11 Inner exiles

Migrant representation and queer belongings in recent Irish films

Allison Macleod

In recent years, Irish filmmakers have responded to Ireland's growing inward migration and changing socioeconomic conditions with films that engage with migrant narratives and representation. Described by critics as an emerging 'intercultural cinema' (Kakasi 2011; Villar-Argáiz 2014), these films address issues of racism, inclusion and intercultural dialogue inherent within the migrant state of 'outside belonging'. They further imply the potential for new relationships to form between those different identities that have historically been excluded from Ireland's national narrative, including sexual, class and ethnic minorities. This chapter builds on existing work by Agnes Kakasi and Pilar Villar-Argáiz to analyse migrant representation in Irish cinema via a politics of space. Issues of space are central to the national imaginary and the formation of the national subject. Ireland's 'imagined political community' (Anderson 1983: 6) is imagined as a natural and unified entity, and this image is maintained through ideological and material practices. As Ireland has become home to a growing number of immigrants, these new arrivals have produced new subjectivities and spatialities associated with the process of leaving their home countries and making a home in their new surroundings. The migrant subject's alternative relations to time and space can be conceptualised as a form of 'queer belonging' that challenges the dominant social order and normative modes of belonging.

Consider, for instance, a scene from Lenny Abrahamson's *Adam & Paul* (2004, Ireland). The film follows drug addicts Adam (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul (Tom Murphy) as they wander around Dublin in search of drugs. After Paul goes to a shop to buy a baguette and milk, he returns to find his friend sharing a public bench with a Bulgarian man (Ion Caramitru).¹ The man's battered suitcase sits between them, and when Paul asks him to move it so he can sit next to Adam, the man replies, 'I'm sitting here first. I have my bag here, it's public property'. The Bulgarian man eventually moves his suitcase to allow Paul to sit down. Paul then offends the man once more by assuming he is from Romania. When Paul asks him how long he has been in Dublin, the Bulgarian man tells him it has been two years. Paul replies that it must be a relief because Bulgaria is a shit-hole. The man angrily retorts that Bulgaria is not a shit-hole but is, in fact, beautiful. Instead, 'Dublin is the

shit-hole full of liars and maniacs and fucking Romanians'. When the men ask him why he is in Dublin, he asks them: 'Why am I here? Did you ever ask yourself the same question? Why are you here? Why the fuck are you here?' He then gets up and walks away.

This scene sets out a number of tensions regarding identity politics in contemporary Ireland. The Bulgarian man remembers his home country fondly but admits he had to leave. He has been in Dublin for two years but shows little love for his host country where citizens regularly confuse him for being Romanian. The man is temporally and spatially dislocated, separated from his past life in Bulgaria and yet not fully attached to his present life in Ireland. He is subsequently imbued with an inbetweenness, at once belonging to both and neither countries. Adam and Paul also embody alternative relations to time and space. Despite the men being Irish citizens, they do not demonstrate any strong connection to place, as evidenced by their wandering movements over the course of the film. Their attachment to Ireland as a place of belonging is questioned by the Bulgarian man with his existential question of 'why are you here?' Further, as drug users they live life in rapid bursts in a way that is contrary to the normative lifecycle of the Western subject.² Adam and Paul therefore embody alternative temporalities and spatialities that position them in opposition to the dominant social order and, in doing so, align them with the Bulgarian man. The scene further points to a criticism of the Eurocentric assumption that distinctions between non-Irish immigrants (such as Bulgarian and Romanian) are nonexistent or irrelevant.

