

Revealing Ireland's 'Proper' Heart: Apology, Shame, Nation

"This is a national shame, for which I again say, I am deeply sorry and offer my full and heartfelt apologies." – Enda Kenny (Taoiseach). 2013<1>

How do you feel about being Irish? "Ashamed, ashamed of being Irish." – Mary Smith (Magdalen survivor), 2013<2>

"Shame strikes deepest into the heart of man." – Silvan Tomkins, 1995<3>

The heart has often been understood as human beings' site of true feeling and the locus of personhood.<4> Phrases such as "I mean it from the bottom of my heart" are offered as statements of sincerity and cognitive, as well as affective, honesty.<5> "The heart of the matter" refers us to something's very core, while charges of heartlessness and hard-heartedness ("a heart of stone") point to moral failings rooted in diminished or stunted feeling. Our emotional capacity and responses, symbolized by the heart, in other words, are assumed to make us who we are, and to play a vital, even defining, role in the relationships we have with others. The heart, although frequently admonished to play second fiddle to the ruling mind, pulls on our proverbial strings: compassion, love, empathy, pity – these are emotions we acknowledge as virtues and recognize as laudable emotional capacities. Philosophers have long accepted the moral and political significance of "matters of the heart" and have developed theoretical frameworks with which to conceptualize the variously termed affects, emotions, or passions.<6> Debates have raged on the assumed disparity between reason and affect, on the relationship between physical feeling and emotion, and on the possibility of emotion's cultural universalizability or specific social construction.<7>

Although controversial and by no means settled, such debates document the long-standing philosophical interest in emotion and feeling – an interest that has recently intensified, with contemporary thinkers in a variety of disciplines producing work under the newly coined "affect theory" paradigm.<8> While much of this work positions itself in an explicitly queer theoretical and feminist frame, there is also a historically continuous feminist concern with theorizations of "affairs of the heart," as feminist theorists have explored the gendered expression of emotion and the social and political expectations and sanctions attached to same.<9> Given the disproportionate burdens of affective labor on women, both in the home and in the public sphere,<10> feminists have thus produced important analyses of the gendered politics of emotion, and have brought feminist critiques to bear upon theories of emotion to tease out the social and political implications of affective norms in patriarchal societies.

This article continues in this vein, as it contributes to feminist expositions of emotion and "matters of the heart" by highlighting the gendered nature of the mobilization of shame. Feminists have theorized shame as an emotion women are particularly prone to, with shame thought to strike deepest, not as Tomkins notes, in the heart of man, but in the heart of woman. Sandra Bartky (1990, 97) thus attributes a "pervasive affective attunement" to women, and posits struggle in oppressive systems in terms of

“more visible disadvantages” as well as in terms of “guilt and shame.” Moreover, shame’s common linkage to the gendered, sexualized body, makes shame a topic that is and should be deeply troubling to feminists, given the near-ubiquitous shaming of women’s bodies through narrow beauty ideals and patriarchal expectations around sexual, embodied practice that entail punishment, often severe and violent, if unmet (see Dolezal 2015).

Building on work that problematizes the gendered politics of shame in the context of nation-building and the disciplining of bodies, this article focuses on the role shame plays in state apology and the desire to recover pride.<11> Specifically, it analyses the state apology offered to the survivors of Magdalen Laundries by Enda Kenny, the Taoiseach (prime minister) of Ireland.<12> The article identifies a second species or variety of the politics of shame, beyond the debilitating shame feminists have long theorized as particularly onerous for women.<13> This second type of shame has the potential to be productive, arising from demands for a “national shame” in recognition of wrongdoing. Such demands are ostensibly met by the state apology to Magdalen survivors under the guise of “healing,” but ultimately revert to covering and the desire to satisfy narcissistic appeals to the nation’s true, virtuous nature. While professing honest self-recognition and contrition, the gendered politics of shame, enacted via the Taoiseach’s apology, thus again comes to be performed through the hiding and shaming of gendered Others in the contemporary context. The construction and safeguarding of Ireland’s “‘proper’ heart” (Kenny 2013) re-inflicts the heartache the apology professes to undo in order to maintain national self-representations of pride. By drawing out how the state apology recreates the Irish nation, I trace the deployment of a potentially productive variety of the politics of shame, which comes to be subverted in the service of keeping the virtuous, feeling “heart” of Ireland – the nation’s very core – intact across a temporal, moral continuum.<14>

