Gendered Violence and Cultural Forgetting

The Case of the Irish Magdalenes

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Irish narratives of femininity facilitate a persistent gendered violence toward women formerly incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries and continue to affect Magdalene survivors today. The case of the Magdalene Laundries illustrates how the Irish state has shaped cultural narratives of gender. Further, it demonstrates the vital role played by cultural memory in constructing these gendered identities. As Anthony Smith argues, memory "by definition is integral to identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival . . . of such collective identities."[1] We argue that memory and dominant national narratives are powerful cultural constructions with broad repercussions in Ireland's past and present.[2]

To understand collective memory, it is necessary to take note of "collective amnesia."[3] "Forgetting becomes part of the process of national identity formation" as "a new set of memories are accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silences."[4] The women who inhabited Magdalene Laundries are subject to this shared silence, as they are omitted from Ireland's dominant historical narrative. Not everyone is equally powerful in their ability to claim and define the past.[5] What becomes defined as the official memory reflects the power of certain groups.[6] The result is that different groups claim the same past in sometimes contradictory ways; hence, "memory can be a potential oppressor as well as a potential liberator."[7]

Restriction of archival material related to the Magdalene Laundries contributes to the invisibility of these survivors. The lack of access to the archives points to the role of the Irish state and religious orders as gatekeepers of information and key

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participants in gendered violence toward survivors. Integral to historical scholarship is the notion that knowledge of the past can inform future behaviors.[8] Political forces constrain knowledge of the past, restructuring events so that "society better remembers."[9] Championing one version of events (in this case, one that silences Magdalene women) has implications for survivors. Trauma experiences are social; recovery is a *collective* process, necessitating social support.[10] We argue that survivor oral histories (for example, those gathered as part of the Waterford Memories Project) provide a way both to understand the meaning of what happened to the Magdalene women and to provide a record of these narratives.[11] As a method, oral history is particularly appropriate for examining "subjective experiences of shifting historical periods" as it emphasizes processes of meaning making.[12]

Women in Postindependence Ireland and the Magdalene Laundries

From the 1920s, "the Irish State conceived its national identity in terms of a predominantly Gaelic and Catholic cultural ethos."[13] In particular, the Catholic Church sought control of socialization processes by "establishing a firm grip on education as well as by the doctrine of familism."[14] This meant enforcing a moral control over women, which encompassed domestic life, education, health, the arts, welfare entitlements, and religious participation.[15]

Historical discourse surrounding the sexuality of the Irish has rarely challenged the self-proclaimed belief in Irish moral superiority.[16] Evidently, those guilty of such crimes as extramarital sex contradicted the prescribed national narrative that emphasized conformity, valued community over the individual, and esteemed conservative Catholic moral values.[17] The control of sexuality (or that of Irish women, at least)—as a practice and a discourse—became one of the strategies by which the Catholic Church maintained power.[18] The interaction between notions of female sexual purity and the nation is critical. As Claudia Lenz notes, women are constructed as biological and moral bearers of the nation, responsible for its future existence, yet regarded as neither capable of coping with the challenges of public affairs nor reliable in political matters.[19] Postindependence Ireland contained what it perceived as sexual immorality by locking it away. Ireland's "architecture of containment" (after James Smith's formulation) encompassed an assortment of interconnected institutions, including mother and baby homes, industrial and reformatory schools, mental asylums, adoption agencies, and Magdalene Laundries.[20] In effect, Magdalene women were hidden from society and written out of Irish history.

