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**Sex and Respectability in Ireland:
A Chronology of Cultural Change**

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October 2018

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, Maynooth University,
Department of Anthropology

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the changing cultural attitudes towards sexuality in contemporary Ireland. Adopting both a conceptual and a chronological approach, this project explores the interconnected themes of respectability, sexuality, and biopolitics through an investigation of, or making visible, a series of ‘figures’ and ‘sites’ that demarcate historical and contemporary understandings of sexual respectability in Irish culture. This study occurs at a time when Ireland is experiencing a belated modernity, yet grappling with a traumatic history of institutionalisation of persons deemed to have deviated from normative sexual values, that continues to re-emerge into the national consciousness. While recent plebiscites have been interpreted as a rejection of Ireland’s abjection of ‘unrespectable’ bodies, this dissertation argues that Ireland’s contemporary sexual politics are still undergirded by ideas of respectability. Chapter One serves to locate this research within a distinguished body of literature on the anthropology of Ireland, particularly in relation to questions of sexuality and kinship. Chapter Two analyses the emergence of the Irish state, and the biopolitical operationalisation of Catholic social and moral teaching, in the twentieth century, and how the legacy of that period continues to mould contemporary social thought and political action. Chapter Three considers the contested role of the institution of marriage within Irish culture: once iconic of a prescriptive, exclusive, and traditional form of kinship, it now is a marker of Ireland’s reputation as a socially progressive liberal democracy. Chapter Four analyses the figure of Panti Bliss, the drag queen whose comments on homophobia in Irish culture set the stage for the same-sex marriage referendum. Much like the marriage movement, Panti Bliss represents the sanitisation, desexualisation, and the rendering respectable of the gay man in Western culture. Chapter Five studies the role of HIV/AIDS in Irish culture. Retaining a partial focus upon Panti Bliss’s role as one of the few publicly known HIV positive individuals in

Ireland, it considers the impact of the respectability politics of the Marriage Equality movement upon the prolonged silence around sex, gay men, and the escalating HIV crisis in contemporary Dublin.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge all of my interlocutors over the last four years, without whom this thesis would never have come to fruition. I appreciate your willingness to allow me to witness, take part in, and document your lives. I'm also deeply thankful for the generosity of those who so willingly shared their time, memories, knowledge, insights, and feelings over countless caffeinated beverages.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Thomas Strong for believing in the worthiness of my research, as well as my capacity to undertake the process (particularly during periods of self-doubt), and whose warmth, humour, and approachability meant that I never felt entirely lost or alone during what is, ultimately, a solitary endeavour.

I am also indebted to the staff of the Department of Anthropology, Maynooth University, for providing me with a space to think, write, and teach over the past four years, as well as listening patiently to my incessant questions and complaints, and tolerating my magpie-like penchant for office stationery. Before my disciplinary promiscuity led me to anthropology, the English departments at the (then) National University of Ireland, Maynooth, and University College, Dublin fostered my research interests and inspired me to ask some of the questions that lead directly to this thesis. For that I am immensely grateful.

Finally, I am obliged to recognise the role of the Irish Research Council in funding this work. Without an Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scholarship Award, this research project would not have been feasible.

Introduction

The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is.

George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman* (1903)

This thesis is concerned with the place of GLBT people in Irish society, and how the extension of the social embrace to this community can be used to describe and analyse recent modernising shifts that Ireland has experienced, particularly in relation to secularisation, gender equality, and increased individual freedoms. These epochal shifts have been accompanied by a collective reckoning with the legacy of the biopolitical Catholicism that regulated the intimate lives of Irish citizens in the twentieth century. Since the 1990s, revelations of clerical and institutional abuse in Catholic institutions since the foundation of the Irish state in 1922 have contributed to an accelerated secularisation of Irish society, a process also influenced by social and economic changes that continue to transform Ireland into a multicultural country. Following the belated repealing of colonial-era laws that criminalised homosexuality in 1993, Ireland has undergone a rapid cultural change in attitudes towards GLBT sexualities: in 2015, Ireland became the first country to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote – a marker of the cultural acceptance of gay people in a country noted for its social conservatism. Gay marriage has been noted as not only a barometer of a country’s acceptance of gay citizens, but also a marker of modernity itself (Puar 2007; Barker 2012). In this context, Ireland’s popular vote for same-sex marriage (as well as the subsequent legalisation for abortion in 2018) can be seen as a symbolic act of inclusion, and a rejection of Ireland’s recent history of control and confinement of unruly bodies and sexualities – a history that remains in the national consciousness through the

discovery of a mass grave at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home in 2014, one of many such institutions that served to detain ‘unmarried mothers’ and their children during the twentieth century. The move towards marriage equality has not been unproblematic, however: just as marriage was the mechanism for creating respectable citizens in twentieth century Ireland – and ostracising others – the realisation of same-sex marriage has been achieved through a sanitised gay politics that disavows the negative stereotypes - promiscuity, sexual recklessness, and non-monogamy - often associated with gay men. While this politics of respectability may have been politically expedient in pursuit of rights and recognition, it has also facilitated a cultural silence around a resurgent HIV crisis in Dublin. While Ireland has been commended for upholding liberal values at a time of reactionary right-wing politics worldwide – in 2017, Leo Varadkar became one of a handful of ‘openly’ GLBT heads of government when he was elected Taoiseach - one can witness a continuity between Ireland’s past and present through an inclusionary/exclusionary model of sexual respectability and citizenship that endures (Rubin 1984).

In *Dancing at the Crossroads: Memory and Mobility in Ireland*, Helena Wulff draws upon Eamon de Valera’s iconic 1943 speech, which imagined a pastoral scene featuring ‘comely maidens dancing at the crossroads’ (2007: 1). While this description was an error of transcription, the expression has gone on to crystallise a romantic vision of Ireland, and the simple, humble lives of its citizens. Wulff identifies it as a ‘key metaphor’ signifying key moments in Ireland’s cultural and political life. I consider my orientation towards Wulff’s use of this metaphor – and metaphors of mobility and movement more broadly - as particularly apt at this point in time in Irish culture, as the country has experienced significant social change during my fieldwork. More recent understandings of twentieth century Irish culture have served to illuminate the dark underbelly of De Valera’s ‘dream’ Ireland.

The tension between tradition and modernity that has structured previous ethnographies of Ireland reappears during my own research. Foremost among informants, and Irish society at large, is the idea that Ireland is changing, culturally, historically, structurally: people feel that a break has been, and continues to be made, with ‘the past’. Broadly writ, this is understood as a shift from an oppressive, theocratic past towards an era of secular individualism. Often framed as generational, these sociocultural changes herald a departure from the Ireland canonised in the writings of Arensberg and Kimball (1937; 1940): a thrifty arcadia where generations lived harmoniously under one roof (literally), and subsequently pathologised by a series of anthropologists (Messenger 1969; Brody 1973; Fox 1978; Scheper-Hughes 1979). While this idyllic image has been critiqued in the anthropological literature across the intervening decades – particularly for its tendency to homogenise Irish culture as either an idyll or in a state of anomie (Peace 1989) - popular thinking of rural Ireland tends to evoke associated stereotypes of ‘country people’ or ‘older people’, who are both geographically isolated from metropolitan centres (through inadequate transport infrastructure) and out of step with social changes that have emerged in recent decades following the weakening of clerical influence in the public sphere (Drazin 2018).

As an Irish fieldworker, I am aware of this oft-maligned tradition of anthropologists – usually American, occasionally English – who come to Ireland to affirm or challenge a series of observations rooted in colonial ideology about the exceptionalism of life on this island, particularly along its western seaboard. The research that resulted in this thesis emerged from sustained engagement with informants in and around Dublin: far from familiar ethnographic descriptions of a dying, inferior culture trailing Western modernity, several close ethnographer-informant relationships were fostered in that acme of modern consumer culture: Starbucks. In a country where tea rivals Guinness for the title of national beverage, and where brand loyalty equates with tribal loyalty, Starbucks, and coffee more generally, is a relatively recent

phenomenon. Whereas Ireland was once Britain's periphery, the colonisation of Dublin by American companies like Starbuck's reflects Ireland's reliance on the capital generated by American multinational operations, many of which are based in 'Silicon Docks', Dublin's answer to Silicon Valley. While early ethnographers of Ireland have been critiqued for an ahistorical approach to Irish culture (Brody 1974), my research is concerned with history and the ethnographic imagination. During my fieldwork, I entered a series of archives to bring occluded figures into view, in order to make sensible a larger, transhistorical cultural dynamic involving sex and respectability. Alongside this archival fieldwork, I was conducting fieldwork in the forgotten corners of 'Marriage Equality' Ireland, in order to identify the contemporary iterations of this cultural phenomenon.

Like Mark Maguire, 'I occasionally feel the presence of ancestors such as Haddon and Browne or Scheper-Hughes. Today their expeditions seem weird – the craniometers and Rorsach tests are gone but "unethical" remains like a tattoo' (2013: 24). I am aware of the ethical implications of research, and the ever contested politics of representation (Clifford and Marcus 1986); I have decentred the anthropological gaze away from the isolated inhabitants of rural villages – held by early functionalist anthropologists to be bound social units – to Dublin, long neglected by my ethnographic forebears, a city increasingly connected to the world beyond national borders, through flows of migration and capital. In this sense, my work can be positioned against this anthropological tradition of privileging the rural Irish village as a synecdoche of Irish culture, and the site of 'authentic' Ireland. However, spectres of this early Irish ethnography emerge in my own research and writing. Questions of tradition and modernity continue to rub against each other in this thesis, as I interrogate questions of sexuality, kinship, and community.

As noted above, my identification as Irish intersects with my identification as queer, doubly rendering me a 'native ethnographer' in the field (Bunzl 2004). After Malinowski,

ethnographic fieldwork became fixed in the anthropological imagination as an encounter between the ethnographic ‘self’ and the native ‘other’. This paradigm shaped much of twentieth century anthropology, though it was critiqued by Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 12-16) for establishing a ‘hierarchy of purity of field sites’ that emulates colonial constitutions of ‘home’ and ‘field’, with fieldwork becoming synonymous with a ‘heroized journey into Otherness’ (Bunzl 2004: 439). Such normative models of ethnography have been challenged by those who do not fit the archetypal fieldworker described by Gupta and Ferguson: ‘Euro-American, white, middle-class male’. Queer anthropologist Kath Weston has described the ‘native anthropologist’ and their position and field site as being ‘one step removed from the “real stuff”’ and thus becoming a ‘virtual anthropologist’ (1997: 164). Kirin Narayan also critiqued the instability of the self/other dyad that shapes ethnographic fieldwork, arguing that engaging in research on topics that others regard as ‘taken-for-granted reality’ results in an ‘uneasy distance’ between ethnographer and informants (1993: 682). For Narayan, the practice of ethnography always transforms the ‘self’ into an ‘other’.

My own ethnographic practice has been informed by Matti Bunzl’s (2004) call for a ‘neo-Boasian’ anthropology – one which necessitates a rethinking of the taken-for-granted binaries that fieldwork produces, such as self/other, and anthropologist/informant – but which also complements Boas’ conception of the past as being integral to present day research with a Foucaultian genealogical method that charts a history of the present. This approach has allowed me to conduct fieldwork in diverse sites such as cafes, people’s homes, public and private archives, offices of non-governmental organisations, and social media in order to track the emergence of the sexual shame that is popularly consigned to the past, yet which erupts in the present, when the dead speak to the living and shape the political climate of the day (Verdery 1989), or when certain voices and experiences are silenced in pursuit of ‘modern’ political goals.

As explored across the thesis, my fieldwork takes Irish sexuality to be a primary focus, mirroring those aforementioned anthropologists whose work has been problematised for exoticising and misrepresenting the Irish as sexually *other*, ignorant in sexual matters, or psychologically maimed in interpersonal relationships. Unlike previous ethnographers, I do not ascribe such descriptions to my informants: rather, many openly identify with the idea that the Irish have, historically, had a negative relationship with sexuality. This self-identification arises out of a historical period where Ireland has experienced both an economic and social liberalisation, as well as a waning of the influence of the Catholic Church in public life and personal morality. Much of the latter has been attributed to revelations of institutional and clerical abuse, and subsequent cover-ups, which have been drip-fed to the Irish public since the 1990s. This has led to a prolonged period of traumatic discovery which has served to slowly corrode the moral authority of the Catholic Church in Ireland, which had been specifically enshrined in the Irish constitution of 1937 as having a ‘special place’ in Irish society. This period in the 1990s saw the rise of Ireland’s ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy, the introduction of divorce, and the decriminalisation of homosexuality: all of these would be seen as belated markers of modernity.

Wulff (2007: 110) has also usefully drawn upon Appadurai’s concept of ‘ruptures of modernity’ (1996: 3) to describe the cultural shifts in Ireland over recent years, and how global processes are embedded in the everyday world of the local. Wulff describes how, in 1994, Ireland experienced its ‘Riverdance moment’, when an internationally televised performance of Irish dancing enabled domestic viewers to experience its cultural heritage and identity as a modern phenomenon. During the course of this research, Ireland has twice had the opportunity to experience itself at the centre of worldwide media attention for ‘progressive’ social change: in 2015, as the first country to introduce same-sex marriage by popular vote, and in 2018, with another overwhelming majority vote to introduce abortion. To an extent, these dates are

arbitrary: Tom Inglis (1998) has posited both 1991 and 1998 as chronologically important in Ireland's trajectory towards modernity; David McWilliams pinpoints the papal visit of 1979 as the high watermark of Catholicism in Ireland (2006). Periodisation is always contested, but what is inarguable is the *feeling* in Ireland that the country has experienced a break with the past, producing a sense of 'before' and 'after' among Irish people. While the aforementioned events are important in their own right, as extensions of rights and freedoms to Irish citizens, they also carry a symbolic freight. My informants – and myself – were not solely voting to effect legislative change, but felt that we were collectively undertaking a change in what it meant to be Irish: what it meant to belong, to be valued, to *not* have to leave the jurisdiction as so many 'sexual dissidents' had before (Dollimore 1991). The historical period during which my fieldwork took place felt like a cultural recalibration: the agency of citizens who were socially marginalised, yet symbolically central, was asserted more powerfully than ever before.

Negation reappeared throughout conversations with informants and elsewhere in my ethnographic analysis. Silence emerged as something of a key metaphor within my research. Silence, and its cognates of shame, stigma, secrecy, have resonated throughout Irish culture during my fieldwork. The contrast between blistering accounts of self-revelations, and the silence that was in actuality, a suppression of experiences that deviated from cultural norms of respectable sexuality, kinship, and citizenship is a phenomenon that has shaped Irish public life since the 1990s. Alongside this, absence was another defining aspect of this work: the absence of clarity around events at the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam during the last century being just one such example, or the continued denial of information by religious orders to survivors of such institutions and their families. Or indeed, for me as a researcher, and the lack of access to the archives of these same orders (an issue that is the focus of campaigns by Catriona Crowe, former Head of Special Collections at the National Archives, as well as the Justice for

Magdalenes Research group). Despite the stream of revelations, the absence of information and justice is still keenly felt in Irish society.

In discussions about sexuality in Irish culture, past and present, the phrase ‘respectability’ emerged as integral to understating Ireland’s history of institutionalising sexually transgressive bodies, as well as its legalisation of same-sex marriage. This concept of ‘respectability’ came to undergird my entire interpretive strategy, as I began to identify a series of figures, both historical and contemporary. Whether one is ‘respectable’ or ‘unrespectable’ – or more accurately, ‘shameful’ - is a key marker of one’s personhood in Irish culture, particularly in relation to sexual morality. Peter Wilson (1969; 1973) has identified the dual value system of respectability-reputation in post-colonial Caribbean social structures. While the latter is described as ‘masculine’ (with an emphasis on braggadocio), while the former is considered to be ‘feminine’ (with a focus on modesty and social status) (such observations echo those by Ashis Nandy on postcolonial masculinity (1983)). According to Wilson, these post-colonial societies internalised colonial European values in relation to whiteness and cosmopolitanism, and where their skin colour or occupation underscored their difference, other aspects of one’s self-presentation, such as one’s clothing or comportment. The masculinist privileging of ‘reputation’ certainly co-exists alongside the code of respectability: the image of the ‘fighting Irish’, who rebel against authority and oppression, and drink excessively was immortalised in the figure of Christy Mahon, in J.M Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* (1907). The archetypal anti-hero of Irish culture, Mahon holds his neighbours in thrall as he tells his tale of patricide to other patrons of the village public house, winning their respect for his alleged exploits. The play itself led to riots at the Abbey Theatre upon its premiere, an event almost as legendary as the literary work itself. This faultline in Irish culture is an example of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 1997): an image of the Irish that can cause embarrassment in terms of negative stereotyping, but which also has currency in contemporary Ireland (in a very

literal sense, as Dublin has become a hotspot for weekend breaks by bachelor/stag and bachelorette/hen parties, and boasts alcohol distilleries as primary tourist attractions).

While the idea of respectability has come up in anthropological discussions of Irish culture on a couple of occasions (Silverman 1987; Peace 2001), it is in A. Jamie Saris' work that one finds the most useful and convincing elaboration of the term and its importance to Irish social life. Echoing Wilson, Saris writes that respectability 'correlates with class status broadly defined, that is to say the "higher up" a person or a family considers themselves the likelier they are to be conscious of the process of being respectable and to take steps to see that their respectability is not infringed by their own doing...or by the doings of others' (2008:317). Saris notes, like Wilson and Silverman before him, that respectability is not a category that is solely within the purview of the middle class: people of humbler social origin still consider the family's respectability to be a 'prized possession', evidenced through an availability for work should such opportunities arise, or through how one presents oneself in the community, such as cleanliness or modest dress (see Silverman 1987: 14). The turn of attention to how a body is presented, in lieu of ownership of property (or 'land') or skilled profession, illustrates Daniel Miller's (2010) argument that one's material possessions are often seen as a marker of one's morality.

Saris – writing about rural Ireland and institutionalisation - also usefully makes a correlation between the category of unrespectability and the 'psychological reality of a sense of social shame', and that while a family's respectability could be lost, a family could rarely make the transition from unrespectable to respectable. While I focus on the unit of the family here, the category of respectability could be lost by the actions of an individual. Invariably, however, such actions would impact upon the status of the family. Saris records that the spectre of 'inbreeding' looms over the community in Sligo where he did his fieldwork, as do familial connections with institutionalisation, and criminality. The material consequences of this

anxiety around sexual reproduction, institutions, and the law is a current issue in contemporary Ireland, and the themes of respectability and social shame continue to re-emerge throughout my thesis. In this sense, my research evokes the shame and honour analytic popular in twentieth century anthropology (see Peristiany 1965; Pitt-Rivers 1965; Herzfeld 1980).

This personal code of respectability was buttressed by a larger ideology: one which I call ‘biopolitical Catholicism’. Through my analysis of the following theoretical concerns, my methodological approach develops, as I track the emergence of a series of ‘figures’ within Irish culture. These figures have been either included or excluded, depending on their relation to the cultural norm of sexual respectability. My understanding of biopolitics is informed by a reading of both Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. For Foucault, the nature of state power shifted with the advent of modernity and the birth of ‘biopower’: rather than focusing on individuals, sovereign power concentrated on ‘man-as-species’, or particular populations (2003: 246-247). At this juncture, sexuality became the concern of state power, alongside the regulation and management of bodies through emerging practices such as demography. As Foucault differentiates: sovereign power is the power to let live and make die, whereas bio-power is the inversion of the old order: make live (in approved forms) and let die (2003: 240-248). Foucault, however, does not suggest a clean break between sovereign power and bio-power: rather, bio-power is contingent upon the normalising, disciplinary power that he has theorised elsewhere (1978).

Agamben’s *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) is an attempt to ‘correct, or at least complete’ the Foucaultian account of modern biopolitics (9). Drawing upon Aristotelian thought, Agamben divides modern society into two binary categories: *zoe* versus *bios*, and *oikos* versus *polis*. *Zoe* – or bare life - is the ‘simple fact of living common to all living beings’, whereas *bios* indicates the ‘form or way of living proper to an individual or a group’. *Oikos* refers to the domestic space, whereas *polis* is the public sphere. Citing Foucault,

and Arendt before him, modernity was marked by dissolution of these strict divisions: ‘the politicisation of bare life’ (10). Agamben argues, however, that by excluding *zoe*, the *polis* actually includes it, for it becomes the constitutive *other* by which the community defines itself. In Ireland, this tension could be seen in relation to institutionalisation – a form of social death that acts not only as a punishment for transgression, but a deterrent against unrespectability; today, the taboo of being HIV positive within the gay community serves to isolate and ostracise those who are infected, but also demarcates the boundaries of respectable sexual subjectivity.

Through an understanding of this inclusionary/exclusionary dyad, that Agamben argues lies at the heart of modern, biopolitical governmentality, one can approach much of the material in this thesis, where the private sphere was regulated in service of the ideologies of both Catholicism and the Irish state. Following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the Irish government introduced a gradual roll-out of laws that restricted the personal freedoms and regulated the intimate behaviour of its citizens – even recreational events such as dances in one’s home were banned (Wulff 2007). Just as Agamben notes that the *oikos* was a feminised domain, and the *polis* a masculine arena, Irish society was gendered in a similar fashion: the marriage bar of 1932 prohibited Irish women from working in the public service until 1973 (Valiulis 1995). The private sphere in Ireland, too, was integral to the public sphere: buttressed by Catholic ideologies around family organisation and planning, the role of the mother in the home - alongside the ‘special position’ of the Catholic Church - was enshrined in the 1937 constitution.

Agamben turned to the Classical world again, and the figure of *homo sacer*. In ancient Rome, the *homo sacer* was one who was considered to be outside of legal protections, and could be killed with impunity. They were also considered unworthy of sacrifice or other ritualised killing, such as execution. However, in the era of biopower, and the modern, biologising state, the contemporary iteration of *homo sacer* is more likely to be subject to social

exclusion and ‘let die’, rather than to be killed outright. Taking my cue from Agamben’s strategic use of the ‘figure’ of *homo sacer*, I utilise a series of such ‘figures’ to crystallise the inclusionary/exclusionary dyadic mechanism of sexual respectability in Irish culture. In the early decades of the Irish state, those who posed a threat to Catholic morality, and by extension the entire social structure, embodied the figure of *homo sacer*. In recent years, Irish culture has been haunted by figures who were abjected by society during the twentieth century: from women who were imprisoned in Magdalene Laundries, to the bones found at the site of the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, those citizens who were secreted away into institutions and out of public view in order to preserve a myth of collective purity. Indeed, the discovery of the Tuam Babies can be read as a hyper-literal ‘return of the repressed’: Ireland’s past refusing to remain buried. The case of the Tuam Babies, as well as the stories of women and girls like Savita Halappanavar and Ann Lovett, have emerged as ‘ruptures’ (after Appadurai 1996) within Ireland’s history of biopolitical Catholicism, and shape the political and discursive climate around modernising socio-political campaigns like the legalisation of same-sex marriage or abortion. In this sense, these cases echo Katherine Verdery’s (1989) anthropological attention to the role that the dead play in the political lives of the living. A more sophisticated biopolitical analysis, drawing upon Mbembe’s (2003) theory of ‘necropolitics’ challenges the conventional assumption that the liberal nation state is a rational, democratic and bureaucratic agent, but rather posits that the state produces ‘Others’ to be killed (or in Foucaultian terms, ‘let die’).

While the facts of the Tuam Babies case, and other cases of clerical and institutional abuse, remain unclear due to a continued denial of access to the archives of religious orders charged with running these institutions, it is clear that if these children were not killed intentionally, they were victims of the ‘indirect murder’ which for Foucault included ‘political death, expulsion, rejection and so on’ (2003: 256). This includes those concrete, physical

spaces of social isolation where morally impure citizens were quarantined, but it also extends to Ireland's queer diaspora (Luibheid 2002), those who travelled for reproductive healthcare before and including 2018, and people living with HIV but coerced into silence through deep-rooted serophobia (serophobia is a locution popular among people living with HIV (PLHIV) that refers to the irrational fear exhibited towards HIV and PLHIV) which serves to enforce a symbolic quarantine. Each of these figures are an iteration of Agamben's figure of *homo sacer*, and serve as integral to my methodological approach to this research.

Agamben locates the abjected figure of *homo sacer* in a 'state of exception' (1998: 18): they may be excluded from the state, yet are still confined in it. The physical manifestation of the 'state of exception' is the 'camp' (1998: 69-107), which Agamben describes as the *nomos* of the modern state. Using the Nazi concentration camps as the ultimate example of biological modernity, Agamben draws upon Arendt's observation that these camps were outside of the German legal system, but were within the state (or its occupied territories). Agamben's key argument is that while the Nazis' Final Solution was the outcome of biologising the modern nation state, it is not exceptional: it is, in fact, the natural endpoint of the inclusionary/exclusionary logic of this political model. Through a reading of Agamben, we can understand the 'architecture of containment' (Smith 2007) that was used to coercively confine bodies antithetical to biopolitical Catholicism, as part of a larger political project of modern statecraft, one that is still in operation today. While physical spaces of exclusionary confinement may still exist, this thesis contends that they have symbolic counterparts designed to regulate behaviour and maintain cultural values.

One contemporary iteration of the camp is the Irish system of Direct Provision. This is the term given to the Irish system of managing refugees and asylum seekers, whereby those seeking asylum receive basic food, medical care, and shelter, but are often segregated from other family members, and live in hostels or disused religious properties (providing a further

link to Ireland's previous system of incarceration) or other spaces lacking in privacy and safety. After almost two decades, migrants were allowed apply for work permits in 2017, though this process has been reported as being particularly challenging. As with much of life in Direct Provision, bureaucracy proves to be an impediment to accessing an income, as well as achieving asylum itself: the process can take years, during which time migrants live in precarious conditions, policed by a private security firm (Luibheid 2018). This is just one further incidence of biopolitical control in contemporary Ireland, and one that merits greater attention than can be given here.

The Irish themselves have been the subject of racialized othering: colonial descriptions of the Irish, preceding the modern nation state, emphasise the 'savage bestiality' of the population. Moryson's description, from 1617, sketches an image of the native Irish, who live 'in the remote parts where the English Lawes and manners are unknowne', as living unclothed 'onely having their privy parts covered with a ragge of linen' (Jones and Stallybrass 1992: 166). The account also contained a description of an illicit pregnancy: 'after her lewd exercise, when she hath filled her vessel, under it she can hide both her burden and her blame'. This early account anticipates centuries of colonial representations of the Irish, their perceived inability to control their bodies, as well as their incapacity for self-rule. The same logic was applied by the 'scientific' discourses on race in the nineteenth century, as well as the same focus on exoticised, degenerate bodies.

While skin colour was often an easy marker of this 'otherness', it was not the only physical characteristic of savagery. Haddon and Browne's study of Aran Islanders (1893) utilised craniometers (to measure skulls), a camera, and consulted an 'index of nigrescence' to determine the savagery of the Irish. As Thomas Carlyle (Dugger: 2006) had observed the year before, in 1892, the 'Celt of Connemara' is 'white and not black; but it is not the colour of his skin that determines the savagery of a man'. Here, 'whiteness' is constructed in opposition to

‘blackness’, but these categories were not based solely on skin pigmentation, but on civilised respectability, morality, and work ethic. For Carlyle, the Irish were lacking in these traits and in need of a ‘beneficent hand [that] will chain him into wholesome slavery’. Without a colonial master to enforce control over them, the Irish would be subject to ‘nature herself, intent to have her work tilled, has no resource but to exterminate him as she has done the wolves and various other obstinately free creatures before now’. This depiction anticipates Agamben’s description of ‘bare life’ – a biological fact shared by humans and other mammals – but undeserving of any political subjectivity and legal protections. The bestiality of the Irish was also the focus of political satirists in the nineteenth century, with cartoonists frequently portraying the Irish as simian (see Foster 1993). Professor and social reformer, Charles Kingsley (1877) recorded the sight of ‘human chimpanzees’, and wrote that ‘to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours’. Kingsley refused to believe that these ‘chimpanzees’ were ‘our fault’, but rather ‘that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were’. Bearing what Kipling described as the ‘White Man’s Burden’, Kingsley’s account demonstrates the paternalistic attitudes of the British towards the Irish, and confidence that colonialism was producing an improvement in the quality of both the imperial subjects and their material conditions.

The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, and its role in relation to the production of respectable bodies, and by extension, citizens, has been explored by George Mosse (1985). The belief in a biological basis of categories like gender, sexuality, or race is fundamental to ideologies of nation states (as theorists of the biopolitical such as Foucault and Agamben argue). The essentialising power of these classifications, alongside the religious revivals of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, shared the colonial emphasis on self-control and social respectability that Mosse identifies as being the hallmark of a middle

class European sensibility. Mosse posits that ‘through respectability, they [the middle class] sought to maintain their status and self-respect against both the lower classes and the aristocracy. They perceived their way of life, based as it was upon frugality, devotion to duty, and restraint of the passions, as superior to that of the “lazy” lower classes and the profligate aristocracy’ (1985: 5). Mosse’s analysis resonates with Foucault’s reasoning that the nineteenth century was not a period of repression in relation to sexuality, but that it was during this time that the productive power of sexuality was being realised.

Alongside this realisation was the recognition of sexuality’s danger to the emerging industrial nations of Europe. The bodies of national subjects became freighted with anxieties about the social order: while desire was integral to industrial capitalism, Lacquer notes that ‘there was no clear conceptual boundary between its sexual and economic manifestation’ (1992: 186). Homosexuals, prostitutes, and masturbators – all three represented unproductive sexualities - were seen as antithetical to the health of the nation, as the image of the ‘sick’ body assumed prominence in the symbolic imagination. The autonomy and vitality of bodies had to be harnessed for social good, and as a result were subject to regulation and discipline (Douglas: 1966).

The gendering of this process of bodily control cannot be understated. Gerardine Meaney (1991) invokes Nandy (1983), to argue that Irish nationalism served to mimic colonial attitudes towards female sexuality, and that its power had to be harnessed in service of the emergent nation. Irish nationalism displayed an affinity for an ‘authentic’ cultural tradition, turning to mythology for a nation-building toolkit (Castle 2001). Out of this heritage emerged a ‘motherland’: literary and cultural representations took the form of several women: Cathleen ni Houlihan, Roisin Dubh, the *Sean Bhean Bhocht* (the poor old woman). The first and last of those are explicitly maternal figures, and these figures – as well as the nation itself – are frequently referred to as Mother Ireland. Alongside these feminised national tropes, the

Catholicism that consolidated its power in the nineteenth century – in tandem with the rising middle class - also shaped Irish nationalism, and the form of governmentality that would emerge in the 1920s following independence. The Mariolatry that has been synonymous with Irish Catholicism leant itself to the iconography of Irish nationalist politics in a form that endured throughout the twentieth century and beyond (Inglis 1998). The currency of Marian-maternal imagery can be seen through the complex, ironising iconicity of Panti Bliss (discussed in Chapter Four).

As Turina (2013) has demonstrated, the Catholic Church's teachings on family, sexuality, and human life are explicitly biopolitical: Vatican encyclicals have a function outside the realm of theology, producing lives with a distinctive Catholic identity and morality. My research intervenes at this point, illustrating how Catholic teachings were operationalised in the service of the biopolitical creation of Irish citizens, as distinct from the Protestantism of their colonial overlords. This produced an alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and the emergent middle class, which resulted in an emphasis on 'respectability' in order to maintain social and symbol control in a nation that was striving towards statehood (Inglis: 247-8). Once independence from Britain was achieved in 1922, a concatenation of laws paved the way for the 1937 constitution, which enshrined Catholic moral teachings into law. Contraception, abortion, and divorce were illegal: marriage meant that women had to give up their careers in the public service in order to inhabit their constitutionally protected role as homemaker. Catholic morality structured both private life and public policy. Within Catholic teaching, sex before marriage was considered a mortal sin, and in post-independence Ireland, these 'fallen women' disappeared from society, while those men responsible escaped such censure. The network of institutions created in the nineteenth century to 'save' that icon of excessive, non-productive sexuality, the prostitute, were turned into asylums to detain unmarried mothers in secret, where babies could be born and subsequently adopted (Finnegan

2001). Among these spaces of confinement were the Magdalene Laundries, where unmarried mothers were forced to engage in unpaid labour, which was figured in Catholic thought as a process of ‘washing their sin away’ (Smith: 2007).

The Magdalenes fit Agamben’s description of bare life, having been incarcerated despite having done nothing illegal and facing no due process. With no clear release date, women were confined indefinitely, with many dying in these institutions. The children of these women were also considered to be bare life, by those religious orders running the institutions. According to Martin Sixsmith (2009), the Church considered ‘the thousands of souls born into its care to be the church’s own property...sold...to the highest bidder’. Through these adoptions, the children were removed from their natal mother’s perilous influence in a process that was ‘sanctioned by the Archbishop of Dublin and administered by the department of External Affairs’, with adoptees being given exclusively to practising Catholics who would raise the child in the faith (Inglis 1998:230). As Mike Milotte (1998) has documented, consanguinity was trumped by a profit motive, as religious orders benefitted financially from these exchanges, which also served to transform a child from bare life to a Catholic subject. With the Magdalene women and their babies, we can witness the interconnected processes of concealment and movement necessary to maintain a façade of respectability in twentieth century Ireland.

While the influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland has waned significantly in the intervening decades, its biopolitical legacy is evidenced through its continued patronage and ownership of Irish schools and hospitals. This continued influence was attributed to the state’s agreement to an indemnity deal in 2002, which protected the Catholic Church from legal claims on the condition that they pay 128 million euro in cash and property, though no detailed analysis was carried out by government departments, and the Ryan Report (2009) estimated costs at that point to have exceeded one billion euro. Controversies around statutory

commissions, reports, and redress schemes have dogged successive governments, prolonging the sense of national trauma and tragedy.

Furthermore, the continued influence of the Catholic Church in the state's national infrastructure has produced what Fiona Smyth described as 'cultural Catholicism' (1998). Though two decades have since passed, the term still has currency in contemporary Ireland, having passed into the vernacular. It is also particularly fitting that it was used in relation to the 'cultural constraints' that impeded the delivery of an adequate response to HIV/AIDS. Smyth found that, despite the shifting nature of Catholic influence in Ireland, individual attitudes towards sex, and by extension, sexual health were informed by a Catholic morality that condoned one form of sex (marital) and rendered other, transgressive sexualities invisible in order to preserve the nation's social and symbolic purity.

This impulse to render invisible the people who trouble the implicit behavioural and political codes of the community is not relegated to my interrogation of Ireland's shameful history of laundries and homes, but emerged as a defining feature of the Irish gay community's attempts to police itself in anticipation of the social embrace of same-sex marriage. The issue of same-sex marriage is one debated within the gay community – as I detail in this thesis – but one that was overwhelmingly supported by the gay community in Ireland, as a signifier of increased 'equality', but also as a reaction against the state's exclusionary attitude towards sexual minorities. The singular focus on marriage politics by gay political lobbying organisations in Dublin occurred contemporaneously with escalating incidences of HIV: in 2015, the year in which Ireland voted to legalise same sex marriage to international acclaim, a record-breaking 485 people were diagnosed HIV positive (approximately half of these were men who have sex with men) into a culture where secrecy around HIV is the norm (HSPC: 2016). This leads to the question of why HIV has not been politicised by the non-governmental organisations lobbying for gay rights and recognition: HIV involves talking about sex, which

is considered shameful, and antithetical to the politics of respectability that has sought to desexualise the gay community in order to distance it from the negative stereotypy - around recklessness and promiscuity – that shaped public (mis)understanding of gay men.

While contemporary Ireland’s vote for ‘marriage equality’ can be seen as a turn away from the country’s theocratic past, the vote can also be interpreted as a redoubling of the exclusionary categories produced by the institution of marriage itself. Just as the idealised marital family enshrined in the Irish constitution of 1937 led to ‘others’ outside of the ‘charmed circle’ (Rubin 1984) of respectable sexuality and kinship, and thus ostracised from Irish society, the advent of ‘gay marriage’ has resulted in shifts towards respectability in both gay politics and sociality. This is an example of what Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) has termed ‘the cunning of recognition’: in order to gain rights and recognition, queers render themselves ‘legible’ to be seen by the state. Once depicted as sexually liberated – even recklessly promiscuous – gay men in Ireland (as elsewhere) have become ideal consumer-citizens: avatars of a new, inclusive neoliberal society (Cronin 2004). Over a decade, the gay community has policed itself in order to distance itself from these homophobic stereotypes in pursuit of social and political acceptance. Increased cultural and political acceptance for gays, alongside the development of antiretroviral treatments for HIV since the 1990s, have meant that the gay community – at least in the public imaginary – have become virtually desexualised. The prolonged spike in HIV infections in Dublin among gay men belies this assumption, though the biomedical advancements that make HIV manageable, and the coercive silence elicited by the gossip and social shunning within the gay community, has served to lull the ‘general population’ into believing that HIV/AIDS is no longer a reality to those of us living outside of sub-Saharan Africa.

This movement towards self-regulation in the service of social acceptance has led to representations of GLBT people as monogamous, committed, desexualised, and “just like”

heterosexuals: this phenomenon has been recognised by scholars as ‘respectability politics’ (Higginbotham 1993; D’Emilio 1983). The politics of respectability refers to attempts, by socially marginalized groups, to police the behaviour of their own members and show their social and political values as being compatible with majoritarian values, rather than challenging the mainstream for what they see as its failure to accept difference. This mimicry of heterosexuality’s normative status has been critiqued for its capacity to create a ‘secondary marginalisation’ (Cohen 1999) of group members who experience multiple forms of disadvantage and oppression (for example, people living with HIV, or in non-monogamous relationships). Writing in relation to HIV/AIDS, activism, and representation, Deborah Gould has written that the ‘politics of respectability is almost always deeply ambivalent: concerned above all with social acceptance, it entails efforts of some members of a marginalised group both to disprove dominant stereotypes about the group and to regulate and “improve” the behaviour of its members in line with socially approved norms’ (2009:89). Just as Higginbotham (1993) noted the embrace of ‘Victorian sexual morals’ in order to disavow negative stereotypes about the African American community, D’Emilio (1983) labelled early attempts by the gay community in the mid-twentieth century to regulate their personal behaviour in order to improve their personal image as a ‘retreat to respectability’.

The ambivalence that Gould describes reflects that which is at stake: for example, the recognition and benefits that marriage affords represent the rights which Gayatri Spivak (quoted in Brown 2009:53) has described as that which ‘we cannot not want’. In Ireland, where the criminalisation of homosexuality is within living memory for many, as “queer bashing”, and the abject mishandling of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, the social embrace witnessed in recent years affords a protection – *bios* – that they had been denied for so long. While contested within the gay community, same-sex marriage –described by Tom Boellstorff (2007: 227-228) as a ‘civilising mission’, and by Lisa Duggan (2003) as a form of

‘homonormativity’ where sexual difference is rendered invisible – transcends simple ‘for’ or ‘against’ arguments (Warner 1999). However, the single-minded nature of the ‘marriage movement’ in Ireland, as well as its market research driven approach that emphasised abstract words like ‘equality’ and ‘marriage’ over identifiably GLBT figures (Healy et al 2015: 43-45), led to an invisibilisation of the reality of gay experience: which, for thousands of gay men in Ireland in recent years, includes testing positive for HIV.

Amid this serophobic attitude among the gay community, and Ireland more broadly, it was a HIV positive drag queen named Panti Bliss who became an outspoken advocate for gay rights and the marriage movement, but who has since been deployed by the Irish Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs to speak on issues relating to Ireland’s advances in the area of GLBT rights. In this sense, Panti Bliss functions as an agent of the Irish government’s ‘homonationalist’ agenda (Puar 2007), whereby Ireland’s international reputation is enhanced as a result of its favourable advancements in the area of gay rights (often despite other areas of perceived failings in relation to refugees in Direct Provision, for example). That this ‘giant cartoon woman’ (O’Neill 2014) has come to be taken seriously at home and abroad is broadly seen as a positive thing, having emerged from a cultural climate where sexual or gender non-conformity was censured. However, Panti Bliss is also a useful analytic for examining the fault lines running through gay politics in contemporary Ireland, especially in relation to HIV. The performative utterances of this drag queen draw into sharp relief questions around the representational politics of HIV, but also of gay identity broadly writ.

The methodological structure of this thesis is a blend of both the conceptual and the chronological. Through an excavation of the current historical moment in Irish culture, this thesis traces a recurrent pattern of social inclusion and exclusion predicated on sexual

behaviour. Specifically, the thesis first interrogates the figure of the ‘unmarried mother’ of the twentieth century, and how the Irish state exerted bipolitical control over life, through an interconnected system of institutions that governed not only health, but education and law, to produce idealised citizens that embodied Catholic social teaching. This thesis then shifts focus to the contemporary figure of the HIV positive gay man in Ireland, who, at a time when the state is extending the social embrace towards the GLBT community, faces stigmatisation and social shunning because of his serostatus. Much like the figure of the ‘unmarried mother’ of the previous century, the HIV positive gay man can be read as defying the codes of sexual respectability in a cultural context where the social acceptance of gay men has been built upon a rejection of negative stereotypy of gay men as licentious, in favour of a political agenda that has successfully pursued rights and recognition, culminating in same-sex marriage.

Chapter One positions my research within a rich history of anthropological research in Ireland, marked by exoticism and misrepresentation, with a strong focus on sexuality and kinship. From Victorian expeditions, influenced by theories of ‘race science’, through Arensberg and Kimball’s seminal study of County Clare, which produced the assumed typicality that the rural smallholder embodied, as well as the image of distinct rural villages that functioned as hermetically sealed social units, untouched by the outside world. This representation of homogeneity and cooperation was challenged in subsequent decades and ethnographies. John Messenger (1969) depicted another rural village in his study, ‘Inis Beag’, but instead of writing of an idyll he recorded a sexually ignorant and repressed society in decline. At a time of sexual liberation in Euro-American culture, Messenger’s portrait of ‘Inis Beag’ echoed Margaret Mead’s writings on Samoan adolescents, with his shocking accounts of sexual naïveté so out of step with neighbouring countries. Messenger’s research was followed by Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ (1979) intervention, which continued the focus on cultural decline and sexual repression, with an added emphasises on dysfunctional family

relations, repressive religious teachings, and emigration. Arising out of her discovery that the Irish admission rates to psychiatric institutions were above the international norm, Scheper-Hughes' psychological-anthropological approach served to maintain the pathological focus on Irish bodies that motivated initial 'scientific' expeditions during the colonial era.

Chapter Two serves to illustrate the interconnections between Ireland's unsettled – and unsettling – past and the modern socio-political climate. Continued revelations about the country's history of biopolitical control, and institutionalisation of persons deemed to have violated the cultural value of respectability, framed contemporary discussions around same-sex marriage and abortion access. This chapter considers the rise of cultural nationalism in the 19th century, and how these values around sexuality and respectability – forged in reaction to British colonial rule – were subsequently transfigured into legislation following the realisation of an Irish state in 1922, and eventually enshrined in the 1937 constitution. Crucially, this chapter examines how Catholic social teachings were operationalised by the Irish state in order to produce 'respectable' citizens, as well as an exclusionary category outside political subjectivity and legal protection, populated by figures such as the unmarried mother, and her child. Biopolitical theorists (Foucault 2003; Agamben 1998) have stated that such inclusionary and exclusionary models of citizenship are integral to the modern nation state. While Ireland's history of institutionalisation is popularly regarded as belonging to a tragic, traumatic past, I contend that the same mechanism of respectable citizenship is still in operation today, as I argue in subsequent chapters. Following Agamben's use of the classical figure of *Homo Sacer* to embody this inclusionary/exclusionary dyad, I interrogate a series of 'figures' that make sensible a series of cultural moments, from the 'unmarried mother' of the twentieth century, to the HIV positive man in contemporary Dublin. This ethnographic and interpretive strategy serves to track a structure of discourse over the course of a century, not as a social history, but

as an anthropological investigation into the production of ‘personifications’ of respectable, or unrespectable, sexuality.

In Chapter Three, I investigate the institution of marriage in producing respectable citizens in contemporary Ireland. Paradoxically, the institution of marriage, and the heterosexual family unit that it connoted, was central to the abjection of those who were deemed sexually transgressive in the twentieth century. While this occluded history is still being recovered, the same institution is being revived through its extension to same-sex couples, and thus has come to symbolise ‘modern’ Ireland (contra Ireland of the Magdalene Laundries, reformatory schools, and systemic clerical abuse). This chapter considers the ambivalent role of marriage in the gay community: the benefits and advantages that it offers, the tangible sense of belonging to a national community that had once rejected you, as well as the in-group policing of members’ behaviour in order to effect respectability and court approval from heterosexual citizens.

Following on from this campaign, Chapter Four will focus on the equally ambivalent figure of Panti Bliss. Emerging from the subcultural world of drag performance, Panti Bliss is a transnational creation that has embodied a form of cultural mobility that reflects the social and cultural changes experienced by both the gay community and the Irish nation – both being collective groups that Panti Bliss has come to iconise internationally. While Panti Bliss has come to signify Ireland’s modernity and inclusive attitude towards GLBT citizens (Puar 2007), she also exemplifies the sanitisation and desexualisation of the gay community that was required to court to social embrace and respectability that same-sex marriage afforded certain types of gay citizens. Panti Bliss is also one of Ireland’s few publicly known HIV positive people: while Panti can function as a helpful voice for HIV related issues, for many HIV positive people, Panti is only listened to because she is coded as a performance and not as a

sexual subject recognisable on, say, a dating website or in a night club where HIV positive gay men most often face social marginalisation.

In Chapter Five, I will continue to consider the meaning of HIV in contemporary Ireland. Through the prism of HIV, one can see how ‘modern’ Irish sexuality is shaped by both ‘cultural Catholicism’ (Smyth 1998), i.e., those structural issues that inhibit education around sexual health, and lingering Catholic values around shame and respectability. While the anachronistic attitudes and beliefs around HIV in Ireland may seem to be the legacy of biopolitical Catholicism, this chapter will also serve to underscore the connections between the politics of respectability in the gay community – in pursuit of gay marriage - and the silence around the resurgent HIV epidemic in Ireland. This connection illustrates the shame still attached to sex in Irish culture: sex is antithetical to the politics of respectability practised by the same-sex marriage campaign, which strove to desexualise gay men in order to disavow the negative stereotypy that shaped public (mis)understandings of gay life. While the ‘marriage movement’ has been described as a metric of a state’s modernity and progressive liberal values (Puar 2007; Barker 2012), my research illuminates how this type of politics merely repeated the historical pattern that it purported to act as a historical and cultural break from. The silenced HIV positive gay man can thus be located on a continuum of unrespectable sexuality, alongside other icons of exclusion in Irish cultural history, such as the ‘unmarried mother’ of the twentieth century.

Methodology

This thesis analyses the contemporary moment in Irish culture by excavating the layers of history upon which it rests. Through the truly catholic ethnographic method, I engaged in a range of practices in order to illicit knowledge from my sources. Several informants – seasoned participants in doctoral research projects - told me that they were intrigued by my ethnographic

approach, having been interviewed by historians, sociologists, geographers, and assorted branches of the humanities and social sciences. Unlike previous encounters with researchers who brandished questionnaires, informants seemed to warm to the relaxed, conversational approach that ethnographic research allows. That isn't to say that ethical permission was not sought and granted, as it was, but my interviews were decidedly less formal than many informants had encountered before, many taking place in cafes and public houses.

While I met small groups from time to time, I found that semi-structured, conversational exchanges were the richest source of information. While I had no objections to my recording interviews, on a number of occasions I could tell that the presence of my recording device was causing interviewees to clam up and become self-conscious, so I switched it off and continued with my usual practice of longhand notetaking. By the end of my research period, I had numerous yellow legal pads full of partially discernible scrawl (my personal reflexive journals were kept in the same crabbed handwriting). These pages highlighted and detailed some of the most relevant parts of often rambling, unfocused exchanges, that enabled connections with theories that I was developing about the research. While these discussions were invaluable, with each conversation invariably leading to connections with new research participants, face-to-face conversations were just one strand of my ethnographic method.

In 1980, Clifford Geertz published his highly influential essay 'Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought', recording that 'there has been an enormous amount of genre mixing in intellectual life in recent years' (19). The anthropologist posited that this interdisciplinary turn had 'become the natural condition of things', thus 'leading to significant realignments in scholarly affinities – who borrows what from whom' (8). Geertz touched upon several examples of such genre-mixers, particularly in the fields of literature – citing Beckett, Barthelme, and Borges – and the humanities and social sciences, name-checking Levi-Strauss and Clavell, as well as a litany of interpretive 'approaches' that social scientists had adopted

up to that point (21). Geertz also recognised the cognitive changes that were emerging at the time, stating that ‘something is happening to the way we think about the way we think’ (20). While almost four decades have elapsed since Geertz wrote his prescient article, it anticipates the sensibility that has shaped this thesis. My own methodology reflects my training not only in anthropology, but also in literary and textual studies. Alongside participant observation, this research was carried out in a series of archives – both official and unofficial- as well as an analysis of a variety of media.

My utilisation of Foucault and Agamben here serves to excavate a sense of sexual shame within Irish culture, tracing an archaeology of abjected figuration that preceded the establishment of the state, from the ‘unmarried mother’ of the twentieth century, to the HIV positive man of the twenty-first. I accomplish this through an engagement with a series of archives, both public and private.

In *The Order of Things* (1966) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault articulates the task of philosophical archaeology; the process by which one can uncover the history of systems of thought much like a layer of earth. Foucault calls to the reader’s attention what he calls the *episteme*: a distinctive cultural and intellectual order that shapes the production of ideas and behaviour. By interrogating these periods, one is able to denaturalise aspects of human experience – including human subjectivity itself – and recognise the contingency of categories such as sexuality and madness, that are often taken as ahistorical. This perspective was particularly useful when thinking about how I can historicise and de-essentialise a topic like sex, so often deployed as ‘natural’ in order to invoke the moral authority that a word like ‘nature’ possesses. I wanted to illustrate how the contemporary politics of Irish sexuality came to be, through a detailed analysis of the past.

To access these layers of recent cultural history, I consulted a series of archives. To grasp how clerical control gripped the Irish population, I went to the Central Catholic Library of Ireland. I consulted a collection of pamphlets on personal morality – many were distributed by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland – designed to educate the masses on matters of character and behaviour. These examples of popular literature provided a useful counterpoint to works of theology and Catholic social theory collected in volumes such as the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. These articles drew upon discourses of medicine, criminality, and public health in discussing the figure of the ‘unmarried mother’, the embodiment of the violated cultural norm of respectability in twentieth century Ireland. She was, in Agamben’s terms, *homo sacer*, or the expendable citizen who represented the constitute ‘other’ in Irish society, allowed to languish, even die, in institutions that were hidden in plain sight.

The contemporary form of this objected, ‘unrespectable’ figure is that of the HIV positive man in Irish society today. While he is not institutionalised in concrete buildings like the ‘unmarried mother’ of the previous century, his serostatus acts as an object lesson for the gay community: his ‘promiscuity’ reminds the gay community of the shameful stereotypy that marriage politics was designed to rebuke, to refute preconceptions of recklessness and irresponsibility. Orchestrated silence and social shunning serve to isolate HIV positive gay men, but contribute to misinformation and stigma, thus having an impact on HIV testing and awareness of biomedical advancement. As with the figure of the ‘unmarried mother’, I traced the origins of the HIV positive man in contemporary Dublin through the archives: The Irish Queer Archive, a treasure trove of community history that has been institutionalised in the National Museum of Ireland, and the private archives of HIV Ireland. As well as archival research, I have spent countless hours interviewing people involved in activism and non-governmental work around HIV in Ireland, as well as attending focus groups, seminars, and conferences.

