

Not At Home: The Affective Labour of Repealing the 8th Amendment

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the durational art campaign, *Not At Home*, through the lens of affect theory in order to explore how performance moves us: physically and emotionally; individually, but also socially and collectively. First performed in 2017, *Not At Home*, created by Grace Dyas (THEATREclub) and Emma Fraser (Nine Crows) focuses on the journey to Britain from Ireland undertaken by abortion-seeking women. Following a referendum in 1992, the right to travel for an abortion was inserted into the Irish Constitution, and thus it became legal for Ireland to export the need for abortion services. *Not At Home* draws on women's testimonies of their journeys to communicate the lived reality of the 8th Amendment as told by those who have experienced the consequences. The recreation of the journey through performance is, the article argues, best understood through affect theory. The analysis explores the affective labour undertaken by the audience, to quote Sara Ahmed, of 'moving and being moved as a form of labour or work, which opens up different kinds of attachments to others, in part through the recognition of this work as work.' (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*).

Keywords: performance, affect, shame, activism, testimony

INTRODUCTION

Following the legalisation of abortion in Britain in 1967, thousands have made the journey 'across the water' from Ireland to access abortion services. According to UK Department of Health statistics, between 1980 and 2017, at least 171,795 women and girls provided Irish addresses¹. Cultural taboo has silenced these experiences and concealed the consequences (emotional, physical, and financial) of forcing people who are pregnant² to go to such lengths to access reproductive health services. The journey to Britain undertaken by abortion-seeking women was the focus of the durational art campaign *Not At Home*, created by Grace Dyas (THEATREclub) and Emma Fraser (Nine Crows). First performed at the National College of Art and Design from 14-17th September 2017 as part of the Dublin Fringe Festival, the intention was to ask the audience: 'not "Can she have an abortion?" but "Should she have to travel to do so?"' (Dyas, 2017). The project involved collecting women's testimonies describing their journeys and these were then incorporated into the performance. This contributed to the process of breaking the silence around abortion experiences, a process that was so vital to the victory of the campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment in the 2018 referendum. As Fintan O'Toole (2018) summarised:

The process mattered, political leadership mattered, campaigning mattered. But it was stories that won. Exit polls showed that by far the biggest factors in determining how people voted were 'people's personal stories that were told to the media', followed by 'the experience of someone they know'.

¹ This figure does not include women who gave a false or non-Irish address. Irish Family Planning Association, <https://www.ifpa.ie/Hot-Topics/Abortion/Statistics> (page no longer available). It should be noted that while abortion services are available on request in Ireland under the provisions of the 2018 Abortion Regulation Act, this is only legal up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. As a consequence, some people are still forced to travel abroad. Abortion was decriminalised in Northern Ireland in 2019 but, as of writing, the NI Executive has failed to commission full abortion services, so the need remains to travel 'across the water' to England for abortion services.

² *Not At Home* addresses 'the experiences of women' so, when discussing the performance, I will refer to women; that said, transgender and non-binary people, who can and do become pregnant, are also affected by the necessity to travel for abortion services.

Not At Home featured video, sound installation and live performance to recreate women's experiences of travelling abroad for abortion services. The installation created an immersive experience to communicate the lived reality of the 8th Amendment as told by those who have experienced the consequences. This article will explore how affect underpins the activist intent of the work and examine the ways in which the audience's participation can raise awareness of 'moving and being moved as a form of labour or work' (Ahmed, 2004: 201).

Following a referendum in 1992, the right to travel for an abortion was inserted into the Irish Constitution, as was the right to information about abortion services, and thus it became legal for Ireland to export the need for abortion services. The hypocrisy of forcing women to travel was made clear by the campaign title, *Not At Home*, and the stated aim of the work was 'to make visible the experiences of women who travel abroad to access safe abortion services, to highlight the consequences of Ireland's abortion laws and to connect women who have travelled in solidarity.'³ The fact that we do not hear the voices of women who cannot travel, due to reasons such as financial costs and visa restrictions, highlights their further exclusion; they do not have the option of travelling to access safe abortion services. *Not At Home* endeavoured to appeal to several audiences including the women who have travelled (a private event was held on 13 September 2017 for these women to attend), and also the audience member who is open to engagement with the issue of abortion⁴. Dyas and Fraser (2017) are clear that: 'This is not a sermon for the converted.' However, it is likely that the installation at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) galvanised 'converted' supporters of Repeal and affirmed their solidarity. Conversely, it is uncertain if audience members open to engagement attended, and if they did, whether they engaged in active emotional and conceptual participation which resulted in a change in their stance towards abortion. This performance was part of an ongoing, national conversation around reproductive justice in Ireland and as such, it is hard to measure the extent to which the work effected social change. Rather this article retraces my journey through *Not At Home* as a means of putting affect at the centre of analysis and conveying this affective experience to the reader. My analysis will explore the political affects generated through the performance; affects which contribute to breaking the silence around abortion experiences and thereby have the capacity to move the audience, physically, emotionally, and perhaps politically.

