonight* which broadcast Monday to Thursday after the 9pm news for one hour. Cathal Kerrigan recalls that the production team refused to give the issue any airtime because there was no proposal in place to immediately change the ruling in Ireland, nor was there any political party in support. As a result, it was not considered a political issue by *Today Tonight*'s team. Kerrigan, who had been active within left-wing student politics, had developed a relationship with Brigid Ruane from his student activism. Ruane was a researcher within the *LLS* production team and through Kerrigan's connection, GLEN began to lobby Ruane to pitch an idea to Byrne. This recognition of the capillaries of power by GLEN signifies a shift in queer visibility. In contrast to the *LLS* seeking out queer participants for its own commercial success, GLEN sought to use the *LLS* to its own

[287] Interview with Kieran Rose, July 7 2016.
[288] Chris Robson, 'Anatomy of a Campaign', in Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collines (eds.) *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-first Century* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 49.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Interview with Kieran Rose, July 7 2016.

political ends, with the goal being to platform the issues coming with decriminalisation and also the recurring mainstreaming strategy of changing people's perceptions about queer Irish people.

Byrne agreed to include GLEN's proposal as a *LLS* item and suggested the soapbox debate format. The *LLS*' soapbox debate took the form of a speech straight to camera in favour of a proposition, with this then being turned over to a panel consisting of one person in favour and two against, in an attempt to strike a balance. Ruane proposed this format to GLEN to get their approval, informing them that the side arguing against decriminalisation would be represented by Family Solidarity and Christians Concerned, two extreme right-wing groups. GLEN were dissatisfied with the proposed frame of televisual debate, as they considered the inclusion of such extreme groups as convoluting the issue at hand. The imperatives of making 'quality television' became a factor once again in dictating this case of queer visibility as Kerrigan indicated that Byrne was attempting to frame queer visibility in the context of a 'gladiatorial contest' that would feed off the culture wars taking place in Ireland at the time.[292] This was an issue in particular as GLEN were attempting to represent the 'middle ground' and the European Court's decision. Initially refusing, Byrne informed GLEN that they could either 'take it or leave it', so the group chose to take the soapbox option.

In order to navigate around the imperatives of *LLS*' televisual conventions, GLEN sought media training from Terry Prone, a prominent and well-established PR consultant. Both Don Donnelly and Kieran Rose had been selected to appear on the soapbox and panel respectively. When meeting with Prone, they were told that 'you must remain calm, you must be reasonable because you want to persuade people'.[293] She informed both to 'not wear unusual clothes' and more importantly, to 'not communicate in negatives. Don't say "I am not something", say "I am something"'.[294] When Kerrigan expressed concern that Byrne would turn the issue into a gladiatorial contest between the left and right, Prone informed him that 'you must control the agenda'.[295] With this media training aside, GLEN also sought to exploit the audience

[292] Interview with Cathal Kerrigan, July 8 2016
[293] Interview with Kieran Rose, July 7 2016.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Interview with Cathal Kerrigan, July 8 2016.

participation element of the *LLS* by carefully nominating particular individuals to sit in the audience and participate in the debate. While picking a number of gay activists within their organisation, GLEN also nominated Phil Moore and Patricia Kilroy of Parents Enquiry.[296] The inclusion of parents was a critical decision, as described by Rose: 'to be crude, it's a very good way of convincing people and it's a very human thing, because Ireland is a very family orientated country […] but of course the Irish mammy is hugely convincing'.[297] This media training and the strategic use of the *LLS* format indicated a change in the type of media activism being performed by gay organisations in Ireland. What had begun in 1975 as militant grassroots activism had become much more institutionalised, in the sense that GLEN was a lot more strategic in its co-ordination and organisation of queer visibility. This was bolstered by the fact that GLEN was attempting to become an increasingly centralised national organisation for queer rights in Ireland. This is not to suggest that the media activism of the IGRM, the CGC or the NGF was not in any way effective, but this *LLS* appearance marked an incredibly strategic effort to influence how images and discussions of gays and lesbians were produced by the *LLS* and received by Irish audiences.

GLEN used the television medium to frame homosexuality as a broader human rights issue, rather than minority grievance specific to the gay community. The debate begins with Don Donnelly speaking directly to the camera from the soapbox, continuously without interruption. Citing Norris' case in the European Courts, Donnelly addresses the Irish audience: 'we can no longer be treated as criminals. Do you think it appropriate that Irish citizens have to rely on an external court for their basic human rights?' Even the language deployed in this speech is carefully manufactured to frame queerness in terms of human rights. Following Monaghan's opening, Byrne moderates the debate, turning it over to the panel, composed of Rose, and the opposition, consisting of Máire Kirrane of Family Solidarity and Paddy Monaghan of Christians Concerned. Responding to the opening address, which conveys a mainstreaming strategy, Kirrane frames Irish queerness solely through the lens of sex, commenting that 'homosexual acts of buggery and sodomy offend against nature, they offend

[296] Parents Enquiry, founded by Rose Robertson in the late 1960s, was Britain's first helpline to advise and support parents and their lesbian, gay and bisexual children, which she ran from her house in Catford, south-east London, for three decades. Phil Moore later founded an Irish chapter of the organisation in the early 1980s.
[297] Interview with Kieran Rose, July 7 2016.

against our laws, they offend against society'. This stood in contradiction to the respectability politics that had been prevalent with queer visibility, which attempted to divorce queer sexualities from sex.

Figures 3.8 & 3.9: Don Donnelly's opening speech and wide shot of the panel.

Source: *The Late Late Show*, 1989 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

The rhetoric of the opposition frames homosexuality in terms of medicalisation when Monaghan argues that it is an 'emotional disorder'. Religious discourses were also incorporated into the debate, with Monaghan claiming: 'it is against the scriptures, it is unbiblical. God's view of homosexuality is that it is an abomination in his sight'. Recognising the potential inclusion of religion, GLEN prepared for this by nominating a pastor from the LGBT inclusive Metropolitan Community Church to be in the audience to debate and diffuse hysteria falsely generated by the opposition,

specifically with regards to how they were deploying religion, arguing that 'nowhere in the Bible is it a sin to be gay'. As both the pastor and Monaghan begin to debate interpretations of Bible passages, Byrne shuts down the dialogue, stating that 'an argument about Bibles can go on all night'. This debate not only indicates GLEN's strategic attempts to control queer visibility, it also highlights how audience participation was crucial to this televisual treatment of queerness. Queer visibility was not only being controlled by production teams, GLEN and the reactionary resistance; the audience in the studio also shaped the narrative of visibility. As Livingstone and Lunt argue, 'audience discussion programmes can be understood as part of social space, as places where people congregate for public discussion'.[298] Ordinary Irish people could engage, live on television, with representatives of established power. Through the construction of social identities and the circulation of arguments and rhetoric, mediation also transformed ordinary, private discourses of Irish lives. This *LLS* example is crucial in conveying queer Irish lives as part of a national conversation to the imagined heteronormative viewing audience at home.

Liveness was one of the central, and unique factors, that shaped queer visibility on this edition of the *LLS*. The fact that the LLS was live (and still remains so) fuelled its popularity, as built into the conventions of the show is an expectation of spontaneity and disorder. Graeme Turner argues that liveness is an 'important component of television's capacity to construct a sense of community or belonging […] the co-presence of the imagined community of the nation'.[299] Inasmuch as the *LLS* attempted to create a normative national culture through live television spectatorship, the appeal of the chat show's liveness could be attributed to the potential for 'unscripted affective moments, when words fail and something else breaks through: gasps, pauses, tears, silences, aggressive eruptions'.[300] This particular 'dialectical movement of control and disruption' that Alla Gadassik refers to, shapes queer visibility on the soapbox debate. The constructions of televisual liveness on the programme relied largely on 'displays of bodies in action, bodies disrupted or bodies in disarray', with the televised debate

[298] Livingstone and Lunt, p. 162.
[299] Graeme Turner, '"Liveness" and "Sharedness" Outside the Box'. *Flow Journal: A Critical Forum on Media and Culture*, April 8 2011. Available at: https://www.flowjournal.org/2011/04/liveness-and-sharedness-outside-the-box/
[300] Alla Gadassik, 'At a Loss for Words: Televisual Liveness and Corporeal'. *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Vol. 24, No. 24: 117-134, 2010.

directly addressing Irish viewers as active citizens.[301] Cecelia Tichi contends that performers on live television are subjected to factors that cannot necessarily be controlled by the production process. She argues that 'no matter how carefully composed or controlled, there remain aspects of individuals self-presentations that are thought to divulge to the viewing eye information otherwise censored by editors and other television workers'.[302] She extends her analysis to consider the notion of the 'accidental' on live television, arguing that this is the source of real knowledge for audiences, stating that 'it is the crack through which the essence of the individual or his or her type can be apprehended'.[303]

The soapbox debate indicates how forms of TV queerness can materialise through liveness, particularly in the context of Tichi's argument surrounding the 'accidental'. As the debate between GLEN and conservative members of the panel and audience intensifies, Rose speaks to moderator Byrne through a mainstreaming mode, informing him that homosexuality is 'perfectly normal'. The liveness of the debate enables a spontaneous and uncontrolled reaction from the conservative Paddy Monaghan, who disrupts Rose's exchange with Byrne and challenges him:

Monaghan: But how can you say its normal?

Rose: Because it's normal for me, I feel perfectly normal.

Monaghan: It's not normal for a man to be preoccupied with another man's back passage and let's face it, that is what the male homosexual act is about.

Rose: I mean that's ridiculous, that's quite insulting, I am not fascinated by a man's back passage.

Byrne: I suppose the quick answer is, what about men who are besotted with women's front passages.

As Monaghan engages with Rose, he turns to face him and becomes more aggressive, as Rose follows Prone's advice of remaining calm and reasonable. Monaghan's

[301] Ibid.
[302] Cecilia Tichi, *Electronic Hearth: Creating an American Television Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 191.
[303] Tichi, p. 159.

outburst ruptures the flow of the televisual debate and his corporeal disruption revealed not only extremely conservative views on homosexuality, but excessive physical and emotional displays. This greatly contrasted with Rose, who remains calm throughout. He uses Monaghan's outburst to indicate how he considered the opposition on the panel completely at odds with Irish society:

> I think in Ireland today, we have moved on from the kind of viewpoints that these people are expressing. I don't think the majority of people in Ireland today want to hear this kind of language that certain people are disordered […] Irish people are a lot more progressive than this.

This corporeal disruption enables Rose to help Irish audiences distinguish between the extreme prejudice being presented on the debate and homosexuality as a human rights issue encompassing all of Irish society. Even the phrasing of his response suggests that he is speaking for Irish audiences watching at home, stating that Irish people are above this level of behaviour. Byrne's response in particular is the most striking, as he completely reconfigures Monaghan's attack into a question about heterosexuality. He deconstructs the question that focuses solely on sex rather than sexuality and frames it in terms of heterosexuality. Byrne's retort is met with laughter and rapturous applause by the audience. This is significant, as the audience serves the role of witness to the event unfolding in the studio. As Gadassik argues, this audience 'cues the television viewer into the presence of another person who is physically or vocally moved by something important'.[304] The live television spectatorship encourages these reactions, as the audience at home are supposed to have a point of identification with the audience in the studio. Byrne's retort can also be read as a tacit approval of GLEN's activism. His transformation of this aggressive exchange into one of humour has been described by Kerrigan 'as the father of the nation giving his blessing'.[305]

As the liveness of the *LLS* indicated, the chat show depended on spontaneous and uncontrolled reactions of real guests, even if the circumstances of these guests and their reactions had been staged to various degrees. Both GLEN and the opposition could nominate people to sit in the audience and contribute to the debate, but what they said and how this played out over live television could not be controlled. Phil

[304] Gadassik, p. 127.
[305] Interview with Cathal Kerrigan, July 8 2016.

Moore's nomination by GLEN and contribution to the debate played a significant role in the configuration of queer visibility, challenging what Gary Needham refers to as the 'familial imaginary of television'.[306] Considering the centrality of family to Irish culture, it is not surprising that this is exploited by GLEN to not only challenge the opposition's arguments, but to proliferate their mainstreaming strategies of appealing to 'middle Ireland'. Moore is invited into the debate by Byrne, and she recounts her young son coming out to her. She notes her startling realisation that she was living with prejudices against gay people that she was completely unaware of up until that moment. During one instance, Kirrane of Family Solidarity claims that homosexuality can be cured, and that 'there are in fact very few homosexuals'. She added that she was shocked to hear that Moore was so accepting of her sixteen year old son coming-out. The liveness of the debate enables Moore to directly respond, as she declares 'a perfect example of the intolerance poor gay people have to put up with'. Moore speaks through the rhetoric of family motherhood as she engages with Kirrane's argument: 'A mother wants to do the best for their child and wants them to be happy, and we're talking about love and tolerance and difference'. This is significant as Moore uses an emotional argument to shape the debate, while also introducing family values to the queer issues and visibility being presented on television screens. The strategy clearly worked, as Moore is interrupted by Kirrane who aggressively tries to shout over her. Moore retorts back: 'excuse me dear, you have a very loud voice and I would like to talk'. This statement results in the audience applauding Moore, affirming her position over Kirrane.

Figures 3.10 & 3.11: Máire Kirrane (left) debating with Phil Moore (right)

Source: *The Late Late Show*, 1989 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

[306] Needham, 2009, p. 145.

The participation of Moore as a heterosexual ally in the soapbox debate was pivotal. In the US context, Christopher Pullen writes that the inclusion of heterosexual performers commenting on gay identity, contextualises 'the connections between heterosexuals and homosexuals'.[307] This Irish case study is unique in the sense that this heterosexual performer is specifically a parent, and more specifically again, a mother. Similar to Pullen's point, this representational strategy attempts to connect heteronormative 'middle Ireland' with the queer minority. Moore is depicted as well-dressed, respectable, articulate and older. The significance of her inclusion on the soapbox debate is the fact the she represents an 'old order' aligning themselves with reform and understanding, enabling a version of the Irish family to be one that could include the gay son or daughter. The positioning of mothers as a mode of address within the debate also feminises the responsibility for gay and lesbian children, as fathers are notably absent. The use of a mother, as noted earlier by Rose, was a deliberate representational strategy. Motherhood was not only institutionalised by the Irish State in the Constitution, but according to Inglis, motherhood was a 'crucial part in the social and economic development of Ireland. It was the mother who provided a rational regular of life in her family' and was a governing force of sexual morality.[308] Moore's inclusion within the discourses of queer Irish visibility questioned the normative family unit, but importantly, opened up the Irish family as a site of inclusivity. Her easy to identify with position on screen and what she said, served to question official Ireland. The emotional argument she deploys, and one which involves her public disclosure of her private, personal story, marked the beginning of a political, mainstreaming strategy that GLEN would continue to use over the next decades of gay Irish activism, particularly in its media activism. The Same-Sex Marriage Referendum of 2015 was the most obvious example of this, when the power of personal storytelling became a key component of the Yes campaign. *Ireland Says Yes* documents how 'many others [LGBT people and families] were prepared to speak out in local and national media…telling why they were voting yes. The bravery and unselfishness of their testimony moved the hearts and minds of many voters'.[309] This

[307] Christopher Pullen, *Documenting Gay Men: Identity and Performance in Reality Television and Documentary Film* (McFarland: North Carolina, 2007), p. 167.
[308] Inglis, p. 179.
[309] Gráinne Healy, Brian Sheehan and Noel Whelan*, Ireland Says Yes: The Inside Story of How the Vote for Marriage Equality Was Won* (Kildare: Merrion Press, 2016), p. 15.

1989 *LLS* example indicates the emergence of framing queer visibility within a broader, familial context.

The soapbox debate of 1989 reveals the reactionary resistance to queer identities, which was reflective of the culture wars taking place at the time. Given the number of setbacks experienced by Ireland's queer community, the European Court's decision to decriminalise gay sex acts between men prompted a new wave of media activism from newly formed social groups such as GLEN. This *LLS* show edition not only reveals the highly organised and strategic approaches adopted by GLEN in its media activism, but its use of the conventions of the *LLS* to its own advantage in mainstreaming queer identities, particularly in the face of such strong resistance. Although each of the *LLS* show editions discussed in this chapter were live, this example indicates how queer visibility can materialise through liveness. This liveness not only frees the control of queer visibility from the production team, but can be manipulated in various ways to shift the televisual representation of queerness, as was the case with the addition of Phil Moore and aggressive outburst from Paddy Monaghan. Although this episode of the *LLS* can be considered as a singular, affective encounter, Kieran Rose contends that this was the moment that really changed public attitudes. He argues that, before the broadcast, 'broad public opinion towards the lesbian and gay community was and still is ambivalent: tolerant but unsure…the debate signified a decisive shift in public attitudes'.[310]

Conclusion

Queer visibility on the *LLS* revealed further the power dynamics structuring queerness on Irish television. The unique conventions of the chat show served as a means of not only platforming queer identities to mass Irish audiences, but commodifying them for commercial success. Visibility for Ireland's LGBT community was no longer generated or prompted solely by the media activism of gay rights organisations, but rather economic imperatives within production teams to meet an increasingly competitive media market. The loose historical trajectory of the chapter reveals an

[310] Kieran Rose, *Diverse Communities: The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994), p. 30.

increasing challenge of media institutions regarding how they staged queer visibility and an attempt to reassert this control through exploiting the unique conventions of the *LLS* format. This chapter also revealed the complexity of television as a medium, looking beyond the *LLS*' handling of queer individuals and content and looking towards how this was designed and produced, such as the role of liveness. Byrne's chat show also saw the introduction of lesbianism within the register of television, a significant first that not only reconfigured anachronistic perceptions of Irish women, but saw a disruption and challenging of what had been the dominance of gay men in the media.

Following the soapbox debate in 1989, and with GLEN now galvanised as a national gay rights group, queer Irish activism was about to enter a new period of campaigning, as attempts to mainstream queer identities in the media continued into the 1990s. Television continued to facilitate queer visibility, as well as cinema, which began to reflect a gay cosmopolitanism that was burgeoning in Ireland. However, an assessment of this period of queer visibility in Ireland's media landscape requires a sideways step and due consideration of the AIDS epidemic. The Irish AIDS crisis reveals how the development of new queer media economies and media activism interacted and at points disrupted the various mainstreaming goals of gay rights groups in the period. The media in particular became crucial for queer activism during the period, particularly when mainstream society ignored a particular group's public health needs.

Chapter Four

AIDS and the Disruption of Queer Visibility (1983-1994)

Introduction

On November 11 1994, prominent gay Dublin street artist and media personality Thom McGinty (The Diceman), appeared on *The Late Late Show* to publicly announce that he was living with AIDS. During the interview, McGinty recounted to Gay Byrne about life post-diagnosis. A studio audience member responded to McGinty's coming-out, stating that he hoped this public declaration would 'dispel all the myths and ignorance about AIDS in Ireland'. Enthusiastically responding, McGinty claimed:

> There's terrible ignorance, but that's because of what [people] are being fed [by the media]. I mean, what makes a good headline? "The Diceman has AIDS" on the front of *The Sunday World*? It's a very frightening thing. People are frightened of it. The amount of people that have been going around saying "oh my God, I've been shaking hands and drinking and eating with that man for the last ten years".[311]

This *LLS* interview indicates the extent to which AIDS transformed life in Ireland for gay men. Although coming-out as HIV-positive twelve years after the first official AIDS diagnosis in Ireland in 1982, McGinty's testimonial on the *LLS* attests to how gay men were conferred with a particular kind of visibility by the mainstream press and media institutions, resulting in the circulation of misinformation and stigmatising media narratives. More significant perhaps is the fact that McGinty's coming-out and subsequent testimonial shows how AIDS disrupted the lives of individuals, communities and the ways that gay identities were framed and represented in the Irish media.

This chapter analyses how AIDS disrupted queer visibility. As Monica B. Pearl contends, AIDS was disruptive in that it not only caused illness and death, but it

[311] *The Late Late Show*, November 11 1994.

'disrupted identity, the ways people could think about themselves'.[312] This also extends to how queer visibility was previously deployed and treated within the Irish media. As Douglas Crimp argues, AIDS and HIV is a central issue for gay men and 'intersects with and requires a critical rethinking of all of culture: of language and representations, science and medicine, health and illness, sex and death, the public and private realms'.[313] AIDS resulted in the disruption of the mainstreaming goals and media activism demonstrated by gay rights groups such as the IGRM and the NGF. Due to this disruption, these queer organisations reassessed their original liberation goals and attempts of integration into the broader social order of Irish society. This derived from many within the gay community contracting the virus. The mainstream media also conferred visibility on the community, which pathologised gay men as dangerous AIDS carriers. Given the context of the media activism that preceded the advent of AIDS in Ireland – particularly the early work of the IGRM on *Last House* and *Tuesday Report* – the media activism of these groups attempted to disentangle gay Irish people from such pathological discourses. The discussion of AIDS within the mainstream media once again attempted to frame the gay community through the lens of clinical, medicalised language.

Queer visibility on Irish current affairs programming, the alternative queer media and the documentary are the primary media texts discussed in this chapter. The period between 1982 and 1994 saw several key broadcasts and developments within the Irish media landscape that indicate how AIDS disrupted previous conceptions of queer visibility. More importantly however, it indicated how queer visibility was being redefined from the original mainstreaming and respectable goal of integration to a media presence that was catering more specifically to the gay community's public health needs. This disruption recalibrated the priorities of Ireland's gay community, who were increasingly becoming demonised through the popular press and news reports. The period of queer visibility discussed within this chapter examines how Ireland's gay community were mobilised into taking control of their own visibility and

[312] Monica B. Pearl, 'AIDS and New Queer Cinema', in Michele Aaron (ed.) *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 24.
[313] Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004) p. 88.

representation through alternative media outlets, and as a result, developed alternative media economies.

Firstly, this chapter will argue that RTÉ's current affairs programming and the mainstream Irish press framed AIDS as a gay disease. Using several editions of *Today Tonight* broadcast throughout the 1980s, the chapter will argue that this framing of AIDS as a gay disease resulted in a direct response from the gay community, who sought to rebut and correct this misinformation, through the production of education leaflets and pamphlets. As a result, the Irish gay community became authority figures on AIDS. This expertise saw the eventual incorporation and participation of the community on *Today Tonight*'s programming, through VT's and panel interviews. Secondly, this chapter will argue that AIDS reportage by the mainstream Irish media resulted in the development of alternative queer media economies. Using the case study of *OUT* Magazine, this chapter will contend that the gay community provided a layered AIDS epidemiology that was not present within the hegemonic news media. *OUT* became an educational resource and a discursive site where its journalists attempted to hold official structures such as the Department of Health accountable. Furthermore, *OUT* performed as a counterpublic that platformed the visibility of People Living With AIDS (PWA), framing AIDS within a larger collective social crisis. This case study highlights how the gay community took control of their own visibility, on their terms, without the intervention of media institutions or gatekeepers. Finally, much like *OUT*, AIDS resulted in a similar response amongst independent documentary makers. Using Alan Gilsenan's *Stories From the Silence* (1987) and Bill Hughes' *Fintan* (1994), this chapter concludes by arguing that these independently produced documentaries formed local responses that made gay PWAs the voice of authority. As local responses, both of these texts provided an important intervention to the dominant US/UK centric AIDS media within Ireland, crucially presenting AIDS within an Irish idiom. The production context also indicates how these AIDS documentaries were produced as a result of queer alliances within the gay community.

Throughout these three case studies, although the contours of visibility changed, threads of mainstreaming strategies and respectability politics manifest within particular moments. This is particularly the case with the queer visibility represented on the documentaries. The media activism of the gay community became centred around disentangling associations between gay men and AIDS. This extended to the

gay community being framed as respectable, as they took responsibility for themselves and attempted to encourage safer sex. The confessional format of the documentaries also presented AIDS to mainstream audiences within the context of private self-disclosure and the sharing of intimacy. This made a crucial connection between the private realities of AIDS and the broader political realities, but also provided a sympathetic identification with the audience.

Considering the changing contours of queer visibility during the AIDS crisis, it is important to briefly note the historical context. The first official AIDS diagnosis occurred in 1982 and by 1987, 581 people had been diagnosed as HIV-Positive in Ireland, among which included 58 homosexuals and bisexuals.[314] Much like the US and UK, the Irish gay community formed one of the first proactive responses to the crisis, founding Gay Health Action.[315] In the broader sphere of gay activism, the 1980s were a crucial decade for the Irish gay community, as David Norris' Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform (CHLR) was gathering momentum. Having begun proceedings against the Irish State in 1977, the case was presented to the High Court in 1980. Justice McWilliam ruled that the criminal laws around homosexuality could not be overturned due to the Christian and democratic nature of the Irish Constitution. Immediately launching an appeal, the case was later heard in 1982 in the Supreme Court, with Chief Justice Tom O'Higgins once again using Christian morality as a basis for the retention of the laws and rejecting the appeal. Following failure in the Irish courts, David Norris took his case in 1983 to the ECHR, claiming that Ireland's law breached his right to privacy. In 1988, the ECHR ruled in favour of Norris.[316] The AIDS crisis did not overtly interfere with Norris' case, but the misinformation being spread in the mainstream media, along with governmental policy paralysis, did threaten to disrupt the campaign during its crucial European case, which will be explored in fuller detail later in the chapter.

[314] Dr. Derek Freedman, *AIDS: The Problem in Ireland* (Dublin: Town House, 1987), p. 72.
[315] Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester: Faber and Daber, 1995).
[316] For more in-depth analysis on the CHLR, see Fergus Ryan, '"We'll Have What They're Having": Sexual Minorities and the Law in the Republic of Ireland', in Máire Leane and Elizabeth Kiley (eds.) *Sexuality and Irish Society* (Dublin, Opren Press, 2014); Patrick James McDonagh, '"Homosexual Are Revolting" – Gay & Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1970s – 1990s'. *Studi Irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies* 7: 65 – 91.

Hegemonic News Media and Media Institutions

The news media in Ireland, much like the US and UK, was one of the first sites where AIDS was made intelligible. As broadcasters and newspapers across the US and the UK began to report on the virus, it became apparent that AIDS was becoming associated almost exclusively with gay men. As Rodger Streitmatter notes, the American news media was central in constructing the narrative of AIDS as a gay disease, with 'gay plague' becoming a recurring journalistic phrase.[317] The assumption of AIDS as a gay disease can be seen with its preliminary designation as GRID (Gay-Related Immunodeficiency) in the US. Colin Clews observes that the UK press were employing 'gay plague' within numerous headlines, particularly in the early to mid 1980s.[318] Within the Irish context, AIDS was also linked with homosexual men. During the 1980s, much of the media in Ireland, particularly current affairs programming and the Irish press, popularised the narrative of AIDS as being confined to 'risk groups', which included gay men, intravenous drug users and sex workers. Accordingly, this rhetoric worked towards creating the dichotomy of 'general population' versus 'risk groups', which served to marginalise the groups in the latter and brought them under greater scrutiny by the media.[319]

The media construction of not only this dichotomy, but of AIDS as a gay disease, is apparent from various newspaper headlines in the Irish press during this period. These included: 'AIDS contact fears from the kiss of life', 'AIDS warning to organ donors', 'New alert as AIDS victims increase', 'Terror hits town after AIDS death', 'Victim of AIDS is cremated in secret', and 'AIDS fear ban in pub'.[320] An editorial in *The Nationalist and Leinster Times* on 26 June 1985, suggested that it was not AIDS, but

[317] Rodger Streitmatter, *From 'Perverts' to 'Fab Five': The Media's Changing Depiction of Gay Men and Lesbians* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009).
[318] Colin Clews, *Gay in the 80s: From Fighting for our Rights to Fighting for our Lives* (Leicester: Troubador Publishing Ltd., 2017), p. 232.
[319] Much of the literature on the cultural discourses of AIDS considers this dichotomy of 'general population' and 'risk groups'. In particular, Simon Watney's 'The Spectacle of AIDS' is a good resource, as his book *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and The Media, Third Edition* (1987). Jan Zita Grover's article 'AIDS: Keywords', is also a useful resource that considers the particular terminology used during media coverage of the AIDS crisis. Cindy Patton's *Inventing AIDS* (1990) provides interesting insights for a US context.
[320] *Cork Examiner*, 18 February 1985; *Irish Times*, 5 February 1985; *Evening Herald*, 13 February 1985; *Evening Press*, 1 February 1985; *Evening Press*, 5 February 1985; *Irish Press*, 8 February 1985.

homosexuality that was the killer disease.[321] This news story indicated how, as Simon Watney argues, 'the reporting of AIDS was inexorably caught up in the larger discourse of retribution against gay men'.[322] The dominant media in Ireland reported false information and sensational stories, with these constructed presentations of AIDS as a gay disease disrupting the mainstreaming, commodified visibility of gay men previously established.

