

The im/mobilities of ‘sometimes-migrating’ for abortion: Ireland to Great Britain

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Abstract

This paper furthers the concept of im/mobilities through an investigation of the reproductive mobilities of women migrating for abortion from Ireland (north and south) to Great Britain. Where more often the focus of reproductive mobilities concerns the movement of people and matter in order to reproduce, there is less (although some) attention to movement aligned with the prevention of reproduction. We consider the variegated im/mobilities of conception not brought to birth, in the frictional movement of people, things, ideologies and imaginations in order to develop understandings of the variegated interplay of mobility and immobility. In adopting a critical mobilities perspective, we draw from the interface of scholarship in mobilities and migration studies. Hence, underlying this exploration is Hui’s (2016) concept of the ‘sometimes-migrant’, used to challenge broader conceptualisations of ‘migrants’ as ‘exceptional’, binary oppositions between mobility and immobility, and open transdisciplinary dialogue between scholarship in migration and mobilities. We adopt Hui’s call to focus on different incarnations of the ‘sometimes-migrant’ in the form of women travelling temporarily across national borders of varying porosity in order to seek care that is not available in their own country. Intersections of migration, mobilities and cultural history reveal the ways abortions involving women from Ireland are immobilised through geopolitical and cultural practices at local and global scales. In furthering understandings of women’s reproductive im/mobilities we challenge the notion of the ‘abortion tourist’ and illustrate the ways in which ‘sometimes-migrants’ become constructed according to historical and spatial discourses.

Introduction

I travelled to London myself. I couldn’t be fully anaesthetised because I was flying home the same day. So I was awake through the whole procedure. All the other girls there went home to their own beds and I went to the train station and I stood on a train for about 40 minutes or an hour, bleeding, all the way back to the airport, because there were no seats and then I waited in an airport for hours until I could fly home. I think the stigma was a real problem for me, aside from the trauma of having to travel. I didn’t tell anybody for months afterwards. I felt dirty and I felt ashamed.

I was tense, and I was stressed, and I was upset, and they didn’t know why, and things became incredibly strained.

I felt like everyone was watching me and everyone knew what I was doing...

It’s so suffocating and overwhelming, and you want to get through it the best way you can. But the culture of fear is just paralyzing, and it’s that shame and stigma that’s just so ingrained in Irish society.

Lucy Watmough, interview with ABC News (2018) and Sheena Mackenzie from CNN (2018)

We decided to travel out of Ireland. We booked flights and accommodation, arranged childcare and took the lonely early-morning departure to Liverpool surrounded by businessmen and hen parties. It was surreal to be going through the greatest tragedy of our lives hidden in plain sight, hoping no one would ask us where we were going or why.

Liverpool was a place I'd never been to. I had a picture in my head of a grey, industrial city, but Liverpool was the beacon of light in this story – a warm and vibrant place that took care of us. We went straight from the airport to Liverpool Women's Hospital, where we were wrapped in a blanket of care and compassion. Everyone we met said they were so sorry we had to be there. They confirmed the diagnosis, talked us through what would happen over the following days, and then sat with us to discuss what we would like to do with our baby's remains afterwards.

I had read somewhere that for babies with anencephaly; you should bring a small hat with you. So, we spent a good part of the weekend in Liverpool walking around looking for a tiny hat.

The next morning, they dressed him for us. And the hat we had bought him was much too big, so they used a mitten instead. They took a photograph for us, they took his handprints and footprints and put it all together in a memorial booklet and they keep a copy of those for us in case something happens to the original. Everything they do is completely about supporting you in this difficult time.”

Two weeks later there was a courier outside with our baby's ashes. It wasn't expensive but I know that since then, the cost of having your baby's ashes delivered by courier is the guts of €1000. So what people are doing now is they're flying back over to pick up the ashes and bring them home because it's cheaper.

Siobhán Donohue, in an article in *The Guardian* (2018)

This article considers stories like these, of women who have travelled from Ireland to Great Britain for abortion, in order to critically nuance the interplay of im/mobilities. This is an investigation of not only the frictional movement of people, but the frictional movement of stories as interdependent aspects of mobilities. Stories are the foundations of social research (Lawler 2002), we are all ‘Homo fabulans, tellers and interpreters of narrative’ (Currie 1998: 2 cited in Watson 2011). In exploring stories of travelling from Ireland to the UK for abortion from a feminist and mobilities perspective, we highlight the power of subjective accounts of experiences as journeys in themselves. They are, as Horsdal (2011, 11) suggests: ‘a path from a point of departure to a destination’. The stories we refer to here were created mostly in the months preceding the Eighth Amendment Referendum in the Republic of Ireland, which paved the way for more liberal abortion laws in a historically highly restrictive legislative situation. They were chosen from a number of sources, including existing biographical published accounts and stories told through artistic representations, published in newspaper articles, television interviews, YouTube videos, Twitter feeds and Facebook pages, to illustrate the im/mobilisation of women by the state and societal cultures.

