

## Communicating the legacy of child abuse and helping victims heal

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ACADEMIC



CULTURAL



HEALTH



POLITICAL



SOCIAL



TRAINING

### SUMMARY

Between 1930 and 1970, over 42,000 children were committed to Catholic residential Industrial Schools in Ireland, where they suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Associate Professor Emilie Pine led a multi-faceted programme to conduct an in-depth analysis of how the system of abuse operated.

This research combined humanities-led inquiry and digital technologies to produce new knowledge of the scale and complexity of institutional abuse. Through media and educational strategies, Dr Pine and her collaborators have extended this knowledge into a deeper societal understanding of the issue.

This work has also helped victims heal, especially through *Survivor's Stories*, a project strand that preserves the memories of victims of abuse.

Dr Pine currently advises the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on dealing with institutional history.

“Her work as an academic, researcher and interlocutor between those who have suffered such harm and those who have responsibility to find adequate reparation for it has become integral to the ways in which I have understood the depth of abuse in the past, and its systemic nature.”

– Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone

### RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

**Principal investigator:** Dr Emilie Pine

**Data analytics:** Professor Mark Keane, Dr Susan Leavy

**Multimedia:** John Buckley, Maeve Casserly, Tom Lane

**Survivors' Stories:** Dr Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, The Christine Buckley Centre

#### Background

To understand Ireland's past, we must acknowledge the country's history of confining the vulnerable to institutions. This history includes the fact that, between 1930 and 1970, more than 42,000 children were committed to residential Industrial Schools, which were overseen and funded by the State. Some were orphans; others came from backgrounds of poverty, parental loss, family dysfunction. The children suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as was comprehensively evidenced in 2009 by the Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the Ryan Report). However, the Ryan Report's focus on isolated institutions makes it resistant to systematic analysis. By digitising and analysing the Report's 2,600 pages, Dr Pine's team have enabled new findings and insights into how the system of abuse operated.



*Launch of Survivors' Stories by Minister Katherine Zappone, with Emilie Pine (centre) and Carmel McDonnell Byrne (right), Director of the Christine Buckley Centre. Carmel is holding her story, which has now been added to the National Folklore Collection, along with fifteen other original volumes. This launch was held to mark the 10th anniversary of the publication of the Ryan Report. (Photo credit: Jason Clarke)*

## New knowledge

Dr Pine's IRC-funded research project *Industrial Memories* (2015-19), with Professor Keane and Dr Leavy, created "paradigm-shifting" insights and ways of understanding through digital analysis:

- Demonstrating for the first time patterns of transferring abusers between schools, illustrating that across different Catholic orders abuse allegations were covered up rather than acknowledged
- Clarifying the role of the Irish State in ignoring evidence of abuse
- Illustrating contemporary public and institutional knowledge of conditions in Industrial Schools
- Creating new methodologies that can also be used to analyse other institutional reports
- Creating experiential ways of knowing through audio and virtual-reality tours of historic institutions

These findings have been widely disseminated to build public and academic understanding, via a website, media, a digital app, academic articles, international conferences, and second- and third-level education.

## Survivors' Stories

Moving beyond the complex historical analysis, and to enhance understanding of major issues for survivors, and help healing, Dr Pine and Dr Mac Cárthaigh worked directly with survivors of institutional abuse to record and preserve their memories of the institutions. For the first time these stories form part of the permanent UNESCO 'Memory of the World' National Folklore Collection archive.

The *Survivors' Stories* project is a direct response to the proposal to seal witness testimony to the Ryan Commission for 75 years. This oral history project thus represents an opportunity for survivors to take back agency, control and ownership of their stories, and to make these stories part of the public record.

## RESEARCH IMPACT

### Social and cultural impact

The digital project *Industrial Memories* has changed how people see historic abuse, so it is understood as an outcome of systemic failure, rather than "a few bad apples". The digital humanities methodology underpinning this approach illustrates the value of digitising government reports, and shows how necessary system-wide analysis is to illustrate patterns of failure – such as transferring abusers, failing to respond to parents, and repeatedly refusing to acknowledge abuse.