PERFORMANCE AS 'ARTIVISM'

Performance has been central to much of the artwork which has contributed to the debate around reproductive rights, from processions and protests to galleries and theatres. In *Tremble, Tremble*, which represented Ireland in the Venice Biennale 2017, visual artist Jesse Jones expanded her range of media to incorporate performance into the mix of text, sculpture, and film. Jones worked with Olwen Fouéré, who played the figure of a witch whose giant presence on the installation's screens dominated the space, as did the projection of her arms and hands onto moving curtains which embraced and ushered the audience around the installation. Jones' work enacts a bewitching of the judicial system, tearing down the structures which police women's bodies to create a new space rooted in the law of female bodies. In contrast, Tara Flynn's one woman show *Not A Funny Word* (2018, co-produced by THISISPOPBABY and the Abbey Theatre) used humour and song as a means of sharing her testimony of travelling from Ireland for an abortion. The range of performances that have been produced during the decades of campaigning for reproductive justice attest to the array of strategies that have been drawn on to share abortion experiences.

Theatre and performance have served to chart the changing nature of abortion journeys. At the time of the insertion of the 8th Amendment into the Irish Constitution (1983), 'taking the ferry' was a commonly used euphemism to denote the journey to the UK to access abortion services. Evelyn O'Malley's discussion of two plays, Sarah Binchy's *Thorny Island* (2012) and Eva O'Connor's *My Name is Saoirse* (2014), explores the queasy affects of the ferry journey taken to obtain abortion services and the affective dissonance generated through performance of these plays (O'Malley, 2019: 23-38). Women undertaking this journey in the 1980s and 1990s were offered support and accommodation by members of the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group (see Rossiter, 2009). The removal in 2001 of a legal requirement that non-resident women remain overnight in Britain following an abortion, together with the advent of cheaper flights, meant that the duration of the stay and mode of transport changed on the 'abortion trail'; yet, the cost, shame, and trauma endured. From the 1990s, the rolling suitcase came to denote women's journeys to access abortion services and was a striking visual image deployed by pro-choice campaigners. In 2016, protesters in London marched to the Irish Embassy with suitcases in tow, while ROSA (For Reproductive rights, against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity) organised a walk with suitcases from Dublin city centre to the airport in May 2018 in order to highlight abortion journeys.

³ <http://notathomeireland.com/#OurStory> (Website no longer available).

⁴ I did not attend the private event; my performance analysis arises from my experience of the event which was open to the public.

Dyas and Fraser describe *Not At Home* as ‘a durational art campaign on the subject of Ireland’s abortion laws’ (Dyas, 2017). ‘Artivism’ designates the role of art-makers as agents of social change. Rodney Diverlus explains how artivism draws on the strengths of both art and activism through:

the understanding that, in the absence of social consciousness, art cannot reach its full range of potentials; and without creativity, activism risks being one-dimensional and irrelevant’ (Diverlus, 2016: 191).

The artivism of the Repeal campaign was animated by demands for reproductive justice and made concrete through a collective set up in 2015 by artists Cecily Brennan, Alice Maher, Eithne Jordan, and Paula Meehan: the Artists’ Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment. Their initial online petition collected over 3,000 signatures and soon developed into a movement. Prior to the referendum in 2018, the Artists’ Campaign participated in Limerick’s biennial art festival EVA International (*Not At Home* was also part of the festival programme in 2018). The striking imagery displayed on the banners which were held aloft during the festival’s opening procession contested the cultural iconography of Woman⁵. Artist Rachel Fallon’s ‘Aprons of Power’ bore political messages and eye symbols which evoked the surveillance of women’s bodies; she stated:

I think visuals are really important to people and it does change how you see something. If it’s not aggressive, it leaves an opening to talk rather than presenting something as a dogmatic fact. As a counterbalance to these at times horrific photos the anti-choice side like to show, [we] try to create a visual culture that is more hopeful (Saner, 2018).

