ATLANTIS
Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies
47.2 (December 2025): 237-252
e-ISSN 1989-6840
DOI: http://doi.org/10.28914/Atlantis-2025-47.2.12

Institutional Violence in Moïra Fowley-Doyle's *All the Bad Apples*: Ireland's Architecture of Containment in Young Adult Fiction

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Until the late twentieth century, Magdalene laundries, mother and baby homes and industrial schools operated in Ireland, constituting what has become known as Ireland's *architecture of containment*. These institutions were originally established with the intention of helping women who got pregnant out of wedlock and vulnerable children, yet rapidly turned into carceral places that punished these citizens. A culture of secrecy, shame and silence gave place to a punitive system which soon became enforced both by the Catholic church and the state authorities. In recent years, Irish young adult literature has begun to tackle a variety of topics that had been previously considered controversial, including the institutionalisation of women and girls and institutional child abuse in Irish society. An example is Moïra Fowley-Doyle's 2019 novel *All the Bad Apples*, which emphasises the injustices endured by Irish women through the centuries, including institutional violence. This paper looks at how this young adult novel approaches some of the different forms of violence suffered by women and children within Ireland's *architecture of containment* and aims to illustrate how this work contributes to denouncing such violence by breaking the secrecy surrounding these crimes.

Keywords: young adult literature; Magdalene laundries; mother and baby homes; industrial schools; Moïra Fowley-Doyle; Irish literature

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Violencia institucional en *All the Bad Apples* de Moïra Fowley-Doyle: La arquitectura de contención en la narrativa juvenil irlandesa

Hasta finales del siglo XX, en Irlanda operaban las lavanderías de la Magdalena, los hogares para madres y bebés, y las escuelas industriales, que conformaban lo que se conoce como la 'arquitectura de contención' de Irlanda. Estas instituciones se crearon originalmente con la intención de ayudar a las mujeres que se quedaban embarazadas fuera del matrimonio y a los niños y niñas vulnerables, pero rápidamente se convirtieron en lugares carcelarios que castigaban a estas personas. Una cultura de secretismo, vergüenza y silencio dio paso a un sistema punitivo que pronto fue impuesto tanto por la Iglesia católica como por las autoridades estatales. En los últimos tiempos, la literatura juvenil irlandesa ha empezado a abordar diversos temas que antes se consideraban controvertidos, entre ellos la institucionalización de mujeres y niñas y el abuso institucional de menores en la sociedad irlandesa. Un ejemplo es la novela *All the Bad Apples* (2019) de Moïra Fowley-Doyle, que hace hincapié en las injusticias sufridas por las mujeres irlandesas a lo largo de los siglos, incluida la violencia institucional. Este artículo examina cómo esta novela para el público juvenil aborda algunas de las diferentes formas de violencia sufridas por mujeres y niñas/os dentro de la *arquitectura de contención* irlandesa y pretende ilustrar cómo contribuye a denunciar dicha violencia rompiendo el secretismo que rodea a estos crímenes.

Palabras clave: literatura juvenil; lavanderías de la Magdalena; hogares para madres y bebés; escuelas industriales; Moïra Fowley-Doyle; literatura irlandesa

1. Introduction

In recent years, Irish Young Adult—henceforth, YA—literature has seen significant growth, and it has begun to tackle a number of topics that had been previously considered controversial, including institutional child abuse and violence against women and girls. Patricia Kennon points to a number of emerging Irish YA authors whose texts "pose uncomfortable, important questions around power, abuse, trauma, misogyny, and historic as well as contemporary discriminations and violence against teenage girls and women in Ireland" (2020, 135). An example is Moïra Fowley-Doyle's 2019 novel *All the Bad Apples*, which emphasises the injustices endured by Irish women through the centuries, including institutional violence. Drawing from Foucault, José Medina contends that "official histories create and maintain the unity and continuity of a political body by imposing an interpretation on a shared past and, at the same time, by silencing alternative interpretations of historical experiences" and thus "[c]ounter-histories try to undo these silences and to undermine the unity and continuity that official histories produce" (2011, 14). I will argue here that Fowley-Doyle's novel can be read as a literary approach to a form of counter-history in that it