With a decline in prostitution after independence (1922), Irish Magdalene asylums began to alter their orientation, and the population of inmates became increasingly diverse; "hopeless cases," "mental defectives," infanticide cases, those on remand from courts, transfers from industrial and reformatory schools, and some "voluntary" committals increasingly formed cohorts of inmates.[21] They accommo-

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dated fewer voluntary entrants, and increasing numbers were detained for longer periods (many for life). These institutions increasingly served a punitive function, containing unmarried mothers, victims of sexual assault, and girls who were "sexually aware" or "demonstrating . . . tendencies towards sexual immorality."[22] The laundries became places where those who did not fit the model of Irish morality were effectively "excluded, silenced or punished."[23]

Ten Magdalene Laundries operated in Ireland between 1922 and 1996, with the stated mission to "protect, reform, and rehabilitate."[24] According to James Smith, many of these institutions shared overriding characteristics, including "regimes of prayer, silence, work in a laundry and a preference for permanent inmates."[25] The longevity of Irish Magdalene Laundries is also noteworthy; women were still entering Irish laundries in the 1980s.[26] The Sean McDermott Street laundry was the final laundry to close in 1996.

Magdalene Laundries provided a powerful mechanism for patriarchal control by the Irish state and religious orders, which deemed sexuality the principal cause for the downfall of morality.[27] Hence, the laundries formed part of a system of moral regulation and social control.[28] Moral reformation took place through industrial discipline, which had the additional benefit of being profitable through unpaid labor.[29] Society sought to render invisible the challenges these women embodied: they were sexually active when Irish women were expected to be morally pure; they were unmarried mothers when the constitution rendered marriage and motherhood inseparable; they were the victims of abuse under a legal double standard that evaded male culpability and condemned victims.[30]

The Carrigan Report (1931), as James Smith demonstrates, was particularly important in the inauguration of a state attitude toward sexual immorality through its hegemonic discourse, which in turn encouraged public consent.[31] The report established a state-sanctioned precedent for church-state advocacy of moral purity by criminalizing sex outside marriage. The report further ensured Irish women's ignorance about biological reproduction and their rights, while simultaneously stigmatizing young women (and exculpating young men) for sexual immorality.[32] So controversial were its revelations at the time that the Department of Justice advised against its publication, believing "it might not be wise to give currency to the damaging allegations made in Carrigan regarding the standard of morality in the country."[33]

The penalty for sex outside marriage was exorbitant. If a working-class woman became pregnant outside marriage, the common practice was for her to leave home (in disgrace) and go to a Magdalene Laundry; parents who tried to stand by their daughters had the priest hammering at the door, telling them it was their Christian duty to turn their back on their child.[34] The state's responses to sexual immorality also suppressed and concealed child sexual abuse in the 1930s; this concealment continued for decades. As James Smith notes, "The precedent established

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between 1930 and 1935 . . . legitimized secrecy and silence as a response to child abuse and pedophilia."[35]

Survivor oral histories provide a powerful challenge to this official silencing.[36] As one survivor of the Magdalene Laundries describes her experiences:

> Soon after [my mother] got married, the abuse started with my stepfather. . . . I was taken away by the [Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children]. . . . Instead of taking the abuser out of the home, which was a man, they took an innocent child out of the home. And, of course, you had the church still continuing with my mother years later when she left him, to go back to her husband, even though he had abused me, her only, her first child, so I'm kind of confused about the Catholic teaching.

Concealment retraumatized abused children and punished already vulnerable citizens. Additionally, girls deemed to be in danger of engaging in sexual activity were incarcerated, as were girls referred through the criminal justice system. Disposing of vulnerable women in Magdalene Laundries ensured their personal silence, while creating a larger silence that safeguarded Ireland's identity as a morally pure society.[37]

Life in the laundries was characterized by silence, prayer, and hard labor.[38] Women worked with containers of boiling water for laundering and steam from the irons while washing soiled sheets from hospitals, hotels, and other businesses.[39] The girls were kept in a constant state of emotional and psychological turmoil, often unaware of why they were there, how long they would remain, or whether they would be transferred elsewhere. For example, one survivor of the laundries describes being moved from the industrial school in Tralee to the Peacock Lane laundry in Cork: "We went in, and a nun came in and then as she was leaving she said 'be a good girl now.' . . . I wanted to run over and say to her please, please don't let me stay here, please take me away, I'll be so good, I'll be very good for you. Even though it was all abuse and starvation, and whipping and beating. But I didn't, I don't know what held me back, but I had this, such a strong urge to do it." Transferal of girls from industrial schools to the laundries was common, typically with no warning or explanation.[40] Survivors reported to the McAleese Committee that, despite conditions, they were heartbroken to leave the only place they could call home.[41] At the laundries they were under constant surveillance and deprived of privacy, education, leisure, and rest; deprived of their identity, they were assigned new names, their hair was cut, and they were provided with uniforms.[42] As one survivor recalls,