This hopefulness resonates with Diverlus’ description of the utopian impulse of artivism which is driven by a desire to change our world: ‘Art gives us a vision of what our world should be; activism gives us the toolbox to craft that ideal world’ (Diverlus, 2016: 206). Jill Dolan’s proposal of utopian performatives draws on theatre and performance’s potential as ‘a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world’ (Dolan, 2005: 2). For Dolan, ‘the experience of performance, the pleasure of a utopian performative, even if it doesn’t change the world, certainly changes the people who feel it’ (Dolan, 2005: 19). Performance does not give us a vision of how our world might be but an experience of how it might *feel*: my analysis of *Not At Home* centres the experiential and its political potential.

It is important to note the difficulties encountered in bringing abortion experiences into the public and cultural sphere during the decades long campaign against the 8th Amendment; obstacles which were experienced right up to referendum day. During the month of May 2018, *Not At Home* toured venues across Ireland and in the week leading up to the referendum, visited the towns of Wexford and Portlaoise, as well as Temple Bar in central Dublin. However, several venues including ones in Galway and the Crawford College of Art and Design’s Gallery in Cork withdrew their invitations. Following these cancellations, Dyas and Fraser were faced with a financial deficit⁶. Crawford College cited the Charities Regulator guidelines to defend their decision, claiming that hosting the work was inappropriate because ‘as a publicly-funded body we need to be conscious of our duty to maintain and portray a neutral position’ (Falvey, 2018). This raised concerns over censorship of artistic expression; concerns that also surfaced when the Charities Regulator ordered the removal of the Repeal the 8th mural by street artist Maser from the front of the Project Arts Centre, Dublin.

‘ABOVE ALL I’VE LISTENED TO WOMEN’

Performance was a vital component in facilitating the creation of spaces in which personal abortion experiences could be shared, and, crucially, heard. Irish theatre has been experiencing what Emilie Pine has described as a ‘witnessing boom’ as numerous testimonial plays bear witness to Ireland’s painful past; experiences which include sexual violence and institutional abuse (Pine, 2020: 12). The Artists’ Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment organised *A Day of Testimonies* at the Project Arts Centre in August 2017 which drew on visual art, film and theatre to give voice to women’s abortion experiences⁷. *Not At Home* also makes explicit the link between the personal and political by drawing on the personal testimonies of women. From April 2016, Fraser and Dyas started

⁵ See <http://www.rachelfallon.com/aprons-of-power-and-the-artists-campaign-to-repeal-the-eighth-amendment> (Accessed 10 December 2020).

⁶ See ‘Stand up to Censorship of Women’s Experiences’, <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/stand-up-to-censorship-of-women-s-experiences-women#/> (Accessed 2 February 2021).

⁷ See Artists Repeal the 8th, <https://vimeo.com/user62255734> (Accessed 2 December 2020).

collecting anonymous testimonies from women online⁸ and then in June 2017, they visited the British Pregnancy Advisory Services in Liverpool. They drew both from the crowd-sourced text and from their experience of travelling to Liverpool, to recreate women's experiences of travelling abroad in *Not At Home*.

Grace Dyas' work has marked her out as an important theatre-maker and activist; she is one of the founding members of THEATREclub (established in 2008). Together with companies such as ANU Productions and Brokentalkers, THEATREclub shares a desire to expose hidden histories. In 2017 Dyas further revealed her commitment to challenging a culture of silence when she published a blog post alleging Michael Colgan, then director of the Gate Theatre, had made comments of a sexual nature about her. Led by Dyas' courage, other women followed suit and Colgan became national news as they disclosed stories of inappropriate touching, highly sexualised comments, and workplace bullying. Dyas revealed that her decision to speak out was inspired by Waking the Feminists (WTF), a grassroots campaign set up in November 2015 to address gender equality in Irish theatre. #WTF was a direct response to the Abbey Theatre's announcement of its 'Waking the Nation' commemorative programme, which marginalised women's contributions with 90% male playwrights and 70% male directors. Waking The Feminists and the campaign for Repeal played out against revelations about the Cervical Check controversy in 2018, which revealed that women had been given incorrect smear test results, and the discovery of a mass grave at the Bons Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway⁹. Ireland faced a reckoning (which continues) with regard to the historical and ongoing silencing of women.