addresses the history of Ireland's architecture of containment through an alternative perspective that visibilises the hidden truths of the violence endemic to these institutions, and the oppression they asserted over those incarcerated. Furthermore, it is significant to note that, in *All the Bad Apples,* Fowley-Doyle addresses a young adult audience and not an adult one, despite approaching a topic that can easily be perceived as taboo. This serves to emphasise the novel's pedagogical value in, on the one hand, showing younger generations the true history of their nation, and on the other, in raising their awareness as future Irish citizens of how these damages can be reconciled and the repetition of these atrocities avoided. Taking *All the Bad Apples* as a literary manifestation that produces this mode of 'counter-history', I will discuss how the novel approaches some of the different forms of violence suffered by women and children within Ireland's architecture of containment and to illustrate how it contributes to denouncing such violence by breaking the secrecy surrounding these crimes, which still have consequences today.

2. Violence within Ireland's Architecture of Containment

In the early twenty-first century, James M. Smith coined the term 'Ireland's architecture of containment' to refer to a range of interdependent institutions that were founded in Ireland in the nineteenth century and which operated until the late 1990s. These included industrial and reformatory schools, Magdalen asylums, mother and baby homes and adoption agencies, among others (Smith 2007, 2). The Catholic church and the Irish Free State worked together "as the self-appointed guardians of the nation's moral climate" (Smith 2007, 2) and their discourse made legitimate the institutionalisation of vulnerable citizens in said institutions. According to Smith, "the availability of this containment infrastructure empowered the decolonizing nation-state to confine aberrant citizens, rendering invisible women and children who fell out of society's moral proscriptions" (2007, 46). Even though these institutions might have been established with the intention of providing shelter and education to the most vulnerable, they soon became carceral places that punished women for their alleged transgression of Ireland's morality standards of purity and sexual respectability, along with their children. The abuse that was not only tolerated but also endemic within these institutions gave place to a punitive system that was built on a culture of secrecy, shame, and silence and enforced by the hegemonic power of church and state. There was, certainly, a general awareness of the punitive regime characteristic of these institutions. Nevertheless, no one attempted to uncover how they operated, as the control by religious organisations served as an excuse to evade any official inspection, regulation, or inquiry (Smith 2007, 47). Nathalie Sebbane maintains that this history of church-state complicity and institutional abuse belongs to "the realm of women's history, of gender discrimination, of patriarchy and male domination, and a society where the weakest and most vulnerable citizens, that is, women and children, were written out of the official national narrative" (2021, 215).

Industrial schools were established in 1868 and these were at first associated with abandoned, poor, or destitute children, rather than criminals (Buckley 2022, 136). The schools were run by religious organisations, both Catholic and Protestant, with the Christian Brothers being the dominant Catholic group connected with boys' industrial schools, and the Sisters of Mercy with industrial schools for girls (Molino 2001, 37-38). Initially, these schools aimed to train "children as craftsmen and artisans capable of earning an honest living upon release and to provide otherwise criminally inclined children [with] a moral upbringing" (Molino 2001, 37). However, accounts from children that were raised in these schools during the mid-twentieth century illustrate how widely these institutions differed from their original intentions (Molino 2001, 40). According to Michael R. Molino the "initially well-intended educational and religious beliefs and practices gave way to a self-protecting system where abuse was tolerated and abusers protected" (2001, 34); and this abuse that children suffered in industrial schools has been for decades "a problem hidden in plain sight" (2001, 33). In 2009, the Ryan Report was published, revealing the enduring sexual and physical abuse in these institutions and the State's failure to protect children (Sebbane 2021, 29).

The Magdalene laundries operated in Ireland until 1996, and ten thousand women are estimated to have entered these institutions since 1922 (Sebbane 2021, 4). The laundries were run by various Catholic sisterhoods, such as the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy, and "figured as penitentiary places for 'fallen women', who remained incarcerated and ostracised usually for life" (Pérez Vides 2016, 17-18). These institutions, in contrast to the industrial schools and mother and baby homes, were never administered through control legislation and thus avoided any form of government inspection and regulation (Smith 2007, 46). Furthermore, they were also independent of courts, meaning that women were not sentenced to these institutions but often signed in by family members or the parish priest (Pine 2011, 159). According to Auxiliadora Pérez Vides, women were sent to these places for a variety of reasons, "rang[ing] from showing dissolute manners or becoming pregnant out of wedlock, to even being victims of rape, having a mental disability or extremely good looks and consequently, according to the strict morals of fundamentalist Catholicism, suspected of tempting men and provoking sexual misconduct, among others" (2016, 18). Smith has observed that while in the nineteenth century Magdalene laundries had a primarily rehabilitative and philanthropic function, after 1922 they progressively turned into carceral and punitive places (2007, 81). That women in these institutions were physically, sexually and psychologically abused has been proved by historians (Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro 2021, 325). Women in these institutions carried out unpaid labour under the physical and psychological exploitation by the nuns (O'Rourke 2011, 200-1). Pérez-Vides asserts how the church used the female body as a labour force for its own economic benefit, and as an object of constant physical abuse based on the premise that these women were in need of rectification (2014, 78). The women were under constant surveillance, subjected to emotional and physical