The symbolic institution that still confers respectability upon Irish citizens is marriage. The recognition of the state, and wider society, is still fundamental to Irish cultural understandings of sexuality and morality. As a result, I closely observed not only the campaign for same-sex marriage that was coeval with the start of this research, but the evolution of the institution of marriage in Ireland across centuries. As well as archival work, and interviews, I also critically analyse the affordances of ‘new media’ in the field of activism, and the creation of ‘publics’.

Contribution

This thesis is a timely contribution to the literature on queer anthropology in Europe, an area which has been unfairly overlooked up to this point (Boyce et al 2017). While institutionalised in the United States, the sub-discipline continues to be marginal within the European academy. In relation to the anthropology of Ireland, a country long framed as ‘peripheral’ by visiting anthropologists, this research refigures the nation’s standing in the anthropological imagination, showing Dublin as a globally connected city, as well as at the forefront of international movements around rights and recognition for sexual and gender minorities. Unlike controversial ethnographic depictions of Ireland in the previous century, in which Ireland was held to be exceptional (particularly in relation to the United States) in regard to issues of sexuality, kinship, and society, this work utilises a novel synthesis biopolitical and queer theories to locate Ireland within transnational discourses around rights and recognition for minoritarian communities, as well as engaging with the complex specificities of Ireland’s own colonial and postcolonial experiences of bodily control. Within Irish culture, this is an overdue critical account of a social movement that has come to uncritically acclaimed as an embrace of modern, liberal values and a rejection of theocratic control of Irish sexualities.

However, this research complicates such a narrative, and serves to trace the continuing pattern of inclusion and exclusion based on sexual practices in Irish culture.

Differences in Analytic Styles between Chapters

The following chapters involve shifting analytical registers throughout. In the first chapter, I will conduct a literature review of some of the more influential ethnographic investigations of Irish culture.

In chapter two, I will analyse the emergence of the Irish state, and the biopolitical operationalisation of Catholic social and moral teaching, in the twentieth century, and how the legacy of that period continues to mould contemporary social thought and political action. Much of the material upon which the chapter is based comes from my archival research in the Central Catholic Library in Dublin, as well as a range of historiography and contemporary reportage. As with other chapters, this interpretation and observation is interlaced with the voices of contemporary informants, whose voices spoke to my findings from the archives.

Chapter three is comprised of a substantial review of legal literature and reportage on the institution of marriage since the foundation of the Irish state in 1922. Many of the events covered in this chapter relate specifically to the decade before the same sex marriage referendum in 2015, in order to contextualise the pained, divisive nature of the politics relationship recognition, as well as the grassroots movement to achieve it. The chapter was shaped by insights from informants well as an analysis of popular, mediatised materials from groups in support of a ‘Yes’ vote.

Chapter four centres on the figure of Panti Bliss, drawing upon a critical analysis of the biographical film *The Queen of Ireland* (2015), as well as recordings that chart of the cultural evolution not only of the character in question, but of the gay community in Ireland.

This critical interrogation draws upon contemporary critical discourses of sexuality, nationalism, and performance, as well as insights from informants within the gay community in Dublin.

The final chapter retains a partial focus on *Panti Bliss*, as it considers the issue of HIV in Irish culture. Drawing upon interviews with informants, as well as a prolonged engagement with the archives of HIV Ireland and the Irish Queer Archive.

Chapter 1: Ireland, Sex, and the Anthropologist

Since first coming to the attention of anthropologists in the nineteenth century, Ireland, and the Irish population, have been constructed as sexually *other*. To appreciate this thesis' intervention into the anthropology of Irish sexual life, one must trace a genealogy of such investigations. Through the ethnographic vignette, anthropologists have not solely recorded details of reproduction and kinship in predominantly isolated, rural communities, but such accounts have contributed to narratives of Irish sexual exceptionalism. While such attitudes have been revised and reconsidered in recent decades, Ireland has receded into a 'zone of cultural invisibility' (Rosaldo 1988:78). While earlier anthropological accounts have been bracketed as shameful, even unethical (Maguire 2013), Ireland has been quick to promote its exceptionalism in recent years, having been at the vanguard of granting its queer citizens relationship recognition and citizenship rights. While Bowyer (2010) has charted those initial attitudinal shifts following the social and economic changes of the 1990s, my own research aims to situate itself within a canon of research on Ireland and sexuality and its cognates by taking into account recent cultural and legislative shifts that occurred during my fieldwork.

Carles Salazar has acknowledged the consensus among ethnographers and social scientists and historians regarding attitudes to a strict, proscriptive code of sexual ethics among the Irish since such investigations commenced during the Victorian era. 'An astonishingly low level of illegitimacy, coupled with a no less astonishingly low marriage rate' wrote Salazar, 'is commonly seen as documentary proof of the widespread acceptance of a sexually inhibitive culture that lasted at least up to the mid twentieth century' (2008: 136). In the words of demographer, Brendan M. Walsh: 'so prevalent was the lack of enthusiasm for marriage and sexual activity in general that Ireland at mid-century may well provide an example of what

Malthus called ‘a decay of the passion between the sexes’, a phenomenon that he thought was rare in view of the evidence that ‘this natural propensity exists in undiminished vigour’ throughout the world’ (1985: 132). Of course, in the intervening decades, this fiction has been shattered as revelations of abuse in Magdalene Laundries (Smith 2007), the illegal transnational adoption of babies born to illegitimate mothers (Milotte 1998), and the ongoing Tuam Babies case, illustrate that the ‘phenomenon’ that Walsh described was, in fact, a façade which masked the reality of a biopolitical regime that regulated the intimate behaviour of its citizens.

The colonial era anthropologists that first recognised the Irish as a group – indeed, a race - worthy of study were informed by the Victorian ethic of investigation, science, and objectivity. These early expeditions to the island sought to crystallise British stereotypes about the Irish that had circulated throughout the print media since the eighteenth century (see Curtis 1968; Moore 2011; and Luibheid 2013). The depiction of Ireland as a dancing monkey in the satirical nineteenth century magazine *Punch* is iconic of the colonial view of the Irish as atavistic and servile, Foster (1993) however, has argued for a more nuanced approach to Britain’s attitudes towards its neighbour through these caricatures. Such cartoons were coeval with the emergence of colonial conceptions of ‘race’. The term ‘race’ requires closer attention here, as unlike contemporary understandings, nineteenth century understandings of ‘race’ included national, ethnic, and religious identity, rather than referring to an ‘essential’, inherent biological factor. For example, Noel Ignatiev (1995: 130) describes the racial category ‘White’ as ‘not a physical description, rather a term of a social relation’. Colonial thought saw race as mutable; the subaltern could be saved through the intervention. DeNie (2004) describes race as a ‘metalanguage in Anglo-Saxon discourse’ in the nineteenth century (2004: 103), and argues that the British considered that the Irish had the potential to be ‘Anglicised’ (a view also expressed by Ignatiev) (2004: 179). This Benthamite impulse to ‘civilise’ can also be seen with

the emergence of systems of asylums, a police force, and the passage of national education legislation during that period.

The ethnographic research expedition of A. C. Haddon and C. R. Browne is widely regarded as the birth of scientific anthropological interest in Ireland. Haddon, a zoologist at the Royal College of Science in Dublin, was a founder of the Anthropometric Laboratory in Dublin, explicitly modelled on that of Francis Galton's in London, and inspired by Galton's eugenicist theories, set about "understanding the racial characteristics of the Irish people" (Ashley 2001:7). Between Haddon's two famous Torres Strait trips, he travelled with Browne, a medical doctor, to Inis Mór, the largest of the Aran Islands, to take the physical measurements of the islanders. Utilising the tools of scientific anthropology, the craniometer and the camera, Haddon and Browne recorded the 'indices of nigrescence' (Ashley 2001: 8) to chart the islanders' place in an evolutionary chain of civilizations. This testing, as well as the lives of islanders, was photographed and disseminated, as modern technology served to capture and crystallise a way of life that came to be regarded as representative of an unchanging, pre-modern nation, one that would firmly hold the anthropological gaze in the coming century. This anthropological project was not part of a wider comparative Europeanist enterprise, but rather, a singularly imperial, Protestant inquiry into the primitive, Catholic Gael. While sympathetic in tone, the cultural nationalism of the Cultural Revival (another contemporaneous Victorian, and Anglo-Irish Protestant led movement) sought those same characteristics in their search for self-definition. This attitude can be traced through the writings of the Revival playwright J. M. Synge, who characterized the Aran islanders as "these strange men with receding foreheads, high cheek-bones and ungovernable eyes" (in Ashley 2001:6).

As the use of putatively scientific metrics for studying culture were abandoned in favour of a methodological approach which reflected Boasian and Functionalist influence, the first recognisably modern ethnographic account of the 'ethnic' Irish was undertaken - like Haddon

and Browne's research - on Ireland's rural western seaboard, in the 1930s by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball. Their resulting monographs, *The Irish Countrymen* (1937) and *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940), were an attempt to 'marry' British and American anthropological traditions in one comprehensive study of a rural community, with a particular focus on kinship and demographics (Wilson and Donnan 2006 :1). Unlike previous scientific accounts which sought to validate Irish difference on a biological basis, Arensberg described their undertaking as a voyage to both the 'Old World and high civilization' (1988: 10), framing post-independence Ireland as a somehow mythical place, protected from the debasing effects of modernity, or the bitterly divisive civil war of the previous decade. While Arensberg stressed the positive attributes of the Irish, speaking of them as a 'very literate people' (1988: 21), and he calls their monograph one of 'modern' Ireland (1988: 22), there is a recurrent idealisation of the Irish that is striking in its partiality and simplicity. Arensberg describes the nation through a series of romanticised stereotypes, heavily influenced by the cultural nationalism of the Gaelic Revival: 'lands of the spirit', the land of the Celtic twilight; the 'gay, full-blooded' land of the stage Irish; the 'grimmer' land of 'hard realities', this land being the most historical and closest to Arensberg and Kimball's own field-site; and the land of 'Saints and Scholars' (1988: 3 -32). The problematic nature of Arensberg and Kimball's depiction of Ireland continues with their field-site in rural Clare becoming a synecdochical representation of the Irish Free State, and its agricultural inhabitants typical of the Irish population. Their insights into how the structural kinship system in rural Ireland undergirded the community was arguably the most important anthropological legacy, with Wilson and Donnan (2006: 27) stating that later anthropologists came to Ireland with the intention of 'prov[ing] or disprov[ing] the basic tenets' of Arensberg and Kimball's study. Because of Arensberg and Kimball's research, reproductive and family politics became seen as central to understanding the 'essence' of the Irish character and social organisation. As Taylor notes (1996:217), their fieldwork was

particularly useful for generating debate on the issue of the ‘stem family’ in kinship, but did not produce controversy over issues of representation as other ethnographic works did in later decades. Taylor speculates that this is in part due to the idealised figure of the agrarian smallholder, the hardworking, respectable farmer who had been so successfully attracted by the policies of Eamon De Valera’s Fianna Fail party, which had swept to power in 1932 (De Valera’s own constituency was East Clare, the site of Arensberg and Kimball’s fieldwork).

Theoretically and analytically, Arensberg and Kimball’s ethnographic practice is informed by a Malinowskian emphasis on exchange in their rural, seaboard village field-site of Luogh. The key theoretical concept put forward by Arensberg and Kimball was that of ‘familism’, which indexed the ways in which the economic motivations of post-Famine rural life served to structure normative cultural attitudes around ageing, sociality, and interfamilial relations, as well as gender relations within the community, matchmaking, and marriage. Familism was driven by a logic of accumulation. Under this model, farmers did not subdivide their farm plots among their children, but rather bequeathed their land to one son, and dowered a daughter. Other children were expected to learn a trade, join the clergy, or emigrate. As a result, a son could not inherit the family farm until his parents retired, and marriages in middle age were not uncommon, nor were age-gap marriages. The system was driven by a set of motivations which ultimately aimed to keep the farm in the family name. The system depended upon emigration; while families were bound by not only economic bonds, but also emotional connection, migration allowed family members to survive ‘without destroying the family structure or the rural culture’ (1968:150). While affective relationship to place and kin sometimes overrode the desire for economic independence, for the system to be successful, emigration must be the norm for dispossessed siblings. Since the decimation of the population following the famines of the 1840s-50s, as well as agrarian instability and violence in subsequent decades, emigration became recognised as unidirectional, a form of social suicide

which gave rise to the symbolic practice known as the 'American Wake', which mourned the permanent loss of a family and community member.

Amid this loss, the economic success of small farms required a sociological explanation over a material one. The perception of rural Ireland became one of decline, rather than successful stability. The continuation of the family farm was dependent on the phenomenon that ultimately abjected members of that family: it provided decades of free labour. Throughout Arensberg and Kimball's writing, one can see the gendered nature of tasks in the home and in farm labour. Children are trained in these duties so that when they come of age, they can offer their spouses 'not only the loving consideration of a husband or wife but the proper skills in farm economy' (1968: 47). This highlights the ways in which issues of individuality (such as choosing a spouse) are mediated through a web of interpersonal obligations. A father is socially obligated to provide sufficiently for his wife and children, who are 'entitled to a just anger' if he fails in his duties. The logic of familism produced what was in effect a structural adolescence in rural Ireland, as sons were 'subordinate' to their fathers, unable to exert control over the economic direction of the farm, despite their being integral to the farm's survival through their supply of free labour: 'You can be a boy here forever as long as the old fellow is still alive' (1968: 52-55). Amid the Oedipal psychodrama that Arensberg and Kimball document, the mother emerges as a figure of tenderness, albeit one who can also dispense judgement and issue orders (1968: 56-7, 67). Though sons are socialised to express 'masculine scorn' for 'feminine interests and pursuits', they look to their mother as a source of 'protection' from a father's censure, as the mother rises to her 'diplomatic, conciliatory role' to 'call upon the strongest ties between herself and her sons to restore rifts in parental authority' (1968: 68). The reader is left in no doubt as to the enduring affective pull of a mother: 'When one goes home, it is to see one's mother'.

The ‘absolute coincidence of “social” and “economic” factors within single relationships’ were seen as integral to community life (1968: 60). The family farm functioned as a ‘corporate economy’, that relied upon cooperation from a network of extended family members, such as cousins, as well as friendly neighbours, particularly at times of intensive labour (such as the annual harvest) (1968 :63). These actors participate in a ‘give-and-take’ system which relies upon loyalty; the breaking of such bonds of loyalty to one’s kin was regarded as a ‘deadly crime’ (1968: 79). This loyalty extends to the provision of financial support from relatives who have emigrated (1968: 144). While only one son would inherit the farm, all other children would play in sustaining the farm – and by extension, the family name – despite being forced to leave the farm through the logic of the system. While high celibacy was a defining feature of rural life, from Arensberg and Kimball’s accounts, marital sex was marked by its extraordinary fecundity (1968:102). A marriage was socially certified with the signing of the deed to the land, though ultimately this could be revoked with the failure to produce offspring. With the signing of the deed, the new family of origin would occupy the homestead, and would be conferred with social and cultural respectability, which was defined through entry into marriage. Class was framed through marriage and procreation, as well as producing a sociocultural memory of institutionalisation and madness, spaces found throughout the country, be they Magdalen Laundries, borstals, or mental hospitals (which were usually local institutions; see Saris 1996).

Arensberg and Kimball describe a local who attempted to have his wife institutionalised in order to annul their union, on the basis that they were unable to procreate (1968:121-122). Her proposed hospitalisation was vehemently challenged by her family, as it would cause reputational damage to the family, as well as economic damage, as the woman’s bloodline would be considered tainted by prospective suitors. The woman’s family defended their own family, in addition to traducing her husband by arguing that he came from a long line of

criminals and madmen, in an enactment of social memory and the public narration of shameful lineage. As the system hinged upon a successful marriage, experts known as ‘matchmakers’ were selected to arrange a successful union. In the matchmaking process, certain figures in the community were called upon to be arbiters of respectability, as well as living archive of local cultural memory, in order to create a partnership that would be companionate, but also fecund. While Arensberg and Kimball were focused on issues of social structure, demonstrating the Durkheimian influence upon research, the study was not entirely focused upon human motivations; interpersonal distaste could derail a structurally sensible match. The strongest libidinal desire among the agrarian community in county Clare was directed at the land itself, its possession, and the reproduction of the family name and status through marital procreation; a sociocultural practice that was given ideological support from the Jansenist Catholicism that propagated a model of marriage for the sole purpose of marital procreation, and encouraged the denial of all other forms of bodily pleasure. This perceived ‘repression’ of personal desire out of religious obligation is a theme that would re-emerge in ethnographies of Ireland for decades. Reflecting on Arensberg and Kimball’s observations regarding Irish Catholicism, Taylor writes that the pair ‘have little to say on the subject, an omission that could only be intentional at a time when the institutional church was at the absolute apogee of its power of its political power as well as cultural authority’ (1995: 250). Gibbon and Curtin (1978: 446) posit that Arensberg and Kimball ‘paid little attention to religion’ but that ‘the significance attached...to the small farm’ should be interpreted ‘as not simply an empirical mistake but as a reflection of the contemporary ideological power of one aspect of Fianna Fail’s republicanism [namely its advocacy for agricultural smallholders] and its clerical endorsement’.

While a conservative Catholic ethos informs life in rural county Clare, particularly the prescriptions (and proscriptions) that delineate relations between the ‘complementary’ genders, producing ideas of respectable personhood and ‘propriety’ (1968: 195-196), Arensberg and

Kimball, in stark contrast to ethnographic accounts of the Irish that would follow, record that boys and girls ‘grow up in an atmosphere of constant reference to sex and breeding’. Anticipating Michael Herzfeld’s later theorisation of ‘cultural intimacy’ (1997), the easy ‘banter’ around issues of procreation serves to reinforce, rather than challenge, hegemonic behavioural norms (1968: 200). In the ‘imagination’ of rural dwellers, a person’s sexuality was inseparable from the larger cultural values around familism, which saw illicit sexuality as being motivated by a young man’s greed for a woman’s father’s land and money (1968: 203). Arensberg and Kimball’s account of dancehalls as loci of anxiety around female sexuality – as well as monitoring by local clergy – resonates with contemporaneous legislative proscriptions on such events, which enabled priests to become ever more embedded in the intimate lives of the young (1968: 207). The anthropologists note the reputational damage to young women who fall pregnant outside of marriage, which often results in their disappearance from public life in that community (1968:209). Just as the sexually active daughter posed a danger to the reputation and the material conditions of her family, Arensberg and Kimball note that adult children frequently elected to remain celibate to avoid such a risk, allowing the family name to continue, and reinforcing the communal importance of individual sexuality, and regulation of that sexuality. Ideally, a marriage would, through the involvement of a matchmaker, serve to fulfil both personal happiness and familial-cultural obligation, and a ‘natural wedding of desire and ambition’ (1968: 218).

Arensberg and Kimball documented a traditional, rural, yet self-sufficient community that survived and functioned through the familist system, as well as a wider system of kinship based upon obligation and counter-obligation. In the following two decades before the Messengers started their fieldwork, social scientific attitudes towards rural Ireland emphasised the decline of such communities amid slow, modernising changes. John C. Messenger’s work provided a much more cynical counterpoint to Arensberg and Kimball’s writing, particularly

in relation to issues of sexuality and community. Contemporaneous with the sexual revolution that was, putatively, occurring throughout the western world, Messenger (aided by his wife, Betty) travelled to Inis Oirr, the smallest of the Aran Islands. Following the romantic inclinations of the scientific anthropologists and Gaelic Revivalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Messenger's choice of field site represented a continuation of a preoccupation with purity on the part of ethnographers working in Ireland. Messenger's study focused on the sexual purity and insularity of the island community, and attributed this crippling repression to the influence of the Catholic Church, as well as the cultural memory of colonial dispossession. Messenger wrote that 'Inis Beag' [an unconvincing pseudonym, literally meaning 'Little Island'] was one of the 'most sexually naïve of the world's societies' (Wilson and Donnan 2006: 45). This prevailing attitude in Messenger's writing lead Donnan and Wilson to conclude that 'if Messenger were to be believed, the average Irish islander's knowledge of sex was so woeful and limited that it is difficult to understand how the country was populated at all ... by implication, much of the rest of Ireland's rural population ... were the most sexually ignorant and most puritan in the whole of Europe'. The Messengers' patronising tone is especially shocking when one reads accounts of the husband and wife imparting their 'sexual knowledge' to the islanders, to whom they referred as 'clients' in 'distress', which leaves the reader imaging Mr. and Mrs. Messenger as transnational sex therapists, describing themselves as 'counsellors' who had previously acted in a similar capacity 'among primitive Nigerians, and for similar reasons' (Messenger 1971: 13-14). By underscoring such comparisons with 'primitive' societies, Messenger illustrates a continuity between his own ethnographic mentality and that of Victorian scientific anthropology.

Following on from Arensberg and Kimball, and their forerunners, Messenger's interest in Inis Beag is a continuation of interest in parts of Ireland that are somehow 'less developed', not 'modern', in relation to the United States, or the United Kingdom, or even Dublin (all three

are figured as modern counterpoints to the arcadian island). Their ethnographic approach is comprehensible within a tradition of looking at communities, which are more or less bounded, as being inherently conservative, having adapted (biologically, ecologically, or socially) and continuing this tradition with little sense that they continually influence and reproduce their daily practices (see Messenger's earlier observations on 'primitive Nigerians'). The anthropologist, in these situations, represents a counter-figure, who is able to recognise the systematic nature of their way of life, representing what Margaret Mead (1953: 653) described as 'the disciplined use of the primitive society as a model' for examining folk communities in Europe. Messenger and other anthropologists are, consciously or subconsciously, in dialogue with the ideas that were put forth by Arensberg and Kimball, particularly in relation to sexuality, and its cognates. With Messenger, however, the sturdy countryman that forms the backbone of Arensberg and Kimball's writing is usurped by a maladjusted peasant, crippled by a combination of psychosexual difficulties, a culture and ecology in decline, oppressive clerical influence, an ever present social memory of colonial dispossession, and bitterness towards the national government that, paradoxically, is subsidising their lifestyle and enabling their continued occupation of the island. Inis Beag is drawn in a contradictory manner: having lower death and illiteracy rates than other folk communities, as well as slowly moving to a cash economy through the export of livestock and crops, Messenger notes that 'inbreeding' is common on the island, and that islanders lack electricity and running water (1971: 3). While the inhabitants of Inis Beag are fiercely critical of politicians and government schemes on the island, they also expect aid from the national government as a 'right' (1971: 6). Unlike Arensberg and Kimball, Messenger provides detail on the role of the Catholic Church in the day to day life of informants. Their contempt for political elites is only exceeded by their 'anticlerical' attitudes, which is a result of what islanders perceive as the excessive influence of clergy on secular life, such as education and social activities (1971: 7).

As identified by Arensberg and Kimball, Messenger records that land is the key status symbol of Inis Beag. However, the growing importance of formal education and emigration (particularly the prestige of having an influential relative, such as a priest or a nun, on the mainland or abroad) is being recognised by islanders (1971: 8). The local customs, such as storytelling and musical performances, are being affected by ‘acculturation’ as outside influences impact the lives of the islanders. There is a contradictory tone throughout the article, whereby the loss of certain indigenous elements of Inis Beag’s culture is lamented, yet elsewhere that same native culture is portrayed as regressive, and symbolic of a sense of repression among the community. There is a shift in tone from Arensberg and Kimball’s ‘scientific’ approach to examining how a community functions – even the conflict is portrayed as being for the health of the system – to Messenger’s use of those same rational, empirical techniques to illustrate the cracks in that society. While in the former, the individuality of the informants (particularly in relation to others) was subsumed by the familist system, in the latter account, the system was seen to be the root of all individual ills.

Echoing Arensberg and Kimball’s observations of close mother-son relationships, Messenger recorded that fathers and sons in Inis Beag had particularly hostile relationships, particularly in relation to land inheritance, which often backfired with sons opting to emigrate, resulting in abandoned homesteads (1971: 8-9). While Messenger’s thesis is that the ‘devout’ Catholicism of the islanders is at the root of psychosexual dysfunction, he also observes that their spiritual belief and practice is influenced by indigenous Irish pagan traditions, and while idiosyncratic, is felt by community to ‘embod[y] an ideal on the mainland, where the faith is thought to set an example for the world’ (1971: 9). Regardless of the genuine faith of islanders, Messenger notes that the outward display of ‘Christian morality... can be attributed to the... techniques of social control exercised by the clergy’ (1971: 10).

Unlike Arensberg and Kimball, who utilised academic and local political connections to become embedded in their fieldsites, Messenger notes the difficulty of getting ‘reliable data’ from the people of Inis Beag (1971: 11). Reflecting the intensely policed gender boundaries in the community, John C. and Betty went about collecting data from their male and female informants, respectively. The Messengers discover that unlike in 1930s Clare, sex is not discussed in everyday life. Mothers rarely imparted sexual education to their daughters, and young men were found to learn about sex in the company of older males, or from observing animals breeding, as parents were found to deflect awkward conversations about sexuality by telling their children ‘after marriage, nature takes its course’ (1971: 14-15). The simple act of ‘insertion of the tongue while kissing’ was regarded as one of the ‘deviant forms’ of sexuality on Inis Beag, alongside acts such as ‘cunnilingus’, ‘femoral coitus’, or ‘manifest homosexuality’. Which, of course, is not to say that such expressions of intimacy did not occur, but the manifest shyness around intimacy is a recurrent feature of descriptions of island life. The Messengers, continuing in their role as ‘counsellors’, frame the intimate lives of their informants as indicative of deeper psychological problems, mentioning ‘traumatic’ adolescent experiences of menstruation, and the popular linkage between menopause and ‘madness’ among islanders. The local curate, whose influence in the private lives of the locals was despised, had to tell women of the parish that sex was a ‘duty’ to be ‘endured’, and that failing to do so would be a ‘mortal sin’ (1971: 16). The premium on procreation on Inis Beag lead to an apparent ignorance of female sexuality and sensuality, as female orgasm is regarded as ‘deviant’ according to the anthropologist. Sex is viewed as threatening, with the capacity to have a ‘debilitating’ effect upon the menfolk of the island, whose natural, strong libido was credited to their diet of potatoes. While obviously necessary for procreation, the male orgasm was ‘achieved quickly, almost immediately after which he falls asleep’ (1971: 17). Women were considered a pollutant, and ‘threatening’, when menstruating and after childbirth. This

description was not unique among anthropologists conducting fieldwork in Ireland in the 1960s: in an otherwise uncontroversial analysis of kinship and social organisation, Robin Fox's ethnography of Tory Island contained the noteworthy assertion that 'immediate orgasm is the goal and boast of sophisticates' (1978: 160). Even in the staid tradition of British Structural Functionalism, the Irish had a reputation. The choice of Tory Island, on Ireland's far northerly coast, yet part of the Irish republic, is interesting as it is synonymous with piracy and ungovernability, and underscores the anthropological obsession with Ireland as peripheral (the island's name derives from the Irish *tóraidhe*, meaning outlaw. Originally, the same word also was pejoratively used to attack British supporters of the Catholic James II; now, ironically, it is synonymous with that nation's modern Conservative Party).

On Inis Beag, islanders also showed distrust of faeces and urine, despite their use in agriculture and the craft industry. This anxiety around bodily fluids, as well as natural processes like menstruation and coitus, recall Douglas' (1966) connection between bodily orifices and sexual purity. Distrust of women, generally, was reported as a feature of life in the parish. Arensberg and Kimball, who had reported ribald humour around issues of sex and reproduction, noted the lack of a 'dirty joke tradition', yet strict gender roles were observed on Inis Beag. This influenced a rejection of the seemingly necessary skill of learning to swim, or being naked in public (even for children), a reticence when dancing (described as 'rigid'), or seeking medical help despite being an island suffering from acute 'hypochondria' (1971:20). Messenger noted that even the sartorial choices of the people of 'Inis Beag' were 'defensive'.

Messenger returns to organised religion, as represented by the island curate, as being responsible for the pathologies that are described in his work (1971:20-27). The history of Catholicism in Ireland is traced, through early monasticism, through to Augustinianism, which 'set the stage' for the 'masochistic' flavour of Catholicism that Messenger argues shapes the intimate personhoods of the islanders. The 'sexual puritanism' of the informants is tied to i)

the role of the curate; ii) visiting ‘missions’ of priests who offer masses and devotional offerings to reduce an adherent’s time in purgatory; iii) inculcation in the home; iv) ‘secular social control’, or the normative judgements of the islanders, and the impact of this upon the comportment of the individual. Messenger argues that it is through these spheres that Jansenism, masochism, the Oedipal complex, and male solidarity cohere to create an atmosphere of repression. This sexual repression is key to the islanders’ urge to emigrate to a more ‘liberated’ area, on the mainland or abroad, as well as exposure to alternative forms of living through mass media, and contact with returning emigrants (now that emigration was no longer necessarily a unidirectional journey) (1971: 32-35). Unlike the submission of the individual’s desires in service of the family’s name, reputation, and land as witnessed in Arensberg and Kimball, Messenger records fathers who drive their sons away, to the detriment of the family farm, and mothers who prefer to have a son join the priesthood rather than have to accommodate a daughter-in-law in a display of ‘the extreme of oedipal attachment’. This individual rejection of the repression of a stifling, dogmatic community is also a rejection of the happy, ‘noble savage’ that was found in county Clare, and that entered the ethnographic imaginary. The individuals that Messenger describes are far more like ‘us’. But worse. This emphasis on the pathology of the Irish, echoing the Victorian ethnologists, would shape the ethnographic conception of the intimate lives of the Irish over the next decade.

Messenger’s lamentful tone is carried on in Hugh Brody’s *Inishkillane* (1973). However, Brody critiques the ahistorical quality that he perceives in Arensberg and Kimball’s writing. Recognising the ‘intense demoralisation’ (2) among the inhabitants of Inishkillane, Brody reiterates the effect of the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century in producing the ‘traditional’ society lauded by his anthropological forebears. The dwindling population of Inishkillane threatened existing practices and relations among locals. As long as the homestead was the focus of life in the Irish countryside in *Family and Community in Rural Ireland*, self-

sufficient family units could still rely on the neighbourly cooperative practice of ‘cooring’ at times when extra labour was required. This form of mutual aid had disappeared, alongside local markets and festivals. Emigration of family members often resulted in remittances for those who stayed at home. While this monetary contribution was welcome, it did not alleviate the shortage of farm labour, or provide the insurance against future difficulties that good neighbourhood relations provides. Depopulation also had an effect on quotidian practices, such as the visiting of neighbours at night, *ceiildh* dances, and other forms of what Malinowski described as ‘diversion and amusement [without which] a culture and a race cannot survive’ (1922: 481).

These structural changes served to isolate inhabitants further. *Mirroring Messenger*, Brody depicts a society in terminal decline: young people – particularly women – are emigrating, leaving a dwindling population of bachelors and spinsters whose lives are depicted starkly. The romanticism of a traditional rural life – that is the decidedly unromantic arranged marriage and childrearing – had been usurped by ‘a greater consciousness of urban ways and attitudes’ among the younger generation, exposed to alternative lifestyles as presented in the media (1973: 128). The emerging role of market forces, as anticipated in Arensberg and Kimball, is embodied in the figure of ‘the new entrepreneur’: the sole shopkeeper in the village. Indispensable to the locals, the shopkeeper provides them with the goods that they can no longer produce themselves. However, with this status comes ambiguity; his newfound economic and social ascendancy renders him an anomaly amid the anomie of Inishkillane (1973: 184-209). The most tangible effect of market forces in the village is manifest in the demographic changes that Brody records.

The challenges faced by Inishkillane and Inis Beag are shared by the pseudonymous village of Ballybran, in County Kerry. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, a medical anthropologist, builds upon Messenger’s interest in pathological personalities and cultural decline in rural

Ireland to understand the exceptionally high rates of institutionalisation in Ireland. Particularly interested in the intimate lives of her informants, Scheper-Hughes is preoccupied with understanding what she refers to in her writing as the ‘antieroticism’ that she perceives in Irish culture. Sharing Messenger’s focus on high celibacy rates and late marriage, Scheper-Hughes’s cultural analysis of the rural Irish psyche gained widespread international acclaim, including the Margaret Mead Award for her ethnography *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics*, but was denounced by her informants and by the Irish national press for its assertions, and framing of rural Irish as psychologically maimed. Like Mead’s writings on the sexual activities of pre-pubescent and pre-marital Samoans, Scheper-Hughes recorded the seemingly exceptional behaviours of a community shielded from an increasingly permissive Western world. As with Messenger and Brody, the tension between tradition and modernity was building among her informants, and altering their way of life. Following Messenger’s lead, Scheper-Hughes utilised the methodological approaches popular in psychology and psychiatry at the time, including, notoriously, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). TAT involved showing respondents cards featuring visual images, and asking them to create a narrative based upon these images with the goal of establishing insights into familial relationships. Based upon her analysis of informants’ responses, Scheper-Hughes claimed that, due to a lack of demonstrative affection in the family home, the rural Irish that she was living among were inculcated with a fear of intimacy that she described as ‘quintessentially Irish’ in their ‘suspiciousness of the flesh and sexuality’ (2001: 118). Scheper-Hughes claimed that through her chosen methodological approach, she had identified an asceticism, and sexual repression, akin to that discovered by Messenger on Inis Beag, and that this was not impacted by an informant’s age or gender.

While such claims run the risk of essentialising a particular form of pathological sexuality among the Irish, such claims are rooted in observation. As with Messenger and Brody,

and Arensberg and Kimball before them, these informants were socialised in an explicitly gendered fashion. Gender segregation occurred in labour efforts, as well as in social situations, such as public houses, dances, or during religious worship. Resonating with Messenger's account of dancing on Inis Beag, Scheper-Hughes recorded that 'body posture is rigid' in mixed-sex assemblies, in contrast to descriptions of conviviality and warmth in single-sex social groups (2001: 106) (see Wulff 2007 for an account of the vexatious role that dancing played, as signifier of both 'authentic' Irish culture and potential sexual transgression in twentieth century rural Ireland). Accounts of Ballybran natives and their awkwardness around members of the opposite sex, shame around their bodies, and corporal processes, from sex to excretion, are all echoing and reifying Messenger's earlier assertion that the Irish were inherently 'repressed'. As with Inishkillane and Inis Beag before, Ballybran had been badly affected by emigration, with more women emigrating and men staying at home to work on the family farm. Scheper-Hughes also shares Messenger's belief that the particular spiritual formation of Irish Catholics was integral to their psychosexual development, or more specifically, disorder. Again, the figure of the local cleric featured prominently in the social life of the village, 'maintain[ing] a firm control over the bodies as well as the souls of their notoriously obedient parishioners' (2001: 120).

Just as Messenger had described the institutionalisation of a local priest because of a mental illness, locally credited to, or rather blamed upon, his young housekeeper who 'drove him mad from frustration' (anticipating the Kerry Babies case of the 1980s, and typifying the tendency to demonise women in Irish society at that period), before making the generalisation that sexual desire is 'probably the major cause of neuroses and psychoses in Ireland' (1971: 15). Scheper-Hughes takes, and expands upon, this to make further remarkably broad claims, such as that Irish shame around their bodies, and the relation of their compartment and behaviour to their spiritual existence, is 'so basic to the rural Irish personality modalities' that

‘celibacy [becomes] a natural way of life’ (2001: 125). It was Scheper-Hughes’s association between sex and madness, but specifically the increasing rates of schizophrenia in rural Ireland, that was particularly controversial upon the book’s publication in 1979, and has been refuted by several anthropologists over the next couple of decades (Kane 1986; Throop 1999). As Arensberg and Kimball identified - and as Saris (1996; 2000) has expanded upon – psychiatry and the space of the institution has been utilised to render invisible bodies that troubled the familist system. Despite the over-generalisation and ahistorical nature of Scheper-Hughes’ claims, they served to build upon earlier ethnographic accounts of the peculiarity of Irish sexuality, and the inherently shamed response of the Irish towards their bodies, and crystallise the Irish village in the anthropological imaginary as providing a time perspective on par with other, seemingly more ‘exotic’ locations, as well as a functional unit of Irish culture, standing in for the entire nation.

If Ireland had lapsed into a zone of cultural invisibility for anthropology, as I had suggested earlier, what had occurred in the intervening decades as the anthropological gaze shifted from Ireland, leaving it fixed and frozen in time, and in a place marked by anomie and asceticism? An ethnographic study by Elizabeth Throop (1999) shifted focus to urban Irish sexualities, specifically Dublin city’s working class neighbourhoods. Building upon classic sociological research into urban areas by Humphrey (1966), Throop found that attitudes towards sex were broadly negative, expressing ‘anxiety about the body and bodily control’ (1999: 139). The idea that such anxieties around sexuality persisted at the turn of the millennium – a time when Ireland was experiencing an economic boom and the effects of an increasingly globalised world - give an indication of the slow pace at which social modernisation was occurring among the Irish population.

As noted by Peace (1989), in acknowledging these past projects that describe a world unrecognisable to the modern anthropologist or reader, one is updating anthropological

investigations, beyond questions of cultural decline and repression. Some aspects of ethnographic research in Ireland do resonate, for a self-identified native who has conducted fieldwork in a site that experienced cultural shifts over the duration of my research. Susannah Bowyer's belated analysis of Dublin, at the turn of this century, identified how a 'local version of cosmopolitan gay sexual identity was celebrated as an icon of a liberal and sexually liberated Ireland' (2010:801). Bowyer's analysis focuses specifically on a gay Irishman who won the British television show *Big Brother*, which was an especially popular 'reality television' programme in the early 2000s. The intense popularity and national pride that the winning contestant experienced was short lived, but I felt that this particular scenario anticipated the international kudos that Panti Bliss achieved over a decade later, and also resonates with Jasbir Puar's (2007) theorisations of how homosexuality can function as a metric of a state's liberal values. I have also found Carlos Salazar's (2008) analysis particularly convincing. Salazar, utilising a Foucaultian framework, credits the process of secularisation as the reason for the shift away from the high celibacy and low marriage rates among the Irish (2008: 143). Salazar traces a shift away from the imposition of morality upon certain bodies to a new model which emphasises the discipline of the self as a knowledgeable and responsible subject. Salazar cites Foucault when describing the first system: 'Christianity substituted the idea of the self which one had to renounce because clinging to the self was opposed to God's will for the idea of a self had to be created as a work of art' (Foucault 1983: 245). This 'surrender' of one's body to church morality is what Salazar describes as 'obedience-sexuality' (2008: 143).

The decline in the church's moral monopoly in Ireland has led to a transformation in disciplinary systems, away from bodies and obedience, to what Salazar calls 'knowledge-sexuality' (2008: 143). Directly influenced by Foucault again, Salazar quotes French thinker's words on pleasure, ethics, and knowledge: 'One could not form oneself as an ethical subject in the use of pleasures without forming oneself at the same time as a subject of knowledge'

(Foucault 1985: 86). While Salazar takes the shift from large to small families, and the figure of the young, unmarried mother as emblematic of failure within the current disciplinary model of knowledge and responsibility, I argue that it can be extended beyond this figure, to bodies that were abjected under a religious disciplinary morality that recognised procreative sexuality as the only legitimate expression of desire. Echoing Rubin (1984), I contend that queer bodies that once were excluded from the ‘charmed circle’ of accepted (marital) sexuality in Ireland, have been incorporated into this new disciplinary system that prioritises knowledge and responsibility, but that certain expressions of sexuality challenge values, and having sex in what Salazar describes as the ‘wrong way’ (2008: 146). In my own ethnographic analysis, the figure of the HIV-positive gay man is representative of that excluded manifestation of sexuality whose ‘wrong’ or ‘bad’ (Warner 1999) sexuality is a counterpoint to the recently reinvigorated values of marriage (following the 2015 referendum on same-sex marriage), and remains outside of the social embrace afforded by the Irish nation to the GLBT community (while simultaneously experiencing marginalisation within that group through normalised serophobia, or the irrational fear of, and prejudice against, people who are HIV positive).

Chapter 2: Biopolitical Catholicism and its Legacy

The Return of the Repressed

As I was writing my Master's dissertation (on Ireland's history of sexuality and shame, and its modern mediatisation through documentary, drama, and film), and preparing to undertake my doctoral research (on the current politics of respectability around marriage politics and HIV in Ireland's GLBT community), a story broke that would reverberate around the world, throwing a spotlight upon an aspect of Irish history that still had not been resolved. The initial headline in British tabloid newspaper *The Daily Mail* read: **Mass septic tank grave 'containing the skeletons of 800 babies' at site of Irish home for unmarried mothers** (O'Reilly 2014). The sensationalistic headline prompted interest, primarily abroad, then at home. In fact, domestic media remained relatively silent, even uninterested, compared to the frenzied attention from overseas (O'Toole 2014). The revelations only came to light through the persistence of a local historian, Catherine Corless, who was conducting a project and requested information from the Bons Secours holy order, but in vain. She was referred to the county council, who then advised her to contact the local health board, only to be told that records were 'individual' and that she could not access them. She then went to the Births, Marriages, and Deaths registration office in Galway city, where, at her own expense, she got the death certificates of 796 babies and children who had died at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home, which had operated between 1925 and 1961. The fate of these children, or their location, has yet to be determined.

Following years of revelations around systemic child abuse by clerics, in religious-run institutions, and subsequent cover-ups, the discovery of the Tuam Babies mass grave, and the reaction to it, was another opportunity for the contemporary narration of the past, one in which

the injustices of the past, once silenced, were aired as examples of national shame. According to Anne Enright (2015), the aspect of the reportage that caused the outrage was not the possible reasons for the deaths of hundreds of children, but the appearance of the word ‘septic’ (in fact, local media had recorded the case two years earlier, and accounts of local children making grisly discoveries dated back decades): ‘the association with sewage, the implication that the bodies were not just carelessly buried, or even discarded, but treated like “filth”’. Under the system that I describe as ‘biopolitical Catholicism’, these bodies were reduced to the status of ‘dirt’: these ‘illegitimate’ children (and their mothers) were ‘matter out of place’ in post-independence Ireland, which was defining itself as Catholic and morally pure in relation to its Protestant occupier (Douglas 1966). Accounts dating back to the 1970s tell of local boys falling into the mass grave, and seeing a vast amount of skeletal remains, before alerting the community. These stories have circulated widely since 2014, having entered the folklore of secrecy in Irish culture. The discovery was public knowledge in Tuam, but no one talked about it. It was forgotten, yet it was remembered. The burial site was paved over anew. In the absence of any official memorial from religious orders, or the local government authorities, the locals of Tuam created a small shrine using their own monies. In 2018, as Pope Francis officiated at a religious service in Dublin’s Phoenix Park, Catherine Corless (having refused an invitation to a papal audience in Dublin) was joined by hundreds of locals and visitors to commemorate the continued lack of justice for the 796 babies who have yet to be exhumed and identified. One of my regular informants, Izzy Kamikaze, travelled to Tuam that day. Along with a friend, she donned a ‘hazmat’ suit, and cordoned off the burial site with tape, declaring it to be a ‘crime scene’.

Corless herself was vilified by some, for disturbing, in Enright’s words, ‘all that dead history, Ireland’s reputation abroad’. Such criticisms, usually from conservative Irish Times columnists and members of the Catholic ‘think tank’ the Iona Institute, were coming from the

same sources that were opposed to the introduction of same-sex marriage, or the liberalisation of Ireland's abortion laws. The crux of the Tuam Babies case, as it became known (or, if on Twitter, #800DeadBabies or #796DeadBabies, an arresting attempt to highlight the perceived cover up and ignorance at stake) was the issue of respectability and recognition. The mothers and children that were held in Tuam, and the other institutions of confinement across Ireland, had violated Catholic moral teaching and cultural respectability. This ethos can still be traced through the Irish constitution, though it is being rethought by Irish politicians in the wake of recent referendums on same sex marriage and abortion access (in July 2018, legislation to remove the 'Baptism Barrier' was passed in Dail Eireann. This means that Catholic schools can no longer discriminate against non-Catholics during a student's admission process). Now, through the discovery of a mass grave in rural Galway, the Irish public was reminded, yet again, of the lack of respect afforded to those institutionalised, and the continued disrespect toward their mortal remains. Enright drew a contrast between the reburial of 1916 rebel Thomas Kent, and the other imminent celebrations of Ireland's 'patriot dead' that were due as part of the 'Decade of Commemorations', marking the centenary of Ireland's revolutionary struggle against British occupation. Indeed, the failure of the Irish state to live up to the rhetoric of the 1916 Proclamation, and its promise to 'cherish the children of the nation equally', was frequently cited during the campaign for same-sex marriage in 2015, a campaign which was seen as much as a reparative act on behalf of the state towards the GLBT community, as it was an act of mass political mobilisation and democratic power. This same phrase also appeared on posters urging voters in the 2018 referendum to 'Vote No' against the proposed liberalisation of abortion laws.

The Mother and Baby Home system was just one space of confinement – indeed, a space of exception in Agamben's terms - in a biopolitical archipelago of institutions designed to control subjects deemed to be outside the bounds of respectability in post-independence

Ireland. The sexually transgressive women – and their babies – were the embodiment of the figure of *homo sacer*: bodies reduced to the status of ‘bare life’, stripped of political subjectivity and legal protections (1998). The historian James M. Smith (2007: 2-3) has described this system as an ‘architecture of containment’. Smith writes:

In its concrete form, this architecture encompassed an array of interdependent institutions--schools, hospitals, mother-and-baby homes, adoption agencies, and Magdalen laundries--that obscured the less desirable elements attached to a number of interrelated social phenomena, including poverty, illegitimacy, and infanticide. In its more abstract form, this architecture comprised both the legislation that inscribed these issues as well as the numerous official and public discourses that resisted admitting the existence and function of their affiliated institutions. What remains incontrovertible, however, is that this bureaucratic apparatus and the discourses surrounding it served the nation-state: its function, to confine and render invisible segments of the population whose very existence threatened Ireland's national imaginary, the vision of Ireland enshrined in President Eamon de Valera's 1937 constitution. As a result, among those incarcerated were unmarried mothers, illegitimate and abandoned children, orphans, the sexually promiscuous, the socially transgressive, and, often, those merely guilty of "being in the way." (Arensberg and Kimball's research in the 1930s focused heavily upon the sociocultural system that they termed familism, whereby late marriages resulted in high marital fertility, but only one child would inherit, thus leading to dispossession, involuntary celibacy, and a peculiar form of structural adolescence that lead to frequent institutionalisation). The respectable, rural smallholder was the target demographic for Irish politicians at the time.

Perhaps one of the reasons the discovery of the Tuam mass grave was not immediately seen as being worthy of ‘breaking news’ status is because of a grim familiarity that the Irish public has with such revelations. In fact, it wasn't even the first discovery of such a site. In 1993, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge sold off a portion of their land in Drumcondra, County Dublin, taking advantage of rising property prices that were integral to Ireland's changing economic fortunes in that decade. Subsequently, builders working at the

site of the former High Park Magdalene Laundry, which had closed in 1991, exhumed the bodies of 155 women (22 of whom were known only by their Magdalene names), who had been confined there (Enright 2015). Over the next three decades, following revelations of further cases, as well as the exposure of clerical child abuse, Magdalene survivors campaigned for recognition of the State's involvement in the running of the system of 'coercive confinement', even bringing the government before the United Nations Committee Against Torture in 2011. An Inter-Departmental Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries was created, which resulted in the McAleese report (2013). The publication of the inquiry led to a teary public apology from An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, and the setting up of a redress scheme for survivors (which has been beset with failings since its inception). While the report did validate the biopolitical dimension to the Magdalene Laundries story, by confirming state complicity, it does not engage the question of 'criminality' on the part of the religious orders involved – the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, the Religious Sisters of Charity, the Good Shepherd Sisters, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity- who continue to refuse to pay compensation to survivors. The report itself provides only brief quotes to illustrate the reality of life as a Magdalene, among discussions of ledgers and profitability.

The policy of 'deny till they die' is popularly accepted to be the way that the religious orders hope to evade responsibility for what occurred in the system of confinement that they presided over. This continued ignorance is also evidenced in the ways researchers are excluded from accessing the archives of the religious orders in question, as well as those also mentioned in the Ryan report (2009). These records are not important only for researchers; to suggest so would be offensive. The survivors, their children, and families would also benefit from making records accessible, in a central location, but also through digitisation (mindful of survivors' privacy). Despite the decade long gestation of the Ryan report, and the long awaited McAleese report, and the ongoing inquiry into the Mother and Baby Home system, the continued denial

of information to concerned parties adds insult to uncompensated injury. However, as Anne Enright has written, those who were institutionalised ‘were sent away, but they do keep coming back’; whether through the discovery of bones, or the repeated failure of the state and church authorities to act in a manner befitting the dead, this phenomenon is the return of Ireland’s repressed. The discovery of the Tuam mass grave functions as a traumatically recovered past that the Church and State had tried to render invisible, but was, alongside the more abstract forms of repression (specifically legislation that codified and a heteronormative, Catholic habitus upon the population) to cultural change. Just as legislation enabled greater personal freedoms in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Irish society started to demand transparency around the institutional violence that shaped Irish bodies and sexualities. This cultural shift was a collective affective reaction towards Irish societal attitudes to the treatment of morally impure bodies.

Since the 1990s, the nation was to witness a reaction against the hegemonic silences surrounding the body and sexuality that had existed since the foundation of the state. The period also marked the first public discussions around the physical and sexual abuse perpetrated against women and children in institutions run by the Irish state and the Catholic Church throughout the twentieth century. These discussions took the form of documentaries, and film, such as *Sex in a Cold Climate* (1998) and *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002). I pick these two, out of countless others on the topic, as the witness testimony contained in the former was used as dialogue in the latter. Sexualised bodies that had been victimized and ostracised were represented through the media of documentary and cinematic film. In the absence of official recognition or redress, mediated representations of sexual abuse became regarded as democratic facilitators of certain ‘truths’ that had been stifled. Yet such an approach risks overlooking the stylistic accomplishments of *Sex in a Cold Climate* and *The Magdalene Sisters* which, I argue, were central to the creation of affect in their audience, resulting in a shift away

from shame around sexual transgression, to one of shame around its history and continued revelations around a past that keeps reemerging through ‘scandals’, be they around child abuse, or failings in the provision of education or healthcare. As cultural values shift, shame remains the dominant ‘structure of feeling’ regarding Irish socio-historical attitudes to the body (Williams 1977: 132). The revelations of recent years have placed Irish society in the shaming gaze of the international media, as well as a post-Catholic self-reflection that has initiated changes in the church-state status quo. Alongside shame, there is a sense of collective guilt around the treatment of abjected others in Irish society, which can be seen through the continuing campaign for not only memorialisation in Tuam, but for a comprehensive investigation (including exhumation and DNA testing) into the exact circumstances of the case.

Both cultural productions re-present a biopolitical regime of power that existed in Ireland in the decades following independence. Other re-presentations of Ireland’s historical attitudes to sexuality and reproduction draw attention to other contemporaneous biopolitical models of power. In *States of Fear* (1999), a documentary series which led to another ‘scandal’ resulting in an apology from then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, references were made by survivors to the similarity between Ireland’s architecture of containment and Nazi Germany’s concentration camp system. One survivor compared his experience of being given a number in an industrial school to the systematic tattooing of Jews in the Nazi concentration camps, although he specifically referred to war films as the basis of this comparison. These parallels highlight the mediated understanding of life in a camp, or institutional situation, which in turn illuminates contemporary Ireland’s understanding of its own heavily censored biopolitical regime. Such comparisons can, initially, be jarring, however, as Ireland’s ‘architecture of containment’ does not match the scope of Nazi Germany’s systematic, racialised extermination of Jews and other ‘undesirables’. Michael Rothberg’s (2009) concept of ‘multidirectional memory’ is helpful, as it encourages comparative, yet non-competitive, ways of thinking about

traumatic histories after the Holocaust. The concept is especially useful in relation to ongoing discussions about a memorial, or historical centre to commemorate and preserve the social memory of institutional violence in Ireland. It also aligns with Agamben's (1998) observation that the space of 'the camp' – while taken to its murderous, logical conclusion in the Nazi concentration camp system – is the 'nomos' of the modern democratic state, which operates through a dyad of inclusion/exclusion, and isolates its 'others' in ambiguous legal zones (such as refugee camps, or immigration control spaces at airports). Similar attempts to create a memorial for victims of AIDS, to act as a marker for those lost but also as a corrective to the ignorance around HIV/AIDS in contemporary Ireland, will be discussed later in this thesis.