Irish television's framing of AIDS as a gay disease is apparent from a series of *Today Tonight* programmes in the 1980s. *Today Tonight* was RTÉ's flagship current affairs programme that initially broadcast three nights a week. The programme's success in terms of its high-quality journalistic output and successful TAM ratings increased this number to five programmes per week by 1983. The success of the show, according to John Horgan, could be attributed to the personality of producer Joe Mulholland.[323] Horgan explains that RTÉ used any available finances to produce home-based programmes, with current affairs taking up most of this funding.[324] In its format, the show offered a magazine of current affairs, including panel analysis, the provision of information from specialists on topics and opportunities for government representatives to discuss Dáil decisions. Horgan expresses the importance of *Today Tonight* when he argues that it 'came to overshadow the news in a sense, it virtually was the news'.[325]

The first mention of AIDS on the programme, and Irish broadcasting, was a 1983 transmission on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Despite the episode generally being about STDs, presenter Hilary Orpen briefly referenced the potential threat of AIDS in Ireland: 'There are now more known sexually transmitted diseases than ever before […] Ireland has had its share of the problem and earlier this year we had our first death from the killer disease AIDS. The situation can only get worse'.[326] As Orpen mentioned various STDs, pictures of genitalia and STD symptoms were shown

[321] *The Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 26 June 1985.

[322] Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media, 3rd Edition* (London: Cassell, 1997).
[323] John Horgan, *Broadcasting and Public Life: RTÉ News and Current Affairs, 1926-1997* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 159-160.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.
[326] *Today Tonight*, 1982 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

onscreen. When AIDS is introduced, the shot cuts to a group of men (see Figure 4.1) as Orpen reports:

> AIDS is the most frightening of the new diseases because AIDS is fatal. AIDS was first discovered among homosexual men in California, where it claimed many lives but it has since spread. Ireland had its first death from AIDS this year […] Medical science has no idea of the cause of AIDS […] The majority of victims die within months of getting the disease.

As Orpen narrated the item, she connects the image on screen to gay men in the US. This commentary galvanised the imaginary divide between the 'general population' of Ireland and 'risk' groups, but also made a declaration of inevitable doom, which Treichler asserts as part of the dominant discourse of television's treatment of AIDS.[327] The *Today Tonight* report further positioned AIDS as an American problem that had penetrated Ireland. The visual iconography of the series of shots suggested that this high-risk group and their deviant sexual behaviour was to blame for the disease finally pervading Ireland. Accompanying this description of AIDS, is what Paula Treichler refers to as 'representational shorthands', which in this case are viral images 'enhanced and magnified'.[328] Continuing her exposition of AIDS, a news clipping of fatalities appeared over Orpen's narration (Figure 4.2). To further embed and create easily accessible meaning for the viewers, this became magnified in Figure 4.3, where the AIDS death toll is shaded in red and fatal is stamped onto the image, all the while presenting a doomsday judgement for those who contracted the virus. As indicated by this 1982 broadcast, AIDS had finally reached Ireland, but it had not yet become a national public health epidemic. Rather than presenting some careful and considered reporting of the syndrome, *Today Tonight* advanced an item that not only established a connection between gay men and AIDS, but provided the first disruption on broadcast television to the mainstreaming goals of queer visibility. This association of AIDS with gay men would later directly result in gay groups responding to such stigmatising reportage, as they attempted to educate the public on the virus, rather than shift their attitudes towards accepting homosexuality.

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[327] Treichler, p. 129.

[328] Paula A. Treichler, *How To Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 130.

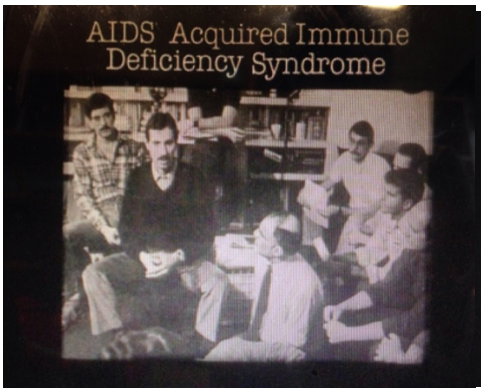


Figure 4.1: Group of American Gay Men

Source: *Today Tonight*, 1983

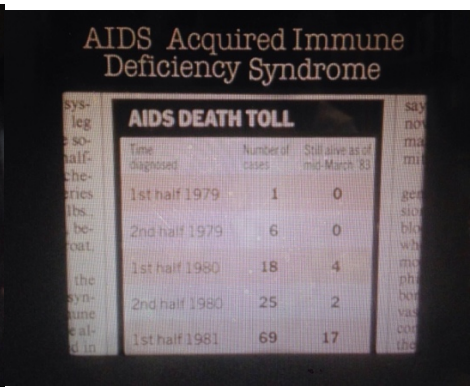


Figure 4.2: AIDS Death Toll Image

Source: *Today Tonight*, 1983

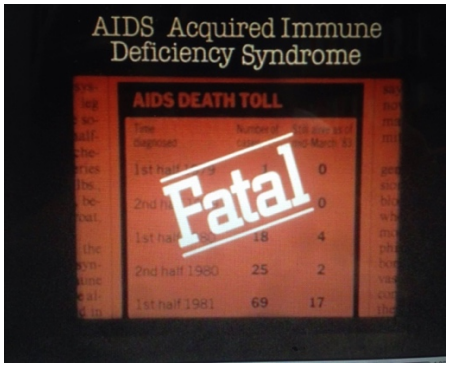


Figure 4.3: AIDS Death Toll with Red Background and 'Fatal' stamped

Source: *Today Tonight*, 1983.

The narrative trajectory established in 1983 was continued later in a special edition of *Today Tonight*, titled 'AIDS: Will Ireland Cope?', aired in 1985. The year was significant, as only a week previously, American film star Rock Hudson announced that he was living with the virus shortly before he died. Rodger Streimatter and Paula Treichler assert that Hudson's announcement and subsequent death from an AIDS related illness provided a turning point in the public consciousness surrounding the virus.[329] Edward Alwood observes that newspaper coverage of AIDS increased by 270 percent following Hudson's death.[330] The event generated considerable Irish media

[329] Streitmatter, 2009 and Treichler, 1999.
[330] Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

interest in the epidemic; just over one week later, *Today Tonight* broadcast its special edition. On the programme, Hudson's death was positioned as a turning point, with a VT package by journalist Joe Carroll stating: 'Soon, doomed AIDS victim Rock Hudson was beyond help and love. The star of numerous films and TV series […] after struggling for a year against the disease, died last week'.[331] The American influence continued beyond Hudson however. Carroll's report cut to a shot of Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco as he remarked: 'since the swinging 1960s, San Francisco has built up a flourishing gay, or homosexual community'. Accompanying visual footage presented a series of shots of gay male couples holding hands and walking in the city's Castro district. Over this iconography of gay men, Carroll not only used the recurring narrative feature of framing AIDS as a gay disease, but positioned blame on the gay community. This is clear when he states: 'the sexual promiscuity of the gay community had become notorious, when a hitherto unknown fatal disease began to strike'. Carroll's report not only framed gay men as a site of contagion, but also relied largely on the American context for its information and visual material. Irish television's treatment of AIDS privileged a US-centric narrative and one that could potentially unravel Irish society.

AIDS as an emerging syndrome in 1985 was construed within televisual narratives of sensationalism. This edition of *Today Tonight* was particularly sensational in its framing of AIDS. Presenter Pat Kenny opened the programme and addressed the Irish audience, stating: 'AIDS is perhaps the most frightening word to enter the language in recent years. It has been compared to the bubonic plague of the middle ages'.[332] Despite claiming to deal 'solely in fact' and avoid 'hysteria', *Today Tonight*'s comparison with the bubonic plague framed AIDS in terms of death. Further to this, Kenny emboldens this sensationalised narrative by positioning gay men as the site of contagion: 'But the huge preponderance of American victims, over 13,000, is testament to its origins in the United States among promiscuous homosexuals'. Through considering AIDS as a global epidemic, especially a US one now pervading Ireland, AIDS is positioned as a threat to the nation. Deirdre Quinn argues that the framing and language on *Today Tonight* 'restricted discussion of illness directly

[331] *Today Tonight*, 9/10/1985. RTÉ Archive Reference 97D00735 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).
[332] *Today Tonight*, 9/10/1985. RTÉ Archive Reference 97D00735 (Dublin: RTÉ Productions).

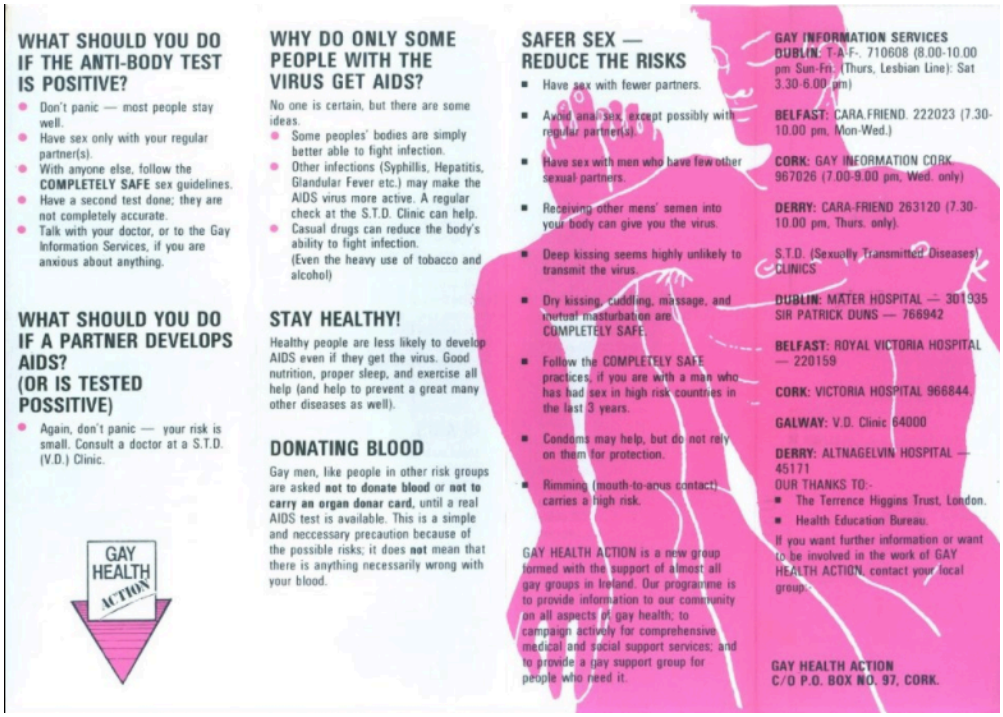
related to sexuality and sexual health'.[333] The language used within this televisual sensationalism contributed to the sense of threat that AIDS (and gay men) posed to the general health of the population.

Resulting from *Today Tonight* and the press framing the gay community within a specific narrative, various queer groups grew concerned with this association. This was not only disruptive to the mainstreaming goal of acceptance and shifting attitudes that the IGRM and NGF had been campaigning towards, but potentially disruptive to the CHLR, which had various ongoing public court cases during the period. The gay community sought to intervene in the dominant media discourse and the institutions forwarding them. To that end, the media hysteria, coupled with a lack of reaction from official governmental bodies to confront the disease, became a concern for the Irish gay community, resulting in the meeting of activists in Trinity College on 3rd February 1985.[334] This mobilisation saw fractured groups form a collective community resistance to provide information on the prevention of contracting AIDS, in the form of Gay Health Action (GHA). GHA was a group formed out of various organisations, including The Dublin Lesbian and Gay Men's Collective, Cork Gay Collective, National Gay Federation, Trinity College Gay Society and the Irish Gay Rights Movement (Cork).[335] Very much like the various queer groups that preceded it, GHA adopted media strategies aimed towards conveying not only public health advice, but accurate and factual information. From the initial attempts of creating queer visibility in Chapters Two and Three, GHA attempted to challenge the disruptive visibility that was being conferred on them. This marked a transition from trying to source air time, to trying to articulate a rebuttal of mainstream media's definitions and representations of AIDS (and gay men), while forming community responses around this new queer visibility forced into existence by the fact of AIDS. GHA's media activism did not strive towards mainstreaming, or arguing for gay rights, but instead focused their strategies on saving lives, preventing transmission and disseminating accurate information.

[333] Deirdre Quinn, *Vexatious Bodies in Modern Ireland* (PhD Thesis, Maynooth University: 2012), p. 263.
[334] "Home News – Gay Health Action" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 3, April/May 1985).
[335] Ibid.

GHA set about attempting to gather relevant information and facts about AIDS and compile it into what would become the first "AIDS Information Leaflet", a pamphlet providing considered details and ways of reducing risks. Donal Sheerin and Kieran Rose, both members of GHA, intended for the information within this pamphlet to avoid the 'disaster in America'.[336] They also suggested that the 'gay hysteria' that had occurred there and which seemed an 'added threat' to the challenge posed by AIDS, could be lessened through the provision of information on AIDS through the likes of this pamphlet. As the design and content would indicate (see Figure 4.4), the pamphlet was addressed directly to a gay male audience. Accordingly, broadcasters began to take note of GHA's activism. The 1985 episode of *Today Tonight* is one such case. Through its educational and public service remit, GHA had become authorities, at least within the gay community, on AIDS. This authority was recognised by the mainstream broadcaster, who looked toward GHA for contributions to the programme. Despite being formally framed as a gay disease through the structures of current affairs television, *Today Tonight* conversely relied on the expertise and activism of GHA. This enabled the gay activists to contest the type of queer visibility that had been conferred on them by the Irish media. Their inclusion on these programmes was a recognition by the mainstream of their authority. This command over the discussion of AIDS on television enabled GHA to dismantle the media narratives that had been circulating and re-frame the gay community as one that was responsible and respectable. In this case, respectability politics was not necessarily a deliberate representational strategy, but rather, could be considered simply as a by-product of GHA's media activism. GHA's public campaigning attempted to destigmatise the community and dismantle dominant AIDS discourses that the gay community had become inexorably caught up in, presenting themselves as an articulate and well-organised entity, endeavouring to save lives.

[336] *Today Tonight*, 9/10/1985



WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF THE ANTI-BODY TEST IS POSITIVE?

- Don't panic — most people stay well.
- Have sex only with your regular partner(s).
- With anyone else, follow the **COMPLETELY SAFE** sex guidelines.
- Have a second test done; they are not completely accurate.
- Talk with your doctor, or to the Gay Information Services, if you are anxious about anything.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF A PARTNER DEVELOPS AIDS? (OR IS TESTED POSSITIVE)

- Again, don't panic — your risk is small. Consult a doctor at a S.T.D. (V.D.) Clinic.

GAY HEALTH ACTION

WHY DO ONLY SOME PEOPLE WITH THE VIRUS GET AIDS?

No one is certain, but there are some ideas.

- Some peoples' bodies are simply better able to fight infection.
- Other infections (Syphillis, Hepatitis, Glandular Fever etc.) may make the AIDS virus more active. A regular check at the S.T.D. Clinic can help.
- Casual drugs can reduce the body's ability to fight infection. (Even the heavy use of tobacco and alcohol)

STAY HEALTHY!

Healthy people are less likely to develop AIDS even if they get the virus. Good nutrition, proper sleep, and exercise all help (and help to prevent a great many other diseases as well).

DONATING BLOOD

Gay men, like people in other risk groups are asked **not to donate blood** or **not to carry an organ donar card**, until a real AIDS test is available. This is a simple and neccessary precaution because of the possible risks; it does **not** mean that there is anything necessarily wrong with your blood.

SAFER SEX — REDUCE THE RISKS

- Have sex with fewer partners.
- Avoid anal sex, except possibly with regular partner(s).
- Have sex with men who have few other sexual partners.
- Receiving other mens' semen into your body can give you the virus.
- Deep kissing seems highly unlikely to transmit the virus.
- Dry kissing, cuddling, massage, and mutual masturbation are COMPLETELY SAFE.
- Follow the COMPLETELY SAFE practices, if you are with a man who has had sex in high risk countries in the last 3 years.
- Condoms may help, but do not rely on them for protection.
- Rimming (mouth-to-anus contact) carries a high risk.

GAY HEALTH ACTION is a new group formed with the support of almost all gay groups in Ireland. Our programme is to provide information to our community on all aspects of gay health; to campaign actively for comprehensive medical and social support services; and to provide a gay support group for people who need it.

GAY INFORMATION SERVICES
DUBLIN: T-A-F-. 710608 (8.00-10.00 pm Sun-Fri. (Thurs. Lesbian Line): Sat 3.30-6.00 pm)

BELFAST: CARA FRIEND. 222023 (7.30-10.00 pm. Mon-Wed.)

CORK: GAY INFORMATION CORK. 967026 (7.00-9.00 pm. Wed. only)

DERRY: CARA-FRIEND 263120 (7.30-10.00 pm. Thurs. only).

S.T.D. (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) CLINICS:

DUBLIN: MATER HOSPITAL — 301935
SIR PATRICK DUNS — 766942

BELFAST: ROYAL VICTORIA HOSPITAL — 220159

CORK: VICTORIA HOSPITAL 966844.

GALWAY: V.D. Clinic 64000

DERRY: ALTNAGELVIN HOSPITAL — 45171

OUR THANKS TO:-

- The Terrence Higgins Trust, London.
- Health Education Bureau.

If you want further information or want to be involved in the work of GAY HEALTH ACTION, contact your local group.

GAY HEALTH ACTION
C/O P.O. BOX NO. 97, CORK.

Figure 4.4: GHA Information Leaflet

Source: GHA & NLGF Collections, Irish Queer Archive, NLI.

A segment of the *Today Tonight* broadcast from 1985 included a report on a branch of GHA in Cork. Members of the Cork branch, which included Arthur Leahy, Kieran Rose, Donal Sheehan and Cathal Kerrigan, were depicted answering phone calls from people seeking information, highlighting the work being done on behalf of the gay community. Along with this, a brief clip is shown of the branch in a meeting discussing some administrative issues. Over these visual images, the reporter narrated:

> Here in Cork, a high-risk group, the city's gay community, is organising an information campaign through a branch of Gay Health Action. Gay Health Action was formed last January, mainly in response to the AIDS issue. The gays were worried with the way the media were linking homosexuals with the spread of AIDS.[337]

Even the language used by the reporter is couched in contradiction. He attempted to highlight how the gay community was concerned with the media association between gay men and AIDS. Despite making this statement, the reporter inadvertently managed

[337] *Today Tonight*, 9/10/1985

to address Cork's gay community as a 'high-risk group'. This contradicted the aims of GHA, which attempted to communicate the potential of the virus to affect anyone. Despite this, GHA were provided a platform to contest Carroll's introduction to the report. The segment included shots of a meeting of the group, with the segment clearly organised and using close-ups to indicate the structure and discipline by which the NGO operated (see Figure 3.7). The first shot in Figure 3.5 is that of the presenter, who introduced the segment. Following this was a shot of a meeting of GHA as they discussed the production of a new leaflet and the establishment of their counselling service. Donal Sheehan, as seen in Figure 3.7, was provided a platform to speak by the authority of the presenter. He highlighted how the gay community were recuperating their respectability through the production of all this information. The visibility on the programme enabled GHA activists to contest this media narrative and reframe AIDS as a national health issue, rather than a community specific one. The shot pattern in this report for *Today Tonight* serves as a reminder of how a greater degree of visibility does not automatically translate into what Melanie Kohnen refers to as liberatory potential, but rather may allow for intensive regulation. GHA were presented as respectable, responsible and highly-organised activists. The cost of this regulatory visibility was the fact that the 'identification of gay men as those affected […] was based on a growing recognition of something called a gay community'.[338] Despite the modes of visibility afforded by the visual and narrative elements of broadcast media, it did indicate that a queer visibility had surfaced strongly in the Irish cultural imagination. Recognition from parts of the mainstream popular press, along with government officials attested to this activism and momentum created by the gay community. Writing in *In Dublin* in 1985, Rhona McSweeney observed that 'Dublin's gay population, formerly invisible, have now begun to reflect the times and adopt a higher profile'.[339] Similarly, Nuala O'Faoláin remarked in *The Irish Times* that 'our gay fellow citizens alone […] took responsibility for themselves by communication with members of the gay community'.[340] Dr. James Walsh, Deputy Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Health, also formally acknowledged the activism and work of the gay community, when he commented: 'the man in the street seems to be

[338] Melanie Kohen, *Queer Representation, Visibility and Race in American Film and Television: Screening the Closet*, (Routledge: New York, 2016) p. 73.
[339] Rhona McSweeney, 'The Gay Generation'. *In Dublin* 234.6 (July/August)
[340] Nuala O'Faoláin, 'AIDS Campaign Short on Street Credibility'. *The Irish Times*, 11 May 1987.

confused about AIDS' whereas gay people 'know a lot about' it'.[341] Evidently, the gay community received recognition and praise from various public media outlets, which was crucial in positioning them as responsible and respectable to Irish audiences.

Figure 4.5: Presenter Introduces Segment

Source: *Today Tonight*, 97DOO735, 1985

Figure 4.6: Wide Shot of GHA Meeting

Source: *Today Tonight*, 97DOO735, 1985

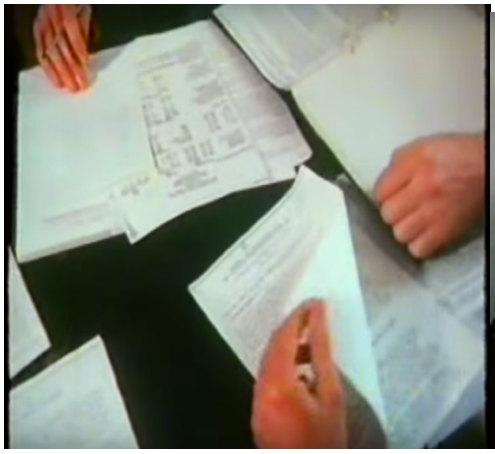


Figure 4.7: Close-Up of GHA Administration

Source: *Today Tonight*, 97DOO735, 1985

Figure 4.8: Mid-Shot of Donal Sheehan

Source: *Today Tonight*, 97DOO735, 1985

GHA, and queer content more broadly, confronted a number of institutional obstacles, despite RTÉ generally ignoring the illegal status of homosexuality by using GHA's expertise on its current affairs programming. In 1986, GHA submitted a small box advertisement to the *RTÉ Guide* headed 'Aid to fight AIDS', which was rejected by

[341] *Today Tonight*, 9/10/1985

the magazine.[342] Commenting on the refusal to include the advert, RTÉ sale controller Peadar Pierce stated that RTÉ had nothing against the 'terrible problem of AIDS', but stated that 'homosexuality in this country is still illegal and putting it in a family magazine like the *RTÉ Guide* would seem to be giving the whole question of gays some normality, putting it in as if it were a normal situation'.[343] RTÉ in some instances used the criminal laws as a means of censoring, or objecting to content, with decision-makers working with the presumption that it was specific to high risk groups such as Ireland's gay community. In some cases, AIDS had rendered gay men as unsafe for family viewing and outside of the perceived respectable boundaries of RTÉ's imagined audience. In 1993, the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health had compiled a series of advertisements to highlight the dangers of AIDS following the diagnoses of 'almost 1,360 people as HIV positive'.[344] RTÉ refused to broadcast the advertisements submitted by the Department, which were scheduled to run from May 28 to coincide with National AIDS Day, with RTÉ taking exception to 'some of the language used' surrounding condoms and the overt sexual representation, particularly that of gay men (see Figure 4.9). Following this, RTÉ and the Department of Health 'amicably resolved the controversy' after the Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht Michael D. Higgins threatened that he was 'prepared to order RTÉ to broadcast the campaign'.[345] The construction of the reality of AIDS then, even when the discourse was aimed towards prevention, was disrupted by the puritanism and conservatism governing the public service broadcaster. The dominant, hegemonic culture represented by RTÉ revealed the prevailing institutional ideologies underpinning the representation of AIDS, particularly when it encompassed gay men and gay sex.

[342] Andy Pollak, "AIDS ad Refused by RTÉ Guide" (*The Irish Times*, 22 November 1986).
[343] Ibid.
[344] Audrey Magee, "Anger at RTÉ AIDS ad Ban" (*The Irish Times*, 18 May 1993).
[345] Ibid.

Figure 4.9: Health Promotion Unit 1993 AIDS Campaign

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjqxG8rfOPA&t=2238s

The mainstream Irish media's treatment of queer visibility during the AIDS crisis indicated how profoundly ideas of queer identities, specifically that of gay men, had changed. For one, the narrative contours of the press and current affairs programming rendered visible a minority group that had previously fought and campaigned media institutions for air time and column inches. As the media began to confer a new kind of queer visibility onto the community – which was perceived for the most part to be quite damaging – it led to a re-evaluation within the queer community of the type of visibility and media activism they sought to perform within the public sphere. AIDS resulted in a new set of priorities being established and a newly formed community response to this, in the form of GHA. This group served to contest the dominant discourse of AIDS and directly challenged its mainstream media portrayal, reshaping the discourse of queer visibility, through participation on current affairs programming and becoming authorities on AIDS within Ireland. This was conversely at a time when the very same broadcaster that used the gay community as authorities on AIDS, simultaneously refused to broadcast and print a number of advertisements because of the criminal laws against gay men. Much of this mainstream treatment of AIDS created an atmosphere within the gay community to formally create a space for themselves, where they could control their own visibility. As the AIDS crisis

developed, the alternative gay press became a source of crucial public health information and a conduit for holding mainstream institutions accountable.

Alternative Media Economies: *OUT* Magazine

The gay community aimed to change the discursive meanings of AIDS that had been constructed within Ireland's media landscape. As discussed above, GHA produced a number of leaflets directed towards providing facts and education about the virus. However, GHA, the NGF and other activists within the Irish queer community considered it imperative to create a space for the communication of AIDS information, to not only counter the misinformation and refusal to represent AIDS in the mainstream media, but as Alexandra Juhasz contends, 'to represent the underrepresented experiences of the crisis [and] to communicate with others who feel equally unheard'.[346] Juhasz argues that low-end, low-tech video production became a central component to alternative AIDS media in the US, with a number of activist organisations using this accessible video technology as an extension of their consciousness raising work.[347] In Ireland, there was very little video technology available to the gay community. In a small number of instances, activist footage was shot by the Irish gay civil rights movement. This was a direct result of Edmund Lynch's position in RTÉ where, in a small number of instances, he would 'call in favours' to gain access to cameras and sound equipment, and subsequently use it to shoot and record LGBT related activities.[348] One such example is his recording of the Fairview Park march in 1983. Another example was a video commemorating John Nolan, a gay club night promoter and founder of Comfort AID, a support group dedicated to the practical needs of those with HIV and AIDS. These videos were circulated within the gay community, but never really served a huge political purpose, and were more so was aimed towards documenting events and individuals.

Alternative media economies, specifically a gay press, did establish within the Irish gay community in response to the AIDS crisis however. Extending from the

[346] Alexandra Juhasz, AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 2.
[347] Juahasz, p. 2.
[348] Author interview with Edmund Lynch, July 8 2016.

significant work being done with regards to the production of pamphlets, the gay press became one of the main queer sites where information on AIDS was produced and freely available. Alternative media platform *OUT* magazine was a crucial site that generated vital public health information for the gay community, but also served as a form of media activism, as its journalists engaged with public bodies to hold them accountable for their response, or lack thereof, to the epidemic. The case of *OUT* magazine is an important example of how alternative media are critical, particularly when mainstream society ignores a minority group's public health needs.

