

TROUBLING IRELAND

Like Everyone Else

Ailbhe Smyth

Like Everyone Else

Ailbhe Smyth

So the gays are OK? Well no, not exactly. Like everyone else, but some worse, even much worse, than others.

I'm thinking of how young girls and boys, lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender, can be desperately bullied at school, at college or in work, and how they suffer.

I'm thinking of the horrible injustices and indignities suffered by transgender people here because of deeply shocking, cruel and stupid stigma and discrimination - and a government slow to pass the laws that would make trans life that bit easier and closer to equal citizenship.

I'm thinking of how lesbian and gay people can't get married in Ireland, and of how their children are left out in the cold as a result - certainly not cherished equally by the nation.

I'm wondering where I'll go and what I'll do as an old lesbian - what home will have me in all my lesbian glory?

I'm thinking of how my heart still misses a precious beat every time I say 'I'm lesbian' in public. And I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Yes, we've come a long way, yes, Ireland is changing at least where 'the gays' are concerned, but there are many hard stories along the way, many lesbian, gay and trans lives blighted or lived in pain, and too many who are still in dire straits.

I'm thinking too of how the iniquity of austerity leaves no ordinary people unscathed, and of how that includes lesbian, gay and trans people. We don't live in a cocoon, where the inequalities of class, or gender or ethnicity or nationality or (dis)ability or age miraculously don't exist any more. We're marked by all these things, just like everyone else, because we are just like everyone else.