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INST FÖR HISTORISKA STUDIER

## Out of Sight, Out of Mind

The ‘Social Death’ of Institutionalized Women and Children and the ‘Social Amnesia’ of Irish Society in the Twentieth Century, Depicted in Forensic Evidence from the Children's Mass Grave at a former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway.



*Figure 1 Picture taken at a Mother and Baby Home in Ireland (Brian Lockier/Adoption Rights Alliance).*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES .....	3
ABSTRACT .....	4
1. INTRODUCTION .....	5
1.1. PURPOSE OF PAPER .....	6
1.2. LIMITATIONS .....	6
1.3. THEORETICAL APPROACH .....	8
1.4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH.....	9
1.5. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIAL.....	12
2. MAIN ANALYSIS: The Archaeological Evidence from the Fifth Interim Report in Relation to the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam .....	14
2.1. The Mother and Baby Home at Tuam.....	15
2.2. Report on the Findings from the Geophysical Surveys of the Memorial Garden, Tuam 2015 .....	16
2.3. Results of phase II: Site investigations in Tuam 2016; the test excavations and interesting features from phase II .....	17
2.4. Human remains and other findings from phase II .....	20
2.5. Results of Phase IIA: Site Investigations in Tuam 2017; the test excavations and interesting features from phase IIA. ....	22
2.6. Human remains and other findings from phase IIA .....	24
2.7. A brief conclusion from the forensic evidence post- excavation and experts comment on the sites future .....	26
3. DISCUSSION .....	27
3.1 A brief overview over Ireland’s history in relation to the religious institutions in the twentieth century .....	27
3.2. The media's reaction to the Mother and Baby Home investigation and their response to the forensic evidence .....	28
3.3. The Irish government's reaction to the Mother and Baby Home investigation and their response to the forensic evidence.....	29
3.4. The Irish public’s reaction to the Mother and Baby Home investigation and their response to the forensic evidence.....	31
3.5. The ‘Social Death’ of Unmarried Mothers and their Children in Twentieth Century Ireland.....	32
3.6. ‘Social Amnesia’ and the Dark Heritage of Religious run Institutions in Twentieth Century Ireland .....	33
4. CONCLUSION .....	35
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	37

# TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Picture taken at a Mother and Baby Home in Ireland (Brian Lockier/Adoption Rights Alliance).	1
Figure 2 Map of Ireland with Tuam marked out to the west (Barry 2018)	14
Figure 3 The area of interest circled in red: The memorial garden today (Google maps 2020-11-16)	16
Figure 4 The area of interest circled in red with the 'sewage tank' marked out on a map from the 1900's, revisited in 1930s and 1940s (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)	16
Figure 5 Layout of the surveyed area. Notice the dark area in the south side of the investigated area. North facing left in figure (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A 2015)	17
Figure 6 Overview of the four trenches opened in 2016. Figure drawn with north facing up (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B)	18
Figure 7 Picture of tank A and B where multiple human remains were found. North facing down in picture (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)	19
Figure 8 Picture of tank in Trench 3 with the lid removed. Human remains were found within the tanks chamber (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)	20
Figure 9 Picture of a children's tin cup from a Swedish design dated back to ca. 19302-1940s (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)	21
Figure 10 Image from the geophysical survey with identified archaeological features added. North facing up in the image (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)	22
Figure 11 Picture taken from phase IIA of the tanks with the concrete lids removed (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)	23
Figure 12 Drawing of excavation area phase IIA viewed from above: Feature 1 had a total of 21 tank openings all with their own context numbers except two with the same context number (C.82) as they share the same chamber below (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)	24
Figure 13 Drawing of the 20 chambers connected to the 21 tank openings viewed in profile. All chambers were given their individual context number. Four chambers had been excavated during phase II, 16 more were excavated during phase IIA (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)	24
Figure 14 A green plastic bottle labeled 'Castrol GTX'. This design was released in the UK in 1968, which means the tanks must have been accessible sometime after 1968 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)	25

# ABSTRACT

The twentieth century was a time of social and political changes. Victims of trauma, genocide, massacres and abuse in a largely Post-Colonial era would increasingly gain recognition and places of suffering, death and pain would become places of remembrance. Post English rule, the Republic of Ireland had many religious run institutions that, at the turn of the millennium, were under many investigations due to accusations of neglect and abuse towards its residents. One of these institutions under investigation is the Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home (1925-1961) in Tuam, Co. Galway. Accusations had been made claiming that nearly 800 children may have been buried on the site of the former institution. In 2015, a commission of investigation was appointed to look into the history of the institution and in 2019 the commission published a Fifth Interim report, along with two archaeological reports, containing the information they have collected so far. In the archaeological report it had been confirmed that a minimum of 14 individuals, all children with the youngest being 35 foetal weeks, were found on the site. The archaeologists also believe that more children's remains are still buried there. It was said that the gravesite was a mere rumor but as more evidence was introduced, more witnesses did claim to have been aware of the possible burial ground. By comparing the event taking place in Tuam with other places related to dark heritage and social amnesia, this thesis studies how Irish society today is facing this dark past and how this burial site could be hidden for over 50 years out of a social death and social amnesia perspective.

*Key words:* Dark heritage, social amnesia, social death, forensic archaeology, bioarchaeology, juvenile human remains, Irish state, Catholic Church, child abuse, human rights violation, Irish society, Irish media.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Sites related to pain and grief in contemporary human history is still being discovered today. A country like Ireland, being known for their Gaelic culture and strong Catholic beliefs, had a large number of cases at the end of the twentieth century of sexual and physical abuse of children committed by priests and clergymen at religious run institutions (The Irish Times 2009). In 1993 in Dublin 22 unknown graves were discovered at a former Magdalene Laundry<sup>1</sup> (McAleese report 2013:779-813) which would lead to the first media exposure on abuse taking place within the laundries in the documentary *Sex in a Cold Climate* (Humphries 1998). These cases, and many others like them, would all be the start of government approved and funded investigations into the Irish religious run institutions. The latest being the *Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters* (MBHCOI<sup>2</sup>) which was an investigation into 14 different Mother and Baby Homes and four County Homes<sup>3</sup> that existed in the Republic of Ireland during the twentieth century (MBHCOI 2016:2). The reason for this investigation was due to the determination of one local amateur historian, Catherine Corless, and her research on a Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway. Her theory, that as many as 796 children may be buried at the site of the former institution in what she believed to be a septic tank, spread fast across the country. In 2015, the commission of investigation was put into place. After many missed deadlines a report was made public as late as in 2019 which included the information the Commission had been able to accumulate from the Mother and Baby Homes so far, as well as a geophysical survey and two forensic archaeological excavation reports from the site in Tuam. The rumors of children's remains buried on the site in what is believed to be water tanks was confirmed, although the number of individuals buried on the site could not be confirmed. Since the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam closed its doors in 1961, there are still survivors from this institution, along with family members of the victims, alive today.

It was Catherine Corless that began this investigation in 2011. As an amateur historian from Tuam, she had an interest in the local history and the Sisters of Bon Secours<sup>4</sup> Mother and Baby Home. As a part of a paper she was writing, she interviewed the locals about the institution and was told about a possible burial ground on the site. It was said that this burial ground could be at the same spot that the memorial garden stands today. An area that would have been at the back of the former institution. As her research continued it would turn out that locally it was known that children had been buried unmarked on the site said to be possible remains of the Great Famine

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<sup>1</sup> The Magdalene Laundry system was originally brought to Ireland from France in the eighteenth century. The purpose was to accommodate prostitutes and teach them a trade in order for them to find work in the domestic sector. In the twentieth century these laundries would accommodate single mothers and young women who the community considered being unfitting in the Irish society. At these laundries the women were verbally and physically abused while they did penance through hard slave labour. The last Magdalene Laundry closed its doors in 1996 ( Luddy 1999, Smith 2008, McCarthy 2010)

<sup>2</sup> The Commission is also referred to as the *Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation*, or *MBHCOI*, which is what it will be referred to in this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> The Country Homes were another name for the workhouses in the late 1920s and onwards. Due to the workhouses being a part of the British system, the Irish society did not want to be associated with them (Ferriter 2018).

<sup>4</sup> The Sisters of Bon Secours are a female congregation derived from France after the French Revolution with the purpose to tend to the sick. The congregation came to take the name Bon Secours in 1824 and in 1861 they arrived in Ireland due to the Great Famine. <http://www.bonsecourssisters.ie/about> (2020-12-12)

victims<sup>5</sup>. Some witnesses also claimed to have discovered bones on the site after the institution had closed down (O’Callaghan 2017). As Corless dug deeper into the archives she came across maps pointing out a septic tank where the memorial garden is today. She would also come across the names of 796 children that had died within the confinement of the institution that had no burial records on file (van der Horst 2014). After two ‘test’ excavations in 2016 and 2017, it could be confirmed that remains were buried within the garden in a former waste facility structure, remains dated back to the time of the Mother and Baby Home. One may ask how these children could be buried in this way without local resistance, how the children's deaths were kept secret for so many decades and why an investigation was never done sooner. To understand this one has to look back at Ireland's contemporary history and the dark past that is connected to the Irish religious run institutions in twentieth century Ireland.

## 1.1. PURPOSE OF PAPER

My intention with this thesis is to give the reader an insight into Ireland and their religious run institutions in the twentieth century along with the reaction of Irish society after it became evident that human remains of young children was found on the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam. The questions I am hoping to answer in this study are:

- From a dark heritage perspective; how come these children were laid into old sewage tanks and then kept secret until now?
- How has this case been depicted in Irish media prior to the forensic evidence and after?
- How has Irish society reacted to the evidence found at the excavations done in 2016 and 2017?
- How has Irish society’s relationship to this dark past changed in the early twenty first century?

## 1.2. LIMITATIONS

As Ireland has a long history of much pain and suffering taking place in the religious run institutions all cannot be included in this thesis. Nor will I have the time or space to go in-depth into other institutions' separate past therefore they will not be mentioned by name but will be referred to as '*institutions*'. I will include some other government reports and other sources that concern similar cases to the Mother and Baby Home case in Tuam. The reason I include these is because these investigations are all connected to one another as they are governmental investigations done concerning these religious run institutions, post English rule. Having that said I do not intend to go too deep into the earlier reports referring to abuse taking place in the

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<sup>5</sup> The Great Famine is referred a historical time in Ireland between 1845 to 1851. Ireland’s potato crop would be hit by blight, which is a fungus, and as many as one million people would die due to the Famine and approximately 2.5 million people would emigrate. <https://www.theirishstory.com/2016/10/18/the-great-irish-famine-1845-1851-a-brief-overview/#.YAML8uhKjIU> (2021-01-14)

institutions, but they will be mentioned. I'm hoping that the brief backgrounds given to the religious institutions here will give the reader a general idea of these dark times in Irish history. The same goes to other places related to dark heritage and trauma, as there are so many sites both globally and historically I cannot include them all in my study but will be giving a few examples of places to give the reader an idea of just why the case in Tuam has affected the Irish society.