I. Debilitating or Productive Shame? Magdalen Laundries, Shame, Pride

The Magdalen Laundries, and Ireland’s pervasive system of institutionalization, more generally, have by now garnered international attention. Government inquiries,<15> mainstream movies,<16> investigative journalism,<17> and scholarly work on Ireland’s “architecture of containment”<18> – reproduced and accessible across the globe – have shone a light on the often deplorable conditions and seemingly arbitrary nature of the interlocking institutions that incarcerated growing numbers of the Irish population post-Independence.<19> Survivors and their supporters drove and informed the growing awareness around Ireland’s institutions in recent years by giving testimony and engaging in sustained activism to highlight the neglect and abuses of a senseless, often cruel, system. The particularly gendered reality of institutionalization has, thanks to such efforts, also been noticed, as Ireland maintained and developed institutions specifically dedicated to dealing with “moral lapses,” that is, with non-conformity to Catholic social policy regarding matters of reproduction and sexuality. Mother and Baby Homes were set up by the Irish state in response to the perceived need to keep those who were pregnant out of wedlock for the first time away from hardened “sinners” and “repeat offenders.” The Magdalen laundries and county homes (former work houses) were thus reserved for women and girls who had experienced multiple pregnancies, while industrial schools, fostering or adoption became a means of catering for their “illegitimate” children.

I have previously argued that this gendered institutionalization and the moral panic surrounding reproduction and sexuality in the early decades of the Irish state should be read in terms of the dis-identification with the former colonial power and the need to develop a new national identity that secured the superiority of the Irish people (Fischer 2016b). The project of nation-building, post-Independence, came to be premised on the unrivalled moral purity of Ireland – a moral purity that easily translated into the sexual purity of Irish women. Since all women, though, also formed potential threats to this national identity through their embodied capacity for impurity – and, importantly, *visible* and therefore *indisputable* impurity – the Irish state, with the support of the Catholic Church, developed an aggressive strategy for excising those who “lapsed.” Sexual transgression was to be hidden and punished through a system of often mutually reinforcing institutions, thereby allowing for the continued representation of Ireland to itself and the world as a nation of morally pure superiority. What becomes evident, I think, in this context, is the operation of the gendered politics of shame, as contemporaneous discourses illustrate the rationalization of mass-incarceration of gendered Others through the pervasive mobilization of shame (Fischer 2016b). By constructing sexual transgressors as shameful and attracting shame – to themselves, their families, and the wider polity – the gendered politics of shame underpinned a vast system of institutionalization that performed that classic mechanism of shame itself: it covered and hid Ireland’s assumed national blemishes.

Shame is often distinguished from guilt through this mechanism, as shame attaches to who we are as persons, while guilt attaches to our actions. Guilt thus allows for reparations as one can make amends for doing something wrong, but since shame entails the assumption of a deep-seated blemish on one’s character, rather than a regretful act, it merely offers covering as a means of dealing with the blemish in question. Indeed, Charles Darwin (1998) already noted that “under a keen sense of shame there is a strong desire for concealment. We turn away the whole body, more especially the face, which we endeavor in some manner to hide.” Shame is thus a deeply debilitating emotion that keeps intact the assumed blemish on one’s character – a blemish that requires covering lest one “lose face” and be revealed as inadequate. In post-Independence Ireland, church and state deployed shame as a disciplining device to satisfy the national imaginary’s demands for a superior vision of Ireland by constructing women who threatened the formation of a new national identity built on moral (that is, sexual) purity, as shameful (Fischer 2016b). In a performance of the gendered politics of shame, shameful national subjects thus came to be identified and constructed as blemishes on the nation, and were covered, that is, hidden away, in institutions to guarantee the preservation of a national identity of purity and superior virtue.<20>

My contention, in this article, is that the seeming lack of remediality afforded by the gendered politics of shame can be counterpoised by a potentially productive type of shame that might even include redress.<21> This productive shame adheres to and is produced in collectivities, rather than in individuals, and, as such, avoids the isolating and inward-looking nature of standard readings of shame and the need for concealment. Moreover, this second variety of shame involves calls for a revealing of the shameful, required as a means of addressing past wrongs – wrongs the collective *should* feel ashamed of. It is assumed that the uncovering of such wrongs can result in the “working through” of shame, as honesty and exposure of moral failings give way

to healing. In what follows, I outline the performance of this productive shame in the context of the Taoiseach's apology to Magdalen survivors. By extending my analysis of the gendered politics of shame from a focus on institutionalization (and the covering it entailed to maintain a national identity based on sexual, moral purity), to a focus on the contemporary apology and Ireland's historic treatment of institutionalized women, I show that productive shame is undercut in a bid to restore pride.<22> Thus, the Taoiseach's apology ultimately reverts to covering and the excising of normatively shameful national subjects, *in that very moment* it claims to expose its shameful, moral shortcomings in the public act of contrition. While asking forgiveness of one maligned and shamed population, he conceals, from the national imaginary, another,<23> in a clinging to representations of Ireland as an open, and self-reflexively magnanimous nation capable of learning from its past. Productive shame, and its potential for change, is thus subverted, as the continuous project of nation-building, in its desire for pride, renders productive shame impossible, as the performance of the gendered politics of shame continues to establish and then cover deviant Others as instances of national shame.

