Children's Burial Grounds in Ireland: An Attempt to Forget, or to Remember?

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This article focuses on the use of children's burial grounds, or cilliní, in Ireland and how the practice might reflect ideas about women, parenting, loss, and grief in modern Ireland. Cilliní were used from the post-Medieval period until about the 1960s as resting places for unbaptized infants and are located on non-consecrated ground. Most cilliní are located at sites that were formerly considered consecrated ground, that formerly had ritual or political significance, or that have liminal qualities, and they generally mark the reuse of a site after it has fallen into disuse. Most scholars fall into two camps when interpreting these sites. One emphasizes the influence of Catholic doctrine on baptism and claims that unbaptized infants were considered the Other, and that placing them in a cillín was an attempt to forget or conceal them. The other camp emphasizes the emotions parents often feel when losing a child and asserts that parents often preferred cilliní because they felt that this practice would prevent their children from feeling lonely. The author's interpretation, based on an evaluation of the existing literature and placing it in conversation with relevant anthropological and historical literature, incorporates the two camps. The first camp's interpretation may correspond to the public aspect of cillín use, while the second may correspond to the private aspect. This article explores and encourages us to interrogate ideas about the place of children in Irish society, motherhood, personhood, and the stigma surrounding pregnancy loss and infant death.

Keywords: Children's burial grounds, mortuary archaeology, pregnancy loss, parenthood, stigma

Introduction

This article focuses on children's burial grounds in Ireland, known as *cilliní,* and how they reflect ideas about childhood, women, parenting, loss, and grief. A *cillín* was a burial ground primarily intended for unbaptized infants (usually fetuses and neonates), although older children, illegitimate children, victims of infanticide or suicide, strangers, and people with different religious beliefs were also sometimes interred at these sites. Basically, *cilliní* were reserved for anyone considered ineligible for burial in consecrated ground (Finlay 2000, 409). Burial sites were often chosen if they were formerly considered consecrated ground, if they formerly had ritual or political significance, or if they had liminal qualities. They were also kept separate from active cemeteries for adults. *Cilliní* were used from about the post-Medieval period until about the 1960s, perhaps in response to changes in doctrine during the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. Given the lines of evidence available, this paper focuses on more recent periods. Due to their sensitive nature as the primary resting place for unbaptized infants, research on them only began in the 1990s.

Most scholars fall into two camps when interpreting these sites. One emphasizes the influence of Catholic doctrine on baptism and claims that unbaptized infants were considered the Other, and that placing them in a *cillín* was an attempt to forget or conceal them. This camp presents a negative image of the Catholic Church, characterizing it as judgmental and secretive. In part, this perspective is a product of widespread disillusionment with the Church and the Irish state in response to the discoveries in the 1990s and early 2000s of workhouse, mental hospital, and Magdalene laundry cemeteries, which were perceived as emblematic of the cruel nature of these facilities and the institutions that administered them. The other interpretive camp emphasizes the emotions that parents often feel when losing a child and assert that parents felt that *cilliní* would prevent their children from feeling lonely.

The interpretation offered here incorporates both interpretations, for although most Irish people may have believed Catholic doctrine on baptism, and *cilliní* were indeed used for people considered the Other, it is still the case that losing a child is often an extremely painful experience for parents, and it seems likely that many parents want to remember their infant. Nonetheless, evidence from oral histories suggests that despite many parents' desire to remember their infant, many experienced pressure to forget. Therefore, the first camp's interpretation likely maps onto the 'public transcript' of modern *cillín* use, while the second camp's likely maps onto parents' private grieving process. This analysis will use the existing literature on *cilliní* to engage with the place of children in Irish society. In addition, the article will discuss women's roles and identities, especially motherhood. Personhood in Irish society and baptism's role in it will also be considered. This study has implications for the archaeological study of childhood, as well as gender, as it shows that a more complete picture of a children's mortuary practice can be illuminated when one considers its relationship to parenthood. It also encourages us to interrogate two distinct but linked ideas within many societies: the stigma surrounding miscarriage and stillbirth and the idea that the most important role for women is that of mother. Finally, the study of *cilliní* illustrates the value in combining historic and archaeological data to better understand a mortuary practice.