For example, the final laundry to shut – in 1996 – was the Gloucester Street laundry, located on what is now known as Sean McDermott Street. In 2017, concerns emerged at the prospect of the site being bought by a Japanese chain of budget hotels. The area has long been a site of neglect by the state, the centre of the heroin epidemic that first hit the city in the 1980s, and had been known in the early part of the century as 'Monto', the red light district. 'Monto', a derivative of Montgomery Street, was immortalized by James Joyce as 'Nighttown' in *Ulysses* (1922), a pseudonym that alludes to the district's reputation for vice. Long a target for Catholic moralists (McCarthy 1902), the area was the centre of a 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972) by the time Ireland was on the cusp of independence in 1921. Along with emblems of British occupation, the 'Monto' was subject to a crackdown on illicit activities, particularly prostitution (Luddy 2007). The imposing, grey institution was a behemoth of respectability and virtue amid public houses and brothels, and a visible reminder of Catholic morality and power (Markus 1993). Now, the building signifies a traumatic past, still unresolved, looming in the consciousness of Dubliners. The revelations about Tuam galvanised local residents and politicians to save the site, in case it too is a burial site. It also underscored the delays in attending to the social dimension of the Magdalene redress package, for example, the erection

of a memorial, or a remembrance centre, or a helpline for the survivors. It also highlighted the perceived futility of statutory enquiries, which last for years, and result in recommendations which are only partially adopted at best. The popular belief is that such enquiries merely serve to rebury the initial issue, and allow those who have perpetrated or colluded in the injustice, evade responsibility. While such processes may serve to give the appearance that justice is being done, the discovery of the mass grave at Tuam is a very literal return of Ireland's repressed, with those infant bones functioning as the materialisation of the values that deemed certain lives unworthy of respect or recognition. Several meetings were held in late 2017 and early 2018, in order to save the site (a campaign which ultimately was successful) and propose cultural and educational uses for the space. While a definitive plan for the site has yet to be approved (and funded), several speakers endorsed following Germany's example of facing the reality of their past, and teaching future generations about it, as a counterpoint to the Irish solution of failing to acknowledge the past.

The mediatised nature of such productions must be underscored, as stylistic techniques and conventions merit observation due to their ability to produce certain affective reactions in the viewer: shame, disgust, guilt, and consequently cause socio-political action (Gould, 3-4). Elizabeth Butler Cullingford warns of the 'inevitable' mediation of survivor discourse 'by generic codes, including that of the prison or concentration-camp film', in relation to *The Magdalene Sisters* (58-59). Mindful of Cullingford's comments, and the troubling implications of a straightforward comparison between a Magdalene laundry and Nazi camp designed for the systemic genocidal extermination of those deemed racially inferior, Mullan's dramatization of Ireland's 'architecture of containment' merits inclusion in the 'concentration-camp' cinematic genre as it enables the viewer to conceptualize Ireland's traumatic history within a wider, democratic context, over an essentialist 'Irish' problem. This cinematic categorization would allow for a broader cultural conceptualization of the Irish regime of power as being on a

continuum with contemporaneous biopolitical regimes, such as Nazi Germany or the U.S.S.R. (a comparison explored by Irish intellectuals: see Arnold 2009; O'Toole 2012). It would also allow a greater cultural understanding of Ireland's history, at a time when archival records remain the private property of religious orders, unattainable by Freedom of Information requests, and when survivor testimony is limited to such documentary interviews and short extracts from the McAleese report (published in 2013).

At a moment of national reckoning, the nation is also learning (through investigative journalism, documentary and film) about the extent of the system of 'coercive confinement' (O'Sullivan and O'Donnell 2012). Since the 1990s, the word 'scandal' has become a key metaphor in Irish discourse. Ari Adut (2005:213) provides a useful definition of the word:

Scandals are ubiquitous social phenomena with unique salience and singular dramatic intensity. They can mobilise much emotional energy, at times with momentous consequence. Scandals in effect trigger a great deal of the normative solidification and transformation in society. At the same time, avoiding them is an essential motivation and ongoing activity of individuals, groups, and institutions.

Revelations of clerical and institutional abuse provided a dramatic rupture with a past marked by unquestioning deference towards the Catholic Church. These 'scandals' that have become synonymous with Ireland's past - and still resonate today - have their roots in the modernising, disciplining apparatus of the modern state, which utilised multiple forms of disciplinary knowledge to control individual sexualities and produce 'normal', thus respectable, citizens. The word 'scandal' is something of a misnomer, as they are rarely unique or surprising. In fact, these scandals are primarily examples of widespread institutional violence and injustice, but what makes them exceptional is that they are no longer shrouded in silence as they once were. At the time of writing in 2018, the latest such public revelation concerns women who were given inaccurate smear test results, and when this error was detected there were subsequent

delays in notifying women of the mistake: several of these women now have terminal cervical cancer. Public commentators have noted that many of these scandals affect women and their bodies, as well as the repeated failures of the Irish state in relation to these women, and their attempts to avert the public gaze.

Colonial Origins of Sexual Control

Of course, many of these scandals revolve around sexuality in the Irish public sphere – particularly the control of sexuality: often female sexuality, but particularly sexuality that compromised the moral purity of the Irish nation. This subjugation of desire to social order has been charted by George Mosse, who declared that:

For society to establish controls of restraint and moderation, the techniques of physicians, educators and police were in need of reinforcement: behind their methods of control there had to be an ideal which might serve to define normalcy and abnormalcy and to contain sexual passion. Nationalism came to the rescue. The history of sexuality became part of the history of nationalism in two ways: nationalism not only helped to control sexuality, to reinforce what society considered normal, but it also provided the means through which changing sexual attitudes could be absorbed and tamed into respectability (Mosse 1982: 222)

The imbrication of respectability, sexuality, and kinship can be traced back to Early Modern Europe (and its colonies), and what Norbert Elias (1978) termed the ‘civilising process’. Here, not only was the state intimately involved in the regulation of sexuality, but the concept of the modern family was born. In this project

Sexuality too is increasingly removed behind the scenes of social life and enclosed in a particular enclave, the nuclear family. Likewise, the relations between the sexes are isolated, placed behind walls in consciousness. An aura of embarrassment, the expression of sociogenic fear, surrounds this sphere of life (1978: 180).

Elias argues that this shame was sanctioned by society, with the publication of a range of literature on the subject of ‘manners’ (1978: 292). Following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, amid the trauma of national partition and a civil war, a campaign for internalised

self-restrained among Irish citizens was launched by the Catholic hierarchy, as well as a number of social purity movements (to be discussed later).

Drawing on the theories of Elias, as well as Bourdieu and Foucault, Tom Inglis (1998) charted the rise of Catholic Church as the hegemonic authority on Irish sexual morality from the mid-nineteenth through to the late-twentieth century. An ascendant clerical hierarchy and an emergent Irish nation combined to produce “a Catholic culture of self-abnegation in which sexual pleasure and desire were repressed” (2005: 11). In Inglis’s account, the dominant sexual culture that prevailed in Ireland for most of the twentieth century had its origins in an uneasy alliance between the British state and a resurgent Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. The first phase of the civilising process in Ireland began in the sixteenth century, and took the form of widespread plantations, aimed at establishing Protestantism throughout the country. Catholicism endured, however, and gained strength, with the passage of Catholic Emancipation in 1829.

Two years later, in 1831, the second phase of the civilising process began, with the introduction of the policy of denominational national education in the 1830s, through which control over primary education, for the majority of the population, was given to the Catholic Church. Following the Great Famine and the decimation of the labouring population through starvation and migration, a new Irish Catholic petit-bourgeoisie emerged as the once powerful Protestant Ascendancy began to wane. A new form of Catholic respectability began to emerge, one which required the tight regulation of both the minds and bodies of the Irish population. Mirroring developments elsewhere in Europe, the civilising of the Irish led to a progressive shift towards monolingualism, as the number of native Gaelic speakers began to decline, and English became the *lingua franca*. The restrictive Penal Laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the subsequent furtive practice of Catholicism throughout the country, as quasi-

pagan Holy Wells and Mass Rocks were replaced by what Emmet Larkin (1972) has described as a 'devotional revolution'. New patterns of behavioural regulation and subjectivity started to develop, as daily life as an Irish Catholic began to shift.

Indeed, the issue of 'respectability' and personal morality was not new to post-partition Ireland. The nineteenth century had experienced a growing awareness of socio-economic difference and associated notions of propriety, which were exacerbated by the increased prominence of the Catholic Church in Ireland after the Great Famine, but especially after the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in from the 1870. R.V. Comerford has concluded that Christianity played a role in the promotion of respectability and the 'moral code', positing that: The standing of individuals and communities in the eyes of the world...depended on conspicuous adherence to a strict code of manners and morals...The consequent individual and social discipline was readily identified by the churches with the Christian moral and spiritual order and promoted accordingly (2005: xliv). Morality and social class were intimately bound, producing ideas of respectability that conjoined sexual mores and social position. As Dymphna McLaughlin (1994) has observed, however, the complex web of social and intimate relations produced multiple categories of recognition and tolerance for non-normative relationships and sexual transgression. As these relationships were predicated on social class, illegitimacy and poverty were invariably relegated to religious run institutions (as detailed by Smith 2001).

In thinking about attitudinal shifts among the Irish, the work of French theorist Pierre Bourdieu is useful for considering individual agency. Bourdieu rejects the concept of the social world as an observable spectacle, consisting of purely symbolic exchanges between actors. Rather, Bourdieu proposes a 'theory of practice', rooted in the quotidian, which states that 'the principal of this construction is the system of the structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions' (1977: 72). He posits that *habitus* is produced by 'the structures constitutive of a particular type

of environment' and refers to it as the 'internalisation of an externality and externalisation of internality'. One of his interlocutors, Navarro, defines habitus as a 'durable set of dispositions that are formed, stored, recorded and exert influence to mould forms of human behaviour' (2006:16). To qualify, habitus relates to the socialised norms and behaviours of individuals in a particular context, or 'field', a 'network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational or cultural' (Navarro 2006:18). One's habitus allows a person to behave in a particular way, specifically because to behave differently would require the breaching of pre-established cultural codes. Bourdieu asserts the potential for strategic calculation. Through an estimation of the chances of transformation based on knowledge of past efforts to effect change, and with a view to a specific objective, such social transformations cannot be ruled out, but the agency required to do this is first defined by a field of behaviour which states that which can or cannot be done. An awareness of the things that are likely to happen within one's own social parameters enables the continuation of culturally prescribed ways of acting in a particular cultural context. Bourdieu stresses that habitus is not fixed, but rather is malleable and dependent on context. His work grants an insight into the power dynamics of social domination, so often occluded in everyday life. Bourdieu understands power as culturally and symbolically created. In discussing power and domination, he maintains that domination does not need to be exerted in a 'direct, personal way when it is entailed in the possession of the means (economic or cultural capital) of appropriating the mechanisms of the field of production and the field of cultural production, which tend to assure their own reproduction by their very functioning, independently of any deliberate intervention of the agents' (1977:183-184). Bourdieu argues that domination is not a function of individual agency, but rather, people experience domination as a result of social processes in any given 'field' at a particular time. People can have radically different experiences of power depending on which 'field' they are positioned within, and this positionality directly forms one's habitus.

Invoking Bourdieu, Inglis describes the creation of a new Irish *habitus*, one which required the ‘a transformation from open, passionate bodies to closed, restrained bodies’ (1998: 137). Opened in 1795, Maynooth College was regarded, by the British authorities, to be a more appropriate location for Irish priests to be trained, away from the revolutionary ferment of continental Europe. Despite this, Irish clergy were heavily influenced by Jansenism, a Catholic theological movement that originated in France and was especially concerned with human depravity and moral rigour. These clerics were subsequently dispatched throughout Ireland, as avatars of Catholic respectability and deportment, not only as parish priests, but as educators in schools. Reflecting Jansenist sensibilities, according to Inglis, these clerics went about ‘instilling shame and guilt about the body’ (138). The Catholic Church developed a power-knowledge nexus, controlling both the apparatus of the national school system, and the confessional space within the parish church, in order to control sexual knowledge - a form of control that it still clings to at the time of writing (through school patronage). Catholic control of sexual education resulted in a lack ‘communicative competence’ on the part of Irish Catholics about their bodies and sexualities (see Messenger 1971). Therefore, according to Inglis ‘sexual morality became a major issue, but it was wrapped up in a veil of silence’ (ibid). Fahey (1995) has argued that the prominence of sexual prudery within Irish Catholicism arose, at least in part, from the tendency to compete for respectability in terms defined by British culture and to take pride in outdoing its colonial masters on these standards (see also Babha 1984). While Inglis identifies Catholicism as constitutive part of the emergence of an Irish middle class in the mid-nineteenth century, he suggests that this same ideological and moral formation is the cause of the country’s stagnated modernisation. Until 1958, and the publication of *Economic Development*, T.K. Whitaker’s report on the Irish economy, which heralded a move from protectionism to foreign investment, Irish society had suffered the effects of a

puritanical and repressive attitudes that were not confined to the realm of private and emotional life, but in fact formed a distinctive Irish Catholic *mentalité*, which proved averse to risk-taking and entrepreneurship in the public sphere. Inglis attempts to reconcile a psychic impoverishment of the Irish people, with the structural poverty of the Irish state in its early decades, suggesting ‘the traditional absence of entrepreneurs and people taking risks with capital in Ireland may be linked to ...a morality propagated by the Church, in which individual satisfaction and pleasure were subdued through an inculcation of humility, shame and guilt’ (1998: 75-76).

Sectarian State-building and Cultural Identity Formation

The instillation of Catholic values into Irish subjects began to be fully realized in the 1920s, with the production of an Irish Catholic identity that was formed in reaction to its former colonial master. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 led to the partition of the island of Ireland into two separate divisions; the six predominantly Protestant counties remained part of the United Kingdom, whereas the majority Catholic remaining twenty-six counties came to form the Irish Free State, with the partition legally demarcated in the 1922 constitution. This document reflected great congruity with existing legal and cultural values. As a member of the British Commonwealth, Article 17 of the constitution determined that all members of the Dáil would have to take an oath of allegiance to the British monarch. However, over the following two decades, successive Irish administrations would alter Irish laws and policies in the creation of a culturally distinct, ethno-nationalistic state, specifically through the enactment of legislation regulating the personal behaviour of its citizens.

In thinking about national identity formation at this time, one must pay attention to three inter-influencing discursive forces that shaped the regulation of private behaviour in the

early years of the Irish Free State: the language of Catholic morality, the language of criminality, and the language of public health. In thinking about these tightly connected issues, it is useful to consider the figure of the mother, and the reproduction not only of Irish bodies, but also Irish culture -or race, as it was framed in the nineteenth century - itself. The nineteenth century saw the rise of Lamarckian views that dictated the role of the environment in the development of a population, thus allowing for culture to influence individual bodies and nations, and thereby to preserve itself. The concept of the Irish as racially inferior can be traced to this time, when Ireland was under colonial rule. The reproductive capacities of the Irish were the focus of particular anxiety in Britain. As Bronwyn Walter writes:

Irish women's bodies were implicitly present in stereotyping through their role in the process of reproduction, especially their "excessive" fertility ... The rhetoric focuses on families and their threat to the English way of life both biologically and culturally. These include through "swamping" and racial degeneration, the weakening of Protestantism, unfair demand for resources and lack of control over bodies, both their own and those of unruly, dirty, and over-
numerous children. (2001: 91)

The idea of the Irish as racially different was positively reimagined during the Gaelic Revival movement in the late nineteenth century, when Ireland became thought of as an ancient nation, different from its colonial rulers in terms of religion, as well as its autochthonous language and cultural practices (Hutchinson 1987). The literary and cultural roots of modern Irish nationalism have been widely researched, with a similar narrative structure identified. The 'recovery' (and fabrication) of a national cultural heritage emerges in the middle of the nineteenth century, with works such as James Standish O'Grady's ethnohistorical writings. Subsequently, in the last couple of decades of that century, literary figures such as Lady Augusta Gregory and William Butler Yeats spearheaded the 'Revival', a creative period that lasted through the partition of the island and the establishment of the Free State. The intense creativity of this period began to wane in the 1920s, as the optimism about the nascent state was replaced by a disenchantment with the insular, petit-bourgeois, conservative Catholic

society that was coming about, as well as the sectarian statelet that developed in the six counties of Ulster that remained occupied following the Government of Ireland Act, 1920 (see Brown 1985 for a masterful overview of this period). F.S.R. Lyons has claimed that the new state's willingness to enshrine Catholic morality into legislation was intimately linked to its policy towards the Irish language, with this coupling central to the development of a cultural-national state formation, and to 'give the new state its distinctive character' (1979: 150). Lyons argues that it was a cultural clash between 'Gaelicism and Catholicism' and Protestant identities, with the emerging Catholic moral monopoly representing the final stage in this battle for a definitive Irish identity. Douglas Hyde, folklorist, founder of the Gaelic League, and eventually the first President of Ireland (1938-1945) gave a lecture in 1892 entitled 'On the Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland' (though initially 'On the Necessity of De-Anglicising the Irish Race'). Hyde describes Ireland at that particular historical moment as being at a 'half-way house'; referring to being at a cultural and historical juncture between a 'pure', native Ireland (typified for Hyde by the west of Ireland) and a compromised, assimilated colony. Hyde warned that Ireland risked becoming the 'Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to the second hand assimilationism' (1986 (1892) 169).

This valorisation of the west of Ireland can be traced through Irish political nationalism into the twentieth century, through the emergence of a virtually theocratic state, to De Valera's famous St. Patrick's Day address in 1943, misremembered for a non-existent reference to 'comely maidens dancing at the crossroads' in an imagined Irish idyll. Helena Wulff has identified this as a 'key metaphor' in Irish political and cultural life, signifying the nation's shifting position connecting 'a distinctly Irish tradition with European modernity' (2007: 1). It is also an enduring image of an Ireland that never really existed: a happy, self-sufficient, frugal and pious agrarian people, living in harmony with their neighbours. We now remember this era as a time of poverty, emigration, and institutionalization for non-conforming individuals.

This social memory endures for certain conservative commentators: John Waters (1991: 82-83) draws upon rural discontent towards Dublin, and modernity when he writes about those who ‘spoke disparagingly about de Valera’s dancing-at-the-crossroads vision of a people content with hard work and simple pleasures’. Such comments speak to a structural nostalgia for this imagined Ireland, and a tension between tradition and modernity, old and young, rural and urban, Dublin and the rest of Ireland.

At the time of De Valera’s address, Ireland’s western seaboard had already been established as representing a ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ Ireland, figuring prominently in anthropological thought. In fact, Douglas Hyde acted as a ‘gatekeeper’ informant for Walter Evans Wentz when he was conducting fieldwork in Ireland for the doctoral dissertation that would result in the publication of *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (1911). The resulting ethnographic work was dedicated to two of the most revered literary, and mystical, figures within the Celtic Revival: William Butler Yeats and A.E. (George Russell). As with most of the Cultural Revivalists, both were Anglo-Irish Protestants. This research placed Ireland within a cultural system that preceded the arrival of Christianity, and whose pagan practices and beliefs existed alongside it in the west of Ireland into the twentieth century (themes that would surface in the work of anthropologists in the late twentieth century (See Messenger 1971; Taylor 1995). It was not a form of neo-paganism, however, that emerged strengthened as a result of the Gaelic Revival, but Irish Catholicism. As O’Farrell (1985) notes, the cultural construction of the Irish race as independent of Anglo-Saxon influence required the re-appropriation of linguistic, religious, and cultural history that had been suppressed under British Penal Laws – most particularly the free practice of the Catholic faith. In *The Philosophy of Irish-Ireland* (1905), D.P Moran railed against ‘foreign’ (specifically British and Irish Protestants, who he referred to as ‘West Britons’ and ‘sourfaces’ repeatedly) influences in Irish culture, advocating for an imagined, ideal Catholic nation, where citizens spoke Irish and

played Gaelic games exclusively. This ideology set the tone for the insular attitudes that informed inward looking policy decisions following the establishment of the Irish Free State.

It is out of this cultural milieu that the figure of ‘Mother Ireland’ gains newfound currency. The image of ‘Ireland-as-Woman’ is a trope that emerged in the eighteenth century: as the *speir bhean* (which literally translates as ‘sky women’, but is more commonly understood as ‘goddess’) of the *aisling* (dream) poetic tradition. In such works, a slumbering Irishman would be visited, and politically awakened, by a vision of beautiful woman in distress and imploring male aid. Such poems sought to induce Irishmen to defend Ireland against English occupation. In the nineteenth century, Mangan’s romantic ballad ‘Dark Rosaleen’ draws upon both natural and religious imagery to transform the Irish nation into a silent, suffering object of nationalist desire. During the Cultural Revival, Yeats and Lady Gregory draw upon this tradition in their play ‘Cathleen Ni Houlihan’ (1902). Both Yeats and Gregory were folklorists, and were aware of this common myth from the West of Ireland. Unlike previous iterations of ‘Ireland-as-Woman’, the titular figure is an old woman: a mother who has been dispossessed and requires the help of young men to regain her ‘four green fields’ (a reference to Ireland’s four provinces). Kearney (1988: 218-220) suggests that this request represents the ‘blood sacrifice’ needed to achieve Irish freedom, and appeals to both Irish nationalist and Catholic ideologies. Such ethno-nationalist mythology served to enshrine the role of ‘Woman-as-Mother’ in Irish culture, and with the establishment of an Irish state in the 1920s, this cultural ideal became buttressed with the apparatuses of the nation-state. McMullan argues that the cultural representation of Mother Ireland shifted from the ‘symbolic to the legislative domain’ in the 1937 constitution, with references to the ‘mother’ and ‘homemaker’ in relation to women (1996: 37). McMullan goes on to argue for the contiguity between the symbolic importance of the female body (and sexuality) in Ireland’s self-definition as an independent Catholic nation: firstly, as a ‘figurative element’ in anticolonial rebellion, and then secondly, as a ‘literal

mechanism for sustaining political legitimacy within the newly established state' as 'the private female body serves the body politic and the state's legislative control of women's bodies in particular (but sexuality in general)' (1996: 38). Therefore, while other vexatious sexualities were criminalised and rendered invisible, it was the female body and sexuality that became the focus of the biopolitical gaze.

Later in the twentieth century, closer attention came to be paid to the importance of gender and sexuality in the ideological battles during this period. Gerardine Meaney (1991), writing out of a context of continued sectarian war in the occupied Six Counties, as well as the 'victories' of the Catholic right wing in Ireland (namely the passage of legislation outlawing abortion, and retention of a constitutional ban on divorce in 1983 and 1986 respectively) framed this period of gendered oppression through a postcolonial perspective. Meaney was insistent that a gendered critique should not be used to elide the centrality of the struggle between coloniser and decolonised in twentieth century Ireland, but to understand Ireland's past and present (1991: 10). In order to understand the importance of gender ideology in Irish culture, Meaney draws upon the work of Ashis Nandy (1983), who contends that the struggle between the coloniser and the colonised is not only always inherently hierarchical, but that this power imbalance is always inherently gendered, with the colonised portrayed as being weak, submissive, and feminine. In the initial, nativist stage of the decolonisation process, the aspiration for independence among a formerly oppressed people coincides with an aspiration towards the masculinism embodied by the colonial power. As a result, peoples in this primary stage of decolonisation gravitate towards the construction of strictly defined and policed gender roles in that society. In light of this, Meaney argues that the impulse to curb the agency of female citizens through legislation, as well as the creation of a conservative habitus, was an attempt to assert the masculinity and claim to power by the emergent nationalist elite, whose rise was a reaction against their symbolic emasculation during colonial rule (1991: 6-7).

Maryann Valiulis (1995) has continued this analysis of gender, with particular attention to the role of Catholicism's gender ideology. Echoing Meaney, Valiulis posits that the government of the Free State, in an act of overcompensation for their inability to control the country's finances, resources, or international relations (as Ireland remained a dominion of the British empire until 1949), exerted control over women's bodies and reproduction, as well as their employment opportunities in the public sphere. This move was, according to Valiulis, 'typical of post-revolutionary societies, which often consolidate their power by enacting measures against women' (1995: 127). Valiulis argues that it was Catholicism that gave the Free State the ideological buttressing for its measures against women, as the Church promoted a set of ideals for womanhood, including chastity, modesty, motherhood, and domesticity (see the encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891); *Casti Connubii* (1930); and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) for an elaboration of the idealised role of women in society).

Catholicism came to dominate what it meant to be Irish, both in the public and private spheres. Irish sexuality was regulated through the institution of marriage, which was limited to a son who would inherit the family property, and/or a daughter who could be married off to another family – if her father could afford a dowry. Sons and daughters who did not fit these prescribed roles would often have to emigrate, either to Britain, or further afield. As Tom Inglis notes 'in most families those sons and daughters not selected for marriage had a choice of remaining sexually inactive, or emigrating' (1998: 33). As Clair Wills notes, the growing alliance between the Catholic Church and nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced forms of domesticity and heterosexuality that 'eschewed the bourgeois ideals of "privacy" or "intimacy"' (2001:41), and as a result the 'construction of sexual and familial roles became the very substance of what it meant to be Irish' (Meaney 1991: 6). The putatively private space of the family home became 'deployed in the service of Catholic-

nationalist hegemony' while romantic, companionate aspects of marital domesticity, such as 'conjugal love, romance, free choice', were rejected (Wills 2001: 46). This theme of marriage as an a-romantic, functionalist institution has been examined through an anthropological lens in the previous chapter. Inglis acknowledges the figure of the Irish mother as an indispensable agent of Catholic regulation, functioning as the 'organisational link between the Catholic Church and the individual. It was she who carried through the new moral and civil code from the church and school into the home. It was she who, through a variety of social and cultural practices which were handed down through generations from mother to daughter with the support of priest and Church, produced the Catholics of modern Ireland' (1998: 179). Inglis argues that through her role in the transmission of Catholic social teaching within the home, the Irish mother was able to reclaim the respect and authority that were denied to them outside of the home. However, as Clair Wills argues, 'the hegemony of the Catholic-nationalist ideology of the family in the middle years of the twentieth century is in danger of obscuring the contest and resistance that were part of its making' (2001: 38). As Catriona Clear has observed, utilising oral history sources to provide a thick description of Irish domesticity in the twentieth century, the uniformity that can be detected in Inglis' account is misleading. While material conditions for women in both rural and economically disadvantaged areas were poor, with limited and unequal access to healthcare and housing, as well as being discriminated against by the government, in 1943, when it was decided that Children's Allowance, the universal social welfare payment, would be paid to fathers and not mothers (2000: 51-56). The domestic sphere was also the site of highly successful political organising, with the emergence of groups such as the Irish Countrywomen's Association and the Irish Housewives Association, giving a platform to women in both rural and urban Ireland, and allowing them to contribute to urgent discourses around modernisation and improvement across the nation - in contrast to the homogenous picture of domestic Ireland to be found in Inglis' work, though not particularly

more optimistic (2000: 61-95). Clear (1987) has also investigated the complex and ambiguous figure of the nun in twentieth Ireland, as religious vocation offered many Irish women access to a form of autonomy and empowerment.

Circulating Concepts of Catholic Social Control

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church also began to exercise its influence over the intimate behaviour of the Irish population during the early years of the state. In 1927, the Bishops and Archbishops of Ireland met at Maynooth for a national synod, which led to the publication of a pastoral statement, to be read at all Catholic churches. Despite the trauma of the Civil War (1922-1923) and the divisions that continued to exist and threatened to erupt into violence, the Church was preoccupied with the comportment of faithful in their private and public lives. This pastoral letter outlined to the faithful what the Catholic hierarchy considered to be the ‘perils in our path’. These perils included: ‘the dance hall, the bad book, the indecent paper, the motion picture, the immodest fashion in female dress – all of which tend to destroy the virtues characteristic of our race (1927: 528). The Manichean belief that there could be a ‘bad book’, and therefore a ‘good book’, reflects the simplistic binaries that came to shape the anxious reaction to perceived threats to public morality, as well as the Irish ‘race’ itself (reflecting the Lamarckian thinking on the mutability of ‘race’). This anxiety around popular culture was anticipated two years earlier, in 1925, with a statement targeting the ‘evils of dancing’, which was disseminated in parishes throughout the country order to prevent the holding the holding of dances (1926: 91-2). Wulff (2007) has documented the suspicion afforded to dancing at this time, as dancing in public and private was outlawed, and dancing was restricted to licensed dance halls (under the Public Dance Halls Act 1935).

Such moves reflect anxieties around what Iwan Bloch described as the 'vibrations' of modernity in his influential *The Sexual Life of our Times in its Relations to Modern Civilization* (1906), which listed the temptations of the big city (qtd in Mosse 1982: 228). In early twentieth century rural Ireland, spaces of sociality (particularly involving the mixing of genders) were regarded as a microcosm of the metropole, and its attendant dangers. These included social spaces such as dance halls and public houses. Bloch articulated the moral panic that developed around cities and sexuality, like many of his predecessors, believed that sexual vices were acquired, and that they indicated a moral failing on the part of those who indulged in practices such as homosexuality and masturbation. The excesses of the modern city were a counterpoint to the quietude and stability of rural life, which was portrayed as a bastion of respectable, healthy living.

While the hierarchy's moralising was facilitated by parish priests at pulpits throughout the country, the message was also being mediated by well-established Catholic publications. A series of pamphlets advising on issues of personal morality, published by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, were widely circulated, and were particularly aimed at educating young people. Founded in 1899, the fortunes of the near bankrupt CTSI were transformed following the establishment of the Irish Free State, with an upsurge in membership, an increase in publications, and an active role in lobbying for censorship (Martin: 2006: 57). Many such pamphlets were imported from the United States, and were circulated through dioceses across Ireland.

The subversive potential of the written word was acknowledged early in the state's existence. The Irish Censorship Board was established in 1929. After the censorship of the quasi-anthropological account *The Tailor and Ansty*, (1942) by Eric Cross, debate argued over the authority to censor creative works in Ireland. In his article, 'Sex, Censorship and the Church,' which appeared in an issue of *The Bell*, C. B. Murphy argued that the decisions of the

ensorship board were not the consequence of its members' Catholicism but 'the attempt of Victorianism to survive in Ireland long after the English people, including the English Catholics, have very sensibly dropped it.' Furthermore, Murphy argues that 'the average Irish mind has not, and perhaps never had, a properly balanced outlook upon sex. Either it runs away from sex, or it runs after it: it never seems able to stand and look at it objectively' (73). Several internationally acclaimed Irish writers such as James Joyce, Edna O'Brien, and John McGahern were banned until the 1970s, due to their descriptions of sexuality, among other 'immoral' acts.

The role of print media in the emergence of nationalism has been noted (Anderson: 1983), and cannot be underestimated in the early, nation-building years of the Irish Free State. The statements of individual bishops on topics of public morality were recorded in the annual *Irish Catholic Directory and Almanac*. These statements included Lenten Pastoral addresses, issued by the bishop and read in each church in that diocese at the beginning of Lent, a period in the Christian liturgical calendar traditionally marked by prayer and fasting. The *Irish Catholic Directory and Almanac* also collected selected sermons and speeches from every diocese, and made them available in a bound volume in every parish nationwide (in the local church or parochial house, residence of the parish priest). The Catholic hierarchy's interest in the morality of Irish citizens was also shared by a number of theologians and intellectuals. The foremost Catholic theological journal in Ireland at this time was the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. First published in 1864, it remained the most important Catholic publication, until journals such as *Doctrine and Life* and *The Furrow* appeared, and the *IER* ceased publication in 1968. *Studies*, in continuous circulation since 1912, was a small but influential organ of Jesuit thought in these years. The popular magazine *The Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, first published by the Jesuits in 1888, and still in circulation, was widely read by the laity in homes across Ireland. A similar publication, *The Irish Rosary*, was published by the Dominicans from 1897

until 1961. However, it was in the pages of the *IER* that the figure of the unmarried mother became the focus of intensified discussion at the time of the formation of the Irish Free State (See M.H. MacInerney, 'The Souper Problem in Ireland,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 18, (1921), 140-156 and 'A Postscript to the Souper Problem,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 19, (1922), 246-61. Joseph A. Glynn, 'The Unmarried Mother,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 18, (1921), 461-467. 'Sagart,' 'How to Deal with the Unmarried Mother,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 20, (1922), 145-153. R.S. Devane, 'The Unmarried Mother: Some Legal Aspects of the Problem'[2 parts], *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 22, (1924), 55-68 and 172-88. R.S. Devane, 'The Unmarried Mother and the Poor Law Commission,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 31 (1928)). According to Jim Smith (2007: 48-53), the political context to this debate surrounded negotiations between the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and the new government, relating to the state's funding provision of payment to the religious orders for the management of mother and baby homes.

The historian Maria Luddy has noted that at the advent of the Irish Free State, there was an increased perception of 'illegitimate' births, as well as an intensification of debates around the 'problem' of the unmarried mother, as well as proposed charitable responses (2001: 798). The 'unmarried mother' constructed by the *IER* writers was a young Catholic woman who found herself pregnant outside of wedlock. She was 'respectable', insofar as she did not become pregnant through prostitution. Throughout these articles, the issue of respectability re-emerges, and is intimately linked to class. The 'unmarried mother' mother constructed in the pages of the *EIR* as a 'problem' that necessitates a biopolitical solution. A dialogue emerges between those in favour of 'institutional' or 'individual' systems designed to manage the provision of welfare services to the 'unmarried mother' and her child. The latter approach, favoured by pseudonymous writer 'Sagart', advocated for a less formal system where charitable groups provided a woman with food and shelter in the lead up to, and following, a

birth, as well as facilitating the child's adoption, if the mother was unable to look after it themselves. Others called for the development of institutions like the 'Foundling' and 'Rescue' institutions, common in the United Kingdom. The location of such institutions was also the focus of concern, with calls for large, centralised centres, or small, local ones (Glynn 147; MacInerney 465-466). While this debate over social welfare concerned the state, it was inflected with distinctly sectarian overtones. 'Sagart' insisted that it was the duty of all Irish Catholics to save the souls of unmarried mother who, without adequate social protection, would engage in prostitution to support herself and her child (146). MacInerney recalls the Protestant, evangelising welfare projects known as 'Souperism', common during the Great Famine, arguing that acting on this issue was of paramount importance as the primary source of care for these women and girls were Protestant institutions that, he claims, offered aid on the condition that the child be raised as a Protestant (142). MacInerney's concerns echoed wider cultural anxieties around the religious formation of the emerging state. The material needs of mothers and children were inextricably bound up with Catholic discourses of morality and the 'soul', requiring 'protection' from nefarious outside (namely Protestant) forces.

The regulation of women's bodies, and souls, required biopolitical control through discourses of criminality. Institutions would act as a 'deterrent' against a woman's behaviour immoral behaviour, just as 'her love for the child will be a powerful deterrent to further wrongdoing' (Glynn 1921: 463). The theological and affective resonances connected with the word 'guilt' (a word which, alongside 'shame', appears frequently throughout these arguments), are associated with criminal 'wrongdoing'. The constructed 'unmarried mother' was not only an example of personal moral failing, but also of a threat to the social order in the post-independence state. Crucially, however, the 'unmarried mother' was not figured solely as a moral contaminant, but also as being susceptible to moral contamination, requiring the protection of the state. One of the most intellectually active figures in the debates around

unmarried mothers was a Jesuit priest, Fr. Richard Devane, who was heavily involved in the public morality campaigns that followed the establishment of the state; writing on the age of consent and other issues around the regulation of sexual behaviour, as well as dancehall regulation, the censorship of literature and the media, and contributing to the Committee on Evil Literature (1926) and the Carrigan Committee (1931-32) (Martin 2006: 60-61; Smith 2007: 10-11). A key element underpinning Devane's writing was the belief that the state should reflect the demography of post-partition Ireland, and institute a framework that would frame 'the legal standard of morality in true consonance with the ideals set before them by the teaching of the Catholic Church' (1924: 58). Despite being a priest, his arguments around the 'unmarried mother' rarely reference the statements of the Catholic hierarchy, but rather utilise varied academic arguments, from sociology, jurisprudence, and medical and behavioural sciences. Just as these debates positioned the 'unmarried mother' as an ambiguous figure that threatened the social order, while also in need of statutory protection, Devane's writing demonstrates a complex, hypocritical relationship to Britain. Using the conceit of 'the English mind', from which the Irish Free State must distance itself through the implementation of a legal and public policy framework that would reflect a Catholic moral sensibility, Devane utilised British social scientific research, as well as pointing to legal changes on the age of sexual consent in the occupied Six Counties, as well as the rest of Britain, that he considered exemplary. Devane's writing illustrates Greta Jones' observation that Irish and English scientific thought and practice were closely related, particularly in the area of population control (1992). The 'unmarried mother' that Devane constructs is freighted with the class prejudices of the nascent Catholic bourgeoisie, arbiters of respectability in the Irish Free State. Devane verbalises the anxieties of the middle class, writing that:

we do not ask that the daughter of the well-to-do man, who leaves a secondary school at seventeen and then lives under her father's roof until marriage should be protected by law...but we demand that the ignorant, the innocent, or the silly girl, who is forced to go out to make a living in conditions dangerous to her virtue, whether she be a domestic, or farm hand, or shop

assistant, should be safeguarded against her own inexperience and the insinuating advances of dangerous men (67-68)

From the above passage, it is clear that the respectable, bourgeois Catholic home is imagined as a safe place for the unmarried mothers, as her father will provide her, and her child, with the material provisions required to prevent her from ‘living in conditions dangerous to her virtue’, which a working class woman would have to endure in order to survive. Her father’s house is envisioned as a holding space, until she gets married, and transitions from the protection of her father to her husband. The working class ‘girl’ is depicted as ‘ignorant’, ‘innocent’, and ‘silly’, who must be ‘protected by law’. Devane’s writings problematizes youth, an approach common in both the social sciences and popular culture at the time (Devane cites the writings of G. Stanley Hall (1904), though such attitudes were challenged by Margaret Mead (1928)). For example, he writes ‘we withdraw protection just when protection is most needed, not only against others, but also as regards herself and her own turbulent emotionalism and instability (67). In addition to raising the age of consent to ‘at least eighteen, preferably nineteen’ (67), Devane advocated for the introduction of a framework, the ‘Bastardy Laws’, that would give an unmarried mother ‘legal redress’ against the father of her child (described by Devane as her ‘betrayed’), making a man legally responsible for financially supporting his illegitimate child (172). He argues that ‘where there is a mutual act involving the mutual consequences of the birth of a child, there should be mutual responsibilities. This is but mere justice’ (172). For Devane, this envisioned legal framework presented a unique opportunity for Ireland to ‘lead the way to the overthrow of the “double standard” that has polluted the social life and legislation of all civilised States, from which arises an unchristian severity to the immoral woman and a lenient tolerance to the man, the partner, more than likely the instigator, of her sin’ (67-8).

Just as Devane drew upon theories of behavioural science, he also utilised the language of medicine in order to bolster his imagined, protective legal framework, framing unregulated

sexuality as a threat to the wellbeing of the nation (specifically, the collective morality). The conflation of particular types of discourse is captured in MacInerney's description of sexual licentiousness as a 'moral pestilence', invoking patriarchal religion's established connection between personal flaws and communal suffering (143). His view betokens an essentialist attitude towards those from the working class; women and girls 'drawn from tenements, where privacy is almost impossible, girls who come from a rather low stratum of society and are rude and ignorant', recommending that these be 'detained for a year or more' (1922: 252). Such girls and women are contrasted with those raised in an atmosphere of 'respectable' bourgeois domesticity, who 'fall more through folly than vice' by being 'betrayed by some rascal'. Not only were these girls and women predisposed to pregnancy outside of marriage, they were susceptible to the contagion of other unmarried mothers. For example, 'Sagart' argues against the introduction of a large, centralised institutions, as they run the risk of exposing 'less guilty' women and girls to 'hardened' women who had become pregnant more than once (148). The Commission on the Relief of the Sick and Destitute Poor of 1925 considered unmarried mothers to be a burden on society, declaring: 'The object of our recommendations is to regulate control according to individual requirements, or in the most degraded cases, to segregate those who have become sources of evil, danger, and expense to the community'.

Internalisation of Catholic Sexual Morality

As observed above, the youth of Ireland – particularly girls and women – had been identified as particularly susceptible to moral contamination. In the absence of formal sex education in schools, and a silence around sexuality and the body in Irish culture, priests were often in the position of educating the populace in intimate matters, assuming an agony aunt role through CTSI publications, and other small domestic pamphlets. Even when discussing marriage, sex is not a point of elucidation in such works. For example, in Daniel J. Lord's *M*

is for Marriage (1962) sex was not considered to be a factor in the success of a marriage, and was not discussed. With the Church, as sole moral authority, abdicating its responsibility to educate the faithful in issues of reproduction, the sexual ignorance as depicted in the works of Messenger (1973) and Scheper-Hughes (2001) thrived. As with many CTSI publication, pamphlets were often produced in the United States and subsequently redistributed to Irish youths. An example of one such work was written by another Jesuit, Fr. Joseph McGloin, who wrote a fictional account of teenage dating in the 1950s (published in Dublin in 1960). *What Not to Do on a Date* admonished the youth against ‘imitating the junk that comes out of Hollywood’, with the priest character appearing in dialogue with four young people, two men and two women (7-13). The priest maintained a strong line of self-denial, arguing that ‘there is no such thing as innocent necking’. While ‘necking is not wrong *in itself*’. It is still not to be indulged in...as you perhaps know it can become a habit, and once that habit is established, it is only a short step to sin, for one thing necking alone will be pretty tame after a while. It is very hard too, to believe that people engage in necking just to show affection’. As with the clerical writings that framed female virtue as prone to degradation, once compromised (institutionalised women being referred to as ‘first time offenders’ and so forth), McGloin advocated for the maintenance of total purity in order to avoid total reputational ruin. Underlining the affective force of such warnings, McGloin developed the F.E.A.R. rule for ‘girls’ to observe when being courted by young men: ‘if kisses are Frequent, Enduring, and Ardent there can hardly be any just reason for them’. While these priestly columns are written in a benevolent tone, girls and women were left in no doubt as to the potential negative consequences of illicit sex. Leane (2014: 29) writes that young girls were euphemistically warned to ‘mind yourself’ when around men, lest they be ‘taken away to a home’. The threat of institutionalisation and as a way of preserving ‘respectability’ in Irish society – particularly

rural Ireland - has been noted by Saris (2000), who underscores the link between the institution and social memory.

The archives held by the Central Catholic Library in Dublin have many such examples of pamphlets written by (ostensibly) celibate men who deign to offer advice to young people, especially young women, on their intimate relationships. One pamphlet by Fr. Thomas Finnegan called, *Questions Young Women Ask* (1965: 1-16), promulgated a particularly self-denying understanding of love. Drawing upon Pauline thought, Finnegan argues that:

true love is not self-seeking. True love is unselfish. To be unselfish is to suffer. Therefore to love is to suffer. Some of the pop songs say that as soon as love begins, suffering ceases. It is the exact opposite. A person who will not suffer will not love. No matter what he says.

This advice draws upon a perceived cultural attitudinal change in values around sexuality, brought about through the modernising influence of popular music (popular song and dance being a particular target of Catholic scrutiny in the 1930s and 1940s; see Wulff 2007). In response to a ‘question’ about marriage as permission for immodesty, Finnegan argues for the power of shame in regulating personal behaviour. ‘Modesty is not a hard virtue to practice because God has implanted in each person an instinct of shame and fear to protect the powers of sex and the holiness of marriage...because of original sin...our bodies are in revolt against conscience’. Here, Finnegan invokes the moral authority of nature to defend the cultural and sexual politics of shame and fear propagated by the Catholic Church, as well as invoking the postlapsarian moment – the originary site of misogyny in Abrahamic faiths- as a reason for sexual urges. The panicked nature of Finnegan’s advice is comical in its urgency and sincerity. Even kissing was considered ‘mortally sinful’ for those outside of wedlock, so ‘bad thoughts’ were a particular site in need of tight regulation. In order to deflect such intrusive notions, young women were advised to ‘Say quickly: “Jesus save me – Mary help me” and then think of something else’. If the reader was a ‘domestic sort of girl’, it was suggested that she focus

her thoughts on ‘the little house that you and your future husband will live in and decide on the colour schemes for the various rooms’. If the reader did not aspire to keep house, Finnegan suggested that ‘the athletic type of girl...pretend...that an uncle has given you money to buy a car with. By the time you have decided upon the relative merits of a Morris Minor and a Ford Anglia, the bad thoughts will have been forgotten’.

Lay Catholics were also mobilising, for the cause of social purity during these years. Chief among these was the Legion of Mary. Founded in Dublin in 1921 by Frank Duff, the new organisation’s first major campaign combined its Catholic moral ethos with concerns over public health, and with the support of the police effectively closed down the brothels in ‘Monto’, Dublin’s notorious red-light district, by 1925 (Luddy 2007: 214-219). In urban centres outside of Dublin, other campaigns were initiated, In Limerick, The Mary Immaculate Modest Dress and Deportment Crusade was founded at the Mary Immaculate teacher training college in Limerick in 1927, in direct response to the publication of the bishops' views on ‘immodest dress in women's fashion’ following the Maynooth Synod statement. As educators tasked with imparting Catholic values to their students, these women signed a pledge to avoid ‘immodest dress’; which included, among other things, a commitment to a minimal length of dresses and sleeves, the avoidance of trousers, and the wearing of stockings to cover the flesh (St Clair nd: 45). Such movements by lay Catholics were preempted by the interinfluencing forces of Catholic teaching, as well as concerns over public health (as evidenced in the Monto raids). As Luddy (2007) outlines, popular belief in Ireland was that sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis were caused by British soldiers (such as those garrisoned near the Monto district, or at the Curragh in Kildare). However, the problem of sexually transmitted diseases did not go away with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Rather, Catholic moralists and legislators found a new scapegoat for venereal disease: prostitutes. Here, as with the aforementioned pamphlets, we see the interinfluencing discourses of public health,

religious morality, and law in the management of venereal disease and illicit sexuality, and control of the public sphere.

Control of Private Sexuality and the Public Sphere

In 1927, a commission of inquiry investigated the incidence of venereal disease and the control of transmission. Contrary to popular belief – and the moral panic sparked by prostitutes in Monto - Dr McDonnell noted that venereal diseases were being spread by people who could not be considered prostitutes. The prevalence of venereal disease was ‘a menace to the maintenance and advancement of the physical and intellectual standards of the race’ as it was often transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy (1927: 13). The figure of the mother as vulnerable, and in need of statutory protection for the good of the Irish race, had been identified. Venereal diseases, as mentioned in the inquiry, reflected the moral condition of the state, underscoring the importance of biopolitical control upon the Irish population for the pronatalist government. The findings were repressed.

Here, we see the intimate lives of Irish citizens fall under the biopolitical scrutiny of the Irish state. Such attempts to control the Irish population affected a number of domains. While the healthcare system was one of those, other aspects of Irish society became sites of anxiety for the state. Soon, the government established a number of commissions and made legislative changes in order to regulate the private conduct of Irish citizens. In 1926 the Free State Minister for Justice, Kevin O'Higgins, established the Committee of Inquiry on Evil Literature. Following its report, The Censorship of Publications Act, 1929 (which followed on from the Censorship of Films Act, 1923) prohibited anything considered to be ‘suggestive of or inciting to sexual immorality or unnatural vice’ (Censorship of Publications Act 1929, Article 1.2). A primary objective of this legislation was to prevent access to birth control

information, a recurrent topic in the aforementioned Catholic publications in the early years of the Irish Free State. Such attempts were made to control the public sphere, and render such social problems invisible in Ireland. This tight control of the public sphere would last for decades, with its vestiges still felt as I write this thesis.

In Dail debates, the use of contraception was described as ‘race suicide’ (Censorship of Publications Act Bill, Second Reading, Dáil Debates, 18 October 1928). Parallels can be found in other parts of Europe at this time. For example, in France, concerns over depopulation, led to the censorship of contraceptive information and the creation of pronatalist organisations (Adams 1990:71). In 1930, the papal encyclical *Casti Connubii* detailed the church’s rejection of contraception, reaffirmation of its opposition to divorce, and stressed the sanctity of marriage and reproduction. This encyclical considered children to be integral to marriage, and vital for the survival of the human race. As well as a prohibition on birth control, its teachings on medical intervention during pregnancy are also notable, given the countless controversies around maternal care in Ireland. In *Casti Connubii*, the issue of maternal mortality was addressed in relation to the survival of the child: it stated that even if the mother’s life was in jeopardy during childbirth, the child must not be aborted. It emphasised that the mother’s sacrifice for the life of the child would be duly rewarded in heaven, and Catholic doctors should not interfere. The currency of this ideology can be understood in relation to the death of Savita Halappanavar, and the subsequent controversy and legislative change that it provoked (to be discussed later in this chapter).

While the encyclicals of the Roman Catholic Church originated in the Vatican, religion was not an impersonal, foreign prescription in Ireland, but a very palpable cultural presence that influenced people’s lives (see Lepicard 1998; Inglis 1998). The special status of the family was gradually enshrined in legislation, with the pronatalist agenda of the new state taking shape. Here one can draw parallels, and contrasts between European neighbours at this time.

In Germany, biopolitical control focused on eliminating dysgenic elements from the population through the deployment of a range of practices, such as abortion, sterilisation, and euthanasia. As in Ireland, mothers occupied a special place in the national imaginary, considered protectors of the pure German bloodline; women considered biologically beneficial to the nation, would in turn benefit both financially and socially (Pine 1997: 44). In the fiscally challenged Irish Free State, the provision of health and welfare services was ceded to religious orders, thus establishing what Smyth (2007) has described as an ‘architecture of containment’, a system of institutionalisation that functioned as a method of biopolitical control, as ‘unmarried mothers’ and their progeny were considered a dysgenic influence on the emergent bourgeois Catholic state. Motherhood in Ireland was marked by a particular politics, which required marriage, and its cognates of money and security, to be deemed respectable, while others were treated as a source of contagion requiring a biopolitical intervention for the health and morality of the population.

The Carrigan Commission was established in 1930 by Eoin O’Duffy, the chief commissioner of An Garda Síochána, to investigate sexual crimes and abuses in the Irish Free State. Testimony was heard from a range of legal and medical experts, including George Cussen, the senior justice of the Metropolitan district court, and Dr Dorothy Stopford Price from the Irish Women Doctors Committee. Included in their recommendations was the suggestion that the age of consent be raised to the age of eighteen (reflecting Catholic thinkers such as the aforementioned Devane, who had testified before the commission), and the removal of the reasonable clause of belief. It was noted that girls between the ages of sixteen and nineteen were a cause for particular concern, because of their ignorance around sexuality and reproduction, and thus it was suggested to provide sex education. Due to the explicit description of sexual abuses contained in the report, and the concerns about such revelations damaging the moral standard of the country and revealing the hypocrisy at the heart of the state, it was not

publicly released (Kennedy 2000: 354-363). Notably, Smyth posits that it is probable that the decision to suppress the report was linked to fears around damage to Ireland's international reputation (2004: 214). This impulse to cover-up sexual scandals is one that would reemerge throughout the twentieth century (Raftery and O'Sullivan 1999).