II. Feeling the Nation: Apology and Collective Shame

On 5th February 2013, the McAleese inquiry published its report into state involvement with the Magdalen laundries. It found that the state was, indeed, implicated in the Magdalen institutions, and therefore had a responsibility for survivors. The inquiry, and, later, the state apology and redress scheme, formed the culmination of many years of campaigning and advocacy work by Magdalen survivors, their families, and their supporters. In a complete miscalculation of the political climate, and, as I will go on to explore below, of the collective invocation for Ireland to feel shame at the way in which it once shamed women incarcerated in Magdalen laundries, Enda Kenny, the leader of the country, refused to apologize to survivors on the day the report was released. It took two weeks and sustained negative commentary on the Taoiseach's inaction – defended with appeals to needing time to read the report – before the eventual, and now well-known apology was offered in parliament.<24>

The apology references the shaming of women institutionalized in Magdalen laundries early on, with the Taoiseach saying:

“what we address today is how you took this country's terrible ‘secret’ and made it your own. Burying it, carrying it in your hearts here at home, or with you to England and to Canada, America and Australia on behalf of Ireland and the Irish people. But from this moment on you need carry it no more, because today, we take it back. Today we acknowledge the role of the state in your ordeal” (2013).

As such, the apology constitutes a necessary and long overdue acknowledgement of the hurt and damage inflicted on people's lives – a public recognition of the harms exacted by the state. Notably, it reconceptualizes the Magdalen survivors' ordeal as “a national shame.” The survivors thus move from having been identified and treated as the state's shameful subjects, to today being constructed as survivors of a repressive regime that “failed” them.

The Taoiseach uses the word “shame” three times in his apology: once, referring to the washing away of sin, explaining that we “know now, and to our shame [the women institutionalized in Magdalen laundries] were only ever scrubbing away our nation’s shadow”; then, noting that “to our nation’s shame it must be said that if these women had managed to scale the high walls of the laundries, they’d have had their work cut out for them to negotiate the height and the depth of the barricades around society’s ‘proper’ heart”; and finally, in the offering of apology, for society’s failing of the survivors, and for “our” forgetting of “them” or thinking of them in stereotypes, he declares that “this is a national shame” (2013).

Note, in these appropriations of the word, “shame” applies to Ireland, to the Irish nation as a whole, for shameful acts and omissions, for “our” shameful treatment of women placed in Magdalen laundries. He thus does not explicitly mention the inducement of shame in the women themselves, but offers a normative reading of Ireland’s failings, which should, by “us,” be understood and felt as a national shame. While his reference to the survivors’ “terrible ‘secret’”, “made [their] own” all over the world, implicitly acknowledges the role shame played throughout survivors’ lives, the speech seems to be directing us away from the historic shaming – “society’s humiliat[ion] and degradat[ion]” – of the Magdalen women and girls, and toward a shame, “we” as a nation, must today take upon ourselves in recognition of wrongdoing and moral shortcomings. In other words, shame, once attached to and produced in Ireland’s “fallen women” is displaced onto the Irish nation, precisely for its shaming of the women institutionalized in Magdalen laundries.

Interestingly, Enda Kenny does not refer to the Church, to the religious orders, nor to the state as bearers of shame. Although he mentions the state’s involvement in the institutions (now irrefutably documented in the McAleese report), notes the interchangeability of moral norms between church and state, and apologizes on behalf of the “state, the government, and our citizens,” he designates “Irish society” and the “nation” as carriers of shame, through which recognition of shameful, past moral failings portends the possibility of a healed and better, shared future. In fact, the Taoiseach says, “just as the State accepts its direct involvement in the Magdalen Laundries, society too has its responsibility” (2013). While the intent of this invocation of “society” must lie in highlighting the pervasive nature of the politics of shame, which involved church, state, and society alike, and which therefore requires a call for collective responsibility-taking, it nonetheless masks the degrees to which that responsibility should be assumed. Were some of “us” more culpable than others, benefiting, perhaps, socially and materially from the laundries? Were others more closely involved with the running of the institutions, having a more intimate knowledge of the hardships they bred? Did others yet occupy positions of power, which, properly utilized, could have undermined or at least questioned the shaming of large swathes of Irish people?

