

## Queer Hedge School – Week 1:

>> RITA: Hello, you're very welcome. I mean Doris, really throwing her leg over that saddle horn! Welcome to Queer Hedge School.

I'm Rita Wild and I'm the education officer with The Gay Project and I am ably assisted this evening by the gorgeous Thomas, and the gorgeous Michael, give us a wave Michael, and you can also see on your screens the wonderful Kate Brennan Harding and the very fancy Cormac O'Brien.

First, we'll do a little bit of housekeeping I must say you're very, very welcome. We have 115, participants online, which is only amazing. And you're more than welcome to put your questions in the chat box, but if you all ask questions, we might have a wee bit of difficulty getting through them. But we'll do our best.

First, I'll do a bit of housekeeping, if you'd like to use our closed caption facility, that's live captioning, you see a little button at the bottom of the screen that says closed captions and you can turn them on there. Our captioner this evening is Michelle, and they are working away in the background.

Your microphones and videos will be turned off and will remain off throughout the session. But as I say, you can put your questions in the chat box. And finally, you'll see in the chat box a donation link to our very fast and very effective, you can throw us a few bob, don't hesitate. If you feel moved to give us your money, we would be delighted to have it and we will absolutely put it to good use.

And now, I'm going to pass you over to the lovely Michael, who is going to tell you a little bit about The Gay Project.

>> MICHAEL: Thank you Rita. Hey folks, I'll tell you a little bit about the work that we do, first I asked Thomas to play us a quick video that illustrates the

work a bit better than I might in so many words.

(video)

Thanks, a million Tom, I always feel like that video can say a lot more than I can. I suppose in essence, what The Gay Project does is we work with, we're an Irish NGO, not for profit for anyone zooming in from overseas, I suppose we work with gay, bi and trans men. There are four pillars to the work, we do, we set up social groups, sporting groups, cultural clubs, we provide information and resources, so that could be in relation to sexual health, mental health and parents for example whose young person is coming out might approach us looking for that type of information, we deliver workshops and talks, which is, this is the essence of that, delivering workshops online and training. We also deliver workshops in schools and workplaces. And then the last one is that we advocate for LGBTQ+ human rights and policy protections and there's a wide range of ways that we do that as well. So, I'll, with that I'll pass you back over to Rita.

>> RITA: Thanks a million Michael. I look at that video and think it looks like we all gad about, have a great old time gadding about, and we do, we do a lot of gadding about and it's very good for us!

So, without further ado, I am going to pass over to Thomas, who is going to play a video for you, which is a recording of an interview that I did with Ruth McCarthy, who is the artistic director of the Outburst Arts Festival. And Ruth unfortunately wasn't able to be with us live this evening, because she's right in the middle of her own recordings for the festival, but she very kindly made time to do an interview, so we'll pass over to Thomas now, who is going to put Ruth up, and Ruth will run for about 30 minutes. Thanks Thomas.

(Video)

>> RITA: Hello. So, I am really delighted to introduce you all to Ruth McCarthy and Ruth and I are going to have a chat, as a bit of an introduction to the Queer Studies Programme. We'll hear a bit about that later from Cormac, but for now I want to introduce you to my dear friend, and partner in crime when we were both girls, Ruth McCarthy. Ruth is the executive director or artistic director I should say, and founder of the Queer Arts Festival in Belfast, which is enormously successful. Possibly one of the most successful Queer Arts Festivals on the planet, but anyway, we could talk about that for hours alone.

I thought about how I was going to introduce Ruth and you know, she has that many accolades that it would take up all the time we have to tell you about them. So, I'm just going to say to you, she's very, very fancy! She's a very fancy queer. The good bit is she's from Limerick, so she's no notions, so the fancy and no notions just run lovely. So, this is Ruth, and Ruth and I are going to have a chat about why big ideas and dangerous ideas are really important.

>> RUTH: Great, lovely. Thank you, that's a great introduction Rita. Just to clarify, I'm one of the people who was involved with Outburst in the beginning, but it was founded by a group of people and a collective of people, so I'm always, I think that's very important to say, that it started from a very grass-roots community place, but I've been there through the whole thing.

>> RITA: So, we had thought about, we wanted to talk about why it's important that these dangerous ideas aren't stuck in a dusty cabinet somewhere, but that they're actually running free in the community, and neither Ruth nor I are academics and most of the rest of the people that you're going to hear from throughout this programme are academics, they've got some really great ideas to share with us. But I wanted you to hear from Ruth as an activist, who is translating those ideas into actions and often in fact creating the ideas first, that then get fed up into the academics to be written about.

So, we're very old activists Ruth and I, in fact we're nearly probably artifacts at this stage! If we didn't move for too long somebody might dust us! And we sat

around drinking cups of tea in rooms and talked about these big dangerous ideas, and we're both really aware that that kind of doesn't exist anymore. So, Ruth, you're full of dangerous ideas, how did those dangerous ideas get trapped in university, what happened?

>> RUTH: I don't think they are. First of all, I would say I don't think they're trapped. I think there's certainly a perception, I think around what we call queer studies or queer ideas in an intellectual sense that it resides in universities, it starts at the universities, but queer studies and queer ideas and queer intellectual concepts, started with activists and artists, in fact that's where it all came from.

We've always had intellectuals who were queer, we've always had queer thinkers. But in terms of what we call queer theory now, I'm not a queer theorist and there's very little queer theory that I've read, I've read Judith Butler which was very informative but I do understand the concepts and ideas and I do think that quite in depth thinking around queer lives and experiences or LGBTQ+ lives and experience is really important, and sometimes when we're talking about those ideas a certain language is needed. And I think that's where things feel like they're trapped.

So, people use words like hegemony and intersectionality and all of these words that you will often hear that are starting to be used more and more in the everyday in terms of activism but it can turn a lot of people off. But all they are talking about is stuff that you and I probably know to a certain extent already but they're writing it down, talking about it and trying to understand where it's coming from and where it's going. And that's all that queer theory is, just taking that lived experience and ideas around it and just taking it apart and examining it. And it's really important to do that so that we can understand a little bit more about what's going on.

So, when you say Rita that those things of sitting around having cups of tea don't happen, I think they don't, I don't think they happen in as formal ways any more.

The nature of community has changed. The nature of queer spaces has changed. And I think that's the key thing, that when we wanted to gather and find our people in the past we had to physically go to spaces, so you and I came out, there was a women's scene in Ireland, there was a lesbian feminist scene in Ireland, we all knew each other, we all knew the Galway dykes, the Dublin dykes and the Cork dykes, there was different events at different times of year they'd organise, there was a network, they'd hang out and conversations were had. Then there were women who weren't involved in the groups who would have smaller groups, people they know have those conversations and people that had no interest in politics or having those conversations just wanted to get on as best they could in life.