abuse, forced to pray and remain silent, and denied education, leisure, rest and even an identity (O'Rourke 2011, 201). Maeve O'Rourke claims that the system imposed by the religious organisations in these institutions was equivalent to that of slavery, forced labour and/or servitude (2011, 202). She observes how "the Irish State directly participated in and failed to prevent or penalise the system of servitude to which the women and girls in Ireland's Magdalene Laundries were subjected" and that it was complicit in the confinement of women and girls in laundries, in dealing commercially with these institutions and in the violation of the right to education of those children who were incarcerated with their unmarried mothers (2011, 229). Emilie Pine concurs, stating that the state "cooperated with these institutions at a high level and turned a blind eye to any mistreatment that occurred within, blatantly ignoring the rights of the women to freedom" (2011, 166). The state, however, has been hesitant and slow in recognising its accountability in both Magdalene laundries and industrial schools (Sebbane 2021, 241). Although the McAleese report, published in 2013, demonstrated the state's involvement with the laundries and revealed the pattern of physical, sexual, psychological and verbal abuse that prevailed in these places, parties involved were not prosecuted and the Catholic church was not officially charged with the crimes that were committed in these institutions (Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro 2021, 316). To this day, while religious orders have recognised their involvement in the Magdalene laundries, they have not given any form of apology (Gott 2022, 159). Researchers continue to be denied access to Magdalene records by religious orders and in recent years these have also refused to speak publicly about the matter (McGettrick et al. 2021, 25). Perhaps, as Caelainn Hogan posits, "the slowly dawning realization that great wrongs had been done might explain why the orders have been so consistently unhelpful to those seeking the truth" (2019, 234). Hogan also contends that the fact that religious organisations are yet to give access to their archives is one of the reasons why we know less than we should about the workings of these institutions in independent Ireland (2019, 61). Furthermore, according to Chloe K. Gott, there were large gaps in the information from which the conclusions were drawn in the McAleese report (2022, 151), and the abuse suffered by women in these institutions is scarcely mentioned (154) as the report downplays the significant value of survivors' accounts (156-57).

Mother and baby homes also operated until the late twentieth century. These institutions had been built on the grounds that pregnancy outside of marriage was a scandal that must be hidden (Hogan 2019, 190). Unmarried motherhood had become highly problematised by the nineteenth century in Ireland, as the unmarried mother represented immorality, a burden on government finances, and someone who needed not only to be rescued but institutionalised (Luddy 2011, 110). By the time of independence in 1922, the unmarried mother was seen as bringing shame both to her family and to the nation, and thus church and state began to enforce policies that would prevent illegitimacy and attempt to control women's behaviour (Luddy 2011, 112). The exclusion from society that women were subjected to in these institutions

aimed to protect social norms and "'respectable' society" from "contamination", as well as offering women a chance to have their baby in secrecy, which would allow them to regain their reputation (Luddy 2011, 117). It was often parents, religious figures, government officials, and even members of the wider community who made decisions regarding the admission of women in the homes and duration of their stay, as they saw them "as a threat to the moral fabric of localities" (Lucey 2015, 111). Similar to the Magdalene laundries, despite state and religious authorities claiming that the mother and baby homes provided mothers with training opportunities and protected them from a harsh social climate, the homes became carceral institutions that were governed by punitive measures and where women were forcibly held (Lucey 2015, 110-11). Moreover, the children of these unmarried mothers were often taken away from their mother or died (Luddy 2011, 118).