> She cut my hair, bitch, she changed my name, she cut my hair, and we had to wear a uniform. . . . I've got my name changed, I got my hair cut, and I've got my name changed. I'm wearing this glorified sack kind of thing, from the Bible, I call it biblical uniform. . . . It was just constant work, work, work, work, work.

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Funnily enough, we didn't have a lot of prayers. When I look back, it was all about money, it was all about raking in this bloody money.

As this reflection suggests, the laundries' economic value conflicted with its moral project.[43] In the 1990s, shocking revelations began to crack the conspiracy of silence about the Magdalene Laundries. In 1993 High Park Convent in Dublin was sold to developers,[44] who discovered the unmarked graves of 133 women who had previously been in the Magdalene Laundry. The bodies of the women from High Park were exhumed, cremated, and interred in Glasnevin Cemetery before any attempt was made to determine their identities. More disconcerting has been the limited public outrage regarding the treatment of these women.[45]

The following decade witnessed a series of high-profile criminal cases and state inquiries into the abuse of children by families, in state care, and by priests. While it is outside the scope of this article to discuss this abuse in detail, the main inquiries are summarized in the Ferns, Ryan, Murphy, and Cloyne Reports,[46] which document evidence of abuse. In another act of complicity between church and state, the government signed an indemnity deal with the religious congregations in 2002, in return for the congregations making a contribution of €128 million to the redress scheme toward compensating those abused in institutions.[47] In a damning response to the Ferns, Ryan, Murphy, and Cloyne Reports, Amnesty International Ireland found "the Catholic Church was the dominant service provider for the majority of people in the State, and remains a significant service provider. . . . The State failed to ensure . . . proper systems of regulation and accountability. . . . In the absence of such systems, abuse was endemic."[48]

Survivor testimony forces a reconsideration of the civic impact of the laundries, despite the indemnity deal. As one survivor reflects, "About us Irish, we love to think we are loved around the world. We give a false impression about ourselves. We can't accept that we are corrupt, that we are immoral, that we are . . . so wrong about human rights." By characterizing Ireland as "wrong on human rights," survivor testimony invokes international conventions.

Such framing by survivors and advocates has power to enlist international support. In response to reports submitted by the Justice for Magdalenes advocacy group, in 2011 the UN Committee against Torture requested the Irish government launch an investigation into human rights violations in the Magdalene Laundries and consider redress for survivors. The UN recommended that

the State party should institute prompt, independent, and thorough investigations into all allegations of torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment that were allegedly committed in the Magdalene Laundries, and, in appropriate cases, prosecute and punish the perpetrators with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offences

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committed, and ensure that all victims obtain redress and have an enforceable right to compensation.[49]

International scrutiny had some impact on internal Irish recognition of survivors. The government's response was the *Report of the Inter-departmental Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries.* The report is limited: it attempted only to establish the facts surrounding the extent of the state's involvement. While the report includes testimony from survivors (chapter 19), "the Committee did not make specific findings in relation to [the living and working conditions in the Magdalene Laundries], in light of the small sample of women available."[50] Justice for Magdalenes and other survivor groups roundly criticized the report. Solicitors, academics, and activists responded that the evidence demonstrates that the state colluded with the laundries, provided the religious orders with support, and failed to supervise the running of the laundries.[51]