In *Adam & Paul*, the disruptive potential of the marginalised Other emerges through their embodiment of alternative relations to space. In at once belonging and not belonging, the Bulgarian man not only embodies an inbetweenness but exposes Adam and Paul as similarly out-of-place. Using John Michael McDonagh's fiction film *Calvary* (2014, Ireland/UK) and Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien's documentary *Here to Stay* (2006, Ireland) as case studies, this chapter argues for the migrant experience as a form of queer belonging that emerges through non-normative relations to time and space and that captures 'an ongoing inbetweenness' (Probyn 1996: 6). Both films blur the lines between the native and the outsider, inclusion and exclusion, to suggest the potential for new social bonds to form between disparate groups through shared experiences of marginalisation. By exposing and challenging normative constructions of belonging and community, these films engage with spatial tactics of queer politics, or what Tim Cresswell calls 'crisis points in the normal functioning of everyday expectations' (Cresswell 1996: 22).

At the intersection of Irish migrant and queer cinemas

Ireland's economic boom, popularly referred to as the Celtic Tiger, resulted in growing numbers of immigrants coming to Ireland in search of new opportunities. In 2004, 58,500 immigrants arrived in Ireland. By 2007, that

figured had almost doubled to 109,500 (Central Statistics Office 2018). This influx of migrants contributed to an Irish sociocultural landscape that was already shifting away from traditional markers of identity associated with Catholicism and rural life. Globalisation and a series of political reforms suggested that traditional signifiers of Irishness were being reworked.³ At the same time, the 2004 Citizenship Referendum demonstrated the limits of such liberalisation.⁴

Despite the growing numbers of immigrants coming to Ireland, they have remained largely absent in Irish cinema. For Kevin Rockett, newly arrived asylum seekers and refugee groups in Ireland have brought new experiences of Irishness as Otherness to the forefront. Yet the arrivals of these groups to Ireland 'are too recent to have found their way in any reflective manner into Irish film or television drama' (Rockett cited in Kakasi 2011: 40). The UK and the US have historically been the primary points of reference for migrant narratives in Irish cinema, framed via a diasporic imaginary that oscillates between a nostalgic romanticism and a dark and violent conceptualisation of Irishness, depending on the political context. Subsequently, the study of Irish migrant films beyond a British or American context remains under-theorised in Irish scholarship.⁵

Kakasi seeks to address this gap by using Laura U. Marks's framework of 'intercultural cinema'. For Marks, 'intercultural' suggests 'movement between one culture and another' (Marks 2000: 6). While other terms such as 'multiculturalism' risk homogenising the struggles of diverse groups, intercultural 'implies a dynamic relationship between a dominant "host" culture and a minority culture' and 'can describe exchanges between non-dominant cultures' (Marks 2000: 6–7). Framed via the lens of interculturalism, migrant representation in Irish film thus offers a space where 'processes of racialization and intercultural dialogue can be performed and explored' (Kakasi 2011: 48). Kakasi further argues that such films are defined by a more experimental and often personal formal language that challenges established modes of representation within Irish cinema.

In her arguments for an Irish migrant cinema, Kakasi suggests the inherently dynamic condition of such cinematic texts whereby representations of migrant identities and experiences are not static, but instead constantly being renegotiated and reworked in relation to the dominant culture. Such an implication of movement can be productively aligned with Elspeth Probyn's 'outside belongings' as a queer model for the bodily migrant experience. For Probyn, the desire to belong is constituted by the desire for an attachment to a space, a community or a way of being, and manifests itself from a position that is already peripheral to the social centre. The disruptive potential of such 'outside belonging' emerges when the marginal body is propelled from the periphery into the social milieu, destabilising normative configurations of power and social relations (see Probyn 1996). In *Calvary* and *Here to Stay*, the disruptive potential of the central migrant characters emerges in their ability to at once belong and not belong. Their state of outside

belonging reveals them to be bodies in flux: 'always an identity under construction, a site of permanent becoming' (Jagose 1996: 131).