But certainly, the world that I came out into was a world of those conversations and I do think it's changed because those spaces have changed. The unfortunate thing that happens when things get better, is that we maybe don't need those spaces or we think we don't need those spaces any more. But actually, the thing is I think we need them more than ever. And I think in part that's to do with the fact that we know that history, or progress isn't always necessarily linear, you can sometimes get turned back, like what we're seeing in the States at the moment. And we need to understand what happens and why that happens.

So, for me that's why thinking, queer thinking is really important and really examining things and what's happened, like this is purely from a personal point of view, it's not to do with ideology, not to do with any "isms", it's observations of what my experience is. I've been out since 1986, which is a huge amount of time in one way but in the other ways, it feels like yesterday certainly.

But in that time, I was an activist pretty much straight away, but in that time, we've seen queer life or LGBT life go from people who became activist because we needed that to happen because we had no rights whatsoever, or very little rights. When I came out it was still homosexuality was still illegal in Ireland,

mad to think of that now, my God! But as soon as politics or activism starts to become more professionalised, which it needs to be in some ways, you need to get resources, you have to work with government. But when you start working with people you compromise; you have to compromise.

So, if you're working with government then you're working a little bit with an agenda that people are having, then when you become professionalised it attracts people who maybe don't question things as much because they may be focusing on one or two specific goals, so in order to do that you have to abandon other things. So, I think that's also what's happened. So, two things for me that have happened, spaces have changed and the professionalisation of LGBT spaces and working with government has meant that, I won't say mission drift, but it becomes harder to say the things that you need to say that are critical, because you're often biting the hand that feeds. And the hand that feeds can be pulled away very quickly.

So I would say those are the two reasons that we are maybe not having those conversations in the same way and just finally to say, without going into a rant about it because it's something I feel very passionately about, while I do believe that individual rights, like marriage rights and family rights and all that are incredibly important and people should totally have that choice, the focus on that over a number of years has pulled us away from the wider conversations and has pulled us away from looking at underlying factors that cause those inequalities in the first place.

I feel we stopped having conversations about the deeper levels of things and only had the conversations about the rights-based things, which needed to happen, but they need to happen in tandem with the rest of the underlying conversation. Unfortunately, I think it's left us with a generation -- I think this generation is amazing by the way, the generation that's coming up, I'm not going to diss young people I think they're wonderful from my experience.

But I would say that it's kind of has made us forget what we were capable of and the conversations we could have. Sarah Schulman talks about it in her book *Gentrification of the Mind*, if it's not on your course it should be, everyone should read it, which is about having been untaught -- not untaught what we knew, but how we've been made to forget by being told it wasn't us who did certain things, who made certain changes and who changed the world. And we did. So I don't know if that answered your question Rita, but it certainly, I think the reason why a course like this needs to exist is because that loss of space and the loss of a deeper and wider conversation, in a general sense, I'm not saying it doesn't still happen at all, and I don't think it's trapped in universities.

I think a lot of the people I knew certainly who were involved in art and making fanzines and doing very counter-cultural stuff wanted to continue thinking and wanted to continue talking and one of the ways they could do that was to go into academia, so a lot of the academics I know started out as activists, or started out as people who really were wanting to change the world and are still doing that, but it's about finding a way to have that two-way conversation and a lot of people are doing that which is very exciting.

>> RITA: Yes, we hope to be part of that. I think you've hit the nail on the head, so many, there's so much in what you've said there. Then to kind of bring it back to the course and the why of this that you've hit on, is that having access to this information, talking about these ideas, thinking about these ideas, allows us to reframe the story, and what has happened us all is that we've been given frames, so we've been given a way in which to understand our lives, that we didn't write. That's not what we think. And it's that absence of those queer spaces, so people are coming out today and are coming into a world where there's a frame about who they are. And now in that frame, that big frame is gay marriage for example, and it's become one of those things that you just accept as normal, really isn't that a good thing? We stopped questioning the very institution of marriage. Let's question everything.

So, it excites me, what really excites me about these ideas and what it's done in my own life is that it's allowed me to frame my life, reframe my life, in a way that makes the queer the hero of the story. And if we can be the hero in our stories, and we are so much better in the world.

>> RUTH: Absolutely. Absolutely. And I'll tell you very briefly about an experience I had this year that has kind of, that summed up to me why we need to do this and why it made me more determined more than ever to do education. I do my education through art and I'll talk about that again I'm sure shortly. But I was at a conference, a museums conference, kind of a stately homes or something, I was asked to do a talk, there were people there from various, it was mainly like the royal palaces, but there were speakers from lots of places and there was a speaker from a museum in Ireland and they were talking about an exhibition that they were putting together and this person was, I won't say quite young, but newly out, very enthusiastic, really lovely person.

They were talking about an exhibition that was on around LGBT stuff and someone had offered them the AIDS quilt, it was the woman who was behind the AIDS quilt in Ireland -- a lot of you might know that the AIDS quilt was a very important memorial, but also very political memorial to those who had died because of neglect essentially. She offered this to the exhibition, it was an incredibly important part of history. And they decided not to display it because it was too negative.

I remember being at the conference and kind of -- I kind of, there was no badness there. There was no -- this isn't about slagging anybody, but it was like how did that happen? How did it happen that now that's too negative, we want to end it with marriage equality and do all this kind of stuff?

Marriage equality, the fight for marriage equality was not something that I was ever aware of when I came out. It was something that really emerged in the

90s. And the reason that it probably emerged, and Monica Pearl talks about this in her book on AIDS Literature, the reason that it more than likely evolved into that was because of the AIDS crisis. Because suddenly for the first time you had a lot of very wealthy men who were losing homes that they had bought with partners because there were no rights, there were no rights in place, and they were dropping like flies, again because of neglect, and it was awful. So, a lot of the people who got involved during that time were professionals who would not have become activists, and suddenly there was an agenda around marriage rights.

>> RITA: Which makes great sense in that context, it makes perfect sense in that context.

>> RUTH: It does, it makes perfect sense. It goes back to what I said earlier on, about depending on who's fighting for those rights and where we're getting the resources to fight for the rights and who we're having conversations with will lead that agenda.

But my point about that space was that if you're a young queer person going to that exhibition, or even a heterosexual person or cisgender person going to that exhibition you are missing out a vital part of our history and why that happened and why that was allowed to happen and what happened to those mostly men, but not only men, and so we need to be talking about our own history, we need to be talking about the ideas and we need to be talking about what's missing, why is it missing.

>> RITA: And who is missing? Which brings us beautifully into the other theme that's going to run right through this programme and ties up beautifully in terms of this theme, we became very narrow in our focus, there were good reasons for that at the time. But it became the old story, because it was a nice simple one. That people could buy into. But who did we have to throw under the bus to do that?

