



Title: A Literary and Cultural Analysis of the Mistreatment of Women Portrayed in the Works of Female Irish Writers and Critical Social Events in Ireland 1984-2022

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Abstract

This thesis examines the treatment of women in Irish society through a cultural and literary approach.

The analysis includes a variety of literature dating from 1936 to 2015. The authors discussed are all female: Teresa Deevy, Rosaleen McDonagh, Kimberley Campanello, and Louise O'Neill. They are examined in chronological order while also exploring the cultural context of the time period in which the works were published. It also looks at the historical narratives of Ann Lovett, Joanne Hayes and the Belfast and Cork rape trials.

Each cultural discussion focuses on women's lives and the challenges present for them at this time. Feminist theory is a lens through which the literature is explored, including theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. These feminist theorists offer an ongoing explorative critique of traditional, and patriarchal, values present in Irish culture, regarding women in particular.

The impact of the Catholic Church on Irish society at this time is woven into the discourse throughout the thesis, along with themes such as reproduction, racism, specifically of those in the Traveller community, and ableism that are present in some of the works, therefore depicting Irish society. The combination of theory, fictional representations and historical events within the context of a patriarchal Irish society allows for a rich examination of the mistreatment of women in Ireland. The thesis highlights the development of women's position in Irish society over eighty years and while there has been slow progress, the examination shows that total equality has not yet been reached.

Declaration of Originality

Declaration: I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and does not contain the work of any other individual. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

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Everything I do, I do for you.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Patrick and Joan Daly, my grandparents, who I miss so much each day. This is all because of you, and to Tom Murphy, a man who fought for the women that battled with the trials of this country.

Epigraph

The truth is like a lion; you don't need to defend it. Let it loose and it will defend itself.

Table of Contents

Title	i
Abstract	ii
Declaration of Originality	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Epigraph	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Teresa Deevy and <i>Katie Roche</i>	19
Chapter Two: The Death of Ann Lovett	400
Chapter Three: Joanne Hayes and The Kerry Babies Case	633
Chapter Four: Rosaleen McDonagh and <i>Mainstream</i>	1100
Chapter Five: Rosaleen McDonagh and <i>She's Not Mine</i>	1444
Chapter Six: Kimberley Campanello and <i>MOTHERBABYHOME</i>	1700
Chapter Seven: Louise O'Neill and <i>Asking for It</i> , The Belfast Rape Trial and The Cork Rape Trial	2166
Conclusion	2666
Works Cited	2722

Introduction

In 1998 Pat O'Connor asked the question: 'Ireland – a country for women?' The aim of this thesis is to answer that question – has Ireland been a country for women? If not, why not?

The last thirty years in Ireland have been regarded as the most progressive that the country has ever seen. The first female president of Ireland was elected in 1990; in 1993 homosexuality was decriminalized; in 1995 the divorce ban ended; *Father Ted*, a satirical British television show that parodied and mocked Ireland's priesthood was a roaring success in Ireland since it first screened in 1998; in 2015, Ireland became the first country in the world to introduce marriage equality through a national referendum; and in 2018, Ireland voted to repeal the Eighth Amendment which made abortion illegal unless the pregnancy was life-threatening. For a country that was viewed as one of the most oppressive and backward societies in Europe, due to the over-powering control of the Catholic Church in political and moral issues, the last thirty years have shown a steady movement towards being a more liberal and modern society.

However, this progression has been far from smooth, and it has not been spread equally across the social structures. Pat O'Connor writes that 'any discussion of changes in the position of women in Irish society over the past thirty years tends to elicit two views: that it has changed completely, and that it has not changed at all' (O'Connor 1998, p. 1). While this statement, written in 1998, may seem dated, it is notable that it can still be deemed accurate when scrutinizing the life of women in Ireland today, twenty-five years later. Ireland as a country has seen enormous development as a society with regards to women, and women's issues, but misogyny is still a significant factor in politics and culture, and a brief examination of some statistics will lend support to this theory. According to the most recent figures available from the Central Statistics Office, in 2014 women were paid 14% less per hour than men, and this statistic shows that the pay gap is widening in comparison with a 12% difference between men and women in 2012 (Gartland 2017). In the 2011 General Election, 15% of TDs in Ireland were

female. Following this, the General Election in 2014 saw an increase to 22.2% of female TDs (Deasy 2016), and even during the progression of this thesis, it has increased slightly to 22.5% in 2020 (Carswell 2020). While this is certainly a positive movement in politics, the percentage is still significantly low in comparison to the number of male TDs. According to an article by the *Irish Times*, female members of the Oireachtas and female councillors have no entitlement to maternity leave (McGing 2018). An advocacy group called the 5050 group was founded to attempt to combat the gender inequality in Irish politics and advocate for a '50 50' gender split in Irish politicians. Questions surrounding this topic became topical as the current Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, was the first woman to receive paid maternity leave while working as a politician. She took her maternity leave from April 2021 and returned in November 2021. Fianna Fáil TD Niamh Smyth admitted in an interview that she was asked to provide a 'sick cert' in terms of her maternity leave, and this was the reason that she returned to work two weeks after giving birth in 2016 (Ó Cionnaith 2021). This legislation has remained from a time when women were not present in government, or indeed in the public sphere, and it had not been updated since they began to enter Irish politics. Taoiseach Micheál Martin stated that revisions of this legislature would be 'discussed in the future', but a sense of urgency did not seem to be present in the statement (Ó Cionnaith 2021).

This type of blatant gender discrimination is present in many other professional environments in Ireland today. For example, in the area of third level education, the lack of a female president in any of the Universities across Ireland until 2020 is a shocking statistic. Merely three years ago, the University of Limerick was the first to appoint a woman president of the University, as Kirstin Mey took charge. However, since then, four Universities in Ireland have appointed women as their leaders. In December 2020 Maggie Cusack became president of the newly formed Munster Technological University. In August 2021, Trinity College Dublin

appointed Linda Doyle as their provost and president and Professor Eeva Leinonen became president of Maynooth University in October of the same year. These new appointments have ended a 428-year tradition of male leadership. In 2017, only 24% of professor positions were held by women and as a result The Gender Equality Taskforce, a government initiative, and from that The Gender Action Plan was put in place and all higher-level universities were given targets and expected to report on their progress (The Gender Equality Taskforce 2018, p.1). Gender equality in the staff of Irish universities has improved as a result but according to the Minister for Education Simon Harris ‘there is much more to be done’ (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science 2022). This progress is revolutionary for Ireland’s academic history, and while it is evident that there are still gender issues present, Minister Harris also revealed that he was appointing an ‘expert group’ to review the progress made and ‘make recommendations to ensure that gender equality is amplified in higher education institutions (HEIs) as they move into the future’ (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science 2022).

Gender discrimination in the workplace is only one index of the unequal position of women in Ireland today. An internalised stereotype of the ideal woman in the home has also prevented many women from attempting to excel in public careers due to the pressure to firstly, have children, and secondly, to remain in the home to be the primary care-giver. Ireland is beginning to attempt to fight this gender discrimination in higher education and has initiated a programme to fill 45 new positions for women-only professorships in universities around the country. Universities were threatened with ‘the risk of a cut of up to 10pc of annual State funding if they do not meet certain performance objectives, and gender equality has been included as one of those’ (McQuinn et al 2018). In reference to Pat O’Connor’s statement included earlier, this change is positive, but also highlights how inequality is still existent in

Ireland's culture; to resolve this particular issue, the need for Government intervention is vital. These positions were then criticised to be 'discriminating against men', but such comments were dismissed quickly by various sources including by the then Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor (O'Dwyer 2020).

Despite these movements to enable the progression of women in academia, The Irish Government does not seem to particularly support women who wish both to have children, and excel professionally. Irish fathers are only entitled to two weeks paid paternity leave. This is a shocking comparison to other countries. Finland have just shy of eleven weeks paternity leave that cannot be transferred to the mother. This promotes the return to work of the child's mother and encourages the idea of dual parenting. It is also interesting to note that Irish female employees are entitled to twenty-six weeks Maternity Benefit, but male employees are only entitled to seven weeks parental leave. This again promotes the idea that women should remain in the home and in their 'natural' roles within society. Working parents in Ireland also pay 90 percent of childcare costs unlike many other countries. Again, the Finnish Government provide 'free universal daycare from eight months until the start of formal education at age seven' (World Economic Forum 2019). Susan McKay states that Ireland 'by failing to support affordable childcare outside of the home, it pressurises women to stay at home with their children' (Barry 2008, p.xvi). Women are being ignored professionally and manipulated into remaining in the stereotype of homemaker. Despite these setbacks, many women are juggling both professional life and home life and 'now occupy the dual role of carer-earner' as outlined by Ursula Barry (2008, p.1). Due to the lack of support by government policies, women have had to adapt themselves to the world of employment. This society does not seem to assist and often prohibits women from having a life outside of the home and apart from children, and it is the women themselves who have fought for the chance of existing in the world of employment.

It is not solely in professional environments that misogyny exists. Women have been the subject of physical and sexual abuse in Ireland for a long time, and despite changes in the law, the number of victims is still extremely high. One statistic is that 1 in 4 women have experienced some sort of sexual abuse in their lifetime. In 2014 in Ireland, only 32% of victims reported sexual violence to Gardaí (Rape Crisis Network National Statistics 2019). The latter statistic exhibits the distrust that many women in Ireland have for the legal system when dealing with victims of abuse. This culture is clearly visible in the famous Belfast rape trial of 2018, which will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis. The trial in question was a clear example of the mind-set toward victims of rape, and the treatment of the woman in question was evidence of the rape-culture present, as she was subjected to weeks of severe questioning and mistreatment, whereas the accused were interrogated less rigorously and treated in a better manner. The mind-set surrounding rape victims is that they are guilty of lying until proven innocent. Referring back to the 32% of victims that actually reported the sexual violence against them, the courts in Ireland are not equipped to deal with the discussion of rape with any real degree of sensitivity, and the case is often a re-enactment of the rape itself. Along with society itself and the judgement cast on rape victims, this factor also can deter victims from reporting the crime. The Rape Crisis Network Ireland has reported that the contacts to their crisis centre during the first 3 months of Covid-19 lockdown, in comparison to the year previous, had increased by an average of 23%. The greatest increase being in March which was 63%. However, ‘in terms of what the helpline was used for through the period March – June, there was a 98% increase in the number of contacts made by survivors seeking counselling and support’ (Rape Crisis Network Ireland 2020).

Growing up in Ireland as a woman, I have been witness to this type of patriarchal culture for the duration of my life, and this experience has encouraged me to examine the lives of

women in Ireland from the recent past to the present day. I decided to specifically study how women in Ireland have been subjected to various types of abuse as a result of this hegemonic, misogynistic culture. To offer an inclusive approach, both literary and cultural perspectives are necessary to obtain a correct understanding of the area being discussed.

This thesis will examine both literary texts and social texts. It will use literature and the aesthetic as an imaginative lens through which to analyse both the effects of this type of hegemonic cultural misogyny, and also the possibilities for some form of transformation of this paradigm. In contemporary times, women are more likely to speak about the issues that they have encountered due to their gender. In the era in which many of these authors were writing, the likelihood of women vocalising their issues was slim, and while some did, the majority did not. Literature was an outlet for these women to express their criticism of society, both privately and publicly, without the commotion of a protest or similar activity. Some even rebelled under the protection of a male pseudonym, which also shows how restricted women writers were with regard to communicating their critiques of society. Literature as a general idea, is an honest approach to the subject that the author is writing about, as the author remains protected by the fictionality of the genre. Therefore, literature is a crucial component through which to examine a social and cultural phenomenon.

Milton C. Albrecht explains that ‘literature is interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as revealing the ethos of culture, the processes of class struggle, and certain types of social “facts”’ (Albrecht 1954). Just as literature can reveal class struggle, so it can also reflect women’s struggle, the gender that can be considered a lower class in itself. Women’s literature is vital as stated by Lia Mills:

If literary history matters at all, if culture and context matter at all, then attentive engagement with the work of women writers [...] is vitally important. Otherwise we are

left with a false sense of a series of giant leaps rather than something organic, various, evolving; a literature that people of previous generations were reading, writing and talking about; a world that is dynamic, not static, alive and not dead, still waiting to be explored. (Mills in D'hoker 2017, p.391)

This thesis examines various types of women's literature including plays, novels and poetry, in order to provide a full examination of this topic. I also plan to centre my work around Irish women writers to analyse the response that many women had to gender violence and patriarchy in Ireland. This research will include an examination of literature by Irish women writers from the twentieth century, through to contemporary literature written in the twenty-first century. In later years, many scandals have been unveiled to the Irish public, and some are still being examined. To achieve a thorough examination of the female experience in Irish culture, these social texts have also been included in the examination as they have become some of the most significant points in Irish women's history.

This work will focus solely on female writers for a number of reasons. Women writers in Ireland have been no exception to the gender discrimination referred to previously. Women's writing in Ireland had been ignored and bypassed, until the controversy surrounding *The Field Day Anthology* came to light. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* that was published in 1991, was a defining moment in Irish literature, but instead of being known as a publication to represent and support talented Irish writers, it became an eloquent statement about the silencing of women in culture. If one was to type the words 'The Field Day Anthology' into Google, the majority of the search results would be examining the controversy and disappointment surrounding it. It was not due to the quality of the texts chosen, or poor editorial work, but because of the blatantly obvious underrepresentation of Irish women's writing. Coming from an all-male editorial board, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* of three volumes completely neglected both traditional and contemporary women's writing. In response to this

sexist publication, a further two volumes were published in 2001 that focused solely on women's writing and traditions. This controversy promoted the interest in examining women's writing:

Arlen House, for example, was created in 1975 to publish women's writing, and as early as 1945 B.G. MacCarthy's two-volume critical work, *The Female Pen*, had argued convincingly the importance of women's contributions to Irish literature. (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.2)

With this in mind, the absence of women's writing in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Volumes I – III was even more obvious and contentious. Edna Longley is quick to blame the culture surrounding women in Ireland; she believed that nationalist culture has failed to recognise the general achievements of women, and is the root of the lack of women's writing included in the anthology (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.4). Anne Fogarty believes that:

Often writing by women seems to be considered unworthy of consideration in the Irish public sphere because it is viewed as lacking in universality and as being too particularist and concerned with the lesser issues of the private self or of the domestic sphere. (Fogarty 2002, p.2)

This idea of women's writing centring solely on domestic or private issues is due to their predicated role in society as a domesticated mother, and the stereotypes of the gender being self-aware and emotional. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to not only highlight many women writers and their works, but to recognise their achievements in various types of literature as modes of liberating women from societal, religious and constitutional constraints.

Gerardine Meaney explains that there had been a large amount of women's writing published that could have, and should have, been included in *The Field Anthology of Irish Writing*:

Most of the groundwork for volumes IV and V, for example, was laid prior to the 1990s. It was for precisely this reason that the 1991 version of the anthology could be challenged. (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.19)

Despite the amount of traditional and contemporary women writers available, the absence of women's writing being taught and studied at degree level was glaring. Meaney herself recalls only studying Jennifer Johnston as an Irish woman writer on the university English curriculum (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.17). She also believes that the discipline of studying writing was deemed male property and not for women. She highlights that 'the consensus was nonetheless that there was no tradition of women's writing in Ireland' (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.17). The *Soundings* anthology which was studied for the Leaving Certificate course, first published in 1969 and lasting over 30 years, only included one female poet – Emily Dickinson, who interestingly and perhaps significantly, did not publish in her own lifetime.

This thesis will also document the changes in women's writing from the 1930s to contemporary times in tandem with the many cultural changes that occurred over this period. It will determine how women's writing reacts to various movements and shifts in the treatment of women in this timeframe. Second Wave Feminism was one of the movements that had a large impact on many women writers when it began to emerge in Ireland in the 1970s. Grainne Healy writes that it was an 'intoxicating, energising movement' that helped her 'make sense of the world' (Fischer and McAuliffe 2015, p.71). Various protests and acts were taking place, for example the 'Contraceptive Train', when members of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement travelled to Belfast and brought condoms, which were then illegal in the Republic, into Ireland. In 1973, the marriage bar that prevented married women from working in many types of employment was removed, and this allowed married women to work in the public sector. Feminist theory began to challenge the previous norms for women in Ireland at this time and therefore, more and more women writers began to gain courage to write. Not only did they gain

courage for the act of writing, but they began to write about various topics that would not have been deemed 'appropriate' for women to discuss previously:

It challenged the prevailing stereotype which insisted that every female, by virtue of her sex, was individually fulfilled and made her best contribution to society solely as a wife and mother. (Hayes and Urquhart 2001, p.15)

Feminist literary theory was a fresh lens used to look at Irish culture, and 'made it possible to function within and against the academic structure' (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.19). The study of women's experience, and of their societal and cultural role, as well as an academic focus on the control of the state over women's bodies through laws and religious strictures, meant that gender was becoming an object of study and critique. Healy writes that the 1980s provided a 'regeneration of energy and feminist vision and activism', especially 'when women's local community development and the discipline of women's studies in universities and in the community provided space and places for analysis and solidarity and vision building' (Fischer and McAuliffe 2015, p.73). Women gained confidence due to this new movement, and here began the publishing of contemporary texts that were outside the perimeter of 'comfortable' women's writing. The authors selected are chosen due to various reasons including personal taste, quality of work, popularity in writing, the type of literature on which they focus and the impact that they have had on Irish women's writing. These authors discuss particular issues of women's experience such as rape, disability, discrimination and racism and society's reaction to them.

Teresa Deevy is the first author to be examined in the thesis, and her works are the oldest, with *Katie Roche* being written in 1936. After firstly writing under another male pseudonym, D.V. Goode from 1914-1919, Teresa Deevy began to use her own name and was very successful in doing so as she began to publish her plays. Many of her plays were performed

at the Abbey Theatre, and were also snapped up by the BBC and performed on television and radio, some recorded in different languages. They were also very well received and were revived many times since, her most popular being *Katie Roche* with its most recent staging in 2017. Deevy remarkably wrote all of her plays and radio programmes while being deaf. She was a member of Cumann na mBan which is a significant signifier of who Deevy was and what she stood for. Cumann na mBan (Irishwomen's Council) was a female-only nationalist group in Ireland that played a substantial part in the Irish Revolution. The primary aim of Cumann na mBan 'was to advance the cause of Irish liberty through arming and equipping Irishmen for the defence of Ireland' (RTE 2020). Women of Cumann na mBan were a vital part of the 1916 Rising as they worked as 'couriers, aides and nurses during Easter week' (RTE 2020). After this, in 1918, they assisted in elections, setting out the new electoral rights of women and providing information of where and how to vote. They worked as secretarial staff when the Dáil was first established, they were responsible for 'disseminating' propaganda materials' and even the transportation of arms (RTE 2020).

Deevy was a member of the Waterford branch of Cumann na mBan. She was also elected to the Irish Academy of Letters in 1954. In her works, Deevy also focused on the mistreatment of women in various aspects of Irish life, and highlighted them in her plays. She also challenged society's attitude toward women and she rebelled against female oppression through her characters. She was unafraid to include 'indecent' behaviour that was against The Censorship of Publications Act, 1929, including behaviour 'suggestive of, or inciting to sexual immorality or unnatural vice or likely in any other similar way to corrupt or deprave' (Censorship of Publications Act 1929). As a writer, this was risky, but as a female writer, this was dangerous. Deevy included various female characters in her plays that did not follow the decent behaviour that was deemed the norm at the time: a woman that 'slips her hand up about'

the neck of the ‘lounging’ Roddy Mann and ‘gives him a long kiss’ like Annie Kinsella in *The King of Spain’s Daughter* (Ní Bheacháin 2012, p. 81), or Nan Bowers in *Wife to James Whelan*, who does not wear stockings and ‘stretches her legs out to the sun’ (Deevy 1995, p.30). This is something that would now be bypassed without further notice, however considering the time of Deevy’s writing, it was mildly revolutionary. It was Deevy’s bravery and forward-thinking that appealed to me when considering female authors to select. All of these factors lead me to believe that she was a suitable writer to be included in this thesis.

Rosaleen McDonagh is one of the lesser known writers covered in this thesis, and is a Traveller woman from Co. Sligo. She is a member of Aosdána, has a BA, two MPhils and a PhD, and she also has cerebral palsy which forces her to use a wheelchair daily. She is known mostly as a playwright, although she has dipped into several genres of writing. In this thesis, it is her plays that will be examined. She is also a feminist, activist, social worker, and academic. McDonagh focuses on minority feminism, especially disability feminism. This is vital in today’s Ireland as 13.7% of people in Ireland are disabled, as of 2016 (National Disability Authority 2018). It was important that this thesis also examined a proportion of minority feminism due to it being a significant element of feminist culture in Ireland.

Introducing a disability analysis does not narrow the inquiry, limit the focus to only women with disabilities, or preclude engaging other manifestations of feminisms. Indeed, the multiplicity of foci we now call feminism is not a group of fragmented, competing subfields, but rather a vibrant, complex conversation. (Mann and Patterson 2016, p.295)

Rosaleen McDonagh’s work is a perfect example as she so uniquely embodies intersectional feminism, both disability feminism and the discrimination experienced by traveller women. McDonagh herself has experienced racism, ableism and sexism and writes honestly about each.

A newer face in Irish women's writing is Louise O'Neill. Originally from Clonakilty in Co. Cork, her writing has transgressed existing boundaries in the discussion of women in Ireland. She published her first novel *Only Ever Yours* in 2014, and has since received various awards, such as Sunday Independent Newcomer of the Year Award and Book of the Year at the Irish Book Awards, and generally national recognition as a writer. She has gone on to publish 4 more books, her most recent being *The Surface Breaks*, a rewriting of the fairy-tale *The Little Mermaid* from a feminist perspective. When examined, classic fairy-tales, such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*, are androcentric in tenor and tone, and offer an unrealistic portrayal of women's values. Women are very often passive in traditional fairy tales, and are deprived of agency. As these stories are popular amongst children, O'Neill is keen to counteract this in *The Surface Breaks*. She has a history of aiming her writing at young people, as *Only Ever Yours* was originally published for a Young Adult audience. Her novel, *Asking For It*, has been adapted for the stage, and it was performed in June in the Everyman Theatre in Cork and in Dublin's Abbey Theatre in November 2018. The original text will be discussed in this thesis because of what can be called a deeply accurate portrayal of events surrounding rape and sexual assault.

O'Neill can be easily compared to the infamous Irish writer Edna O'Brien; indeed, O'Brien can be seen as her precursor. O'Brien was known for destroying boundaries around women's sexuality in writing and her books were even burned by priests due to their content. While O'Neill's success is evident and her reception at the beginning of her career was positive, unlike O'Brien's, she has brought taboo topics into national conversation. O'Neill is liberal in terms of her opinions on the issues embedded in Irish society today, just as O'Brien was 50 years ago. While O'Brien was criticising the 1937 Constitution by Eamon De Valera, a constitution that condemned women to exist solely as mothers and domestic entities inside the

home, O'Neill is addressing the controversial topic of rape culture. One is as revolutionary as the other, and even 50 years apart, they both discuss and focus on the topic of sexual desire in women and how it is demonised. While highlighting that both authors have similar opinions, this study also shows how little our culture in Ireland has evolved in 50 years in a number of significant ways. A shocking fact is that, in 2022, Article 41.2 of the Constitution still reads that 'mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home'. The Citizens Assembly has recommended it be amended but no clarity on that wording has been reached nor has a date for the referendum been set, but it may be likely in 2023. This inequality of the sexes has moved to mainly sexual politics as O'Neill is keen to highlight.

Another author included is Kimberley Campanello, a dual Irish and American citizen who now lives in York in the UK. She is a poet and an academic, lecturing in Creative Writing in the University of Leeds. Campanello's work *MOTHERBABYHOME* is examined in this thesis and provides an accurate and emotional account of the Mother and Baby Homes that were prominent in Ireland for nearly 100 years. *MOTHERBABYHOME* is a unique 796-page book of visual and conceptual poetry. Campanello creates a poignant account of the stories of the Home residents through her poetry and portrays the experiences in both the words and the structure of each poem. The aptly named book describes the lives of those in the Mother and Baby Home institutions and the scandals that surfaced in recent years surrounding them.

Each writer included in this work is relevant to the conversation of this thesis. They question, critique and problematise issues of importance to women in their own social context. As their work is explored, a number of significant events involving women will also be read as social texts, notably the death of Ann Lovett; the Kerry Babies case and the Belfast rape trial. Calling these traumatic and horrific events 'social texts' is not to attempt to trivialise them or

remove or attenuate their materiality; rather it is to suggest that as well as being individually traumatic, they also serve as signifiers of the very traumas and inequalities that women experienced and about which other women were writing. It is through the intersectional reading of the real and of the fictive that this thesis hopes to set out the importance of women's writing, across an extensive range of Irish women's circumstances, as an agent of social critique and hopefully, as an engine of change in Irish society.

As mentioned previously, feminist theory played a large part in Irish women's experience and so did French feminist theory in particular. It was in the 1980s that feminist theory began to circulate in Ireland. It was not widely taught, originated from French departments, and was popularised in English departments where it was taught as part of literary theory modules. It was mainly 'blurred photocopies of photocopies of photocopies' that circulated around universities (Haberstroh et al 2007, p.17). Many noteworthy French feminists have existed over the last 50 years, however for the sake of this thesis, I will mainly focus on four theorists: Simone De Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. It will be through a lens of their theory that I will examine the main texts, events and culture. I will use a variety of works from each theorist and apply them where suitable to the relevant contexts within the plays, novels and cultural events. Feminist theory and these theorists will not be a main focus of this thesis but a tool with which to support analysis.

Feminist theories 'provide intellectual tools by which historical agents can examine the injustices they confront and build arguments to support their particular demands for change' (McCann et al 2020, p.1). The theories included assist this thesis in highlighting the oppression that Irish women were under. While feminist theory analyses the texts in a new way, it also supports the message throughout the thesis that Irish women were mistreated over the years. Many of the theories included were written a significant time before some of the main texts

were published and that in itself shows the little progress made in terms of women's position. This thesis does not include a complete coverage of feminist theory, but selected theorists, works and essays that add deeper meaning to the analysis.

Simone De Beauvoir is included in the thesis and her most famous work *The Second Sex* is used as a lens to analyse throughout. De Beauvoir famously states in her 1949 work: 'One is not born a woman, but becomes one'. This existentialist viewpoint assists in the idea that women are simply a product of social structures, they are the 'second sex' due to the culture in which they live, not due to inferior attributes. She believed that femininity itself was a construct in order for men to remain dominant in society and to combat this, women must understand and recognise social norms such as beauty, domesticity and submission that are constantly promoted as positive attributes in females.

Luce Irigaray has a different perception and style of feminism due to her background in psychoanalysis. She famously got expelled from the *École Freudienne de Paris* after her second doctoral dissertation *Speculum* was published which criticised Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, in particular the phallogentrism that they were based on. Irigaray believes that personal information and biographies of authors deter and alter the reading and understanding of texts, especially those by women. This is why access to her own personal information is limited. However, I will not follow those guidelines and omit author biographies in this thesis as while I do believe Irigaray is correct in that it often influences readers' perceptions, I believe there is an important significance and history behind each of the authors included in this work and that their biographies and lives add more meaning to their works. Irigaray also focuses on the role of mothers in culture; an important aspect of this thesis due to the importance placed on mothers in Irish culture.

Hélène Cixous is famously known for her focus on language and '*écriture féminine*' which derives from her most famous piece of work, 'The Laugh of the Medusa'. Cixous wishes to establish a different style of writing from 'masculine writing'. Feminine writing, in her eyes, was one to discuss the female experience, female pleasure and sexuality through language and text. Female sexuality, in particular, is often bypassed in conversation, and in Irish society it was considered completely disgraceful.

Julia Kristeva, the final main theorist utilised in this thesis is often associated with the concept of abjection. While abjection is often linked with bodily functions deemed inappropriate and impure, the social connection is often marginalised groups such as women, single mothers, those rejected from society and 'othered'. Various characters and groups discussed in this thesis certainly could be considered to fall into this category.

Intersectional theory is also a vital device in which to analyse a variety of works in this thesis. Often the identity of many of the characters is in the 'in-between' of social groups or possibly belonging to many, similarly to Mary-Anne in *Mainstream* as she exists in three marginalised groups of the population simultaneously. Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana write that: 'Both individual and group identity are complex – influenced and shaped not simply by a person's race, class, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, sexuality, religion or nationality – but by a combination of all these characteristics' (Dill and Zambrana cited in McCann et al 2021, p.111). To examine the identity of some of these characters in more depth, intersectional theory is included briefly in some relevant chapters.

This thesis aims to highlight the difficulties faced by women in Ireland since 1936 through the voices of female writers. It will utilise various forms of literature in order to appreciate and recognise the capabilities of women writers, especially the ones included in this work, as they highlight and narrate the difficulties of their fellow Irish women. It also aims to

Introduction

examine the narrative capacities of the various forms of literature and how both fiction and social texts can accurately address similar issues such as misogyny, consent, social norms, rape culture, and many more that were present in Ireland within this timeframe. This dissertation argues that throughout the years, women in Ireland have been treated appallingly, often as a result of a culture dominated by the Catholic Church. It argues that there are traces of this culture still present in Irish society in the most recent years and while there has been slow change regarding women's position in Ireland, there is still far to go.

Chapter One: Teresa Deevy and *Katie Roche*

Miss Deevy shows how a writer, if true to Christian ethic, can treat even such dangerous material with a delicacy that adds a new beauty to literature. ('Waterford Author's Rise to Fame' 1939)

Extracted from a review in a Waterford based newspaper in 1939, the statement accurately captures the essence of Teresa Deevy. Born in Waterford in 1894, the Catholic author contracted Ménière's disease while in university and, as a result, lost her hearing. She learned to lip read in London, and attended the theatre while her hearing was fading. Here she saw works by Chekhov, Shaw and Ibsen, which ignited an interest in theatre in her, as her plays can be seen to be greatly influenced by these playwrights and their work, especially Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. She began writing her own plays shortly after, so that she 'would put the sort of life we have in Ireland into a play' (Ní Bheacháin 2021). When she lived in London in the late 1920s, she wrote under the protection of the pseudonym D.V. Goode. This was a device many female authors used in order to be published as they were de-gendered. This name was quickly shed as she moved back to Ireland, and the Abbey Theatre staged her play *Reapers* in 1930. This was followed by five more plays by Deevy spread over six years, all staged in the Abbey. She had been receiving excellent reviews for her plays, being referred to as 'fascinating reading', and as demonstrating 'a mark of genius' by one Waterford based newspaper ('Waterford Author's Rise to Fame' 1939). She was known for dealing with deeper, and often more controversial, issues, another newspaper referring to her work as a discussion of 'the dream and the reality' ('The Dublin Theatres: New Play at the Abbey' 1935) which can be seen in various plays focusing on women. Deevy even tied first in the Abbey Theatre Contest with her play *Temporal Powers* after it was referred to as 'strikingly original and of fine literary quality' (Ní Bheacháin

2021). Frank O'Connor, who was a director of the Abbey for a short period, was a great supporter of Deevy, proven by the words he wrote to her:

Nothing since the "Playboy" has excited me so much. It's a grand thing to think that Ireland is stepping into the limelight once more; we've had so many books, so many plays, and so little of Ireland in them. I congratulate you heartily and wish you all the success you deserve. (Bank et al 2011, p.3)

While her first play received mixed reviews, her career and reputation with the Abbey went from strength to strength, until abruptly ended by Ernest Blythe when he took over as Theatre Director. Deevy, now an established and respected playwright and a regular of the Abbey, wrote *Wife to James Whelan* and 'felt the play was good and was confident of it' (Bank et al 2011, p.105). She wrote of her frustrations in a letter to her friend Florence Hackett as new director Blythe 'showed clearly that he had no use for my work – never asked to see anymore' (Bank et al 2011, p.105). This was a very different reaction to that with which Deevy was familiar. It was not solely Blythe who did not approve of her work, 'Yeats does not care at all for my plays' she stated in another letter to Hackett (Bank et al 2011, p.3). It was Frank O'Connor who informed Deevy of W.B. Yeats' dislike for her work and 'that is the reason my work is not brought on at the Abbey more', due to Yeats being an extremely important and influential figure behind the theatre (Bank et al 2011, p.3). It has been noted that 'women playwrights were no longer welcome at the Abbey once Ernest Blythe became managing director' (Murray 1995, p.3). However, 'it makes little sense to find a scapegoat in Blythe when other theatres in Dublin and elsewhere also failed to encourage women playwrights' (Murray 1995, p.3).

'Teresa Deevy lived in an internal world of silence whilst also being silenced by external forces' (Sihra 2017). Along with the hardship of losing her hearing, Deevy's voice as a writer was ultimately silenced by these figures of the Abbey Theatre. Her preferred topic of discourse was women's position in Irish society, as well as those who also were silenced by cultural

pressures at this time. *Katie Roche*, the play to be examined in this chapter, featured a plot concerning the limitations of women in society at the time and was on stage while the 1937 Constitution was being drafted. It was following this that Deevy was dismissed from the Abbey. *Katie Roche* was a great success and after it was first produced on 16 March 1936, it was revived several times. It was performed in London, Cambridge, New York and various cities across America (O'Doherty 1995, p.165). It was even most recently revived in Ireland in 2017, so it was unlikely that Deevy's dismissal was due to poor success. However, it's necessary to bear in mind that this was an Irish society where women were not 'obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties at home' (*Constitution of Ireland 1937*). A society where women were not to work after marriage, one where women were to remain obedient, submissive and quiet. This type of society in Ireland was unprepared for Teresa Deevy's forward thinking, and her female characters, in particular, who searched for the 'dream' as they attempted to challenge the 'reality': the prohibiting, patriarchal culture that confined these women to repressive societal norms. A culture, one could say, where there was no room for a female's dreams. Ní Bheacháin refers to it as 'an intervention by Deevy in the broader political, social and cultural consensus that was being promoted by the Catholic Church and the Irish Free-State governments' (Ní Bheacháin 2012, p.80). As a result of this, Deevy, like the women in her plays, was also muted by this society as she was blatantly disposed of by the Abbey. Regardless of this, *Katie Roche* is Deevy's most popular play, and it expresses the society in which Deevy herself was brought up, and portrays the mistreatment and limitations of women at this time.

Katie Roche is a play focusing on a young, illegitimate, orphaned girl, who works as a domestic servant to Amelia Gregg, and lives with her. Katie has few life options, due to her background and her gender, and this is frequently highlighted throughout the play. In Act I,

Katie highlights the limited life options that she has: spinster, wife or nun. This is a common theme in Deevy's plays as Ní Bheacháin highlights: 'Four of her six Abbey plays feature young women grappling with the scarcity of life paths available to them' (Ní Bheacháin 2021). Katie eventually marries Stan Gregg, Amelia's brother who is quite her elder and who once wished to marry her mother. She marries for the status and identity that Stan would give her, and not for Stan himself. She speaks how marriage is possibly a better opportunity for her than entering the convent:

'I long ago made up my mind I'd be a saint. I was trying to find one went before me in a way I'd like: the most of them entered a convent very young, and I was wondering would I. But now there's a man came here and asked me to marry him and, I know in my heart I'd like that better' (Deevy 1995, p.48).

This marriage is a difficult one. Christopher Murray deems it 'impossible' (Murray 1995, p.6). The marriage between Katie and Stan is the focal point in the play, along with the choice to marry. Cathy Leeney writes: 'The fact that Deevy herself and her seven sisters remained single; it is not then surprising that the decision to marry is a recurrent theme' (Leeney 1995, p.91).

Katie has a lack of identity, she was born to a woman named Mary Halnan, but with the surname of the woman who raised her and unaware of who her father is. She searches for self-assurance and an identity throughout the play and finds it in the marriage with Stan. Leeney states 'Katie Roche is aware of the social advantages of marrying well, but not in material terms, only in terms of the opportunity to fulfil herself' (Leeney 1995, p.91). She is aware of her lack of status. Michael Maguire, Katie's old lover, highlights the community's, and society's, view on Katie: 'What chance has she? Sure there's no one round here would think of her – for want of a name' (Deevy 1995, p.61), but once she is married he says 'She'll have you in the house now; she wouldn't before' (Deevy 1995, p.106). This depicts the change in status and the respect gained because Katie has a respectable marriage. Katie is even more attractive to

Micheal now that she is married ‘Anyway he gives you plenty of money. You were never dressed like that. You never looked better’ (Deevy 1995, p.105). It also depicts the financial stability that Katie now possesses and how women at this time were often financially dependent on their husbands.

As she becomes Stan’s wife, however, she is far from the ‘perfect’ wife that Irish society expects at this time. She is described in several instances in the play as having a ‘wildness’ about her. She is emotional, flighty and creative. She tries to be a ‘good’ wife but fails often. Judy Friel makes a valid point in her essay ‘Rehearsing Katie Roche’:

Katie’s given identity, for instance is Roche but it could be Halnan, or Fitzsimon or Gregg. Finally it is of no great consequence, because Deevy believed that one is born with a certain nature and it is with this interior identity she is as much concerned in the play as with the public identity or role. (Friel 1995, p.119)

It is this ‘certain nature’ and ‘interior identity’ that prevents Katie from conforming to the conventional behaviour of an Irish wife of this era. However, as the play continues, it seems that Katie behaves more and more like the wife that Stan wants her to be, regardless of the sporadic episodes of quiet rebellion. She argues less, and once a curious girl, is now disinterested in the happenings outside of the home: ‘It is better to keep our mind off these things’ (Deevy 1995, p.96), and she seems to make an effort to please Stan ‘I must be steady. That’s what he said. I must read sensible books’ (Deevy 1995, p.96). However, Katie often changes her mind and suddenly the statements become sarcastic: ‘I must have his room ready – like a good wife (Goes to the door – laughs again, this time more happily)’, and the false efforts are as a result of scolding from her husband as she says to Amelia: ‘It was you had told him about the Coolbeg dance’ (Deevy 1995, p.96). Katie seems to take pleasure from tormenting her husband as she realises that the boys, one who was her lover, were coming to the house the day that Stan was arriving and she is aware that this provokes jealousy in him:

‘What possessed him? To-day of all days... and the regatta on... and the boys... the boys will be coming up for the bench... Oh Amelia... and he might – (Cannot finish – with laughter)’ (Deevy 1995, p.97). Katie cannot help but allow her wild, independent ways to shine through, as much as she wishes to be the ‘perfect’ wife for Stan.

These socio-cultural norms of the ideal Catholic wife were set predominantly by men. Luce Irigaray writes of this female oppression in *Je, Tu, Nous* as she highlights that one part of humanity have a hold over the other:

the decline of sexual culture goes hand in hand with the establishment of different values which are supposedly universal but turn out to entail one part of humanity having a hold over the other, here the world of men over that of women. (Irigaray 1993, p16)

It is this critique of patriarchal culture on which Deevy focused many of her plays, especially *Katie Roche*, and could have been a reason that led to her expulsion from the Abbey. Discourse about these controversial topics at this time in particular was not encouraged and Deevy’s plays were provoking considerations that this culture did not want made overt. These strong characters, created by Deevy, had the potential to provide inspiration for so many women, but again, they were silenced by the cancellation of her plays. A loud, strong and independent female character was not looked at fondly. One critic complained that *Katie Roche* ‘seems to be little more than a clever psychological study of an illegitimate girl’ (Ní Bheacháin 2021). Deevy also included contrasting characters that were examples of the internalised, misogynistic attitudes that many women in Ireland had at this time. These types of internalised ideas originated through years of patriarchal culture, and Deevy, like Irigaray, was cleverly highlighting the ideologies that underpinned patriarchal Ireland. Irigaray’s work functions in a Western context, however it supports this argument in an Irish context. Due to conditioning, women had become accustomed to this type of thinking and as a result were unaware that their

culture was, in fact, misogynistic. Simone de Beauvoir writes of internalised misogyny: ‘women’s mutual understanding comes from the fact that they identify with each other; but for the same reason each is against the others’ (de Beauvoir 1953, p.520).

The Catholic Church was a significant nexus between patriarchy and Irish culture, and the strong Catholic beliefs that were present in the Irish people, often led to female oppression. As recently as 2018, former Irish president Mary McAleese has called the Catholic Church ‘an empire of misogyny’ (BBC 2018). Though it was known that Deevy herself was very religious, she disregarded the chauvinistic approach that the Church promoted, and campaigned against it through her work. Deevy had not internalised the patriarchal tendencies that many women had at this time, namely the notion that a woman’s life should revolve around male requests, and that they should be in search of a husband, and after marriage be defined by the roles of mother and wife. Women’s characteristics were to be caring, quiet and submissive, along with being obedient to their husbands, and Deevy’s protagonists were the opposite: loud, opinionated and reckless. As a result, these women found themselves heavily criticised by other female characters who did not approve of this behaviour, and it is through these characters that Deevy criticises this concept of internalised misogyny. Luce Irigaray also speaks of internalised misogyny as she describes a mother-daughter relationship. ‘This relationship has to be given up, Freud tells us, if the woman is to enter into desire for the man-father’ (Irigaray 1993, p.101). Women must deem other women as competition as they seek a male partner. Many women’s behaviour is an unconscious reflection of internalised misogyny.

In *Katie Roche*, Margaret Drybone, sister of Amelia and Stanislaus Gregg, is an example of this type of patriarchal repercussion. Described as ‘small and pinched – about forty – with an air of suspicious, brooding intensity’ (Deevy 1939, p.85), her appearance mirrors her attitudes, to exaggerate her unappealing values. Deevy also includes various stage directions

providing acting outlines for the character, including the terms ‘dry’, ‘frigid’ and ‘suspicious’ (Deevy 1939, p.85). Margaret Drybone has an impression of Katie, similar to many in the community, solely because of her illegitimacy, familial reputation or ‘name’ and does not believe she is worthy of her brother Stan: ‘A girl like that. My brother, your brother – and a, girl like that ...’ (Deevy 1939, p.87). Margaret attempts to agitate the relationship between Stan and Katie. She speaks in a condescending tone to him about Katie leaving the house and him: ‘I wouldn’t leave my husband alone’, and later ‘I don’t have people *to whom he objects*. I don’t think a wife should’ (Deevy 1939, p.88). Margaret attempts to provoke doubts in Stan’s head about Katie as a wife and refers to their marriage as a ‘mistake’ several times throughout the play. Deevy is highlighting how many women facilitated patriarchal ideas by sabotaging other women. Her actions also mirror the old-fashioned mind-set that women are obliged to prioritise their husband above all else, tending to them at all times. Deevy’s negative portrayal of Margaret Drybone’s appearance and personality highlights her own disapproval of this type of behaviour. Deevy portrays an awareness that many women did not have at such a time. Mrs Maguire, Michael’s mother, mentioned previously, could also be classed as a woman with internalised misogyny as she would not allow Katie into the house because of her ‘name’ or her familial status.

Deevy portrays male entitlement and expectation, a theme that was common in Ireland in the 1930s, due to the support of patriarchal culture. In Act 1, Stan Gregg is ‘apparently surprised to find the room empty’ (Deevy 1939, p.40) upon his arrival, and questions further why his sister was not there to welcome him. ‘Wasn’t Miss Gregg expecting me? (*Silence. Katie puts the tray on the table.*) Was my sister not expecting me?’ (Deevy 1939, p.40). Stan’s astonishment at the lack of attention his sister gives to his arrival embodies an entitled attitude. This type of behaviour also depicts how he is familiar with being doted on by the women in his

life. He also questions as to where she has gone: 'Has Miss Gregg gone out? ... Has my sister gone out?' (Deevy 1939, p.40). It was expected that women would be available to the men around them and to put the men's needs before their own. They were shamed into giving up their own life and independence. Amelia Gregg conveys this idea upon her early return to the house: 'Katie, I came back. I came back early because my brother's coming I forgot to tell you. I don't know how I forgot' (Deevy 1939, p.53). Amelia's panicked reaction to her failure to recall her brother's arrival is one of guilt and horror. She represents the conditioned female, willing to serve the men in her life. This is also shown in her nervously tidying the room before she meets him. 'Looks about the room, moves a chair here – a book there. Goes again to the door, looks around the room, and, not satisfied, comes back to change the position of chair, and books ...' (Deevy 1939, p.53). A frantic need for domestic perfection is part of the expected female priorities. An emphasis on cleanliness is present in preparation for his arrival and this reinforces the domestic female ideal present in this culture. The home is 'the centre of the world' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.437). The opposite reaction is present for her sister as she simply states, 'Oh Margaret, you've come!' (Deevy 1939, p.85). There is no fuss around her sister visiting purely due to her gender. Amelia often treats Stan differently than her sister. This could be a result of the traditional reliance of women on their male relatives for financial support and a residence to live, especially fathers or brothers. She may know that he has the authority in her life and while it is not directly stated that Stan owns the house that Amelia resides in, it is presumed due to cultural norms at the time. There is also a moment that competition is seen between the two sisters with a hint of possessiveness over their brother as Margaret replies: 'Yes, Amelia – and why shouldn't I? Stan's my brother as well as yours ...' (Deevy 1939, p.85), and this prefigures points made by de Beauvoir about how patriarchy sustains itself by putting

women in competition with each other. It, again, is a constant battle with members of the same sex after internalising the patriarchal norms which Deevy highlights in *Katie Roche*.

The proposal of marriage by Stan Gregg to Katie Roche is a peculiar process. He is significantly older than Katie, and once had an interest in her late mother. In the scenes leading up to the proposal, one would think that he thought quite little of Katie, constantly correcting her grammar and putting her down. 'It's a shame – the way you speak' (Deevy 1939, p.44). He insults her while complimenting her mother: 'she was a lady; she had none of your ways', and 'she ... stood only a little taller than you, but she had beauty' (Deevy 1939, p.44). Stan fails to think of Katie as beautiful or as a lady, the stereotypical traits that men required in prospective wives at the time. Despite this, he proposes marriage to her and attempts to manipulate her into agreeing. 'I may seem a bit on the old side – I thought of that – but I'm strong. You'd probably age more quickly so there'd be less difference between us in a few years' (Deevy 1939, p.45). Stan is seeking a wife solely for the conventional norm, and her identity does not seem to be an important factor. It seems that he is still holding onto the idea of her mother 'I've always liked you, for your mother, for yourself – anybody would'. It is obvious that at this time, women had little choice in who they would marry. It is almost surprising if a woman is happy in her marriage and Mr Gregg proves this as he says to Katie: 'you might be glad afterwards' (Deevy 1939, p.45). It is the fact that Katie does go on to marry this man that shows the culture at this time with great clarity, and the few choices women had without a husband. De Beauvoir writes of the necessity of marriage for women of this time: 'for girls, marriage is the only means of integration in the community and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.417).

Prior to marrying Stan, Katie considers her options for the future and here Deevy explores the limited options for women at this time. At the very beginning of the play, Katie

mentions her wish to enter the convent. This, along with marriage, and remaining working as a domestic servant are the only real choices available to her, and Deevy has highlighted that this in fact is the case for most women in Ireland at this time. This also brings the discourse of class into the play which will be discussed at a later point in the chapter. Ní Bheacháin states that: ‘the life narratives available to uneducated serving girls in the Free State were certainly limited. This is a recurring theme in the dramas of Teresa Deevy’ (Ní Bheacháin 2012, pp.82-83), and it is certainly evident in *Katie Roche*. Society at this time was aimed at detaining women to domestic duties: ‘woman is doomed to the continuation of the species and the care of the home’ (de Beauvoir 1953, p.419). In the lifetime of Deevy, the Marriage Bar was in place in Ireland, which required women to resign from their jobs after getting married. It was extremely common in public service jobs and while private sector companies did not legally have a bar, a de facto rule was that a married woman would discontinue working outside the home. This remained in practice until the 1970s (Beaumont 1997). Deevy was adamant to highlight the few opportunities and options available to women at this time.

Stan also manipulates Katie into marriage with the promise of bringing her to Dublin. Speaking to his sister Amelia, he says: ‘We’ll live here. I’ll go on with my work. You and Katie will look after the house . . . And sometimes – (*a smile over at Katie*) – she’ll come to Dublin with me’ (Deevy 1939, p.70), and again, we see another reference to women’s domestic role as the men work. Stan also says ‘look after the house’ when referring to the women’s duties; he does not consider it to be ‘work’ like he is doing. Stan Gregg speaks with a certainty that implies that he is familiar with giving orders to the women. He is culturally the head of the household, and will make the decisions for each of them, a role permitted and encouraged by society due to his gender. It is also clear from Act 2, that when married, Stan is still the decision-maker. Katie has a strong-willed personality but her attempts to make decisions and influence Stan are

not supported by society and he fails to listen to her. She attempts to prevent him from going down to his sister's house and to continue with his work but he ignores her: 'I'll go' (Deevy 1939, p.70). Stan is aware that Katie has no cultural support in which to control his actions.

There is also a lack of love in the marriage of Katie and Stan, and while she sometimes can act with great pride and affection toward him, the sense of deep love is absent:

Katie. Was it I made you do this?

Stan. Made me do it?

Katie. Wasn't it like because of our love?

Stan. Because of our love? ...

Katie. Or what made you do it?

Stan. (*judicial, as always afraid of saying a word more than he feels*). I think, Katie, I did this chiefly for the love of the work ... and of course to get on. (Deevy 1939, p.68)

Katie has accepted the lack of true feelings in their relationship and acts as if it does not affect her: 'No matter – a prince' (Deevy 1939, p.68). Her reference to Stan being a prince, while dramatically ironic, also shows her true feelings toward relationships. She is seeking a prince as her partner, and desires her life to be a fairy tale, but due to her situation in society, she has settled for a loveless marriage to a selfish man. This also connects to the point made earlier in the chapter of Deevy's characters searching for the 'dream' but being confined to 'reality'. This also highlights the unrealistic expectations postulated by fairy-tales and the disappointing comparison to real life at this time.

Usually, prior to marriage, the control over the girl would lie with the father, and if not, then with a brother. De Beauvoir writes:

When she becomes a young girl, the father has all power over her; when she marries he transfers it *in toto* to the husband. Since his wife is his property like a slave a beast of

burden or a chattel a man can naturally have as many wives as he pleases. (de Beauvoir 1953, p.107)

Due to her father being absent for the majority of her life, the power that de Beauvoir first mentions is possessed by Katie herself. As she marries Stan, the control is then transferred to him in this patriarchal culture. Katie is unable to deal with this change in control over her life. When Katie is bound to the ties of a marriage, especially at this time when women were meant to be compliant to their husbands, she rebels. Stan can be considered a father-figure to Katie as well as being her husband; he scolds her frequently, punishes her for her behaviour and even calls her 'child'. Stan says: 'I can't delay. There's a good child' to which Katie replies: 'Child! I am your wife that you married' (Deevy 1939, p.72). Unsurprisingly, Stan does not consider Katie his equal in the marriage. A noteworthy fact is that Stan's respect, and treatment, of the traveller Reuben is heightened when he learns that he is actually the father of Katie. Male figures such as fathers and husbands command respect at all times, and 'Stan is obliged to show him a certain deference' (Roche 1995, p.151) that he would not have given otherwise.

After getting married, Stan Gregg becomes more condescending and ruder to Katie. Though she remains the strong-willed and flighty person that she was prior to marriage, Stan is more openly arrogant. His awareness that she is now bound to him provides him with more confidence, something that he lacked while attempting to woo her. Before marriage, he uses manipulation of Katie and others to get what he wants. He manipulates his sister Amelia into allowing him to live with her in the house if he is to marry Katie, almost arranging a husband for her in an attempt to move her on. When this fails, he blatantly asks if he can live with her, and Amelia's reply is one that would be predicted – due to the cultural pressures in her to serve her brother as mentioned previous '*(after a moment)* Now wouldn't that be *very nice? (bravely)*' (Deevy 1939, p.57). The change of circumstances would be a strange dynamic for Amelia

especially. She is Katie's employer but once Katie married her brother there would be a change in power dynamics between the women, placing them in a form of female competition to which de Beauvoir had adverted. However, she accepts it gracefully, as a woman was expected to do.

Stan also manipulates Michael, a love interest of Katie's, into denying his interest in her in order to eliminate him from the competition for her attention:

Stan: I see ... I had thought you might be fond of her.

Michael: Fond of her is it? 'Tis that she was mad to be at this dance.

Stan: As a matter of fact, I'm fond of Katie myself.

Michael: (*after a moment's silence*) Oh she *can* be very nice. (Deevy 1939, p.61)

Stan shames Michael into denying his fondness for Katie, as he is aware of Katie's situation and her 'name', which refers to the fact that Katie is an orphan. She is also an illegitimate child, a factor that drew significant shame in Ireland at this time, and the consequences of this stigma will be explored in more detail in some of the following chapters. Familial name and status is a deciding factor in Ireland in the 20th century as to whether someone was worthy of a respectable marriage or not, and could be the reason that a person may be unable to get married. Michael confirms this theory when he says: 'My mother would die if I were to bring her in the door' (Deevy 1939, p.61), which is purely due to Katie's familial status and less to do with her own being.