As the final report from the commission will not be made public until January of 2021 (Dáil Éireann 2020-12-03), the MBHCOI's Fifth Interim report of 2019 is currently the most informative report to have been published covering the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam. It also includes other Mother and Baby Homes across Ireland but as no other excavations had been done on these sites when the report was published, the former institution in Tuam is the only archaeological source available at this moment. Due to the delicate subject of this case, being a children's mass grave from contemporary times including infants and juveniles, all images of the children's remains have been blackened out in the archaeological reports. Because of this, no images of the human remains will be included in this thesis but can be viewed by the readers blackened out in the original report. The same rule is applied to the terminology; in this thesis I will at times use the full names of these particular institutions, which is *Mother and Baby Homes*, and at times I will only refer to them as *former institutions* or just *institutions*. The reason for this is out of respect for survivors of the institutions as many of them have claimed that this place was never considered a *home* to them (MBHCOI 2019a:3).

Although the site in Tuam is not a tourist attraction to my knowledge, people do visit the site at different occasions. The visitors are survivors or victims' family members and the media has visited the site for many of their reportages throughout the years. As such I do not intend to go too much into dark tourism but only mention it briefly as it is an industry related to dark heritage.

There are many theoretical perspectives one can apply to explain this Irish dark heritage and the religious run institutions that will not be included in this study. I will also not have the space to go through all the different layers of socio-economic and political changes Ireland went through from 1920s to today, I just wish to share a couple of theoretical perspectives in relation to dark heritage studies and the Irish mentality towards the religious run institutions. I do not claim these theoretical perspectives to be the only ones nor do I claim that no other events had an impact on Ireland.

There have been many articles in the news and government debates referring to this case of which all will not be included in this study as some are not relevant to the perspective this study focuses on, therefore only a few selected will be referenced. Also, Irish law will be touched upon in the study but will not be analyzed thoroughly as this study does not focus on the law but more on Irish society's reactions to the evidence found in 2016 and 2017.

My intention with this thesis is not to point fingers at any guilty party but to analyze this dark heritage from the current debates and discussions going on in Ireland today. This is why I have not included any comments from the Church or any other religious figures as my focus is not on why the Church treated the Irish minority in this manner. My focus is on Irish society and how they are handling this case and others like it and how they are handling this dark heritage in the twenty-first century.

I have been in contact with forensic archeologist Niamh McCullagh who was the team leader for the two excavations in Tuam. During our communication she emphasized that some of her answers to my questions were her personal opinions on the case and that those comments could not be used in this thesis. The reason for this is because McCullagh and her team were hired by the Commission of Investigation in 2016 to conduct a professional forensic investigation with a focus on the evidence at hand and not to discuss the case in public (N. McCullagh 2020, personal communication 17 December). Therefore I have decided to not cite anything from our communication, out of respect for McCullagh and the entire excavation team. Instead our correspondence directed me towards alternative information on McCullagh's and the team's involvement in the case post-excavation that will be mentioned in this study.

### 1.3. THEORETICAL APPROACH

My main approach is to study the Tuam site within a theoretical framework of dark heritage, with consideration of the concepts of 'social amnesia' and 'social death'. Cultural heritage can bring people together but it can also set them apart. As written in his article *The Memorializing of Violence and Tragedy: Human Trauma as Heritage*, Gregory Ashworth (2008) states: 'All heritage is a deliberate selection from pasts in order to satisfy present needs and demands' (Ashworth 2008:231). The same can be said to what is deliberately excluded as a part of a society's culture. This is where one can see a difference in dark heritage studies and other heritage studies. Peter Burke states that: '...history is written by victors. It might also be said that history is forgotten by victors. They can afford to forget...' (Burke 1997:54). Dark heritage tends to lift the subject of pain, remorse or trauma in human history, in order to show the complexity of a society's remembrance of the past (Thomas et al 2019). One can therefore say that while cultural heritage ends up being what a group or society wants to remember, dark heritage brings to light memories that might have been too painful or shameful to remember or where excluded in a society's history in the past.

The term 'Social Amnesia' dates back to Russell Jacoby's work *Social Amnesia, A critique of conformist psychology from Adler to Laing* published in 1975, which states that social amnesia is '...memory driven out of mind by the social and economic dynamic of this society' (Jacoby 1975:4). His work was first and foremost in reference to the field of psychology and the works of Freudianism and Marxism (Jacoby 1975) but can be applied to heritage studies as well. Such as his statement that, according to Marx, the word 'ideology' originally meant a 'false form of consciousness'(Jacoby 1975:6). This perspective can be applied to how society's choses to mediate their cultural heritage and how strong nationalistic propaganda may be spread. Sociologist Tetsuden Kashima who is known for his work done on American and Japanese relations during WWII (Ng 2018) interpreted social amnesia as such:

Social amnesia is not a psychological pathology; it is a group phenomenon in which attempts are made to suppress feelings and memories of particular moments or extended time periods. It is a conscious effort, an attempt to cover up less than pleasant memories.

It does not mean that the past is repressed, in the psychoanalytic sense; rather more



simply that they are suppressed and are difficult to bring up to the surface consciousness”  
(Kashima 1980:113).

A community’s or society’s memory loss in relation to their dark past can therefore be seen as an intentional memory loss or collective social amnesia as those memories are being excluded within a society’s collective remembrance.

The reason for a society’s social amnesia can be many including the social or political nature in a society’s past. In this thesis I have looked into one theoretical term that can be related to social amnesia, the term ‘social death’. Social death was first used in Orlando Patterson’s (1982) work *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. With this theoretical term he claimed that certain folk groups or subgroups within a society are or were seen as less human and would therefore be excluded and alienated from society with focus on slavery throughout human history. He would analyze the power of dominance, authority and symbolism and how this would be applied to the slave and the slave owner. He also discussed the importance of communal acceptance of slavery within a society, claiming that one could only own a slave if this was accepted behavior within one’s society. Also, the treatment towards the slave would only be accepted if the whole society would see them as outcasts. Only then can slavery be accepted within a society (Patterson 1982:35-38).

This can also be related to Zygmunt Bauman’s (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*. In his work, Bauman discussed how the Holocaust was inevitable in a society that was ethically blinded by its bureaucratic pursuit of efficiency and goals of greatness (Bauman 1989:14-17). A society where the Jews did not fit in and had to be dealt with (Bauman 1989:31-33). He also discussed that, although many individuals did heinous crimes against the Jews and others in the name of the Third Reich, these individuals believed themselves to do nothing wrong as they were done out of obedience and for the Nazi party’s benefits. His study shows that authority weighs heavily on anyone inferior, and that collective action can take control of an individual’s consciousness and awareness and make one blinded to one’s own immoral actions (Bauman 1989:18-27).

## 1.4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In the book *Places of Pain and Shame- Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage’* from 2009, a number of authors discuss certain sites today notoriously famous for their painful past. They give the reader an inside look into how these sites are represented in the present and the past, why they are places of remembrance and how they have been received by the public. To give some examples: Qian Fengqi (2009) discusses the history behind the Nanjing massacre memorial and how approximately 300,000 Chinese, many of them civilians, women and children, were killed by the Japanese over the course of six weeks in 1937 (Fengqi 2009). Katie Young (2009) gives a different view into the dark heritage from the Holocaust and how it was mediated between postwar and post-communist rule in Poland. She also discusses the complexity of the concentration camps as they affected so many people with so many religious and cultural backgrounds and how this has stirred up conflicts at Auschwitz-Birkenau (Young 2009). Sarah McDowell (2009) wrote an article on the Maze prison/Long Kesh that was a prison in Northern

Ireland during the ‘Troubles’ in Ireland<sup>6</sup>. In this chapter the reader is given a background on the intent of the prison and to the conflict of interests that derived after it closed down (McDowell 2009).

Many of these sites and others like them can be considered to be subjects of ‘difficult’ heritage or ‘dark’ heritage. Dark heritage studies focus more on heritage that can be related to pain and hurt, of events that happened in the past that are still affecting people today. Dark heritage studies try to expand the view on what heritage actually is or means, to make people aware of its complexity (Thomas et al 2019). It is “...an attempt to establish a more balanced understanding of how and in what forms the past is present in the present, in recognizing the diversity of impacts that both recent and more distant past has on contemporary issues” (Thomas et al 2019:2). Dr. Gregory J. Ashworth completed studies on the concept of dark heritage. He would discuss and analyze not just how these heritage sites are being represented by local managements of tourism, but also why we today see a growing interest in tourism visiting these sites of pain and suffering (See e.g., Ashworth 2004, Ashworth 2008, Ashworth & Tunbridge 2016).

The subject of dark heritage originates from ‘dark tourism’ studies, a word first mentioned by Malcom Foley and John J. Lennon (1996) in their article *JFK and dark tourism: A fascination with assassination* where the two authors studied peoples fascination to sites related to the deceased presidents life and death (Foley & Lennon 1996). Dark tourism is a phenomenon that has grown as a subject in both the world of academia as well as in the tourism industry (Martini & Buda 2018).

Despite this fascination to the darker past in human history, there is also resistance to it. In general, the public are interested in ‘others’ traumatic history, as in they do not want to confront their own (Ashworth 2008). Many of the authors in *Places of Pain and Shame- Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage’* comment on the subject of ‘collective amnesia’. This amnesia can derive from many different reasons. Societies related to sites of this nature would often suffer a collective amnesia. Often this is due to the propaganda of political parties or the likes of a politician’s attempt to build up a certain nationalistic persona (Fengqi 2009:19-20). Others would go through collective amnesia, trying to forget the painful past (Long & Reeves 2009:68). This social amnesia can therefore be applied to a society due to e.g., political or social systems within it. Many of these sites can also be seen as symbolic of the exercise of power and dominance of one group over another, where a minority group would be put through pain and trauma inflicted by an authoritarian group and would deliberately be considered socially dead. The term socially dead refers to an individual or group of people that are not considered to be a part of the society and are therefore alienated and excluded from society (Patterson 1975).

Archaeologists have also become involved in ‘dark heritage’ studies. Many archaeological projects have taken place at sites often related to places of human injustice, suffering and crimes.