So, we look back at things like the Stonewall, trans people, why do we have to

recover that history? So back when you and I were sitting around drinking tea and shooting dangerous ideas we were much more intersectional than our community have become, a lot of that was down to the numbers, there were so few of us, we didn't have the luxury to be segregated. It wasn't because we were good, there was literally so few of us. This is one of the interesting things, kind of sort of aside but also important, that with the trans stuff all going crazy in America and in the UK, often the question is asked by why are you all so chill in Ireland about the whole trans thing? We're so chill in Ireland about the whole trans thing because we've been working with trans people from the get-go. There have been trans people in our communities from the get-go, because there wasn't enough of them to have a trans community and there wasn't enough of us! And here we are now down the road, where nobody bats an eye lid.

Whereas in bigger communities people had the luxury of organising separately, but that's -- we're going to talk about space, one of the tutors, Emma Breathnach is going to talk about prejudice and privilege in our spaces, in queer spaces, and what that looks like and what would an intersectional queer space look like if we had such a thing?

So, one of the themes that's going to run right through this is intersectionality. We've got to do this work; we have got to recognise the depth and breathe of the people who are identifying as LGBTQ+ and make spaces big enough to hold all of us. And that's why these ideas are important too, because they make the space for thinking in our heads bigger. And if we can make the space for thinking in our heads bigger, we can make the spaces outside of our heads bigger, if that doesn't all sound too highfalutin.

>> RUTH: No, not at all highfalutin, I do think that Ireland has always, because we have been small, we have always worked together, it doesn't mean there wasn't tensions, certainly between the men and women, there was very different needs there often, there's very different issues that people are dealing with while there are commonalities as well, likewise with trans people and even

up north where I live now, I'm in Belfast, everyone's like there was no sectarianism, nobody cared about your religion in the queer scene, and you're like, no it was just if you wanted to get laid or have a social life you probably didn't want to ask too many questions, but it doesn't mean that that wasn't there, there have always been tensions but we tried to work together and sometimes we were forced to work together. Things can shift as well.

And while there's not the same hateful trans-phobia within the gay community in Ireland, I think it's still in the LGB sector still.

>> RITA: It absolutely is, as is racism, as is sexism, as is ableism. We are far, far from the people we would like to think we are.

>> RUTH: Yeah but it goes back to the thing earlier Rita about when you step away from what this was all about to start with, the gay rights movement when it started was very much about sexual liberation for all, it was about looking at relationships and looking at our sexual, emotional relationships, our kinships, how we lived, how we gathered, what family was, who is family? We moved away from that as soon as it started becoming about individual rights and started becoming about specific rights. Again, really important, but you need the parallel conversation happening.

And I'm not saying that the gay rights movement from the beginning was immaculate, the organised movement was certainly quite white, it was people -- I always said it's either people who have nothing to lose or people who are independently wealthy enough that they don't have to worry about losing everything, and to me that's who the gay rights movement was generally made up, the visible rights movement, of people who could put it on the line one way or the other. And ask those questions, ask wider questions.

Why are we oppressing someone based on the fact that they want to sleep with somebody of the same gender or why are we oppressing somebody who is otherly gendered, or who is different from their gender assigned at birth, or who

is faggy -- please, I use these terms in the most affectionate way -- dykey or butch or faggy or effeminate, whatever way you want to put it, we need to address that in our own communities, we need to address what is acceptable, what are the good gays and who are the bad gays?

A lot of that is to do with intersections of poverty, of education, effeminacy, of stepping outside lines, this is going back, from my understanding this really helps us look at how our own internalised homophobia and trans phobia impacts on us and our decisions and the decisions we even make politically, because I see it in -- I've travelled the world working with queer organisations and queer artists all over the world, and you can see it in people sometimes, where this idea of respectability politics takes us away from the hard questions, because as soon as you start asking the hard questions you're undermining authority and you're undermining the status quo.

So, if you're an uppity queer who starts talking about poverty, or even simpler than that, how we share resources in the world, who has access to power and who doesn't, it comes down to that every time. Who has access to power and resources? As soon as you start talking about it in relation to gender, in relation to sex, in relation to power and so many different ways it's so complex. In some ways it's so easy but in other ways it's so complex. And that's what theory or talking about things helps us unpick and unpack in ourselves.

All of us, all of us, if you grew up in this world no matter how cool you think you are about your sexuality or gender, you are carrying a wild load of baggage, you are swimming in that ocean. So, to understand that in yourself is not only important, like everyone talks about self-development and personal development and mindfulness and all this, the best mindfulness you can have is to be aware of what you're carrying and why you're carrying it and how we can make sure other people aren't carrying that in the future. And I think this type of learning and thinking and just talking with each other, let's bring it back to that. That's all it

is, sometimes you have to use complex words because over a number of years those words built up to mean a very specific thing, to have a conversation, so it's just like learning a language, it's learning, it might sound like it's a completely different language than English or Irish or whatever you are used to speaking, but it's just to help us understand more difficult concepts. But when it comes down to it, all we're asking here is how does this work, who has the power here, who's this person here, who's this person, who's making the decision? And how does all of the underlying stuff affect us around gender and sexuality, whether it's racial issues, or issues around poverty or other issues of social justice, reproductive rights are another one.

That's what was amazing during the referendum to see queer activists working with feminists' activists and it's that kind of, that's the practice, so all we're learning about is the theory of why that's important.

>> RITA: Yes and in doing that, in learning the theory of why it's important, that gives us power, like we get x-ray glasses to put on, we put on our x-ray glasses and suddenly we can see the structures that are oppressing us, suddenly we can see how it's impacting on us, on our bodies, our homes, on our relationships and once we see it we can do something about it. And in that there is an enormous freedom. So yes, let's set the ideas free. Let's set ourselves free. Ruth, thank you so much for helping me introduce this notion of big ideas, being dangerous and changing ourselves and changing the world. You've always been an inspiration to me in terms of those big ideas and hopefully now our wee chat will make it easier for some of the people watching to get stuck in to these big ideas.

>> RUTH: Thanks Rita, it's great and important to talk about it, before we go just to say my specific area is arts. I lead a queer arts organisation, and the reason I've always said the reason I do that rather than went into politics or do other types of activism is that it helps translate all of these things that I'm talking about, so while some people find it hard to read books, they might not just even read for pleasure never mind read for deeper learning that way, one place that's

always really great for looking at these ideas and playing with these ideas is in art and theatre, in music, in dance, performance. Look you can walk into a drag club and there's some of that going on ahead of you. If you follow through on a programme like this, going into a space like that and seeing a show suddenly something else opens up for you. Suddenly you understand why our drag queens are our sacred clowns in one way and can say the things -- they might say some dodgy shit sometimes, but the art is, art is really important and it's a way that we can really connect with these ideas and I'm sure some of the people in your programme will be talking about that.

But just to be aware that it's not always about sitting down and having to read heavy literature, that artists have always translated these ideas and artists have always in fact initiated a lot of these ideas that theorists then go to. There's a lot of academics that end up working around Outburst, the festival that I run, for that exact reason. Artists are unpacking and unpicking things all the time and asking questions, so the two work very well in tandem together.

So, if you're not a book reader look to films, I'm sure I can give Rita a hand putting a film list together.