Alternative media such as *OUT* were essential to the formation of a gay consciousness in Ireland. As Tim O'Sullivan argues, alternative media 'avowedly rejects or challenges established institutionalised politics, in the sense that they all advocate change in society, or at least a critical assessment of traditional values'.[349] *OUT* was not anomaly in the context of queer Irish history and there had already been various incarnations of a gay press. The establishment of the IGRM saw the birth of a gay press with the *IGRM Newsletter* in 1976. Later, the IGRM began producing and circulating *In Touch*, a monthly newsletter. With the formation of the NGF, they maintained *In Touch*, later restructuring it into *Identity* magazine, published from 1981 to 1984. Although an attempt at a commercial magazine, retailers refused to distribute *Identity*, due to the fact that gay and lesbian appeared on the cover.[350] During the early 1980s, Ireland had no indigenous commercial gay magazine, until the founding of *OUT*.

OUT's examination in this thesis is significant for several reasons. For one, it was the central gay publication during the AIDS crisis and subsequently responded to it as the crises pervaded and developed. The magazine attempted to be innovative by having a 'glossy' cover in colour, the first of its kind for a gay Irish publication. Further, it had a significant circulation of 300-500 over the course of its run. Most important, it sought, according the editorial in its first issue:

[349] Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery, and John Fiske, *Key Concepts in Communications and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 10.

[350] This is just a brief overview of the history of the gay press in Ireland. In 1977, four issues of a Cork gay newsletter *Corks Crew* were produced. The Cork IGRM newsletter *Sapphire* was published on 30 January 1978 and was in circulation for a number of years.

> to facilitate the discussion of issues relevant to lesbian and gay men in Ireland […] Despite our numbers, gay people do not in general have access to the media and for many there is a lack of basic relevant information. We hope to go some way towards filling this gap.[351]

With an editorial board of six people initially, *OUT* covered international, national and local LGBT news stories, along with features, interviews and reviews. *OUT* was also the first commercial magazine to be stocked by retailers, with Eason's – Ireland's oldest and most popular distributor of books, newspapers and magazines – agreeing to stock it in some of its Dublin stores.

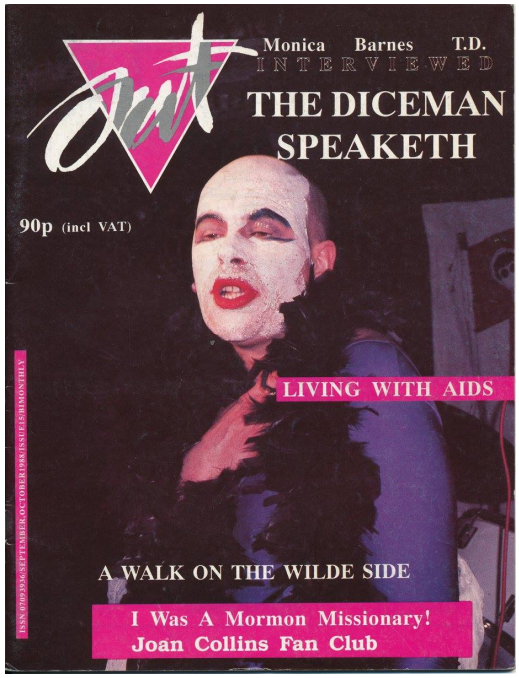


Figure 4.10: *OUT* Magazine's glossy cover

Source: *OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 15, 1988

Although a discussion of *OUT* marks a notable change in the media discussed so far throughout this thesis, many of the individuals involved in the creation and journalistic output of the magazine were also involved with other Irish media and the media activism of the Irish gay civil rights movement. Edmund Lynch, a key staffer within RTÉ, was one of the founding members and on the editorial board. Maurice Devlin –

[351] *OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (December 1984/January 1985).

a gay activist, a producer and editor on some RTÉ LGBT productions – was similarly on the editorial board and wrote many of the news features. Tonie Walsh, Nell McCafferty and David Norris similarly appeared on many RTÉ shows and wrote content for the magazine. This latter fact reveals a number of things about media activism within the Irish gay civil rights movement. It indicates how the small media landscape of Ireland enabled a movement between media forms and industries. Despite the television and publishing industries being very different in their composition, many of the activists and media workers moved between both. Lynch used his role as the editor of *OUT* to feed stories to RTÉ in an attempt to get them picked up.[352] He also utilised the resources in RTÉ to bolster the profile of the magazine, by securing a TV slot on *TV GaGa* to coincide with the launch of the magazine and attempted to get cheaper advertising slots on radio. Further, he used resources within RTÉ, such as photocopiers, stationery and postage to help with the administration of the publication.[353] *OUT* signifies the close connection between television and the gay press, becoming an extension of the media activism within the Irish gay civil rights movement. When RTÉ refused to cover stories on HIV and AIDS, *OUT* became the only space that enabled and facilitated content specific to the gay community's public health needs.

Paralleling experiences in the US and Europe, *OUT* proved how alternative media compensated for the Irish State in its failure to effectively deal with HIV and AIDS. *OUT* can be classed as alternative media in the sense that it voiced the concerns of the gay community, whose viewpoints and issues were not sufficiently represented within the existing local and national media. The magazine became a site where 'oppositional cultural values were formed and took shape in the context of their struggle with the dominant culture'.[354] *OUT* can similarly be understood within Nancy Fraser's conceptualisation of a subaltern counterpublic, which she distinguishes as 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn, permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs'.[355] *OUT* was imagined as a space

[352] Author interview with Edmund Lynch, July 8 2016.
[353] Ibid.
[354] O'Sullivan et. al., p. 10.
[355] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy'. *Social Text*, 25.26: 56-80.

where the gay community could control what was being said about them, without institutions of power dictating the terms of queer visibility. This was particularly crucial when the mainstream press and current affairs broadcasting was framing AIDS as a gay disease. *OUT* magazine was therefore published during a very significant period in Irish media history, as it was Ireland's only gay publication during the AIDS crisis.

In the UK, Jenny Kitzinger and David Miller argue that public education was 'the main plank of government policy on HIV and AIDS'.[356] A formal public health campaign of this sort did not surface in the UK until 1987 however. Similar to Ireland then, much of the early AIDS education was generated by the gay press. Popular magazine *HIM Monthly* ran its first front cover AIDS story in 1983. *Gay Times* similarly started providing monthly updates on the killer disease and carried a list of local and national AIDS help lines every month. Sharif Mowlabocus describes how the UK's gay press 'not only spoke directly to gay men, it began to criticise the government's handling of the burgeoning crisis'.[357] It was perhaps this upward pressure that prompted the UK government to eventually organise an 'unprecedented scheduling co-operation between all four television networks for a ten-day blitz' of AIDS related programming in 1987.[358] Although substantial gains were being made with regards to mainstreaming AIDS within the UK media, much of the public education in Ireland was left solely to *OUT* and GHA, with no support from any government public health or mass media campaign.

As an alternative media economy, *OUT* had a number of characteristics that enabled them to cover issues specific to the gay community, while also using its journalistic output to highlight the relationship between the gay community and government bodies at the time. The magazine regularly attempted to hold the Irish government accountable for its response to the epidemic. In the August/September issue of 1985, an article by GHA revealed that they had received £790 from the Health Education

[356] David Miller, Jenny Kitzinger, Kevin Williams and Peter Beharrel, *The Circuit of Mass Communication: Media Strategies, Representation and Audience Reception in the AIDS Crisis* (London: Sage, 1998), p.1.
[357] Sharif Mowlabocus, *Gaydar Culture: Gay Men, Technology and Embodiment in the Digital Age* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 132.

[358] Miller et. al., p. 2

Bureau for printing costs. The article goes on to state that GHA were also in the process of applying to the Department of Health for funding to run the organisation for the next year.[359] However, in the October/November issues in 1986, *OUT* revealed that the Department of Health 'had not answered any letters, agreed to any meetings, nor accepted telephone calls to discuss the issue in the correspondence'.[360] The magazine emphasised that GHA had been the only organisation in Ireland to provide public health education on the issue of AIDS. GHA claimed that the only explanation for the Department ignoring the NGO was their anti-gay attitude. This stood in stark contradiction to the UK, where Kitzinger and Miller noted that the government utilised the mainstream media in a robust and efficient way to convey public health information. As was the case with RTÉ refusing to mediate AIDS education, the laws surrounding criminalisation delayed public media campaigns. This is given further credence in light of the Department of Health stating to *OUT* that they could not fund an organisation of gay men whose sexual practices were still illegal.[361]

A retrospective analysis of *OUT* magazine highlights a contradiction in terms of how the government's approach to AIDS was influenced by the criminalisation of homosexuality. As *OUT* revealed, the Department of Health claimed that they could not fund GHA because of the laws in place. In a departure from this position, before the ECHR in 1988, the government defended the retention of these laws, on the grounds that they were not being implemented or influencing public policy. While highlighting the contradictory nature of the Irish government's arguments, this paradox also indicated the barriers encountered by GHA when their work was not even recognised or funded by the state. State Papers revealed in January 2016 indicate that the Irish government considered using AIDS as an argument to retain the laws criminalising homosexuality.[362] It was hoped that this strategy would provide a sufficient challenge to Norris' case against the state, with a memo to the government stating that such an argument was justified, 'given that a substantial proportion of

[359] "Home News — Gay Health Action" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 5, August/September, 1985).

[360] "Knot Unless It's Safe" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 9, 1986).

[361] *OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (October/November, 1986).

[362] Fiona Gartland, 'Government Considered Citing AIDS in David Norris Case', *The Irish Times*, January 1 2016.

homosexuals are now carriers of AIDS'[363]. When analysing *OUT* within the context of the relatively recent release of these State Papers, it emboldens the significance of this alternative media economy, given that the government was about to deliberately assert misinformation in order to retain criminal laws. *OUT*'s media economy inscribed a range of AIDS realities, that countered misinformation and ignorance, but also sought to use its marginal position to speak back against the state and directly challenge its policies and approach.

As much as the media activism of GHA was censored by broadcasters such as RTÉ, *OUT*'s printing press, the *Carlow Nationalist* and *Leinster Times*, disrupted the production of one issue due to what they considered objectionable content. GHA actively produced AIDS education pamphlets and in 1987, they produced a "Safer Sex Advertisement", to be disseminated through the inside back cover of *OUT*'s 14th issue. The production of this advert was another aspect of AIDS generated visibility, as it was aimed exclusively at gay men. The image and accompanying text (see Figure 3.10) resulted in the printers refusing to produce the advert as 'some of the material would give offence to their customers'.[364] Given that the magazine was written by and for the queer community specifically, it was clear the printing press was not willing to present an advertisement specifically tailored for the gay community, within a gay publication. The visibility given to gay men having sex proved a point of contention. Visibility in this case was circumscribed by more official structures, at the expense of the gay community. However, after obtaining a new press, GHA and *OUT* were eventually allowed to produce the safer sex advert. Not only was this image countering the narrative of visual representations of high risk groups prevalent in Irish media, but it also explicitly portrayed, or at least suggested, the 'deviant' sexual behaviour of gay men, which had been positioned by the wider media as threatening to spread to the imagined audience of the 'general population'. These attempts by GHA and *OUT* to challenge and dismantle the dominant discourses of queer visibility – while also taking responsibility for their own community – incited moral panic, which was eventually circumnavigated.

[363] Ibid.
[364] "Editorial — The Beast of Bigotry" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 15, 1988)

Figure 4.11: Gay Health Action Safer Sex advert, aimed towards gay men

Source: *OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 15, 1988

Links with international gay presses were also a crucial thread within this alternative media economy. While official structures within the Irish state were not effectively confronting AIDS and producing information about the syndrome, informal networks, particularly in New York and San Francisco 'offered physicians the opportunity to discuss their perplexing new cases and to exchange information regarding diagnoses, treatment and care'.[365] This information was summarised and circulated in gay publications in North America, such as Canada's *The Body Politic*. Co-editor and co-founder of *OUT*, Edmund Lynch, was part of the secretariat for the International Gay Association and as a result established some valuable contacts within the network of international gay publications.[366] Lynch's access to these networks enabled *OUT* to get permission to reuse articles and publish them for a gay Irish audience.

Articles from *The Body Politic* featured regularly in the magazine, with the first on condoms appearing in issue three in 1985. Although the article did not advocate the use of condoms as the best means by which to avoid AIDS, it does argue that it will

[365] Ronald Bayer and Gerald M. Oppenheimer, *AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 110.
[366] Author interview with Lynch

'probably help prevent it'.[367] It indicated that there was uncertainty amongst gay men regarding how to use condoms and recommended that they should not be used 'for the first time during a sexual encounter'. This *Body Politic* article on condoms was reused in this issue of *OUT* as a result of legislative changes that had occurred in Ireland in 1985 regarding contraception. At the time of the first official AIDS diagnosis in the country in 1982, and despite a huge surge of STDs, condoms were only available to married couples with a prescription from their GP.[368] Accordingly, there were no safe-sex measures in place, and because gay men could not marry and get access to condoms through prescriptions, they were rendered invisible by legislation, but more importantly, denied access to a medical device to practice safer sex. As a result, this probably contributed to rising infection rates. With the Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act, 1985, the law was loosened and allowed the sale of condoms to over 18s without a prescription; however, sales were limited to categories of places named in the act. *OUT* used this change in legislation and promoted condom use, although the magazine had to rely on international information to inform a gay Irish audience how to use the now freely available contraceptive.

Sensitive to the latest developments in AIDS and HIV research, *OUT* regularly recirculated articles from *The New York Native*, a biweekly gay newspaper published in New York city from December 1980 until January 1997. Several issues contained interviews with Peter Duesberg, Professor of Microbiology at the University of California, who questioned the view that HIV is the sole or principal cause of AIDS. *OUT* maintained a speculative view of these claims, particularly when Duesberg suggested that safe-sex precautions may not be necessary if his theory is proven to be true:

> *OUT* would like to remind readers that even if HIV does not cause AIDS, as seems increasingly likely, we have no cause to complacency or carelessness. Whatever causes AIDS may in fact be more easily transmittable than HIV. It remains crucially important therefore to follow safe-sex guidelines and to live a healthy lifestyle.[369]

[367] "AIDS – The Angst" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1985).
[368] Irish Statute Book: Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act, 1985.
[369] "Saying No to HIV" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 14).

In the following issue, GHA was also critical of Duesberg's theory and informed readers in an article in *OUT* that there was no 'evidence to suggest that HIV is not the cause of AIDS' and that they will not 'hesitate to advise the gay community of the facts as we see them'.[370] Not only did GHA use this alternative media economy to engage Irish gay readers on safer sex practices, but it also provided a critical platform to interact with the developments in the field, identifying AIDS epidemiology within this alternative queer media space as layered and nuanced, or as Treichler would suggest, 'an ongoing dialect between official and less official definitions'.[371] This starkly contrasted with the recurring narrative contours of AIDS circulating within the mainstream news media. The queer visibility generated within *OUT* magazine in response to this hegemonic mainstream dispelled fears and misinformation and forged a queer visibility resistant to Ireland's heterosexist media – an important intervention to television's coverage of AIDS a narrative format that does not encourage careful, complex and original reporting or analysis.

In addition to providing AIDS education, safe-sex guidelines and international networks of exchange, *OUT* contributed to what Douglas Crimp has called the genre of 'portraits of PWA' (People With AIDS).[372] Much of the mainstream Irish media presented AIDS through scientific meanings and televisual shorthands. *OUT* served as a necessary intervention to the 'simplicity and convention' of television's coverage.[373] The magazine became pivotal in the mobilisation of PWA visibility, following suit with the US-based Advisory Committee of PWA declaring 'we condemn attempts to label us as victims, which implies defeat […] We are people with AIDS'.[374] Jean-Pierre Boulé recognised the significance of PWAs, arguing that they 'tentatively try to break out of the dominant discourse, with varying degrees of success, in order to present something whose reality society is trying to ignore'.[375] PWA's began to populate *OUT*'s pages more frequently by its final issue in 1988 and

[370] "HIV: The Case for the Defence" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 15, 1988).
[371] Treichler, p. 48.
[372] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, p. 88.
[373] Treichler, p. 48.
[374] Raymond A. Smith and Donald P. Haider-Markel, *Gay and Lesbian Americans and Political Participation: A Reference Handbook* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2002), P. 247.
[375] Jean-Pierre Boulé, *HIV Stories: The Archaeology of AIDS Writing in France, 1985-1988* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), p. 27.

challenged popular narratives, such as the binary of general population versus risk groups.

The inclusion of PWA testimonies revealed the activism performed by *OUT*'s journalists. Kate Flynn's account of what life was like for 'John' attested to the magazine's activist potential. The subjects of Flynn's column were anonymised, only using the participants story, as John feared how his coming-out publically as a PWA would affect his wider family. John was dying of AIDS and Flynn observed how this reverberated onto his wider family. John's mother featured prominently within the article and noted how life had changed since her son's diagnosis: 'practically every week is punctuated by visits to James's Street Hospital for tests and treatment and the rest of the week is generally spent at home, preparing for the next visit to the hospital'.[376] Revealing the socio-economic dimensions of living with AIDS, Flynn noted how John had access to a medical card. Living with AIDS in 1988 without a medical card would have resulted in great difficulty acquiring all of the necessary medication due to their high cost. The biggest barrier that both John and his mother faced was the prejudice they encountered from the Eastern Health Board of the Department of Health. When attempting to get John onto a doctor's register, his mother remarked that 'most of the doctors had full registers'.[377] She noted the experience of living with a family member who had AIDS, stating that 'when you tell someone your son has AIDS, they often don't want to know'. Despite eventually securing a doctor, he would only sign the prescriptions if someone else brought them down. He would never directly deal with John.

Incited to action by John's testimony, Flynn contacted the Department of Health regarding their treatment of John. The Department replied to the magazine, claiming that the incident was 'highly surprising' and that 'all doctors were willing to treat AIDS patients'.[378] When *OUT* spoke to the chairperson of the ethics sub-committee of the Irish Medical organisation, Dr. Joe Curry, he remarked that this was 'not the first time he had heard or encountered individuals who were HIV positive and being treated in a discriminatory fashion'.[379] John died before the article went to press, but

[376] "Ethics and AIDS: John's Story" (*OUT*, Vol. 1, No. 15, 1988).
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.

his testimony in *OUT* provided an individual component to the epidemic that was part of a larger story. OUT managed to link John's individual story to a larger collective social crisis, that not only framed AIDS within conventional media narratives, but linked it to issues of class and social prejudice.

OUT and its inclusion of PWAs evidently performed important work in critiquing the state and public bodies regarding their approach to AIDS. Creating a platform for PWA visibility in *OUT* enabled a counter-narrative within a subaltern counterpublic. In many of the mainstream narratives in the press and mainstream news, the gay body was represented as diseased and dying, contained by televisual conventions. *OUT* made no such effort to contain and it served as one of the first media forums to provide queer Irish PWAs with a voice and one that was not regulated or governed by other bodies or media gatekeepers. The magazine was one of the few sites where Ireland's gay community could control what was being said about them. The development of alternative media such as *OUT*, with its public education remit and activist potential, was crucial in terms of countering governmental paralysis and misinformation within the mainstream news. The magazine provided a layered AIDS epidemiology that was not present within the mainstream media, through the provision of insightful and critical reportage. Through reclaiming this queer visibility, this alternative media economy applied upward pressure on mainstream institutions and also created a community energy, that would later be drawn upon by independent media producers who were sympathetic with the community.

Queer Alliances and Community Documentary Activism

Very much like the alternative media economy of *OUT*, the documentary form became central to providing local, personal responses to AIDS. As discussed earlier, there was no media economy within Ireland that enabled activist groups like GHA to produce AIDS video. The access to low-end video technology and equipment, which Juahasz argues was central to the creation of alternative AIDS video in the US, was not as present in Ireland and as noted earlier, was only available sporadically.[380] Despite this lack of access to media technology and production equipment, a small number of individuals and independent production companies produced documentaries about

[380] Juahasz, *AIDS TV*, p. 2.

AIDS, prompted by both the silence and scare-mongering pervading the Irish media landscape, but also influence from members of the gay community and AIDS activists.

This section uses two independently produced AIDS documentaries, *Stories from the Silence* (1990), directed by Alan Gilsenan and *Fintan* (1994), directed by Bill Hughes. These two documentaries are crucial to the argument of queer visibility, as not only did they provide visibility to gay PWAs on television and presented them as a voice of authority on AIDS, but they attempted to move them from marginal subjects within Irish discourses of AIDS to a central status, as they performed tasks of education and self-identification. Further to this, queer visibility on these AIDS documentaries fulfilled a similar role to the visibility on previous documentaries such as *Tuesday Report*, in that the presentation of gay subject living with AIDS was to provide a counter-cultural ideology that contested the narratives forwarded by the hegemonic news media. In so doing, this presented Irish television audiences with the concerns held by the homosexual minority surrounding AIDS. Transcending the counterpublic of alternative media economies, gay PWAs began to pervade the mainstream media, albeit through independent productions outside of broadcasting structures.

Stories from the Silence and *Fintan* initially began as independent productions, and were accordingly not subjected to broadcast regulations and standards. When defining both of these documentaries as independent, it is important to note that neither were ever intended for broadcast. As the production on each progressed, they were accepted for broadcast by the Independent Production Unit (IPU) in RTÉ and towards their completion, fostered a broadcasting shape to meet the standard of a commercial hour. These two documentaries are also reflective of RTÉ's changing structures, which had begun to favour commissioning independent productions through the IPU, embedding it formally within the organisation through government legislation. The Broadcasting Act of 1990 explicitly stated that RTÉ should 'commission a reasonable level of independent production'.[381] It wasn't until 1993 that a statutory amendment required the broadcaster to set up a separate budget to finance commissioned production from the independent sector.[382] RTÉ appointed Claire Duignan in 1993 to lead the IPU and help develop, fund and produce independent material. RTÉ was thus obliged to

[381] Broadcasting Act, 1990. Available at: http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1990/act/24/enacted/en/html
[382] Pettit, *Screening Ireland*, p. 254.

broadcast material produced by the independent sector, inadvertently diversifying televisual content for Irish audiences. The IPU also had a certain amount of leverage in the type of material it picked up. The processes and structures around the decision-making of programmes was not as complex, given that the IPU was much smaller and that it had no particular output requirements to meet in terms of content. Accordingly, it was not structured in the same way as the rest of RTÉ and its sole mission was to commission content that was in line with the public service broadcasting charter. This provided a wide scope to cover a myriad of different social issues, among which included AIDS.

Stories From the Silence derived from the fact that the global AIDS narrative was predominantly US/UK centric. Director Alan Gilsenan, who had risen to notoriety with the critical and popular success of his first documentary *The Road to God Knows Where* (1988), was approached by two of his friends, Clare Watson and Rachel Martin, who were activists in the field of AIDS education. Watson and Martin were motivated to approach Gilsenan, because the videos they were using in their AIDS education seminars were British and American, and as a result, were 'too remote' for an Irish audience.[383] Initially beginning as an AIDS education project, they asked Gilsenan if he would produce something. Given the scarce resources for this kind of production, much of the media work was carried out on what Gilsenan refers to as a 'pro bono' basis.[384] Windmill Lane Studios – which was becoming a hotbed of cultural productions during the 1980s, among which included U2's *The Joshua Tree* – donated an entire production crew to the project for free. Gilsenan's main aim with the documentary was not only an affirmative education remit, but to simply provide a voice to Irish people living with AIDS. For much of the production, the documentary had only ever been intended for AIDS education purposes. [385]

The documentary was an important intervention in the media narratives of AIDS. As noted earlier in this chapter, AIDS in the US was prominent in Irish media's treatment of the epidemic, particularly within news and current affairs. Similarly, UK-based soap opera *Eastenders*, which broadcast two nights a week on BBC One and was accessible to those who had Cablelink in Ireland, diagnosed primary character Mark

[383] Author interview with Alan Gilsenan, 29 January 2018.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid.

Fowler with the syndrome. *Stories From the Silence* was an intervention within these dominant narratives, and presented AIDS as a major social issue within an Irish idiom. Frank Vaughan, who served as an executive producer on the documentary, attests to the preponderant silence around AIDS within the Irish context, noting:

> The film was made in response to what we considered to be a conspiracy of silence around AIDS in Ireland. People seem to refuse the fact that AIDS was something that was in Ireland. Everyone seems to see it as a foreign phenomenon.[386]

The documentary, and its broadcast by RTÉ, created an Irish AIDS reality that had not previously been seen within the mainstream media, and only present within alternative media forms such as *OUT* magazine.

Fintan similarly began as an independent production, engendered by a queer alliance between director Bill Hughes and his childhood friend Fintan Brennan. Having told Hughes that he would like to keep a record of 'who he was', Hughes was prompted to interview Fintan about his life with AIDS and hired a crew to shoot an interview over the course of one day.[387] Following this initial shoot, Fintan said to Hughes:

> I'm going to tell my sisters that once I'm gone, because it's going to be soon, once I'm gone, they all have to talk to you and they have to tell you what they thought of me and my parents have to do the same and then I want you to edit that into a documentary.[388]

Initially an individual memorial project, it began to take the shape of a documentary following Fintan's death, as Hughes began to interview the Brennan family. However, given the similar limitations of being an independent producer, Hughes sought to get support from mainstream media structures to finish the project. Noting that a programme centring on AIDS 'would not have got commissioned' during this period (with *Stories From the Silence* being the only other exception), Hughes contacted the IPU in RTÉ, where he knew the head of programming, Clare Duignan. Using this personal connection, Hughes approached Duignan with rushes of the interviews with

[386] *RTÉ News: 1 O'Clock*, 1990.
[387] Author interview with Bill Hughes, 11 January 2018.
[388] Ibid.

Fintan and having watched this initial footage, Duignan agreed to fund the project, considering it 'a work of national importance'.[389] The queer alliance between Fintan and Hughes, and what I have previously termed the parochial inter-connectedness of the Irish media, served a crucial means of acquiring visibility for Fintan's story.

Both of these productions adopt the conventions of realist documentary. As Treichler, Watney and Juhasz have considered, media representations of AIDS occur within 'a war of meanings', where AIDS is culturally constructed and characterised through various constructions of reality.[390] Juhasz in particular argues that the 'conventional documentary form has proven most useful […] to give witness to the beliefs, values and experiences left out of or misrepresented by broadcast news programs'.[391] Talking-heads is the predominant approach adopted by both Gilsenan and Hughes, with both giving a voice to Irish PWAs. There is no voice-of-god narration within either documentary, giving the authority of AIDS to those speaking on screen. *Stories From the Silence* featured interviews with eleven PWAs, including two members of the gay community. This positioning of gay PWAs amongst a broad spectrum of Irish society on screen served as a significant disruption to the sense of AIDS as a gay disease. Framing these gay PWAs, David Keegan and 'Padraig', alongside heterosexual individuals provided a range of social identities that evoked a critical deconstruction of this recurring media narrative, working to provide mainstream audiences with what Christopher Pullen refers to as a more meaningful discourse around AIDS.[392]

The personal testimonies provided by the gay PWAs, much like those seen in *OUT*, revealed the social realities of AIDS. Gilsenan's documentary revealed the fault lines of queer visibility and AIDS within the public sphere. Despite representing two gay men, only David Keegan appeared as himself on screen. The second gay participant, given the pseudonym Padraig, chose not to have his face revealed. As Gilsenan recalls, this was due to participants fearing retribution from becoming fully visible. In some instances, they had not disclosed to their families that they were either gay or living with AIDS. Whenever Padraig's voice is heard, a picture of a young boy appears on

[389] Ibid.
[390] Juhasz (1995); Watney (1997); Treichler (1999).
[391] Juhasz, p. 76.
[392] Pullen, p. 99.

screen to denote a change in voice and also to provide a point of identification for the audience. Both testimonies provided a crucial critique of Ireland's system of care surrounding AIDS. Padraig noted: 'I use to have to queue for three hours outside of St. James' to get a bottle of AZT, something that was keeping me alive. Rory O'Hanlon [Minister for Health] says that the situation is under control, Rory O'Hanlon is a liar'. David Keegan similarly criticised the level of health care being provided by the government when he remarked: 'We're all queers and junkies, so we deserve to die, don't we? And that's the attitude of the Minister […] So it is up to junkies and faggots to show the Minister that we're actually human'. While highlighting the political motivations behind the visibility of these gay PWAs, queer visibility on the documentary form also enabled the gay community to have the power to speak back to a cultural and political system that had frequently subjugated them and conferred liability onto them. The intimate testimonials also provided sympathy-identification. The confessional context of the interview attempted to address the viewer and encourage them to sympathise with the personal struggle being narrated, looking beyond the speakers' sexuality and AIDS status and recognising their humanity. As Crimp argues, narratives tended to keep PWAs 'safely within the boundaries of their private tragedies'.[393] Much like the confessional approaches to the gay and lesbian documentaries discussed previously, this identification, within the private tragedy, altered how audiences would not just perceive AIDS, but gay sexualities. Both *Fintan* and *Stories From the Silence* deliberately produced sympathetic portrayals of gay PWAs as a representational strategy, aimed at altering perceptions of gay men.

