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Title	The hyphenated persona: Aidan Quinn's Irish-American performances
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Publication date	2017-06-01
Original Citation	Goff, L. (2017) 'The Hyphenated Persona: Aidan Quinn's Irish-American Performances', Persona Studies, 3(1), pp. 60-75. doi:10.21153/ps2017vol3no1art646
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	10.21153/ps2017vol3no1art646
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Download date	2026-11-03 14:31:30
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/5125

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THE HYPHENATED PERSONA: AIDAN QUINN'S IRISH-AMERICAN PERFORMANCES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the hyphenated Irish-American identity performed by actor Aidan Quinn across a number of his media appearances. Hyphenated identities are frequently used in our increasingly globalised, migratory world to consolidate two or more national identifications into a singular, new identity. However, the performances of such identities are often complicated by shifting levels of identification, in line with the concept of identity salience, which result in multiple, protean identity performances—from either side of the hyphen—drawn upon as needed. "Celebrity identities" as a construct forms an ideal category for a broader exploration of hyphenated identity performance, as their highly visible public identities most overtly demonstrate the continuous processes of (economically influenced) construction, performance and negotiation that comprise all identity formation. Aidan Quinn, who holds dual United States and Irish citizenship, has spent significant time living in each country, is vocal about his connection to both and is often framed accordingly in the media, makes an ideal case study for examining the nuances of Irish-American identity performance which are magnified as a result his stardom. By looking at how the actor frames (and is framed regarding) his national connections, I interrogate the intricacies of how his experiences in each country are combined in some instances and separated in others, and ultimately argue that the two sides of his hyphenated Irish-American persona are largely kept separate, resulting in multiple identity performances rather than forming a cohesive, singular performance.

KEY WORDS

Film studies, Star studies, Cultural studies

The hyphen, though it may only be a symbol, can be utilised as a relative 'stabiliser' for, and of, hybrid identities because of its simultaneous capacity to connect and divide two designations of nationality. As such, it creates a single category, or label, and attempts to assist in the definition of a new identity from a combination of two or more. Any identity can be said to develop from a diverse background, but hyphenated identities are specifically demarcated to acknowledge the mixing of (at least) two categories. However, when it comes to performances of these mixed identities, levels of identification with each national categorisation tend to shift according to context. This results in a multiplicity of separate identity performances that are continuously renegotiated, complicating the notion of a singular, cohesive hyphenated persona.

The multiplicity of these performances can appear all the more visibly common within the system of stardom in America—as a country particularly full of hyphenated identities—when either foreign-born stars relocate to the US for their careers or American stars draw upon and highlight their heritage(s), often in relation to particular roles. While many stars do present

themselves as solely American (with even foreign-born stars sometimes choosing to leave behind their 'otherness' in performances for the American audiences that consume them) and audiences may not always focus on, or be aware of, stars' bicultural identifications, hyphenation does appear frequently in stars' biographies and in what Richard Dyer would call the 'star texts'[i] of some celebrities. It is therefore useful to see when, in particular, this is performed as a part of their persona within this capital-driven system.

The motivation for stars to highlight hyphenated national aspects of their persona is often economic in nature. Various identities are performed in relation to the promotion of both particular projects and the celebrities themselves as a way of connecting with audiences and 'authenticating' their work. Equally, the topic of immigration and the 'American Dream' are frequently tied together in a number of success narratives regarding having 'made it' in Hollywood. Bearing this in mind, hyphenation will be mobilised as a focal point in this article for the examination of actor Aidan Quinn's performed Irish-American identity as it manifestly illustrates the choice to retain more than one national identity and reveals multiple, protean identity performances—from either side of the hyphen—drawn upon as needed by the public, the on-screen performer Quinn, and those marketing his persona. As such, Quinn's hyphenated persona demonstrates the mediation and societal influences that are at the core of the construction of the star and celebrity identity, and thus exposes key aspects of the ontological status of all identity negotiation behind the public performances. Before examining Quinn's hyphenated persona in greater detail, however, the nuances of constructing and performing hyphenated identity more generally and the influences of, and on, celebrity identity performance (i.e. why particular personas are chosen) must be considered.