Tellingly, the Department of Justice's report placed little significance on survivor testimony. By contrast, Justice for Magdalenes' efforts to collate its own archive of survivor testimony in the form of oral histories established a clear (and oppositional) focus on understanding how survivors experienced Magdalene Laundries.[52] The group's faith in oral history as a method for exploring how people make sense of their past by contextualizing their memories in the present allows us to reflect on how participants can make both micro- and macrolevel connections between their individual memories and collective experiences (within families, cultures, nations, etc.). Similarly, oral histories collated in the Waterford Memories Project demonstrate how many of the women draw connections between their personal experiences and the mechanisms of the state and religious orders. As Paul Thompson maintains, "Once the life experience of people of all kinds can be used as its raw material, a new dimension is given to history."[53]

Impact on Survivors

Our knowledge of the Magdalene women's experiences is constrained by societal forces, restructuring events so that "society better remembers."[54] Championing one version of events (which silences Magdalene women) makes it harder for survivors to integrate their experiences into personal narratives. If trauma experiences are social, like all historical events, recovery is similarly a collective process, necessitating acknowledgment and support.[55] Further, recognizing the cultural invisibility of these survivors makes plain their reduced ability to define their own past.

While the Department of Justice report was interested in establishing "the facts" of what happened, the oral histories recorded as part of the Waterford Memories Project allow us to know how these women survived and how they lived with long-silenced trauma. Their stories reflect the very current trauma of women

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actively processing the meaning of their experiences. For them, this is not history per se, given its continuing impact. As one survivor insists:

> They never even saw to our education . . . they made sure we were not educated because it was all part of the plan for the Magdalene laundries. That's all. It's as simple as that. What other ulterior motive would they have not to educate us? And how long were they doing this in Irish society? How long were they doing it to children in Irish society, training them for the Magdalene laundries so Senator McAleese, as nice as he may be and all that, his work was very narrow in the sense he could have found out how far back it went the pattern. How many industrial schools there were, how many children each year came out from the industrial schools went into the Magdalene laundries. Forced in there I should say because the religious had control with their support of the government paying them for our keep in in the industrial schools, and then the payment continued because they were paying the laundries, for us anyway, 'til we were eighteen and so on.

For this survivor, the trauma of the past affects her life today; she laments not just its impact on her life but the continuing intergenerational effects. The women do not simply describe the past; they testify to its ongoing relevance.

In this sense, oral history refuses to comply with the silence surrounding these women's lives. By sharing the survivors' stories, the Waterford Memories Project makes them available inside and outside of Ireland. Videotaping (rather than audio recording) further captures the emotion inherent in the stories. Thus, we witness how the survivors construct meaning from past events in order to make sense of their current situation. For the survivor above, confronting her past involved providing testimony for the first time, recognizing her trauma, and engaging in dialogue through oral history. Where this is problematic, as in the previous quote, we see how many survivors have difficulty in making sense of the past in the absence of information about what happened; silence hinders coping.

It is the public purpose of oral history that is important in the Waterford Memories Project and other oral history projects. Collecting and displaying survivors' stories enable the women to take some control over the history of the laundries. The narration alone becomes "a subversive act, especially in light of powerful . . . forces working against it."[56] Hence, the dissemination of oral histories is an act of resistance against collective forgetting as humiliated silence; this is particularly true where broad-scale silence around an event is unacknowledged, resulting in collusive silence (as a desire to forget) and collective shame. When we consider the Magdalene institutions' presence, in conjunction with decades of silence on the subject, we are faced with "the tacit imposition of a taboo."[57] Eviatar Zerubavel notes how "washing one's community's 'dirty laundry' in public" is taboo, resulting from informal codes of silence prohibiting this act.[58] This statement works literally and meta-

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phorically for Magdalene history: survivors literally scrubbed the community's dirty laundry while metaphorically representing what Irish society wanted hidden. Such "conspiracies of silence" often emerge after a major traumatic experience, comprising an individual's decision to remain silent, an imposed silence, and a collusion of silence between survivors and society.[59]