Similar to Stan, Michael also attempts to manipulate Katie into not marrying Stan and insulting him by saying 'He's a little bit cracked', and 'you'd know he had no regular work' (Deevy 1939, p.65). He contradicts what he was saying to Stan about Katie, and promises that he would make a home for her in a couple of years. Katie is considered a prize to be won by the two men as they fight over her. Woman as a possession was a common cultural idea at this time, and de Beauvoir also mentions this in *The Second Sex*:

In the first place, it is almost impossible to realize positively the idea of possession; in truth, one never has any thing or any person; one tries then to establish ownership in negative fashion. The surest way of asserting that something is mine is to prevent others from using it. (de Beauvoir 1953, pp.172-173)

These are exactly the actions that both men are undertaking to establish ownership of Katie. They are attempting to prevent the other one from ‘using’ her, and wish to create distance between her and the other man by manipulating each other and manipulating Katie. As de Beauvoir also contends, possession can never be done in a positive fashion, solely negative. This has negative effects on both Katie and the two men as they fight over her and it depicts destructive opinions of women as a whole.

Michael and Katie’s relationship is also a complex one, and patriarchal power can also be seen in the way that Michael treats her. He manipulates her just as Stan does, and constantly denies their relationship in the presence of others. When the audience is first introduced to Michael, he is shown to have been waiting for Katie: ‘Katie, why don’t you come down? I’m below at the corner since Miss Gregg went out’ (Deevy 1939, p.51). He appears to wish to spend time with her, and tells her this when he believes that they are alone: ‘Ah come on now, all our time will be gone – the one chance we have before she comes back’ (Deevy 1939, p.51). Michael attempts to retain the privacy of their relationship and denies it in front of Reuben: ‘And what is between us? There’s nothing between us, to my knowledge and never was’ (Deevy 1939, p.52). Michael’s defensiveness and denial of any sort of relationship with Katie comes and goes throughout the play. In some moments, he informs her that he wants her and in others, he tells her that he does not.

Whether Michael has true feelings for Katie is uncertain, but he does attempt to retain the relationship. Directly after denying their relationship, as soon as Reuben leaves he says to her: ‘How could you put me out of your head? What’s in the heart, Kate, is in the mind’ (Deevy

1939, p.53). Michael is indecisive but still attempts to preserve her as an option. He shows signs of jealousy, and lashes out at Katie when she shows other men attention. Katie says: ‘Do you know what Jo said? ... He said – (*overcome with laughter*) –tell them ... tell them you ... (*Jo laughs a little self-consciously. Michael looks disapproval*)’. Michael then says severely: ‘You can’t come to the dance. You’ll have to stop here. Miss Gregg won’t leave you: I asked her now’ (Deevy 1939, p.62). He uses this as a punishment for Katie laughing with Jo. If he shows Katie any affection, he makes excuses for his actions and blames Katie throughout. ‘I wouldn’t care whether she was in it or no. ’Twas that she had me pestered’ (Deevy 1939, p.62) and ‘Tis a trap that she laid! I never asked to go near her once. She put her arms around me, she wouldn’t let go’ (Deevy 1939, p.77). Michael is very concerned with his own reputation and does not particularly care about Katie, and if he does, he cares about himself more.

Once again, after these instances, he reverts back to speaking to her kindly, attempting to persuade her to be with him and not Stan: ‘It would be yourself with me, Kate’ (Deevy 1939, p.63). He also promises her many things: ‘ ... in a couple of years I’ll make you a home ... I won’t let you down’ (Deevy 1939, p.65). Michael is full of empty promises to Katie when they are alone, but he denies her in front of company. The pet name ‘Kate’ is often utilised by Michael in times of manipulation and wooing.

As the play continues, and Katie marries Stan, Michael’s jealousy remains strong and he takes this out on Katie. He attempts to complicate her marriage to Stan, and tells him of Katie’s actions in the hope of clearing his own name while blackening hers: ‘... And if I’d tell you the truth no one could blame me ... She threw her arms around me. She held on to me tight’ (Deevy 1939, p.91). When he receives no reaction from Stan, he pushes harder and harder in an attempt to provoke anger within him. ‘Oh, she have you twisted round her little finger!’ (Deevy 1939, p.91).

Katie's incident with Michael is viewed as infidelity by many characters in the play. Reuben is very vocal about his disapproval of this meeting, and of Katie's actions. De Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex* that infidelity is a reaction and an escape from a particular social situation for a woman. The social situation for Katie is a loveless, controlling marriage and a life that is unfulfilling to her. De Beauvoir states that this act is a form of rebellion and 'revenge' by the woman: 'this is a woman's sole defence against the domestic slavery in which she is bound' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.80). Even though Katie does not have sexual contact with Michael when she is married to Stan, her actions are viewed as disloyal by the community. As de Beauvoir mentions the word 'revenge', this is directly relevant to Katie's situation, as she attempts to punish Stan for abandoning her in the house alone. This rebellion is an attempt to escape from the mundane and monotonous domestic roles in which Katie is trapped. As Leeney has noted, reading this play with contemporary eyes, shows that this dilemma, while still present, is less common due to the improvement of women's situations in modern times with regard to work. De Beauvoir explains as she quotes Bebel:

Woman can be emancipated only when she can take part on a large social scale in production and is engaged in domestic work only to an insignificant degree. And this has become possible only in the big industry of modern times, which not only admits of female labour on a grand scale but even formally demands it. (Bebel, cited in de Beauvoir 1953, p.81)

The physical strength of man is no longer needed due to modern machinery, and now that various female characteristics are useful in the labour industry, there is a societal imperative towards women working outside of domestic duties. However, de Beauvoir does admit that women cannot 'be regarded simply as a worker, for her reproductive function is as important as her productive capacity' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.84). She also uses the word 'useful' when referring to women's reproductive capabilities: 'it is more useful to produce offspring than to

plough the soil' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.84). Women are often regarded as instruments of reproduction rather than as active contributors of society. They are defined by their reproductive genitalia. Something to note also is that de Beauvoir avoids mentioning the woman's choice as to whether to work outside the home or to reproduce because many did not have this option, and their future was decided for them by society. De Beauvoir writes: 'from infancy woman is repeatedly told that she is made for childbearing and the splendours of maternity are for ever being sung to her' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.473). Katie also does not have any choice but to work inside the home, she is also trapped by her gender in the constraints of society.

When Deevy created the character of Katie Roche, while she allowed her to be manipulated by some factors in the story like patriarchy and her familial name, she also made her resistant to all kinds of influential societal factors. Katie remains herself throughout: strong-willed and flighty. She does not permit society to mould her as a person, despite the changing of her situation. Katie is unafraid to defend herself and is constantly showing her temper. Her character does not change after her marriage to Stan, though it was custom for a woman at this time to obey the wishes of her husband. Instead, Katie fails to succumb to this tradition and constantly argues with Stan while failing to do tasks that he orders her to do:

Stan: I never wear this. Where's the other?

Katie: You might find it upstairs.

Stan: I might find it upstairs! I want it now. (*Silence. Katie does not move.*)

Katie: Yourself left it upstairs. (Deevy 1939, p.71)

Katie's confidence is unusual in wives in this type of patriarchal society. Katie's resistant attitude does not appeal to Stan: 'Katie: "I am your wife that you married". Stan: "Then do what you're told! Keep out!"' (Deevy 1939, p.72). It is clear from this interaction of Stan's beliefs that wives must follow orders from husbands and remain submissive. Margaret Drybone is an archetypal, submissive wife, and obeys her husband with pride, as referred to earlier: 'Hubert

never objects. I don't have people to whom he objects. I don't think a wife should' (Deevy 1939, p.88). Again, this is another example of the internalised misogyny against which Katie so vehemently struggles.

Deevy puts continued emphasis on the language in her play. Katie's language is coarse and unpolished due to her common background and lack of education. We can also see that Katie is uneducated, not just in the way she uses language, but also by her understanding of it. Stan is constantly correcting her, 'it's a shame the way you speak'. Anthony Roche also writes of Stan's own means of control over Katie: 'speech and silence', in comparison to the 'stick' that Reuben uses to strike Katie (Roche 1995, p.151). Stan tactfully uses his silence, along with certain phrases, to manipulate and control Katie. He often attempts to lower her self-esteem by making her feel inadequate: 'she was a lady. She had none of your ways' (Deevy 1939, p.44); and by correcting her speech. He wishes to lower her self-esteem in order to get her to marry him. Deevy contrasts Katie's relationship with language to her progressive attitude towards societal pressures. Her intelligence is not represented correctly by her way of speaking. Other characters in the play, such as the Greggs, use polished language but possess a backwards worldview in comparison. Katie also uses speech and silence as her own form of resistance. She often remains silent on issues when asked questions and lends false meanings to others, such as her relationship with Michael, to tactfully rebel against Stan. Katie's use of different language can be seen as an act of rebellion against the patriarchy.

Hélène Cixous writes of language in a way that can be applied to Stan's critique of Katie's way of speaking, his 'deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine' (Cixous et al 1976, p.881). Katie's alternative way of speaking is seen as negative in the eyes of Stan and his sisters who speak in the same way; however, it can be seen as 'speech which has been governed by the phallus' (Cixous et al 1976, p.881). Katie is speaking

a language that will ‘wreck partitions, class, and rhetorics, regulations and codes’ (Cixous et al 1976, p.881). She can be seen as engaging in ‘*écriture féminine*’ as a form of rebellion from the standardised, patriarchal language. Stan constantly corrects her language: Katie: Three years ... come Wednesday. Stan: "Come Wednesday" (correcting).’ (Deevy 1995, p.43). Stan says: ‘You don’t speak well (to KATIE). I was disappointed: I went away’ (Deevy 1995, p.64). This is the ‘deaf male ear’ as referred to above. Katie also uses silence as a powerful tool to demand respect from Stan, especially in the opening scene as she ignores his questions. Perhaps her silence is also a form of ‘*écriture féminine*’, just as it can be considered Deevy’s due to her deafness.

At the time of production, Deevy’s plays would have extremely forward-thinking about gender equality, a controversial and uncommon subject amongst many people in Ireland at the time. Cathy Leeney reminds readers that ‘to re-read any old play for performance is to engage with it on new terms, in a new context’ (Leeney 2010, p. 7). One must bear the social context in mind when examining and attempting to understand the position of the author and the various social and cultural aspects that have had an influence on his/her life and have therefore influenced the text as a whole. The social context should also be considered when examining the play’s reception when first produced in theatre, the influence of societal norms at the time determines not only a play’s reception but also that of an author. This may also explain why Deevy first used a pseudonym when she was writing. Deevy’s grandniece suggests a possible reason that Deevy was careful as to how she was perceived: ‘Tessa’s siblings were religious, conservative and fearful of scandal. They would have been deeply uneasy and nervous of disrespecting the prevailing social and political mores’ (Ní Bheacháin 2021). So Deevy may have been protecting herself and her works from extra ridicule.

Leeney also states that looking at older plays by women is even more exciting:

Not only will the content of the play look different to contemporary eyes, but every aspect of gender as expressed by the author will test our understanding of what changes have or have not occurred for women and men, of how our foremothers and forefathers lived and wrote, and how they negotiated representation on stage to express their experience. (Leeney 2010, p. 7)

Deevy's works provide evidence of how women were perceived at the time of writing. When reading the plays through these 'contemporary eyes', the female characters are nothing much out of the ordinary for current times, but when one examines the social setting, her female characters, and her plays were revolutionary and progressive. Deevy's nephew, Kyle Deevy, states of his aunt: 'She was very religious and I often wondered how she wrote of people and life, her own life being so guarded. Anyone, especially a young girl, who struck out on their own and made good was a hero to her' (Friel 1995, p.125). Perhaps drama was an escape for Deevy, a 'private longing' (Friel 1995, p.125). However, at the end of *Katie Roche*, Katie succumbs to her fate, she is whisked away from her home town by Stan, far from any sexual temptation and is doomed to live out her days in Dublin, never to return. This ending could be perceived as an accurate portrayal of marriages at this time as 'Deevy's experience as a woman in the nineteen thirties told her to survive by submission and to do it with grace' (Friel 1995, p.123).

Katie Roche consists of a basic plot discussing complex issues present in Ireland at this time. Deevy allows the content of the play to stand alone. Katie's position in society mimics reality for most women in Ireland during this period, however she represents a very unconventional existence as a female. Perhaps Deevy is providing an example for future generations of actions necessary to begin changing patriarchal societies, and an author in that future generation is Rosaleen McDonagh, a woman living in contemporary Ireland who also challenges prevailing patriarchal norms.

Chapter Two: The Death of Ann Lovett

There has always been an issue in Ireland regarding women's reproductive rights. Women have continually struggled to gain very basic rights over their own bodies, and this struggle 'remains to a great extent unwritten' (Quilty et al 2015, p.45). It was not only the Magdalene laundries and Mother and Baby Homes that assisted the Church in controlling women's fertility. There were various ways in which unplanned pregnancies were dealt with, including infanticide, birth concealment and industrial schools. Some women fled to England, gave birth and gave the child for adoption; some gave birth in Ireland and both mother and child went to England, never to return; and some even gave birth and if they were young enough, the child was passed off as their own mother's youngest child. There was also back-street abortion (Quilty et al 2015). Barry and Wills were correct when they wrote: 'women in the Republic did not wait for legislation to begin to assert control over their fertility' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1415). While the ways that women attempted to control their fertility at this time were controversial, and often illegal in Ireland, Irish women used what was at-hand to possess authority over their own reproduction as best they could.

The conflict between Ireland and abortion dates back a long time, with many believing it originated directly after the establishment of the Irish Free State. When Ireland gained freedom from British rule in 1922, it needed to determine a reputation and a personality of its own, one that was, essentially, separate from Britain. 'Ireland was distinguishing itself from its British colonizers and its politics and destiny as a nation were heavily influenced by the Catholic Church' (Allison 2016, p.135). Mary McAuliffe writes: 'The first government of Cumann na nGaedhael was socially conservative and ideologically wedded to traditional Catholic values. Successive governments would continue to be socially conservative, especially in the area of women's rights' (Fischer and McAuliffe 2015, p.330). Ireland's Catholic beliefs

became a basis for creating an original culture, along with the pure and ‘perfect’ Irish family: ‘Catholic culture was Irish culture’ (Maher and O’Brien 2017, p.7). It was after this that Ireland’s obsession with controlling women and their fertility began, and this was communicated through the new laws that were put in place. As Pauline Conroy highlights: many ‘anti-women laws passed shortly after the foundation of the state’ (Quilty et al 2015, p.45). Therefore, it can be seen that ‘Ireland’s post-colonial history has contributed to its constitutional emphasis on embodied motherhood’ (Allison 2016, p.135). Women in Ireland suffered hugely from this obsession with motherhood, but men were naturally left unscathed. Irigaray poses the question: ‘Have fathers ever been asked to renounce being men? Citizens? We do not have to renounce being woman in order to be mothers. (Irigaray qtd in Whitford 1991, pp.42-43). This is associated with the judgement to which mothers were subjected if they had lives outside of the family and the home. Women were to be controlled, managed and regulated and were ‘often treated as dangerous and diseased, and contaminating to the body politic, to society and to the nation if they were perceived to behave contrary to the code of respectability’ (Fischer and McAuliffe 2015, p.330).

The abortion referendum, in September 1983, resulted in a ban on abortion being voted into the Irish Constitution. This was an unsurprising result due to the tight grip of the Catholic Church around the neck of the Irish State and the Irish people in general. The Church was the ‘arbiter of moral standards and values’ in Irish society (Maguire 2001, p.335). These standards and values were gradually put under pressure by the feminist ideas and theories that were beginning to be introduced into Ireland in the 1970s. These theories ‘challenged traditional assumptions about women’s appropriate social roles’ and ‘began to undermine the Church’s moral authority’ (Maguire 2001, p.336). Women’s social roles in Ireland were clearly illustrated in the 1937 Irish Constitution mentioned briefly in the introduction of this thesis. The words

‘mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home’ not only assisted, but actively promoted the oppression of women (Constitution of Ireland 1937). For ‘foreign’ theories to arrive in Ireland, and attempt to disrupt the cultural standards on which the country was based, was unacceptable to many.

Maguire believes that the abortion referendum was ‘both a retreat into conservatism and a backlash against the feminism inherent in some of the legislative initiatives of the 1970s’, initiatives such as campaigns for women’s access to contraception and equal pay (Maguire 2001, p.336). It can be seen that the abortion referendum and addition of the Eighth Amendment were some of the main causes for two of Ireland’s largest scandals regarding women’s reproductive rights. It cannot possibly be a coincidence that both of these events happened to take place a mere few months after the ban on abortion was implemented. Simone de Beauvoir writes of abortion in *The Second Sex*:

It must be pointed out that our society, so concerned to defend the rights of the embryo, shows no interest in the children once they are born; it prosecutes the abortionists instead of undertaking to reform the scandalous institution known as ‘public assistance’; those responsible for entrusting the children to their torturers are allowed to go free; society closes its eyes to the frightful tyranny of brutes in children’s asylums and private foster homes. (de Beauvoir 1953, p.468)

De Beauvoir’s comments cast a light on the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and many pro-life campaigns that happened in Ireland. These campaigns emphasised the rights of the unborn child but the ‘supports’, like Church-run Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries, treated both mothers and children terribly, with many children dying from lack of care. This will be discussed at length in this thesis in another chapter.

The case of Ann Lovett was one of the most significant events in Ireland’s controversial history of reproductive rights. It also highlighted many other issues present in the country, such

as the prejudicial attitude of Irish communities toward unmarried mothers and the unwavering power of the Catholic Church. Ann Lovett was a fifteen-year-old girl from Granard in County Longford, who fell pregnant and gave birth, alone and frightened, under a statue of the Virgin Mary, in a grotto in her home town. She gave birth to a stillborn baby boy and died shortly after in hospital. She died on January 31st 1984, only a few months after the abortion referendum in Ireland took place to insert the Eighth Amendment into the Constitution. Lovett's death was caused by many factors, mainly the stigmatised view of single mothers, the lack of support for unplanned pregnancies, the control of the Catholic Church and the unhelpful and unresponsive reaction of a rural Irish community. It was the latter that caught the public's eye as media attention surrounding the case heightened.

The Lovetts had moved to Granard three years prior to Ann's death. Diarmuid and Patricia Lovett had nine children, and they lived above their pub, The Copper Pot, where Lovett once worked behind the bar. She attended the Convent of Mercy School, and was a well-liked girl, clever and witty, as told by her boyfriend at the time, Ricky McDonnell:

Ann was always messing about, always having the craic. She was very sharp, very witty. She could hold her own, she could stand up for herself, about what she thought; she was able to back it up. She was brilliant at drawing. She was intelligent. She was also loving and caring and kind. I could just go on and on, the things to say about her. She was fun to be with; a fun person to be in the company of. (Boland 2018)

Ann Lovett was let down by her family, by her community but more importantly, by Irish society where this stigma originated. Nell McCafferty writes: 'The people of Granard say with one voice: "Ask the Family"' (Smyth 1992, p.99). Nobody wishes to take responsibility or any amount of blame for the horrific death. 'Ann Lovett's welfare was the inviolate responsibility of her parents. Had she asked for help it would have been forthcoming' said the people of Granard (Smyth 1992, p.99). However, the facts surrounding Lovett's untimely death say

different. Although it was common presumption, or even knowledge in the community, that she was pregnant, the community turned their heads away from this fact and denied it.

When Lovett was fourteen years old, her boyfriend at the time lived on his own in Granard, and she often stayed with him. Due to the living arrangements of Lovett and McDonnell being widely known, and because of the lack of contraception in Ireland at the time, it would have been no shock to the community that she became pregnant. If so, the community's ignoring of the rumours of her pregnancy, and the complete denial of knowledge in many cases, was detrimental to Lovett's situation. However, the community was largely influenced by society at this time, like the majority of communities in Ireland at the time, which generally was deeply loyal to both official and unofficial Catholic teaching. Lovett's pregnancy caused controversy and many were reluctant to get involved. People avoided association with scandals like this due to fear of judgement from their community and from the church. De Beauvoir writes: 'maternity in particular is respectable only for a married woman; the unwed mother remains an offence to public opinion, and her child is a severe handicap for her in life' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.420).

The constant and overpowering media attention that Granard received after the death of Lovett was criticised by many in the community; her parents refused to comment for weeks after her death, shutting themselves off from the world behind the doors of The Copper Pot. 'It will not be other than an ordeal for the two people of whom it [an explanation] will be demanded, her parents, who are her family. The townspeople cannot or will not help them bear that ordeal' (Smyth 1992, p.100). Firstly, the community abandoned Ann Lovett in her time of need, and then they abandoned her parents in theirs. The community of Granard refused to be blamed for any part of Lovett's death. As the family concentrated on explaining why their daughter died 'unaided and alone' (Smyth 1992, p.100), the efforts of the townspeople were

directed towards explaining how they, the townspeople, could not come to her aid either, even though her condition was ‘common knowledge’ (Smyth 1992, p.100). Even the school that Lovett attended, Convent of Mercy School, hired a solicitor to assist them to draft a statement in response to the ordeal; stating that staff ‘did not know’ of Lovett’s pregnancy (Smyth 1992, p.100). ‘Did they, however, “suspect” that she was? A spokeswoman, trembling and refusing to give her name, told *In Dublin* that the school would not comment on whether or not they suspected. They certainly “did not know”’ (Smyth 1992, pp.100-101). The spokeswoman then replied ‘no comment’ to further questions asking about the knowledge or the actions of staff regarding Lovett’s condition. Lovett’s pregnancy was very much a ‘woman’s issue’ in the eyes of many in Granard, and the community refused to get involved due to a long-standing patriarchal avoidance of the discourse surrounding female reproduction. This can still be seen at the time of writing this thesis, as there is still avoidance surrounding the topic of feminine hygiene products in particular, though there are some changes coming with the topic of period poverty in schools and in the social realm becoming more discussed as an issue.

Many of the townspeople in Granard fully believed their innocence, and consequently blamed the media for bad publicity. In the aftermath of Ann Lovett’s death, Canon Gilfillen addressed the congregation at Mass: he ‘lashed out at the media for “descending like locusts” to “plague and torment” the townspeople about a “family matter”’ (Smyth 1992, p. 102). Once again, the blame was placed fully on Ann Lovett’s family. However, some members of her own family would not take the blame on themselves: Lovett’s twenty-two-year-old sister, ‘with whom Ann spent some time in Dublin before Christmas, says, “no comment”’ (Smyth 1992, p.100). Her uncle said ‘that it is the business of no one but the parents’ (Smyth 1992, p.100). It can be said that Irish people have a tendency to shirk blame at any opportunity, and the case of Ann Lovett is a prime example of this. ‘It was assumed that the family knew and had made

arrangements’, and ‘people could hardly just come out and offer help that might be misinterpreted as interfering’ were the main excuses used by the locals (Smyth 1992, pp.99-100). Small, rural communities in Ireland are known to be aware of other’s business within the community, and discussing it is a pastime, but once action has to be taken, it is widely denied and avoided. The Catholic Church also shirked the blame. In his sermon, Canon Gilfillen, mentioned earlier, he blamed the media and the family for this occurrence and pitied the townspeople as they were ‘plague[d] and torment[ed]’, but he did not mention the real victim – Ann Lovett. The pity for Lovett shown by the Church was minimal due to her illegitimate pregnancy and how shameful this was to the Church’s moral position.

When Lovett was found at the Grotto by three young boys and as they ran for help, the first person they met on the streets of Granard was Tony Kelly, who spoke of the encounter: ‘So I held her hand to see was she alright, like, and she was very cold. I put her hand down again. So I went in for the priest, and I rang at the door’ (Boland 2018). The priest was called first by the boys, perhaps because members of the Church were seen as leaders of communities and many looked to them for answers or it simply may have been due to the fact that the priest would have lived in the house closest to the Grotto. ‘And the priest come out, and I told him, and he says, ‘It’s a doctor you need.’ And I said ‘I need you too, Father, the baby is after dying and this little girl might be dying too’ (Boland 2018). However, Boland writes that despite the priest saying it was a doctor that was needed, he did not phone for one but instead collected the items that were needed for The Last Rites, a prayer said over someone that was dying. It is also worth noting that Lovett went to the Grotto as she struggled in childbirth, and reflects a possible search for safety and comfort in her faith, or perhaps forgiveness as the Virgin Mary is known for representing such a concept in Catholicism.

The other shocking fact was that after Ann Lovett was found after giving birth in the grotto, nobody had informed the Gardaí of what has happened:

One of them, coming on duty at six in the evening, remarked that there were rumours in the town of an abortion. It was eight o'clock, three and a half hours after Ann Lovett had been found, before the Guards established the facts, by dint of footslogging and telephone calls around the locality. (Smyth 1992, p.104)

While Lovett was not dead at the Grotto, and was moved to hospital where she later died, her baby was dead at the scene. Doctor Tom Donohue, who was the deputy coroner for Granard, 'was a man well versed in the legal procedures that flow from the discovery of a dead body. It must not be moved' (Smyth 1992, p.104). However, Lovett's baby was moved and brought with her. This was a removal of evidence and because of the nature of her death, could be seen to be motivated by shame, embarrassment and a desire to shelter such issues from the public domain.

Lovett's boyfriend at the time was called Richard 'Ricky' McDonnell. It was only in 2018 that McDonnell first spoke out about the incident. He spoke to Rosita Boland, a journalist for *The Irish Times*, and communicated his version of the story. He informed Boland that he remained silent at the beginning 'out of fear, and then it was out of respect' (Boland 2018). He highlighted that it was out of respect for the Lovett family that he stayed silent, but now that her mother had passed away in 2015, he was ready for his version to be heard. McDonnell's version of events also gives those interested in the Ann Lovett case a new perspective, and he also highlighted various facts that had never been heard previously.

McDonnell met Lovett in 1981 when he went for a few drinks with a friend in The Copper Pot where Lovett was tending the bar with her father. He was fifteen and she was thirteen. (Boland 2018). 'I thought she was funny, she was nice looking, she was friendly. I think she liked me immediately as well. It was like love at first sight' (Boland 2018). The pair

began spending time together frequently, and their relationship deepened. After Lovett turned 14, in 1982, they began a sexual relationship. McDonnell lived alone due to his mother and brother being in England. Lovett would often stay at his house until very late:

She started to come to the house more often and stay later and later as the relationship intensified. It got to the point she was staying with me four or five nights of the week, every week, sometimes going home at 4am or 7am, and I would say virtually everybody in Granard knew that at the time. (Boland 2018)

McDonnell spoke about his surprise at Lovett's parents, Diarmuid and Patricia, never questioning where she was. 'I was surprised there wasn't more about Ann staying out. You would have thought somebody would have stood up and said something. But nothing. It didn't happen' (Boland 2018). Again, nobody interfered with their obvious sexual relationship, which also segues with the avoidance of the discourse surrounding female reproduction. Ann, as a woman, 'had no right to any sexual activity apart from marriage' but Ricky, her boyfriend, 'can enjoy contingent pleasures before marriage and extra-maritally' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.424). It is fascinating that the thoughts of French theorists can so accurately reflect the lived situation of women living in Ireland.

McDonnell also highlights that during their sexual relationship, they never used contraception. 'Contraception had been outlawed in the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935 which made it illegal to import, display or sell contraceptive devices' (Girvin 2008, p.556). This lasted until 1980, when contraception was made available to those with a medical prescription. However, it was largely inaccessible for many unmarried couples, as contraceptives were only intended for married couples as directed by the Church, and many doctors and pharmacists followed these instructions carefully. In the years prior to this, the discourse around contraception was largely pessimistic, often with the aim to discourage those from using it. The Catholic Church was mostly responsible for this conversation. "The pill" was described as the

“death pill” by one Catholic newspaper’ (Girvin 2008, p.557). It can be presumed that another reason that this young couple did not use contraception is due to the lack of information available on the subject at this time, and the fact that they would have to purchase them in the pharmacy of this very small town. Contraception and family planning discussions would have been widely avoided in schools at the time, as such discussions could have been seen as the promotion of sexual relationships outside marriage. Often women used the excuse of taking the contraception pill as a ‘cycle-regulator’, and doctors prescribed it for them for this use only. The couple did, however, discuss what would happen if Lovett became pregnant. ‘She always had the same answer: that she would go to a family member in Dublin and ask for help, McDonnell stated’ (Boland 2018). This was Lovett’s way of taking control of her own fertility, as so many other women did.

A year later in April 1983, as McDonnell was in bed, he heard banging on the door at around 10pm; it was Lovett. She was upset and was crying as McDonnell explains. She informed him that she had been beaten:

‘Her thighs were bruised and scuffed’ McDonnell explains: ‘I just went ballistic. I asked her what happened. And she roared and cried and begged me not to tell anybody, or say anything. She was very distressed. I held her. The two of us cried. She begged me not to tell anybody, not to say anything, not to breathe a word of it’. (Boland 2018).

He asked her if she had been raped but she did not reply, ‘she just cried’ (Boland 2018). Their relationship changed after this night, McDonnell admits: ‘I got the impression she was pushing me away’ (Boland 2018). After rumours circulated regarding Lovett’s pregnancy, McDonnell asked her several times if she was pregnant, but she denied it each time.

Then on the 31st of January, Ann was found by schoolboys, after giving birth in the Grotto, barely conscious. McDonnell recalls the moment that he discovered the terrible news:

A friend that I had in the town, who had often borrowed a bike off me before; he was knocking on the door. I got up and answered the door, and he was just standing there, talking gibberish. I could get ‘Ann’, ‘the Palms’, ‘accident’. (Boland 2018)

McDonnell thought he was joking with him and sent him from the house. He then left his home and went to another friend’s house to enquire if they had heard anything. There, his friend was just returning from the town and told him that ‘something was after happening’, and that he had to go to his aunts (Boland 2018).

McDonnell began walking to town: ‘I could hear screams and crying as I was walking down New Road. It just got louder and louder as I approached the Market corner’ (Boland 2018). The ambulance with Lovett, her baby and her mother Patricia had just departed from outside her house. McDonnell describes the reaction of the local people:

Everybody was screaming. It was just horrific. Everybody was screaming and crying; everybody who was on the main street, and that’s probably half the town. All the schoolchildren were coming up from the convent. I saw one girl pulling handfuls of hair out of her own head, screaming. (Boland 2018)

They received a call later that day to report that Lovett had died in hospital. ‘I don’t know what happened after that. I was sedated. I don’t know whether I woke up that evening or the next evening. I lost track of time’ (Boland 2018). McDonnell’s comments add a new depth to the case and offered a new perspective. His detailed account is opposite to the ‘no comments’ and ‘ask the family’ responses that were given to the media at the time of the tragedy. However, McDonnell, if asked at the time of Lovett’s death, through fear of the Catholic Church and also through respect for the Lovett family, would have also replied ‘no comment’. It took McDonnell over thirty years to find the courage to speak about his experience, and it highlights how much control the Church had at this time and its lasting impact. McDonnell was censored by the Church and this is explained in more detail further in the chapter.

McDonnell and his friend went to the mortuary in Mullingar on February 2nd. ‘There were a lot of people at the mortuary’ (Boland 2018). The funeral was the following day; McDonnell went to attend but was unable to go in ‘I wasn’t able. I don’t know how I ended up in the graveyard, but I ended up in the graveyard with me cousins, and I think I was taken away halfway through the burial. I just couldn’t. I just couldn’t handle it’ (Boland 2018). McDonnell’s mental state was evidence to support how devastated he was at Lovett’s death.

In the days after the funeral, two of Lovett’s friends were in her bedroom as Patricia Lovett had offered that they could take some items in remembrance of her. They located a suitcase under her bed with two envelopes in it. One was blank and one was addressed to McDonnell, with ‘Ricky’ written on the front. They opened the one that was not addressed to anyone in particular:

‘We opened the one with no name on it,’ Fiona says. The three of them sat on the bed together, and read it. ‘I can’t say who it was for, or if there was “Dear Mam”, or anything like that. I don’t know. I only remember that the first few lines were, “If I’m not dead by the 31st of January, I’m going to kill myself anyway”’. (Boland 2018)

The other friend who had been present, recalls the line ‘Everybody would be better off. People will be better off when this happens. It’s better this way’ (Boland 2018). It seems that Ann had been in a terrible mental headspace when writing these letters. Whether this was due to the pregnancy or to other factors, is unknown. De Beauvoir writes that: ‘illegitimate motherhood is still so frightful a fault that many prefer suicide or infanticide to the status of unmarried mother’ (de Beauvoir 1953, p.470), and Ann Lovett’s situation and her admission of a suicidal wish in the letter highlights this. The common occurrence of infanticide, that is described in more detail later in this thesis as it discusses the Kerry Babies Case, also supports de Beauvoir’s theory about the frightfulness of unmarried motherhood.

Patricia Lovett and her eldest daughter Louise, visited McDonnell and presented him with the letter that Ann had written for him. He says that it had been opened prior to him receiving it (Boland 2018). He admits that:

‘I only read the letter once because I just lost it. But the gist of the letter was, how much that Ann had loved me, and how sorry she was for doing what she was going to do. She had never meant to hurt me. That she had loved me. That the reason she was doing it was that nobody would believe I was the father of that child’. (Boland 2018)

McDonnell believes that Lovett had the chance to ask for help, and he is adamant that she would have received it if she had asked. This may be true, but due to so many people being aware of her secret, Lovett should not have had to ask for help. She also may not have felt able to ask for help if she felt she would have been met with judgement, scorn and shame from the community and society in general. This all relates back to the society that discriminated against single mothers who give birth outside wedlock. Ann knew that her pregnancy would not be well received in the community, especially in such a small and rural place as Granard. After McDonnell had received the letter from the Lovetts, the local priest, Fr. Quinn, arrived at the house. He had heard about the letter and demanded to read it (Boland 2018). He ordered McDonnell to burn it because it would ‘cause so much trouble’ and ‘destroy the town’ (Boland 2018), so McDonnell did just that, and surely this is, in parvo, an example of the power of the Church in Ireland at that time: the lived truth of the letter was silenced as it did not accord with the patriarchal truth of the catholic Church.

McDonnell was also brought in to be questioned by the Gardaí after the death of Lovett and her baby. He tells of what happened in the interview with Detective John Murren:

‘He asked me everything. He asked me every question under the sun. The times we had sex. Where we had sex. Did I know anybody else who had had sex with Ann. Was there

anybody that I suspected. Did she have any other boyfriends. And then I told him about the assault and what had happened'. (Boland 2018)

McDonnell then tells of Fr. Quinn informing him that the bishop at the time wanted to see him in Longford. The Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise was Colm O'Reilly. When they arrived, McDonnell and Fr. Quinn went into a room with the Bishop and another member of the clergy. The bishop wanted to know what McDonnell had told the guards so he repeated it (Boland 2018). McDonnell highlights what the bishop did then: 'The bishop told me he was swearing me to a vow of silence. And that I would have to kiss the seal of St Peter and he held out his hand with his bishop's ring. I was never to breathe a word of it again, he said' (Boland 2018). Boland also highlights that when contacted by the *Irish Times*, Bishop O'Reilly denied that he had ever met Ricky McDonnell. This shows the absolute control that the Church had on the Irish people, what they did and even said was influential and binding: truth was very much what they said it was.

Fr. Quinn then informed McDonnell that he wished to take him away from Granard because of the media. McDonnell informs Boland in his interview that they spent three days driving around Ulster, another ploy by the Church to keep McDonnell from speaking to the press and aggravating things further with relation to the death of Ann Lovett. They wished to keep as much information quiet as they possibly could, and this was achieved by removing McDonnell from the town altogether and keeping him under the observation of Fr. Quinn. When they returned, McDonnell's mother had returned to London and the authorities had taken the key for the house; McDonnell was now homeless: 'That's when he [Fr. Quinn] said I could have a room in his house' (Boland 2018). This again highlights the coercive control that was mentioned earlier. McDonnell was threatened, his possessions, like the letter, were confiscated and he was then hidden away.

Then another tragedy hit the Lovett family. In the early morning of Sunday April 22nd 1984, Patricia Lovett, Ann's younger sister, who was fourteen, committed suicide. It is unknown why exactly she decided to overdose in an attempt to commit suicide, but one can presume a reason behind it was the difficult times she had been through with the death of her sister. After this, McDonnell felt that his presence in Granard was causing difficulty and was a 'reminder to everybody' of the deaths of the Lovett sisters (Boland 2018). Fr. Quinn brought McDonnell to Dublin that summer to meet Patrick Cooney, who was Minister for Defence at the time, in an effort to get him into the army. 'He said I had been interested in joining the Army when younger and would it be possible to put my name on the recruiting list' (Boland 2018). Cooney had denied to *The Irish Times* that he had ever met Ricky McDonnell; however, representatives for Fr. Quinn said that their client recalled this meeting (Boland 2018). This was another effort to silence McDonnell and eliminate him from the situation, as the Church feared that speaking of his experience would damage their reputation. McDonnell was not treated with empathy and kindness as one might hope to be treated after the traumatic experience of the deaths of Ann Lovett and what was presumed to be his baby.

Sure enough, McDonnell was called for a medical in the Army several weeks later. "I enjoyed the training and Army life, but my mind was engulfed by the death of Ann," he says. "I often thought of ending it all when alone and armed but the thought of what I would be leaving behind for my relatives and friends stopped me from going through with it" (Boland 2018).

The *Irish Times* received the following statement from solicitors of Fr. Quinn after they posed many questions to him regarding this case:

Our client has no knowledge of a letter written by the late Ann Lovett and accordingly did not request to see such a letter ... our client did not drive Mr McDonnell to see

Bishop O'Reilly and this meeting did not take place with Bishop O'Reilly and the suggestion by Mr McDonnell that he was requested to swear an oath of secrecy about a statement which is on the Garda file and therefore on the record is absurd and erroneous There was an intense level of media coverage of events in Granard and it was decided that Mr McDonnell needed a short break and this was arranged in consultation with his relatives He travelled to Donegal with our client and stayed with relatives of our client Mr McDonnell expressed an interest in joining the Irish Army and he made the necessary application and representations were made on his behalf and arising from the representations our client brought Mr McDonnell to an appointment with Mr Cooney. (Boland 2018)

While an inquest into Ann Lovett's death found that many people did know about her pregnancy, although they furiously denied it at the beginning, some people did directly admit to being aware of her condition. A businessman who once worked for St. Vincent De Paul admits 'We knew Ann Lovett was pregnant. The family said nothing' (Smyth 1992, p.99). He makes the excuse that 'the days when you could intervene are long gone. If a family doesn't want you to know, there's nothing you can do' (Smyth 1992, p.99). Even the parish priest was aware of the situation: 'I could hardly just come out and say "You're pregnant", he admits' (Smyth 1992, p.99). A classmate of Lovett's wrote a heartfelt poem, also showing that many of them knew of Ann's predicament:

Oh my god what have we done.
We killed our friend and now she's gone.
It's only now we have deep regret.
She needed help which she did not get.
No one on his own is to be blamed.
It's all in Granard should be ashamed.
When she died everyone did cry and moan.
When she needed help she was alone. (Maguire 2001, p.343)

This poignant poem shows the guilt felt by Lovett's friends and classmates. It also could be seen as an admission that so many in Granard were aware of her pregnancy. The opening line 'oh my god' shows the utter shock that so many in the community were in, some were shocked at Lovett's pregnancy but others were aware of this and were shocked that it had ended so badly. The fact that 'god' has a lower case 'g' could be seen as a straw in the wind and the Ann Lovett and Joanne Hayes cases were often, in retrospect, seen as key pillars in the downfall of the Catholic Church in terms of power and influence in Ireland. It also depicts a sudden realisation of the tragedy that had happened. It also accurately shows the tendency that many people in rural Ireland have to 'cry and moan' when a disastrous event happens, but not doing anything to attempt to prevent it from happening. It also shows how some members of the community believe that it was not just one person that should be blamed, but all in Granard, others blame only the parents.

Irish poet Paula Meehan wrote a poem based on the occurrences of Ann Lovett's death in Granard; she named it 'The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks'. Its narrator is the statue of the Virgin Mary at whose feet Lovett died. Meehan's poem criticises, through the use of the statue of the Virgin Mary, the attitude of the Catholic Church in Ireland. As stated previously, the shame and prejudice that was associated with single mothers and children born out of wedlock stemmed from the morals of the Catholic Church. The statue represents society and the Church turning their back on a young Lovett as she suffered painfully due to the shame that the Church created in the first place. Meehan mirrors the horror of the situation through the use of pathetic fallacy in the opening lines of the poem: 'It can be bitter here at times like this, November wind sweeping across the border' (Meehan 2013). She creates a cold atmosphere of wind and 'ice', mimicking the horrible January day that Lovett had to endure as she gave birth.

She also highlights how the Church is so powerful and it has created such strong morals that will be difficult to change: ‘The howling won’t let up’ (Meehan 2013).

This line could also mirror the suffering that Lovett endured as she gave birth to her baby, alone and frightened as the following line reads ‘trees cavort in agony’, mirroring the physical torsions of Ann’s body as she endured labour pains: ‘The whole town tucked up safe and dreaming’ (Meehan 2013), a line seemingly about the town of Granard who did not attempt to assist Lovett in her position. Meehan creates a semantic field of death in the third stanza with words such as ‘death’, ‘drowning’ and ‘dying’ to illustrate the horrific death that Lovett and her baby endured. Meehan highlights the accepted values of the Church as the atmosphere lightens in the fifth and sixth stanzas. These stanzas describe the events of First Holy Communion and a wedding, both accepted and celebrated events in the Catholic Church. Semiotically it is significant that the females taking part in these events are wearing white, a sign of purity and a trait highly regarded in the Church. The statue narrator even mentions Lovett directly ‘the child who came with fifteen summers to her name’ (Meehan 2013), as Lovett was only fifteen years old. ‘I did not move, I didn’t lift a finger to help her’ (Meehan 2013). This is a reference to society, the Church or Granard itself as none of these helped Lovett in her time of need.

The image of the Virgin Mary has been a significant one throughout Irish history and it is almost ironic that Lovett died while being ‘watched’ by her statue. The Virgin Mary was a mother but also a virgin who was pure and untouched; a physically impossible and unrealistic exemplar towards whom Irish women were strongly directed in terms of finding a role model. She was a figure to whom women in Ireland often prayed and looked to for guidance and help in times of need. However, in this case she did not come to the aid of Lovett, but instead it was her idolised image that aided in the stigmatising of Lovett and many other women in her position. Julia Kristeva writes about the image of Mary in the Bible:

These texts open a path, narrow to be sure but quickly widened by apocryphal additions, that leads to the possibility of pregnancy without sex, wherein a woman preserved from penetration by a male conceives solely with the aid of a ‘third person’ or, rather, non-person, the Spirit’. (Kristeva and Goldhammer 1985, p.136)

Kristeva highlights that Irish women are chasing an ‘apocryphal’ image, one that is physically impossible. She states that it is ‘an ideal that no individual woman could possibly embody’ (Kristeva and Goldhammer 1985, p.141); however, such an ideological positioning of women and of female desire was an excellent means of coercive control, and was used as such in Irish society.

Ann Lovett’s death sparked national media coverage with many people conveying their sadness in songs, poetry and letters. Many people wrote into the Gay Byrne radio show in 1984, two weeks after Ann had died. Gay Byrne had said there were ‘too many letters’ and that they ‘couldn’t be ignored’ (Ingle 2017). These letters voiced the stories of women in a similar position who felt, due to a very Catholic society, they could not admit their pregnancies to many. The *Irish Times* published extracts of the anonymous letters, identified solely by their county. Many women wrote the letters themselves, telling of their own story for the first time as they still battled the sadness and shame over their situations:

WEXFORD

“I know how Ann felt, as I have travelled down that same lonely road. At the age of 16 I found myself pregnant and still at school. I concealed my pregnancy until I was eight months pregnant. My mother then discovered with great horror that her only daughter was one of these unmentionable people. How could I humiliate them this way? What would the neighbours think? My parents were very well-off business people. It was decided that I would go and look after my poor old sick great-aunt in Dublin.

After six weeks I gave birth to a baby boy and returned home immediately to pick up from before, as if nothing had ever happened. Never in the past 10 years since the birth of my baby have my parents ever talked about my pregnancy. They even talk about

other girls who get into trouble as if I never had a baby. Of course, my baby was adopted. There was never any question of anything else happening. I hide my secret with great hurt and guilt. I feel very depressed at times and wish I could reveal my long-kept secret to somebody. On several occasions I've walked into my local GP's waiting room in the hope of talking to him, but always fail to wait and see him for fear of what he might think of me. (Ingle *Irish Times* 2017)

This letter from a woman in County Wexford shows the utter humiliation that an unplanned pregnancy caused a family in Ireland at this time. It also gives an example of the excuses that people made in order to explain their young, female family member disappearing for a significant amount of time. This letter was written ten years after the birth of her child, and clearly she still feels the same guilt. It also shows a significant trait of Irish people when they judge others for actions that they have made themselves.

Another letter came from Carlow:

CARLOW

'My mother never went outside the door after news of my downfall became public'
In 1972 I found myself expecting. I was 16. I was expelled and disgraced from the Mercy Convent in Carlow town. A priest who visited me told me I would pay for my great sin for the rest of my life. My baby, a boy, was taken from me. I am not allowed to trace him. My own mother died before the child was born. She never went outside the door after news of my downfall became public.

I accepted all this as part of my punishment. But I am still paying. I cannot relate all the things that happened in my life without breaking down. My point is that I lived after my sin and I've been treated as an outcast ever since. All this sorrow would be turned to gossip had Ann lived. Why was there this fear in 1984, [meaning] that Ann could tell no one? When the people of Granard pray before their grotto, pray for us who lived to pay. (Ingle *Irish Times* 2017)

This letter shows the reaction of schools as this woman was 'expelled and disgraced' from her secondary school. The Catholic Church's reaction is a standard one at this time, as the priest in

this particular situation informed the woman that she would pay for her great sin for the rest of her life (The *Irish Times* 1984). The omnipresent influence of the Church is depicted here again, as this woman felt shame for the rest of her life, similar to the writer of the first letter. It has taken an emotional toll on her too as she speaks about ‘breaking down’ when discussing her life. Her mother also suffered greatly from the shame as she never left her house after the community discovered her daughter’s secret.

KILMALLOCK, LIMERICK

‘Her distress was all hidden. She got no help or care. It didn’t exist then’

As I drop you this line my heart is so sad for poor little Ann Lovett. A particular case that will always remain in my mind: in about 1940 Mary was an agricultural servant girl, employed by a farmer in this area. Mary worked about 12 or 13 hours a day, beginning at 6am.

Mary became pregnant, like so many of these poor agricultural slaves. Mary’s lover was a married man from the nearby village, the father of nine children. She was 28 years of age, a beautiful singer and always in good humour.

Mary was able to hide her pregnancy until about the seventh month, when one day the farmer’s wife, who was also pregnant, confronted her. Mary denied everything and said her body gathered fluid sometimes and it disappeared again. Mary’s employer didn’t really believe this, but a blind eye was turned to the situation. Mary continued with her work. A day or two before Good Friday in that year, it was potato setting day. Mary rushed into the house just before dinner to give the final help, serving up the meal for all the others. She had none herself, as she said she had a headache. She then cleaned and washed up after the meal and asked for an hour or two off to go to bed with this blinding headache. Mary got the permission, and after about an hour her employer called to her bedroom door which was locked. Mary assured her that she was much better and would be up shortly.

After about another hour the house was filled with the screams of a new baby. The employer went to the garden for her husband. He set off to Mary’s house, a few miles away, and brought back her elderly father. Mary still had the door locked, and, after they forced it open, she denied everything. They searched the room and found a little

baby boy choked by a stocking and packed with her clothes in her case. The father walked his daughter home and carried the case. Later that night the baby was buried in the nearby graveyard.

Mary returned to her work after two days. She got no sympathy or concession. After two or three weeks she had to visit a doctor. She was sent to hospital for treatment: her breasts were “almost rotted”, the doctor said. She again returned to her job on her discharge from hospital. Her distress, her broken heart were all hidden. She got no help or care. It didn’t exist then. (Ingle *Irish Times* 2017)

This letter highlights that these ‘agricultural slaves’ often became pregnant out of wedlock, and it shows how common these pregnancies were. This woman, in particular, was twenty-eight-years-old, so she was not a particularly young mother in comparison to other letters, it shows that it was not the age that was the issue here, but the fact that this woman became pregnant out of wedlock. She denied her pregnancy and went to great lengths to keep her secret. Even when the baby was born, Mary’s actions show what a horrific mental space she would have been in as she suffocated her child, whether this was to kill her child or to simply muffle the sounds of the crying is unknown.

Perhaps the most telling consequence of Ann Lovett’s death was the many previously silent and unvoiced women who anonymously wanted their voices to be heard. The idea that Lovett was somehow deviant and exceptional was denied and contradicted by all of these voices, coming across the airways and in print, telling an Ireland which officially did not know anything about them, but which in actuality was quite aware of these and similar circumstances, about their experience. It was a watershed moment for the role of women and for the way in which a society would deal with unwed mothers. It took time for this change to percolate through to society in general, but it certainly was a key moment.

One of the main messages to take from the Ann Lovett story is that while she was wronged so badly by the people that knew her and her community, one cannot blame a

community alone for this tragic incident. There are many factors that led to Lovett's death but at bottom, her tragedy reverts back to the message stemming from society at this time, namely that unmarried mothers and illegitimate children brought shame on their families. Lovett, and other women at this time, suffered so badly at the hands of society and the Catholic Church. De Beauvoir writes of female suffering:

When the ruins of Pompeii were dug up, it was noticed that the incinerated bodies of the men were fixed in attitudes of rebellion, defying the heavens or trying to escape, while those of the women, bent double, were bowed down with their faces towards the earth. Women feel they are powerless against things: volcanoes, police, patrons, men. 'Women are born to suffer,' they say; 'it's life – nothing can be done about it' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.571).

The Virgin Mary, who women in Ireland should strive to be like, according to the Catholic Church, suffered throughout her life. Therefore, it has been expected that Irish women should suffer, and tolerate their suffering with patience and poise in order to exist as the ideal Irish woman, and this ideal also had tragic consequences for another young Irish woman living in Tralee, County Kerry. She was called Joanne Hayes.

Chapter Three: Joanne Hayes and The Kerry Babies Case

Another incident that occurred in 1984 was ‘The Kerry Babies Case’ as it is now referred to in media and literature. The case began as an infanticide investigation, something that would have been reasonably common in Ireland before this event, but that would go on to be another significant moment in the progression of women’s rights in Ireland. Joanne Hayes, a young single mother, whom the case centred around, was wrongly accused and subjected to horrific treatment by Gardaí and by the courts. The misconduct caused fury amongst women in Ireland and many went to protest outside the courthouse in Tralee, Co. Kerry, where Joanne was testifying. Much of the information in this section is derived from the *Report of the Tribunal of Enquiry into the Kerry Babies Case*, a report into the handling of this case by Gardaí, and also various literature that has been published on this topic as it caused quite a stir in Irish society. Joanne Hayes also released a book in 1985 to tell her story, it was co-written with journalist John Barrett and aptly named *My Story*. This will also be referenced in this chapter.

This event happened at a time in Ireland where society, while less so than before, still held significant prejudice around issues of women’s sexuality. As Irigaray states, ‘female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters’ (Irigaray 1985a, p.23). These ‘parameters’ mostly originated from the male dominated institution of the Catholic Church. To be an unmarried mother was still quite controversial in Ireland due to the constant pressure from the Church, and its associate, the State. The treatment of Joanne Hayes illustrates an Irish state so terrified of women’s sexuality that it attempted to exemplify her negatively in order to deter other women from acting “immorally” as she did. Meaney highlights that this ‘distrust and fear is paradoxically rooted in the idealisation of the mother in Irish culture as an all-powerful, dehumanised figure’ (Meaney 1991, p.4). The ability to create life was an unknown and powerful trait that no man possessed and it was threatening to them.

Single mothers in particular were even more feared as they were not constrained in the sole domestic life that the Irish state pushed mothers towards, as infamously highlighted by the 1937 Constitution. This can be seen throughout this case in particular as Hayes was criticised deeply for having both a social life and a child. In 1977, a survey was taken collecting Irish societal attitudes and it highlighted that 57.6 per cent of people ‘agreed that premarital sex is always wrong’ (Ferriter 2009, p.407). This showed the mind-set that Hayes was dealing with. However, instead of being villainised by Irish society, Hayes became a heroine in the eyes of many Irish women as they gathered outside the courthouse to support her and, as a result of this case, societal prejudice began to lessen around women’s sexuality (McCafferty 1985, Inglis 2003). This change was also highlighted by Ferriter as this same societal survey included some answers that were far more liberal than they had been before such as ‘sex education should be a human right (89.2 per cent agreed, 7.5 per cent disagreed)’, and that ‘it is always wrong to use artificial contraception (31.3 per cent agreed, 63 per cent disagreed)’ (Ferriter 2009, p.407). This chapter intends to discuss the events of this case and what led to the mistreatment of Joanne Hayes and her family. It also intends to highlight how even the Government report itself is largely flawed and often biased in its language and argument.

On April 14th of 1984, the same year that Ann Lovett tragically died, a body of a baby washed up on a beach in Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry. The body was found by a local man, Mr. John Griffin, who was out jogging on The White Strand at around 8:30pm (The Stationary Office 1985, p.27). He was checking some cattle in a field near to the beach, and had to climb across some rocks to reach the area. Here he discovered the body of a male infant. He was ‘uncertain at the time as to whether it was a doll or a baby’ (The Stationary Office 1985, p.27). He went in search of help and returned with two other men who also confirmed it was, in fact, the body of a baby. The men drove into the town of Cahirciveen from the White Strand, which is a few

miles outside the town, and notified the local Gardaí. Local Garda Pat Collins accompanied the men to the White Strand and they showed him the body. He advised the men to return home as he waited for Sergeant Patrick Reidy to arrive with local undertaker Tom Cournane (Inglis 2003, p.20). They arrived at the White Strand in Cournane's ambulance, and dislodged the baby from the rocks, wrapped it in a white sheet, and brought it on a stretcher to the ambulance. On the way to the ambulance, they passed a small stream and Cournane took the baby from the stretcher, reached down to the stream and baptised the body of the new-born with his hand, saying: 'I baptise thee, in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I call thee John' (Inglis 2003, p.20). This moment in itself shows the strength of the Catholic beliefs and customs, as it was an instinctive response to the situation.