Background

As mentioned above, because *cilliní* were located in non-consecrated ground, they were mainly used for unbaptized infants but were also used for other marginalized individuals. Children's burial grounds are not unique to Ireland, but *cilliní* are unusual in that they are commonly located at sites that were formerly considered consecrated ground, such as abandoned churches, monasteries, or other early ecclesiastical monuments like holy wells and cross slabs. They are also found at sites that in the past had ritual or political significance, such as Neolithic passage tombs, burnt mounds, ringforts, or castles. Like children's burial grounds in other parts of Europe, they also tend to be located in or near places with liminal qualities, such as cliffs, seashores, peat bogs, or townland boundaries (Dennehy 2016; Finlay 2000, 409; Lillehammer 2011; Murphy 2011a; Murphy 2011b).

Burials may have modest grave markers made of rough stone, stone-lined graves, and timber coffins. Several archaeologists have reported that grave goods are rare, though some archaeologists have found figurines, throwing stones, and white quartz, especially in the form of water-worn pebbles (Finlay 2000, 409; Murphy 2011a; Murphy 2011b). *Cilliní* are quite common, perhaps reflecting the fact that infant mortality rates were high throughout much of the period of their use. They are scattered throughout Ireland, though the heaviest concentrations are found in Counties Galway and Kerry, in the West, and many are located in the North, particularly in County Antrim (Murphy 2011a, 410; Murphy 2011b). The modest or non-existent grave markers, the long use of these sites, and the fact that infant skeletal remains generally do not preserve well, mean that dating is often difficult or impossible. This also means that we should not assume that any adult remains found at *cillín* sites were deviant individuals, as they may have been buried when the site was in its original, active phase (Finlay 2000, 410).

The origin of *cilliní* is uncertain, but most scholars agree that the practice became commonplace in the Late Medieval and post-Medieval periods. Earlier in the Medieval period, it seems that infants and children were placed in a separate section of an active cemetery. While there was an increasing trend toward burying one's dead at ecclesiastical sites as Christianity became more accepted throughout the Medieval period, there were also 'settlement-cemeteries,' or burial grounds located adjacent to settlements, which were probably used by kin groups. One such site at Carrowkeel, County Galway, appears to have segregated children and infants, but it cannot be labeled a *cillín* per se because these burials were still part of the cemetery (Wilkins and Lalonde 2008). Another difference between the site in Carrowkeel and *cilliní* is that the children at this site were buried while the cemetery was still in active use; *cilliní* are marked by their reuse of a site after it has fallen into disuse (Finlay 2000; Murphy 2011b; Wilkins and Lalonde 2008).

The Influence of Roman Catholic Doctrine and *Cilliní* As Sites of Forgetting

Scholars have explained the origin of *cilliní* as a response to the Counter-Reformation's new doctrine on baptism, which was that infants who died before being baptized would be placed eternally in Limbo, a place 'on the edge of hell,' for although these infants would not suffer, they would never achieve proper rest and would never go to Heaven (Murphy 2011b). This has led some scholars to conclude that the

liminal character of many *cilliní* is meant to reflect the liminal status of these infants' souls (Dennehy 2016; Finlay 2000). This conclusion is consistent with a common hypothesis in mortuary archaeology known as the Saxe-Binford hypothesis: that a person's treatment in death is a direct reflection of either his or her position in life or the circumstances of his or her death (Gillespie 2000). In any case, this change in doctrine would help explain why *cilliní* only became common after the Counter-Reformation. The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) relaxed church doctrine concerning unbaptized infants; the most current version of the Catholic Catechism does not mention Limbo, instead urging Catholics to trust in God's mercy and pray for these infants' salvation. It was now permitted to bury unbaptized infants in consecrated ground, which some scholars claim led people to abandon *cillín* use by the 1960s (Finlay 2000; Murphy 2011b, 71).

