



Memory & Oral History Conference Programme 1st & 2nd July 2022

The annual conference of the Oral History Network of Ireland in association with Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute

DAY ONE: Friday 1st July

****Unless otherwise stated all rooms are in the Iontas Building, North Campus****

10.00 – 10.45	Registration [Outside 2 nd Floor Seminar Room]
10.45 – 12.30	Workshop Session 1
<p>Workshop A: Interviewing Basics with Maura Cronin [1st Floor Seminar Room] Workshop B: Doing Oral History as a Graduate Student with Daniel Carey & Matthew O’Brien [2nd Floor Seminar Room]</p>	
12.30 – 13.45	Lunch [at leisure]
13.45 – 15.15	Panel Session: 1A & 1B
<p>Panel Session 1A: Community Memories [1st Floor Seminar Room] Chair: Elizabeth Kiely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Púca of Ennistymon: oral history and social memory in a North Clare town. Sarah O’Brien & Christopher Fitzgerald (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick) • Establishing strong community partnerships: the Columbia College Chicago Oral History Model. Erin McCarthy (Columbia College Chicago) • Raising the curtain on Co. Kerry’s amateur dramatic heritage: an oral history project. Fiona Brennan (Independent Researcher) 	
<p>Panel Session 1B: Migration memories and histories [2nd Floor Seminar Room] Chair: Derek Mulcahy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Of Mice and Elephants”: subjectivity, myth, and performative Irishness in reminiscences of post-war London-Irish builders. Michael Mulvey (Maynooth University) • Migration, transnational memories and the Troubles. Fearghus Roulston (University of Brighton) 	

15.15 – 15.35	<i>Tea / Coffee Break</i>
15.35 – 17.05	Panel Session 2A & 2B
<p>Panel 2A: Memories of the Magdalene Laundries [<i>1st Floor Seminar Room</i>] Chair: Thérèse McIntyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recentering women’s voices: the Magdalene Oral History Project and twentieth century Irish history. Conor Murphy (Trinity College Dublin) • The women of the Magdalene Laundries seen through a new theoretical lens. Sarah Golding (Birkbeck, University of London) • Remembering Nora: Interpreting the oral testimony of a Magdalene Laundry survivor through the lens of collective memory. Sarah O’Brien (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick) 	
<p>Panel 2B: Analysing Memories [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>] Chair: Matthew O’Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating the investigation of memory in oral history archives with linguistics tools. Chris Fitzgerald (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick) • ‘That I look back on with some bitterness’: what tools help us to understand and interpret emotion in oral history interviews? Elizabeth Kiely (University College Cork) • “A Curse of a Disease”: remembering the history of diabetes treatment and care through patient memory in Northern Ireland. Lauren Young (Queen’s University Belfast) 	
17.05 - 17.50	<i>Opening Reception</i>
17.50 – 19.00	<p>Keynote Address: Prof Guy Beiner (Boston College) Chair: Regina Fitzpatrick The Vernacular Sounds and Silences of Irish Memory [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>]</p>
19.30	Conference Dinner: Stone Haven Restaurant, Maynooth





DAY TWO: Saturday 2nd July

****Unless otherwise stated all rooms are in the Iontas Building, North Campus****

09.00 – 09.30	Registration [<i>Outside 2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>]
09.30 – 11.15	Workshop Session 2 [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>]
Workshop C: Beyond memory: Prememory, Pre-forgetting and Postmemory with Guy Beiner	
11.15 – 11.35	<i>Tea / Coffee Break</i>
11.35 – 12.35	Panel Session 3: Moments [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>] Chair: Adrian Roche
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories on the Estate: Scéaltaí a' tsraid. Samuel Guthrie (Ionad Na Fuiseoige) • Exploring memory, gender and generation in the context of women's emigration from Ireland from 1995 onwards. Gráinne Mulcahy (University College Cork) • Trauma and Resilience of the Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Movement. Mandy Lee (Trinity College Dublin) • 'Hurling and Us', not another podcast. Regina Fitzpatrick (Independent Researcher) 	
12.35 – 14.00	<i>Lunch (at leisure) & OHNI AGM (starting 12.45pm)</i> [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>]
14.00 – 15.30	Panel Session 4A & 4B
Panel 4A: Women's lives [<i>1st Floor Seminar Room</i>] Chair: David Ryan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'We just got on with it': An oral history of mothers in Belfast during 'the Troubles'. Yumi Omori (Queen's University Belfast) • Researching (with) my mother: exploring the lives of former Irish nuns. Karen Hanrahan (University of Brighton) • In her words: The lived experience of Irish women as missionaries and volunteers. Ellen Regan (University College Dublin) 	