The stories were found online, where they were publicly available on various sites, many of which had been created for the purpose of collecting and disseminating them. For example, the *Not at Home* exhibition (London, December 2017) is an archive of the stories of the ‘70 Irish women a week’ who ‘travel abroad to access safe abortion services’. The thinking behind the campaign is that women have left their stories behind, hidden from view and it is now time to bring them into public view as a form of resistance. Women's stories were collected through the campaigns website and then excerpts are put together with striking images in a touring exhibition by artists and abortion rights activists Grace Dyas and Emma Fraser. The stories are literally being brought back to the places from which the women travelled. Similarly, the Facebook group, *In her shoes – women of the eighth*, was set up specifically to collect and publish stories. According to the page ‘The telling of the stories is

important and part of the release of feelings of shame and disgust.’ Historically, the climate of extreme fear and shame surrounding abortion in Ireland meant that women’s experiences were effectively silenced in public debates about the issue (Fletcher 1995) and this continues. A number of the venues that had booked the *Not at home* exhibition cancelled in the run up to the referendum in order to maintain a ‘neutral position’ (Irish Times 2018) and Pro-life campaigners launched a deliberate attack on the *In her shoes* Facebook page in April 2018 (The Daily Edge 2018). This silencing and the broader geopolitical issues of abortion in Ireland have attracted much academic attention (see for example De Londras and Enright; 2018; Earner-Byrne & Urquhart; 2019; Quilty et al. 2015). However, here we focus on silencing as *immobilising*, and the ways in which this is implicated in the immobilising of women’s bodies.

We read hundreds of women’s stories, which had many similarities and many peculiarities. Numerous stories were from younger women who travelled alone without telling anyone where they were going or for what purpose; some travelled with their families. A number of women had been sexually assaulted and many were from women who had been told that there was a terminal foetal abnormality. The vast majority of women travelled to England, mostly to the cities of London, Liverpool and Manchester, but others travelled further afield so that they could remain more ‘hidden’. A few accounts were of women who were coerced into travelling to a ‘mother and baby home’ to carry their baby to term and have it adopted. Women’s stories of deeply personal experiences in relation to abortion were brought to the service of various campaign initiatives in the lead-up to the referendum—whether these revolved around legal change, human rights, women’s rights and global equality of access, or others, in political, media, activist and social media spheres. They were all stories of women immobilised and mobile, journeying and telling their stories in resistance. The personal accounts above, of two women Lucy Watmough and Siobhán Donohue, illustrate the range of experiences of women travelling from Ireland to the UK for abortion and illuminate reproductive im/mobilities. In their retelling of deeply personal experiences of grief, they contribute to public mourning, healing and working through (Fletcher 2015). At the same time, the stories we present here are of those who have the ‘privilege’ of less restricted trans-national travel, focusing on subjectivity and ‘lived experience’ (Gluck and Patai 1991; Horsdal 2011).

Migrations for abortion from Ireland (north and south) to Great Britain demonstrate the intersection of gendered geopolitical and corporeal landscapes. They occur within Ireland’s unique history of legislative restriction on abortions, as outlined below. At a global scale, the political, cultural, societal and demographic effects of labour and other forms of migration (religious, spiritual, educational, political) between Ireland - north and south - and the UK, and across the world, have been well-documented (*inter alia* Gilmartin and White 2011; Landau and Long 2015; Freeman 2017). We focus in on the gendered dichotomy of mobility and immobility by drawing particular attention to the imbrications of scale in relation to the immobilised body, from global constructions of the female fecund body and its association with national identities, to the ways in which immobilisation produces resistant and alternative micro mobilities. This reveals the complex navigations between legality and illegality in the ways women move to effect their desires for abortion. As such immobility here is not only an *absence* of movement, but the constraining of movement in particular ways – both corporeally and emotionally - hence we emphasise the complex landscape of cultural, legal, gendered, national, political and personal. Abortion politics in Ireland are rooted in the historical moral conservatism that deems women second-class citizens, that represses and stigmatises female sexuality, and equates women’s role as stay-at-home mothers with the project of nation-building- as explicitly stated in the Irish Constitution of 1937 (Bloomer and O’Dowd 2014:368). Resisting the “overgoverning of bodies” (Freeman 2017) through story-telling illuminates the interdependencies of mobilities (Urry 2007; Sheller and Urry 2006), as corporeal, communicative and imagined. These stories are powerful insofar as they are told in ways that have become instrumental in social and political transformation.