Hyphenated Nationality and Identity Performance

According to Stuart Hall, identification is "a process of articulation" that entails "the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries" and "requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process" (1996, p. 3). In this sense, the resulting identity from this process becomes defined against, and ultimately requires, an Other. Taking this to the level of national identity means that part of a particular nation's identity becomes defined by how it sets itself up as differing from other nations geographically, ethnically, culturally (including historically), constitutionally, politically, linguistically and even conceptually. The importance of differentiation—clear boundaries—is made apparent in representations of nationality from individual identity performance to collective expressions of culture such as national cinemas: "Nationhood, as with all other forms of identity, revolves around the question of difference, with how the uniqueness of one nation differs from the uniqueness of other comparable nations" (Dissanayake 2009, p. 878). Therefore, when the term 'hyphenated identity' comes into the mix, the already complicated process of identification (and identity formation) becomes even more problematic, despite the fact that the hyphen is discursively used as one stabiliser to resolve protean instability and flexibility 'problems' of identity.

Hyphenated national identities are normally brought about by regional and spatial connections made as a result of migration. With the ever-increasing globalisation of the world, lines of national and cultural identity continue to blur. Hall argues that:

> The more social life becomes mediated by the global marketing of styles, places and images, by international travel, and by globally networked media images and communication systems, the more identities become detached—disembedded—from specific times, places, histories, and traditions, and appear "free-floating". (1992, p. 303)

This argument suggests a loss of cultural specificity as these identities merge, shaping a new hybridity, but such a loss need not always be the case and, in fact, national affiliation continues

to be important for many. Often, attachments remain to one nationality even as it is blended with another, creating new performances of national identity. As we will see in the subsequent discussion of Aidan Quinn, he has connections to both Ireland and America, and performs these across various media but remains culturally associated with his hyphenated Irish-American identity, actively mobilising it as required in different circumstances. What exactly it means to perform a hyphenated identity can vary from visibly 'wearing' or displaying (mixed) national affiliations through aesthetic choices (including flags, traditional clothing and symbols) to acting according to (multi-)national stereotypes and tropes (from religion to patterns of behavior) or active participation in cultural activities or organisations (such as making or consuming ethnic foods and drinks or involvement in culturally specific arts). Equally, language is key to the performance of hyphenated identity; many hyphenated individuals may speak with an accent, be multilingual or use hybridised languages, but, importantly, many Americans who only speak (American) English sometimes more directly invoke hyphenation by vocally 'claiming' their chosen identity performances—describing themselves according to their hyphenated identity label and discussing their cultural and national affiliations in what is, perhaps, the most frequent, and most overt, enactment of a hyphenated persona. Ultimately, however, performances of hyphenated identity are often fragmented because of the oppositions and differences between markers of separate nationalities that make it difficult to perform them simultaneously, thus opening a plethora of protean identity choices that create new performances.

The multiplicity of identity choices that we meet today has created an environment wherein identity has increasingly become a "freely chosen game, a theatrical presentation of the self" (Baumann 1996, p. 18), a notion highlighted by the performances of celebrity identity. These choices are particularly visible in the case of hyphenated identities wherein individuals may decide to either perform their identity as hyphenated or enhance the performance of one side of their identity over the other depending upon the situational context—thus revealing the flexibility of the hyphen. As such, the construction of hyphenated identity is a dynamic process with continually shifting levels of bicultural identification. The shifts in performance of these identities go hand in hand with the concept of 'identity salience' wherein individuals choose to enact one identity over another due to "the person's perception of the importance or significance of the identity relative to other identities" (Hogg, Terry & White 1995, p. 257). Examining celebrity identity is particularly useful for revealing these identity choices and the influences upon them; their identity performances across the media reflect our own to a manifestly observable degree and clearly demonstrate the influence of economics on the performance of identity, given that their public personas are usually specifically constructed to be 'sold' to, and consumed by, their audiences.

Hyphenated Celebrity Identity: Value and Influence

Just as the hyphen can be used to mark identity construction concretely, functioning as an objective correlative for its ongoing processes of negotiation, so too do the performances carried out by celebrities provide a highly visible, overt, and useful example of the same. If we consider that individual identity formation occurs in the overlap between identity choice and performance, an additional motivating factor in this construction becomes clear through celebrity identity formation: economics. As such, celebrity identities are able to more overtly reveal the underlying importance of 'capital' in the definition of identities (more broadly speaking) as exchange commodities. The system of stardom has always linked those who achieve star status (and thus their various performances) directly with economic incentive, not only through their own financial success but because their image is specifically constructed for profit. As Richard Dyer notes, star images "are products of Hollywood" and as such can be "seen in terms of their function in the economy of Hollywood, including, crucially, their role in the manipulation of Hollywood's market, the audience" (1979, p. 10). The primary economic benefit to performing as a hyphenated star, then, is in fact the flexibility of the hyphen that allows the