Reducing a person's *choice* to speak comprises meaning making, which is, like trauma, a collective process, "particularly when the shared experience is a historic event."[60] For Zerubavel, such "silent witnessing" highlights a core tension between knowledge (personal awareness) and acknowledgment (public discourse) in mutual denial.[61] Maria Ritter notes that traumatic silences in therapy can reflect both the initial disconnect with trauma and "a silencing identification with the original silencer."[62] In this way, silence around trauma is both an individual and collective experience. Survivors of trauma will often report feeling sworn to silence as "bearers of a secret" that is transferred to the next generation in a collective act of remaining silenced.[63]

Further, if the process of recovery from trauma is collective, social interaction and support are necessary for "ending" the silence.[64] Silence here must be understood at a personal, cognitive level (as a form of survival) and in terms of broader social processes. A survivor explains how she felt constrained in her ability to be heard: "The Irish government has failed in their duties. . . . Governments are not and never were thinking of any violence perpetrated against Irish women. Sadly this is in the mindset of the Irish governments. . . . Irish society is so enshrined in their negative attitudes towards women collectively . . . this mind set has . . . instilled their Catholic indoctrination, and the men in power are on a macho trip." This quote underscores how gendered violence and silencing of Irish women inherently intertwine with the patriarchal government and societal norms. This has implications for how we approach understanding collective memory. We cannot ignore the importance of social interaction and context on an individual level in understanding how public silence can promote collective forgetting. If we acknowledge the import of social contact in dealing with trauma memories, the restriction of the archives related to the laundries can be viewed as inflicting ongoing distress. Oral histories therefore constitute an organized effort to bring "meaningful history to a public audience"[65] to begin addressing the lacuna of survivor testimony in official histories of the laundries.

How Do We Remember the Magdalenes?

The modest public engagement with the history of the Magdalene laundry points to the lack of a "common historical consciousness" on the subject.[66] Analyses of the laundries are constrained by the lack of access to the records of the religious orders,[67] resulting in an absence of intervention, as well as a failure to remember officially.[68] It is also the case that the "quality and quantity of the material held in

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various archives varies to a great extent."[69] Thus, public engagement with Magdalene history remains, in James Smith's formulation, at the level of "story," rather than at the level of history, supported by official documentation.[70] Religious orders did submit documentation to the government as part of the compilation of the 2013 report but required that the records submitted be returned and copies destroyed. A Residential Institutions Redress Board was established after the release of the report to compensate women incarcerated in the laundries, but survivors are legally prohibited from publicly communicating their experiences of either the institutions or redress scheme; the archive collated during the report remains vulnerable and inaccessible. State and religious orders thus remain gatekeepers of information about, and participants in, the continued gendered silencing of survivors.

The statements of Magdalene survivors throughout this article reveal previously obscured relationships between gender and the state. A survivor highlights such collusion in her own reflections:

> Ireland [still hasn't asked] people like me, not just me you know, collectively, to give our versions of, of how we feel and how it should be changed. Well first all what I would like to see is if some horrible disaster struck Ireland again do not let the church get involved, nope . . . no matter how good they say they are. Do not let one specific organization be in control. Let them work side by side in honesty and in partnership and to be honest with people.

This quote emphasizes how the state, despite attempts to position itself as less culpable than the church, emerges in survivors' conviction that these "previous partners in hegemony—state and familial institutions—evaded all intimations of culpability."[71] Stephen Sloan argues that, "for the oral historian, moments of crises . . . can offer an environment when the larger weaknesses or strengths of a society are quite visible."[72] Oral histories provide a means for survivors to document emotion, thus providing insight into their experiences.[73]

Further, recording the personal accounts of these women facilitates our understanding of the meaning of these events. Only when the voices of these women enter collective memory will the nation be able to confront its gendered violence. T. W. Moody argues that history is a matter of "facing the facts of the Irish past, however painful some of them may be. . . . The study of history . . . enlarges truth about our past . . . [and] opens the mind."[74] Remembering the Magdalene women accurately necessitates a willingness to revisit our national narrative and to include that which we have forgotten through a collective "therapeutic voluntary amnesia."[75]

As their reflections make clear, Magdalene survivors actively embrace their role in realigning our collective memories by breaking the collective silence. Gathering and sharing their stories thus encourages us to focus on recording the "essential purpose of history": to "give to people who experienced history, through their own words, a central place."[76] As Mark Cave highlights, collecting oral histories validates

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survivors' experiences through the process of recording the story as the researcher becomes an agent of the community's collective memory.[77] This is a salient point: at the heart of oral history is empathy, on the part of both the story-teller and the researcher.