The 1937 Constitution, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, reflected a change in the governing party, from those who had favoured signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1921 and won the subsequent Civil War (1922-23), to those who had opposed the partition of the island of Ireland and later formed the Fianna Fail party in 1926, coming to power in 1927. This marked a shift to a more distinctly ethno-nationalistic turn in Irish politics. The 1937 constitution crystallised this, defining the limitations of citizenship, severing ties with Britain, and removing ceremonial legacies of colonial rule, such as the oath of allegiance to the British monarch (though the state would remain part of the Commonwealth until a republic was declared in 1949). It delineated a new Irish identity by rejecting the partition of the island, claiming in Articles 2 and 3 that the nation of Ireland encompassed the entire island, rather than the twenty-six counties previously stipulated in Article 11 of the 1921 Anglo-Irish treaty. The primacy of the Irish language was asserted, being designated the official language of the nation, despite dwindling numbers of *gaelgoiri* (native speakers who communicated exclusively through Irish).

As noted previously, the symbolic and political significance of the maternal figure emerged from a specific cultural moment of anticolonial struggle and post-independence self-identification (McMullan 1996). It is, however, worthwhile to return to the treatment of reproduction elsewhere in Europe, and in other postcolonial societies in the early decades of the twentieth century, and how the politics of reproduction retains currency today. The status accorded to women under *Bunreacht na hÉirenn* is not dissimilar to that of women in Mussolini's Italy, where motherhood was deemed to be a social duty (Willson 2012). Similarly, in post-World War One France, contraception was outlawed in an attempt to

repopulate. Maryann Valiulis has compared post-independence Ireland to fascist Italy, as both states ‘took their gender ideology from the same source – the papacy’ (1995: 177). There are parallels to be drawn between the Irish case and that of India, which too would be partitioned along sectarian lines a quarter of a century after Ireland. The work of Veena Das is particularly useful in understanding the power of the state in shaping the intimate lives of subjects. Focusing on language, Das proffers a gendered account of the role of the state, and how the state is embedded in people’s lives through political decision-making. Describing the events following partition in 1947, and subsequent laws which were developed to ‘rescue’ abducted women, Das demonstrates how the law was implemented to characterise the nation as masculine and paternalistic, with the purpose of safeguarding the honour of the nation. The law portrayed women as primarily sexual and reproductive beings who were being held under duress, which Das argues further entrenched ‘kinship norms of purity and honour as they were transformed into the law of the state’ (2007: 25). Das contends that the state subsequently became the matrix for reasserting the male authority of the husband and father within the domestic sphere. Through her analysis of state violence, Das illustrates how the nation became reified as both ‘a distant power and one that burrowed itself into the nooks and crannies of everyday life’ (2007: 161). This was achieved through the “representation and performance of its rules in modes of rumour, gossip, mockery and mimetic representation” (2007:162). Lauren Berlant’s comments on foetal rights and citizenship in an American context have a particular resonance in Irish culture. She writes that ‘the reproducing woman is no longer cast as potentially productive, except insofar as she procreates: her capacity for other kinds of creative agency has become an obstacle for national reproduction’ (1997:100). In order to reproduce the social order, as delineated in the 1937 constitution, the agency of Irish women in the public sphere had to be curtailed.

Female Penetration of the Irish Public Sphere

While the status quo remained in place for decades, the accession of Sean Lemass to the office of Taoiseach in 1959, and the movement of De Valera to the largely symbolic role of President, signalled a socio-political shift. Ireland started to move away from policies of insularity and protectionism, and the state experienced foreign direct investment for the first time. The role of the state in relation to the family, however, was slow to shift. Crucially, women continued to remain outside of the public sphere. Irish economic policy up to that point had favoured the principle of ‘subsidiarity’, as advocated in the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). This principle, articulated by the Church as oppositional to both communist and capitalist ideologies, advocated that decision making ought to take place at the lowest practical level. The most controversial example of Church opposition to a government initiative was the ‘Mother and Child Scheme’ of 1951, a universal health scheme for pregnant and nursing mothers and their children up to the age of sixteen, which failed when it was opposed by the Catholic hierarchy. As recorded by Arensberg and Kimball (2001), Irish women tended to marry older husbands, and having renounced public service occupations before their wedding, faced a stark power imbalance within the home, and Irish society. Still, in their capacity as a housewife, Irish women displayed political clout, as noted by Clear (2000). While the Irish Countrywomen’s Association were not avowedly feminist, they did advocate for property rights and access to their own money for women during the 1950s. The Irish government only started to take action on women’s rights in the following decade, adopting the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1968, and establishing a Commission on the Status of Women in 1969. The international focus on the rights of women spread to Ireland in the 1970s, with the emergence of what has been popularly referred to as the Women’s Movement. In 1971, a group calling themselves the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement published a pamphlet titled *Chains and Change*, alluding to the contemporary moment in Irish

society when Irish women faced both inequality and intensified mobilisation. This manifesto declared that: ‘upon marriage a woman in Ireland enters a state of civil death’. The Women’s Political Association was formed in the same year in an attempt to increase female political representation at local and national levels, and when the Commission on the Status of Women finally reported in 1972, their recommendations focused on issues around equality in pay, taxation, education, social security and law. The agitation around the liberalisation of ‘family planning’ legislation was spearheaded by the Women’s Movement.

In 1971, members of the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement travelled to Belfast by train to buy contraceptives in protest against the law prohibiting the importation and sale of contraceptives in the Republic of Ireland. Upon their return to Connolly Station, Dublin, they openly flaunted their contraceptives without reproach from authorities, as demonstrators chanted ‘let them through’ and ‘enforce the constitution’. This demonstration was sensational, as it was a deliberate action in the public sphere, thus highlighting that which had been deemed private: the sexual female body. As will be shown, such ambiguity was, and continued to be, a hallmark of the Irish state’s attitudes towards the regulation of sexuality until 2018 (though at the time of writing, legislation permitting access to abortion has yet to passed in Dail Eireann, and Irish women still have to travel abroad, or consume illegal abortifacients in Ireland). The Censorship Act, 1929 had rendered it illegal to publicise the use of contraceptives, as it did the promotion of treatment for sexually transmitted infections, but prohibition of the sale and importation of contraceptive devices was not prohibited until the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1935. In actuality, by 1965, an estimated 15,000 women were using an oral contraceptive, which circumvented the prohibition on the import on contraceptives under the 1935 Act because it was prescribed as a ‘cycle regulator’, and not as a contraceptive (Maher, 1968). However, following the publication of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, Kieran O’Driscoll, the Master of Holles Street Maternity Hospital, announced that the contraceptive

pill would no longer be prescribed by the hospital. The hospital had operated a family planning clinic, and since 1967 had offered the pill to ‘couples who felt in conscience able to take it’ – about half of whom were happy to do so according the hospital’s annual report (Farrar 1994: 152-154). Shortly after the closure of the family planning clinic at Holles Street, a new enterprise known as the Irish Fertility Guidance Company, later known as the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) was established in Merrion Square, Dublin. The IFPA bypassed legal penalties by providing contraception free-of-charge to its clients (who were requested to make a ‘donation’), and within its first decade operated five clinics within Dublin, as well as regional services in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Bray and Navan (Whyte 1980: 403). The growth of the IFPA throughout the nation, as well as the dispensation of contraceptives ‘for medical reasons’, highlights the disjuncture between the state’s official attitudes, and the private morality of its citizens (Ferriter 2004: 573). However, there were barriers to access: geographical, financial, and awareness. Access to family planning clinics was dependent on ability to pay for its services, which precluded large sections of the population. Due to restrictions on the promotion of matters of sexual health, people became aware of the availability of contraception through word-of-mouth. As a result, access to contraception became the preserve of the middle classes, and subsequently excluded many gay men who, unable to access a ‘family planning’ centre, were forced to acquire condoms from outside of the state. The emphasis of the language of the family, marriage, and the rights that are associated with these institutions are brought into sharp relief with the McGee case in 1973.

Mary McGee, a 27-year-old mother of four, took a case against the Attorney General because she could not gain access to contraceptives. McGee had, for health reasons, ordered contraceptives that were subsequently impounded by the Irish customs service. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled that the relevant section of the 1935 Act was unconstitutional, as it breached the right to privacy in marriage, and as a result, Mary McGee was entitled to import

contraceptives. The 1935 Act did not criminalise the procurement of contraceptives from abroad. This illustrates the Irish state's stance of relying upon services outside of the jurisdiction (almost always to the United Kingdom) to clarify the ambiguous position of its laws pertaining to the intimate lives of its citizens (such as the Irish queer diaspora, especially during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, women and girls seeking abortions or forced to travel under duress to avoid reputational damage to their families, or access for gay men to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)). Legal clarification was long overdue: the myth of unnaturally high numbers of women requiring "cycle regulators" being an example of how official hypocrisy towards sexuality was tolerated, and how impotent the 'Catholic ethos' of the population was. Walsh J. of the Supreme Court, declared that 'The sexual life of a husband and wife is of necessity and by its nature an area of particular privacy. If the husband and wife decide to limit their family, or to avoid having children by the use of contraceptives, it is a matter particularly within the joint decision of the husband and wife, and one into which the State cannot intrude, unless the intrusion can be justified by the exigencies of the common good' (Memo on the Health (Family Planning) Bill, 1978, in relation to the McGee case, 26 January 1979 (N.A.I., 2009/135/194)).

It is of great irony that a constitutional ruling, citing an individual's right to privacy, was a catalyst in changing public health, albeit at a glacial pace. The McGee judgement was a legal landmark, inevitable considering the growing reach of 'family planning' clinics and oral contraceptives: "The question was no longer whether the law should be relaxed. The law was relaxed. The Supreme Court had legalised the importation of contraceptives at least for married couples" (Whyte 1980: 409-410). Whyte noted that there was resistance to the judgement among hard-line Catholic organisations. There were others who welcomed the verdict, however, including Barry Desmond (later the Minister of Health in the 1982-1987 coalition government, during which the first AIDS cases were identified in Ireland), who claimed that

the availability of contraceptives was a fundamental human right (1980: 411). While the public seemed to be in favour of liberalisation of contraceptive legislation, the Fine Gael-Labour coalition attempted to introduce legislation in 1974 to licence chemists to sell contraceptives to married couples (1980: 412-413). The divisive nature of the issue soon became apparent, as the Fine Gael Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave and other deputies helped to defeat their own bill by opposing it in a free vote in 1974.

From parliamentary debates on the issue of contraception, there emerged concerns around legalisation of contraception and the introduction of abortion, which also raised questions over Ireland's cultural identity, with one senator arguing that: 'Their [pro-choice groups] goal is the anglicisation of our Irish way of life and the removal from Irish life of everything that distinguishes it from life in England' (Seanad Éireann deb., lxxvi, 4 (14 Nov. 1973), available at <http://historicaldebates.oireachtas.ie/S/0076/S.0076.197311140006.html> [09 May 2011]). Professor Patrick Michael Quinlan went on to describe contraceptives as abortifacients: 'Many of the pills at present have certain abortifacient characteristics...Anyone, however, should be in no doubt but that future research on those pills will be directed towards producing a morning-after pill, the one that will work by producing an early abortion' (Prof. Quinlan, Seanad Éireann deb., lxxvii, 261 (21 Feb. 1974), available at <http://historicaldebates.oireachtas.ie/S/0077/S.0077.197402210003.html> [09 May 2011]). These comments anticipate the contentious debate over reproductive rights that would dominate the sociocultural and political landscape for the next four decades, including at the time of writing. The government changed in 1977, and under pressure to finally legislate following the McGee ruling, Fianna Fail Minister for Health, Charles Haughey introduced the Health (Family Planning) Act, 1979, which made contraception available to married couples on prescription from their doctor. The legislation sought to provide, in Haughey's own words, 'an Irish solution to an Irish problem' (Ferriter 2009: 423). Haughey consulted senior Catholic figures, with both

parties in agreement that the legislation should be limited. The Catholic hierarchy stated opposition to the involvement of the Health Boards, fearing their liberalising attitude towards contraception, and vehemently rejected the suggestion that contraception be made available to unmarried persons, regardless of age. Despite the slow pace of change around women's rights and access to contraception, a reaction began to emerge from Catholic activists and legislators (most notably PLAC (Protection of Life Amendment Campaign) and SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child)).

Despite the strongly pronatalist tone of the 1937 constitution, anti-abortion activists agitated for further safeguarding for the preborn child. The 2018 referendum has its origins in 1983, when a specific constitutional prohibition on abortion was introduced. Anti-abortion groups believed that the existing Constitutional Articles 40.3.1 and 40.3.2 could be interpreted as allowing for abortion access in specific circumstances, and that clearer legislation was necessary. Groups opposed to legislative change argued that any constitutional provisions regarding the rights of the unborn child would invariably lead to greater confusion. The aforementioned articles outline the following:

- 1) The State recognises in its laws to respect, and as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate the personal right of the citizen.
- 2) The State shall, in particular, by its laws protect as best it may from unjust attack and, in the case of injustice done, vindicate the life, person, good name, and property right of every citizen.

Following a contentious campaign, Article 40.3.3, the Eighth Amendment to the constitution, was introduced through plebiscite in 1983. The provision of this article asserts that 'the State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right'. However, nine years later, the article was subject to legal challenge

in the *Attorney General vs. X*, popularly referred to as the X Case. This case involved a 14 year old girl who was impregnated as the result of a rape. Faced with a constitutional prohibition on termination, the girl threatened suicide if forced to give birth. Following legal wrangling, it was established, through the Supreme Court, that the aforementioned amendment permitted a pregnant person to travel outside of the jurisdiction to access an abortion if their life was at risk, including suicidal ideation. Another referendum, held that same year, which would have been the Twelfth Amendment to the constitution, proposed that suicidality was not sufficient grounds to allow an abortion. This referendum was rejected. The above interpretation influenced the outcome of the C Case, in which a 13-year-old who had been raped and whose parents would not allow her to travel to access an abortion, was allowed to access an abortion in the United Kingdom. Through the constitutional prohibition on abortion, and continued use of abortion services in the United Kingdom, Irish lawmakers are acknowledging the failure of Irish abortion policy. Through the traffic of women from Ireland to the United Kingdom, the State allows for the continuation of a myth of sexual purity among the Irish population. Just as in the foundational years of the Irish State, permissive, Protestant Britain was constructed as a moral counterpoint to holy, Catholic Ireland, with the island still refusing to officially acknowledge the lived reality of its sexual subjects, instead adhering to a narrative that criminalises, impoverishes, and endangers its women (a logic that, for several years, affected users of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis in the Irish GLBT community. This will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter). The women whose bodies were at the centre of legal cases were anonymised, and given letters: Miss X, Ms A, Ms B, Miss C, and Miss D. Their suffering was transformed into symbolism, representing the biopolitical violence inflicted upon women. Just as institutions functioned to invisibilise forms of sexuality that were deemed unworthy of respectability, the situation up to May 2018 regarding abortion access replicated the same inclusionary/exclusionary dyad, with women who needed access to abortion being forced to

seek medical care outside of the gaze of the state, but also outside of the normalising gaze of a culture that largely does not permit the discussion of experiences of abortion (or around HIV, to give another example to be discussed later), though the run-up to the 2018 referendum did allow for a wider mediatisation of abortion stories than at any time in the nation's history. However, the personal stories of figures in the Irish public eye are only a tiny fraction of the narratives that emerge out of the 12 abortions performed on Irish women daily (as the figure popularly cited in the media suggests).

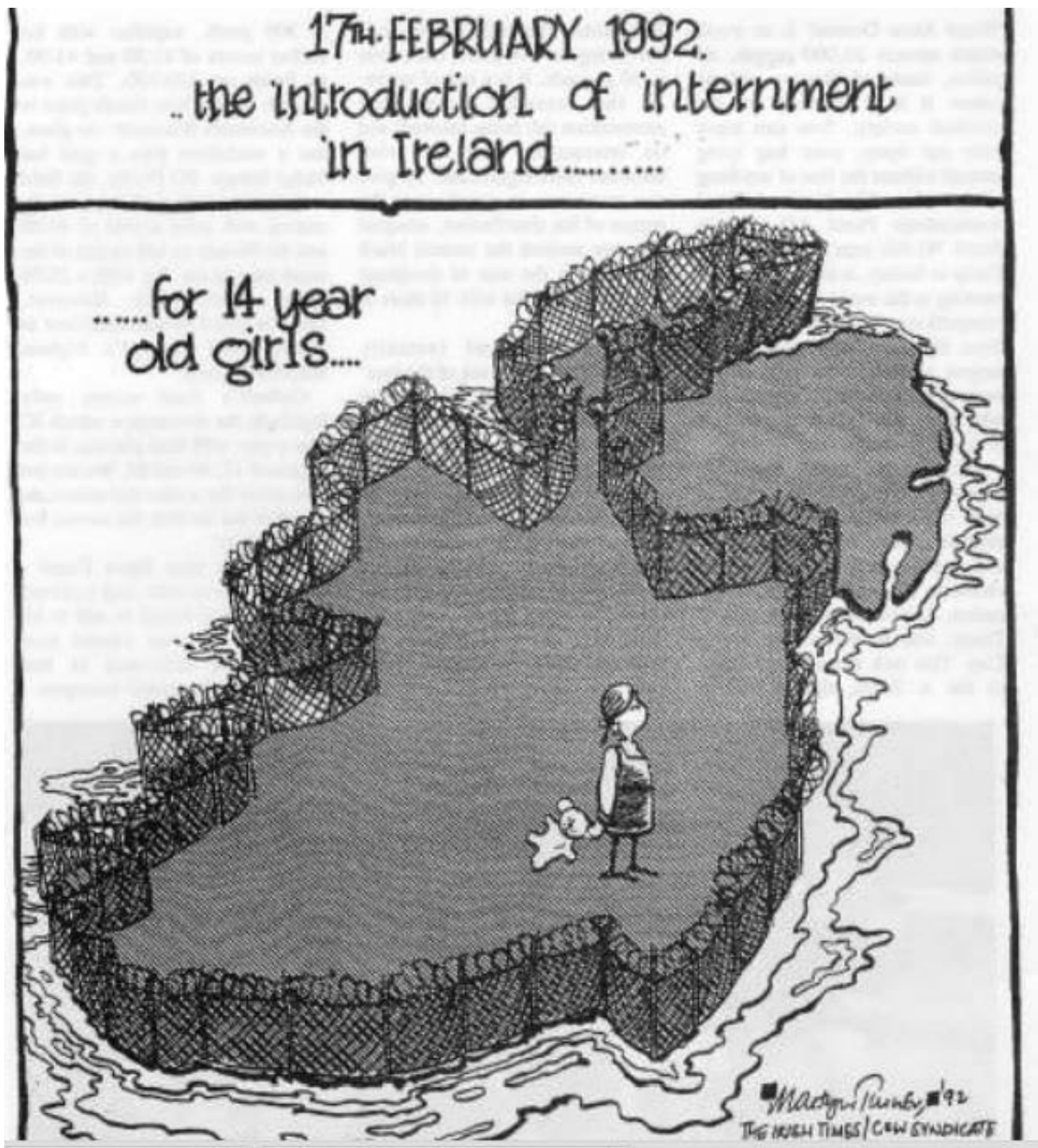


Figure 1 Irish Times X Case Cartoon

Like the Tuam Babies case, the re-emergence of the story of Ann Lovett during the 2018 abortion referendum campaign is illustrative of Ireland's unsettled history, in relation to reproduction and morality. At a time when the introduction of the Eighth Amendment was being debated in 1983, fifteen-year-old Ann Lovett, of Granard, in Longford, became pregnant. Details of the conception, such as the father of the child, have remained a mystery since January

31, 1984, when Ann went to the Marian grotto near the Catholic Church in Granard. It is at this site that Ann gave birth to an infant son, who died shortly after being born. Within hours, Ann, too, was dead following postpartum haemorrhage. The lonely death of Ann Lovett has been shrouded in mystery, along with details of her life and pregnancy. However, much like the Marian statue at the grotto where she died, Ann Lovett has passed into Irish culture as being symbolic of a maternity diametrically opposed to the values of Irish Catholicism and the particular cult of motherhood that it espoused. The contrast between the two figures inspired the poet Paula Meehan to write the poem '*The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks*'. In the poem, Meehan animates the inanimate icon, to undercut to religious and moral attitudes of Granard, and condemn their silence around her pregnancy, and after her death, as well as the absence of divine intervention as Lovett died at the sacred site. Through the poem, the event has had an enduring cultural resonance over the decades.

The work caught the public's attention in November 2012, at a vigil for Savita Halappanavar, a 31-year-old Indian dentist who had died of septicemia and multiple organ failure following a septic miscarriage at 17 weeks. Having requested a termination, Halappanavar was refused, told by a nurse that 'This is a Catholic country'. The story attracted international attention, and the parallels between the Lovett and Halappanavar cases lead to Meehan dedicating the poem to the latter when she read it at the vigil. Both stories have entered the vernacular as examples of an archaic period of Catholic social control, albeit one that has not fully passed, and still puts the lives of women at risk. The story of Ann Lovett has become a folkloric allegory for the lethal consequences of the church-state nexus, with Granard functioning as a synecdochical representation of an insular Ireland where respectability, and the privacy and autonomy of the family, as the basic unit of society, was respected by 'outsiders' (with locals who spoke to media being ostracised as a result). As another cultural

representation of the Lovett case, the folk song *Middle of the Island* by Christy Moore, observed: ‘Everybody knew, nobody said’.

While an ethnography of silence is difficult to record, one can witness the power of cultural silence through moments, like the death of Savita Halappanavar, when Ireland’s legacy of sexual shame becomes tangible and contemporary. As with the Tuam Babies story in 2014, the Ann Lovett case re-emerged in 2018, with two articles by the *Irish Times* journalist Rosita Boland. The first article was written to mark what would have been Lovett’s fiftieth birthday, and the second featured an interview with her boyfriend, Richard ‘Ricky’ O’Donnell. The latter was the first time he, or anyone, who had known Ann Lovett intimately had spoken to the media (outside of short descriptions of her personality from friends). Crucially, it was also the first time the Irish public had seen the face of a girl who had been transformed from a hapless schoolgirl to an iconoclast of victimhood and shame. The interview itself reinforced the contemporary understanding of the case as an example of the pernicious alliance of church and state in 1980s Ireland, as well as the code of ‘respectability’ that preserved reputations and concealed that which was deemed shameful. Crucially, however, was the timing of the articles. Published weeks away from the abortion vote, the story of Ann Lovett, who was secretly pregnant at the time of the debates over the insertion of the Eighth Amendment, was framed as a reminder of why that amendment needs to be removed. As with the case of Savita Halappanavar, whose death remobilised the pro-choice movement in Ireland, the Lovett story (though arguably more confused than before the articles were published) served to emphasize the mortal danger associated with giving birth in Ireland since 1983.

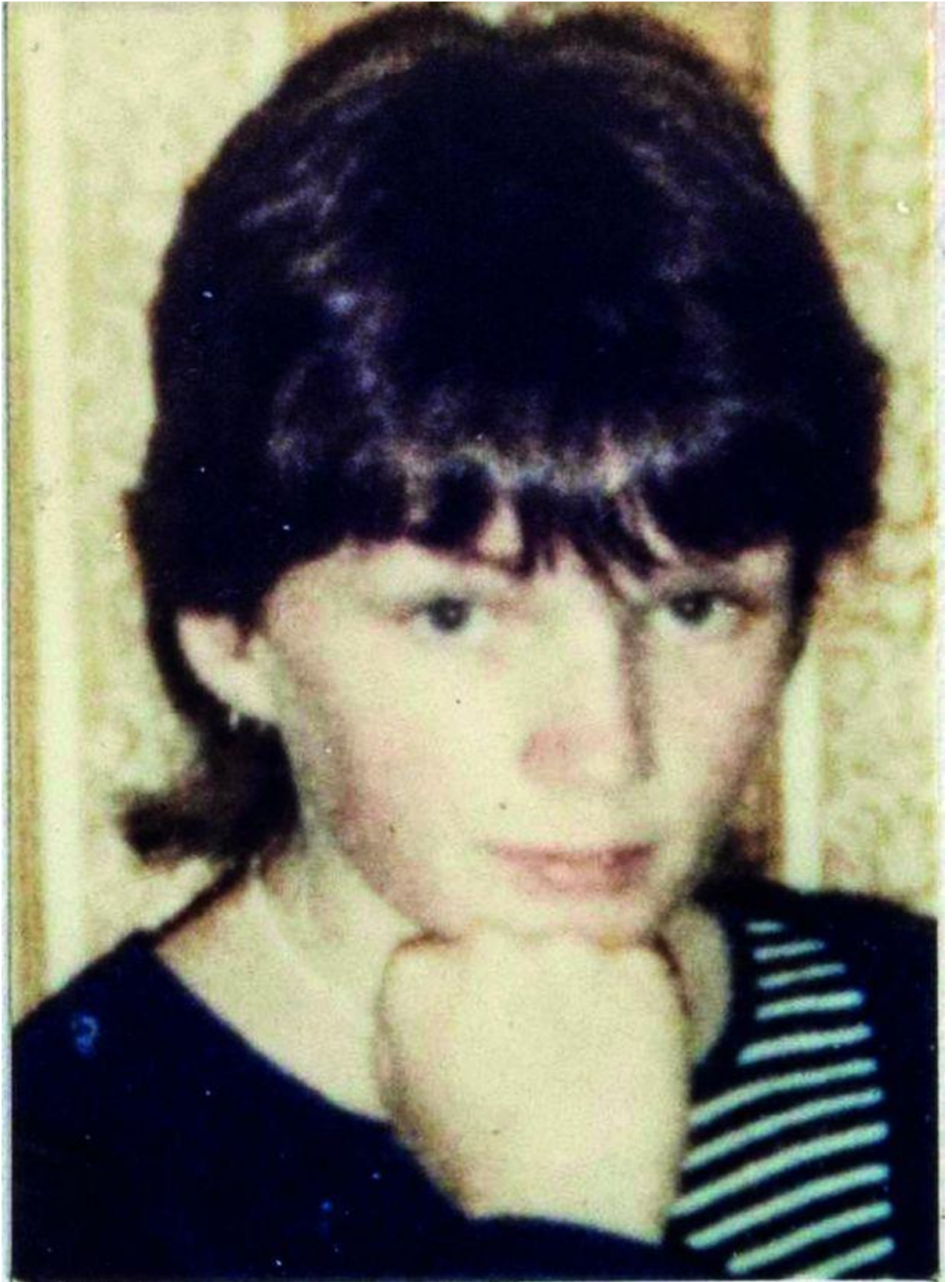


Figure 2 Ann Lovett

At a cultural moment when the language of human rights has particular currency in debates around sexuality (see the press releases of Irish non-governmental organisations who work with sexual and gender minorities, or the 2015 same-sex marriage campaign for numerous examples), this discourse has particular weight in relation to the issue of abortion access for Irish women. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has cited the Eighth Amendment as leading to ‘cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment’ to women who are forced to travel abroad for healthcare, for while the Eighth Amendment is most closely associated with abortion access, the legislation also has an impact on women’s ability to have consent over their medical care while pregnant. The only recourse of those with ‘crisis pregnancies’, as the State refers to them, is to travel. The ability to leave the country is, of course, dependent on access to funds and citizenship status that allows freedom of movement. The cultural attitude towards abortion has shifted noticeably however, with the Citizens Assembly in 2017, which reflected a majority in support of liberalised abortion access, and several government ministers in favour of change, including the Minister for Health, Simon Harris. By January 2018, when the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, announced that a plebiscite would be held in May 2018, all the leaders of the main political parties in Ireland were in favour of legislative change.

Shifting Spheres of Activism

Activism around the issue played upon the shame and secrecy that have shaped Irish policy to sexuality since the twentieth century, and agitated by protesting in novel ways that made public the private experiences of those affected by the Irish law on abortion. One direct action activist group, called Speaking of I.M.E.L.D.A (an acronym for Ireland Making England the Legal Destination for Abortion) drew attention to the connection between Ireland and the United Kingdom, or rather the dependence of the former upon the latter in abdicating

responsibility for the reality of abortion for women in Ireland. The group launched a ‘knicker-bombing’ campaign in 2016, targeting a diaspora fundraiser for Fine Gael, and managing to place a pair of knickers, emblazoned with the words ‘Repeal the 8th’, on the Taoiseach’s plate. The group also tied a giant pair of knickers around the gates of Leinster House (the houses of parliament) in Dublin to attract attention to the issue. Alongside such direct action moves, the group started an online campaign, through the use of the hashtag #knickersforchoice. By focusing on this censured topic, such protests are a form of washing a nation’s dirty laundry in public (and bring forth resonances of Magdalene inmates who were expected to symbolically wash away their ‘sins’). This drawing of attention to Ireland’s shame around sexuality, and shameful attitude towards non-normative sexualities and practices, has been a recurrent feature of protest and discourse around abortion in Ireland in recent years. The emergence of social media, as noted, has been harnessed in innovative ways to raise consciousness around reproductive rights. The affordances of Twitter, and other social media platforms have allowed for the aggregation and articulation of a feminist politics, from the #everydaysexism campaign to the #metoo movement, transcending geographical limits in a way that mirrors the transnational, structural barriers to gender equality and reproductive rights. With regard to #MarRef and #Repealthe8th, Twitter has become as much of an ideological battleground, as it is a space for organising protest. Tracey J. Hayes points to the ability of social networks such as Twitter to function as ‘the space where the protest occurred rather than the expected usual functionality of only circulating the protest’ (2017:119). Social media allows for connectivity between individuals, and community making (through hashtags like #knowyourrepealers), as well as virtual protest. The interplay between the virtual, the symbolic, and the real, can be witnessed in the #tweetyourperiod movement, launched by the comedian Grainne Maguire, who tweeted detailed of her menstrual cycle to then Taoiseach Enda Kenny. As with the Speaking of I.M.E.L.D.A protests, #tweetyourperiod invited attention to the hidden quotidian,

an issue stigmatised and silenced in popular culture (female fertility and sexuality). Recalling Mary Douglas (1966), the cultural revulsion directed towards orifices and excreta is potent, but the humour of #tweetyourperiod served to undercut aversion to menstruation by redirecting attention to the discrimination against women and their healthcare.

With the campaign to Repeal the Eighth amendment, recent years have seen an attempt at redressing the shame around non-normative sexualities in Irish culture. While logics of isolation and stigmatisation persisted through forced travel for healthcare and risking prosecution for accessing illegal abortion pills (a sentence of up to fourteen years), there developed a greater openness around discussing the issue. Outside of direct action protest and ‘hashtag activism’, black sweaters emblazoned with the white lettered word ‘REPEAL’ became ubiquitous in 2016, as did murals, stickers, and badges, remaining so until the campaign’s successful outcome. Women who the state was complicit in hiding from ‘respectable’ society were suddenly visible, and crucially, audible. Arguably the most potent aspect of the campaign for abortion access, like the campaign for same-sex marriage before it, was the verbalising of experiences and feelings that had been silenced through stigma and criminalisation. In contrast to the suppressed narratives, the campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment was marked by blisteringly raw stories of traumatic journeys to and from Britain, of rape, and fatal foetal abnormalities. While attitudes seemed to shift, opposition remained vehement (#repealkills was one example of a hashtag from anti-choice protestors on Twitter, demonstrating their regular associations of the pro-choice campaign with death, the destruction of the family, and the spectre of sex-selective abortions, euthanasia, and the eugenic killing of the disabled). Even the language in public discourse around ‘*abortion regimes*’ and ‘*social abortions*’ illustrated the normalisation of an anti-choice perspective in the ‘balanced’ Irish media.

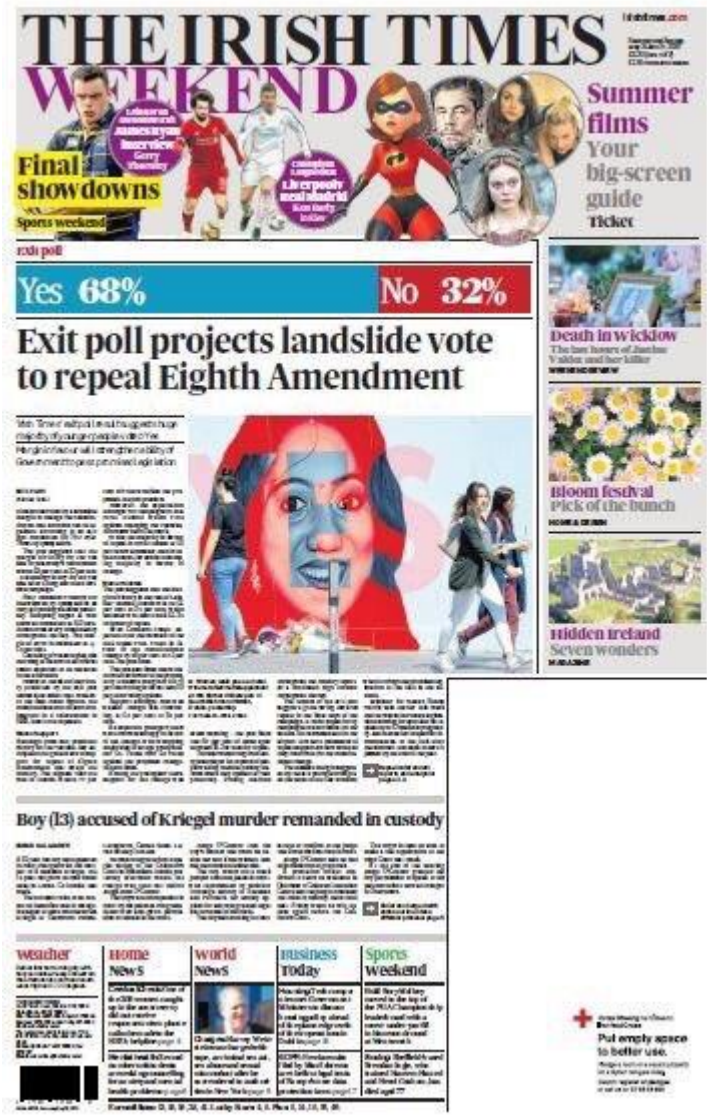


Figure 3 Irish Times Cover Page 26th May 2018

While one is reluctant to subscribe to simplistic ‘liberation’ narratives, it is hard not to read the successful campaign for liberalised abortion legislation as anything other than the throwing off of historical shackles and breaking free from spaces of symbolic confinement and moral judgement. Alongside the euphoric scenes at Dublin Castle when the results of the referendum were announced, gathered crowds chanted the name of Savita Halappanavar. The day before, as people were anxiously going to the polls, a mural appeared on Dublin’s Richmond Street, urging a ‘YES’ vote, and featuring Savita’s face. The site began to attract candles and flowers, alongside post-it notes produced by the ‘Together For Yes’ campaign, featuring personal messages to Savita. This image appeared on the front page of the Irish

Times the next day, alongside news of exit polls that projected a landslide victory for the Repeal movement. Like Cathleen Ni Houlihan and those other feminine icons whose suffering had been a catalyst for political mobilisation, Savita became iconic of an Ireland whose attitudes towards women not only shamed them, but put them in mortal danger. Savita became iconic of a past that had become shameful for a country that saw itself as ‘modern’, with the exception of its restrictive reproductive laws. The Irish news coverage repeatedly referred to the international attention that the vote was garnering, just as it has in 2015 with the referendum on same-sex marriage. That international media, as it had in 2015, drew attention to the modernising effect that the vote would have upon Irish society. It was this same international gaze following Savita’s death that jarred the Irish state to act, ultimately leading to the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013. The international, but specifically Indian, dimension to these processes of Irish modernisation was underscored not only by Savita Halappanavar, but also Leo Varadkar. Commentators acknowledged the ironies around their migrant narratives: Savita, had she remained in India, would not have died in the manner that she did; Varadkar would be criminalised in his father’s native country, because of India’s anti-sodomy laws (though these were eventually repealed in 2018). Savita, alongside the Tuam Babies, represented ‘bare life’, but through their deaths acquired a form of ‘political life’ (Verdery 1989). In an uncannily Catholic way, their deaths have served to re-vivify discussions around social modernisation, and the need for a caesura between modern and ‘Catholic’ Ireland.

Interestingly, the vote to liberalise abortion laws in the Republic of Ireland resulted in renewed attention towards the anomalous status of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom in relation to both abortion access and same-sex marriage (much like the referendum on same-sex marriage acted as a catalyst for an Australian plebiscite, it was felt that the Irish vote would have implications beyond our jurisdiction (a word used with stunning frequency in the Irish

vernacular for reasons presumably relating to the existence of an international border on this comparatively tiny island)). Within Ireland, a two-thirds majority voted in favour of introducing abortion, cutting across demographic categories such as age, socioeconomic status, and location (complicating simplistic divisions between urban and rural voters, as had the 2015 vote). The embrace, by the political establishment, of a grassroots feminist movement, signalled a move away from what the Taoiseach described as a political ‘legacy of shame’ on the eve of the referendum poll, towards a new biopolitical regulation of women’s bodies. The anticipated legislation will enable access to abortions up to twelve weeks after conception. There were calls from activists, politicians, and the parents of Savita Halappanavar, to name the law after the woman whose death proved to be (one of) the final traumatic, public markers of the pernicious effect of the Eighth Amendment to Irish Constitution upon the bodies and lives of women in Ireland.

Ultimately, the May 2018 referendum marked a continuation of the recent historical trajectory away from shame and silence around forms of sexuality that were hitherto deemed unruly by the Irish state. The campaign, and the landslide vote to affirm the right of Irish women to autonomy over their healthcare, was a further marker of the Irish state’s move away from earlier models of biopolitical control of unruly sexualities (particularly the control and concealment of female bodies deemed outside of respectable sexual behavior). The vote was also a further indication of how the influence of Catholic social teaching had waned among the Irish population. The ongoing wound of sexual abuse scandals associated with the Catholic Church, the unsettled histories of places like Tuam and Granard, as well as the plight of those who have to leave the jurisdiction for reproductive care, all contributed to the usurpation of traditional attitudes towards sexuality and respectability. From the testimony of survivors of institutional abuse, through social media campaigns around reproductive rights, recent decades have seen the emergence of voices deemed shameful or sexually transgressive into the Irish

public sphere for the first time since the foundation of the state in 1922. In contrast to their decades long silencing, the stories of women's experiences under Ireland's biopolitical regime have been raw, and blistering, yet it is the expression of such experiences that have afforded women the respectability and political agency they had been denied.

Chapter Three: Marriage, Meanings, and Modernity

Marriage and Tradition

Building upon the previous chapter's analysis of the biopolitical apparatus that governed the intimate behaviour of Irish citizens in the twentieth century, this chapter will look at the institution of marriage since the establishment of the post-partition state in 1922, through its constitutional alteration to reflect the nation's self-identification as Catholic and independent of Britain, and the relatively rapid secularisation and liberalisation of the institution, including referendums on divorce (1995) and same-sex marriage (2015), the latest iteration of global modernity. Echoing Jasbir Puar's concept of 'homonationalism' (2007), Nicola Barker observed that 'same-sex marriage has become a litmus test of how gay-friendly society is' (2012: 1), with the purported egalitarian spirit of the institution of marriage expected to provide access to specific legal provisions and equally to solve wider social problems of homophobia and heterosexism (2012: 126). The topic of same-sex marriage is both complex and contested: for some it represents acceptance into the social nation and a solidification of belonging; others see it as mechanism for creating a hierarchy of families and relationships; others see it as an issue of parity, whereby citizens who pay the same amount of tax should be able to access the same institutions as their fellow citizens. This aspirational linkage between marriage and equality can be traced back to the Classical world, where Roman law stipulated that marriage was a method by which a man could improve a woman's lot by marrying her, in order 'to make her equal' (Stocquart 1907: 304). There was, and continues to be, cultural variation in types of marriage. In Ireland, Medieval Brehon law facilitated ten forms of marital union, ranging from unions between equals in terms of social and economic status, the 'union of common contribution', to other partnerships formed under duress, or diminished capacity (Ó Corráin 1985). The modern 'companionate' marriage, valorised in western popular culture, has been the site of intensive governmental surveillance and regulation, particularly in Ireland.

The Irish Constitution of 1937 prescribed that a woman's place was in the domestic sphere, thus ascribing economic responsibility for the entire family to the husband. Women were legally required to resign from their civil service positions upon marriage, a legal stipulation which remained in place until the 1970s, following agitation from the Women's Movement. Over several decades, in Ireland and elsewhere in the western world, marriage law has been subject to both reform and extension. My intention, however, is not to propose marriage as the solution to, nor the root cause of, social inequality. Rather, my focus aims to analyse how the institution of marriage has been operationalised by the Irish state, for the purpose of the biopolitical regulation of the Irish people, but also how Irish citizens have also agitated for the extension of that control as an expression of freedom and personal choice, often in reaction to Ireland's shaming, and shamed, history. By paying attention to the biopolitical regulation of Irish citizens, one can appreciate that aspects of society that we take as 'natural' (primarily those involving our intimate lives, our bodies, and interpersonal relationships) are constructed and mediated through a cultural lens that is constantly shifting. Foucault, arguably the thinker most closely associated with biopolitical theory, refers to this 'government of life' as 'biopower' (1978: 141). Through dispersed, invasive economic techniques such as taxation, or the provision of social supports, the government encourages a particular regulatory relationship norm. Following the partition of Ireland in 1922, the Irish Free State inherited the legal framework of its former colonial oppressor, with an ecclesiastical inflection that was alien to the vast amount of the Irish population, and this remained unchanged until the enactment of the 1937 Constitution, when the regulation of marriage was placed within the authority of the various religious bodies in the state. The Constitutional language used in relation to marriage was primarily influenced by Papal encyclicals, and the solemnisation of Roman Catholic marriages was not subject to involvement by a registrar working on behalf of the state. Material questions surrounding inheritance and property ownership within a marriage was clarified by

the Married Women's Status Act 1957, though this piece of legislation could hardly be considered to be an egalitarian reform. The Irish Constitution's regulation of the family was inherently linked to the state's own claims to sovereignty as a Catholic nation, distinct from Britain, not as the basis for claims-making on behalf of citizens, least of all women.

As noted, the Women's Movement organised and advocated for change in the public sphere during the 1970s, and this led to a series of legal changes, not least of all in relation to the regulation of marriage and families. Framed within an argument that purported to protect wives and mothers, bills legislating for maintenance rights (Family Law (Maintenance of Spouses and Children) Act 1976) and family home protection (Family Home Protection Act 1976) were passed in 1976. The Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act 1989 enabled access to legal separation, and the Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996 allowed for the enactment of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, which had been accepted by a narrow margin in a plebiscite in 1995. A decade and a half later, with the introduction of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, the state's recognition of intimate relationships was extended to include same-sex partnerships, and the creation of the legal figure of the 'qualified cohabitant'. The rigidity with which the institution of marriage was regulated since the creation of the national constitution until the 1990s, is almost as remarkable as the speed at which the Irish state has reimagined the way it regulates the intimate lives of its citizens in the twenty-first century.

Following the partition of the island of Ireland, the Irish Free State's minimum legal age for entry into marriage was twelve for girls, fourteen for boys, and the age of sexual consent was sixteen (for girls). These regulations were set in place under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, which stated that the 'defilement' of a girl between the ages of thirteen and sixteen

was a misdemeanour. The ‘defilement’ of a girl under thirteen was classed as felony, punishable by imprisonment for a period of up to two years. In 1935, the age of consent was raised to seventeen. As with its colonial predecessor, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935 outlined two levels of offence, a misdemeanour in relation to a girl aged between fifteen and seventeen, and a felony in relation to a girl under fifteen; the potential sentences were, however, increased considerably to reflect social anxieties around female sexual purity in the fledgling Catholic state. Outside of sexual activity, the age of majority in Ireland was twenty-one, until it was lowered to eighteen in 1985, with the Age of Majority Act 1985. The age at which one could enter a marriage remained unchanged until the Marriages Act 1972 revised it to sixteen. Before this point, married persons were considered adults upon marriage, regardless of their age. While the state was eager to combat the ‘defilement’ of young girls through legislation, that girls as young as twelve could be engaged in sexual intercourse with a man of any age, provided that they were married, is indicative of the state’s special treatment of marriage, and how the privacy it endowed engendered and concealed abuse. A further example of this being the absence of legislation criminalising marital rape until the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990. The institution of marriage served to provide a veneer of respectability to actions otherwise deemed criminal, representing a symbolic extension of what Smith (2004) termed twentieth century Ireland’s ‘architecture of containment’. These unmarried girls are transformed into what Giorgio Agamben (1998) describes as ‘zoe’, or ‘bare life’, that is the state of being wherein one exists without rights, which Agamben typified using the expendable figure of ‘Homo Sacer’. Notably, male rape has never been criminalised in Ireland, as the bodies of boys and men have never been considered in need of protection (this logic of selective ‘protection’ can also be traced through the ways in which the sale and purchase of sex has been policed by the Irish state). The Offences Against the Person Act 1861 dictated that the ‘abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or with any animal, shall be

liable ... to be kept in penal servitude for life', ensured that sex between men was legally proscribed until 1993.

De Valera's Fianna Fail government came to power in 1932, on a wave of popular, agrarian Catholic support. Reflecting that constituency, De Valera continued the previous administration's roll-back of women's rights, and crystallised a distinctively Catholic social view. The 1937 Constitution vowed that the State would 'guard with special care the Institution of Marriage upon which the Family is founded', thus disallowing any mechanism that would dissolve the institution. The family was not merely a kin group, but 'a moral institution,' 'the basis of social order,' and 'indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State.' Here, the family functioned not only as the basis for social organisation, but also central to the Irish people's understanding of themselves. The language of Article 41.1 resonates with that of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter that was the cornerstone of Catholic social teaching on issues of personal morality until the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, in 1968.

For example, the encyclical asserts:

No human law can abolish the natural and original right of marriage, nor in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage ordained by God's authority from the beginning: "Increase and multiply." Hence we have the family, the "society" of a man's house – a society very small, one must admit, but none the less a true society, and one older than any State. Consequently, it has rights and duties peculiar to itself which are quite independent of the State (1963:7)

Remarkably, the influence of contemporary Catholic teaching upon the writers of the Constitution is even less opaque in Article 41.2, which simply rearticulates the 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which declares: 'Mothers, concentrating on household duties, should work primarily in the home or in its immediate vicinity. It is an intolerable abuse, and to be abolished at all cost, for mothers on account of the father's low wage to be forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the home to the neglect of their proper cares and duties, especially the training of children' (1963:144-145). Here, the Church becomes not only the arbiter of the

gender roles within the home, and in the public sphere, but also influences the provision of social welfare and healthcare (the extent to which the Catholic influenced such policy decisions became apparent in 1951, with the failed implementation of the Health Minister Noel Browne's Mother and Child Scheme, designed to enable free access to healthcare to all mothers and children within the state). In Article 41, the state was outlining a design for the intimate lives of its citizens: marriage was a lifelong commitment, of religious and moral import, which placed women outside of the public sphere, and those who engaged in sexual relationships outside of marriage found themselves placed under the state-institutional care of religious orders, with any children born outside of marriage adopted, often transnationally (Luddy 2011; Milotte 1998).

As noted, the institution of marriage was exceptionally easy to enter through one's church, but the state ensured that it was almost impossible to exit. The sole mechanism for leaving an unsuccessful union was through a decree of nullity, which for reasons of diminished capacity, duress, or impotence, for example, meant that the union never took place in the eyes of the regulatory state. As noted, divorce remained unconstitutional until a narrowly successful 'Yes' vote (50.3% to 49.7%) allowed for the permanent dissolution of marriage (an earlier attempt at removing the constitutional ban was defeated by a two-thirds majority). While a remarkable number voted to retain the prohibition (and by extension the decidedly sectarian nature of the ban), the vote marked what would become a relatively swift re-imagining of what marriage could mean in an Ireland where the Catholic Church was losing its moral authority amid an avalanche of revelations about clerical and institutional sexual abuse, as well as an economy that was experiencing significant foreign direct investment for the first time in its seven-decade history.

Marriage and Modernisation

In light of these changes, the following section will examine the realisation of relationship recognition for same-sex couples in Ireland through the courts, the parliament, and popular plebiscite. As Michael Warner acknowledged, the marriage movement was ‘never a broad based movement, [and] depended for its success on lawyers and the courts’ (1999:121). This is certainly how the issue of relationship recognition for same sex couples first came to public attention in Ireland in 2003. In that year, Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan were married in Vancouver, and upon their return to Ireland, went about having their Canadian marriage legally recognized in Ireland (Zappone and Gilligan 2008). For a couple whose case would initiate a rapid phase of legislative and constitutional change around kinship in Ireland, Zappone and Gilligan appear, at first, to be figures of conservative respectability. Both women earned doctorates in theology (Gilligan was an ex-nun!), before going on to work in academia, consultancy, and eventually, opening an adult education centre in the socioeconomically disadvantaged suburb of Jobstown, in south Dublin. The case was in its embryonic stages, however, when the Civil Registration Act 2004 was passed. The primary function of this statute was to modernize the procedures for registering births, marriages, and deaths; the law had never explicitly prohibited same-sex marriage prior to the enactment of this act. Section 2(2)(e) of the act outlined the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage in the following terms: ‘For the purposes of this Act there is an impediment to a marriage if ... both parties are of the same sex’. This legislative move was a counterpoint to the ruling in the country of Zappone and Gilligan’s marriage, where the courts ruled that same-sex marriages were protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Canadian ruling prompted action by Australian lawmakers in order to prevent attempts by progressive courts to allow for same-sex marriage, and the Marriage Amendment

Act 2004 was enacted to amend the existing Marriage Act 1961 so that section 5(1) now defines marriage as ‘the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered for life’ (Witzleb 2011: 135; 153-154). Tobin (2016: 115) posits that these international developments likely had an influence on Irish lawmakers, as subsection (2)(e) was inserted into section 2 of the Civil Registration Bill 2003 concurrent to developments in Australia, which ‘lends credence to the notion that the then Irish Government most likely had similar concerns pertaining to same-sex marriage and judicial activism in the Irish courts’. This preemptive action has resonances with the ‘homophobic backlash’ (Warner 1999: 121) that followed the initial success in the *Baehr v. Lewin* case, with measures taken at state and federal levels to ensure the heterosexuality of the institution of marriage. When the proposed legislation was debated at ‘Committee Stage’, which sees Irish lawmakers discuss possible changes to bills before being voted on in parliament, suggestions were made about the feasibility of marrying the sibling of one’s former spouse in light of the legalisation of divorce in 1996, and concerns were raised about the presence of the word ‘lunatics’ in the legislation bearing in mind the changes in social and medical attitudes towards people with cognitive impairments (Tobin 2016: 116). The issue of same sex marriage was not, however, considered a priority when Irish lawmakers were debating what they considered to be relevant sociocultural changes in attitudes towards kinship, not only to marriage, but also to births and deaths, and the shifting nature of family life in contemporary Irish society. It with the High Court case *Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan vs. Revenue Commissioners, Ireland, and the Attorney General* (hereafter KAL), decided in 2006, that the issue of same sex relationship recognition became the focus of public discussion in Ireland for the first time. The lack of a debate in the Oireachtas before the enactment of the 2004 legislation would prove controversial, albeit retrospectively, when the judgment on the KAL was issued.