The scholars who most heavily emphasize the influence of church doctrine argue that it caused these infants to be excluded from society, and that their placement in a *cillín* was an attempt to forget or conceal them (Dennehy 2016; Finlay 2000; Garattini 2007). They cite the placement of other marginalized people in *cilliní,* the fact that these sites are often in secluded locations, and the fact that burials often took place at night, attended by only a few male relatives (sometimes only the child's father), as evidence to support this claim (Garattini 2007, 194-195). They argue that this shows that an infant's death before baptism was considered shameful, and that it needed to be hidden, both through darkness and through an absence of witnesses, including the mother herself. They also cite folklore, such as stories of deceased children becoming changelings or murderers, or a common superstition

that a person who steps on an unbaptized infant's grave will become permanently lost (Finlay 2000, 412; Murphy 2011b, 71). These stories suggest that deceased children occupied a problematic, even threatening place in the social order.

Furthermore, oral histories collected by Roseanne Cecil (1996) from Northern Irish women who lost children between the 1940s and 1960s suggest that miscarriages, stillbirths, and other infant deaths often went unacknowledged during this period by these women's friends and neighbors, their families, and sometimes even their partners. It appears that others did not consider pregnancy loss an easy or appropriate subject to discuss openly. Therefore, these women often felt coerced into silence, and that they were expected to forget about their losses and move on. Many also reported feeling ashamed after an infant's death, even that they had failed as women or as mothers, though some of the women interviewed were matter-of-fact in their accounts. Cecil claims that this study was one of only a few of its kind in the world at the time it was conducted, in part because many women feel unable or unwilling to talk about their pregnancy losses, due to the emotional and physical pain they often cause (1996b; as cited in Garattini 2007, 195; Murphy 2011a, 415; Murphy 2011b, 71). Indeed, Cecil states that "[t]he feelings concerning simultaneous birth and death, the death of one who never was, may be virtually impossible to convey" (1996a; as cited in Garattini 2007, 195; Murphy 2011a, 415; Murphy 2011b, 71). This silencing and shaming is not unique to Ireland and is commonly reported by women (and men) who lose children. Fathers in Northern Ireland, at least today, face somewhat different pressures, however: namely, that they must hide their feelings in order to support their partners, and that they

should not talk about these feelings at all because they are presumed not to form attachments to their children until after birth (McCreight 2004, 327).

Cillín use was and is such a sensitive topic that to this day many young Irish people do not know that these burial grounds exist, or that they were used so recently. Today, infants are often interred in family plots or with already deceased relatives, with increasing personalization of the graves. Still, parents will sometimes bury their infants in infant burial grounds, such as the section devoted to infants in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, which was originally a *cillín* but is now consecrated. Chiara Garattini argues that "[t]here is no stigma in separation; the infants' place has become a special rather than a marginal one" (2007, 197).

Some scholars use Cecil's oral histories as further evidence that an infant's death was supposed to be hidden, that *cilliní* were intended for forgetting, at least in the twentieth century; they especially emphasize the accounts of women who were apparently able to forget their pregnancy losses, such as one woman who stated that she simply buried her miscarriage in her garden and rarely thought about it afterward (Garattini 2007, 195). Nyree Finlay argues that the aforementioned liminal qualities of these burial grounds, coupled with their modest and sometimes non-existent grave markers, discourages their use as active sites of remembrance, which further supports the notion that *cilliní* are sites of forgetting (2000, 413). She seems to imply that a lack of a specific location for the burial facilitates forgetting, or perhaps that a specific location is required for remembering.