With the repeal of the eight Amendment in the Republic of Ireland and the recent (October 2019) decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland, the issue of abortion has received much interest in Ireland and beyond. Reproductive im/mobilities in Ireland are evident not only in movement across

borders but also within the nations. There is a reinvigorated social awareness of gendered issues that comes in the wake of controversies - such as the Magdalen Laundries (Fisher 2016) - around the control and obscuration of female bodies by the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Magdalen Laundries, also known as the Magdalen asylums, were church-run institutions providing a 'home' for 'fallen' women or "'problem girls" affected by sexual abuse, pregnancy outside marriage, poverty and crime' (Bloomer and O'Dowd 2014) - up to 30,000 throughout Ireland until the last closed in 1996 - in exchange for free labour in their laundries. Fischer (2016) argues that as women were carriers of 'virtue and purity' in post-Independent Ireland, the state, enabled by the church, removed women from society through institutions such as the Magdalen laundries and immobilised. However, here we are primarily concerned with women's travel across national borders, whether from the Republic of Ireland to the UK or Northern Ireland to Great Britain. In the shadow of large-scale economic in- and out-migrations, less attention has been paid to the specific gendered forms of women's travel, this 'sometimes' migrating (Hui 2016), specifically for the purposes of abortion. We illustrate here how by attending to the im/mobilities of women's travel for abortion we highlight the relevance of Hui's concept of 'sometimes migrant'. Although used by Hui in relation to travel between Hong Kong and China, we show here that, in effect, the borders between Ireland and Great Britain have been and are of varying porosity, not only politically and culturally, but emotionally and affectively.

The emotional and affective aspects of travelling for abortion, emphasizing fear, shame, trauma and grief, importantly also challenge misleading conceptions of 'abortion tourism' (Bloomer and O'Dowd 2014) which simplify the complex geopolitics of abortion im/mobilities. Adopting a critical mobilities perspective and following on from a number of scholars in the field of reproductive geographies (Freeman 2017; Gilmartin and White 2011; Side 2016), we challenge the notion of such movement as 'abortion tourism', given the connotations here of choice, freedom, enjoyment and legality. As Hui (2016) argues, by considering the complex everyday and migratory mobilities of 'sometimes-migrants' it becomes possible to challenge conceptualisations of 'migrants' as 'exceptional', a notion that is preserved by migration and mobilities scholars. By questioning the temporary social practices of mobility and immobility, 'with cases that embrace multiple subject positions and mobilities systems, with temporally fluctuating prominence' (ibid., 76), we begin to disrupt some of this thinking. Before doing so through engagement with our stories, however, it is important to set them in context.

Between mobility and immobility: abortion, Ireland and nationhood

In *Mobilities*, Urry (2007, 25) states that 'the complex...character of social life stems from...[the] flux-like dialectic of immobility and mobility'. Immobility is often positioned as a lack of movement. However, across the social and human sciences, 'immobility' has developed etymologically as a code for political, economic, material, cultural, emotional and affective assemblages of blocked, stuck and transitional movement (Khan 2016). In terms of transnational migration, immobility can pertain to structures, classifications and experiences of confinement, arrested time-consciousness, liminality, and isolation produced by neo-liberal globalization, war, and transnational migration. Immobility is imposed; but also governs people's efforts to subvert, resist or re-construct narratives of freedom, progress or integration in response to the neoliberal policies such as immigration points systems. This applies also to the 'sometimes-migrant' who may or may not transgress national borders. Immobility can be tool of governmentality that a society can deploy to regulate (also block, arrest or frustrate) socio-economic and culturally defined modes of movement. In turn, both immobility and mobility can embody challenges to a states' regulative power, policies and regimes. Abortion is banned by governments in 26 countries around the world, prohibited in a further 37 countries except where it is necessary to save a woman's life; and permitted only in cases in which it would protect the woman's health in a further 60 countries (Guttmacher Institute 2017). In challenging the immobilities of abortion regulation, women travel - across many borders across the world from Canada to the USA in the 1960s, from Mexico to the USA in the 1990s and from state to state within the States (Gilmartin and White 2011; Landau and Long 2015; Freeman 2017).