Contemporaneously, in 2004, David Norris introduced the Civil Partnership Bill in the Seanad, though discussion of the proposed legislation was deferred, pending the outcome of Zappone and Gilligan case. The legislative amendment of 2004 was to have a defining impact upon the judgment in the KAL case. Upon their return to Ireland following their Canadian wedding, the couple contacted the Office of the Registrar General seeking confirmation that their marriage was legally binding in Ireland, but they were told that a declaration of validity for foreign marriages was an issue for the courts to decide, following family law legislation. The plaintiffs also sought recognition of their marriage from the Revenue Commissioners, in order to avail of the numerous tax benefits available to married couples in Ireland. The Revenue Commissioners responded with an interpretation of Irish tax law relating to married couples as consisting exclusively of a 'husband' and a 'wife', citing the Oxford English Dictionary's gender-specific definitions of both words. The plaintiffs then sought and were granted leave to apply for judicial review of the Revenue Commissioners' decision. When the issue was heard at the High Court in Dublin, the plaintiffs argued that the Revenue Commissioners' decision was in breach of their constitutional right to marry. Subsequently, they sought to have the disputed provisions of Irish tax law declared unconstitutional for excluding same-sex marriages from their remit. Amid the rhetoric of the tax law, the presiding judge, Dunne J, recognised the issue at the centre of the legal action: does the constitutional right to marry extended to couples of the same sex? During the case, Dunne J acknowledged 'the definition of marriage to date has always been understood as being opposite-sex marriage' and that the plaintiffs wanted the High Court to create a paradigmatic shift and 'redefine marriage to mean something which it has never done to date' (Zappone 2006). Citing the legislative decision taken two years earlier, Dunne J stated that 'the Act of 2004 is in force, is entitled to a presumption of constitutionality and is to my mind an expression of the prevailing view as to the basis for capacity to marry',

asking if the existing legislation is ‘not of itself an indication of the prevailing idea and concept in relation to what marriage is and how it should be defined? I think it is’.

O’Mahony (2010: 78) notes that ‘deference theory states that the courts should look to the legislative position for guidance’ when the courts are attempting to reinterpret an existing piece of legislation. Dunne J viewed the relevant legislative section, introduced two years earlier, as an expression of the prevailing attitude towards marriage in the constitution. However, Dunne J’s strict interpretation of the meaning of marriage as enshrined in section 2(2)(e) of the 2004 Act is problematic when one considers the lack of debate when the proposed legislation was progressing through parliament. Again, O’Mahony, returning to this contentious point (2012: 213) argues, section 2 (2)(e) ‘did not represent a considered legislative judgment on the issue to which the court could defer’. Similarly, Foley (2008: 230) has stressed the contradiction at the heart of Dunne J’s decision: ‘The essence of deference, however, is deference to a decision actually made. If the legislature does not actually decide on matters of rights, then it starts to make less sense to ‘defer’ to its decisions because they do not exist’. However, as Tobin (2016: 119) asserts, Dunne J could not have made herself aware of the circumstances in which this legal provision came about, as Irish judges are disallowed from having knowledge of parliamentary debates concerning statutory provisions. Dunne J’s deference to the legislature’s understanding of marriage is particularly significant when one considers the implications that this standpoint *could* have had upon the way in which ‘marriage equality’ came to be realised in the Republic of Ireland.

Since Dunne J declared section 2(2)(e) of the Civil Registration Act 2004 to be confirming ‘of itself’ that the institution of marriage is a union between two parties of the opposite sex, one can infer that the Oireachtas holds the power to decide such definitional issues. Dunne J went on to state that ‘ultimately, it is for the legislature to determine the extent’ of the legal recognition to be accorded to same-sex unions (Zappone 2006), which prompted

Carolan's (2007: 265–66) observation that 'the fact that Dunne J. relied so heavily on the Civil Registration Act 2004 as indicative of the nature of the existing social consensus suggests a pre-eminent role for the Oireachtas in determining the social (and thus constitutional) appropriateness of any future amendments to the meaning of marriage'. While Kavanagh (2009: 843) posits that 'if there is intense social controversy about an issue, suggesting that people may not be ready to accept a particular change in the law (or at least may not be prepared to accept it from an unelected court) considerations about democratic legitimacy and social acceptance may lead the courts to exercise caution before making the decision themselves', most of my informants would see this as a blatant abnegation of the state's responsibilities, fully realised through its recourse to a popular referendum on the rights of a minority group. The Oireachtas could have introduced same-sex marriage through an act of legislation, following the British parliament's course of action, when it passed the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013. The Working Group on Domestic Partnership's Options Paper, also known as the Colley Report, concluded that full civil partnership was the best mode of relationship recognition for same-sex couples because the introduction of same-sex marriage was likely to be vulnerable to constitutional challenge. Oddly, this report was published on 28 November 2006, over two weeks before the High Court decision in the KAL case, which appeared to grant the legislature primacy in defining the legal meaning of marriage in Ireland. Dunne J's judgement 'implies that a court should exercise considerable constraint in preferring its own perception of society's norms to that evinced in a statutory instrument' (Carolan 2007: 266), which makes the government's failure to pursue civil marriage through legislation, as opposed to opting for civil partnership (and ultimately civil marriage through the prolonged process of constitutional referendum), all the more perplexing. While Dunne J's judgment left a definitive decision on same-sex marriage to legislators, Tobin (2016: 121) suggests that the Government was waiting for the opinion of Supreme Court on the KAL case before legislating for marriage.

In 2006, as the KAL case was going through the High Court, and several months prior to entering into a governing coalition with Fianna Fáil, the Green Party issued a policy paper titled *Valuing Families* in which it stated that the party considered it ‘completely legitimate that the Oireachtas, as the body most appropriate to take decisions on social policy, should take the lead and seek to have the right of same-sex couples to marry guaranteed in legislation’ (2006:8). In fact, the Green Party anticipated this as the most likely successful route towards relationship recognition for the GLBT community, ‘believ[ing] that the Supreme Court would be unlikely to strike down such an expression of the democratic will of the Oireachtas on the grounds that marriage under Article 41 can only be defined in relation to Christian beliefs’. Tensions – or at least varying degrees of appreciation for the High Court ruling - between the government parties were evident in 2008, when the Fianna Fáil Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern claimed that the Government, citing the advice of the Attorney General, believed that ‘anything that would provide, or try to replicate “marriage” in this legislation would not stand constitutional scrutiny’ (Hennessy and O’Brien 2008). Ahern, and apparently the Attorney General, were out of step with Irish judicial attitudes to the law and marriage. It had already been established by Murphy J (1995) in the High Court that while ‘it may well be that *‘marriage’* as referred to in our Constitution derives from the Christian concept of marriage. However, whatever its origin, the obligations of the State and the rights of parties in relation to marriage are now contained in the Constitution and our laws’. Internationally, several countries had seen constitutional challenges to same sex marriage fail, leading Tobin to observe that ‘it is not unthinkable that a same-sex marriage law in Ireland could have survived constitutional scrutiny, just as similar laws have in other countries’ (2016: 123).

The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Bill 2010 was signed in July 2010, becoming law on January 1 2011, with the first registration of a same-sex relationship taking place in April. As the legislation progressed towards enactment, civil

partnership grew to become a contentious issue within the GLBT community, as well as in wider Irish society. Despite being a piece of secular legislation, an unsurprisingly vociferous source of opposition came from the Catholic Church, in the form of a publication entitled *Why Marriage Matters* (Irish Catholic Bishops: 2010). This pamphlet was circulated throughout Irish parishes, warning that the proposed legal change:

is not compatible with seeing the family based on marriage as the necessary basis of the social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State. Nor does it ‘guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded’ (Art. 41.3.1, The Irish Constitution) ... This Bill is an extraordinary and far reaching attack on freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion – which are guaranteed to every citizen under the Constitution.

This pamphlet was countered by a statement from The Irish Council of Civil Liberties (ICCL), which dismissed the attack from the Bishops’ Committee stating that ‘it is the on-going absence of full equality for all forms of family in Ireland, and not the Civil Partnership Bill, which brings the existing institution of marriage into disrepute’ (Irish Council for Civil Liberties 2010). The framing of civil marriage or partnership recognition for same-sex couples as an attack on religious freedom would become a mainstay of organised opposition to the movement, as articulated by the ubiquitous punditry of the hardline Catholic ‘think tank’, the Iona Institute. However, debate around civil partnership was not merely influenced by predictable religious hostility.

Interneccine tensions began to emerge among organisations concerned with LGBT issues in Ireland, following the formation of *Marriage Equality* in 2008, marking a rupture in the established, ‘insider’ form of politics espoused by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network. One of the founders of the organisation wrote that the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 marked ‘the beginning of a new relationship between the Irish state and the lesbian and gay community’ (Rose 1994: 1). However, much of this new relationship has been between the Irish state and select lobbying groups that work on behalf of the GLBT community. The GLEN,

founded in 1988, participated in campaigning, lobbying, and consultation that achieved not only decriminalisation, but also a statutory infrastructure that included the establishment of the Equality Authority, the role of which was to enforce two pieces of legislation, the Employment Equality Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act (2000). These laws prohibit discrimination against individuals in the workplace and in the provision of goods and services based on the following nine criteria: gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the 'Traveller' community. Ireland's predominant GLBT political organization followed the dominant model for lesbian and gay political activism in the liberal democracies. In the US, the initial liberation phase of the new political movement of the early seventies gave way by the end of the decade to a reformist politics that was, as Dennis Altman has observed, 'less concerned with the radical restructuring of sexuality and society than with winning equal rights within the ongoing system' (1982: 118). One informant described the impulse in the Irish queer community in the 1980s to imitate the political agenda in other liberal Euro-American countries, citing perceived similarities between the NGF and the reformist organisation CHE (Campaign for Homosexual Equality) in the United Kingdom. This trend to follow suit led to very tangible consequences, particularly around the age of consent. In England and Wales, homosexual acts were decriminalised under the Sexual Offences Act 1967, although the age of consent for such acts was set at 21, whereas the age of consent for heterosexual acts was 16. The perceived inability for the gay lobby in Dublin to conceive of an age of consent independent of British example meant that gay people were only coming out once they were in their early twenties, into a community that was full of older gays and lesbians. This led to an atmosphere in Dublin of stagnation and conservatism, according to Izzy Kamikaze, who describes the 1980s in Dublin feeling like the 1970s in other liberal, democratic European cities.

GLEN became the central organisation lobbying for legislation that would be as close to marriage as possible (Mullally 2014). On the other side of the schism in the queer community, organisations such as *Marriage Equality*, as the name suggests, the National Lesbian and Gay Federation (NLGF, subsequently NXF), and LGBT Noise, all prioritised the attainment of full marriage equality for gay and lesbian couples. Notably, despite the well-known divisions between Marriage Equality and GLEN, both sides of this split endeavoured to achieve relationship recognition for same sex couples; there was no mobilisation for an alternative to this trend towards a politics of recognition. Even Senator David Norris, who introduced the first Civil Partnerships bill in 2004, confided in me that he had ‘almost’ voted against it in 2010, as a result of its deficiencies, and the way in which rendered gay relationships ‘second-class’ in the eyes of the state. *Marriage Equality* produced a report entitled *Missing Pieces* (Fagan 2011) highlighting the 169 differences between the civil partnership and civil marriage legislation, in an attempt to remind the GLBT community of the inequalities that had been enshrined in legislation, and distract them from the monthly issues of Gay Community News, which had by this time transformed into a ‘fucking wedding manual’, as Tonie Walsh (the magazine’s founding editor) described to me in the run up to the referendum.

Daly (2010) has critiqued what he has termed ‘over-constitutionalisation’ in Ireland, whereby complex social, legal, and political problems are resolved by way of constitutional wrangling and popular referendums, rather than through the process of parliamentary deliberation utilised in numerous other countries. As a result, the Constitution has become the focus of public debate over socially divisive issues that ought to be resolved by elected representatives. This suggests that the neoliberal devolution of responsibility from the state to the masses is a defining aspect of state power in Ireland. For instance, while divorce would typically be treated as a quotidian legislative matter elsewhere, in Ireland, the Constitution prescribes relatively strict conditions for divorce, which only became available following a

referendum in 1995. This tendency to refer back to the Constitution any matters of social and political contention may suggest sensitivity on the part of legislators to the opinion of the populace. However, as Daly argues, the Constitution is too often utilised in order ‘to deflect political responsibility’ – an opinion of many informants who took part in door to door canvassing during the lead up to the referendum, and who attested to the traumatic side to participative democratic exercises such as referendums. As many marriage equality advocates suggested – particularly after the success of the plebiscite - legal change by popular vote boasts a particularly strong claim to democratic legitimacy. It is impossible, for instance, for opponents of equal marriage in Ireland to suggest that cultural change was forced upon the people by unaccountable judges, or a government with a bias towards social liberalism. Daly warns against the assumption that the referendum process is a vindication of national sovereignty and a healthy display of democracy:

We should not be so naïve [as to] imagine that the demands of democratic participation are vindicated simply because the people are given the opportunity to passively acquiesce or veto whatever constitutional amendment government deigns to submit. Too often, “popular sovereignty” in the Irish constitutional context is unreflectively conflated with the people’s nominal right to amend their constitution (at the Government’s prodding). Again, it is wise to remember that such plebiscites only occur at the invitation of the government of the day.

The recourse to a referendum to decide the issue of same sex marriage was a risky one. In 2006, the All-Party Oireachtas Committee reported that, among the 7989 submissions made to it regarding changes to the constitutional definition of the family, there was ‘a sharp division’ and that many submissions expressed a desire for Articles 41 and 42 to remain unchanged, out of ‘fear that any change would threaten the position of the family based on marriage. It would

undermine the stability of the traditional family and all the enhancement of the common good that flows from it (2006: 122). The marked difference in opinion among submissions were indicative of the potential divisive nature of any campaign to change the definition of the Irish family through a plebiscite. The All-Party Oireachtas Committee had observed that the ‘Irish experience of constitutional amendments shows that they may be extremely divisive and that however well-intentioned they may be they can have unexpected outcomes’. This comment refers to the long Irish tradition of rejecting proposed constitutional changes through a popular vote (such as the first Nice referendum in 2001), not to mention polls on sociocultural issues. For example, ‘the removal of the ban on divorce, most notably, took two attempts, in 1986 and 1995, the ban eventually being discarded in 1995 by the tiniest of margins’ (Ryan 2008: 374-375). Envisaging the ‘anguish and uncertainty’ that a plebiscite would have upon concerned parties, the committee recommended legislative action towards civil partnership legislation. Keane (2008: 355) was critical of the committee for recommending legislative pathway towards civil partnership, over a constitutional referendum on Article 41, arguing that ‘virtually every proposal to amend the Constitution provokes opposition from some quarters ... [t]hat is an inevitable consequence of the democratic process: it is not a justification for leaving untouched the framework of [Article 41]’. Nevertheless, the committee’s prediction that a referendum may have proved divisive is understandable, considering that traditional understandings of marriage and family – informed by Catholic social teaching - remained dominant in a society where, according to the national census in 2011, 84 per cent of the population still identified as Catholic (CSO, 2012).

Despite these official anticipations of conservatism among Irish voters, opinions polls suggested strong support for the introduction of full marriage rights for same sex couples. In 2010, an opinion poll in the *Irish Times* indicated that just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of the Irish people believed that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry (O’Brien 2010). In

2011, Red C, a research and marketing organisation, conducted an opinion poll which found that 73 per cent of the population was in favour of same sex marriage. In 2014, another opinion poll indicated that 76 per cent of the electorate supported the introduction of same-sex marriage (Collins 2014). While these polls suggested a cultural acceptance of non-traditional kinship structures that had been overlooked by the committee in 2006, there was a nervousness on the part of myself and many informants, citing the narrowing of the ‘yes’ campaign in the 1995 divorce referendum, and its marginal victory despite optimistic opinion polls. Social media accounts circulated images of right-wing Catholic propaganda from 1995, in order to avoid complacency on the part of same sex marriage supporters. One such image was of a billboard campaign, which read: ‘Hello Divorce...Bye Bye Daddy’, which served to suggest that legislative change would not merely change family law, but would disrupt the private, domestic sphere. An anticipation of the effectiveness of such tactics was shown to be justified, as the last Red C opinion poll taken just prior to the Marriage Equality Referendum indicated that support for a ‘yes’ vote had dropped slightly, to 69 per cent, sparking a panic that opinions polls could be drastically inaccurate, as had been the case in the British general election in early May (Nardelli 2015).

Even as Civil Partnership progressed through the various stages of the parliamentary process, these organisations became increasingly vociferous about the deficiencies of the proposed legislation, particularly around kinship, namely issues of guardianship and children’s rights. The NLGF commissioned report, entitled *Burning Issues* (Denyer et al., 2009), identified marriage as the third highest priority (behind rights at work and personal security) of lesbian and gay people in Ireland. Izzy Kamikaze recounted to me, in the wake of the 2015 referendum, that this push for marriage was not organic, but that the community felt that it was a ‘top down’ movement, orchestrated by figures within the gay establishment that she has long been critical of for their exclusionary politics (Kamikaze 1995). Kamikaze stressed to me that

the aims of the queer community have always been quotidian, as reflected in the *Burning Issues* survey, with the basic needs for protection against workplace discrimination and physical attack trumping an ‘outside’ ideology like marriage rights. Writing on the saturation of the media with discussions of marriage politics in the 1990s, Warner acknowledges the ‘weird foreign language’ of the ‘media world of politics, policy, and punditry’ (1999: 120). It is precisely this perception of marriage politics as ‘foreign’ that still resonates among self-styled ‘leftist’ or ‘radical’ critics of marriage politics, such as Izzy Kamikaze. This feeling of isolation stems from the abandonment of this ‘queer counterpublic’ (Warner 1999: 159) and the multiple, interconnected issues that affect it, by national gay organisations in favour of a singular focus on marriage politics. However, as Warner (1999:123-124) demonstrates, marriage politics was a central part of the initial, post-Stonewall social movement. Warner notes how, in 1970, same sex couples in California and Minnesota challenged, and made visible not only the heterosexuality of the institution of marriage, but exposed the way in which the institution acted as a mechanism for the distribution of rights and provides in society. Gay groups not only utilised the institution of marriage to highlight social inequality, they were also wary of the normalising effect of state recognition of relationships, particularly on the abjected unions who are not deemed worthy of the ‘respectability’ afforded to married couples. Warner goes on to cite several reasons to explain why marriage politics did not assume the centrality to the gay rights movement that it later would, noting that ‘queer thought ... centered on the need to resist state regulation of sexuality’, noting that ‘morality, respectability...decorum’ were tacit forms of regulation. This attitude also held that state recognition of certain intimacies above others would lead to a replication of the ‘hierarchies’ that marginalized prostitutes, unwed parents, divorcees, and single people, and that these would ‘structure the thought of the gay and lesbian movement itself, whether through “internalized homophobia”, in-group

hostility, or simply the heteronormative perspective unconsciously embedded in so much of our thought and perception’.

The gender dynamic in the campaign for civil marriage was a recurring issue among informants when recounting their experiences of that campaign. In semi-official histories of the marriage movement in Ireland, this fissure has been noted. In Mullally (2014), Gay Community News editor Brian Finnegan (101) acknowledges a ‘gender divide’ in the political organising around the issue, with Ann Louise Gilligan (104) calling for a ‘real gender analysis of what’s going on here’. As Finnegan observed, many female informants felt that *Marriage Equality* was a predominantly female-run movement, with GLEN staffed overwhelmingly by men. This impression was not only of the highest levels of both organisations – with the most visible, vocal figures in *Marriage Equality* being Moninne Griffith and Grainne Healy, and the most high-profile GLEN members being Brian Sheehan and Tiernan Brady – but on the ground, as canvassers walked through neighbourhoods across Ireland. Informants describe how their canvassing parties were majority female groups, of varying ages and socio-economic backgrounds (though informants described the pressure to feel ‘presentable’ and ‘respectable’ on doorsteps). This nationwide, volunteer effort contrasts with the perception among informants of GLEN as being ‘establishment’, ‘professional’, and ‘male’. This echoes Michael Hardt’s concept of ‘affective labour’, which the theorist notes is a burden especially felt by women in society (1999: 98-100). Informants described finishing work, or lectures, in the evening, to face ‘a couple of hours walking around estates, not knowing what sort of reaction you’d get. It could be frightening’.

Kamikaze also impressed upon me that it was the belief of many in the LGBT community that the *Burning Issues* survey was expected to give legitimacy to the campaign for marriage equality – with the line of questioning ‘engineered’ to guarantee an emphasis of relationship recognition – and that the result was a blow to the gay establishment, but also

reflects the chasm between ‘ordinary’ queers and those who lobby in a professional capacity under the aegis of LGBT rights. An example of this tension has been recorded by Healy et al (2015) in a condescending vignette, that has been angrily contested by a couple of informants and friends who were in Pantibar on the night of the referendum result. Returning from Dublin Castle, following the declaration of the result, the authors were part of larger party of *Yes Equality* (as *Marriage Equality*, GLEN, and the ICCL had opted to campaign under, to avoid confusion in the run up to the vote) campaigners who had been feted upon their arrival at the bar. However, in their account, they awkwardly recount a purportedly ‘humorous’ anecdote about being met with a crowd of rowdy Eurovision fans, who were more interested in the results of the song contest than the vote – a suggestion demonstrably untrue from footage in and around the bar that night, as captured in *The Queen of Ireland*.

Largely overlooked in the debate around relationship recognition for same sex couples were feminist and queer critiques of such unions. As Fraser (1989) argues, and the controversy over Irish judicial interpretations of the definition of marriage illustrates, marriage rests upon assumptions of heterosexuality and the nuclear, heterosexual family. Marriage is foundational to the hetero-patriarchal order, enabling the production of regulated and respectable unions (Ettelbrick 1997). Historically, the institution defines a woman’s social and political relations (Rubin 1984; McClintock 1993). This lack of critical thought around the institution of marriage is indicative of the urge from gay and lesbian organisations to stay ‘on message’ about a ‘Yes’ vote, long before a referendum date was announced. The influence of NGOs in this area can be seen even before Civil Partnership had been legalised. The reformist impulse of many within the gay political lobby was evident with the co-optation of radical feminist critiques of the institution in order to bolster the case *for* marriage. In one of the few official acknowledgements by the campaign for same sex marriage that there is a rich intellectual tradition of radical politics within the gay movement, Feargha Ní Bhroin (2009) elicits this legacy of gay

liberationist and lesbian feminist critique of marriage, extensively outlining the role of marriage in maintaining patriarchal authority over women. Furthermore, the institution of marriage renders the hitherto sexually transgressive figure respectable; it offers a ‘redemptive power’ for single mothers in order to privatise dependency in a neoliberal society (Rohrer 2009). In an Irish sociohistorical context, this redemptive aspect of marriage also functioned as a socially redeeming institution for women whose relations with men jeopardised their futures, with the alternative to marriage being institutionalisation (Inglis 2005).

Notably lacking in references to queer thinkers in, or outside of, the academy, Ní Bhroin elects to focus on British examples of legal challenges to both traditional marriage and gender roles. She restates that marriage, even in its contemporary, egalitarian form, continues to be detrimental for women – providing unpaid female labour to carry out the work of caring and nurturing that is essential to fulfil not only domestic needs, but the needs of society at large. Crucially, however, Ní Bhroin claims that her imagined reader (presumably a critical queer) should not confuse this oppressive traditional form of heterosexual marriage with same-sex marriage, which will, somehow, be a radical departure, taking a wholly egalitarian and anti-patriarchal formation. The academic tone of this argument is generally thoughtful and persuasive, yet the paper was commissioned by *Marriage Equality*, and circulated exclusively on its website. This is an example of an organisation whose name is its political aim, with the repeated assurances of the homogeneity of *all* marriages regardless of sex once same sex marriage is legalised. Ironically, through an attempt to contain dissent against the mainstreaming of queer relationships by sexual dissidents, *Marriage Equality* resorted to advocating the distinctive, egalitarian nature of same sex relationships, and unwittingly underscored its own reliance upon the heterosexual couple as the only viable model for all relationships, instead of offering examples of what Warner describes as ‘forms of living’ (1999:146), alternative models of intimate relationships outside of state ‘authorisation’. Ní

Bhroin's cynical posturing as radical lesbian feminist critic, in pursuit of a clearly conservative political objective underscores the erasure of queer history that consensus-building and pragmatism requires. Concurrent with the ongoing and overlooked HIV crisis, the campaign for same sex marriage in Ireland reflected Judith Butler's comments on the quest for 'state legitimisation' (2004: 115) at the heart of the 'drive for gay marriage is, in some ways, a response to AIDS, and in particular a shamed response'. The reassuringly homogenous, positive images of 'real couples', particularly gay men, are a simultaneous refutation of 'promiscuity' and the stereotypical image of the oversexed gay man, which must be continually abjured, as well as a nostalgia for the heterosexual family that was enshrined in the 1937 constitution.

As Warner (1999: 120-124) outlined, the initial mobilisation of queer people in the U.S following the Stonewall riots utilised marriage to highlight the inequality and privilege that it sustains, whereas national gay and lesbian organisations had renounced such 'liberationism' in favour of advocating for the individual's right to marry. If Puar (2013) is correct, and marriage for same sex couples is a 'structuring' feature of modernity, then its effectiveness coheres through its ability to appear to be a matter of individual 'choice', to be regulated and subject to the normalising gaze of the state and society. Writing about the contemporary historical moment, Wendy Brown argues that to understand what neo-liberalism is, one must first grasp its hegemonic formation as something more than a revival of classical economic theory, or a constellation of socioeconomic policies that put citizens at the mercy of the market and entrench inequalities both nationally and internationally. One has to also confront the political rationality of neoliberalism and grasp that it is not only focused on the economy, but on the subordination of the liberal democratic state to the market, and the dissemination of market values and language through all spheres of life. Brown writes that 'all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality' that does not just mean the demand to be profitable

but, more profoundly, requires ‘the production of all human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action’ (2005:40). This form of governmentality ‘normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life’ (Brown 2005:42). From employment and welfare to education and health the contemporary citizen is insistently encouraged to conceive of themselves as a ‘free’ subject, wholly responsible for their own self-care and rationally making choices to maximise the benefits accruing to them. But this rationally calculating individual must also bear sole responsibility for the consequences of their choices, regardless of the actual constraints on their freedom to act and choose. In this way the effects of structural inequalities are translated into the failure to ‘manage’ one’s life successfully, and this judgement of failure is cast in moral rather than political terms. This, as Brown argues, ‘is a new mode of depoliticising social and economic powers [which] reduces political citizenship to an unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency. The ideal neoliberal citizen is one who strategises for her- or himself among various social, political and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organise those options’ (2005:43).

There is a clear linkage between this idealised liberal citizen and the model gay couple projected in pro-same sex marriage discourse. The vision and language of justice and equality (or ‘rights’) subtending the argument for gay marriage is a vision of lesbian and gay households equally free to compete as privatised units of consumption and striving to successfully manage their resources; securing their property rights, managing their pensions and healthcare, funding their children’s education. The reassuring, common-sense approach to the demand (though the tone of the organized campaign was anything but demanding) for civil marriage was laid out in a Marriage Equality pamphlet that circulated in the weeks leading up to the plebiscite:

Research shows that marriage is good for people: married people are healthier, happier and earn more. Marriage is also a commitment device, it keeps couples together and families together. It is accepted by the majority of people as good for society e.g. the family unit looks

after itself, takes on a caring role for the members of that family and therefore is less dependent on the State for support. . . . On top of this, introducing civil marriage equality is austerity proof. It won't cost the State anything but will improve the lives of thousands of people and arguably improve Irish society in general (10: 2015).

On reflection, the successful appeal of this vision to the Irish political elite was unsurprising in Ireland, as support ranged across the spectrum from Labour and Fine Gael to Fianna Fáil - all of whom were involved in implementing austerity policies in the years being discussed - since it is entirely compatible with our political culture. More powerfully, as the annual 'March for Marriage' which was held in Dublin every August from 2008 to 2014, visibly attests this vision has been internalised by many GLBT Irish people, who articulate a profound, affective investment in the achievement of marriage rights as a source of recognition and validation. This is most vocally articulated by the younger, middle-class cohort represented by *LGBT Noise*, the organisers of the march, as well as other protests regarding queer issues (One informant, an employee of an LGBT advocacy NGO described to me how their organization would contact *LGBT Noise* and ask them to mobilise at short notice. This tactic backfired for the NGO on one occasion, when an *LGBT Noise* protest 'offended' and 'alienated' then-deputy Prime Minister Joan Burton from the cause). Crucially, it must be noted that this group, widely perceived to be the most 'radical' affiliation of advocates for same sex marriage, were hardly calling for a revolution. Rather, they were aggrieved that they should have to sacrifice any of their social privileges (or 'rights') merely because of their sexual and affective relations – which in itself was a wildly successful political strategy that resonated with the wishes of many members of the GLBT community who did not prioritise a return to the redistributive social and political aspirations of the post-Stonewall era. Moreover, if we recognise the political objective of same-sex marriage as an inherently neoliberal project it presents us with the challenging proposition that, as Puar (2013) argues, we are not being co-opted by shadowy elites, but that regulation can be actively agitated for and experienced as a form of freedom.

Mirroring the strategy utilised by social conservatives in the aforementioned divorce campaign in 1995, much of the right-wing reaction to the proposed constitutional change to the definition of marriage hinged upon the impact that such a decision would have upon children. Having committed itself to a referendum on same sex marriage in 2013, the governing coalition of the Fine Gael and Labour parties moved to ensure that issues relating to same-sex parenting would not be utilised by the ‘No’ side in the campaign leading up to the referendum. The centrepiece of these efforts, the Children and Family Relationships Bill, was unveiled by the government in 2014. The purpose of the bill was to allow civil partners and cohabiting same-sex couples to apply to adopt a child, as well as enabling a biological parent’s same-sex partner to apply to become a legal guardian of the child that they were co-parenting. The most radical cultural change proposed by the bill concerns the regulation of donor-assisted human reproduction (but did not mention any form of surrogacy, a particularly contentious issue throughout the campaign for same sex marriage) for the first time. The members of a same-sex, or opposite-sex, couple who conceived a child in a clinical setting via sperm or egg donation, or both, could both be recognised and registered as the parents of that child. The prolonged passage through both houses of parliament lead to an intensification of the moral panic around surrogacy and same sex marriage, with the bill being signed into law by the President of Ireland on 6 April 2015, just six weeks before the referendum. It was claimed that the enshrinement of same-sex marriage in the constitution would lead to a corresponding constitutional route to surrogacy for same-sex couples, a scenario that was framed as detrimental to child welfare by campaigners for a ‘No’ vote. However, the Irish courts have established that, for married couples, there is no automatic right to procreate. In *Murray vs Ireland* (1985), it was decided that prisoners were not guaranteed a constitutional right to conjugal relations. In November 2014, in *MR v An tArd Chláraitheoir* the Supreme Court again deferred to the legislature on a controversial social issue, namely surrogacy. This anxiety was

exploited by the ‘No’ campaign, whose main poster campaign heavily featured images of children and women (as mothers), with slogans such as ‘A Child Deserves a Mother and a Father’. Drawing upon Edelman’s (2004) theorization of the Child as a symbol of futurity, one couldn’t but help think of the children as emissaries from the future, imploring Irish voters to maintain the ‘traditional’, hegemonic, theocratic understanding of the family in the nation’s constitution. Regardless of the provisions within the Children and Family Relationships Act, these images and slogans preyed upon historical fears around pederasty, pedophilia, and homosexuality. Mulhall (2015) records the pressure upon (understandably) aggrieved ‘Yes’ supporters who felt that their ability to parent was being publicly denied, a hurt repeated every time one left one’s house. Brian Sheehan, the chairperson of GLEN, and one of Yes Equality’s main spokespersons, advocated the reporting to police of anyone defacing posters, which many ‘Yes’ campaigners and supporters (including myself) felt was yet another example of the self-sacrificial nature of the campaign, as one was expected to silently endure public insult.

Aside from the aforementioned concerns over the accuracy of opinion polls that showed a likely victory, some ‘Yes’ campaigners were afraid that these polls could also occlude a widespread ‘No’ vote, with the suggestion that many likely ‘No’ voters would publicly support the ‘Yes’ campaign, widely considered a ‘progressive’ opinion, but would privately vote with their conscience, thus avoiding accusations of ‘homophobia’. Campaigns to mobilise both the youth and the diasporic vote proved successful, with groups traditionally less inclined to vote emerging to affirm the proposed changes to the constitution. The ‘youth vote’ and voters from working class areas were overwhelmingly in favour of same-sex marriage. Over 100,000 new voters were registered in the months prior to the referendum. The percentage of ‘yes’ votes in some of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Dublin, was especially striking. 87% of voters in Dublin’s Jobstown – the site of intense and controversial protest against the government’s austerity measures - voted ‘Yes’, with 88% of voters in the north Dublin suburb

of Coolock and The Liberties area of south central Dublin city following suit, while 85% of voters in the south Dublin area of Ballyfermot also voted ‘Yes’ (Tobin: 2016: 127). As Mulhall (2015) noted, civil unrest regarding water charges – resulting in the largest political mobilization of citizens since the foundation of the state – was framed as a potential threat to same-sex marriage, as leading political proponents of austerity, such as Minister for Equality Aodhan O Riordain suggested that there could be a protest vote *against* the government-backed ‘Yes’ campaign. This anxiety around supposed latent homophobia among the working class population of suburban Dublin has been linked by Mulhall to a notorious incident in 2015, in Jobstown, when the Tanaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) attended a graduation ceremony at an adult education centre founded by Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan (who were also in attendance), and when leaving was surrounded by over a thousand vocal protestors, angry at Burton’s Labour Party’s continued economic policies. A brick was thrown at Burton, and while it missed its intended target, she was hit by a water balloon, after which she sought refuge in her car. The car was subsequently surrounded, and Burton was ‘falsely imprisoned’ (as charges against protestors alleged) for several hours, as Burton claims she was subject to ‘sexed up language’, noting in particular that ‘the homophobia was disgusting’. Through the use of hashtags such as #hometovote and #gettheboat2vote, communities of (predominantly) young people who had been abjected through the government’s austerity policies during the previous decade exercised their citizenship in order to alter the social fabric of a state that had failed them. One poster produced by the Anti Austerity Alliance (a loose affiliation of socialist politicians, which is now defunct) stated that in 2015, voters can vote for ‘Equality’, and the following year, voters can vote ‘Against Austerity’ (in the expected 2016 general election). The Anti Austerity Alliance co-opted the ubiquitous, unifying language of ‘equality’, but unlike all other media strategies of the campaign, they acknowledged the issues that had prompted the largest display of organized resistance since the inception of the state, and tapped

into the potential political power of this group. These movements, which mobilized in excess of the centralised ‘Yes Equality’ campaign, were also symbolically notable as a reversal of the decades long traffic in figures who had been sexually shamed and excluded from Irish society to access abortions, or to live their lives in accordance with their sexual preferences.



Figure 4 Marriage Equality Posters, Dublin 2015

While the socialists in the Dail collaborated to present a united front against not only the ‘No’ message and tactics, as well as the perceived classism inherent in the aforementioned statements by centre-left Labour party figures, it is undeniable that the support for same-sex marriage expressed by that party when negotiating terms for entry into coalition with the centre-right Fine Gael party was catalytic in making same-sex marriage an achievable goal. In 2012, the then leader of Labour and Tanaiste had called same-sex marriage ‘the civil rights issue of our time’, and positioning Ireland to be perceived as progressive on an issue of international importance. The overwhelming support of the Citizens’ Assembly in 2013 for constitutional recognition for same-sex marriage rendered a plebiscite an inevitability within

the lifetime of the government (whose mandate was expected to expire in 2016), but also suggested that there was considerable political currency to be gained for supporting the issue. Enda Kenny, the then- leader of Fine Gael and Taoiseach (Prime Minister) was widely perceived to be opposed to any change to the constitutional definition of marriage until 2014, when he very publicly became the first sitting Taoiseach to visit a gay bar (that we know of!). Occurring at the nadir of the fallout from the Jobstown protests, many GLBT members felt that Kenny's visit to Pantibar was a cynical excuse to attract good publicity. Though as Panti Bliss acknowledged in *The Queen of Ireland* (2015), while this may have been the case, many were glad that the state's recognition of queer lives had resulted in a visit by the leader of that state to a gay bar in order to court the popularity of its patrons. The photo opportunity also served to reassure 'Yes' campaigners that the leader of the country would not be the most prominent voice of opposition to constitutional change.



Figure 5 Panty Tweet: Enda Kenny in Pantibar 2014

As emphasised by Izzy Kamikaze, and several other informants who were less than fully supportive of same-sex marriage assuming the central position that it did in GLBT organising for over a decade, queer lives often rubbed against the mechanisms of the state that exist to protect Irish citizens, to expose the prejudices that exist outside of statutory protections. The founder of the Irish Queer Archive, Tonie Walsh, when discussing the bruising nature of the 2015 referendum campaign, pointed to previous milestones in GLBT equality (such as workplace equality provisions) as drawing attention to queer lives, and subsequently facilitating a backlash against queer people (recalling Foucaultian warnings about the dangers of visibility, as well as its merits). Several informants mentioned one such legal case to me as

one that occurred against the backdrop of legal protections, as well as in the shadow of a much larger political project.

In 2006, while the KAL case edged slowly towards defeat in the High Court, another case was being heard in the District Court in Cork, one which resulted in the first successful conviction on sexual orientation grounds taken under the Intoxicating Liquour Act (2003). The case concerned a lesbian couple, Myra McGuirk and Eileen Twomey, who alleged discrimination following a kiss in Michael Malone's pub in Blarney, Co. Cork – ironically, considering the town is synonymous with the act of kissing. The kiss occurred as Myra was playing pool with members of a particularly boisterous, male party, who has been openly frolicking with a 'sex doll' throughout the night. Following what Eileen described as a 'peck', the publican approached the couple and asked them to leave, which left her 'shocked, dazed, and humiliated' according to her courtroom testimony. Myra and Eileen complained to the Gardai, and an action was lodged against Mr Malone under the Equal Status Act, a move which was supported by the Equality Authority. McGuirk had protested the illegality of the publican's actions, but to no avail, telling the court that she 'did not want a confrontation. I have seen a lot of people attacked over the years over their sexuality'. Malone refuted allegations of discrimination, emphasising that he had often requested heterosexual customers to refrain from displays of affections. The publican said that he had approached Myra and Eileen following a complaint from a customer. Judge Clyne decided that Malone had discriminated against the couple, particularly in light of his inaction over the inflatable female doll which was in circulation at the bar that evening. Crucially however, despite offering what appeared to be a queer affirmative ruling, the judge undercut the integrity of his own decision by saying that 'while a lot of people would think it (the inflatable female sex doll) was tasteless - and many might think it was a lot more tasteless than two girls having a peck on the lips even in a pub in rural Ireland...it's a small country pub - it's not a gay bar in Dublin or Amsterdam or anywhere

else'. Judge Clyne added that patrons were 'were also entitled to expect good manners and good behaviour'. While Malone was found guilty of a technical breach of the Equal Status Act, Judge Clyne refused to offer the women any form of redress. Clyne's judgement went largely unnoticed by the Irish media, queer and mainstream, but it continued to rankle many queers. Clyne's decision appeared to reinforce a dichotomy that implied varying standards of respectability for heterosexuals and homosexuals, as well as appearing to justify the presence of homophobic sentiment outside of urban areas. Despite being supported by the now defunct Equality Authority, some of my informants contrasted the response of the LGBT establishment to Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan and their case, to that of the two working class women from Cork, and their own landmark case for LGBT equality.

In Ireland, as elsewhere in the 'West', the campaign for same-sex marriage came to dominate the GLBT movement's political agenda. Of course, other very significant concerns among Irish queers were being played out in the public and private spheres, as the case of Myra McGuirk and Eileen Twomey illustrated. Elsewhere, the rights of younger gay and transgendered people in Ireland were being actively pursued by organisations such as *BelongTo* and *TENI* (Transgender Equality Network Ireland). *BelongTo*, Ireland's national service for LGBT young people, was founded in 2003 (See Barron 2013) for a summary of their contribution to the community). *Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)* was founded in 2005, and 'seeks to improve conditions and advance the rights and equality of trans people and their families.' In 2013, the organisation expressed deep dissatisfaction at the Irish government's proposed gender recognition legislation (which was itself a belated action, with Ireland already in contravention of European human rights legislation). The grounds for recognition were deemed to be unduly restrictive by members of that community, including the age requirement (eighteen, despite being the age of majority and therefore logical, was a contentious choice as

TENI was advocating for children to be the arbiters of their own gender), the requirement for a medical diagnosis and, most notably, the requirement that transgender people must be single when seeking recognition – effectively forcing transgender people to divorce in order to have the state recognise their chosen gender identity.

THE T ISNT SILENT
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

YES
EQUALITY

VOTE YES
ON MAY 22ND



Figure 6 Transgender Marriage Equality Poster

Feeling marginalised by the ‘Yes Equality’ representational strategies, and with one transgendered informant telling me that she did not want to canvass in her neighbourhood in case it caused ‘confusion’, TENI launched a series of posters on their social media platforms. These images featured the faces of a number of transgendered adults, as well as the familiar phrase ‘Yes Equality’. One poster, however, declared that ‘THE T ISN’T SILENT MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD’. The concept of the ‘silent T’ was one that frequently surfaced when in the company of informants from that community, particularly in relation to issues of GLBT lobbying and organisation by national organisations, as well as the perceived dearth of social spaces considered ‘trans-friendly’. Same-sex marriage was of crucial, practical importance for a number of the transgendered people that I spoke with during my fieldwork, which included stints as a volunteer at their social events, as well as some minor administrative duties. Such events were a rare opportunity to see this small, yet diverse group of people, which usually would be too nebulous and, frankly, divergent, to come together in other situations. One transgendered woman (male to female) described, at one such event, how the recognition of same-sex marriage would mean that she would not have to divorce the woman that she was married to when the anticipated Gender Recognition Bill would be passed. She also alluded to the contentiousness of her decision to campaign for same-sex marriage among the transgender community. Another transgendered woman told me of how she sought psychiatric help as a young man for his gender confusion, to be told that marriage was the solution to his problem. A marriage which lasted decades, and resulted in children, had ended in acrimony upon her revelation of ‘true’ gender identity, and was a lasting source of personal pain. Her case was not unique, as several older transgendered women, widely acknowledged to be the founders of Dublin’s transgender community as it is recognisable today, have a similar story of marriage and children, followed by transition, and estrangement from those spouses, and sometimes children. The younger (adolescent/young adult) generation are now presenting as

predominantly non-binary (though as noted by numerous figures in the transgender community, the overwhelming majority of people identifying as such were ‘assigned female at birth (AFAB)’), and rejecting what they consider to be ‘mainstream’ and ‘heterosexist’ aspects of GLBT political organising, including marriage and monogamy (though several transgendered teenagers and adults were identifying as ‘asexual’, or ‘demi-sexual’, or ‘grey-sexual’ (terms indicative of an absence of sexual desire, or varying degrees of sexual or romantic attraction)). Across the generations, the issue of marriage is a fraught one in that particular section of the GLBT community. This incident illuminates the fractious composition of that group – some pursuing goals that could be described as assimilationist, whereas others were vociferously advocating gender ideologies and identities that demarcated their difference.

However, as one transgendered interlocutor lamented to me, the alliance of primarily cisgender organisations that shaped the campaign for marriage equality decided to ‘narrow’ and ‘simplify’ the ‘message’ that would be communicated, thus avoiding ‘confusion’ among voters. Such straightforwardness was the hallmark of publicity initiatives by *Marriage Equality*, whose strong focus on media campaigns aimed at generating support for same sex marriage in mainstream society. One prominent media campaign was its ‘Just Love’ series of billboards messages, featuring images of ‘real couples and families’. The irony is that if it was ‘just love’ at stake, Marriage Equality would not have needed to exist as an organisation. Love does not need to be sanctioned by the state. You do not need to be married to be in love, and nor indeed do you have to be in love to be married. Furthermore, marriage is not ‘just’; that is, concerned with justice, as Marriage Equality’s slogan suggested. On the contrary, the institution of marriage is rigorously discriminatory and policed, establishing a very rigid demarcation between the legal rights and benefits of the married and those of the unmarried (as access to civil partnership issue served to reinforce). Marriage is a privileged institution; why else would one actively seek access to it otherwise? This façade of simplicity undergirded

the campaign for same-sex marriage, deploying what Michael Warner described as an ‘active mystification’ about what the institution of marriage actually means (1999:96). The imagery and rhetoric of ‘real couples and families’ emphasises the value placed upon the intimacy of private life, personal relationships, and individual choice. Through the promotion of bourgeois domesticity, the regulatory power of the neoliberal state disappears – even though the object of the entire campaign is access to a very public act of recognition by the state. This rhetoric used during the campaign used the word ‘right’ when discussing love and marriage, but strategically concealed that this is not a ‘right’ to love or intimacy – despite the optics and tenor of the media campaign - but rather the right to enter into a legal contract wherein certain benefits are unevenly distributed.

The Marriage Equality video, *Sinead’s Hand* (2009), was an early example of the contradictory logic of the equality rights strategy that would dominate the campaign for marriage equality in Ireland. The liberation and limitation of telling one’s story would be repeated in the years running up to the 2015 referendum. In the quest to demonstrate one’s sameness, one had to disclose one’s difference. These most intimate of moments, as parodied in *Sinead’s Hand*, would in fact become the most important strategy of that campaign to come. Such emotive experiences were re-enacted in public, as people canvassed door to door, and recorded intimate conversations with relatives and subsequently uploaded these videos to social media. These exchanges, primarily familial in nature, became the sole form of intimacy expressed, or expressible, by Irish queers for the duration of the campaign. The video features a respectably dressed young man traipsing through city alleys, suburbia, and the Irish countryside, knocking on doors, gauchely requesting permission to marry the titular Sinead. Imitating the patriarchal tradition of asking a woman’s father for his permission to marry his daughter (which retains its currency in the name of tradition in many areas of Ireland, and the West), the conceit of the video is to highlight the farcical nature of having to receive the

permission of an entire population in order to marry. As with the recording of Panti Bliss' Noble Call in 2014, the video served to draw international attention to an issue that affected not only Ireland, but the vast majority of liberal democracies. Youtube videos such as *Sinead's Hand* subsequently appeared in other nations, including the Australian *It's Time* video, which emphasised the sameness of the homo- and heterosexual experience of love and, as the video's climactic engagement scene suggested, marriage. Ironically, however, this strategy was adopted by Marriage Equality and its teams of volunteers throughout Ireland in the early months of 2015.

Through the democratic affordances of Youtube, grassroots initiatives supporting a 'Yes' vote were able to broadcast their message. Such videos were often displays of emotion and personal self-revelation, mediated strategically to win over undecided voters. Crucially, they also elide any overt political motivation or allegiance. This can be viewed through the #VoteWithUs video archive, outlining appeals from Irish citizens from a range of backgrounds (a series of videos came from trade unionists, another focused on the stories of members of the diaspora in London). One particular video, featuring an elderly married couple named Paddy and Brigid, became a viral sensation (to the extent that they won the 'LGBT Ally' at the annual Gay and Lesbian Awards in Dublin in 2016). This video underscored the recurrent themes of sameness and equality, declaring that the couple were devout Catholics, but that they had campaigned for civil rights in the north of Ireland in the 1960s, and considered this issue an extension of that human rights ethos. The video was particularly effective as it portrayed older voters as potential 'Yes' voters, if they engaged with gay people and witnessed the reality of gay lives and relationships. This video, and the entire archive, served to reassert the importance of visibility and conversation in the referendum campaign, though unlike the Yes Equality canvassing method, the #VoteWithUs campaign was able to harness the stories that could not be told as easily on the doorsteps of Ireland (diasporic voices, the elderly, rural

dwellers). The mobilisation of the student vote – considered widely to be an overwhelming ‘Yes’ vote – was seen as indispensable to a successful result. This resulted in a number of voter registration drives in universities and other centres of adult education across the country. Such traditional methods of organising were supplemented by tech-savvy students. One example of this was the #RingYourGranny video, by members of Trinity College, Dublin’s Students’ Union. In the video, elderly voters were framed as likely to vote ‘No’, with phone calls from their grandchildren being portrayed as having the potential to swing that vote. ‘My age group wouldn’t vote in favour of that at all’, declares one ‘granny’, before adding ‘Oh, I’ll vote for it alright’. The effectiveness of the video is predicated upon that tension, between the asking of the question, and waiting for a response (a tension heightened by the intercutting of stories). The tone of the video is overwhelmingly affirmative (‘Well you know I’ll vote for it!’; ‘When it’s your turn I will stand proudly behind you whether it’s a church or a registry office or whatever the hell it is’). One phone call did not, however, share the same optimistic tone. One woman tells her grandson that she will ‘have to think about it’, explaining that ‘in my time when you got married children were there’ as his hopeful face changes notably. Later in the video, the viewer finds the conversation ongoing, as the grandmother tells her grandson: ‘I came from the west of Ireland ... gay and lesbian I wouldn’t have known them’, reasserting not only the perceived generational split among voters, but a feared ‘No’ vote in rural areas, that are conservative, culturally homogenous, and crucially, often vote against the government in referendums. As Mulhall (2015) has observed, there is a contiguity between the anxieties around a possible ‘No’ vote in working class areas of Dublin, and rural Ireland, that behoves a metropolitan attitude in Dublin towards peripheral regions and which casts their inhabitants as socially regressive. As in working class areas of Dublin, the referendum results proved this to be untrue, with all constituencies bar one (Roscommon/South Leitrim) returning majority ‘Yes’ votes. Nevertheless, this grandmother gave credence to these fears, which explains why

her phone call featured most prominently in the video. While having an overwhelmingly ‘feel-good’ tone, the video represented a strategic intervention, designed to avoid complacency, by focusing on the values of intimacy and kinship at the heart of the ‘Yes’ campaign. As her grandson’s body language reflected his discomfort and exasperation, she conceded that she didn’t support discrimination against ‘how people felt’ as it ‘wouldn’t be fair’, and while he tried to argue in favour of someone ‘being with’ another person ‘regardless of why they’re attracted to one person over another’, the grandmother responds in a way that parrots the rhetoric of the Iona Institute, emphasising the need for the electorate to ‘be informed’ and ‘given the other side’, and ‘let people not be self-conscious about ... having a few words on the subject’. The video concludes with another young man, talking to camera and noting the tendency of students to ‘jump to conclusions’ about elderly voters, and advocates ‘a dialogue about the subject’ with ‘your granny ... she might surprise you. It might turn out better than you think’. Another metric of the video’s influence can be gauged through its replication during the Australian postal plebiscite on same-sex marriage, with the ‘RingYourRellos’ video.

While the ‘do-it-yourself’ ethos and aesthetic of the #RingYourGranny video contrasts starkly with, for example, the sleekly produced ‘Marriage Equality: Bring Your Family with You’, commissioned by BelongTo, both videos maintain a balance of optimism and caution. BelongTo, while in receipt of state funding, is heavily dependent on fundraising and voluntary efforts in order to sustain its work among young people across the country, and certainly not in the position to engage in the production of expensive advertising campaigns to the extent that other ‘Yes’ affiliated groups could. In the BelongTo video, hordes of grinning people walk together to a polling station (many of whom were volunteers for the NGO, or had been involved with the group as they were growing up, and were excited to become involved in the national effort). As with #RingYourGranny, the video’s suspense hinges upon the response of several older, male relatives (blatantly targeting that ‘soft Yes’ demographic) if they were coming to

vote with their younger family members. However, its stylisation allows for a glimpse into an imagined Ireland that plays with stereotypy of the nation: the curiously deserted public house, a farmer and his tractor, a polling station with a thatched roof that would not be out of place in a John Hinde postcard, or *The Quiet Man*. Ultimately, this rural idyll affirms the wishes of the young people, even the unreliable, and demographically representative, father who appears to have disappointed his son (who not only is gay, but is in an interracial couple, further emphasising the social and cultural changes affecting Ireland). In keeping with the tone of hopeful optimism of such videos, the father is seen to pre-empt his son, with the pair meeting outside of the polling station, as the father applies a ‘Yes’ sticker to his lapel (an action which would be considered highly risky on polling day, as many organisations advocating for a ‘Yes’ vote urged supporters to remove badges or apparel that signified their voting intentions, lest they be barred from casting their votes, as per voting regulations). While the polling station featured in the video strikes the viewer as a somewhat kitsch representation of ‘middle Ireland’, it does touch upon a notable reality of Irish life, urban and rural. Many polling stations are established in local schools, the vast majority of which are owned by the Catholic Church. Several friends, in Dublin suburbs and small, rural communities alike, described voting in rooms that featured Catholic iconography, and wondered how this was allowed, particularly when that organisation had articulated a position on the issue at stake, as well as questioning whether these icons would remain in place for future polls, such as the anticipated referendum on abortion.