To be sure, a state apology cannot guarantee or prompt individual accountability for past wrongs committed. Its purpose is to convey recognition of such wrongs at the highest level of government in front of the citizenry, even the world; to vindicate the claims of those wronged; to express regret, sorrow, and shame for hitherto unacknowledged failings; and to seek forgiveness. In so doing, it engages in a variant of the politics of shame, which, as Ahmed (2004) points out, nonetheless brings “the nation into existence as a felt community” (101). Nations are produced with regard to

the normative standards of ideal national subjects, which are contrasted against the shamed, that is, those bringing shame onto the nation through their inability to live up to said standards. In Ireland such shamed Others included the women contained in Magdalen laundries, but also children institutionalized in industrial and reformatory schools, women confined to give birth in mother and baby homes, and various other “undesirables,” be they poor, disabled, or abused. Importantly, Ahmed, commenting on the Australian context, notes that nations are further produced and reproduced through shame brought onto the nation ‘by itself,’ that is, “by its treatment of others” (108). In this second *modus operandi*, or instantiation, of the politics of shame, “the individual may...take on the failure of the group or nation to live up to an ideal as a mode of identification with the nation,” meaning that the individual “may feel shame, then, *as* an Australian” (108). Understood like this, Irish nation-building engages a politics of shame that operates both via the construction of shamed, deviant Others hidden away in Ireland’s network of institutions, and via the shame brought onto itself precisely through the maltreatment meted out to those deemed deviant Others. The Irish nation thus reproduces itself in this paradoxical, circular manner, as it draws on shame’s capacity to bind people in the creation of national collectivities through the establishment of “insiders” and “outsiders” (which never quite works for women as the Outsiders Within anyway),^{<25>} or through the assumption of collective or supra-individual failings that make us feel shame *as* (the) people of Ireland.

The latter should give us pause for a tentative optimism, though, as the shame experienced in such scenarios might be of a productive nature in ways that the inward-looking, isolating shame frequently discussed with particular regard to women and women’s bodies, is not. I have already elaborated upon shame’s debilitating effects, its need to cover and silence, lest one’s innermost inadequacies be exposed, and one’s social standing and relationships be jeopardized (Fischer 2016b). The type of shame arising from our identification with the nation’s failings, though, may allow for action, redress, perhaps even remedy, precisely because it is not an individualized and internalized feeling, but stems from shortcomings outside of oneself. That is not to say that one did not in some way contribute to the particular national wrongs in question, but because these wrongs are attributed to the collectivity – usually to some kind of state policy or state-sanctioned injustice – they do not singularly inhere in me as a person.^{<26>} Moreover, such wrongs are often already in the public domain, or at least emerging, and are therefore visible and known. For example, we might feel ashamed at the state’s failure to properly intervene in an escalating humanitarian crisis, such as the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean.^{<27>} The shame experienced at the state’s inaction, as it turns its back on human beings desperately fleeing violence and destitution, is one of association. We are ashamed of the moral failings committed in our names, ashamed of a state that seems to be *shameless* in its disavowal of duties toward others.

With that said, we may also be the beneficiaries of a structural injustice that is perpetuated through state policy and through popular discourses (much like those originally attached to those institutionalized in Magdalen laundries) that justify the inequitable treatment of certain people in a bid to maintain the narcissistic notions of superiority and entitlement of others. Discussing Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed* (2001), which implores Americans to feel shame, not guilt, at the inordinate economic inequality and poverty marking U.S. society, Martha Nussbaum argues

“the fact that we more prosperous people live in a way that depends on the “underpaid labor of others,” is not the result of this or that bad act by this or that individual. It results from deeply rooted and long-standing patterns of thought and commitment in American society: the love of luxury, the common resentment of redistributive taxation, the belief that the poor cause their poverty, and a lot more” (2004, 211).

What is required of us, in milieus where collective harms are allowed to exist in this way, is precisely a feeling of shame to redress not particular actions, as guilt would have it, but to issue in a reassessment of what Nussbaum calls “our national character”:

“It is easy to say, “Let’s not do A again.” We need to say, “Let’s not be that way any longer (greedy, materialistic, hostile to equality, etc.)”” (212).