Building on this, *Survivors' Stories* enables future generations to understand how it feels to be abused. This project worked with sixteen individuals over a year to preserve their memories in audio and print, adding a major new strand to the National Folklore Collection. The purpose of this project was to listen to survivors and, through listening, to heal some of their trauma. *Survivors' Stories* was launched in May 2019 by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone, to mark the 10th anniversary of the Ryan Report. Dr Pine has since been invited onto the Board of the Christine Buckley Centre to continue working for survivors' well-being.

Overall, the project illustrates how research methods focussed on subjective experience can have meaningful impact on an immediate community of survivors, while online digital resources and educational materials (including outreach in schools and lectures at regional history festivals) enable national and international impact. See the References section below for examples of media dissemination.

*Artane Industrial School Refectory. Artane was the largest single school in the system, certified for 800 boys. Artane also had the highest rate of transfer of abusers. (Archive photo, Ryan Report, Volume 1, Chapter 7, Appendix 4)*





## Academic impact

*Industrial Memories* uses leading-edge digital techniques to create a state-of-the-art way of analysing digital texts, which can also be used to investigate other government reports internationally. The combination of this digital approach with a deep humanities methodology has impacted researchers in the fields of Child Abuse, Digital Humanities, Folklore, Memory, and Irish studies. Dr Pine and her team have lectured on the project's methodology in Ireland, Germany, Singapore, Spain, the US, Canada, and Australia. The project has shown how a sensitive and responsive methodology can benefit a range of stakeholders. Crucially, this interdisciplinary project shows the value of combining researchers' skills across these fields.