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<sup>6</sup> The Troubles refers to a historical time of armed conflict in Northern Ireland, dated back to 1968 and lasted until 1998. This conflict was much due to political disagreements between the Ulster Protestants and the Irish Nationalists, with one party wanting to stay in the UK, the other party wanting to have a united Ireland. Much violence, armed attacks, kidnapping and murders would take place during those 30 years.  
<https://www.theirishstory.com/2015/02/09/the-northern-ireland-conflict-1968-1998-an-overview/#.YAMSKehKjIU>  
(2021-01-14)

Sites related to the Holocaust and the nineteenth century Workhouses in Ireland are examples of such places. These excavations have helped science fill in some of the gaps or confirmed certain questions still existing concerning these sites. Caroline Sturdy Colls (2015) has spent many years at Treblinka I, locating sites and architecture long gone missing, for example, she was able to map out the gas chambers on that site, which were destroyed by the Nazis in 1943 (Sturdy Colls 2015:42-43). Archaeologist Jonny Geber has written many articles on the Union Workhouse burial ground in Kilkenny with focus on the time of the Great Famine (See e.g., Geber 2011, Geber & Murphy 2012, Geber 2015) in a project called *Great Irish Famine/Kilkenny Union Workhouse Bioarchaeology Project*. At this site, he found evidence of chronic disease, such as scurvy, in the victims and other signs of stress and trauma (Geber & Murphy 2012) which can help give an inside look into the hard life inside the Workhouses as historical documents lack information on this (Moran 2018:28). An excavation connected to the Union Workhouse in Tuam took place in 2014, on the corner of Athenry road and Dublin road, which is located northwest of the site of interest in this thesis. During this excavation a large number of human remains were discovered, all dated back to the Union Workhouse and the Great Famine (Delaney et al 2014).

Geber has also done many studies in bioarchaeology and children related to diet and health in relation to the Kilkenny Union Workhouse and the Great Famine (See e.g., Geber 2016, Geber 2018). The reason for a focus on the children was because they, as Geber states: ‘...in general, never wrote their own accounts of their lives...’ (Geber 2018:75). The remains found on the site showed a time of high mortality for children in the Workhouse along with malnutrition, diseases and other signs of stress and trauma for many of the poor children in Irish society (Geber 2018). Other studies such as the anthology; *Children and Childhood in Bioarchaeology*, edited by Patrick Beauchesne and Sabrina G. Agarwal (2018) gives an in-depth look into the field of bioarchaeology and the study of children’s remains from ancient times to more contemporary time periods. These studies have given information on how an individual’s cultural and social structure can leave traces within the bones and can therefore give an insight into children’s lives as well as their fate in the past (Beauchenes & Agarwal 2018).

A new branch within archaeology emerged in the twentieth century, called forensic archaeology. Many times, forensic archaeology is applied to contemporary gravesites or mass graves to determine if any crimes against human rights have taken place and to try to identify the deceased individuals (Skinner et al 2003, Powers & Sibun 2013). In discussing his experience in forensic archaeology, Richard Wright (2010) stated: ‘...the recovery of bodies has recovered history, affirming the fragile and contested memory of atrocity...’(Wright 2010:97), thereby forensic archaeology can help a society or community heal and find justice. Forensic archaeology has shown to be helpful in projects related to people going missing and being murdered due to social and political conflicts, such as in Ireland and Northern Ireland during the Troubles (McCullagh & Knupfer 2015) or in Cyprus during the 1960s and later the Turkish invasion in 1974 (ICMP). In other places such as Argentina, forensic archaeologists have helped locate people missing and individuals murdered during the military dictatorship in 1976-1983 (Crossland 2009). In recent European history, forensic archaeologists were involved in identifying the victims of the Bosnia and Herzegovina genocide sites and the mass graves that were left behind in the 1990s (Wright 2010, Jugo 2017).

## 1.5. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIAL

This thesis is a literary study on the case of the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, the forensic evidence discovered at the excavation and finally a discussion concerning the Irish society's reaction to the evidence in relation to their own dark heritage. Throughout the study other sites related to dark heritage will be introduced and discussed to compare with the site in Tuam in order to understand Irish society today.

Many references have been taken from the book *Places of pain and shame- Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'* as similarities can be found between these sites and people's reaction to the sites (Logan & Reeves 2009). Other articles on the matter that also are connected to archaeology will be used in this study such as the work of Jonny Geber (2011) and his article *Osteoarchaeological and archaeological insights into the deaths and intramural mass burials at the Kilkenny Union Workhouse between 1847–51 during the Great Famine* in which he discussed his discoveries made at a former Workhouse in Kilkenny. In it he studied the people that are buried on the site, their health and the site's taphonomy (Geber 2011). Another of his work is "*Wretched in the extreme*". *Investigating child experiences of the Great Hunger through bioarchaeology*. In this article he discusses the lack of documentation from children in human history and claims that with the help of bioarchaeology, new information can be depicted in the remains of children (Geber 2018). Another example on the subject of dark heritage is an article from archaeologist Caroline Sturdy Colls (2015) called *Uncovering a Painful Past: Archaeology and the Holocaust* where she writes about her work done at the Holocaust concentration camps and how she found the remains of the old gas chambers and other features of interest for the site's history (Sturdy Colls 2015). Like the site in Tuam these places are related to much pain and suffering and have helped in giving new information to the local contemporary history.

To give the reader a brief insight to the religious run institutions some of my references will be taken from historical published research such as Maria Luddy's (1999) *Women in Ireland, 1800-1918. A Documentary History*, James M. Smith's (2008) *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries- And the Nation's Architecture of Containment* and Rebecca Lea McCarthy's (2010) *Origins of the Magdalene Laundries: An Analytical History*. The Irish historian Dairmaid Ferriter has a vast knowledge of childcare in Irish contemporary history and has voiced his insight on this case since it was made public in 2014 (See e.g., Ferriter 2014, Ferriter 2017, Ferriter 2018). His statements concerning the former Mother and baby Home in Tuam will be referred to throughout this study. Investigational government reports published relating to other institutions will also be included such as *The report of the Commission to Inquire into Child abuse*, also known as *the Ryan report*<sup>7</sup> from 2009, and the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries*, also known as the *McAleese report*<sup>8</sup> from 2013. These reports include documentation from the institutions as well as survivors' statements and historical records from a number of institutions across the country (Ryan report 2009, McAleese report 2013).

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<sup>7</sup> The report was shortened to the *Ryan report* after the chairperson of the Commission, Mr. Justice Sean Ryan (Ryan report 2009:5)

<sup>8</sup> The report shortened to the *McAleese report* after the chairperson of the Commission, Senator Martin McAleese (McAleese report 2013:XI)

For the main analysis the forensic evidence from Tuam has all been taken from two archaeological reports both exercised and written by project leader and forensic archaeologist Niamh McCullagh, which include written work by archaeologist Adrian Harte and osteologist expert Linda Lynch both of whom were on site with Niamh McCullagh. Other experts analysts on carbon dating and soil sampling included in the report will be referred to as well (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016, MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017). These two reports along with a geophysical survey (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A) have all the forensic and archaeological evidence from the site up to date. Figures being used in this thesis are mainly taken from these reports. These figures are photographs taken on site, maps of the former institution, GPR maps and drawings of any features of interest found during the excavations. Photographs of certain artefacts related to the site's context will also be included.

Political debates referring to the Mother and Baby Home will be included in this study to provide an insight into what has been discussed on the case by the politicians within Oireachtas two houses Seanad Éireann and Dáil Éireann<sup>9</sup>. Statements made by the former minister of Children and Youth Affairs, Catherine Zappone, and the current minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman will be included along with other statements made by a number of senators and deputies on the Tuam case and the forensic evidence from the site. Any mention of Irish laws or acts will be referenced directly to as the Irish law.

In the section discussing the media's and the public's reactions to the forensic evidence, a number of news articles, podcasts and videos will be used as reference from 2014 up till 2020. As the focus in this thesis is on the Irish society's reaction to the forensic evidence from Tuam, the majority of references are from Irish sources. This will hopefully give this study and the readers an inside look at the media’s role in this case and an insight into the public’s reaction to the Tuam case.

As for the theoretical perspective in this study I have taken inspiration from works such as Russel Jacoby’s *Social Amnesia, A critique of conformist psychology from Adler to Laing* (Jacoby 1975) and Orlando Patterson’s book *Slavery and Social Death* (Patterson 1982), with some comparison with Zygmunt Bauman’s work *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Bauman 1989). Although the work of Jacoby is in relation to psychology and the forefather of psychoanalysis, Freud, his theory on social amnesia is also relevant in the world of heritage studies (See e.g., Fengqi 2009, Young 2009, Batten 2009). Patterson’s study focuses on the ‘social death’ of slaves throughout human history (Patterson 1982), which can be related to Bauman’s study into the moral consciousness and social norms of the Nazi society during the Holocaust (Bauman 1989).

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<sup>9</sup> Oireachta is the legislature of Ireland which includes the president of Ireland and the two houses Dáil- and Seanad Éireann. Seanad Éireann, Irish for senate is the upper house with 60 members and Dáil Éireann is the lower house. [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/role-of-the-oireachtas/\(2020-12-11\)](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/role-of-the-oireachtas/(2020-12-11))

## 2. MAIN ANALYSIS: The Archaeological Evidence from the Fifth Interim Report in Relation to the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam

The site of Tuam is situated northwest of the city of Galway (Fig.2). The name Tuam originates from the Irish word *Tuaim* that stems from the word for burial ground. This name may come from a burial ground found in the area referred to as *Tuaim Dá Ghualann*, possibly dated to the Bronze Age. The former Mother and Baby Home was located on the north side of the townland of Toberjarlath, with the exception of the memorial garden which is located in the west townland, Farrannabox. During the medieval period the town of Tuam was located approximately 700m northwest of the site of the former institution. Before the Union Workhouse was built on the site in the 1840s, the area consisted of farmland (ETG 2017:3-4). Workhouses would be built all around Ireland after the Poor Relief Act of 1838<sup>10</sup> was passed into the Irish law. The purpose of these Workhouses was to house the many poor people in Ireland, as poverty had become an increasing problem within the country during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (O'Connor 1995:58-76). The Union Workhouse in Tuam could accommodate 800 individuals at a time, but records have shown that during the Great Famine there were up to 2000 residing at the Workhouse at some occasions (Delaney et al 2014:6).



Figure 2 Map of Ireland with Tuam marked out to the west (Barry 2018)

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<sup>10</sup> See *Poor Relief Act 1838* at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1838/act/56/enacted/en/print.html> (2021-01-07)

## 2.1. The Mother and Baby Home in Tuam

The site of interest to this investigation is today a memorial garden situated just south of the house estate and a playground built in the late 1970s (Fig.3). The memorial garden has been maintained by a local committee with a small grotto added to the southeast corner in the 1990s. The garden is surrounded by stone walls with a gate entrance in the north wall (MBHCOI 2019a:63-64). It is within these walls that local amateur historian; Catherine Corless believed that 796 children may lie deposited within a ‘septic tank’. It is also within this garden that witnesses claim to have found human remains lying under ground in relation to the demolition of the institution and the construction of the housing estate in the 1970s (van der Horst 2014). According to the Commission of investigation, local authorities had an obligation to keep a register on any public burial<sup>11</sup> sites in the local records. No such records can be found in Tuam (MBHCOI 2019a:7).

According to the archaeological report from 2016, the area of interest can be found marked out on maps going back to the 1890s, the time of the Union Workhouse. After the Union Workhouse closed down, the area of interest can be seen labeled as a ‘sewage tank’ on the map (Fig.4). Between 1925 and 1961 the Union Workhouse was run, like the Mother and Baby Home, by the Sisters of Bon Secours. After the Mother and Baby Home closed down the building was removed and a plan for a housing estate and playground was put in place. On three building plans from Galway Co. Council records dated back to the 1970s, the area of interest and just west of the area of interest are both labeled as ‘burial ground’. In 1979 this label was removed from the building plan (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:11-16). The ‘children’s burial ground’ can also be found mentioned in a report from the Galway Co. Council dated back to 1981 (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:187, Plate 1.2.).