Through the affordances of social media, as well as through long established practices, such as poster campaigns and protests, the ‘Yes’ campaign was able to make visible that which was suppressed (sexuality, yes, but also marginalised voices in the state), and transform discontent against that state into both a strengthening of that state’s regulatory power, but also an exercise in claims-making that asserted the power of the citizen and active citizenship.

While the attitudinal shift was facilitated through the courts and legislative (in)action, the advent of same-sex marriage in Ireland required a radical reconceptualization of an institution that had tightly policed the comportment and ostracised the transgressors of its moral code. Such a cultural shift required both economic and social liberalisation, and the development of a neoliberal sensibility in relation to one's subjectivity, citizenship, and rights. The peculiar combination of Catholic spiritual formation and biopolitical control of the Irish population was (or considering the ongoing debates over the proposed repeal of the Eighth Amendment and liberalisation of reproductive rights, one ought to refer to this process in the present tense) displaced by a late capitalist ethos that put a premium on choice and entrepreneurial action. This focus on individuality, and its stark contrast to the strict conformity to values of virtue and respectability that defined the intimate lives of Irish citizens in the twentieth century, produced a campaign for same-sex marriage that defied simple political dichotomies of left and right, and rendered ideological attitudes to marriage as an institution such as 'pro' or 'con' redundant when considering the Irish sociocultural context. While the marriage movement here was a success, its victory came through the development of a singular, simplified message, as other issues were sidelined. The consequences of this marginalisation included the emergence of a HIV epidemic that was scarcely recognised in the GLBT media, never mind the national media, and especially stigmatised within the population that it affects most – gay men. The tension between the political and social embrace of the gay married couple contrasts with the abjected, silenced gay man, and draws attention to the dark side of the politics of respectability in contemporary Ireland.

Chapter 4: Panti Bliss: Staging Respectable Citizenship

In *The Queen of Ireland* (2015), one talking head comments that Rory O’Neill has ‘got two things going on: dressing up as a cartoon, pixelated lady, and the HIV...’. This simple binary is a useful heuristic device for understanding the phenomenon that is Panti Bliss: the self-styled ‘national fucking treasure’ (O’Neill 2014). This chapter will consider Panti Bliss and her creator Rory O’Neill as signifying figures of the mobility that has marked Ireland’s transformation in recent years: from socially conservative backwater, to bastion of liberal values, multiculturalism, and economic prosperity. The product of a transnational subculture of drag, that gestated in the bars of Tokyo and the fetish clubs of Dublin in the 1990s, Panti Bliss – the drag persona that Rory inhabits - has become an internationally recognised symbol of not only GLBT rights, but of human rights writ large, as Panti (and occasionally Rory) acts as a representative of the Irish state’s foreign aid programme, giving speeches about Ireland’s evolution on GLBT rights policy as well as issues relating to HIV/AIDS. Panti Bliss, a self-described ‘giant cartoon woman’ (O’Neill 2014) has become an exemplary citizen of modern Ireland.

Through Rory’s public pronouncements and Panti’s theatrical speeches, Panti Bliss has become a symbol of modern Ireland; deemed suitable to act as a representative of the Irish state abroad. The rise of Panti Bliss, and the drag scene that she pioneered, was coeval with a gay community that was emerging from criminalisation that caused decades of emigration, and hampered the response to HIV/AIDS. As Helena Wulff observed, ‘mobility clearly produces new connections and meanings of place, indeed new power structures’ (2007: 48). In the figure of Panti Bliss, one can witness the mobility of Irish culture itself: through economic transformations, waves of inward and outward migration, as well as through cultural changes

that have shifted perceptions of Ireland, domestically and internationally. Through a reading of *Panti Bliss*, one can also witness a process of tacit disavowal of particular forms of sexuality that threaten the newfound respectability that Dublin's gay community enjoys.

A vocal opponent of heteronormative values such as marriage, *Panti Bliss* nevertheless became its most eloquent proponent in 2014, as well as a viral sensation around the world. A figurehead of the successful campaign for same sex marriage in 2015, *Panti Bliss* became inextricably linked to a moment of national pride. Alongside this, however, is Rory/*Panti*'s other high profile role: that of HIV/AIDS advocate, and a person living with the virus for over two decades, in a country where HIV is particularly stigmatised and concealment of one's positive status is expected. In many ways, the duality that is the celebrity figure of *Panti Bliss* illustrates aspects of both sides of the 'good gay'/'bad queer' dichotomy that Warner (1999) describes: signifying as both radical and respectable, often at once. The celebrity status of *Panti Bliss* is crucial to understanding her role advocate for HIV related issues.

Just as *Panti* can dissolve the boundaries between propriety and dissent, an easy division between Rory O'Neill and *Panti Bliss* cannot be made. Through *Panti Bliss*, one can appreciate the movement of drag from subcultural spaces, like gay bars and Pride parades, into mainstream venues, both physical and virtual. Through Rory, one can observe Irish culture's (particularly the Irish gay community's) anachronistic attitudes towards HIV, as the scientific reality of a HIV diagnosis is superseded by myths that reveal structures of thought that render sexuality either 'good' or 'bad', reflecting the cultural vestiges of a religion whose morality still imbues both health and education sectors in contemporary Ireland, thus hampering the communication of factual sex education to the population. In both spheres, *Panti* acts as a bulwark against structures of repression for sexual minorities in Ireland. This is the irony in interpreting *Panti Bliss*: avatar of gay, and national, pride, and one of the very few celebrated GLBT figures in Irish public life. Similarly, *Panti* is one of the few vocal and visible HIV

positive figures in a GLBT community, and a nation, where serophobia is normalised and runs deep. One of the many ironies of Panti Bliss is that her celebrity status in the gay community, well as the national and international community, enables her frank discussions of seropositivity in gay social spaces where the disclosure of a positive HIV status correlates with social isolation and the onset of mental health issues (Murphy et al., 2015). However, Panti's profile rose following 'Pantigate' (2014), her comments on HIV tend to be given to specific publics, not her 'traditional' audience in PantiBar: 'diversity talks' for multinational companies, or an address at the World AIDS Conference in Amsterdam in 2018. Panti's retreat into respectability enables a further silencing of HIV positive experiences in contemporary Ireland. Despite emerging from a tradition that challenged social and sexual orthodoxies, Panti Bliss has alienated certain people living with HIV, and underlining the contested ownership of HIV representation in a national context here Panti is frequently given a monopoly on the topic.

Drag

This section will position Panti Bliss within drag culture, as well as contextualise the role of drag within GLBT sociocultural and political life. Many studies of gay male and lesbian culture(s) have considered communication within these communities, focusing on the furtive nature of queer sociality in many contexts, and the need for a 'secret' language, or cant, which tended to rely heavily on slang terms (see Barrett 2006; Jacobs 1996; Kulick 2000; Livia and Hall 1997; Queen 2007). Such deployment of an informal, coded system of communication has been described by M.A.K. Halliday as anti- language, or as "special forms of language generated by some kind of anti- society" (Halliday 1976: 570). Such languages are never native, but rather emerge as the result of entry into a new cultural situation. According to Halliday, 'an anti-language, however, is nobody's "mother tongue"; it exists solely in the context of resocialization, and the reality it creates is inherently an alternate reality, one that is constructed precisely in order to function in alternation. It is the language of an anti- society.

(1976: 575). Foucault (1976) has described this use of language as a site of reimagining and resistance against oppressive structures as ‘reverse discourse’. Language is central to the creation of alternative, queer cultures that respond to hegemonic structures; what Warner has coined ‘counterpublics’, contra ‘publics’ (2002).

The form of slang most synonymous with queer culture in the United Kingdom and Ireland is Polari (sometimes Palare), a coded form of communication used by theatre performers, circus and fairground entertainers, and other subcultural groups since the nineteenth century. While the origins of the cant are disputed, it is widely believed that it is the result of transcultural contact between English speakers and travellers from around the European continent. In the late twentieth century, following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967, Polari shifted from being a coded form of communication among gays, and instead became known to mainstream British culture as being associated with queer entertainers who were gaining media visibility. Paul Baker (2002) posits a number of reasons for the diminished cultural importance of Polari for British queers, from media overexposure to the stigmatisation of effeminacy in the gay community. No longer a *lingua franca* in the queer community, it exists as a throwback to an earlier form of sociality, its continued currency in queer performance reflecting its origins in the theatre of the nineteenth century. Polari itself has bequeathed several words to the popular English lexicon: in addition to ‘camp’, ‘bitch’, and ‘butch’, non-ostensibly queer contributions include ‘naff’ (distasteful), zsoosh (improve the appearance of), and khazi (toilet). However, arguably the most important, and most current, Polari contribution to the English language is ‘drag’, which while originally meaning clothes, has become synonymous with performative cross-dressing.

As noted, gay male language use relies heavily upon the appropriation of language associated with other sociocultural groups, and the creative ways in which these appropriated forms are combined - in a drag show, for example - can illuminate the local construction of

gender and sexuality. Barrett (2017) argues that norms can be challenged through ‘indexical disjuncture’. Though indexical disjuncture, one communicates through signs that index associations not normally related to that particular context. I contend that Irish drag performances are especially marked by this practice, through their engagement with icons of the conservatism that marked twentieth (and twenty-first) century Ireland. Indeed, the aesthetics of kitsch and camp lend itself to critique of Ireland, and its citation, references, and excess (as do the rituals and teachings of the Catholic Church). As will be explored later, Irish drag performances will draw upon a range of Catholic religious imagery alongside references to anal sex (the disjuncture stemming from the homophobia implicit in Catholic orthodoxy). Another such example is Irish drag’s incorporation of Irish dance practices that are conventional signifiers of ‘tradition’ and ‘authenticity’ (though Wulff 2007 has challenged such interpretations). The celebratory context of drag mirrors the performative Irish identity that is celebrated around the world, through the diaspora, claims of ancestry, and St. Patrick’s Day festivities. Drag performance playfully reveals how Irish identity is constructed, whether it be through colonial history, religious influence, transnational migration, or shifting socioeconomic formations.

Central to contemporary theorisations of gender performance and drag is the concept of performativity. This idea was developed by J. L Austin (1962), in relation to language and communication. While most language is descriptive, insofar as it carries details of things and events, sometimes language has the capacity to produce a tangible effect upon the world. Social relationships are altered by the utterance of phrases such as ‘I’m gay’, or ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’, in a way that the phrases ‘The sky is blue’ or ‘It is raining’ do not. This, for Austen, is performativity. Performative utterances are not evaluated on the basis of their verity or falsity, but rather on they achieve an effect upon the “real world”. Austin deems such

successful utterances *felicitous* (happy) if it has an effect, or *infelicitous* (unhappy), if it fails to achieve its purpose. In order for an utterance to be felicitous, it must be a *citation*, or refer back to an existing frame of meaning established by previous felicitous utterances. Whether or not a statement is felicitous or not is determined by set of conditions:

- The utterance must match the form of previous utterances (“I now pronounce you man and avocado” would be infelicitous).
- The social context for the utterance must match that of previous utterances (a marriage ceremony that takes place in a public house, while participants are intoxicated, would be annulled).
- The speaker must have the authority to make the utterance (a marriage pronouncement in which the solemniser was not recognised by the state would render the union invalid).
- The parties involved in the utterance would have to have matching social identities (in countries where same-sex marriages are illegal, a marriage pronouncement would be infelicitous).

The concept of performativity has been especially useful in the study of gender, sexuality, and performance since Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler’s assertion that social behaviour associated with gender are not reflective of an “authentic” self, but rather the enactment of an established, culturally sanctioned identity. For Butler, gender is rendered intelligible through a series of citations, whereby one’s behaviour becomes a recognisable marker of one’s gender identity. Through forms of parody, such as drag performance, Butler argues that gender performativity has no original citation (1990:138). This does not mean that gender is inherent, but that it is a series of signs and behaviours that have been coded as being “masculine” or “feminine”. While drag performances can undermine normative assumptions

about gender, it often serves to reify the binary between masculinity and femininity (an example would include Judith Halberstam's (1997) research on 'drag kings', who, as the name suggests, are the female equivalent of drag queens. Drag kings, according to Halberstam, demonstrate 'female masculinity', which challenges normative associations between biological sex and gender identity, but ultimately reinforce this bi-polar model of understanding sex and gender). Butler (1993) went on to clarify that drag is not merely a secondary imitation, but that heterosexuality itself is also stylised and repetitive in the service of appearing 'natural' and 'original'.

Pre-dating gender studies, or queer theory, Esther Newton's (1979) study of 'female impersonators' proved to be foundational to the study of gender and sexuality in anthropology, and elsewhere in academe, rendering the drag queen as a legitimate object of ethnographic analysis. The figure of the drag queen as an anxious one, making visual a hidden, deviant sexuality – embodying liberation, but also stigmatised sexuality. Pace Sontag, Newton argued for the relationality of drag, over Sontag's (1966) understanding of it as a merely aesthetic practice. Newton's ethnography took place in the 1960s, on the cusp of the social change that followed the Stonewall Riots of 1969. Her informants were nightclub performers, whose preoccupation with glamour, dance, and comedy remain hallmarks of drag shows six decades later. Newton notes that 'going legit' was the ambition of several performers: that is, to move beyond the seedy venues that they worked in, to audiences full of so-called 'covert' homosexuals. Reflecting on Newton's drag queen informants and their environment, I immediately thought of the parallels between the 'female-impersonators' and Panti Bliss. In many ways, Panti Bliss has achieved the celebrity that those queens longed for: the star of her own biographical stage shows; several radio series on Ireland's national broadcaster; countless media appearances in Ireland and abroad; Panti is even the star of a film about her life!

Thinking of Newton's descriptions of the 'coverts' who attended drag performances, I couldn't help but draw parallels between those gay men who see Panti Bliss, across various media, joking about her HIV positive existence, yet themselves being coerced into silence about their serostatus because of the deep-seated serophobia in Ireland's gay community. While Butler (1993) has emphasised that drag is not automatically 'subversive', anthropologists have emphasised its potential to strategically undermine the culture that produces gendered identities. Taylor and Rupp have ethnographically analysed the work of drag queens in Key West, Florida, and contend that these drag queens challenge hegemonic conceptions about the gender binary by creating identities that trouble binary gender and sexual systems (2006: 12).

Transvestite performances have often targeted normative gender roles and institutions which serve to support them (Garber 1991). For example, the eighteenth century 'Mollies' are an example of this. Mollies were homosexual men who frequented 'Molly Houses', which were public houses, taverns, coffeehouses, and even private houses where men could socialise and have sexual encounters. Court records preserve accounts of such venues, and the distinctive subcultural semiotics of such spaces: feminine dress, gestures, voice, nicknames (Bray 1982). Such sites were often the scene of prototypical drag performances: Norton (1992) describes how a man, aided by a 'midwife' and to the sounds of 'groaning', was delivered of a wooden doll. Even these early iterations of a recognisable same-sex desire and sociality, hegemonic social systems and rituals were mocked.

A more recent example of this was provided by Panti Bliss, before becoming the symbol of same-sex marriage. Just as drag queens draw attention to the performative aspects of gender, Panti appears to have done almost as much in drawing public awareness to that other performative cornerstone of society: marriage. Appearing on RTE (Ireland's national

broadcaster) in a late night interview with the media personality Gerry Ryan, who had a reputation as something of a ‘shock jock’ during this period, Panti was accompanied by her co-creator Niall Sweeney. Panti wore a flowing wedding gown, and Sweeney was her sailor-suited groom. The interview took place immediately after Ireland voted to introduce divorce in 1995, rendering their choice of attire particularly topical. In retrospect, however, it is especially ironic considering the tone of the interview and one’s knowledge of her future endorsements of the institution of marriage.

The purpose of the interview was to promote O’Neill and Sweeney’s latest business venture: G.A.G. – a fetish club night that took place once a month in a rented room in a leisure centre in Dublin’s dingy, and dangerous, docklands (a place that in 1995 was yet to be redeveloped, and become central to the Irish economy as ‘Silicon Docks’: the location of the European headquarters of multinational companies such as Google, Apple, and Facebook). The interview itself became exemplary of the form of social critique pioneered by Panti in her drag acts, where tensions between modernity and tradition were played out. Probed by Ryan as to the nature of G.A.G, Panti describes one such performance (images of which feature in *The Queen of Ireland* (2015)) which involved a mock wedding ceremony. Panti did emphasise that while she and her sailor beau were a ‘modern couple’, they were also very ‘traditional’. When asked to elaborate, Panti tells Ryan: ‘He gave me pearls...which I secreted inside my person’. To the astonishment of the interviewer, and gasps of shock from the audience, Panti and Sweeney went on to describe the rest of the performance, which involved Sweeney delicately pulling a string from Panti’s anus, thus delivering her of a string of pearls. This routine, known as ‘Pearl Harbour’, has gone down in infamy. Indeed, at a recent ‘Spicebag’ show (a monthly, amateur GLBT club night that recently emerged as a result of concerns around the lack of queer spaces, and named after a popular Dublin fast food option) during summer 2018, one of the performers lamented the rather staid state of GLBT social life in Dublin. Referencing Panti, he

decried how ‘respectable’ Panti had become, pointing to the fact that she used to have ‘things pulled out of her ass on stage!’ Just as Panti Bliss was part of a drag tradition that had ironised and mocked aspects of the establishment, Panti is now seen by many as part of that establishment (after all, Panti, through her bar, and her theatre work, and paid appearances, is a lucrative brand). Jose Esteban Munoz has described this form of mainstream or commercial drag as ‘present[ing] a sanitized and desexualised queer subject for mass consumption, representing a certain brand of integrationist, liberal pluralism’ (1997:85); one can recognise in the contemporary figure of Panti Bliss in this description, having moved from what one could easily identify as a subversive cultural role just two decades ago.

‘Pantigate’ and the ‘accidental activist’

Panti’s television appearance in 1995 notwithstanding, she remained something of a marginal figure in Irish public life. Through a series of short-lived, if iconic within the GLBT club scene, ventures such as G.A.G., H.A.M., and PowderBubble, Panti Bliss gained a reputation as an inventive, original performer whose early work is still fondly, vividly remembered by informants who cut their clubbing teeth at the end of the last/turn of this century. The ‘mainstreaming’ of Panti Bliss can be traced back to 2007, when Rory O’Neill became the manager of a public house on Capel Street in north Dublin, that had a reputation for hosting successful club events. The new enterprise became known as PantiBar, and quickly began to rival The George as Dublin’s premier gay bar, with themed party nights and regular drag shows. PantiBar’s reputation spread, and soon began to attract a clientele beyond the GLBT community. 2007 also marked Panti Bliss’ first solo stage shows *In These Shoes?* and *All Dolled Up*, at Dublin’s New Theatre. *A Woman in Progress* followed in 2009, and *High Heels in Low Places* debuted in 2013. These shows have since toured internationally, as has the ensemble piece *Riot* (2016), at which she is the centre. Panti’s trajectory from seedy venues to international theatre is a route towards respectability that Esther Newton’s informants dreamt of, but seemed unlikely

to realise. The successful mobility of Panti Bliss has been shaped by series of fortuitous events, including what was expected to be a run of the mill television interview that turned Panti into what she now self-identifies as: ‘an accidental activist’ (O’Neill: 2015).

Before becoming a viral sensation in 2014, Panti had been recognised by the gay community in Dublin as a figure who could bridge sociality and social activism. In 2009, she criticised what she perceived as a consumerist and depoliticised gay community in a blog post titled ‘No More Mister Nice Gay’. Panti’s motivation was the poor turnout at an LGBT Noise demonstration to protest proposed Civil Partnership legislation which activists feared would create a two-tier system of relationships and families in Irish society. Targeting the gay community’s infatuation with popular culture and fashion, and lack of concern for relationship recognition, Panti asked the community: ‘Where the FUCK is your righteous anger?’ The blog post was shared widely on chatrooms, and emerging platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Panti’s ‘rant’ had an effect: a follow-up direct action by LGBT Noise attracted a much larger crowd, as did their annual March for Marriage late that summer. The reason why I call Panti’s post a ‘rant’ is because that is how her archive of blog posts was described. However, at some point during my research, the rich collection of Panti’s blog posts – which used to be found under the heading ‘Panti’s Blog Job’ on PantiBar’s website– disappeared (www.pantibar.com). One friend suggested that perhaps it was because, as an icon of GLBT rights, her frequent usage of the word ‘trannie’ – widely perceived as a slur by the transgendered community – may damage her reputation with organisations that work with and advocate for sexual orientation and gender identity issues. Or, they suggested, it had something to do with her fetishization of Brazilian men. Whatever the reason, evidence of Panti’s radical critiques of homonormativity (Duggan: 2003) are no longer accessible through a simple Google search, leading several of us within the gay community to believe that it is part of a wider project to sanitise Panti Bliss, and transform her into a model of idealised citizenship in neoliberal Ireland.

The turning point in the public life of Panti Bliss occurred in 2014. On 11 January, Rory O'Neill appeared as a guest on RTÉ's *Saturday Night Show*, hosted by Brendan O'Connor. Following a pre-recorded drag performance as Panti Bliss, O'Neill was interviewed about his life and career as a drag queen. Two months earlier, in November 2013, the Irish government had announced that a referendum on same-sex marriage would be held in 2015, which had triggered conversations in the public arena about the issue, but a focused campaign was yet to begin. Therefore, the conversation was not subject to the tight, 'balanced' regulation of discourse in Irish media in the run up to popular votes. While talking about being gay in contemporary Ireland, O'Neill acknowledged that Irish society had indeed changed positively in recent years, but alluded to the existence of 'horrible and mean' public comments from elements within the Irish media. Encouraged by O'Connor to cite examples of media commentators who hold an anti-gay attitude, O'Neill names Irish Times columnists Breda O'Brien, John Waters, and the conservative Catholic think tank the Iona Institute. It was, in fact, Brendan O'Connor who introduced the word which transformed an unmemorable slice of light entertainment into a cultural catalyst: homophobia. 'I wouldn't have thought John Waters was homophobic', suggested O'Connor, to which O'Neill explained the potential for homophobia to be a subtle phenomenon, such as advocating for the differential treatment for same-sex couples. After complaints of defamation from John Waters, a member of the *Broadcasting Authority of Ireland* (BAI), and members of the *Iona Institute*, RTÉ removed the episode from their online media player on January 15. The following day, an edited video of the interview reappeared, with the offending segment concerning allegations of homophobia removed, as an online furore emerged, with websites being ordered to remove the full video and any existing transcripts. On January 16, O'Neill received solicitors' letters on behalf of Breda O'Brien and the Iona Institute, with a letter from John Waters' legal team arriving four days later. John Waters subsequently waived his obligations and resigned from the BAI, in order to pursue a

case against O'Neill. However, the controversy escalated on January 23, when RTE issued compensatory payments to Waters, O'Brien, and the Iona Institute. Initially, the amount paid remained confidential, but not for long. In the lead-up to an anticipated referendum on civil marriage between same sex couples, the threat of legal action against the broadcaster, who paid out approximately €85,000 to the offended parties, effectively meant that homophobia could not now be publicly identified and discussed in the national media. The national media initially offered scant coverage of the interview, its subsequent censorship, or the legal threats, leading to a sense in the Irish queer community that accusations of homophobia were prohibited in the name of 'balance' ahead of the expected referendum. Two weeks after the show aired, Brendan O'Connor apologised to the complainants.

RTE's capitulation in the face of legal action had a very real effect on queers in Irish society, as a number of complaints were made regarding programmes featuring gay people. One particularly controversial example of this censorship occurred when the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland upheld a complaint against RTE Radio One's *The Mooney Show*, a decidedly uncontroversial afternoon programme that mainly consists of features on human interest stories and birdwatching. The presenter, Derek Mooney (also gay), was reprimanded for responding encouragingly towards a same sex couple who expressed their desire to marry (a decision which was upheld later in 2014). Despite occurring a year before the official campaign had started, the ruling made many queers (myself included) realise that discussing even the most banal aspirations on the national broadcaster was verboten; our existences were deemed too politically controversial to be acknowledged. It also served as the point at which any discussion of sexuality or reproduction on Irish television or radio necessitated the inclusion of a homophobic commentator, invariably a member of the Iona Institute, to advocate for a 'traditional' interpretation of relationships and families, with media contributions marshalled carefully so as to avoid accusations of bias. RTE's continued attempts at saving

face, through payouts and an overzealous interest in ‘objectivity’, ‘balance’, and ‘fairness’ - the oft-repeated terminology of BAI reports and guidelines – was reflective of an aversion towards engagement with the actuality of Irish life. The ubiquity of the Iona Institute was seen, not only by queers, but by many heterosexuals, as an anachronistic throwback to an Ireland that was unrecognisable (even for many practising Catholics, whose clergy was relatively muted and, on occasion, advocated for a ‘Yes’ vote, despite epistles from the Church hierarchy calling for a rejection of constitutional change). RTE’s stance led to the impression that airing homophobic bigotry was not merely being normalised, but seen as a legitimate, respectable way of exercising one’s citizenship. What was deemed unrespectable was to challenge the reputation of an individual, or a small group of individuals, as was seen through the efficiency with which RTE paid compensation, rather than have a discussion of homophobia and public discourse in a civil court case. The case demonstrated the extent to which elements of the Irish establishment favoured silence when it came to issues around sexuality. As Fintan Walsh observed, tapping into the feeling among Dublin’s gay community, the affair “effectively meant that homophobia could not be called out in public” (2014: 104).

However, dissenting voices would quickly emerge across a series of sites. One of these sites was on stage, a seemingly appropriate space for a drag queen. In contrast with the respectably presented Rory O’Neill, whose interview led to censure and litigation, it was Panti Bliss who would emerge as the figurehead of the rapidly galvanising movement for marriage in Ireland. On 1 February 2014, Panti delivered a ten-minute speech on the main stage of the Abbey Theatre following a production of James Plunkett's play *The Risen People* (1958). Panti’s oration was the final instalment in a series of so-called ‘Noble Call’ speeches, commissioned by Ireland’s national theatre, which saw artists, activists, and public intellectuals speak on a topic of social concern in contemporary Ireland, and resonated with the ethos of social justice inherent in Plunkett’s play. Plunkett's drama explores the impact on a family of

the 1913 Dublin Lockout, during which approximately 20,000 people took to the streets in an industrial dispute over working conditions. Marking the centenary of the event, the production and its Noble Calls was one of the first in a series of initiatives marking one hundred years since the start of revolutionary agitation which led to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Recognising a visible difference between the characters around her, and herself, Panti acknowledges that she is 'painfully middle class', but proceeds to draw out the resonances between the lives of those who struggled through the Irish revolutionary period a century earlier, and Irish citizens confronted with an oppression that they feel they are unable to name without suffering negative consequences. Referring directly to the controversy that had unoriginally been coined 'Pantigate', Panti's speech both critiqued and escaped the restrictions of the national broadcaster, as well as offering opportunity for not only solidarity, but participation, among queers in Ireland and abroad through the affordances of video-sharing social media platforms. Panti's 'Noble Call' was not the first time that the stage of the Abbey Theatre was the site of challenge to existing structures of personal morality. The theatre itself, established in 1904, is synonymous with the cultural nationalism of the Irish Literary and Cultural Revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing a space for productions of work by leading nationalist writers, such as William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Sean O'Casey. The most famous incident, arguably, occurred on 26 January 1907, the opening night of John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. In *The Playboy* the action takes place in a public house on the windswept west coast of Ireland, when the protagonist, Christy Mahon, enters and is induced to tell his story. The on-stage audience are in thrall to his patricidal narrative, as Mahon becomes the embodiment of the wild, ungovernable Irishman, whose Oedipal bravery transforms him into an anti-hero, and an object of desire for the publican's daughter. When the supposedly deceased Mahon senior enters, the on-stage audience turns on Christy, prompting him to make another failed attempt at killing his

father. The off-stage audience, already shaken by the inherently anti-Christian sentiment of patricide, erupted into a riot at the mention of the word 'shifts' (a woman's chemise) in the third act, outraged at the play's disregard for the sexual purity of Irish women, religious and legal strictures, as well as the perceived injury to the Irish national character. Synge's *Christy Mahon* was a repudiation of the stage Irishman, fashioned by English dramatists as a subject of mockery and ridicule, and a reappropriation of the stage as a site where hegemonic understandings of class, nationalism, religion, and crucially, respectability, were challenged.

Standing on the Abbey stage, surrounded by the cast of *The Risen People*, Panti delivered a witty and impassioned talk outlining what she understood homophobia to be, as well as an elaboration of the affective toll of such experiences. The speech was structured around her own experiences of homophobic prejudice, in an attempt to connect to her audience, asking: 'Have you ever been standing at a pedestrian crossing when a car drives by and in it are a bunch of lads, and they lean out the window and they shout 'Fag!' and throw a milk carton at you? Now it doesn't really hurt. It's just a wet carton, and anyway they're right - I am a fag. But it *feels* oppressive'. Referring specifically to 'Pantigate', Panti recounted how 'three weeks ago, I was on the television, and I said that I believed that people who actively campaign for gay people to be treated less or differently are, in my gay opinion, homophobic. Some people, people who actively campaign for gay people to be treated less under the law, took great exception at this characterization and threatened legal action against me and RTÉ'. Denied an opportunity to respond to the controversy on the national broadcaster, Panti used the Abbey stage as a space to comment upon the implications of Rory's interview, and the subsequent legal repercussions, upon discussions of homophobia by queers, declaring that 'our definition has been disallowed by our betters':

I have been denounced from the floor of parliament, to newspaper columns, to the seething morass of Internet commentary for 'hate speech', because I dared to use the word

'homophobia'. And a jumped-up queer like me should know that the word 'homophobia' is no longer available to gay people. Which is a spectacular and neat Orwellian trick, because now it turns out that gay people are not the victims of homophobia - homophobes are the victims of homophobia

Here, Panti recovers the Abbey Stage as an alternative forum for the performance of Irishness: one that would then be endorsed through the affordances of new media: viewings and sharing among users of social media added to the power of the message, and implicit condemnation of perceived bias-in-the-name-of-balance at RTE.

Panti repeatedly returns to examples of the self-regulation of one's comportment so familiar to queer subjects, required to 'pass' in a potentially hostile situation. Describing the effect of the internalisation of homophobia, Panti describes the lasting psychic impact of prejudice: 'Afterwards I wonder and worry and obsess over what was it about me, what was it they saw in me? What was it that gave me away? And I hate myself for wondering that. It feels oppressive and the next time I'm at a pedestrian crossing I check myself to see what is it about me that "gives the gay away" and I check myself to make sure I'm not doing it this time'. At this point, laughter can be heard in the audience: a drag queen – a persona – is asking the audience what “gives the gay away” about Rory's real life experience of homophobia. The humour, however, does not detract from the sincerity of the appeal; Panti's costume enables the frank discussion of homophobia that Rory had been denied on television. Panti goes on to anticipate the collective queer experience of the referendum campaign, describing the 'panel of people - nice people, respectable people, smart people, the kind of people who make good neighbourly neighbours and write for newspapers. And they are having a reasoned debate about you. About what kind of a person you are, about whether you are capable of being a good parent, about whether you want to destroy marriage, about whether you are safe around children'. The intensive surveillance of, and performance by, queers in order to verify their respectability, and by extension, their claim to kinship and citizenship rights, has an affective

cost. Further to this, Panti's rhetorical strategy underscored the pervasiveness of homophobia, how everyone internalises homophobia – including homosexuals – and are by extension homophobic, which spoke to the allegations that her interview on RTE was libellous towards John Waters and Breda O'Brien (see Kulick: 2007 on the cultural production of homophobia).

This section of Panti's 'Noble Call' emphasises the embodied dimension of memory, and how people are socialised into (and out of) ways of being in the world. William Kelleher (2003:14; 56) has explored social memory in Northern Ireland through the embodied practice of 'telling'. This refers to the ability to 'tell' whether a person is Protestant or Catholic through the observation of their bodily movements and psychological features. Kelleher observed that his informants 'mapped their social world through their moving bodies. Those moves were acts of memorization, forms of practical consciousness, and they elicited narration'. The speech reasserted the quotidian nature of homophobia in the lives of Irish queers, as well as the necessity to identify it alongside other, more newsworthy incidents of violent oppression. The 'Noble Call' stressed the contiguity between the domestic and the international dimensions of homophobia, at a time when homophobic violence in Russia was the focus of particular media attention in light of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

New media helped alert the public to the anachronistic and censorious attitudes of old media, as well as highlighting the Irish marriage movement internationally, as it had done in 2009, with the *Sinead's Hand* video. The mobilisation of queers, and other supporters of marriage equality, through Pantigate and its viral afterlife was of profound importance, as it anticipated the divisive tone of the formal campaign in 2015. The lobbying movement around gaining civil marriage was not as vociferously supportive, however. In their quickly produced memoir of the successful campaign, Healy et al (2015) were ambivalent about the importance of Pantigate, even after the 'Yes' victory, as it did not specifically appeal to a demographic which needed to be persuaded to vote 'Yes'. Acknowledging the 'galvanising' effect of the

affair, the authors claim that ‘it is debatable whether ‘Pantigate’ contributed to or detracted from the early stages of the pre-referendum debate among the broader public’ (22). This comment underlines the strategic nature of the lobbying campaign, and reinforces the feelings of alienation from the organised marriage movement that my informants frequently reported. Indeed, Healy et al (2015: 43-45) recorded that ‘Yes Equality’ followed strategic marketing advice that actively downplayed any identifiers of sexual difference: posters, for example, would feature slogans about equality, but where people were featured, they would only appear in groups that would make it difficult to identify GLBT people. It is against this backdrop that Panti remained an icon of the movement for marriage, though one who would be marginalised during the ‘official’ campaign. Footage of Rory canvassing for a ‘Yes’ vote in *The Queen of Ireland* illustrates the tone of that particular campaign: ordinary, respectable people asking their fellow citizens for the right to marry. The invisibility of Panti Bliss in the weeks leading up to the vote was noted by many informants who critiqued the ‘simplified’ strategy of ‘ordinary’ people being the face of the campaign (a tactic which left many of my bisexual and transgendered informants feeling unwelcome on local canvassing teams). Panti’s symbolic value was recognised at Dublin Castle, on 23 May, as the GLBT community came to realise the magnitude of the day’s events. Panti’s reception at Dublin Castle was something of a crowning moment: a HIV positive drag queen emerging at the former seat of colonial power – one that had criminalised homosexuality – to be lauded for her part in enacting democratic social change. It was this moment that provided the opening scene of *The Queen of Ireland*, framing this moment as the telos of Rory O’Neill’s life story.

The Queen of Ireland

In this section, Panti Bliss' biographical portrait will be analysed, with a particular consideration as to how the film functions as an important Irish cultural document at a particularly important juncture in the nation's history. While *The Queen of Ireland* (2015) had been in production for several years, the events around 'Pantigate', the 'Noble Call', and the same-sex marriage campaign gave the director, Conor Horgan, and the production company Blinder Films, added impetus to release the film and capitalise on the topicality of its subject. Being an independent company in need of funding to match the sudden interest in Panti Bliss in 2014, Horgan and Blinder Films reached out to the Irish public, through a 'crowdfunding' appeal. This appeal can be appreciated as an act of reciprocity: Panti's admirers enthusiastically supported the project, and as a result, the end product appeared in cinemas in October 2015, a year after the publication of *A Woman in the Making* (O'Neill: 2014), Rory's autobiography. The film largely uses the conceit of the memoir: the individual's story is mapped onto the national narrative of mobility and progress.

The indexical disjuncture of the film's title is notable: it is a moniker usually afforded to Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and associated with the Marian apparition site of Knock, in Rory's native Co. Mayo. The title itself is not an original Panti Bliss creation, however. Panti's use of the moniker dates back to the 1990s club scene that they pioneered, as Shirley Temple Bar recounted to me. Referring to the title as an example of Panti's 'magpie'-like tendencies to lift other people's ideas and slot them into her own work, she alleged that Panti had stolen what had been their fellow drag queen Veda's title. When I later asked Veda about this alleged slight, she laughed it off, and told me that Panti had asked permission to use the title in promotional materials earlier in their career. Shirley Temple Bar's comments suggest an underlying bitchiness between these ageing queens, but the presence of Shirley Temple Bar's creator, Declan Buckley, in *The Queen of Ireland*, describing his experience of a

homophobic attack while walking down the street with Rory reflects the interconnections between their stage personae and personal lives. Similarly, Veda was eager to reveal that he was the anecdotal ‘gay friend’, referred to in the ‘Noble Call’ speech, whose deportment causes Panti to be ‘embarrassed by his gayness’. She took great pride in telling me that she had caused this internationally acclaimed human rights advocate to confront his internalised homophobia.

The Queen of Ireland (2015) took several years to come to fruition. Initial filming started in 2010, but as the events surrounding ‘Pantigate’ lead to a transformation of the subject’s cultural import in Ireland and abroad, the filmmakers turned to the popular practice of crowdfunding to ensure the film’s timely completion. The completed film has since lead to Panti travelling around the world, funded by the Irish government, to promote the documentary at festivals and embassies, in conjunction with other activities designed to promote Ireland, foreign aid, and human rights advocacy. The opening minutes of the film consists solely of footage of Panti entering Dublin Castle on May 23, 2015, before the official announcement that same-sex marriage had been approved by the electorate. These images showed Panti as the focus of adulation from the crowd, and taking her place alongside members of the political establishment as an architect of the victorious movement. This success, which led to the rushed release of the long-awaited production, is foregrounded before the film returns to its (presumably) original opening scene. From the outset, the viewer is granted the intimate privilege of entering Rory/Panti’s world, initially through the conceit of entering the changing room where Rory becomes Panti, but later through a series of intimate settings. The film records both public and private aspects of Rory and Panti, and how both sides rub against each other. The fortuitous timing of the film grants the viewer into those initial days following Rory’s controversial television appearance, and the ensuing lawsuits, and public support, through to the marriage referendum, as well as dealing with the personal and cultural histories of being a gay Irish man. As a result, *Queen of Ireland* is a crucially insightful cultural

document of a changing society at an uncertain time. Reflecting the religious connotations of the title, the film does, at times, strike the viewer as hagiographic: all of the talking heads are Panti's friends and family. There are no dissenting voices: no criticisms of the marriage movement from within the gay community; no lamentations for the spike in HIV infections concurrent with the period of filming; While broadly well received by my own informants, they worried that *The Queen of Ireland* was joining other 'official' narratives of the movement for marriage (Healy et al., 2015; Mullally 2014).

The film's narrative arc traces Rory's personal journey towards becoming the 'accidental activist' as he frequently self-styles, online, in print, and in public appearances for 'diversity' events and campus talks. In many ways, this narrative reflects the national narrative of delayed modernity, and evokes a sense of isolation felt by those who felt out of place amid the cultural homogeneity of twentieth century Ireland (see O'Toole 1997 on Ireland's belated modernity). Importantly, O'Neill seems to reinforce the notion that his rural hometown of Ballinrobe, County Mayo, in the West of Ireland, still retains something of an Ireland that has passed, at least chronologically. According to O'Neill, contemporary 'Ballinrobe is your typical Irish country market town, has a couple of streets, a town hall, a cattle mart. There was great excitement when Tesco came to town!' O'Neill's description is complemented by Horgan's shots of a tractor, slowly trundling along the main street in Ballinrobe, delaying a long line of cars, as well as images of traditional shop fronts, once ubiquitous in rural Ireland; remnants of a pre-Tesco Ireland, and a pre-liberalised society.

O'Neill describes his youth in Ballinrobe as 'pretty idyllic', but in a narrative familiar to many queer coming-of-age stories, Rory started to recognise the shortcomings of Ballinrobe once he was exposed to life as a dormer at a boarding school. Intimately connected to puberty and the realisation of his sexual orientation, O'Neill describes himself as 'feeling like a square peg in a Ballinrobe-shaped hole'. Rory's ruminations on his life, and the cinematography that

accompanies his statements, reveals what Helena Wulff (2007) repeatedly refers to as the ‘divisional’ nature of Irish society: urban and rural, traditional and modern, Catholic and Protestant – and I would argue heterosexual and homosexual (see also Conrad: 2004). A narrative strategy emerges early in the film, one that folds Rory’s personal narrative into narratives of both the gay community in Ireland but the nation itself. Telling the story of Irish gay men before decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, the need to leave one’s place of origin in order to feel a sense of belonging is foundational- not only in Rory’s story but also as a common trope within narratives of the gay experience (cf D’Emilio: 1983). Initially, boarding school functioned as a liminal space wherein O’Neill was granted space for self-realisation, if temporarily. Subsequently, O’Neill describes choosing to go to art college, because ‘you’ll find queers there’. This marks an important juncture in the film: at art college, he meets friend and the eventual co-creator of *Panti Bliss*, Niall Sweeney, and his personal creative journey begins to develop. It is also at this point that the film reflects on the Dublin of the early 1980s, with archival footage of moustachioed, cardigan-wearing men dancing in subterranean basement venues (where, according to O’Neill ‘homosexuals [were] fellating each other’ unbeknownst to passers-by), to news reports of the Declan Flynn killing in 1982, and the subsequent mobilisation by gays, women’s rights groups, republicans, and labour organisations for sociocultural change.

The killing was also followed by one of Dublin’s first Pride marches later in 1983 (While Pride had been publicly marked in 1974, by activists including David Norris, Tonie Walsh asserts that the first Pride march occurred in 1980). Obliquely, the viewer can trace the trajectory of the Pride movement in Ireland between 1983, where the gathering was an explicit demand for rights and recognition, to more recent Pride events from 2010, through 2015, when the event was *marketed* as a ‘parade’ (albeit with a renewed focus on political mobilisation around issues of relationship recognition). The inclusion of personal photographs alongside historical

documentary evidence is compelling as it links the personal with the political, as well as alluding to the recent focus on recovering the occluded history of the GLBT community in Ireland (from the Irish Queer Archive (IQA) project, which has been institutionalised in the National Museum of Ireland, to the establishment of the annual Gay Theatre Festival in Dublin, or the archival/interview film projects of Edmund Lynch, an early member of the Irish Gay Rights Movement in the 1970s). As Tonie Walsh, the founder of the IQA, observes in the film, the Dublin of the 1980s was one that rendered gay men criminal (which he traces back, justifiably to the prosecution, and persecution, of Oscar Wilde, that other noted Irish homosexual), and whose life ‘has no value’, which produced an atmosphere that was, to echo Panti’s description of contemporary Ireland, ‘oppressive’. Indeed, inadequate police protection or justice for gay men who were susceptible to violence, as well as the attempts by the police to intimidate gay men following the murders of Charles Self in 1982 and Declan Flynn in 1983, evidences the status of the gay man as *homo sacer*, in Agamben’s (1998) terms. Much like those institutionalised in Ireland’s ‘architecture of confinement’(Smith: 2007), gay men in Ireland were considered to be undeserving of the state’s protection, and in the case of Declan Flynn, undeserving of justice (Mullally 2014). The precarity would only intensify as that decade progressed, and AIDS began to decimate the gay community in Dublin, and its gay Irish diaspora who fled, usually to London, to live and die. It was the state’s criminalisation of homosexuality that impeded initial attempts by groups like Gay Health Action and Dublin AIDS Alliance to gain funding for medical care and education programmes for gay men in Ireland. (A stark artefact of these migrations appeared in an unmarked file during my research in the archives of HIV Ireland: a South Eastern Health Board form, to be completed by those seeking funding to repatriate the body of a relative).

As seen with his move from rural to urban, the film, and Rory’s life is marked by mobility. Wulff (2007) has identified mobility as a key feature of Irish culture: one shaped by

emigration and exile, as well as social, economic, and political transformations. Rory's mobility, as depicted in the documentary, mirrors that of Ireland, and its shifting cultural formations. While Dublin and its small queer community appeared to satiate desire for feelings of kinship and belonging, it comes to be a mere waystation for O'Neill at this point in his life. Describing Dublin as 'grey...depressed' and a 'difficult place to be fabulous', O'Neill leaves for Tokyo, where Panti Bliss is born (utilising the then acme of modern communication, the facsimile machine, O'Neill received designs for his drag creations from Niall Sweeney, who was still in Dublin). The transnational gestation of the character is testament to Panti's hybridity, and that of drag queens writ large. Panti's return coincides with a changed, and changing, Dublin, after the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, economic growth, and an atmosphere of creativity among Dublin's gay scene. Rory describes his involvement in multiple club projects, considering patrons to be 'participants' rather than 'consumers': this was 'nightclubbing as performance art'. Ireland's economic and cultural liberalisation are represented as being symbiotically connected in the documentary: Panti often appears at such 'diversity' events held by multinational companies in Dublin; PantiBar is a major tourist attraction, and a main site during Dublin Pride celebrations (see Duggan 2003 and Ward 2008 for a critical analysis of 'Rainbow Capitalism').

Alternative Miss Ireland

In this section, I will consider the role and legacy of the legendary institution, the Alternative Miss Ireland contest, which ran on an annual basis from 1996 to 2012. This chronological period is particularly notable, as it traces the emergence of a distinctively local form of a globalised gay identity, sociality, and performance in Dublin, at a time when Dublin was emerging as a metropolitan, economically and socially liberalised city. In the documentary and in O'Neill's memoir, the AMI is discussed as a way of introducing Rory's HIV diagnosis and illustrating the

role that Rory and the Dublin drag community have had in fundraising and social visibility, providing a bridge between sociality and social activism.

Soon after returning from Japan in the mid-1990s, Rory describes how he, Sweeney, and their friend Trish Brennan were approached by Dublin AIDS Alliance to resurrect the Alternative Miss Ireland (AMI) revue, which had been held as an AIDS fundraiser in 1987. As the documentary was being recorded, Rory was preparing to present the eighteenth, and final, AMI show. The AMI was an opportunity not only for queer performance, sociality, and cultural critique, it was also a source of revenue for HIV charities (the legacy of the AMI and the much needed funds that it raised is still fondly remembered by those working in the HIV sector in Dublin today, who imparted memories of donations from U2, and “brown envelopes” full of cash from politicians who were subverting the strictures that existed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that prevented state funding from being given to organisations deemed to promote the illegal activity of homosexuality). The AMI also provided a space for dissent in relation to social and political issues, particularly around gender identity and sexual orientation. Each year, the show critiqued the ongoing close relationship between church and state. The pageant format itself lampooned commercial ‘Oirish’ events such as the Rose of Tralee, though arguably mirroring its idiosyncratic winner selection process. Held on the Sunday closest to St. Patrick’s Day, it showcased identities that were long considered incompatible with Irishness. Irish drag continues to challenge rigid constructions of gender and sexual morality that are deeply inscribed in Irish culture, and guarded by icons of virtue such as the Virgin Mother and Cathleen ni Houlihan. The winner of the competition would receive the coveted ‘Medusa Crown of Shamrocks’.

Having initially occupied a series of nightclubs, the AMI revue found a home in the Olympia Theatre. Unofficially, the show became seen as a side-event during the ever-evolving, increasingly commercialised St. Patrick’s Day ‘Festival’, as it was marketed since the Celtic

Tiger era. With a nod to that other Christian festival, AMI became affectionately known as ‘Gay Christmas’ in Dublin’s queer community, with the AMI’s cross dressing and audience interaction mirroring that of a seasonal pantomime. The Olympia itself harks back to the Victorian music hall tradition, with its delusions of grandeur still evident: the gilt-edged décor, the plush seating, both of which have seen better days. The faded glory of the theatre is fitting for the pageant, which itself was manifested through the goodwill and talent of the community, even if the production value did improve markedly over the years.

Richard Kirkland has, provocatively, brought the concept of camp to an Irish context, specifically to the North of Ireland, but with an applicability to the rest of the island. Camp, for Kirkland:

fulfils a number of important roles within bourgeois society. In exposing the shallowness of identitarian constructions of the self through a determined focus on the surfaces of their manifestation, it is a celebration of those identities while at the same time containing a more dangerous awareness of their ultimate interchangeability. Its intimacy with those codes, the profound knowledge of the society it demands, similarly allows for a demarcation of a culture while, as [Richard] Dyer reminds us, providing a mode of cultural survival in the face of real or imagined violence (2002:130).

For Kirkland, the value of camp is that it is ‘transgressive of the limits by which identity normally offers itself’. Influenced by Sontag’s writing on camp, Kirkland is drawn to the aesthetic potential of camp which ‘seems to invite an actual commitment to identity’s formal structures. In this way camp becomes an unlikely ally, if not of identity itself, then at least to the symmetries and oppositions on which it is dependent’ (130). For Kirkland, camp becomes a way of unpicking identitarian politics, as camp is ‘indicative of an overdetermined identity formation’ (127). Kirkland’s appreciation of camp is based on Sontag’s definition of ‘seriousness that fails’ (59). While Kirkland identifies and appreciates the transgression inherent in camp, and the performative failure that constitutes it, he occludes the queer cultural

practice of camp in lieu of a fixed, identifiable aesthetic. Opting to utilise the queer critic Richard Dyer in order to elaborate on his own theories of camp, Kirkland explicitly selects Dyer's 'cheerful analysis' over the 'more militant reclamations of camp by queer theory', citing Moe Meyer's claim that camp 'embodies a specifically queer cultural discourse' that considers non-queer analysis as cultural appropriation (181).

A Sontagian focus on aesthetics, as favoured by Kirkland, while valuable, has been eclipsed by the ethnographic approach of Esther Newton's *Mother Camp*, which enables enquiry into the 'exercise in homosexual taste and a mode of existence' that is camp (Cleto: 89). Kirkland's emphasis on the performative serves to elide the importance of performance in camp; it ignores the dialogic nature of camp, the sensibility, a knowingness, what Newton describes as a 'theatricality' shared between the performer and the audience (Cleto: 102). Eve Sedgwick is one of the strongest proponents of camp-as-queer while also appreciating the aesthetic nature of camp, as opposed to a variation of kitsch, emphasising the interactive – even ritualistic - nature of camp performance, writing that:

Camp seems to involve a gayer and more spacious angle of view ... unlike kitsch-attribution, then, camp-recognition doesn't ask, 'What kind of debased creature could possibly be the right audience for this spectacle?' Instead, it says what if: What if the right audience for this were exactly me? What if, for instance, the resistant, oblique, tangential investments of attention and attraction that I am able to bring to this spectacle are actually uncannily a response to the resistant, oblique, tangential investments of the person, or of some of the people, who created it? And what if, furthermore, others whom I don't know or recognize can see it from the same 'perverse' angle? Unlike kitsch-attribution, the sensibility of camp-recognition always sees that it is dealing in reader relations and in projective fantasy (projective though not infrequently true) about the spaces and practices of cultural production (1990:156).

The affinity among queers for camp performance, and its potential for recognition that it affords its audience anticipated the politics of recognition that the queer community would

move towards in the late twentieth century. This appeal of camp to the minoritarian queer community is constitutive of what Michael Warner has termed counter-public discourse, with camp 'maintain[ing] at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one ... The discourse that constitutes it is not merely a different or alternative idiom but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility' (2002:119). Such a reading of camp refutes Sontag's assertion that the practice was a 'an experience of underinvolvement, of detachment', and that the 'camp sensibility [is] disengaged, depoliticized - or at least apolitical' (54). Au contraire, camp is shaped by the political context. In that case, Irish drag is especially interesting when one considers the accelerated social changes vis a vis same sex sexualities and relationships since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, and the fermentation of a visible drag/queer social 'scene' in Dublin in the following years.