The regulation of abortion in Ireland is rooted in colonialism. That is, the law on abortion – north and south – dates back to the UK Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which criminalised abortion. In the UK – England, Scotland and Wales – the Abortion Act 1967 legalised abortions up to 24 weeks (if there was a risk to physical or mental health of woman or her existing children) and beyond in particular circumstances. In the Republic of Ireland the 1861 Act continued to legislate abortions until the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018. However, following the 1992 constitutional amendment, and the introduction of the Common Travel Area between Britain and Ireland in 1997, border checks were effectively loosened with the consequence that women were able to travel to Britain for abortions with minimal [identity documents](#), depending on their means. The illegality of abortion had been enshrined in the nation's constitution in 1983 (Eighth Amendment). The turning point in the south of Ireland came about following a particularly well-reported and studied case there (Gilmartin and Migge 2016; Gilmartin and White 2011; Smyth 2005). A fourteen-year-old child was being taken to England, by her family, for an abortion following long-term abuse, including rape, by a family friend and a subsequent pregnancy. On arrival in Britain they found that the Irish courts had issued an injunction against their travel so they returned to Ireland before the abortion was carried out – the courts were upholding the constitutional recognition of the rights of the unborn child in the 8th Amendment. The case became hotly debated, with demonstrations against the ruling – but also international condemnation, particularly acute given at the time Ireland held the presidency of European Union. The Irish government helped the family to fund their appeal against the Supreme Court and the injunction was lifted. This was the first time that changes had been forced by a global and local campaign that problematised, in regressive colonial terms, the Irish state as ‘cruel’, but also backward’, in its pursuit of its anti-abortion agenda. Nationhood, modern Irishness, had become problematised in international political and national legal arenas through the pregnant body of a sexually abused child (Lees 2002). Changes in the law were about marking Ireland out as an equal player in liberal democracies; as a modern country that does not restrict the mobility of its citizens.

The phenomenon of reproductive mobilities in regard to women in Ireland thus invokes an interesting legal, historical and cultural interplay between mobility and immobility. The control of mobility is implicated in maintaining an Irish nationhood, in protecting an imagined nation, which, as Yuval-Davis (1997) argues, is rooted in gender and reproduction. In the Republic of Ireland, ‘post-colonial nationalism promoted Catholicism as a religious signifier of richness as distinct from the UK’ (Side 2016, 1790). The Irish state maintains ‘constructions of Irishness in traditionally familial, patriarchal and conservatively Catholic terms’ (Smyth 2005, 1). Similarly, in Northern Ireland, the interplay between the Catholic and Protestant churches and the national discourses of family have produced a highly restrictive reproductive mobility regime. Hence the mobilities of the female body become highly regulated, economically, politically, socially and culturally.

The women's stories presented at the beginning of this article situate the human amongst these political and religious geopolitics of abortion. They evoke visceral intensities of blood, tears, stigma and shame in the case of Lucy Watmough, and the asymmetrical geographies of isolation and care in the case of Siobhán Donohue. They evoke the intensity of political and religious beliefs and associated rituals around childbirth. Whilst different in context and detail, they both illustrate the emotional violence of legal, religious and historical institutional powers that, as they enter women's bodies, may constitute one of the most profound and intrusive forms of bodily colonisation. As Watmough's story illustrates, the law forces deeply distressing, private and personal life-events to become mobilised outside of the domestic and national sphere of home—and in the examples cited by Donohue, remobilised in the case of those women who feel they must return to the UK to collect the ashes of their unborn foetus. Rituals of religious ‘burial’ surrounding unborn foetuses illustrate the deep often contradictory entanglements of religious belief and personal choice—and an affective and emotional landscape of guilt, rationalisation, and some belief in the ‘life’ of the unborn child as the choice is taken to extinguish it. These women navigate the political constellations (Cresswell 2011) of im/mobility, not only in their journeys for abortion, but in the narrativization of their stories, which realign the axis of power in moving themselves and the reader through their telling. Through

restrictions on the movement of bodies, of pregnant bodies and bodily ashes, im/mobilities become entwined with legalities and practicalities.