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<sup>11</sup> These legalities did not apply to private burial grounds, but since the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam was owned by the Galway Co. Council any burial ground on that site would automatically be considered public and not private burial grounds (MBHCOI 2019a:7,10).

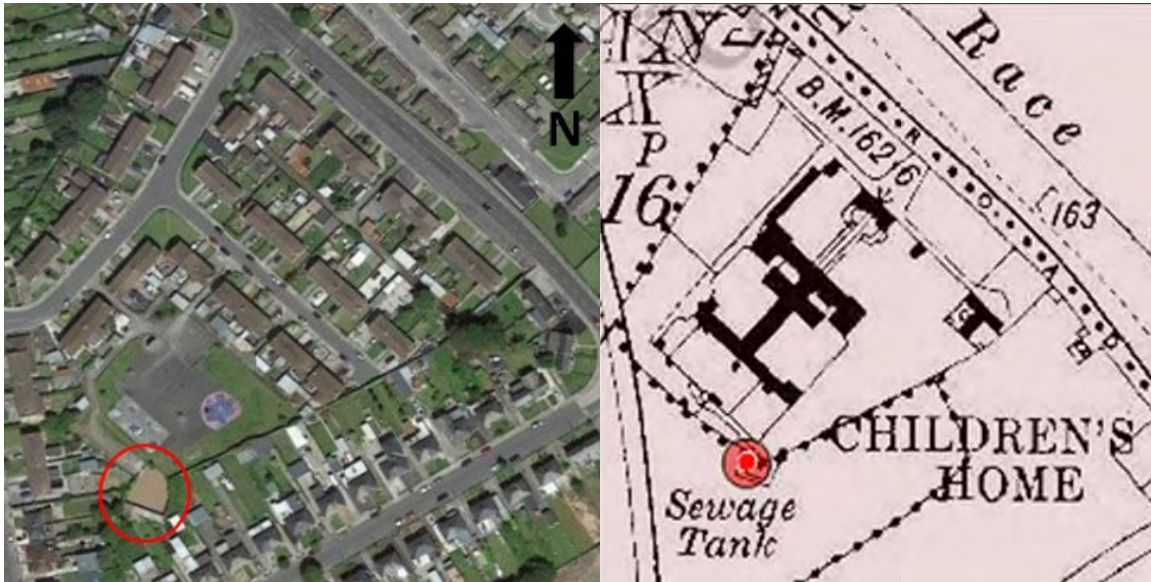


Figure 3 The area of interest circled in red: The memorial garden today (Google maps 2020-11-16)

Figure 4 The area of interest circled in red with the 'sewage tank' marked out on a map from the 1900's, revisited in 1930s and 1940s (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)

## 2.2. Report on the Findings from the Geophysical Surveys of the Memorial Garden, Tuam 2015

As the rumor of 796 children being buried at the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam spread across the country, the Irish government assigned a Commission of Investigation to investigate the institution in Tuam and other similar places in Ireland (MBHCOI 2019a:2). In 2015 they decided that a geophysical survey must be done on the site to determine if the original cesspit could be located on the site and if any burials could be detected within or around the cesspit. With the help of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) they did a thorough survey within the memorial garden which is located right on top of the old sewage tank, or the cesspit's origin location (Fig.5) and where witnesses have claimed to have found human bones. They also did Magnetometry on the area but as this area has been backfilled with a mixture of materials, due to the housing construction that took place in the late 1970s, the GPR showed to give the best results (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A 2015:1).

With the GPR, radio waves are being sent down into the ground. When the wave hits a difference in material, it sends the wave back up into the receiver antenna that collects the data and can show where these shifts and changes of material occur in the ground. What the GPR cannot tell though is what kind of material it hits, only where (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A 2015:19). Also, human remains tend to, over time, take on the electromagnetic properties as the surrounding soil which makes it more difficult to show a change in material in the GPR. They also comment in the report that because the human remains believed to be deposited on the site were likely infants, the size of such human remains would be difficult to detect. Evidence of burials could therefore not be detected in this survey (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A 2015:2).



The cesspit however could be detected although not intact due to the amount of back-fill material from the demolition of the former institution and the construction of the housing estate. They also found a large anomaly along the Memorial gardens south side wall, which they believed to be connected to the old cesspit (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A 2015:3-8).

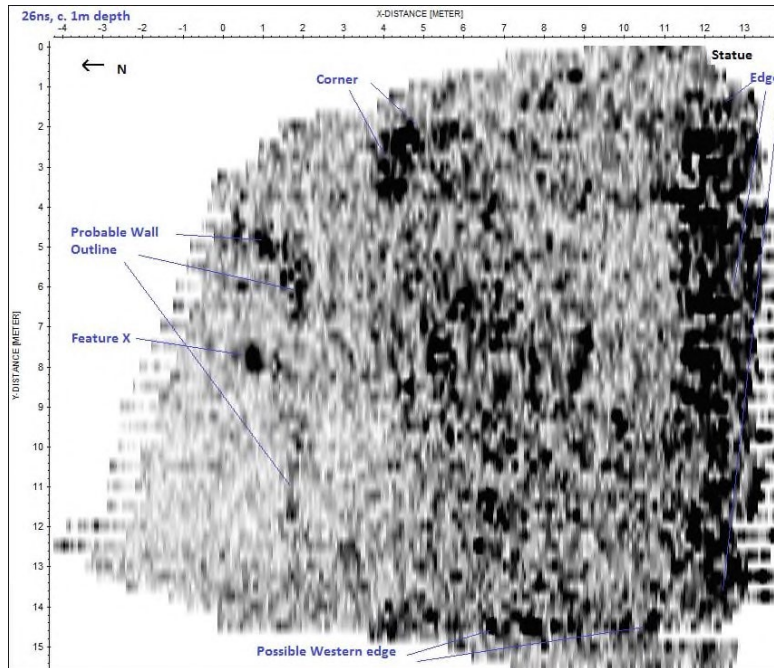


Figure 5 Layout of the surveyed area. Notice the dark area in the south side of the investigated area. North facing left in figure (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix A 2015)

### 2.3. Results of phase II: Site investigations in Tuam 2016; the test excavations and interesting features from phase II.

As the geophysical survey could not bring forward any information regarding human remains it was decided on behalf of the Commission of Investigation to do a ‘test’ excavation. The excavation was led by forensic archaeologist Niamh McCullagh (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:8). The test excavation took place on two different occasions; phase II in late 2016 (MBHCOI 2019 Appendix B 2016:10) and phase IIA in early 2017 (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix C 2017:7). The archaeological report including all methodology and findings were presented in the Fifth Interim report published in February 2019 (MBHCOI 2019). As the purpose of the excavation was to locate juvenile bones from modern times, the decision was made to implement forensic archaeology as methodology to the site. Additionally as the site is under the protection of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, due to the nineteenth century Union Workhouse that once stood there, a licensed archaeologist oversaw the excavation as well (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:9-10). Due to the delicate nature of the site and the excavation, security

measurements were implemented to the site with a 24/7 An Garda Síochána<sup>12</sup> present and the whole area sealed off from outsiders (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:19).

The main purpose of the excavation was to locate any human remains within the specific areas that had shown to be of interest from the geophysical survey, to date the remains and to make a demographic profile of the remains (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:8). Two trenches were originally opened within the memorial garden, with two more opened after finding an interesting feature in Trench 1 (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:17; Fig.6).

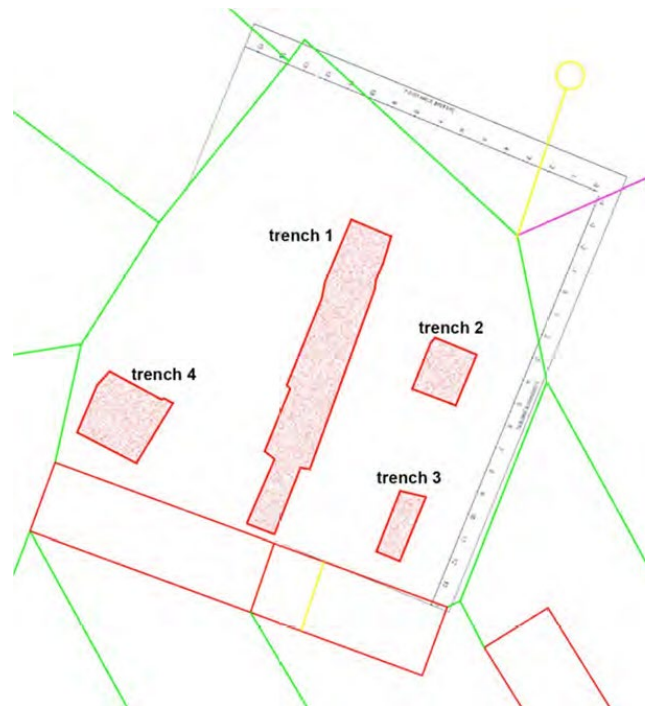


Figure 6 Overview of the four trenches opened in 2016. Figure drawn with north facing up (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B)

Trench 1 was located in approximately the center of the garden running northeast to southwest, 13.4m x 1m x 2m in size (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:18). In the far southern part of the trench a large concrete cover was found, in full size 11.8m in length, 1.6m in width, and approximately 2.2m in depth, named 'Feature 1' (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:33). Within Feature 1, two tanks were located, 'tank A' and 'tank B' (Fig 6). Tank A was measured 1.3m x 0.6m from north to south and at a depth of 1.98m from opening. Tank B measured at 1.37m x 0.86m with a depth of 1.92m. Both had a concrete lid covering the tank's entrances (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:18). Due to the small size of the tanks and for fear of damaging the children's remains they could not be entered (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:33), therefore photographs and drawings were made of the inside of the tanks (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:18). Within the tanks they found much debris of mixed material and clayey silt. They also found human remains in both tanks. The bones were visually examined by a human

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<sup>12</sup> An Garda Síochána, more commonly referred to as the Gardaí or "the Guards", is the national police service in the Republic of Ireland.

oste archaeologist, Dr. Linda Lynch, who could confirm that these were the remains of human juveniles and infants, no one over the age of 3 (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:46). It was also estimated that a minimum of fourteen individuals were found during phase II (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:56). Six bone samples were taken of the remains to do further testing (MBHCOI 2019a:92). Human remains were also found outside the feature, believed to have originated from the tanks (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:33).