Contact was made with superiors of the Gardaí and Sgt Reidy was informed that the State Pathologist, Dr John Harbison, was in Cork and it was arranged that he would perform a post-mortem on the body of the baby the following day. After four hours of an examination, Dr Harbison concluded that the body of the baby had 28 stab wounds, four on the right side of the neck, twelve on the front of the neck, and twelve on the chest. There were also two large wounds to the chest where the heart had been stabbed as well as a broken neck (Inglis 2003, p.20) 'The air passages were not obstructed and there was no evidence of strangulation, but there was evidence of internal bleeding and this suggested that the baby's neck had been broken while it was still alive' (Inglis 2003, p.21). The number of wounds and also the nature of them suggested that they had been 'inflicted during a panic frenzy' (Inglis 2003, p.21). Inglis revealed that: 'experience suggested that it was a case of infanticide and that it was probably carried out by the child's own mother in a temporary state of derangement' (Inglis 2003, p.21). This makes one question the influences that provoked a mother to kill her own baby.

Infanticide was not unknown in Ireland. James Kelly highlights that ‘neonaticide (the killing of newly born infants) was more frequently resorted to in the second half of the eighteenth century than previously’, and the Nineteenth century mirrored this number:

Consistent with the pattern previously identified, a majority of infanticide victims in Ireland in the 1830s and early 1840s were born to unmarried women, experiencing their first pregnancy, who, driven by the compulsion ‘to conceal their guilt and shame’, the ‘desperation of lost honour’ and the ‘desire to appear virtuous’, sought to evade the implications of motherhood by killing their newborn child. This accounts for the continuing presence of female servants, shop workers and those engaged in the urban retail economy on the short list of instances in which the occupation of the neonaticide can be identified. But the dishonour and disgrace associated with sexual activity outside marriage was not reserved to women in paid employment. Rural women were as susceptible as their urban equivalents to reputational loss and the attendant social sanction. As a result, farmers’ daughters as well as farm servants are commonly encountered among those who had to resort to infanticide. (Kelly 2019, p.93)

While Kelly references the 1830s, as we have seen, the shame and guilt that was associated with children born out of wedlock was still largely present in Ireland in the 1980s; therefore, infanticide was still an ongoing issue, though less so. Inglis’ point earlier in the paragraph stating that it was ‘probably carried out by the child’s own mother’, can easily be believed due to the fact that the responsibility for the care of children, and often the burden of blame for the birth of illegitimate children, was placed solely on mothers in Ireland as they were the centre of the home. Maguire supports this argument, and states that it was unusual ‘for men to be drawn into the drama. In the judicial record of infanticide, men typically appear only as judges, jurors, prosecutors, and defence attorneys’ (Maguire 2016, p.63). The 1949 Infanticide Act brought the law up-to-date with what had been happening already since the 1920s. It separated infanticide from murder and removed the death penalty. This had been already happening unofficially under local authorities, as they often looked past the infanticide crimes. This new

category of crime was ‘rooted in a gendered understanding of the crime’ (Maguire 2016, p.63). A guilty Irish State was willing to disregard some crimes that were committed, ironically, as a result of the State itself.

Reverting back to the Kerry Babies case: ‘it was quite clear that the Cahirciveen baby had been deliberately killed’ (The Stationary Office 1985, p.27). The umbilical cord was cut in such a way that it indicated that there had been no medical assistance with this particular birth, which would make sense due to the fact that it would probably have been done in secret. ‘Harbison also estimated that the baby had been born three or four days prior to his examination’ (Inglis 2003, p.21). The Cahirciveen baby was given a funeral in Cahirciveen town, with students from the local school, scouts and guides attending. Baby John, as he is known, is buried in a graveyard outside Cahirciveen.

The Gardaí in Kerry began a county-wide search to locate the mother of this child. They were searching for the mother, not for both parents, as fathers often escaped blame for illegitimate children. Bacik supports this as she highlights that ‘there is no mention of fathers’ in the 1937 Constitution, in Article 41 as it promotes the rights of the family and women’s natural role ‘within the home’ (Bacik 2007, p.101). Although both parents are needed to create an embryo and the life of a child, children are considered a domestic unit which automatically makes them the responsibility of the mother in Irish society at this time. Despite this emphasis on the family unit, Mary Robinson writes that ‘the family in question is the family based on valid subsisting marriage’ (Smyth 1993, p.103). She also highlights that a single mother and her child or children are excluded from the definition of family (Smyth 1993).

Luce Irigaray writes of old-fashioned values in politics:

Rarely have these measures been thought through and affirmed by women themselves, who consequently remain at the level of critical demands. Has a worldwide erosion of

the gains won in women's struggles occurred because of the failure to lay foundations different from those on which the world of men is constructed? (Irigaray 1993, p.6)

This idea is relevant to the laws and guidelines in the 1937 Constitution that were made about women in the home. Politics at this time failed to include women as members of the public sphere, therefore no woman was consulted when this political document was drafted. Irigaray highlights that it is laws similar to this that are the 'foundations' from an androcentric society, and it is because of these foundations that the struggle for women's rights has proved so difficult.

As mentioned previously, a case of infanticide in rural Ireland would often be dealt with locally and with empathy, but in this case, presumably due to the brutality of this murder and the publicity it had received, the Gardaí took serious action. They visited hospitals around the area and called to houses, asking locals if they knew of any woman that had been pregnant around this time, often demanding that new mothers produce their babies as proof that they had not 'done away with them' (Maguire 2001, p.345). They interviewed doctors, nurses and midwives in the area. My own grandmother who worked as a nurse in the local hospital in Valentia Island, was asked by members of the Gardaí if she had known anyone that was pregnant and that should be having a baby around this time. Her daughter, my mother, was also asked if she had been pregnant, or if any of her friends had been pregnant, to which she replied: 'No and if I did know someone I wouldn't be telling you', to which the local Garda replied, 'I wouldn't tell me either' (in conversation with the author).

Garda Noel O'Connell enquired at Tralee General Hospital for any information that could lead them to a suspect. At the time, staff were concerned about a woman that was admitted a few days prior, claiming to have had a miscarriage; however, they did not reveal any information to Gardaí. The staff expected to discover more information themselves as usually

the details of these incidences became known after a few days (The Stationary Office 1985, p.28). As Inglis highlights, ‘in rural Ireland, particularly in County Kerry, there has always been ambivalence about helping the Gardaí with certain types of crime, notably those involving close-knit families and communities’ (Inglis 2003, p.23). Gardaí in Cahirciveen were looking for ‘any woman who might have been pregnant and who was no longer pregnant and to the whereabouts of whose baby there was uncertainty’ (The Stationary Office 1985, p.28). In their search, they did hear of a woman that could possibly fit into this category, but when they visited the house they ‘discovered that she had given birth to a baby with her mother’s assistance and that all three were alive and well, although living in very poor circumstances’ (Inglis 2003, p.22):

This girl was therefore eliminated as a suspect for responsibility for the Cahirciveen baby and the only matter which remained to be done in relation to her was to notify the doctor, the Public Health Nurse, the Priest, and the Local Housing Authority that they urgently required assistance and better housing. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.28)

Inglis also highlights the link between the state agencies and how they worked together, on a local level to help and protect the community. It has been known that many local Gardaí treated unmarried mothers at this time sympathetically; generally, they were not hostile towards them and dealt with them carefully and gently, ‘even when they abandoned or killed their babies’ (Inglis 2003, p.22). Inglis also emphasises the difference between ‘*local* mechanisms of power’ and ‘*state* mechanisms of power’ (Inglis 2003, pp.22-23). He also states that in this particular case: ‘*state* mechanisms of power became involved, with devastating consequences’ (Inglis 2003, p.23). Meaney discusses how the state, as a postcolonial product, has rebelled in a way that significantly affects women:

The subject people in rebelling and claiming independence and sovereignty, aspire to a traditionally masculine role of power. The result is that colonised peoples, often long after colonisation itself has ended, tend to observe or impose strictly differentiated gender roles in order to assert the masculinity and right to power of the (male) subjects. (Meaney 1991, p.7)

Meaney also makes the point that the state's 'anxiety about one's fitness for a (masculine) role of authority, deriving from a history of defeat or helplessness, is assuaged by the assumption of sexual dominance' (Meaney 1991, p.7). Irish women are used as the 'territory over which power is exercised' (Meaney 1991, p.7). This point of the state subjugating women to depict power has been exemplified in the Kerry Babies case, and will be highlighted in this chapter.

Along with the local Kerry Gardaí, a 'Murder Squad' from Dublin was also sent to assist with the case, and this group of Gardaí can be seen as an example of Inglis' 'state mechanism of power'. The Murder Squad is the Investigation Section of the Garda Technical Bureau, based in Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin. They were 'a body of detectives specialising in tracking down and interrogating people suspected of having committed serious crimes' (Inglis 2003, p.24). Detective Superintendent John Courtney was originally from Kerry, and had been home on leave during the weekend that the Cahirciveen baby had been found. It was through him that the idea originated of sending a member of the Murder Squad down to Kerry to assist in the investigation. This group in particular changed the atmosphere of the investigation, it had now become more serious. 'If the Murder Squad had not become involved, the case would probably have been left unsolved, or quietly resolved among the local players in the grey area between health, social welfare and law enforcement' (Inglis 2003, p.24). This was a common occurrence in rural Ireland, particularly in the latter half of the 1900s, where there was a general tolerance for some actions that were illegal or immoral in the eyes of the Church at that time. Barry and Wills discuss how 'even before the recent wave of liberalizing legislation, Irish

women and men had become used to finding ways of side-stepping and evading traditional social and moral constraints' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1410). This understanding and overlooking that was carried out by the various organisations allowed people to 'side-step' the social and moral constraints that Barry and Wills mention.

As the investigation proved difficult, 'Detective-Sergeant Kevin Dillon was requested to check again in Tralee area' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.29). He learned of this particular woman about whom the staff were worried, called Joanne Hayes, 'from a private source of his own' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.29). The case of Hayes drew attention due to what the hospital called 'an inconclusive file' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.29). The Murder Squad then visited Tralee hospital and examined the evidence against Joanne Hayes. Hayes was admitted to hospital with severe bleeding the same night that the baby was found in Cahirciveen. A scan of her uterus was completed in the hospital, and it revealed that her womb had been emptied recently (Maguire 2001, p. 345) The issue was that there was no sign of this baby and there had been no funeral. Hayes then became the Gardaí's main suspect.

Joanne Hayes was a twenty-five-year-old woman from Abbeydorney, a small town outside of Tralee in County Kerry. She was the daughter of Mary Hayes, a widow, and a sister to Ned, Kathleen, and Michael. The family lived on the family farm along with their aunt, Mary Hayes' sister, Bridie Fuller. The Hayes and Fuller family were a respectable and well-liked family, typical of a rural area. Joanne Hayes worked at Tralee Sports Centre as a receptionist, where she met Jeremiah Locke who worked as a groundskeeper there. Locke and Hayes began a relationship, but Locke was already married to another woman, and was four years older than Hayes. Various sources report how smitten Hayes was by him, and she admits this in her statement to Gardaí: 'He told me that he wasn't getting on with his wife. I fell deeply in love with him and we were intimate from the very beginning' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.200).

Joanne Hayes first became pregnant in 1982, but this pregnancy ended in a miscarriage in June of that year. She became pregnant again and had her first child, Yvonne Hayes, in May 1983. Hayes says: 'I wanted to be pregnant. I thought from the beginning that Jeremiah Locke would go away with me and we would live together happily ever after' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.200). One can relate this to Irigaray's ideas, as she believes that the child is 'the symbol of the union' (Irigaray 1993, p.19). Hayes believed that she and Locke would be united due to the child that they had conceived together because, as Irigaray highlights, a child is a sign of two people united with each other through the creation of one being. She revealed that after she had Yvonne: 'I still thought that Jeremiah would go away with me especially after having the baby for him. Jeremiah only saw Yvonne twice and that also upset me. I stayed going out with Jeremiah and I still loved him and he said he loved me and that he might go away with me eventually' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.200). When Hayes fell pregnant again, she was thoroughly ashamed and hid it from everyone, even her own family.

Ivana Bacik highlights that: 'the roles of wife/mother or virgin/nun therefore remained the accepted social functions for Irish women for many years, expressed through Church teaching and the law' (Bacik 2007, p.101). It was obvious that Hayes was no longer a virgin, so the image of wife/mother was the only one available to her after giving birth to Yvonne. However, when it became clear to Hayes that she was not about to become the wife of Jeremiah Locke, she became upset and even more so when she became pregnant again. She was now significantly distant from the wife/mother position in the family unit that was so promoted by the Church. While she was still a mother, it was to an illegitimate child; soon to be two illegitimate children, and this was not deemed acceptable motherhood in the Church morals. The message from the Church was quite contradictory in this regard, as it abetted the forcing of motherhood upon women by limiting contraception and banning abortion but it also endorsed

the shaming and mistreatment of women when they became pregnant in a way that was unsuitable to the Church's teachings. Irigaray also states that 'the value of woman would accrue to her from her maternal role, and in addition, from her "femininity"' (Irigaray 1985a, p.84). This examination of women's roles was particularly accurate in Ireland after the moulding of society by the Catholic Church.

Local Garda Liam Moloney was the first to interview Joanne Hayes, and this was a strategy put in place by the Gardaí that a local, Kerry Garda was the first to interview each member of the Hayes family instead of the intimidating Murder Squad. Hayes first admitted to having a miscarriage at home on the Thursday evening, 12th April. She insisted on this for some time until she admitted to giving birth to a baby boy. She stated that she gave birth alone and buried it in the surrounding area of the family farm. Superintendent Courtney joined them and Hayes informed him that Moloney, and another Garda who had joined them, Ursula O'Regan, were attempting to blame her for the death of the Cahirciveen baby. Due to Hayes initially denying giving birth, the Gardaí did not believe her second statement:

On Thursday night 12/4/84 sometime around ½ eleven or twelve o'clock, I gave birth to a baby boy of six to seven months in a field at my brother's farm. I delivered the baby myself with my own hands. I delivered the baby standing up. I panicked and then I put the baby down on some hay. I went in home and said nothing. I went to bed and couldn't sleep. I got up at 5a.m. I sat down and had some tea and went back to bed until 7:30 a.m. I got up and went out to the baby. I put my baby into a blue and white plastic bag I think it was a bag from O'Carroll's Chemist, in Tralee. I then put the baby into a brown paper bag first and then into the plastic bag, I mean. I put the baby down in the river, it's a pool of water. (The Stationary Office 1985, pp.198-199)

Hayes repeated this story to any Garda that interviewed her. She pleaded with them to allow her to go to the farm and show them where she had buried the baby. Liam Moloney and a member of the Murder Squad went to the farm that day to look for the body of the baby.

Superintendent Courtney was convinced that Joanne Hayes was responsible for murdering the Cahirciveen baby, and permission was not granted for Hayes to leave the station and show them the burial place of her baby. This was the first issue of many surrounding this investigation, as Hayes had not been charged with anything at this time, and therefore had the right to leave the station but was led to believe that she could not leave. Irigaray states in 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother' that 'what women say seems to be of little importance' (Whitford 1991, p.34), and this was verified in the case of Joanne Hayes, as she was not listened to by the Gardaí when they had already decided that she was the mother of the Cahirciveen baby. Nothing that Hayes said after this decision was heeded and it resulted in her being accused of being the mother, and murderer, of the Cahirciveen baby. These accusations were later shown to be false.

While Joanne Hayes was being interviewed, Ned Hayes, her brother, had 'given a confession which directly implicated her in the Cahirciveen murder' (Inglis 2003, p.28). Ned firstly denied knowledge of Joanne Hayes' pregnancy while being questioned. He then admitted that his mother informed him about three months' prior that Joanne was pregnant. He suddenly declared 'whatever happened, happened in the house' (Inglis 2003, p.29). He then went on to discuss the baby being stabbed and the body being thrown off a cliff at Sleah Head in Dingle. Detectives searched the Hayes house and found a carving knife, a bath brush and a turf bag, and they brought these items as evidence into the room where Joanne was in the station. They got the reaction that they were looking for. 'Joanne Hayes became hysterical. O'Carroll said that she shouted out that she was insane, a murderess, that she had stabbed the baby with the knife, that she had beaten it with the bath brush and that the baby was taken away in a turf bag similar to the one she had been shown' (Inglis 2003, p.29). She made a second statement telling of this story in more detail.

Joanne, Ned, Kathleen and Michael Hayes made similar, but not exactly the same, statements about what happened to the baby. They all consisted of Joanne giving birth in the house, assisted by some of her family, the baby being stabbed and its body being thrown into the sea near Dingle. The concern with these confessions is that significant details were different. Ned's account recalled that it was just himself and his brother going to Dingle to dispose of the baby, while Kathleen's account highlighted that she went with them, a noteworthy and unmistakable difference. Joanne's account referenced the white bath brush, but Kathleen does not mention it. Another difference was that Kathleen and Michael's accounts recalled that Kathleen got the carving knife for Joanne, but Joanne's account recalled her getting it herself from the kitchen. Michael's statement read that Kathleen went out to the yard and brought in a bag, he withdrew this and stated 'myself and Ned went out to the backyard. We got a blue manure bag' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.215). Each account also recalls a different colour bag in which the body of the baby was put. These weaknesses in the confessions are what puzzled so many people about this case. The confessions were not simply unreliable: they were contradictory. It makes one question where the Hayes family were getting information or why they were making false confessions. There are more weaknesses other than the confessions which this chapter will highlight at a later stage.

Jeremiah Locke was also interviewed separately and stated that Joanne Hayes had informed him that she had miscarried in hospital. Gardaí were immediately satisfied that this was the extent of his knowledge on the subject. Why Locke was not questioned further is prime example of the lack of responsibility men possess regarding children in the Irish legal system. Joanne Hayes was charged with murdering her baby, and the other Hayes family members were charged 'with concealment of birth and helping to dispose of the body' (Inglis 2003, p.39). Joanne remained in custody and the rest of her family were on bail.

The following day, Kathleen Hayes and her brothers found the body of Joanne's baby, known as the Tralee baby. Kathleen went to Abbeydorney Garda Station and informed Garda Liam Moloney. While he did not believe her, he reported this to Tralee and three detectives went with Moloney to the Hayes farm. They found the body near the pond, exactly where Joanne Hayes had described. The body was then taken for a post-mortem by the State Pathologist John Harbison. The Gardaí now had to explain this inconsistency of the discovery of the Tralee baby. They had an easy explanation: Joanne Hayes had had twins.

John Harbison's post-mortem examination of the Tralee baby showed that it was full term and weighed about five pounds. The umbilical cord was very long. It had been cut cleanly over a foot from the body. The baby had not been washed. There were bruises to the head which could have been caused during birth, or by deliberate blows. There were bruises to the neck, but they were not consistent with strangulation. There were no stab wounds. His examination of the baby's lungs was inconclusive. (Inglis 2003, p.41)

Many of the Gardaí were still convinced that the statements given by the family were true, and that the only change in this case was that Joanne Hayes actually birthed twin babies. This meant that the case depended now on the results of forensic analyses carried out by Dr Louise McKenna. Dr McKenna tested blood types of Jeremiah Locke, the Cahirciveen baby and the Tralee baby. It was already known from Tralee hospital that Joanne Hayes' blood type was Group O. The Tralee baby and Jeremiah Locke were both also Group O. The Cahirciveen baby was Group A so it was concluded that 'the Cahirciveen baby could not have been the child of Joanne Hayes and Jeremiah Locke' (Inglis 2003, p.42).

The Gardaí searched for a plausible explanation to this change of events and they created the following theory:

Joanne Hayes had given birth to twins of different blood groups. This would mean that at the same time she had become pregnant by Jeremiah Locke she also became pregnant

by another, as yet, unidentified man who was Group A. She could then have given birth to twins of different blood groups. (Inglis 2003, p.43)

This process is called superfecundation and is an extremely rare occurrence in medical history, 'whereby a woman is impregnated by two different men within a forty-eight-hour period' (Maguire 2001, p.347).

The case of Joanne Hayes being the mother of and murdering the Cahirciveen baby was beginning to unravel. The Garda report on the case attempted to justify actions and, in a way, to protect themselves. They then reported that the charges against Hayes were not specifically in relation to the Cahirciveen baby. This could also be seen as an action to shield themselves from criticism:

It is because these people were charged with the offences as stated that popular opinion and media sensationalism presumed that these charges referred to the baby found at An Trá Bán, Cahirciveen, on Saturday, April 15th 1984. This opinion did not emanate from the Garda investigators involved in the case. They accept that it would be a most difficult task to definitely associate Joanne Hayes with the baby found in Cahirciveen. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.114)

The Garda report highlighted some other theories, such as one that included the ridiculousness of three murdered babies. Each theory attempted to safeguard the Gardaí from backlash and charge the Hayes family with a crime. Due to lack of sufficient evidence, the Director of Public Prosecutions revoked the charges against Hayes.

The media in Ireland played a vital role in the Kerry Babies Case. Nicola Goc writes:

By 1984 the Irish press had moved away from its traditionally conservative lapdog role, subservient to the church and state, and had moved into a fourth estate watchdog role, fulfilling the expected role of the news media to scrutinize those in positions of power and expose corruption and wrong doing. (Goc 2012, p.72)

It was the freelance journalist Don Buckley and Joe Joyce, who published in the *Sunday Independent*, who kept the story of the case in the media with their investigative journalism. Unlike the Gardaí and even the tribunal investigation itself, they were not focused on the shame of the illegitimate child, the brutal murder of the Cahirciveen baby or the social life of a single mother, but rather the alleged police brutality and the ‘corrupt conduct of the Gardaí’ (Goc 2012, p.72). The Irish media, by publishing updates on this case:

enabled people all over Ireland not only to keep abreast of the latest developments but also to participate in a national critique of the contemporary Irish society that claimed to embrace “pro-life” principles even as it allowed newborn babies to die, and single women to give birth frightened, alone, and stigmatized. (Maguire 2001, p.348)

This type of journalism was controversial in itself, as it spoke out against the state and provided a support to Joanne Hayes. This coverage was possibly was one of the main reasons that Hayes received so much public backing during the case.

After a Garda report was leaked, Buckley wrote about the case in great detail in the *Sunday Independent*. The night after this report was published, the Hayes family agreed to appear on a programme called *Today, Tonight* a current affairs programme on RTE. On this programme, Joanne Hayes stated:

It was the Guards that made the statements. We just agreed with them at the end. They convinced themselves that we did do it. They were saying the statements and we were just agreeing with them. They were writing down the whole time. Why I signed my statement was because they told me they were going to make mother charged with murder as well and put my little girl into an orphanage and going to sell the farm as well. (Inglis 2003, p.47)

The Hayes family claimed that there was physical abuse, emotional manipulation and harassment by the Gardaí present during the investigation, and on the same day as the *Today*,

Tonight interview, it was announced that there would be an internal Garda inquiry. In the end, there were two internal Garda inquiries, with the media scrutiny multiplying as they failed to resolve the matter. ‘Members of the Hayes family wanted guaranteed immunity from prosecution as a result of participating in the inquiry. This was refused and so they declined to give direct evidence. Instead they made formal statements to their solicitor Pat Mann’ (Inglis 2003, p.48). The Gardaí also refused to give direct evidence and they too only submitted written statements. The internal inquiry came to no conclusions on the alleged mistreatment or as to how the Hayes family had come to admit the false confessions. This led to a public Tribunal of Enquiry. Justice Kevin Lynch was nominated as the sole member of the Tribunal. He was to hear all of the evidence and was to write the report and decide the facts (Inglis 2003, p.48). This fact in itself that a sole person was in charge of such a large and important tribunal is not unusual, and poses the question if one person, of one gender, is adequate in providing fair judgement in a case such as this. One also can question how an impartial and unbiased ruling can come from a person who is also a member of the institution being examined in the Tribunal. Vicky Conway, who wrote a feminist judgement on the report into the Tribunal, states that she was concerned that the ‘tribunal deviated from a strictly inquisitorial approach and can only be described as, at least on occasion, adversarial’ (Enright et al 2017).

One might question the accuracy of this report for the reason that it was completed solely by one male on such a female-sensitive topic. This was also an issue in the Tribunal itself as ‘forty-three male officials, judge, fifteen lawyers, three police superintendents and twenty-four policemen’ stood in front of Joanne Hayes and tore her to shreds (McCafferty 1985, p.xv). Joanne Hayes’ life was probed and picked apart by forty-three men who had never given birth or generally experienced life as a woman. She said herself in her book ‘I felt I was some kind

of prey pursued by hunters, who were men and who invaded the privacy of my body and my emotions in their dragging out of all the details about me' (Daly 2017, p.5).

These men had never experienced a society that forced motherhood upon them but only on the right terms, the shame that a child out of wedlock brought to a single mother, or the judgement society had on an independent woman who had children but also continued living her own life. The latter is exactly what Joanne Hayes did, and she was punished for it. She did not 'conform to the Church/State model of married motherhood' and was 'subject to legal and societal sanction' (Bacik 2007, p.103). Hayes was not the only woman to challenge this conformity, and many others also defied these norms. Again, the difference is that Hayes was put in front of the whole country for all to see her in her most private and vulnerable moments. Hayes challenged the type of motherhood, that, as Irigaray states 'is supposedly the root of woman's identity' (Irigaray 1993, p.117). Motherhood was certainly a large part of Joanne Hayes' life, but she did not allow it to define her, it was not her whole character. She was a sister, a colleague, a friend, a girlfriend and a person in herself. Patriarchal culture has an issue with this existence when a woman has a child and Hayes received backlash because of it.

It was in January 1985 that the Tribunal began, and to provide some context on the attitude to reproduction at this time, it is noteworthy that eleven of the twelve pharmacies located in Tralee refused to stock contraceptives (Goc 2012). It was no wonder that Joanne Hayes had experienced three unplanned pregnancies. Goc also highlights the irony of Hayes burying her baby in a bag from O'Carroll's Chemist in Tralee, though the pharmacies were not the only hurdle present for the access to contraception. Irigaray highlights a possible reason as to why the Church and State were so against contraception: 'contraception and abortion raise the question of the meaning of motherhood and women [...] are looking for their sexual identity and are beginning to emerge from silence and anonymity' (Irigaray qtd in Whitford 1991, p.36).

Both Church and State wanted a clearly defined role for women in Ireland and that was as married mothers, in the home. Nell McCafferty writes of the “moral policemen” who helped to keep women’s fertility under control. She specifically tells of the difficulty in obtaining contraceptives in Kerry at that time. Contraceptives were banned in Ireland until 1979 when Charlie Haughey, as minister for health, introduced a Family Planning Act that permitted the sale of contraceptive devices to married couples only. When changing the laws in Ireland surrounding contraception, the Government pushed the message that it was a matter of ‘private morality’ but evidence of the inaccessibility of contraception often shows otherwise (Ferriter 2009, p.408). Advertising and promoting of contraceptive devices was still banned (McCafferty 1985):

A conscience clause which he inserted into his Act ensured that doctors and pharmacists would fulfil the role of moral policemen: if the consciences of these mainly male, mainly Catholic practitioners forbade them to prescribe or fill prescriptions for contraceptives, married supplicants would have to go elsewhere. The doctors in turn patrolled the pharmacists, who could not sell even non-medical devices such as the condom without prescription. (McCafferty 1985, p.29)

Due to this, there was a widespread refusal to prescribe contraceptives as these doctors and pharmacists ‘rose with relish to the challenge of patrolling women’s wombs’ (McCafferty 1985, p.29). If a woman was clever enough to use the unwritten code to disguise her need for the contraceptive pill as a ‘cycle regulator’, she may have managed to obtain both a prescription from the doctor and the prescription from the pharmacist.

Jo Murphy Lawless mentions a ‘particular relationship and reliance upon doctors’ that many women had because of reproduction (Smyth 1993, p.9). The state and Church took advantage of this reliance, and controlled women’s fertility and sexuality through this medium. Murphy-Lawless also speaks of the power differences between woman and doctor and again,

they are certainly evident here. Condoms were far more difficult to obtain via the other ‘moral policemen’ present in Irish society. The next example of these were customs officials, who once impounded forty-eight condoms which a Protestant Kerry doctor tried to import by post for personal use (McCafferty 1985). Of course, the ‘ultimate moral policing’ was by the Church, and contraception was mentioned in the sermons of the Bishop of Kerry, Kevin McNamara. His words were often printed in *The Kerryman*, the main, local newspaper in Kerry. He stated frequently that ‘sexual activity outside marriage is a serious sin’ (McCafferty 1985, p.31). This was common in other parishes also, with priests recommending chastity to unmarried couples. The last ‘moral policemen’ were the Irish postal workers who steamed open packages, confiscated the condoms inside and resealed the parcel, no questions asked. This action was usually to do with Ireland’s only tabloid newspaper at the time which had a scheme whereby, if you sent a filled-in coupon with your address, then condoms were then posted to you without question of age or marital status (McCafferty 1985, p.33). This was illegal, but the Government at the time seemed to turn a blind eye to it. Ferriter highlights a phrase that is relevant to the use of contraception: ‘You may, but you can’t’; and this phrase sums up Ireland’s introduction of contraception at this time (Ferriter 2009, p.408).

Amongst the allegations of abuse from the Hayes family were complaints concerning physical and emotional manipulation used in attempts to make the family confess. Each member of the family maintained that they were shouted at by detectives. They claimed that they were lied to by the Gardaí: Joanne Hayes claimed that a detective told her, ‘we have medical evidence showing that it is your baby because blood groups match’, and she also included that ‘he also said that I won’t be put into jail if I told the truth’ (The Stationary Office 1985, p.227). If these statements were true, then Gardaí would have purposefully lied to Joanne Hayes in order to gain a confession. Joanne claimed that they also called her names and used personal insults.

She stated that O'Carroll said: 'I will not be made a fool of by a cheeky strap like you' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.227). She also claimed that she was called a 'cheeky bitch', a 'murderer' and that 'Detective Browne kept pounding at the table [with his fist] and shouting at me to tell the truth' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.227). The personal insults aimed at Joanne could be seen as an example of how these Gardaí viewed Hayes. She also accused the Gardaí of speaking to her in a derogatory manner about other members of her family: 'Look at your sister, you know she is stupid', 'and your old Auntie Bridie, it is unknown how many people yourself and herself have killed between the two of you', 'Ned, my God, he is awful fond of the drink lately' and finally, 'your mother outside there and she like a tramp on the side of the road' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.228). If true, the conduct could be considered extremely unprofessional and would usually make a confession invalid. This was defended in the Tribunal report and will be discussed in more detail further in the chapter.

Physical abuse was also a part of the complaint made by Joanne Hayes:

Detective Browne kept imitating me, everything I said he kept saying after me. He told me to tell the truth and he gave me two hard slaps across the face with his palm. He was going to hit me again with his fist but I stood up and told him to hit me but then he put down his fist. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.228)

If the allegations were true, one can only imagine why Joanne Hayes decided to confess to anything that the Gardaí asked of her. The one thing that did push her over the edge was the Gardaí's use of her mother and her daughter Yvonne in order to manipulate Hayes:

O'Carroll said 'Now Joanne tell the truth because if you don't your mother is going to be charged with murder, Yvonne is going to be put in an orphanage and the farm put up for sale' After that all I could think of was Yvonne being taken away from me. So I said alright I would tell them what they wanted'. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.228)

The threat of losing the farm was also a deciding moment for Hayes. The family farm supported two families, the Hayes and the Fuller family and the loss of it would be devastating to their livelihood (McCafferty 1985), and Hayes also knew that her brother, Mike, ‘did not have a world beyond the farm’ (McCafferty 1985, p.15). It can be said that it was a variety of threats, lies, and abuse that led Joanne Hayes to falsely confessing the murder of the Cahirciveen baby. Writing after this case, Ailbhe Smyth states that ‘women in Ireland are living in a police state’ (Smyth 1992, p.138). She continues to explain that ‘the reproductive activities of women in Ireland are being subjected to a process of “regulation, discipline and control”, carried out by the police in accordance with state policy and laws’ (Smyth 1992, p.138). This ‘policing’ was generally carried out in Ireland as a whole at this time, but also specifically in the Kerry Babies Case. The power advantage and authority that the Gardaí had over Joanne Hayes throughout the case is evident in her false admissions.

According to Hayes, the mistreatment did not stop after she confessed. She claimed that ‘Detective Browne put me sitting up on his lap and he was saying the statement’ (The Stationary Office 1985, p.229). This is a very specific and strange allegation, but also quite an inappropriate and bizarre action by the detective, if true. The same detective then asked her what she would tell Yvonne about the baby. ‘He said “You will have to tell her you murdered her little brother”, Joanne claims’ (The Stationary Office 1985, p.229). The Gardaí received what they wanted, a confession, but continued to harass and belittle Joanne Hayes, who was later to be proven to be an innocent woman.

In Kathleen Hayes’s statement of complaint, she made it quite clear that the Gardaí truly frightened her. She claimed that the detectives ‘roared at her’, that they ‘kept shouting’ and that she was ‘terrified because he frightened me so much’ (The Stationary Office 1985, pp.236-237). She claims that the Gardaí were also physical with her while being questioned: ‘He

slapped me across the back of the head a number of times' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.236). She also alleged that they emotionally manipulated her by saying: 'What will the neighbours think of you? They will not have any more to do with you. You are evil' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.236). The Murder Squad, some being from Kerry originally, would have known that community was an important aspect of the lives of people in rural Ireland at this time, especially in Kerry, and can be seen to use that knowledge against Kathleen. She claims that she then decided to 'say what ye want me to say' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.237). This is similar to what Joanne Hayes claimed happened while she was being questioned as well.

A very interesting accusation from Kathleen Hayes was one that explains the origin of her false confession:

I overheard the detectives talking so I got the impression that all the others had made their statements and were gone home. I decided then that I would make up a story including what I had overheard. A turf bag was brought in and shown to me and I said 'that's the bag', even though I had seen in the paper that it was a fertiliser bag that the Cahirciveen baby had been in. I only said that it was the turf bag because it had been brought into me. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.237)

The statement of complaint by Ned Hayes included much more physical threats than those from Joanne and Kathleen. He said that one detective was sitting in front of him and another was punching him from behind: 'every time that he started punching me he kept it going for about two minutes. As far as I remember, this took place on four occasions' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.246). He also claimed that Detective Mahony knocked him off his chair and kned him in the back. 'He then tried to pull my head back. He kept me in that position to tell the "fucking" truth' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.246). Ned also alleged that he was 'up against the door when I was suddenly caught by Detective Sergeant Dillon and turned upside down and kept there for three minutes. While that was going on Detective Mahony was trying to catch me by

the private parts' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.246). There was another very strange, but specific allegation made by Ned Hayes. He claims he was also called various names such as a 'lying bastard', 'fucker' and 'murdering bastard' and that he was threatened that they would use other ways to force him to tell the truth (The Stationary Office 1985). Similarly, to Kathleen and Joanne, he also claimed that the detectives told him what was said and 'to repeat it, which Detective Dillon wrote on a sheet of paper' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.247). Michael Hayes also got 'two punches in the stomach', and like the other member of the family, alleged that 'all they wanted from me was what they regarded was the truth' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.252). Each of the Hayes family also maintained that they asked for water a number of times and that each request was refused. Joanne also asked to go to the toilet as she had felt sick, due to stress and trauma, and 'the detective refused, put a newspaper on the floor and told her that if she wanted to be sick, to do so on the newspaper' (Inglis 2003, p.48). If this statement is true, the Hayes family were completely denied basic human rights while being questioned by Gardaí, even though not one of them had been charged at this point.

The Government Tribunal began on 7th January 1985 and finished on the 14th June 1985. It lasted eighty-two days. Seventy-seven of those days were spent taking evidence. There were 109 witnesses and over sixty-one thousand questions (Inglis 2003). Inglis highlights that the main purpose of the Tribunal was to establish the facts of the case, and that no-one involved, members of the Gardaí or the Hayes family could be charged with an offence or punished because of the Tribunal (Inglis 2003). When examining the questions and treatment of Joanne Hayes in the Tribunal, one could argue that she was punished, not legally, but by public humiliation.

The media in Ireland swarmed around the Tribunal and it was the main topic of publication for weeks, along with the discussion of motherhood, contraception and abortion.

There were two very different discourses with regard to Joanne Hayes, and they were based on a binary opposition commonly associated with women: virgin/whore. Hayes was either ‘a martyred mother and the Gardaí a corrupt institution’, or she was ‘an immoral young woman who violently killed her newborn baby’ (Goc 2012, p.75). The Irish media, while provoking important conversations on motherhood, corrupt state institutions and female sexuality were still entertaining the Irish public with stories about Hayes’s sex-life and her affair with a married man. One of the headlines read: ‘She Wasn’t a Virgin When the Affair Started’, as if this fact about the woman’s sexual history had anything to do with the case (Goc 2012, p.77). There are strong similarities here with attitudes in the Belfast rape trial and the Cork rape trial, as will be discussed in further detail later. This public shaming of female sexuality is still largely present in Irish society and can be seen in this very public case over 30 years later. This suggests that Irish society has not changed all that much, as the same issues are still drawing attention and there is still a big difference in moral standards between men and women.

Even when newspapers were sympathetic to Hayes, they often included headlines like the former. Regardless of morals, the press prioritised sales and people wanted to read about the ‘scandalous’ past that Joanne Hayes had, especially when ‘Irish women’s fertility was the topic of political, religious and public debate’ (Goc 2012, p.78). Regardless of this, Marianne Heron, an editor of the *Irish Independent*, told readers that this moment was a turning point in Irish society: ‘had someone predicted a month ago that there would be a massive expression of sympathy for a young woman who not only was carrying on with a newly married man, but had two children by him, the second of which she allegedly abandoned at birth, no one would have believed it’ (Goc 2012, p.78). Maguire states that the Kerry Babies Case ‘raised these issues in a way that allowed Irish people to project their anger on to institutions of church and state’ (Maguire 2001, p.344). She contrasts this to the reaction of the death of Ann Lovett, where

‘Lovett’s death forced people in Granard and throughout the country to consider their individual and collective role in perpetuating the attitudes that might have contributed to it’ (Maguire 2001, p.344). There are various reasons as to why this could have been the case, including the fact that in the Kerry Babies Case, the state was accused of very obviously mistreating a woman, while in the case of Ann Lovett, it was the culture created by the Church and state that indirectly caused her suffering.

There were five legal teams involved in the Tribunal; these were five separate counsels. One for the Tribunal itself, one for the Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions, one for the three Garda Superintendents, a separate one for the twenty-five other Gardaí involved in the case and one for the Hayes family. Inglis highlights that it could be argued that ‘the state had four different teams and the private citizens, the Hayes family, only one’ (Inglis 2003, p.51). Inglis highlights the three pillars, or ‘eggshells’ as he terms it, on which the case of the Gardaí was based. These were that the confessions of the Hayes family were ‘spontaneous, voluntary and independent’ (Inglis 2003, p.65); that Joanne Hayes gave birth to twins; and also that there were various explanations for the blood groups not linking the Cahirciveen baby with the Tralee baby.

Joanne Hayes was called to give her testimony on the eighth day of the Tribunal. She was a witness in this case that was supposedly set up to investigate the behaviour of the Gardaí, but in reality she was treated as a woman on trial for her immoral behaviour. It was as if the Tribunal was a punishment for having an affair with a married man, for having two children out of wedlock and for having a social life as a mother. An added complication was that Hayes attempted to challenge the Gardaí on their unacceptable behaviour, and this proved to be the final nail in her coffin with regards the Tribunal. Many women in her position would have retracted their statements about the Gardaí with the threat of experiencing even more

humiliation, but Hayes bravely sat through days of men examining the most private details of her life. This is how she changed Ireland for the better. Irish society, at this time especially, did not wish for women to have a life outside of being a mother and this was the basis of much of the criticism and humiliation that Joanne Hayes endured at the hands of the men involved in the tribunal. As discussed at great lengths previously in this thesis, Irish societal morals derived from the Catholic Church and its teachings. Julia Kristeva highlights that even in the Bible, in the case of the idolised Virgin Mary, her past is not mentioned. Kristeva states in her essay 'Stabat Mater': 'admittedly, the Gospels acknowledge the existence of Mary. But they allude only in the most discreet way to the immaculate conception, say nothing at all about Mary's own history' (Kristeva and Goldhammer 1985, p.135).

Hayes recalled the events that she had previously told the Gardaí in her first statement: that she gave birth standing up outside, that she broke the umbilical cord with her hands, that she left the baby down on some hay and went back inside, and that later that night she came back outside and put the baby into bags and buried it in the water hole. She also confirmed this in her book *My Story*: 'now in the open field I realised that the birth was imminent' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1440). She told the Tribunal also that the Gardaí slapped her, intimidated her and would not believe her. On the second day of cross-examination, she began to break under the stress. Her counsel asked for a pause but Mr Justice Lynch refused. After she broke down again, he obliged. Throughout the Tribunal, Joanne Hayes had several break-downs, during one incident, she pleaded with Justice Lynch: 'Please, sir, can I go? Please, sir ...' (Hickey 2020). She ran outside the courtroom to vomit and had to be sedated by a doctor. Kathleen Hayes began to give her evidence in Joanne's absence. Joanne eventually came back to the court but broke down again (Inglis 2003). It was obvious that Joanne was very emotionally traumatised throughout the proceedings, but this did not seem to affect the opposing counsel's examination

and their treatment of her. They continued to accuse her of horrific actions and to ask her extremely personal questions. Hayes' book also highlights how distressed she was after what happened to her baby, she writes of how she was feeling after giving birth: 'The enormity of what happened began to dawn on me. The baby was my biggest worry. Had I harmed it? I tried several times to go out but I hadn't the courage. I was afraid of what I'd find, so I just kept turning it over in my mind as if it was all just a terrible nightmare that would eventually go away' (Bourke et al 2002, p. 1440). She writes a very realistic and honest portrayal of her emotions directly after giving birth. Her heartfelt account contrasts to the monstrous and evil person that those in the Tribunal attempted to create of her.

Donal Hickey of the *Irish Examiner* described Joanne Hayes during the five days that she was being examined for the Tribunal. He said that she spent the whole time on the stand looking 'tearful', and that often as she became 'distressed, her replies were barely audible' (Hickey 2020). Those cross-examining Joanne Hayes often attempted to connect her to any man that they possibly could in order to get her to admit to having sexual relations with another man along with Jeremiah Locke. This would, in turn, support the superfecundation theory. On one instance, Joanne Hayes was accused of sleeping with a man named Tom Flynn. The only relation that this name had to Hayes was that his name was written on her mattress in blue biro (Inglis 2003). Hayes told Martin Kennedy, the examiner, that her Aunt had bought that mattress in a shop in Castleisland. This was in fact confirmed at a later stage of the Tribunal by another employee of the shop as he admitted that a man called Tom Flynn had worked there from September 1968 to June 1969 and that the name on the mattress was a way of distinguishing delivery responsibilities (Inglis 2003, p.70). Tom Flynn had emigrated to America. The Hayes family were quizzed about any man who came in contact with Joanne, and it was insinuated that they could be the father of the second baby.

Joanne was publicly asked about her sexual relationship with Jeremiah Locke. ““Were you intimate with him on that first occasion?” Hayes answered “Yes”” (Fegan 2018). Often, the questions had an underlying judgemental tone: ‘You weren’t in love and still you allowed intimacy to take place on your first day?’ (Fegan 2018). The idea of female desire and *jouissance* was unacceptable in Irish culture. Irigaray states: ‘And her sexual organ, which is not one organ, is counted as none.’ (Irigaray 1985a, p.26). This is why it is stressed that any sexual activity by a woman is for solely reproductive purposes.

Many of the ‘questions’ asked in the Tribunal were simply statements and can be seen to be aimed at harassing Joanne: ‘Then you used the expression in your statement “We would live happily ever after”’? “Do you not realise that expression only occurs in fairy tales?” (Fegan 2018). It could also be wondered how Justice Lynch did not step in here, as these are not genuine questions, they were used to simply badger Hayes on the stand. She was also shockingly asked about her virginity: ‘I have to put this to you, because it has been raised in evidence, Jeremiah Locke said that when he began to make love with you that he said in answer to questions that you were not a virgin at that time?’ (Fegan 2018). The relevance of this fact within the case is limited. It brings to mind the victim blaming in other chapters to do with rape – when a woman’s sexual past is wrongly blamed for sexual assault. Joanne Hayes was also asked for the number of men that she had been with before Locke, again the relevance of this to the case could be questioned.

She was also interrogated about her social life as a single mother:

After Yvonne was born and that while you were enjoying the good life, earning good money, working every day at the sports centre, enjoying your work, no doubt meeting the public, looking after the cash, answering the telephone, socialising, going to parties, your sister Kathleen, then approaching thirty years of age, was sitting at home minding your baby? (Fegan 2018)

This statement includes various issues with regards to motherhood in Ireland. Mothers, especially single mothers, were supposed to be at home. It was ridiculous that they should be working and if they were working, they should not be enjoying their job. They should definitely not be making good money, socialising or going to parties. The other issue is the comment about Kathleen Hayes approaching thirty years old, is that it was implied here that she should be settling down and having children of her own. It was also asked if Kathleen was ‘getting any younger?’ (Fegan 2018). This was a similar implication. This highlights the feminist perspective that men attribute value to women in a patriarchal culture largely based on reproductive ability – an ability that takes place in socially-sanctioned contexts. Fertility and the ability to produce offspring increases a woman’s value in this culture and as Kathleen Hayes was not ‘getting any younger’; hence her value was decreasing. It is this ‘exchange of women’ in society that creates this value (Irigaray 1985b, p.170).

Joanne Hayes was interviewed after the Tribunal on *The Late Late Show* by Gay Byrne. Byrne asked her: “Did you not expect the Tribunal to find as it did?” and Hayes replied: “I didn’t expect a clap on the back but I didn’t expect they’d go so hard on me. After all, the Tribunal was set up to look into the behaviour of the Gardaí but it was I who went on trial” (It was I who went on trial 2018). The statements that Joanne Hayes made about the Gardaí’s mistreatment of her during questioning are alleged, and because of this, while one can make their own judgement on what they believe, one cannot be completely sure of the truth and whether these actions did take place. Regardless of the corresponding and similar claims made by the Hayes family of mistreatment during questioning, none of these have been confirmed to be true. However, many people witnessed the mistreatment of Joanne Hayes during the Tribunal, and while often the counsels were simply doing their job, the case could have been handled much more sympathetically due to the sensitive nature of the material involved. The

full blame does not lie with those doing the questioning; it also lies somewhat with Mr Justice Lynch, who did not intervene in this harsh treatment and because of this, protests began outside the court.

Another thing to note is that in the midst of cross-examining a colleague of Joanne's, Anthony Kennedy referred to Joanne as 'cunning' and asked if she had expected 'such lies and deception from Joanne' (Inglis 2003, p.65). When Senior Counsel for the Hayes family protested these pejorative terms, Mr Justice Lynch replied that he was not going to 'limit the bounds of language used in the Tribunal' (Inglis 2003, p.65). This statement sent a clear message to all in the court, that Justice Lynch was not about to protect Hayes from the judgement and ridicule, it also symbolises the law does not protect women of Ireland. Mark O'Brien, a journalism history lecturer in DCU, who was also a teenager in Tralee at the time of the Tribunal says: 'I remember the silent protests outside the council chambers in Tralee where the Tribunal sat. Women would give flowers to Hayes as she went in and out of the hearings' (Gataveckkaite 2018).

The rest of the Hayes family were also cross-examined in the Tribunal. Most of the family's accounts matched that of Joanne, but Michael Hayes' account and Bridie Fuller's account included statements that the baby was born in the house. This was vital to support the Gardaí's story, regardless if all of the others were supporting Joanne's story. It was argued that Michael was of 'sub-normal intelligence', and that his evidence was 'unreliable' according to Dr Fennelly's evidence (Inglis 2003, p.57). The issue with Bridie Fuller's evidence was that she was recovering from her second stroke, so it was argued that her evidence was also unreliable (Inglis 2003). One of the inconsistencies was that Fuller said firstly that she did not wash the baby, which was confirmed by the State Pathologist as the baby had not been washed, but shortly afterwards she said that herself and Joanne had washed the baby (Inglis 2003).

Jeremiah Locke was then cross-examined, and was also asked intimate details of his and Joanne Hayes' sex life. Martin Kennedy, legal counsel, was asked about the relevance of this line of questioning by Mr Justice Lynch. It is interesting that he did not interrupt with this question while Joanne Hayes was on the stand. The attempt here was to set the scene for the theory of superfecundation. By attempting to demoralise Joanne through details of her relationship with Locke, and portray her as a promiscuous woman, it would look more possible that she had intercourse with more than one man in a 48-hour period, Locke and another, which would support this superfecundation theory. At one point, he was even asked about having sexual intercourse with Joanne in his car.

Inglis also highlights that the main strategy of the legal teams for the Gardaí was to attempt to show the female employees of the sports centre in Tralee as 'immoral and irresponsible, bad judges of character and easily fooled by Joanne Hayes who was, they suggested, the most immoral and irresponsible of them all' (Inglis 2003, p.65). In one of the cross-examinations of a female employee of the sports centre, she was asked "What did your husband say to that?" She replied: "I told him I was out" to which they replied: "Out drinking with a married man" (Inglis 2003, p.67), implying that it was completely unacceptable for a woman to be out drinking in a bar without her husband and in the company of another married man, and this is just one more example of the patriarchal principles on which many of the cross-examinations were based. Referring back to the feminist perspective of Irigaray on the value of women, the virgin/whore binary is present in this examination of culture. As Irigaray states the 'virginal on the other hand, is pure exchange value' (Irigaray p.186). The 'virgin' or the submissive, domesticated woman, is worth more on the exchange market of women in patriarchal culture due to the morals present at that time. This contrasts with the 'whore' aspect of the binary which is representative of the woman in question here who went to a bar without

her husband. While she is not actually labelled as a whore, she does form that aspect of the binary which refers to elements of uncontrolled sexuality – going to a bar with a married man but not in the company of her husband. She signifies, in this situation, a disobedient woman and one that would not be looked on fondly in patriarchal culture.

Superintendent John Courtney also said something that shocked a nation, a statement that was widely reported and critiqued in Irish academia. ‘She must have been of loose morals because I heard Jeremiah Locke giving evidence here that she had association, that she was intimate with other men, some other man at least, before he had intimate relations with her’ (Inglis 2003, p.71). Courtney’s statement highlights the opinion that many of the men involved in this Tribunal had of Hayes, or at least what image they wanted to create of her. It also showed how this culture viewed, and, at times, still does view, women’s sexuality.

Joanne was also diagnosed, without proper examination nor interview with the psychiatrist, with a personality disorder. This diagnosis was purely based on Joanne’s statement, and Dr Fennelly’s notes. The consultant psychiatrist, Brian McCaffery, stated that:

She is inclined to tell lies to people of authority. She is an expert at having attention drawn on herself, from what I have read and what I have seen she catches a lot of public sympathy for a while. The relationship with her boyfriend and her wishes – as I think the question was put – to go off and live with him in dreamland. I think it is really fantasy that is typical of histrionic individuals. (Inglis 2003, p.72)

This analysis is not just about Joanne Hayes, I would contend, but about women in general. It is motivated by the idea that women are cunning and manipulate people to feel sympathy for them without there being a real need for it. Also it is suggested that women live in a fantasy land without regard for real life, or the ability to be serious, and is furthered underscored by the standard relation of women to mental illness or ‘hysteria’.

One of the things that the Gardaí needed to prove was that the bag with the body, if thrown off Sleah Head, where the Hayes family apparently disposed of it, could reach the White Strand in Cahirciveen, as this is where the Cahirciveen baby was found. They called in four people to attempt to prove this, two of them experts in marine matters. Some believed that it was possible that the bag could have travelled via sea from Dingle to Cahirciveen, while others did not. Regardless of this, the theory of superfecundation had to be valid for this point to be relevant.

The theory of superfecundation was finally dismissed when Dr Patrick Lincoln, senior lecturer in blood group serology, University of London, gave his evidence (Inglis 2003). He stated that if Joanne Hayes had given birth to a baby with blood group A (Cahirciveen baby), there would have been traces of this blood group still in her blood. Superfecundation was then ruled out and there was little mention of it after this. The representation for the Gardaí then moved to blame the contamination of the tissues of the Cahirciveen baby when samples were taken. Again, experts to support this case were brought in and gave their evidence. This theory remained plausible until Dr Louise McKenna, the state's forensic scientist, found a gene in the Cahirciveen baby that was not present in Jeremiah Locke, making it impossible for him to have been the father, regardless of the blood groups and regardless of contamination. After this, the discussion moved on to Joanne Hayes having twins, with neither being the Cahirciveen baby. The Gardaí and their representatives were still determined to prove that they did not botch the investigation and that Joanne Hayes was guilty, regardless of what crime. The theory was that Joanne Hayes gave birth to two babies, one by herself in the field and another in her bedroom with the assistance of her family.