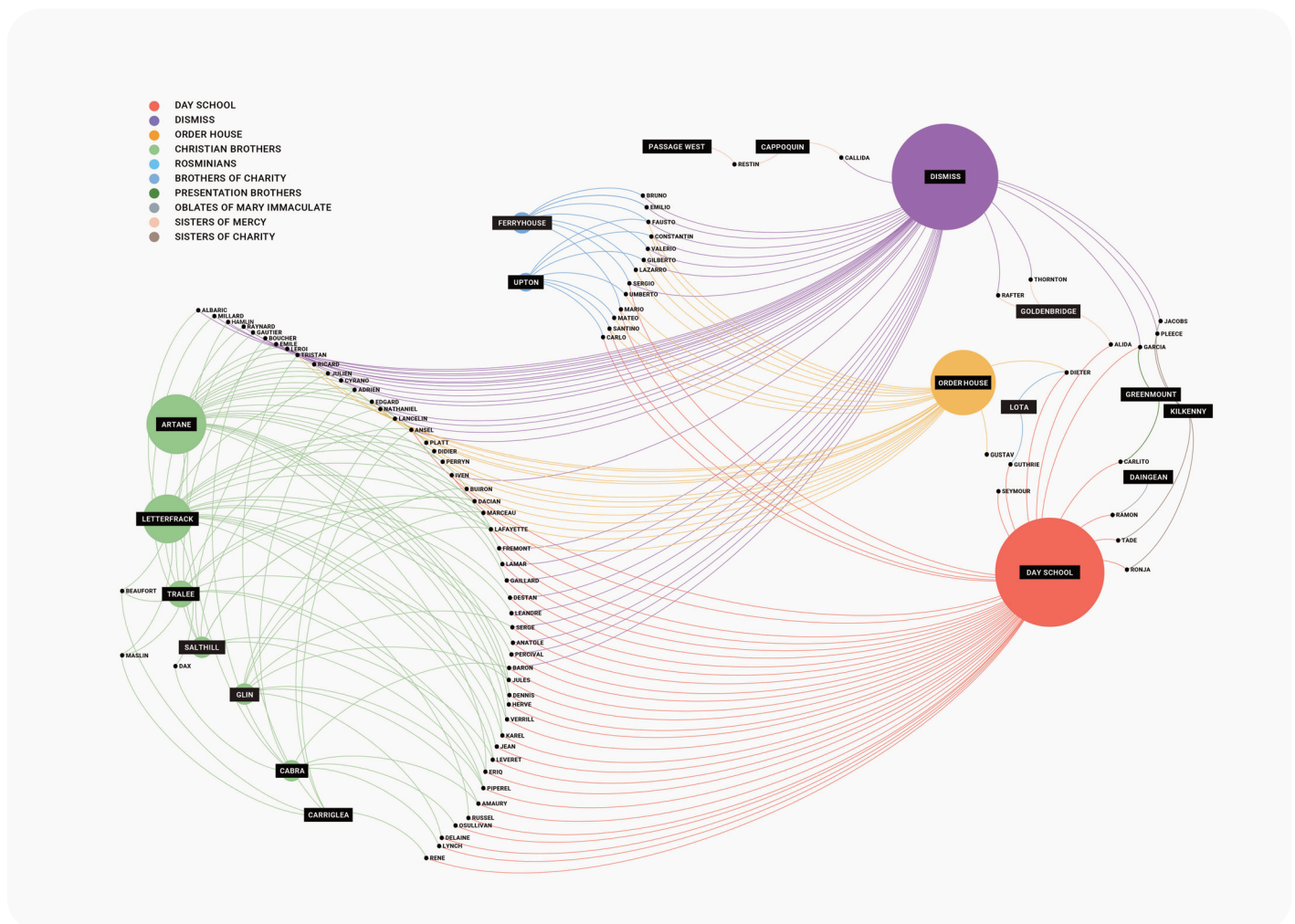
## Training impact

The methods and outputs of the project have also made an impact in the classroom. In Claregalway Educate Together School, Transition Year students made and exhibited art projects based on *Industrial Memories*, helping them to understand how much the incarcerated children suffered.

The students commented that “they never learnt about any of this in their history classes”. In UCD, students in the Schools of English, Drama and Film, and Computer Science, have studied digital humanities methods together, illustrating how a combination of computational tools and critical thought skills are vital to students from across the university.

## Political impact

In 2018, and on foot of *Industrial Memories*, Dr Pine was invited to advise Minister Katherine Zappone, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, with responsibility for dealing with institutional legacies, on how to use the arts to respond to Ireland's dark history. One of the key insights of Dr Pine's project is the complex links between industrial schools, mother and baby homes, and Magdalen laundries, illustrating the intersectional nature of institutional history. The utility of the *Industrial Memories* methodology has further come to the attention of the Taoiseach, as a template for dealing with future government reports.



The Transfer Graph, a major output of the *Industrial Memories* project, shows that transfer to another institution was the most frequent response to allegations and discovery of abuse. The sizes of the circles represent the frequency of transfer.

## TESTIMONIALS

### Political testimonial

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*"Associate Professor Pine's work on the Industrial Memories Project has had a very significant influence on my work as Minister for Children with responsibility for the Independent Mother and Baby Homes Commission.*

*Her work as an academic, researcher and interlocutor between those who have suffered such harm and those who have responsibility to find adequate reparation for it has become integral to the ways in which I have understood the depth of abuse in the past, and its systemic nature.*

*Further, her development of a digital arts and socio-cultural analysis of The Ryan report is such a significant achievement - especially though not only from a public policy perspective.*

*It's capacity to engage - including law and policy makers - lays foundations to pay attention and understand the past in new ways, and in a way that lives in the present.*

*There are several other reports that can be worked with in this way."*

– Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone

### Survivor testimonial

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*"The difference the project has made is one of positivity and of being believed and now owning who we are without shame. [...] We placed trust in you and [it] made us feel important that our lives became valuable and worthy rather than valueless. [...] It is important that future generations will have a proper understanding of what happened in Ireland."*

– Carmel McDonnell-Byrne, Director, Christine Buckley Centre for Survivors

### Academic testimonials

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*"The launch of Industrial Memories could be seen as a more transformative event than the 2009 publication of the Ryan Report. At a time of renewed exposure of institutional child abuse, the report now yields its findings in detail, by theme, and as a whole, with accompanying analysis. This is a fine example of timely advocacy through public digital humanities, of great importance to Ireland and the world."*