*Figure 7 Picture of tank A and B where multiple human remains were found. North facing down in picture (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)*

In the north part of Trench 1 another feature, ‘Feature 2’ was discovered to be a larger tank with the size of 2.5m north-south x 1.22m and 2.28m in height at north. North of that, a culvert was discovered connected to the large tank. From the culvert, two pipes connected to Feature 2 through the northern wall. The east, south and west walls had large openings covered with iron grills. It is believed that liquid came through the pipes into the tank and out again through the metal grills that would prevent any large material from going through. No traces of human remains were found within this tank (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016: 21-22).

Trench 2 was opened up east of Trench 1 and ran from northeast to southwest and was 2.4m x 2m in size (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:18). The reason for placing the trench on this spot was due to an anomaly detected in the geophysical survey which turned out to be a masonry wall, possibly a corner of the cesspit. The whole feature was not excavated as it was fixed deeper than the trench depth of 1.08m. Yet the wall was included within Trench 1 and 3. No human remains were found within this trench (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:26-27).

Trench 3 was placed southeast of Trench 1 and south of Trench 2, running northeast to southwest, 2.8m x 1.1m in size. The reason for opening up the trench was to see the extent of Feature 1 in Trench 1. The masonry wall in Trench 2 ran along the north corner of the trench. In Trench 3 another tank similar to tank A and tank B were found (Fig.8), measured at 1.58 north-south x 0.85m. This tank also had a concrete lid covering the entrance, with the inside of the tank being 1.93 m deep from ground surface. Inside the deposit was a mix of dark brown silt, metal and stone debris and a number of human remains. A 'tide-mark' was visible on the east and south wall inside the tank, 0.83 m below the tank's entrance (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:27-28).

Trench 4 was placed southwest of Feature 1 in Trench 1, running west to east with the measurements of 3.1m x 3m. Adjacent to the east side wall of the trench, another tank similar to tank A, tank B and the tank in Trench 3 was found. Its concrete lid was damaged and had a corrugated iron sheet lying on top. The inside of the tank was measured 1.45m north-south x 0.45 wide, 1.8 deep. Another 'tide-mark' was visible 0.83m below the tank's entrance, on the west and south wall. The deposit inside the tank was similar to the deposit in trench 3 with just less human remains discovered (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:28-29).



Figure 8 Picture of tank in Trench 3 with the lid removed. Human remains were found within the tanks chamber (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)

## 2.4. Human remains and other findings from phase II

A total of 182 fragments of bone weighing 163g were removed from the site with the majority found within the different tanks and only a few found outside the tanks. The remains within the tanks are believed to have been originally deposited within the tanks, yet due to water waste and fluviations they are not considered to be *in situ*. The bones found within the tank's had been preserved and were in good condition. The bones found outside the tanks were in poorer

condition and some were found with rodent bite marks. These bones are believed to have originated from within the tanks and due to water flow and eruption of the northern wall, they ended up outside at a later date (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:46-47). A minimum of 14 individuals were found ages varying from 35 foetal weeks to 2-3 years at death (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:56). Traces of calculus or plaque were found on 4 individual teeth from the site (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:37, 44), which may be the result from many different factors such as diet and poor oral hygiene (Lieverse 1999).

Other findings made on the site could date the site to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century with an end sometime in the 1970s. A few examples are shards from an enamelled chamber pot and fragments of clay pipes dated to the nineteenth century, glass bottles used for medicine, chemicals and feeding and three children's tin cups of Swedish design all dated to ca 1930s-1940s (Fig.9), two combs and a food scoop for baby formula dated to ca 1960s-1970s (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:48). This shows activity on the site up until the building was demolished to make space for the housing estate and the site was back-filled in the 1970s.



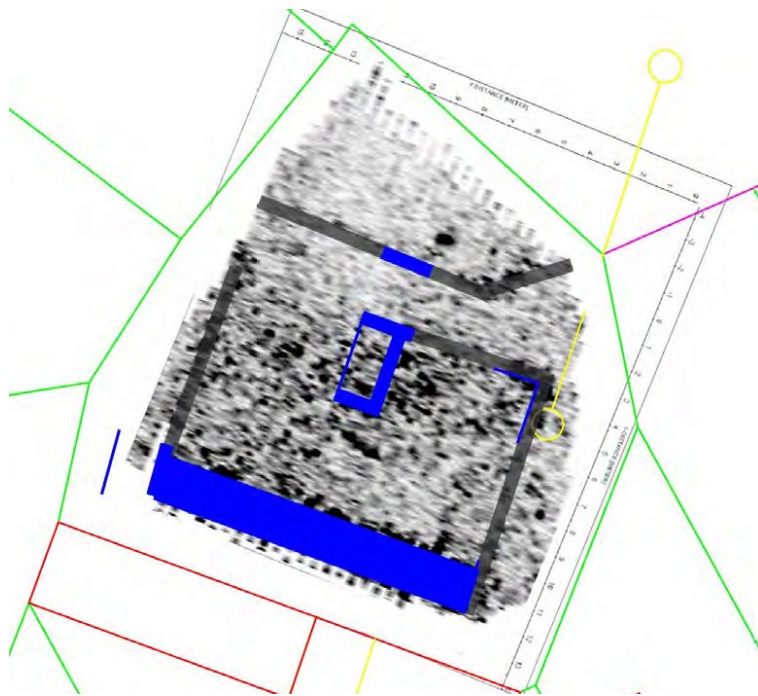
*Figure 9 Picture of a children's tin cup from a Swedish design dated back to ca. 1930-1940s (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016)*

Other analysis that was done on evidence from the site was carbon dating on bones and soil sample analysis. Carbon Dating analysis was made on 6 separate bones (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix B/Appendix VIII 2016:2) all collected from inside the tanks (MBHCOI 2019a:92). The bone fragments could all be dated to both prior to and within the nuclear era which is within the same time period as the former Mother and Baby Home was operational (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix B/Appendix VIII 2016:17). Soil samples were taken from one of the tanks within Feature 1 in relation to human remains deposition (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B 2016:52). In the soil sample data traces similar to human excrements were detected that contained high levels of plant sterols along with low concentration levels of plant-wax n-alkanes and fatty alcohols. This is believed to be traces left from baby formula milk commonly containing vegetable oil. No traces of excrements of adult humans were detected, which may imply that the structure at some point stopped being used as a sewage tank (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B/Appendix II 2016:4).

## 2.5. Results of Phase IIA: Site Investigations in Tuam 2017; the test excavations and interesting features from phase IIA.

Due to the findings made in Feature 1, a second test excavation, referred to as phase IIA, took place from January to February, 2017 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:6). The same team of experts would return to Tuam in early 2017 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 41-42) using a similar methodology and security measures as the previous excavation (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:9-10). The purpose of the second test excavation was to establish the extension of Feature 1, to see if any more human remains could be discovered within the feature and to take additional soil samples in order to establish if the structure had been used as a sewage facilitating structure. Unlike the excavation in 2016, this one was to be a completely non-intrusive exercise therefore no human bones were to be removed during the excavation (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:6-7).

Along with the geophysical survey and the first test excavation the experts had been able to find that Feature 1 ran all across the southern wall of the memorial garden (Fig.10). This was to be the area of interest during phase IIA. The topsoil was removed to find the full length of Feature 1 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:9).



*Figure 10 Image from the geophysical survey with identified archaeological features added. North facing up in the image (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)*

The structure of Feature 1 is of a large concrete slab measuring at 11.8m in length, 1.6m in width, and approximately 2.2m in depth (MBHCOI 2019a Appendix B:33), with 21 openings (Fig.11) leading down to 20 chambers running from east to west, all similar to the tanks discovered in the

previous excavation. The average measurements of the tanks came to 0.84m length x 0.29m width, all with a concrete lid that was approximately 6cm's thick (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:11), with the depositions inside the chambers at a depth of approximately 2m (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 14). Every chamber was given two context numbers, the first being the number for the tank and the second the number for the chamber e.g., the first tank starting in the west had the context number C.50/51 (Fig.12 & Fig.13). Many of the tanks looked to have their original lid although some looked to have been replaced at some point.



*Figure 11 Picture taken from phase IIA of the tanks with the concrete lids removed (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)*

The interior of the tanks showed that the tank's north wall bases had all some sort of gaps or damage to the walls. All of the tank's south side walls, including end walls in C.50 and C.104, were made of limestone and have therefore been predicted to be a part of the original cesspit dated back to the Union Workhouse time period, whilst the north wall along with the interior chambers walls were built at a later stage, possibly to be used as a number of 'cesspools' (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:11-13). Four tanks had been excavated during phase II and are excluded from this report. A total of 16 tanks were opened during phase IIA and 14 of the 16 tanks contained human remains. Although the report states that these tanks may still contain human remains. They just may not be visible on the sediment's surface (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:31).

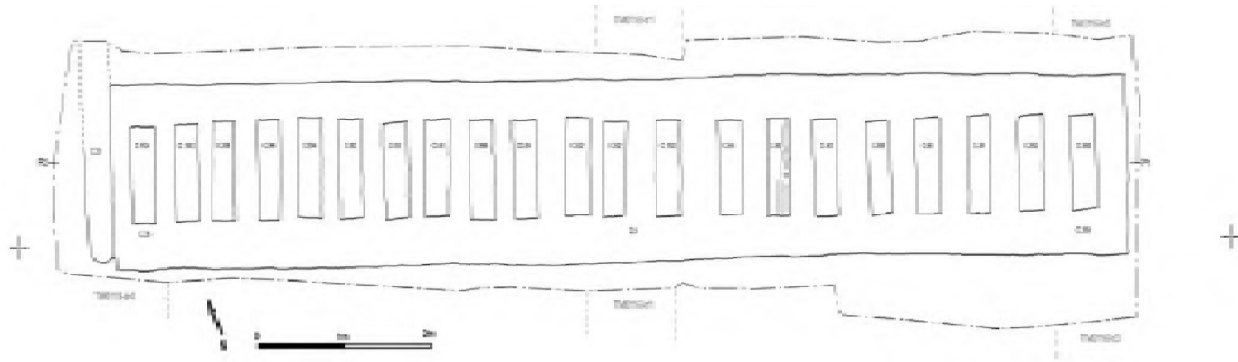


Figure 12 Drawing of excavation area phase IIA viewed from above: Feature 1 had a total of 21 tank openings all with their own context numbers except two with the same context number (C.82) as they share the same chamber below (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)

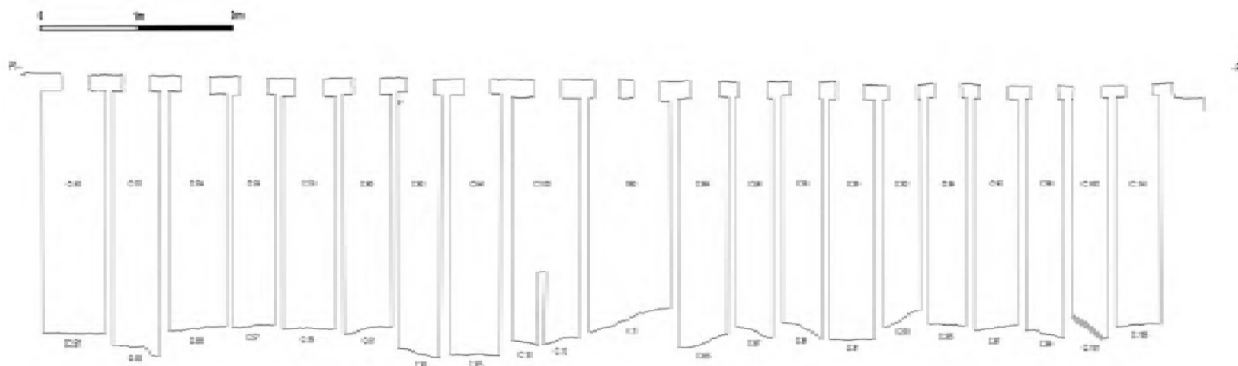


Figure 13 Drawing of the 20 chambers connected to the 21 tank openings viewed in profile. All chambers were given their individual context number. Four chambers had been excavated during phase II, 16 more were excavated during phase IIA (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)

## 2.6. Human remains and other findings from phase IIA

As mentioned above, no human remains were removed from this excavation; instead photographs were taken of the bones found within the chambers in order to study the remains. Due to this it was problematic to identify the ages of the remains, although they are believed to be the remains of infants (<1 year) and juveniles (<1-6 years, 6 being the oldest of age) since no adult bones were discovered (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:14/60). The remains documented during phase IIA are also believed to be of similar ages as the human remains found during phase II (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 33).