<p>Panel 4B: Performed Memories [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>]</p> <p>Chair: Michael Mulvey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconvenient memories: songs from the period of conflict 1919-1923. Thérèse McIntyre (Independent Researcher) • Staging a river: performing memories and experiences of the River Shannon. Helena Enright (Independent Researcher) • Climate Change: An Oral History of Sustainable Food Sources. Clair Butler (University College Cork) 	
15.30 – 15.50	Tea / Coffee Break
15.50 – 17.00	<p>Panel Session 5: Disseminating Memories [<i>2nd Floor Seminar Room</i>]</p> <p>Chair: Ronan Foley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gillian O’Brien (Liverpool John Moores University) • Anna Bryson (Queen’s University Belfast)
17.00	Closing Address





Memory & Oral History

Book of Abstracts

[Arranged by Session]

Panel Session 1A: Community Memories [1st Floor Seminar Room]

The Púca of Ennistymon: oral history and social memory in a North Clare town.

Sarah O'Brien & Christopher Fitzgerald (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick)

In May 2021, a newly commissioned statue by Aidan Harte was revealed to residents of Ennistymon. Entitled the Púca of Ennistymon, the sculpture was a source of immediate controversy and was rejected by many of the town's residents. Media reports of the púca portrayed these residents in a decidedly critical light, labelling them as "tasteless", superstitious and blind to their own folkloric heritage (Ray Darcy Show, 13 May 2021; 'Dublin ready to host 'grotesque' Púca statue after Clare locals fear bad luck', The Times, 14 May 2021; 'Council backs down in 'unholy row' over plans for controversial Púca sculpture in Ennistymon', The Independent, 10 May 2021; "Creator of 'Púca of Ennistymon' brands priest's intervention 'Fr Ted Stuff'", Irish Examiner, 13 May 2021). In this paper, we share how a mixed methods oral history/ corpus linguistics project carried out with residents of Ennistymon during the Summer of 2021 brought new perspective to the púca debate. Framed by theories of social memory, the paper explores how participants' spoken and written words revealed a collective memory that delved as far back as 1798 (Beiner, 2018; Fentress, 1992). In turn we demonstrate how this rich social memory has informed local opinion about the púca sculpture, producing nuanced, complex and sophisticated socio-historical narratives.

Establishing strong community partnerships: the Columbia College Chicago Oral History Model.

Erin McCarthy (Columbia College Chicago)

After summarizing the evolution of the undergraduate honours course Oral History: the Art of the Interview from its origins as a founding member of the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project, to a regionally recognized leader in community oral history—this paper discusses the creation of Columbia College's oral history model. Key components of this model include establishing protocols for community partners, partnering with the college archives, developing core interview questions, sharing the model with oral history practitioners, and bringing the narratives out of the archives. Following this model, potential partners are asked to provide a project description, a confirmed list of narrators, background material, guest speakers, and an accessibility plan. The access requirement is the biggest challenge for community partners and ultimately served as the catalyst to formalize a permanent relationship with the college archives which could guarantee preservation and access. The development of core questions grew out of a 2009-10 project to interview activists for the Archives' Chicago Anti-Apartheid Movement Collection (CAAMC). We define core questions as a group of targeted prompts tailored to a specific project for the purpose of preliminary research across interviews. Inspired by a 2015 article by Linda Shopes, we explored alternative ways to edit the interviews for public presentation. Last year, we received a grant from the Council of Independent Colleges for their Humanities Research for the Public Good initiative. With the grant, we hired two undergraduate students to create a podcast using the CAAMC. The podcast will soon be broadcast on WCRX and Pacifica Radio.

Raising the curtain on Co. Kerry's amateur dramatic heritage: an oral history project.