Through this brief account of how industrial schools, Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes operated, the regime of violence that permeated these institutions becomes clear. Industrial schools subjected young children to the violence of religious authorities, often in the form of beatings and sexual abuse; women sent to Magdalene laundries were exploited under the premise that they were there to atone for their sins; and unmarried mothers in mother and baby homes suffered the punitive regime of the nuns and saw their babies taken away from them, either to be given up for—illegal—adoptions or left to die. Given that there was a level of general public awareness of what was happening, this situation, as Hogan explains, "was not a subculture; this was a mainstream set of experiences, hidden in plain sight" (2019, 7).

This is the context for my critical reading of *All the Bad Apples* as a text that participates in the communal effort to bring to light these crimes. *All the Bad Apples* is a fictional literary account that resembles the coming-of-age narrative often found in YA fiction. While set in 2012 and told from the protagonist's perspective, there is an insight into a variety of experiences set in the 1800s and 1900s. When Deena Rys accidentally comes out to her grandfather William—whom she believes to be her father—on her seventeenth birthday, she tries to find comfort from her sister Mandy—who is actually her mother—as she has always been accepted by her. However, when Mandy finds out that her father knows, she worries that Deena has been touched by the family curse (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 31). She speaks of the bad apples in their family: "The ones who don't look like the others, don't act like the others. The ones who don't conform, don't follow the rules, don't go to church on Sunday. The ones who run away, make their own lives. The ones who drink too much, talk too much, don't work enough or at the right things. The ones who dress differently, love differently, think differently" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 29). The Rys family tree, Mandy explains, keeps its good apples safe, "[b]ut the bad apples get shown the door. Shunned, ignored, talked about in hushed whispers. They get pushed off the tree, breaking every branch on their way down. And once they've fallen, once they've been cast off the family tree, that's when the curse comes to them" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 29). Soon after this encounter,

Deena is told that Mandy has been found dead, which she does not believe and this leads her to find a set of letters that take her on a trip through Ireland as she explores the country's history through her family's past. It is through these past accounts that the novel explores the institutionalisation of women and children in twentieth-century Ireland, as Deena finds out about her great-grandmother, Julia, who was sent to an institution resembling the Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes after becoming pregnant from rape in the 1930s, and her son – Deena's grandfather William –who had been born in the home and later sent to an industrial school during his adolescence. The depiction of the experiences of Julia and William in these institutions are marked by the violence that had become both systemic and systematic there. For my analysis, I will focus on how both characters were subjected to different forms of violence, particularly physical violence and epistemic violence. In order to do this, I will draw from analyses of the experiences of women and children in industrial schools, Magdalene laundries, and mother and baby homes during the twentieth century, building too on key material on violence for my critical reading of the text.

2.1. Physical violence

Julia's pregnancy at age seventeen was "a shock and a shame on the family. That's what Julia's parents both said. It was a curse and a burden. It was all her own doing. It was a great sin" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 186). Even though Julia has been drugged and raped by her grandfather, the blame falls on her. Her mother casts her out and the local priest suggests that "she could be spirited away to the home before anybody else noticed, could come back to the farm right after and none of the rest of the parish need know" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 187). Julia is thus sent to the fictional Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mother and Baby Home, where she must work at the laundry under harsh conditions. Gott contends that the perception that beatings were the only form of physical violence in these institutions "fails to address the *inherently violent* nature of the laundries," claiming that "[f]orcing women to work long hours, doing physically demanding manual labour, for no money, with a severely limited diet, should be considered physical abuse" (2022, 88; italics in the original). Eva Urban observes that women in these institutions were forced to work six days a week, for long hours, without receiving any payment and in the unhealthy humidity of the laundries (2012). This is depicted in the novel as it is explained that "[t]he only days they didn't work were Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas Day. They finished work at midday on Christmas Eve, for a treat" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 189). Regarding the work, Gott describes it as physically demanding, hard, and painful, a form of violence in fact, arguing "for a conceptualization of it not as 'work' but as another example of bodily discipline and, specifically, punishment" (2022, 89). In the novel, Fowley-Doyle defines the harsh working conditions of the home and their effects on the women's bodies: "[the women] got blisters from grating the laundry over the washing racks, rashes from spilled bleach, burns from the steam irons, eye infections from the washing chemicals,