A majority of bones exposed in the tanks could be identified anatomically and in certain tanks possible individuals could be identified. In tank C.52/53, possible articulated bones and two mandibles could be identified. The two mandibles may indicate that a minimum of two individuals were deposited within the tank (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017;16). Two possible bone fragments were found attached to the north facing wall within tank C.54/55 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 17), which could be evidence for water levels fluctuating within the tanks chambers at a later date (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 33). Within tank C.56/57 another minimum of two individuals were found represented by two right side temporal



fragments and two occipital squama fragments. Also, possible articulated remains were identified (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:18). In tank C.58/59 a possible articulated thoracic vertebrae with left ribs was identified and an infant hand phalanx was discovered in the north side corner, attached to the concrete covered wall (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 19). That the phalanx is situated in the wall could be evidence for water levels fluctuating within the tanks chambers at a later date (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 33). Three possible humeri were identified in tank C.88/89 which could be from two different individuals. An intact cranium was also discovered, lying on top of the sediment. By studying its dentals this individual was approximately 1.5-2.5 years of age or slightly older. An infant humerus showing post-mortem erosion was also found (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 23-24). Dr. Linda Lynch's theory is that both the cranium and the humerus may have originated elsewhere and been put into the tank at a later date as they stand out from the other remains in the chamber (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017: 32). Three possible individuals were found within tank C.90/91, one infant younger than one year old, possibly found *in situ*, and two infants or young juveniles (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:25-26).

No other material was removed from the site, with the exception of one green plastic bottle found in C.94/95, labeled 'Castrol GTX' which is a brand for motor oil. This brand was first released in the UK in 1968, seven years after the institution closed down. This gives indications that the tanks were accessible post 1968, possibly due to the construction work that took place on the site in the late 1970s (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:35). Other finds of interest were a black plastic comb discovered in C.58/59 that was not removed, a piece of angled timber, believed to be from a possible coffin, found in tank C.60/61 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:20) and a blue shoe believed to be from a young juvenile found on the northern side of tank C.90/91 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:26).



Figure 14 A green plastic bottle labeled 'Castrol GTX'. This design was released in the UK in 1968, which means the tanks must have been accessible sometime after 1968 (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017)

A number of soil samples were taken from within the chambers. The results from the samples show that the structure was used as a sewage facility at some point in time, yet it is uncertain if it was in use during the Mother and Baby Home's timeline or at the time the remains were deposited. The reason for this is because the amount of human excrements traces found could be due to the decomposing of the human remains and not from sewage waste (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C/Appendix 7 2017:5-6).

## 2.7. A brief conclusion from the forensic evidence post- excavation and experts comment on the sites future

The good condition of the bones found would suggest that they were originally deposited in the tanks and had not been buried at another site and laid inside the tanks at a later date. It is also debatable if any of the bones were found *in situ* as the underground chambers the remains were deposited in once contained fluctuating water levels which would move the bones from their original spot (MBHCOI 2019b Appendix C 2017:32-33).

No comments on cause of death were made in the report as the majority of remains that were discovered were left on site and only a few bone fragments were collected from the first excavation, phase II. Although old records from the former institution show that the children died of illnesses such as whooping cough, bronchitis, pneumonia, congenital syphilis and malnutrition (O'Reilly 2014, Daly 2017). If a full excavation will be done in the future possible cause of death may be able to be traced in the bones, which could help connect the individual remains with the documented names of the children.

In 2017, validated by the former Minister of Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone, an *Expert Technical Group* (ETG) was created which included the team from the two excavations. Along with a number of other experts a report was delivered to the government containing the expert groups their opinions on the site of Tuam's future. In the report they give five options they believe to be possible; exhumation of the known remains, forensic excavation of the known remains, forensic excavation of both known and unknown remains, a full forensic excavation of the entire site and DNA sampling of the remains (ETG 2017:37-47).

## 3. DISCUSSION

### 3.1 A brief overview over Ireland's history in relation to the religious institutions in the twentieth century

The first media reports concerning the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam would refer to the knowledge of human remains at the site as 'unknown' and shocking news. Yet as Catherine Corless did her research and locals would come forward claiming to have been aware of the Memorial garden containing children's remains in the 1970s (See e.g., Bohan 2017), it was clear that this mass grave may not have been unknown after all. So how could the children's remains be kept a secret for so long? And why was an investigation not done at the site before?

The Irish people had for a long time been considered to be a society of uneducated, somewhat illiterate and uncivilized people (Paz 1986). This, along with centuries of religious and cultural oppression felt by the hand of England, would lead to 'The Easter Rising' in 1916 and eventually a signing of a treaty between Ireland and England in December of 1921 (Kilmainham gaol website n.d.). After this, the Republic of Ireland was a free state, free to govern themselves without being under the control of the English Crown<sup>13</sup>. To re-create themselves as a self-sufficient and independent country, the Irish government turned to the Catholic Church for help to bring a certain social and moral structure to the people of Ireland. And with this anyone that did not fit the bill would be excluded from Irish society. The ones to feel the blow the hardest would be unmarried mothers and their children (Smith 2008: 46-54). For a woman to have a child outside of wedlock was considered to be the biggest sin in the eyes of the church, which would often mean that the mother-to-be would have to give birth in secret at a Mother and Baby Home (McCarthy 2010:156-165). There she would have to pay the nuns running the institution for their service. If the mother had no way of paying the fee she would be forced to stay at the institution and pay off her debt with domestic labour. 'Second offenders'<sup>14</sup> would often be put into religious run institutions called Magdalene Laundries (Ferriter 2018), where they would be given new names (Smith 2008:37), be stripped of their private possessions and would spend years doing hard domestic labour with no pay as a form of penance (Luddy 1999: 57-60).

The children of these 'fallen women' would have a hard life. As they were considered to be the results of their mothers' sins they would end up being shunned or cast out of society as well. Many would start out their lives at Mother and Baby Homes and later move on to foster care, industrial schools, reformatories or Magdalene Laundries (Ferriter 2017). Some would be put up for adoption to families in the US, many times with falsified records (ICCL 2018) or no records of their birth or name (O'Rourke et al 2018), some of the children would end their short lives within the Mother and Baby Homes where they would either be buried or used for anatomical

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<sup>13</sup> Ireland would still be depending on the UK much due to market trade and labour, which would change once Ireland joined the EC in 1973 (O'Rourke 2017).

<sup>14</sup> The term 'second offenders' meant women who got pregnant more than once, they would be considered the biggest sinners in Irish society (Ferriter 2018)

studies at hospitals (MBHCOI 2019a:47-56). The full list of the 796 children that died at the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam shows that many of the children would succumb to illnesses such as whooping cough, bronchitis, pneumonia and malnutrition (O'Reilly 2014, Daly 2017). At the Mother and Baby Homes the children would be separated from their mothers, only allowing the mothers to interact with them for an hour a day. The children would also be separated into subgroups with information showing that biracial children were treated worse than non-biracial children (Adaser 2019, Adaser 2020, O'Sullivan 2020) as well as children from the Irish Travellers community (Madden & Murphy 2017).

### 3.2. The media's reaction to the Mother and Baby Home investigation and their response to the forensic evidence

The Irish media has had a big part to play in this case and in others like it. Back when Catherine Corless contacted the media in 2014 to get her research published in the news, many other stories would quickly follow (See e.g., O'Reilly 2014, Finn 2014, RTÉ 2015). As one reads the different articles it is clear what the media wants to mediate; the pain and suffering of all the victims of the institutions, dead or alive, and their family members and the injustice that took place in the name of the church and the state (See e.g., Finn 2017, Barry 2018, Murphy 2020). The tone had begun to change from back when the first accusations of abuse within institutions were made in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Back then the main culprit to these crimes of abuse was the church (Kenny 2009, Donnelly & Inglis 2010). As more in-depth investigations were made it was made clear that the state had a part to play in the crimes made against the victims as well (Ryan report 2009, McAleese report 2013) and the media quickly shared this with the Irish people (See e.g., Katsareas 2009, Little 2013, O'Carroll 2013).

In 2014, not much information was known of the site, so the media relied much upon Catherine Corless research. Headlines such as *'Ireland shock over 800 babies 'in septic tank''* (Whelan 2014) and *'800 skeletons of babies found inside tank at former Irish home for unwed mothers'* spread across the country and abroad. Corless would later criticize the media for twisting her words in order to make the headlines sound as gruesome as possible. Such as the media stating that Corless claimed the children were being 'dumped' in a septic tank, which she herself has denied having stated (Boland 2014). Others would follow and share their doubt and criticism on the accuracy from the media (See e.g., Fingleton 2014, Garrett 2017, O'Neill 2019). In March of 2017, the Commission made a statement that juvenile remains had been found on the site of the former institution (MBHCOI 2017-03-03) and the news quickly went viral (Bohan 2017, O'Doherty 2017).

In the latest news, articles concerning the case today focus more on how the government has handled this case. The media has informed of the victims and survivors disappointment in the Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, Roderic O'Gorman for lack of communication and for signing *The Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters) Records, and another Matter, Bill 2020* (Conneely 2020). According to the media, this bill could leave all the information that the Commission of Investigation has collected sealed from the public for 30 years, with the exception of a number of files, except a

number of records that will be in the care of *Tusla*<sup>15</sup> (McConnell 2020). This has been shown by the media to have left many of the survivors and family members disappointed and frustrated as they find that *Tusla* has shown in the past to be difficult to cooperate with in similar cases (Duffy 2020). A major topic in the media has also been to discuss the site and other sites like it, such as a former Mother and Baby Home in Bessborough, and what the future holds for these sites (McCurry 2018, Fátharta 2019).