The distinction with guilt here becomes clear: although the second species, if you like, of the politics of shame under discussion here allows for action and making amends for moral harms (as guilt ordinarily does, but debilitating, individualized shame does not), what we are experiencing in moments of recognition of collective harms with which we are in one way or another involved or associated, is a deeply negative feeling that adheres to us as subjects. Precisely because we identify as members of a collectivity, of a nation, or at least believe others to identify us as such (recall the role witnesses play in the shame experience, as we avoid losing face in front of others at all cost) do we experience shame *as* Americans, *as* Irish people – an experience that necessitates a changed conception of who “we”, the collectivity are, and an assessment of whether we adhere to the ideals (such as compassion, benevolence, justice) set out in the national imaginary and reflect these back to the world.<28> Changed policies and actions can thus grow out of feelings of shame that go to *the very heart* of an assumed (national) identity.

III. The Road to Re-Coverry: Shame and Heartache

Judith Butler describes rather movingly the affective complexities involved in what I take to be feelings of shame, or perhaps a confluence of emotions including shame, in response to state policies committed in one’s name, and in a context where national, ethnic, and religious attachments are often overlapping, if not conflated. She writes of the “heartache” felt at signing a petition criticizing the Israeli state, noting that “hands shook as they entered their names on that list” (2004, 114). Butler explains:

“The heartache emerges from the thought that Israel, by subjecting 3.5 million Palestinians to a military occupation, represents the Jews in a way that these petitioners find not only objectionable, but truly terrible to endure, *as Jews*; it is precisely *as Jews*, even in the name of a different Jewish future, that they call for another way...” (114).

Identifying troubling, even shameful, actions and policies perpetrated by the nation-state to which one has an affinity and connection (if just by virtue of others’ stipulation of the existence of such a connection) can be hugely distressing, perhaps more so when they are widely supported by other members of the polity through the kinds of self-serving discourses already mentioned. I have no doubt that many people in Ireland experienced this heartache when survivors began to tell their stories in the

media, when the horror of Ireland's church and state-sponsored shaming of deviant Others came to be aired and widely discussed. The permissibility of such a harsh and damaging system of institutionalization in a relatively young Republic, and in a nation otherwise clinging to self-representations of compassion and charity, did, in fact, result in calls for re-examination of the "national character," which came to be understood as marred by a shameful past that incarcerated and humiliated inconvenient Others.

How does this heartache relate to Ireland's "'proper' heart," described in the Taoiseach's apology as one that is fenced in, barricaded by intolerance and a failure to embrace diversity? He says that "we saw difference as something to be feared and hidden rather than embraced and celebrated" (Kenny 2013), but surely the sheer scale of institutionalization in Ireland points to the fact that those who were locked away were not in any meaningful sense different. They were victims of criminal perpetrators (in cases of sexual abuse) or victims of circumstance – coming from families where parents had died or were poor – who were subjected to a process of nation-building that had to eliminate visible instantiations of shame that were constructed arbitrarily, and not with regard to some objective measure of "difference." Ireland's politics of shame, and its attendant system of mass-institutionalization did not develop in response to tangible logics of differences in people, and it could not be met by their being a bit more like everybody else, by conforming better. Ireland's politics of shame did, of course, involve the deeply problematic othering of the nation's shamed, especially by race, class, and gender, and, as previously discussed, this meant that all women were suspect owing to their embodied, sexualized presumed capacity for shame (as were those deemed "destitute" or "illegitimate"), meaning a majority of people in Ireland were the potential objects of a nationalism that *ascribed* difference to them and punished and excised them accordingly. Difference, then, was not apprehended and met with hostility – difference was *produced* in the service of a national identity-formation requiring the normative creation of an "us" and "them."

The metaphor of Ireland's heart, fenced in by the fear of difference, serves, I think, a distinct purpose in the Taoiseach's apology. By ascribing a "'proper' heart" to Ireland, the speech establishes continuity between a shameful past and the present day, implying that somewhere underneath the fear of difference and emotional barricades lay, all along, a national capacity for feeling (presumably benevolent and virtuous), in the 'real,' that is, "proper" Ireland, which was inhibited by the psycho-social and political conditions of the day. In order to now understand ourselves as a collectivity capable of recognizing and feeling the damage wrought by moral wrongs of the past, the Irish nation must present itself (to itself and the world) as containing within itself an affective core that can and does experience shame, contrition, and remorse – a virtuous core of feeling that was present, even in the dark days, through the thicket of prejudice and fear.

Notably, the Taoiseach's speech goes on to use the metaphor to create a *discontinuity* between present and past, to mark a regrettable, shameful era from a better present and future. He says,

"Today we live in a very different Ireland with a very different consciousness [and] awareness. An Ireland where we have more

compassion, empathy, insight, heart. We do because at last we are learning those terrible lessons. We do because at last, we are giving up our secrets. We do because in naming and addressing the wrong, as is happening here today, we are trying to make sure we quarantine such abject behavior in our past and eradicate it from Ireland's present and Ireland's future."