fungal infections from standing up to their ankles in dirty water for eight hours a day over two weeks before the leaks in the machines were fixed" (2019, 190). Because of the high temperatures in which they had to work in the laundry "girls often fainted for want of fresh air, for want of lighter clothing, for want of a ten-minute break" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 200). Furthermore, women were forced to work immediately after giving birth: "Julia slept and the following day she went back to work – with blood spilling into her skirt, milk leaking into her apron from her breasts" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 206). Pérez-Vides contends that the main expression of violence, given the physical conditions under which these women were forced to work, was "[t]he commodification of the deviant female body as a profitable labor force" (2014, 83). Thus, the imagery found in Fowley-Doyle's novel reveals how violence was inflicted upon the women's allegedly sinful bodies through the brutal working conditions of the institutions, both unhealthy and unsafe.

Fowley-Doyle's novel also provides an insight into the brutality of industrial schools. After Julia gives birth to William she is only allowed to see him for an hour a day, and when she leaves the home, the nuns keep her baby against her wishes (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 207). At the age of eleven, William is sent to the fictional St Brendan's Industrial School in Killybegs, and Fowley-Doyle describes the industrial schools as "almost identical to the home except that they were run by the Christian Brothers, not the nuns, and there were a lot more beatings" (2019, 229). Beatings were indeed frequent in industrial schools (Gott 2022, 87). The grim conditions and cruel treatment that children living in these institutions suffered have, according to Molino, "become the hallmark of the industrial schools" (2001, 40). The novel depicts how the physical violence the children are subjected to occurs on a daily basis:

> If you were last to make your bed in the morning, you were clouted about the ears. If you had the misfortune to wet your bed, you could expect a beating. If you were last out of the classroom at break time, you'd get a wallop on the back. If you were last to the latrines, you'd get a kick up the arse. If you were last to finish your sums, you'd get a ruler across the knuckles. The smacks and slaps became a metronome by which to measure your days. (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 231)

William speaks of the different forms of physical violence he witnessed during his time at the industrial school: "The ones to look out for were the ones with tempers. Like Brother Jack who beat a boy unconscious for sniffing all through class because he had a cold and no handkerchief. Like Brother Francis who broke a boy's arm for laughing at the crumbs in his beard one morning. Like Brother Carl who gave a boy a black eye for doodling a cartoon picture of him farting" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 231-2). This passage is illustrative of the mistreatment of children in educational and care institutions run by religious organisations, and of the brutality that was imposed on them by the religious figures who worked at the schools.

In 2009, the publication of the Ryan report revealed that children in industrial schools had not only been subjected to physical violence, but were also often sexually abused (McGettrick et al. 2021, 33); indeed, sexual abuse had become endemic in institutions for boys (McGettrick et al. 2021, 38). Thus, the hypocrisy of the Catholic church was exposed in that it facilitated the sexual abuse of children while enforcing sexual purity on society (McGettrick et al. 2021, 32). The church moved clerical abusers between parishes, allowing them access to children and the vulnerable population, deliberately failing to inform authorities of what was known and/or suspected (Hogan 2019, 171). Hogan points out that the priority given to secrecy conditioned the lives of Irish society such that children and women suffered because of it, while it benefited male abusers (172). In the novel, sexual abuse is not explicitly addressed. However, William does hint at the sexual abuse happening behind closed doors: "Knowing whom to look out for [...] didn't mean you could avoid following the summons of a brother into his office, where he stood with his robes all askew, didn't mean you could run when he brought you inside and shut the door" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 232). This appears a rather restrained passage, perhaps because it already seems daring to be alluding to the topic, yet it speaks volumes on the consequences for the most vulnerable of this climate of secrecy. I have decided to include this example here because I think it is significant to recognise that sexual abuse was another form of physical violence happening within the institutions, and that the novel's failure to address these experiences reflects the complexity of such hidden truth for Irish society, more so when it comes to write about it for a YA audience.