This interpretation makes a great deal of sense, especially if one only considers the 'public transcript' about *cilliní* (Dickson 2006). The term 'public transcript' applies because it does not seem that parents used *cilliní* as sites of forgetting, and it appears that many parents objected to or resisted pressures to forget about their losses, even if many gave in to pressures to remain silent. However, this interpretation fails to address certain key issues, such as the point at which an infant becomes culturally recognized as a full person in Irish society. Finlay, Garattini, and Emer Dennehy seem to assume that personhood is conferred upon baptism; therefore, unbaptized infants are treated differently because they died before becoming recognized as true persons. However, they do not articulate this assumption clearly, and they do not investigate it.

This assumption is not unreasonable; baptism is the ritual during which an infant officially receives his or her name, and names are often an important part of being recognized as a true person. However, becoming a fully-formed person in a society often does not happen instantly, as it depends on navigating complex relationships with others (often through ritual); even some individuals who survive to adulthood, such as slaves, never become recognized culturally as a full person (Gillespie 2000). A definitive explanation for the mechanisms of personhood in Irish society is not offered here, but it seems that there is more to personhood than baptism. After all, the fact that adults (i.e. victims of suicide) are sometimes buried in *cilliní* suggests that other events or actions are part of becoming recognized as a full person. Furthermore, the fact that the manner of one's death can cause an adult to be placed in a *cillín* suggests that personhood can be revoked. Therefore, it may be more useful to think of personhood as a process, rather than a quality.

This interpretation also fails to problematize the idea, ultimately from Robert Hertz, that children do not receive

lavish funerals because they have not had time to form relationships, as well as the commonly-held, but problematic, idea that children in pre-industrial societies are not valued until parents can be confident that they will survive, or that children have no value until they can contribute labor (2004). The rationale behind the latter idea is that parents suppress feelings of love or attachment toward infants in societies with high infant mortality rates in an effort to mitigate feelings of grief in the event that their infant dies (Hertz 2004). Finlay, Garattini, and Dennehy also fail to consider that *cillíní* are found in high concentrations in County Antrim, in Northern Ireland, where there has been a significant Protestant population since about the seventeenth century (Murphy 2011a). This could indicate that Catholic doctrine is not the only explanation for their use, since the Church of Ireland had different policies regarding unbaptized infants; it was less insistent on separate burial treatment, and it did not recognize the concept of Limbo (Murphy 2011a, 411). Nonetheless, it appears that exclusion was part of *cillín* use, especially considering the people besides unbaptized infants who were buried in *cillíní*, and that there was significant stigma surrounding infant deaths. Also, church doctrine is a convincing explanation for at least part of the reason that *cillíní* were considered necessary.

Cillín Excavations in Their Social Context

Before moving on to the second main scholarly interpretation of *cillín* use, it is important to situate the first interpretation in context. Cemeteries in Ireland for marginalized or forgotten populations gained infamy in the 1990s and 2000s as these sites were being publicized. Excavations at Ireland's nineteenth-century workhouse and mental hospital cemeteries raised awareness of the astounding rates of malnutrition, disease, and death that occurred at these government-administered institutions. This was particularly clear in the excavation led by Jonny Geber at Kilkenny Union Workhouse beginning in 2006, which uncovered the remains of almost one thousand people and experienced extensive press coverage (Geber 2015; Rogers et al. 2006). Geber cautions that workhouse doctors did their best to care for the inmates, and that every inmate who died received a coffin and a shroud and were buried carefully. However, this only mitigates the horrendous circumstances of these people's lives and deaths to a limited extent, especially because the land surrounding the workhouse where the burials took place was not consecrated (2015, 195-196). Most Irish people knew about the Famine from 1845-1852 that precipitated the opening of workhouses and the emigration of more than one million people to other countries. However, workhouses had been successfully kept out of the public consciousness after their abolition in the 1920s by the new Free State until these excavations began.