Fiona Brennan (Independent Researcher)

The history of Ireland's amateur dramatic tradition is a rich and diverse one. While its incredible contribution to Irish heritage remains under-researched, the lack of an authoritative history or permanent oral archive is not indicative of the tradition's cultural insignificance. In 2021, Kerry Writers' Museum, Listowel, Co. Kerry, received Heritage Council funding to establish a project on the county's amateur dramatic history. As the project's researcher, my brief, which included the development of an exhibition – opened recently at the Museum by Minister Norma Foley – focussed on the creation of an oral history archive. As a historian and drama practitioner, interviews sought to explore the collective memories of participants regarding their present roles as amateur practitioners and their recollections of the amateur tradition in the specific locale. The act of performance imbues a certain depth of spirit and commitment. By sharing excerpts from these interviews, I will endeavour to respond imaginatively to participants' individual acts of remembering. Using archival documentation as a guide, the paper will explore these interviews not merely as responses to the preservation of communities' creative and historical narratives but as

positive, informative and joyful ‘performances’ per se. I hope to demonstrate participants’ validation of the importance of this research and to do justice to its restorative value in transforming unique private histories into public recollections.

Panel Session 1B: Migration memories and histories [2nd Floor Seminar Room]

“Of Mice and Elephants”: subjectivity, myth, and performative Irishness in reminiscences of post-war London-Irish builders.

Michael Mulvey (Maynooth University)

Drawing on elements of Irish socio-economic and migrant history, British construction history, and London-Irish construction lore, this paper will examine the legacy of the ‘mailboat generation’ of migrant builders, looking at the migrant workplace experience from the 1940s to the 1980s. The predominantly oral transmission of these histories means collective cultural memory within the Irish and London-Irish is strewn with Cuchulainn-like characters and epic nicknames: ‘The Elephant John’, ‘Darkie’ Finn, ‘The Bear O’Shea’, and ‘The Horse Muldoon’. Over time, fact-based myth and fictional retellings coalesced. Epic narratives of Donegal’s ‘Tunnel-tigers’, ‘McAlpine’s Fusiliers’, ‘Murphy’s Rangers’ and ‘Long-distance men’ became interwoven in songs and stories. I contend that these reconstructed memories and the culture they perpetuated induced a cycle of performative identity formations which simultaneously mythologised the mundanities of working life in London whilst amplifying notions of nationalist, Catholic, Gaelic ethnicity. Collected primary source oral evidence – both archival and newly-collected – together with documentary research, radio clips, and published migrant stories are used to look at key issues including: Historical ‘bowdlerisation’ in the self-identification of Irish builders in post-war London; the self-perpetuation of the ‘Lump’ and labour-only subcontracting system within the Irish ethnic enclave; workplace self-segregation; the sometimes pernicious influence of subcontractors, foremen, gangers and pacemakers; the endemic culture of hegemonic and toxic masculinities, aggression and reckless endangerment.

Migration, transnational memories and the Troubles.

Fearghus Roulston (University of Brighton)

A question we often asked interviewees in our oral history project about post-1945 migration from the north of Ireland to Britain was about the possibility of return. Would you ever go back? Did you consider doing so in the past? Why, or why not? Drawing on some of the responses to these questions, this paper considers what they reveal about the transnational history and memory of the Troubles, and about the complicated dynamics of belonging and

home experienced by Northern Irish migrants in Britain. Given the relative proximity of Ireland to Britain, and the relative ease of travel between both spaces, an ambivalent and mobile conceptualisation of home was a feature of our interviewees' narratives. Most of the people we interviewed kept one foot in Britain and one in the north, in many cases going back regularly to visit friends and family there. But this mobility did not prevent migrants from feeling homesick or dislocated, or from wondering whether they would rather bring up their children in their country of origin. Reading a series of oral history interviews with migrants and with their children, this paper will consider how our interviewees remember and narrate their experience of living between two places. In doing so it will suggest that these narratives offer some insight into the complex relationship between the north of Ireland and Britain during the Troubles.

Panel 2A: Memories of the Magdalene Laundries [1st Floor Seminar Room]

Recentring women's voices: the Magdalene Oral History Project and twentieth century Irish history.