The documentaries are both crucially conveyed through an Irish idiom. The positioning of the family front and centre, particularly in the context of *Fintan*, marks the uniquely Irish production context. In his essay 'The Spectacle of Mourning', Crimp marks his anger over how the media has given visibility to the deaths of famous people from AIDS related illnesses, but the deaths of 'hundreds and thousands [of] ordinary people go unnoticed'.[394] *Fintan* foregrounded the personal realities of being gay and living with AIDS, framing this within the broader context of its impact on the Brennan family, with Hughes stating that 'I needed it to be a story that showed how

[393] Crimp, p. 91
[394] Ibid.

the family needed to rally together around him and I needed it to have hope'.[395] In attempting to produce *Fintan* as a family narrative, the documentary deliberately avoided 'scare-mongering'. Talking-heads are used throughout, with interviews encompassing Fintan's sisters, his niece and nephew and his parents Bunty and Tadhg. Individual members of the Brennan family provide emotional testimonials, as they remember Fintan. Various emotional moments are included within the documentary, such as Fintan's mother Bunty stating: 'Fr. Dennehey came over and he said did you cry yet? I said don't talk to me, I cry every day, which I do […] even in bed at night when I'm talking to him'. Similarly, Fintan's father Tadhg admits: 'I can't talk about him without crying. You know, that's […] I just can't help it. I know it's stupid, but I can't help it'. The narrative of the Irish family is forwarded again when Tadhg recalls buying Fintan his first pair of boots for Gaelic football (GAA).[396] Having been bought a pair of boots by his own father, Tadhg continued the tradition with his only son Fintan:

> So I thought I'd do the same for him and I bought Fintan some. I gave him the football boots going to school and he came back the next day or so and he said that he didn't like the colour of the laces and I don't think he ever used them afterwards, but it was one of those small things that shows the difference between us.

The GAA in Irish culture has notably been crucial in not only the formation of Irish masculinities, but threading families and communities together.[397] The invocations of this father and son relationship through the GAA, along with emotional testimonies of Fintan's broader family, serves a number of purposes. It positions AIDS within a broader community, rather than an individual narrative of suffering and decay. The focus of AIDS on the family, to some degree, frames AIDS for Irish audiences in a way that not only provides a point of identification, but a representation that is palatable and nonthreatening. The attitude and acceptance of the Brennan family

[395] Author interview with Bill Hughes, 11 January 2018.
[396] Gaelic football is an Irish team sport, played between two teams of 15 players on a rectangular grass pitch.
[397] Debbie Ging and Marcus Free, 'Gay in the GAA: The Challenge of Dónal Óg Cusack's "coming-out" to Heteronormativity in Contemporary Irish Culture and Society', in Rosie Meade and Fiona Dukelow (eds.) *Defining Events: Power, Resistance and Identity in Twenty-First Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 220.

towards Fintan as a PWA was pivotal. As Pullen writes, 'the inclusion of heterosexual performers commenting on gay identity' has been a recurring trope within gay and lesbian documentary.[398] In this context of queer visibility and AIDS, these heterosexual performers are older parents of gay a PWA. These parents are depicted as well-dressed, respectable, articulate and older. The significance of their inclusion was the fact that they represented an old order aligning themselves with reform and understanding, enabling a version of the Irish family to be one that could not just include and accept a gay son, but a gay son living with AIDS. This positioning of AIDS within the family arguably presents AIDS within the familiar mainstreaming purposes of attempting to shift attitudes and alter conceptions of gay PWAS.

Stories from the Silence similarly evokes this Irishness through the use of family, with the use of father and son Ger and Joe Healy. Gilsenan extends this Irishness beyond the familial context however, particularly in the opening sequence of the documentary. Following a magnified shot of red blood cells – a staple representational shorthand of AIDS – the shot fades to archival footage from Liam O'Leary's *Our Country* (1949), a party-political film for Clann na Poblachta.[399] The clips included idyllic images of the rural Irish countryside and several shots of swans swimming on a lake. This sequence is overlaid with W.B. Yeats's poem "Down to the Salley Gardens". This idealistic veneration of rural Ireland is quickly interrupted by a cut to the Department of Health's educational video on tuberculosis (TB), *Voyage to Recovery* (1954). The clip depicts an exchange between a mother and son, as the son discloses to his mother that he had contracted TB. 'How could you get it?' she questions, to which he responds, 'oh, just picked it up in an idle moment'. His mother humorously retorts, 'there was never anything like that on our side of the family'. This abstract montage of archival footage and audio material positions Ireland's AIDS narrative within a broader reflection of Irish identity and culture, particularly regarding infectious diseases and epidemics. Although TB was not explicitly associated with sexuality, it was perceived as a disease rooted in poverty and uncleanliness. TB reached epidemic proportions in Ireland in the late nineteenth century, with mortality rates remaining high until the mid-twentieth century. Gilsenan's foregrounding of TB at the beginning

[398] Pullen, 2006, p. 165.
[399] Clann na Poblachta was an Irish republican political party founded in 1946 by Seán MacBride. The party ceased operation in 1965.

of the documentary frames the testimonies of the PWAs within a broader historical narrative of epidemics in Ireland. This provided an intergenerational cue that referenced how epidemics were previously treated in Ireland. Noel Browne, as Minister for Health in 1947, attempted to completely eradicate the disease through TB sanatoria. Yet, as the PWAs would claim in the documentary, the government refused to engage with preventing or eradicating AIDS in any way. Through using these archival materials, Gilsenan facilitates a particular discourse of AIDS in Ireland and one that references and uses its own history, rather than drawing upon the US and UK centric narratives.

Both of these documentaries avoid representing AIDS through intimate details of the illness and focusing on the diseased body. Both used representational strategies that were devised towards framing the PWAs as living, rather than dying. In the case of *Fintan*, this was in fact a deliberate decision both in the production process and the editing. Fintan had disclosed several intimate details of his treatment to Hughes during one of the shoots, with Hughes recalling:

> He told me horrendous things on camera about the sitting of his chemotherapy tube in James's. He told me about the surgeon kneeling on his chest to try and force the tube in. He told me stories that made me and the crew physically ill.

Hughes resolved to not broadcast this material, as not only would they feed into what he saw as a potentially scare-mongering narrative, but it may have resulted in other PWAs refusing to seek treatment. In the context of the media sensationalism around AIDS, *Fintan* was an important intervention, as it went against the trope of PWAs as 'ravaged, disfigured and debilitated', with the opening mid-shot of the documentary depicting Fintan stating:

> I have been surprised, but I think everybody has been surprised by how long I have lasted and I suppose I must have discovered that I am an awful contrary auld bastard, because I won't give in, and that's the principal discovery.

The documentary provides a disclosure of intimacy into the lived realities of AIDS and connects with a wider discursive network which may be influenced concerning the position of gay men within the Irish media. Fintan disclosing this material, as the singular subject of the text, foregrounds the idea of community and gay identity and

resists the conferring of both victim status and a narrative of decay. Gilsenan similarly fostered an approach that simply wanted to represent PWAs speaking on camera and go 'beyond analysis and statistics'. Humanising and 'putting an Irish face on AIDS' was the key goal of *Stories From the Silence*, while using the voices of these PWAs to ignite community resistance, informed Irish audiences that: 'we collectively have HIV and AIDS and we better face up to that, and own it with compassion, pragmatism and accept that this is a physical and medical condition that is affecting Irish people'.[400]

Conclusion

As this chapter has outlined, AIDS disrupted the previous contours of queer visibility, particularly around the mainstreaming of queer identities. The AIDS crisis in Ireland demonstrated how, rather than coming out once and then fighting for increasing degrees of visibility, the gay community comes out over and over again: first in the 1970s to highlight that gays 'are just like everybody else', then attempting to resist television's conventions of sensationalism and commodification of gay identities, to AIDS in the 1980s. New battlegrounds formed within particular contexts that ruptured and shaped the media activism of the Irish gay community and how queerness was configured by both the mainstream and alternative media.

GHA's media activism and the collective response of the Irish gay community to AIDS transformed the activism and the media presence of queerness, to one that attempted to position gay people as responsible individuals. As Kohnen argues, the AIDS crisis resulted in a 'conversion narrative' that resulted in the gay community 'growing up'.[401] Through media activism, alternative media economies and the broadcast of gay documentaries, the Irish gay community managed to alter perceptions of queer sexualities conferred on them by the AIDS crisis. This is traced from guilty PWAs, framed in pathological terms, to responsible gays who were actively supporting the wider community, to the sympathy-identification forwarded by the documentaries in the early 1990s.

[400] Author interview with Alan Gilsenan, 29 January 2018.
[401] Kohnen, p. 104.

In the wake of the devastation of the AIDS crisis, the culture wars of the 1980s and the eventual decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, the beginnings of a new sexual landscape began to form during the 1990s. With the legislative reforms, the cultural progressions and the transformation of gay Irish politics with the founding of GLEN, the battleground for gay activism (and media activism) changed once again. Despite this however, the politics of queer visibility in the Irish media, as the next chapter will attest to, was not all that radical. Arguably, the spectre of AIDS haunted Irish televisual queerness during the 1990s – a time when queer representation in the US and UK was undergoing an 'explosion of gay visibility'. The Irish inflection of the 'gay 90s' was to fall back on dated conventions of queer visibility and hesitated to fully embrace gay identities in a decade where it was no longer illegal to have sex with other men.

Chapter Five

Coitus Interruptus -

Queer Visibility on the Sitcom and Soap Opera (1995-1998)

Introduction

It is argued within queer media studies both in the United States and the United Kingdom that the 1990s saw a proliferation of queer representation and visibility in popular media forms, particularly television. Often referred to as the 'gay 90s', the decade introduced queer characters and narratives into the televisual frames of the soap opera and television sitcom.[402] In some instances, queer visibility became media events. Ellen DeGeneres' coming-out, alongside her on screen character Ellen Morgan, became a huge cultural touchstone in the US. In the UK, the character Zoe Tate's (Leah Bracknell) 1993 announcement that she was a lesbian on the popular soap opera *Emmerdale* saw the first overt lesbian representation on British prime-time television and was accompanied by mass hysteria in the tabloids, which dubbed the programme 'Emmer-gay-le'.[403] Just over one year later in 1994, the soap opera *Brookside* depicted the first lesbian kiss on UK television. Despite this significant progression for queer media visibility during the 90s, Irish television lagged behind its Anglo-American counterparts. The demonizing discourses surrounding AIDS certainly stalled fictionalised representations of queer characters. More specific to the Irish context was the fact that homosexuality was not decriminalised until 1993. Given that the campaign to decriminalise was active until late 1993, queer visibility remained confined to news and current affairs shows as the issue was debated.

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[402] Larry Gross, *Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Media in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) and Suzanna Danuta Walters *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[403] Anthony Hayward, *The Emmerdale Companion: A Celebration of 25 Years* (London: Orion Publishing Group, 1998).

This chapter analyses queer visibility post-decriminalisation. It marks an important transformation for queer visibility more broadly. Up until this point, Irish gay civil rights groups emphasised media activism within a mainstreaming strategy for recognition. With the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the battleground of queer activism and politics changed substantially. In light of this, there was a greater liberal dispensation for queerness to be represented within fictionalised settings. David Norris' original goal of introducing a character on the rural soap opera *Glenroe* in the 1980s was later realised in 1996, when RTÉ's soap opera *Fair City* introduced an out gay character. Much like AIDS, decriminalisation served as a node that recalibrated and redefined queer visibility. What had been a power play between the gay community and media institutions in Ireland over visibility had now been resolved somewhat with the gay law reform. Accordingly, there was a depoliticised approach to queer visibility in the media, in that queer politcal issues, for now, had been resolved, and a new sexual landscape within a new Ireland could emerge. Queer visibility thus transitioned from community-led-activism to becoming incorporated within the broader structures of Irish television, specifically the sitcom and the soap opera.

This chapter will examine RTÉ's formative attempts at representing queer characters within its cultural productions. It will argue that institutional forms of popular culture, like the soap opera and the sitcom, shaped the conditions under which queer visibility could emerge in Irish public life. Using the sitcom *Upwardly Mobile* (1995 – 1998) and soap opera *Fair City* (1989–), this chapter will contend that queer visibility on these programs revealed the tentative anxieties surrounding the depiction of queer characters on Irish television. While seeming to embrace queer identities post-decriminalisation, these fictionalised representations were ambivalent and conservative to varying degrees. The chapter will also illustrate how the genre specific conventions of both the Irish sitcom and soap opera influenced the representation of queerness on Irish television.

Further, this chapter will also argue that the queer visibility conferred onto these texts – ambivalent, cautious, anxious, conservative – adopted particular representational strategies to convey queerness. Using Alexander Dotys's theorisation of queer reception, this chapter will argue that both of these television programmes deployed subtle extra-textual knowledge that spoke to queer audiences and queer culture. By

this, I do not mean to suggest that the writers or producers intended for this to be overt or explicit in any way. Rather, I use Doty to reveal the queer potentialities and energies within both texts, as he argues, 'a range of textual meanings caught somewhere between auteurist consideration of director intentionality […] and considerations of reception practices and uses of text'.[404] Doty stresses that the audiences may derive what he refers to as 'queer pleasure' from standard categories when they view film and television. Using Doty, I will explore the more subtle mechanisms by which queerness was articulated and will focus in particular on the way queerness was represented through closeted and double-voiced means. Although Doty's ideas are not specific to this era or to Irish media, his theory sheds light on a specific queer moment in post-decriminalisation Ireland.

Developing an Irish Sitcom and Soap Opera

Upwardly Mobile was developed by RTÉ in 1994. Its conception came about not only from the perceived need to have a successful, domestically-produced sitcom on its schedules for competitive reasons, but also to redress RTÉ's poor record in producing the genre.[405] Previous sitcoms, which included *Leave it to Mrs. O'Brien* (1984-1986) and *Extra! Extra! Read All About It* (1993), had largely failed to sustain either a regular audience or commercial success. *Upwardly Mobile* was broadcast over the course of four series from 1995 to 1998 in the prime-time Friday night slot on RTÉ 1 at 8.30pm. Originally devised in 1994 by Bill Tierney and written by Thomas McLoughlin during an RTÉ sitcom writing seminar, it was developed further by RTÉ executives Kevin Linhean and David Blake-Knox and by its third series was being written by a team of ten named contributing writers.[406] Across its four-series run, the show managed to sustain the healthy audience figure of over 400,000.

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[404] Alexander Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1993).

[405] Lance Pettitt. *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 193.

[406] Lance Pettitt, *Screening Ireland* and Helena Sheehan, *The Continuing Story of Irish Television Drama: Tracking the Tiger* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

The basic premise of the sitcom was the well-worn domestic scenario of incompatible neighbours. In this case, working-class Dublin north-siders Eddie and Molly Keogh (Joe Savino and Catherine Byrne) win £2 million on the Irish National Lottery, decide to leave their council flats of deValera mansions and move to Belvedere Downs next to Pamela and Anthony Moriarity (Hilary Fannin and Niall Buggy), a south-side Dublin suburban couple with social pretensions. Also living within this affluent suburb is the supporting character Toby O'Driscoll (Mark O'Regan), who lives with his wife Emer. Toby's wife Emer never physically appears on screen; she is only ever referred to by the other characters. Each episode of the sitcom hinges on the neighbourly tensions between the working-class sensibilities of the Keoghs and the middle-class affectations of the Moriarities. Although a supporting character, Toby is regularly positioned at the centre of the conflict between the two families, aligning with the middle-class tastes of the Moriarities. Ted Sheehy observed that the show relied on the 'class-based British model' of BBC sitcoms.[407] In particular, Pamela Moriarity shared numerous character tropes with Hyacinth Bucket from *Keeping Up Appearances* (BBC, 1990-1995). Comparisons with *The Beverly Hillbillies* (CBS, 1962-1971) by Lance Pettit also suggests the influences of Anglo-American sitcoms and RTÉ's appropriation of these generic conventions, as the broadcaster attempted to speak to an Irish audience in a familiar register.

The social mobility which is at the centre of the show has a particular resonance in Ireland. Anna Coogan notes that *Upwardly Mobile*'s popularity can be attributed to the fact that 'it seems everybody wants to win the Lotto and [that] has struck a chord with the TV watching public'.[408] Set at the emergence of the period of significant national economic growth that would become known as the Celtic Tiger, the broader socio-economic landscape of the sitcom was one of aspiration. In this period, as a result of the attraction of foreign direct investment into the IT, pharmaceutical and financial sectors through a low corporate tax rate, a model of neoliberal governance, and, in its latter years, the dependence on an unsustainable construction boom, there was a significant increase in the wealth of the nation. In tandem with this rise in affluence, pre-existing economic inequalities proliferated, resulting in 'elitist capitalist

[407] Ted Sheehy, *Film Ireland* 55 (October-November, 1996). Dublin: Ireland.

[408] Anna Coogan, 'The Show That's Upwardly Mobile'. *Evening Herald*, 1996. Dublin: Ireland.

accumulation and growing social inequality'.[409] This period was one of shifting economic and socio-cultural realities and this sitcom tested the notion that these 'boundaries and markers of class and status in Ireland are not permanent and might change'.[410] These are tested out in the central situational premise of the programme. Given that there are clear social class divides in the geographical distribution of housing in Irish cities, families like the Keoghs and Moriarities would be unlikely to live next door to each other. However, the Keoghs' winning the Lotto facilitates social movement in a direction that the writers attempt to depict as incongruous and comedic.

As *Upwardly Mobile* represented a new Ireland, RTÉ's announcement of *Fair City* in 1989 as part of its Autumn schedule was a similar attempt to convey a modernised nation. The soap opera was conceived as an attempt to disrupt what had been the 'moral constructions of Ireland as a pastoral idyll', which was seen in previous television dramas such as *Bracken* and *The Riordans*.[411] It also met the demand for an Irish urban serial since the demise of *Tolka Row* in 1968. In 2002, *Fair City* was Ireland's third most popular television programme, gaining a peak audience of 659,000 viewers. In 2014, the show celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary and still remains one of RTÉ's most popular outputs, with audience figures regularly surpassing 500,000 an episode. *Fair City* has also become a successful export, being sold for broadcast in other territories such as UTV in Northern Ireland, STV in Scotland and the Tara Television network in the UK, until its closure in 2002. From its inception, *Fair City* has provided a platform for the contentious issues of Irish society to be played out, with Helena Sheehan observing that the characters 'represent interesting dimensions of contemporary Ireland'.[412]

In 1996, the show marked a liberalisation in RTÉ's identity politics and included an out gay character within its cast. The character Eoghan Healy (Alan Smyth) first appeared for a brief storyline in 1994, where he was cast as a foil for Jimmy Doyle (David Mitchell), 'to create a bit of jealousy and stir things up between Jimmy and

[409] Peadar Kirby. 'Contested Pedigrees of the Celtic Tiger', in *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*, eds. Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbons and Michael Cronin, 21-37. London: Pluto Press.

[410] Pettitt, *Screening Ireland*, p. 193.

[411] David Tobin and Patricia Neville, 'Cosmopolitan Kitchen: The Representations of Nationality in the Irish TV Series, RAW'. *Critical Studies in Television*, 6.2: 87-99, 2012.

[412] Helena Sheehan, 'Fair City', *Estudios Irlandeses – Journal of Irish Studies*, 1(2006): 75-176.

Lorraine'.[413] In 1995, Eoghan resurfaced again as a minor character, but in a marked transition from his initial appearance as a love interest for Lorraine Molloy (Maeve McGrath), he was to be introduced as gay. *Fair City* became a barometer of social change, reflecting the post-decrminalisation Ireland of the 1990s.

While mapping the changes to Irish society's social and economic order, both *Upwardly Mobile* and *Fair City* follow in the wake of significant social progress, such as the removal of the constitutional prohibition on divorce in 1995 and the election of the first female President Mary Robinson in 1990, who was succeeded by another woman, Mary McAleese in 1997. Similarly, the decriminalisation of homosexual acts between men in 1993 was to prove hugely influential to televisual queerness. Hence, *Upwardly Mobile* and *Fair City*'s gay storylines were conceived and produced in a dynamic context where the Irish economy was on the cusp of becoming a global competitor and conceptions of gender and sexuality – at least in terms of legislation and public representation – were expanding. The sitcom and the soap opera storyline can be read as RTÉ's attempt to produce a show representative of what Debbie Ging would later retrospectively refer to as '"New Ireland', where increased affluence and the decline of religion [had] created a new sexual landscape'.[414] Despite significant progress in the legal status of gay Irish men, the suggestiveness and ambiguity of Toby's queerness in *Upwardly Mobile*, and the presentation of a desexualised queer citizen with Eoghan in *Fair City*, indicate an uncertainty regarding the extent to which general attitudes to homosexuality in Ireland had changed. Creating an Irish televisual idiom for queer sexualities through Toby and Eoghan proved problematic, as the sitcom and soap opera attempted to build on the cultural moment of decriminalisation. Instead of creating an out gay character *Upwardly Mobile*'s Toby provided an incoherent set of ambivalences. By contrast, *Fair City*'s Eoghan was named as gay but the rest of his queer life remained outside of the televisual frame off screen. Both characters can be read as a product of the uncertainty regarding the representation and sustainability of queerness on Irish television.

[413] "Fair City Gets Gay Surprise" (*Irish Independent*, 8 November 1998).
[414] Debbie Ging, 'Goldfish Memories? On Seeing and Hearing Marginalised Identities in Contemporary Irish Cinema', in *Facing the Other: Interdisciplinary Studies on Race, Gender and Social Justice in Ireland*, eds. Borbála Farago and Moynagh Sullivan, 182-204. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

Since the end of its run in 1998, *Upwardly Mobile* has critically and popularly been confined to the vaults of RTÉ's audio-visual archives. This chapter foregrounds a rereading and reclaiming of an Irish television text that has been absent from debates and criticism of Queer Media Studies and Irish Media Studies more generally. This is a striking contrast to *Fair City*, which has framed its gay character Eoghan – and specifically its first gay kiss storyline – as a form of queer history making. These texts reveal two very different institutional treatments of queer visibility by the broadcaster. RTÉ could not support a coming-out for Toby in any formal way, but in the case of Eoghan's first gay kiss, queer visibility is framed as a historic media event. Eoghan is not the first queer character on Irish television, but, as Anna McCarthy argues regarding Ellen's coming-out, he could be considered as 'a ceremonial first, an occasion we were all supposed to remember as the moment when queer lives finally became a part of mainstream television'.[415] RTÉ displayed significant efforts to cement the historic status of this gay kiss within the Irish media, through extensive press coverage and veneration within popular culture. Much like *The Late Late Show*, queer visibility was framed in terms of a media event through televisual sensationalism, although this sensationalism was conveyed through other media outputs – both within the broadcaster and outside – rather than *Fair City* itself.

Representing Queerness on the Irish Sitcom

Much like how the conventions of current affairs programming and the documentary shaped queer visibility in the previous chapters, the conventions of the sitcom shape Toby's televisual queerness in very specific ways. As Mary Dalton and Laura Linder argue, the sitcom is generally presented within 'thirty-minute episodes, photographed in a three-camera studio set up in front of a live audience and built around situations in the program'.[416] Given the short timeframe within which to present its protagonists in humorous situations, sitcom characters are often reduced to stereotypes. Denis M.

[415] Anna McCarthy, 'Ellen: Making Queer Television History'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7(4): 593-620, 2001.

[416] Mary Dalton and Laura Linder, 'Introduction', in *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*, eds. Mary Dalton and Laura Linder, 1-12, (New York: State University of New York Press), p. 2.

Provencher contends that the positioning of the heteronormative family at the centre of the sitcom has become one of its most recurring conventions, a point which Valerie Peterson extends further, stating that the performances of queer characters 'are limited accordingly'.[417] Centred around heteronormative family structures, the sitcom has traditionally been limited in the range of topics it can cover, particularly in relation to sexuality and queer issues. As noted in various instances throughout this thesis, particularly pertaining to queer issues, RTÉ regulated its content to align with its imagined audience of the heteronormative family unit. Although the domestic sitcom, as Jane Feuer (2001) argues, is a conservative form, RTÉ's public service remit, and perceived duty to protect its mass viewing audiences, added a further layer of conservatism to cultural productions.[418]

In keeping with RTÉ's reluctance around the production of queer content, in *Upwardly Mobile*, Toby's homosexuality is treated at most tangentially, not least by the fact that he is never formally outed. He is positioned within a narrative space that relies on familiar comedic conventions for addressing homosexuality, where his performance of queerness fits within a historical systems of coding queer characters as stereotypes. In the same way that Richard Dyer refers to Charles Hawtrey as both 'obviously gay, yet not explicit', Toby's characterisation reference a similar system of queer coding within this Irish sitcom.[419] Amy Villarejo similarly references this ambiguous queer characterisation in relation to Mrs. Carney (Florence Bates) and Connie Brooks (Eve Arden) from the US sitcom *Our Miss Brooks* (1952-1956). This type of characterisation, the ambiguous, ambivalent queer figure pervaded many sitcoms, among which included Mr. Humphries (John Inman) from *Are You Being Served?* (BBC, 1972-1985; 2016) Derek, from the BBC Northern Ireland radio comedy *The McCooeys* (1949-1957) and Charles Hawtrey and Kenneth Williams from the *Carry On* (1958-1978; 1992) franchise. The latter examples were represented as flamboyant and marked through double entendres, oblique innuendos, visual gags, a lack of

[417] Denis M. Provencher, 'Sealed With a Kiss: Heteronormative Narrative Strategies in NBC's *Will & Grace*', in *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*, 177-189; Valerie Peterson, '*Ellen*: Coming Out and Disappearing'. In *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*, 165-176.

[418] Jane Feuer, 'The 'Gay' and 'Queer' Sitcom', in *The Television Genre Book*, ed. Glen Creeber, 70-71, (London: British Film Institute, 2001).

[419] Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 154.

masculinity and eccentric camp performance. Toby is similarly deployed with these same representational strategies, where his sexuality operates as an open secret within the sitcom.

Although Toby's representation speaks to a history of sitcom characterisations, from a production perspective, he is deliberately marked as queer. Kevin McGee, a writer on the show, notes how Toby was specifically 'coded as gay for a straight audience' despite never formally being outed.[420] He was deliberately written, as McGee recalls, through a 'pantomime characterisation'. McGee contends that this was all that both he and the writing team were familiar with from the sitcom tradition. Further, he cites how the writing team were aware that this was a first, and that 'there had been no comedic gay presence on Irish TV prior', or fictional representation for that matter.[421] Although observing that Toby was deliberately a stereotype, McGee similarly speaks to a level of uncertainty within the writing team. He recalls that they were not 'very plugged in to gay culture' and accordingly, were uncertain about how to write a gay character. Given that this was comedy writing, McGee notes that this lack of knowledge did not enable them to be as subversive or innovative with the character. This was new territory for the writers as much as it was for RTÉ as an institution and accordingly, the writing team stayed within the parameters of what was familiar, thus approaching the character cautiously and tentatively. There was a clear awareness amongst the writers that Toby was gay and this was certainly something that was discussed in scrip-writing meetings, but McGee notes that 'the envelope was never necessarily pushed in overtly representing his sexuality'.