Simultaneously, the public amnesia and government secrecy surrounding Magdalene Laundries came to an end with the discovery in August 1993 in North Dublin of the bodies of 155 women in a mass grave on property once owned by the Catholic Church and the Sisters of Charity. No records of the deaths could be found. This discovery was extensively covered in the press, and it led to widespread public outrage. Magdalene laundries were institutions that incarcerated "unmarried mothers, illegitimate and abandoned children, orphans, the sexually promiscuous, the socially transgressive, and, often, those merely guilty of 'being in the way'" (Smith 2007, xiii). The last

of these laundries finally closed in 1996, but other such mass graves have been discovered since.

Laundries opened in the mid-nineteenth century as institutions dedicated to reforming prostitutes, but, as time went on, other women were brought to these institutions as well, especially after the Irish Civil War. James M. Smith asserts that their functions expanded as a result of a new nation's need to write "a new story of Irish identity," which involved criminalizing, hiding, and punishing 'immoral' female sexuality that violated conservative Catholic values, as well as promoting the image of the pure Irish wife and mother (2007, xiii-xiv). This point helps us understand the expectations for Irish women, especially after independence; pressures toward marriage and motherhood were apparently significant, which may have fed into the feelings of shame and failure reported by Cecil's interviewees (Smith 2007, xiii-xiv).

The above discussion offers examples of how people categorized as the Other in Irish society have been treated in death. Once people became aware of workhouse, mental hospital, and Magdalene laundry burial grounds, widespread horror and disillusionment followed. Many wondered how the church and the government could treat society's most vulnerable people this way. Archaeologists started to excavate and survey *cillíní* around this time. Nyree Finlay's study, which was one of the first and is one of the most widely-known, was published in the year 2000. Finlay, Dennehy, and Garattini would have been well aware of these discoveries, and it shows in their interpretation. They take a negative view of the Catholic Church, emphasizing the judgmental and exclusionary nature of its policies, when the presence of *cillíní* in more Protestant-leaning areas suggests that this is not exclusively a Catholic issue.

These scholars' interpretations are in part products of their horror and disillusionment with the church and the Irish state. *Cillíní* are part of a larger conversation about the church's and the government's hiding and silencing of Ireland's vulnerable people.

Emotional Interpretations of *Cillín* Use

Other scholars, notably Eileen Murphy, have taken a different approach, emphasizing how parents' emotions factor into *cillín* use. Murphy rejects the Hertzian conception of child deaths, citing the oral histories collected by Roseanne Cecil, as well as a number of other studies, as evidence that mothers feel the loss of their infants keenly, and that grief can last for years, even decades, even if they give in to the pressure of 'putting on a brave face' and do not grieve openly (Murphy 2011a; Murphy 2011b). She also cites several studies suggesting that women who experience miscarriages may feel an equally acute sense of grief compared to women whose infants survived for a time after birth (Murphy 2011a, 413). She emphasizes historical accounts from the Medieval period in Europe that document parental investment in children and high levels of emotional distress when a child falls ill. These accounts contradict the received wisdom that parents in the Medieval period valued their children little (Murphy 2011a, 414). This is an idea that was problematized above.

She mentions that fathers and siblings often feel an acute sense of grief, though this makes up a lesser portion of her analysis. She cites an anecdote of a famous hurling player named Len Gaynor whose infant son died in the 1960s; Gaynor apparently managed to attend a game only two weeks later, but the grief of losing his son brought him to tears in the dressing room, and he received no consolation from his teammates (Murphy 2011b, 72).

She also cites the biography of a sports commentator who recalled the death of his infant brother years afterward, and whose family chose the *cillín* where the infant was buried to celebrate the new millennium on January 1, 2000 (Murphy 2011b, 72). Still, she uses several more examples documenting mothers' experiences.