Ireland's now enlarged heart of compassion and empathy is enabled precisely through our divulging of dark secrets and acknowledgement of past wrongs – by recognizing injustices and moral failings we, as a nation, can stop such outgrowths of past immorality from extending into the present and the future. Ireland's collective shame is thus uncovered, as the Magdalen women's institutionalization is itself revealed as a taint on the "national character," which, once exposed, allows for learning, healing, and the preservation of a virtuous nation-to-be. He continues:

"In a society guided by the principles of compassion and social justice there never would have been any need for institutions such as the Magdalen Laundries."

Leaving aside the issue of there ever having been a "need" for the Magdalen institutions, which I think can probably be attributed to poor wording, the speech here, together with the earlier reference to a changed Ireland, asserts the existence of a contemporary nation of compassion and related virtuous feeling that is guided by principles of social justice – a nation that is markedly different from the past but that comes to recreate itself through the second species of a politics of shame by recognizing and "working through" the shame brought onto itself by its past treatment of deviant Others. This "working through" shame via naming, exposure, and acknowledgement of wrongs is indeed a necessary way of tending to wounds and bringing about healing. On the other hand, to imply that such healing has already, in a sense, taken place, and that, anyway, today's Ireland is more compassionate, empathetic, and governed by principles of social justice, is simply to feed into fantasies of Ireland as a linear, morally progressive nation, while simultaneously masking uncomfortable realities of today's shaming of unwanted populations.

Forgotten is the humiliating system of "direct provision," the roundly critiqued provision of housing to asylum applicants in the form of reception centers, where people spend years in cramped and insecure accommodation without the ability to provide for their families while waiting for their applications to be processed (HIQA 2015). Forgotten, too, is the well-documented impoverishment of lone parents in recent years – an astonishing erasure given the history of institutionalization, including in Magdalen laundries, of women who became pregnant "out of wedlock." A disproportionately harsh series of cuts to state supports introduced in recent years under the banner of "austerity," has resulted in a staggering 63% of lone parent households living in deprivation (Central Statistics Office 2015).^{<30>} Ironically, then, the very apology invoking the need for and benefits of revealing moral shortcomings and injustices committed by state and society against the shamed is here doing the exact opposite: it is burying injustices and engaging in a politics of shame that may itself, in the future, necessitate a further apology and call for national self-opprobrium.

By creating the distinction between a dark, less feeling, but more-or-less finished past of “Magdalen Ireland” (Kenny, 2013), and an enlightened, empathetic present, the Taoiseach’s apology deflects from the contemporary shaming of populations who are similarly constructed as deviant and subjected to problematic state policies.<31> As one shame is revealed and loudly embraced, even lauded as a means to national healing, so another shame is covered. In a bid to restore a measure of national pride to the shamed collectivity, the nation is presented as having been virtuous all along (but with a calcified heart fenced in by the fears and prejudices of the past), and as especially virtuous now, hence the continuities and discontinuities posed by Ireland’s “‘proper’ heart.” The shame of a shameful past can be revealed precisely because that past no longer reaches into the present, as distance is gained through a dis-identification with the dark days of a by-gone era that is contrasted with an advanced and more feeling present. In the process, the shameful injustices once committed against Magdalen women are admitted and exposed, but contemporary moral failings are still covered, despite appeals to the learning and healing power of revealed shame. As Ahmed succinctly puts it: “the politics of shame is contradictory. It exposes the nation, and what it has covered over and covered up in its pride in itself, but at the same time *it involves a narrative of recovery as the re-covering of the nation*” (112).

Talk of “naming and addressing wrong” and its capacity to reconcile and mend wounds caused by a shameful past thus are put to the service of the recovery of pride through the imagining of a virtuous nation. This nation is virtuous, and therefore once again proud, *because* it feels shame and admits to feeling shame as a reflective, self-critical, but, ultimately, magnanimous polity that can learn from past mistakes. Contemporary examples contradicting this representation of the benevolent, reflexive nation are covered and passed over to avoid disturbing the national imaginary’s harmonious scene of a compassionate, morally progressive Ireland. Just as Ireland’s institutionalized Others were once hidden to facilitate the construction of a sexually, morally pure nation, so today’s shamed Others (such as people confined to direct provision centers, lone parents and their children living in poverty) are covered to maintain the fantasy of an empathetic, inclusive Ireland of the 21st century.