At the same time, Fletcher (2005, 370 cited in Side 2016, 1790) argues, ‘reproductive activities do not simply respond to the contours of the nation – they also challenge the nation and its work of cultural reproduction’. Where there is repressive regulation and immobilisation, there is resistance. As a result of political action by citizens across genders and faiths, on 26th May 2018 the Republic of Ireland voted overwhelmingly, 66.4 per cent to 33.6 per cent, to overturn the Eight Amendment. This led to calls for a similar change in law in the north of Ireland and in October 2019, in the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly, the UK Parliament voted for the decriminalisation of abortion there. However, abortion services will not be in line with the rest of the UK until later this year. Up until 1992, the freedom to travel out of Ireland for an abortion, as illustrated in our stories, was ambiguous but women were in effect immobilised. Their travel to Great Britain was fundamentally constrained not only by law but by lack of affordable access to abortion. Until 2017, abortions were not available on the UK National Health Service (NHS) to those travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. Despite deep-rooted religious cultures the appetite for change was apparent. Amnesty International found that nearly ‘three-quarters of people’ in Northern Ireland wanted a change in abortion law: ‘It’s entirely unacceptable that women and girls there still have to travel over to Britain to access abortion care’ (BBC 2018). Action was being taken against women recently - the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland pursued the prosecution of a woman for giving abortion pills to her 15-year old daughter, although in October 2019 the high court in Belfast ruled in favour of a woman who had travelled to London for an abortion after a scan showed that her pregnancy was not viable (Carroll 2019). With the strict enforcement of the law meaning a near-total abortion ban, women were prosecuted for procuring abortion pills in 2016 and 2017 (Martinson 2018). In 2018, the UK government published new guidance for healthcare professionals on abortions in Northern Ireland, including support for women wishing to travel to Great Britain for abortion. As BBC Health Correspondent Marie-Louise Connolly suggests whilst the guidelines ‘remove the abortion issue from under the shadows’, they did not ‘remove all stigma’ (BBC 2019).

Much work on gendered mobilities has focused on the ways in which women’s mobilities are constrained at the micro scale, particularly as a result of the demands of domestic labour (Murray 2008; Uteng and Cresswell 2008). These reproductive mobilities illuminate often neglected connections to macro-scale mobilities and in particular the tensions between scales of movement and its regulation. The conceptualisation of im/mobility highlights the variegated movements around reproduction. Im/mobility regimes are produced in Irish women’s attempts to subvert the political-legal ban or restriction on abortion by travelling to the British mainland. In doing so they challenge and reshape the gendered contours of Irish national identity. In the case of Irish abortion, mobility has been produced within a punitive legal regime that reveals a geographies of difference. These geographies enfold ideas around gender, the state, social class, morality, subversion and chaos, religious and national identity, and the undulations of political tension which regulate movement. It situates women travelling for abortion as agents of reproductive mobility, which they use to exercise autonomy and choice over their bodies during a delimited time of unwanted pregnancy.

Agency, however is differentiated, for example, between ‘native’ women and others, with poorer women, women in refuges, women from minority groups, asylum seekers, and others without papers having fewer resources to overcome restrictions (Bloomer and O’Dowd 2014). As Gilmartin and White (2011, 277) argue the abortion question in Ireland is a question of mobility rights; and that a full understanding requires attention to the ‘differentiated politics and mutual constitution of mobility and gender and Ireland’. Particular discourses of un/Irishness also come to light in the situating of ‘mainly African’ refugees who enter the country when pregnant and are then categorised as ‘illegals’ (Luibhéid 2013). As Gilmartin and White (2011, 278) argue, the ‘only women with guaranteed mobility rights are Irish women’. Reproductive rights in the case of travelling for abortion need to be framed around a perspective that encompasses legality, affordance and cultural normalcy. In the present day, post-referendum Irish Republic and a slowly changing political landscape in Northern Ireland, women

have been granted the ‘privilege’ of travelling for abortion but not the socio-economic affordances nor socio-cultural normalcy. Hence, they remain immobilised, despite the ‘freedom’ of movement from one country to another, for some women.

The immobilisation of women is legitimised through idealised notions of the family and the regulation of women’s transgression in public as well as private spaces (Walby 1997). In travelling from their nation states and their regulatory ideologies and practices, women are also travelling from their place in the home, where they are emplaced and immobilised (Massey, 1994), despite, paradoxically, the necessities to be highly mobile in order to play out their gender roles. This tension, between prescribed roles and societal constraints is ingrained in every aspect of society, from governance to everyday practices. It is embedded in the forces that necessitate and freeze women’s movements as they go about exercising their reproductive rights as illuminated in Rossiter’s (2015) ‘On the run: a story from the London-Irish abortion underground’. Rossiter recalls finding a woman she was ‘stiff and immobile at the information desk’ at Heathrow airport unable to make the last part of the journey into London alone, even though she had been briefed on travel arrangements beforehand. Moving out of their ascribed spaces, for women, is burdensome, but at the same time becomes an act of social, political and emotional resistance.