Notes

1. Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.
2. Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 289.
3. Charles Mills, "White Ignorance and Hermenuetical Injustice," *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 3, no. 1 (2007): 28–29.
4. Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 63.
5. Brian Conway, "Active Remembering, Selective Forgetting, and Collective Identity: The Case of Bloody Sunday," *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 3, no. 4 (2003): 319.
6. Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, and Ruth Wodak, "The Discursive Construction of National Identities," *Discourse and Society* 10, no. 2 (1999): 169.
7. Michael Kammen, "Review of Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory, by Iwona Irwin-Zarecka," *History and Theory* 34, no. 3 (1995): 253.
8. James Pennebaker and Amy Gonzales, "Making History: Social and Psychological Processes underlying Collective Memory," in *Collective Memory*, ed. James Wertsch Pascal Boyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 110–29.
9. Alin Coman, Adam Brown, Jonathan Koppel, and William Hirst, "Collective Memory from a Psychological Perspective," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 22 (2009): 128.
10. Pennebaker and Gonzales, "Making History."
11. Oral history is a method of qualitative, in-depth interview that emphasizes the participant's narrative of personal experiences and memories of events.
12. Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.
13. John Marsden, *Redemption in Irish History* (Dublin: Dominican, 2005), 92.
14. Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity and Ideology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 66–67.
15. Ibid. See also Maryann Valiulis, "Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State," *Journal of Women's History* 6, no. 4 (1995): 117–36.
16. Maria Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
17. James Smith, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).
18. Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly* (Dublin: UCD Press, 1998), 157.
19. Claudia Lenz, "The Silenced Memories of the Sexualised Other in Post-war Norway," in *Minority Narratives and National Memory*, ed. Cora Doving and Nicolas Schwaller (Oslo: Unipub, 2010), 87. See also Nina Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).
20. James Smith, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries.*
21. Luddy, *Prostitution.*
22. Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan, *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's*

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Industrial Schools (London: Continuum, 1999), 27–28; Brian Titley, "Heil Mary: Magdalen Asylums and Moral Regulation in Ireland," *History of Education Review* 35, no. 3 (2006): 9.
23. Kathryn Conrad, *Locked in the Family Cell: Gender, Sexuality, and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 3.
24. James Smith, *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries*, xvi; Frances Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
25. James Smith, *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries*, xv.
26. Raftery and O'Sullivan, *Suffer the Little Children*; Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish.*
27. Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*; James Smith, "The Politics of Sexual Knowledge: The Origins of Ireland's Containment Culture and the Carrigan Report (1931)," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, no. 2 (2004): 208–33; Titley, "Heil Mary."
28. Diarmaid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2009); James Smith, *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries*; Titley, "Heil Mary."
29. Titley, "Heil Mary."
30. James Smith, *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries*, xvii.
31. James Smith, "Politics of Sexual Knowledge."
32. Ibid.
33. Finola Kennedy, "The Suppression of the Carrigan Report: A Historical Perspective on Child Abuse," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 89, no. 356 (2000): 356.
34. Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish.*
35. James Smith, "Politics of Sexual Knowledge," 224.
36. All of the survivor quotes in this article are taken from interviews conducted by Jennifer Yeager as part of the Waterford Memories Project.
37. James Smith, "Politics of Sexual Knowledge."
38. Katherine O'Donnell, "Justice for Magdalenes" (paper presented at the Irish Human Rights Commission and Law Society of Ireland Ninth Annual Human Rights Conference, Dublin, Ireland, 2011).
39. Department of Justice, *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries* (Dublin: Department of Justice and Equality, 2013).
40. Raftery and O'Sullivan, *Suffer the Little Children.*
41. The Irish Government established the McAleese Committee in July 2011. The committee consisted of an independent chair (Senator Dr. McAleese) and senior representatives from six centrally relevant government departments: Department of Justice and Equality; Department of Health; Department of Enterprise, Jobs, and Innovation; Department of Education and Skills; Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; and Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The purpose of the interdepartmental committee was to establish if there was state involvement with the Magdalene Laundries and to produce a report on its findings. Department of Justice, *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee.*
42. Maeve O'Rourke, "Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the State's Duty to Protect," *Hibernian Law Journal* 200, no. 10 (2011): 200–37.
43. The Justice Department report found that the laundries "were operated on a subsistence or close to break-even basis rather than on a commercial or highly profitable basis." Department of Justice, *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee*, 993. However, this conclusion was based on figures submitted from the religious organizations and their accountants, which was not independently audited. Additionally, financial information from the laundries in New Ross, Waterford, Cork, Donnybrook, and Dun Laoghaire