Indeed, for much of the series, Toby is hiding in plain sight. He is closeted formally, but his innate homosexuality was entirely obvious and conveyed through retrograde stereotypes and sitcom conventions that spoke to a history of queer character's history in the sitcom genre. It could be argued that this representational form was necessary to sustain a queer character over the course of several series. Strategies deployed to represent Toby included: conveying sexual excess through double entendres, eccentric camp performances, invisible characters and blatantly queer codes. As Gross argues, 'rooted in sensibility, camp serves several purposes. Used as a secret code in public

[420] Author interview with Kevin McGee through personal correspondence, 12 November 2017.
[421] Ibid.

settings, it can also be a way to identify and communicate with other "club members" under the unknowing eyes of the straight world – itself an act of subversion'.[422] Unlike other queer sitcom characters that exposed and subverted the heteronormative discourse of the sitcom form, a reading of the character of Toby highlights the tropes and conservative conventions that were necessary at this moment to accommodate same-sex desires and identifications on Irish prime-time television.[423]

Kathleen Battles and Wendy-Hilton Morrow argue that through the character of Jack McFarland in *Will & Grace*, homosexuality was made safe for broadcast for audiences 'by framing its characters within the familiar popular conventions that equates gayness with a lack of masculinity […] confining homosexuality within its paradoxical position in dominant heteronormative discourse'.[424] Brett Mills argues that the presence of such stereotypes in sitcoms have generally been bound up with the argument that 'as comedy is more likely to fail if it requires too much thought to work the jokes out, it has to draw on a range of simplistic character types which are easily understandable'.[425] Stereotypes are important in sitcoms because they help to establish instantly recognisable character types. Rather than belonging to a tradition of out gay characters on the sitcom, such as Jodie Dallas and Jack McFarland, Toby belongs to the sitcom tradition where the genre shied away from an expressly open homosexual character, such as Miss Jane Hathaway on *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Despite being marked as obviously gay within the text – strengthened by the fact that his queerness fits into a historical framework of sitcom queerness – Toby's sexuality exists in constant suspension throughout the series, ultimately remaining entirely ambivalent.

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[422] Gross, 2001, p.1.

[423] See Fred Fejes and Kevin Petrich, 'Invisibility, Homophobia and Heterosexism: Lesbians and Gays in the Media', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 10(4): 396-421, 1993; Fred Fejes, 'Making a Gay Masculinity', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17(1): 113-116, 2000; Frederik Dhaenens and Sofie Van Bauwel, 'Queer Resistances in the Adult Animated Sitcom'. *Television & New Media* 13(2): 124-138, 2012.

[424] Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow, 'Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces: *Will and Grace* and the Situation Comedy Genre', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19(1), 2002, p. 102.

[425] Brett Mills, *Television Sitcom*, (London: British Film Institute, 2005).

At a cultural moment that attempted to embrace social progress regarding LGBT rights in Ireland, it is yet undeniable that the characterisation of Toby displayed a preoccupation with dated sitcom conventions. Toby is an architect, which was indicative of the professional occupations that were starting to benefit directly from the economic boom, in this case in the construction industry. He is a member of a cycling group called 'The Buccaneers', and is generally dressed in cycling apparel, consisting of gilets and tight shorts. This aesthetic is representative of the sitcom conventions of visual gags, which become central to Toby's queer embodiment.[426] Though the inclusion of a character coded as queer but not explicitly designated queer in a prime-time Irish television show suggests a liberalisation of the Irish sitcom's representational politics, the lack of clarity around Toby's homosexuality belies a latent parochial mentality. Whereas Ellen Morgan's (and Ellen DeGeneres') coming-out was a formal event in what McCarthy describes as 'the textual and ritualistic sense of the word within television as an institution', the ambivalence of Toby's sexuality was testament to the fact that his characterisation did not even warrant a coming-out moment.[427]

Toby's queerness is exposed through his involvement with the class conflict between the Keoghs and the Moriarities. The plot of each episode centres on an issue that plays on the neighbourly tensions between the two families in Belvedere Downs. Early episodes veered towards celebrating the working-class values of the Keoghs as more authentic and genuine. Against this, the middle-class values of the Moriarities and Toby are portrayed as shallow, with Pettitt going as far as to say that 'they are artificial, even un-Irish'.[428] The 'un-Irish' comment is striking, as Kathryn Conrad and David Norris have both noted how identifying as homosexual has historically been at odds with Irish identity.[429] Furthermore, Toby's exaggerated attitudes represent the social aspirations of the 1990s nouveau riche –wealth acquired through the economic benefits of the Celtic Tiger – and differentiate him further from the Keoghs, who are marked more explicitly as Irish, evidenced by Eddie Keogh's frequently worn Irish

[426] Tropiano, 2002.
[427] McCarthy, 2001, p. 594.
[428] Pettitt, *Screening Ireland*, p. 195.
[429] Kathryn Conrad, 'Queer Treasons: Homosexuality and Irish National Identity', *Cultural Studies*, 15(1): 124-137, 2001; David Norris, 'Homosexual People and the Christian Churches in Ireland', *The Crane Bag,* 5(1): 31-37, 1981.

soccer jersey. The implication of Toby as un-Irish might point to a deliberate representational strategy that would enable the series to sustain a queer persona through creating a differentiation between Irishness and queerness – the Irish audience will accept a queer character as long as they are coded as 'un-Irish'.

Much of Toby's queer potential is conveyed predominantly through playful dialogue, comprised mostly of oblique innuendos. This calls attention to Toby's sexuality through euphemistic references that challenge heteronormative sitcom conventions and expose the open secret through which queer characters are regularly framed. Specifically, the double entendre functions in this instance to prick at the heteronormative surface of *Upwardly Mobile*, which following sitcom conventions, foregrounds the traditional heteronormative family unit as the normative basis of the text. The double entendre, while an opportunity to convey sexual excess, also requires a 'knowing' audience to identify such a sexual subtext. Doty stresses that the audience may derive 'queer pleasure' in viewing film and television. Many of Toby's quips directly suggest gay sex acts: 'it's little wonder, all I could think of was having a bottom full of inoculations' or 'by rights I should have been on my back an hour ago, pumping'.[430] In one episode, Pamela informs Toby that she misses Anthony who is away on a work trip. Toby responds by informing Pamela: 'a house is not a home without a pungent male aroma, the slippers curled under the bed, the sounds of steel banging against steel, the sweat pouring…'.[431] Pamela abruptly interjects and prevents Toby from finishing his statement. Although Toby's same-sex desire is entirely obvious, the double entendres provided a cover of sorts before he explicitly names his queer desires. The interruption by Pamela not only acknowledges an open secret that is at work within the text regarding Toby's sexuality, but it also calls attention to the role of the double entendre and its function within *Upwardly Mobile*. Pamela's interruption acknowledges how Toby's queerness questions the formal level of Irish television, highlighting the parameters by which queer Irish sexualities could be represented, while also being representative more broadly of anxieties around gay sex acts within Irish society, which had been widely discussed during the AIDS crisis until

[430] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 3, Episode 3, 1997; Series 2, Episode 3, 1996.
[431] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 4, Episode 3, 1998.

decriminalisation within the public sphere. The double entendre allows for the sustainability of a queer character across several series.

Development from the reliance on the double entendre can be observed later in series four, where the programme begins to engage with his queer potential more playfully. At this point, the double entendre is not entirely abandoned, yet it is not the sole means of speaking to Toby's same-sex desire, which is voiced in alternative ways. For example, when looking for an alibi for not attending his local cycling club meeting, he tells Pamela: 'if anybody asks, just say that we spent the morning here together, listening to my Judy Garland CDs'.[432] Richard Dyer has argued that Garland was particularly appealing to gay men, being dubbed the 'Elvis of homosexuals'.[433] More obvious again is when Aileen, Pamela's niece, comments on the fictional Irish celebrity Eddie Schumacher being 'only gorgeous' to which Toby replies, 'he certainly is'.[434] These more interpretable articulations by Toby suggest that the initial anxieties surrounding representing a queer character in post-decriminalisation Ireland had subsided somewhat by the fourth series in 1998. In this regard, the representational approach deployed to depict Toby exploits the narrative structure of the sitcom, which allows character development. Even by this late stage in the series, Toby was still straddling the visible and invisible boundaries of the closet, revealing the structural limits of the sitcom form in representing queer sexualities on Irish prime-time television. Lynne Joyrich argues that television in the US in the early 90s 'both impedes and constructs, exposes and buries a particular kind of sexual knowledge'.[435] This Irish case confirms Joyrich's argument. The resistance to accommodate an out gay character, and the continual use of historically familiar queer character tropes, indicate that Irish television in the post-decriminalisation moment refused to incorporate out queer lives into its representational space. As a consequence, the Irish iteration of institutional forms of popular culture, like the sitcom's narrative structure, shaped the conditions under which queer identities could emerge in public life.

[432] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 4, Episode 11, 1998.
[433] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Films Stars and Society, Second Edition*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 138.
[434] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 4, Episode 12, 1998.
[435] Lynne Joyrich, 'Epistemology of the Console', in *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics*, eds. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 20.

Even with this conventional sitcom, there are queer readings that are specific to the logics of a knowing queer audience. That is not to say that the practices of queer spectatorship are specific to queer Irish audiences, but cultural codes within *Upwardly Mobile* require a knowledge of queer subcultures and gay life in Dublin during the 1990s, something which may not have been part of the mainstream consciousness during this period. Where queer content and intent are not entirely clear, queer reading can be useful to not only uncover the underlying normative theme, but the subversively queer one also. Such an example occurs when Toby is making a purchase in Molly Keogh's clothes shop. When asking Molly whether his special package had arrived, she presents him with a box. Toby reveals a handkerchief within, claiming he has purchased it for his wife Eimear, as a result of her 'red and rather unpleasant' nose.[436] A queer reading of this situation, however, would provide a different interpretation of Toby's use of the handkerchief. In the 1970s and 80s, the handkerchief was a cultural code used by homosexual men to display their interest in having sex with potential male partners.[437] Only men looking for sex with other men would recognise the code and its existence allowed a discreet communication of queer desires in normative space. In this scene, the handkerchief could suggest Toby's queerness to a knowing audience, reflecting Doty's notion of queer reception and spectatorship, which required extratextual knowledge for understanding the meaning coded within the text.

The sitcom also incorporates the trope of the gay sauna. Gay saunas, or gay bathhouses, are commercial establishments where men gather for sexual encounters. They can be found in many large and medium-size cities. As Jason Hendrickson (2007: 217) argues, 'bathhouses have served as meeting places for men interested in sex with other men since at least the turn of the twentieth century […] and they have played an important part in the development of modern gay identities'.[438] Inasmuch as they offer a social infrastructure to explore queer sexualities amongst men, gay saunas simultaneously offer a veil of secrecy and anonymity away from the wider

[436] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 2, Episode 8, 1996.

[437] Lauren Rosewarne, *Part-Time Perverts: Sex, Pop Culture and Kink Management*, (California: Praeger, 2011).

[438] Jason Hendrickson, 'Conflicts at the Tubs: Bathhouse and Gay Culture and Politics in the United States', in *Handbook of the New Sexuality Studies*, ed. Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer and Chet Meeks, (London: Routledge, 2007), 217.

society. Throughout *Upwardly Mobile*, Toby regularly refers to frequenting the sauna, which he clearly designates as a male exclusive space. At points, the dialogue engages with the queer potentiality of Toby's interactions with this off-screen space through quips such as 'If I don't rush, I won't get a good seat at the sauna, and it's open day, so it's always a bit of a tight squeeze'.[439] Other characters question Toby's visits to the sauna, particularly Anthony Moriarity: 'And speaking of hair, is it absolutely necessary for you to have a full body wax before and after each sauna'.[440] The provocative line of questioning is again met with an equally provocative, queer response from Toby: 'that's for aerodynamic purposes, it helps me to ride faster when it's off'. Toby may be talking about his bike-racing past-time, but the use of 'ride' speaks to a particular Irish colloquialism for sex.

Writer Kevin McGee states that the references to the saunas were very deliberate. In 1994, gay saunas were a headline news story within the popular media following the death of Fr. Liam Cosgrove in Dublin's Incognito Sauna Club. The death of a priest within the gay sauna generated sensational headlines in the Irish press, among which included 'Priest Dies in Club for Gays', 'Up to 20 Said to be Gay Club Regulars' and 'Shock at Curate's Death in Gay Club'.[441] The gay sauna story gained increased notoriety in the press due to the fact that there was another priest on site to provide Fr. Cosgrove the last rites, a Catholic prayer often given shortly before death.[442] Accordingly, when *Upwardly Mobile* began broadcasting later in 1995, the trope of the sauna had become identifiable, given the very public reportage of Cosgrove's death. Accordingly, the knowing audience might have expanded, subsequently leading the sitcom to trade on that. The existence of the gay sauna in Ireland was mirrored in the televisual frame of the prime-time slot. McGee notes that 'the sauna was forever cemented as a gay space' for the writers of *Upwardly Mobile* following Fr. Cosgrove's death. However, Toby's queer sexuality and activities within were confined beyond the parameters of broadcasting off screen. Although the trope of the sauna certainly

[439] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 2, Episode 11, 1996.
[440] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 3, Episode 4, 1997.
[441] Charles Mallon, 'Priest Dies in Club for Gay', *Sunday Independent*, 1994 Dublin: Ireland; 'Shock at Curate's Death in Gay Club', *Sunday Independent*, 1994, Dublin: Ireland; Alison O'Connor, 'Up to 20 Priests said to be Gay Club Regulars', *The Irish Times*, 1994, Dublin: Ireland.

[442] Tonie Walsh, 'Incognito Sauna'. Storymap Dublin, 2011. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9nwcunhLks [Accessed 15 December 2017].

plays to a gay audience, the death of the priest in 1994 certainly brought the existence of this countercultural space into the popular Irish consciousness and may have been obviously queer to heteronormative viewers.

Queer representation on *Upwardly Mobile* also draws upon the sitcom convention of the 'invisible other'. Chris Ritchie argues that the television sitcom has always used the 'invisible other', a character that we only ever hear of 'in anecdotal exchanges between characters'.[443] In *Are You Being Served?* for example, Mrs. Slocombe's pussy adds to our understanding of her life away from the Grace Bros. department store, suggesting that she is a lonely middle-aged single woman, sexually naïve and socially unsatisfied. Similarly, in US comedy *Frasier* (1993-2004), Niles' wife Maris is constantly described in absentia as a neurotic and domineering presence in Niles' life. Derek McFadden on the BBC NI's radio play 'The McCooleys' also had an unheard wife, only ever referred to on the show to signify Derek's queerness. In *Upwardly Mobile*, Toby references numerous characters who appear for the most part off-screen, most notably his wife Emer. Emer is actually a key member of the ensemble, and serves to not only contribute to the queering of Toby, but works towards critiquing the wider heteronormativity within the show. An exchange later in the series with Molly indicates a potential queer reading:

> Toby: Now Molly, you know that I've never held with the idea of the weaker sex. I've always encouraged Emer to do anything that a man can.
>
> Molly: That would require surgery though, wouldn't it?
>
> Toby: Yeah, I only wish.[444]

It is evident that Toby wishes that Emer could physically become a man, explicitly revealing his same-sex desire. The heteronormative function of the sitcom requires Toby to maintain this relationship with Emer however, and underscores the 'hetero privilege' at the core of narrative development in the sitcom.[445] The reactions given by Toby when discussing his invisible wife simultaneously suggest his innate unhappiness and admit a failure to organise a fulfilling coherent heterosexual

[443] Chris Ritchie, '"Er Indoors": The Invisible Other in Sitcom', *Comedy Studies* 3(1): 83-91, 2012, p. 42.

[444] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 2, Episode 4, 1996.
[445] McCarthy, 2001, p. 596.

relationship. This is clear when he says: 'I remember when I went on my round the world holiday, Emer begged to come but of course it wasn't possible' and 'it was the worst experience of my life, well except the time that somebody gave Emer a copy of *The Joy of Sex*'.[446] Over the course of the series, it becomes evident from Toby's anecdotes that he and Emer have been unable to organise themselves into any kind of traditional Irish family. This is indicated explicitly by the fact that the couple have swapped gender roles, with Emer adopting many of the traditionally masculine traits, such as putting down the patio in the back garden and fixing a slate on the roof of the house. During these various DIY excursions, Emer somehow usually ends up in hospital, being disciplined for daring to transcend her conventional domestic role of housewife.

Emer's position within the sitcom is never represented because of her absence, and Toby's references also suggest a potential reading for their marriage to be one of convenience, bound together by the conventions of the sitcom. Indeed, given the swapping of gender roles, Emer and Toby may both be gay and hiding their respective sexualities. Emer's more 'masculine' role within the O'Driscoll household might also be a foil to illuminate Toby's effeminacy and queerness.

Questions of Toby's masculinity go beyond his relationship with Emer however and extend to his relationship with the other male characters in the sitcom. The source of much of the humour within *Upwardly Mobile* derives from the clash of masculinities evident between Toby and the other male characters within the show, such as Toby's inability on occasion to name players of the Irish soccer team when asked by his male counterparts. Within the context of the sitcom more generally, Guillermo Avila-Saavedra stresses that 'interactions that on the surface challenge or mock traditional masculine roles are common. However, the non-traditional is always normalised by the implicit assertion that traditional is still better, even if non-traditional can be tolerated'.[447]

The class based premise of this Irish sitcom serves to expose further this clash of masculinity, between Toby and Eddie Keogh. Avila-Saavedra argues that 'in the

[446] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 4, Episode 3, 1998; Series 4, Episode 11, 1998.
[447] Guillermo Avila-Saavedra, 'Nothing Queer about Queer Television: Televised Construction of Gay Masculinities', *Media, Culture & Society* 31(5): 5-21, 2009, p. 13.

mediated world, "real" masculinities are often working-class and anti-intellectual'.[448] As much as class reveals about masculinities in cultural texts, I would extend Avila-Saavedra's point regarding class in this Irish context and argue that it can similarly expose a character's queer potential. Often Toby uses his class position to separate himself from the other male characters. In one instance, Toby discovers that he will be challenging the working-class male characters in the local quiz in McGettigan's pub and states that he will have an obvious advantage because his area of interest is 'les beaux art'.[449] He furthers the intellectual divide between himself and the other men when he states that 'the standards are rather high at this level […] quizzes demand a certain intellectual rigour'.[450] Predictably perhaps, Toby underestimates the Keogh family's intellectual potential and the quiz in actuality serves to expose Toby's inadequacies as a traditional Irish male, as he is unable to answer any question on sports.

Significantly, *Upwardly Mobile* makes no effort whatsoever to follow these clues regarding Toby's sexuality to a conclusion. Rather, by holding the question in permanent suspension, *Upwardly Mobile* encourages what Joyrich refers to as 'an epistemology (and erotics) of knowing viewers'.[451] In other words, it is precisely the keen and artful presence of a certain absence in *Upwardly Mobile* and the accompanying logic of 'undecidability, incongruity and allusion' that seems most to mark Toby as somehow queer.[452] This Irish sitcom presents the queer images in the series in a way that Avila-Saavedra argues is 'acceptable for heterosexual audiences by reinforcing traditional values like family, monogamy and stability'.[453] He also argues, in the US context, that 'most of the erotic connotations of homosexuality have been eliminated'.[454] This is not the case with *Upwardly Mobile*, as it is through the medium of frequent erotic connotations that Toby's queerness is regularly inferred. Irish television and *Upwardly Mobile* in this instance can be read as a closet door that swinging both ways. Toby's queerness reflects the precarious border of public and

[448] Avila-Saavedra, 2009, p. 13.
[449] *Upwardly Mobile*, Series 2, Episode 4, 1996.
[450] Ibid.
[451] Lynne Joyrich, Epistemology of the Console, in *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics*, eds. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 30.

[452] Ibid.
[453] Avila-Saavedra, 2009, p. 8.
[454] Ibid.

private and reveals the constraining conditions that the sitcom form posed for queer history making in the Irish media landscape, particularly at the crucial moment of representing Irish television's first queer fictional character.

Amy Villarejo argues that 'the queer stereotype as a temporal structure [was] a way to register existential and affective connection, as well as a form of temporal production of queer life in the 1950s'.[455] I would similarly argue that Toby is the temporal product of the timeslot and a product of Irish television's attempt to convey queer Irish life in the 1990s. In relation to the sustainability of queerness on Irish prime-time television, Gary Needham has remarked elsewhere with regard to queer content, that 'there are fundamental issues at stake in what kind of images, information and pleasures queer viewers have access to before 9pm and 10pm'. Given that the watershed on Irish television is 9pm, any kind of queer visual fare prior to then had to be tailored to a family viewing audience and the depiction of Toby's queerness can be read as a result of the 8.30pm time slot. Instead of complex, developed queer characters, Irish television resorted to recognisable fey characters and their pronounced innuendos about their sexual deviance. Toby's straddling of the closet textually within the show reflects a broader temporal dimension to his queerness. The Irish television schedule itself was punctuated by the religious beats of the Catholic Church; embedded at the core of RTÉ programming was a daily broadcast of the Angelus at 6pm before the main evening news – itself an indication of the centrality of religiosity to the public service broadcaster – and *A Prayer at Bedtime*, which broadcast a passage from the bible at 12.00am before the close of the station after midnight. Toby's queerness on Friday evenings was broadcast between two central focal points of Catholic Ireland's disciplinary cultural practices, embodied in these programmes.

Eve Kosofky Sedgwick's (1990) concept of the closet becomes informative in this instance, considering there is no closet within the text for Toby to come out of. The concept of the closet came to the centre of queer identity politics in the 1970s as a technique to alter the power relations of sexuality through acts of self-naming. The queer energy of Toby's character at this historical moment for Irish television allowed

[455] Amy Villarejo, *Etheral Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 17.

for a shared knowledge between the text and audience, marked through the obvious textual references to Toby's homosexuality. Sedgwick's notion of the epistemology of the closet provides another way of seeing a relationship between sexual knowledge and power, 'one where its very hiddenness – as opposed to its disclosure – is the source of its meaning'.[456] Toby's nondisclosure within *Upwardly Mobile* awards power to his character, who can continue to maintain a presence within the show. The negotiation of his queer place in Irish television history indicates the institutional concerns of making a show about a character's queer identity. Although RTÉ could not support a coming-out for Toby in the form of a media event, the 'between-the-lines' stance of his representational form marked the beginning of sustaining regular queer characters on Irish television.

"Where the Guys Are So Pretty" – Gay Visibility on *Fair City*

The ambivalent representation of Toby in *Upwardly Mobile* did not manifest in *Fair City*, as Eoghan Healy was named outright as a gay character. This could be attributed to soap opera conventions. In both the UK and Irish contexts, the soap opera has been positioned as a forum for civil engagement. Although the sitcom can similarly prompt discourses around issues pertaining to contentious social matters (and sitcoms like *All in the Family* and *Maude* in the US in the early 70s did so), Eddie Brennan notes that social realism is a pervading convention of the British and Irish soap opera.[457] This fostering of social realism prompts the soap opera to not only entertain, but to inform and educate, albeit while using hot-button social issues as a form of televisual sensationalism. Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers propose that the soap opera operates as a form of 'entertainment-education', which may serve as a catalyst that can 'trigger interpersonal communication, leading to changes in the social discourse of the audience'.[458] They argue that the soap opera is important as it can create a space for audiences to consider new patterns of thought and behaviour. The framing and

[456] Matthew Tinkcom, *Queer Theory and Brokeback Mountain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 71.
[457] Eddie Brennan, 'The *Fair City* Production Line: An Examination of Soap Opera's Potential Contribution to the Public Sphere' (PhD Thesis, Unpublished: Dublin Institute of Technology, 2004).
[458] Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers, *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates).

representation of homosexuality in *Fair City* reveals the extent to which a sitcom could stimulate discourses around gay sexualities in Ireland.

Initially, RTÉ's announcement that it was introducing a gay character to the soap resulted in press attention, with the *Irish Independent* running the headlines 'New Year twist to Popular Soap' and 'Fair City gets Gay Surprise'.[459] The press treatment of RTÉ's announcement configures queer visibility in terms of televisual sensationalism. Further, Eoghan Healy was a secondary character and not a primary cast member. His coming-out is prompted by the advances of Niamh Cassidy, who pursues him at a New Year's Eve party until he makes his revelation. The choice to have the coming-out on a New Year's Eve episode is significant, given that British and Irish soap operas tend to produce Christmas and New Year episodes as event television, in an attempt to attract family audiences who are home for the holidays. Every year, the popular press covers the television broadcasts during this week, dubbing it the 'Christmas TV ratings battle'. This can be compared to sweeps week in the US, where, as Allison Burgess argues, queer identities were sometimes used to boost ratings.[460] The choice to introduce a character solely for the purpose of coming-out – rather than one as the main cast – indicates a risk-averse and cautious treatment of gay Irish lives. Despite this positioning within televisual sensationalism, Eoghan's coming-out and its effect on gay Irish audiences indicates the soap opera's potential for civic engagement. Following the broadcast of the New Year's episode, calls to regional Gay Switchboards around the country doubled. Writing in *GCN*, Deborah Hellard argued that this reaction to the coming-out indicated that RTÉ had a 'responsibility' and a 'duty to represent the interests of all of this country's citizens – there's a lot of us paying the licence fee and seeing precious little which reflects our reality'.[461] Here, Hellard references RTÉ's role as a public service broadcaster and its duty to reflect fairly and equally the cultural diversity of Ireland.

Following his coming-out, Eoghan was slowly incorporated into the storylines of the show, eventually becoming a part of the main cast. As if in response to the constraining

[459] "Fair City gets Gay Surprise" (*Irish Independent*, 3 January 1995), "New Year Twist to Popular Soap" (*Irish Independent*, 4 January 1995)
[460] Allison Burgess, 'There's Something Queer Going On in Orange County: The Representation of Queer Women's Sexuality in The O.C' in *Televising Queer Women: A Reader, 2nd Edition* ed. Rebecca Beirne (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).
[461] "Just When You Thought it Was Safe…", (*GCN*, March 1996).

conditions of RTÉ, the queer history making of having a gay character on an Irish soap opera was conveyed by the fact that the character firstly had to be secondary and secondly, had to slowly be incorporated and included within the cast of characters over the next six months. For much of that time, Eoghan's storylines relate to his university coursework, where he is training to be a secondary school teacher. He is framed as respectable and when his gay sexuality is mentioned, he is entirely desexualised. This respectability and status as a 'good gay' citizen is clear from an exchange with his friend and housemate Imelda:

> Imelda: What's the latest on your love life anyway?
>
> Eoghan: Oh nothing.
>
> Imelda: Ah, there must be someone.
>
> Eoghan: No, it's not that easy you know. I mean, I'm not into the whole gay scene, you know, pubs and discos and all that. So my chances of meeting someone are between zero and nil.
>
> Imelda: If only. This is Carrigstown. I'd say your chances are in the minus range.[462]

This exchange not only desexualises Eoghan, but also the broader fictional Dublin suburb of Carrigstown, as Imleda underscores the location as entirely lacking any potential for Eoghan's gayness to be expressed or articulated in any way. Framing Eoghan's sexuality in this manner renders a particular performance of gay identity that attempts to not only make gay sexualities within Carrigstown acceptable, given the heteronormative sensibilities that characterise the mainstream Irish audience to which *Fair City* is directed. The cautious approach could be read as testing the waters, given that an openly gay character had not been on Irish prime time television before.

The trope of the gay best friend is one of the early representational devices evident in Eoghan's storylines, which aims to make the character palatable for mainstream Irish audiences. Much of the early writing positioned Eoghan alongside Imelda, with their interactions defined by Eoghan offering her relationship advice. Similarly, Eoghan shares a lot of screen time with Niamh Cassidy and much of his presence on the show centres almost entirely around the female characters, very much like Toby in *Upwardly Mobile*. Baz Dreisinger contends that the role of the gay friend was a 1990s

[462] *Fair City*, Series 7, Episode 31, TX Date: 22/02/1996

incarnation that 'speaks to sexual anxieties of the moment'.[463] Although Dreisinger was discussing the gay friend in relation to *My Best Friend's Wedding* in the US context, Eoghan does represent the anxieties of a post-decriminalisation moment on Irish television. Helene A. Shugart goes further and describes the 'popular configuration of gay men and straight women' as a means of making homosexuality palatable to mainstream audiences.[464] Through his positioning as the gay best friend of these female characters, Eoghan's gay identity is constructed as a supporting role that provides guidance and support to female characters in a way that, as Shugart describes, 'heterosexualises the gay man'.[465] The positioning of the gay man alongside the straight woman makes homosexuality acceptable for the presumed heteronormative audience. Central to maintaining this palatability is the fact that Eoghan is entirely depoliticised within *Fair City*, in the sense that his gay identity is constructed as primarily a personal and relational concern. He is entirely depoliticised, with no obvious connection established to a broader gay community. As he declares himself on a number of occasions, 'he's not into the whole gay scene'.