In capturing disruptive moments of outside belonging and the new social relationships that result, *Calvary* and *Here to Stay* undermine the nation as a natural and unified formation by exposing the forms of unbelonging that are necessary to its claim of hegemony. Further insight can be unpacked via a comparative analysis of these filmic texts. While *Calvary* is a bigger-budget drama populated by a well-known cast of actors (including Brendon Gleeson and Aidan Gillen) and targeted towards a more mainstream audience, *Here to Stay* is a grass-roots documentary intended for the festival circuit with a more targeted reach. *Calvary* contains openly queer characters and jokes about acts of sexual dissidence, while *Here to Stay* is more explicitly focused on the nuances of queer identity and experience. By analysing these films alongside one another, productive comparisons regarding their spatial politics can be found that in turn provide new understandings of migrant and queer Irish cinemas.

Calvary

Calvary is a black comedy set in a provincial and remote Irish town. The film opens with an unknown man in a confessional telling the local priest Father James (Brendon Gleeson) that he was raped as a child by a priest. The man tells him that he intends to kill Father James in retaliation in a week because 'nobody would care if I killed a bad priest. But to kill a good priest like you would really be noticed'. The remainder of the film follows Father James as he goes about his pastor duties over the course of the week. His interactions with the townspeople reveal them to be a motley cast of characters that include Simon (Isaach De Bankolé), an African immigrant and auto mechanic who is having an affair with Veronica Brennan (Orla O'Rourke), whose husband Jack Brennan (Chris O'Dowd) is the local town butcher and regularly beats his wife. Other characters include a gay police officer (Gary Lydon); a gay hustler with a penchant for 1930s gangster quips (Owen Sharpe); an atheist doctor (Aidan Gillen); and the town barman (Pat Shortt). At the end of the week, Father James is confronted by Jack, who reveals himself as the man who confessed and who then shoots and kills the priest.

From the film's onset, Simon is positioned as an outsider. It is implied that he came to Ireland to capitalise on the promises of the Celtic Tiger boom but ended up staying in the aftermath of the economic downturn. He is introduced early on in the film in a conversation between Father James and his colleague Father Leary (David Wilmot). Father Leary gossips to Father James about the townspeople, telling him that Veronica has got a black eye from someone and implying that Simon might have given it to her. When Father Leary refers to Simon as 'coloured' and from Uganda, Father James corrects him and replies that he is from Ivory Coast. In a later conversation

between Father James and Jack, Jack describes Simon as 'black' and then corrects himself to say 'coloured', apologising that the previous term is racist. The ways that the characters describe Simon in terms of his ethnicity ('coloured', 'black', from either Uganda or Ivory Coast) not only emphasise the need to identify him as non-Irish, but also reveal how he is more visibly othered than the other townspeople. Further, just as Paul confuses Romania and Bulgaria in *Adam & Paul*, Father Leary demonstrates an ignorance of the distinctions between African countries in mistaking Simon to be from Uganda.

Even as Simon is framed as an outsider to the town, an early scene in the film reveals how he navigates his liminal positioning vis-à-vis Father James to challenge the priest's authority. Father James goes to Simon's workplace to ask him about Veronica's black eye. Simon taunts him by describing how white women often beg him to hit them. Father James assumes Simon is admitting culpability and tells him to not do it again. Simon replies: 'You cannot tell me what to do. You're not in the missions now. . . . [A]re you going to chop off my hand if I disobey you?' Father James then admits 'You know your history'.

Up until this point, their conversation is framed in alternating close-up shots of the two men. As Simon tells Father James 'I like to read', the film cuts to a medium shot of the two men contained within the same frame. Simon continues: 'You probably believe that black people cannot . . .' The priest interrupts him: 'Yeah yeah yeah, black people, white people, blah blah blah'. Simon retaliates by throwing his cigarette at Father James's chest and telling him: 'Run along Father. Your sermon is finished'. By pulling back to show the two men contained within the same frame, the film emphasises competing socialities: black and white, migrant and Irish. Simon challenges the priest's stereotyped view of him as being violent and beating Veronica by alluding to the stereotype of black people being uneducated. He further questions Father James's right to investigate Simon on suspicion of abuse given the Church's role in covering up the violent mistreatment of African people by Catholic missionaries. Father James's precarious social status is later emphasised in the film when Father Leary, upon hearing of his confrontation with Simon, reminds him to tread lightly since '[t]he Church can't be seen to be getting involved in matters of diversity and the like. . . . [W]e have to be very circumspect in those areas'.