As Moss and Dyck (1996, 474) suggest, the body is a site of repression and resistance and ‘coming to terms with the disjuncture between one’s own body and its representation is important in defining the boundaries of individual identities: boundaries are continually adjusting’. This is also true of the metaphorical body of the nation which, when considered in gendered terms embodies women with the same need for male control over bodily and territorial borders, and for the protection of purity and order. Women travelling for abortion are thus ‘some-times migrants in negotiating the seemingly porous borders between friendly nation states. Although women’s migratory movements are more often attached to mobile labour and women migrating temporarily from Ireland for abortion do not fall into the category of labour migrant, there are connectivities and continuities in their experiences. The legal, political, institutional and cultural restrictions on access to health services for abortion severely impacts Irish women’s ability to stay at home and on their mental health, forcing them into mobile positions of secrecy, concealment and ‘subversive mobility’ in which abortion is undertaken under a shroud of clandestinity, shame and guilt. That is, they are forced into positions where migration can also entrench traditional roles and inequalities and expose women to new vulnerabilities (Jolly and Reeve 2005). Thus their subversion must be veiled given their precarious legal status, exclusion and isolation.

Im/mobilised bodies: pain, comfort, mourning and resistance

Returning to our two stories, Watmough’s conveys a deeply visceral account of the bordered body in pain, and the affective and emotional dimensions that are produced by her mobility. She is highly mobile: she has travelled to London from Ireland and back again, stopping only for the abortion. Her inability or lack of desire to dwell in the location that this took place meant that she had to endure the procedure partially conscious, her body and mind in continual motion. Her mobilities were both enforced and constrained by forces beyond the local. The denial of reproductive rights had not only forced her from her home to an alien place but deprived her of the comfort of her ‘own bed’ afterwards. Watmough was required to endure not only bodily discomfort but the embodied shame that accompanies the social and cultural stigma of abortion as marked out by religion and national identity. Her account of bleeding on the train was a deeply embodied and visceral experience; and one of stigma. The story interweaves the ‘dirtiness’ of her bleeding body and the ‘dirtiness’ associated with acts of abortion. The micro-mobilities at the site of her body are tangible, the standing on the train bleeding and the waiting at the airport for her flight home. The enmeshment of bodily pain and legal restriction in her experience necessitates seeing such bodies not as autonomous or stable entities rather but embodied ontologies—“brain-body-world entanglements”, of human, biological, social, economic, technical and affective assemblages that are part of the world (Blackman 2012, 1). Her body is leaking, not only in the physiological sense, but in its connections and disconnections to state and nation.

An analysis of personal stories, like Watmough's, with their stark imagery shows a converging intensification of historical and spatial specifications, which can help us to understand how their mobilisation in national as well as transnational spaces and locations should be read within and as a product of particular historical – colonial and post-colonial, religious and secular—contexts. Watmough's bodily and sensory experiences bring forth “bleedthroughs”, “territorial phantoms” and “scars” that blur the lines between border and body, inside and outside (Billé 2018, 63). In terms of the tormented feelings, and pains that move through the body, her story also points to other borders, that is between what is normal, tolerable, speakable and not. It shows how the memories of bodily experience, as translated into her account, are remembered by the body on which the “past has made its mark” (Fassin 2007, 175). As with refugee migration, discourses of human, humanity and human rights also become entangled with the politics of mobility and moving across borders of nations, legal and cultural limitations, and endurance. Stories point to traumatic breakdown and recovery, sometimes redemption, but more often irrevocable damage. This is often bound up in the dislocated movements of bodies and objects of significance.

In Donahue's story, her ‘lonely’ body was ‘out of place’ on her journey across the Irish sea, amongst the ‘businessmen the hen parties’. It was displaced, again, forced to move in order to experience her ‘greatest tragedy’, in an unfamiliar place. Yet in contrast to the isolation of Watmough, Donahue drew comfort in her experience of England. She experienced Liverpool as distinct to the city in her mobile imagination, as a place of refuge and care, a ‘beacon of light’ and ‘a warm and vibrant place that took care of’ them. The city itself normalised her migration as much as the hat that she walked around the city trying to find, and the memorial booklet that was given to her after the abortion. The experiences of ‘home’ and ‘away’ for sometimes-migrating for abortion cannot be characterised according to comfort and alienation, but in the case of are as much dependent on the local contexts in which they are emplaced as the more global geopolitics that create them. Relationalities at the micro-level can both disrupt and reinforce the association of home with safety and away with alienation. It should be noted, however that whilst the ‘home’ and ‘away’ countries may be Ireland and England, it is not the sovereign states that are critical at this scale, but the relationships of care within them. Rather, the reproductive mobility stories directly demonstrate ways mobility and immobility are used as tactics of states’ regulative power in regard to migration policies and regimes, the hospitality of host-states, and international relations, as well as the colonial spectre of historical border disputes (Khan 2016). These stories, in which hats and mittens appear as ghostly material mementos, are also stories of violent cultural, personal and political histories of loss. They point to the harsh geography of abortion mobility from Ireland—while shot through with a sense of profound relief. If England's landscape is described as a welcoming one, its warm reception is underpinned by alienating experiences akin to forced displacement, legacies of loss and remembrance, economic expediency, and the legal embargoes on pregnant women.