Lastly, I maintain that the neglect regarding infant care in mother and baby homes is also a form of physical violence, as depriving these children of basic care—including their physical needs—often resulted in their death. The high death rates for babies and children in these institutions have become a controversial indicator of the care standards in the homes (Lucey 2015, 92). Augustine Pang et al. posit that due to the neglect and abuse that was happening in these institutions, babies seldom survived (2022, 17), while Sarah-Anne Buckley considers that the high rates of infant mortality demonstrated an utter lack of concern for the babies born in such institutions (2022, 138). Fowley-Doyle's novel raises awareness of such deaths: "Sometimes the children died. They fell down the stairs; they became sick; they didn't eat enough; they coughed up blood that Julia cleaned out of tiny clothes. The babies died even more often. One every couple of weeks" (2019, 196). When these babies died, they were not buried in consecrated ground, but rather "in the mass grave at the bottom of the big garden" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 198). Hogan contends that these mass graves resulted from the need to hide sexual transgression and illegitimacy, even in death, due to the prioritising of the protection given to the institution of the family over that given to those who constitute it, and from the predominance of superficial respectability over compassion (2019, 234). I would further add that these graves were also a result of the religious authorities' and Irish people's absolute disregard for the lives of those children; they did

not simply die, and nor was their death simply hidden, they were starved to death and left to die from often treatable illness. It was only a decade ago when Catherine Corless found that around 800 children had died in the Tuam mother and baby home between 1925 and 1961, for whom there were no burial records and some of whom had been buried in a sewage tank (Hogan 2019, 2), despite the fact that it had been known since 1972 that bodies were buried in the Tuam home (Hogan 2019, 46). In her analysis of childbirth and citizenship in Ireland, Sara Martín-Ruiz, drawing from Patrick Hanafin's concept of 'virtual citizenship' (2003), speaks of how Ireland has privileged the 'virtual citizenship' of those who are not yet born—through the prohibition of abortion—at the same time as it has created a category of 'aborted citizens', referring to asylum seekers who are refused full personhood in the nation through the Direct Provision system (2022, 182).[1] I contend that the babies born to women incarcerated in mother and baby homes or Magdalene laundries could also fit within this category of 'aborted citizens'. At a time when abortion was prohibited by the hegemonic powers and women were forced to carry their pregnancies to term and give birth to their children, these same authorities considered that the babies were 'born of sin' and so they were not taken care of and were abandoned to die. Thus, while the church and state gave a constitutional right to life to the unborn, they were at the same time complicit in the deaths of hundreds of children, who became 'aborted citizens' as religious and state authorities robbed them of their right to life and denied them personhood within the state by keeping them confined to these institutions.

2.2. Epistemic violence

Those who were confined to the Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes were kept away from the outside world, as they generally could not communicate with families nor go outside. Following Nancy Tuana and Shannon Sullivan, who argue that "practices of ignorance are often intertwined with practices of oppression and exclusion" (2006, i), the oppression these citizens suffered becomes clear in the many ways they were reduced to ignorant subjects who lacked any sense of agency. Ignorance can take a variety of forms including those at the centre of power "refusing to allow those at the margins to know" (Bailey 2007, 77), which is exemplified through the lack of information given to women in Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes regarding their own incarceration. Gott states that "the constant lack of information given to the women about being in the laundries contributes to a wider instance of epistemic violence, in which women are prevented from being conceptualized as knowers, as subjects with agency and capacity to make decisions on their own lives" (2022, 78). Women sent to the laundries were rarely informed how long they would stay there, whether in fact they would be able to leave, or why they had been placed

[1] Direct Provision is system that provides emergency accommodation and a number of social services for asylum-seekers in Ireland.