There were many other weaknesses in the case against Joanne. The stab wounds in the chest of the Cahirciveen baby were significant. Dr Harbison's evidence stated that the stab

wounds in the Cahirciveen baby were made by ‘a more stiletto like object’ (Inglis 2003, p.78). Therefore, the wounds shape and width would not have been caused by the carving knife that Joanne Hayes was accused of using. Another pathologist was brought in to oppose this, and while he stated that the wounds on the heart could have been caused by a carving knife, the others around the body did not suggest this to be the case.

Another weakness was that Joanne Hayes, while ‘admitting’ to the murder of her baby, stated that she stabbed it in the back; however, there were no stab wounds in the back of the Cahirciveen baby. There was another issue with this:

What is crucial here is that Garda Liam Moloney told the Tribunal that he had heard Superintendent Courtney tell the garda conference on the 30 April that the baby had been stabbed in the back. If Garda Moloney was right, this incongruity would imply that more than just suggestions were being made to Joanne Hayes. The addition of the stabbing in the back might seem like an attempt to obtain congruence between Joanne Hayes’s statement and the facts of the Cahirciveen baby’s death. (Inglis 2003, p.79)

The Tribunal Report itself was published in October 1985. It was written by Mr Justice Lynch, the judge in charge of the Tribunal itself. It has been widely criticised by academics. Vicky Conway states: ‘In the broader sense, rather than making sense of what happened the Tribunal was conducted as if its purpose was to establish the guilt of the Hayes family (Enright et al 2017). Inglis has referred to it as reading ‘like a good detective story’ due to its ‘narrative flow from chapter to chapter’ (Inglis 2003, p.84). The chapters are named adequately and the Report itself has delved into the background of the Hayes family, the culture of Ireland and of a small community at this time and ‘the way the Gardaí operated and responded to this crisis and the unfolding events’ (Inglis 2003, p.84). Inglis also highlights that the report begins with the Hayes family and this is peculiar given that to the Tribunal being established to investigate the treatment by Gardaí (Inglis 2003). From reading the report, it can be seen that much of the

language used is biased in favour of the Gardaí, and there is often an undertone of condescension toward Joanne Hayes and the Hayes family. The report can be seen to make excuses for the Gardaí's behaviour throughout the case also and 'raises more questions than answers' (Conway 2018)

Examining the excuses made by Judge Lynch, he refers to the Gardaí's failing to write down Joanne Hayes' first statement, while they wrote down her second statement (which was the one that Hayes alleged that she gave because it was 'what they wanted to hear'):

It is significant that this story was never written down by either Detective - Sergeant O'Carroll or Detective-Garda Browne, whereas the other story which implicated her in the Cahirciveen Baby was written down as soon as she offered it. The second story was the one which the Detectives honestly believed to be the truth and was also what they wanted from her. They believed that the first story was untrue and consequently they were not interested in taking any proper note of it. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.90)

It also states in the report:

It is impossible to make precise findings on the many allegations of Joanne Hayes of verbal abuse. It is however clear that the atmosphere prevailing, particularly during the last two hours of her interview with Detectives O'Carroll and Browne from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., after the results of the second search were reported as revealing no signs of a baby, was one in which the two Detectives were clearly saying that she was telling lies insofar as she was saying that she had killed her baby by choking it and that her baby was out on the lands. Her understanding of what Detectives were saying to her was that she had stabbed the baby and that her baby was in Cahirciveen, whether or not they specifically mentioned those things. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.90)

Here, Mr Justice Lynch is alleging that the Gardaí did not, in fact, say those things to Joanne Hayes, but she was mistaken in her understanding of the conversation, therefore the Gardaí were free from blame for telling Joanne Hayes what had happened, and that they were simply

seeking the ‘truth’. He also deems it ‘impossible’ to make precise findings on Hayes’ allegations of verbal abuse, this may be true but the action to simply ignore them is unacceptable. One may presume that the whole reason for the Tribunal is to examine these allegations instead of dismissing them, and Justice Lynch also seems to create an undertone of female hysteria as he speaks about ‘many’ allegations. The word ‘many’ creates a tone that Hayes is exaggerating the number of allegations and being excessively dramatic. This, again, links back to the common patriarchal notion of hysteria which has been a common discourse in feminist theory, and can be linked back to Freud’s famous case study of Dora and hysteria.

One of the names of the chapters in the report is ‘Why the False allegations?’, obviously suggesting that the Hayes’ claims of mistreatment were false, although no solid proof of this had been found. In this chapter in particular, the report attempts to explain why the Hayes family decided to accuse the Gardaí of mistreatment. According to the report, the Hayes family used ‘the oldest way in the book’ and accused the Gardaí of such things to re-establish their reputation (The Stationary Office 1985, p.75). There was a publication in *The Sunday Independent* which reported the case in detail, and included a number of extracts from the statements made by the Hayes family. The Tribunal Report claims that because these extracts were very damaging to the reputation of the Hayes family, they decided to claim that the Gardaí used verbal and physical threats in order to obtain these statements, and also that they were invented by Gardaí and that they were also false (The Stationary Office 1985). This biased and defensive part in the report also can be seen to show where the writer’s priorities lay when writing it.

Following this, Justice Lynch also writes:

It is probably true to say that the Hayes family had no realisation of the seriousness of such false allegations against the Gardaí. It did not occur to them that if they were

accepted as true, the Gardaí against whom they were making the allegations would have to be dismissed by the Garda Síochána, because such misconduct involving physical abuse of citizens by Gardaí simply cannot be tolerated. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.75)

Lynch writes this after he had dismissed the allegations of assault by various members of the Hayes family, and that he decided that they had been fabricated. However, this was Lynch's own judgement. He discusses the implications that these allegations would have had on the Gardaí involved if they had been found to be true, but does not mention the implications that this misconduct would have had on the Hayes family. If these statements are true, then the Hayes family certainly experienced horrific treatment at the hands of the Gardaí, though Lynch does not seem concerned about this. A final, ironic statement that Lynch writes is: 'Where the media fall down is in their failure to give equal prominence to the other side of the case' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.75). Justice Lynch can certainly be seen to make up for that in his writing of the Tribunal Report. Inglis highlights that, throughout the Report, Justice Lynch offers excuses for actions of the Gardaí and often ignores those difficult to justify: 'Mr Justice Lynch again glossed over an important issue here' (Inglis 2003, p.104). He blames Hayes' guilty conscience for her being 'convinced or half-convinced that she had done away with her baby in the manner suggested by Detectives' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.91). Mr Justice Lynch 'did not analyse how Joanne Hayes came to describe in detail an event he determined had not taken place, despite analysing in depth so many other aspects of the case' (Inglis 2003, p.105).

Lynch writes in the report about Kathleen Hayes' interview with Gardaí: she 'was not terrorised nor was she overborne', although Kathleen Hayes has previously stated that she was terrified of the Gardaí in their conducting of the interview (The Stationary Office 1985, p.96). One may wonder how Justice Lynch can comment so confidently on how Hayes felt, when

firstly, he was not present in the interview with Gardaí, and secondly, when he does not know Kathleen Hayes apart from her statements and interviews in court:

Joanne Hayes complains in her Statement of Complaint but not in her evidence that Detective-Sergeant O'Carroll said to her that her baby would haunt her for the rest of her life. Whether or not he said this is of no great importance. It was not a tea-party they were at. The Gardaí were investigating the death of a baby that (inter-alia) had been stabbed 28 times and had had its neck broken. (The Stationary Office 1985, p.80)

This is an extract also taken from the report. It, again, can be seen as an example of how Justice Lynch recognises some facts of the case as important while seeing others as less so, with those that would harm the reputation of the Gardaí being deemed 'less important'. Lynch's language here is significant; he writes 'but not in her evidence'. Because Joanne Hayes did not mention this in her evidence, the report highlights this in order to provoke doubt about the legitimacy of the statement. The statement 'this was not a tea-party' can be seen as extremely colloquial and patronising to include in such a legal document. The words 'tea-party' also have very feminine connotations, and Justice Lynch seems to locate and define the role of women in the private and domestic sphere, as opposed to the public social sphere. It can be said that a statement similar to what was said to Joanne Hayes, about her child haunting her, is appropriate for neither a 'tea-party' nor for a difficult and important Gardaí investigation if conducted correctly.

Mr Justice Lynch also highlights in the report that it is well-known in law that 'promises or threats of temporal advantage or disadvantage inducing a confession will render the confession inadmissible in evidence' (The Stationary Office 1985, p.80). His excuse for a threat such as 'your baby will haunt you for the rest of your life', is that it is a spiritual disadvantage being threatened and that therefore the confession is still admissible. This is a technicality and regardless of whether the confession is still admissible, the horrific statement that was made to a woman, who would be later proved innocent, and who had recently lost her baby, is morally

wrong. Maguire highlights how biased this Tribunal actually was. As mentioned previously, it was established to investigate the Gardaí's dealings with the case and the allegations of abuse but 'of Lynch's forty-three findings, at least twenty-five addressed the actions and statements of the Hayes family while only four addressed allegations of garda misconduct' (Maguire 2001, p.352). An issue with this is that neither Lynch nor any other officials involved in this Tribunal saw anything wrong with how this was conducted.

Joanne Hayes writes of the moment that she and her family heard the findings of the Tribunal report as it was announced on the radio news:

The whispered prayers and aspirations were stilled as the judge's first lethal blow landed: I had killed my baby in my bedroom by putting my hands on its throat to stop it crying by choking it. I had also hit it with a bath brush in the presence of Mom and Kathleen. My screams drowned the rest. Oh Jesus, not that, not after Dr Harbison's evidence. I became hysterical and heard no more. (Bourke et al 2002, p.1442)

This account highlights the trauma that Hayes and her family went through. She references Dr Harbison's evidence as he, the State Pathologist, testified that it was impossible to say whether Hayes' baby had 'achieved independent life because the lungs were not fully inflated' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1442). Ignoring this evidence from a medical professional, Judge Lynch reported that Joanne Hayes had strangled her baby to death. He also disregarded the evidence from Dr Louise McKenna that there was no evidence that Hayes' baby was born in her bedroom, and that there was vegetation found on Hayes' clothes that supported the theory of the birth taking place in a field (Bourke et al 2002, p.1443). Justice Lynch disregarded two professional state witnesses, and took the word of Bridie Fuller, who had visible and obvious difficulties and health issues which made her evidence less than reliable. It is plausible that Judge Lynch, instead of investigating or outlining why the Gardaí operated in a certain manner during the case, and why they explored particular avenues (the original reason why the investigation was

established in the first instance), may have used the report to place blame on Joanne Hayes and her family.

Hayes was so traumatised after hearing the report, that a doctor was called to the house to treat her and advise her how to cope and how to face the days ahead (Bourke et al 2002, p.1443). Hayes thought, 'What days ahead? I had no future now' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1443). As the report found that Hayes was not the mother of the Cahirciveen baby, people attempted to console Joanne about this fact but she stated: 'I had always known that and so had the Gardaí if only they'd had the decency to admit it' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1443). It was the manner in which the case was handled that traumatised Hayes as she stated in her book:

that there seemed to be no humanity in the relentless way in which I was pursued by my legal interrogators. The process of the law allowed for me to be torn asunder and every part of me examined in such a way as to denigrate and degrade me. (Hayes in Daly 2017, p.3)

In May 2006, Hayes's life was once again under threat of disturbance as she read in her local newspaper that the Irish Film Board was providing funding for two films based on the Kerry Babies Case. Through her lawyer, Pat Mann, the same lawyer who was involved in the case, Hayes 'begged to be left in peace', and 'to allow her to get on with her life' (Goc 2012, p.64). It again shows how Hayes was deeply traumatised and how she was still being affected by the case twenty years later.

Anne Mulhall writes of Hayes's own memoir: Hayes describes her dehumanization by the tribunal, who 'discussed my capacity to take further punishment ... as somebody would ask a mechanic when the car would be ready' (Ingman and Ó Gallchóir 2018, p.388). Hayes's 'further punishment' largely came to an end in 2018 when DNA tests were carried out and they proved that she had no connection to Baby John, the Cahirciveen baby. The Taoiseach issued an apology along with the Garda Commissioner and the Minister for Justice. Taoiseach Leo

Varadkar apologised on behalf of the state and said that ‘it reflects, I think, the extent to which Ireland was such a different place in the 1980s than it is now’, and that Hayes was ‘a woman who was very badly treated by our state and by our society in a way that so many other women have been in the past and that needs to change’ (RTE 2018). Hayes then took a High Court Case and received compensation.

With regards to Baby John, his grave still lies in Cahirciveen, and I have visited it myself. The case of his death remains unsolved. It is also presumed that a controversy lies with this baby, as the grave has been vandalised various times. *The Irish Times* reported that ‘a heavy instrument, possibly a sledgehammer, was used to smash the black marble slab’ (The Irish Times 2004). The culprit was never discovered.

The Kerry Babies Case was a turning point in Ireland and Joanne Hayes was a martyr for women’s rights, especially single mothers. During the Tribunal, Justice Lynch was met by hundreds of women upon leaving the council chambers after a day of hearings. “‘What have I got to do with the women of Ireland in general? What have the women of Ireland got to do with this case?’” He stated in frustration’ (Gataveckaite 2018). Mr Justice Lynch, being an upper-class male citizen, was oblivious and ignorant to the role of the Kerry Babies case as a significant step in combatting the patriarchy in Ireland. He also states in the report: ‘What is so unbelievably extraordinary about two women in County Kerry in one of the weeks in 1984, both deciding to do away with their babies?’ (Bourke et al 2002, p.1444). The issue with this statement is that it originated from a well-educated person who is expected to be fair and moral in this report. What can be understood from this statement is that because infanticide was so common at this time, many simply accepted it. But realistically, whether Hayes did kill her baby or not, the idea of two women, in the same county, in the same week both doing away with their babies is a shocking statistic. Also, these extremely public cases were unusual, the

reality of infanticide in Ireland at the time is that it was rarely public knowledge, so this lends to the idea that the amount of infanticide that was left under the radar must have been huge. One might wonder how horrific the environment for mothers in society was at this time that women avoided it through such extreme measures, however, Justice Lynch does not seem to find anything ‘extraordinary’ about it.

Prior to the Ann Lovett case and the Kerry Babies case, Catholicism in Ireland was at an all-time high with the census in 1961 reporting that 94.9% of the population were self-declared as Catholic (Central Statistics Office n.d.). This has slowly decreased over the last few decades due to a number of factors, these cases included and in 2016, it was recorded that 78.3% of the population were Catholic. This is the lowest ever recorded and a significant drop from the data gathered in 1961 (Central Statistics Office n.d.), and the probability is that the 2022 figure will be lower again. Wills and Barry highlight some of the reasons that Catholicism began to decline in Ireland, stating that it was ‘a disillusioned response to the rigid position adopted by the Catholic Church on contraception, “mixed” marriages and divorce’ (Bourke et al 2002, p.1410), allied to the many scandals that were exposed surrounding members of the Church: Bishop Eamonn Casey fathering a child in the 1970s, the reports of abuse of children in the orphanages and homes that were church-run, the shocking cases of sexual abuse of children by a number of priests. Matte highlights how a surge in birth rate in the 1980s also affected this decline in the more recent years:

In the early 1990s, half of the Irish population was under the age of fifteen years, the birth rate having peaked between 1979 and 1981. This means that today the massive arrival of a younger generation into the work force is but the least of Ireland’s changes. Just as the post-war baby boom meant that an entire generation reached maturity in the 1960s in several Western countries, a similar phenomenon stimulates Ireland’s dynamism. (Matte 2007, p.23)

Therefore, this new generation of young adults has benefitted from the improved education system. In the 1960s, Ireland had 21,000 full-time tertiary education students in comparison to 127,000 in 2005 (Matte 2007, p.23). These more educated people were now being made aware of the ideological control of the Church in matters of sexuality and individual moral choice which led to a decline immediately. 'But a drift away from religion was a factor in Irish society before these cases were exposed, revealed by the increasing non-observance – by both women and men – of religious codes of sexual and moral behaviour' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1410). The case of Joanne Hayes is a complicated one as it was positioned at the beginning of this decline. Hayes did not seem to observe these 'religious codes', and while many people at this time had started to act in a similar manner, it was still a relatively controversial topic and going against Church morals was still widely criticised.

Something to note about both the Ann Lovett case and the Kerry Babies case was that both of the women involved were very 'ordinary' women, 'women who were not part of any movement or who did not in themselves represent anything other than themselves. Living in small communities, attending school or work in an unremarkable and routine way, they have none the less been cast into the centre of Irish political life' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1412). This is exactly what happened to Lovett and Hayes as they instantly became martyrs and representative of all Irish women through no choice of their own and through their own suffering. Unfortunately, Irish society responds to tragedy, and similarly to how Jesus died on the cross for people's sins in the Catholic religion, someone had to die in Ireland for change to happen. Ann Lovett was such a martyr, and while Joanne Hayes did not die, her wish for a quiet, unbothered life certainly did. This image of sacrifice and suffering also can be tied to 'images of suffering Mother Ireland and the self-sacrificing Irish mother', and as Meaney highlights, can be 'difficult to separate' (Meaney 1991, p.3). She makes this point as she links

the idea of national identity and sexual identity. The idea was that to be truly Irish, and to be a true Irish woman, sacrifice is necessary, and usually that sacrifice was concerned with a denial of female sexuality.

Joanne Hayes and Ann Lovett behaved ordinarily and it was a tragic accident that brought them both into the limelight. The reason I say that they behaved ordinarily is because regardless of legislature or moral regulations in Ireland, a large number of women were acting in this way, being sexually active outside marriage, getting pregnant or bearing illegitimate children. There were various factors, including bad luck, that lead the cases of Lovett and Hayes in particular to be brought to public knowledge.

Class played an important factor in each of their cases. One could say that both the Lovett and Hayes family were working class, both living in rural areas and not particularly well-to-do. With Lovett's family running a pub in Granard, and Hayes' family running a farm in Kerry, they could easily be considered 'normal' people. While some would argue that Hayes' family had a higher standing in their community than the Lovett family in theirs, they would be on similar levels with regard to social standing. Neither family would have possessed the funds to send their daughter to England to terminate the pregnancy, or to Dublin to have the child in secret, or to 'care for a sick relative' as it was often disguised. It was a well-known fact that both of these options to deal with a pregnancy at this time were expensive. Due to this, the pregnancies of middle-class and upper-class women were dealt with more easily, as their financial situation led to them having more options. Ferriter highlights that contraceptives were more available to the 'middles classes, those with friends or family in England and those with the time and money to travel to Belfast or access to a liberal doctor' (Ferriter 2009, p.408). However, it was reported in an article published in 1988, by the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group, that in more recent years, 'more working class and poor women are deciding

to have abortions' (Bourke et al 2002, p.1448). The support group founded in the 1980s consisted of Irish women based in London, and provided support and assistance for women undertaking the journey to London for an abortion. De Beauvoir also refers to class as a factor in women's reproduction, she states: 'sometimes abortion is referred to as a 'class crime', and there is much truth in this' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.470), as if both of these women had access to funds, then their situations would probably not have arisen, as they would have had access to abortion or to the other solutions for a pregnancy at the time.

The fact that both women were from rural areas, Hayes more so, also had an effect, as Anne Byrne suggests: 'the principle disadvantage experienced by rural women is the lack of access to resources and facilities which are more often available in large urban areas' (Smyth 1993, p.142). Byrne also highlights another disadvantage that directly affected Hayes: 'what about the women on a small farm, whose income is limited and whose medical card does not entitle her to the full range of family planning facilities?' (Smyth 1993, p.142). Family planning services were inaccessible to many women at this time regardless of locality but the rural area certainly did not assist Hayes or Lovett in obtaining any advice on family planning or even contraceptives. De Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex* of rural areas and the lack of reproductive knowledge and that 'it may also happen that a small strangled corpse is found under a hedge or a ditch' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.471). It is almost as if de Beauvoir is foreshadowing what was to happen to Hayes and what happened to many women due to lack of resources and guidance regarding reproduction.

Luce Irigaray writes in *Je, Tu, Nous* that 'many of us are under the impression that all we have to do is not enter a church, refuse to practice the sacraments, and never read the sacred texts in order to be free from the influence of religion on our lives' (Irigaray 1993, p.22), and she follows with an explanation as to how influential religion is to society and culture. This

chapter has highlighted how society still mimics religious morals in many ways, and while some people may not be actively practising religion, they are still influenced, especially in Irish culture, by religion. The Catholic Church, while the number of those actively practising Catholicism is declining steadily in Ireland, is still heavily influential in terms of various morals and practices in society, particularly regarding women.

Chapter Four: Rosaleen McDonagh and *Mainstream*

What Ireland shares with many societies around the world is a dangerous reality: once a group of people is isolated as being in some way inferior, the general population becomes less concerned with how they are treated, even in the face of evidence of cruelty and abuse. (Raftery cited in Mullally, 2013)

This quote, by Mary Raftery, can be applied to the mistreatment of three groups of people around whom playwright Rosaleen McDonagh bases much of her writing. These three groups are: women, Irish Travellers and those with disabilities. McDonagh herself is female, physically disabled, and an Irish Traveller, and it is from her personal experience that this interest stems. Originally from Sligo, Rosaleen McDonagh is the fourth of twenty children in her family, and is a member of the Traveller community. McDonagh was also born with a disability which forces her to use a wheelchair. McDonagh has cerebral palsy, which has got progressively worse over the duration of her life, and she was placed in an institution, or what she calls a ‘special school’, at the age of four because of it. In this particular school, there were children with physical and intellectual disabilities, and as a result, the education that McDonagh received was based on disabilities; so she studied topics such as speech therapy, in comparison to mainstream subjects such as reading, writing or mathematics. At eighteen years of age, she began attending the Institute of Education and received her Leaving Certificate qualification four years later.

McDonagh admits she was late to ‘mainstream’ schooling herself, a fact which can be connected to the title of her play, *Mainstream*, which will be the focus of this chapter. McDonagh is extremely pro-active with regards to various societal issues and her perspective ‘comes from a lived experience of racism, ableism and sexism’ (McDonagh 2018). McDonagh speaks openly about the discrimination and abuse that she has encountered throughout her life and utilises it to raise awareness through her literature. She speaks of this ‘lived experience’, as

she describes an early memory of an encounter with racism that still affects her to this day. She tells of a frightening episode that took place when she was a child; a group of men shouting ‘Travellers out!’ came towards their trailer as she and her sister played inside. The group rocked the trailer and turned it over, shattering the glass on top of the children. They were rescued by a young Garda before a gas container leaked and the trailer went up in flames. This episode led to McDonagh being heavily involved in Traveller rights activism, and partly explains why she attempts to both represent and fight for this minority. She believes that she speaks for the Traveller community when ‘the voices of previous generations came out of my mouth, as I started to speak’ (McDonagh 2018).

McDonagh was also affected by another traumatic event in her life that perhaps has also influenced her activism today. At age thirteen, the author was subject to sexual abuse by an employee of the ‘special school’, and she took an overdose as an attempt to take her life:

He would bring you up on the lift. Your wheelchair would be clamped and then the bit that was most distressing was the safety belt. He’d lean over looking for a kiss from his gypsy girl while also having a grope. As the years rolled on the gropes extended themselves to other forms of dangerous behaviour. His manipulation & coercion felt like he was giving me special attention. (McDonagh 2017)

This man was loved and respected in the school and community and as a result of this authority, McDonagh downplayed and ignored the abuse until it became too much for her to handle. She now says, looking back, that ‘we have often chose, as a society, a beloved, charismatic man over a woman – any woman’ (McDonagh 2017). All of these events have affected McDonagh as a person and as a writer, and her readers can see the significant autobiographical connections in her works.

McDonagh has a BA in Biblical and Theological Studies, two MPhils, all from Trinity College Dublin, and she was awarded a PhD from Northumbria University in 2019. McDonagh

is a regular contributor to the *Irish Times*, with her writing frequently discussing issues related to disabilities. McDonagh's plays usually focus on highlighting Traveller issues through a feminist lens. She gained valuable experience with this subject while she worked in the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, in the Violence against Women Programme for ten years. McDonagh is also the first person from the Traveller community to become a member of Aosdána.

Irish Travellers have been present in Irish society since people have been present in Ireland. Irish oral history tells of '*fir siúil*', meaning walking/travelling men, and also of '*mná siúil*', meaning walking/travelling women. People that followed nomadism, were professions such as 'bards, musicians or herbalists', or tradesmen such as 'metalworkers, tin-smiths, horse dealers and fairground entertainers' (Hayes 2006, p.9). This minority were previously known as 'tinkers', the word originally derived from people that mended metal utensils, though this word is now classed as derogatory. There is also a lot of confusion as to the relation between Travellers and Roma Gypsies. Irish Travellers, while their culture has significant similarities to Roma Gypsies, is a completely different ethnic group. They are often intertwined in general discourse, but this thesis will focus on the culture and experiences of the Irish Travellers specifically, although some instances may unintentionally also apply to the ethnic group of Roma Gypsies also.

As of April 2016, there are 30,987 Travellers in Ireland; this makes up 0.7% of the general population of Ireland, making them a relatively small minority group. The Traveller community's culture and traditions often differ from those of general Irish culture. This difference has led to 'othering' and various forms of judgement and discrimination directed toward this ethnic group. 'Travellers are expected to conform to the expectations of the dominant group', the dominant group being settled people (Dublin Travellers Education and

Development Group et al 1993, p.11). ‘They are expected to behave in a “normal way”, to live in a house, to abandon a nomadic way of life and to share the same aspirations as settled people’ (Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group et al 1993, p.11). Michael Hayes refers to Travellers as:

an indigenous group who fall outside much of the theoretics of race and yet at the same time are acknowledged to be a group of Irish people who suffer a particular form of social and cultural ostracisation. (Hayes 2006, p.1)

The attempt by society to ‘other’ Travellers resulted in them experiencing various forms of abuse. This abuse prompted many Traveller rights groups to be formed to fight for equality, along with recognition and support from the Irish State. These groups include Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Irish Travellers Movement. These groups, along with many activists, were successful in their fight for recognition, as in 2017, then Taoiseach Enda Kenny announced that Travellers would be recognised as an official ethnic group and that they would receive State support.

Traveller culture is widely known for having various traditions that many of the communities and families still follow quite carefully. Nowadays, there are conflicting reports as to whether Traveller traditions have evolved to become more relaxed, or if they have remained quite strict and restricting, especially toward women. Rosaleen McDonagh believes that traditions were followed far more religiously at the early stage of her life and before she was born, and that they have become more relaxed in contemporary time with Travellers, especially women Travellers, having more personal choice in their actions (McDonagh 2021). Other reports state otherwise. TikTok star Bridgely Wall has gained thousands of followers on the social media app for simply telling of her life as a divorced Traveller woman. The Irish Traveller, who is living in the UK, was forced into an arranged marriage at 16, and has reported

her husband to have been physically and mentally abusive of her. She openly tells her followers about her life and about Traveller traditions, actively highlighting the discrimination that Irish Travellers experience on a daily basis. Many travellers face both direct and indirect discrimination from non-Travellers.

Michael O’Flaherty, director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed some recent statistics in a speech at Traveller Equality & Justice Project’s ‘Barriers to Justice for Irish Travellers’ report launch event in April 2022. He revealed that the EU-wide average of Travellers and Roma Gypsies that experienced some sort of discrimination in the past year was 25%. This is quite a high number, however the statistics from Ireland alone are simply shocking. In Ireland, 65% of respondents revealed that they experienced discrimination in the past year alone and as O’Flaherty says: ‘a dramatically higher figure than the EU one’ (O’Flaherty 2022). Also, ‘a study by Micheál MacGreil, from Maynooth University, showed that 41% of people were not willing to employ a Traveller’ (Traveller Employment n.d.). The FRA also report that 38% of Travellers in Ireland ‘felt discriminated against when looking for work’ (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2020, p.4). Only 17% of Traveller women have jobs in comparison to 68% of Irish women of the general public ((European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2020, p.4). While it can be a cultural norm of Traveller women to remain in the home, this discrimination will have also had an impact on the lack of female travellers in the workplace.

Travellers are often grouped into one particular negative stereotype, and it is forgotten that, similar to the general population, families and communities are very different and have their own values, rules and traditions. Bridgey Wall, known as Bridgey Barbara on TikTok, supports this theory as she speaks about Travellers having a negative reputation in a video: ‘Well there’s different types of Travellers, and these Travellers are the type of Traveller that

we're scared of the same types you [sic] scared of' (Wall 2021). The fact that there are conflicting reports from various sources about the traditions and values of Travellers can also be linked to this theory, that various Traveller communities and various Traveller families also have different values and traditions, as in general culture, and is why McDonagh and Wall have quite different opinions about how Traveller culture is evolving. *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland* by Frank Murphy and Cathleen McDonagh also highlights the mistake of generalising Traveller families and communities: 'Different families have different traditions or customs, which they may or may not follow and it is never wise to generalise about Travellers' (Murphy and McDonagh 2000, p.60).

The norms, or often rules, in Traveller culture are significantly different for males and females, Wall highlights: 'A boy can do what he wants, he can drink alcohol before marriage, he can sleep with other people before marriage, where like a girl won't be, if a girl does she'll be shamed from her family' (Wall 2021). While these Traveller cultural norms may seem extreme to some, they are not far from those of general society, where a non-Traveller woman is also shamed for being too drunk and for having sex before marriage. These conventions are interesting in comparison to the dress of female Travellers. This is a continuous topic of conversation by the general public due to television shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* and *Gypsy Brides*, which will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter. Clothing of Traveller women in particular is often quite dissimilar to the fashion trends of the general public, and this has also evolved drastically over time. McDonagh writes of the importance of appearance of Traveller women, especially of their hair: 'regardless of the changes that were forced on us within the community, our hair has always been a source of strength and beauty. We wash it, we fix it, we style it' (McDonagh 2021, p.9). McDonagh writes of her grandmother putting trousers on her as a child despite it being shameful in her early life for traveller women

to wear trousers: ‘this was outrageous at the time. To everyone else, the trousers were to keep me warm; deep inside me, the kernel of knowledge that this was a political act grew’ (McDonagh 2021, p.11). She believes that ‘the iconic image of Traveller women in shawls and skirts evokes a romantic nostalgia’, and that they ‘reflect a time when women’s lives were defined by poverty and domestic roles’, but she believes ‘the world has moved on, and Traveller women are no longer restricted by these roles’ (McDonagh 2021, p.11).

In contemporary Traveller culture, the clothes worn are still of great importance but are less modest than the shawl and skirt. The community are often recognised now by their wearing of short skirts, tops showing their stomach and low on their chest. One thing to note is that Travellers, while they are wearing short skirts and low tops, still believe themselves as ‘pure’, as many of them have never had sexual relations with anyone, due to the rules mentioned above. This contradicts current society’s view on revealing clothing: it is seen as impure and as a signifier of sexual availability, especially in rape culture as victims are blamed for wearing revealing clothes. This is an interesting aspect of Traveller culture and perhaps society outside the Traveller communities should adopt this mode of thinking namely, that showing skin does not mean sexual availability. This is very forward thinking in comparison to many of the Traveller traditions. This idea in particular can be closely linked to Louise O’Neill’s *Asking for It*, that is discussed further in the thesis, and highlights the link between revealing clothing and victim blaming. Being sexually ‘pure’ is an important aspect of Traveller culture, and is simply an exaggerated version of the priorities of the general public. Tom Inglis writes of where it originated in Irish culture: ‘the obsession with sexual purity was connected to both cultural and material interests: to an attempt by Catholics to attain a symbolic victory of the Protestant English colonizers by demonstrating moral superiority’ (Inglis 2005, p.23).

Pride in the home is also a large part of Traveller culture. Older norms were that the typical Traveller man was at work from early morning to late evening, and the cleaning of the home fell to the wives and daughters. In recent times, Traveller women are ‘experiencing a change in traditional roles’, and are now ‘combining domestic responsibilities with working outside the home’ (Traveller Women n.d.). This is similar to the situation of women outside of the Traveller community as well, due to the influence of patriarchal culture of Irish society. According to the 2016 Census, 30% of Traveller women over the age of 15 are looking after the home (Traveller Women n.d.). It is not simply the woman’s role that is clearly defined in Traveller culture, but also that of the man: ‘Back then, men could eat but never cook. If a man did venture onto that dangerous terrain, he’d be ridiculed for the rest of his days’ (McDonagh 2021, p.53). It was the husband’s and father’s responsibility to finance the household. Nowadays, many Traveller women are financially independent, and work in caring service occupations, retail, administrative positions and health provision (Traveller Women n.d.).

Another reason why Traveller women often have difficulty obtaining a job, aside from the discrimination and prejudice, is due to a lack of education. While some Traveller women, like McDonagh, have returned to education as adults and completed Bachelors’ Degrees, masters Degrees and Doctoral Degrees, generally only 13% of Traveller girls complete secondary school, in comparison to the 92% of the general population (Traveller Women n.d.). Many older Traveller women have even less education, and McDonagh often speaks about her mother being illiterate (McDonagh 2021). A statistic from 2014 highlights that ‘7 out of 10 Traveller children live in families where the mother has either no formal education or primary education only’ (Education and Travellers n.d.). This is often due to a negative experience at school, where Traveller children are subject to bullying, discrimination, low expectations from staff and isolation (Education and Travellers n.d.). This negative association with education is

often the reason why so few Travellers continue to further education. Bridget Wall also states that ‘we’re not supposed to have friends that are not Travellers. That’s another reason that we get pulled from school early when we’re young’ (Wall 2021). She states that this happens due to a presumption that those who are not Travellers will be a bad influence on the Traveller children. This often relates to different values that originate from the different families.

It is not just in education that Travellers receive negative reactions. Female Traveller Winnie McDonagh writes that ‘discrimination is not just about being refused entry into pubs. I know and have seen how badly Travellers have been treated in supermarkets, hairdressers, libraries and shopping centres, in fact, almost everywhere Travellers have to avail of a service or facility’ (Sheehan 2000, p. 121). The comprehension of Traveller culture in Ireland is significantly ‘underdeveloped’ for many reasons (Marcus 2019, p.viii). Due to the documentaries focusing on Traveller culture, such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* and *Gypsy Brides*, that are frequently broadcast on television, many people assume an awareness of the full nature and range of this culture. Rosaleen McDonagh has criticised these types of programmes in an article, and it highlights the issues that they provoke, not just personally for the Travellers involved, but also in terms of the negative attitude that many have towards them and their culture. This type of documentary is otherwise referred to as a ‘mockumentary’ (McDonagh 2012). A documentary that, instead of examining a subject without bias, adopts a condescending tone and often ridicules the subject on which the programme is based. *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* in particular, includes a comprehensive portrayal of Irish Travellers. This documentary focuses on the lives of Irish Travellers and Roma Gypsies, both in Ireland and the UK, as they travel between the two countries. The theme is disguised as a supportive and enlightening examination of Traveller culture, but as it includes many elements that contradict

this apparently innocent intention, one can understand the offence it can cause to this ethnic group and many Travellers have publicly aired their upset and dislike for the programme.

In the opening line of one of the many episodes aired, the narrator refers to the Traveller community as one of the ‘most secretive communities’ (*My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* 2012). While creating this mystery around a minority is a production technique used to intrigue viewers, it instantly creates a negative impression of this group of people, in the name of entertainment. The difference between this type of documentary about Travellers and another documentary about a different minority group is the level of respect that is shown to the group being portrayed. As all television shows are heavily edited, the final product shown on television is carefully manipulated, and this can be seen to work against Travellers. An interview scene of a nine-year-old girl about to make her communion is aired with her mother beside her, telling her the exact words to say and it shows the young girl repeating these words. The editing here attempts to insinuate the Traveller community as unintelligent and almost comical. In this particular episode, there is another interview with an older man of the community which shows him batting away flies and running away from them during the interview.

The importance of the narrator in any documentary of this kind is significant, and has a strong influence in the shaping of the viewer’s mind-set. This particular narrator in *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* has quite a condescending tone when discussing the people in the documentary, and makes subtle derogatory comments. For example, the use of sarcasm is frequent in this programme: when discussing a young girl getting quite a dark tan sprayed on her before her First Holy Communion the narrator states: ‘Margaret has decided to contrast her brilliant white dress with a subtle shade of ... brown’ (*My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* 2012). The reviews on the documentary are often quite mixed. On one hand, the documentary won ‘Most Ground-breaking

Show' at the Cultural Diversity Awards in 2010. At the time of the documentary being aired live, the live viewers were in their millions, one live airing reaching 6.4 million people (Frost 2011). While the producers argue that societal issues, such as domestic abuse, that were often avoided in conversation, were now being discussed in households as a result of this programme, it also provoked a very negative reaction online, specifically on Twitter, to the Traveller Community. Jane Jackson, deputy chief executive of the Rural Media Company, a charity which publishes the *Traveller's Times*, states that it is 'posing as a documentary' and that 'it's not generally true'. She also states that Channel 4 'should be ashamed of themselves for pillorying a community who already face a lot of prejudice' (Frost 2011). Other feedback is that Travellers are being subject to an increase of bullying because of the Channel 4 series and its various ad campaigns (Plunkett 2021). Educational consultant Brian Foster, who also chairs the advisory council for the education of Romanies and other Travellers, states that it had caused 'real, measurable, and long-term harm' (Plunkett 2021).

The discourse of gender equality within the Traveller community is a very complex one with many layers. The comment made earlier in the thesis that feminism is a very personal aspect of someone's life is also relevant here. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' in the discourse of feminism, and this can be seen as a mistake that second-wave feminists sometimes make. 'In their desire to prove that women are men's full equals, they stressed women's sameness to each other as well as women's sameness to men' (Tong 2009, p.204). Different cultures and races are often disregarded and feminism is painted solely for one type of woman. This is a reason that the discussion of feminism with Traveller culture is a complicated, but important one.

Similar to one type of feminism, *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* and similar documentaries have created the habit of showing one type of female Traveller. This portrayal is inadequate, as there is not just one type of female in any culture. The documentaries, as a production technique,

exaggerate the stereotyped female Traveller: a woman who is beauty-obsessed, uneducated, wears provocative clothing, is married at a young age, lives in a caravan and spends the day completing domestic tasks. While many female Travellers do have some traits of this stereotype, they are not all as exaggerated as the programme depicts, and many people of the general population also possess these traits. 'The pursuit of beauty dominated not only the weddings but every stage of a gypsy girl's life', the narrator reads as the camera zooms in on shots of young girls' skin, bottoms and chests (*My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* 2012). One must treat these documentaries with scepticism. Gender inequality is exaggerated in these programmes with a focus on appearance as the narrator describes the girls' priorities: 'it's all about how nice your outfit is' (*My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* 2012). There is also a focus on competitiveness between females and it is repeated to an excess throughout the programme, along with how male travellers exchange responsibility of the women from fathers to husbands, though as we have seen, de Beauvoir sees this as an effect of patriarchy on all women in society, and not just Travellers.

While there is some truth to the traditions portrayed, there is a sense of 'embarrassment, some anger and internalised shame' amongst the Travelling community at the exaggeration of the values and practices, as McDonagh admits feeling these emotions while she watches it with her female relatives (McDonagh 2012). This also leads one to think of Luce Irigaray's theory of women being treated as commodities: 'the exploitation of the matter that has been a sexualised female is so integral a part of our socio-cultural horizon that there is no way to interpret it except within this horizon' (Irigaray p.171). The programme can be seen to play on and exaggerate this exchange within the Traveller community. While this theory of commodities is present in every culture, it is exaggerated here in order to increase entertainment. Those watching the show laugh and scorn at the commodification of women,

and how they are exchanged so blatantly in the Traveller community, as portrayed by the series. However, so many are oblivious to the fact that commodification of women broadly exists in general culture too.

There are very strong beliefs and traditions in Traveller culture that are strictly followed by the majority of individuals. While different families and communities also adhere to their own traditions, there are many general ones that are followed religiously. The majority of these rules apply to the females of the group, and many can be considered quite backward in comparison to women's lives today. Travellers take pride in their personal and familial reputation, and will usually tailor their actions for reputational protection. The following traditions are carefully passed down through generations from mother to daughter: it is very important that a woman is seen as pure before she marries and so she must be a virgin, to be seen as impure would ruin her own reputation and would apparently be a deterrent for men interested in marrying her; after marriage, a wife must remain sexually faithful to her husband and must avoid any actions that may imply infidelity. This could be as little as being alone with a man or having a conversation with someone. Judith Okely writes of her own experience where she witnessed this:

I was present when a Gorgio man called at a Gypsy trailer for the husband, who was out. The unsuspecting visitor remained, so he was instructed to stay near the open door, as far away as possible from the wife and myself. Another Traveller woman soon appeared: 'What's going on here?' The wife replied, 'It's all right, she's here,' indicating my presence – another woman to safeguard her reputation. The presence of a child old enough to relate events was also considered a protection. (Okely 1983, p.203)

McDonagh supports this in an Irish context as she writes 'in those days, Traveller women who weren't married didn't talk to men other than their fathers or brothers' (McDonagh 2021, p.33). However, the inclusion of the phrase 'in those days' implies that this is an outdated tradition

and no longer in practice. Traveller women are also supposed to remain with their husband for the duration of their life, divorce and separation are not looked on kindly by the Traveller community. Husbands' orders are to be obeyed by wives, along with fulfilling the expectation of giving birth and raising many children. McDonagh writes of her sisters being prepared for the role of wife and mother. Due to her disability, opportunities were unavailable to her, but she also highlights that opportunities were also inaccessible to her sisters due to Traveller culture: 'tradition, while it may be honourable, can strangle' (McDonagh 2021, p.48).

The home life for many female Travellers is portrayed inaccurately by many media outlets. A focus on beautifying and glamorising themselves is prevalent in programmes. There is truth to this, however, as McDonagh admits that 'for many Traveller beoirs, our hair is a source of self-love and pride' (McDonagh 2021, p.9). Many Traveller women remain at home for the majority of the day and domestic cleaning is a large part of their role but this is rarely seen on the various documentaries, this normal task is not interesting or ostentatious enough to be broadcast.

A study of the role of women in Traveller culture which also includes various interviews with several women from this community is a work done by Rionach Casey. This particular work also supports the notion that the gender roles followed by individual families and communities within the wider Traveller community have notable differences. With this in mind, some individuals also refuse to follow many gendered roles that are generally promoted with Traveller culture:

Some Gypsy-Traveller women are showing increasing signs of incremental change in their attitudes to the education of their children but they seem less willing to compromise their feelings on moral issues and traditions regarding marriage, family and the care of children. (Casey 2014, p.816)

Like every culture and the general population, many communities have different priorities and

beliefs, similar to Traveller culture.

The idea of education amongst female Travellers is discussed in detail by Geetha Marcus, who highlights that within education, Traveller women are not discriminated against simply for being members of the Travelling community, but the issues that they face are no different to those of women from a different ethnicity or culture. She states that many people prefer to blame the Traveller girl's community and culture, but rather it is often a gender issue and that 'it is the racialised and gendered scourge within powerful patriarchal systems that binds us all together as women' (Marcus 2019, p.10). The intersection of ethnicity and gender here inhibits the Traveller women's lives and puts them in a less privileged position. 'Inequalities derived from race, ethnicity, class, gender and their intersections place specific groups of the population in a privileged position with respect to other groups and offer individuals unearned benefits based solely on group membership' (Thornto-Dill and Zambrana cited in McCann 2021, p.110).

In today's culture many people associate different characteristics with different genders, and although there are various movements to combat the idea of stereotypical masculinity or femininity, underlying notions are still largely present:

A large amount of research shows that people attribute different psychosocial characteristics to women and men. In general, masculinity tends to be associated with an instrumental dimension of personality (characterized by independence, autonomy, assertivity, ambition, courage, initiative, power, resistance, dominance) and femininity with an expressive-affective dimension (characterized by affection, care, sensitivity, empathy, amiability, sociability, etc). (Williams & Best; Williams, Satterwhite & Best; Conway & Vartanian cited in Todor 2010, p.46)

While other cultures have attempted to convince themselves that they have moved from this belief system, it is still largely present in general culture. At an institutional level, there is

progress being made with attempts such as initiatives to decrease gender pay gaps and rape culture; however, these issues are still largely present despite attempts to combat them. Traveller culture is criticised as it is often openly accepting of these gender stereotypes, and they are widely manifest in the daily practices of this community, where the men are sent to work from an early age to provide for their family, while the women remain at home to tend to the children and the domestic duties. The difference between Traveller culture and settled culture is that they are generally more open about these stereotypes, and have less of a tendency to strive to combat them due to an adherence to traditional ideologies around gender.

McDonagh's most popular play, *Mainstream*, was staged in November 2016 by Fishamble. Packed full of complex themes, McDonagh discusses various contemporary issues, while creating relatable characters and situations. *Mainstream* deals with the lives of three people from the Traveller community – Eoin, Mary-Anne and Jack, as they are interviewed by a young filmmaker, Eleanor. McDonagh deals intersectionally with discrimination against a mixture of groups: women, people with disabilities and Travellers. She combines these social 'disadvantages' amongst the characters, and does not prioritise one over another; these traits are all entangled in discussion and often the audience is unaware to which they are referring. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes: 'Feminism increasingly recognises that no woman is only ever a woman, that she occupies multiple subject positions and is claimed by several cultural identity categories' (McCann et al 2021, p.186). This is directly appropriate in *Mainstream* as McDonagh includes characters of several 'categories' as referenced above: specifically Mary-Anne as she belongs to the category of an ethnic minority, the Traveller community, those with disabilities and the female population. When a character speaks about living with an issue, McDonagh has written it so that it is dependent on the audience themselves to decide which they are discussing, whether it be being a Traveller, being a woman, being disabled or, in Eoin's

case, being gay. McDonagh puts various lines in the play that are relevant to each 'flaw' in the characters: 'We have our history, but nobody ever wrote that down' (McDonagh 2016, p.14). It is difficult to distinguish which history in particular Mary-Anne is talking about here, whether it is Traveller's history, women's history or history of those who are disabled. The possibility is also that she is referring to them as a collective.

McDonagh also shows that feminism is not just black and white, it is personal and can be understood very differently by each person. Some may believe that feminism is activism against pay gaps or sexual assault, others may believe that it lies in the desire to be a successful woman. For each person, there are other aspects of culture intertwined, for example an ethnicity, a disability or a particular culture. An example of intertwined, intertextual and personal feminism, specifically for McDonagh, is an experience she writes of in her collection of essays: *Unsettled*. She writes:

In the mixed special school, for a number of years only the boys got powered wheelchairs. The manual wheelchair was of no use as my arms are too weak to push it. Having others push me around was a frightening experience. Having no control, putting my body into someone else's hands, exacerbated my lack of autonomy. (McDonagh 2021, p.5)

This statement highlights so many issues with regard to feminism. It highlights the crossover between sexism and disability, as males were prioritised when providing assistance to those with disabilities. The idea of McDonagh having no control over her body as she could not physically move the wheelchair, also links to the idea of women having no control over their own bodies with regards to reproduction. This could be a nod to the current discussion and controversy about abortion that was largely present in conversations at the time of this book being published. This will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis. Sexism, racism and ableism are also intertwined in McDonagh's own life. Indeed, intersectionality of the three

categories wherein McDonagh existed were a cause of her abuse. She writes: ‘disabled bodies didn’t have the exotic fetish that Traveller bodies did. The beatings were for my disabled body, and the sexual stuff was for my Traveller body’ (McDonagh 2021, p.23). These sexual connotations linked to Traveller bodies can be linked to a cross-over of cultures where, as discussed previously, the revealing clothes that are worn often in Traveller culture signify a sexual availability in general culture. This type of clothing is also linked to victim blaming and will also be discussed in a later chapter.

McDonagh also depicts a very realistic aspect of feminism throughout the play, especially in the female characters: she shows that feminism can be seen to be present in some actions of the women and not in others, or by one person in some instances and not in others. Some character actions seemingly support patriarchal ideas and some challenge it, it often depends on the belief and opinion of individual audience members. It acts as a reminder that the day to day reality of feminism is a complex and multifaceted experience. Her writing can be classed as feminist and she is not shy about her personal experiences as a female playwright. She admits in an interview that it is very difficult to ‘call out when it’s the hand that’s feeding you’, and this is an issue for various women as they experience sexism in the workplace or by an authoritative figure (Fishamble 2018). She also states that she has:

had two particular experiences where men express the opinion that we just need a woman. We just need a woman to get the funding. I got this email saying there’s no need to read it just can we put your name on the application. I’m thinking, why would you do that? I’m a feminist do you think I’m thick?. (Fishamble 2018)

The blatant and unashamed use of women for selfish gains such as funding also angers McDonagh. The ‘token woman’ is a prominent topic of discussion in Ireland at present, with the introduction of certain gender quotas especially in politics. While these gender quotas are useful and an encouragement for more women to be included in higher levels of employment

and politics, they can also unintendedly promote the idea of the 'token woman'. A woman, as McDonagh discusses, being included in productions solely for funding or to reach a target defeats the purpose of these quotas and creates the same sexist atmosphere that is present when women are disregarded. These gender quotas are an example of the institutional efforts to combat sexism, mentioned earlier, but the reaction to this that McDonagh describes highlights that they are not a simple solution to the problem, and that these quotas are not solving the core issue regarding sexism in society.

Mainstream is packed with complicated issues over a short production time, and this can seem quite complex and unrealistic when considering day-to-day lives. McDonagh does this to discuss all of the subjects that she wishes to include in the play, she contrasts the unrealistic daily life with very realistic characters, and this is the reason that the play works successfully as a whole. The chaotic energy also mimics the difficulties of the discrimination that the characters experience. McDonagh gives the characters realistic and flawed personalities that also make them extremely relatable. Both positive and negative qualities can be seen in all characters, along with insecurities, tempers and fantasies. Mary-Anne's jealousy over Eleanor and Jack's relationship, Eleanor's denial of her disability, Jack's emotional block and Eoin's gossiping, are all traits that add to the realism that this work holds. The conversational tone of the play also helps to create a realistic atmosphere along with the use of profanities by the characters that add to the colloquialism: 'Eoin you're a cunt' (McDonagh 2016, p.10).

Although the reviews of *Mainstream* were few, they all address one key point. McDonagh's play is criticised for engaging with too many complex issues that are subsequently not dealt with adequately on an individual basis. One review of the play states: 'unfortunately *Mainstream* almost has too much it needs to say and, much and all as we need to hear it, the

message frequently overwhelms the story' (O'Rourke 2016). Another review mirrors this by saying:

Even a director of Jim Culleton's finesse and passion can't bring clarity to McDonagh's maelstrom of complex issues in the time at his disposal: too many have been thrown into the mix, and dealt with (if at all) through the inadequate narrative recall of the characters in their interview with Eleanor. (O'Kelly 2016)

This 'inadequate narrative recall' can also be read as a satirical take on the popular shows that McDonagh frequently criticises: *Gypsy Brides*, *Embarrassing Bodies* and other reality television shows that alienate and mock minority groups under the guise of a documentary. These shows also include an unrealistic and entertaining version of Traveller lives, only including excitement in order to speak to the stereotypes. The complexity of McDonagh's play also attempts to combat and correct the notion of the over-simplified lives of Travellers, created by the various media outlets, which centre around fighting, cleaning, drinking and other criticised actions. McDonagh's over-complicated work can be seen to expose these stereotypes, and to normalise the lives of travellers and highlight that they are full of complex issues similar to the general public.

The authenticity of the production was important to the creators, and they included performers with disabilities to avoid 'cripping up', a term used by McDonagh that refers to the use of non-disabled actors and actresses to play the role of a character with disabilities. 'Crippling-up' is a world-wide problem, and Christopher Shinn writes that non-disabled actors playing disabled roles provide us with the comforting assurance that we are not witnessing the actual pain and struggle of real disabled human beings:

it is all make believe . . . Able-bodied actors can listen to the disabled, can do research, can use imagination and empathy to create believable characters. But they can't draw on their direct experience. That means that audiences will be able to "enjoy" them without really confronting disability's deepest implications for human life. (Johnston 2016, p.43)

The practice of crippling-up 'focuses on changing bodies imagined as abnormal and dysfunctional rather than on changing exclusionary attitudinal, environmental, and economic barriers' (McCann et al 2021, p.186). Although attempts were made to cast disabled actors in disabled roles, McDonagh admits that 'opportunities for training and development in theatre for disabled performers and actors are not *de rigueur*' (McDonagh 2012). This in turn increased the difficulty in finding suitable Irish disabled performers to cast.

McDonagh states in an interview that 'when you're disabled or you are living in a disabled body, it's always very empowering to find bits of your body in literature, or in music, or in art' (RTE 2019). This can be considered one of the reasons that inspired McDonagh to write *Mainstream* and to attempt to cast other disabled artists in her play. 'Historically, disability has been primarily written about by people who are not disabled and don't have a lived experience of disability' (Johnston 2016, pp.39-40). McDonagh's background allows a certain authenticity to be developed in the play, and therefore wishes to continue this in its casting. Disabled bodies 'are supposed to be dependent, incomplete, vulnerable, and incompetent bodies' (McCann 2021, p.184). McDonagh attempts to combat this by casting disabled actors in this play, instead she highlights the ability, competency, and independency of those with disabilities. The focus of this chapter is the mistreatment of women and the nexus that it has to Traveller culture, however, where other issues intersect with this experience they will be discussed. These include the representation of masculinity, disability, and racism as they are all delicately intertwined in *Mainstream*.