As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly evident that it is Father James who is truly peripheral to the town community whereas Simon is positioned more centrally within its social sphere. This shift is made evident in a significant scene that takes place about two thirds into the film. Father James goes to the local pub for a drink after discovering his dog has been killed. Father James is a recovering alcoholic, and therefore his decision to order a drink at the pub represents him reaching his breaking point. Father James stands at the bar, framed in a medium close-up shot facing the camera, as he orders a large drink. The film shows Simon and Jack visible

in the background behind the priest, playing chess with one another (see Figure 11.1). The film cuts to a close-up of Simon as he asks the priest if he knows who burned down the church, referencing a scene earlier in *Calvary* when Father James's church is burned down by an unknown vandal. Father James replies that 'It's not my church, it's our church'. The film cuts to a close-up shot of Jack's face as he interjects: 'I'd say it was the Romanians. They're awful heathens'. He looks off-screen left, towards Simon, and then pauses before repeating: 'Romanians'. The film cuts back to Simon, who glares in Jack's direction off-screen right and then looks down at their chess game. Simon tips over his queen, suggesting Jack has won the chess game.

Given that Simon is having an affair with Jack's wife, which Jack knows about, the expectation is that the men should be at odds with one another. Their interactions in this scene do hint at unresolved tensions between them. Jack's emphasis on Romanians being heathens as he looks at Simon and Simon's reaction suggest Jack is implying that Simon is also a heathen. At the same time, their togetherness in this scene as they play chess aligns them. Both have felt victimised by the Catholic Church: Jack was sexually abused as a child by a priest, and earlier in the film Simon criticises the mistreatment of African people by Catholic missionaries. The actions of the characters further suggest they are threats to the family unit: in addition to knowing that Simon is committing adultery with Jack's wife, we also learn that Jack

Figure 11.1 Father James (Brendon Gleeson) orders a drink in the foreground as Simon (Isaach De Bankolé) and Jack (Chris O'Dowd) play chess in the background in *Calvary* (2014)

Source: *Calvary* (2014), directed by John Michael McDonagh © Fox Searchlight Pictures, Screen Ireland, British Film Institute, and Universal Pictures UK (2014).

beats Veronica. The normative family unit and the Catholic Church have historically been framed as necessary building-blocks for the Irish nation-state. Subsequently, the togetherness of Simon and Jack in this scene serves to question the continued relevance of these traditional forms of belonging. The two men at once belong to the town community and yet are alienated from those traditional institutions that have historically defined Ireland.

This state of outside belonging is expressed spatially in the scene through the juxtaposition of the men's positioning in the background against the back of the pub and Father James's positioning at the centre of the pub by the bar. While Father James's positioning would connote a position of power (centrally within the space, situated in the foreground of the shot), it is Jack and Simon who command the space from the background. Their command of the space becomes further evident when Jack gets up and walks over to Father James. He teases him, resulting in the priest walking away off-screen, and the film cuts back to a close up shot of Simon smiling as he rearranges the chess pieces.

It is also significant that this clash of different identities (migrant, abuse victim, Catholic priest) takes place within an Irish pub. Richard Stivers argues that poverty, the growing influence of the Catholic Church, and the increasing segregation of men and women into separate social spheres in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led to hard-drinking groups becoming a form of remission for men and central to the cultural definition of masculinity in Ireland. The institutionalisation of male drinking practices within the pub further became a means of governing these practices even as they themselves constituted a rebellion against familial, religious, and economic obligations (Stivers 2000). Thus, as Macleod notes, 'male drinking practices within the pub constitute a profoundly gendered national expression that is deeply imbricated within a struggle for power' (Macleod 2018: 52). As a critical site for the performance of Irish masculinity and ethnicity, the Irish pub has historically been conceptualised as a microcosm of Irish society.⁶ By using the space of the pub as the setting for the power struggle between Father James, Simon and Jack, *Calvary* depicts a contemporary Ireland struggling with its self-identity during a time of cultural transition.