While the strong desire to distinguish Irish identity from British identity may have waned since the post-Independence era, the mechanism by which the Irish nation today comes to be established and fixed is the same: the politics of shame normatively produces acceptable subjects of the nation, while those deemed to be unacceptable, that is, the nation’s deviant Others, are hidden and excised from the national imaginary. Paradoxically, such hiding is here taking place *at the same time* as the recovery of pride through a re-imagining of the nation as one “we” can be proud of, precisely for its feeling of shame, its acknowledgment of past wrongs, and its learning from same. What is, therefore, presented as a process of recovery and emergent wholeness from shame, is itself a function of the politics of shame, as the presentation of a contemporary, healing, compassionate Ireland results in the re-covering of shamed Others in the newly imagined nation.

It seems, then, that the productive type of shame that allows us to act and to address serious, structural moral failings has, in the Taoiseach’s quickness to restore the nation’s pride, fallen short of interrupting the cyclical nature of the politics of shame. Deviant Others have again been covered and their shaming by the state has yet again been erased *in that very moment* when the nation is re-presented as open-minded,

capable of self-criticism, and, in an important sense, improved for uncovering and acknowledging its shameful, moral shortcomings. Although, of course, the recognition and public contrition for past wrongs is essential for acknowledging the survivors' experiences and conveying the wide-spread remorse and regret for injustices committed against the Magdalen women, the masking of contemporary deviant Others in the Taoiseach's speech via a newly imagined Ireland of empathy, even social justice, reproduces the politics of shame in the current context, thereby "allowing the endless deferral of responsibility for injustice in the present" (120).³² Ireland's "'proper' heart" is thus maintained in the national imaginary, while heartache continues to be inflicted on the nation's shamed and those who feel a collective sense of shame at the state's shamelessness.

NOTES

Parts of this work were presented at a conference organized at the London School of Economics and Political Science, *Gender and the Politics of Shame*, 2015; at the *1916: HOME: 2016* conference, University College Dublin, October 2016; and at a UCD School of Philosophy work-in-progress session, May 2016. I am grateful for generous comments at each of these, and want to specifically thank Luna Dolezal, Dianna Taylor, and Chris Cowley for reading and commenting on early drafts. *Hypatia's* referees also provided thoughtful and encouraging comments, for which I thank them. Finally, I gratefully acknowledge early support of this work from the British Academy's Newton International Fellowship Scheme.

1. Kenny (2013).
2. O'Donnell, Pembroke, and McGettrick (2013). K. O'Donnell, S. Pembroke, and C. McGettrick, "Oral History of Mary Smith," in *Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Oral and Archival History* (Government of Ireland Collaborative Research Project, Irish Research Council, 2013), 1–76.
3. Tomkins (1995, 133).
4. Exploring John Wesley's "language of the heart", Gregory Clapper (2007, 75) notes that "we use heart...as a metaphor for the essential core of the human being – the home of values, desires, hopes."
5. Interestingly, the etymology of "heart" (from Old English *heorte*) includes reference to "intellect," highlighting the ambiguous relationship between mind and

heart, or cognition and feeling, which proved to be a controversial topic among philosophers of emotion.

6. In this paper I will mainly refer to “emotion” given certain philosophical and political commitments I hold regarding cognition’s role in feeling (see Fischer 2016a). For more on the distinction between emotion, affect, and passions, see Thomas Dixon (2003).

7. These debates reflect the development of specific models of emotion, which are usually listed as the cognitive, the Darwinian, the Jamesian, and the social constructivist models. For sources for each of these respective models, see Nussbaum (2001), Darwin (1998), James (1981), and Harré (1986).

8. See Pedwell and Whitehead (2012), Clough (2010), and Gregg and Seigworth (2010).

9. For notable second wave examples, see Meyers (1997), Jaggar (1992), and Lorde (1984).

10. For a particularly insightful study of the affective demands on women in service industries, see Hochschild (2012).

11. See Fischer 2016b. This article is also inspired by work on nation-building and shame by Ahmed (2004).

12. The Taoiseach’s apology to the Magdalene survivors was issued on foot of the McAleese inquiry. The inquiry was set up to establish whether the state was involved in any way with the Magdalen institutions – a fact the state had denied up until then – see Irish Government (2013).

13. For feminist work on shame, see Bartky (1990), Beauvoir (1997), Young (2005), Locke (2007), and Taylor and Wallace (2012).

14. The context under consideration here is Irish nation-building, with specific reference to institutionalization and gender, although my analysis may bear out

similarities with other contexts (see Ahmed in Australia). It is possible that the productivity and transformative power of shame is not undercut in other contexts.