The story tells of Eleanor, a young film-maker attempting to make a documentary about the lives of the other three main characters Mary-Anne, Jack and Eoin as her ‘commissioning spec wanted diversity’ (McDonagh 2016, p.4). The story tells of the often-complicated relationships between them all, the struggles, the secrets and the harsh realities that comes with disabilities and racism.

McDonagh uses the play to highlight the issues associated with having a disability in Ireland. The character of Eleanor is used to provide an example of discrimination against those with disabilities. It is quite subtle but definitely present from her words and actions throughout the play. At the beginning, she says to Eoin when he begins to reject involvement in the documentary: ‘Who knows in the future, if there’s a follow-up, we might be able to do something, when there’s a bit more preparation and more people to support you. (*Leaning into Eoin talking in a soft voice*). These things, they’re not meant for everyone’ (McDonagh 2016, p.16). She speaks to him in a patronising way and implies that he is child-like and helpless, needing ‘support’ and that he is different to ‘everyone’. When Eoin retaliates with a comment about her own disability, she denies it, like it is something to be ashamed of: ‘No I’m not. I have a rare condition. So rare that it can’t be diagnosed’ (McDonagh 2016, p.16). She also refers to Eoin as ‘too disabled’ when speaking about his involvement in the documentary (McDonagh 2016, p.24). Eleanor is afraid and ashamed of her disability, Jack says to her ‘You’re spoilt, and afraid. Terrified of your body... frightened of us’ (McDonagh 2016, p.26). Eleanor is simply reacting to a culture that promotes fear and shame together with disability: ‘the gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and ability systems exert tremendous pressure to shape, regulate, and normalise subjugated bodies’ (McCann 2021, p.185). Garland-Thomson explains Eleanor’s reaction to her disability diagnosis: ‘Accomplished women who have

physical, mental, or psychological impairments not infrequently flee the category, sometimes proclaiming proudly that they are not ‘disabled.’ (Garland-Thomson 2005, p.1567).

McDonagh also critiques the services, and lack of, for disabilities through the medium of Eoin: ‘Year after year, a begging box, for their cars, holidays bonuses and pensions... Our services are being cut... You might try and edit my words but you can’t edit my reality’ (McDonagh 2016, p.18). She highlights how those with disabilities often feel ‘What about pain and burdening our families or society? There is a view out there that we’d be better off dead’ (McDonagh 2016, p.25). However an extremely insightful and aware statement comes from Jack, ‘Life is shit. Heartaches, loneliness, regrets, rejection, unfulfilled ambitions, dreams and hopes, struggles, but we are still worth something. Don’t buy into that internalised shame shite’ (McDonagh 2016, p.25). This statement highlights the shame that many minorities feel, while also combatting the stereotype of the character Jack possessing less intelligence due to attending a ‘special school’. Eleanor replies with ‘Jesus, Jack, didn’t think you had it in you’ (McDonagh 2016, p.25). This comment can be seen as representing the discriminative public who place these stereotypes onto the groups mentioned and how much of a surprise it is when it is not true.

There is also a romanticised version of Traveller culture that Eleanor references as she coaxes Eoin to speak about his life for the documentary: ‘Traveller culture is so rich, so full of texture. Talk about that. Music and storytelling’ (McDonagh 2016, p.15). Eleanor highlights the other angle that documentaries can take when focusing on minority groups; a romanticised and exotic, often exaggerated, image. She also says to Mary-Anne ‘Soft lighting, your hair down your face. It might help give a gentler image. A more familiar Traveller image... if we are going to film’ (McDonagh 2016, p.30). Eleanor wishes to extract the ‘interesting’ bits out

of Traveller culture, similarly to the documentaries mentioned earlier in this chapter. The areas that possess more entertainment value when appealing to a general audience.

Women's sexuality is often wrongly blamed for many sexual assaults and rapes, an issue discussed in detail by Louise O'Neill in *Asking For It* that will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. Women are blamed for enticing and seducing men, who then are excused as having no further control over their actions. In other cases, women can use their sexuality for their own benefit, adapting their behaviour to manipulate the male gender. This can be clearly seen in *Mainstream* as Eleanor, the producer, attempts to persuade Jack to continue with his interview, an action that would benefit her and her career. She says to him: 'Only talk about what you want' while '(touching his arm in a reassuring way)' (McDonagh 2016, p.6). Eleanor is aware that Jack will respond to her flirtatious behaviour so she continues by looking deep into his eyes, 'smiling flirtatiously' (McDonagh 2016, p.6). Her behaviour seems to work as he continues with the interview. McDonagh is highlighting this behaviour in her play as it is a female response to patriarchy. Women in Irish culture have become accustomed to sexism in every aspect of their lives. Due to the failure of various forms of retaliation against this patriarchal culture, women have resorted to this type of manipulation in order to survive and change the narrative. Radical-cultural feminists believe that men use sex as an instrument to control and manipulate women rather than as a signifier of love. Here Eleanor does this and gets largely criticised for doing so in the play, as a woman would in culture. The power structures in place here are important, the binary is not only male-female but also traveller-settled. Due to discrimination and prejudice, settled people possess more power in society than the ethnic minority of Irish Travellers. This disrupts the dynamic and could have pressured Jack to also complete the interview. Intersectional analysis also works here as it 'explores and unpacks relations of domination and subordination, privilege and agency, in the structural

arrangements through which various services, resources and other social rewards are delivered' (Thornton Dill and Zambrana cited in McCann 2021, p.110). Jack is part of the Traveller community and Eleanor is not, so Eleanor can be seen to possess this 'domination' mentioned above and the 'social reward' is him completing the interview.

The character of Mary-Anne defies various gender roles as a woman, and especially as a Traveller woman. The societal pressure on any woman to be a mother is intense and constant, and even more so as a Traveller woman due to their longstanding tradition of having many children. Although Mary-Anne acts like a mother to the older Eoin, she does not have any children of her own. She was pregnant but lost the baby through miscarriage. McDonagh highlights here that the baby is constantly seen as the woman's property and not the man's, although both have physiologically created the baby. She shows it here as Jack says: 'If I didn't bring all the stress and tension, you mightn't ... we mightn't have lost the baby' (McDonagh 2016, p.54). Although he corrects himself, his first reaction was to say that the baby was hers, and this is due to a convention of believing that the child is solely the woman's responsibility, in both Traveller culture and less overtly in culture generally. Anne McKenna, in a study published in 1979, reveals that in Ireland, it is seen that women are rearing the children and the husband and family are there to help (McKenna 1979). And, in a more recent study of parental roles, even though fathers are more present in actively rearing their children than before, mothers are often the primary carers:

I think we are very traditional, he goes out to work and is the bread winner and does all the things like the fishing and the boat and all that kind of stuff. I cook the dinner, and clean the house; it's the way I want it to be. I want to be at home when my kids come in from school in the afternoon. I want to be there in the mornings to put them out to school. Fortunately, I am in a position where I don't have to work ... I'm not saying that

working mothers are any disadvantage to their children, I'm just saying for me, I like to be at home. (Rose and Atkin 2010, p.787)

Women involved in this study stated that they felt like they had a choice in the matter of child rearing and that they did not feel oppressed, but simply that they preferred running their household in the 'traditional' way. However, the article also includes an analysis opposing this idea:

However, feminist pedagogy might argue (Rockhill, 1987), and the work of Bourdieu would concur, that the mothers were not choosing these roles freely. Rather, the roles were a product of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1971) which, through the illusion of misrecognition and the hierarchies of power within the family field was socially reproduced, from one generation to the next. (Rose and Atkin 2010, p.787)

These points also raise issues of class, the choice of whether to work or not as highlighted in the first quote is not a choice available to all women and this complicates these issues further.

It also highlights the stigma surrounding pregnancy loss in Ireland. This cultural blame often excludes fathers and is generally directed toward mothers. In Ireland, about 14,000 women experience miscarriages each year, a common occurrence but it is still a taboo topic in society (McDonnell et al n.d.). Women often feel shame and guilt after experiencing a miscarriage which alludes to it being a moral issue instead of a medical or psychological one. This can be linked to the 'loss of self-esteem as women feel that they are unable to fulfil motherhood roles' that are so strongly forced upon them in Irish society (Omar et al 2019, p.1).

The attitude that a woman has little to no value without being a mother is also insinuated in this scene; McDonagh is criticising this view that a woman's worth is defined by her ability to conceive. It is especially true of Traveller culture as the women are expected to provide many children. The typical Traveller family is larger than the general population, and the Central Statistics Office has revealed that from a survey of Traveller women aged 40-49 (the age by

which women have typically finished their fertility) ‘nearly half had given birth to 5 or more children, in stark contrast to just 1 in 20 (4.2%) of women overall in this age group’ (Central Statistics Office 2016). McDonagh also revealed a statement by her mother that also highlights the importance of child rearing in their culture. As McDonagh attended a ‘special school’ and was often away from her family, her mother would cry: ‘They’re rearing my daughter’ (McDonagh 2021, p.2).

Ann Oakley states that this maternal need has originated in the socialising of girls and the reinforcement of this ideology by society. She believes that:

if parents did not give their daughters dolls; if the schools, the churches, and the media did not stress the wonders of biological motherhood; if psychiatrists, psychologists, and physicians did not do everything in their power to transform “abnormal” girls (i.e., “masculine” girls, who do not want to be mothers) into “normal” girls (i.e., “feminine” girls, who do want to be mothers), then girls would not grow into women who need to mother in order to have a sense of self-worth. (Oakley cited in Tong 2009, p. 83)

She believes that society psychologically manipulates women to desire to be mothers. This is a radical-libertarian idea. Another one is that until a woman’s ‘maternal instinct’ is fulfilled, she is angry and frustrated. Irigaray writes that ‘maternity fills the gap in a repressed female sexuality’ (Irigaray 1985b, p.27). This can be seen in Mary-Anne as she longs for a baby but is unable to carry one. She becomes frustrated in this inability, but also because she believes that a baby would reinforce and strengthen her relationship with Jack. Society has conditioned her to believe that having a child would fix all issues, when in reality it could create more. Ruddick believes that the maternal, caring, emotional love that is believed to be natural to women is actually a learned behaviour due to the manipulation of a patriarchal society (Ruddick cited in Tong 2009, p.182). If this is true, a male figure has the capabilities of this same devotion and love to their child as the mother, but still the responsibility is that of the mother.

Eoin admits in an interview with Eleanor that at seven years old, Mary-Anne became his mother, and the fact that he was older than her was irrelevant. He says that Mary-Anne and Jack reared him. Eleanor asks him: ‘Did you ever try and find your mother or any of your other relations?’ (McDonagh 2016, p.17). His reply was: ‘No need’ (McDonagh 2016, p.17). Eoin represents a radical-libertarian view that ‘a person does not need to be a biological mother to be a social mother’ (Tong 2009, p. 82). Mary-Anne represents this type of mothering as she cared for Eoin. Eleanor represents the view that ‘nevertheless, patriarchal society teaches its members that the woman who bears a child is best suited to rear him or her’, as she questions him about his biological mother (Tong 2009, p.82). It shows a radical-cultural feminist assertion that children need their biological mothers and Tong states that this is the ‘most oppressive feature of the myth of biological motherhood’ (Tong 2009, p. 84). This ideological position ties women to children, suggesting that the children need the woman who physically gave birth to them; this view argues that rather than a motherly figure, that they need their biological mothers more than anyone else (including biological fathers) and that children only need one nurturant carer (Oakley cited in Tong 2009, p.84). The fact that McDonagh includes Mary-Anne, a disabled woman as the unofficial adoptive mother of Eoin highlights an important point discussed in feminist disability theory. ‘In contrast to normatively feminine women, women with disabilities are often stereotypically considered un-desirable, asexual, and unsuitable as parents’ (Garland-Thomson 2005, p.1567). In the character of Mary-Anne, McDonagh intertwines the stereotypes of women in Traveller culture, where women are often bound to motherhood and domestic life and are often considered sexual due to their dress norms, with the stereotypes of women with disabilities who are in theory, the opposite.

McDonagh highlights the issues specifically with reproduction as a disabled woman in her essays: ‘disabled women were never meant to grow up. Our reproductive systems have

always been regarded as something to be feared' (McDonagh 2021, p.16). She tells of women being put on contraceptive pills without their knowledge or consent and of involuntary hysterectomies. Due to many of these women being unable to read or write, there was 'very little conversation' surrounding their reproductive rights (McDonagh 2021, p.17). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes 'women and the disabled are cultural signifiers for the body their actual bodies have been subjected relentlessly to what Michel Foucault calls 'discipline'' (McCann et al 2021, pp.184-185). The fear of women's bodies in Irish society has been mentioned previously in this thesis regarding the control of fertility however the fear of disabled bodies is also extremely immense with female, disabled bodies in particular being feared and as a result strictly controlled with contraception.

McDonagh also highlights the insecurities and shame that women have related to sexuality. The idea that women must please men sexually is prevalent in society, and McDonagh can be seen to criticise this in *Mainstream*. After having a sexual encounter with Jack, Eleanor says to him: 'Are there ways that I could do things differently? ... in bed? The scars, the botox, my body shape ... ' (McDonagh 2016, p.23). Although Jack denies that there is anything wrong with her, she again asks: 'Is it me?' (McDonagh 2016, p.23). Women in society have been conditioned to believe that they must satisfy male needs in sexual encounters and other interactions, and that if this does not happen, they are blamed. Yet female sexuality has traditionally been deemed as shameful and to be hidden, portrayed in the metaphor of Eleanor searching for her clothes: 'Where's my bra? (Has a sheet around her and is searching frantically)' (McDonagh 2016, p.22). Eleanor covers her naked body and attempts to locate her clothes to cover her vulnerability and hide her recent sexual encounter as society has taught her to do. Separately, Jack is unashamed of their night, and comfortably lies 'bare-chested' (McDonagh 2016, p.22). The fact that their night was a one-night encounter without a

relationship also carries an amount of shame for women in society. It is seen as shameful again for women to have these encounters but men are almost celebrated for doing so. Terri D. Conley writes that: 'men are fairly likely to agree to sex with a stranger, women are exceptionally unlikely to do so' (Conley 2010, p.309). This conclusion is taken from the widely cited study by Clark and Hatfield (1989), where gender differences are examined in relation to sexual attitudes and a conclusion found was that women are less likely to partake in a casual sexual encounter than men. Inglis writes: 'the stereotypical image of the shy Irish colleen, silent about herself and her emotional needs, reflects a historical reality in which there was a strict silence imposed on sex and sexuality in general and on female sexuality in particular' (Inglis 2005, p.26). This stereotypical image of the ideal Irish woman originates from the misogynistic attachment of shame to female sexuality and from the obsession with the image of the Virgin Mary.

This shame around sexuality is clear in a scene from the play when Mary-Anne threatens to expose a recording of Eleanor's sexual encounter with Jack. The camera was seemingly planted by Eoin when he took it from Eleanor. This can be seen as a type of pornography, and Eleanor's reaction is one of shame and anger as she attempts to take the laptop from Mary-Anne. This again shows the taboo and shameful controversy surrounding women in pornography which originates again from the shame of sexuality. Radical-libertarian feminists, Tong notes, 'urged women to use pornography to overcome their fears about sex, to arouse sexual desires and to generate sexual fantasies' (Tong 2009, p. 68). Such ideas can be seen as problematic as women are conditioned to believe that sexual behaviour is scandalous, shameful and should not be something that is recorded and watched. Radical-cultural feminists, on the other hand, find that pornography is especially harmful to women. They believe it encourages male fantasies about sexual abuse such as rape and sexual harassment, and that pornography

also ‘defames women as persons who have so little regard for themselves they actively seek or passively accept sexual abuse’ (Tong 2009, p.68). In addition, it also allows men to discriminate against women and treat them as second-class citizens, while also normalising this type of behaviour. Mary-Anne also uses the notion of shame surrounding women’s sexuality against Eleanor as she predicts her reaction.

This threat is a result of Mary-Anne’s jealousy regarding Eleanor’s relationship with Jack. This is another contradiction in the play which again adds to the realism. Eleanor and Mary-Anne are in competition with one another for Jack’s attention, recalling de Beauvoir’s point, and this idea is promoted by patriarchal ideologies. Irigaray writes of women’s value in the ‘marketplace’ of a patriarchal society as they obtain worth from men: ‘with respect to other merchandise in the marketplace, how could this commodity maintain a relationship other than aggressive jealousy’ (Irigaray 1985b, p.32). Although this type of shame originally stems from patriarchy, women can also be seen to promote the negative attitude and here Mary Anne even attempts to use it for her own benefit. This internalised misogyny is due to the reinforcement from society of competition between women.

Another issue that McDonagh highlights in her play that is very significant for Irish women and their history, is that of the Mother and Baby Homes. The inclusion of them in this play describes a typical scenario for women that were placed in these homes. The character Eoin was born in a Home, as his mother, who was a Traveller, was raped by a settled man and due to the shame attached to women being pregnant outside of wedlock, her family placed her in this home. Eoin says: ‘Then the family thought she was a disgrace so they just put her in there and I was born They used to call us the tar babies’ (McDonagh 2016, p.17). As discussed in detail in an earlier chapter, women were solely blamed and punished for getting pregnant out of wedlock, and due to accepted social standards, the ashamed family banished

them into these homes where they had their child. The women were frequently treated very badly by the nuns that were in charge of these homes and often never saw their child again. The father of the child was free to carry on with his life unashamed and without punishment. While the Church and society at the time were to be blamed for the abuse in the homes, the families are also at fault for bringing them there. Paul Michael Garrett writes of these homes:

Being sent to a Mother and Baby Home had substantial disadvantages for women, as it is clear that these institutions were designed to serve male interests and reinforce the power and social advantages of men. For example, whilst the secrecy inherent in the arrangement was likely to intensify women's sense of shame and guilt surrounding the pregnancy (Viney et al), it preserved the anonymity of putative fathers, safeguarding 'male reputations' (Milotte). (Garrett 2017, p. 362)

This also refers back to a previous point made about the shame surrounding female sexuality. We also see in this statement from Eoin to Eleanor, that the babies that came from these women and these homes were seen as beneath everyone else 'Jack and Mary-Anne won't let me say that word but that's what they used to say about us. Tar babies. Dirt of the road' (McDonagh 2016, p.17). These children were then put into homes together, where the abuse continued. They were physically, mentally and sexually abused by older children and the workers. 'Mary-Anne, she knew, because as she got older the lads did it to her as well' (McDonagh 2016, p.19). The abuse of these innocent children, originally stemmed from society and its views on women's sexuality and the opprobrium attached to it.

Overall when examining Traveller culture, it can be argued that there is a large amount of agency present when comparing their lives through the lens of radical-cultural feminism; Traveller women celebrate and use their female power as mothers and wives in their culture. In addition, many are now using their education and professional lives to combat the patriarchal norms and ideologies but also the negative racial stereotypes. Realistically, female Travellers'

lives in contemporary times are not very different from the lives of women in the general population. They are outlined to be polar opposite on television and it promotes the idea of otherness being associated with this minority. This otherness also leads to abuse, discrimination, and lack of governmental and community support.

The stereotypes of Traveller culture are satirically highlighted throughout the play. McDonagh uses the character of Jack to criticise the stereotyping of Travellers in the various documentaries mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. She over exaggerates the various stereotypes of both male and female travellers. Males - violent, possessive alcoholics that fight and curse often. Eoin states of Jack 'Could have went all the way but preferred to sign a contract with Jack Daniel – what a guy!' (McDonagh 2016, p.8). Eoin also states 'You're like the years-ago men trying to control women long after they've took their freedom' (McDonagh 2016, p.10). Jack also says to Eoin to reiterate the violence 'There are moments when I really want to fucking kill you' (McDonagh 2016, p.10). Mary-Anne also represents the stereotypical female traveller; motherly as she mothers Eoin, image obsessed '*Mary-Anne hands Eleanor a hairbrush*' (McDonagh 2016, p.32), and tolerant. Eleanor says: 'Traveller culture is so male. And women like you collude with that crap' (McDonagh 2016, p.34). It is also possible that McDonagh is highlighting the common misconception of the public regarding Traveller culture.

McDonagh follows the daily lives of Traveller people to normalise the culture as well as showing them dealing with other 'regular' issues. She also wishes to combat the 'pervasive cultural system that stigmatises certain kinds of bodily variations' and normalise the lives of those with disabilities (McCann 2021, p.182). She portrays that regardless of their cultural category, be it gender, ethnicity, class or ability, the problems are similar. She also highlights the struggles of those discriminated against, again regardless of their category. The complexity of the play mimics the complexity of normal lives, full of problems, struggles, happy times and

sad. She aims to highlight the similarities between cultures and to debunk the myths. The general population should first examine themselves before criticising another culture such as Travellers, and in *She's Not Mine*, in the following chapter, McDonagh takes on another stereotype, that of child abuse.

Chapter Five: Rosaleen McDonagh and *She's Not Mine*

Another captivating play by Rosaleen McDonagh that highlights really important issues is *She's Not Mine* that was aired on RTE Radio 1 as part of their drama section. *She's Not Mine*, while being classed as a play, was never produced on the stage and was broadcast on national radio in April 2012. It has four characters, similar to *Mainstream*, which allows the content of the piece to take priority. The play itself is packed with many complex themes, again, similar to *Mainstream*, as McDonagh discusses disability and the issue of feminism in Ireland, along with the abuse of children in state institutions and the mistreatment by the nuns.

Various inner monologues of the characters are also heard, helping to obtain an insight into their minds, which also adds to the realism of the play. While being a work of fiction, McDonagh based this work around real-life occurrences, which in itself draws emotion from the listener. *She's Not Mine* centres around three women, Vera, a woman who gave her daughter to an institution in the 1970s; her daughter Caroline; and Mel, an old acquaintance of Vera's, and a nun that cared for Caroline whilst in the home. Vera accuses Mel of abusing her daughter while she was in the home and the play follows their conversations and thoughts along with the conversations between Caroline and her mother Vera. The institutions discussed in the play existed in Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and they were largely run by Religious Orders. McDonagh has never specified the particular type of institution to which she refers in *She's Not Mine*; instead her use of an umbrella-term covers a wide variety of places to which children and teenagers were sent due to parents' inability to care for them. McDonagh generalises the idea of the homes because many of these institutions were similar in concept.

Various reports and investigations were done into these institutions over the last few decades such as the *Commission of Investigation: Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin*, published in 2009, more commonly known as the Murphy report; the 'Report of

Investigation into the Catholic Diocese of Cloyne' published also in 2009, known as the Cloyne report; the 'Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse report. Vol. IV, Department of Education, finance, society, Kennedy to the present, interviews, conclusions, recommendations' again, published in 2009 and known as the Ryan report. These reports described the living conditions to be broadly the same including the mistreatment of the children who lived there. This was due to them often being run by the same group of religious brothers or nuns. An investigation into these places by the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, released a significant report in 2009 that defines an institution as 'a school, an industrial school, a reformatory school, an orphanage, a hospital, a children's home and any other place where children are cared for other than as members of their families' (Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse 2009, 12.01). The institutions were part of an 'interlocking system' and supported each other (Raftery et al 1999, p.19). There were often large complexes with various institutions on the same land such as an Industrial school, a Reformatory, and a Magdalene Laundry. They all sustained each other and many children attended more than one institution. An in-depth analysis can be found into Mother and Baby Homes in particular in chapter six of this thesis.

McDonagh's work attempts to illustrate the various forms of abuse that were present in the homes, and how they affected both mothers and children for the rest of their lives. Lastly, this work also portrays how society was extremely phallogentric at this time, and how a misogynistic and Catholic Ireland forced many mothers to hide their pregnancies and leave their children to abusive institutions managed and run by Religious Orders. This thesis will focus mainly on the girls and women that these institutions affected. There were usually more girls attending the various institutions than boys: 'girls were usually committed at an earlier age than boys, thus spending longer periods of time in industrial schools' (Raftery et al 1999, p.19). Females were also the most harshly punished in this system of institutions and it is ironic due

to the fact that the majority of them were run by female religious orders. (Raftery et al 1999, p.19). This chapter will examine the repercussions of the homes on all of the women in the play, including the nun herself who undertook much of the abuse.

These institutions were first introduced in Ireland in 1868, eleven years after they began in England and Wales. They were established 'with the specific aim to "save the souls" primarily of women and children' (Raftery et al 1999, p.18). Thirty years later there were seventy-one schools in the country caring for approximately eight thousand children. They were abolished in Britain in 1933, but remained operative in Ireland until 1992. The understanding of these homes amongst the general public was poor, with numerous myths surrounding the institutions helping to blur the comprehension of what was actually taking place. It can be said that 'had there been a proper understanding of the true nature of the system it is likely that it would not have survived for so long' (Raftery et al 1999, p.12). The attempt by the Catholic Church to conceal the true system of the institutions shows the need for control that was present. Paul Redmond, a survivor of an institution, states that:

The Irish Catholic Church had fought long and hard to own and/or control all the different types of institutions spreading across the country and were not about to give them up. (Redmond 2018, pp.11-12)

Fifty-six of these seventy-one schools were for Catholic children. They were otherwise known as 'orphanages', 'although the death of one or both parents was not always the cause of a child being committed to one of these institutions' (Arnold et al 2012, p.18). The title 'orphanage' had a more 'charitable appeal' instead of a 'state-funded institution' (Arnold et al 2012, p.18). There was also 'an erroneous view among the general public that these institutions were reformatories for children who had been found guilty of criminal offences' (Raftery et al 1999, p.13). The percentage of children that were in the homes due to sentencing was very small, and

of those that were, the offences committed by them were so minor that they could hardly be deemed criminals. In 1928, a twelve-year-old was sentenced to an institution for four years and four months for stealing 'a quantity of apples and pears valued at thirty shillings' (Raftery et al 1999, p.27).

Children also were committed for criminal acts that their parents undertook. Many girls under seventeen were actively criminally convicted and therefore committed to institutions for being 'sexually aware', and then moved to the Magdalen Laundries as they aged. The Catholic Church's obsession with controlling female sexuality is clear here and will be investigated in more detail as the chapter continues. Children of unmarried mothers, like Caroline in the play, were often committed solely for illegitimacy. Vera gave birth to Caroline as an unmarried mother, her pregnancy was hidden for months and Caroline was then entrusted into the institution where Mel was employed. Many of the children in these homes were often from poor families, and this was one of the main reasons for a child to be committed to an institution:

It was considerably more expensive to keep children in institutions than it was to place them in properly inspected foster homes, but the state continued to push women and children into institutions. (Redmond 2018, p.14)

One can tell instantly that the main concept behind these schools was not charity and care, but punishment and reform for classes that were seen as a nuisance to Irish society. They were also for 'maintaining social control of the population' (Raftery et al 1999, p.18).

In the play, McDonagh describes the lives of three women at a crucial point in all of their lives: a time where the abuse and mistreatment carried out in institutions is about to be revealed. She traces the fear and denial of the Sister Mel, who carried out the abuse and who was about to be exposed for her actions; the guilt and regret of a mother Vera, who entrusted her child into the care of these institutions; and the anger of Vera's daughter Caroline, who has

suffered mentally for all of her adult life because of her childhood, and directs the majority of her frustration toward her mother for leaving her to this abuse. The play exposes facts through inner monologues and conversations had between the three women and Caroline's husband. It exposes a corrupt, misogynistic society that forced so many women into dire situations due to an overt link between State and Catholic Church in Ireland.

Mel's character is an example of a typical nun who ran these particular homes in Ireland. Religious figures were well respected in Irish society at the time, due to the direct connection with the Catholic Church. This is the reason for the high number of children sent to these schools and why they were entrusted into the care of the nuns and brothers. It was only after the stories were shared that the dirty secrets were exposed that the reputations of the Religious Orders plummeted. They were no longer viewed as the trustworthy and reliable representatives of the Church, but now as evil and controlling abusers of many vulnerable mothers and children. McDonagh includes Mel in order to represent these now controversial figures in society. While they have lost a significant amount of respect, there is still a silent deference to the nuns that has been retained even when they were being punished for their actions. Raftery describes that 'one individual in particular would be in prison for the way she treated the children in her care but for the fact she was a nun' (Raftery et al 1999, p.10). The special treatment for these religious criminals is due to an internalised respect amongst Irish society for the Catholic Church and those associated with it. Mel is portrayed as a judgemental and competitive person who is obsessed with public opinion of her: 'Yes I did take a glass or two of wine. She encouraged me and the ones back home, sure Vera wasn't going to tell them' (McDonagh 2011, p. 9). She constantly puts blame on someone else for her actions that may be disapproved of by society, and this continues throughout the play.

Mel and Vera always had quite a peculiar relationship and it deteriorates throughout the play: 'the thought struck me that we had a strange friendship. It wasn't built on kindness or mutual respect' (McDonagh 2011, p. 5). Although Mel was friends with Vera when she fell pregnant, she continuously punished Vera, in the forms accessible to her, for her promiscuous lifestyle, professional success and for falling pregnant outside of marriage. De Beauvoir writes of peculiar friendship dynamics 'in fact the theme of woman betrayed by her best friend is not a mere literary convention; the more friendly the two women are, the more dangerous their duality becomes' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.520), and she could actually be speaking about these two characters as their friendship has an enmity and a discontinuity at its core that de Beauvoir sees as a patriarchal method of ideologically controlling female relationships.

Mel thinks poorly of Vera because of her actions, she tells her: 'You're not in a position to judge me' (McDonagh 2011, p. 7). Vera's outlook mimics society's narrow-minded perspective regarding women and their sexuality. Single mothers and illegitimate children were looked down upon and treated badly, but contradicting this, abortion was forbidden and an extremely sinful act. Mel manipulated Vera into avoiding aborting her child in England, and she convinced her to have her child and give custody to Mel in the institution. Due to many of the institutions being funded *per capita* 'the Orders required and demanded a constant inflow of children to keep up their total income' (Arnold et al 2012, p.19). This pressure to gain funding could also be a reason as to why Mel convinced Vera to give her child up, along with the opportunity to seize and hold power over her in some way. To add to their strange relationship, Mel does in fact protect Vera from social disapproval, she keeps the secret of her pregnancy from those in their hometown of Sligo as she knows the negative judgement that Vera would receive if the community found out: 'I reminded her I hid her thirty years ago for six months when the bump started showing. She couldn't go back to Sligo. I told her mother, "Ah Vera's

busy with work. She can't come home this weekend Mrs Murphy'" (McDonagh 2011, p.7). Why Mel protects her is unknown, perhaps a true care for Vera lay underneath. While Mel did not have much access to Vera's adult life, she used the only resource at her disposal – Caroline. Mel punished Vera's daughter Caroline in the institution for her mother's actions, but also punished Vera directly by prohibiting a relationship with her daughter. She refused to allow Vera access to her daughter and refused to give 'one lousy photograph' (McDonagh 2011, p.13).

Another reason that Mel wanted Vera to give her the child could be due to the internalised desire of women to be mothers. Mel, being a nun, was not allowed by the Church to have her own children, so the closest thing she could get to a child was Caroline. Mel says: 'You gave her to me. She was mine and then you were asking for her back' (McDonagh 2011, p.13). Unfortunately, this did not assuage her need and due to anger and jealousy, Mel punished Caroline, and the other children, since they were not good enough, they were someone else's child that they were left to care for: 'They weren't exactly dotes. Particularly Vera's one. Vera didn't want her own or she was busy making history in the fucking Civil Service while we were rearing her little yoke of a daughter' (McDonagh 2011, p.17). The nuns were not immune to the pressures of society and the internalised idealistic female traits but these were not fulfilled by someone else's child. The way Mel speaks here portrays anger as Vera was able to live her life unburdened by a child while she reared Caroline. Her jealousy of Vera also comes to light as she references her professional advancements in the Civil Service.

Mel continuously makes excuses for how she treated Caroline and other children in these homes. While she denies that abuse was happening in her conversations with Vera, the admissions in her monologues reveal that there is a large amount of guilt present as she confesses to her actions: 'Softness isn't part of my makeup' (McDonagh 2011, p.4). Mel is

aware that she was harsh with the children but never changed her ways. She also attempts to convince herself that she should be guiltless as she repeats phrases like 'I had nothing to feel guilty about' (McDonagh 2011, p.4) and 'nobody wanted those children' (McDonagh 2011, p.7). Mel attempts to justify her actions to herself, and to Vera, as she blames the illegitimacy of the children for how they were treated: 'these people forget nobody else wanted these type of children' (McDonagh 2011, p.17). While this is an excuse by Mel for her abuse, she is not completely incorrect in that statement. Society at this time strongly rejected children born outside of marriage due to a nexus with the customs of the Catholic Church. This was largely connected, again, with the Church's obsession with control over sexuality, female sexuality in particular.

Issues of law, health and education have all been subject to strong levels of control, both implicit and explicit, by the Catholic hierarchy, and this is especially true in terms of matters pertaining to sexual morality. (O'Brien 2017, p. 147)

These single mothers and their children were often shunned from families and communities and had little choice but to move to England, or to hide their pregnancies and give the children to these homes. The patriarchal culture present also meant that the fathers were left without punishment or consequences. This was particularly present in rural communities, such as Sligo where both women were from, and is the reason as to why Vera avoided going home throughout her pregnancy and remained in Dublin. Speaking of the Church's influence on rural places, O'Brien states:

In an undereducated, largely rural community, such power structures had little difficulty perpetuating themselves: they created narrow horizons of expectation, which limited any development or influence from outside. Information came from the pulpit on a Sunday, from Irish newspapers, which operated under censorship and under legal

frameworks that were intrinsically conservative and under a constitution that recognised the 'special position of the Catholic Church. (O'Brien 2017, p.152)

As Mel attempts to convince herself of her innocence, she puts the blame on anyone but herself. She says to Vera: 'you didn't rear her, feed her, teach her how to wipe her own nose' (McDonagh 2011, p.12). Mel constantly suggests that the institutions were a positive influence on the children; that they nurtured and reared them. She then blames the children for the nuns' actions: 'Some of them were more difficult than others and your little brat was in that category. We did the best we could. We taught them right from wrong, gave them a chance' (McDonagh 2011, p.13). It is unclear whether this is meant to be a defensive reaction by Mel, or whether she genuinely believes that the homes did well in rearing these children. It can be seen, however, that she does believe that the homes were positive as her delusional statements continue: 'We did our best. I did my best and if you want to use the word love that's what it was. Not the soft stupid kind that you went looking for in a man. The kind of love we gave those children made them strong for life' (McDonagh 2011, p.15). This was another difficult statement by Mel as one can see later in the play that the abuse has emotionally scarred and weakened Caroline in her adult years. Mel also attempts to rationalise the abuse when she says: 'There was no fluffy psychology. No we didn't go around telling them how beautiful or great they were. We taught them how to survive' (McDonagh 2011, p.16). The denial continues. Caroline voices her opinion of Mel's child-rearing that also reinforces the truth of the abuse: 'She would have been a very bad mother. A dangerous mother' (McDonagh 2011, p.42).

Mel then moves the blame on to society: 'And now because the world has changed we're guilty of something that wasn't expected or asked of us' (McDonagh 2011, p.13). Mel shirks the blame for everything accused of her. This defensive response can be seen as a reaction to guilt but she also denies it to herself. The atmosphere turns when Mel shows her fear of being

vulnerable as the scandal is about to be exposed, and she begs Vera for her help which, for Mel especially, is an admission of defeat.

What are they going to do to me? What's going to happen? Each day each night I'm losing bits of myself. Bits of my memory bits of dignity. You know me Vera. Over the years I never asked much of you. Now I'm asking. Please? (McDonagh 2011, p.19)

Mel often has moments of contradictive behaviour about her life as a nun, as on some occasions she shows confidence and stubbornness, but in others, she hides: 'Vera Murphy was the first one who made me realise it might be sometime before I could wear a habit in public. Others had stopped wearing it many years ago but I liked it. The power and prestige' (McDonagh 2011, pp.5-6). Mel shows how brazen she can be and how she craved the power and attention regardless if it was negative: 'But, the habit, for me whether they respect it, reject it or hated me for it, when I didn't wear it I felt invisible, like I was no one' (McDonagh 2011, p.6). Mel would rather be seen as evil than invisible due to the reputation that nuns had at that time. Her whole existence centred around being a nun, as often the Church promoted this sense of special social standing in the Religious Orders, and she adored the status that the ideology of the Church brought, but this was now changing. Eamon Maher states that the Holy Orders had a 'formerly enviable position' in society, but that this was 'gradually transformed into a nightmare scenario' due to the exposition of the clerical abuse (O'Brien 2017, p.117). One can also see moments of weakness in Mel: 'the oddest thing, I found myself hiding my cross inside my clothes. The headlines on the newspapers, the radio talk shows. Where do you hide?' (McDonagh 2011, p.6). Mel's shame seems to be of public opinion, and not of the abuse that she caused in the homes and the lives that she ruined. 'Both of us knew our voices were being raised. I told Vera this wasn't the place' (McDonagh 2011, p.7).

Mel needed control in various aspects of her life and the power that she got over both Vera and children in the homes fulfilled this:

I wasn't going to give her to you she was my child. You gave her to me and that's how I understood it. I said it then and I'm saying it now, wanting photographs, you wanted visits, all that maudlin Vera it wasn't going to help the child. You weren't going to take her. (McDonagh 2011, p.14)

Mel repeats the word 'mine' and 'my child' to emphasise that she owned Caroline, and that she had power over her, but she also does this to hurt Vera. This is almost a self-justification for how she treated Caroline as she was her property. She then again makes excuses as to why she would not allow Vera to have contact with her daughter: 'I did it for her not for you' (McDonagh 2011, p.14). She constantly states that her actions were for the good of the child, when really, they were so that she could have control over the mother. Whether she lies to Vera that she meant well, or whether she is in deep denial is unknown.

Women's sexuality is also discussed frequently throughout the play. The idea of a woman being sexually active still has elements of shame attached to it, but this was especially the case in the 1970s, when this story was based. In Ireland, much of this shame derives from the Catholic Church, with emphasis put on the Virgin Mary and the celebration of virginity and sexual purity. The importance of purity and virginity in women was exaggerated so much that this idea was transferred to Irish culture, and as a result, sexuality in women became a taboo subject in general society. The Virgin Mary was an aspirational figure and this Mariolatry in Irish society is 'the dilemma that is unsolvable' (Colletta et al 2006, p.59). Sharon Tighe-Mooney writes of the typical Irish woman's aim: to be the 'perfect Irish Catholic woman, modelled on the Virgin Mary: self-sacrificing, subservient and all-loving, and largely disinterested in sex' (O'Brien 2017, p.201). In the 1970s, Catholic ideals and societal customs were almost indistinguishable, and it is due to these ideals that so many women were shamed

into hiding their illegitimate pregnancies and resorting to the largely church-run institutions throughout Ireland to 'dispose' of their unwanted children. Throughout the play, Mel constantly shames Vera about her sexuality in her youth and before she fell pregnant, and while Mel is a nun and was thus even more disapproving of this behaviour due to her Catholic profession, nevertheless she represents the majority of society at this time. Mel says to Vera while the women confront each other: 'The woman who didn't know which man made her pregnant, the one who had so many she didn't know what his name was' (McDonagh 2011, p. 10):

Catholicism has generally seen desire, especially sexual desire, as a negative human quality, in need of repression. The adequation of desire with sin has long been part of the Irish psyche: the corollary of this ethico-moral equation – desire + sin = guilt – has led to serious consequences for individual development in Ireland. (O'Brien 2009, p. 114)

The idea of having multiple sexual partners is seen as shameful for women, even today. Mel also says to Vera: 'You were loose and easy. Men may not have wanted me because I wasn't like you Vera. I wouldn't give them anything but you gave them everything with a smile' (McDonagh 2011, p.11). The fact that Vera was happy to have casual relationships with men is also a target of criticism by Mel, though Vera then retaliates with: 'Like I said Mel the world has moved on. Sex isn't such a big sin anymore' (McDonagh 2011, p.11). While this is true and society has moved on somewhat, there is still a quotient of shame attached to women's sexuality; it is still, as will be seen in later chapters, a very sensitive topic in Irish culture. While in the 1970s the Church was 'preoccupied with issues of control' and 'with the contraception issue and in the eighties and nineties with abortion and divorce issues' (O'Brien 2017, p.48), these have since been rectified by various referendums; in 1996 it was made legal to divorce, and in 2018 Ireland voted to repeal the eighth amendment and legalise abortion. It is no accident

that the key referendum changes had to do with sexual matters and that these have been the battlefield in the broader social sphere which is being mirrored, on a smaller scale, in this play.

Of course, such societal misogyny is not just an Irish issue. Looking at how western society categorises women, Luce Irigaray believes that there are three social roles imposed on women: mother, virgin and prostitute:

The characteristics of (so-called) feminine sexuality derive from them: the valorisation of reproduction and nursing; faithfulness; modesty, ignorance of and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure; a passive acceptance of men's 'activity'; seductiveness, in order to arouse the consumers' desire while offering herself as its material support without getting pleasure herself Neither as mother nor as virgin nor as prostitute has woman any right to her own pleasure. (Irigaray 1985a, pp.186-187)

In Irigarayan terms, Vera is regarded as the prostitute in this situation due to her relations with men. She is forbidden from enjoying any pleasure herself, but is supposed to act as an object in which to offer men pleasure. Vera, as the prostitute, is 'explicitly condemned by the social order' (Irigaray 1985a, p.186), and here Mel is very much the voice of that order, being a virgin herself and supported by patriarchal power of church and state, both of which underlie her authority. Irigaray is correct in saying this as Vera's actions are shamed and she is punished by Mel, and by society.

McDonagh also discusses the issue with successful women, again Mel's views in the play represent general society's views. Mel disapproves of Vera's professional choices and frequently uses them as ammunition against her. She believes that Vera chose her career over a child, and condemns this throughout the play. While Vera celebrates her 'seven promotions' (McDonagh 2011, p.2), Mel believes that her career was not for her: 'Going into men's jobs as well as their beds' (McDonagh 2011, p.18). Mel believes that Vera is wrong and selfish for being professionally successful and that men should be professionally successful, not women:

I suppose what else does she have? We all tried to tell her to move on. She had plenty of opportunity to get some man to marry her. But no, she was happy to live in her own misery and blame it on other people. She hid behind that job. (McDonagh 2011, p.5)

Again, Mel believes that Vera has lived a miserable life without a man. The idea that a woman's world should centre on getting a husband and not a career was prominent in the 1970s, and while less so now, it is still present. Simone de Beauvoir writes 'there is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a 'protector' – is for her the most important of undertakings' (de Beauvoir 1956, p.328). Mel embodies de Beauvoir's theory, as she focuses on the great loss that is present that Vera did not have a husband. Because Mel is a nun, this was the only acceptable position to be in society without a husband. Vera is proud but also ashamed of how successful she is, and this can be seen as she tells her daughter about her life: 'I'm not saying much has changed but it was hard to move up the ranks. '75 was when I joined, a clerical officer. The job was always what mattered to me. *She pauses again.* Yes, ambition' (McDonagh 2011, p. 38).

Vera has clearly been conditioned to feel shame about being ambitious and successful over the years due to her gender, and it is seen here as she gingerly tells Caroline of her success. A woman's ideal role in society at this time was rarely seen as in a professional context, but rather a domestic one, as women were forced to be mothers, but only a type of mother that society deemed correct: married, unemployed and undertaking only domestic tasks. Irigaray critiques society's obsession with women as mothers:

The man by virtue of his effective participation in public exchanges, has never been reduced to a simple reproductive function. The woman, for her part, owing to her seclusion in the 'home', the place of private property, has long been nothing but a mother. (Irigaray 1985a, p.83)

Irigaray points out here that women are used solely for their 'reproductive function' and not men. The need for men elsewhere in society is partly the reason that fathers were not punished for conceiving an illegitimate child as mothers were. Men are valued for other roles outside of producing offspring. A woman's sole responsibility was to be a mother, but if this motherhood was not socially and religiously sanctioned, then she was punished, along with her child.

McDonagh includes an example of the typical way that men treated women around the time when this play was based, in the character of Vera's father and although he is never directly in the play, the few statements that Vera makes about him give a clear description of the type of man that he was. She says to Caroline when asked about her family: 'Well I didn't have much of a family. That was another reason why I was dying to get away from home. I hated my father. He was a "man of his time" but he treated my mother, my poor mother, like a dog and I was damn sure no man would ever do that to me' (McDonagh 2011, p.36). From this statement, one can assume that men treating women badly, and husbands treating wives badly, was to be expected as he was a 'man of his time'. Normalising this abusive behaviour in society led to its expectation. Her parents' relationship clearly had an effect on Vera, as she refuses to be abused by any man. This also forced her to be successful professionally so that she could be financially independent from her father and any man that she would meet. Her father did not like her independence, and did not approve of her owning a car: 'my father hated it' (McDonagh 2011, p.38). She also admits that she considered telling her mother of her pregnancy, but 'sure I knew she'd tell Dad and he'd take it out on her' (McDonagh 2011, p.41). Her mother represents the loyal caring wife, while her father is the controlling difficult husband – both archetypes of the time. McDonagh included these as examples of a typical husband and wife in the 1970s. A wife suffering at the abuse of her husband at this time was the norm, and Irigaray highlights that

because women have the 'capacity to endure' the pain of childbirth they also can endure suffering in relationships (Irigaray 1993, p.103).

While Vera can be seen as a forward-thinking woman in the play, with her independence, her successful career and her disinterest in having a man in her life, we can see that she has succumbed to one significant societal view: that it is important that men want you, even if you do not want them. She says to Mel: 'No man ever wanted you Mel' (McDonagh 2011, p.10). A patriarchal society is clearly present as women are worried about what men want. Women gain worth in a patriarchal society by the valuing of men: 'commodities among themselves are thus not equal, nor alike, nor different. They only become so when they are compared by and for men' (Irigaray 1985a, p.177). This could also be a cause of competition between women for men's approval, and of the lack of support women give to each other. Even Vera has been conditioned to believe that women find their value in men's approval. This can also be seen in the jealousy that Mel has toward Vera, as in their youth, men wanted Vera. Irigaray sees women as commodities that men exchange and value amongst themselves as 'just as commodities cannot make exchanges among themselves without the intervention of a subject that measures them against a standard, so it is with women' (Irigaray 1985a, pp.187-188). Men are the 'subject' that measure women against a standard, instead of treating women as their equals they are objectified and seen as commodities to be rated. In a patriarchal society such as this in *She's Not Mine*, women would never be seen as equal to men.

The difference in Vera's actions toward her daughter as an adult differ greatly from when she first gave birth to her. The change in behaviour can be linked to various factors: age, maturity, guilt, denial and shame. When she was pregnant 'it was very strong in' her mind to abort her child, and she 'even got a ticket for the boat' (McDonagh 2011, p.40). It was Mel who stopped her from doing this. When Vera first gave birth to her daughter, she kept her for five

days before giving her to Mel, she did not attend the Christening and according to Mel, while Vera was in the hospital, she 'didn't even want to look at her', she did not care about a name for the child either. This type of behaviour is one of shame, shock and denial. Vera could not possibly cope with the situation and hid from it all. As time went on, she accepted her past and longed for a relationship with her daughter, but Mel prevented this and refused access to Caroline or to provide a photo. Despite this, Vera sent money, letters and a communion dress and shoes for Caroline, but Mel 'put it on somebody else', saying Caroline 'would dirty it' (McDonagh 2011, p.59). Vera's attitude clearly changes toward her daughter as she no longer feels shame for having her but instead, feels shame for intrusting her into an institution. She also feels guilt for how she was treated there and for giving her baby to Mel. Vera can now deal with her actions and the consequences of them as she matured and gained confidence with age. It was often youth, immaturity and lack of confidence that also forced young women to give up their children as they were manipulated by society to do so. The play, through images of denial and dirt enacts the way that women of the time were made to feel ashamed of their bodies; it was as if a form of internal misogyny was ideologically created within many women, and this play really grasps this in the attitudes of both Vera and Mel.

Vera admits at the beginning that she 'just didn't want a baby' (McDonagh 2011, p.60). This was a general perception amongst young women then, but as contraception was illegal in Ireland from 1935 to 1980, pregnancies were common and women's choices were limited when they fell pregnant. The use of contraception was seen as 'alien and evil and subverted the National moral order' (Beatty 2013, p.103). It was also thought that if the legislation against the use of contraception was relaxed, then it would promote couples living together outside of wedlock. There was an 'idealised vision of Ireland as a bastion of public sexual respectability' present amongst many of the public at this time, and it can explain both the resistance against

contraception and the mistreatment of unmarried mothers and children born outside wedlock (Beatty 2013, p.105). Of course, such ideas were generally held in Western Europe, though ideas of equality had progressed significantly in other countries, whereas Ireland was still quite belated in terms of such notions of parity; Irigaray writes:

If contraception and abortion are spoken of most often as possible ways of controlling, or even 'mastering', the birth rate, of being a mother 'by choice', the fact remains that they imply the possibility of modifying women's social status, and thus of modifying the modes of social relations between men and women. (Irigaray 1985a, pp.83-84)

In an Irish context, the availability of contraception gave women more power over their own bodies, and more control over their sexual relationships with men. The society that was present in Ireland did not want a change to women's position, either socially or sexually, as this would threaten the repressive, patriarchal structure that was already in place. The power over their own sexuality would give too much power to women.

McDonagh includes a significant quote at the beginning of the play as Vera describes reading reports of the abuse suffered by many children in institutions, and the reactions of various colleagues of hers:

What I read during the day, I just felt my stomach open, of children being starved, being beaten, raped and God knows what. The men in the office were trying to cover it up. In a subtle way, of course. They were talking about what might happen if all the allegations were true. The financial implications, the Government and Church. (McDonagh 2012, p.2)

This particular quote is dense with messages about the culture in which this play is based. McDonagh can be seen to imply ideas about patriarchy in Irish society today: 'the men in the office were trying to cover it up'; it is significant that it was the men in Vera's office that were attempting to cover up the scandal and not women. McDonagh hints at the patriarchal society

present and its tendency to silence and hide various controversial ideas such as female sexuality, mental health, the various scandals such as clerical abuse, and the Tuam babies' case, where babies had been buried in a disused septic tank. She also references the typical victim-blaming culture that is still present in Ireland: 'if the allegations were true', the key word being 'if'. McDonagh highlights that society in Ireland often blames the victim with the idea that they are lying until proven innocent. This trope will be analysed in a later chapter in the thesis that discusses victim-blaming in depth. The other notable part of that quote is the last line: 'the financial implications, the Government and Church'. These are the 'important' repercussions which society focuses on if the scandal is true, and not on the repercussions of the ruined lives of the victims. McDonagh is highlighting that the priorities are in the wrong place, and have been for some time.

The main harrowing point of this significant quote is the emphasis on the abuse that was reported. McDonagh writes of 'children being starved, being beaten, raped and God knows what'. After examining the Commission Report that outlines the lives of ex-inmates in these institutions, one can conclude that the above quote is indeed accurate, and that these children were actually witness to this abuse. The Commission Report examines the physical, emotional and sexual abuse that many children endured over the years in these particular schools and homes. For the purpose of this thesis, I will examine the lives of female witnesses and the nuns that took 'care' of them. The physical abuse that many witnesses reported included 'being hit, slapped, beaten, kicked, pushed, pinched, burned, bitten, shaken violently, physically restrained, and force fed' (The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse 2009, 9.11).

The character of Caroline in the play provides examples of how the victims suffered, both as children in the homes, and now in their adult lives. Caroline describes some of the physical violence that she experienced as a child: 'She beat the shit out of us for no reason.

Locked us in bathrooms overnight' (McDonagh 2011, p.59). Mel also punished Caroline for getting diarrhoea the night before her Communion by rubbing 'excrement on her face'. These harrowing and upsetting accounts that McDonagh includes in the play are based on true events, as one can read in the Commission Report of the witnesses' accounts of abuse a similar occurrence: they reported 'being locked in outhouses, sheds and isolated rooms' (The Commission to Inquiry into Child Abuse 2009, 13.31). Certain somatic behaviour by the children were also punished such as 'soiling sheets and underwear and bedwetting' (The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse 2009, 13.33). Due to the incidents in the play mirroring the factual reports, it is clear that McDonagh's account is in fact accurate as she describes the abuse present in the institutions. It is interesting that bodily functions seem to have drawn the most severe punishments, as if to the institutions the very fact of the female body itself is deserving of punishment. This can be linked to Kristeva's theory of abjection as the fluid is 'grotesque and unclean' but so are the children as they are illegitimate and 'othered' from society (Kristeva cited in Oliver 2002, p.225). These children were almost expelled from society by what they represented.

Sexual abuse was also largely present in these homes and while it is mentioned little in the play, Caroline describes: 'the sexual thing ... they did what they wanted to the children. She explained the older children, teenagers; they in turn would do it to each other' (McDonagh 2011, p.33). Perhaps McDonagh purposely leaves out sexual abuse because of the difficulty in speaking about it, or it could possibly be a metaphor for Irish society covering up female sexuality even as it opens up closed structures and practices in its investigations. In the Commission Report, a witness described sexual abuse that she encountered: 'Br ... X ... used do dirty things to me at night when I'd get my period. He used to wake me at night and took off all my clothes and pull the things up on me. He raped me when I'd get my period, he did it five

or six times and he'd touch my chest' (The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse 2009, 13:44). Many witnesses also reported being sexually mistreated on a regular basis for periods up to five years.