>> RITA: We have somebody who is going to talk to us, Padraig Kerrigan and his specialist field is media and communications and he is going to look at all that stuff. I'm sorry we didn't get more time to get stuck into the meat of that very important translation of the ideas and the informing of art by these ideas and more recent phenomenon in our lives is drag kings and the whole idea of masculinity and feminine masculinity, and that's gorgeous, that's glorious work, and we have, just following on from us now we have Cormac -- who I met, for the first time at one of your events, Outburst, one of the queen's events where I believe I was giving him a hard time on the panel as he reminded me -- so Cormac is going to talk to us about masculinity and feminine masculinity, and that is on the stage right now in the drag kings in Ireland and that scene and we've had it with the drag queens, I love that idea of sacred clowns.

I'm so sorry you weren't available Ruth. The reason why this is recorded and Ruth isn't doing a session is because she's in the middle of Outburst, so please look up Outburst Arts Organisation, it's going to be online this year right?

>> RUTH: Well some of it, we've just gone into another lockdown today, so we're going to try and do some live, definitely record some live anyway, the festival is supposed to start the day the lockdown is supposed to end so who knows, but yes, the good thing is that there will be quite a bit online this year, so we'd be delighted for people to join in, outburstarts.com, the website is being built at the moment so you will be able to see that soon.

>> RITA: Brilliant, Ruth thank you so much.

>> RUTH: You're very welcome, cheers Rita, bye.

>> MICHAEL: Rita, you're on mute!

>> RITA: It was all going so well! (laughs)

>> KATE: I'm looking at your body language trying to watch.

>> RITA: Trying to work out what I'm saying, so yeah that was great, Cormac got a mention in terms of the queer queens from Ruth, Cormac's an auld hand at this. Yes, I was just saying the comments, your comments have been gorgeous, in the comment box. Thanks so much and thanks for all your lovely words of support.

And now I'm going to pass you across to our arts correspondent, Kate Brennan Harding. Who is going to talk to you all about the Break for Art.

>> KATE: Hi, thanks Rita, my God it was so gorgeous to hear Ruth speak there. My name is Kate Brennan Harding, I'm a lesbian, an uppity queer, sometimes an honorary gay man and really pleased to be part of the space created by The Gay Project, it's just really good to plug back into the community. I don't know about you guys, I'm feeling a big loss this year of that connection, so we have so many different performances coming up over the series as part of a Break for Art. Some will enthrall you; some will leave you wonderfully confused but questioning, some will be living room performances

and some will use space outside to generate dangerous ideas, some you can simply sing along to.

I have been looking at ways our artists and performers can create a live experience and show how grass-roots have to move online and occupy that space, it's essentially a DIY scene. I think about how visibility is vital and how the element of surprise has been oppressed, surprise is finding a new way of seeing yourself, how the energy shared is what helps to feed and encourage a performance, as we're not able to be in a room with a gaggle of people delighted to be in a queer space.

We're going to start off with Avoca Reaction. I know Avoca for a number of years, Avoca describes themselves as Ireland's premier non-binary drag queen, Avoca, hi, welcome to a Break for Arts, I'm delighted you're able to join us.

>> AVOCA: Hello, thanks for having me.

>> KATE: You're a drag artist, actor and producer, what does be a non-binary artist in 2020 mean for you?

>> AVOCA: Well, I think after hearing Ruth speak, I want to say I'm a sacred clown, I want that tattooed on me, that's amazing. Being a non-binary artist in 2020 feels like being a rebel, like an outlier, like a circuit breaker, particularly on the drag scene with the advent of Ru Paul's Drag Race, we saw this homogenization of what drag can be, what's championed is cis men dressing up as women, whereas the work I like to do and the cabaret I produced pre-lockdown times is there to try and showcase talent from non-binary artists, trans artists and people assigned female at birth like drag kings.

>> KATE: That's amazing, I was going to say in coming up with this, it's so difficult at the moment to try and get what you want to convey out there, are you finding that you are coming up with unique ways to perform?

>> AVOCA: Still figuring that out! I think one of the pressures on artists now is that you have to retrain and invest in equipment to be able to perform online, you need a ring light, back drops, I'm using a kaftan tonight that's hopefully

doing the job! But for me performing to a camera and without an audience is a completely different experience than what I'm trained in and what I'm used to. So, it's kind of one foot in front of the other, we're all figuring it out on the fly.

>> KATE: At a grass-roots what you do is alternative drag really, do you feel it's important to represent a different version of yourself every time?

>> AVOCA: In terms of aesthetically or?

>> KATE: In terms of what drag can be perceived as, you mentioned Ru Paul there, this alternative DIY, in your face, back to queer culture drag.

>> AVOCA: We try to keep it really rootsy, what I love to see is not necessarily the most preened polished like we see on Instagram and Ru Paul's Drag Race, I want to see the passion and people giving it their all. We as queer performers are the ones who take all the marginalisation and oppression and turn it into glitter and magic and get up and we bleed for people, we show our pain on stage in a way that allows for a catharsis

>> KATE: Completely, so we're going to go on now, Avoca recorded a small piece for camera, one of the main ingredients is the audience, I can't see you, I know I'm talking to you, I'm inviting you all now to visualise your favourite club and performance space, to see the smiling friends and hopeful new acquaintances; if you know what I mean; just join in the simplicity of fun.

Here's, Avoca Reaction.

(video)

AVOCA: # I go out walking, after midnight, in the moonlight, just like we used to, I'm always walking after midnight looking for you ...

# I go for miles, down the highway

# I guess that's my way, of saying I love you

# I'm always walking after midnight, looking for you ...

# Now if you see a weeping willow

# crying on his pillow

# maybe he's crying about me

# but as the night turns gloomy

# someone whispered to me I'm lonesome as can be

# I go walking  
(Klaxon sounds.)  
# Oh, the night, is my world  
# city lights  
# painted girl  
# in the day  
# nothing matters  
# it's the night-time that flatters  
# in the night, no control  
# through the walls, something's breaking  
# wearing white as you're walking  
# down the street of my soul  
# you take my self, you take my self-control  
# you got me livin' only for the night  
# Before the morning comes, the story's told  
# you take my self, you take my self-control  
# another night, another day goes by  
# I never stop myself to wonder why  
# you help me to forget to play my role  
# you take my self; you take myself control  
# I ... I live among the creatures of the night  
# I haven't got the will to try and fight  
# Against a new tomorrow, so I guess I'll just believe it  
# in case tomorrow never comes  
# A safe night, I'm living in the forest of your dreams  
# I know that things are not what they would seem  
# I must believe in something so I make myself believe if  
# tomorrow never comes  
# ooh, ooh,  
# ooh, ooh  
# ooh ooh

# ooh, ooh

(Klaxon sounds)

>> KATE: I tell you what, first of all we know there's an issue with the video lagging and we're really, really sorry, we don't really understand what's happening, it's one computer talking to another. Avoca, that was lovely and I just want to go dancing, I'm missing dancing and it was great, great to have this. Can you hear me okay?