The gay best friend trope is central to the introduction of Eoghan's love interest Liam Casey (Peter Warnock), who is initially positioned as straight. When Liam is first depicted on screen, he is positioned within very heteronormative conventions as a potential suitor for Imelda (Jasmine Russell). Working as a drinks promoter, Liam enters McCoy's to speak to Imelda, who is working part-time as a barmaid. Eoghan inadvertently happens to be at the bar on Liam's arrival, as he presents Imelda with a drinks order. Following the transaction, Liam asks both Eoghan and Imelda if they would like to go for a drink that evening. As Imelda agrees, Liam's gaze fixes on Eoghan. as he says: 'it's good to meet new people'. As the shot cuts to Eoghan, he looks directly back at Liam, returning to a shot of Liam as he leaves, telling the pair he will see them that night. Leaving McCoys, Eoghan's gaze lingers on Liam as he walks out.

This scene offers a queer reading that reveals the silent cues defining queer visibility and desire, conveyed through the shot reverse shot and editing patterns. In this case,

[463] Baz Dreisinger, 'The Queen in Shining Armor: Safe Eroticism and the Gay Friend'. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 28.1: 2-11, 2000.
[464] Helene A. Shugart, 'Reinventing Privilege: The New (Gay) Man in Contemporary Popular Media'. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 20.1: 67-91, 2003.
[465] Ibid.

these production techniques can be read against the cultural practice of gay male cruising. Accounts of gay male cruising often stress the reciprocity of the glance and the often-playful exchange of looks. In *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity*, the sociologist Henning Bech proposed that the homosexual gaze is a look that often lingers, it has that extra beat of time.[466] Gary Needham has argued elsewhere, specifically in relation to *Brokeback Mountain* and queer cinema, that cruising and editing can be conflated as a mode of queer spectatorship and can 'translate the structure of same-sex cruising into cinema'.[467] Similarly, I argue that this can translate into the context of Irish television, particularly as a means of silently, or subtly representing desire in a way that was layered and not overtly gay. This is more so the case considering that cruising is a particular cultural practice within the gay community and would accordingly require a knowing queer audience to identify it. The exchanges go unnoticed within the soap opera by any other characters and they do not become verbally acknowledged by either Liam or Eoghan. This initial exchange between the two has a double-voice closeted-aspect, as Liam up until this point is at least still framed as straight.

Despite this subtle communication of queer desire, Eoghan reinforces Liam's heterosexuality when he tells Imelda that '[Liam] fancies her rotten'. He does not acknowledge the potential desire behind the exchange of glances in McCoy's. Later in the episode, Imelda is unable to partake in the drinks, asking Eoghan to go on his own, despite his protestations: 'Ah Imelda, you're the one he wants to see'. On entering the bar, Eoghan approaches Liam, asking what would he like to drink. As Eoghan walks towards the bar, another shot reverse shot is used, with Liam's glance fixing on him walking away. As the two get to know each other, they discuss hill walking and Liam encourages Eoghan to do it as a break from study. As they come to the end of their drinks, Liam asks, 'could I ring you sometime about the hillwalking?' After Liam receives Eoghan's number, the episode closes with a mid-close up of Liam looking down at the number and smiling, as the credits roll on screen. Not only does this scene make the attraction between the two obvious, but also the soap's credits rolling at this point forces the audience to consider this moment as one of significance,

[466] Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
[467] Gary Needham, *Brokeback Mountain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 98.

given that soap opera episodes traditionally conclude with a dramatic cliff-hanger. In this instance, the soap opera conventions underscore the gay desire burgeoning between Liam and Eoghan, forcing a formal recognition of the gay potential between the two, evoked by its status as a concluding, noteworthy part of the episode. The signalling of gayness becomes increasingly more obvious and a major departure from the representational strategies that marked Toby on *Upwardly Mobile*.

Figure 5.1: Eoghan and Liam meet in McCoys pub for a drink.

Source: RTÉ Stills Library.

Although much of the initial interactions between Eoghan and Liam are cautious and moderate, a conservative approach to gay representation and intimacy becomes clear through the 'first gay kiss' scene. In the episode following their drinks, Liam rings Eoghan and the latter invites him that night for dinner at his house with Imelda and her boyfriend, Wayne (Victor Burke). Despite the signalling of Liam's potential queerness in the previous episode, the exchanges between Imelda and Eoghan once again frame Liam within heteronormative terms as straight. Eoghan tells Imelda: 'I think you're afraid he might pounce. Don't worry Imelda, I won't let him lay a finger on you'. *Fair City* treats Liam as a desiring subject with an aim that the audience must begin to question, with this desire being marked through the trope of a potential love triangle between Imelda, Wayne and Liam.

Liam's queer potential is further covered by the heteronormative imperatives wrought on the text by his potential participation in a love triangle. This is prompted by Wayne's jealousy, who fears Liam might make a move on Imelda at dinner. Although

Fair City was inaugurating a gay moment in the soap opera, this 'first gay kiss' episode does so via conventions particularly based on romantic heterosexual tensions. Further, this episode frames the eventual revelation of Liam's same-sex desire as unexpected and within what Lesley Henderson refers to as the core soap opera convention of 'the plot twist', which provides a cliff-hanger at the end of each episode.[468] Whereas a typical television drama tells a complete story in the course of an episode, the soap opera provides no resolution. It simply suspends the telling of its stories at the end of an episode and continues into the next one. Gay visibility is used in this instance to create televisual sensationalism that will ensure audiences will return to see how the storyline plays out in the next episode.

As Wayne's jealousy makes itself clear over the course of the dinner, Eoghan and Liam retire to the kitchen to clean up the dishes. While cleaning within this domestic space, Liam mentions hill-walking: 'I am serious about learning how to use a compass, if you teach me?'. Eoghan responds flirtatiously, 'I'd like to'. Mentioning the compass before the pair kiss could suggest a double entendre or sexual innuendo at play here. In light of Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* however, it could also have a broader allegorical significance, given that the compass refers to orientations and spatiality. Ahmed looks specifically towards sexual 'orientation' and articulates the ways that bodies are turned towards each other. Within a queer perspective, she argues that homosexuality exists against the background of normative heterosexual practice and that it is only the homosexual subject that is thought of as having an orientation.[469] Pulled by desire, a queer body leaves the realms of heteronormativity and requires a reorientation through gathering and bringing closer objects that are not visible in the field of heterosexuality. The queer body, Ahmed contends, needs contact with other objects to shift its orientation, to become queer.[470] In *Fair City*'s gay storyline then, Liam's gay sexuality is revealed through contact with Eoghan and a shared interest in hill-walking. Similarly, Eoghan is provided an opportunity to (almost) transcend his desexualised characterisation and articulate an overt gay identity on Irish television through meeting Liam. Significantly, the spatial arrangement of the scene occurs

[468] Lesley Henderson, *Social Issues in Television Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 15.
[469] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
[470] Ibid.

within a kitchen, a site of traditional domesticity and heteronormativity and the orientation of Liam and Eoghan towards each other almost disrupts the heteronormativity of this space, much like Laurie and Arthur on *Week In* in Chapter Two.

Fair City ultimately fails to follow through on representing gay intimacy, instead, revealing a conservativism undergirding Eoghan's representation. Following the exchange about the compass, Liam turns away from the kitchen sink and walks towards Eoghan, telling him that he likes his shirt, before informing him he has 'good taste for a student'. As Eoghan smiles to fix a button on his sleeve, Liam volunteers to do it for him. As Liam grabs Eoghan's hand, both look up towards each other and smile. Once again, the shot reverse shot is used, with the desire between the two all the more obvious. Consequently, the scene cuts to an establishing mid-shot, as Eoghan and Liam move in to kiss. As their lips are about to touch, the queer-history making moment is disrupted by Imelda walking into the kitchen. As the pair part, Imelda walks out and the credits roll. The queer rupture of this primarily heterosexual text was itself interrupted, perhaps to avoid the potential consequences of displaying gay intimacy on screen. As if in response to the heteronormative logic governing Irish television and the soap opera form, same-sex desire can only be permitted to some extent – gay potentiality and desire can be represented on screen, but this is not permitted to go into the realms of physical intimacy. Much like *Upwardly Mobile*, the post-decriminalisation moment was fraught with anxiety and caution around representing gay Irish sex on screen. Writing in *GCN* at the time of broadcast, Jim Redmond acknowledged Eoghan's desexualised presence on the soap, arguing that the next big hurdle for RTÉ was 'that of public displays of affection'.[471] Similarly, a letter to *GCN* from reader Denis Murray was similarly critical of the conservatism surrounding intimacy, when he argued: 'after all the recent scandals in this country involving priests, nuns, abused orphans etc., would it be too much for many hypocrites in this country to see two men having a good shag and making love?'[472] The queerness is there on screen, it's just not permitted to become sexual.

[471] "Channel Cruising" (*GCN*, April 1996).
[472] Letter to GCN, "Not Enough Soap" (*GCN*, June 1996).

Figure 5.2: Eoghan and Liam move in for the much anticipated 'near-kiss'.

Source: RTÉ Stills Library.

Despite the conservatism informing queer representation on both *Upwardly Mobile* and *Fair City*, the institutional treatment by RTÉ of the kiss attempts to frame this event as part of a liberally progressive moment for Irish television and queer history making, despite refusing to actually air an on-screen kiss. The gay visibility presented through this storyline suggests that such a representation was primarily permissible as spectacle or a media event. Liam and Eoghan's storyline, however brief, provided a queer rupture to this primarily heteronormative text, warranting a particular level of media attention. Although the Irish press provided a lot of space for the discussion of the gay kiss, RTÉ utilised other internal outputs to promote its own programming and to frame the programme through the lens of televisual sensationalism. One such example would be chat show *Kenny Live*, which at the time was Ireland's second highest rated programme, just after the *LLS*. Peter Warnock, the actor who played Liam, appeared on the show to discuss taking on the role of a gay character. The history-making nature of this gay kiss is predicated by Warnock being invited onto the show in the first place to mark the storyline. The introduction by presenter Pat Kenny emphasises RTÉ's deliberate deployment of sensationalism in the storyline, when he states:

> My next guest is a young man who has created quite a stir since he arrived in Carrigstown. A real sex symbol, the ladies of Carrigstown, as well as those at home, were knocked out by his good looks. Imagine the shock though, when he almost got caught in an embrace with Eoghan, a character who has been acknowledged to be gay?[473]

Kenny's statement acknowledged a strategy to frame Warnock's character Liam as straight, which would subsequently result in the necessary plot twist. The interview also attempts to divorce Warnock from his on-screen character, with Kenny asking: 'We better get this straight first, are you actually gay or are you straight?'. Warnock responds, confirming his heterosexuality. The attention to Warnock's sexuality displays his anxiety around playing a gay character. The interview positions playing a gay character on television as a significant challenge for an actor: 'what sort of reservations do you have or do you see it as a challenge?' Following his grandfather's advice, Warnock notes that he 'just thinks of the cheque'. The fact that Warnock is even invited onto the show indicates an effort to generate public interest, but it also highlights how RTÉ as a media institution was fully aware of the significance of having a gay storyline. The significance of this historical televisual event has even been noted by the fact that RTÉ has since included the kiss within the 1996 episode of *Reeling in the Years*. This serves as a retrospective acknowledgement of what RTÉ perceived to be its own queer history making.

The economic imperatives of RTÉ may have also influenced how gay sexualities were depicted on the soap. Although RTÉ was a public service broadcaster, with a duty to represent minority groups in Irish society, it was also commercially funded through advertising revenue. The reliance on advertising from commercial entities in Ireland certainly influenced the shaping of Eoghan's sexuality; that, and the fact that the soap opera is, as Brennan describes, 'a highly profitable genre'.[474] The soap opera form depends on audience ratings for its survival, and so, this adds greater necessity to sustain an economic model that can compete within broadcasting structures, particularly given the fact that by 1996, *Fair City* had become somewhat globalised, in that it was being sold for broadcast in other territories. Two things make themselves

[473] *Kenny Live*, Original TX Date: 26 March 1996. Available at: http://www.rte.ie/archives/2016/0322/776620-fair-city-gay-kiss/
[474] Brennan, 2004, p. 12.

clear from this. RTÉ was willing to frame and use gay sexualities to create televisual sensationalism. Such was the case with both Eoghan's coming-out and his near-kiss with Liam. When it came to depicting a quotidian, recurring gay character that appeared on television screens four nights a week, the approach became much more cautious. Advances in queer visibility on Irish television, however much they hinge on financial interest or a desire to reflect a more culturally diverse Irish society, are precarious. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed argue that the commodification of gay and lesbian identities in the 1990s potentially could have provoked 'a backlash' given that 'far-right boycotts have hurt progressive causes before'.[475] Given that queer visibility on Irish television had historically generated active resistance, integrating Eoghan as anything more than respectable, may have upset the commercial logic that lies at the centre of the soap opera, the family. As a result, in embracing and commodifying queer identities, *Fair City* 'cultivates a narrow definition of a gay identity […] and integrates gay people into a new consumer niche'.[476] The economic imperatives of including a recurring gay character in *Fair City* resulted the gay identity having to be palatable to the heteronormative sensibilities of RTÉ's imagined audience.

Conclusion

The television sitcom and soap opera genres are rooted in domestic family relations, which forms the basis of their narrative conventions. Characters such as Toby and Eoghan serve to, as Michele Aaron argues, 'queerly contest' the normativeness of the forms and Irish television more broadly. Television inhabits the domestic sphere, the realm of the everyday, 'through embracing its common denominators – precisely the terrain against which the queer agitates'.[477] What is more, its range of narratives frequently follow 'normative developmental narratives of sexuality' which promote heterosexual romantic coupling and commitment invariably in the form of marriage and reproduction, and as such, seem instinctively anti-queer. *Upwardly Mobile* and *Fair City* depict queer characters in a moment when Ireland was undergoing significant social and economic changes. Although both characters were treated

[475] Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed, 'The Gay Marketing Moment', in *Queer Economics: A Reader* eds. Joyce Jacobsen and Adam Zeller (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 302.
[476] Ibid.
[477] Michele Aaron, 'Towards Queer Television Theory: Bigger Pictures Sans Sweet Queer-After', in *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics* eds. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (London: Routledge, 2009).

differently, this can be attributed to the conventions of their respective genres and also RTÉ's cautious and conservative approach. Despite the fact that these formal attempts of representing queer characters within fictional settings were cautious and conservative, they marked a new moment for queer visibility in the Irish media.

For queer visibility, decriminalisation signalled a slow ambivalent shift from news and current affairs to representation within light entertainment forms. The 'new Ireland' that was coming into formation did not necessarily emerge over-night, but rather moved in a direction that was gradually more open to representing queer identity politics in fictional settings. Even at that, the two case studies considered in this chapter relied on devices that rendered the queer identities on screen palatable for Irish audiences, producing narrow versions of queer sexualities that were closeted, desexualised and male experiences. The economic imperatives governing RTÉ as a public service broadcaster, along with the constraining conditions underlying televisual queerness, shaped the conditions by which queer identities could emerge within the Irish public sphere.

Upwardly Mobile and *Fair City* signalled a moment post-decriminalisation where gay identities could be part of Ireland's new social order, but only to a certain extent and under particular conditions. They also reinforced, to varying degrees, dominant cultural narratives of progress in Ireland at the time; one based on the progression of gay liberation and the other brought about by the Celtic Tiger economy. The narrative of progress configured a particular kind of queerness that elided the radical political potential of gay identity. As the Celtic Tiger economy continued to prosper towards the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s, queer identities in the media came to symbolise Ireland's modernisation, becoming what Ed Madden refers to as 'a synecdoche for the triumph of global capitalism, rather than a movement of social and sexual resistance'. Indeed, as the final chapter will argue, queer visibility in Ireland become configured within queer globalism, with globalism becoming an integral characteristic of both queer Irish media visibility and queer politics.

Chapter Six

Queer Visibility, Television Drama and the Celtic Tiger (1999 – 2007)

Introduction

In 1999, Stephen Gately, one of the lead singers of the internationally renowned Irish boyband Boyzone, came out publicly as gay. This was not only a watershed moment for the pop music industry in the UK and Ireland, which now had its first openly gay boyband member, but it was also a crucial moment for queer Irish visibility. The conditions under which Gately came out revealed the dynamics that had led to a globalisation of gay Irish sexualities. Gately's coming-out had resulted from threats made by *The Sun* newspaper in the UK. The paper had informed Gately that they were about to break a massive story revealing the details of his relationship with a Dutch boyband member. Having been given the ultimatum that he could give an interview himself or have the newspaper "out" him, Gately chose to take control of his own media narrative and subsequently came out on the front page of *The Sun*, with the headline 'Boyzone Stephen: I'm gay and I'm in Love'.[478] Accompanying the headline at the top of the front page was a declaration of the story as a 'World Exclusive'. Gately's coming-out, the media event that surrounded it and the international significance attached to it by *The Sun*, not only reified the sensationalised treatment of gay sexualities by tabloid newspapers, but it also underscored how the media created an international presence for queerness, in this case Irish queerness. Both the cult of celebrity and the globalisation of media systems contributed towards what this chapter refers to as an international queer identity. The incident further highlighted how gay Irish sexualities were inexorably caught up in a political economy and the international capitalistic imperatives that controlled much of the newspaper industry in the UK and Ireland.

[478] "Boyzone Stephen: I'm gay and I'm in Love". *The Sun*, November 6, 1996. London: United Kingdom.

Figure 6.1: Stephen Gately's coming-out Sun front cover

Source: *The Sun*, November 6, 1996

This globalisation was a two-way process however. As Irish queers were making their way into a more international media sphere, there were external forces from these international markets that influenced queer visibility within the Irish media. Ireland, which was once a site of exile and migration for queers, became part of an international media system and economy that became a space for not only Irish gays, but the international gay, or what Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt have referred to as the 'passport gay', who 'traverses borders with sinister ease'.[479] Benigno Sánchez-Eppeler and Cindy Patton note the politicised discourse of the global, travelling gay when they argue that 'translocation itself, movement itself, now enter the picture as theoretically significant factors in the discussion of sexuality'.[480] However, queer globalisation and cosmopolitanism, as Maria Pramaggiore has argued, 'has always been an aspirational feature of queer Irish identities'.[481] Naming the LGBT community centre in Temple Bar the Hirschfeld centre (1979 – 1988) reflected what Pramaggiore has referred to as 'Irish aspirations towards Europeanisation'.[482] As each chapter of this thesis has demonstrated, international coalitions were central to the formation of queer Irish subjectivities, be that through the affiliation with American activists such as Frank

[479] Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, *Queer Cinema in the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 43.
[480] Benigno Sánchez-Eppeler and Cindy Patton, eds. Queer Diasporas (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 2.
[481] Maria Pramaggiore, 'The Metagenerational AIDS Archive: Dublin's Hirschfeld Centre and Ireland's Queer Globalism', AIDS & Irish Media: Intergenerational Dialogues (Conference paper presented at Maynooth University: Maynooth, Republic of Ireland, 2017).
[482] Ibid.

Kameny (Chapter Two), inviting US based lesbians Nancy Manahan and Rosemary Curb onto the *LLS* (Chapter Three) or even forming alliances with US, UK and Canadian gay activist groups during the AIDS crisis in an attempt to obtain information on the syndrome (Chapter Four).

This final chapter analyses queer visibility during the Celtic Tiger era, which like decriminalisation and the AIDS crisis before it, marked a significant transformative moment for queer Irish visibility. Following the decriminalisation campaign, television became more overtly embracing of gay identities, however tentative and anxious (as explored in Chapter Five). The Celtic Tiger period brought with it an even greater liberal dispensation for transgressive sexualities, as queerness became more present on Irish screens. Further, queer sexualities had become both 'an object of consumption, an object in which nonqueers invest their passions and purchasing power and an object through which queers constitute their identities in our contemporary consumer-oriented globalized world'.[483] The Celtic Tiger wrought a process of globalisation, which became reflected in television during this period. This globalisation resulted in configuring queer visibility positively in order to project an image of global modernity consistent with capitalist market exchange. Queer visibility was configured within a new sexual landscape where queer sexualities were framed as positive, upbeat and optimistic and associated with the new-found affluence of the Celtic Tiger. Irish screen production transformed significantly during the Celtic Tiger period as a result of more funding and initiatives from bodies such as the Irish Film Board and RTÉ's Independent Production Unit.[484] As Ireland progressed into a '(post)modern first world state', this screen production, as a result of initiatives encouraging its development, became more 'diverse, generically, thematically and stylistically'.[485] Much of the funding for screen production during this period resulted

[483] Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV, 'Introduction: Dissident Sexualities/Alternative Globalism' in Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV (eds.) *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2002.

[484] Among such initiatives was the launch of the Irish Film Board's Low Budget Feature Initiative in 2002, designed to encourage the development of film in Ireland on productions costing no more than €1 million. Producers provided 40% of the funding when the Irish Film Board provided the remaining 60%. *Goldfish Memory* benefitted from this scheme.

[485] Debbie Ging, 'Goldfish Memories? On Seeing and Hearing Marginalised Identities in Contemporary Irish Cinema' in Borbála Faragó and Moynagh Sullivan (eds.) *Facing the Other: Interdisciplinary Studies on Race, Gender and Social Justice in Ireland*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, pp. 182.

from international collaboration, as the Irish screen industries began interacting with an international media industry. This industrial context along with the narratives of the texts in question resulted in queer visibility coming to signify modernity and progress for the gay and lesbian community in Ireland.

Previous chapters have identified the connection between queer media images and political change within Ireland's LGBT community. The Celtic Tiger era however, saw LGBT community politics suffer from complacency.[486] Rory O'Neill, also known by his stage name as Panti Bliss, a drag queen and gay rights activist, identified the complacency that had gripped the Irish queer community during a segment on RTÉ 2's *@LastTV*, a comedy show with a political bent. In a four-minute segment, O'Neill expressed his frustration with the queers who 'believed they now had it all' because of the Celtic Tiger, using the relative acceptance of Stephen Gately's coming-out as an example, noting: 'the way we all accepted cute, gay Stevey and the way the papers all dealt with it, was held up as an example of how grown up we all are'.[487] Critiquing the perceived acceptance and new-found liberalism in Ireland, O'Neill concluded his monologue by stating that the 'young queers are completely apolitical. They think the work is done. They think they're accepted on gay pride. They even think they're celebrated. But they're not. Truth is, we're barely even tolerated'. O'Neill's commentary in 1999 indicates how intertwined queer Irish identities had become with consumerism and how this neoliberal economy provided a false sense of security for the community. This cultural current was similarly reflected in some of the television output of the period. Although queerness was more visible in the Irish media than ever before, this output was predominantly within the realms of fictionalised representation, where queer lives were narrated working through Ireland's new sexual and economic landscape on screen. Although the queer images discussed within this chapter are not necessarily responding to political change and activism, they do respond to the seismic cultural and economic shifts taking place in Ireland.

Community activism in Ireland for much of the period remained dormant. Within the broader international sphere of gay rights however, the battleground for gay activism

[486] Fintan Walsh, 'Pride, Politics and the Right to Perform', in *Theory on the Edge: Irish Studies and the Politics of Sexual Difference*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Margrit Shildrink, 105-125 (New York: Palgrave, 2013).
[487] *@LastTV*, RTÉ 2, 1999.

became centred around the Marriage Equality movement. This international discourse surrounding marriage equality found its way to Ireland through the watershed case *Katherine Zappone and Anne Louise Gilligan v Revenue Commissioners, Ireland and the Attorney General*. The KAL case, as it came to be popularly referred to, formed much of the backdrop to the texts under discussion within the historical framework of this chapter, although it did not directly intersect with the fictional texts in question. In 2003, Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan married in a civil ceremony in Vancouver, Canada, benefitting from the then recent legalisation of same-sex marriage in the province of British Columbia. Later in 2004, Zappone and Gilligan wrote to the Irish Revenue Commissioners, with their marriage certificate enclosed, requesting that they be able to claim their 'allowances as a married couple under the Taxes Consolidation Acts'.[488] In response, the office wrote to the couple, informing them that it was not within their remit to make a declaration of validity of marriages occurring outside of the state and said it was a matter for the courts. In that same year, the Civil Registration Act was introduced, for the first time including a ban on same-sex marriage. The explicit ban on same-sex marriage in Irish legislation came at a time when marriage equality was gaining momentum as an international movement. Although the backdrop to these texts did not bode well for gay civil rights in Ireland, queer visibility during this period was far more inclusive, despite the fact that the battleground for queer activism had changed yet again, as grass roots organising began to take centre stage in the international coalition that was becoming Marriage Equality. Following the rejection of the KAL case from the High Court in 2007, the advocacy group Marriage Equality was founded, and began what would be their eight-year campaign to introduce same-sex marriage to Ireland in 2015.

This chapter does not attempt to examine these texts within the context of LGBT community activism, as has been the case with previous discussions of visibility in this thesis. Rather, this final chapter will treat the television examples of the Celtic Tiger era as fully mainstream texts. The chapter will explore how queer Irish visibility had not only become international, but spoke within an international media landscape where queers were emerging internationally in media texts. Much of the literature from the Celtic Tiger period centres around film representation and how these films

[488] Ann Louise Gilligan and Katherine Zappone, *Our Lives Out Loud: In Pursuit of Justice and Equality* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2008), p. 56.

configured queer visibility within a global, cosmopolitan vision of sexual expression for a broader range of queer Irish characters. The film texts utilise queerness as part of an international address, akin to what was happening in other media landscapes such as the US and UK. Much of the criticism within this body of work is limited to two texts: Liz Gill's *Goldfish Memory* (2002) and David Gleeson's *Cowboys and Angels* (2003).[489] Both films present a contemporaneous, modern, secular and liberal representation of twenty-first century Ireland, where queerness has been successfully incorporated and assimilated into the fabric of Irish society. Queer characters within each of the texts are used as an allegorical reference to reflect the predominance of cosmopolitanism in Celtic Tiger Ireland. Although these representational tropes are present within the television texts under discussion in this chapter, the place of film within the debates of LGBT visibility are somewhat overstated and limiting. An examination of television from the Celtic Tiger reflects not only the internationalisation of Irish TV, but more nuanced instances of queer visibility while also reclaiming clichéd images of Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years.

Through an analysis of two texts, this chapter will make two specific arguments in light of this. Utilising the television series *The Clinic* (2003-2009), the chapter will argue that the series resonates with and responds to international representations of gay men that were was forming during this period in popular media, reflecting queer texts and characters of the period such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Will & Grace*, and *Sex and the City*. The series also borrowed from the conventions of Hollywood genres such as the romantic comedy. In the process, this TV series aligns with the queer visibility presented in the films during the period in that Celtic Tiger Ireland was celebrated for its progressive potential and queerness becomes reconfigured within an international market. Irish queer characters become cosmopolitan figures positioned as 'seemingly more diverse, more international, more

[489] Martin McLoone, 'Cinema, City and Imaginative Space: "Hip Hedonism" and Recent Irish Cinema', in Brian McIlroy (ed.), *Genre and Cinema: Ireland and Transculturalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Ging, 'Goldfish Memories? On Seeing and Hearing Marginalised Identities in Contemporary Irish Cinema' p. 182; Natalie Harrower, 'Cityscapes of Fluid Desire: Queering the Romantic Comedy in Liz Gill's Goldfish Memory' in Brian McIlroy (ed.) *Genre and Cinema: Ireland and Transculturalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Conn Holohan, *Cinema on the Periphery: Contemporary Spanish and Irish Film* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010).

worldly'.[490] Despite this, *The Clinic* does provide a space to explore the darker undercurrents of being gay in Celtic Tiger Ireland.