Dyas' decision to speak out also emerged from the context of the #MeToo movement which saw women publicly share their experiences of sexual harassment and assault. Women took control of their narrative and shared their stories to expose 'rape myths' and the structures that have supported a culture of sexual violence towards women. Jia Tolentino critiques the 'prayerful reverence' with which some people wrote about women 'speaking out' and that at times the 'importance of action was subtly elided' (Tolentino, 2019: 19). #MeToo served to assert the validity of women's experiences, and at its most powerful it took forms that ensured women's voices were heard and change effected. The context, forms, and spaces from which testimony emerge are crucial. The possibility of conceiving new forms through which women can voice their experiences and be heard to effect change was illustrated by the Citizen's Assembly in Ireland which was created in 2016 and comprised 99 randomly selected Irish citizens. They considered a range of important issues including the 8th Amendment. A majority of Assembly members ultimately recommended amending the Irish constitution to allow lawmakers to address the issue of abortion access. The Assembly acknowledged the importance of the personal testimonies of women in crisis pregnancies (including members of Terminations for Medical Reasons) in aiding their deliberations. This was also highlighted by the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar's statement in January 2018, that his decision to campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment was informed by the fact that 'above all I've listened to women'. The fight for abortion rights was ongoing for decades, and in his speech following the referendum result, Varadkar characterised the decades long campaign as a 'quiet revolution' (RTE, 2018). It is the failure to listen to loud and insistent demands for change that imposes silence. In order to think about transforming the act of listening into the potential to effect change, I want to now turn to consideration of the participatory demands that *Not At Home* makes on audience members: how engagement in affective labour has the potential to result in their being moved emotionally and politically, and possibly into action.

THE AFFECTIVE LABOUR OF PARTICIPATION

The work of a generation of theatre-makers, including THEATREclub, ANU, and Brokentalkers, was nurtured during the years of Róise Goan's directorship of the Dublin Fringe Festival from 2008 to 2013. What emerges from their work is what Miriam Haughton has described as a

paradigm shift in the forms of theatre and performance making in contemporary Ireland, challenging their audiences to participate physically, politically, and personally in their performances (...) (Haughton, 2015: 140-1).

I frame my discussion of *Not At Home* through affect theory in order to explore the potential political effects of participation. Affect is the forces and intensities that circulate between bodies, and that, in the words of Gregg and

⁸ <http://notathomeireland.com/#YourStory> (Website no longer available).

⁹ In 2014, the work of local historian Catherine Corless brought international attention to the Bons Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway (1925–61). Her research led to the discovery in 2017 of a mass grave in a septic tank containing the bodies of as many as 796 babies and children. In 2018, Vicky Phelan, a 43-year-old mother of two who has terminal cervical cancer, launched a High Court action after it emerged her smear test seven years earlier was later in a review found to be incorrect. Phelan was not informed of this until 2017. It emerged that 14 other women were also given false-negative test results.

Seigworth, arise 'in the midst of *in-between-ness*' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010: 1). An understanding of affect as the *circulation* of felt intensities is important as it is identified by movement and the potential for the creation of affective communities which are moving and in movement. Sara Ahmed's work in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* posits emotions as 'relational' and discusses the work involved in 'such affective forms of reorientation' (Ahmed, 2004: 8). Crucially it is the circulation of these felt intensities that takes us beyond the individual and has the potential to reshape our relationships and create communities. Performance offers the prospective creation of spaces in which the sharing of women's experiences might generate affective communities and solidarity. The activism of *Not At Home* served to diminish the isolation inflicted by the stigma and wall of silence around women's bodies and experiences. The affective imprint amplified the voices and testimonies of women, by carving out physical spaces which nurtured 'the real powers of affect, affect as potential: a body's capacity to affect and to be affected' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010: 2).