15. For inquiry reports, see Irish Government (2013) and Ryan (2009).

16. See *Philomena* 2013, and *The Magdalene Sisters* 2002.

17. Raftery (2003), and Raftery and O’Sullivan (1999).

18. Smith (2007a). For other scholarly sources on the Magdalen laundries, see Finnegan (2004), Luddy (2007), Smith (2007b), Smith (2004), McCarthy (2010).

Most recently, a number of interviews with survivors and other relevant parties have been made available through the Digital Repository of Ireland, see O’Donnell, Pembroke, and McGettrick (2015).

19. Following the War of Independence and the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Irish Free State was established in 1922. The Irish state increasingly relied on institutions, with confinement levels peaking in the 1950s as 1% of the population became confined to a plethora of institutions, including industrial schools, Magdalen laundries, mother and baby homes, mental hospitals, prisons, and a borstal – see O’Sullivan and O’Donnell (2012).

20. This is how the gendered politics of shame came to be performed in the post-Independent, Irish context. However, what is meant here by the politics of shame is simply the political engagement or mobilization of shame. In the Irish case, this was deeply implicated with gender and ideas of moral, sexual purity during the process of identity-formation in the early decades of the Irish state.

21. For feminist work on the productive nature of shame, see Nussbaum (2004), Probyn (2005), and Munt (2008). I draw on Nussbaum’s account in this article, and have expressed reservations about Munt’s and Probyn’s accounts of the positive nature of shame in Fischer 2016b.

22. For work on shame in an Irish context, see Valente (2005) and Munt (2008).

23. As will be seen, though, one of these groups is actually the same in a contemporary context. Lone parents today are similarly constructed as shameful, and are excised in the Taoiseach's apology. This is highly significant, given to whom the apology is addressed, the gendered nature of lone parenting, and Ireland's troubled history of gender and reproduction, which presumably, the apology is meant to interrupt in some way.

24. See O'Halloran (2013) and TheJournal.ie (2013).

25. See Fischer 2016b.

26. Although shame was also experienced collectively in the context of nation-building during the early decades of the Irish state, in the sense that shame became mobilized against women who formed threats to a national identity premised on superior purity, that shame was assumed to inhere in the women themselves, and was often experienced as deeply individuating. This is borne out by evidence included in the McAleese Report (Irish Government 2013, 957) highlighting the debilitating consequences of the internalization of shame by women who had been institutionalized (see also ref to author's work), and by the silence survivors usually shrouded themselves in until very recently (O'Donnell et al. 2015). By contrast, the potentially productive shame under consideration here posits shame as inhering in the nation itself as a collectivity.

27. Summer 2015 has seen increased numbers of refugees fleeing poverty and war (notably the Syrian conflict) to enter Europe. At time of writing, pictures of a dead toddler, washed up on a beach in Turkey, have made the front pages of European newspapers, highlighting the awful human cost of a crisis European governments seem to be stalling on – see RTÉ News (2015).

28. Although I don't want to essentialize an entire nation, it is possible to follow

Nussbaum's example to identify problematic national "characteristics", that is, values and beliefs that are common in Ireland and therefore generally reflected in policy-making. These include a reluctance to criticize and confront, and, relatedly, conformism and a deference to authority (this used to be the authority of the Catholic Church, which has become replaced by a neo-liberal conservatism that has, at least since the Celtic Tiger era, resulted in an acceptance of growing inequality and the enrichment of certain people – including corporate entities such as investment and vulture funds – at the expense of others).

29. This much is acknowledged in the speech, as it questions the practice of calling people "'penitents' for their 'crime' of being poor or abused or just plain unlucky enough to be already the inmate of a reformatory, or an industrial school or a psychiatric institution" (2013).

30. The vast majority of lone parent households in Ireland are headed by women. The cuts were implemented by the government in full knowledge of their effects, in fact, the Department of Social Protection's own analysis showed that Budget 2013 had its most adverse effect on lone parent households but the department persisted in introducing further cuts, see Department of Social Protection 2013.

31. The distinction is reinforced by reference to an arbitrary "moral code that was fostered at the time, particularly in the 1930s, 40s and 50s," which neatly fixes the construction and shaming of deviant Others to a specific period in the past (Kenny 2013).

32. Ahmed provides a fascinating analysis of the desire to pass through shame to pride by looking at the performance of shame in Australian Sorry Books, which "involve individual Australians (mostly white, but also some indigenous Australians) writing messages of condolence and support; they are compilations of statements and

signatures, which create the effect of a shared narrative of sorrow as well as an account of national shame,” 110.

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