in these institutions in the first place (Gott 2022, 79). Yeager and Culleton describe the "constant state of emotional and psychological turmoil" in which women were kept because such information was withheld from them (2016, 137). Furthermore, the women were completely removed from society, unable to communicate with their families, rendering the access to information and knowledge completely impossible. They were cut off from previous ties and any contact between the women and their friends or relatives outside was strongly prevented (Killian 2015, 27). Letters were often undelivered and censored and visits were discouraged (O'Donnell 2018, 82). In the novel, Julia tries to communicate with her family through letters, censoring herself what her real experience was in the home as she was aware that the nuns read every letter (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 204). Nevertheless, Julia did not know that the nuns "rarely if ever sent them [the letters]. They also rarely gave the girls letters from their families back home" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 204). Information is thus being withheld, and Julia is unable to make any decisions regarding her own life, as for all she knows her family has abandoned her there. This demonstrates how in being denied information about their own rights, women were also being denied the possibility to have control over their experiences and the capacity to make their own choices (Gott 2022, 81) and this situation coerced them into following certain forms of behaviour (74). Julia is stripped of her agency as all decisions are made for her: she is sent to the home because it is what the local priest suggests (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 187); her son is taken away from her because the nuns think she "can still have a good life, find a husband" and "put all of this behind [her]" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 208). Moreover, women were also denied information regarding what was happening around them: girls would disappear from the homes and laundries and babies would be taken away without any explanation being given to anyone. In the novel, when a young girl named Nellie kills herself after learning of the death of her baby, the other women assume "she had finally been sent home. The nuns believed they were protecting the other girls by not telling them, and the girls didn't think anything of the extra prayers the nuns required of them that evening. They didn't think to wonder why the bishop had been called over from the town" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 198). This mirrors the real life homes and laundries where such unexplained and unannounced disappearances of women occurred regularly (McGettrick et al. 2021, 20). Given the lack of agency that women were subjected to, it was not surprising, as McGettrick et al. note, "that a life spent as a Magdalene often resulted in disabling mental illness as well as an obliteration of agency so severe that those locked into a relentlessly punitive system were over time rendered incapable of living independent lives outside that system" (2021, 28).

Gayatri Spivak has extensively discussed the use of silence as a form of oppression, and sustains that one of the methods that serves to enact epistemic violence is to hinder a group's capacity to be heard and to speak (Dotson 2011, 236). Forced silence was imposed in most of the laundries and homes as a punitive measure to stop the women talking with each other in work spaces (Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benítez-Castro 2021,

329) and thus removing the possibility of friendships being formed (O'Donnell 2018, 82). Nuns saw friendships between the women as problematic, potentially leading to unproductivity, sin, or both, and thus silence was maintained in order to limit interactions between the women (Gott 2022, 71) as well as "to avoid the dissent caused by excessive feminine speech" (72). In the novel, readers are told that "[t]he girls of the home were not encouraged to make friends" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 192), although they did speak to each other in hushed whispers, afraid of being caught: "The [...] girls softly shuffled their chairs closer [...], didn't look up from their knitting for fear of giving away the fact that they were talking" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 193). Any breach of this rule of silence was punished through, for instance, cruel forms of physical violence (Pérez-Vides 2014, 83). When Julia and another girl named Cecilia are found in the bathroom refreshing themselves with cold water and touching Julia's pregnant belly, they are punished: "The nun took Julia's thick red ponytail in one fist and with five decisive snips cut it off just under her ears" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 202). Hair cutting or shaving is a common form of punishment that intends to deprive women of their femininity and dignity in some parts of the world (Sebbane 2021, 266), and it was often practised in the laundries. Sebbane also notes that the effects of enforced silence in the laundries and homes are seen in how the women learned to silence their memories of abuse, thereby themselves replicating the pattern of silencing that had been imposed on them (89). The women who were deprived of their voices carried the stigma throughout their lives as they continued to silence their experiences. But, as Arundhati Roy has claimed, "there's really no such things as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard" (2004). Church and state authorities deliberately silenced these women, and Irish society certainly preferred not to hear them.

Furthermore, even after their deaths, the very existence of these women continued to be silenced. For instance, on finding the institution Julia had been sent to almost eight decades after the events, Deena and her friends go through the documents left there and find out that "[t]here was nothing about the women the laundry used as unpaid labour. Nothing about the children stolen from the women. No names, no details, no death notices" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 212). This demonstrates how, as Jennifer Yeager and Jonathan Culleton posit, "Magdalene women were hidden from society and written out of Irish history" (2016, 135). Hogan claims that "[t]he logic of secrecy and shame that underpinned the institutions may [...] explain why the religious orders did not keep good records of burials" (2019, 234). That is, the deaths of these women and their children went undocumented so that they could be erased from history, and with them both the atrocities committed against them and the shame that permeated Ireland's architecture of containment. A ghost that Deena sees in the home tells her: "*You won't see us in the photographs. The history books. But the landscape remembers*" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 183; italics in the original). Despite the efforts of church and state authorities to silence women in order to hide the crimes they committed—for instance, by having the women's bodies found in High Park laundry hurriedly cremated and reburied in

Glasnevin Cemetery before any attempt to ascertain their identities could be made (Yeager and Culleton 2016, 138)—the bodies found buried in the laundries and homes have revealed the truth, have *un*silenced these women.