The ways in which the audience of *Not At Home* were invited to participate will underpin my discussion of the affective terrain navigated through the installation: the creation of an experiential opening which encourages engagement in affective labour. Ahmed states, 'justice has to leave room for feeling better, even if it is not *about* feeling better' (Ahmed, 2004: 201). Ahmed's argument enables us to link the emotional work of truth-telling with demands for reproductive justice; of fairness and equity for those who have to travel from Ireland to obtain abortion services. Ahmed is not advocating 'feeling better' as a reassuring or self-affirming sentimental act or cathartic release, rather she argues that there are a range of ways in which the work can be done and through a range of emotions but that what is fundamental is the continued effort to work at it. Ahmed describes 'moving and being moved as a form of labour or work, which opens up different kinds of attachments to others, in part through the recognition of this work *as* work' (Ahmed, 2004: 201). This resonates with Pine's argument that the audience of testimonial performances engage in labour as active witnesses:

Highlighting the role of immaterial labour is a political act, making visible the mnemonic, emotional, intellectual, and physical labour that are necessary to the witnessing event (Pine, 2020: 9).

In *Not At Home* the audience participate by moving through the installation and engaging in the political work of 'feeling better'. Abortion is, to apply a phrase of Ahmed's, 'saturated with affect', a site 'of personal and social tension' (Ahmed, 2004: 11), so I want to explore how *Not At Home* engages the audience with this 'sticky' subject.

THE JOURNEY THROUGH *NOT AT HOME*

In order to examine the affective experience of *Not At Home*, I will now retrace my passage through the spaces of the installation. As I approached the venue (NCAD) on the afternoon of 16 September 2017, my first view was of two women individually framed and isolated against screens in the large windows facing onto Thomas Street. They were dressed in hospital gowns and had rolling suitcases with them; visual cues which instantly referenced the act of travelling, as well as evoking the women as patients. This was echoed by the footage relayed on the screens behind, of airports and planes, roads, and of the movement of a journey seen from behind a rain-drenched window. Excerpts from the testimonies sourced by Fraser and Dyas were projected onto the exterior wall above the windows. These words resonated with the stories told by the women in the windows; stories which were amplified onto the street through speakers. My attention was then drawn to a black taxi which was parked outside and had a sign on the window inviting people to enter.

Central to *Not At Home* is the creation of a contemplative space, Dyas and Fraser describe how:

We want to create a waiting room. This is the waiting room where Irish citizens wait for this issue to be resolved. The audience will have autonomy in how they navigate the space. It's quiet. It's calm. It's reflective (Programme Note).

The first reflective space into which I entered was the taxi. I climbed in and listened to the radio playing an audio recording of taxi drivers from Liverpool who shared their experiences of driving women between the airport and the clinic. What was initially so striking was how the taxi drivers are accustomed to this experience, a pattern which attests to the numbers of women forced to undertake the journey. As their stories further unfolded what also emerged was their compassion; one of the taxi drivers said:

They are often alone. It makes me think of my daughter, if it was her, I would want someone to be with her, so I try look after them as best I can.

This contrasts with the words of one woman's testimony which were projected onto the wall of NCAD and described how Ireland 'turned her back in shame and wouldn't even look at me, pretended I wasn't there.'

Ahmed describes how shame ‘involves the de-forming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies “turn away” from the others who witness the shame’ (Ahmed, 2004: 103). This woman’s experience of having Ireland ‘turn(ed) her back in shame’ bears testament to the legacy of a politics of gendered shame central to the foundation of the modern Irish State and the formation of bodily and social spaces within it. The fledgling Irish nation constructed woman as the bearer of the nation’s moral purity with virginal maidens and married mothers as the feminine ideal. A network of institutions, which included Magdalen Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes, was used to hide away and punish women who had failed to live up to this ideal. Caelainn Hogan defines this network as the nation’s ‘shame-industrial complex’ which independent Catholic Ireland brought ‘to a sort of dark perfection’ (Hogan, 2019: 29). This serves to remind us that ‘home’, as feminist scholarship has argued, can function as an exploitative space where gendered labour is unpaid, as well as potentially being an unsafe place, as statistics on domestic violence attest. As I sat in the taxi parked outside the installation, everyday life continued on the streets around me. This evoked an experience of isolation suggestive of the silence surrounding women’s experiences of travelling for abortion services; a reminder of the complicity of ignoring women’s experiences while in plain sight. Yet the creation of a quiet space in which the audience member could sit with and reflect on these stories simultaneously counters the turning away that Ahmed describes: the silence, concealment, and isolation imposed by shame.