Other media platforms have been publicizing the case throughout the last six years. Many podcasts such as *The Niall Boylan Show*<sup>16</sup> and *The Keith Walsh Podcast*<sup>17</sup> have discussed the case. In a special episode, Keith Walsh invited Councillor Fiona McLoughlin Healy to discuss the latest news on the case and the vote of the *Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters) Records, and another Matter, Bill 2020* in October, 2020 (Walsh 2020). The well-known radio figure, Niall Boylan, has discussed the case for many years (See e.g., Boyland 2017, Boyland 2019, Boyland 2020). He was born at a Mother and Baby Home in Dublin in 1963, and has called these institutions for ‘baby factories’ (Boyland 2020). The podcast series *The Home Babies* from BBC Radio 4 with reporter Becky Milligan aired in June, 2018 interviewed Catherine Corless, locals and survivors in 11 episodes (Milligan 2018). *The Hazbeanz Show’s Podcast* hosted by Martin Beanz Warde (Warde 2020). The podcast *Other: Stories from the Tuam Mother and Baby Home* is a part of an ongoing project called *The Tuam Oral History Project* from NUI Galway, a project with the goal of collecting oral stories from survivors of the Tuam institution (NIU Galway 2020a). In the podcast, narrated by actor and activist Cillian Murphy, three victims of the institution Teresa O’Sullivan, Peter Mulryan and Christine Carroll share their stories of the suffering and trauma that they went through in their childhood (NIU Galway 2020b).

### 3.3. The Irish government's reaction to the Mother and Baby Home investigation and their response to the forensic evidence

As this case is related to children, the minister of Children and Youth Affairs has been the foremost politician active in this case. During the majority of the investigation, Katherine Zappone was the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs (2016-2020). In June 2020 a change in the Irish parliament was made and Katherine Zappone was replaced by Roderic O’Gorman who is now the Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Zappone did request for a full forensic archaeological excavation to take place at the site (Dáil Éireann 2018-10-25). She also shared her feelings, in a press release, on the discovery of the children's remains at the grounds of the former institution (Government of Ireland 2017). The former Minister also made visits to Tuam, met with survivors and listened to their stories (Boyland 2020). In 2017 she put together the ETG group which included Niamh McCullagh, Aidane Harte and Linda Lynch, all part of the excavation team in 2016 and 2017. The group was created to give the government options on how to move forward concerning the former institution in Tuam (ETG 2017:i). In 2018, she also met with and wrote a letter to Pope Francis on his visit to Dublin, explaining the situation in the Tuam case (Doyle 2018). Other political leaders also met with Pope Francis and

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<sup>15</sup> *Tusla* is the Irish child and family state agency, founded in 2014 under the Child and Family Act 2013. <https://www.tusla.ie/about/> (2020-12-08)

<sup>16</sup> Niall Boylen is an award winning radio DJ with many years of experience in radio and TV (Boylen 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Keith Walsh is a former presenter at RTÉ 2 Radio (RTÉ 2020).

gave their thoughts on the case. The former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, the former Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar and the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins all voiced their concern and disappointment in the Church to the Pope (RTÉ 2018).

Despite all this, criticism has been leveled at Katherine Zappone and the whole of the former government party in relation to the Tuam case. From a Seanad Éireann debate in 2017, Senator Máire Devine brought to the former Minister's attention that in 2012, files collected from the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam contained evidence of '...financial fraud, horrific levels of infant mortality, falsification of birth certificates and illegal adoptions' (Seanad Éireann 2017-05-17:893). She stated that a request for an investigation had been made in 2012, yet nothing came of that (Seanad Éireann 2017-05-17:893-894). Politicians have also expressed to the minister their disappointment in the commission for not keeping to their deadline in 2018. Stating that there have been too many delays on the matter and that the survivors of these institutions are growing older and may not have time for more delays (Dáil Éireann 2019-02-21).

The current Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman, took over the role as minister at the end of the investigation. It has been confirmed that after a two year delay, the Commission of Investigation did hand over a final report to the Minister in October, 2020 (Government of Ireland 2020). O'Gorman made a statement in the Dáil stating that the final report will not be published until January 2021. The reason for this being due to the current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic still going on and for it being so close to the Christmas holidays (Dáil Éireann 2020-12-03). He also signed the *Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters) Records, and another Matter, Bill 2020*, which, according to some was too rushed to be signed into law (McLaughlin 2020), to which the Minister was quick to apologize for (Ryan 2020). He has also been criticized for not visiting Tuam as of yet (Boylan 2020) and for not having enough contact with the survivors. The minister explained the reason for this being due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Dáil Éireann 2020-12-03).

Critical opinion concerning the lack of communication between the Commission with survivors during the investigation has been voiced numerous times by politicians in the Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann (Seanad Éireann 2017-05-17, Dáil Éireann 2020-12-03). Statements have also been made by politicians that better cooperation and communication with survivors and family members must be put into place (Dáil Éireann 2019-02-21, Walsh 2020). Counseling and other support for survivors have been discussed. Inquiries concerning a full excavation at the site in Tuam, and others like it, have been voiced many times in the two houses (See e.g., Dáil Éireann 2018-01-12, Seanad Éireann 2019-02-03, Dáil Éireann 2019-02-13, Dáil Éireann 2019-05-15). Many politicians feel that it is of utmost importance that the victims of all these institutions will be given peace of mind. As the former TD. Maureen O'Sullivan stated in 2018:

Behind each body is a real person with an identity, but that identity has been eroded...We have been rightly horrified by the mass graves in Rwanda, Bosnia and Syria. It is just so ironic, so incredible, that we are looking at a similar situation, similar graves, here in Ireland...Those human beings were not given any respect or dignity in life, so surely the request for dignity in death and burial can be expedited. We are all very disturbed by

those who would deny the Holocaust, for example. It is important we do not do the same here and deny or try to hide behind what has happened. (O'Sullivan Maureen, qt Dáil Éireanne 2018-02-21:919).

At this moment, the government has been occupied by the Covid-19 pandemic which has been a priority within the whole country since early 2020, which may have left the mass grave in Tuam in the shadows. Also, a change of minister happened at the end of the investigation which may have affected the government's investment into the former institutions site and the excavation work that was discussed in 2017 and 2018. Having that said, in a recent statement made by the current minister to the press he comments on having read the final report. He utters how the survivors' stories in the report affected him and that a full forensic excavation must take place in Tuam in the future (Bray 2020).

### 3.4. The Irish public's reaction to the Mother and Baby Home investigation and their response to the forensic evidence

As Ireland entered a new millennium, a new attitude towards the church grew. Statistics taken from the Central statistics office (CSO) shows Catholicism was at its peak in 1961 when 94.9 per cent of the population considered themselves of Catholic faith. After 1961 the number of Catholics would decrease, and in 2011 that had declined to 84.2 per cent. In 2016 only 78.2 per cent claimed to be of Catholic faith with 9.8 per cent claiming to have no religion. According to CSO this decrease of Catholic faith has to do with an increase of other religions in the country (CSO Ireland 2017) but possibly also due to the many abuse scandals concerning the Catholic Church.

This was made fairly clear when the Pope came to visit the Republic of Ireland in 2018. In 1979, Pope John Paul II made his first visit to The Republic of Ireland, and over a million people came out to see him in Phoenix Park for the papal mass (McGarry 2018). In 2018, the Pope returned to Ireland, an Ireland much changed from 1979. During his visit, many organized groups of institution and abuse survivors were gathering all around Dublin City Centre demonstrating against the Pope and the Catholic Church (RTÉ 2018, Byrnes 2018). Tickets to the free mass were booked and later binned in protest (Lonergan 2018). The mass in Phoenix Park that drew over a million visitors in 1979 had an estimation of less than 130,000 present in 2018 (McDermott 2018). In Tuam, a group of 500-1000 people gathered in the memorial garden for a vigil at which candles were lit and the names of the 796 children that died in the institution were read out (Magnier 2018).

Before the Pope's visit in 2018, the Irish public had already taken a stand against the Catholic Church by repealing the Eight Amendment<sup>18</sup> that same year (Bardon 2018). Three years prior, a same-sex marriage referendum took place in Ireland, with the yes votes winning by 62% to 38% (Caollai & Hilliard 2015), and the Marriage Act 2015 was written into Irish law<sup>19</sup>. One can see

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<sup>18</sup> The Eight Amendment was a law added into the Irish Constitution in 1983 that made abortion illegal within the Republic of Ireland. See *Eight Amendment Act 1983* at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1983/ca/8/enacted/en/print> (2021-01-07)

<sup>19</sup> See Marriage Act 2015 at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/35/enacted/en/html> (2021-01-07)

this as Ireland having undergone a second phase of remaking and re-establishing itself, similar to what happened in the early twentieth century, with the difference being a country now more independent from the Catholic Church.

When it became known by the public that human remains had been found in 2017, the response showed a society full of anger, frustration and disappointment. At the consultation forum conducted by the former Minister, Catherine Zappone many people, including the survivors from the former institution, requested for a full excavation and DNA testing on the remains to take place (ETG 2017). Similar requests concerning other sites like the one in Tuam are being heard from the public (McCurry 2018). Having said that, there are people that are not as keen on having the site excavated. Some due to the costs to excavate the site or that the past should be left in the past (Tierney 2019). Some are denying that these events took place at all (See e.g., ISFCC 2018, O’Keeffe 2019,).

The current discussion at large as the investigation is coming to close is the anger many in the public feel against the *Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters) Records, and another Matter, Bill 2020*. As stated earlier, it has been said that the purpose of this bill is to collect all evidence found during the investigation and seal it for 30 years before handing it over to the national archives, according to the Commission of Investigation Act 2004 (McConnell 2020). Yet the concern voiced by the public is that this will prevent people from accessing their own personal records and other valid information will be hidden away (Clann project 2020). If they seal this information away for 30 years many of the survivors will never access their information as many of them will not be alive in 30 years (Murphy 2020).

### 3.5. The ‘Social Death’ of Unmarried Mothers and their Children in Twentieth Century Ireland

Many sites of dark heritage across the globe are usually related to events where one dominant group exposes another group to violence and pain in order to eliminate or take control of the group or their territory. These conflicts are usually related to differences between the groups such as religion, politics, ethnicity and so on. Yet what happened to these unmarried mothers and their children in Ireland would more than often not have anything to do with a conflict of ethnicity, religion or social status. These unmarried mothers were in general of Irish ethnicity<sup>20</sup>, often raised catholic and came from all sorts of social classes; money and status were of no importance. What was important was that these women had committed the ultimate sin and their children were the physical evidence of this sin, they were illegitimate (Ferriter 2017).