>> AVOCA: I can yeah.

>> KATE: Sorry, you spoke to me, when I was speaking to you last week, you spoke about a dangerous idea for you was to exist loudly in the world and be your authentic self was dangerous, I know I identify with that and have done for many years, do you think performance and creating that space is a way to make yourself safe?

>> AVOCA: Yeah, I hadn't thought of it before but that certainly, that is one of the benefits of creating your own space, that you get to mediate that space and sort of create the right environment for everybody to come in and be themselves, that's always been a core tenet of the shows I put on, there's a space for everybody within that, including allies and cis people who are supportive and respectful within the bounds of what we do.

>> KATE: It's completely vital, I love underground subversive, personally, I think all of it fits in the rainbow, but it's brilliant, there are so many gorgeous messages coming through from everybody as well. Thank you everybody, that keeps us going, that connection, I perform as well, it's that connection that we're missing, so when you see the comments coming through it's gorgeous. Avoca, thank you so much. Rita, I'll pass back to you.

>> AVOCA: Thank you.

>> KATE: Rita, you're muted!

>> RITA: I'll get there eventually! I think I sound better anyway with the mic off. So that was brilliant Avoca, thank you so much. Kate, thank you so much.

We're now going to take a five minutes break and hopefully Michael is going to

flash up our donation spot in the chat box, because now we're going to have a bucket collection for queer arts. So, if we were doing this in real life in a room, we'd pass a hat now and at the end of our 12 sessions everything we pick up after all your donations will go to the artists. The artists are being paid, but they're being paid very badly! And we would love, you heard the story, it's really tough times for performing artists, they've to buy new equipment, they've to retrain, they've to do all that kind of stuff, so we want queer arts to throw them a bit of money, here at The Gay Project everything you donate in these breaks will go to the artists. And there we are. Michael's popped up Donorbox.

So, we'll take a five minutes break. Thomas will run a little video for you, this is one of my absolute favourites, it's a Willie Nelson song called Sometimes Cowboys are Secretly Fond of Each Other. See you after the break.

Short Break

>> RITA: The gorgeous Orville Peck, I love that song as well, the first time I heard it I was drinking a cup of coffee, I spat it out, I think it was Gerry Anderson in Derry who played it for the first time.

So, I hope you all had a nice wee break, again thanks a million for all your chats, what a wonderful group of attendees you are.

So now I am going to introduce you to our scholar for this evening, who is the very fabulous Dr Cormac O'Brien. And Cormac is a Dub, but we won't hold that against him, because he has some other very good qualities, and he is our first scholar of the evening, of the series and Cormac will be with us for the next few sessions, so we'll have our first three sessions are going to be covered by Cormac.

So, Cormac, I gave a wee bio to people about you, so I'm not going to go into all

your accolades and all your amazing plaudits that you have, I'm going to let you just tell us what you want to tell us. I've lost, I've got a wee bit lost here, so I'm going to refer to my notes! There we go, so what I'm going to do now is I'm going to pass across to Michael, who is going to start Cormac off by asking him a question related to the work that Cormac is doing and we'll kind of start the chat from there. So, Michael would you like to fire away?

>> MICHAEL: Sure, I suppose one of the things that I often wonder about is in relation to the word queer itself, so we talk about queer theory, we talk about queer studies, I suppose it's something that's very alive for me in my own personal life and also in my professional life, even within the community there would be a lot of disagreement and different kinds of understanding about what the word queer actually means, so you might have one person who finds it a very offensive term and another who uses it as a term of empowerment, so I'd love to learn more about the word itself, when did we start to use it, how did we start to use it, why did we start to use it, whatever. How you want to go about answering that, if it's not too complicated a question?

>> CORMAC: Sure, no it's not a complicated question at all, it's something I've come up against, not up against, something I've come across quite often at conferences where, at academic conferences there's this terrible tokenisation of, they'll have the queer panel, so academic conferences are organised into three speakers and the ideal thing is there's a queer speaker on every panel, but of course these mainstream conferences they'll say we've the queer panel and the three queer academics who put in totally disparate papers -- me, I come from the arts like Ruth said earlier, I came to academia late in life, I was a theatre director, making queer theatre for many years, and that just reminds me -- I'm going to side bar here and thank Avoca for that amazing performance, because I actually lost my queer virginity to Laura Brannigan's Self Control, that was a real trip down memory lane there thank you very much, Avoca.

But to come back to the word queer and why the word queer. You'll often get -- heterosexual people who consider themselves allies, and they would

approach you in the social spaces of the conference and say why are you using this word queer? Surely that's an insult. Surely that's a pejorative? Certainly, those questions will come from people of an older generation, I'm no young fella either, I'm in my 50s, you know? But I can certainly understand why, because it was a term that was used in the early to mid to late 20th century, as an insult, as a very derogatory insult, it was often the last word that a queer person heard before they were the victim of a homophobic murder.

So, to first of all answer it in terms of it being an insult. There has been this sense of positive reclamation of the term. The way certain minority groups of colour have reclaimed their pejorative terms, so that's a very simple first step to where this word queer has come from and why we use it so often and why we use it with ease and frequency, that it's a sense of reclaiming it for ourselves, because language is power and there is power in language. So, the first thing is that we've reclaimed the language and we've taken back the power by saying that's now our term and we'll use it thank you very much and it's not for you to use, it's for us to use.

To take that a little bit further then, queer then branches out as a term, now in the academy, in academia, it's the brand name or the name given to a field of study, I'm going to go into that now in a few minutes and how that field of study came about. In the broader sense of queer communities, and I note I pluralise that word, because I think there's -- Rita, during Rita and Ruth's interview, they spoke about easily digestible gayness that is put forth to the mainstream as a way of, I would almost say as a way of heterosexual mainstream people assuaging themselves, that all of a sudden they are very tolerant and very liberal, but what they are getting -- I'm plucking examples out of the air here, something like Modern Family, where you have this very benign gay couple, I'd call them a gay couple not a queer couple, yeah? So, there's very easily digestible version of gayness that's out there, it's very asexual, there's no sex involved, they go shopping and buy matching sheets etcetera. There's nothing wrong with those

things in and of themselves if that's what a couple wants to do, it's when it becomes the norm and the only accepted way of becoming gay that's problematic.

But coming back to this easily digestible mainstream idea that can be said on Prime Time or the RTE News of the LGBT community and we hear that term so often. But there are many, many communities and there was a point when we were getting LGBTQXI etcetera etcetera, so queer therefore in the sense of uniting us can operate as this broad umbrella term under which we can all come together. So gay men, lesbians, trans, whatever label you want to put -- I don't like to say whatever label, whatever identity you're comfortably landing on at that particular point in your life. Because there was a point where I identified as a gay man, as I've matured and grown older myself and my partner, we're together a long time, we identify as queer men now, that's a political stance, that's where I'm going next with this. Queer as a political position.