The taxi created a space of reflection which echoes the experience of isolation suffered by women travelling for abortion services, while simultaneously opening up the possibility of connection and the creation of an affective community; the realignment of bodies into a solidarity. We allow what we hear to make an ‘impression’, a term which Ahmed deploys to avoid distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought. Ahmed suggests:

We need to remember the ‘press’ in an impression. It allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very affect of one surface upon another, an affect that leaves its mark or trace. So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me (Ahmed, 2004: 6, Ahmed’s italics).

Not At Home created spaces of reflection which facilitate the circulation of affects which impress upon the audience. Though not assured, there is the potential for these affective traces to be carried beyond the moment of performance, and that the audience member is not just emotionally moved but might be moved to action; action which might manifest in a variety of ways, including voting.

THE WAITING ROOM

The taxi is a space of transit, of preparation, waiting, or recovery, and these experiences were also evoked through the interior spaces of the installation. Upon entering NCAD, I walked into a reception area in which the audience was advised to navigate the space as they wished. I gravitated towards the large open space of the room which fronts onto the street. Performers, dressed in hospital gowns with rolling suitcases in tow, took turns to walk into the framed spaces of the windows to read the testimonies contributed online. The Waiting Room was recreated at the back of the large space by a row of chairs and a coffee table. On this table, there were magazines which bore the affective traces of the waiting experience as they came from the clinic in Liverpool which Fraser and Dyas visited. What at first glance appeared to be a digital clock above the seating area, was a counter totalling the number of women who have travelled from Ireland to the UK for abortions since 1980: over 170,000. The experience of waiting and my acute awareness of time passing was heightened by the numbers counting upwards as women continued to travel as I sat there. To the right of the seats was a desk where a woman (Grace Dyas) read from a weighty book filled with women’s testimonies. This hefty volume evoked a book of Judgement with the Catholic Church as judge. However, *Not At Home* rebuked judgement as an endpoint, which implies that the act of listening is over, instead, offering an ongoing archive of experience as women continue to travel and add their stories.

To the left of the waiting area, and the opposite side of the room to where Dyas was seated at the table, was a large white plywood board with holes. There were several sets of headphones which could be plugged into these holes to enable the audience to listen to women’s experiences. The listener was placed in an active role, highlighted both by the fact that the audience chose which stories to connect to and made the decision of when to stop listening. I put on the headphones and listened to the myriad reasons why women choose to have an abortion; testimony which was inflected by attendant emotions of shame, guilt, anger, loss. The responsibility invoked by listening weighed heavily. Máiréad Enright notes that when abortion-seeking women’s ‘testimonies entered formal legal spaces they were constructed as stories of victimhood or tragedy’ (Enright, 2020: 107). In contrast, *Not At Home* gathers a wide-ranging archive of experience which defends women’s right to bodily autonomy, whatever

the circumstances. The cumulative effect of immersion in the installation peaked during this encounter, both through active listening and embodied awareness.

Campaigners for reproductive justice have had to fight against an Irish cultural narrative which associates shame with women's bodies and has thus endeavoured to erase them. Enright draws attention to the ways in which women's abortion experiences were excluded from legal debate unless 'they could abstract themselves, or be abstracted, from their embodied context' (Enright, 2020: 106). The eradication of women's bodies was also evidenced during the referendum campaign through the No campaign posters which depicted foetuses with no reference to the bodies who carry them. In contrast, the hugely successful online campaign *In Her Shoes: Women of the Eighth*¹⁰ positions the viewer inside the body of the woman whose experiences they are reading as each story is accompanied by a photo of the woman's shoes, taken from the perspective of her eyeline. *Not At Home* returned women's bodies in an immersive, experiential manner. Through the intimate act of listening through headphones, the audience located the woman's experiences in their own body and stood in her shoes. The articulation of women's embodied experiences between and through the body and bodies of the audience becomes a radical act. The audience member entered an auditory bubble where they are both in a private, isolated space, while simultaneously aware of the expansion of their body as they inhabit the women's stories. The boundaries between public and private were blurred to create a heightened embodied awareness that the personal is political. For me, this was one of the most affective moments as it facilitated:

the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds, and the drama of contingency, how we are touched by what we are near (Ahmed, 2010: 30).