Conor Murphy (Trinity College Dublin)

This paper proposes to summarize the findings of a postgraduate dissertation on the Magdalene Oral History Project (MOHP) and respond to the conference theme of 'Memory and Oral History' through the topic of 'reusing memories'. Providing an astounding glimpse into the operation of Magdalene laundries in twentieth century Ireland, the MOHP was not only an acclaimed oral history initiative but an undertaking allowing survivor testimonies to be presented to a wider audience and preserved for future access. The proposed paper, and the dissertation research, focuses on not just the testimonies of these women but on how these oral histories may enhance the corresponding social and cultural historiography. The dissertation attempts to meet these twin research aims through a detailed study of nine of the interviews given to the MOHP. These testimonies, covering five of the Magdalene institutions addressed in the McAleese Report, were chosen to represent the Magdalene experience and its aftermath across Ireland from the detention of survivor Kate in 1957, to 2013 when the interviews were completed. The research produced two main findings. Firstly, oral histories are a valuable resource in the study of the Magdalene laundries and a similar project would be equally beneficial in the study of any of Ireland's sites of confinement. And secondly, oral histories both corroborate and contradict elements of the extant historiographies. The main conclusion drawn from the research is that oral history is a valuable source that will enhance the existing historiography and augment the future authorship of modern Irish history.

The women of the Magdalene Laundries seen through a new theoretical lens.

Sarah Golding (Birkbeck, University of London)

This paper presents a qualitative analysis of twenty-nine oral testimonies from the Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Oral and Archival History project. It will re-examine the experiences of the women of the Magdalene Laundries and challenge the idea that these women were ONLY victims, rather than women who were attempting to establish their individual rights. Two themes will be spotlighted, that of 'Talking back' and 'Refusing to work' to highlight this. The paper stresses the importance of a new theoretical framework, the basis of my PhD research. This framework extends understanding of 'Collective Memory Theory' - interweaving it with 'Social Movement Theory' and 'The Theory of Everyday-Resistance'. Thus, creating a theory that accepts that the Republic of Ireland has collectively re-written their own history to enable a clearer narrative of progression while also providing a more comprehensive understanding of the nuances of activism that is focused on individual behaviour as well as the collective group. While the right to have power over their lives and bodies was fundamental to the women's movement the same cannot be said for the women of the Magdalene Laundries. For these women it was seen as a form of sinfulness and their punishments deemed acceptable. Using this layer approach, the position of the women of the Magdalene Laundries can be elevated to their rightful position – that of equals to the women's movement.

Remembering Nora: Interpreting the oral testimony of a Magdalene Laundry survivor through the lens of collective memory.

Sarah O'Brien (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick)

On January 2005, I interviewed Nora, an elderly Irish emigrant woman in Birmingham, England. The interview was to be part of an oral history of Irish migration to the West Midlands. Instead, it became a testimony to Nora's experience of institutional abuse in Ireland between the 1930s and 40s. In this paper, I discuss my use of collective memory theory to interpret Nora's oral testimony. Specifically, I will explain how a theory of "autobiographical memory" helped me to make sense of the fragmentary and non-linear nature of Nora's oral history (Welzer, 2010). In turn, by comparing Nora's narrative against broader collections of survivor oral testimonies I argue for the necessity of undergirding interpretations of survivor testimonies with memory studies theory. This approach, I argue, not only deepens our respect for survivors' oral testimony — it also allows us to more fully come to terms with the effects and legacies of institutional abuse in twentieth century Ireland.

Panel 2B: Analysing Memories [2nd Floor Seminar Room]

Facilitating the investigation of memory in oral history archives with linguistics tools.

Chris Fitzgerald (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick)

Approaching large archives of oral histories can be a daunting task. Consistent themes that run through texts in large archives can be difficult to discern by close reading alone and can often be limited by a researcher's biases. Tools used by linguists can provide a means of accessing archives and pursuing salient themes in a way that is objective and based on linguistic evidence rather subjective assumptions. This paper provides an overview of some methods, tools and techniques used by linguists to explore large bodies of texts to reveal relevant themes that may be initially hidden. These approaches are shown to be useful to oral historians who may be interested in revealing salient themes or pursuing themes of interest through the application of linguistic tools and competencies. This is exemplified through the exploration of a sample of the Bureau of Military History archive of witness statements concerning the Irish Struggle for Independence. An emergent theme is the process of accessing memory to construct personal and historical narratives and the role of the present context in the linguistic shaping of past experiences. In presenting these techniques, this paper proposes that linguistic tools can contribute to oral history investigation as can oral histories contribute to linguistic understanding and showcases how a synthesis of oral history and linguistics can provide beneficial outcomes for both fields.