The emotional abuse that many children were witness to in the homes was also horrific. While it is presumed that the majority, if not all, of the children were subject to this type of abuse, some experienced it more than others. Caroline admits to Vera: 'did you know that kids who were orphans were treated worse? Orphans, Travellers, Protestants and poor children' (McDonagh 2011, p.58). She also says: 'I won't even tell you what they thought of kids who were made outside of marriage. Mel (the woman who claimed to be your friend) used to tell me my mother was a whore' (McDonagh 2011, p.58). The voice of the sufferer of abuse tells a harrowing story in the play, and her comments make us look at Mel in a different way. The homes mirrored general society in this way, as those are the minorities that would have been discriminated against generically in Ireland at the time. The treatment of illegitimate children also mirrored society as they were looked down on outside the homes and they were punished inside the homes. The idea that an unmarried woman having a child is shameful is mentioned again here, as Mel refers to Vera as a 'whore'. The abusers attacked the emotions of these children by reminding them that they were unwanted 'constantly telling us that we're useless, good for nothing. That nobody had ever wanted us and nobody ever would. Every day all the time' (McDonagh 2011, p.59). This power display helped to keep the victims quiet about the abuse as they grew older, and left the homes, they were conditioned that there was no one that listened to what they had to say, no one cared: an internalised sense of worthlessness had taken over. Mel destroyed the confidence of Caroline and, as already noted, when Vera sent her a dress for Caroline's Communion, 'Mel put it on somebody else, she said [Caroline] would dirty it' (McDonagh 2011, p.59). These children were constantly being reminded that they were

below everyone else because of their background, Caroline in particular, because she was illegitimate and because of Mel's relationship with Vera.

Caroline's adult life shows that the physical, sexual and emotional abuse carried out by those employed in the institutions had a lasting impact on the sufferers. She admits as she speaks to Vera: 'She still has power over me and she's not even in my life' (McDonagh 2011, p.54). She says this about Mel as she clearly still feels Mel's influence in her adult life. Caroline's husband Brian also provides evidence of how Caroline is still affected 'all the secrets, all the running around, bursting into tears. Not wanting to go anywhere. Not wanting me. Not wanting us. Not wanting sex' (McDonagh 2011, p.30). The experience in the institutions has affected Caroline's mental state, and in turn, has affected all of the relationships in her life, especially the close ones like with her husband. It is not just Caroline that was affected in the play. Something else to note from the last quote is that Caroline's husband is clearly focused on how her mental states affect him. He is obliged to deal with the secrets, tears and how she will not go anywhere and does not want him or sex, something that obviously affects him greatly as he decides to highlight it. McDonagh here also foregrounds that while a man can be a good person, he is also conditioned by patriarchy to look after himself amidst the madness, and that is what Brian does as he worries how Caroline's reactions affect him. Of course, this also suggests that these institutions had huge effects across Irish society on those close to, and in relationships with, sufferers of abuse.

The character of Sean who was with Caroline in the home has also been affected: 'Even Sean, I met him for a couple of pints and he just froze when I asked what happened in that school they were in' (McDonagh 2011, p.31). The abuse had a detrimental effect on the victims especially Caroline in the play, but she admits that 'I'm alright but she ruined so many of the rest of them. Mel single-handedly destroyed them' (McDonagh 2011, p.61). After seeing the

behaviour of Caroline after the abuse, one would find it difficult to think of how bad the others were if Caroline was 'alright' in comparison. Another thing to note is that if Mel, as one person, could destroy lives by herself it shows how much power that she actually had in the school and how badly she treated them.

Sean and Caroline also have a special bond as they share a common understanding of how bad it was in these schools. Her husband was jealous: 'Sean seemed to be over all the time and yet I know she had no interest in him. Nonetheless he was closer to her. Closer to my wife and that drove me insane' (McDonagh 2011, p.30). The connection and understanding between the people that were in these institutions was stronger than those who were not. 'Her childhood was something we talked about but really she gave very little away. Opening up to me was difficult for her' (McDonagh 2011, p.32). It is clear that Caroline found it difficult to discuss these issues with anyone, and perhaps the reason that she was close to Sean is because she did not need to discuss it or explain herself as he had experienced it with her. Her husband admits that 'they've history. History that I don't know or understand' (McDonagh 2011, p.31). The difficult childhoods that they had not just affected them, but also those who have relationships with them. When hearing of the stories, Brian felt 'sick and helpless' (McDonagh 2011, p.32). The abuse not only hurt the victims but also affected those around them.

Vera and Mel's conflicted relationship is an example of internalised misogyny, which is a significant issue in the play. Both women are in competition with each other instead of supporting one another; this is clear from the jealousy present along with various insults that they say to each other. This is still a common occurrence amongst women, as a phallogocentric society has conditioned women to be in competition with one another for the approval of men. Even Caroline, while understandably upset at her mother, does not seem to blame her father for her abandonment, even though he is also at fault. This is because of the internalised misogyny

and the preconceived notion that the mother is solely responsible for her children. Irigaray has much to say about this internalised sexism: 'if we keep on speaking sameness, if we speak to each other as men have been doing for centuries, as we have been taught to speak, we'll miss each other, fail ourselves' (Irigaray 1985a, p.205). Irigaray believes that to combat sexism and repression of women, women must first recognise how they are treating one another and alter this behaviour to avoid and tackle patriarchy. If we apply de Beauvoir's theory, the reason that Mel and Vera are at war is pointless due to them both being condemned by society: 'a woman who appeals too obviously to male desire is in bad taste; but one who seems to reject it is no more commendable' (de Beauvoir 1956, p.508). A patriarchal society, like the one present in the play and in Ireland at present, rejects all women, not because of their actions but because of their gender.

An important point that McDonagh includes in her play is one surrounding disability. Autobiographical ties can be seen here as McDonagh herself attended an institution as a result of her cerebral palsy. Due to this insight, the experiences in the play can be seen as more accurate as a result of her direct exposure to this particular environment:

The institution she was in was abusive, and she hated it: that, though, is another story. There were children of both physical and intellectual disability mixed together, and she received barely any education. (Murphy 2011)

The lack of education in these institutions is an issue that still vexes McDonagh, especially for those with physical disabilities as she includes this issue in *She's Not Mine*. The character of Caroline was also diagnosed with cerebral palsy at the age of five. Vera recalls the moment that she heard the news: 'When you were five, Mel rang me in work. She told me on the phone, she refused to meet me. You had been diagnosed with a condition. She used the word spastic' (McDonagh 2011, p.48). The word 'spastic' is a derogatory term in reference to someone with

cerebral palsy, and the use of this word by Mel shows the lack of respect that she has for Caroline's diagnosis. McDonagh has discussed her anger at such treatment at length in various interviews and other works. 'The only reason I was no good at school was they kept me back. Put me in a classroom with three-year olds, drawing pictures. Then as I got older knitting and sewing. Real good skills for someone like me' (McDonagh 2011, p.62). Her mental capability was wrongly seen to be attenuated by her physical disability. The emphasis on skills like knitting and sewing can also be seen to be perpetuating gendered stereotypes of the time. Caroline proved her intelligence by going back to school and doing her Leaving Certificate and acquiring a degree. Kristeva's theory of abjection can be applied here also: 'And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master' (Kristeva cited in Oliver 2002, p.230). Caroline was deemed worthless and unintelligent by Mel however she proved this theory wrong.

Caroline can be seen to represent McDonagh's own experience in an institution as she had similar treatment, and went on to demonstrate her own intelligence by getting her Leaving Certificate, an undergraduate degree, two Masters degrees and a PhD. McDonagh uses a technique that she also uses in her play *Mainstream*, where she intertwines the societal disadvantages of the characters. Caroline is discriminated against for being both illegitimate and disabled, but much of the time, the listener is unaware as to the specific nature of the discrimination. The idea that she is being mistreated for both is also possible:

That day when Sister Imelda said there was no need for me to have my hair put in wrinkles like the other girls. It would take too much time. I was lucky to have a veil.
(McDonagh 2011, pp.58-59)

Caroline was treated as less important than the other girls in the home. The listener is unaware if this is because of her disability or her illegitimacy, or both. McDonagh is a strong advocate

for disabled rights throughout each of her works and constantly highlights issues with regard to ableism in society.

The impacts that these homes had on many mothers and children were detrimental to their later lives. Because of the ties of the various institutions with the Catholic Church, it can be seen that the Church is at fault through their promotion of various ideals and customs that lead to the mistreatment of so many of these individuals. McDonagh accurately deals with a variety of the issues associated with the process of both entrusting a child into an institution and the repercussions of the institution on both mother and child. While these institutions mentioned in the various reports tend to be grouped together as Magdalene laundries, or as mother and baby homes, one institution has achieved particular notoriety in terms of how it dealt with deceased babies, and it is to Tuam that our discussion now turns.

Chapter Six: Kimberley Campanello and *MOTHERBABYHOME*

Kimberly Campanello was born in Elkhart, Indiana, USA, and holds dual Irish-American citizenship. She has a BA in French and English from Butler University; an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Alabama; an MA in Gender Studies from the University of Cincinnati and a PhD in Creative Writing from Middlesex University. She is now a lecturer in the School of English in the University of Leeds.

Catherine Corless, a local, amateur Irish historian, began her research into Tuam's mother and baby home to examine the history of the home and of the mothers and babies and to 'find out a little bit about them' for an essay that she was doing (Real Stories 2018). She was not prepared for what was about to unfold, as she stumbled upon the dark history of the Tuam home and discovered death records and death certificates of 796 babies, but no corresponding record of burials. It was then found that they were thrown into an sewage tank, unmarked with no headstones for those who died. Corless's findings were supported by a local story that in the 1970s, two young boys were playing and discovered remains:

It was a concrete slab and we used to play there, but there was always something hollow underneath it so we decided to bust it open, and it was full to the brim of skeletons. The priest came over and blessed it. I don't know what they did with it after that. You could see all the skulls. (O'Reilly 2018, p.8)

It was said initially, that these skulls were victims of the Irish famine, but after they were exhumed it was discovered that they were in fact the remains of the babies that died in the home.

'A MASS GRAVE OF 800 BABIES' was the headline that appeared on the front page of the *Mail on Sunday* on the 25th May 2014, and in the words of Campanello, it was the 'precise moment in time when Irish people started to abandon their religion' (Campanello 2019, p.409). The other events mentioned earlier in this thesis regarding Ann Lovett and the Kerry Babies Case may also have led to this metaphorical turning of backs on the Irish Catholic Church.

When this article was published in the *Mail on Sunday*, it was expected that the story would be all over the Irish media the following day, but this was not the case. It was the international media that picked up on the story, and it suddenly became a viral piece. Paul Jude Redmond remembers the media coverage:

On Monday 2 June, the story finally appeared in *The Irish Times* and the *Irish Mirror* although both mentions of the Tuam 800 story were further down in articles that primarily reported Philomena Lee's visit to Sean Ross Abbey. The *Irish Independent* also reported on Lee's visit but never mentioned the Tuam 800 story. (Redmond 2018, p.205)

One would wonder what reason the Irish media would have to fail to report on the Tuam 800 story. The possibility is that the Catholic Church's influence affected the decision, or possibly a sense of shame that was associated with Irish history and with the media's unwillingness to broadcast it; this may have been unconscious, and it is also possible that after the Ferns (2005), Murphy (2009) and Cloyne (2011) reports, there was a form of 'church scandal fatigue' at play in this instance. On the 4th June, the Irish media finally reacted and began reporting on the story. The Irish government were also in denial about the story and demonstrated this when a Galway TD, Colm Keaveney raised the issue in the Dáil. He was eventually ejected, as he refused to give up on the subject. He said: 'in the process of trying to raise an issue that everyone in this country is talking about, apart from the Dáil, I was removed from the Dáil' (Redmond 2018, p.205). Again, there could have been a case of unconscious scandal fatigue here as the country had seemed to be putting all of the scandals behind it at this stage and was attempting to forget about it.

There have been various literary texts created about the institutions of Ireland, but due to the contemporary nature of the Tuam findings, little has been written directly about this particular incident. The decision to include a poetic text discussing this topic was made due to

the generic ability of poetry to deal with emotions, repressed emotions, and somatic experiences portrayed through various forms, linguistic modes, associative ideas, disruptions of semantics and syntax that are central to poetic techniques. *The Feminist Reader* states that ‘As Audre Lorde famously noted, poetry is a tool that helps us create the new language needed to rearticulate the harms of oppression’ (McCann et al 2020, p.13).

MOTHERBABYHOME is a book of visual poetry that privileges the physical appearance and form of the poems, along with the content. Campanello comments in an article for *The Irish Times*: ‘the physicality of the language on the page felt vital to me, as bodily autonomy was what these women and children were denied’ (Campanello 2019). The physical aspect of the poems and the book itself assists Campanello in portraying all of the messages that she wishes to include, therefore they will be a fundamental aspect of the discussion in this chapter. Gregory Betts says of the book: ‘clearly “experimental”, each page is a mess of words and letters that are sometimes legible but sometimes not’ (Betts 2019). Due to the focus on language in this chapter, certain feminist theory that discusses language will be utilised to explore the text in more depth, and Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva’s works will be included in particular. The inclusion of trauma theory is also beneficial to this particular chapter because of the personal repercussions of the home. As Cathy Caruth writes: ‘to be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event’ (Caruth 1995, pp.4-5). This is true for the victims of the homes as they suffer from their trauma each day without the ability to escape it.

The book itself is a large A4 size text, with 796 pages. The size of the book makes a semiotic statement along with the content. Poetry is the ideal form for such a process as the shape of the words, the fixed nature of the lines and the words on the page, as well as the wide margins that enframe the text all suggest a very specific aesthetic discourse and also suggest a very special reading practice. With the use of this form, Kristeva’s theory of the Semiotic and

the Symbolic comes to mind. Kristeva believes that symbolic language is ‘through the use of logical terms’ and semiotic language is ‘through a breathless (punctuation-less) flow of words that are more emotive than logical’ (McAfee 2004, p.16). Kristeva believes that poetry is close to the semiotic and Campanello’s style can be seen to demonstrate this, as it is a disruption of the symbolic that challenges traditional binaries. Campanello wants this book to be noticed, and the victim’s stories to be heard and recognised. She chose to include a poem per page, and each poem represents each child that died in the home while residing there from 1926 – 1961. In her foreword of the book, Campanello explains that:

these poems are composed entirely of the text taken from historical archives and contemporary media and other sources relating to the home, including files given to me by Catherine Corless in 2015. The source material dates from the construction of the building as a workhouse in 1841 to Feb 17th 2019 when the Commission’s final report was due. (Campanello 2019, p.iii)

By focusing on this sensitive but important topic, Campanello adapts one of the most vital messages from Cixous: ‘woman must write herself, must write about women and bring women to writing’ (Cixous et al 1976, p.875). Campanello writes about women and the difficult lives they led in the homes, but she also ‘brings women to writing’ by adopting a very complex writing style in her poetry. It can be said that she attempts to combat patriarchy by avoiding what Cixous refers to as ‘patriarchal writing’ and using a style of writing called *écriture féminine*. The style of writing in *MOTHERBABYHOME* is based on rhythm and fluidity and has no definite beginnings or endings. Punctuation is also used in a non-conventional way. These are all characteristics of *écriture féminine*. *Écriture féminine* is not specifically assigned to one sex and it is based on femininity, which Cixous believes exists in both men and women. ‘I do not say feminine writing. I talk of femininity in writing’ (Cixous 2008, p.22). While this is true:

Cixous also believes that there is something in particular about women's sexuality and their material experience of the world which makes them particularly conducive to the hospitality or opening up required by *écriture féminine*. (Brigley Thompson 2013, p.155)

For this reason, the physical aspect of the language along with the content is Campanello providing a subversive voice.

The title of the book can also be seen as significant to its content: the use of all capital letters combined with no spaces represent the anger that many feel about this topic: the title enacts a form of linguistic shouting. Campanello wants this story to be heard. The capital letters also can portray the importance of the people in the homes. The book is completely black and white, with no other colours used; Campanello does this to represent the lack of colour and happiness in these children's lives, and she also wants no distractions from the stories told. The main colour that can be seen is white: representing the purity and innocence of these children whose lives were taken through the cruelty and neglect that took place in this Home. The front and back cover of the book simply show a map of Tuam in Co. Galway, including various significant areas in relation to the home such as the sewage tank, cemetery, orphanage, Christian Brother's school and Children's Home. It also shows the Tuam cemetery, extremely close to the home but yet not close enough to bury the bodies of the children and babies that died in the home as they were found in the sewage tank.

On each page of the book, Campanello includes a name, date and age. These are set out chronologically and represent the name, date of death and age (at death) of each child who has died in the home and was deprived of a correct and respectful burial. In this manner, she tells their story, and ensures that they are personified and are not simply facts and figures in a report. She highlights their importance and individuality, something that was taken from them as they were 'disposed of' in the tank. In so many of the reports that were completed following the

investigations into child abuse, the names of the victims were often excluded. While this was presumably done to protect the identity of the victim, it also makes a statistic of the people and somewhat blurs the lived and somatic reality of the fear and suffering that was endured in these places. Campanello removes the anonymity with the inclusion of this technique in *MOTHERBABYHOME*, and so individuality is given back to the victims as she gives them a form of poetic life. Unusually, there are no page numbers in this book, this takes away the impersonal numbering of the children and as she says in a poem in this particular book, 'I have not inserted page numbers to keep track' (Campanello 2019, p.50). Campanello is challenging the traditional way of reading, she is not allowing the discussion to be ended. This can also be seen as an example of *écriture féminine* as Campanello challenges the structured and linear way of writing that is associated with the masculine. *Écriture féminine* is a circular style of writing with no clear chronological order. It also represents the lack of clarity that is present with regard to information about the home. Such a deconstruction of the normal structures of pagination, titles, sub-titles and structures of the normative writings in reports about the homes is a powerful statement, and one which is poetic in the extreme. For the sake of this thesis, I will number the pages as to avoid confusion and to aid referencing.

During the peak years of the homes, the Catholic Church was an extremely prominent aspect of Irish society. The Church and the Irish State were almost indistinguishable, and so many values of the Church were often included in Irish law for this reason. Therefore, social morals and values were largely based on those of the Catholic Church, and because of the strong religious beliefs of the Irish public at this time, these were strictly followed. Redmond writes of the influence the Catholic Church had at the time of these homes when compared to modern day Ireland:

Church and State had an even greater social power in the 1940s that most ordinary parents could not resist in order to keep a pregnant daughter at home. The local Gardaí would not dare interfere with the local parish priest. No solicitor would even consider the case. No politician would risk his re-election and career by standing up to the Catholic Church. (Redmond 2018, p.109)

Campanello includes this fact in a poem spread over two pages. ‘separationofchurch’ is included on the first page, ‘andstate’ on the second (Campanello 2019, pp.331-332). The poem being included on two separate pages highlights the fact that they are two separate entities and should have been treated as such, though the fusion of the different words at the same time is a performative of the fusions of church and state throughout Irish society. The lack of space between words portrays that they have in fact been treated as one. Campanello implies that had there been a detachment between the two, many of these scandals would not have happened, but because the controlling and conservative ideas of the Church became so embedded in the social realm, society gradually took on the shape and ideology of the church. There was a ‘long collaboration between Church, State and society to exert control over women and reproduction’ (Hogan 2019, p.96). The Catholic Church was a powerful force, especially from the 1940s to the 1990s. A survey was commissioned in 1962 by Archbishop McQuaid into the position of the Catholic Church in Ireland: ‘the results by today’s standards seem astonishing. Nine out of ten Dubliners said they would side with the Church if there was a conflict between it and the state’ (Redmond 2018, p.123).

The Church’s presence in Irish society helped further an already patriarchal culture. Irigaray writes of men and patriarchy that:

Their discourses, their values, their dreams and their desires have the force of law, everywhere and in all things. Everywhere and in all things, they define women’s function and social role, and the sexual identity they are, or are not to have. (Irigaray 1991, p.35)

Ireland's Catholicism had a reputation of complete faithfulness and purity, and this was to be preserved at all times. Ireland was a country with a large amount of poverty, it was 'poor but more pure than dirty Britain' (Real Stories 2018). Single mothers at this time were seen as morally impure and if they were left to roam free amongst the public, they would 'infect' those whose morals were correct; in Irigaray's terms, they were defined as a perverse form of social identity, one that could not be socially sanctioned. The single mothers were 'morally contagious' (Real Stories 2018), they were 'unfit for society' (O'Reilly 2018, p.27) and had to be separated by eight-foot-high walls in order for the general public to remain uncontaminated. In at least one Church, women who fell pregnant out of wedlock were 'named and shamed by the priest on the altar during his sermon' (O'Reilly 2018, p.24) – a very public definition of woman's role. If this was the tradition in one Church, one can expect it was the tradition in many. It can also be presumed that this was a horrifying experience for any woman, to be shamed in front of the whole community. It was also a warning to other women, that 'there is no place to hide if you were an unmarried woman with a child' (O'Reilly 2018, p.24). Many women were petrified of getting pregnant and with no contraception in Ireland, if they had sex there would be a high possibility that they would become pregnant. Contraceptives were seen as 'avoiding the consequences of sexual indulgence among the unmarried' (Hogan 2019, p.88). Families warned their daughters:

don't bring a bastard
into this house

uttered as soon as menstruation began. (Campanello 2019, p.564)

This poem highlights the derogatory term used to describe an illegitimate child, and how unwanted they were in communities, especially rural communities. The latter half of this poem explains when families began warning women of becoming pregnant out of wedlock. Young

girls were warned as soon as they were able to conceive a child, which could be as young as eleven years old.

In Kristeva's theory of abjection, single mothers were the 'abject other' in society. The abject other is deemed 'outside, beyond the set and does not seem to agree to the rules of the game' (Kristeva 1982, p.2). They were a threat to the clean, pure idolised version of the Irish Catholic woman and therefore were rejected by society:

What makes something abject and not simply repressed is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness. It remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one's own clean and proper self. (McAfee 2004, p.46)

This also could lead to an explanation as to why so many women, along with men, were also rejecting single motherhood, as such pregnancies were a threat to the representation of themselves. Kristeva also highlights that 'this process is not a passing stage in a person's development', and that 'it remains a companion through the whole of one's life' (McAfee 2004, p.49). This is a reason as to why the shame followed and tormented so many women for their entire lives, even if they had their child taken from them. Kristeva also highlights that cultures have founded rituals to deal with the abject, 'religions have served such purposes, setting up ways to cleanse or purify' (McAfee 2004, p.49). The Catholic religion in Ireland cleansed these women through the homes. She also states that 'some religions ban certain foods or practices ... because they threaten the identity of the self or the social order' (McAfee 2004, p.49). The practice banned here could be women's engaging in sex, or women raising their illegitimate children. Both of these practices would threaten the social order of Irish Catholic culture.

The issue that the Church had with these children is that they were born out of wedlock. While this was through no fault of the child, this 'less acceptable conception' (Campanello 2019, p.707) had a serious effect on the child's life. The nuns working in the homes referred to

illegitimate children as ‘the spawn of Satan’ (Redmond 2018, p.124). The illegitimacy of the child was the cause of societal judgement, various abuse in the homes and emotional trauma after being released from the home. Caelainn Hogan writes of the difference in how illegitimate babies were treated in a regular hospital through the experience of a nurse:

The Coombe hospital would deliver babies to Temple Hill with ID tags on. Jennifer remembers one such baby, a girl born prematurely. When the trainee nurses went to wash her, they discovered that her name and date of birth had been scrawled in red ink on her back ... It would not have happened, she felt, if the baby had not been born out of wedlock. (Hogan 2019, p.20)

The red ink was seemingly a sign of illegitimacy as Corless writes” ‘Details of their baptisms were written in red ink in the Church’s baptism book, to differentiate them from those who were legitimate’ (Corless 2021, p.232). The colour red has a negative connotation, a colour often used by a teacher to point out flaws in a piece of work. Perhaps this is also how illegitimate children were viewed: a flaw on Irish society.

The homes were portrayed by Irish society as positive and charitable organisations that sheltered single mothers from a judgemental community, and cared for their illegitimate children without any payment. The reality was far crueller and Campanello includes this in her metaphorical poem: ‘a small stone in a candy wrapper’ (Campanello 2019, p.431). This also can be seen to reference an occurrence in the life of Catherine Corless, the local historian who played a pivotal part in the discovery of these children’s remains. Corless recalls her school in Tuam, and notes that some of the residents of the Mother and Baby home also attended, and how a young girl mocked one of the residents by pretending to give her a sweet but instead gave her a stone (O’Reilly 2018, p.7). The ironic unconscious connection with the biblical idea of stoning women caught in adultery (with no consequences built into the law for men similarly caught) is poignant.

In the homes, the mothers were judged and punished for their actions while working off their debt, and children were abused both mentally and physically. From the outside, the Church's 'caring' gesture to shield and protect single mothers and illegitimate children was actually disguising a corrupt, controlling, manipulative prison for women and children, which in Irigarayan terms, controlled women. Campanello also includes the poem:

mother
washed society's dirty laundry
twenty miles away in Galway. (Campanello 2019, p.345)

This double-entendre shows that society's 'dirty laundry' was the abuse in these homes, and it also mirrors the work that many of the women did by washing laundry and other domestic tasks. The rhyming of these lines mimics that of a nursery rhyme; which is ironic as there seems to have been very little poetry or song in these homes. Another poem reads:

sounds cozy a place of
swaddling blankets sweet
baby scents warm milk
emboldened survivors
demanding accountability. (Campanello 2019, p.465)

The poem depicts how the homes were ideally perceived; but the last two lines show the real experience of many of the survivors of the homes, and of how most of the children born there, are still fighting for justice. Campanello contrasts the soothing effect of sibilance with the reality of the situation, which is all but soothing in the sonic associative chain of 'swaddling ... sweet ... scents ... survivors', a chain which enacts the move from the idealised version to the grim reality that has been enacted in the Irish public sphere. She also refers to all of the senses in this short poem, juxtaposed with the reality of them having to demand to be heard. In *Belonging*, various recordings of Julia Devaney taught Corless a great deal about the homes.

Julia was a woman who was born and raised in the Tuam home and who worked there for forty years as an unpaid servant. She states that: ‘The poorest downcast family were better off than being in the home; there’s love in the family home even though there’s poverty’ (Corless 2021, p.200).

The Church also placed the full blame of any illegitimate pregnancy on the mother of the child. These fathers were left to live without consequences and without blame, unlike the mothers who were ridiculed and judged by society, and who took all of the blame for something that both parents created. This patriarchal hegemony has been included by Campanello in a poem with a line reading: ‘one wonders if the fathers of these unwanted children’ (Campanello 2019, p.128). The unfinished line infers a question wondering if the fathers were also punished, and suggesting that it is known that they were not. Later in the book, Campanello reminds her readers again of the forgotten fathers:

invisible nameless
men who raped
the women got
them pregnant
out of wedlock. (Campanello 2019, p.464)

This poem references ‘invisible nameless men’ due to the fact that they received no condemnation for creating this child, but also because most women were not required to give the name of the father of the child upon entering the homes. Redmond states that:

The fathers of many babies, often rapists, liars, child abusers and married men who abandoned their victims and pregnant girlfriends to the brutality of the workhouses, escaped all responsibility for their actions. (Redmond 2018, p.39)

The patriarchal culture present in Ireland at this time allowed the fathers of the children to remain ‘invisible’ in terms of any blame, responsibilities or consequences attached to the

illegitimate child that they played a part in creating. It is significant that illegitimate babies did not have their fathers' names, but also that these fathers' names were not formally entered on the record either: the ideology of control had no sense of irony whatsoever. Hogan writes of:

A twenty-three-year-old [that] 'became pregnant' while living with relatives in Limerick. 'Putative father is uncle of girl,' the sheet read. He was not named and there was no reference to the Gardaí being informed. (Hogan 2019, p.15)

This is just another example of how so many men escaped without punishment, especially those who committed crimes. In patriarchy, without the name of the father, the children of these homes were without a family name which provided a sense of belonging and a legal right to property and ownership. In every other aspect of society, the name of the father bestowed a type of unsaid power and it guaranteed the place of an individual before the law. For the children, being illegitimate, any rights were unnecessary as they were deemed second-class citizens. So many of them were denied basic human rights so the right to property and other things that went with a paternal surname were not to be expected, and in the case of the power of the name and of the law, Ireland is very much part of a Western European paradigm.

Irigaray's discussion of the Greek myth Oresteia highlights how, traditionally, philosophy and psychoanalytic thought promotes patriarchy. It has always forsaken the mother and shielded the father from blame. The myth is based on Clytemnestra who is married to Agamemnon, he has been abroad for years at war and he also ordered sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia. He finally returns with another woman who is his slave and mistress. Due to jealousy, frustration and because of the murder of their daughter, Clytemnestra murders Agamemnon. The new order commands that she, in turn, must be killed by her son Orestes: 'Orestes kills his mother because the rule of the God-father' (Irigaray 1991, p.37). Women must be punished for their actions and this must be done by a man. Neither Agamemnon, nor Orestes were held

accountable for their murders but Clytemnestra was shown no forgiveness nor understanding. Orestes goes mad as a result of killing his mother along with his sister Electra, as ‘the matricidal son must be saved from madness to establish the patriarchal order’ (Irigaray 1991, p.37). Electra remains mad as she was not saved, and this highlights how men must be saved from madness but the women not so. Women do not possess enough importance in society to be worthy of saving. It also revisits the association of women with madness and hysteria, an association that underlined, formally or informally, the rationale for placing women in these homes in Ireland, and Irigaray’s mythic discussion provides a strong rationale to show that the Irish system, while belated with respect to the rest of Europe, was nevertheless part of that broad patriarchal tradition that is ensconced in the western knowledge paradigm.

The negative reputation that was attached to single mothers, derives from the obsession of the Catholic Church with female sexuality, and the ‘seductive’ female body. Redmond writes:

By the early twentieth century, single mothers were regarded as sinners, fallen women, strumpets, prostitutes, brazen hussies, Jezebels riddled with venereal diseases, tramps and sluts. (Redmond 2018, p.8)

Campanello includes a range of motifs that are repeated throughout the work. Each motif is portrayed through visual and conceptual poetry along with text specifically chosen by the poet. She prominently includes a motif about the societal perception of the women that were in these particular institutions. On page 91, she incorporates the words ‘due soon’, but the visual aspect of these words creates an atmosphere of chaos as the letters are spread all over the large page. (See attached image). This mimics the panic and the fear that is present in the minds of these women as they are preparing to have their child, not just for the birth but also for the situation that will befall them following it.

Campanello also includes the word 'fallen' on page 101; this was the disparaging name given to women that became pregnant out of wedlock. (See attached image). In true Campanello style, she creates imagery with the letters to mimic the action of falling in her visual poem. Another poem reads 'heaven forbid we should actually enjoy our sexuality' (Campanello 2019, p.557). Women are forbidden from enjoying their sexuality in this society, and the treatment of illegitimate children and single mothers highlights this. Along with it being a popular idiom, the words 'heaven forbid' also can be seen to be a reference to the Catholic Church in particular being the driving force of society forbidding women to enjoy sexuality.

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She also includes the line ‘obsessed to the point of promoting prudishness’ as she describes the Church (Campanello 2019, p.419). They encouraged virginity and chastity in all women and punished those who did not practise these, and even for married women, sex, whether procreative or not is shameful (though only for women). Hogan tells of a Catholic tradition called ‘churching’:

Up until the 1970s, a married Catholic woman who had given birth was expected to go to Church to thank God for the ‘gift’ of her child and receive a blessing from the priest, who would lead her to the altar then and bless her again. Until she had done so, she was considered unclean, and some Catholic women felt they could not prepare food or go to Mass. (Hogan 2019, p.4-5)

Hogan also tells the story of a priest chasing a woman who had recently had a miscarriage back into her house from the front garden because she had not been ‘churched’. Whether married or single, woman’s sexuality was shameful.

Cixous writes that woman ‘must explore her *jouissance*, her sexual pleasure, so as to bring down phallogocentric discourse and ultimately, change the world’ (Juncker 1988, p.426). Irish patriarchal culture was, and is, afraid of women owning their sexuality due to the change that it would have on society. This is why so much shame is attached to woman’s ‘*jouissance*’, it keeps women under control so they do not, as Cixous says ‘change the world’. Irigaray writes of the ‘regulation Athenas’ in Greek mythology and they can also be seen as the ideal woman in Irish society:

You can recognise these regulation Athenas, perfect models of femininity, always veiled and dressed from head to toe, all very respectable, by this token; they are extraordinarily seductive [*séductrices*], which does not necessarily mean enticing [*séduisantes*], but aren’t in fact interested in making love. (Irigaray 1991, p.37)

These women being attractive for the benefit of male pleasure, but not actually interested in their own sexuality, are examples of the ideal woman in Irish culture. These women will not seduce and ‘corrupt’ innocent men but they will simply exist as a fantasy to be appreciated: once again, they are objects, not subjects; vehicles and not agents.

Campanello then provides some information for the readers of *MOTHERBABYHOME* as she includes the line: ‘those who had a second or third were left in’ (Campanello 2019, p. 148). This refers to the mothers in the home. Many mothers were discharged from the home after a year or so when their babies were fostered out, but those who had a second or third child out of wedlock were to remain in the home for much longer. Redmond admits that ‘while single motherhood was never a crime, it was effectively treated as such’ (Redmond 2018, p.38). ‘Repeat offenders’ were considered ‘mentally deficient’ and needed to be ‘committed’ to an institution, just as a convicted criminal is ‘committed’ to jail for society’s protection’ (Redmond 2018, p.38), recalling Irigaray’s notion of women and madness as a control mechanism. Those who committed a ‘second offence’ were even more looked down upon by society, if this was even possible. They were often called ‘professional cases’ that reared families ‘at the expense of the ratepayers’ (Hogan 2019, p.85). Some societies that were founded to assist single mothers, like the Rotunda Girls’ Aid Society, would only assist those who committed ‘a first offence’. The use of the phrases ‘first offenders’ and ‘repeat offenders’ is ‘legal terminology for something that was not a legal crime’ (Real Stories 2018). This type of language highlights that there was little to no discourse available to represent an alternative to these women’s experiences, or to voice them positively. There was no adequate means of representation that conveyed the honest stories of these women. These poems provide a new representation, ironically with recycled language from those misrepresentations. Campanello also includes this

idea of criminalisation in a poem that reads ‘a second baby a second offense’ (Campanello 2019, p.356). Hogan highlights that women were divided into three classes:

There were a great number of women who ‘will never be able to take care of themselves and are easy victims to the wicked’, for whom the ‘one form of protection’ would be to ‘collect them into institutions under the care of nuns’ The second class of offenders was the ‘naturally decent’ girls who had fallen through accident ... ‘The third class is that of women of a wild and vicious nature who are a harmful influence wherever they prevail.’ (Hogan 2019, p.40)

She also includes a statistic on the following page ‘... 70 per cent of lone and single mothers and their ended up in these institutions throughout the’ (Campanello 2019, p.150). Along with the inclusion of the name, date and age of one of the children who had died in the home that is on every page of the book, the author’s statistic shows the incredibly high number of women who went into these homes. It also shows the power of the patriarchy and discrimination in Irish society that so many women had to resort to these types of institutions to have their children. She leaves the sentence unfinished, and with words missing to emphasise the high statistic of 70%.

Another example of Campanello criticising the treatment of women is in a line that reads ‘For years Marie’s “impure” background was a source’ (Campanello 2019, p. 184). She directly references here the obsession of Irish society with women’s sexuality and their purity. This stemmed from the Catholic Church and the importance of Mariolatry. She also ironically includes the name ‘Marie’: a version of ‘Mary’. Campanello also includes another image of Mariolatry in the Irish Catholic Church when she includes a poem with the words ‘A shrine with an image of the Virgin Mary is seen’ (Campanello 2019, p. 696). These words are repeated to emphasise the over-powering presence of the image of the Virgin Mary and all that she stands for in Irish society: purity, virginity, chastity. This also points again to the limited

representations available to women. Women were associated with the Madonna/whore binary, and were seen as these extremes and nothing else. Campanello attempts to break down this binary and give an honest representation. She shows the grey area in what was seen before as black or white.

One of the great values of Campanello's work, and that of the feminist literary theorists cited in this work is that they provide an alternative language which allows the voicing of female sexuality and desire devoid of any connotations of shame or of being somehow 'dirty' (an image that has resounded in comments about women as cited thus far in this thesis). Thus, Irigaray writes of desire in women:

Desire for her, her desire, that is what is forbidden by the law of the father, of all fathers: fathers of families, fathers of nations, religious fathers, professor-fathers, doctor fathers, lover father etc. (Irigaray 1991, p.35)

Men in Irish culture were afraid of the power of female sexuality, it could possibly be for their ability to create life, a power which men do not possess, or the power that women have when they are comfortable with their sexuality. To protect the patriarchy, the threat of women's sexuality must be controlled.

The names of the wards in the various institutions were quite significant and St. Agnes's Ward was often used because of the relevance of the Saint itself to the women in the homes. Hogan writes about the Saint:

Represented by the lamb. Agnes was venerated for being violently martyred at the tender age of twelve or thirteen, a beautiful young woman from a wealthy family who refused repeated marriage requests. She was wedded to the Lord and he wanted her untouched. Some said she was dragged through the streets, naked to a brothel to be punished, but her hair grew miraculously to cover her body and the men who tried to rape her went suddenly blind. She was fastened to a stake, but the flames would not

burn her, so she was beheaded. She died a virgin martyr and became patron saint to whom young women prayed in hope of learning the name of their future husband. (Hogan 2019, pp.24-25).

Agnes was an image and an ideal towards which the girls should aspire, a virgin martyr who was married to the Lord. The Saint was used to remind the women of who they should have been, and who they could never be due to the shame they have brought upon themselves by having a child out of wedlock, and for having sex in general. She was also of course, a model of passivity who trusted to God and did not act in any way in her own defence – there was an unconscious model of behaviour being put before the young women in the homes here as well, to not resist but to accept – to be objects as opposed to subjects in the living of their own lives, and to allow, silently, figurative (and some literal) violence imposed upon them.

Society in general did not accept even the sight of unmarried mothers, and this can be seen by a letter that the Archbishop of Dublin had in his records from residents of Herbert Avenue:

Complaining to an estate agent about unmarried mothers on display in their neighbourhood. He remarked that the use of Lowville as a Maternity Home for unmarried mothers was unfortunate and had they been allowed a say they would have ‘instantly protested’ against ‘unwanted intrusion’ on their area. (Hogan 2019, p.15)

They were offended that the mothers were ‘seen outside and not always with reticence’ and that ‘men were seen to meet and greet these women’ (Hogan 2019, p.15). The mothers again were treated as criminals and a danger to society as if they will corrupt the men mentioned here through greeting them. On another occasion, referring to a different institution, it was complained that ‘women even in advanced stages of pregnancy’ were seen going into shops and walking up and down the avenue (Hogan 2019, p.16). The mothers’ basic human rights of existing and being seen were being criticised. The same complaint read ‘it is true to say there

is an element of shamelessness in the freedom with which these girls and women comport themselves' (Hogan 2019, p.16). Society deemed the correct penance for pregnant unmarried women was to hide indoors with heads bowed, ashamed by their own actions and those who did not do this were condemned.

Kristeva's theory of abjection can also be seen here as even though the women are being punished and banished to these homes they are still upsetting the social order by existing, and Kristeva admits that 'from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master' (Kristeva 1982, p.2). The women are challenging their master, the church and society, by simply existing. Even though the homes were supposed to offer a safe place to these women, they were not safe in the home and were frequently treated badly by staff. It could be said that they were in fact in more danger in the homes than they were if they stayed amongst the community. In a poem full of fractured language, Campanello sets out how broken and battered, both physically and emotionally, the women in these poems were; and this is a language that captures through its performativity in a way that the normative discourse of reports can never do, the felt, somatic reality of their experience:

'The practice.was

to offer no pain relief as suf-fering was regard.ed

as part ofher

punishment'. (Campanello 2019, p. 3)

This shows the mistreatment of women as they received no pain relief in child-birth, which was one of the punishments for becoming pregnant out of wedlock, essentially a punishment for being sexually 'impure'. Physically, the word punishment at the bottom of the page is isolated and defamiliarised by the space before the word which creates dramatic effect. The word

‘suffering’ separated by a hyphen in the middle of the word also emphasises how horrific the suffering was for these women, and that it was present for a long period of time. These fragmented words also could mimic the process of painful contractions in child birth as they increase in severity and strength.

In relation to Cixous’s *écriture féminine*, Campanello is again resisting the patriarchal mode of writing. She is giving these women representation, that was previously denied to them, through her writing, in both context and form. Campanello changes the way in which words would usually be placed on a page, with the inclusion of the hyphen in the word suffering. The scattered punctuation also can be seen as an example of *écriture féminine*; broken bodies and spirits are best signified by a broken and fractured mode of language. Redmond admits that the ‘births would take place without doctors or painkillers’ (Redmond 2018, p. 45). The care given to women in the homes during birth was basically non-existent, and the nuns often made it more difficult and traumatising for them. Redmond also describes the birth process:

In all the homes, it was common for the nuns and some of the midwives to wander in and out of the various delivery rooms and berate the patient writhing in silent agony with well-worn phrases such as ‘This is your punishment for your sin’, ‘This will teach you to keep your legs closed’, ‘Give your pain up to the Lord’, ‘Your bastard is born in sin’, ‘Serves you right’, and the seeming favourite of many of the nuns: ‘Well? Was the five minutes of pleasure worth all this?’ (Redmond 2018, p.77)

All of these statements relate to the ‘sin’ of sexual relations committed by the women, but even the agony of giving birth was not a suitable enough punishment as they continued to be verbally and physically abused throughout their time in the home. Hogan writes of the experience of a woman giving birth in one of the homes:

Ann remembers screaming in pain during labour and being told by a nun to shut up. In a vortex of her own noise, with her eyes screwed shut, she had no one to hold her hand or help her breathe. (Hogan 2019, p.110)

The ‘Sisters’, nuns and nurses, were the main source of trauma and violence for so many of these women. The fact that the abuse originated directly from females is an example of the internalised misogyny that Catholic Ireland promoted here, and that is a central component of patriarchy in general. Cixous writes in *The Laugh of the Medusa*:

Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs. (Cixous et al 1976, p.878)

She highlights that instead of using the strength of women to support one another, they have been trained by patriarchy to use it against each other. Cixous believes that this is the worst thing that patriarchy has done to womankind. Hogan quotes a nurse in one of the homes as she speaks of the nuns:

‘I have no time for them’ Cathy said of the nuns. ‘I was educated by them, trained with them, worked with them, I didn’t meet a decent one’. (Hogan 2019, p.22)

The experiences that so many women had with nuns are mostly negative; the reasons for this are unclear, and are not mentioned in depth in reports, as to whether it was due to the strict guidelines of the Catholic Church or due to the jealousy caused by the strict life-boundaries that they had to endure in the convent. Such as the lack of freedom and the ability to have a family. The same nurse says ‘it drove Sister Francis mad. I had a life she never had’ (Hogan 2019, p.27). Corless also admits that ‘I felt there wasn’t an ounce of compassion’ by the nuns as she spoke to two Sisters after the story of the Homes was first broadcast.

The physical abuse and horrific deaths that the victims of the home endured were the main aspects that shocked the public when this controversy broke. One of the most appalling details was that the abuse was largely carried out by religious figures: the nuns that ran the homes. Prior to this, the nuns were well respected in society and ‘it was one of the only “careers” with serious social standing for women up to the 1980s’ (Redmond 2018, p.110). These women were also well educated. Many people have spoken out in support of the nuns, with the excuse that they had been ‘brainwashed’ by a corrupt and misogynistic system. It can be appreciated that there was a large amount of pressure on the nuns from various sources, and that they ‘took a solemn and formal vow of obedience and it was often unimaginable for them, in the context of Catholic Ireland, to break their vows’ (Redmond 2018, pp.109-110). Redmond makes the point that they had the option to leave the order and refuse to stand by and watch babies and children suffer and die in their care (Redmond 2018, p.110). The idea that jealousy and resentment played a part in the abuse could be true, as they spent their days caring for pregnant women and children that were not theirs, knowing that because of the life of ‘chastity and childlessness’ they would never experience pregnancy or have a child of their own (Redmond 2018, p.111).

While it would be difficult to leave, with expected criticism from their family, the order and society in general, nevertheless it was still possible. ‘Unlike the so-called inmates, no one locked them in their rooms at night and supervised their waking moments. Gardaí were never going to snatch an escaping nun off the street and return her to a home’ (Redmond 2018, p.111). While the women were physically trapped, the nuns were not, though they could be seen to be emotionally or ideologically constrained. Regardless of this, it was rare that a nun did leave the order. Women and their illegitimate babies became victims of this bitterness and therefore experienced horrific physical and mental abuse.

and state would treat people in this systematically brutal misogynistic way. Another example of abuse and neglect is included by Campanello in a poem that reads:

‘Article I. her so pale like porcelain
she wouldn’t live
past 5

Article II. her bowel would protrude
from her bottom they
would just
push
her bowels back
inside her’. (Campanello 2019, p.53)

The text is taken from what one would presume is a report from the home. The text in bold is Campanello highlighting important areas: the former showing the ill-health of a child from the colour of her skin and noting that she was predicted not to live past the age of five years old; the latter outlining another illness wherein the child’s bowel would protrude and, due to the carelessness of the homes, she was not treated or cared for properly, they would just simply ‘push her bowels back inside her’. Often, the physical abuse had a lasting effect on so many of the abused children: ‘beaten around the head he says permanently damaging his ears’ (Campanello 2019, p.469). Some of them never recovered from the injuries for the rest of their lives, and that fact shows the extent to which they were abused. To permanently damage a child’s health, the force of the blow given by the nuns must have been powerful.

Campanello also provides an insight into the conditions of how some of the children died in the home as she writes: ‘newly born babies left to die on a draining board’ (Campanello

2019, p.188). The visual aspect of this short poem also mirrors the death of the babies as the words are turned 90 degrees and they mimic an image of a child lying down:

newly
born
babies
left to
die on a
draining
board

This deconstructed example of language is again breaking the norms of writing, but is very much part of poetic language and what might be termed poetic thinking, where the shape and form of the words on the page are as much part of the meaning as what they signify. This defamiliarises the reader and pushes her or him out of their comfort zone, and the linguistic jolt is very much part of the work of the poem and the sequence. Julia Devaney also states of the children in the Homes in the recording heard by Corless: ‘They used to die like flies’ (Corless 2021, p.197).

So many of the children who were in these institutions were neglected; they were constantly hungry and cold and therefore susceptible to disease which often killed them. The most common causes of death were officially recorded as convulsions, heart failure, marasmus and stillbirths (Redmond 2018, p.40). Marasmus, meaning death from malnutrition, is an example of the neglect that these children endured. The hard, physical work that so many pregnant women had to do can also be seen as a causal factor of the deaths of so many babies. The fact that there were no doctors at so many of the homes can also be linked to the number of deaths. A man that was born in an institution tells Hogan of his childhood:

He had nearly died from malnutrition there, had been the subject of vaccine trials and had been given the last rites on two occasions; (Hogan 2019, p.6)

A doctor that visited some institutions to do check-ups on the children wrote that: ‘our babies are of such a class as to be predestined to disease’ and he considered the mortality rates to be satisfactory due to this; (Hogan 2019, p.14).

It was a known fact by the State that these children were subjected to such poor living conditions but ‘poor conditions and high mortality rates were seen as regrettable, but not regrettable enough to compel the State to change the system. (Hogan 2019, p.84)

It was not simply physical abuse that was present in the St. Mary’s Home, and other homes. Emotional abuse also had a prominent existence, and Campanello highlights this in various poems throughout the sequence. The staff in the homes punished the children for being illegitimate, something out of the child’s control: ‘calling you names calling you bastard’ (Campanello 2019, p.474). She also includes:

‘About 3 girls had a visitor
I had none.’ (Campanello 2019, p.233)

The fact that so few of the children had visitors to see them shows how distanced they were from society. Campanello emphasises the sadness and loneliness of the child speaking as she puts the phrase ‘I had none’ on the second line, creating a pause before the phrase and provoking dramatic effect, which is especially stark in the monosyllables chosen.

She also includes the line ‘Christmas was no different to any other day’ (Campanello 2019, p.234). A supposedly happy day for all children was still full of sadness and loneliness for the children in the home. Redmond speaks of how Christmas Day was celebrated in the homes:

Christmas was not celebrated in the festive sense but was much the same as the standard Sunday routine. There are reports of the odd Christmas tree in some homes in later years but, in most of them, there were no trees and certainly no presents on the day. There were no holidays of any description. It was a soul-destroying, grey, monotonous grind, day in, day out, with little variation. (Redmond 2018, p.74)

Campanello includes an interesting technique in similar poems spread over 12 pages. She includes a few lines of poetry with a particular form in each: text taken from an official

statement at the beginning, media statements and reports into the home. Then at the end of the poem, she includes a personal side of the home, sometimes without the use of any punctuation to divide the two. She reminds readers that there are real people present behind these media stories. An example of this is the following poem:

We are going to do it on a phased basis, as we are honestly not sure what we are getting into. But we do know that it is the right thing we were locked in and there was absolutely no way of getting out. (Campanello 2019, p.673)

By doing this, she shows the extremely difficult lives that the inmates of the home had, or the emotional repercussions that followed in their adult lives. Another example would be:

It was announced yesterday that the remains of children found buried at the Bons Secours home will be exhumed, identified if possible, and then reburied panic attacks for example if I go to a theatre I have to sit near the door so I can get out. (Campanello 2019, p.676)

The feeling and fear of entrapment, along with other emotional issues, are present in the survivors of these homes for the rest of their lives as Campanello portrays over this collection of pages: 'I suffered from depression and an all-pervading sense of sadness' and 'it ate away at me until I was', along with various abuse that the victims encountered in the home: 'a rule of silence was enforced. We were not to be heard' (Campanello 2019, p.675); 'I used to lay awake in my crib with my eyes wide open' (Campanello 2018, p.679); and 'my tiny buttocks bleeding and raw' (Campanello 2019, p.680).

Redmond lists some of the emotional issues that many people suffered from because of the homes:

The majority suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder ranging from severe to mild symptoms including nightmares, anxiety, panic attacks, suicidal ideation, depression,

secondary infertility, parenting issues and a fear of losing subsequent babies. (Redmond 2018, p.114)

Hogan also provides an example from an interviewee that lived in the Tuam home as a child:

The only distinct memory P.J. had of the home was rocking himself to sleep at night. He told me he still did that sometimes. He was locked inside the dormitory bedroom at night with twelve other boys. They sometimes had to urinate on the floor' (Hogan 2019, p.48).

So many of the victims from these homes had mental health issues due to the trauma to which they were subjected in the homes. Campanello's poetic style creates a sense of pain and emotion through her language, more vividly than a prose piece would portray. Campanello's technique of dividing the lines over separate pages attempts to mirror the never-ending consequences that the victims suffer in their later lives as a result of the abuse. Her half-finished statements portray how difficult the abuse is to articulate for the victims, as well as creating a chaotic atmosphere which ties in with the frightened and anxious victims.

Henry Krystal writes of the affect that separation of child and mother can have on the child called *anhedonia*:

Since separation from the mother quickly becomes a matter of life and death, the whole affective apparatus of the child is mobilized, the infant becomes frantic and noisy and assumes a search pattern – as permitted by his motor skill development. At its highest point, the infant searches for its mother in concentric circles of increasing radius, vocalising in a way as to provoke pity and caring responses. Periodically, the infant gives in to exhaustion and apathy and becomes stationary, whimpering piteously. (Caruth 1995, p.79)

This shows the impact that separation has on young children and it was a normal practice in the homes, it would have affected all of the children residing there. Krystal also admits that this has

long-term effects on various psychological areas such as ‘pain, pleasure and distress’ (Caruth 1995, p.80). Kindness and fondness were not promoted by the nuns among the wards and they even attempted to prevent it. Hogan recalls a nurse’s story that if the nuns realised that any of the nurses were fond of, or emotionally cared for, any of the children, they were instantly moved wards away from the child (Hogan 2019, p.25). Krystal also admits a very notable fact about the child’s state after separation:

For if this state continues too long, or is repeated too often, it leads to a failure to thrive: marasmus, hospitalismus, anaclitic depression, and eventually death. (Caruth 1995, p.80)

Along with various other factors, such as the neglect, so many of the deaths originated from the separation of mother and child and this was due to society’s outlook on single mothers and illegitimate children. It was not only the children of the homes that were affected. Hogan also tells of another woman that had her child in an institution, ‘[she] was ninety-four years old, living in a nursing home in Cork and had never returned to her birth county because of the shame’ (Hogan 2019, p.106). This story shows how a very elderly woman still lived in shame for having a child out of wedlock and attending an institution. Many of these victims never recovered from the impact of the disapproving society created by the Catholic Church and State alliance.

Krystal also writes of the experience of the survivors of serious trauma. Many have ‘continued to suffer from depression, repetitive dreams, various chronic pain syndromes and chronic anxiety’ (Caruth 1995, p.76). He also quotes a study by Ettinger which notes that ‘the ex-prisoner’s sick periods and hospitalization periods were about three times as long as those of the controls’, along with the average number of sick leaves (Caruth 1995, p.77). While this is not directly referencing the experience of those in the homes, the application of the theory is

extremely suitable, and often accurate, after examining reports from women in the homes. Krystal speaks of ‘survivor guilt’ which applies largely to the mothers who left without their babies, not knowing if they were going to survive; ‘the survivor guilt becomes severe and some of the individuals assume a depressive or penitent lifestyle’ (Caruth 1995, p.77). Some women even attempted suicide with the guilt when they realised their babies had not survived (Hogan 2019).