What would happen to these unmarried mothers’ and their children is that they would experience a social death. Social death refers to when a person or a group of people are deliberately alienated and excluded from a society, more than often considered to be less worthy than others in that society. In Patterson’s (1982) research he commented that in order to exercise power of dominance and control over another individual, one must have the acceptance of others within one’s society, it must be seen as normal action to enslave another individual. Even the person

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<sup>20</sup> Biracial women and children were also confined within these institutions (O’Sullivan 2020) as well women and children from the Irish Travellers community (Madden & Murphy 2017). Many of the children of other ethnicities would stay long term in the institution as these children would often be unwanted for adoption (Boylan 2017).



being dominated must in a way accept its inferior situation in order to be dominated (Patterson 1982:35-38, 172-173). In Ireland as the Catholic Church and the state worked together it was accepted within Irish society as a whole for the church to dominate and control the weakest within the society. To make enslavement a norm, Paterson stated that symbolism was of major importance. One effective way to enforce this symbolism of authoritarian power upon another person is through rituals. Many of these rituals included removing the enslaved from their known environment, stripping them of their own culture and religion, taking away their human rights, their name and keeping them isolated from the outside world and society. This has been referred to a sort of rite of passage, which is a symbolic and powerful way of depersonalizing and possibly traumatizing an individual (Patterson 1982:51-62). This rite of passage would also be a common practice in the religious run institutions in Ireland (Luddy 1999, Smith 2007). Bauman (1989) stated that through Nazi propaganda, the Jews were seen as a disease that had to be removed from society, if they could be removed from the eyes of the public, society could prosper and grow stronger. In order to stigmatize the Jews it was found to be easier to not feel sympathy for them and to not get involved with the inhumane treatments they suffered. This would leave the Jews alone to suffer by the hand of the Nazi's (Bauman 1989:122-129). The children born out of wedlock in Ireland during the twentieth century automatically carried with them their mothers' sin and stigma which meant they would be born alienated, depersonalized and socially dead with little to no human rights and with little empathy or help from the Irish society. This would leave them incredibly vulnerable within society.

In an interview with Catherine Corless from 2014 she shares her memories of the children from the Tuam institution. In the interview she explains how the children did go to school with the other children in the community but were obviously treated differently from the rest. They would enter after the other children were seated for class and leave before class finished. They were kept separate during class and recess. And she recalls them having poor clothing and ripped shoes and the institutionalized children being thin and very small (van der Horst 2014). This was a way to control the children and dominate them outside of the institution, a daily ritual to remind them that they did not belong within society. In bioarchaeology analyzing the bones length can give much information concerning an individual's health. Studies have shown that a child suffering from malnutrition is likely not to grow at the same rate as a child receiving adequate nutrition. Also maternal stress and care can have a large impact on the child. Children that are not receiving maternal care and are not being breastfed during their earliest years can run a higher risk of contracting chronic diseases and other health problems (Gowland & Newman 2018:296-304). The mothers to the children at the Tuam institution were usually present only at a short period of time after giving birth. They would work within the institution to pay for their own as well as their child's accommodation, with many mothers only being allowed to stay at an average of a couple of years (Ferriter 2018). One can therefore claim that due to these children being treated as socially dead they did not receive the proper care which would come to have a negative effect on their health as well as their life. This could be the reason why the children were small and thin.

### 3.6. 'Social Amnesia' and the Dark Heritage of Religious run Institutions in Twentieth Century Ireland

Some sites that today are globally known and related to places of dark heritage and trauma were once sites used to reconstruct a country's past where, under the control of different political

parties and leaders, certain events might be deliberately excluded from a country's history. This was often done in order to build up an organized nationalistic narrative strengthening their own political position (Fengqi 2009:19-20, Batten 2009:85-86, Young 2009:51-52). Although, some sites of trauma and pain may not be memorialized as the memory is too recent and complex so that to mediate such a current event as a part of a country's heritage may stir up conflicts within the country (Logan & Reeves 2009:68, McDowell 2009:224-225).

This can be seen mirrored in the case of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam and the witnesses that have come forward to tell the story of human remains being discovered in the late twentieth century, Building plans drawn up in the 1970s point out a children's burial ground that later vanishes from the plans. All of this evidence shows that this unmarked graveyard was never unknown but that locals and the Galway Co. Council were all aware of it but did not speak about it. This can be compared to a social amnesia in Irish society. The term social amnesia refers to when a whole society or a collective group deliberately chooses to repress certain memories or historical events in order to make and remake a society. To create an ideology or false consciousness representing a narrative or image as a society deems appropriate. Whether it is the cause of the society as a collective conscience or due to political propaganda can differ depending on the situation (Jacoby 1975:4-6, Burke 1997:55-59).

The notion that these institutions were often owned by the Irish State and ran by religious orders is a big topic within these cases. The country was run by the state that, in turn, was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church implemented their rules and regimes in order to create a society symbolizing purity and god fearing, clean people. As the church had so much control they were in control over people's norm and thoughts, what was right and what was wrong. Sex education was non-existent in schools up until 1990s (Nolan 2018:22) and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1935<sup>21</sup> made contraceptives illegal to sell or import within Ireland up until 1985 (Enright & Cloatre 2018:264), which would lead to many women getting pregnant out of wedlock. As such the relationship to sex and the sexual body, primarily the female body was a collective symbol of sin in Ireland with the unmarried mother being the biggest sinner (McCarthy 2010:156-157) and her offspring not worthy a proper upbringing (Ferriter 2019).

It is also common for the victims to be pulled into this social amnesia as well. In the case of the Nanjing Massacre in the 1930s, Fengqi (2009) discusses that many of the victims felt shame and personal tragedy was seen as a weakness, which left victims silent (Fengqi 2009:9). This is also very common for victims of abuse. Studies of physical and sexual abuse have shown many of the victims go through a number of stages before (if ever) telling their story. Feelings of embarrassment and shame for the event taking place are common in victims of abuse. A feeling of fear of accusing the perpetrator can stop a victim from coming forward, as the perpetrator is many times a figure of authority within the community or a person somehow related to the victim. A feeling of fear for being called a liar leaves many victim's quiet or feelings of denial or confusion can sometimes lead to the victim keeping the abuse a secret (See e.g., Cashmore & Shackel 2013). Irish society would punish and alienate their most vulnerable and hold the Catholic Church at such high respect. As a result of this the Church's victims would be left with

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<sup>21</sup> See Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1935 at:  
[http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1935/act/6/section/17/enacted/en/html#sec17\(2021-01-04\)](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1935/act/6/section/17/enacted/en/html#sec17(2021-01-04))

little to no voice, others have only in their older years felt comfortable to share their stories to the media or their family. Before the late twentieth century, while some of these institutions were still up and running, there was a stigma put upon the victims of these institutions, they would be considered socially dead (Ferriter 2017). It is only now in the new millennium that this stigma is fading.

## 4. CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, the Commission of Investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes has now come to an end, yet not all are satisfied. As the survivors and victims' family members grow older they are in desperate need of some final answers and of some form of closure (Murphy 2020). The notion that all the information and documents collected by the commission might be sealed off for 30 years has left many disappointed. Also, the uncertain future for the site at the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam and others like it has upset many. Just as the Ryan report published in 2009 and the McAleese report published in 2013 have been strongly criticized (See e.g., Crean 2019, JFM Research 2015), this investigation was bound to be as well. When it comes to these former religious run institutions it is clear that the people of Ireland find it hard to trust the people in charge of these institutions as well as their government. Yet this investigation, like its predecessors, has opened up the floor for more enquiries. Other sites of a similar nature such as the institution in Tuam are being discussed, such as the Mother and Baby Home in Bessborough.

The whole issue of the former religious run institutions in Ireland is problematic with far too many layers to unfold in just one investigation. The events that took place in Ireland were not an outside force oppressing another; it was Irish society as a whole persecuting its own people. As the survivors of the former institutions are getting older, the fear of their history being forgotten again is a constant presence in the Irish society. For Ireland to fall into a social amnesia yet again could be easy unless these memories are commemorated and passed on to the next generation. Today there is much discussion of the survivors and the victims' mothers, children and siblings searching for the truth, but unless the information and stories from these institutions live on there will be no one left alive to enquire into these victim's identities.

As I set out to do this thesis my main goal was not only to educate myself but to educate others as the history of the Irish religious run institutions is not much talked about outside of Ireland. England's colonization of Ireland, the Great Famine and the Troubles are all included in the history books and are well known to many. Sites such as *The Workhouse Center* in Portumna, Co. Galway, *The Kilmainham Gaol* in Dublin and *The National Famine Museum* in Strokestown Park in Co. Roscommon are just a few examples of tourist attractions related to dark heritage in Ireland. Yet there is little publicity in the tourism sector of the religious run institutions and their victims. Unless a person has a strong interest in learning about the institutions on their own accord, not much is being mediated about these institutions compared to other painful memories in Ireland's history. Therefore, it may be difficult for an outsider to grasp the pain and suffering these institutions' victims and survivors went through. Luckily, thanks to the social changes in Ireland in the twenty-first century, more information is being circulated within the country and abroad as well. The majority of the public's comments have been of anger and frustration, not just from survivors but from the entire nation and this can be mirrored in the changes made in the

law, with repealing the Eighth Amendment, and the Same-Sex Referendum. Survivors of the institutions are still sharing their stories in the media and many charitable organizations exist today such as *The Tuam Home Survivor Network* and *Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse* or *SAVIA*. A number of projects have come to life such as a project named the *Clann project* which is a collaboration between *The Adoption Rights Alliance* (ARA) and *Justice for Magdalenes Research* (JFM Research) that together cooperate in collection survivors statements and information related to religious run institutions and abuse (Clann n.d.). Other projects such as *The Tuam Oral History Project* at NUI Galway are still ongoing. Another project based at University College Cork called the *Living Well with the Dead* started in 2019 which takes its concept of living well with the dead from Jacques Derrida's theoretical platform of hauntology and to coming to terms with living with our ghosts (ISS21 2020).

As the investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes have come to an end with their concluding report being published in January 2021, there is no conclusion as of yet for Irish society and this dark chapter in Ireland's history. Many people would succumb to the institutions. Many people; men, women and children of all ages were affected by it and are affected by it still to this day. As the Irish historian Diarmaid Ferriter stated in 2014:

I think the process of trying to come to terms with all these scandals is going to be a very, very long one. I am even thinking of the amount of testimony that was given to the Ryan report (2009) into abuse in Industrial Schools. The enormity of that is going to take years, perhaps decades, to be absorbed and understood and for it to make its way, perhaps, into a different kind of Ireland. The same, perhaps, is true of the kind of scandals we are dealing with now. There is no overnight solution to these difficulties. There is no quick process. There is no quick remedy (Ferriter 2014).

Places related to pain and suffering can be difficult to grasp but should be remembered. Places related to death and pain can often be seen as a part of a pilgrimage, a pilgrimage for people who have suffered, or have relations to those who have suffered, to come together in order to grief, remember and together heal. But it can also be a forum for knowledge, to teach others what has happened in the past so it does not happen again, to show people that what might be someone's past might also be someone's present situation, to make us understand that we can all suffer pain and to make us as humans understand one another a little bit better. The future for the children in Tuam is unknown; one can only hope that they will not be forgotten yet again.

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