star to appeal to national audiences on either side of it as well as a hyphenated audience when the context suits, thus expanding their potential target market, audience and fandom (at least in terms of nationality). Equally, the sense of romantic nostalgia that becomes a part of certain hyphenated identities, such as Irish-American, can also resonate with non-Irish, non-American audiences, thus further expanding the target audience beyond specific national publics. The potential for audience expansion afforded by the hyphen accounts for the fact that many stars who do not primarily maintain a hyphenated persona, draw upon one (often by creating a new performance of national identity or affiliation) in order to reach a particular audience (and the money that audience ultimately brings).

Despite the clear economic undercurrent that shapes the publicly performed identities of celebrities, social value can also be attributed to their various performances. Star studies scholar, Martin Shingler notes that, in the seminal work of Edgar Morin, the overlap between stars' personalities and their characters, and thus the visible fabrication of this personality to a degree—similarly found in the "movement between the self and the social" that is the focus of persona studies (Marshall 2014, p.162)—is the ultimate value of stars: "the fact that they tell us something about identity formation more generally but also the fact that they play a key role in helping us to form our own identities" (Shingler 2012, p. 123) through the visibility and influence of their own performance choices. Similarly, it is stars' "typicality or representativeness" that Richard Dyer sees as important as "stars relate to the social types of a society" (1979, p. 47). In fact, this may be because stars specifically utilise these types to develop personas that their audiences will find relatable and consume more of. This means that, while regarded as idols, stars offer to their audiences "patterns of culture [that] give shape to the total human process that has produced them" (Morin 1960, p. 147). In this way, stars simultaneously reflect and influence the culture of which they, themselves, are also a product, adapting their performances of identity as required.

As with the protean nature of identity, itself, the projection of such through a star's image does not remain static: "Once manufactured and distributed widely, they continue to evolve, their images rarely remaining stable or consistent" (Shingler 2012, p. 174). For Judith Mayne, it is this "constant reinvention, the dissolution of contraries, the embrace of wildly opposing terms" that is the "appeal of stardom" (1993, p. 138). Considering the continuous reinvention of their image, stars are likely to perform certain identities that are in contradiction with others (whether for a role or in a personal capacity) over the course of their careers, weaving these together in their overall 'star text'—a combination of oppositions similar to what may be found in hyphenated personas. While the multiplicity of stars' performances can occur over time, they also perform various identities simultaneously, working with what Barry King calls a "wardrobe of identities" (2003, p. 49). The amount of (identity) performances that a star undertakes means that "inconsistency, change and fluctuation are characteristic of star images, as if the 'real' person constituted by star publicity is as open to a change of definition as the actor's roles themselves" (Mayne 1993, p. 128). By nature of their profession, actors continuously perform a variety of identities seamlessly (in both films and publicity). Therefore, while they may choose a singular coherent persona by which they define their 'real' selves in the media, this is equally subject to seamless shifts in performance and reception.

While all stars may perform multiple identities across their film and promotional appearances, often categorised by and drawing from social 'types', this multiplicity is even clearer, and more visible, in transnational stars. These stars oscillate "between stereotypical notions of national or ethnic identities, on the one hand, and more universal subjectivities that ignore the specifications of nationality, regionality, class or ethnicity, on the other" (Shingler 2012, p. 179). Particularly as transnational celebrities cross geographical boundaries, "their cultural identities either become exaggerated or obscured [in public performance], being utilised in some instances rather than others" (Shingler 2012, p. 179). Thus, these stars become symbols of hybridity, and very clearly and tangibly demonstrate the protean nature of celebrity

identity performance, and identity performance more broadly. Celebrities that can claim hyphenated identity, in particular, are useful to look at in terms of how (and when) they perform various national identities separately or simultaneously. Just as hyphenated individuals, stars choose to a varying degree the level of identification they have with their country of birth, their ancestry and any country they may relocate to, exhibiting this through their various identity performances. We see this balancing of multiple national identities, along with the usefulness of enacting particular national affiliations in certain situations (as discussed regarding economic incentive), in performances of Irish-American identity within the American star system.