The audience of *Not At Home* were positioned both within and outside; they were simultaneously immersed in the testimony, yet remained outside as the listener who can choose when to walk away. This experience recognises the labour of 'moving and being moved' and its potential to 'open(s) up different kinds of attachments to others' (Ahmed, 2004: 201).

The mobilisation of audience affective participation was heightened through the recreation of the auditory impressions of the experience of travelling for an abortion. This was evident in the sound design of the installation by Frank Sweeney and echoed in a publicity video produced for the campaign¹¹. In the video the experience of travelling is evoked through the sounds heard on the plane: of voices chatting, seatbelts clicking, and the repeated sound of the 'fasten your seatbelt' bell. The viewpoint is from behind windows (taxi, airport, plane), creating a sense of distance and isolation; a view that is at times blurred as rain trickles down the windowpane. Abruptly, the scene changes to a stark, white waiting room. It is empty but the soundscape echoes with the repetition of the 'fasten your seatbelt' signal. The auditory impressions evoke and recreate the in-between space of the journey. As the audience travel through *Not At Home* they occupy an in-between space, negotiating their immersion in the experience and their position as audience member. This is crucial to establishing the waiting room as a space for reflection; moreover, it is 'in the midst of *in-between-ness*' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010: 1) that the audience are made aware of their engagement in affective labour.

THE RECOVERY ROOM

After spending some time in The Waiting Room, I moved on to the room at the opposite end of the reception space: The Recovery Room. *Not at Home* encouraged the audience to 'feel better' and it does this through exploration of the sticky affects which circulate around abortion, including shame, guilt, anger, loss. In a work which was so affectively immersive, this final room was vital. It was an inviting, calm space with soothing lighting, and I felt a sense of relief after the intensity of The Waiting Room. There were several round tables at which people could sit, talk (or not), and process the experience and their thoughts. In the space of The Recovery Room, participants were invited to write down their comments on post-it notes which could be added to the collection of notes accumulating on the wall. The audience was offered the opportunity to add their testimony to the ongoing creation of an archive documenting women's lived experiences of abortion journeys¹².

The emphasis throughout *Not At Home* was on encounter, connection, and solidarity. Sandra Lee Bartky describes how the 'need for secrecy and concealment that figures so largely in the shame experience is disempowering ... for it isolates the oppressed from one another and in this way works against the emergence of

¹⁰ See <https://www.facebook.com/InHerIrishShoes/>

¹¹ See clip on <https://www.rte.ie/culture/2017/0821/898950-grace-dyas-and-i-am-one-of-the-authors-of-not-at-home/> (Accessed 2 March 2020).

¹² The last iteration of *Not At Home* took place in the week leading to the referendum, and saw the creation of a wall of post-it notes in front of the Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin. This is located in a central part of the city which many people pass by.

a sense of solidarity' (Bartky, 1990: 97). The affective experience of *Not At Home* served to counter this disempowerment through the realignment of bodies through affective labour; bodies which have directly felt the oppression of the 8th Amendment, and those which have been impressed upon through the sharing of these experiences. The installation created intensely affective moments with the capacity to produce an affective community: a solidarity generated through affective labour, which is moving in its flexibility and inclusivity. In the lead up to the referendum, I saw friends struggle with reliving the trauma and stigma of their experiences under the 8th Amendment, highlighting the personal toll as the referendum campaign unleashed the sticky affects around abortion. What was vital was that these affects impress upon the whole nation to engender a commitment to nuanced, reflective thinking and to continued movement towards justice. To this end, *Not At Home* endeavoured to immerse audiences in women's experiences of being forced to travel abroad for abortion services. This affective labour echoed the intense work required of the nation; a long overdue labour which placed women's lived realities and their embodied experiences centre stage, and ultimately led to support for women's right to bodily autonomy. And yet, as figures from the UK Department of Health and Social Care show, that despite travel restrictions owing to the pandemic, 194 women or girls who had abortions in Britain in 2020 gave addresses in the Republic of Ireland (Holland, 2021). Under The Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act, a medical abortion is only available on request up to 12 weeks¹³. As the need to travel for abortion services endures, so too does the need to facilitate the work of 'feeling better' the experiences of those who travel.

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¹³ Thereafter an abortion must be performed in a hospital, and only in exceptional circumstances where continuing the pregnancy would put the woman's life or health at serious risk or where the baby is likely to die within 28 days of birth due to a foetal abnormality.

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