A significant aspect of this scandal is the approach that the Catholic Church took when it came to light. The defence was to avoid blame at all costs and to displace this blame on anyone but themselves. Campanello includes this in her work and it can be seen in many instances throughout the sequence, with an interesting phrase at the beginning of the book representing the Church’s attempt to deny and blame others when the discoveries were first made: ‘history combing Catholic-bashers’ (Campanello 2019, p.28). This is a reference to those who discovered, investigated, and disapproved of the home. Here we see the Church attempting to portray that they had been victimised in this process. Campanello also simply includes the words ‘this is why’ as a poem (Campanello 2019, p.37). This phrase can be seen to represent the Church as attempting to explain the situation and make excuses. It has been shown that throughout any scandal involving the Church, there will be attempts to justify actions in all sorts of ways: ‘You will find the troublesome playing around with facts more than upsetting’ (Campanello 2019, p.47). This quote can be seen as ambiguous depending on from which side it originated. The poet leaves it for the reader to decide. If the statement originates from the Church, then it is another example of denial and playing the victim. If it comes from the people who are investigating, then they are showing how this home, like many others, altered many of the reports in order to disguise the abuse. Campanello also underlines this statement to show its importance. Similar to Mel in *She’s Not Mine*, the blame is also placed on the children, ‘a few

children stick out in my mind' (Campanello 2019, p.52). The bad behaviour of the children is blamed for the abuse and punishments. Another sarcastic line included by the author is 'world sticking its nose into shy little Tuam the fields the trees the houses' (Campanello 2019, p.449). The ironic point here is that nothing malicious would happen in rural, innocent Tuam so the accusations could not possibly be true. It also shows that no one expected such a horrific story to come out of such a small rural place.

Catherine Corless, the historian who made the discovery of the mass grave in Tuam, has had her say on the reaction of the Church as she writes for the *University Times*:

In that vision, I am standing beside Fr Fintan Monaghan, the Archbishop's secretary, who has come to the site to see what all the fuss is about. RTÉ News is there to catch a comment from the local clergy regarding this tragedy. I feel a sense of relief that now, at last, the church will come on board. They will take this task in hand, declare their horror, offer an acknowledgement, an apology, and make some sort of posthumous reparation to the babies, survivors, and the mothers who had suffered in this home. But no, this is not happening. In fact, Fr. Monaghan is on the defence! Again, it's the same old mantra: protect the institution, the church, at all costs. (Corless 2020)

Corless highlights the blatantly defensive attitude of the Church when faced with a matter such as this. The denial by the priest mentioned by Corless repeats the blanket response that many religious figures adapted. Corless quotes him:

I suppose we can't really view the past from our point of view, from our lens. All we can do is mark it appropriately, and make sure there is a suitable place here where people can come and remember the babies that died. (Corless 2020)

Fr Fintan Monaghan, now Bishop Fintan Monaghan of the Killaloe diocese, blames the abuse on different morals from different times, and casually brushes off the deaths of the innocent children. Campanello also references this in her book as she includes this visual poem:

‘we cannot judge the actions! of the past by today’s standards’ (Campanello 2019, p.48). She is referencing a similar thought to the message of the priest quoted by Corless, and the difficulty of reading this single compound word mirrors the ethical difficulties in trying to understand how an institution could attempt such a self-serving justification.

Campanello foregrounds this by including a small, faint question mark symbol further down the same page of this poem. This shows her questioning this remark and wondering how someone could justify the events in this way. The typography here is very unusual, in that it breaks down the normal syntactical and grammatical rules. By doing so it creates dramatic effect and portrays strong emotions. *Écriture féminine* comes to mind again here as Campanello highlights the inadequacy of official language to represent the female experience. She is reclaiming it with her unusual style. Campanello highlights that normal language is not adequate to express the ridiculousness of this statement. She strongly draws attention to the word ‘actions’ by a period in the middle of the word and an exclamation mark after, this exclamation mark can be seen as a satirising technique as she criticises the abuse and mistreatment as simply ‘actions’. She also leaves no space between the words in order to quicken the tempo in which it is read, which mimics the desire of the speakers that all scrutiny should be quick and that attention should now move on from this issue.

The chaos that Campanello creates in many of the poems and pages of her work expertly mimics the trauma of the victims. Roger Luckhurst speaks of the trauma narrative:

Anyone who has watched rolling news services in the immediate wake of a disaster will have seen a disarray of competing and contradicting accounts, obsessive repetition of the same, unedited footage and a collapse of distinctions between knowledge, rumour and speculation (Luckhurst 2008, p.79).

This also describes the narrative of *MOTHERBABYHOME*. A chaotic, repetitive disarray of poetry, statements, rumours, media: all portraying the psychological trauma of those in the

homes, and those connected to the happenings in some way. However, he also highlights what this thesis is doing: ‘This chaos is only gradually corralled into a meaningful, strongly shaped media story, slowly edited back into conformity with News discourse as the initial crisis recedes’ (Luckhurst 2008, p.79). While it is not a media story being created, this thesis, and any examination done of this work in particular, translates this chaos into a ‘meaningful’ and ‘strongly shaped’ narrative. He also states that: ‘Trauma, in effect, issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge’ (Luckhurst 2008, p.79). This could also be connected to the story of Joanne Hayes as trauma also issued a ‘challenge’ to the inconsistent narratives told in the police station.

The author also includes a defence of the nuns working in the home that can be presumed to have been released by the Church: ‘they’re human beings they’re not all saints’, and the following page adds ‘it’s too much to expect that everybody would be perfect’ (Campanello 2019, pp.459-460). While this line does have some truth in terms of the pressure that is often put on members of the clergy and religious orders to act like saints, often forgetting that they are human, the acts that many of them committed were inhumane, women and children were denied basic rights and this defence is yet another tactic to excuse the behaviour, and to avoid judgements (and the squeezing of the term ‘judge’ in the middle of the compound word above can be seen as performing linguistically the desire of occluding the need for judgement.

Campanello includes poems that are spread over various pages describing an article written by either a member of the Clergy or by a strong Catholic Church supporter. She includes the following words: ‘The writer claims the real aim of all of these commentators is to bash the Catholic Church and pave the way for greater access to abortion’ (Campanello 2019, p.361). She shows again how the Church tends to play the victim, and place blame on people that are probing the actions of the past. They make the excuse that the scandal is simply a tactic used to

gain access to abortion, something that the Church was strongly against. The church felt that the scandals were a way of undermining its own moral and ethical position, and this would strengthen the secular case for provision of more widespread abortion facilities. Another poem of the same nature is:

Even by today's standards if the young women were wild and uncontrollable and came home expecting a baby she too would be expelled from the family. (Campanello 2019, p.362)

Campanello includes this line to make some very significant points. These words represent the Church's attempt to justify the actions that lead to women being sentenced to institutions. They also attempt to put the blame on the family for 'expelling' the woman even though, firstly, it was the morals and ideas of the Church that made a single, pregnant woman become a negative concept and secondly, sometimes when the woman was not expelled from the family, the priests and Gardaí would knock on doors and bring the women to the homes (Hogan 2019). Kristeva's theory of abjection is also relevant here as these women were rejected completely by all levels of society, though largely due to the influence of the Church: 'they are threatened because the abject is alluring enough to crumble the borders of self' (McAfee 2004, p.50). It is Irish society, once again, protecting its own image.

Campanello also examines and portrays the life for the women in these homes. She includes a simple poem of two lines that includes three significant messages about the home; the poem reads:

the work was especially difficult given that I and the other women were pregnant protects the reputation of the family name whose burial places were not recorded. (Campanello 2019, p.664)

The poem has no punctuation. The first image is regarding the expectant women in the home being forced to physically work like slaves:

Before giving birth, they generally worked in the buildings, cleaning, polishing, scrubbing already spotless floors and surfaces in the kitchens, or were assigned to a ward for the day to look after ten to sixteen babies. However, nuns brought their own style to assigning duties and pregnant girls could end up working anywhere. (Redmond 2018, p.73)

Another poem reads 'I worked seven days a week every week until I went into labour' (Campanello 2019, p.660). It depicts the harsh conditions in which the women were put from the beginning in order to pay for their 'care'. The labour continued after the baby was born, and became more physical, with some residents cutting grass by hand and collecting fallen trees and cutting them with large saws, while they also weeded fields and picked fruit (Redmond 2018, p.74). The second significant message in the above poem speaks about how important it is to protect 'the reputation of the family name', referencing the reason as to why so many of the girls were committed to the institutions in the first place; some were banished by their families and most were sent in secrecy to have their children, but all of them were sent to protect the reputation of the family amongst the community, and avoid shaming the family in that community. The welfare of the woman and her child were rarely considered. The final message delivered through the earlier poem is the stark 'whose burial places were not recorded', which references the lack of care that many of the homes had for the bodies of dead, illegitimate children, as the places of burial for so many of these children were not recorded in the files. Corless highlights the irony as the nuns reburied their own before they left the home of Tuam but 'had not thought to do the same for all the children buried there' (Corless 2021, p.229). Another poem reads:

my own name, my own clothes
redress and reparations. (Campanello 2019, p.651)

Campanello is presumably referencing the voice of the women as they leave the home. As they usually wore a uniform in the homes, they are now wearing their own clothes as they leave, and also using their own name as in the homes they were usually given 'house names' which were generally called after saints. 'Redress and reparations' refers to the woman living the rest of her life, and attempting to make amends for the 'sin' that she committed; it also implies how much of this was due to the guilt and sadness that the women felt, or had thinking about their children who were taken from them and fostered out or adopted.

There seemed to be a significant lack of love and kindness in the home with regards to the treatment of the children. Campanello compares them to 'chickens in a coop all reared in a batch' (Campanello 2019, p.456). These exact words can also be read in Corless' book, from another recording of Julia Devaney. It is presumed that Campanello may have found inspiration for that line from that recording. Those in the home were dehumanised, and there was an animalistic aspect to their treatment. A line that is presumably a description of the children shows the yearning that was present in the children for love: 'trying to get up on your knees trying to love you' (Campanello 2019, p.457). It also shows the pure innocence of the children as they sought affection. Even the women craved love and friendships as they were forbidden from talking to one another and forming relationships, 'I was just hoping we would make a bond' (Campanello 2019, p.452).

One of the most shocking things about this scandal was the way in which all 796 children and babies were buried, or to use a more suitable phrase: 'disposed of'. The children's bodies were found in a sewage tank beside the home, although a chaplain was paid £120 per year and had the job:

to oversee all events – that is, to ensure that those incarcerated there attended mass, confession, and other religious duties: that births, baptisms and deaths were recorded, and that burials were carried out in a Christian manner with the attendance of a priest. (Corless 2020)

To highlight this issue, Campanello uses various images and poems about burials. She includes the numbers ‘796’ on page 4 to signify the 796 children who died, but the visual adaptation that she includes in this poem is that only the top half of the number is visible. It mirrors the disposal of the 796 children and criticises the improper burial of them. Campanello also implies that these burials took place at night-time, away from the public eye: ‘night-time burials’ (Campanello 2019, p.237). She also shows the carelessness that was shown when burying the children: ‘unmarked, unvisited, unknown’ (Campanello 2019, p.255). This was due to their illegitimacy and the discrimination that the Catholic Church showed toward such children born out of wedlock. Even their own mothers were unaware of the babies’ whereabouts, due to them being obligated to leave their babies in the home and to have no contact with them, although they lived only metres from each other. As Redmond speaks of the burials he says: ‘nobody cared about them while they lived, so their deaths and burials were unworthy of any attention whatsoever’ (Redmond 2018, p.44). Campanello also includes the powerful image: ‘little bones crying out pure white babies’ arms’ (Campanello 2019, p.462). The inclusion of the colour white represents how innocent they are, while the word ‘pure’ relates ironically to the impure act of how they were conceived out of wedlock.

Another attempt at justification by the Church is seen on another poem that is presumably taken from an article by a Church supporter. The words read:

Burial in an unmarked grave does not necessarily mean ‘disrespect’ to the dead. ‘Usually it means the people concerned had other priorities on their minds at the time’ he writes. (Campanello 2019, p. 365)

These words are repeated over and over to take up the full page, mirroring someone attempting to convince themselves of something that is not true. Again, it plays on the idea that the nuns were trying their best, but they were just too busy and they had to prioritise the babies that were alive over ones that had died. This is untrue due to the knowledge we now have about the lack of care that they gave to the children that were alive. Those in the homes had no respect for the life, nor for the bodies of illegitimate children. This is clear in the way that the babies were buried but also because around four hundred dead children from several institutions were donated for medical research between 1940 and 1965 without knowledge of the mothers (Hogan 2019, p.8).

The final report of the Mother and Baby Homes investigation was due to be published in February 2019 and was again postponed. From page 723-788 in the book, Campanello has a similar poem on each page, the word 'delay' repeated over and placed on top of itself. As the pages continue, the words get fewer and fewer until on page 788, there is just the one 'delay' on the page. Campanello explains in a tweet that 'the final chunk of *MOTHERBABYHOME* is dedicated to the word "delay" referring to the delay in February 2019 and those prior to that' (Campanello 2020).

One of the most powerful messages in the book is included by Campanello on page 434. It reads:

A removal of the constitutional protection afforded to the foetus will somehow erode
our uniquely Irish Catholic
tradition of cherishing Connolly Stephen 12/08/1942 7 ½ months
all the children (Campanello 2019, p.434).

The author includes this ironic message to highlight the hypocritical argument of the Church with regard to the abortion referendum. The Church argued that the unborn foetus had a right to live but they failed to care for the children who lived in their institutions. This chapter has

outlined the society that the Catholic Church in Ireland created which promoted these institutions, and the defensive attitude of the Church when dealing with accusations of abuse that happened in these particular establishments.

The latest update in the progression of the report was that in January 2021, it was finally released. This had potential to be the closure and justice that so many mothers and children of the home longed for and needed, however it was instead a source of even more pain and criticism instead. While the report did in fact report truths that ‘9000 children died in the institutions under investigation’ (*Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes* 2021, p.4), many of the survivors are claiming that it is stating inaccurate claims. Many of the witnesses that provided evidence to the report ‘barely recognised their own contributions’ and were ‘disappointed and angry about how their evidence was presented and paraphrased in the report’ (Flanagan 2021). When looking at the language used in this State report, it can be deemed biased in favour of the State and Church. It claims that ‘there is no evidence that women were forced to enter mother and baby homes by the church or State authorities’ and often provide excuses for conditions in the home:

Some of the institutions were in very poor physical condition. Living conditions in Irish homes were generally poor before the 1960s; however, poor sanitary conditions in congregated settings have much more serious consequences than in individual homes. (*Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes* 2021, p.4)

It also often attempts to make light of situations in the homes. It has been frequently reported, by various survivors and other sources, that the women in the homes were subjected to extremely difficult work when they were pregnant and after, without pay. However, the report found that:

There are a small number of complaints of physical abuse. The women worked but they were generally doing the sort of work that they would have done at home; women in the county homes did arduous work for which they should have been paid and there are a few other examples where this is also the case (*Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes* 2021, p.4)

Many women report that they were forbidden from speaking to each other in the homes and building relationships, according to the report: ‘Women were dissuaded from sharing their stories with their fellow residents, because of concerns to protect their privacy’ (*Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes* 2021, p.5).

Many of the statements of the report purposely lead readers to consider that the practices in the institutions were for the benefit of the residents, and perhaps this was originally the intention, however the numerous survivor accounts tell a different, collective view. Some other lines to soften or excuse the reports of the institutions were: ‘However, the hostile comments were not restricted to mother and baby homes... were transferred from a mother and baby home to maternity hospitals to give birth, for medical reasons, were subjected to unfriendly comments by fellow-patients and their visitors’ (pp.5-6), ‘conditions in the county homes were generally very poor; this, of course, was also true for the other residents who were mainly older people and people with disabilities’ (p.6), ‘Illegitimacy’ was widely regretted and disowned in most countries in the early and mid-twentieth century so in that respect Ireland was not unique’ (p.12). The report often places the blame on families of the pregnant woman and fathers of the children for abandoning and disowning them and on communities for failing to accept them however, fails to blame the influence of the Catholic Church and the State. The report even goes so far as to excuse the Church’s behaviour on multiple occasions, and constantly highlight the positive aims of these homes:

The stated primary mission of these homes was to promote reform and repentance though they also rescued destitute women from homelessness and life on the streets. It was widely believed that many first-time unmarried mothers became prostitutes and went on to give birth to additional ‘illegitimate’ children. If first-time mothers spent time in homes cut off from the world, carrying out domestic duties, being trained for future employment in domestic work, caring for their child, and spending time in prayer and other religious experiences, it was believed that they would avoid that danger (*Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes 2021*, p.17)

The above mission of the Mother and Baby Homes creates a potentially positive experience for women, however, the reality is highlighted throughout the chapter: they were treated as criminals, the ‘domestic duties’ were similar to slavery and often carried out when the women were heavily pregnant and ‘caring for their child’ was not possible as the child was usually taken from them immediately after birth. It is extremely plausible that the report angered many survivors. The biased approach to the report is similar to the Tribunal Report of the Kerry Babies Case mentioned earlier in the thesis. Both government-based reports received academic criticism for an inaccurate, influenced attitude.

Through Kimberly Campanello, Catherine Corless, Rosaleen McDonagh and many other people, we are aware that a fight for justice is taking place and as part of this fight, the voice of these victims will be heard through various avenues such as poetry and drama and fiction, and it is to fiction that the discussion now turns. The thesis has been looking at real victims of the patriarchal society of Ireland, and in the next chapter, the fictional case of a young woman who becomes a victim will be discussed. Just as poetry is able to access aspects of truth that are not available to normative writings like inquiries and reports, so a fictive truth about the role of social media in the victimisation and shaming of women will become clear in chapter seven.

Chapter Seven: Louise O’Neill and *Asking for It*, The Belfast Rape Trial and The Cork Rape Trial

The issue of rape and consent has been on the tongues of many people in Ireland over the last decade. With various sexual offence cases, including controversial occurrences within trials, sparking public interest and sometimes protests, the subject of sexual assault has been unavoidable as a discourse. The Belfast rape trial and the Cork rape trial as they will be referred to in this chapter, were the most discussed sexual assault trials in Ireland in the early 2020s. Surprisingly, the outcomes of the trials were not the main object of criticism, but rather the court procedures that took place as they progressed. They led to nationwide, and even worldwide in some cases, discussion on sexual assault and a public questioning of Irish laws regarding sexual offences and sexual offence trials in particular. This chapter will examine the happenings of these trials in parallel with the novel by Louise O’Neill, *Asking for It*, as it captures the societal attitudes to sexual assault, many of these deriving from rape myths. It will also highlight the similarities between the two trials, along with how O’Neill accurately encapsulates the experiences of rape victims in her novel, despite it being published prior to both. While O’Neill discusses various issues surrounding consent, she also includes more general concerns relating to a patriarchal culture and how it affects females.

The Belfast rape trial, as it is publicly known, was one of the most discussed topics in Ireland and the United Kingdom in 2018. Not only because of the extremely high-profile defendants, Ulster and Ireland rugby players, Paddy Jackson and Stuart Olding, but also because the trial itself highlighted issues with the Northern Irish justice system surrounding consent, sexual assault and rape. The trial showed the patriarchal tendencies of the justice system, and how victim blaming is often present in sexual assault trials. Roe McDermott states that the legal system ‘was built to support the rule of law in a society that was patriarchal’ (McDermott 2018).

While it has evolved with gradual change over time, there are still major flaws that have yet to be resolved. Ireland is still largely patriarchal, so expecting a justice system to reflect few or no signs of these patriarchal tendencies can be seen as naïve. The complainant of the Belfast rape trial was a nineteen-year-old female who, on 27 June 2016, was celebrating the end of her exams on a night out in Belfast. It was in a nightclub, in the VIP area, with her friends that she encountered Jackson and Olding, along with two of their friends, Blane McIlroy and Rory Harrison. After the nightclub, the woman learned of an after-party and got into a taxi with three other women and Jackson. At one stage in the night, the woman went upstairs to Jackson's bedroom with him, the two began kissing but as he started to undo her trousers she made him aware that she did not want to progress further and the two then went downstairs. Later in the night, she decided to leave and went to look for her handbag, it was in Jackson's bedroom and as she went to retrieve it, he followed her upstairs. It was here that Jackson allegedly vaginally raped the young girl, with Olding orally raping her at the same time. She left the house in tears and was inconsolable as she was escorted home by Rory Harrison in a taxi. It was these events that lead to her reporting the incident (Gallagher 2018).

The Belfast rape trial began on 30 January 2018, a year and a half after the alleged sexual assault took place. Paddy Jackson was charged with rape and sexual assault, Stuart Olding with rape, Blane McIlroy with indecent exposure and Rory Harrison with withholding information. The events of this trial, which this chapter will discuss in detail, led to uproar on social media and deep discussions in households throughout Ireland. The trial provoked a national debate about consent, due to people's disgust at the treatment of the victim in the trial itself. This trial also indirectly resulted in a review of Northern Ireland's law and procedures regarding serious sexual offences. Sir John Gillen, a retired judge who spent over forty-five years practising law, was given the challenging job to review and propose corrective measures

of the laws concerning sexual offences in Northern Ireland. He was assisted by a panel comprising of various experienced individuals, including Judge Patricia Smyth, who was the judge in the Belfast rape trial; Neil Anderson of the NSPCC; Paul Dougan: Director of John J. Rice and Co. Solicitors; and D/Chief Superintendent Paula Hilman of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, along with other experts in the field. 'Gillen's review' as it is more commonly referred to, highlighted various flaws with the court system in Northern Ireland in its dealings with sexual offences.

Many of these, though not all, also refer to procedures in the Republic which has a similar approach to this type of crime. Gillen's review focuses on confidence building measures with regard to victims of these offences, and they are 'vital for complainants who understandably fear the cruel glare of public exposure at a time when they are revealing the most intimate, stressful and personal details of their life' (Gillen 2019, p.11). The review also included a public survey to collect information on the opinions of the community with regard to changing these measures. The overall aim of the review was to highlight the flaws in the present legal system, especially within the rights of complainants, and this in turn would encourage the reporting of sexual offences which are consistently under-reported; indeed, the most recent statistics on this data from 2014 state that 64% of sexual crimes were left unreported (Rape Crisis Network Ireland 2019, p.23). This thesis will highlight Gillen's recommendations throughout the chapter as it examines the events of the Belfast rape trial.

The Cork rape trial took place after a 17-year-old woman alleged that she was raped after a night out by a 27-year-old man. The woman in question was walking home at approximately 2am after attending a party with friends, on a route that was familiar to her. The girl claims that the man in question dragged her up a lane way and raped her on a muddy patch of ground (Phelan and Riegel 2018). A witness has also stated that the man had his hand around

her throat (Phelan and Riegel 2018). The man denied this, and insisted that the situation was misread. He claimed that the complainant and he had been attracted to one another and that the sex was consensual (Phelan and Riegel 2018). On first glance, this incident does not seem to be unlike the many other rape cases with which the Central Criminal Court deals. It was, however, the treatment of this case in court that set it apart, and caused protests and fury all over the world. One particular act from the defence counsel caused global uproar, as she attempted to use a highly controversial tactic to prove her client's innocence. Elizabeth O'Connell SC used the complainant's underwear as evidence of consent. The Cork rape trial will be examined further in the chapter along with the discussion of victim blaming.

Unlike the Belfast rape trial, the exact details of the Cork rape trial are not public knowledge. This is due to the different levels of privacy and confidentiality between the separate legal jurisdictions of the North and South of Ireland. In the Republic, there is significantly more privacy for both the complainant and the accused. The complainant remains anonymous throughout, along with the accused who is only named once they are charged. The naming of the defendants in this particular case could be seen as both a positive and a negative. It is a positive because the process of naming defendants often encourages other victims to speak out if they also experienced an issue with the accused. There is undoubtedly strength in numbers, and the inclusion of more than one account may strengthen complainant's stories. The anonymity is also negative because of the obvious power-dynamic that is in favour of the accused due to personal status. John Gillen stated himself that:

One of the reasons for the low conviction rate, is because it's a one-on-one situation, no independent evidence, no forensic evidence and no witnesses. But if you have four or five women ... (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018)

To assist with anonymity, members of the public are excluded from attending the trials in the Republic (Bacik 2018). Gillen's review highlights that because of the public presence at rape trials, 'public familiarity with the complainant is often present', and there is a 'risk of jigsaw identification' through the use of 'location, addresses, schools, friends and family members' (Gillen 2019, p.11). This was in fact what happened at the Belfast rape trial in particular.

The victim of a sexual assault is deemed a 'vulnerable witness' in court. This allows for certain exceptions and protective actions during the trial itself to protect the witness from experiencing further trauma. It allows for the use of screens in the court-room, and also for the use of pre-recorded interviews stating the evidence-in-chief shortly after the victim has reported the incident to the Gardaí. While this is a positive action for the benefit of the witness, it also has negative results attached to it. The pre-recorded interview is shown on a television to the jury, but often this fact lessens the reality and authenticity to the jury. The interview becomes less personal and there is a significant distance between the jury and the witness in the interview, in comparison to an interview that would be given directly in court. When this practice was introduced, acquittal rates soared due to the tendency of the jury being physically distanced from the testimony (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018).

In the case of the Belfast rape trial, the witness chose to give her testimony in court, giving her story more weight. She was placed behind a curtain to prevent her from seeing the accused and provoking more trauma, but a live feed of her was shown to the defendants and the public. The woman spent eight days on the stand and in comparison, to the significantly shorter amount of time that the men spent being examined, it lent to the idea that the woman was actually on trial and not the four men. After her examination, she remained in a room outside of the courtroom. Although she had the ability to hear the occurrences in the court-room through

a live feed, she was invisible. This might have had a subconscious effect on the jury as the defendants were extremely visible with the support of their family and friends.

This notion of either passivity or absence being the only acceptable forms of behaviour is highlighted in Irigaray's work *This Sex Which is Not One*, as she discusses female eroticism and appealing to 'the subject'. A woman must emphasise 'her consignment to passivity, she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation' (Irigaray 1985b, p.26). This chimes with the role of the woman in the Belfast rape trial, she must fall into her social role of passivity and with this she will be contemplated by the jury, by the opposing counsel and in particular by society. Gillen's review called for the recording of cross-examinations also to reduce the trauma to the victim, and while this would certainly work in reducing trauma, looking at the result of the pre-recorded testimonies, it could also negatively affect prosecution rates. If this process did not affect acquittal rates it would be extremely beneficial in protecting the witness. It would also provide more accurate evidence: 'it lends itself to better-quality evidence as it is given closer to the alleged event and is recalled at a time when the complainants are removed from court stressors' (Gillen 2019, p.12).

There is another significant difference between legislations that was evident in the Belfast rape trial. In the Republic, those accused rarely take the stand as it often gives the prosecution the opportunity to cross examine their argument, and the jury is 'specifically instructed it cannot draw any adverse inference from an accused's choice not to give evidence' (Gallagher 2018). However, in Northern Ireland 'juries are told they can take an inference from a defendant's choice not to give evidence' (Gallagher 2018). This is the reason that it is more common in the North for defendants to give evidence in trials and why the four defendants in the Belfast rape trial also did so.

‘The problem is that the justice system in general was never designed to protect victims of sexual violence – because historically victims have always been assumed to have been women’ (McDermott 2018). There is a significant bias against complainants in sexual offence trials and their accusations are seen with doubtful eyes. Statistics suggest that the majority of complainants are women, 82% of victims of sexual violence crimes in 2018 were female (Central Statistics Office 2019). A common prejudice is that women are overly-emotional, and the reason that they report rape is because they are being ‘overdramatic’ regarding consent. This is inferred by the opposing counsel in both the Belfast rape trial and the Cork rape trial and in the treatment of Emma in *Asking for It*. De Beauvoir writes of women’s behaviour and how it is not linked to being ‘woman’ but the situation that surrounds her: ‘but we must only note that the varieties of behaviour reported are not dictated to woman by her hormones nor predetermined in the structure of the female brain: they are shaped as in a mould by her situation’ (de Beauvoir 1953, p.567). This lends to the idea that women have the right to react ‘dramatically’ in situations, like sexual assault that call for it.

Sexual assault can often be seen as a woman’s ‘over-reaction’ to a consensual sexual interaction, and it is well to remember that women comprise 91% of sexual assault survivors who contacted Rape Crisis Network Ireland in 2020 (Rape Crisis Network Ireland 2021). The result of this ‘over-reaction’ may be an innocent man being charged with a crime he did not commit, and in the eyes of the patriarchy, this is far worse than a man committing sexual assault and never being punished for it. The other patriarchal bias is that women, through their slyness and cunning, may be lying about the level of consent to, again, trick the innocent man into being charged and to gain some sort of satisfaction or revenge. In reality, the gruelling stages of a trial are not worth either of these motives, and if a complainant reports an incident, it is the result of a courageous action that is neither because of an over-reaction or for revenge. A study was done

in the US to measure the statistics of false allegations in rape cases, and an analysis of over ten years has indicated that the prevalence of false rape allegations is between 2% and 10% (Lisak et al 2010).

Louise O'Neill's second book, *Asking for It* was first published in 2015 in the category of 'Young Adult' fiction, but due to its success, has since been marketed at a more general audience. O'Neill, in recent years, has been very vocal about her feminist beliefs, often speaking on television, radio and through her own column in the *Irish Examiner* about the impact of a patriarchal society on women. She is a fearless writer, unafraid to bring the controversial topics in Irish society into conversations, topics such as female sexual pleasure, domestic abuse and sexual assault. *Asking for It* was also produced as a play and premiered at the Everyman in Cork city in 2018, before moving to the Abbey Theatre in Dublin with a sold-out season. It also made its UK premiere in the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 2020. In *Asking for It*, O'Neill has discussed rape culture in Irish society, the complicated issue of consent and the impact of social media through her creation of a judgemental community in rural Ireland. One of the core themes of the book is around the issue of consent, and what is the nature of consent, in particular, and the law in Ireland has much to say on this topic.

The laws surrounding rape have clearly changed over the years, becoming more specific with regard to sexual assault and consent. For example, the Criminal Law (Rape) Act of 1981 did not specify as to what consent entailed, the words 'does not consent to it' were simply stated in the act (Criminal Law (Rape) Act 1981). In 1990 this Act was amended and there was a section dedicated to consent, it read:

It is hereby declared that in relation to an offence that consists of or includes the doing of an act to a person without the consent of that person any failure or omission by that person to offer resistance to the act does not of itself constitute consent to the act. (Criminal Law (Rape) Amendment) Act 1990)

This was a very basic explanation of consent and it still needed an updated, more specific version. It was finally done in 2017 with a Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act:

9. (1) A person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act.
- (2) A person does not consent to a sexual act if—
 - (a) he or she permits the act to take place or submits to it because of the application of force to him or her or to some other person, or because of the threat of the application of force to him or her or to some other person, or because of a well-founded fear that force may be applied to him or her or to some other person,
 - (b) he or she is asleep or unconscious,
 - (c) he or she is incapable of consenting because of the effect of alcohol or some other drug,
 - (d) he or she is suffering from a physical disability which prevents him or her from communicating whether he or she agrees to the act,
 - (e) he or she is mistaken as to the nature and purpose of the act,
 - (f) he or she is mistaken as to the identity of any other person involved in the act,
 - (g) he or she is being unlawfully detained at the time at which the act takes place,
 - (h) the only expression or indication of consent or agreement to the act comes from somebody other than the person himself or herself.
- (3) This section does not limit the circumstances in which it may be established that a person did not consent to a sexual act.
- (4) Consent to a sexual act may be withdrawn at any time before the act begins, or in the case of a continuing act, while the act is taking place.
- (5) Any failure or omission on the part of a person to offer resistance to an act does not of itself constitute consent to that act. (Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017)

This updated version has been a long time coming. The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre published a work in 1998 by Professor Ivana Bacik of Trinity College that made ‘several recommendations, including a broadening of the definition of rape and a change in the interpretation of consent’ (McKay 2007, p.98). It took almost ten years for this change to be made in Irish law, and it

shows that Ireland's system is moving at a very slow pace with regards to updating their laws. This change, if it had been completed sooner, could have made a difference to the lives of so many victims of sexual abuse, as they had to watch their attacker be acquitted. This overdue, updated version is more informative and specific as to what does not constitute consent. It is much more supportive of the victims of sexual offences, especially in comparison to the previous acts. It can be said that the previous acts' lack of specifications could be a reason as to why defendants were not convicted of the accused sexual crime. Something to note is that this definition of consent is present in the Republic of Ireland; in the Northern Irish legislation the definition of consent is as follows: 'For the purposes of this Order, a person consents if he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice' (The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008).

O'Neill highlights various issues with Irish society and notions of consent through the protagonist Emma in *Asking for It* and her interactions with the world. The character of Emma O'Donovan is a complex one: she is the leader of her friend-group, a physically beautiful and popular 'queen-bee' of her school with both girls and boys wishing to be close to her. O'Neill makes an interesting point and creates her protagonist as quite unlikeable. Emma acts unkindly to her friends, she is conniving and manipulative with her own interests as her priority, but despite all of this the reader feels tremendous pity for her as she faces the reality of her assault which involves victim blaming, slut shaming and general rape culture. O'Neill creates this dislikeable character to combat the stereotype attached to an assault victim, one that is quiet, shy and submissive, to channel de Beauvoir, that so many plots include. She highlights the possibility of sexual assault happening to anyone. Emma's nastiness is mostly seen through her inner thoughts. 'By the time the bell rings, I am exhausted. I have to smile and be nice and look like I care about other people's problems or else I'll get called a bitch' (O'Neill 2015, p.13). It

is Emma who gets raped in this plot, when she attends a house-party and takes drugs given to her by her rapist. She wakes up the following day to opprobrium as pictures of her being sexually assaulted by multiple males were posted on a Facebook page. Emma has no recollection of any of this due to her intoxication. The plot follows the unravelling of her life as she attempts to deal with constant harassment from the community and wider society, due to submitting a complaint to the Gardaí. Louise O'Neill highlights various issues with a patriarchal society in *Asking for It*, along with the more direct issues of victim blaming in rape culture which will be discussed in detail further in the chapter.

Chronologically, one of the first matters that one notices when reading the book is the importance placed on physical appearance. Emma's mother is a constant source of emphasis on beauty: 'Her fingers rest on my stomach. "Do you have your period?" she says. "You look a little bloated"' (O'Neill 2015, p.5). Here, O'Neill highlights societal disgust at a natural female process, such as menstruation. Along with being an 'uncomfortable' subject for many people, it is inconvenient as it often changes the female's bodily shape, and so, deprives the body of one of the signifiers of conventional beauty, in this case, thinness. Emma's mother strongly believes that women's worth derives from beauty and constantly reminds her daughter of her looks: 'You look beautiful this morning, Emmie. As always' (O'Neill 2015, p.6). She also takes care of her own appearance as she gets her hair done every Saturday regardless of the monetary implications: 'I don't care how expensive it is' (O'Neill 2015, p.3). Emma's friends are also of the same mind-set, constantly worrying about their figures and restricting their food intake. When offered a muffin:

Ali pushes her blonde hair extensions back off her face. 'No, I shouldn't' She takes a sip of coffee from her Nespresso travel mug. 'Mom has signed us up for this paleo food challenge thing'. (O'Neill 2015, p.9)

The hair extensions also highlight the girls' need to physically alter themselves in order to enhance their physical appeal. Those who do not conform to the acceptable beauty standards are subject to criticism by Emma and her friends.

It's Chloe Hegarty, her hair standing up in a halo of frizz at her hairline, breakouts all around her jaw and chin, one patch of acne crusted over with yellow pus. I wish she would go and see a dermatologist. (O'Neill 2015, p.14)

Emma's mother comments on another mother's grey hair. 'I do think it's brave of her to allow herself to go grey so early' (O'Neill 2015, p.18). This insult disguised as a compliment shows society's belief that signs of aging in a woman are unacceptable and should be hidden or disguised.

When women age, the conventional beauty that they once possessed is lost or lessened, therefore, to maintain their societal value they must aim to preserve this beauty at all times. This is done by covering grey hairs with hair dye and injecting muscle-freezing chemicals such as Botox into their face to reduce wrinkles, along with the constantly advertised 'anti-aging cream' and 'anti-wrinkle moisturiser'. Bordo writes about aging 'Aging beautifully' 'used to mean wearing one's years with style, confidence, and vitality. Today it means not appearing to age at all' (Bordo 2003, p.xxiv). Aging also means that women no longer possess the ability to bear children, and this also decreases their value in society. De Beauvoir writes of women's aging: 'But all those precautions do not prevent the appearance of grey hairs and crows-feet. Woman knows from youth that this fate is unavoidable' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.512). Regardless of how a woman masks her aging with aesthetic treatments, there is no stopping her body from aging, and de Beauvoir highlights this. In society, women's physical appearance is an important aspect of their being, and patriarchy has placed substantial value on physical beauty and attractiveness. Women are very much aware of this and it creates various insecurities when they

fail to meet these standards: 'since woman is an object, it is quite understandable that her intrinsic value is affected by her style of dress and adornment' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.510).

Often these insecurities manifest in different ways, one is jealousy and the act of comparison to other women. This often leads to women putting themselves in competition with one another. This is a prominent aspect of O'Neill's book. Emma thinks to herself about when she was twelve or thirteen years old and she first met her friend Maggie: 'I had been worried when I heard that until I saw Maggie and realised that, yes, she was pretty. But she wasn't prettier than me' (O'Neill 2015, p.18). For a child of twelve or thirteen to place value on appearance in this way exhibits a very dangerous attitude with regard to beauty. A study on the standards of physical beauty shows the effects that unrealistic standards have on a child's social development:

Standards of appearance can be considered one of the important aspects of the social development situation; they are adopted by a child through the mechanism of internalization and serve as an internal tool for regulating the attitude towards their own appearance and the appearance of other people. When unrealistic, unhealthy standards become this internal tool in the form of a system of perceptions about beauty, they induce a high level of dissatisfaction with the person's own appearance and a highly critical attitude towards others. (Kholmogorova et al 2017)

Emma's attitude towards beauty at such a young age shows the internalisation of unhealthy beauty standards mentioned in the above quote.

Beauty standards in modern culture are detrimental to women, Naomi Wolf writes of the beauty myth: 'we are in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth' (Wolf 2002, p.10). She explains that as domesticity lost power in social control, the beauty myth took over (Wolf 2002). This is where society instils in women a 'dark vein of self-hatred, physical

obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control' as a form of social control. Emma also possesses the 'highly critical attitude', mentioned by Alla Kholmogorova, towards others, as evidenced by her insults to her own friends: when Maggie wears a nice outfit she says 'Jesus' ... 'You look like you're Amish or something' (O'Neill 2015, p.18). She calls a girl on television 'an unfortunate looking girl', and says to her brother: 'The state of her ... You'd think she'd have got her hair done or something if she knew she was going to be on TV' (O'Neill 2015, p.55). Emma feels the need to insult those that do not meet her standards of aesthetic beauty.

This study by Kholmogorova et al also illustrates that modern culture 'stimulates in girls, the need to show themselves off and it generates grand fantasies and dreams about admiration and adoration' (Kholmogorova et al 2017). Emma loves to be admired and adored by all:

I imagine them whispering to themselves once I'm out of earshot about how nice I am, how genuine, how I always seem to have time for everybody, how it's amazing that I can still be so down to earth when I look the way I do. (O'Neill 2015, p.13)

It is as if she is voluntarily internalising her position as admired object as opposed to the agent of her own life and being. She also competes for admiration from males, and likes to have all the attention at all times. 'You're so hot, Jamie, they kept saying. I didn't like it' (O'Neill 2015, p.93). She admits that she is competitive, especially with Jamie: ('It was never just the two of us. We were too competitive for that, always needing one of the other girls to act as a buffer') (O'Neill 2015, p.93). De Beauvoir writes of such rivalry in women: 'but it is above all in the sphere of coquetry and love that each woman sees in every other an enemy. I have referred to that type of rivalry in young girls, it often continues for life' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.520).

In the instances when O'Neill uses parentheses in the text, it portrays Emma's private thoughts. These thoughts also highlight the peculiarity of the friendship between Jamie and

Emma. The rivalry between them prevents them forming a true friendship. Emma is constantly criticising other women, but she rarely criticises men. While this stems from her own insecurities, this is also a conditioned outlook, an internalised misogyny. Along with this, her insecurities, mostly related to physical appearances and the public view of her, also derive from societal values. It is not solely Emma that possesses these traits, O'Neill includes various characters that act in the same way, to highlight that this is a common problem amongst women.

It is not simply a problem of Emma's generation:

According to Vygotsky, the standards accepted in a culture are communicated to the child primarily by the adult, which makes communication with family members and other adults close to the child (for example, teachers) particularly important. (Kholmogorova et al 2017)

The mothers in *Asking for It* are sources of these insecurities for their daughters. Emma's and Ali's mothers are guilty of communicating this type of thinking. Ali's mother often focuses on physical appearance: 'Karen's jaw drops when I come out of the dressing room. "You look stunning. You could be a model," she'll say as she stands behind me' (O'Neill 2015, p.31). Karen also promotes a slim figure in her own daughter, as she puts her on a diet, as mentioned previously in this chapter.

Another interesting aspect of the book is the relationship between Julie and Dylan, a couple that are friendly with Emma. These are two minor characters, but their relationship portrays some significant issues. Although Dylan disrespects Julie in many ways, often cheating on her, she constantly blames women for his actions. When he sleeps with Jamie, although he forced himself on her, Julie blames Jamie for the occurrence and Dylan suffers no consequences. Patriarchy promotes blame on women and allows men to remain unscathed. A good reputation is vital to the characters in this book, and it is not solely the physical image that is imperative in order to retain a good reputation and gain respect from others. O'Neill

highlights the importance of academic results in the lives of these girls, especially in the case of Emma:

‘And then in first place,’ he continued, ‘congratulations, Jamie.’ Jamie took the booklet from him, 93% scrawled across the front in red marker. Her expression didn’t change as she shoved it into her school bag. I looked at my own again, and it was if the number drifted off the page, rising towards me, searing itself into my eyes. I wanted to rip it into fifty thousand pieces. (O’Neill 2015, p.11)

It seems from this quote that Jamie is uninterested in showing off her grades, unlike Emma who ‘left it on [her] desk so everyone could see it’ (O’Neill 2015, p.11). Emma’s jealousy is clear but she disguises it to shield her reputation: “‘Well done, J.’ I smiled at her, in case anyone thought I was jealous. ‘God, I wish I had actually studied now’” (O’Neill 2015, p.11). Emma’s public image is extremely important to her. This status is based on appearance, likeability, popularity but also on academic success. She also fabricates the amount of time she studies, both to protect herself from the possibility of poor grades and also to portray her natural intelligence as being higher than it actually is.

Emma consistently observes designer brands on her friends, especially Ali, and she seems jealous of her wealth. ‘Ali reaches into her yellow Céline backpack her mother bought her in Paris to grab a pair of tortoiseshell Ray-Bans’ (O’Neill 2015, p.11). The mention of the brands, followed by an insult, highlights her envy. She says after she notices the sunglasses: ‘They were a bit big for your face anyway, hun’ (O’Neill 2015, p.12). She often insults Ali in particular due to her jealousy and the value that Emma places on the material designer items that Ali possesses: “‘Cool,’ I said. My fingers gripped a highlighting cream I had wanted for ages, but Mam said was too expensive. ‘Although I always think the Mac girls look like trannies’” (O’Neill 2015, p.10). Emma’s condemnation highlights her own insecurities. De Beauvoir writes ‘it has often been said that woman dresses to inspire jealousy in other women,

and such jealousy is in fact a clear sign of success; but it is not the only thing aimed at' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.514), and Emma wishes to inspire such jealousy in others as it is a sign of accomplishment in female social circles.

As Ali also shows the new Mini Cooper she is getting for her birthday, Emma says: 'I feel like you see Mini Coopers everywhere these days' (O'Neill 2015, p.16). Emma is extremely passive aggressive to those around her. While possessing designer brands is important, the girls are also judgemental regarding living situations: "God the state of the place' Jamie had said last year when we drove past a council housing estate on the outskirts of Ballinacorney' (O'Neill 2015, p.7).

These social class factors, including having a large house in a nice area, assist in creating the best image that the girls wish to portray to the public. These women are constantly comparing their lives with others. Luce Irigaray highlights how women find their value as commodities in society: 'in order to have a *relative value*, a commodity has to be confronted with another commodity that serves as its equivalent. Its value is never found to lie within itself' (Irigaray 1985a, p.176), and this lends an explanation as to why the internalised misogynistic culture that exists amongst women is still prevalent today. Society's placing significant value of women in certain areas such as appearance, has led women to find their worth in comparing themselves to other women, so that their sense of value is constructed to be extrinsic and not 'within itself'.

Another important aspect of society that O'Neill criticises is the sexualisation of women's bodies. Due to patriarchy, and the influence of media outlets, women's bodies are overly sexualised, and largely thought of as objects with the aim to please and entice men. O'Neill criticises how society has conditioned both men and women to associate women's bodies with sexuality. 'She frowns at my chest, at where the nipples are outlined through the

sweat-stained fabric ... I wrap my arms over them' (O'Neill 2015, pp.3-4). The issue with the visibility of nipples either without clothing or through fabric is only relevant regarding female nipples. Male nipples are not seen as anything taboo or worthy of covering, as they are seen as asexual. Women's nipples' primary function were for feeding children, but patriarchal inclinations have modified them into sexual objects. A movement that began on social media, called 'Free The Nipple', has recently attempted to banish the controversial outlook on female nipples and to promote the absence of bras. The movement has led to various marches around the world to promote gender equality with regards to sexualising women's bodies.

Another example of sexualised bodies is observed when Jamie gets dressed for a party:

She fidgets nervously with her dress. 'Do you think it's too short?' she says, spinning around to see herself from the back. 'Don't be stupid,' I say, handing her another drink. 'With your legs?' (O'Neill 2015, p.51)

Jamie highlights the notion that women have value and respect based on the length of their skirt and of the attractiveness of their bodies. The shorter the skirt, the less value they have, according to society, due to the sexualisation of women. When wearing a short skirt, also, it can be seen that women are 'asking for it' and they often receive less pity if a sexual assault happened and they were wearing 'provocative' clothing. However, while a shorter skirt is devaluing in the eyes of society, men often desire and provide attention to more revealing clothing, with this attention often providing a different type of value to the woman, a more relative value to recall the words of Irigaray.

This male-centred value pleases the woman, as patriarchy ideologically constructs values, so that male attention is seen as a positive trait and well worth having. De Beauvoir underlines this aporia well:

While some women, however, assert that they 'dress for themselves', we have seen that even in narcissism being observed by others is implied. Women fond of dress are hardly ever, except among the insane, entirely satisfied not to be seen; usually they want witnesses. (de Beauvoir 1953, p.513)

This issue around clothing and its link to victim blaming will be discussed later in the chapter. O'Neill highlights that age is not a factor when it comes to commodifying women, it is not just young, immature boys who focus on physical beauty, rather it is all men:

Ciarán looks me up and down. I probably shouldn't have worn such a low-cut top. 'Well, well, well.' He winks at Dad. 'You have a heartbreaker on your hands there Denis. I'd say you must be bating them off with a stick'. (O'Neill 2015, p.51)

Here Emma regrets her outfit choices due to the way that men react to her 'low-cut top'. The point that physical beauty is the focus when meeting a woman shows where patriarchy places its values. Ciarán calling Emma a 'heartbreaker', also reiterates the idea that women break the hearts of innocent men with their seductiveness. The irony of the phrase 'bating them off' also reminds the reader of the issues of consent: the men in this book do not listen to the word 'no', they must be physically stopped. Ciarán is also the father of Paul O'Brien, the man who rapes Emma later in the plot. Irigaray highlights an important idea: 'father-son relationships, [...] guarantee the transmission of patriarchal power and its laws, its discourse, its social structures' (Irigaray 1985a, p.193). It is evident here that Ciarán has passed on his misogynistic and predatory behaviour to his son, exemplifying Irigaray's theory.

As Emma complains to her friends about men looking at her sexually, they reply "Well what did you expect princess?" Jamie says. "You're about to take someone's eye out" (O'Neill 2015, p.51). This emphasises the common idea that men are not at fault for reacting if sexuality is seemingly offered to them. It is the woman who offers who is at fault. Women are seen as clever and cunning beings who corrupt innocent men who remain powerless in their biological

response.. This leads to the phrase 'boys will be boys'. Men are expected to succumb to these urges and should not receive punishment or condemnation when they do so, in contrast to women whose sexuality is not accepted in society: 'sexually transgressive women are more likely to be pilloried and demonised than men who violate accepted norms' (Inglis 2005, p.31). Like here, Emma is criticised for being the object of sexual desire instead of the men who are sexualising her. Emma's mother again is the representative of societal critique as she says to Emma: 'And put a jumper on yourself' ... 'You'll embarrass your brother if you go into him like that' (O'Neill 2015, p.54). She portrays the mind-set of sexuality being attached to female breasts and also the necessity of putting male needs before one's own; women's sexuality must be muted to avoid embarrassing or seducing men.

O'Neill also includes pleasing men, and society's will to do so, as a central topic in the book. She highlights that women have been conditioned over years of patriarchy to alter their behaviour with the aim of pleasing the men in their lives. Emma's mother is an example of this when it comes to her husband. Emma says:

I remember watching her when I was a child as she patted and stroked her face, applying layers of creams and gels. *You have to take care of yourself*, she would tell me. *I can't expect your father to stay interested in me if I just let myself go.* (O'Neill 2015, p.263)

Emma's mother demonstrates the pressure on women to constantly appeal to male desire, and this burden stems from patriarchy. It also highlights the importance of beauty and preventing signs of aging in women, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Emma's mother also attempts to satisfy her son Bryan, Emma's brother: 'Emmie, give your brother some room, he's not feeling well' (O'Neill 2015, p.57). The idea that women should prioritise men's needs before their own is voiced when Emma says that 'Mam never gets cross with Bryan' (O'Neill 2015, p.58).

Emma's mother puts the needs of the men in her life before her own and instils the same values her daughter. Their value system embodies the fact that men hold authority in family structures.

Emma continues promoting these values in her life. She says to Paul O'Brien: "I never want to get married," I say. "Gross." "Of course you don't." He pulls my body closer, wrapping one of his legs over mine. "You're not like other girls are you?" (O'Neill 2015, p.110). Emma says this, although it is a lie and she admits that she does want to get married at another point in the book, in fact she says this to impress Paul as she thinks this is what he wants to hear and that she would seem more attractive and sexual, and again she is embodying the idea that her role is to please men and say, not what she thinks, but what men want to hear: 'confronting man, woman is always play-acting' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.519).

It is not just the women in this family that aim to please men, as O'Neill shows that many women want to do so. Another woman in the community says: "John Senior has to cook all his own meals" Sheila Heffernan had tutted to my mother a few years ago, "and he coming in from a hard day's work on the farm" (O'Neill 2015, p.269). She says this about a woman suffering badly from grief after losing a child, and the implication is that she should still be looking after the men in her life despite what happened. Her suffering is to be ignored to prioritise caring for men. Women's position in society is to be 'born to suffer' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.571). This also highlights the woman's domestic role in the household which will be discussed at a later point in the chapter. Irigaray states: 'In this new matrix of History, in which man begets man as his own likeness, wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men' (Irigaray 1985a, pp.171-172). She highlights here that women's value only stems from men and how they are of use to them. Women are solely objects to be utilized in various ways, domestically, sexually and other ways, by men.

Louise O'Neill wrote *Asking for It* long before the alleged incident that caused The Belfast rape trial took place, but the similarities between the two narratives are uncanny. They show that the common issues surrounding sexual assault in Ireland are simply repeating themselves year after year. Victim blaming is highly present within the discourse of rape culture in Ireland, and this is often communicated through various rape myths. O'Neill highlights various ones in *Asking For It* and tackles the complex issue of consent. One of these rape myths in particular can also be connected to the Cork rape trial, and that is the notion of authority and credibility.

Jackson and Olding, both being Ulster and Ireland rugby players, were extremely well known and respected in Irish society, due to the popularity, throughout the country, of this particular sport. They were both earning significant salaries, and were role-models for many children across Ireland. Before any trial started, these men 'were always entitled to the presumption of innocence', they had an upper-hand in the case due to their influence and their contacts, but yet their reputation was also at stake (Lewis 2018).

In *Asking for It*, Paul O'Brien, Emma's rapist, was an older, popular man who was respected by the whole community, especially for his football skills, an important aspect of one's reputation, especially in rural Ireland. He also had a girlfriend at the time. For some reason, the idea of someone being in a committed relationship makes them seem more trustworthy, and lends to the idea that they would not commit an act like this. Ciara Molloy also suggests that 'acquaintance rape' is often taken less seriously than 'stranger rape' in courtrooms, and the fact that both complainants in the Belfast rape trial and *Asking for It* knew the accused, did not bode well for them (Molloy 2018), and this situation has a lot to do with what have been termed 'rape myths'.

There are various misconceptions surrounding all types of sexual assault and these are often referred to as 'rape myths'. These are common beliefs, often promoted by society, that blame victims and excuse those accused of the crimes. Gillen's review highlights the presence of 'rape myths and stereotypes about sexual offences' that may 'be embraced by juries and that may influence their judgement' (Gillen 2019, p.13). Many of these were present in the cross-examination of the complainant in the Belfast rape trial, and were the cause of online censure, particularly directed at Mr Brendan Kelly, representing Paddy Jackson. Many lawyers are aware of these rape myths, and often use them to persuade juries to a certain decision and to 'make determined efforts to discredit the general character of the complainant' (Brereton 1997, p.243). Rape myths are also adverted to by O'Neill in *Asking for It*, as she attempts to highlight the misuse of them in the Irish justice system and in society in general.