'That I look back on with some bitterness': what tools help us to understand and interpret emotion in oral history interviews?

Elizabeth Kiely (University College Cork)

In oral history, we are working with interviewees' memories to produce new insights into the past. The people we interview are chosen because they have direct knowledge and experience of events etc. However, living and experiencing and then remembering and talking about that living and experiencing, is not done without feeling or emotion. Oral histories give us considerable access to feeling both in the interview and in the listening and interpreting. This will be shown with reference to oral history interviews collected for the HEA funded Irish Women at Work Oral History Project, now archived and available at the Digital Repository of Ireland. However, the paper is concerned with what can we do to acknowledge and interpret emotion in oral history interviews. In the presentation, sociological and other conceptual tools available to us to appreciate emotion and to interpret it, will be considered with reference to what they might offer the field of oral history research.

“A Curse of a Disease”: remembering the history of diabetes treatment and care through patient memory in Northern Ireland.

Lauren Young (Queen’s University Belfast)

The use of oral history in medical history remains a highly under researched area in our field, particularly when thinking about the patient experience of ill-health, relationships with medical professionals and of living with a chronic condition. This paper will draw on my current PhD research, which looks at the history and lived experience of type one diabetes from the perspective of the patient, using Northern Ireland as a case study for oral history interviews. The paper will focus on the idea of memory and will explore how my research has been situated within current studies on memory and its fragility but also its importance to historical research. I will hold focus on the different factors that might impact participant’s memories of life with diabetes, particularly in relation to the trauma of diagnosis and changing treatments throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century. I will discuss themes such as the insider / outsider perspective, generational differences, the support group narrative, gender and briefly look at the impact of Covid-19 on oral history interviewing. This paper will explore how my PhD thesis works towards filling this gap in both medical and oral history works, from my unique perspective as an insider with diabetic patients.

Panel Session 3: Moments [2nd Floor Seminar Room]

Stories on the Estate: Scéaltaí a' tsraid.

Samuel Guthrie (Ionad Na Fuiseoige)

Twinbrook, West Belfast, is a community known for its difficult memory and contested history: squatting, Bobby Sands, joyriding, heatless winters, and the shooting of Sapper Ted Stuart are some of the memories mostly associated with the housing estate’s past. The 50th anniversary of the establishment of the estate was marked quietly during the heights of the pandemic but now the community is embarking on a heritage project to narrate their collective memory collection, reuse, and performance. For more than four years Ionad Na Fuiseoige has been slowly collecting the basis for a heritage project which, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, they are now undertaking having appointed a project officer. Stories on the Estate: Scéaltaí a’ tsráid is a heritage project seeking to engage with local heritage through, primarily, oral histories and build an immersive heritage experience for an area often associated with official neglect rather than its own vibrancy. Working with local volunteers the project will train the local community on research skills and the collection and interpretation of oral histories. This paper will outline the early stages of the project, its

key aims and delivery plan (including equipment practicalities and working with volunteers), and the core debates and problems which face this sort of community heritage project.

Exploring memory, gender and generation in the context of women's emigration from Ireland from 1995 onwards.

Gráinne Mulcahy (University College Cork)

Research on memory and evocation of societal events and processes reveal generational impacts, where individuals remember and recall occurrences from their 'critical years' of adolescence and early adulthood (Corning, 2010). Stephen's (2010) investigation on our remembered selves, oral history, and feminist memory, suggests that interpretative approaches from oral history and memory studies can enable more ambivalent dialogues to emerge which challenge fixed versions of feminist history. Using a feminist oral history approach, my research will illustrate how women's retrospective memory of gender and generation in the context of Irish emigration patterns and Catholic patriarchy, generates notable debates about the intersection of memory, history and intergenerational transmission. I am at the very beginning of my PhD oral history research which is being conducted with a generational cohort of women who emigrated from Ireland post 1995. I wish to consider how memory can be used as one of the analytical tools to help interpret what women tell me in the study. My study will engage in particular with lapsed Catholic, emigrant women, exploring how they negotiated their Catholic upbringing on emigration and how, or whether, these Irish women felt their subjectivities continued to be influenced by memories and remnants of their pasts in Ireland. Irish women's motivations for leaving Ireland have been predominantly understood in research to date, as arising from their desire to escape hetero-sexism, Catholicism and the intense familiarities and surveillances that have marked Irish society (Gray, 2004). My research will consider to what extent this analysis holds for the generation of women who recall in the interviews, why they left Ireland post 1995 to live / settle in a different country. The purpose of this paper is twofold; firstly, to discuss the relevant literature on memory that is relevant to an oral history study with emigrant women and secondly, to introduce my research to a wider audience to elicit further discussion.