Murphy also emphasizes that toys and figurines are sometimes found in infant graves, suggesting that they were tokens of affection (2011b, 68). Furthermore, she rejects Finlay's idea that *cilliní* are not intended as active sites of remembrance by pointing out that parents and siblings commonly visited *cilliní,* and their out-of-the-way locations were likely favored precisely because they were unlikely to be disturbed. This was either because the site was prominent, in the case of churches or monoliths, or because the land would be ill-suited for practical purposes, in the case of bog land or woodland (Murphy 2011b, 64-65). Parents may have preferred *cilliní* if they were close to their dwellings. Oral histories suggest that some parents preferred them because they felt that their child would be surrounded by other children and would not be lonely in the afterlife (Garattini 2007, 197; Murphy 2011a, 415). These parents' descriptions of this afterlife were touching and poignant, as they often imagined *cillín* occupants as older children, not infants, who had toys and could play together for all eternity (Murphy 2011a, 415; Garattini 2007, 197).

In addition, *cillín* burials on the whole are carefully laid out, and they generally have coffins (Murphy 2011b, 65). Murphy reminds readers that most victims of infanticide are not buried at all and are found during archaeological excavations in even more hidden locations, such as latrines, sewers, and inside houses. Therefore, because of the respect shown to the remains found at most *cilliní,* it is unlikely that many of the infants buried in them were victims of infanticide (Murphy 2011b, 65). She also questions that infant burials always took place at night with few people attending, citing oral histories from the early to mid-twentieth century describing daytime funerals with the whole town in attendance, such as Robin Flower's account of a town-wide funeral procession for an unbaptized infant, led by the baby's father (Murphy 2011b, 69). Still, some sources do describe infant burials taking place at night with few witnesses. This can be explained by different traditions being favored in different regions, but also by the fact that most of these oral accounts remain unpublished, so researchers cannot consult them directly and have to rely on other scholars' interpretations.

Moreover, historical data indicates that mothers may have been absent from funerals, not out of shame or secrecy, but because women in certain regions of Ireland, notably Ulster, often did not attend funerals at all (Murphy 2011b, 69-70). Also, Irish women often had a 'laying in' period after childbirth, where they were supposed to spend between nine days and two weeks recovering at home, depending on their health. After this period of confinement, women underwent 'churching,' a purification ritual performed by a priest that allowed them to return to their normal activities and church services (Murphy 2011b, 69-70). Therefore, mothers of deceased neonates probably could not attend funerals in most cases, nor could mothers attend baptisms. It is interesting to note the parallels between the unbaptized infant and the unchurched woman; both were considered outside society and outside the church, since childbirth was considered extremely private and mysterious (Murphy 2011b, 69-70). All the evidence Murphy presents

is meant to show that church doctrine cannot account entirely for *cillín* use, nor can it prevent parents from mourning or grieving.

Murphy's perspective is important, as it emphasizes the lived experiences of parents, as well as the fact that parents often want to remember deceased infants. It also gives us the context to further evaluate Garattini's interpretation, which is that only recently are infants seen as special, rather than marginal, and are mourned. Murphy's findings contradict this conclusion. It seems likely that Irish parents have mourned the deaths of infants in the past, though it is possible that they feel more comfortable mourning openly now (Garattini 2007; Murphy 2011a). Murphy's perspective does not discount the importance of baptism. Rather, she names the possibility of an infant spending an eternity in Limbo as a leading cause for feelings of anxiety among parents who lost (or thought they might lose) infants. For this reason, baptism was performed as soon as possible after the birth, sometimes by a layperson first, followed by a christening in the church at most a few days later (Murphy 2011b, 64). She also engages effectively with the silencing and shaming that women who experienced miscarriages or stillbirths faced. While these processes are real and had effects on women's feelings and behavior, silence is not equivalent to a lack of emotion.