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"did not survive" and were not included in the report. The Justice for Magdalenes group has questioned the findings, arguing that the religious orders had an unpaid workforce and lucrative contracts. See James Smith, Maeve O'Rourke, Raymond Hill, and Claire McGettrick, "State Involvement in the Magdalene Laundries: JFM's Principal Submissions to the Inter-departmental Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries," Justice for Magdalenes, 2013, www.magdalenelaundries.com/State_Involvement_in_the_Magdalene_Laundries_public.pdf. Without open access to the original records, clear conclusions cannot be drawn regarding the economic viability of the laundries.

44. High Park Convent ceased operations in 1991.
45. Eva Urban, "The Condition of Female Laundry Workers in Ireland 1922–1996: A Case of Labour Camps on Trial," *Études Irlandaises* 37, no. 2 (2012): 49–64.
46. Francis D. Murphy, Helen Buckley, and Larain Joyce, *The Ferns Report*, presented to the Minister for Health and Children (Dublin: Government Publications, October 2005), www.bishop-accountability.org/ferns.htm; Ryan Report, *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, Report*, vols. 1–4 (Dublin: Government Publications, 2009), http://www.childabusecommission.ie/rpt/pdfs/; Murphy Report, *Commission of Investigation, Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin* (Dublin: Government Publications, 2009), www.dacoi.ie/, "Dublin Archdiocese Commission of Investigation Report"; Cloyne Report, *Report into the Catholic Diocese of Cloyne* (Dublin: Government Publication, 2010), www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Cloyne_Rpt_Intro.pdf/Files/Cloyne_Rpt_Intro.pdf.
47. Ryan Report.
48. Carole Holohan, *In Plain Sight: Responding to the Ferns, Ryan, Murphy, and Cloyne Reports* (Dublin: Amnesty International Ireland, 2011), 389.
49. UN Committee against Torture, "Concluding Observations of the Committee against Torture," 46th Session, 2011, 6, https://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFM_UNCAT_Follow%20Up_Complete.pdf.
50. Department of Justice, *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee*, 925.
51. James Smith et al., "State Involvement in the Magdalene Laundries."
52. The Justice for Magdalenes oral history project was a collaborative research project with the University College Dublin, led by Katherine O'Donnell. The project was completed in 2013. The Waterford Memories Project (led by Jennifer Yeager) focuses on collecting narratives associated with the Magdalene institutions in the southeast of Ireland.
53. Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6–7.
54. Coman et al., "Collective Memory," 128.
55. Pennebaker and Gonzales, "Making History."
56. Stephen Sloan, "The Fabric of Crisis: Approaching the Heart of Oral History," in *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*, ed. Mark Cave and Stephen Sloan (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 273.
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