But as a broad, where I am right now, queer is a broad umbrella term, under which all what we might call counter-normative sexualities can come together, and it's a way of -- I'm seeing a comment there from Michele, yes Michele it's a matter of stopping categorisation. I'm going to get in that categorisation in a few minutes now and how that categorisation, and how that categorisation has been bound up in legalising things and saying certain people can be legal and certain people can't be legal. Or rather their forms of desire can be legal or can't be legal.

So that's another, Michael, that's another way queer works. Like myself and my Michael, my guy is Michael as well, we don't even identify as partners any more. When people ask us what we are to each other we say we're queer kinsmen, we see ourselves as two men, queer men on a journey through life together. So, we're queer kinsmen.

To come to queer then as a political position. Queer is those of us who wish to agitate and activate and often as Ruth pointed out when she spoke to Rita, we agitate and activate through art as much as we agitate and activate through boots on the ground at protests, or at an active demonstration. And then I mean Act Up is a perfect example, particularly Act Up Dublin and some of the amazing work they have been doing recently, but also I'm thinking of Act Up back in the late 80s and early 90s where they combined amazing art with activism, like putting the condom on Jesse Helms' house back in the 80s or just walking along the streets, this is pre-pandemic, and these wonderful spray paint etchings, I don't know what you call it when you hold the thing, what's it called again? You spray through the thing?

>> MICHAEL: Stencil.

>> CORMAC: These wonderful stencils, so art and activism coming together. And when art and activism come together and they are propped up or shored up as Ruth pointed out by queer thinking, activism Noel, thanks a million (laughs) it's queer practice, you know what I mean? This coming together. So queer is a political position.

If we even think of the early gay rights movement before AIDS came along, AIDS did change everything, particularly in terms of sexual practice. Gay men in particular in the US were often critiqued for having very robust sexual lives, that horrible P word, promiscuous, which carries a lot of bad, it's not a word I use, I would say someone has a robust sexual life.

That sexual, those robust sexual lives were not just about pleasure. They were worn as a badge of political identity. It was a way of saying we are different to you. And we will live our lives in a different way and have sex in different ways, and on that difference is why we should have the same rights as you. And then as we've seen, there's a trajectory we can follow then, where a lot of self and sexual policing came in through the AIDS crisis years to arrive at the moment, we're at now which Ruth and Rita addressed during the talk, where

rather than our politics being about liberation, our politics have become about assimilation.

Then if I just finally, the last thing I'll say on queer or where this word, so it's a political place, or a political standpoint, where you're activating against normative structures of oppression, and then to address queer theory as it has come up through the academy. So, we had feminist criticism, since the 60s, the late 60s, or maybe the early 60s with the publication of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, but certainly in the academic sense it was the publication of Kate Millett's dissertation in 1972 *Sexual Politics* which started feminism, and there's a plethora of amazing feminist literary and cultural critics. And then in the early 80s we started to get my field of speciality, which is critical masculinity studies -- don't confuse this with men's rights activism, it's a different arena altogether, really critical masculinities studies is looking at masculinity and manhood through a feminist lens almost, you'll know the difference between men's rights activism and masculinities studies, because we pluralise the word masculinities, in recognition that there are many different ways of being a man.

Then as Ruth mentioned in her talk, in the early AIDS crisis years there was an awful lot of homophobia going on. Particularly directed at gay male communities, so there was this kind of coming together of what had been traditionally understood as feminist criticism, masculinities studies and this burgeoning field that was kind of loosely labelled gay studies, and people like Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick etcetera started writing in a way that brought all of those disciplines together and all of a sudden we had this thing that was called queer theory, and the essence of queer theory is that it looks at how sexuality has been mobilised or is mobilised as a tool for social control.

When I say sexuality, I don't just mean sexual orientation, sexuality there includes women's bodies as a site of political angst, maternity sexuality, as in how you practice your sex, not just your sexual orientation. So, I hope I've

gone some way towards unpacking that term, queer there for you?

>> MICHAEL: 100 percent, I'll be spinning from that answer so, thank you very much. I have a lot to digest. Rita you're on mute again!

>> RITA: I know Thomas also wanted to ask a question; I'll just go to you now Thomas.

>> THOMAS: Absolutely, could we just maybe beforehand take some of the questions, because it seems as if there is something, there's a lot going on of course.

>> RITA: I'm whizzing up past them, we have a lot of comments. Why don't you have a look at the questions there Thomas because there is some, I wanted to ask Cormac.

>> THOMAS: I will actually go forward with my own in that sense, but if I may, just sticking with the terminology Cormac that we're talking about, queer of course, but also talking about activism in itself and the public expectation of activism and our evolution, in society in keeping up with getting progressive. So I'm from Denmark and you can say homosexuality has been decriminalised since the 1930s there, it was decriminalised in the 1930s in Denmark, whereas people compare it with Ireland seeing that was in 1993, which is comparatively recent, but that doesn't mean that discrimination is, if you know in that sense better or worse in Denmark, you can say that it's the same. So, you hear a lot of people say oh it's 2020 why is it that we're not better at accepting things, or why are people so intolerant, they should not be intolerant when it's 2020.

So, this idea of linearity of the whole public expecting us all to be progressive simultaneously, regardless of which culture we are in. What do you see, what is the historical trajectory or the linearity or lack of linearity when it comes to queer rights?

>> CORMAC: Right, I think to answer that question, we need to - there's several different factors, historical factors that need to be taken into account. Colonialism and imperialism and the British Empire being the final of the big empires, I know we could talk about the American Empire and economic

colonialism right now, or other, you know Russian Empire and data colonialism, but I'm speaking here specifically in the terms of old imperialism, with the British Empire, the idea of going and invading countries, that's the type of imperialism I need to talk about here.

So, I want to park, I'm putting imperialism on the table, I'm going to come back to it now in a second. I want to bring in some other historical factors. You spoke there Thomas with your beautiful bow about -- sorry, I love it, it's fab, it's queer fab -- you spoke about decriminalization, so decriminalization happened in Ireland in 1993. I was 24, now the temptation for me is to say I was illegal until I was 24. But the fact of the matter is I wasn't illegal, the sex I wanted to practice was illegal. So that separates two things out. And what it separates out is sexuality as identity and sexuality as behaviour.

So, if we take ourselves back a bit in history to the 19th century, when the British occupied about a third of the world was it, they said the Empire upon which the sun never set, because they had so much of the world. And there really was a period of time up until around the Victorian era, when although same-sex sexual practice and I'm sorry to use such long-winded terms, same-sex sexual practice was frowned upon, or not -- you know, in certain communities or villages or places, it might have been punished or ostracised or whatever, it was still seen as something somebody might do every now and again. Rather than as the whole of somebody's identity.

So, for example the way we might have a friend now who might every now and again go on a drinking bender, so it was seen as something people did rather than who they are, so if we bring that into 19th century, particularly around the late 19th century, several things start to happen. First of all, the first one we have to bear in mind is that the British Empire is laying down the law on a lot of countries all around the world and with them they are bringing the gender binary, the patriarchal gender binary, which as progressive as we want to think

we are nowadays with our legislation and our referenda etcetera, we still live by that binary. I really think for radical change to the gender order and the understanding of gender and sexuality, that's where we start by dismantling that binary, but that's a side point.