The second argument proposes that the television series *Proof* (2004-2005) offers a departure from the overarching trend identified above. In the case of this programme, queerness served to critique the fragility of the Celtic Tiger economy. This TV series was an anomaly, as it served to highlight the darker side of the Celtic Tiger economy. Much of the series eerily foreshadows the eventual collapse of the Irish economy through its depiction of embezzlement within the banking sector and corruption within the Gardaí. A central feature of these texts, whether they celebrate the new Ireland, or critique the fragile economy on which it was based, was the fact that Irish queer sexualities transcended local, historical and culturally specific readings of sexuality. What makes queer globalisation unique in this chapter is that it serves to function as a symptom of Irish modernity, a narrative of progress, which, Michael G. Cronin contends, eliminates the radical potential of gay identity.[491] *Proof* and *The Clinic* serve to problematise this neat rubric of queer sexualities as a triumph of global capitalism and instead deploy queerness to disrupt this narrative of progress.

Television drama of the Celtic Tiger, specifically those produced by the Independent Production Unit (IPU) within RTÉ, provided televisual representations of queerness that critiqued the fragilities of the Celtic Tiger economy and the civic bodies of the State, while also engaging narratively with queer issues such as coming-out and homophobia. Television's narrativization of LGBT individuals provided an ongoing representation of queer lives over the course of several series in *The Clinic* and one series with *Proof*. Both *The Clinic* and *Proof*, in terms of their character representations and their industrial contexts, reveal the international dynamics at play in queer Irish visibility during the Celtic Tiger. *The Clinic* was an independent production made for RTÉ by Parallel Films. Its success nationally, with its generic medical drama formula familiar to global audiences, was sold and broadcast in other territories. *Proof* was similarly an independent production made for the national broadcaster by the production company Subotica Entertainment, in collaboration with

[490] Alan Latham, 'Sociality and the Cosmopolitan Imagination: National Cosmopolitan and Local Imaginaries in Auckland, New Zealand' in Jon Binnie, Julian Holloway, Steve Millington and Craig Young (eds.) *Cosmopolitan Urbanism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 92.
[491] Michael G. Cronin, 'He's My Country: Liberalism, Nationalism and Sexuality in Contemporary Irish Gay Fiction'. *Éire-Ireland* 39: 250-267, 2004.

TV2 in Denmark. Both *The Clinic* and *Proof* reflect the good, bad and the ugly of Celtic Ireland, by highlighting Irish inflections of international queer media, by framing gay identities as upbeat and positive, by linking queerness to a corrupt financial and political underworld, but also to narratively deploy the international, gay cosmopolite and reveal the struggles of the local gay.

Cosmopolitanism and the 'International Gay' on *The Clinic*

As Ulf Hannerz describes it, being 'cosmopolitan means being open and able to interact with a variety of different world cultures'; it describes a group of people who have 'become more diverse, more international, more worldly'.[492] Cosmopolitan, as described by Kellie Burns and Cristyn Davies, 'encompasses a political economy from within which an entire set of cultural and consumer practices govern what it means to be a cosmopolite'.[493] This cosmopolitanism manifested in much of the queer representation that was circulating in media texts in Ireland during this period. Given the situation of dual-broadcasting with the UK, along with the fact that RTÉ 2 and the newly founded commercial broadcaster TV3 regularly imported US programming, international queer characters were in circulation in the Irish media landscape and were familiar to Irish audiences. The conventions and tropes of many of these characters and narratives in these TV shows indicated Irish aspirations towards participating and contending with this diversity on Irish TV. These new representational strategies being deployed in Irish fictionalised screen representations underpinned a mainstreaming of queer Irish identities. This process of mainstreaming is a departure from that discussed in Chapter One. At its crux, the concept of mainstreaming remains the same, that is, to 'integrate LGBT people within the status quo'.[494] In the earlier chapters however, mainstreaming was a strategy fostered by various gay Irish civil rights groups in their media activism, who were attempting to obtain media visibility to counter negative views and shift attitudes of the Irish audience. The terrain for mainstreaming Irish LGBT identities was significantly

[492] Ulf Hannerz, 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 7(2): 237-251, 1990.
[493] Kellie Burns and Cristyn Davies, 'Producing Cosmopolitan Sexual Citizens on The L Word'. *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 13(2): 174-188, 2009.
[494] Vaid, p. 54.

different by the end of the historical period under discussion in this thesis. It had now transitioned from community activism to narrativization, as Irish texts borrowed from the conventions and tropes of international texts. This mainstreaming of Irish LGBT identities finally finds itself participating within an international sphere of queer representation, while also addressing a broader, international audience, as evident in the textual and industrial contexts of the case studies in question.

The function of the gay man as a model neoliberal cosmopolitan citizen is one of the recurring tropes fostered within *The Clinic*. The gay man is operationalised within the series to teach others how to consume tastefully and how to appropriately work on the self. As Chapter Five demonstrated, *Fair City*'s Eoghan signalled these representational strategies through the configuration of the gay best friend, but this becomes extrapolated further in the case of *The Clinic* and the character Alex Walsh (Sam Corry). The drama centred on the staff of the Clarence Street Clinic in the affluent Dublin 4 area. *The Clinic* signalled RTÉ's early attempts to represent the growing multi-cultural composition of Irish society, that focused on the working and private lives of staff members within the clinic. The drama series presented a global workplace made up of immigrants as well as Irish staff members, reflecting inward migration on Irish television screens. Among this cast was Alex, an openly gay Australian nurse. The cosmopolitan nature of *The Clinic* meant that the plots, as well as the characters, are deemed to be comfortable with 'difference' and fluent at dealing with 'otherness'. The signifiers of city living, liberating and individuated lifestyles and an international cast of characters are clearly used to encode *The Clinic* and its queer visibility as a thoroughly contemporary representation of Irish society.

Consumerism and cosmopolitanism are central to Alex's representation in *The Clinic*. As Kellie Burns and Cristyn Davies argue, being 'queer has become synonymous with being a cosmopolite. The discourse surrounding the pink economy has framed gays and lesbians as an homogenous niche of consumers'.[495] Alex exemplifies an established male homosexual stereotype that participates openly in what Martin McLoone has characterised as a brand of hip hedonism, which he argued 'epitomise[s] a kind of transglobal "cool"'.[496] Alex evinces this through his trendy clothing,

[495] Burns and Davies, p. 177.
[496] McLoone, 'Cinema, City and Imaginative Space: "Hip Hedonism" and Recent Irish Cinema', p. 212.

groomed appearance, regularly participating in Dublin's gay scene, and his friends being predominantly women. These representational devices, along with the configuration of Alex as a cosmopolite, demonstrates a cosmopolitan address within this Irish TV series. For one, Alex is positioned within the trope of the gay best friend. In the first two series, Alex adopts the conventional gay best friend role, often helping Daisy (Amy Huberman) with her dating life. He similarly provides emotional support and friendship to the various workers within the clinic. His gay best friend role is cemented by the fact that Daisy regularly references his gay sexuality, through comments such as 'Hello Mr. Gay'.[497] Further to this, physiotherapist Keelin Geraghty, who is organising her best friend's hen party, suggests that Alex should be invited as 'the token gay'.[498] The casual conversation around Alex's sexuality indicates an acceptance within the Clarence Street Clinic around queer sexualities and by highlighting the comfortability with difference, aims to show a fluency with otherness.

This gay best friend trope had become a familiar and popular means of representing gay men on television. This was evident through various character duos in internationally successful TV series, such as Stanford Blatch (Willie Garson) and Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), Will Truman (Eric McCormack) and Grace Adler (Debra Messing) in *Will & Grace* (1998-), Jack McPhee (Kerr Smith) and Jen Lindley (Michelle Williams) in *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003) and Eric van der Woodsen (Connor Paolo) and Jenny Humphrey (Taylor Momsen) in *Gossip Girl* (2007-2012). The incorporation of this trope within Irish TV indicates a narrative aspiration towards an international address as the gay best friend had become a commodified identity within television, with all of these TV shows being broadcast in Ireland during their respective runs. Russell Hoffman argues that this is unsurprising, given that 'gay culture has been heavily commodified in consumer culture'.[499] The appropriation of Alex as the gay best friend character has numerous implications. For one, he is safe for public view since he has been divested of his sexuality. He displays only surface homosexuality – that is, he is associated with good taste (personal

[497] *The Clinic*, Series 1, Episode 1.
[498] *The Clinic*, Series 1, Episode 6..
[499] Russell Hoffman 'Friendship Trouble: An Examination of the Gay Best Friend Identity in American Consumer Culture' *Journal of Communication, Culture and Technology* (Georgetown University, 2011).

grooming and fashion) – in a sense he becomes an arbiter, a producer, but importantly, a consumer of a middle-class lifestyle. The previously illicit subject position of the homosexual on the margins of Irish culture evident at the beginning of this thesis is now granted a place at society's table, not through activism, but through purchasing power, which has become an important emblem of citizenship in capitalist societies and even more so in the Celtic Tiger social milieu depicted in *The Clinic*. Likewise, gay best friends are rendered safe for mainstream consumption through the focus of their non-sexual relationships with men. This is strengthened by the strong bond that develops between Alex and Brendan Davenport (Chris O'Dowd) that remains purely homosocial. This recuperates homosexuality in a safe and non-threatening manner, as gay male identities become mainstreamed on Irish television.

Alex serves as a model neoliberal queer character, deployed as a disciplinary force within the text, teaching his colleague Brendan how to judiciously work on the self and to consume tastefully. Alex's tasteful consumption is coded within the film as having directly benefitted from the increased affluence wrought by the Celtic Tiger, but also his un-Irishness. Alex's identification as Australian allows him to perform what McLoone refers to as a 'transglobal cool'.[500] Alex's expertise in fashion is woven into the narrative to improve on Brendan's imperfections and make him a desirable partner for the object of his affection with the clinic, Dr. Clodagh Delaney (Leigh Arnold). The makeover premise that undergirds much of the narrative resonates and echoes with the mainstream breakout success of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003-2007, 2017 -). *Queer Eye* was a reality makeover show originally broadcast on the US cable network Bravo (now rebooted and streaming on Netflix), where five gay male experts known as "The Fab Five", assumed the task of revamping a straight guy's lifestyle and physical appearance. Each week, the Fab Five tackle a different straight subject, educating the straight guy on matters of wardrobe, culture, grooming, food, wine and interior design. Following the massive success of *Queer Eye* in the US, the show was distributed internationally and broadcast in Ireland through cable and satellite on the UK channel Sky One. Accordingly, Alex's characterisation speaks to a representation of gay male characters that was familiar to Irish audiences. The makeover dynamic popularised by *Queer Eye* plays on the premise that gay men are superior in matters of fashion, style, personal grooming, interior design and culture.

[500] McLoone, p. 210.

Alex uses his cosmopolite status to improve traditional Brendan's cultural capital, which needs serious rejuvenation to assimilate into the broader social milieu of Celtic Tiger Ireland.

One of the demonstrations of this international, cosmopolitan address is in series two, when Alex coaxes and encourages Brendan to ask Clodagh out over the course of the series. Brendan, who displays high levels of self-doubt throughout the show, receives regular support and advice from Alex, pertaining to his clothes, how he carries himself in a bar, to how he should approach Clodagh and ask her out, by role-playing various scenarios to get Brendan familiar with the idea.[501] Alex suggests various outfits to Brendan, while providing recommendations for ways to improve his hair with new products.[502] These attempts at improving on Brendan's imperfections eventually prove successful. Having gained the confidence to eventually ask her out, Brendan and Clodagh enter into a relationship, until Brendan's departure at the end of series three. Alex's work towards Brendan's makeover not only indicates an Irish inflection of representational strategies surrounding the representation of gay men – which had been popularised by the international success of *Queer Eye* – but it also presents the gay male lifestyle in a commodified form that allows Brendan to safely develop the expertise from the culturally savvy Alex. Brendan participates in the new cosmopolitan gay culture that was growing in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period, but he remains distant from it. Now, his new made-over self has resulted in the eventual romantic coupling with Clodagh.

The international address and cosmopolitanism is also evident in *The Clinic* through the representation on screen of Dublin. The Dublin that the young gay Alex traverses is a site of consumption, a place of 'contemporary art galleries, trendy restaurants and stylish coffee and wine bars'.[503] The representation of Dublin on screen has been discussed widely by scholars, with Conn Holohan and Natalie Harrower arguing that screen media of the Celtic Tiger conveys Dublin and queer sexualities within a utopian vision, an urban space that for all intents and purposes is never actually self-designated as Dublin.[504] Dublin is divested of markers of Irishness, reflecting, as Harrower puts

[501] *The Clinic*, Series 2, Episode 1, 2, and 4.
[502] The Clinic, Series 2, Episode 5.
[503] McLoone, p. 46.
[504] Holohan, , 2010.

it, 'a broader cultural trend towards remaking Irish identity as international, plural and cutting-edge'.[505] Ireland has become so international, according to Holohan, that the Irish queer no longer needs to leave Ireland to find modernity. *The Clinic* constructs Dublin as a place of possibility and opportunity, with chance meetings and run-ins often igniting new relationships and introducing new narratives. A casual encounter with a barman in series one results in Alex having a recurring casual fling over the course of the series. *The Clinic*'s reimagined Dublin could stand in for any cosmopolitan space. Apart from obvious markers of Irishness familiar only to a local, Dublin audience, *The Clinic* refrains from explicitly identifying its setting, indicating an aspiration towards a modern, European Ireland on screen. The actual shots that are used of Dublin locate the city within its more affluent spaces. Alex is an educated character, who frequents libraries, art galleries and lives in the city centre.[506] Coffee shops, restaurants and nightclubs are heavily featured and this focus on and celebration of visible consumption spaces ties Alex to the discursive myth of the 'pink economy', whereby LGBT subjects 'are articulated through consumer spending and buying power'.[507] Alex is depicted participating in the vibrant and urban nightlife of Dublin, often depicted in Dublin's primary gay bar, The George with notable queer Irish figures being included during such forays into the gay landscape, among which included prominent drag queen Shirley Templebar. Alex serves as a conduit by which actual queer spaces within Dublin become incorporated onto the show, with recognisable queer Irish figures being visible on screen, such as Templebar. During this period, Shirley Templebar had reached notoriety as a result of fronting RTÉ One's afternoon game show *Telly Bingo* (2000 -). Distinct markers of queerness are thus utilised within the text to reference a gay culture in Dublin and one that characters such as Alex actively participate in.

As noted, over the course of series one, Alex attracts the attention of the local barman, but any romantic dalliance is relegated to off screen for much of the series. Series three however explores the dynamic of a gay relationship more closely, when Sam, a nurse, is introduced as a love interest for Alex. Alex and Sam's relationship becomes a

[505] Harrower, p. 218.
[506] Allison Macleod, 'Compartmentalized Cosmopolitans: Constructions of Urban Space in Queer Irish Cinema', in Conn Holohan and Tony Tracy (eds.) Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger's Tales (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2014), p. 54.
[507] Ibid.

recurring feature of series three, with the pair often depicted in their shared apartment, leading a homonormative, homodomestic lifestyle where they make dinner, drink wine and share a bed. As explored in the case of Laurie and Arthur and the current affairs programme *Week In* in Chapter Two, homodomesticity was deployed as a representational strategy to highlight the sustainability and potential to form gay relationships, even within the climate of criminality. That chapter argued that this representational device was part of a mainstreaming strategy of framing homosexuality as respectable. Over twenty years later, this homodomesticity becomes incorporated into fictionalised representations through a process of mainstreaming, although in this instance, the representation of Alex and Sam reflected a global trend in queer media representation, as identified by Steven Edward Doran, where the domestic space becomes a 'central symbolic realm for these subjects', citing television programmes *Will & Grace* and *Queer Eye* as examples.[508] The transition from homodomesticity on current affairs programming in 1980 to fictionalised representations on mainstream Irish television signals an assimilation of gays into mainstream heteronormative culture and that the original vision of gay and lesbian activism – along with the social change originally sought by Laurie and Arthur – had finally been realised.

Despite this initial homodomestic framing in series three, Alex's status as a 'global gay' serves to reveal the local struggles of the Irish gay, revealing the not-so-utopian reality of being gay in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger. In episode three of series three, Sam informs Alex that his parents will be coming up to visit the apartment and that he wants Alex to stay in the spare room. Further to this, he was wondering whether Alex could have Daisy in the apartment when his parents arrived and pretend to be his girlfriend, so as to avoid any suspicion on his parents' behalf regarding his relationship with Alex. This becomes a contentious point between Alex and Sam, with Alex attempting to encourage Sam to use their relationship and homodomesticity to finally come out to his parents.[509] Sam remains very resistant to coming-out throughout the episode and the couple's bedroom becomes a contentious space, which is quite visibly marked as gay through posters of half-naked man and stereotypical associations with gay culture such as posters of Kylie Minogue. The concealment of his sexuality from

[508] Doran, p. 96.
[509] *The Clinic*, Series Three, Episode Three

his parents threatens to break down the relationship. By the end of the episode however, Sam is depicted showing his parents around the apartment, when Alex enters, holding hands with Daisy, finally agreeing to Sam's request of concealment.

Within this specific example, Alex could be read as a disruption to what Schoonover and Galt refer to as 'stable accounts of sexual and cultural identities promoted by globalization'.[510] The international gay serves to challenge what had become the globalization of queer identities in Irish screen representations. The international and cosmopolite configuration of Alex's character highlights the local struggles of the local Irish gay, who is not yet willing to come out to his family. Sam's struggle to come out locally in his rural hometown and to his parents highlights the well cited link between queerness and urbanism. There is a thriving corpus of literature on the relationship between queer sexualities and urbanism – from George Chauncey and Samuel Delaney on New York to Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis on Buffalo, Rob Kitchin and Karen Lysaght on Belfast, Manchester and San Francisco, and David Bell and John Binnie on queer urbanism and homonormativity.[511] Matt Cook and Jennifer Evans write that 'there has been a deeply constitutive relationship between queer citizens and city spaces' and the work of Maria Pramaggiore on Dublin's Hirschfeld centre marks similar attempts in the Irish context to create a space within the city for the Irish queer community.[512] The link between urbanism and queer sexualities is similarly evident through Sam on *The Clinic*, who moves to Dublin so he can openly express his gay sexuality and benefit from his eventual homodomestic relationship with Alex. However, Alex's evident acceptance and openness regarding his sexuality comes into conflict with Sam, as the closet manifests itself on screen within his narrative as he struggles to come out. As the local anxieties of coming-out clash with those anxieties of of Alex's international gayness, the homodomestic space becomes a contested space for the type of queer identities that could be articulated

[510] Schoonover and Galt, p. 37.
[511] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community (New York: Routledge, 2014); David Bell and Jon Binnie, 'Authenticating Queer Space, Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance', *Urban Studies*, 41.9, 2004; Rob Kitchin and Karen Lysaght, 'Sexual Citizenship in Belfast, Northern Ireland', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 11.1, 2004.
[512] Matt Cook and Jennifer Evans, *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Pramaggiore, 2017.

there. Alex and Sam functioned for much of series three like their straight counterparts, up until Sam's parents travel from rural Ireland to visit. The presence of an ordinary, everyday gay relationship in this fictional representation does not go unchallenged, while also being an anomaly in the broader sphere of queer visibility during the period of this chapter. Sam and Alex's relationship presents a specifically local and Irish situation and trope of rural attitudes versus urban. Although their homodomestic relationship was concomitant with what was happening internationally in queer media texts, their relationship is challenged and undermined by the local challenges presented on screen to being gay in Celtic Tiger Ireland.

Haunting the Tiger from the Edges - *Proof*

In terms of aesthetic and production value, *Proof* shares a number of traits with the *The Clinic*; Dublin as a new urban landscape, shots of high-rise apartments, scenes in trendy cafes and characters working within the IFSC. Despite this, queerness comes to signal the fragility of the Celtic Tiger economy, by raising questions regarding neoliberal markets, the role of the banking sector and Garda corruption, all of which have been implicated in the eventual crash of the financial markets in 2008. *Proof* positions queerness at the centre of the fault lines of the global Celtic Tiger economy, and queer characters within the text serve to potentially unravel and reveal the embezzlement and corruption which much of the Celtic Tiger was based on. The fact that the queer characters have very secondary roles on screen is significant; their respective deaths shape the course of the text, as they haunt the edges of protagonist Terry Corcoran's investigation and the Garda cover-up.

At the centre of the series lies fictional politician Myles Carrick's campaign to lead his centre-left Social Democrat party to election victory and become the country's next Taoiseach (the elected political-managerial role that is equivalent to the Prime Minister). Propping up Carrick's campaign is his private secretary Andrew O'Hara, who through human trafficking, lap-dancing clubs and private banking crime, props up Carrick's campaign 'as one of the most media-savvy campaigns in the history of the country', making him the probable candidate to win the election. Through Andrew's careful manipulation, Carrick crafts a campaign centred around economic openness, looser borders and a stronger connection to the European Union, noting that

Ireland is 'only a constituency' of a broader Europe. Globalization is positioned front and centre, through connection to financial and political systems in Europe and specifically Germany. As the series progresses, it is revealed that Carrick's election win in Ireland is part of a broader conspiracy across Europe to elect centre-left, neoliberal governments that are propped up by the banking sector.

At the crux of this series is investigative journalist Terry Corcoran, who when introduced, has been fired from the national newspaper, *The Irish Standard*, after trying to reveal corruption within the banking sector. A voice against global capitalism and neoliberal economies throughout, he attempts to uncover the links between the corruption within the Social Democrats and the Gardaí. Following his firing from the national paper, he finds himself working with *The Northside Chronicle*, a struggling local newspaper more focused on filling its paper with advertising to ensure its survival. It is through this local newspaper that Terry happens upon the murder of two individuals, both of whom are queer.

Head of the private German Midar Bank, Klaus Neuman (David Robb) is introduced working in the IFSC, as he puts a computer disc containing the details of party donations to the Social Democrats into a laptop. As is later revealed in the series through Terry Corcoran's investigation, the amount of money recorded on the disc from various accounts indicates tax evasion while also revealing that much of the resources have been generated through lap dancing bars. As politics and banking become intertwined, Klaus attends a Social Democrat press launch, leaving the laptop and the disc in the car. Conor Kelly (Darren Healy), a working-class gay man from the inner-city subsequently breaks into the car as Klaus enters the press launch, taking the laptop with him. Following this, Conor is depicted with Frank Erskine (Mark Lambert) an accountant. The scene begins after a sexual encounter between Conor and Frank, with Conor noting: 'I told you it was only going to be a quick one, I've a car to deliver'.[513] Frank gets out of bed and puts on a silk robe and is given the stolen laptop as a gift from Conor, as he tells Frank 'it's one of the perks of the job'. The evidence of political corruption becomes inexorably entangled in a gay relationship. Noting the stolen car and laptop, Klaus orders a hitman to retrieve the laptop, resulting in Conor's eventual death. At this point, Terry is sent by his local paper to investigate Conor's

[513] *Proof*, Series 1, Episode 1.

death, which the Gardaí have attributed to Conor's association with drug dealers. Later, Frank Erskine discovers the disc in the laptop and links the client accounts to Miles Carrick. Frank calls Klaus Neuman to blackmail him for his silence, requesting €2 million. Frank's attempts to blackmail result in him being shot in the head in the office, leaving it to Terry Corcoran to piece together the significance of this queer relationship in the midst of Garda corruption and political scandal.

Although *Proof*'s queer characters are only in one episode of the four-part first series, their relationship lies at the centre of the plot. Frank and Conor's queer relationship is entangled within commerce, crime, banking, political scandal and Garda corruption. Their queerness and their interaction with these various spheres of the Celtic Tiger economic and political landscape could potentially derail a government election and expose deep corruption within the civic sphere of the State. Further, their relationship is symptomatic of the darker currents of the Celtic Tiger economy. Queerness within this TV series has the potential to unravel the 'new Ireland' that has been established. Frank and Conor, despite their deaths, become a shaping presence on the narrative within this cosmopolitan Dublin. This presence remains as Terry Corcoran pieces together the various threads left in the midst of both their deaths.

Terry's meeting with Mrs. Erskine uncovers further the particular circumstances surrounding Frank's death. The opening exchange between the two reveals alternatives to being gay in Ireland, a configuration of gay identity that is not as open, cosmopolitan and upbeat as the other text in this chapter purport. As Terry begins to interview Mrs. Erskine, she opens by stating: 'which Frank Erskine are you interested in? The pillar of the community Frank Erskine or the Frank Erskine who preferred the company of muscular young men'.[514] Following this, she reveals the particularities of her marriage to Frank, noting: 'I gave him a closet and a twenty-year marriage of convenience'. Mrs. Erskine's remarks about her relationship with Frank reveal that not all forms of gay identity were successfully incorporated into the new sexual and economic landscape provided by the Celtic Tiger. Frank's marriage of convenience, closeted sexuality and sexual relationship with Conor provide a counterpoint to what was predominantly representations of cosmopolitan gay male lifestyles found in the queer visibility of the Celtic Tiger era.

[514] *Proof*, Series 1, Episode 3.

When enquiring about Frank's double life, Mrs. Erskine provides Terry the details of Frank's private house, a space designated for him to have his sexual encounters with younger men. Continuing his investigation Terry finds Neuman's laptop and disc in the house, while one of Neuman's hitmen is simultaneously breaking into the house, attempting to obtain the laptop, leading to a high-speed chase with Terry. Escaping the chase, Terry subsequently discovers the link between the private bank and Miles Carrick's political campaign, while also discovering that the deaths of both Frank and Conor were at the hands of the Gardaí, when it is later revealed in the series that the hitman is a Garda detective. Politics, private banking, the Garda Síochána and queerness all become bound together in the text. Rather than *The Clinic*, where gay sexualities are presented as participating in the new landscape through consumerism and cosmopolitanism, the queer characters in *Proof* directly attempt to participate in the darker currents of the Celtic Tiger economy, be that through participating in crime as a means of survival or through blackmail as a means of generating more income. Queerness is framed within this text as operating on the fringes of the narrative. Neither of the characters are openly asserting their sexualities and are for the most part relatively closeted, until after their deaths. To not openly assert their sexualities enables them to participate along the fringes of the economy and threatens to uncover the involvement of the private banking sector with various bodies of the Irish State. Although neither of the queer characters utilise the disc or their knowledge to publicly uncover the scandal, their involvement and interception in the relationship between the banks and the public sector serves as a broader critique of not only political corruption, but of the private enterprise and investment that were foisting up the Celtic Tiger economy during the period. It was this private investment that served as one of the key factors in the eventual collapse of the Celtic Tiger in 2008, which marked the beginning of the Irish banking crises as Ireland officially entered into recession. The varying Fianna Fáil governments of the Celtic Tiger similarly became inexorably caught up in private enterprise, leading to a number of high-profile scandals, among which included Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, who had received money from a millionaire businessman while the Minister for Finance in 1993. This revelation, along with many other financial misdemeanours, led to Ahern's eventual fall from power and the uncovering of a troublesome relationship between the private sector and the Irish government. *Proof*'s narrative thus eerily critiqued and foreshadowed the eventual factors that would lead to the demise of the Celtic Tiger.

Frank and Conor's relationship, with its interaction with Dublin's criminal underworld, speaks to a history of queer media representation, where queer subcultures have been linked with organised crime and criminality. Vito Russo in his seminal work *The Celluloid Closet* has noted this as a recurring trope within Hollywood cinema. Even in the Irish context, this is not an anomaly. The 1988 film *The Courier* (1988) for example depicts 'bent' businessman Val (Gabriel Byrne) as a cruel inner-city gangster, who is depicted cruising for rent-boys to take back to his private sauna club. This night-time activity is synonymous with the shadowy criminal underworld which he inhabits. In the case of *Proof*, Frank and Conor's relationship, as Frank's secretary's disclosure to Terry suggests, had a transactional element. Interestingly, Frank and Conor evidently have different interactions with the new economy. Frank, an accountant with a visibly affluent Dublin home, has benefitted greatly from the economic upturn. On the other hand, Conor has been disillusioned, having to participate in crime and criminal activity to survive. In stark difference to Frank, Conor's home is situated within working-class inner-city flats. Frank and Conor could also be seen as a radical departure from what Jon Binnie refers to as 'the hedonistic desires promoted by global gay consumer culture'.[515] The queerness articulated by both Conor and Frank operates outside of the matrix of the metropolitan gay cosmopolite that proliferated in media images during this period and as such, the will to self-identify and openly assert a gay identity is less apparent. While queer characters such as Conor and Frank have been used as signifiers of deviancy and moral decay, their inclusion on this programme offers an alternative articulation of both queer desire and queer identity and one that critiques the contemporary moment.