– Professor Alison Booth, Director, Scholars' Lab, University of Virginia

*"The Industrial Memories project deals with an emotionally difficult history in a sensitive and innovative fashion. This project is a rare example that deals with an important subject sensitively and combines disciplinary approaches in a fashion that makes it accessible at different levels. This is an excellent example of how the digital humanities can transform a subject."*

– Professor Geoffrey Rockwell, Director of the Kule Institute for Advanced Study, University of Alberta

*"Sincere congratulations on your article in the Irish Times earlier this month. It was a moving and thought-provoking piece that, in my opinion, brought into sharp focus the need for research in this area. We wish all the best with your ongoing research in this critical area."*

– Irish Research Council

## REFERENCES

### Funding

*Industrial Memories* was included by the Irish Research Council in its 2017 Annual Report: "in which we select a few awardees to feature their projects as a sample of the ground-breaking research funded by the Council". Dr Pine has built the project, in tandem with the Irish Memory Studies Network, supported by the following funding:

- 2015-19 Irish Research Council New Horizons (€216k)
- 2014 Irish Research Council New Foundations (€6k)
- 2014 UCD Seed Funding (€4.5k)
- 2012 Irish Research Council New Foundations (€5.1k)

### Appointments (leading from role as PI of *Industrial Memories*)

- Advisor to Minister of Children and Youth Affairs on dealing with national institutional history (2018+)
- Executive Board Member, Christine Buckley Support and Education Centre for Survivors of Institutional Abuse (2019+)
- Elected Committee Member, Languages, Literature, Culture and Communications Committee, Royal Irish Academy (2018+)

### Website

- Home page: <https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie>
- Searchable online version of the Report: <https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie/ryan-report/>
- Transfer graph: <https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie/project/the-transfer-graph>
- Communication Network: <https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie/project/networks>
- Virtual Reality Tour: <https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie/project/vr-tour-of-carriglea>

### User statistics (May 2018-June 2019)

- 26,755 views
- 7,084 users
- Repeat users: 10%
- Top ten user countries of origin: Ireland, USA, UK, France, Australia, Canada, China, Russia, Germany, Spain

The Industrial Memories website has been archived by the National Library of Ireland, and the 100Archive (which archives the top 100 online projects; <http://www.100archive.com/project/industrial-memories>)

### Academic publications

- Emilie Pine, 'Witnessing abuse: digital methodologies for understanding difficult pasts', in *Irish Literature in Transition 1980-2020* (forthcoming Cambridge University Press, 2019) ed. by Paige Reynolds and Eric Falci.
- Emilie Pine, Maeve Casserly, Tom Lane, 'Walks of Experience: Taking and Making Digital Audio Tours: digital interventions in the memory and cityscapes of Tel Aviv and Dublin', forthcoming *Theatre Research International* (2019)
- Susan Leavy, Mark Keane, Emilie Pine, 'Patterns in Language: Text Analysis of government reports on the Irish industrial school system using word embedding', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (April 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqz012>
- Emilie Pine, Susan Leavy, Mark Keane, 'Digital Reading as Active Witnessing: Re-reading the Ryan Report', *Eire-Ireland* (Spring/Summer 2017) 52.1-2, DOI: [10.1353/eir.2017.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2017.0009)
- Emilie Pine, 'Commemorating Abuse', (2013) <http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/scholarcast34.html>

### Media publications

- Emilie Pine, 'Actually listening to survivors is the best redress', *Irish Examiner* 19 May 2019
- Emilie Pine, Op-Ed: 'We have a culture of not listening to survivors', *Irish Times* 14 May 2019
- Emilie Pine, 'We need more than a plaque to commemorate this history', *Irish Times*, 14 April 2018
- Patsy McGarry, 'A decade after the Ryan Report: Launch of Survivors Stories', *Irish Times*, 16 May 2019
- Olive Keogh, 'How data analytics revealed new insights in Ryan report on child abuse', *Irish Times*, 6 September 2018
- 'Industrial Memories', Feature in *UCD Today* (Summer 2018)
- Eithne Shortall, 'State failings "further exposed" with digitising of Ryan Report', *Sunday Times*, 4 March 2018
- Eithne Shortall, 'Cover-ups of abuse to be traced online', *Sunday Times*, 12 March 2017