As much as these are accounts of enforced migration and hardship, the mobilities of women migrating for abortion are nevertheless transformative, as they are resisting absolute immobilisation. Women are enacting their mobility freedoms to move across borders for their reproductive rights, resisting the diminution of rights imposed by their nation states (Freeman 2016; Side 2017). They do so not only in their corporeal travels to another country for abortion, but through the telling of their stories. In doing so, women are defying the hegemonic masculinised story which is of confinement and immobilisation, using their bodies to re-write, to ‘enunciate’ (De Certeau 1988) space. As the women moved through space they were ‘manipulat[ing] spatial organisations’ (Ibid., 101), redefining the spaces through which they travelled in these, often foreign, cities. In turn, their mobilities are produced through their cultural and material engagement with these spaces and mobility itself becomes representative of women's social and political and emotional struggles (Murray and Vincent 2014). Through their mobility, they are bound up in ‘fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve...’ (De Certeau 1988: 108). Women who travel for abortion, and who speak about it, are ‘moving dangerously’ (Murray and Vincent 2014; Parkins 2009) in challenging state ideologies, societal patriarchy,

repressive gender frameworks and a deeply entrenched moral conservatism (Bloomer and O’Dowd 2014).

In the Twitter account (@Ireland) of her travels from Ireland to England for an abortion, Janet Ní Shuilleabháin writes: ‘I only have one regret about my decision to have an abortion and that is I had to travel’, lying about the reason for her trip, and vivid memories of the alien floors of waiting rooms, corridors, clinics, wards and staying in a strange bed and breakfast (Her, 2018). Her tangible anger at her forcible displacement from the familiarity and comfort of home is akin to the stories of refugees, who undergo incredible hardships to reach the safety of Europe, but must navigate instead the ‘hostis’ of contemporary migration politics (Derrida, 2000). That is, occurring within transnational contexts of forced migration between Ireland and mainland Britain, stories such as Ní Shuilleabháin’s are suffused with manifold ideas that link hospitality, refuge and international politics to women’s search for bodily autonomy and ‘freedom’. They also gesture to the fluvial flows of the everyday quotidian and domestic politics of women’s opposition to the restrictions placed on their freedoms at ‘home’. Home, as Scheper-Hughes (2001) writes of the family, and particularly of the Irish family subject to the losses of out-migration and the secrecies of sectarianism and violence, is one of the most violent social institutions there is. Her work speaks to differences between the nation as ‘home’ and the domestic institution of the household that is also home for women who must become politically and temporarily homeless in their travels for abortion.

The moral sensibilities that run through these stories are apparent. ‘Yes’ campaigner Ellie Flynn (2018) reported stories of physical and verbal abuse (being spat at, called a murderer) recounted by women choosing to undergo abortion, compared with the heart-rending tales of women seeing perfect ‘wee arms...[and] wee fingers’ on scans of unviable foetuses by women refusing to terminate their pregnancy. This demonstrates the intense domain of public affect that polarises women between the tropes of murderer or tragic victim, and invisibilises stories where pragmatism, ambiguity, and relief rather than guilt or torn consciences may be more prominent. Flynn observed how, on welcoming the referendum result, the crowds chanted ‘Savita, Savita’, in memory of Savita Halappanavar, a woman who died of sepsis after being refused an abortion. Halappanavar’s death occurred as a result of complications after a miscarriage following doctors’ refusal to terminate the pregnancy until the foetal heartbeat had stopped because ‘this is a Catholic country’ (Bloomer and O’Dowd 2014:371) Halappanavar’s death caused widespread international and national reaction. It also pointed to fear, confusion and conflicting beliefs among medical staff. It elevated Halappanavar to the iconic plane of both sacrificial mother and purified holy Virgin who embodies the naturalisation and undermining of colonial presence, and anxieties around the Irish nations’ religious, sectarian, and secular roots. The celebration of Halappanavar, and women like her, shows both a nationalist and religious affect connected to a symbol of women’s autonomy and liberation—but also augur the strengthening of an ecumenical transnational and unified Irish nation and Church in response to the liberationist politics of women’s bodies. It illustrates the bifurcation of public space and relations of mobility and immobility; the ‘yes’ campaigner is moving dangerously in navigating the uneven mobile terrain. It also allows for incorporating an affective dimension into this terrain, which is also one of a feminist socio-legal translation which effects legal change through ‘the motivation of collective joy, the mourning of damaged and lost lives, the sharing of legal knowledge, and the claiming of the rest of reproductive life’ (Fletcher 2018:233).