One of the most common rape myths used is that 'victims who drink alcohol or use drugs are asking to be raped' (Gillen 2019, pp.13-14). In the Belfast rape trial, Kelly asked the witness if she was intoxicated in the nightclub before going to Paddy Jackson's house-party (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). It can be seen that he was insinuating the common rape myth of placing blame on the victim for blurring the lines of consent due to intoxication.

In *Asking for It*, the rape of Emma has two parts to it, one being the actual event that she communicates as it happens in real-time in the novel and this the only part that she actually remembers. The other part is revealed later through social media and she has no recollection of it due to her being intoxicated. In the first part of this complex event, O'Neill raises various important issues with regard to female sexuality and consent. A very prominent aspect of the rape scene is the fact that Emma was highly intoxicated. This has issues in itself due to the fact that even if she wanted to provide consent, which as we can see from her internal monologue that she did not, she was not in a fit state of mind to provide adequate consent. Society often

views this intoxication in a different way, seeing it as Emma almost allowing herself to be in a vulnerable position and therefore 'asking for it' as she did not protect herself fully. When this book was published, the laws defining consent were unclear as mentioned earlier in the chapter, but since 2017, and the Amendment of Act of 1990, intoxication is specifically mentioned: '(2) A person does not consent to a sexual act if—(c) he or she is incapable of consenting because of the effect of alcohol or some other drug' (Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017). This would assist in the prosecuting of the accused if Emma were to make and sustain a formal complaint. Emma takes the drugs that Paul offers her as he taunts her: 'Nothing for an innocent girl like you to be concerned with' (O'Neill 2015, p. 98). When she hesitates, he laughs and because of this manipulation, she decides to take them. The issue with intoxication was also present in the Belfast rape trial. Like *Asking for It*, emphasis is placed on the fact the victim is intoxicated and therefore she is blamed. Finch and Munroe completed a study on the link between intoxication and rape and state that:

In a recent and highly publicised report, for example, 30 per cent of respondents indicated that they would hold a complainant who was intoxicated at least partially responsible for having been raped, with 4 per cent holding her completely responsible. (Finch et al 2007, pp. 592-593)

This shows the widespread and unthinking public acceptance of rape myths due to lack of correct education on the subject. On the other hand, 'intoxicated defendants tend to be held *less* responsible for subsequent sexual events than their sober counterparts while intoxicated complainants tend to be held *more* responsible' (Finch et al 2007, p.591). This example of patriarchy constantly seeks excuses for men and, in turn, penalises females, in this case assault victims. It also originates from the act of excessively drinking alcohol being 'generally viewed as a culturally sanctioned masculine activity' (Finch et al 2007, p.594). Women should refrain

from deviating 'from gender-role norms' and so drinking excessively is a wide source of criticism (Finch et al 2007, p.594):

Women who consume alcohol in the presence of a male drinker will be perceived, both by male and female observers, to be more sexually disinhibited, more sexually available, and more likely to enjoy being seduced than a non-drinking counterpart. (Finch et al 2007, p.594)

This social construct is additional reason why the verdict of trials involving complainants who were intoxicated often result in acquittal of the accused.

Following the incident, Emma heard a conversation about herself from a bathroom cubicle:

'Yeah.' Caroline still sounds unsure. 'But if she had passed out?'

'Car.' The first girl is losing patience. 'Come on. No one forced the drink down her throat, or made her take shit. And what guy was going to say no if it was handed to him on a plate?' She laughs. 'She was fucking asking for it'. (O'Neill 2015, p.154)

Due to the victim being intoxicated with either drugs or alcohol, they are more vulnerable to sexual assault and therefore it is seen as the fault of the victim for exposing themselves in that position. Due to this intoxication, Emma was also unconscious. She had no recollection of any of the events and discovered the events through photographs posted on Facebook. Her thoughts describe what she sees: 'His fingers are inside the body, the girl (*me, me, oh God I'm going to be sick*) but she doesn't move' (O'Neill 2015, p.146). The men were playing with her body as if it were an inanimate object and not a person. Emma also speaks with a distance as she refers to herself as 'the girl', and on realising that it is herself (the repeated '*me, me*') her reaction is to be sick. It is as if she is split in two: as subject and as object. She cannot believe that it is her. They humiliate her: 'Paul lifts the girl's legs, holding them up in the air, while Dylan puts his head in between them. In the next photo he is staring at the camera, grimacing like the girl, *like*

I, it's me (it can't be me), smells bad' (O'Neill 2015, p.147). Emma is in denial and shock that the girl in the photographs is her. She was completely unconscious for the entirety, and is limp and unresponsive in the pictures: 'Her head and shoulders have fallen off the edge of the bed' (O'Neill 2015, p.147).

In the newest amendment of the Criminal Law Act, it can be seen that Emma has not given consent to these acts: '(2) A person does not consent to a sexual act if—(b) he or she is asleep or unconscious' (Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2017). Again, this amendment provides victims of sexual violence with more support than the previous legislation. The treatment of Emma as an object here also is an example of Irigaray's view that 'woman, in this sexual imaginary, is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies' (Irigaray 1985a, p.25). The way that Paul is posing for the camera and pulling faces underlines the use of Emma as a 'prop': his pleasure seems to be not in the act of sex but rather in the act of dominance. The only difference here is that Emma, due to being unconscious, is the ultimate obliging woman, she is unable to protest or object, she is a literal prop in their fantasy.

During the Belfast rape trial, the witness told a detailed account of the occurrences in the bedroom when Jackson pushed her down onto the bed, pulled down her trousers and raped her vaginally, while Olding raped her orally. Jackson was so rough with her that she began to bleed (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). The woman said: 'I couldn't move. I knew I had started to bleed. Whenever Paddy stopped having sex with me he started trying to get his hand up me' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). Defending counsel Kelly then asked her a question which confirms another rape myth 'Why did you not give him a firm "no"?', she replied: 'He was not taking no for an answer' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). This rape myth is included in the Gillen review as 'if complainants did not scream, fight or get injured, it was not rape' (Gillen 2019, pp.13-14). Due to the victim being 'frozen with fear' as she states,

she did not fight or scream (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). Kelly attempts to show her providing consent by her failing to directly say the word 'no'.

In *Asking for It*, Emma also had a particular incident with another boy, Kevin Brennan, before the main rape happened. It shows how often these incidents occur and nothing is done about them. We witness the event through Emma's thoughts amidst a conversation with Dylan:

'Just good?' He raises an eyebrow at me. 'That's not what Kevin Brennan said.'

(Kevin, throwing me against a wall at the party, his teeth sharp.)

'Why?' I say. 'What exactly did Kevin say?'

(... he is dragging me into a dimly lit bedroom that smells of Play-Doh. Tripping over a headless Barbie. A candy-pink duvet, people laughing outside. *Let's get back to the party*, I kept saying.)

'Oh – ' Dylan smirks – 'just that you had fun.'

(Kevin's hands on my shoulders, pushing me down, saying, *Go on, come on, Emma*. It seemed easiest to go along with it. Everyone is always saying how cute he is anyway.)

'What kind of fun?' My voice is tight.

(Afterwards I made him *swear* he wouldn't tell anyone). (O'Neill 2015, p.29)

Emma's thoughts, again, portray the complex issue of consent. Similarly to the former, the word 'no' was not uttered but it is obvious that Emma did not want to have sex with him. O'Neill uses violent terms such as 'throwing', 'sharp', 'pushing' and 'dragging' to highlight the non-consensual aspect of this incident. Regardless of protesting, the word 'no' was again not said, so in a society governed by rape myths, this would be considered consent. The act of telling about the 'fun' he has with Emma again sees her as something of a prop to male vanity: the act of sex is almost less important than the bragging to his male friends. This is one of the main issues when reporting sexual violence as discussed previously.

One of the most shocking aspects of the cross examination of the complainant in the Belfast rape trial, was the introduction and inspection of the complainant's underwear worn on

the night in question. This automatically sparked opprobrium amongst the public, and was a source of humiliation and shame for the witness. After the rape, a medical examination confirmed that the witness had an internal tear, presumably from Jackson's forceful entry. Despite this, the reason that Kelly introduced the thong into the courtroom was an attempt at proving that the blood that the witness mentioned was present prior to the alleged rape, that it was menstrual. Due to Kelly's history in the courtroom, it can be presumed that he was implying another rape myth to convince the jurors, one focusing on clothing, specifically, underwear. The fact that the victim's underwear was a thong, is stressed and as this can be seen as a more 'sexual' piece of clothing, it is made to suggest that the victim wore in the hope of enticing a man. The victim was wearing 'white jeans and a sparkly top', but if she was wearing something more 'provocative' like a short skirt or low top, these clothing choices would also have been used against her, again suggesting that she was looking for a sexual encounter (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). 'Frequently, even when women are silent (or verbalising exactly the opposite), their bodies are seen as 'speaking' a language of provocation' (Bordo 2003, p.6). The language in this case would be spoken through the fabric on their bodies.

The Cork rape trial, mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, took place at the beginning of November 2018, and it was not the verdict that sparked attention, but the defence attorney's inclusion of the woman's underwear as a defence. A statement from the defendant's senior counsel, Elizabeth O'Connell, reads:

Does the evidence out-rule the possibility that she was attracted to the defendant and was open to meeting someone and being with someone You have to look at the way she was dressed. She was wearing a thong with a lace front. (O'Connell 2018)

It was this comment that sparked uproar from women, and men, across the globe who, in protest, began posting pictures of their underwear in various colours, fabrics and shapes to prove that

#ThisIsNotConsent. The Chief Executive of Dublin Rape Crisis also condemned the comments, along with TD Ruth Coppinger who held up a thong in the Dáil, and called for an end to this victim blaming. It also caused street protests in Cork and in Dublin along with a clothes-line being erected between lampposts near the Spire in Dublin, displaying women's underwear. Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan spoke out against these techniques used in court and plainly said: 'Clothes don't rape women. Rapists rape women' (Phelan et al 2018). This issue was also picked up by various media outlets and was broadcast around the world, highlighting Ireland's misogynistic practices and, in turn, supporting the idea of the backward reputation possessed by Ireland. 'Lawyer in Rape Trial Links Thong with Consent, Ireland Erupts' was a headline of an article published online by The New York Times. Media organisations CNN in America and BBC in the UK also published various articles surrounding the incident.

The use of this personal, and ultimately irrelevant, item caused unnecessary upset to the complainant and her family due to the intimate details that were shared widely. Elizabeth O'Connell also received widespread censure for this tactic. The fact that this was used by a woman also caused global upset. It shows a conditioned mind-set about victim-blaming present in so many women. This can be tied to the portrayal of the mothers in *Asking for It* as they were the strongest promoters in various misogynistic concepts present in the book. Internalised misogyny is present in all of the texts examined so far in this thesis and this shows a significant presence in Irish society. This use of clothing against a rape victim's complaint is not a new concept, the matter was existent over forty years ago:

In October 1978 five thousand women came from all over Ireland to take part in a protest march through the centre of Dublin organised by the new Dublin Rape Crisis group. Anne Connolly led the chant: 'Yes means yes and no means no, however we dress, wherever we go.' (McKay 2018)

Ireland has shown little progression with regards to the use of clothing against victims of rape and sexual assault. Perhaps this should also be included in the updated version of the consent section of the Sexual Offence Act.

Both the Belfast rape trial and the Cork rape trial sparked Ruth Maxwell, an assault survivor, to create an exhibition entitled 'Not Consent'. The exhibition launched in Dublin in November 2018, and travelled to various places including higher education centres. It showcased outfits that sexual assault victims had been wearing when they were attacked. Sophie Doherty writes of her experience of the exhibition in Belfast:

Maxwell's exhibition represented the experiences of both men and women, of a variety of ages. Each of the outfits donated had a small and simple, but particularly striking label text. On a white rectangular card, the pieces were accompanied by a description in bold black font. (Doherty 2020)

The details on the card included the victims first name, offence, age, year that they were assaulted, the location and the perpetrator (*Irish Times* 2018). One harrowing example was the inclusion of a Communion dress and the label beside it read:

'Una
Aged: 7
Year: 2008 (The Night of her First Holy Communion)
Location: The Family Home
Perpetrator: Her Father'. (*The Irish Times* 2018)

The format in which this is presented is incredibly effective. This can be connected to the form used by Kimberly Campanello in a previous chapter. Both artists allow the content to speak for itself, and utilise a stark and striking image, often with little text, to speak to the observer.

The outfits in the exhibition vary from the underwear of a homeless man, to running gear with headphones, to a school uniform: 'the common denominator in all of these is the

rapist, not the clothing' (*Irish Times* 2018). Various labels also described the perpetrator as a male 'friend' (*Irish Times* 2018). This also combats the misbelief that all rapists are strangers to the victim. The aim of the exhibition was to 'help to inform public understandings of sexual violence and to combat prejudicial or stereotypical views about rape' (Doherty 2020). It combats the specific rape myth that 'provocative' clothing or underwear, similar to the Cork rape trial, suggests that the victim was 'asking for it', with the term 'it' referring to a sexual assault.

The radio interview in *Asking for It* also offers the opinion of another woman regarding sexual assault:

'You agree with him, do you Eileen?' 'I do indeed,' an older woman says. She breaks into a raspy smoker's cough before continuing. 'I see these girls walking around town here on a Saturday night, half naked, I tell you –'

'They are –' Davey chimes in, but she talks over him. 'Skirts up to their backsides, and tops cut down to their belly buttons, and they're all drinking too much, and falling over in the streets, they're practically asking to be attacked, and then when it happens, they start bawling crying over it'. (O'Neill 2015, pp.185-186)

This is another example of internalised misogyny. This opinion, regardless of the generational difference, echoes those of younger individuals regarding victim-blaming. This is a common perception: 'People phone in to say that I deserved it. They say that I was asking for it' (O'Neill 2015, p.187). This rape myth was also mentioned in the Gillen report: 'victims provoke rape by the way they dress or act' (Gillen 2019, p.13). This constant criticism has conditioned Emma to also believe that all of this is true, 'it's not your fault, the therapist tells me, but she is wrong' (O'Neill 2015, p.191). Bordo writes: 'these depictions of women as continually and actively luring men to arousal (and, often evil) work to disclaim male ownership of the body and its desires' (Bordo 2003, p.6), and they perpetuate the myth that men are powerless to resist the

provocative clothes of women and therefore have no control over their actions and should not be punished.

O'Neill also emphasises the idea of 'slut-shaming', a contemporary phenomenon that exists due to a patriarchal culture and its obsession with female sexuality:

He leans over me again, biting my ear, telling me I'm a slut, and he knows I want it, *you know you want it Emma*, thrusting harder and harder, slamming his body into mine, I just want it to be over. (O'Neill 2015, p.108)

The derogative word 'slut' is used negatively to describe a woman who enjoys sex, or a woman who has had many transient sexual relationships. The male equivalent of this term is the word 'stud' which usually has positive undertones. The dichotomy represents the contradictory values that a patriarchal society promotes for men and women. The fact that both words refer to the same behaviour, but believing that the female equivalent is negative, shows a misogynistic attitude. As we can see in this case, some men also find the idea of a 'slut' or a promiscuous woman attractive while having sexual intercourse, but find them distasteful in general life. De Beauvoir writes succinctly of this contradiction: 'a woman who appeals too obviously to male desire is in bad taste; but one who seems to reject it is no more commendable' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.508). We see this dichotomy enacted in *Asking for It*, as Paul O'Brien sees Emma on the street: 'He nudged one of his friends, whose face darkened when he caught sight of me. I could read his lips mouthing a word. *Slut*' (O'Neill 2015, p.195). This hypocrisy is an example of how patriarchy has manipulated society to solely chastise women for their sexual relation and not men.

O'Neill also highlights the idea that for women, once they decide to engage in sexual relations, changing their mind is unacceptable, and this is often used as an excuse for rape:

I try to get up. 'What?' he says. 'What's wrong with you?'

‘Maybe we should ...’ I try and swallow but my mouth is too dry. ‘Paul, maybe we should go back to the party.’

‘Don’t be silly,’ he says. (I brought him in here. This was my idea.) ‘Don’t be a fucking cock-tease.’ (O’Neill 2015, p.66)

Despite Emma asking to go back to the party, Paul ignores this and blames her for being a ‘tease’, and he implies that there is something wrong with her for wanting to leave. In a modern patriarchal society such as this one, women are criticised for being sexually active, slut-shamed as mentioned above, but are also criticised for celibacy and are ridiculed for innocent behaviour. This can be tied into a point made earlier of Irigaray’s theory that the only roles available to women in a patriarchal culture, with regards to sexuality, are mother, virgin and prostitute. Women are criticised for all aspects of their sexuality, while men are commended.

Paul manipulates her in to feeling obliged to have sex with him and the reader is witness to her frantic thoughts:

But it’s too late now and I don’t feel well, and I don’t know, I don’t know if there’s any point in stopping him now. And it’s too late now anyway.

(It doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter, it’s no big deal and who cares, who cares anyway?).

(O’Neill 2015, p.108)

Emma’s repeated and chaotic thoughts show how intoxicated, but also how emotionally upset, she is by the situation. She reassures herself in order to cope emotionally with what is happening.

It is not simply the youth of society that perceive this to be true as a radio programme discussing the Ballinacorney rape case reveals a broad swathe of opinion. A man says: ‘I’m not a judgemental man, I’m not. But if this girl was in bed with the lad anyway, what was she expecting?’ (O’Neill 2015, p.185). This again highlights how unacceptable it is for a woman to change her mind, as mentioned previously in the chapter. It also shows the presumption and

obligation for a woman to engage in sexual activities after physically getting into bed with a man. This is also now mentioned in the newest amendment of the sexual offences act: '(4) Consent to a sexual act may be withdrawn at any time before the act begins, or in the case of a continuing act, while the act is taking place' (Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017). This also attempts to combat this particular rape myth present in society and supports the victim's rights.

Social Media played a large part in the Belfast rape trial, in the fictional rape in *Asking for It*, and the Cork rape trial. For the Belfast rape trial in particular, social media played an active part in providing evidence. Key parts were WhatsApp messages sent between the four accused men, and between the girl and her friends. There was a clearly disrespectful and misogynistic undertone to the group WhatsApp messages of the accused as they discussed 'spit-roasting' and 'Belfast sluts' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). The terminology of 'spit-roasting' in particular refers to the cooking of meat on a spit, and in this case it is a sexual term referring to the physical positioning of the complainant when she was allegedly raped. The use of this phrase would seem to refer to women as pieces of meat to be 'roasted', and also connects to the idea that women are seen as less than human. This also links to the Irigarayan image of Emma as a prop as seen in the photographs on Facebook. The accused also described themselves as 'top shaggers', and the night as a 'merry-go-round at a carnival' (Gallagher 2018). These messages boasting about the number of women with whom they have had sexual relations derives from the cultural norm that men have a 'deep polygamous tendency', which 'exists among all men, always makes the number of available women seem insufficient' (Irigaray 1985a, p.170). Men are often expected or even commended for having a large number of sexual relationships with different women. Women are condemned for doing so even though a 'sexualised female is so integral a part of our sociocultural horizon that there is no way to

interpret it except within this horizon' (Irigaray 1985a, p. 171). Society only accepts female sexuality on its own terms, often when it is used against women. This is at the core of the slut/stud dichotomy, one term of praise and the other of shame.

The complainant texted her friends the morning after the event saying: 'So I got raped by 3 Ulster fucking rugby scum brilliant fucking night' (Gallagher 2018). Other texts to her friend also highlight that she was aware of the inequality she would be facing as a result of the authority of the men 'I'm not going up against Ulster Rugby, yeah because that'll work' (Gallagher 2018), and this message shows how much patriarchal authority and privilege has been accepted, 'she has been taught to accept masculine authority' (de Beauvoir 1953, p.569). The Belfast rape trial was also widely discussed on the social media platform of Twitter, and it had been trending in Ireland for weeks at the time of the event. It triggered a mass of online support for the complainant in particular, and updates of the events were also posted on social media by various journalists and reporters. One disadvantage of this particular social wave was that the anonymity of the complainant was under serious threat. Her name was leaked several times by various sources, and was widely known on social media, despite her wishes to remain anonymous.

The hashtag #IBelieveHer trended on Twitter with members of the public showing their support for the complainant. This was met with Jackson's legal team threatening legal action against the individuals that tweeted the hashtag, and this response led to even more uproar and the inclusion of #SueMePaddy which also trended on Twitter as a response. Sills states that: 'critiques on social media produce supportive spaces where women and girls can share understanding of, and mobilize against, sexual violence and rape culture' (Sills et al 2016, p.937), and this was certainly the case in this instance. The #Metoo movement is an example of this idea, where thousands of women united under a hashtag to share their stories of abuse.

It was an empowering movement that gave women the courage to speak up about their pasts and provided support for those who did. These online movements also result in surges of reports of abuse being made to authorities.

One of the most controversial discussions surrounding the trial was the presence of the then-captain of the Irish rugby team, Rory Best, in the courtroom. Many people saw this as Best supporting Jackson and Olding, therefore implicitly condoning what they had allegedly done and providing them with even more authority over the witness. Another hashtag reading #NotMyCaptain trended on Twitter, as people were outraged at Best's attendance. In fact, Best had been called as a 'character witness' for Jackson, and was following legal advice from Jackson's legal team when he attended the trial. He has since admitted in an interview that he regrets attending the trial:

I shouldn't have been there. I didn't [take independent legal advice] and that was more mistakes because I think when you're a reasonably trusting person you kind of think that, 'Oh look, if they're saying this then it must be for my benefit.' It turned out it wasn't. (Cummiskey 2020)

Best now believes that he was used as a pawn by Jackson's legal team, and these lawyers have since issued defamation proceedings against Best related to these comments (Phelan 2020). It seems that Jackson's lawyers are willing to take legal action against any person that speaks critically of Jackson. The attempt to rebuild his reputation is evident, but the idea of suing every single person on Twitter that uses a particular hashtag seems nonsensical.

The experience that Emma has of social media in *Asking for It* is significantly more negative. Due to the pictures of her being posted on Facebook, it was this social media application that, again, was a direct tool used in the sexual assault of Emma. While she did receive some messages of support and a hashtag of support was created reading #IBelieveBallinatoonGirl, this was not powerful enough to combat the broader negative

perception in the online community. Emma also received abusive emails, along with the tweets mentioned previously in this chapter. O'Neill highlights the power that social media can have, whether negative or positive and it can be detrimental on mental health; in her case, it actually protracted the whole experience of sexual assault.

The Cork rape trial also sparked online debate and attention. It caused global protests with the hashtag #ThisIsNotConsent trending on various platforms. As mentioned previously in the chapter, it was the misogynistic comment from Elizabeth O'Connell that sparked this uproar from women across the globe who, in protest, began posting pictures of their underwear in various colours, fabrics and shapes along with the hashtag to prove that #ThisIsNotConsent. All of these specific social media waves provoked discussion about rape in Ireland and the UK, a previously taboo subject that would usually be purposely ignored. It also informed newer generations about the laws surrounding rape and consent. Social media can be seen as an 'important space for young people in particular to learn about rape culture, and challenge it' (Sills et al 2016, p.936).

Rape culture in general has largely been affected by social media: 'while none of these phenomena are new (victim blaming, humour, criticism), their everyday reach and visibility has arguably intensified through online technologies in general, and through social media in particular' (Sills et al 2016, p.936). She highlights that 'traditional gendered power relations that shape "offline" spaces are repeated online ... For example, women and girls are threatened and sexually harassed through social media, and bullied and shamed for their sexual behaviour' (Sills et al 2016, p.936). Previously, individuals could usually escape these power relations mentioned when in a 'safe place' such as the home, but now, because of social media, people can be vulnerable to these threats anywhere. Overall, both positive and negative aspects are linked to social media regarding sensitive cases such as sexual assault. It undeniably provokes

beneficial discourse surrounding diverse topics and can instigate mass support rapidly, but as quickly, it can be used against vulnerable individuals and sometimes even result in catastrophic events.

Another common rape myth is that the 'victims will report immediately and give consistent accounts' (Gillen 2019, p.14). This has also been highlighted by O'Neill in her plot:

And you had sex with Mr O'Brien voluntarily? You admit that? And why did you change your story? In your initial statement to the Gardaí, you said you were pretending to be asleep, is that correct? I have that statement here. In it you say that those boys were your friends, that they would never have done that, that this was all a huge mistake. Why did you change your statement? You were afraid, you say? You were embarrassed? Is that why you changed your statement to say that you had, in fact, been raped? Were you embarrassed by what you had done? Were you ashamed of yourself once the pictures began to circulate?' (O'Neill 2015, p.230)

Emma imagines this dialogue in the courtroom if she were to testify. It also shows how the victims can often give inaccurate accounts of the rape or sexual offence at the beginning due to the trauma that they have experienced. Hohl and Conway highlight:

the criminal justice process places high demands on human memory when given in evidence: the amount of minute, often insignificant peripheral detail the victim remembers, and the internal consistency of the victim account are key criteria the police and prosecution use to assess the veracity of a complaint, and its potential credibility in court. (Hohl and Conway 2017, p.249)

They also highlight that relying on memory as main evidence carries various difficulties as 'memory research has established that inconsistencies are a normal feature of memories and that remembering only few details is the norm, remembering many peripheral details unusual' (Hohl and Conway 2017, p.249).

The myth that a rape victim's actions following the incident are evidence of the legitimacy of their complaint is also addressed by the Gillen report. The complainants are expected to be constantly unhappy and afraid, and are criticised when they attempt to move on with their lives, even though if one were to pause their life for the length of the processing of the trial, they would lose a year or two of their lives. This criticism is aimed at Emma in *Asking for It*: 'When the boys had first been brought in for questioning, I tweeted about watching reruns of SpongeBob with Bryan. *Wait*, Sarah Swallows had replied. *You say you were 'raped' and then you tweet happy shit? #Idon'tGetIt #DumbBitch*' (O'Neill 2015, p.194). This shows a typical attitude towards rape victims, and is embodied by Emma's own mother: 'My mother didn't think it was "normal" at the time. She thought if I was telling the truth, I should have been up in my room, taking showers and scouring myself with a Brillo pad' (O'Neill 2015, p.326). Due to the notion of uncleanness linked to female sexuality, Emma's being involved in a sexual act, whether with consent or without, is now deemed 'dirty' by society. The image of the Brillo pad adds to this, as it is thought that she should be attempting some form of ongoing deep self-cleansing, and this also can be linked to a form of punishment due to the rough, cutting nature of a Brillo pad. Victims are not supposed to be happy, productive or successful if they have truly been raped, and Emma imagines the questions that will be asked of her in the trial:

And after the alleged rape took place I see you sat your summer exams and your grades were excellent. Nothing below seventy-five per cent, and all higher-level subjects. If you had just endured something as traumatic as you claim, surely you wouldn't be able to concentrate on your studies? (O'Neill 2015, p.306)

Emma never actually hears this question due to the withdrawal of her complaint, however this question reflects what would typically be something that a defence attorney would ask. It also shows that she has internalised a sense of guilt as she is previewing the trial in her mind, with herself, as opposed to her assailant, under cross-examination. The utilisation of rape myths and

victim blaming, as seen in the Belfast rape trial, can often influence a jury to a certain conclusion.

Another rape myth outlined in the Gillen report, and one that was undoubtedly present within the Belfast rape trial is that 'victims cry rape when they regret having sex or want revenge' (Gillen 2019, p.14). As the witness was in a distressed state when she waited for the taxi to leave Jackson's house, she was heard to say: 'This does not happen to a girl like me' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). Kelly, in the courtroom, employs this comment to accuse the witness of lying about the rape: 'What might not happen to girls like you is that you are witnessed in group sexual activity' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). The victim replied: 'Mr. Kelly, again, I was raped' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). Kelly's response was accusatory: 'No doubt it was unplanned, you engaged in group sexual activity, that's what happened' (Notes from a Belfast rape trial 2018). Kelly insinuated that the victim willingly engaged in group sexual activity, and 'because of embarrassment and shame, was now crying rape' and declaring it non-consensual. Another point to note is that group sexual activity is only seen as shameful for a woman, and this again relates back to the importance of purity and chastity in a woman's sexual existence discussed previously in the thesis.

O'Neill also provides an example of this through a tweet from one of Emma's classmates: 'Kevin Brennan tweeted: "Ok girls, just get drunk and slutty and then shout rape the next day' It had been favourited 136 times"' (O'Neill 2015, p.191). This depicts the typical mind-set of many people in Ireland, and was again reflected in Paddy Jackson's defence, specifically in Brendan Kelly's argument in the Belfast rape trial as he attempted to undermine the witness's account of the alleged rape. This reiterates the idea that women are cunning and attempting to victimise and get revenge on innocent men with whom they have had sexual relations.

O'Neill also highlights the flaws in Irish legislation regarding rape and sexual assault cases. Firstly, it can be seen that she is criticising the insensitive treatment of victims by Gardaí. *'If any of them tries to harass, intimidate you or assault you, Sergeant Sutton told me in a bored tone, contact the Garda station immediately'* (O'Neill 2015, p.195). The lack of interest shown by this Garda portrays the doubt present in his mind as to the legitimacy of the complaint, and he is just making this comment out of obligation and in line with procedures. Emma's lack of confidence in his support manifests in her not reporting an incident of harassment on the street by Paul's friends. Many victims of sexual assault in Ireland do not report the incident to the Gardaí. O'Neill also highlights this prior to the rape of Emma in the text. She portrays it in a conversation between Emma and Jamie giving the reader access to Emma's inner thoughts throughout: (Jamie coming to my house after it happened last year, crying and crying. *What'll I do Emma? What am I supposed to do now?*) (O'Neill 2015, p.3).

Emma attempts to lighten the situation when they discuss it in private, but she also highlights so many issues by doing so: *'It's happened to loads of people. It happens all the time. You wake up the next morning and you regret it or you don't remember what happened exactly, but it's easier not to make a fuss'* (O'Neill 2015, p.92). The fact that rape and sexual assault *'happens all the time'*, shows how Irish culture can be seen as promoting a misogynistic attitude and almost normalising it. So many women wake up after a night out, with no memory of the night's occurrences due to intoxication, and then discover they have been taken advantage of, sexually. Many women also are unaware of how problematic this is, and are unaware that this is not consent. The key line that Emma says in this context is: *'it's best not to make a fuss'* and this shows how dangerous the rape culture is in Ireland, though of course the unasked part of this is *'best for whom?'* Victim blaming is prominent and is the reason that so many victims choose to avoid reporting sexual assault crimes, as they are aware of the repercussions that such

reporting can have for them in society as there is little to no support for them both legally and societally. Emma is guilty of victim blaming herself as she says to Jamie:

‘But I wasn’t there with you was I? How do I know what really – ‘ ‘But I told you. I didn’t want I didn’t want to’ ... ‘You didn’t say no ... You told me you didn’t say no’
‘But – she shrugs my hands off her and looks at me with such despair my skin crawls –
‘I didn’t say yes either’. (O’Neill 2015, p.92)

In 2020, the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre received 13,438 contacts to their National Helpline, 6451 of these were first time contacts, the rest being repeat contacts or undisclosed (Dublin Rape Crisis Centre 2021). Only 36% of those new clients had reported the incident to the Gardaí (Dublin Rape Crisis Centre 2021). This little percentage can be traced to two main reasons, lack of faith in the justice system and societal judgement.

The young girl in the Belfast rape trial, who was aged twenty-one when the trial actually took place, spoke of her reasoning behind reporting the incident to police:

The more I thought about it, rape is a game of power and control. They rely on your silence. The only way you take the power back is when you actually do something about it. I may be preventing it happening to someone else. (Gallagher 2018)

Although she did not win the case, this young complainant won in the eyes of so many women in Ireland. As a result of this case, the number of reports of sexual violence have increased. This victim was a representative of all sexual abuse survivors in Ireland as she attempted to tackle an already biased culture and flawed legal system. Complainants in rape trials are not eligible for separate legal representation and ‘the status of the victim is reduced to that of a mere witness for the state’ (Molloy 2018, p.702). The only time that a witness is permitted independent legal representation (ILR) is to ‘oppose a defendant’s application to introduce a victim’s sexual

history evidence in court' (Iliodis 2019, p.417), which in itself is a questionable form of evidence. This is a practice of courts in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Belfast rape trial went on for nine weeks and had a jury of nine men and three women, the gender ratio in itself being problematic, especially for a case of this kind. Mr. Tony Hedworth was the lead prosecuting counsel for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and the complainant was a witness in the trial, and did not have separate legal representation. Gillen's review criticises this lack of individual representation and advises a change in procedures:

I consider that a measure of publicly funded provision of legal representation for complainants is essential and would represent yet another confidence building block for complainants [along with] the right to have legal representation to oppose cross-examination on previous sexual history and to oppose disclosure of personal medical records seems eminently sensible. (Gillen 2019, p.13).

The lack of separate legal counsel for the witness shows another flaw of the legal system and general society as highlighted by McDermott: "He" is alleged to have wronged society and not "her". It is not her case; it is not her day in court' (McDermott 2018). It gives the impression that the accused is being charged solely because they disobeyed society, and that the fact that they wronged the complainant is irrelevant. This culture is more concerned about individuals following the societal rules than about how they treat women, in this case. Irigaray would identify this as 'history's "denial" of female identity with a suppression of the possibility of female subjectivity' and a promotion of objectivity (Stone 2006, p.27). This overlooking of the rights of the female is evident throughout the full experience of many rape cases.

In *Asking for It*, this is also the case. 'Emma does not have the right to separate legal representation', the Director of Public Prosecutions brings the case to court but prosecutes on behalf of the state and 'not on Emma's behalf *per se*' (O'Neill 2015, p.224). O'Neill bases her information on real-life issues with Irish law. In *Asking for It*, the solicitor that Emma and her

family meet informs them that the defendants may apply to use Emma's sexual history in court. The cross-examination of a complainant's sexual history is one of the most controversial and criticised aspects of rape trials in the Irish courts, and is a strong argument to suggest that current Irish law is not suitable to represent sexual assault victims, and can be seen to favour the accused. It has a strong nexus to victim blaming due to the negative sociocultural opinion on promiscuity. The Gillen report also calls for restrictions on this:

Restrictions on sexual history evidence, by limiting evidence and cross examination to only highly probative material, are justified by the need to reduce the humiliating and distressing nature of cross-examinations in serious sexual offence trials as well as protecting a complainant's right to privacy. (Gillen 2019, p.16)

While this technique shows a prejudice against rape victims, the notion of independent legal representation (ILR) is a relatively new addition to the court system, and Ireland battled for a significant amount of time to acquire it: 'Initial proposals for ILR for sexual assault victims were put forward by rape crisis centres, women's organisations and members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee in 1987' (Iliodis 2019, p.418). This proposal was rejected by the Irish Law Reform Commission, claiming that 'permitting dual representation would be hostile to the interests of the accused and their right to a fair trial' (Iliodis 2019, p.419), and 'concerns also arose about the possibility of legal representatives 'coaching' victims by advising them on how to answer questions in cross examination, or downplay or highlight certain aspects of their evidence' (Iliodis 2019, p.419). An amended version was proposed that permitted the witness to state-funded separate representation with regard to sexual history applications by defendants however, this was also rejected. Ireland revisited the issue ten years later 'due to consistent pressure placed on the government by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre' (Iliodis 2019, p.419). This fight for basic rights for victims shows the conservative influence of patriarchy on the Irish court system. Sexual assault victims are denied rights to representations that would be provided

without question to victims of other crimes, a point made by Doreen McBarnet: 'there are legal rules limiting discussion of a defendant's previous convictions or bad character in court; the victim's history and character are less sacrosanct' (McBarnet 1983, p.294). Again, there are rules protecting the defendant, but fewer rules protecting the witness in a sexual assault case. Another aspect of the court that protects the defendant is the fact they 'can choose not to enter the witness box and be subjected to cross examination; the victim, if called must' (McBarnet 1983, p.294).

The solicitor also highlights the issue with the Book of Evidence, particularly the fact that 'only the prosecuting solicitor, the accused and their representation will be allowed to see it' (O'Neill 2015, p.229). Again, the laws are providing the accused with an upper hand in the case. O'Neill also highlights that the courts' system needs substantial updating with regard to social media: 'it's a whole new world, all these camera phones and Facebook pages and whatnot. I have no idea whether the judge will allow it' (O'Neill 2015, p.228). Again, this shows that the Irish courts are not equipped to deal with modern sexual assault cases and generally, the people who suffer are the victims. O'Neill also highlights various issues about the actual court cases of rape and sexual assault through Emma's thoughts and presumptions as she ponders over the happenings of the case. '(How many boys?) (What were you wearing?) (How much did you have to drink?)' (O'Neill 2015, p.224). O'Neill mimics the genuine questions that are usually asked in sexual assault cases such as those asked in the Belfast rape trial, and interestingly Emma's perceptions of a future hypothetical court case are always focused on being accused and questioned about her own behaviour as opposed to seeing it as a process wherein she will receive some form of justice.

The Cork rape trial took place three years after the alleged incident took place. The delay in processing rape trials is significantly longer than in any other type of criminal offence.

Due to this, it can often lead, similar to the case of Emma, to the victim withdrawing their complaint. The Gillen report highlights that: 'for adults, the greatest delay is found in rape cases. The 943 days average in 17/18 for rape cases is 69% longer than the overall Crown Court average (558 days)' (Gillen 2019, p.17). It also highlights the delay in sexual offence cases excluding rape, which 'has increased by 22.1% since 2015/16 from 687 days to 839 days in 2017/18' (Gillen 2019, p.17). O'Neill portrays this in *Asking for It*, as Emma waits for over a year for a court date, and is informed it could be another two years before it comes to trial. In this year, she goes through a very difficult time and various pressures result in her withdrawing her complaint. Chances are, if there was less time between the incident and the trial, she would not have withdrawn her complaint. This is true for many victims. The other issue with the delay is that so many victims, due to trauma, begin to forget aspects of the incident, and their stories can become muddled, which also can lead to a jury not believing the complainant, or not being able to prosecute the accused. This also happened with the Belfast rape trial; the incident happened on the night of June 27th 2016 and it came to trial on the January 30th 2018. This led to the victim's trauma continuing for two years while waiting for the trial.

The Gillen report describes the difference that education on rape and sexual offences would make to society. It calls for: 'well-funded public and school campaigns to debunk these myths and address the consequences of serious sexual offences' (Gillen 2019, p.14). Emma also highlights that 'drink driving kills people, it ruins lives. There are other ways to ruin lives. We were never warned about those' (O'Neill 2015, p.214). She shows how various campaigns about drink driving, and taking drugs are promoted but sexual offences are ignored. In schools, anything related to sexual health is also not a priority. This relates back to the Catholic Church and the taboo issue of sexual relations. Instead of accepting that young people are engaging in sexual acts and attempting to inform and protect them through education, society ignores the

issue due to the prevalent, underlying outlook that derived from the Catholic Church that sexual acts are shameful and should not be discussed. RSE (Relationships and Sexual Education) has been a compulsory part of the secondary school curriculum since the 1990s, but many sources have reported that information given by teachers is outdated, inaccurate (*The Journal* 2021), and often altered to fit the ethos of schools, especially religious schools (O'Brien 2019). However, the issue was discussed in depth in the Irish Parliament, the Dáil, and the Minister for Education at the time of writing this thesis, Norma Foley, has announced that the topic of consent will be included in the RSE curriculum from September 2023 (Gataveckaite 2021).

Each of the rape trials end in a similar verdict, namely not guilty. None of the men in either trial was prosecuted and the complainants were left hurt, humiliated and deemed as liars. In *Asking for It*, the ending is one that O'Neill uses to portray a common happening within rape allegations, and that is the complainant withdrawing the complaint. Emma withdraws her complaint at the end of the novel, disappointing many readers, but also conveying the reality of many rape cases. In the UK, which would include Northern Ireland, almost half of rape victims withdraw from investigations (*The Guardian* 2019). When examining the treatment of all three complainants in the different rape trials, real and fictional, it can be easily understood why such a large portion of people withdraw their complaints and do not support further action. Disbelief of society and constant victim blaming, along with a legal system that does not support rape victims, are enough to put victims off pursuing a rape case, especially with the statistic that only 14% of cases actually come to trial (O'Riordan 2021). Emma herself often portrays the mindset of society toward accusing men of rape. She provides an example of this as she says to Jamie:

Be careful I warned her. (Dylan is a dick, but he isn't that, he wouldn't do that) You can't just say stuff like that. When you say that word, you can't take it back. She kept

asking, What will I do? What will I do, what will I do, what will I do, what will I do, what will I do? (O'Neill 2015, p.93)

In the days following the end of the Belfast rape trial, the *Belfast Telegraph* published a headline that portrays the patriarchy in Irish culture, especially surrounding sexual assault. The headline read: 'Four young men and their families now face challenge of putting lives back together after harrowing case' (Goh 2018). There was no mention of the victim, who was also attempting to piece her life back together after being torn asunder by the case and the trial, and whose identity was now common knowledge.

This headline shows the tendency of Irish culture to favour men, seemingly disregarding the fact that these men were still accused of rape. Their admitted wrong-doings, like the misogynistic WhatsApp messages that were examined previously in the chapter, were quickly forgotten, and they were to get on with their lives as the victim lives with the shame, the judgment and the memories for the rest of her life. O'Neill articulates the feeling left from such an event in Emma's thoughts: 'I belong to those other boys, as surely as if they have stamped me with a cattle brand. They have seared their names into my heart' (O'Neill 2015, p.339), and this sense of being marked by patriarchy has been noted by Irigaray: 'women are marked phallically by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce' (Irigaray 1985b, p.31), and the repetition of the word 'brand' is an interesting connection between Irigaray and O'Neill, as both are suggestion an adequation between women and cattle as objectified 'props' to patriarchy. This branding in particular refers to Emma being sexually devalued as a result of the events.

The amount of victim-blaming and abuse that Emma has received has greatly affected her emotionally. She suffers from overpowering guilt, and blames everything on herself and not the men who did it to her: '(Life ruiner) (I have ruined their lives) Guilt paints itself on to

my skin. I am tarred in it and feathered' (O'Neill 2015, p.183). She has been conditioned to think in this way, which is ironic as in fact, it is her own life that has been ruined. Her thoughts are taken over by the pictures and she wakes in the middle of the night: 'I wake in the middle of the night. I remember. I am pink flesh. I am splayed legs' (O'Neill 2015, p.205). Emma's whole self has been replaced, she has lost her own identity and is now only defined by the rape and the pictures. Cixous writes 'the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure' (Cixous et al 1976, p. 880). This line maps onto Emma's experience in both a figurative and literal sense, as it refers to the boys taking physical advantage of her as she was unconscious, and also to the fact that she now feels as if her body is not her own, as it was 'confiscated' from her that night. She has lost herself from this assault. Subsequent to the rape, she has developed panic attacks and has attempted suicide twice, 'it feels as if I might die (I wish, I wish, I wish)' (O'Neill 2015, p.196). Emma is under constant scrutiny from the community which leads to constant criticism; bizarrely, even a suicide attempt creates disapproval:

After the second time I tried, people around the town said that I didn't really mean to do it, that I was looking for attention. I don't think that was the reason. I think I just wanted some silence. But I don't know. (O'Neill 2015, p.233)

The community's reaction also depicts them protecting themselves against opprobrium, as if Emma did take her own life, the community and the boys would be at fault due to their treatment of her.

Molloy writes that "a real rape" is thought to occur outdoors, is perpetuated by a stranger with the threat of violence, and the victim offers physical resistance' (Molloy 2018, p.697). From the examination of these rape trials and *Asking for It*, it can be seen that this view is incorrect and largely outdated, but society's view remains based on this type of stereotypical

notion of rape, however unrealistic. In the Belfast rape trial, the fact that those accused were acquaintances, one even being a possible romantic interest, enforced even more doubt in society's mind about the legitimacy of the complaint due to the situation being far from the 'real rape' pretence. Overall, when referring to sexual assault, it is the complainant who is on trial, attempting to be proven innocent of lying. The real question to ask society is: 'We don't assume that people who report a burglary probably made it up; so why is that the default position for so many when it comes to sexual assault?' (Lewis 2018). The fear of shame associated with female sexuality can be seen to be well-founded in both of these real and fictional cases.

Conclusion

Words that Catherine Corless highlighted in her memoir *Belonging* are: ‘The truth is like a lion; you don’t have to defend it. Let it loose, it can defend itself’ (Corless 2021, p.285). This thesis is simply letting the truth loose about the treatment of women in Ireland, and it simply defends itself. In this work, I have examined the mistreatment of women in Irish society portrayed through literature by Irish women writers, and also in the media which records historical events. I have taken advice from Cixous when she said: ‘woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal’ (Cixous et al 1976, p.877). I am writing about women’s experiences, using women’s writing to study these, and women’s theory to examine them. The authors Teresa Deevy, Rosaleen McDonagh, Kimberley Campanello and Louise O’Neill have addressed various women’s experiences in great accuracy and detail. These writings have been an agent of social change and each text has represented the need for change in Ireland. Irigaray, Kristeva, de Beauvoir and Cixous assist in applying deeper perspectives to the literature and especially to a female understanding of literature. The inclusion of trauma theory, intersectional theory and feminist disability theory also assist in including a wider analysis on complex and intertwined perspectives. ‘Intersectional analysis provides an important lens for reframing and creating new knowledge because it asserts new ways of studying power and inequality and challenges conventional understandings of oppressed and excluded groups and individuals’ (Thornton Dill and Zambrana cited in McCann 2021, p.110). Whether it be Katie Roche affected by her class and gender, or Mary-Anne part of three of these ‘oppressed groups’ their identity has been studied in more depth and with a new lens through the inclusion of these theories.

The thesis has also included the impact of the Catholic Church on society and how it has enhanced what can be deemed a deeply-rooted, patriarchal culture, and in so doing looked at the lived experiences of two Irish women, Ann Lovett and Joanne Hayes, in order to understand how traumatic being pregnant while not married could be in such a culture. The traumatic events of the Belfast and Cork rape trials are also examined as part of the narrative of discrimination against women on the basis of their sexual desires and practices. In engaging in such a study, it has been possible to ascertain that while there has been significant improvement of women's position in Irish society, it has been a slow process.

Various factors have contributed to this progress, but in Ireland, 'the land of saints and scholars', literature has positively affected women's position. The thesis traces the development of women's literature in Ireland and outlines the ability of progressive literature and forward-thinking authors to highlight current issues present in society at that time. The comparison of the writing of women, from Teresa Deevy to Louise O'Neill shows how they attempted to address and challenge prevailing beliefs relevant at that time, and how their writing and thought expanded the boundaries of the time in which they were writing. Deevy addressed issues such as women's right to work and the emphasis of marriage on women's lives, while O'Neill focused on rape culture and victim-blaming on social media. Fictional representations can offer a critique of a wide range of issues related to feminine experiences. Issues such as internalised misogyny, the beauty complex, victim-blaming and female sexual desire, can be present in various settings such as homes, schools, institutions, workplaces, social media, justice systems and in general society. Fictional representations can also present ways to challenge these instances by addressing the reader as a witness, and hence, they can present us with truths usually not seen in other contexts. Various factors dictated the criteria for choosing the authors and the texts. I wished to include various axes of difference that are integral to Irish identity,

but were often avoided in general discourse, such as ableism and racism against the Irish Traveller minority. Other criteria included having women as central characters, a certain sense of bravery in discussion of complex issues and a clear questioning of societal norms. A broad range of media are included in the thesis in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the contemporary female experience in Ireland; these include literature, television, drama and even social media such as TikTok, WhatsApp and Facebook, the latter being unavoidable in the discourse of a contemporary Irish woman.

This thesis has looked at specific historical events that have also been a contributing factor to the improvement of Irish women's status. The exposure of the Mother and Baby Homes, the life of Ann Lovett and the privacy of Joanne Hayes all show the very real dangers that faced women and children who fell foul of the sexual morality of this very patriarchal culture. Though Joanne Hayes lived through her tragedy, it can be seen that she also gave her private life to the improvement of women's position in Ireland.

Irigaray's theory of women as commodities in the marketplace of a patriarchal society supports the theory of internalised misogyny existing as a large part of Irish culture. This project proved such misogyny to be present in each of the works studied, regardless of the difference in time period, the current status of women, the class, or age of the perpetrators. This internalised misogyny is present from the older character of Margaret Drybone in *Katie Roche*, to the nuns in Campanello's *MOTHERBABYHOME*, to Mel in *She's Not Mine*, to the majority of female characters in O'Neill's *Asking for It*, both young and old. Internalised misogyny is present in each of the texts studied and this exemplifies how prominent it is in Irish culture.

The development of the internet and social media has been vital in feminist activism, and it can be considered a driving force of the progression of women in Ireland. It has assisted in educating generations of feminist ideas, disseminating information quickly and in provoking

Conclusion

national and global support for various feminist causes. Social media gives women platforms to speak out against abuse and shed light on sexism. Prior to the internet, in Ireland information was provided from the lectern during Sunday Mass, and the Catholic Church had a stronger influence on society. The progression in society in terms of technology is notable and there are now multiple platforms for women to express and voice their own experience. However, there are many shocking instances of anti-feminism that social media also facilitates and the experience of women in this environment is also dangerous as well as being hyper visual. Censorship in this regard still takes place, and more disturbingly, it takes place anonymously.

The thesis portrays that it is no coincidence that the improvement in women's position in Ireland corresponded with the decline of Catholicism. The promotion of the misogynistic Catholic ideals has waned due to the decrease in the active practice of Catholicism. A cyclical structure is present as the more scandals that arise involving the Church, the further the decrease in practice, and with the weakening of the influence of the Church, the more confidence victims of scandals have in order to speak out. The cycle continues and leads to a more progressive society. This is the reason that so many of the scandals, including the recent revelations regarding the Mother and Baby Homes, have been aired to the public. The generation responsible for this abuse is slowly becoming extinct which again feeds the confidence of the victims of these scandals.

There are other changes in terms of the laws surrounding consent that have been mentioned previously. Now that there are far clearer definitions of consent, and more importantly when consent is not present, assault victims, statistically more often female, now have more leverage if pursuing a case against an alleged attacker. While consent is still a difficult concept to prove, these changes in the law eliminates a large amount of bias and victim blaming in court.

Conclusion

Many people believe that feminism as a concept is outdated, and that it is only relatable to basic women's rights, such as the right to vote. This thesis explores how feminism is still necessary and relevant. It is necessary due to the many troubling issues that still remain in society regarding women such as those discussed throughout the thesis: rape culture, internalised misogyny, the repression of female sexuality and issues surrounding pregnancy outside marriage. Feminism is not a 'one size fits all' paradigm, often it is intertwined with various other characteristics such as class, ableism or racism as mentioned in the thesis. Feminism can be applied to all situations but moulded to fit each person differently. This thesis speaks for women and about women, it does not presume to speak in place of all women, and cover all issues; it focuses on a specific set of issues and concerns that can be applied to a majority. The thesis highlights that attitudes of feminist theorists are not always alike in every sentiment; theirs is a changing theoretical matrix that adapts to the times. However, the overarching message from all feminism is support for women and a fight for equality. It is interesting to note that feminist theory written over fifty years ago is still applicable to discourse today. It is essential for a progressive society to incorporate feminism as common practise.

I would like to finish with some evidence that highlights that while we have come far in the timespan of this thesis, women's position in Ireland is far from strong. The recent abortion controversies are an example of that. In 2018, abortion was legalised in Ireland and was a large cause for celebration amongst women's rights groups. However, in the 4 years after legalisation, these women's rights groups are still fighting the same battle. While abortion is now legal in Ireland, there are numerous barriers preventing women from obtaining one, and women are still travelling to the UK to avail of these services. The National Women's Council have outlined the barriers and are calling for a review on abortion services. Only one in ten GPs are providing abortion services in Ireland, which equates to 405 GPs in the country, and only 246 of these are

listed with the national health organisation (HSE) pregnancy support service. Only half of maternity hospitals provide abortion services. There is an obligatory three-day wait period for those seeking an abortion, for which there is no medical reason and it is impeding doctors' ability to provide urgent care. It can be presumed that this is an effort to allow women to change their minds or to abandon their decision about having an abortion. There is a strict 12-week gestational limit to termination services in Ireland in the case of normal pregnancies, and a 28-day mortality clause for fatal foetal anomalies (Kennedy 2021). Women are still finding themselves travelling to the UK for abortion services due to the limits above.

In the final stages of writing this thesis, the people of Ireland, especially the women of Ireland, were traumatised by the murder of 22-year-old primary-school teacher, Ashling Murphy. Murphy was attacked while running in broad daylight in Tullamore, Co. Offaly at around 4pm. The nature of this attack caused an outpouring of grief and anger after a significant number of attacks in recent years based on male violence against women. There are still significant issues in Ireland surrounding women's position and the way to begin to combat these is education. The more we educate, both genders and all of society, on the cause, we communicate a message of support and camaraderie. Once we use our similarities to strengthen and our differences to enrich, we will realise that women are not the problem. Pat O'Connor asked the question in 1998: 'Ireland – a country for women?' (Connolly 2019, p.221); in 2022, the answer can be given that Ireland is not yet a country for women, but it can be.

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