One particular performance that has endured in the memory of those who attended AMI 2010 is *Opus Gei*. The title refers to the Roman Catholic sect Opus Dei (which translates as 'the work of God'), an organisation that gained attention in the mid-2000s, following the publication of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) and its subsequent movie adaptation, which emphasised both the cult-like practices of the group, including the ritualistic self-flagellation that members endure. The overt focus on Catholicism in the performance reflects the integral role of Catholic teaching in the production of Irish sexual personhood, and its deconstruction through drag. The first performance starts with a figure, wearing a nun's habit and holding a Pope John Paul II mask to their face, and descending a flight of stairs while playing decontextualized extracts of the late pontiff's speech, from his 1979 Irish visit, warning that 'Your religious practices are hopelessly, hopelessly, hopelessly out of date' and declaring: 'Young people of Ireland, I love you'. Simultaneously, the figure is joined by a troupe of nuns singing the Motown song 'I Will Follow Him', albeit in the choral arrangement popularised by

the movie *Sister Act* (1990). The tempo of the song changes, as the nun's habit is shed, to reveal a man in drag, wearing a skimpy cocktail dress, and decidedly more on the side of the 'whore' in the Madonna/whore binary. The utilisation of both local and international codes are standard in Irish drag performance, as is the referencing of Catholic iconography, but the performance in and of itself was not particularly stimulating.

The group's second performance, however, is what has become the stuff of Dublin drag lore. The piece opens with the audio of an actual news report from Co. Limerick in 2009, covering the alleged appearance of what the news reporter described as 'an image of the Blessed Virgin' on a tree stump. As a group of priests hover over the wood, the news reporter approaches a dishevelled local, whose apparel suggest that he is likely a farmer. Visually, the contrast between the heavily made-up, metropolitan news reporter and the mystified, unwashed peasant serves to code the division between urban and rural, rich and poor, secular and pious – traditional and modern. Taylor (1995) has noted the persistence of folk religious practices in rural Ireland, alongside orthodox forms of Catholic worship. It is also notable that the apparition at the tree stump in Limerick occurred in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash. Taylor has also observed that Ireland's robust culture of apparitions tend to happen at times of particular economic difficulty (the 1879 apparition at Knock, during a period of heightened agrarian conflict; and the 'Moving Statues' phenomenon of the 1980s, a time of great socio-economic upheaval, emigration, and referendums on abortion and divorce).

This brief preamble sets the scene, as the song 'Like a Prayer' starts to play; crucially, it is not the original Madonna classic, but an inferior cover version by an act called Mad'House. The choice of the overproduced cover version over the original underscores the cheap, do-it-yourself nature of Irish drag. The central performer emerges, flanked by dancing priests and altar boys, lip-synching to the music, dressed in yet another cocktail dress, but one of a light blue common in icons of the Virgin Mary, wearing a crown of thorns and a bleeding Sacred

Heart (both of which are synonymous with portraits of Jesus, commonly found in Irish homes during the twentieth century). As the song progresses, both priests and altar boys lose their robes, and start to engage in simulated sexual acts. The main performer – while lip-synching impeccably – is held back by one priest, while another simulates cunnilingus upon her, before she assumes a dominant role, and simulates the practice known in gay vernacular as ‘fistfucking’.

The crowd goes wild, partially with delighted shock, partially out of joy at witnessing a ‘woman’ assuming a dominant sexual role towards men who signify as the embodiment of repression of sexual pleasure in Irish culture. Leashes are then attached to their clerical collars, as the star of the performance orders them to move forward. The priests are then unleashed, to raise the main performer into the air, before lowering her to the group so that they join a high-kicking chorus line. As the song faded out, all performers revealed an image of Pope John Paul II once again, linking the climax of the performance with their earlier one. This time, instead of a repetition of that iconic ‘Young People of Ireland, I Love You’ line, an audio of Sinéad O’Connor, from her infamous 1992 Saturday Night Live performance, saying ‘Fight the Real Enemy’. Following O’Connor’s cue, the members of Opus Gei proceeded to rip up their images of the pope, and throw them to the ground.

O’Connor’s performance has become legendary, despite damaging her career, particularly in the United States. It is widely regarded as prescient, considering the sheer number of allegations of clerical and institutional abuse that would emerge throughout the 1990s. The climax of the Opus Gei performance does not have that same shock value, as the institutional church has lost the moral authority that it claimed just two decades prior to that AMI show. The main shock of the evening stemmed from the fact that Opus Gei did not win: the actual winner has largely been forgotten in Dublin’s drag community – even if the boos following her victory have not - but many still recall Opus Gei as capturing the quintessence

of Irish drag: the local and the international coming together, the glamour alongside the do-it-yourself ethos, as well as references to hegemonic institutions such as the Catholic Church and RTE. Crucially, the event also fostered community spirit: through the fundraising prerogative, but also through the harnessing of local talent in the service of sociality. My informants, while recognising that drag has become a profitable enterprise for commercial venues such as the George, or PantiBar (indeed, the Olympia Theatre has hosted revues by stars of *RuPaul's Drag Race*) notes with regret that this newfound popularity is making nights out financially challenging for less wealthy fans; the average price per ticket for *RPDR* show was seventy euro, according to one disgruntled student informant, citing that the cost was prohibitive for himself and many of his fellow drag enthusiasts). The social and material relations enabled by the AMI linger in the memory of the gay community in Dublin, though its absence is also felt by many who feel that their community has lost something of communal value in recent years.

Today, Alternative Miss Ireland exists as an archive, or more accurately, across a series of archives. Performances by contestants were often recorded by attendees (with varying degrees of recording expertise), and subsequently have found an afterlife on platforms such as YouTube and Wordpress. People leave comments, containing remembered details of AMI events that they attended; in this sense, the interactive space of the AMI remains. Some footage of the final AMI is preserved in Conor Horgan's *The Queen of Ireland*. These scenes serve to reinforce the function of gay sociality as a force for social good, as a fundraiser for HIV/AIDS charities. Several manila files full of ephemera, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and official annual programmes, reside in the Irish Queer Archive collection in the National Museum of Ireland's headquarters. This archive is particularly fruitful, as the annual programmes, designed by Niall Sweeney and sold on the night of the event, illustrate the growing importance of sleek commercial advertising. One particular programme was designed specifically for the tenth AMI (including the first event at *Sides* nightclub in 1987). This

programme, considerably girthier than other volumes, also serves as a de facto history of queer Dublin, and Ireland. One can flick through, chronologically, and appreciate how AMI deconstructed stereotypes of Irishness, often ones that are explicitly cast as heteronormative. Importantly, AMI is still recalled by informants who have been involved in Dublin's gay social life in recent decades as the high watermark of a community spirit and selflessness that seems to have gradually ebbed away, leaving a dearth of GLBT spaces (save commercialised places such as PantiBar and the George), as well as a social scene that is influenced by the proliferation of dating applications. One informant cited bars and club nights that had recently closed down: the Front Lounge; Crush; The Dragon; Bbz. While the tone, especially among older drag queens was rueful – lamenting what they felt was a dying culture, and the emergence of a new generation of drag performers that were career driven and commercially motivated – they felt relatively confident in the future of the abovementioned venues, noting their ‘mainstream’ (non-GLBT) appeal. An alternative to these commercialised spaces has emerged in the aforementioned ‘Spicebag’, whose frequent references to cultural Catholicism and regular, spontaneous Riverdance performances, display a clear connection between it and the AMI.

With AMI, camp was deployed to deconstruct and subvert hegemonic ideas around Irishness, gender, and sexuality. AMI also used humour to challenge cultural attitudes around HIV, particularly important in a gay community rife with phobic attitudes towards seropositivity (see O'Brien: 2013 for a discussion of the AMI winner and performance artist Neil Watkins). However, even as the most visible and vocal poz (I use this locution as the term is frequently used by HIV positive men with whom I have spoken, and is derived from their ‘positive’ status) figure in Ireland, Panti's performances and comment have served to alienate other positive gay men. One positive informant cited Panti's ‘Get AIDS!’ sketch (an attempt to educate the audience about HIV/AIDS, to induce them to understand, or ‘get’, the syndrome) as an example of Panti 's questionable judgement. This sentiment was particularly strong

among older, positive informants who resented Panti's oft-repeated public comment about taking a 'magic pill' to manage HIV. These informants cited the multiple health conditions – from organ function to bone density problems - that they have experienced as a result of years taking antiretroviral medicines. One informant mentioned a close friend who had died of a heart attack, which has been attributed – by positive friends and those working in the HIV/AIDS sector – to his antiretroviral regime. Such anecdotes colour their opinions of PrEP, too. Panti's routine also condescends to younger people with HIV (shaming them as she scolds from the stage that they 'should have known better' than to contract HIV) – another focus of ire from my informants. Here we see contestation over HIV and representations of life with the diagnosis; this topic will be explored at greater length in the next chapter. Thinking about Panti's contested place in the gay community, Eve Sedgwick's summation of drag culture - 'kinda hegemonic; kinda subversive' (1993: 15) – comes to mind. While this may sound frustratingly vague, it sums up both the shifting semiotics and contexts of drag performance in Ireland, and of the complex role of Panti Bliss. A quarter of a century later, Sedgwick's statement, alongside Butler's denial of a link between drag and 'subversion' (1993), holds true in Dublin.

Rory's 'Life Partner'

In this section, the effect of HIV on Rory's relationships will be addressed. Panti's descriptions of the difficulties of dating as a poz man, featured in *The Queen of Ireland*, resonate through conversations that I have had with friends, lovers, and informants over the course of my fieldwork. The greatest challenge for those with whom I have spoken is not dealing with side effects of treatment (though this can cause some distress, particularly around weight gain and loss, or diarrhoea), but the issue of status disclosure: predominantly to a prospective partner, or to family and friends, to colleagues, to service providers such as dentists or chiropodists. At

an address at Maynooth University in 2016, O'Neill described HIV as his 'three letter life partner'. This humorous quip alludes to the alienation that people with HIV can feel when seeking partners, and feeling that their diagnosis will deprive them of the chance to find a significant other.

Beyond romantic concerns, disclosure of one's HIV status to a partner is loaded with a more pernicious risk in certain jurisdictions. At the time of writing in 2018, 68 countries criminalise the non-disclosure of one's HIV status to sexual partners (Cameron and Bernard 2018). Ireland does not have criminalisation laws, though several HIV advocates did express concerns over the possibility of legal action around non-disclosure and infection. It is established scientific fact that people who are adhering to antiretroviral therapy cannot transmit HIV (a moment known as the Swiss Statement of 2006), but one that has not been successfully communicated in Ireland, as it has in other countries. In *The Queen of Ireland*, Rory recounts a typical scenario: a date, which is rarely followed by a second date, because of fear and ignorance of HIV. Such a situation is not unthinkable, as there are very few Grindr or Scruff profiles in Ireland that advertise their HIV positive status, despite specific 'Poz' categories which enable HIV positive guys to connect with each other. Despite affordances that enable sociality between Poz men, the cultural norm of non-disclosure applies online, as well as offline.

Profiles on applications such as Grindr and Scruff explicitly state that only men who are 'clean' need apply: the implication being that people with HIV are 'dirty'. This category refers to one's negative HIV status, and has been the target of Panti's vitriol on Twitter and Facebook frequently. This cultural categorisation invokes Mary Douglas' writing on pollution and taboo, and illuminates a fault line within the gay community in Dublin, which is divided along lines of 'good' and 'bad' sex; the symbolism of the body is always social (1966). For a HIV positive man on Grindr, one can feel like Douglas' definition of 'dirt'; that is 'matter out

of place'. Warner's (1999) concept of the 'good gay' and the 'bad queer', two inextricably connected figures within the imagination of the gay community, and the nation at large, is particularly salient in the Irish context. Here, sexual morality and behaviour, and idealised citizenship are intimately linked. In *The Queen of Ireland*, Rory laments the impact that HIV has had on his 'love life'; his sex life remains unspoken of. This marks a contrast between Panti Bliss' early stage work, which was predicated on simulated sex acts and graphic descriptions of sexual acts. Now, Panti is more likely to lament her lovelorn state, and talk about her beloved dog, Penney, in their domestic, if lonely, idyll. Rory frequently comments on how he can't remember the last time he dated an Irish guy: several informants who know Rory joke about it being no secret that he is attracted to the type of man one can see behind the bar at PantiBar: sculpted, and usually Brazillian.

Through such online behaviours we can recognise the socio-cultural organisation of sexual preferences, and how sexual encounters are 'scripted' (Gagnon and Simon 1999). Sexuality is more than just a 'stubborn drive', but as Foucault argued, it is an 'especially dense transfer point for relations of power' (1979:103). Ergo, sex becomes dyadic: licit or illicit (Rubin 1984). The relation of sex to power is maintained through 'language or rather through the act of discourse' (83). The sexual norm is created through its articulation and re-articulation, and supported through legislation: to 'deal with sex, power requires nothing more than a law of prohibition'. In private and public, the sexual norm is enforced through the 'endlessly produced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship...the form is the law of transgression and punishment, with its interplay of licit and illicit'.

One can trace the mobility of Panti Bliss alongside that of Ireland's gay community, more broadly. From a marginalised cultural space, Panti Bliss and the gay community in Dublin has been vitalised by a series of socioeconomic changes: the economic and social liberalisation of Ireland has created a vibrant, multicultural space that ostensibly celebrates sexual and gender

diversity and celebrates a HIV positive drag queen as an avatar of modern Ireland. The converse of this has become apparent to many members of that community: in her journey towards mainstream respectability and celebrity, Panti Bliss embodies a tacit rejection of the milieu from which she came: PantiBar is more likely to be the scene for a photo opportunity by a politician than an old school drag performance, mocking the establishment and flaunting nudity. Politicians are aware of the pragmatic benefits of being seen to be progressive towards sexual and gender minorities – this phenomenon has been termed ‘homonationalism’ by Puar (2007). The state has utilised Panti Bliss to showcase its newfound economic and social liberalism, as Panti is sent on what she describes as ‘Princess Diana trips’ – humanitarian missions which involve speeches in foreign embassies, or screenings of *The Queen of Ireland*, designed to show developing countries in southern Africa that Ireland has successfully moved from the criminalisation of homosexuality towards same-sex marriage in a relatively short period of time (GCN 2017). This has been described as the ‘post-Stonewall’ model of sexual citizenship by the anthropologist Martin Manalansan, whereby national maturity and development is attained when the non-Western society and citizen accepts Euro-American understandings of sexual identity (2003: 133).

No longer on the periphery of Rubin’s (1984) ‘charmed circle’ model of sexuality – partly through changes in social mores beyond individual agency – Panti has disavowed deviant practices such as on-stage sadomasochistic performance, in favour of a public persona that bemoans her inability to find a life partner. The main threat to Panti’s attainment of domestic bliss is framed in *The Queen of Ireland* as HIV, as well as the memoir (O’Neill 2014), and countless public appearances as Rory’s seropositivity. In a national culture lacking in GLBT celebrities, nevermind HIV positive public figures, Panti Bliss has acquired a singular role in relation to HIV in Ireland much like the one that Senator David Norris did upon his coming out as gay in 1974: the ‘go to’ talking head for the media when discussing issues around gay rights.

This singular focus upon a public figure serves to elide the variety of same-sex identities, or experiences life with HIV, in contemporary Ireland. While many of my informants are troubled by some of Panti Bliss' representations of life with HIV, it reasserts the status of HIV as a contested site of meaning and representation. Just as Panti's public profile has been sanitised, the gay community has continued to silence HIV disclosure under the threat of social exclusion, as the community has gained social acceptance. This dynamic renders Panti Bliss' public discussions of seropositivity crucially important, if contested, in Dublin's gay community. In the next chapter, Panti Bliss' role will be considered further, in relation to HIV as a biomedical crisis and a cultural phenomenon in contemporary Ireland. The celebrity and singularity of the figure of Panti Bliss will be contrasted with testimonies of 'ordinary' people living with HIV, in relation to the shifting terrain of biomedical advancements and a cultural understanding of the diagnosis that many informants feel can be directly traced back to Ireland's legacy of 'cultural Catholicism' (Smyth 1998) and the biopolitical 'architecture of confinement' (Smith 2007).

Chapter 5: HIV and Irish Sexual Culture

In this chapter, I will situate HIV in relation to the gay community in Dublin, as well as in contemporary Irish culture more broadly. As an anthropologist interested in the meaning of HIV in Ireland, I will explore the local moral imagination that shapes stigmatisation of the illness (see Mattes 2011; Villaamil 2014 for anthropological accounts of the role of local attitudes towards the body and sexuality play in relation to HIV) as well as the political structures that influence HIV incidences (Farmer 1996; Castro and Farmer 2005). Following on from my analysis of Panti Bliss and her role as a celebrity advocate, and the singular voice requested by the Irish media when they need a vox pop on HIV, I will shift my focus to a number of other figures – ‘ordinary citizens’, if you will - who are HIV positive and are active in the areas of advocacy and activism. While recent years have witnessed remarkable advancements in the testing and treatment of AIDS, these biomedical and biotechnical developments have not been successfully communicated to the Irish public. Even within the gay community – a group whose sexual subjectivities have been shaped by the spectre of HIV/AIDS – many have expressed ambivalence around preventative therapies and novel testing initiatives designed to tackle a resurgent epidemic within the country. The vast majority of gay men living with HIV keep their diagnosis a secret, as the illness remains a signifier of promiscuity and irresponsibility, and grounds for discrimination, ostracisation, and even violence. The coercive silencing of seropositive gay men has resonances with the social marginalisation experienced by the ‘fallen’ women who were institutionalised in Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes; one interlocutor drew the analogy, referring to the ‘symbolic quarantine’ imposed upon HIV positive men in the gay community, as well as in Irish society at large. The self-description of another informant’s diagnosis as ‘social death’

also underscores the anachronistic attitudes that many Irish people have towards HIV, conflating the diagnosis with AIDS, and death.

The timing of the current HIV crisis in Ireland is also of particular note. Occurring contemporaneously with the growing focus on attaining same-sex marriage, the issue of HIV - historically associated with shame and stigmatisation – was marginalised yet again through the marriage agenda of gay political organisations, as well as the exclusionary category that marriage produces. While I have noted critiques of marriage in a previous chapter, it is worth revisiting the topic once more in order to appreciate the power of shame associated with the institution of marriage. Judith Butler (1993) has argued that the performative ‘I do’ contains the power to shame, and produces the performative ‘queer’ figure. Just as the ‘I’ in the performative ‘I do’ is ‘a name that precedes and exceeds me but without which I cannot speak’ and contains nothing that does not ‘stand behind discourse’, the identity category ‘queer’ emerges for those who ‘resist or oppose that social form’ (18). While access to the institution of marriage has been widely celebrated by the gay community, the shadow side of this social embrace is the rearticulation of norms of social and sexual respectability – recurring themes throughout this thesis – and the production of sites of queerness and abjection.

HIV/AIDS has always been freighted with symbolic meaning: Paula Treichler memorably described it as ‘an epidemic of signification’ (1999:11). Since the emergence of the epidemic, cultural theorists have been pondering the cultural meanings of HIV/AIDS. Having written about the negative associations attributed to people with cancer (1978), Susan Sontag turned her attention to AIDS, to illustrate how illness is made intelligible as punishment (1989). This particular cultural logic, which renders HIV infection as a punitive consequence of reckless behaviour retains a particular currency in contemporary Ireland, where HIV is understood through discourses of stigmatisation, that elide the biomedical reality of being seropositive in twenty-first century Ireland. HIV infection becomes a marker of sexual shame

and spoiled identity, only discussed on World AIDS Day (December 1) and Irish AIDS Day (June 15), by (over)familiar figures such as Panti Bliss. In Ireland, silence around HIV is the norm. One informant, who tested positive while living abroad, was advised by his doctor upon his return to Ireland to conceal his serostatus. Such anecdotes are not exceptional, with HIV advocacy workers repeating countless stories of doctors failing their patients by disclosing their HIV status to relatives (sometimes on purpose, sometimes inadvertently).

As in other countries, the emergence of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s provoked a heroic response from civil society, with the mobilisations of groups that eventually cohered into Gay Health Action (active between 1985-1990). This initial wave of activists was subsumed into statutory and semi-statutory organisations dealing with gay and lesbian equality issues, and public health, particularly the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network. This visibility and sense of community and purpose receded in the 1990s, with many suffering from burn-out following the period some describe as the ‘plague years’, and others remember as ‘the war’, and with their work now being undertaken in a country where condoms were legal, and homosexuality was decriminalised. By 1996, with the development of antiretroviral therapies (ART), HIV/AIDS was no longer a terminal diagnosis. While this was a joyful moment for those who had survived through the previous decade and a half, many of these activists lament that this was also the moment that people living with HIV became invisible, not only within Irish society, but the gay community. The perpetuation of HIV stigma despite the availability of ART has long been the focus of anthropological attention: Farmer and Castro (2005) have noted that while selective disclosure aids in the manageability of stigma, this is only partial as access to treatment still requires a level of public engagement with HIV clinics and health professionals. Informants have noted how the near-dilapidated and difficult to find ‘genitourinary and infectious diseases’ clinic at Dublin’s St. James’ Hospital was a further source of

stigmatisation, until HIV advocates lobbied for the removal of the ‘infectious diseases’ from public signage citing it as a barrier to testing for some.

This irrational attitude towards HIV lingers within the gay community in Ireland. There is a longstanding negativity towards non-normative sex in Irish culture, and HIV/AIDS represents that which is antithetical to both the health of the individual and the nation: death (O’Brien 2013). The emergence of HIV/AIDS in Ireland was coeval with the heroin epidemic in inner city Dublin, with the visible AIDS body in the Irish imaginary being that of the ‘junkie’, a figure still visible in contemporary Dublin. Such associations, and attendant class anxieties, still resonate in the Irish public consciousness. This speaks to the peculiar temporality of HIV/AIDS in Ireland. When the AIDS crisis emerged in the 1980s, Irish society was still a deeply conservative and censorious society. Discussions about sexuality did not feature in the prudish Irish media, with informants citing British and American television as giving them their first glimpses of intimacy (Inglis 2005). It was through British media that several informants’ attitudes towards AIDS and sex were shaped. Countless people with whom I spoke about HIV/AIDS in Ireland cited the ‘Tombstone’ advertisements that aired on British channels – which were received in Ireland - in the 1980s. One informant, a gay teenager at the time, described how these advertisements ‘scared me out of having sex’, and shaped his attitudes towards his own sexuality into adulthood.

The centrality of the ‘Tombstone’ public health information film to Irish attitudes towards HIV/AIDS was recognised in a recent play about HIV stigma in contemporary Ireland. ‘Rapids’ (2017), a play by Shaun Dunne, focused upon the theme of shame in relation to HIV in Ireland, and the role of shame and silence in the resurgent epidemic. However, the opening scene locates contemporary attitudes towards HIV in the past. On large screens, the audience watches shots of that iconic advert. The blue-black tones, and imagery of a cliff-face exploding in slow-motion, an industrial drill, the acronym AIDS chiselled upon a granite tombstone.

Upon the surface, alongside elegiac lilies, is a leaflet stating: DON'T DIE OF IGNORANCE. The crumbling mountains and crashing monoliths reflected the apocalyptic tone of the media reportage on both sides of the Atlantic (Long 2012); the cinematic production and corporate advertising denote the socio-economic climate of the 1980s. The sensationalism and fatalism are still hallmarks of HIV in Ireland, three decades after these advertisements were produced.

Among the so-called 'general public', ignorance of the biomedical reality of HIV is coupled with tabloid driven fear and paranoia around infection. Over the course of this research, there have been countless media reports of Gardai having been tested for HIV (<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/courts/100-000-for-garda-who-feared-hiv-after-attack-1.1515099>), and being given post-exposure prophylaxis, as precautionary measures after being spat on, or bitten by, a HIV positive person (there have been no medical cases of HIV transmission through spitting or biting). One especially shocking incident occurred on the 'FM104 Phoneshow' radio programme, during which listeners phone the station with content for discussion. On this particular show, on 19 August 2015, the disc jockey relayed information from a listener about a sexually active, HIV Positive young woman, broadcasting information (such as her age, that she was a mother to young children, her housing estate) that rendered the woman easily identifiable to what quickly became a baying mob of texters and callers. The disc jockey framed his role as that of a public health defender, as the woman was figured as a malicious slut. The listeners' vitriol increased, with numerous threats of violence – even murder – that remained unchecked by the disc jockey. The discussion revolved around the perceived immorality of the woman in question, her irresponsibility vis a vis her ignorant lovers, but also as a mother. This sensationalistic attitude reflects the tabloid response of the 1980s: themes of shame, blame, apocalyptic doom, and death. That such popular ideas persist speaks to the continued problem of a lack of adequate education around HIV/AIDS, despite the evident social and attitudinal shifts since the 1980s.

While ignorance and misinformation are widely accepted by both myself and my informants as defining features of Irish attitudes towards HIV, this was confirmed by a recent study. Launched in 2017, the HIV in Ireland report, commissioned by HIV Ireland to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the organisation's establishment (as Dublin AIDS Alliance, a name which anachronistically remained until 2015, long past the point at which biomedical advancements rendered the progression from HIV to AIDS no longer the inevitability it once was). This report provided a stark illustration of what those of us who are cognisant of Irish attitudes towards HIV already knew, both within the poz community, the gay community, and wider society. The report highlighted a recurring issue in conversations with HIV positive informants, and advocates: serostatus disclosure. 61% of respondents said that they had withheld their status from one or more persons, out of fear of judgement or differential treatment (HIV Ireland 2017). The findings show the extent to which one's positive status colours one's relations with others. 88% of those surveyed agreed with the statement that Irish society views a HIV diagnosis as shameful. In terms of intimate relationships, 61% said that they feared personal rejection because of their positive status, while 32% had experienced such rejection. 55% feared that they would be 'outed' as HIV positive, with 17% fearing physical violence. The same number reported feeling suicidal in the previous year, compared to the national average of 4%.

The survey also asked the 'general population' about their understanding of HIV, and the findings give some justification for the feelings of isolation and persecution among HIV positive respondents. One in five people between the ages of 18 and 24 believed that one could contract HIV through sharing a toilet seat, a number that fell to one in ten over the age of 24. The persistence of misinformation around risk and toilet seats – debunked in the 1980s – brings into sharp relief the impact of inadequate sex education in Irish schools, a tangible effect of Catholic patronage on Irish public education. 24% believed that HIV can be transmitted

through kissing, and 11% believed in the possibility of airborne infection (coughing, or sneezing). 10% of people believe that sharing a glass poses the risk of HIV infection. The report contained a statistic on the aforementioned fear of being bitten by a HIV positive person: 70% incorrectly believe that this is possible. Despite screening processes, and an explicitly unscientific prohibition on blood donations by men who have sex with men (<https://www.giveblood.ie/Can-I-Give-Blood/Keeping-Blood-Safe/MSM/>), 56% of respondents believe that blood transfusions pose a risk of HIV transmission.

While irrational, this fear can, at least partially, be traced to the Irish state's repeated failures to protect Irish citizens who have had blood transfusions. In the 1970s, almost a thousand Irish women were given Anti-D (a blood product for mothers whose blood type was incompatible with their newborn babies), which was found to be contaminated with hepatitis C. The scandal, and its cover-up, emerged in the 1990s, and resulted in a tribunal of inquiry and redress scheme (one of the earliest such investigations into Ireland's history of biopolitical wrongdoing). Similar incidents involving blood products contaminated with HIV affected the Irish haemophiliac community in the 1980s. Some of my informants have pointed to this episode as the moment when haemophiliacs became the 'innocent victims' of HIV (alongside 'AIDS babies', born to drug addicted intravenous drug users in Dublin, and the centre of public outcry, as evidenced by contemporary media reports). The infection of haemophiliacs as a result of statutory failings has, in the words of one informant, meant that the haemophilia 'lobby' has 'had the ear of the government' with regard to issues around blood donation in the intervening decades, and has thus influenced the stringent limitations on those allowed to donate blood. In 2017, the Irish Blood Transfusion Service altered its restrictions on blood donation for men who have sex with men: a lifetime ban was replaced by a twelve-month deferral policy. This means that a man who has sex with another man can donate blood if he waits (and abstains from sex) for a twelve-month period. While this is an ostensibly

progressive, inclusive move, it has nevertheless been met with cynicism by many gay men that I know, who cite a twelve-month abstinence requirement as impractical. Furthermore, the prohibition is as anti-science as the lifetime ban, for it ignores that all donated blood is screened before being approved for transfusions or any other biomedical use. Such continued measures reflect the cultural memory of AIDS, haemophilia, hepatitis, and tainted blood products, and how this memory is folded into contemporary practices and relations.

What was particularly stunning for me, as I read the report, was the absence of any explicit discussion of the gay community. Remarkably, the report had failed to ask respondents about their sexuality. While gay men have been totems for HIV/AIDS, and suffered the social effects of this, their experiences are apparently deemed unworthy of particular consideration. Gay men (or ‘men who have sex with men’) have repeatedly consisted of up to half of those who test positive for HIV in Ireland in recent years, yet Ireland’s primary advocacy organisation had managed to overlook the importance of sexual identity when commissioning this research. The gay experience of HIV in Ireland had, presumably inadvertently, been erased from HIV Ireland’s much heralded report. This oversight struck me, before I began to realise how telling it was, as it mirrored the invisibility of HIV positive gay men, both within Irish society at large, but also within the gay community itself. A crucial contribution made by anthropologists in discussions around HIV has been a critique of the essentialising effects of the concept of a ‘risk group’, and underlining the fact HIV/AIDS results from unprotected sex, not from particular forms of relationship and identity (Seidel 1993; Schoepf 1993). Seidel (1993:175) has argued that such categories transform people into ‘depersonalized seropositives’ which are seen to be typically ‘prostitutes’ or ‘promiscuous people’, members of so-called ‘high risk groups,’ or ‘core transmitters,’ or ‘control populations,’ all epidemiological equivalents, linked to ‘reservoirs of infection’. It is this moralising judgement

that stigmatises people with HIV, creating ‘spoiled personalities’ (Goffman 1963), and thus acts as a barrier to testing,

In my discussions with people living with HIV, as well as advocates and professionals, the issue of serostatus disclosure and stigmatisation was repeatedly cited as the most challenging aspect that accompanies a diagnosis. In a ‘post-AIDS’ world, as described by David Roman, the ‘social, cultural, and medical problems’ still faced by individuals living with HIV are ‘rendered invisible’ (2007). In this context, talking about HIV is essential to keeping the issue in the public consciousness. One of my informants, Tonie Walsh, is one of Ireland’s few publicly known HIV positive people. From our very first conversation early in my research, through several public HIV advocacy events at which I heard him speak, he drew parallels between the act of serostatus disclosure and the ‘coming out’ narrative. Tonie asserts that the socio-political achievements of the gay community were achieved by the visibility that accompanies life as an ‘out’ gay person. Therefore, in Tonie’s view, the normalisation of HIV is dependent on making one’s diagnosis known. Tonie’s confidence in such a public disclosure model of HIV normalisation reflects the remarkable cultural changes in attitudes towards homosexuality since decriminalisation in 1993. It also speaks to the premium placed on personal narrative in Irish culture. Ireland boasts a proud heritage of storytelling and a vibrant creative scene today (see Wulff 2017), but nowhere was this emphasis on personal testimony more potent than during the campaigns for same-sex marriage (2015) and abortion access (2018). As noted elsewhere in this thesis, these deeply personal and often painful stories were instrumental in the respective successes of those campaigns. While it has become politically expedient to expose your vulnerability for political gain, many of my informants – and myself included – can attest to the affective cost of such testimonial transactions, as well as the ever present risk that telling one’s story will backfire. Visibility – as Foucault (1978) warned – can be a trap.

On a personal level, the issue of HIV disclosure remains a challenge, regardless of one's interlocutor. This point was reiterated by a social worker with HIV Ireland's Community Support department, who identified HIV disclosure as the most common challenge for people who test HIV positive, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. In Foucault's words, while 'discourse transmits and produces power' it 'also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (1998: 101). The same informant described HIV Ireland's attitude towards HIV disclosure as a 'healthy' act. Discourse gives this chronic, manageable, hidden illness an ontological reality, and a level of public visibility. Therefore, the cultural value placed on HIV disclosure - an act which can be seen to transform one's HIV diagnosis into something 'healthy' - reflects the potentially beneficial implications for self and community. This resonates with E. Summerson Carr's assertion that 'honesty, openness, and willingness are of the highest cultural value; they are the indigenous markers of individual integrity, morality, and health' (2013:1). For some - though few - of my informants, it grants them a certain recognition in public life that they have harnessed.

While disclosure of one's HIV status can be idealised as a 'healthy', the support worker acknowledged that it would be remiss of HIV advocates to ignore the lived reality of those who disclosed their HIV status, only to endure repeated 'rejection' in their intimate (though not specifically sexual) relationships. The support worker conceded that designating HIV disclosure as a 'healthy' act was to infer that refusing to publicly disclose one's HIV was 'unhealthy'. In light of repeated traumatic experiences by those who chose to disclose, non-disclosure became a logical, autonomous act of self-preservation. As reflected by HIV Ireland's aspirations, the act of HIV disclosure has the potential to become what Foucault described as 'a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (1998: 101). However, the

actuality of the disclosure/ stigma dialectic renders an official ‘line’ on HIV disclosure impossible.

PantiBar: Testing the limits of sociality

In this section, I will return to the figure of Panti Bliss, and what is now an institution, PantiBar, to consider the complex role of the public house and the ‘landlady’ herself in the PantiBar, on Dublin’s seedy Capel Street, where one can buy bric-a-brac or vibrators. Since its opening in 2007, the venue has become Dublin’s most iconic GLBT landmark (arguably usurping the popularity of The George public house on George’s Street), and epicentre of queer culture in the city. The site is a destination for tourists, and a place of employment for some who have migrated to Dublin. Once predominantly a fairly conventional space for drag performances by Panti and other queens, PantiBar has evolved into a popular haunt in Dublin, regardless of the patron’s sexual orientation. Indeed, as Panti’s profile rose outside of Ireland, the regularity of drag performances such as the Saturday night fixture ‘The Panti Show’ have become less frequent. Patrons with whom I have spoken miss the ‘old’ Panti, recalling light-hearted drag shows that were punctuated by drunken party games like ‘Hangman’ or ‘Charades’, or impromptu ‘Make-and-Do-Do’ competitions. While these patrons still prefer PantiBar to most other bars, they note that it has become, more or less, just like any other bar, in any other metropolitan city.

The public house retains a particular importance in Irish culture. Anthropologists have recorded the vital role that the pub has in the life of the Irish community (Arensberg and Kimball 1968 [1940]; Messenger 1971; Brody 1974; Scheper-Hughes 1979 [2001]; Saris 2000). It has traditionally functioned as a pillar of the community, alongside the church, school,

and the post office in rural communities. The same is demonstrably true in contemporary, urban areas too. Indeed, Ireland's relationship with alcohol is one of great contestation. The stereotype of the Irish as a nation with a tendency to overindulge in alcohol consumption is seen as a source of both shame and pride; Irish politicians and the media periodically call for a 'national conversation' about the issue, while at the same time, distinguished visitors to the country – such as Barack Obama and Queen Elizabeth II – are made to pose for photographs with pints of Guinness. The Guinness Storehouse is one of Dublin's primary tourist attractions, and the Temple Bar area of the city is a notorious destination for so-called stag/bachelor and hen/bachelorette parties at weekends. These are just two examples which highlight the role of the pub as a vital transactional space: it provides a livelihood for the proprietor, and staff, as well as entertainers, such as musicians and performers. It has also served as a site of sociality necessary for community cohesion, particularly in the agrarian communities frequently observed by anthropologists in the twentieth century. That same value is placed upon bars in the gay community both internationally (the Stonewall Inn in New York, or the Admiral Duncan in London being just two famous examples), as well as in Dublin, with PantiBar and the George. The role of these establishments in the social life of the gay community in Dublin was evident following the declaration of the referendum result in 2015: The George was the site of TV3's live coverage that day, as well as jubilant celebration inside and outside. Across the Liffey, patrons were flowing out of PantiBar and into the streets, with traffic coming to a virtual standstill between both bars (Dublin Castle, where the results were announced to an outdoor crowd that became a street party, was conveniently located between the two venues). On a day to day basis, a gay bar is the site of entertainment for the community, just as in traditional pubs. Interestingly, Panti has described the *seanchai* tradition of storytelling as an influence on her drag shows (O'Neill 2014: 183). The *seanchai* was a key figure in traditional Irish culture, often found in pubs, acting as a storyteller who imparted shared cultural wisdom – often ribald

- and history to his audience, through memorised performances. It is precisely the absence of this kind of figure that PantiBar's patrons miss.

However, regardless of this perception of increasing homogeneity and sanitisation, the importance of the bar to the gay community is still evident through not only its continued popularity with patrons, but through its shifting uses. If Panti is to appear, it is more often than not to host a fundraising table quiz for a GLBT or HIV related cause. In 2016, the HIV rapid testing initiative 'KnowNow' was launched, and the public house was transformed into a site of biomedical intervention amid an escalating crisis. No longer merely a space for commercial transactions, celebration, and sociality, PantiBar becomes the site of an accretion of meanings: it becomes a heterotopia (Foucault 1967). Within sixty seconds, one's serostatus can change, alongside one's social standing in a gay community that is deeply phobic towards HIV. The darkened, lower level of PantiBar becomes the potential site of apotheosis for the gay subject: his sense of being in the world, as typified by the upper level of PantiBar is forever altered. With the exception of Panti Bliss, PantiBar is a typical Dublin homosocial and sexual social setting where seropositivity is shrouded in a coercive silence. The rumour and social ostracisation, and subsequent internalization of stigmatization, can be read as a modern, semiotic counterpart to the materiality of twentieth century sites of institutionalization, where those who violated the norms of sexual respectability were confined, and whose confinement served as a salutary warning to others (Smith 2007). Throughout my research I have heard stories of people being publicly 'outed' and shamed about their HIV status in pubs in Dublin, and of how differently they are perceived by others when their HIV status is public knowledge: the whispers, stares, aversion of eye contact. While pubs hold a particular place in the Irish imaginary: loci of hospitality and community, they can also serve as sites of anxiety and exclusion of those with a HIV diagnosis.

Walking through the double doors of PantiBar, one enters a darkened area, with sleek black furnishing, and red neon backlighting that draws the eye to the bar, which is invariably tended by a muscular Latino. ‘Have you ever seen a woman working in PantiBar?’ a drag queen cattily asked me when we were discussing Rory’s developing role as a human rights advocate. I conceded that I had not. ‘Exactly. They don’t. Except maybe the cleaner’. The clone-like staff reflect the homogeneity that marks popular conceptions of desirability in gay culture, as well as the sizeable influx of migrant workers and English language students from Brazil, and other South American nations. The attractiveness of such foreign bodies is oft-commented upon by gays in Dublin, but this attraction is accompanied by rumours of danger. Many informants have drawn parallels between the spike in HIV infections and the emergence of a Brazilian community in Dublin. As one told me, flippantly, ‘They [Brazilians] all have AIDS’. While this is hyperbolic and inaccurate, it underscores the popular Irish mentality that HIV/AIDS comes from another place, outside of Dublin, and Ireland. This attitude was spearheaded by the Irish government’s belated ‘AIDS: Don’t Bring it Home’ campaign of the 1987, which framed the disease as an external threat to the native population.

Rumours also abound among the gays in Dublin (including other drag performers with whom I spoke) that the bartenders in PantiBar are sex workers. Regardless of the truthfulness of these claims, and the gossip that abounds, such utterances crystallise the commingling of lust, rumour, risk, and scandal associated with PantiBar, its proprietor, and sexuality in contemporary Dublin. They also draw attention to questions around race and risk in Dublin, displaying the anxieties that accompany this newfound, visible form of mobility in Ireland. Due to Ireland’s progressive legislation around same-sex marriage, and legalisation of abortion access in recent years, and growing sense of multiculturalism in Irish society, gay men – embodied by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar – have become totems of liberal values at a time when fellow European Union states such as Hungary and Poland have reaffirmed conservative

‘family values’ and migration agendas, as well as the rise of Donald Trump in the United States on a similar right-wing platform. Panti – and Rory - make no secret of their attraction to the type of men who work at PantiBar, nor their dissatisfaction with Irish men and their attitudes towards sexuality. This exoticisation of Brazilian men is especially visible on applications such as Grindr and Scruff, where many men express an explicit preference for Latino men. On many profiles belonging to Brazilian men, one can find outward rejection of this fetishisation of their bodies. Checking Scruff as I write this, some profiles of Brazilian men nearby stated that they were ‘not sex objects’ or ‘not a fetish’, while others claimed that they were not looking for sex but for social or romantic connections. Beyond social and sexual domains, these applications often serve unexpected purposes: recent arrivals to Dublin advertise that they are looking for ways to improve their English, ‘gym buddies’, or for rooms to rent. Some profiles include requests for employment. While sexual solicitation is not allowed on these applications, there are signifiers of sex work: emojis (ideograms used in online messaging) of dollar bills or euro signs, for example. Such emojis can also be used to spell out words such as ‘cash’, that would otherwise count as grounds for having an account suspended for solicitation. Alongside such profiles, other Brazilian men angrily state that they are not sex workers – evidently having been approached for that purpose.

Visitors to PantiBar are also struck by the flashing neon pair of legs, guiding them downstairs, where they will find more seating, and a greater level of intimacy (as well as the toilets). The changing rooms for drag performances are also located in the labyrinthine hall that traverses the building. Until 2015, the lower floor was a cluttered, garish space akin to the living room of an elderly female relative: dated floral wallpaper on the walls and ceiling, mismatched wingback chairs, and standing lamps, complete with loose shades. While undeniably kitsch, the space felt uncannily comfortable, warm, even homely. In the last couple of years, the space has been transformed: stripped of its original character, both floors share

the same black-red aesthetic. The lack of natural light downstairs, however, makes the space feel darker. The campy femininity has been replaced by a masculine sterility: it could be a clinical space (albeit one with a zig zag motif on the ceiling).

Today, I'm not here for Panti's iconic pale ale, but rather for a rapid HIV test. Greeted by a friendly volunteer, I am handed a registration form to complete as I make my way downstairs, which is cordoned off to other patrons. The registration form itself is like similar forms at other HIV testing centres in Dublin: it contains no identifiable information, and is used for statistical purposes. Handing back my form, I am assigned a number, and take my place in the queue, where those waiting sit awkwardly, avoiding eye contact. Once my number is called, I am escorted into a private room. As I glance around me, I imagine the drag queens who must have used this space to transform themselves before a show. Before my test, the volunteer guides me through the process. I'm also probed further, as the volunteer ensures that I am emotionally prepared for a positive result, and understand how the test results will be communicated (the word 'reactive' is used to connote a positive HIV diagnosis, for example). After somewhere between five and ten minutes for discussion, I sign a consent form, and the testing begins.

Unlike conventional HIV tests, which can take up to a week for a result, I will know my HIV status 60 seconds after taking the test. The volunteer opens the kit, and lays out the paraphernalia. While not radically different from previous HIV tests that I have taken, it feels much more intimate, immediate. As the volunteer put on a pair of latex gloves, I offer my right index finger, which is then wiped with an alcohol swab. The finger is then pricked, and squeezed, so as to produce enough blood for collection in a pipette. The blood is then mixed with a solution, before being poured into the testing kit. Another couple of liquids are added to the kit, as the seconds tick by. The volunteer tells me that once the solutions soak through, a result would be available.

Unlike previous experiences of HIV testing, after which a negative result would be conveyed by text message; a positive result would involve a phone call to arrange a visit to the clinic to receive the result (allowing time for a person to adjust to what would inevitably be bad news). With the rapid test, however, the result would be intelligible to the tester in two ways. A single blue dot indicates that, having been more than three months since my last HIV test, I am negative for HIV antibodies. Two blue dots, according to the tester, indicates a reactive test, and the likelihood that I am HIV positive. This diagnosis, however, would have to be confirmed at a conventional sexual health clinic, following a blood test. While the service was friendly, efficient, and staffed by helpful, competent people, as I walked away from PantiBar that evening I asked myself if I would have taken a rapid HIV test if I wasn't reasonably confident of the result. I concluded that I wouldn't: I would rather have that news confirmed by a medical professional, than a 'peer'. That having been said, the lengthy queue was testament to the success of the scheme, and the vital service that it provides to the community in ensuring that people 'know their status', a mantra that had become ubiquitous in recent public health campaigns around HIV.

The scheme itself had been expanded to other social spaces in Dublin and beyond since 2016. The George had also started offering the service on a weeknight. The Boilerhouse Sauna, Dublin's main sex-on-premises venue, located on a side street in Temple Bar, has also facilitated rapid testing in light of the community demand. Dublin has had a long history of sex on premises sites, and informants who were involved in groups such as Gay Health Action recalled how many saunas in Dublin were happy to cooperate with community activists, eventually providing free condoms and lubricants for patrons, and avoided the closures that saunas in other cities experienced in response to AIDS in the 1980s. Rapid testing has also emerged alongside conventional testing, in places such as Outhouse, a GLBT community centre just a few doors away from PantiBar, where the Gay Men's Health Service has been

offering sexual health outreach services outside of its usual, clinical setting in Baggott Street. The latter site is both outdated, and its services overstretched, and its weekday evening testing hours are inconvenient. One is often turned away due to long queues. Such demand has also been seen at PantiBar on weekends, with people being told to return to another testing session. Rapid testing is not limited to Dublin, however: the initiative was first launched at the Sexual Health Centre in Cork, and soon was extended to the GOSSH clinic in Limerick.

Despite this innovative approach, there were voices of dissent within the gay community, who questioned if a bar was an appropriate venue for HIV testing. Activists argued that this attitude was indicative of the impulse to invisibilise HIV within the community, despite the worrying spike in infections. GCN published a series of opinion pieces on the topic of HIV rapid testing, which were as perplexing as they were inaccurate: one article was brimming with nostalgia for the days when HIV/AIDS still had the power to terrify gay men into associating sex with death in 2016 (Meyler 2016). The article itself lacked a clear argument: it started by comparing the choice to take a HIV test with getting drunk, or having sex with an unattractive man. Bizarrely, the author writes that gay men are ‘not...being entirely rational characters’ and thus will continue to have condomless sex (an act that carries no risk of HIV when partners have an undetectable viral load, or are taking PrEP). The author argues that HIV positive men elect to remain ignorant of their HIV status and thus abdicate themselves of ‘moral’ responsibility to their partners. At the outset of the article, HIV testing in PantiBar is critiqued for ‘normalising’ HIV; by the end of the article, the author is commending the initiative. While there is a lack of clarity and facticity in the article, it underscores the tension within Dublin’s gay community: particular forms of sex (monogamous, condom-wearing) are good, whereas other forms of sexuality (condomless, and free from irrational fear of HIV) are considered immoral. It was startling to see such views, though widespread among the gay community, in print.

Positive Visibility

In this section, I will consider how activists are responding to the resurgent HIV crisis, in a community whose sole political focus was on achieving relationship recognition for a decade. In 2015, as the gay community campaigned for, and celebrated, the coming of same-sex marriage to Ireland, another landmark was reached. As with the introduction of same-sex marriage, this landmark primarily concerned the lives of gay men: 2015 saw, up to that point, the highest number of new HIV diagnoses (484) in since the first Irish case was identified in 1982. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), which was formed in 2002 (!), is the statutory agency with responsibility for epidemiology and case-based reporting of communicable diseases. HIV was categorised as a notifiable disease in 2011, which required the Medical Officer of Health/Director of Public Health to be made aware of new diagnoses, in order to monitor the burden and changing levels of a disease, thus facilitating the early identification of a potential crisis. Informants in HIV Ireland recalled the controversial decision to make HIV a notifiable illness, noting that the idea of the state surveilling and recording people with HIV conjured up memories of calls for the quarantining of those with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, as well as concerns over confidentiality, and a possible negative effect upon HIV testing. All these fears are particularly well founded in a society with such high levels of ignorance, fear, and prejudice around HIV. Broadly, however, the advocates with whom I spoke regarded the decision to make HIV a notifiable disease as a useful one, as it has enabled the tracking of what Niall Mulligan, director of HIV Ireland, predicted was moving from being a ‘crisis’ to a ‘catastrophe’ (HIV Ireland: 2016). Indeed, in that year, infection figures exceeded 2015’s record, with 511 new cases diagnosed in the state.

This begs the question: what is being done to curb the HIV epidemic? The state’s action, or inaction? The resurgence of civil society action on the topic, mirroring the crisis years of the 1980s and 1990s. The rebirth of ACT UP in 2016, and popularising of medical knowledge

around HIV research have been particularly visible (from posters, to stencil work, and stickers that have become ubiquitous in Dublin's city centre) attempts to correct the lacunae of knowledge around HIV. The initial wave of organising featured many lesbians and women, who had been mobilising for over a decade for change on a number of issues. Izzy Kamikaze helped me chart this grassroots response to the crisis, describing the affective labour of providing services and care for the terminally ill. While several men who were involved in the movement professionalised, and subsequently became involved in the belated statutory response to HIV/AIDS (Mick Quinlan, former head of the Gay Men's Health Service and the government's 'AIDS Tsar' according to one informant, being the most prominent of these), women who were involved in organising and care did not experience the same career progression. Kamikaze's current job, as a frontline worker with the homeless of Dublin, reflects this division in labour and career prospects. Striking me as something of a Zelig figure in Dublin, full of anecdotes about her involvement in multiple movements and moments in recent Irish social history, Izzy recalls how she was also co-founder of the first Dublin chapter of ACT UP, alongside figures such as Quinlan, and the street performer Thom McGinty, better known as 'The Diceman' whose routines on Grafton Street have entered Dublin lore. In the mid-1990s, he became the first public figure to discuss their HIV diagnosis on television, during an interview with Gay Byrne on RTE's *The Late Late Show*. Izzy described how ACT UP staged a protest outside Dublin's Pro Cathedral around 1991 (such ethnographic vignettes from members of ACT UP's first chapter, or members of Gay Health Action, are priceless nuggets of community history, but are often frustratingly vague and difficult to corroborate as activists give contrasting dates, or other small details) with members wearing giant condoms to draw attention to the Catholic Church's pernicious prohibition of contraceptives. McGinty suggested that ACT UP members should join the congregants, and donate condoms when the collection plate reached them. This idea was quickly rejected, out of fear that such a move would offend,

perceived as an attack on the faithful, and subsequently alienate the group and the cause. Crucially, protesters remained outside of the building.

Such tactics were not exclusive to Dublin: ACT UP/New York, founded in 1987 by playwright Larry Kramer and others (France: 2016), attracted international attention by staging a ‘die-in’ at that city’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral in 1989. The protest involved storming the church during a service, and lying in the aisles (hence the term ‘die-in’), and chanting slogans. The action was widely condemned –particularly the interruption of the sacrament of communion - and this negative reaction was anticipated by members of the Dublin chapter ahead of their Pro Cathedral demonstration. Other notable contemporaneous actions undertaken by ACT UP New York included large scale, choreographed protests at the offices of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the National Institutes for Health (NIH), to protest the corporate greed and iniquity around the access to treatments. ACT UP Dublin copied this approach, with a direct action against the Department of Health’s headquarters on Hawkins Street, in the city centre. Izzy described how a group of approximately ten members entered the building, under the pretence that they were visiting the public office, before storming a lift, which brought them to the eighth floor office of Dr. James Walsh, the co-ordinator of AIDS treatment services. Dr. Walsh was out of the building at the time of the protest, but ACT UP remained in a standoff with officials at the department, with member of the Gardai outside on standby. From inside the office, a member of the group phoned the media to explain that the motivation behind the action was to protest the inaction of the government and health officials. The media attention was also a first for the group, with Dublin’s *Evening Herald* noting the presence of the organisation internationally (mentioning that the group ‘wrecked’ an AIDS conference in San Francisco earlier in 1991), but that it was the first time that the group had made themselves known in Ireland. The report also carried Dr. Walsh’s criticism of the actions of ACT UP,

saying that ‘I do not honestly think that people who conduct themselves this way assist in the general cause of AIDS’ (22 October 1991).