Throughout the film, the townspeople become increasingly unified through their dismissal of Father James and Catholicism in general. Each of them represents a type of social failing or marginalisation. Therefore, even as they create a community, this community is formed through processes of fractured togetherness as each member struggles with their feelings of not fully belonging to dominant Irish society. Donald Clarke criticises *Calvary* for a slightly heavy-handed approach towards critiquing contemporary Ireland whereby 'every character represented a failing of the state or a victimised proletarian sub-group' (Clarke 2014). Yet the symbolic function of these characters serves to portray an Ireland still struggling in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger economic downturn. Simon is not the only outsider; instead, *Calvary* suggests that all of the townspeople are in a state of outside belonging

to highlight how the erosion of traditional forms of belonging in contemporary Ireland has resulted in the creation of new, inner exiles.

Here to Stay

Here to Stay focuses on the life of Fidel Taquinod, a gay Filipino nurse living in Dublin, as he navigates his personal life with his political involvement with the Overseas Nurses Section of the Irish Nurses Organisation, an organisation that aims to secure equal opportunities and rights for non-EU immigrants in Ireland. His political activism takes place alongside his participation in the Alternative Miss Philippines beauty pageant, his academic studies at University College Dublin, and his romantic relationship with an Irish man named John. In documenting the experiences of transnational migration, *Here to Stay* explores how such experiences intersect in complex ways with gender and sexuality. The film was funded by NGO organisations and the Irish Film Board. It premiered in Dublin at the Stranger Than Fiction Documentary Film Festival, and was later screened at various international film festivals to critical acclaim.

Fidel embodies a complex constellation of identities. He is a Filipino nurse in Ireland who is active in the Filipino queer community, but does not feel able to express his queer sexuality as openly amongst his Irish colleagues. He occupies a liminal position within Irish society, both in terms of his ethnicity and in terms of his sexuality. The film uses Fidel's voice-over throughout the film to share past experiences where he has encountered marginalisation or has questioned Irish societal processes. At the same time, the film demonstrates his ability to inhabit and command space in the peripheral migrant and queer communities to which he belongs. In following Fidel as he navigates these different spaces and utilising voice-over as a filmic device, *Here to Stay* reveals Fidel to be a body in flux, caught between competing spatialities (public, migrant, queer) and temporalities (past and present).

Fidel's state of inbetweenness is captured in a short sequence of scenes that takes place about three quarters of the way through the film. The film shows John and Fidel celebrating Fidel's graduation from university at their home with friends. It then cuts to a shot of the Irish landscape from inside a moving train. Fidel's voice-over describes the migrant experience of traveling from a developing country to a Western country:

I had this notion that because all of the textbooks in college or in school were authored by Americans or British, that the West was doing the right thing. . . . Initially I had this thought that, okay, here I am in Ireland, I have to be grateful to the government that they recruited me from the Philippines. But then as I was working longer in Ireland, I realised that not everything in Ireland is right or not everything in the West is perfect.

The camera cuts from the landscape shot to show Fidel leading an Overseas Nurses Section Meeting. As Fidel opens the meeting, the camera pans to show different migrant groups in the audience (Filipino, Nigerian etc.). At

the meeting, Fidel recognises that Nigerian migrants have a greater difficulty finding work than do Filipino migrants. The camera cuts between different men and women in the room as they share their challenges with getting work permits for their spouses. Fidel then describes his experience of being suspended from work for two weeks without pay because he allegedly had no working visa, even though he did.