Trauma and Resilience of the Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Movement.

Mandy Lee (Trinity College Dublin)

This brief paper presents a planned doctoral investigation that takes a narrative medicine approach to exploring trauma and resilience of the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement. I wish to highlight some of the ethical considerations involved in inquiring into situations of communal trauma through the use of narrative methods, connecting it to recent Irish debates

regarding the respectful conduct of narrative research with those who had/have experienced trauma. My main motivation is to garner feedback from the OHNI community on appropriate steps forward to pursue this research on cultural/social trauma that would be deemed ethically sound.

‘Hurling and Us’, not another podcast.

Regina Fitzpatrick (Independent Researcher)

The GAA Oral History Project was carried out from 2008-2012 to mark the 125th Anniversary of the GAA. The purpose of the project was to capture the place of the GAA in Irish life and the lived experience of people across the country who were involved in the games. Ten years on, commissioned by Kilkenny County Council, oral historian Regina Fitzpatrick and producer Conor Sweetman reflected back on the Kilkenny collection of the project to discover what it tells us about the place of hurling in the lives of people in Kilkenny. This presentation is about the process of listening back to the collection to create 4 part podcast Hurling and Us. It will offer some food thought on podcasting as a medium for disseminating and generating individual and collective memory.

Panel 4A: Women’s lives [1st Floor Seminar Room]

‘We just got on with it’: An oral history of mothers in Belfast during ‘the Troubles’.

Yumi Omori (Queen’s University Belfast)

This paper explores how ordinary mothers maintained ‘normality’ in family lives during ‘the Troubles’, based on oral history interviews with 28 women who raised their children in Republican and Loyalist areas of Belfast amid the conflict. It examines how mothers managed risks posed to their families, especially their children, in areas that bore the brunt of the conflict and violence as part of everyday life. The focus of the analysis will be placed on the mothers’ parenting strategies and the mundane moral values that underpinned such strategies. Despite recent growth in research on women’s experiences of ‘the Troubles’ and their contributions to peace, most attention has been paid to women who are categorised into somewhat ‘political’ categories (peace activists, victims and, more recently, ex-combatants). Ordinary mothers have been silenced despite their deep embeddedness in the processes of social and cultural reproduction of the new generations, which directly relates to the transformation of the moral landscape in conflict-affected societies. Drawing on the idea of ‘everyday life peacebuilding’, the paper aims to illuminate how mothers are involved in the processes of social transformation in violently divided societies through their day-to-day roles. The paper will argue that ordinary mothers have been hidden and silent

contributors to social peace processes in Northern Ireland, as well as hidden, silenced victims of the conflict and violence.

Researching (with) my mother: exploring the lives of former Irish nuns.

Karen Hanrahan (University of Brighton)

Based on doctoral work in progress, this interdisciplinary project adopts a life history approach to explore the lives of former Irish nuns, one of whom is my mother. My research considers the various individual and social factors which led the women to enter a convent in Ireland in the 1950s when they were just 16 years old, what religious life was like for them, and how they navigated the transgressive act of leaving the convent decades later. I explore how the women, who are now in their eighties, subsequently make sense of and narrate these events, and how this former self has become subsumed into their life story, shaping the overall configuration of their narrative identity. The act of storytelling is a moment in its own right that cannot be conflated with the moment in time when the events occurred. I cannot write myself out of this reconstructed and co-constructed narrative; my mother's story is nested within my story, it forms part of my narrative inheritance. In addition to the ethical imperatives for carrying out the research, there is a strong autobiographical impulse driving the work as I seek to locate myself in the wider frame of my life history. My roles as researcher, as learner, as audience, as writer, as daughter are deeply entwined and shaped by the narrative encounter, thereby highlighting the connectedness between the personal and the socio-political. As I research (with) my mother I work out my place in and through the text.