Murphy fails, however, to account for the other categories of people who were often buried in *cilliní*. Also, the oral histories from Cecil's study that she uses came from women who wanted their children; therefore, it is no wonder that they would be devastated by their infants' deaths. She does not mention the woman Cecil interviewed who apparently buried her miscarriage in her garden with little subsequent thought, cited in Garattini's

paper, for example. Her analysis leaves out how a woman with an unwanted pregnancy may have felt, especially in a context where an unwed mother could be confined in a Magdalene laundry. A more substantive engagement with fathers may have helped her analysis, but she likely had significant difficulty finding oral histories from Irish men who lost infants during the period of *cillín* use. Another idea that she does not mention is that placing an unbaptized infant in a location that was formerly considered consecrated ground, or one that formerly had ritual significance, may be an affectionate gesture. The parent is not allowed to give his or her infant a consecrated burial, so he or she gives the infant the next best thing. Nonetheless, Murphy highlights an important side of the issue, that societal and religious pressures can impose stigma and perhaps dictate behavior, but they cannot erase memories, love, or grief.

Interestingly, neither of these approaches focus on the children themselves to a significant extent. Rather, they deal with the parents or other members of the community. This is a foundational approach in mortuary analysis, going back to Hertz, that the people who are left behind are more important than the decedent (2004). This approach is partially justified by the fact that adults generally choose how children are treated in death, and children generally do not choose mortuary practices either for themselves or for other children. Jane Baxter categorizes children's mortuary practices as the "imperial practices of adults," as opposed to the "native practices of children" (2005, 94). Murphy offers some insight into children's roles in Irish society by explaining that a new baby was a blessing and a cause for celebration, with the parents providing food and drink for anyone who visited after the birth. They were material assets, as they were potential

laborers, and they would continue the family lineage. This is reflected in the fact that (married) mothers had a higher status than other women, and married women had a higher status than single women, since they had fulfilled the 'prerequisite' for having children (Murphy 2011b, 70). This point seems to contradict her overall argument that parents love and grieve for their infants simply because they are their infants, since she emphasizes the 'rational' reasons that children were valued. Still, it is useful because of the scarcity of discussions of children's roles in studies of *cilliní*.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to critically review some of the key issues and interpretations of *cillín* use in modern Ireland. Limits to the study include the fact that most of the relevant oral histories remain unpublished, as well as the fact that excavations and surveys of individual *cilliní* are often described only in unpublished master's theses. The study is also limited by the sensitive nature of *cillín* use and the secrecy surrounding it. The first investigations of *cilliní* occurred in the context of the unprecedented discoveries of thousands of previously hidden bodies throughout Ireland, bodies of people who died in workhouses, mental asylums, and Magdalene laundries. The widespread horror felt toward the Catholic Church and the Irish government in the wake of these discoveries is one factor that led some researchers to emphasize their exclusionary, liminal, and marginal nature, and that the stigma of losing an infant would lead parents to conceal their infants and try to forget about them. Murphy has a different interpretation; she instead focuses on parents' emotions, arguing that while church doctrine on baptism can impose judgement, exclusion, and stigma, it cannot

eliminate parents' memories, love, or grief. This paper has explored the idea that understanding how infants are recognized as persons in Irish society is more difficult than some scholars may realize. Baptism is an important ritual that helps recognize an infant as a fully-formed person, and yet there must be more to it than that, since other categories of people were buried in unconsecrated ground (though this may also result from group dynamics).

These interpretations show that there are webs of meaning embedded within *cillín* use in the twentieth century, and it is difficult or impossible to disentangle them all. Both of these interpretations can coexist, as the opinions of Finlay, Garattini, and Dennehy may align with the 'public transcript' of *cillín* use, while Murphy's analysis shows us the perspective of families of deceased infants, who appear to have largely resisted pressures to forget about their infants, even if they often gave in to pressure to remain silent. As Murphy's descriptions of parental emotions in the Medieval period show, there is no reason to assume that parents felt less grief or love toward their children in earlier time periods. In short, *cillín* use has multiple meanings that touch on several aspects of Irish society, including the role of women, parenting, and the circumstances that lead to some people being Othered. The evidence presented here suggests that the use of these burials cannot be easily tied into a coherent account of Irish beliefs about death and mourning.

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