As he continues to speak to the room about how he handled being suspended, the film plays a voice-over of Fidel describing his frustration with the experience and his suspicion that he was suspended because he was so vocal in his criticism of the government. He saw this issue being representative of greater concerns with the immigration system in Ireland rather than a problem with his employer. The camera cuts to a panning shot of a suburb and then shows Fidel inside a bedroom, folding clothes, as his voice-over describes how this experience gave him a new perspective on what is happening in Ireland. Fidel's voice-over continues: if this could happen to him, as a high-skilled worker, than low-skilled workers are even more vulnerable. While Fidel's visa enables him to move employers if he is unhappy, not everyone can do this, and the situation of migrant workers is based on a market demand that could change.

This sequence of scenes highlights a tension around Fidel's sense of belonging in Ireland. His voice-over on the train positions him on the periphery of dominant Irish society, looking in. For O'Brien, the use of the train in this shot was a deliberate choice to separate Fidel from the landscape: 'he's observing and he's very much a distant observer of his landscape. He's exoticizing the landscape in that scene; it's not exoticizing him' (Villar-Argáiz 2016: 179). The use of voice-over in these scenes further distances Fidel from his surroundings while suggesting a temporal disconnect. Even as Fidel describes a past experience during the meeting (shifting from present-day to past), the inclusion of his voice-over creates a third temporality that further dislocates him.

Although Fidel is describing his migrant experience of being marginalised, he simultaneously occupies an authoritative position within the Overseas Nurses Section, indicated by his ability to command space and control the conversation during the meeting. Throughout the film, Fidel emphasises the challenges faced by different migrant groups in Ireland and acknowledges his own privileged position not only as a highly skilled worker but also as a migrant coming from the Philippines (versus other migrant groups, such as Nigerian, that as a group tend to face more explicit discrimination in Ireland). By also beginning and ending this sequence with shots of Fidel in a domestic space, *Here to Stay* emphasises how Fidel has established a home and sense of place within Ireland.

Fidel finds a form of attachment not only with the Overseas Nurses Section, but also through his involvement with the Alternative Miss Philippines beauty pageant. Whereas in Ireland homosexuality has historically been framed in opposition to nationalism, for Fidel a form of queer belonging enables him, in fact, to remain closely tied to the Filipino community in

Ireland. He describes his difficulty bonding with his Irish colleagues since they ignore any hints he gives about being gay. Instead, his involvement with Alternative Miss Philippines becomes a primary source of queer expression. Fidel not only performs in the pageant but also organises it. In one scene, as he applies make-up, Fidel describes how gay beauty pageants are popular in the Philippines and are events the whole family attends, unlike in Ireland where children are not allowed to attend. While he acknowledges that homosexuality was not always so tolerated in his home country, he claims that there is much more tolerance in the Philippines now as long as queer citizens remain contributing members of society and help to support their families financially. Again, Fidel is positioned in the role of observer, looking in from the periphery and highlighting issues facing broader Irish society.

Fidel operates as the catalyst for exposing the economic as well as cultural barriers often facing migrant groups in Ireland. Yet even as his involvement with Alternative Miss Philippines and his political activism reveal the ways in which queer and migrant bodies are policed in Ireland, he is imbued with a sense of agency that is expressed spatially in terms of his ability to move confidently through space. In the pageant scenes, he performs in drag and moves across the stage in front of the audience with a sense of self-assurance. His involvement with the Overseas Nurses Section shows his comfort with entering into different meeting spaces and speaking with authority. For instance, when he arrives at the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism Migration Dialogue, he walks into the room and immediately greets someone who is positioned off-screen as he signs in at the welcome table. Fidel's immediate inclusion within the space underscores the position of authority he has gained. The film also includes various shots of Fidel walking along city sidewalks, moving centrally within public space, and demonstrating a sense of purpose as he walks towards his destination (see Figure 11.2). By juxtaposing Fidel's experiences of marginalisation with his ability to inhabit space, *Here to Stay* not only demonstrates how non-Irish

Figure 11.2 Fidel commands space, both on-stage at Alternative Miss Philippines (left) and at a meeting of the Overseas Nurses Section (right), in *Here to Stay* (2016)

Source: *Here to Stay* (2006), directed by Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien © Telwell Productions (Ireland).

bodies are policed and regulated within space, but also reveals how different non-Irish groups are subjected to different mechanisms of control.