For Lentin (2015: 183) Halappanavar’s death is additionally significant not solely as one of a woman whose reproductive practices were controlled by Irish patriarchy, but as a migrant woman, planning to give birth in a country that only eight years previously, in the 2004 Citizenship Referendum, had legislated against migrant children’s access to citizenship. This othering of migrant women’s pregnant bodies, which emerged from the debates surrounding the 2004 Citizenship Referendum, made gendered and racialised bodies such as Halappanavar’s central to the re-articulation of Irishness as white supremacy, and other to the ideology of the state. Abortion then is just as institutional as it is personal, and emotive personal testimonies and factual statistical truths are invoked to justify the conjunction of personal, national and institutional politics. The stories show also that the various

feeling-states of im/mobility—permanent, temporary, structural, and subjective—are systematically but also transiently, intangibly, historically, materially, and symbolically present in the division and provision of power, space and privilege in society. They implicate both emotion and affect, as constitutive of politics, society, and local and global economies that impinge on self and subjectivity and the ways in which they these come into contact with others—as well as intensities of movement and stasis in ways that “humans”, “things” and “Nature” *move* or do not in response to real and imagined encounters with each other (Khan 2016). They are germane to Ahmed’s (2004) cultural politics of emotion which proposes that affects circulate ‘surfacing’ and ‘sticking’ in historically, ideologically meaningful ways to bodies, signs and objects to create, here, social and national collectivities, and storied forms of opposition to the material and discursive structures of the nation-state.

Conclusion

In this article we positioned the storied female body as the site for reading as emplaced, enfolded and socially emplotted. The fecund mobile body of Irish women travelling for abortion is situated between the home and the state; it is both in place and out of place, some-times migrating, mobilised and immobilised. The moving bodies, and the pains that move around the body and between the body and its situation, raise questions about causal chains—human, legal, imaginary and empirical—that govern moving people. They illustrate the complex geographies of women’s physical travel on the island of Ireland, in the process of obtaining an abortion. Their mobilities are controlled and yet they leak out, viscerally, into the masculinised world around them; they are im/mobilised. The significance of these stories, however, as discussed, is not only in their detail but in their telling. Irish women’s stories are testaments to their suffering at the hands of unresponsive and uncaring state and religious institutions. These Irish women’s narratives and testimonies visibilise and proclaim their histories of temporary displacement, suffering, and exclusion from the nationalist ideal of Ireland. Their stories reveal the absorption of reproductive im/mobility by emotional and affective processes, and the back-and-forth between anguish and hope, past and present, in the mutual sharing of deep experience.

In being mobile through space and across borders, in seeking abortion that was prohibited in their own nation state, they were also resisting and loudly protesting society’s silence toward their plight, and the forms of social and political silence that perpetuate suffering. They are mobilising themselves and their stories. Experiences of abortion and mobility are rooted historically in penalising, even vengeful, formations of nation, community and place. Like Side (2016, 1794), we conclude that women travelling for abortion are not ‘tourists’; their stories are ones of pain and mourning, of labour and hardship, not relaxation and pleasure. The conceptualisation of im/mobility allows us to emphasise processes of temporality, and emotionality/affectivity, which pose two challenges to the concept of abortion tourism. First, while tourism implies a finite beginning and end to a pleasurable trip, the battle of Irish women for access to abortion is a process that extends across time (Fletcher 2018). Second, ‘tourism’ belies the multi-layered affects of pain, anguish, and joy involving reproductive harms and opposition to them (e.g. protest against the Eighth Amendment), the visceral impact on individuals in the context of social struggle in Ireland and the UK.

Sometimes women travelling for abortion experience consolation in the places that they travel to, but this is comfort only in the context of their enforced absence from their place of home. They have no choice as this had been denied. They were the ‘sometimes migrant’ whose mobility stories are not exceptional, but as once they were obscured and invisibilised, they are now being told in acts of resistance and transformation. At the same time, we are acknowledging that the ‘sometimes-migrant’ is a differentiated category, so that mobilities are experienced unevenly within it. There are ‘migrant’ women whose cross-border movement is so restricted that they are unable to travel for abortion (Side 2016); they, and their stories, are fully immobilised. The translation of stories into legal change is not a strategy that can be rolled out and finished (like a holiday): rather, stories contribute cumulatively and in unforeseen to the value of law as more fully fleshed-out, enduring social resource and energy (Fletcher 2018). The stories of reproductive mobilities have themselves have been mobilised. They can

tell us much about mobile justice and the ways it is sought, not only in relation to women in Ireland, but in the regulation and control of all subjugated bodies and their mobilities.

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