The ways in which capitalism, cosmopolitanism and global queer consumerism have shaped queer visibility in the other texts in this chapter is challenged somewhat by this queer relationship. Proof reclaims the clichéd images of Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years. Although the TV series presents the buzz of the new economy and the glossy circulation of finance capital, it uses queer figures to tell a darker story of the failed promises of prosperity. John Champagne contends that 'gay subjects have a particularly vexing relationship to capitalism in that, while capitalism is one of the preconditions of a modern gay identity, it also works to manage that identity in its own interests' be this through consumerism or configuring queer visibility to have a global,

[515] Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 4.

cosmopolitan address and be able to participate in a globalised and competitive media environment.[516] Although arguably, Frank and Connor's sexualities are managed by capitalistic imperatives, their relationship serves to highlight the fragilities of this 'new Ireland'. However accidental, by becoming narratively associated with the economy of crime and corruption, both Frank and Conor are ultimately disciplined, with the circumstances of their deaths being covered up by the Gardaí. Conor's death is linked to his involvement in inner-city drug culture, whereas Frank's death is attributed to suicide, both of which become sources of suspicion for Terry Corcoran's investigation. Through Frank's secretary, Terry discovers a link between Frank and Conor, when she informs him that Conor 'used to give him a lot of presents'.

Both *The Clinic* and *Proof* as television texts provide an emblem for the social and cultural change that had occurred within this 'new Ireland'. However, both – to varying degrees – provide a social and political critique of Celtic Tiger Ireland, and do not just solely formulate queer subjectivities within the context of upbeat, positive imagery as evident with the film texts of this period noted in the introduction. This could very well be attributed to the internationalisation of the Irish television market over the course of the Celtic Tiger. Both of these television series were distributed internationally. The queer visibility presented in these TV series were not only influenced on a narrative level by TV series circulating internationally, but also by the international television industry in which they were being produced and distributed. The use of generic and character tropes within these texts suggests an aspiration towards participation in an international television market. *The Clinic* was an Irish independent production, but was distributed in Finland, Iceland, Hungary, Serbia, Australia and New Zealand. The presentation of queerness through the makeover, gay best friend trope suggests that *The Clinic* had generated familiar structures that could intuitively be understood and was meaningful to a range of audience both national and international.

On the other hand, *Proof* was the product of an international collaboration with TV2 in Denmark. Following its broadcast in both Ireland and Denmark, it was distributed on DVD within the US. This sustained success to home-video formats could be

[516] John Champagne, 'Transnationally Queer?: A Prolegomenon', *Radical Society*, 27.1/2, 1999, p. 145.

attributed to the Irish inflection of international television tropes. *Proof* particularly positioned itself within a trend of British drama of the early 2000s that aimed to present contemporary life with an air of gritty realism, such as *Shameless* (2004-2013). The attempt to capture 'contemporary' Irish society through this sense of 'gritty realism' became a feature of Irish television drama in the 2000s, seen elsewhere with *Raw* (2008-2013) and *Pure Mule* (2001-2003). As David Tobin and Patricia Neville argue, the extent of creative possibility was reflected in the relative increase in dramatic productions over the course of the 2000s.[517] It is against this back drop, in which the dynamics of Irish television are changing. Queer visibility on both *The Clinic* and *Proof* reveal the dynamics involved in the internationalisation of Irish television during this period. For one, both fostered and reflected international influences, evident in the queer characters depicted on screen. They also made clear the attempts to actively participate and compete within an international television market. Given the composition of Ireland's media landscape and the situation of dual-reception noted throughout this thesis, international content (and consequently international queerness) was frequently imported by indigenous stations and broadcast by international stations that had a stake in Ireland, such as many of the UK channels. Satellite providers, such as Sky, became more pervasive amongst consumers during the period, accordingly increasing the stakes of competition for broadcasters.[518] These are some of the factors that explain the internationalisation of Irish television. Not only does queer visibility on Irish television reflect and critique Celtic Tiger Ireland, but it also comes to signify the internationalisation of Irish television more broadly, marking a determined development, from the local to the national and from the national to the international.

Conclusion

Queer Irish media visibility, which had developed from locally based activist agitation in the 1970s, now attempted to speak to and be a player within an international media environment, that had begun to mainstream queer identities on prime-time television

[517] David Tobin and Patricia Neville, 'Cosmopolitan Kitchen: The Representations of Nationality in the Irish TV Series, *RAW*', *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2011: pp. 87-99.
[518] John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History Since 1922* (London: Routledge, 2014).

programmes. As a result of the broader internationalisation of queer media visual fare, Irish audiences became familiar with prominent international texts that featured many gay characters, but also modelled these tropes and conventions in an attempt to create a queer Irish visibility akin to this cosmopolitan address that was happening internationally. This was evident through the configuration of characters in familiar tropes, but also through the utilisation and deployment of internationally digestive narrative, such as the medical drama and the crime/thriller drama.

As these texts speak to a cosmopolitan address, they strive towards international forms of gay visibility that attempts to divest itself specifically of its Irishness, bar some obvious markers such as locations and accents. However, the television texts in question do demonstrate a calibration of these gay cosmopolitan figures with local concerns, as evident with Sam and Alex's relationship in *The Clinic* and Frank and Conor's sexual affair in *Proof*. The incorporation, mainstreaming and what some scholars would refer to as assimilation, of these gay identities on the one hand coincides with the subsuming of alternative sexualities and identities into a normative trajectory. Although throughout this thesis, queer politics and activism had been closely linked with the media images that appeared on screen, the mainstreaming of queer Irish visibility represents an interaction for the most part with an international media industry at a time when community politics and activism, as discussed in the introduction, were not necessarily caught up with informing queer media images. Although this international address, with this new configuration of queer visibility, does eschew concerns for the local within the process of mainstreaming explored throughout this chapter, this was a response to a particular cultural moment, when Irish society had changed substantially, both sexually and economically. The nodes of activism and visibility would once again change, as queerness returned to being a centralised, current affairs item, as the Marriage Equality movement was formally founded in 2008 and quickly gathered momentum and media visibility over the subsequent years.

Conclusion

Have They Still Not Noticed Us?

Pantigate and Queer Media Visibility

On 11 January 2014, Rory O'Neill, the performer behind the Irish drag queen Panti Bliss, appeared on RTÉ One's prime-time talk show, *The Saturday Night Show*. In a live interview with host Brendan O'Connor, O'Neill was questioned on contemporary gay Irish life. Acknowledging the positive developments – many of which have been discussed throughout this thesis – O'Neill claimed that there was still substantial homophobia within Ireland. When prompted by the presenter, O'Neill claimed that he considered the actions of high profile journalist John Waters (who was then a columnist for *The Irish Times*), and members of the Catholic lobby group the Iona Institute, to be homophobic. Following the airing of these claims, the named individuals sought legal action, threatening both RTÉ and O'Neill with defamation. In light of potential legal action, O'Neill's interview was removed from the RTÉ Player and *The Saturday Night Show* issued an apology on 25 January. As Fintan Walsh observed, 'in the lead up to the same-sex marriage referendum in 2015, the initiation of legal action, and settlement by the broadcaster who paid out approximately €85,000 to the offended parties effectively implied that homophobia could not now be called out in public'.[519] The Irish media initially reflected this by barely documenting the interview, the censored edit or the legal threat.

As the Iona Institute and Waters attempted to control the media through the 'old' methods of censorship through legal action, their initial victory was confronted by media activism generated by the queer community, becoming a social movement over new media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Through digital dissemination online, this form of queer media visibility evaded methods of traditional media control, becoming a digital media event. Across social media and blogs, 'Pantigate' grew into a national and global event, culminating in Panti's eventual appearance on the stage of the Abbey Theatre, where she delivered the Noble Call

[519] Fintan Walsh, *Queer Performance and Contemporary Ireland*, p. 41.

speech.[520] Recorded live on the night, Panti's speech was uploaded onto YouTube and went viral overnight, and was internationally lauded for its call for tolerance, equality and justice for LGBT minorities.[521]

Although this example occurs outside of the dissertation's historical parameters, Pantigate offers a good example of the shifting dynamic of queer Irish media visibility that has been the focus of this thesis. Firstly, it confirms that queer media visibility does not necessarily fit within a neat historical narrative of a simple linear trajectory from oppression to liberation. Secondly, visibility is an ever changing dynamic between individuals generating it and the media institutions controlling it. Thirdly, it suggests that queer media visibility can take a variety of different forms at different historical moments. Finally, it indicates how the Irish queer community has deployed media forms and channels to create visibility, disseminate information and hold institutions of power accountable, particularly when a minority community's interests are compromised or threatened. Pantigate reaffirms this thesis' argument regarding queer Irish media visibility; that it falls into a tug-of-war and a shifting dynamic between varying social actors, media, and activist groups. As media develops, changes and transforms, the parameters and conditions under which queer visibility manifests shift accordingly, as this thesis has argued throughout.

Chapter Two explored how queer visibility was originally envisaged by the Irish gay civil rights movement not only for its liberatory goals, but as a means of social recognition. This subsequently revealed a particular kind of queer visibility that manifested during the period, a queer visibility that had to be negotiated between RTÉ and the IGRM, as documented through David Norris' appearance on *Last House*. Subsequently, queer alliances were made with key figureheads within RTÉ to lobby for programming on gay issues, such as that seen with documentary *Tuesday Report*. Many of the strategies deployed to attain visibility, along with the gay visibility that ended up manifesting on screen, became caught up in a paradigm of respectability and homonormativity, where gay individuals argued logically and rationally as they

[520] "The Noble Call" was a speech that took place following each performance of the 2013-2014 revival of James Plunkett's play, *The Risen People* at Ireland's national theatre, The Abbey. At the conclusion of the performance each night, a different public figure was invited each night to make a speech in response to the play's themes of oppression and resistance.
[521] Panti's Noble Call at the Abbey. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXayhUzWnl0

attempted to shift the mindset of viewers at home, denoting the use of a mainstreaming representational strategy and a mainstreaming political approach.

Chapter Three noted the continuation of these mainstreaming strategies on *The Late Late Show* but also and significantly highlighted the shifting dynamic of visibility during the period. Queer Irish media visibility became caught up within the genre of the talk show and dynamics of live television, which could shift the representational goal posts and paradigms of queer visibility. Further to this, queer Irish identities began to become inexorably caught up in the industrial and economic dynamic of television, where queer identities were utilised for the purpose of boosting television ratings, increasing advertising revenue and keeping number one rated shows competitive. The chapter culminated with a debate from 1989 surrounding the decrminalisation of homosexuality, which outlined strategies fostered by Irish gay civil rights groups such as GLEN in producing queerness and shows them becoming more media savvy, particularly within the context of live, commercial television, where the industrial context threatened to configure queer identities in sensational term. The 1989 soapbox debate example in particular marked how queer media visibility calibrated and recalibrated under particular cultural, production and historical contexts.

Chapter Four outlined how the manifestations of queer media visibility seen in Chapters Two and Three became disrupted, as the AIDS epidemic shifted priorities for both the gay community and media institutions. Much like early media visibility, the AIDS crisis saw hegemonic news media return to a narrative of pathologizing gay men by framing them as diseased. The return to such pathological discourses prompted new strands of activism within the Irish gay civil rights movement. Organisations such as GHA participated in a global network of exchange around AIDS education and became experts, subsequently using this capital to obtain airtime on broadcast media and in the press, due to their newfound expertise. Similarly, GHA and the broader gay community developed their own alternative media economies, in response to the paucity of information in the mainstream media and the lack of educational material and campaigns being developed by the government. What had become a globalised AIDS narrative further resulted in local responses to the crisis, prompting documentaries that highlighted the significant Irish inflections of the AIDS crisis, contesting the predominant US/UK-centricity. Once again, the paradigms of visibility

transformed and changed due to a public health crisis, particularly for gay men, indicating how mainstream demonization can result in the generation of a queer counterpublic.

The mainstreaming discussed in the early chapters comes to the fore once again in Chapter Five during the 1990s, when queer media visibility becomes incorporated into fictionalised representations. The overall rise in the cultural visibility and the changing legal status of gay men following decriminalisation engendered an increase of gay visibility in narrative-driven fictionalised representations. The primary forms by which queer characters became represented were the sitcom and the soap opera. Although this chapter marks the beginning of the incorporation of gay Irish identities into mainstream entertainment programming, this perceived increase in gay visibility was conservative in representational terms. In the case of the sitcom *Upwardly Mobile*, dated sitcom conventions were used to convey Toby's queerness, but he is never formally named as gay. Using Doty's 'Making Things Perfectly Queer', queer visibility must be deducted and searched through extra-textual material and knowledge. Similarly, the character of Eoghan on soap opera *Fair City* was completely desexualised, with gay intimacy with another character being controlled by the industrial and cultural context of the programme. Although initially seeming to be inclusive, the queer visibility that appears in fictional representations post-decriminalisation is for the most part anxious. Specific cultural and industrial factors determined the form and content of these respectable versions of gayness making them palatable for a mainstream audience. Consideration of these factors allows us to determine how and why such programming occurred when it did. Necessarily, such consideration also entails some understanding of the distinct historical, political, social, ideological, commercial and industrial factors which converged between 1993 and 1996 to create gay and queer programming deemed viable both by Irish audiences and by the television industry.

The tenet of globalisation, which has been mapped to some degree in minor detail throughout the thesis, forms the basis of Chapter Six. Here, the process of mainstreaming and assimilation into queer popular culture becomes more pertinent as queer Irish media visibility begins to foster a cosmopolitan outlook, aimed towards an international address, akin to trends occurring elsewhere in queer media representation and visibility. Cosmopolitanism is part of the internationalisation occurring in Ireland

during the Celtic Tiger period, a product of a neoliberal political economy which allows for the (economically conditional) accommodation of 'others', not least members of the LGBT community. The television programming created during this period not only attempted to use this queer globalisation to configure queer Irish media visibility as symptomatic of a new sexual landscape, but used LGBT individuals to appeal to a much larger audience of liberal minded, cosmopolitan homosexuals and others. Although queer visibility becomes caught up in celebrating the successes of this 'new Ireland' that has purported to have overlooked any local issues or difficulties for queer individuals, the television dramas provide a counterpoint by which queerness is configured to critique the new economic and sexual landscape, while also marking the aspirational attempts of Irish television to compete within a more international television industry.

The development of queer Irish media visibility was informed by local activism, legal changes, viral epidemics, international media influences alongside the development of Ireland's media landscape. In my analysis of the development of visibility, I have examined a number of frequently recurring frameworks, concepts or themes. These have included the concepts of mainstreaming, respectability, homodomesticity, counterpublics, cosmopolitanism and televisual sensationalism. Other sources of analysis have included primary archival sources from the RTÉ Archives and Irish Queer Archives. In addition the analysis has worked across multiple representational forms including film, television drama, soap opera and the sitcom. Using these genres and practices, I have demonstrated the processes by which queer Irish media visibility not only complicated previous conceptions of queer visibility but provided forms of social recognition, acted as a mechanism of social control and constituted a consciously disruptive act. My mode of investigation allows for a critical understanding of the conflicts surrounding respectability, mainstreaming and cosmopolitanism among many other paradigms of queer media visibility. In examining a wide variety of media, their production context and historical junctures, my research has focused on the clusters of meaning that attach themselves to queer Irish media visibility. This study offers a critique of the forms of queer visibility that have manifested during the period 1974-2008 and also points towards the invisibility of many members of the Irish LGBT community that are symbolically omitted from the story of gay Irish media visibility.

Future Research

I began this project in September 2014, just as the dust of Pantigate began to settle. Four years later, much has changed within the Irish cultural, political and media environment, particularly for the LGBT community. For one, the same-sex marriage referendum held in 2015 saw 62% of the Irish electorate vote in favour of marriage equality, with Ireland becoming the first country in the world to introduce same-sex marriage by popular vote. Following this, senior government minister Leo Varadkar became leader of one of Ireland's largest political parties, Fine Gael, consequently becoming the country's first openly gay Taoiseach. Despite these gains for Ireland's LGBT community, there have also been a number of setbacks. The number of HIV diagnoses in Ireland have increased by 35% since 2011 and among these new diagnoses were men who have sex with men (MSM).[522] During the Eurovision Song Contest 2018, Ryan O'Shaughnessy's entry "Together" was banned from broadcast by China, with censorship threatened by Russia, due to the inclusion on stage of two gay dancers.[523]

These ever-changing realities of queer experience in Ireland, along with the developments in Irish media – demonstrated by Pantigate – prompted potential new ways of articulating queer media visibility. Digital media and its processes of distribution and consumption transform and parallel the means by which sexuality shapes and is shaped by particular historical moments. Varadkar's coming-out in 2015 quickly became a global news story, generating not only discourses on social media but on global online and traditional news platforms. Kara Keeling in 'Queer OS', sees the potential for queer media scholarship to offer important models for mapping the transformation of queer life.[524] As Hollis Griffin notes, in a contemporary moment that faces new regimes of 'power and control in what is a now a post-Brexit, post-Trump' world, queer media research must 'foster methods that are vital in their adaptability'.[525] Queer media studies research is beginning to look towards this. Noah

[522] Órla Ryan, '"It's Worrying': Over 200 people diagnosed with HIV so far this year' (The Journal.ie, 2018). Available at: https://www.thejournal.ie/hiv-diagnoses-ireland-4070681-Jun2018/
[523] Ryan O'Shaugnessy – Together – Eurovision Live Grand Final. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD1cQ2wZ1dk
[524] Kara Keeling, 'Queer OS', *Cinema Journal*, 53.2, 2014.
[525] Hollis Griffin, 'Queer Media Studies', *Feminist Media Histories*, 4.2, 2018.

Tsika explores the normalising impact that algorithms have on queer cinema when it circulates on the internet.[526] In sum, queer media studies is a varied, diffuse set of research questions, objects of analysis and methodological approaches employed by scholars who work in an array of institutional locations, employing diverse critical frameworks. As Griffin notes, Queer Media Studies is always, necessarily, 'a becoming: a breaking down and building up that is best characterised as simultaneously episodic and uneven, involving shimmers and flashes of sites, approaches and modes of critique that shape in uncanny, intriguing ways'.[527]

This dissertation examined a variety of queer media in the context of their political, cultural and industrial determinants. Ultimately, it aimed to establish how and why the production of queer visibility in the Irish media occurred in varying forms over varying media. Unlike previous studies of lesbian, gay and queer film and television, which have tended to draw conclusions through textual analysis, this project also uses methods from Queer Production Studies, such as semi-structured interviews and paratextual analysis, to substantiate links between the cultural product, the representation of queerness and wider Irish society. In terms of future research, such methodologies and sub-disciplinary approaches might be useful for Queer Media Studies research. To that end, rather than replacing or deconstructing, this research concludes by recommending an expansion in the scope of queer media research by focusing on institutional practices, extra-textual promotional materials (paratexts) and the examination of the production practices, processes and means by which queer identities are produced on screen. Queer Media Studies has seen the beginning of a production studies approach. Ben Aslinger examined the programming strategies within the US cable channel Logo TV, which caters to an LGBT audience. Using an institutional analysis, Aslinger argues that Logo's attempts to market itself to diverse queer audiences are undermined by a struggle to meet programming diversity.[528] Himberg similarly examined practices surrounding lesbian programming on cable TV networks Bravo and Showtime, examining institutional practices and beliefs

[526] Noah Tsika, *Pink 2.0: Encoding Queer Cinema on the Intern*et (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).
[527] Griffin, 2018, p. 171.
[528] Ben Aslinger, 'Creating a Network for Queer Audiences as Logo TV', *Popular Communication*, 7.2, 2009.

surrounding lesbian content.[529] The work of Martin examines the production of gay black characters on the black-cast sitcom, using interviews with writers to examine the processes by which they created and produced black gay characters.[530] Paratextuality has also become a site of research within queer production studies.[531] Significantly, much of this research has been US-centric, so hopefully this research project will expand beyond the US and open up Media Studies to fostering this approach in queer media research.

Although the chapters within this dissertation have made frequent reference to LGBT visibility, transgender and bisexual representation still occupy an even more invisible space within this historical trajectory. There are some isolated instances of visibility, when transgender issues broke into the Irish mainstream media in April 1997, when Dr. Lydia Foy, a trans woman began legal proceedings regarding gender recognition in Ireland, beginning a twenty-year battle to have her birth certificate reflect her gender identity. Neil Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto* (2004) features transgender character Patricia "Kitten" Braden as the protagonist. Televisual representations have been rather sparse. Since 2014, there have been some singular attempts at representing transgenderism within Irish media. RTÉ 2's sitcom *The Centre* (2014) introduced a pre-operative trans woman, Nuala, a secretary within a local community centre on Dublin's northside. The representation of Nuala was condemned by the Irish LGBT community, with the character being noted as 'inexhaustible stereotyping-as-comedy', with Nuala 'only and ever a punchline'.[532] Later in 2015, the Irish government passed the Gender Recognition Act. This legislation provided a process enabling trans people to achieve full legal recognition of their preferred gender and allowed for the acquisition of a new birth certificate that reflects this change. Much like with the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, soap opera *Fair City* introduced the soap's first trans character, Ryan Donnelly (Jack Murphy). However, this was only for a brief storyline and did not necessarily explore the character's trans identity, besides

[529] Julia Himberg, 'Multicasting: Lesbian Programming and the Changing Landscape of Cable TV', *Television & New Media*, 15.4, 2014.
[530] Alfred L. Martin Jr., 'Scripting Black Gayness: Television Authorship in Black-Cast Sitcoms', *Television & New Media*, 16.7, 2015.
[531] Andre Cavalcante, 'Centring Transgender Identity via the Textual Periphery: *TransAmerica* and Double Work of Paratexts', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 30.2, 2013.
[532] Kay Koss, 'The Trouble with RTÉ 2's *The Centre*', *GCN* 2014. Available at: https://gcn.ie/trouble-rte-2s-centre/

using the character for coming-out purposes. The trajectory of transgender visibility, particularly in Irish television, warrants further research, while further analysis of the political and cultural context of transgender issues would better contextualise instances of transgender visibility within the specific socio-cultural climate from which they emerged.

Similarly, although instances of lesbian visibility are highlighted in the various chapters of this thesis, lesbians still occupy a liminal space within the story of queer Irish visibility, which reinforces dominant patriarchy, both within the Irish gay civil rights movement and the queer media images that manifest on screen. There have been recent attempts by activists to use the documentary form to redress the relative invisibility of lesbians, both in the media and the Irish gay movement, a narrative and genre that has been dominated by men. Lesbian activists and filmmakers Sonya Mulligan and Ger Moane specifically sought to engage with this invisibility, using the fundamental question of 'where are we on screen'.[533] From this, they produced *Outitude*, a grassroots documentary charting the history of the Irish lesbian community from the 1970s to 2015 marriage referendum. The team producing the documentary is an 'all-female, all queer' ensemble, ensuring to redress patriarchal dominance both on screen and within the production context. The case of *Outitude* not only highlights the shifting dynamic of visibility argued for throughout this thesis, in that the Irish gay community created a counterpublic to contest the hegemonic narrative, but members within the Irish gay community itself deployed media activism to broaden and diversify the record beginning to take shape for queer Irish history, particularly one that favours that of gay men.

Very little material currently exists that focuses specifically on queer Irish media visibility and LGBT programming. This project represents a necessary contribution to gay, lesbian and queer screen studies and has, I hope, opened up further lines of enquiry into the field that might be fruitfully explored in the future. This project is necessary and important, not only in terms of broadening the field of Irish Media Studies, but diversifying the historical record of queer Irish history. The period of this

[533] Brian Finnegan, 'Irish Lesbian Documentary *Outitude* wins GAZE Audience Award', *GCN* 2018. Available at: https://gcn.ie/irish-lesbian-documentary-outitude-wins-gaze-audience-award/irish-lesbian-documentary-outitude-wins-gaze-audience-award/

project is significant. From the foundation of the first Irish gay rights group in 1974, to legalising same-sex marriage in 2015 over forty years later, this dissertation provides a necessary window into the remarkable social transformations that occurred for Ireland's queer community in such a short space of time. Further, this research indicated the role of the media in not only providing a space for queer community to express themselves, but in changing mindsets and attitudes. Crucially, the story of queer Irish visibility is not a simple one. Visibility does not equate with progress and accordingly, it can be subjected to numerous influential factors, stemming from spheres of activism, broadcasting, social, cultural and legal.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Sheet for Participation in Research

Information Sheet

My name is Páraic Kerrigan and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD studies in Maynooth University. I am carrying out research with gay people who either made an appearance or took part in the production of a media broadcast to gain an understanding of the context behind the media texts. These people are active and public figures in Ireland's gay community. I would like you as a participant in this research, as I think that your contributions could be very interesting and valuable.

About the research and your participation:

1. I am the project's only researcher and this research is being conducted for the purpose of my PhD studies in Maynooth Univesity. I am being supervised by Prof. Maria Pramaggiore (Department of Media Studies, Maynooth University) and Dr. Stephanie Rains (Department of Media Studies, Maynooth University).
2. This research aims to identify, interpret and historically situate primary media texts from television, radio, film and internet culture in Ireland over this period, examining the relationship between the media and the development of Irish LGBT communities. This study will examine the emergence of the community's identity through its engagement with media forms, including the response of LGBT people to stereotyping and attempts to intervene through participation, through overt public challenges and through the production of an alternative media culture.
3. This research will take place in Outhouse, Capel Street, Dublin, across a three month period.
4. Archival research, textual analysis and semi-structured interview will be used to gather data.
5. 15-20 people will be interviewed for this research. All participants will have made a prominent media appearance or contribution to a production pertaining to being gay in Ireland within the period of 1974-2014.
6. Interviews are largely unstructured, but interviewees will be asked to talk about aspects of gay visibility in Irish media, among similar topics.
7. You must sign a consent form to participate in the research. However, you can choose to withdraw from the project at any time. If you choose to stop participating, then you must sign a withdrawal form. You do not need to give a reason for leaving the research.
8. You will be named within the research in the context of your media appearance or involvement with media production.
9. You will be allowed to view the notes and quotes of the interview and any other documents produced as a result of this interview.
10. Any information that you give me may be used in my final thesis, in other materials written for publications and in a variety of other academic and popular outlets.
11. Electronic files will be stored on a laptop or on Maynooth University's secure server. These files will be encrypted and password protected. Paper files will be locked in a secure cabinet. The data will be deposited in the Irish Qualitative Data Archive. Any data gathered during the course of these interviews will be stored on encrypted CD, data keys, laptops and folders on a server. Once the research project is complete the recordings will be deposited in the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) and made accessible to future researchers. Data made available to the IQDA will only be allowed with consent of the interviewees.
12. If you do not wish for your content to be deposited within the IQDA, the data will be retained securely by the researcher for a minimum of 10 years as stipulated in the MU

Research Integrity Policy. It will remain stored as outlined above, and after 10 years all the transcripts, electronic notes and meta data will be destroyed using appropriate tools to delete and overwrite the content. Any hard copies of transcripts or notes will be destroyed immediately after completion of the Viva and termination of the project, using confidential shredding as approved by the University.

13. You can contact me at any time for a general overview of the research and research findings.
14. You will not be remunerated by the researcher for your participation as you are participating as a volunteer.

Contact Details –

You may contact myself or my supervisors if you have any concerns about the project.

The Researcher:

Páraic Kerrigan – paraic.kerrigan@nuim.ie

Supervisors:

Prof. Maria Pramaggiore – maria.pramaggiore@nuim.ie

Dr. Stephanie Rains – Stephanie.rains@nuim.ie

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 Maynooth University 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.

Appendix B: Consent for Participation in Research

Consent Form for Participants -

This form must be signed in the presence of the researcher

Question	Yes	No
I have read and understand the information sheet and have been given a copy to keep?		
I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research and my participation in it, and these questions have been answered satisfactorily?		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can pause, reschedule or withdraw from the research at any time?		
I agree to interviews being recorded, transcribed and being used by the researcher for any future work?		
I agree to any information resulting from my participation being deposited into the Irish Qualitative Data Archive on the condition that it will not be anonymous and devoid of any identifiers?		

Name (printed) -

_____

Signature -

_____

Date -

_____

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 Maynooth University 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.