Conclusion

In *Adam & Paul*, the primary role of the immigrant character is to underscore the social and economic hardship faced by many in the shadow of the celebratory Celtic Tiger narrative. Just as the Bulgarian man is caught between competing temporalities and spatialities associated with home and away, Adam and Paul similarly find themselves in a state of ongoing in-betweenness. As they question each other's right to occupy space, first referencing the bench space and then referencing Ireland, they negotiate their respective positionings along the centre-periphery divide. This negotiation is framed as a disruptive moment in the film since it questions normative configurations of power and social relations.

Similar tensions are found in *Calvary* and *Here to Stay*. In both films, the migrant characters of Simon and Fidel respectively are caught between competing socialities and spatialities. Both characters at once seek to belong to their surrounding communities and are repeatedly reminded of their liminal positions in relation to dominant Irish society. In *Calvary*, Simon is othered as an African migrant and initially framed as an outsider and threat to traditional familial values. However, his ability to question Father James and form a type of fractured togetherness with the other townspeople disrupts those normative power dynamics associated with the Catholic Church and the Irish nation-state. In *Here to Stay*, Fidel exposes the economic as well as cultural barriers often facing migrants in Ireland, including the barriers he himself has faced. At the same time, the film emphasises his ability to create a sense of belonging within Dublin as well as within the city's peripheral Filipino and LGBTIQ+ communities.

This chapter began by associating *Calvary* and *Here to Stay* with an emerging Irish migrant cinema. Yet even though both films engage with themes of displacement and intercultural dialogue that are representative of this cinematic genre, they can be further aligned with Irish queer cinema – a cinema that 'emerges as a product of the complex, interdependent and inherently conflicted relationship between nationalist discourses and sexual politics in Ireland' (Macleod 2018: 2). In *Calvary* and *Here to Stay*, this relationship is expressed not only in terms of non-normative representation, but also spatially in terms of how the characters move through and inhabit space. As Simon and Fidel shift between the periphery and centre of their respective social circles, their experiences of outside belonging undermine the idea of the nation as a unified formation by revealing those who are excluded and marginalised within the national narrative. In these films, queerness thus offers the disruptive potential to undermine normative Irish conditions of social and spatial belonging and open up new possibilities for national reimaginings.

Further, both films are indicative of a recent trend in Irish queer cinema of focusing on ‘the ongoing reconstruction of the (Irish) self’ (Macleod 2018: 25). Ireland’s experience of rapid economic growth and then decline in the 1990s and 2000s has resulted in films that comment on the country’s unease with transition and the impact of such change on people’s individual and collective identity. In *Calvary* and *Here to Stay*, the characters’ refusal to be easily categorised is represented spatially in their ability to move between spaces and communities. The two films therefore not only contribute to the increasing on-screen visibility of migrant characters in Irish cinema, but also represent an ongoing tendency in Irish queer cinema to redefine what constitutes Irishness in a globalised society.

Notes

- 1 This character is unnamed and simply referred to as ‘Bulgarian man’ in the film credits.
- 2 For further reading on alternative temporalities and spatialities associated with non-normative life modes, see Halberstam (2005).
- 3 Significant political events include the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, the legalisation of divorce in 1997, and the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998.
- 4 The 2004 Citizenship Referendum was passed by a vote of four to one and amended Irish citizenship law to prevent migrant parents from claiming citizenship through the status of children that were born in Ireland. The political campaigns that supported this amendment have been heavily criticised for proliferating racist discourses and conservative views about what constitutes authentic and legitimate forms of Irish identity and national belonging.
- 5 Villar-Argáiz (2014) and Kakasi (2011) seek to address this gap.
- 6 See Macleod (2018) for an in-depth discussion of the role of the Irish pub in Irish cinema.