Framing the Irish-American Celebrity

Irish-American identity, itself, has been characterised and performed in a variety of ways across time periods and communities. Although Irish emigration to the United States pre-dates Famine-era Ireland, by the 1830's the large amount of Famine emigrants that had arrived in America meant that early Irish-Americans—largely centred in urban areas—became defined by associations with poverty, violence, alcohol, and crime (Blessing 1985). Faced with nativist stereotype and situated amongst the poorest social groups in America at the time—along with African-Americans and Native Americans (Kenny 2000)—the early Irish in America were characterised by what Peter Quinn labels the 'Paddy' stereotype: "a hairy, beetle-browed alien, with a 'wild and savage aspect'" (2006, p. 676). The stereotypes defining early Irish-Americans were enacted by the first staged vaudeville performances of Irish characters in America. The Irish were usually portrayed as "bellicose yet fun-loving, drunken yet brave, rowdy yet patriotic,", dressed in working immigrant's clothing and often used in slapstick comedy, beating one another with shillelaghs (Snyder 2006, p. 407) as they were also seen as "highly temperamental and always ready to fight" (Quinn 2006, p. 667). However, the stage portrayal of the personality traits assigned to the Irish was usually seen as good fun and "the stereotype became so ingrained in popular attitudes and perceptions that it passed from being regarded as a theatrical parody to a predetermination of group behaviour" (Quinn 2006, p. 667). Essentially, these stereotyped performances became markers for Irish-American identity, shaping individual performances of it. Although the popularity of Vaudeville eventually segued into film by the 1910s, and Vaudeville itself was virtually dead by the 1930s (Snyder 2006), stereotyped portrayals of the Irish in America carried over to film and continued to influence performances of Irish-American identity.

By the 1920's the Irish had found their footing in America, building their own urban communities, and their status rose. With this, the stereotype changed to the 'Jimmy' type: "slick, smooth, an evolutionary adaptation to the American scene who not only looked and acted like he belonged, but at some level seemed to incarnate what urban life was all about" (Quinn, 2006, p. 676). Significantly, it is hinted here that the *performance* of belonging—the choice to enact a confident immigrant identity that had carved out its own place in America—is linked with actual belonging. As such, particular performances of Irish-American identity could be used to raise socio-economic status. In fact, Irish-American women often worked towards upward social mobility for their families so that "Irish mothers pushed their children to Americanize, but not at the expense of their Catholic religion or by wholly abandoning their Irishness" (Lynch-Brennan 2006, p. 346). Many of these women worked as domestic servants, learned social codes of upper and middle-class America from their employers and ensured their children were educated (Lynch-Brennan 2006), thus incorporating these social codes in their own identity performance. These individual identity performances also had a symbiotic relationship with constructed performances of Irish-American identity; Irish women's aspirations of upward mobility became an emergent pattern in popular culture where "women [were] almost always depicted as socially and economically ambitious [...]" (Meagher 2006, p. 623). While, of course, a number of factors contributed to the socio-economic rise of the Irish in America—including their participation in politics, organised religion, labour unions and World

War II—it is evident through these 'types' of Irish-Americans that emerged in popular culture that particular choices of identity performance were also central to this rise, which saw a "steady climb up the occupational ladder in the second half of the twentieth century" for the Irish (Kenny 2000, p. 227).

By this period, Irish immigration to America had slowed, resulting in a growing number of second, third and fourth generation Irish-Americans whose only contact with Ireland may have been through visits (made easier by transatlantic flights from the 1940s). The 'typical' Irish-American now being of a later generation and the spread of Irish-America to the suburbs meant that there was "significant diffusion and erosion of Irish-American ethnicity in the second half of the twentieth century" (Kenny 2000, p. 228). As such, these Irish-Americans either "had to work harder to be Irish" (Dowling Almeida 2006, p. 548)—actively performing this as a hyphenated Irish-American persona, perhaps visibly marked by Celtic tattoos, apparel and the like—or began to blend in, performing a fully assimilated American identity. Thus, when a new influx of immigrants came to America during the 1980s as financial hardship again hit Ireland, it introduced another component to Irish-America. These 'New Irish' immigrants came from a contemporary Ireland that had experienced economic prosperity and social progress, had the benefit of being exposed to international pop culture through their televisions and "carried with them the culture, style, and tradition of modern Ireland [...], an Ireland that the traditional Irish American did not recognize" (Dowling Almeida 2006, pp. 562–563). Perhaps most importantly, "they did not come seeking to become Irish American, and in many cases they were critical of American foreign policy, culture, and lifestyle" (Dowling Almeida 2006, p. 563). In this sense, they often actively perform identities in opposition to 'traditional' Irish-Americans, or Americans more broadly, in order to mark themselves as different—primarily through their understanding of the culture of modern Ireland (although the retention of their Irish accents also mark their identity performances as 'different'). Contemporary Irish-America is thus a diverse group, mixed in a number of ways, but generally falling into the contrasting categories of these 'New Irish', retaining a predominantly Irish identity in America, and the traditional Irish-Americans, now a number of generations in, who "have been softened by sepia tint of nostalgia and selective memory" (Quinn 2006, p. 678). These broadly defined different 'types' of Irish-Americans, along with various influences on the identity and performances of such, can be seen in the assorted Irish-American connections invoked by celebrities.