So, this empire is laying down this way of being, man and woman. This way of being sexual. Around about the 1870s or thereabouts, we also have the rise of the sciences of the mind. So, what happens is Freud and his cohort, their ideas come to the fore and they start being popular. And we've the rise of a side field if you like called sexology, or the study of human sexuality, and it's the first time really that this has had a popular discourse, that people are talking about this, that books are being published.

And of course, as humans what do we do? A very famous line from Dr Who, we categorise, we label, we try to organise people into bunches to make sense of them. So, we have this situation where this strict gender binary that's heterosexual to its core and homophobic is being laid down and at the same time this new science is forming around the science of the mind and the medical professions move in here as well, and this is where we see a turning point. And Michel Foucault, a major philosopher who died in the early 80s who recorded history of sexuality, he said you can actually pinpoint a time in the 1870s when these new psychologists started to categorise and they invented the word homosexual, it's really interesting that the word homosexual was invented roughly a decade before the word heterosexual was invented. Homo meaning the same, homogenous, a lot of people think it means man, man sex. But no, it means homogenous, the same people having sex.

So, this new field of psychiatry started to say okay this must be something to do with the mind. And then the medics moved in and said okay well then if it's something to do with the mind it's something we must fix. There must be something up here. So, all of a sudden what we see there in the late Victorian

empire period is that the homosexual becomes a species. Or as Foucault would put it, the homosexual becomes a persona and is pathologized. So basically, what you have is human desire -- let's move beyond sexuality, because sexuality really is a series of labels or categorisations that started getting laid down in the late 19th century under this binary that the imperialists were imposing on their subjects. Let's move that back, take that right back and think instead of terms of human desire. So, we desire certain bodies Jasbir Puar -- sorry Rita, we did say we'd provide reading lists etcetera at the end of the session. Jasbir Puar, a fabulous queer theorist, completely intersectional in her work, she said let's think of sexuality -- I think I might even have a quotation from her here that I can share the screen with you, I've just done a few screen grabs. Yeah, of course it would be the last one I open wouldn't it?

She says let's think of sexuality not as identity -- am I okay to share my screen? Not just yet Tech Fairie. She said let's not think of sexuality as an identity, but as an assembly, a cluster, a coming together of feelings, tingling sensations and desires and emotions, that's what sexuality is.

>> THOMAS: Give it a go Cormac.

>> CORMAC: Are we there? She says think of sexuality not as an identity but as assemblages of sensations, affects -- in academia affect is just a posh word for emotions, affects and forces. That's what sexuality is, things happening around you and within you, okay? And what we see in the late 19th century, the medics and psychologists move in and start to say okay we're taking human desire which is basically what Jasbir is describing there that sexuality is desire, we're going to categorise desire and we're going to put labels on human desire and we're going to say certain human desires are okay, and legal and legit and we're going to allow them, and then we're going to take other human desires and categorise them as being illegal and against the law and not good, because they disagree with our idea of one white man and one white woman procreating.

It's interesting when we think back to the Victorian era, the Empire, that sodomy

did not just mean anal sex, it meant anything other than vaginal sex; so, you're a sodomite if you gave your person a blow job, that was sodomy, anything other than procreative sex that was going to produce a baby was considered sodomy.

Now I want to continue here with this, this quotation is -- some of these queer theorists if they were here, I'd slap them for the way they write their stuff, know what I mean? It can be a bit brain-bending but let's look at what she's saying, she's talking about sexuality and the law. She says the law, meaning the status quo, those who rule, is limited in what it can convey and create. She says the limits with which we must concern ourselves are not the legal instruments per se, meaning the police force or the judiciary or the courts or whatever, but she says the law's reliance on performative language, now what does that mean? We've all heard that word I'm sure at some stage? Performative -- performative is not performance, performative, performance is a show you put on, it's something you rehearse, you practice, you bring before others knowingly.

Performative -- when we see that "ive" at the end of a word, what it means is there are a set of rules and codes and scripts that we're following, that's where the heteronormative comes from, yeah? I'm not talking about heteronormative tonight we'll talk about that next week, but performative means something that is brought into being by either just doing or saying it.

And the easiest way to understand this is the idea of performative language, from a scholar back in the 1950s JL Austin, who came up with the idea of performative speech acts, whereby we bring something into existence merely by saying it has happened. And the most famous example we use when we're teaching students is the wedding ceremony. Whereby the celebrant says "I now pronounce you husband and wife" and the legal status of that couple changes. They suddenly have more rights, more privileges, less tax to pay etcetera etcetera, merely by it being stated that this has happened. So, it is brought into being by doing or saying it. Okay?

So that's a performative speech act. What Puar is saying here is that the law's reliance, the laws that are created around sexuality relies on bringing certain sexual categories into being merely by stating that they exist. So gay -- well gay is, I don't think gay is the word that would turn up in a constitution, but homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, so the law takes this wonderful thing, it's free, one of the most basic things we have, to express ourselves, but the law takes it and by saying that it goes into these categories, it actually creates those categories, and then regulates those categories, saying that some of them are okay and some of them aren't okay and they should go to prison or in some countries in the world still that they should be eliminated, and all the while behaving as if those categories had already existed since the beginning of time. Whereas in fact the status quo, those in power, the law has brought those categories of good desire or bad desire into being, naming them first.

Sorry, did I just bend your brain Thomas? Have I -- I hope that's clear. I know it can be quite confusing, the idea of bringing something into being merely by stating that it exists, but that's really how sexuality is constructed within legal frameworks, that they say this thing exists, we will regulate it, but behave as if it has always been known to be this thing since the beginning of time.

>> THOMAS: Very good, it's all bends into how we look to legislation to allowing ourselves to be defined in a certain way, whereas to get past that in a certain way and say, the beautiful way to express your desire just happens to be with these colonial categorisations as well.

>> CORMAC: Yeah, there's three things coming together; colonialism, the rise of the sciences of the mind and then how the sciences of the mind got medicalized, the medical professions moved in and said okay these categories you are coming up with, homosexual, whatever, they now belong to us, the medical profession, we see them as bad things and we're going to fix them. And so, came in the long 20th century of reparative therapy and all the terrible things we've heard happen, and it was only in the late 60s then that we started to fight back.

>> RITA: Cormac, we've had loads of questions coming in and I'm also aware of the time, we're coming up, it's ten to nine.

>> CORMAC: Can we tell Ciara it's okay to push the kid's bedtime?

>> RITA: Gender might be a social construct but bedtime is real! So yeah, Cormac, maybe we've some really interesting things here, we have Laurence talking about, oh he's talking about the creation of a dissident Utopian self, there's a big idea! A lot of stuff about colonialism and its impact on queer people. Mary Queery is saying as a queer Irish person still living within British colonial legacy in Ireland up in the north, I wonder have you any thoughts about partition on queer Ireland, north and south? I don't think we have time to get into that one tonight Cormac, but it's such a great question.