In her words: The lived experience of Irish women as missionaries and volunteers.

Ellen Regan (University College Dublin)

This paper draws on research conducted for a doctoral thesis and is concerned with the oral histories of Irish women who worked as missionaries and volunteers in education and health settings overseas. The individual oral testimonies relate to periods overseas from 1950-2010 and highlight how identity formation in school shaped experiences. Largely absent from the historical narrative, this research seeks to make these women historically visible. Oral testimony is essential when there are limited studies of a certain group “couched exclusively in their own words and attaching their values to their experiences.” Paul Thompson states that one of the great contributions made by oral history has been its role in democratising history through admitting the voices of those traditionally excluded from the ‘mainstream.’ The paper examines themes such as childhood experiences, motivation to volunteer overseas, as well as the risk and reward associated with humanitarian work. Collective memories of identity formation in childhood are a central theme of this paper. Subjectivity

and objectivity of the oral accounts is explored through the participants' reflective and retrospective interpretation of their lives. The researcher seeks to unlock these hidden stories and preserve participant memories of this snapshot of Irish history.

Panel 4B: Performed Memories [2nd Floor Seminar Room]

Inconvenient memories: songs from the period of conflict 1919-1923.

Thérèse McIntyre (Independent Researcher)

Between the Rising of 1916 and the period of conflict from the War of Independence to the Civil War, there was a distinct change in the function of songs written during this time. Songs composed prior to the Rising served as a way of remembering and commemorating events that captured the national imagination; preserving the heroic deeds of those who died for Ireland often in great historical detail. The composition of songs during the period 1919-1923 shifted its focus to more localised events rather than national ones due to the controversial nature of the events being remembered. Although the accuracy of the information might not agree with more formalised narratives, the songs represent the 'grass roots' view of the events – history from the bottom up. It may be argued that these songs evolved to serve another function – as repositories of historical memory; but one which can only be transmitted through a performance of the song. While interviews have yet to be conducted regarding the songs of this later period, previous interviews with both children and adults concerning the songs of the earlier era have shown that the narratives contained within the songs affect how a community 'remembers' its history and what they perceive to be 'true'. However, it also may be said that the songs encompass more than just 'historical memory' – they also operate as a focal point at which various forms of theoretical memory commingle and represent the possibility for the development of a new theory of memory.

Staging a river: performing memories and experiences of the River Shannon.

Helena Enright (Independent Researcher)

'It's amazing the amount of people that live and die in Limerick and have never been on the river.' In August 2014, artist and researcher Dr Helena Enright performed a one woman show 'The River' on board an 80ft barge on the River Shannon. The play was the culmination of nearly two years research and story gathering about the river and its presence in Limerick. It took inspiration from the stories and the physicality and rhythms of the river, and featured a montage of characters, real life testimonies, music, folklore, images and film along with an original score. Enright, whose artistic practice focuses on and blends together personal testimony, oral history, memory, heritage, folklore, theatre and the image discusses in this paper, the process of finding and gathering stories and how this influenced the dramaturgical

decisions she and the production team made as they transferred those stories from transcript to script and then into the performance itself.

Climate Change: An Oral History of Sustainable Food Sources.

Clair Butler (University College Cork)

Prior to European invasion the Australian continent was mapped out through thousands of trails currently known as songlines. Songlines consisted of information regarding the land and its inhabitants as well as instructions on how to cultivate it. Such cultivation resulted in the mass production of food sources such as yams, rices and grains. As part of the longest living culture in the world dreamtime songs/songlines have been practiced orally for thousands of years. As a result of European colonisation however 80% of this knowledge has been lost. This paper will explore my current doctoral research with Aboriginal composers knitting together the fragments of said songs and recovering lost knowledge. In a world where the effects of climate change are looming over us a need for more sustainable food production is vital. In this paper I will explore the ways in which the knowledge contained in dreamtime songs can be used as more sustainable forms of food production. In doing so I will discuss the work I am conducting with Aboriginal composers. This work consists of interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander composers and elders as well as audio and video recordings of songline performances as reconstructed by composers.