Celebrity connections to both Ireland and the United States are employed to varying degrees across different contexts—from social to economic[ii]. Broadly speaking, there are three main types of Irish-American identity contemporarily performed by celebrities, largely determined by how closely connected they are—or appear to be—to each country. The first type includes those who largely perform as American, but, in certain contexts, speak of their (usually distant) connection to Ireland or participate in cultural activities in order to enact this affiliation as a part of their persona for that context. An example of this is actor Matthew McConaughey, who expressed (to the Irish media in 2016) pride in his Irish heritage and a desire for his children to learn Irish, even going as far as labelling them 'Brazilian Irish' (their mother is Brazilian). The Texas-born, thoroughly American, McConaughey went on to relate how his time spent living in Dublin while filming in 2001 felt like "coming home", and that he wants his kids to keep a strong link with the country, notably by performing a kind of Irishness: "I gotta keep up the Gaelic. I want them reading the literature, I want Riverdancing, I want them saying, 'grand' and 'lunatic to the marvellous'" ('McConaughey wants to send his kids to the Gaeltacht' 2016). These statements, constructed for the media, have a specific purpose. For instance, McConaughey has Scottish, Irish, English, German and Swedish heritage, but has only elaborated on the Irish part of this for his Irish interviews. It is equally possible that this claim is made because it is what he most identifies with, or as a way of gaining favour in Ireland or amongst Irish-American audiences while promoting his films. As Shingler has noted:

> Stars are not only made sense of in terms of cultural significance but are constructed in this way, so that some aspects of a star's image and films are privileged over others in order to make a star seem more representative of social groups or historical contexts. (2012, p. 150)

It is therefore useful to note exactly when (and where) celebrities choose to invoke these connections, enacting particular identities as needed and when they are most valuable commercially, politically, socially, and even romantically.

The second type is perhaps most commonly associated with an Irish-American persona and includes American stars—such as Edward Burns, Conan O'Brien and Jimmy Fallon—who are of Irish descent and were raised in proclaimed Irish-American families (hyphenated through ancestry). Stars in this group often assert a strong affinity for Ireland as part of their public personas, frequently speaking of their Irishness as a primary method of ensuring its inclusion in their persona, despite being life-long Americans. Additionally, they often incorporate performances of their hyphenation into their work: Fallon sometimes includes Irish gags on his talk show such as putting on an accent, O'Brien traced his Irish ancestry for TV, and Burns' first foray into writing, directing and acting, *The Brothers McMullen* (1995), depicted Irish-American life. However, Irishness for this group can only fully be conceived in terms of their Americanness, rather than separated from it, because, for them, Ireland and Irishness are seen directly through the (often nostalgic, or 'frozen in time') lens of America, despite visits to Ireland. This is reflected in their altered (nostalgic and/or often gimmicky or consumerist) performances of Irishness, which, while in line with contemporary conceptions of Irish-America, are out of touch with contemporary Ireland.

Finally, the third type consists of stars that have direct connections to and extended experience in both countries. These include, amongst others: Mel Gibson, whose mother is from Ireland; Saoirse Ronan, who was born in the US to Irish parents and moved to Ireland at the age of three; and Jason O'Mara, the Irish actor who relocated to America. Each of these stars holds dual United States and Irish citizenship, hyphenating them in the legal (documented) sense of identity and, while they discuss and perform their connections to each country in different ways, they usually choose a primary national identification (American for Gibson and Irish for Ronan and O'Mara) for their persona (developed largely through promotional appearances), again enacting the other side of their identity as needed in particular contexts. This type is thus similar to the first, with hyphenation as a secondary aspect of persona, employed as needed and hidden when not. However, their hyphenation is authenticated not only legally but through performances that reflect their direct, contemporary experience of both countries—often more in line with those of the 'New Irish' but in a way that is not in opposition to America so as not to alienate audiences.