Such disregard for respectability is evident in the latest iteration of ACT UP Dublin, who have continued the commitment to direct action protests that have been the hallmark of other ACT UP chapters internationally, over the last four decades. Mirroring the 1991 protest, the newly re-formed ACT UP Dublin’s first attempt at attracting Irish media attention came on December 1st 2016, World AIDS Day. Bearing placards that stated: ‘CORPORATE GREED GOVERNMENT INACTION PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE HIV IS A POLITICAL ISSUE’ as well as a cardboard alarm clock to underscore and signify the need for an adequate government response to the escalating HIV crisis. Through social media, the group emphasises the concrete implications of continued inaction: a new diagnosis every 18 hours, on average, resulting in approximately 500 new diagnoses every year. While their initial public action in 2016 remained outside of the health department offices, ACT UP members entered the building in July 2018, demanding that the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, follow through on his promise to meet the group to discuss access to PrEP, and associated concerns. While Harris has been ridiculed on posters and placards, as well as on social media as ‘Silent Harris’, for his perceived inaction over the HIV crisis, his image as progressive on issues such as sexual and reproductive health set him apart from predecessors. Harris’ predecessor as Minister for Health, now Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, launched the state’s first National Sexual Health Strategy 2015-2020 (just months after coming out as gay in a radio interview ahead of the marriage referendum, making him the first ‘out’ Irish cabinet minister in history). The strategy outlined an approach that endeavoured to provide both a robust sexual health education programme, and sexual health services (including ‘Treatment as Prevention’, or Pre- and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis, respectively). However, the sluggish delivery of effective change, as well as concerns over affordability of medical care has led to a resurgent ACT UP: a sexual health landscape in

Dublin that has been shaped by lobbyists and non-governmental organisations has reanimated with a spirit of activism that had been dormant for decades.

This crisis is occurring at a time when biomedical research has changed not only life for people living with HIV, but for anyone at risk of contracting HIV. I first became aware of the emtricitabine/tenofovir fixed dose combination medication marketed and known popularly as Truvada in 2012, following its approval for preventative use by the U.S Food and Drug administration. This breakthrough, coming as it did at a time when HIV infection rates were beginning to rise in Ireland, caught my attention for its potential to reverse this trend and change the phobic impulse towards HIV in Ireland. Incredibly, however, it felt as though very few of us in Dublin's gay community were aware of its existence. That HIV was becoming a crisis again seemed to go over the heads of many people with whom I spoke. The consciousness of the community, and its political will, appeared to be almost completely behind the drive for same-sex marriage (with Enda Kenny's Fine Gael – Labour coalition government having announced its intention to hold a referendum before the end of that government's term, due to expire in 2016 at the latest). Same-sex marriage came to pass, and HIV rates continued to increase, seemingly unnoticed, especially by the Gay Community News (GCN). In the years before the 2015 vote, the free magazine, predominantly contained advertisements, celebrity, and 'lifestyle' features. As had been the case for years, GCN had largely ignored the issue, or the myriad issues encountered by the seropositive members of the community that it purported to speak for, and serve.

Up to 2016, when it suddenly decided to pursue an 'edgier' route, focusing on hitherto underrepresented issues on its pages (such as activism related to HIV, or the transgendered community, or abortion, for example) the only space dedicated to HIV/AIDS was at the back of the magazine, among the classified advertisements – creating a form of symbolic quarantine for people with HIV in a magazine that purported to represent the gay community. Focusing

on HIV prevention, or cases of HIV stigma in Irish life, this page was far removed from the images of ideal wedding venues, or designer apparel. One HIV advocate bitterly recounted how the editor of GCN, upon being asked to make HIV a cover story in one of its monthly editions, curtly replied that he would if she and her colleagues could find a willing celebrity. The commercial imperative of the free magazine, dependent on advertising, relegates the decidedly unsexy topic of HIV to margins of the press, and the consciousness of the gay community. This, in spite of the unfolding crisis that results in hundreds of us developing a lifelong medical condition.

Hearing Positive Voices

In this section I will look at a selection of the stories of HIV that I have heard during my research. Reflecting the deep secrecy around HIV, I have found it incredibly challenging to find informants that were not already publicly known as HIV advocates. As a result, my most sustained engagements were with people used to discussing their experiences. For several years, Jimmy Goulding, a key informant, was one of the very few HIV positive voices that were in the public forum in Dublin. His column ‘Positive Thinking with Jimmy Goulding’ appeared on the HIV page, and contained Jimmy’s observations on what it was like to be poz in Ireland. Free of advertisements and the control of the magazine editor, the page was funded by Gay Men’s Health Service, as a way to raise awareness, and visibility, of HIV and related concerns in the community. Jimmy recalls the event that brought him to national prominence, after years of quietly living with HIV. In 2006, at a time that Jimmy recalls for the state’s renewed emphasis on ‘stamping out stigma’ against HIV, he went to see a chiropodist about a problem that he had been having with his toenails, which he attributed to his antiretroviral treatments. Upon presenting his Health Service Executive issued card, which entitled him to free chiropody services, Jimmy was probed as to why he had such a card, given his relative youth. Despite his reservations about the chiropodist’s question, Jimmy disclosed his HIV

status. The chiropodist promptly told Jimmy that he needed to see a practitioner who specialised in foot care for the seropositive, and after briefly checking Jimmy's feet, told him that he was fine. Leaving the office, Jimmy recalled that had the incident occurred earlier in his life he would likely have acted upon the destructive urges that were welling up inside of him, inflicting violence upon the chiropodist's office, or even harming himself. Jimmy cites the potential that such quotidian ignorance and rejection can have on the psyche of someone forced to carry a secret with the power to destroy their reputation, even their life.

Rather than resorting to violence, Jimmy took a prima facie case to the Equality Authority, who ruled in his favour in 2009, and cited that he had been discriminated against based upon the false believe that people with a HIV positive status were unhealthy, and a threat to public health. Jimmy notes that the national attention that the case received would have made it impossible for most HIV positive people in Ireland to seek justice, as it would have revealed their status to the public. He acknowledges that his 'out' status as a poz man allowed him to pursue a case that had the potential to end such commonplace bias in everyday life for PLHIV. He concedes that, due to the furtive attitude that most positive people have about their status, such cases are rare, noting a recent case about a Dublin man who was refused a tattoo due to his status. When I met Jimmy, he had been HIV positive for over a quarter of a century. As a young sex worker, struggling with substance abuse, and at a time when the illegality of condoms made sex even riskier, Jimmy contracted the virus. Noting the judgment that he receives when he reveals to people that he engaged in condomless sex, he impresses upon me that this was because of the inability to access prophylactics as a gay man in Dublin in 1990. Looking back at his life, pre-diagnosis, Jimmy describes the lack of 'value' that he placed upon it. Acknowledging it for what it was at the time, a 'death sentence', Jimmy also points to the deterioration of his health as the moment where he started to attribute meaning to his existence. His positive diagnosis resulted in sobriety, and a deeper commitment to activism and

engagement within the HIV positive community. Following his successful case against his chiropodist, and alongside his contributions to the local gay media, Jimmy went on to co-found Positive Now, in 2010.

Positive Now describes itself as an ‘all-Ireland’ group of people with HIV/AIDS, working so that positive voices would be heard by NGOs and government, thus shaping more inclusive policies. While Positive Now states clearly on their website, and their members reasserted in person, that the organisation was ‘not affiliated or connected to, or representative of, any statutory or non-statutory agency’, their primary location is the basement floor of HIV Ireland’s offices on Dublin’s Eccles Street. The space is used for meetings and social gatherings: hanging from one wall is something reminiscent of the AIDS Quilts that memorialised those lost during the Plague Years. This, however, is explicitly celebratory. Multiple rows of crocheted panels affirm the lives of the positive men and women who stitched them together. On one such panel, the letter H,I, and V, stand for ‘Happy’, ‘Included’, and ‘Vital’, respectively. The homespun nature of the décor gives a welcoming feel to the faintly musty room, which otherwise functions as a storeroom (I first explored the archives of the HIV Ireland and its predecessors in that same basement). I also noted that the space was largely hidden from the sight of passers-by. One is also struck by the large, brass statue of Tara, the Tibetan deity iconic of compassion, on one windowsill, flanked on one side by a pile of red AIDS ribbons, and sexual health literature on the other.

Along with Jimmy, Sandy is a founder member of Positive Now. At the time that we spoke, the organisation appeared to be the primary space for HIV positive people to meet, in a supportive environment. There are many parallels between their stories: Sandy recounts how his diagnosis, in 1999, marked a turning point in his own life. While he is now an outspoken, visible poz figure in Dublin, he remembers becoming an object of fear for many people, including his own family. He began to notice how he ‘never saw the same mug twice’ when he

visited his mother's house; he came to realise that any cups that he used would be destroyed after he left the house. Furthermore, he noticed the impact upon his desirability to other men. In fact, he recalls the weight loss before his HIV diagnosis as a welcome development (a statement which Sandy prefaced by saying 'as a gay man', alluding to the premium placed upon certain bodies in the gay community). After his diagnosis, Sandy started to realise that people 'feared' him, and what his diagnosis meant, or at least what they believed it meant. Framing his diagnosis as a 'social death', he now concedes that over a decade and a half after the diagnosis, it is hard to imagine life without HIV. This has shifted over the years, as adherence to a treatment regime renders the viral load of a HIV positive person undetectable, and the condition untransmittable, thus removing the necessity of disclosing one's status before every sexual encounter. Cultural attitudes towards HIV, however, have yet to catch up with medical advancements. Echoing similar statements by Panti Bliss (made when speaking at an event to mark World AIDS Day at Maynooth University in 2016), Sandy and Jimmy both express a frustration with the Irish media's biannual interest in HIV/AIDS: on World AIDS Day (December 1), and Irish AIDS Day (June 15), especially at a time when HIV infection rates are growing but this is being largely overlooked. But the visibility of HIV positive people like Sandy and Jimmy is rare in Irish public life. With the exception of handful of other figures, such as Panti, or Tonie Walsh, or more recently, Robbie Lawlor, people with HIV are invisible in Irish society. These twice yearly events are still important opportunities to educate the Irish public about what a diagnosis means.

While Sandy shows that one can adapt to life after a HIV diagnosis, it clearly is a new life; or at least for those who are public about their status. As with Jimmy, Sandy's status marked a turning point. He points to his diagnosis as the start of a journey which lead to him studying law, and working in that area, as well as his advocacy work. While both men can see their diagnoses as turning points in their lives, and appreciate the personal achievements of

subsequent years, their stories have struck me as exceptional. While I do not want to represent their lives as ones of unadulterated happiness since their positive diagnosis (they list a series of health issues that have emerged: diabetes, osteoporosis, lipodystrophy (abnormal distribution of fat in the body), bowel disorder, and arthritis are just some of the complaints), but they are able to take personal satisfaction in, say, professional qualifications, sobriety, or service to other people living with HIV in Ireland. Most HIV positive men to whom I have spoken struggle to identify any areas of personal growth since testing positive. Rather, they report incidences of anxiety, secrecy, gossip, public shaming, and isolation.

The issue of HIV status disclosure is a particularly fraught one for poz gay men in Dublin, reflected not only in the secrecy around one's status, but a cognisance of HIV criminalisation laws internationally, including Canada and U.S states such as California. As noted previously in this thesis, Ireland does not criminalise HIV disclosure, yet fears that a person with HIV could face legal action for non-disclosure were a real concern for informants. The issue of HIV criminalisation has long been a concern for anthropologists and their informants; Mykhalovskiy (2011) recorded the detrimental effect that such statutes have on public health. As noted, Sandy undertook legal studies in the years following his diagnosis, and that training has informed his career in law, as well as his advocacy. When I first met members of HIV Ireland and Positive Now, I was told that the prospect of a case based on sexual transmission of HIV or exposure to possible infection was an inevitability. The advocates with whom I spoke dreaded the anticipated media coverage of any such case, and the consequences that it would have for attempts to normalise HIV in Irish society. That case appeared in 2018, as a man, identified as an African migrant with previous convictions for possession of a knife and illegal drugs, was convicted of causing serious harm to two partners, having infected them with HIV. The man was subsequently sentenced to ten years in prison. A press release from HIV Ireland following the conviction emphasised that the case was an

isolated incident, underscoring that the case was less concerned with HIV transmission than the reckless and malicious endangerment of one person by another. The statement went on to point out that once a HIV positive person is adhering to treatment and has an undetectable viral load, they cannot transmit the virus to a sexual partner. Without this knowledge, the myths around HIV would continue to negatively affect the 5000 persons living with the condition in Ireland (HIV Ireland: 2018).

Among my seropositive interlocutors, not everyone feels comfortable with Positive Now. For example, one person cited the pamphlet ‘Our Responsibilities’ (2014), which was produced by the group, as placing the onus upon people living with HIV when engaging with certain actors in society, such as health professionals and institutions. One HIV advocate criticised this focus on responsibilities, preferring to focus on the challenging broader structural deficits in education and training for professionals in both the public and private sectors, rather than expecting people living with HIV to internalise expectations of ‘worst case scenarios’ when they try to access everyday services. That advocate pointed to an already existing fear of stigmatisation from service providers. She cited the figure of the dentist as one of particular fear – not the routine fear that dentists provoke among the general public, but an expectation that a dentist will refuse to treat a patient with HIV. The advocate recalled how often she was asked about ‘poz friendly’ dentists, with clients having heard rumours that they could face rejection or confidentiality breaches, and feeling the need to assume ‘responsibility’ for finding someone who would not discriminate against them. This anticipation has been delineated as ‘felt’ stigma, as opposed to ‘enacted’ stigma, or experiences of discrimination (Hopkins and Scambler: 1986).

Other informants are mystified by the existence of the group. Despite being adjacent to HIV Ireland, Positive Now stress their independence as a group. Some informants expressed a feeling that the organisation was ‘cliquey’, and lacked transparency around what they actually

did. When I asked Sandy and Jimmy about direct action activism, particularly in relation to the newly re-formed ACT UP Dublin, Sandy told me that while they support such forms of protest, Positive Now considers itself to have a place ‘at the table’ in influencing policies around HIV/AIDS, not ‘outside the window shouting in’. This self-perception of the group as ‘insiders’ corresponds with the perception by some of my informants that Positive Now is somewhat removed from the general public and inaccessible. While Positive Now is described on the HIV Ireland website as a ‘diverse group of people’, this does not seem to be accurate: at least superficially, Sandy and Jimmy are the public face of the group in media and public events. Even within the gay community, Positive Now does not appear representative of, for example, younger HIV positive gay men, or those from ethnic minorities. One critic labelled their approach towards HIV as ‘penitential’: their diagnosis marking a point at which they disavowed past behaviours (promiscuity, intoxicants, sex work) and discovered new meaning.

Tonie Walsh, an early informant, is another one of the very few publicly known figures who are open about their HIV status (telling me that he could only count six such openly poz people in Ireland). Appearing on academic panels to discuss his status and activism, he has also been a prominent event organiser and disc jockey, pivotal to the emergence of Dublin’s club culture in the 1990s, alongside figures such as his friend Panti Bliss. Tonie often refers to Panti when speaking at HIV events: a tacit recognition of his friend’s centrality within the world of HIV activism and advocacy in Dublin. Tonie’s most enduring contribution to queer life in Ireland is the magazine *Gay Community News*, which he founded in 1988 (though when we first spoke, he lamented its commercialised approach and emphasis on lifestyle features directed at couples planning civil partnership ceremonies, laughingly describing it as a ‘fucking wedding magazine’). In the 1990s, Tonie began aggregating ephemera, which eventually grew into the Irish Queer Archive, established in 1997. A collection of historically important materials that chart the emergence of the gay and lesbian community in the final decades of the

twentieth century, the IQA continued to collect materials germane to GLBT issues into the new millennium. Tonie's involvement in gay social life in Dublin, through the Hirschfield Centre (established by David Norris and his IGRM associates in 1979), as well as his involvement in numerous political organisations has ensured that the IQA is the repository of the administration records of all of the gay and lesbian organisations in the country since 1974. While the administrative papers can make for dry, and incomplete, reading, the collection also contains copies of several short lived magazines that pre-dated Gay Community News in 1988. The archive retains glimpses of what gay sociality was like for gays before decriminalisation: pictures, stickers, badges, and posters are the traces of dances, book launches, and movie screenings. The archive contains materials belonging to Gay Community News, the Alternative Miss Ireland contests, the GAZE Film Festival, Gay Health Action, the National LGBT Federation, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), and Dublin's Pride marches and parades. The history of a marginalised community is collected, albeit in a frustrating, piecemeal fashion.

The collection was transferred to the National Library of Ireland in 2008. While this event was lauded for its symbolic importance (at an event to mark the occasion, Colm Toibin heralded the belated inclusion of the GLBT community into the national narrative through the act of the donation), Tonie expressed regret that much material remained in storage ('in a warehouse in north Dublin'), and a wealth of resources from the campaigns for civil partnership, same sex marriage, and other social and cultural events, had yet to be added to the collection and made available to researchers and the general public. Of symbolic note too is the fact that the archive was handed over to the nation in 2008: the year in which the country's economy crashed dramatically and plunged its citizens into years of austerity politics and an International Monetary Fund bailout in 2010. As a consequence, Ireland's cultural sector has been particularly affected by underinvestment, which has had a direct impact upon attempts to

make GLBT history accessible. Tonie had taken to using social media sites to disseminate images of items from the collection, in hopes of reaching a wider audience than can access the National Library, as well as bringing together material that he deems to be of sociocultural importance. Tonie anticipated my own frustration with the collection, and how it is managed by the National Library. Particularly in light of campaigns for relationship recognition over the last decade, he was eager to rectify this, along with academics who had aided the transfer of the archive to the National Library: Tonie repeatedly used the language of construction: ‘building’ a resource for the GLBT community, and Irish society at large, of ‘fixing blocks into place to create this historical structure [which remains] incomplete’.

From our first discussion, shame became a keyword. Ever erudite, Tonie displays a knowledge of Irish history and culture that was both deep and vast. He even makes a living from this, offering GLBT themed walking tours of Dublin, as he reveals the often hidden stories of salaciousness behind the city’s landmark sites. Citing the Penitentials of Early Medieval Ireland (a series of prohibitions and punishments around sexuality in monastic settlements), to the Victorian puritanism of the Catholicism still tangible in Irish life today, Tonie understood shame and sexuality to be symbiotic in Irish culture. Recalling his mother’s resistance to the process known as ‘churching’ (a purifying ritual routinely performed by Catholic priests upon women after giving birth, though a practice that has since disappeared) following his birth, Tonie was born into a family of progressive, critical thinkers (his great-grandfather was a Scottish Labour M.P, and his great-grandmother was involved in the campaign for women’s suffrage). From the rituals surrounding his birth, to his descriptions of growing up in Clonmel, a small town in County Tipperary, Tonie understood shame to be woven into the fabric of daily life. As a teenager, he volunteered at the local psychiatric hospital, accompanying patients on excursions, to take the air, or have tea. It was here that he saw people who had been abandoned by their families, some because of the same-sex attraction that Tonie recognised in himself.

Here one can appreciate how gay men were regarded as, in Agamben's (1998) term, 'bare life': they could be plucked from everyday social life and isolated indefinitely because of their unruly sexuality (see Kelly: 2015; and Saris:1996; 2000 on the centrality of the asylum in twentieth century Ireland, and the process of institutionalisation for the socially nonconforming in rural Ireland).

Moving to Dublin as a young man to study, Tonie became involved in the nascent gay scene of the late 1970s. At a time when David Norris was known as 'the only gay man in Ireland', having been a founder of the Irish Gay Rights Movement in 1974, Tonie remembers his own first television appearance, in a news segment about the venereal disease gonorrhoea (or 'drippy cock', as it was popularly known to Tonie and his contemporaries). While Tonie makes a point of telling me that he did not have the infection at the time, the lack of visibility around sexual health prompted him to tell the nation his 'story'. Immersed in the movements of the 1980s: gay rights and AIDS activism, as well as the emergence of club culture in Dublin in the 1990s.

As with members of organisations such as Gay Health Action, or the original iteration of ACT UP Dublin, Tonie recalls the 'burnout' that he felt during those early years of what he refers to as 'the war'. Focusing once more upon the word shame, he winces as he describes feeling 'funeral fatigue', as his friends and lovers continued to die. He describes highly emotional funeral wakes, that involved listening to Anita Baker, to defensive confrontations with undertakers who wanted to place his friends in body bags (a longstanding practice that was met with resistance from the original ACT UP Dublin chapter). Walking down Grafton Street in Dublin, he, and others, would cross the street to avoid meeting visibly unwell friends, knowing that they too would soon be dead. These memories evince the greatest sense of shame, the way that society treated people with HIV/AIDS; how Tonie coped with the trauma of this time can still elicit regret. From his description of this period, trauma is how Tonie understands

the impact of AIDS upon his generation. From the ‘shellshock’ of the First World War, to the ‘Post Traumatic Stress Disorder’ diagnoses that followed the Vietnam War, a conceptual creep has occurred. People outside of the military, or war zones, now articulate their psychic pain through the language of physical violence (Tonie’s casual references to the pre-antiretroviral treatment era as ‘the war’ is an explicit example of this). Such utterances also show the enduring potency of metaphors of attack and defence when we think about the sick body (Sontag: 1978).

‘Tainted by the aura of criminality’, Tonie bristles with anger as he recalls the lack of state support for frontline activists and medics, and how this contributed to the pressure upon a community being decimated, yet too busy to mourn their countless griefs. He believes that this silence has persisted, recounting friends still bitter about their experiences. Explaining his eagerness to talk to me, and displaying his own reflective personality and archivist mentality, he tells me that ‘mining the lived experience of people who are HIV positive, or who lived during ‘the war’, is necessary to debunk the shame and stigma, because they created the cultural mindset that we have today’. He acknowledges the difficulty in creating a history of HIV/AIDS, or an archive of experiences, as the stories of how people lived disappeared when they died ‘those nasty, silent, shabby deaths’. While certain anonymous activists in Gay Health Action, and eventually Dublin AIDS Alliance, made attempts to create archives of the time, cutting out relevant newspaper articles and saving medical journal reports (some of which were digitised by HIV Ireland in 2017), almost all of the voices of those lost to AIDS in Dublin during ‘the war’ have disappeared (Cathal Kerrigan, a founder member of GHA, and professional librarian, recalled being recruited by D.A.A in the early 1990s to parse the shared archives of those affiliated groups, and destroy any personally identifying information. As a result, all that remained in the archives were media reports, minutes from activist meetings, pamphlets and other ephemera: often fascinating, but infuriatingly partial, and impersonal). I

would contend that the same holds true today: the voices of those living with HIV ought to be heard; beyond those of Sandy, Jimmy, or Tonie. A normalisation of HIV needs to occur in order to, in Tonie's words, 'debunk the shame and stigma'. Such attempts to 'normalise' the diagnosis provokes a reaction from elements within the community, who resort to the 'plague years' as a warning from history about the dangers of 'reckless behaviour' and 'promiscuity' (see Meyler: 2016). Throughout our exchanges, and in his public pronouncements, Tonie stressed the importance of an 'intergenerational dialogue' in changing cultural attitudes towards HIV in Ireland. Such an approach seems exceptional among the gay community in Dublin: older men (namely those who have lived through the 1980s) are conservative in their attitudes towards sex, risk, and HIV.

An example of one such voice, from outside of HIV healthcare and any cognate field, is that of Bill Hughes. A television producer who has worked for RTE, as well as founding his own production company, has been given airtime on numerous occasions in recent years to discuss his opinions on HIV/AIDS, specifically around young people's sexual behaviour. In an article that appeared to be fuelled by his inability to have an idea for a documentary on HIV/AIDS commissioned by RTE, Hughes used his platform to lament that HIV/AIDS is no longer being discussed sufficiently in Irish public fora. While this a valid claim, and a frustration shared by all of my informants, his broad, reproachful attitude towards 'young people' and their role in the upsurge of infections ignores the structural issues that have facilitated this health crisis.

It's [HIV] coming back now because young people think they are bullet proof and that's shocking. And in the same way I find it shocking that people get pregnant outside of...you know... that young couples get pregnant. What shocks me about that is not that they are pregnant, it's the fact that they are having unprotected sex.

That Hughes had started to use the phrase ‘outside of marriage’ is indicative of a sexual conservatism that is widespread, even among the gay community in Dublin, but also evinces the echoes of a twentieth century Irish Catholic morality that undergirds contemporary attitudes towards sexuality, risk, and responsibility. The generational divide to which Hughes attributes the spike in infections is the focus of continued criticism: ‘It’s the arrogance of youth...young people are now so arrogant they think are here forever and nothing is going to impinge on their lives because they are cared for and over cared for and if it does there is always a pill [a reference to antiretroviral treatments]. Would they just wake up and take responsibility?’ Such an inaccurate generalisation about ‘arrogant’ youth, who are ‘over cared for’, speaks to a lack of real engagement with younger people, particularly those who are HIV positive, or involved in HIV advocacy and activism. Hughes’ comment that ‘there is always a pill’ is worrying, for it invokes a nostalgia for a time when the lack of antiretroviral treatments rendered sexual activity a potentially lethal experience. Hughes has repeated these claims of complacency among young people in his documentary *Fab Vinny* (2017), marking the death of his mentor Vincent Hanley, an RTE presenter who denied his AIDS diagnosis, despite his visibly failing health onscreen, and whose death from AIDS in 1987 was the focus of intense media focus. This nostalgia for a lethal defence against promiscuity recalls Watney’s term ‘the spectacle of AIDS’ (1987), which referred to the effect of AIDS reportage in regulating sexual behaviour in the service of ‘respectable domesticity’.

While it easy to dismiss Hughes as a dinosaur, out of touch with the reality of HIV in contemporary Ireland, his voice is not a solitary one. Bill Foley, a founder member of Gay Health Action who now is a respected social worker at Dublin’s Mater Hospital, who has spent his life working in the area of HIV care, intimated to me that while he welcomed the advent of PrEP, and was in favour of its rollout in Ireland, he believed that ‘behavioural change’ was needed in the gay community and that PrEP was not a panacea for the current HIV crisis.

Indeed, this emphasis on personal responsibility finds an unlikely champion in Panti Bliss, specifically regarding her pronouncements on young people and HIV. Unlike Rory's friend Tonie's approach, Panti's routine, and Rory's advocacy speeches, frequently target young people living with HIV. Captured in *The Queen of Ireland*, during a sketch from the final Alternative Miss Ireland show in 2012, Panti, discussing HIV said 'the younger gays only stumbled across it recently', wagging her finger, 'when they should have known better'.

This opinion is widely held among older HIV positive men living with HIV: my conversations with Positive Now members (long term HIV survivors) were shaded with judgement around young people, and their perceived recklessness, particularly around barebacking (the act of condomless sex). Such criticism focus on changes in attitudes towards not only HIV, but sexuality generally, as well as technological changes, such as geolocation applications that facilitate sexual encounters without the need for prolonged conversations in bars. Or, indeed, PrEP, and PEP, and how medical advancements change attitudes towards risk and HIV. Such simplistic dismissals of young people and their behaviours should not negate the larger structural issues that influence HIV infections. One hears with incredulity stories like that of Robbie Lawlor, a twentysomething ACT UP activist and sexual health advocate, whose HIV diagnosis was especially shocking as he claims to have been unaware of the existence of HIV in Ireland! (Hogan: 2016). While this initially strike one as naïve and ignorant, it speaks to inadequate sexual education in Irish schools, reflecting the tangible legacy of Catholicism in publicly funded areas of civil society. The process of secularising an education system that relies on Catholic owned infrastructure will take time; in the interim, figures such as Lawlor, a former 'Mr. Gay Ireland' whose media profile has risen in recent years through his activism, continues to raise awareness of HIV. ACT UP has been educating the public with slogans such as 'Undetectable = Untransmittable', in an attempt to correct what members feel has been a

poor effort at communicating the scientific reality of a HIV diagnosis, which in turn reduces the fear of a diagnosis, and thus normalise regular HIV testing.

Growing out of his commitment to preserve Irish GLBT culture, with the Irish Queer Archive, Tonie has been campaigning for the establishment of a public memorial to AIDS in Dublin. First touted during a speech given to mark World AIDS Day in 2015, the imagined physical marker would act as a ‘totem’ for both memory and learning. The latter is important, as it shows a recognition for public education and awareness of the issue coming from within the HIV positive community. Rejecting a monument in an occluded spot, such as a side street or public park, Tonie has publicly called for any memorial to be built in Dublin City Centre, in Parnell Square or opposite Leinster House, as a reminder of the government’s role in neglecting HIV/AIDS. This concept of a public reminder of those lives lost to AIDS has reemerged, on subsequent World AIDS Days and Irish AIDS Days, and when HIV Ireland held a day-long conference to mark their thirtieth anniversary. Outside of these red letter days, when the issue of a public memorial resurfaces, the idea disappears once again. With every renewed call, comes a flurry of attention from media outlets, and then silence. This is symbolic of how HIV/AIDS is treated in the Irish public forum: the focus of academic conferences (referred to by one HIV positive interlocutor, in a display of what is known in drag culture as *shade*, as ‘opportunistic inspections’), a couple of radio interviews which invariably place emphasis on eliciting the details of the interviewee’s infection, over more pressing biomedical breakthroughs which would assuage the fears of an Irish populace that remains woefully under informed, and as a result deeply phobic towards seropositive bodies.

While plans for an AIDS memorial remain unrealised, they are notable as they speak to this historical moment, where the Irish public feel that they must finally reckon with the ‘sins’ of previous generations, and rehabilitate the memories, and respectability, of those who had been marginalised in Irish society because of perceived transgressions of the flesh. As with

calls for a permanent memorial centre for those incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries, Tonie's impulse to record those lost to AIDS is timely, and the educational value of such an undertaking is best appreciated when one looks at the rising HIV incidences, at a cultural moment when the state is congratulating itself following the success of socially transformative referendums, yet sexual education remains hampered by the ethical objections of Catholic schools. One can observe the contiguity between the structures that produced the Magdalene Laundries, and those which isolate HIV positive people in what one informant described as 'symbolic quarantine' within Irish society. The memorialisation of the marginalised still has currency in Irish society, as that marginalisation is ongoing, rooted in the structures that were established in the last century.

In conversations with the Positive Now founders, a HIV diagnosis can be rendered an opportunity to transform the overall direction of one's life, an example of the 'post-traumatic growth' that Murphy et al., identifies as sorely lacking among gay men in Ireland (2015). This, however, did not resonate with the other stories that I had heard. Reflecting Murphy's findings that HIV stigma stymied the possibility of post-diagnosis benefits for most gay men who test HIV positive in Ireland today. This stigma, Murphy found, was most acutely felt by those most socially active within the gay community. This process was referred to by an informant as 'the gay community cannibalising itself', as more gay men are testing positive, but feel that they cannot be open about their diagnosis with their peers. If a HIV positive man discloses his status when talking to a man on Grindr, or in a bar, he risks immediate sexual rejection, and long-term social exclusion. Once one's status is shared, there is a risk of gossip, and reputational ruin.

Even knowledge of biomedical reality of HIV, and assumptions of 'wellness' when adhering to treatment, can cause one to neglect the detrimental effect that stigmatisation has upon mental health, and subsequently upon behaviours that can impact upon adherence to

treatment, sobriety, and so forth. The invisibilisation of HIV since the appearance of effective treatments over twenty years ago has, to an extent, removed the HIV positive gay man from public consciousness, but the cultural associations with contagion and death remain. The emergence of the ‘triple cocktail’ of antiretroviral medications lead to what one HIV positive interlocutor, who has worked as a therapist himself and has observed the same scenario of internalised anxiety and paranoia among his HIV positive clients, describes as the ‘remedicalisation’ of HIV. A positive diagnosis no longer is accompanied by an automatic referral to counselling, which up to that point had been integral to the care that newly diagnosed people received. This lack of social support lead to people struggling to cope with this event, with no support, often keeping their HIV status a secret. This informant noted that while stigma appeared to be the ‘buzzword’ around HIV in Ireland, there is no ‘go-to’ person in the Health Service Executive, or the NGO sector, employed and resourced to work with those affected by stigma. He noted the inadequacy of community supports: expressing reticence about what he perceived as Positive Now’s ‘cliquey’ structure and ‘insider’ status within the structures of HIV management and advocacy in Dublin. He recalls attending the HIV community centre Open Heart House soon after his diagnosis, and lamenting its demise. Open Heart House, funded through state money and donations, opened in the mid-1990s, as ART began to transform the biomedical meaning of HIV/AIDS. It functioned as a community centre for people living with HIV, though my informant recalls the space as one shrouded in secrecy (signs that adorned the walls of the centre reminded visitors that their experiences at Open Heart House stayed within those walls). By the time Open Heart House collapsed due to lack of funding in the wake of the economic crash, in 2012, my informant told me that the centre was predominantly working with patients who ‘could not help themselves’: drug users and the homeless. While it was ostensibly for people like him (with HIV), he felt unable to foster social, supportive connections there. While HIV testing has been the focus of much energy

within the community in recent years – as well as disputes over statutory funding of programmes, such as the ‘rapid testing’ initiative – those living with the psychosocial consequences of diagnosis are inadequately helped. The need for the development of stigma resistance among the newly diagnosed is key to avoiding the internalised stigma that HIV carries in Irish culture (Foreman and Ni Rathaille: 2011). To do this, Ireland must shift out of its ‘cultural Catholicism’ (Smyth: 1998), and change its views around sexuality.

My poz therapist informant displayed deep insight and eloquence when identifying structural shortfalls when it comes to HIV management, from his experiences as a professional within the HSE and as someone living with the diagnosis. Notably, he is not ‘out’ about his status; he has only told a handful about his diagnosis in the past seven years. Citing his privacy, as well as concerns around his job and implications for potential romantic or sexual connections, he is one of the many people in the gay community who feel silenced by codes of shame around HIV. Certain poz voices are frequently heard – those figures are easily identifiable in the community – but their stories are ones that can seem stale, having been told and retold on the rare occasions that Irish media displays an interest in HIV. These conversations become part of the reality of their diagnosis; this is not the case for the vast majority of people. To an extent, disclosure defines their identity in a way that my anonymous informants wish to avoid out of fear of reputational damage.

One informant pointed out Panti Bliss’ second appearance on RTE’s *The Saturday Night Show* several months after the interview that triggered ‘Pantigate’. The interview was scheduled to promote Rory O’Neill’s memoir, published in October 2014. While Panti Bliss, in full drag, got away with a discussion of the busy months since ‘Pantigate’ in the way that perhaps Rory would not, the interview hinged upon Rory’s private life, particularly his HIV. The atmosphere of the interview was one of nervous humour from the host, Brendan O’Connor. While this was presumably out of fear of further litigation, there was the added defamiliarising

effect of drag: like a court jester or a Shakespearean fool, Panti embodied a particular power, capable of making the host appear to be a fool, particularly when discussing such sensitive topics. What caught my informant's attention, however, was seeing Rory on live television, discussing intimate details around his HIV diagnosis and related challenges, but having the protection of a drag persona that affords a form of protection that my informant could not relate to. When Rory is in drag, he is semiotically coded as a theatrical performance even when he is at his most personal discussing intimate disclosure on national television, whereas 'real' people are unable to articulate their experiences at home or in their social circle. To return to my observation at the start of this chapter about the performative abject queerness of HIV positive men in Ireland post-same sex marriage, Butler observes that 'the sight of a transvestite on stage can compel pleasure and applause, while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence' (1988: 527). While this observation can explain the potency of Panti's 'Noble Call', it also helps one comprehend Panti's status as public HIV advocate in a climate where private disclosure can attract the range of phobic responses that Butler describes.

To conclude, and to return to the methodological conceit that has informed this thesis, I consider the 'figure' of the Poz man in contemporary Ireland, and how he connects to other figures of abjection in Irish cultural history. In a post 'Marriage Equality' Ireland, he is considered the antithesis of 'clean' on applications such as Grindr: he represents the 'matter out of place' that Mary Douglas describes (1966). His body is iconic of the promiscuity that threatens the 'normalization' of 'gayness' (Halperin 2007), and that jeopardises the social embrace that the gay community has finally received. The Poz man is abjected (Kristeva 1982; Butler 1993) from contemporary Irish culture, because to acknowledge him would be to acknowledge sex itself. In the cultural and moral imagination of the community, he conjures up the Kristevan 'horror' of bodily fluids, social and corporeal boundaries, and our own

porousness and instability. Following the success of the sanitisation strategy of the same-sex campaign – even after the Repeal the Eighth campaign, and the remarkable explosion into the public sphere of hitherto suppressed stories of abortion that reframed longstanding notions of propriety in public discourse - sex still is considered inherently shameful, and therefore has not been politicised despite an escalating crisis. While both same-sex marriage and abortion are complex issues, and those campaigns were long and traumatic for many, they could be couched in the abstract language of ‘choice’, or ‘equality’, or ‘love’. Despite the parallels between reproductive healthcare and HIV, mainstream abortion campaigners have failed to adequately consider the intersection of these issues. Just as the AIDS crisis did in the 1980s, HIV necessitates frank, public discussions about sex, as opposed to the hushed tones and gossip synonymous with the virus at the moment.

The continued failure to do so serves to underscore my argument that the code of sexual respectability in Irish culture still exists: despite the rejection of a near-theocratic past and institutionalisation of deviant bodies, sex is still figured as shameful, and detrimental to the social order. Just like the figure of the ‘unmarried mother’ a century ago, the Poz man of today is socially and culturally marginalised for perceived transgression. Both are positioned against idealised figures in their society: the ‘respectable’, married, heterosexual family unit that epitomised twentieth century Ireland, and the desexualised, gay couple who also function as ideal consumer-citizens in neoliberal Ireland (even potentially consuming kinship through surrogacy). For both abjected figures, the shame of sex cannot be cast off. While collectively, Ireland may be experiencing something of a cultural watershed, the figure of the Poz man serves as the personification of a structure of discourse around sex and respectability that endures in Irish culture.

Conclusion

This thesis has critically analysed the role of sexuality at a momentous time for Irish politics and culture, culminating at a moment outlined in the above vignette. Arising out of personal frustration at a perceived single-mindedness around relationship recognition within the GLBT community, and its progressive ‘allies’, this work illuminates the shadow side of this trend. Amid an enthusiastic popular embrace of marriage politics and the ‘equality’ agenda, in an act of historical anthropology (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992), this work traced the transformation of the institution across more than a century, identifying how marriage continues to endow respectability upon certain Irish citizens and ‘unrespectability’ upon those who do not. It was only through a deep, sustained engagement with historical and archival ideas and materials that one could fully appreciate the cultural changes that are occurring in Ireland at the contemporary moment.

This document reflects a four-year period of immersion in a shifting cultural milieu, albeit one that I have long been a part of. While it has become standard for ethnographies, after Malinowski, to open with an account of their arrival and immersion at their field site, it would have been duplicitous for me to do so. However, as I started to inhabit the mentality of a fieldworker in a familiar site, I realised that I needed to reorient myself in relation to the culture around me. This native fieldworker recognised the necessity of going beyond familiar methods of participant-observation, opting instead for a variety of sites: official archives, private archives, textual analysis, and interviews in order to provide a clear focus upon salient events in Irish culture. Many of these events pre-date the period of my fieldwork, but were selected specifically to illustrate the secrecy, orchestrated silences, and shifting

morality that continue to imbue Irish sexual culture in the twenty-first century. The weight of history still bears upon the collective psyche.

Against this popular rejection of Ireland's traumatic history of institutionalisation and clerical control of the population, many have regarded same-sex marriage and reproductive rights as markers of how far we have come in terms of the creation of a pluralistic, tolerant society. While this is a noble, and understandable aspiration, this narrative often served to simplify a complex history, and present. As a result, my work endeavoured to pull together a plurality of sources, both past and present, to create a Foucaultian archaeology (1966; 1969) of abjected figures in Irish culture, tracing those who have been shamed and marginalised for having violated contemporary codes of sexual respectability. To achieve this, I conducted what John and Jean Comaroff have described as 'ethnography in the archives' (1992: 33). Archival work reveals the Irish Catholic church to be not merely a theological monolith, but an institution deeply engaged with discourses of law and science in order to develop tighter social controls over its adherents. Such debates shaped the legislative framework that so punitively governed the bodies and sexualities of Irish citizens throughout the twentieth, and into the twenty-first, centuries.

The Geertzian 'blurring' of genres (1980) has also been a marker of this research; the holistic character of anthropology has facilitated my own previous training in literary studies, as well as permitting not only analysis of sexuality, but religion, secularism, civic activism, legal studies, human rights, and media. While I quickly identified the concept of 'respectability' as something of a key symbol within my fieldwork, this analytic was complemented by a range of ancillary theoretical ideas that shaped this finished document: biopolitics, neoliberalism, hegemony, identity politics, shame, and stigma, as outlined below.

Here, anthropology intersects with other disciplines, specifically with those in the field of policy research and lobbying, for protection of civil liberties.

This thesis also is a necessary contribution to the literature on queer anthropology in Europe, an area which has been unfairly overlooked up to this point (Boyce et al 2017). While institutionalised in the United States, the sub-discipline continues to be marginal within the European academy. In a country long framed as ‘peripheral’ by visiting anthropologists, this research refigures Ireland’s standing in the anthropological imagination, recording its position as a centre of international communications and capital, as well as at the forefront of international movements around rights and recognition for sexual and gender minorities. Unlike controversial ethnographic depictions of Ireland in the previous century, in which Ireland was held to be exceptional (particularly in relation to the United States) in regard to issues of sexuality, kinship, and society, this work locates Ireland within transnational discourses around rights and recognition for minoritarian communities, as well as engaging with the complex specificities of Ireland’s own colonial and postcolonial experiences of bodily control.

Of course, the scope of this thesis is limited, and identifies questions that require closer, sustained attention in future. Foremost among these is the continued issue of HIV stigmatisation. As biomedical developments – from pre-exposure prophylaxis, to rapid testing technologies – continue to make HIV an ever more manageable disease, this scientific reality of HIV has not been communicated effectively in Ireland. Despite these scientific advancements, it is clear that cultural factors continue to impede the social lives of gay men living with a HIV diagnosis. From anecdotal reports of people being shamed because of their use of PrEP and accused of ‘promiscuity’ by their peers, to PrEP users who refuse to have sex with seropositive men, it is evident that knowledge of, and attitudes towards, HIV in contemporary Ireland remain woefully disappointing (as is the state’s roll-out of

comprehensive sexual health and education). Further in-depth research into the sexual practices and attitudes of men who have sex with men is sorely needed, in order to better understand the cultural reasons for Ireland's continued HIV crisis.

The cultural value of respectability is most explicit when one looks at the 'figures' (Agamben 1998) who have violated its code: the 'unmarried mother' and the HIV positive gay man. The first figure was impacted by the regime of 'Catholic biopolitics' which dominated Irish life in the twentieth century. This mode of governmentality had a distinctly Catholic flavour, but was not purely doctrinal. Rather, it drew upon modern discourses of natural and social science, law, and criminality to produce an all-encompassing – catholic, in the most literal sense – means of social control. While physical institutions were the logical endpoint for socially transgressive figures, a series of more abstract institutions developed - systems of healthcare and education – that endure into the present day, shaping Irish knowledge and sensibilities around sexuality and personhood.

While there has been a popular rejection of aspects of historical Catholic social influence in recent years, widely held conceptions about sexual morality abound, and are most tangible when one examines the figure of the HIV positive gay man. In a group whose identity was shaped by its exclusion under Catholic biopolitical control, the gay community in Ireland has mimicked the state's homophobic attitudes towards gay men, with familiar tactics of orchestrated silence and shaming operationalised to place HIV positive gay men in a form of social quarantine (Gould 2009). Biomedical advancements have not been matched by an evolution of attitudes, as one's HIV status is also regarded as a marker of one's personal morality and sense of responsibility in this neo-liberal, and neo-puritanical age. While the gay community is congratulating itself on increased social acceptance and statutory protections, it continues to promulgate the exclusionary logic that marginalised it in Irish society for decades.

With responsibility being a key value within neoliberal society, and with HIV constructed as knowable, calculable, and preventable, discourses of public health produce particular forms of understanding of terms such as ‘risk’ and ‘responsibility’ around the diagnosis. Globally, several countries have introduced legislation which criminalises HIV, with many statutes and cases specifically targeting those who fail to disclose their HIV status to sexual partners. This legal approach is one that is ultimately detrimental to the fight against HIV/AIDS, as it ignores the science of HIV transmission, and dissuades people from getting tested and knowing their status. While Ireland has yet to pass such legislation, such a move would not be unimaginable in a country so ruthlessly judgemental about sexual practices. Ireland’s programme of sexual education is outdated, and sexual health services underfunded and oversubscribed, and a gay community that is itself is so deeply serophobic that most HIV positive gay men do not feel comfortable disclosing their status publicly for fear of reputational damage among their peers. Rumour and fear serve to hinder the conversations necessary to correct the pernicious ignorance around HIV that is rife in the country. Continued restrictions on blood donation for gay and bisexual men are a tangible manifestation of the cultural associations between gay men and risk, disease, and death. Such associations, and the inequities that they produce, are a source of shame for the gay community, which implicitly blames HIV positive men for their ‘promiscuity’ and the continuation of negative stereotyping about same-sex desire.

‘It will be the biggest mass movement in generations’, the Irish Independent predicted on the morning of Saturday 25 August 2018, the first day of Pope Francis’ less than thirty-six-hour visit. That evening, a crowd of 100,000 people were expected to line the streets of the

capital to witness the ‘Popemobile’ traverse the city, following a state reception at Dublin Castle. That night, he was expected to speak before 80,000 pilgrims in packed-to-capacity Croke Park stadium to mark the biannual Festival of Families event. The real challenge for organisers - and locals like myself - would come on Sunday as the entire public transport fleet would be deployed to facilitate the estimated half a million pilgrims expected to descend upon Dublin for the closing mass of the World Meeting of Families in the Phoenix Park.

Homes in the area had been inundated for weeks with information on the logistics of the event: some neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the Phoenix Park fell within ‘exclusion zones’, meaning that they were under virtual house arrest, and with road closures in place across the city, normal bus schedules were suspended, and with local businesses shutting for the day. Many neighbours opted to leave Dublin for a weekend break to avoid the expected chaos. The choice of location was also of significant symbolic importance within Irish Catholicism. The Phoenix Park was the site of Pope John Paul II’s mass to 500,000 pilgrims in 1979, an event remembered as the apogee of the Catholic Church’s power in Ireland, whose teachings would influence politics over the coming decade through referendums on abortion and marriage, but that would soon lose its moral authority in a spectacular fashion (McWilliams 2006).

Occurring just weeks after a landslide vote to legislate for abortion access, and in an Ireland where same-sex relationships were no longer criminalised, but embraced by the state, it seems foolhardy for the authorities to have believed that a crowd equalling that of the 1979 papal mass would congregate in 2018. Willing to satiate my anthropological curiosity, I braved the expected hordes of the devout on Saturday afternoon. The heavy police presence and lack of car or pedestrian traffic as I walked towards the quays seemed uncanny: Saturday at noon is usually one of the busiest times of the week in the city centre. Perhaps a dozen curious onlookers were waiting at the entrance to the Phoenix Park, where the Pope was expected to

depart following an audience with President Higgins. The sight of Garda foreriders, and the long motorcade seemed out of place on Parkgate Street: the dark blue Skoda Fabia chosen by the Pope, however, seemed an entirely unremarkable sight save for its backseat passenger. The speed at which the motorcade darted across the city, as well as the intensive security operation, seemed somewhat anticlimactic.

As the day wore on, and I walked through an eerily quiet city centre, it became increasingly obvious that the estimates of 100,000 spectators lining the route was exceedingly optimistic. An estimated cost of 32 million euro that had been circulating in the media in the days before the visit, which would be approximately one million euro per hour of the visit, served to enrage many Dubliners. This rage appeared justified, as the city was heavily fortified and sectioned, but the crowds did not justify such measures. Leo Varadkar tweeted a picture of the Pope signing the visitor book at Dublin Castle, commenting that the Pope was visiting a ‘very different Ireland’ to that of Pope John Paul II but reminding his (Twitter) followers that 78% of Irish people identify as Catholic. While this may reflect how people respond to a census question, the muted reaction to the papal visit, as well as sociocultural shifts, are a more accurate reflection of the Catholic Church’s standing in Irish culture.

The papal mass in the Phoenix Park – the highlight of the visit and locus of security and logistical issues – turned out to be yet another anti-climax. Instead of the suggested half-a million pilgrims, the most generous estimates speculated that 130,000 people had attended. This mass had been the target of an online campaign against the papal visit: the wittily titled ‘Say Nope to the Pope’. The group emerged on Facebook, and other social media users appropriated the group’s name as a hashtag to express opposition to the papal visit. The group advocated booking, but not using, free tickets to the papal mass as a form of peaceful protest. Many group members stated that they would instead use their papal mass ticket to avail of free public transport for pilgrims, and attend the #Stand4Truth demonstration at Dublin’s Garden

of Remembrance, organised by abuse survivor Colm O’Gorman, the Executive Director of Amnesty International Ireland, who was heavily involved in the campaigns for same-sex marriage and abortion. Others were planning on travelling to Tuam, to take part in a vigil at the site of the Mother and Baby Home, timed to coincide with the papal mass.

These protests were organised to express dissent at the continued mismanagement of the abuse crisis in Ireland, and the Pope’s comments in Dublin did little to ameliorate the situation. In his address at Dublin Castle, and his homily at the Phoenix Park, Francis acknowledged the abuse scandal, but did not apologise. After their meeting with the pontiff on Saturday, survivors reported that he seemed to be ignorant of the Magdalene Laundries and the Mother and Baby Home system. The content of the brief visit did little in the way of creating a reparative dialogue between the Irish people and the Catholic Church. In fact, for many, it affirmed the popular perception of the organisation as being an arrogant monolith, impervious to cultural change and sensitivity. While Leo Varadkar was commended for his speech at Dublin Castle regarding the role of the church in dealing with its legacy of abuse, many still saw the enormity of the operation around the Pope’s visit - in both cost and logistical scope - as a marker of the state being out of touch with people on the ground.

The same anthropological curiosity that forced me out on the Saturday had also spurred me to book a ticket to the mass. However, having been underwhelmed by what I had (or had not) seen the day before, and the Pope’s failure to apologise for the systemic abuse and cover-up, I opted to stay at home. Despite not being a Catholic, I nevertheless felt an odd sense of disappointment that the potential of the papal visit to act as a symbolic act of reconciliation had been scuppered by the Church’s continued inadequacy to account for its failings. Rather than a reparative moment following a traumatic period of national history, the papal visit served to crystallise the deep social transformation that had occurred in recent years. The perceived failure of the papal visit marks a watershed in Irish culture: the 1979 visit may have been the

pinnacle of church influence, but the 2018 visit illustrates how that influence has receded, even if the state has yet to fully appreciate this recalibration of national values.

Ultimately, the papal visit was a disappointing episode. The Irish people, having voted twice in three years in liberalise society, had to observe the state stage an elaborate national theatre of Catholicism, and subsequently pick up the bill. Many felt that the decision to visit Ireland was a timed response to the decision to hold a referendum on the repeal of the Eighth Amendment – with the Dail’s vote to confirm the plebiscite and the Vatican’s announcement of the papal visit both occurring in the same week in March 2018. If the visit was an orchestrated attempt by the church hierarchy to demonstrate its influence over Irish society, it was a failure. The entire occasion threw into sharp relief the distance between Catholic social teaching – and the government’s deferential display – and the majority of Irish citizens, for whom the entire charade served to illuminate the continued failure of both church and state to acknowledge its complicity in the institutionalisation of socially abjected citizens, and to follow through on promised redress packages for survivors, and the need for the increased secularisation of Ireland’s healthcare and education systems.

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