Moreover, it is significant not only to think of silence as a type of oppression, but also what forms of speech were allowed in these institutions; namely prayer (Gott 2022, 72). In the novel there are several instances where women are seen to be praying. They would pray after breakfast (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 189), and after Nellie's death extra prayers are required from the women, who had certainly not been told about her suicide (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 198). After Julia's hair is cut off as punishment she begins to pray as she works: "She prayed when she folded the linen; she prayed when she fed cotton sheets through the rollers, when she brushed the steam-sweaty hair out of her eyes; she prayed when she felt her baby kick as she knitted in the evening with the balls of scratchy wool that was the only kind the nuns allowed. She was not sure to whom she prayed" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 203). According to Gott, this form of speech served to discipline the women's voices, constructing them as penitent and religious subjects as they were being shaped into a religious subjectivity through both this forced speech in the form of prayer and the forced silence (2022, 73).

3. Conclusions

At the close of the novel, protagonist Deena concludes that the curse is not on her family but on every woman in Ireland who has been "[k]ept in shame and silence for generations. Kicked out, locked up, taken away. Their children sold in illegal adoptions; their babies buried in unmarked graves. Forced pregnancies and back-street abortions, eleven a day on the boat to England only to come home to rejection and stigma. Insults and prayers and keeping up appearances" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 328-9). She wonders how to break a curse like that, which can only be achieved by doing the opposite of what has been done by Irish society for centuries: by breaking the veil of silence, secrecy, and shame. Mandy states: "You tell your story and the story of your family. You speak your truth. You shatter the stigma. You hold your head up to the world and speak so that everyone else who was ever like you can recognize themselves" (Fowley-Doyle 2019, 329). While *All the Bad Apples* is a work of fiction and should be considered as such, it acts as a 'counter-history' in its attempt to break the silence and shatter the stigma, unsettling the nation's consciousness about the truth of its punitive architecture of containment. O'Rourke highlights the fact that "telling the story of the Magdalene Laundries further defies ignorance by the Irish State of its responsibility towards every individual in Ireland, to protect their basic human rights" (2011, 236). Fowley-Doyle's novel certainly contributes to challenging this wilful ignorance. The novel describes various forms of violence that women and children were subjected to, and denounces this violence by breaking the secrecy surrounding the crimes that were committed in Ireland's industrial schools, Magdalene laundries, and mother and baby homes.

It raises awareness about how violence against women and children was sanctioned by the hegemony of church and state authorities under the premise that those who diverted from the sexual respectability that was expected of Irish society should be punished, posing difficult questions that should no longer be ignored. Exposing how this punishment took different forms, Fowley-Doyle interrogates the culture of silence and shame that has become ingrained in Irish society as they criticise the treatment of women and children in those places where they were supposed to find refuge but instead were subjugated to the violence of beatings, inhumane labour conditions, sexual abuse, forced silence, and deprivation of agency. Certainly, there were many other forms of violence in these places—such as psychological violence, for instance—and these also had different dimensions that are not addressed in depth in the text. Nevertheless, Fowley-Doyle's novel is valuable as it brings to the forefront what until recently was—and to some extent still is—considered a controversial truth for a YA audience. Through this novel, young readers have access to a part of Irish history that continues to be somewhat hidden, which contributes to the broadening of questions that emergent Irish YA authors are beginning to tackle. *All the Bad Apples* speaks to future Irish generations in an attempt to avoid the repetition of these crimes and to acknowledge the damage, so that future Irish citizens are aware of their responsibilities. I would like to conclude by echoing Fowley-Doyle's call to their readers in a brief 'Author's Note' in *All the Bad Apples*: "Cry. Rage. Speak out. Break the stigma. Break the curse" (2019, 343).

Acknowledgements / Funding

This publication has been co-funded by the predoctoral grant program by Xunta de Galicia: "Programa de axudas á etapa predoutoral da Consellería de Cultura, Educación e Universidades da Xunta de Galicia." This publication is also part of the project I+ D+ i "Communitas/Immunitas: relational ontologies in Atlantic anglophone cultures of the 21st century" PID2022- 136904NB- I00 funded by MCIN/ AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and "ERDF A way of making Europe."

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Received: 18 June 2023 Accepted: 23 December 2023

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