>> CORMAC: Well I'll riff off it rather than get into it, I wouldn't be an expert on sectarian, north and south, there are better queer thinkers equipped than me, probably somebody like Alison Campbell, you know what I mean? Particularly because I grew up in the Republic and we know the history, us down in the south turned our back, we really did turn a blind eye to the fact that you all were living in occupied territory for such a long time, so -- but I will riff off the idea, the north and south thing, and what it makes me think in particular is of tribalism, and how when you've got a zone of conflict as we had in the north for so long, that you're going to have two forms of queerness emerge, because you've got two different sides. And this idea of two different things, it's something I wanted to - I'm making a bit of a leap here, but what I wanted to bring in, the idea of queerness, because you know -- where I'm coming from -- right I've got my train of thought now, sorry!

You might get loyalist queers and you might get nationalist queers up north and certain traits or attributes will be latched on to each, so I'm using that as a jumping off point into the final point I wanted to bring to the table tonight. Is the idea of what we might call discursive coupling, and this also goes back to Thomas's previous question about history and it also riffs off Michael's question about queer and the history of the word queer?

The first thing I need to do here is give a crash course 101 in discourse. The word discourses. What does it mean, discourse? You'll often hear it and people sometimes think discourse, we're having a discourse, it just means we're having a conversation. Discourse is a word that should always have an adjective in front of it, discourse doesn't mean that you're having a conversation, it means the way you're allowed to shape the conversation. The things that are allowed to be said, the things that aren't allowed to be said, there's a certain way with any kind of topic at all, but particularly with issues of the body, embodiment, gender, sexuality we're allowed talk about those in certain ways, I don't mean just your conversation over the back garden wall with your neighbour, I mean all the way up the ladder right to the top echelons of power. There are ways we are -- nowadays it might be called framing the narrative or owning the narrative, but there are particular ways in which we are allowed talk about it.

Think about the discourse around being gay in Ireland, up until not very long ago that was a stigmatizing, scandalising discourse. Being gay was spoken of in terms of taboo, of secrecy, of hiddenness, of wrongness, of sinfulness, so it was a scandalising discourse. Then we had the institutional and church scandals revealed in the early 90s and the discourse, and we had lots of progressive LGBTQ rights, lots of referenda were passed and the discourse around being gay in Ireland has done a 180 where everybody wants to have a gay best friends -- and I'm told by my heterosexual mother friends that it's really trendy to have a gay son -- so we can see the discourse has flipped. Simultaneously the discourse around the church has done a 180, where we used to have to talk about the church in very reverent, respectful terms and if you saw a priest on the street you doffed your cap, that discourse has flipped. So, discourse is what's allowed to be said, how you can talk about things and what's equally important, what's not allowed to be said.

So, we can therefore infer that discourse produces power, if you're only allowed say certain things about certain things it's giving power, and likewise if something is producing power it's also going to take away power. And so I'll finish up on this final thing, the idea of discourse and queerness and what we call discursive coupling or discursive twinning, and what we see throughout the history of homosexuality and particularly in the 20th century when we had mass media; so film, photography, in the mid-century, television, so we're getting mass representation, is we see the twinning of very sinister aspects of life with queerness. A really good example would be the 2015 marriage campaign, where you had the anti-marriage group called Mothers and Fathers Matter. And their schtick was gay people shouldn't be bringing up children, queers shouldn't bring up children, that they shouldn't get married because they'll form families, as if queerness was somehow contagious and the kids will catch it.

I'm a very short guy, by their logic if I want to be taller, I'll hang out with tall people because I'll catch their tallness, that's how crazy that logic is. But there's a dog whistle at play there, that really, they're discursively twinning queerness with paedophilia, and what we see throughout the history right up until the late 90s or 80s and particularly Act Up were very prominent, we see this discursive coupling in the way queerness is talked about, is it's linked in with sinister aspects. So, for example in cold war US all queers were communists, yeah? At the same time, if you look at the history of the USSR, they are telling their people that all queers were licentious capitalists, so you'll find this history of what we call discursive coupling, this twinning of homosexuality, queerness, with nefarious traits, which have nothing to do with sexuality, you know what I mean? So that was just -- I know I didn't answer the questioner's thing about north and south and particularly sectarianism, but it did spark that idea in me, associating traits and the discursive coupling and the history of how -- a very famous example would be in films, right up till very recently, that trope of the queer must die, that queerness has always been associated with bad and untimely and early death.

>> RITA: So, Cormac, we've run out of time.

>> CORMAC: We have? Why do they do that to queer people, they do that because of power, people are power crazy, where ever you see power you will see money trailing along somewhere behind.

>> RITA: I am going to have to do that terrible thing and wind us up. And bring us to a close, really a big part is Michelle who we can't see here, needs to be able to finish at 9 o'clock. So, we have to let Michelle go. I just want to thank everybody so much, I couldn't be happier with how this has gone this evening, we've had lots of questions we haven't answered, we have one from queer movements being anti-capitalist, we'll definitely get to that.

>> CORMAC: Absolutely.

>> RITA: We have one from Heather, notions of monogamy and coupling, it's far too interesting, but we've three more weeks with Cormac.

>> CORMAC: Have we an e-mail address that people can send questions and we can pick them up when we start off next week?

>> RITA: Absolutely, send to me, Rita at [gayproject.ie](mailto:rita@gayproject.ie). This session has been recorded and there will be a full transcript, the recording and the transcript will be hopefully available in the next couple of days on our website, that's our Tech Fairy's job, Thomas, to look after that. Cormac is also going to give us some readings and we'll put up a reading list so you can do further readings, some people have been asking about that, so you'll have a recording of the whole session and further readings to keep you all going until next week.

One final thing I want to say is that when we set up the Eventbrite invitation originally, we only set it up for one event, we didn't realise we couldn't go back in and change it after that. So tomorrow I am going to send you all a link for the rest of the series, so you'll only have to sign up to that the one time tomorrow. Is there anything I've forgotten, my beautiful assistants, Michael and Thomas?

>> MICHAEL: I'm just going to do a shameless plug, I've already done it twice in the chat, just in case anybody is not watching, we have a website that's where

the information and transcripts will be going up. That's gayproject.ie, you can sign up for the newsletter, lots of things like this we'll host in time and we also have a Facebook and Twitter account, so please check those out.

>> RITA: You're so good at that Mike!

>> THOMAS: Thanks for all the nice comments out there, apologies for the choppy videos, we'll definitely improve on that, it's trial and error first, but we really appreciate all the comments thanks a lot.

>> RITA: Thank you all so much, with that we will bring it to a close, and Thomas you can turn us off!

>> THOMAS: Thank you so much. Good bye everyone, see you.

>> RITA: Bye bye, thank you.

Session concludes