For the purpose of this article, however, my main focus lies in the Irish-American performances of actor Aidan Quinn. Quinn, who also holds dual citizenship and has spent significant time living in both Ireland and America, is often vocal about his connection to both countries in public displays of his identity, and is framed accordingly in the media. While Quinn is not of the traditionally conceived Irish-American working class background, his family position and his parents' emphasis on education allowed him to travel and live for extended periods between Ireland and America during his formative years, developing a flexibility in his performances of identity. As such, he performs a highly active contemporary Irish-American identity—somewhere between the 'traditional' Irish-American (whose performances work well in America but not necessarily Ireland) and the 'New Irish' in America (who largely choose to perform as solely Irish). Quinn maintains reasonably current connections with and perspectives on both countries, allowing him to easily transition between, and be accepted in, the two as his (national) identity performances have been frequently renegotiated in terms of each. In fact, Quinn has even linked his becoming an actor to his experience moving back and forth between

countries, adapting to each "and having to change your voice because you want to fit in. As a kid you do that automatically within weeks because your heart, your ear, and your mind are more tuned to adaptability" (Balfour 2008). It is because of his considerable lived experience in each country, particularly throughout his childhood and teen years that Quinn does not seem to work as hard as many other celebrities to defend or define his hyphenated persona (or to perform with realistic Irish and American accents); instead, his status as 'Irish-American' can often be taken as read, making the moments that his connections to the countries are invoked particularly interesting. Equally, the fact that he is able to give voice to a more 'traditional' Irish-American experience (as we will see in his work) at the same time as performing a newer, more active, Irish-American identity makes Quinn an ideal case study for examining the nuances of contemporary Irish-American identity performance, magnified by his stardom. In what follows I will interrogate how Quinn's experiences in each country are enacted and discussed, and ultimately argue that the two sides of his hyphenated Irish-American persona are largely kept separate, resulting in multiple identity performances rather than forming a cohesive, singular performance.

Aidan Quinn as Irish-American Celebrity

Aidan Quinn was born in Chicago, Illinois, to Irish parents. His father, who was a literature professor in Chicago, instilled Irish culture in his children from a young age, sharing his love of Irish literature and sending them to live with relatives in Ireland for an Irish education, which he viewed as important (Egan 2008). Therefore, Quinn and his siblings spent time living in both the United States and Ireland during their childhood. Quinn's connection to both countries, solidified with his dual Irish and American citizenship, is reflected in his mediated persona. A quick online search for Quinn results in a number of sites with short biographies of the actor that discuss his national connections. The Wikipedia page for him does not list his citizenship or nationality but calls him 'Irish-American' and notes that he was raised between Chicago and Ireland (Dublin and Birr, Co. Offaly). Biography.com similarly does not list his citizenship or nationality, nor does it label him according to these. However, it does list his birthplace as Chicago and refer to his 'Irish heritage', noting that he was raised by devoutly Catholic parents between Ireland and the United States. Rotten Tomatoes again highlights these points, stating that his birthplace is Chicago, his parents are from Ireland, and he spent much of his youth in that country. The topic of Quinn's nationality also arises in various news articles about the actor, influenced by his performance of such either on-screen or in interviews. While the articles that choose to label Quinn most frequently do so as "Irish-American" (Hamill 1999; Kennedy 2016; McGoldrick 2008), he has also been labelled as solely "Irish" (Drew 2010).

Quinn's acting career and on-screen star image, reveal clear links to this Irish-American identity, sometimes separated into Irish and American. Quinn, who has been credited with 85 roles as an actor, got his start in theatre—working in both Chicago and Dublin, as well as appearing on Broadway. His first film role was as a rebellious football player in the American film *Reckless* (1984) and he has since starred in a number of other United States-based productions, perhaps most notably alongside Brad Pitt and Anthony Hopkins in *Legends of the Fall* (1994) and as Captain Gregson in the US television series *Elementary* (2012–2017). However, he has also been involved in a number of Irish films (or Irish American co-productions), including *The Playboys* (1992), *Michael Collins* (1996), *Evelyn* (2002), *Song for a Raggy Boy* (2003), *32A* (2007) (written and directed by his sister Marian Quinn), *The Eclipse* (2009), and *A Shine of Rainbows* (2009), and narrated the documentaries *The Irish in America* (1995) and *Irish Chicago* (2009). His work on all of these projects clearly displays his connection to Ireland, as well as its Diaspora in America, but the film that best publicises this is *This Is My Father* (1998), which tells the story of an Irish-American teacher based in Chicago who takes a trip to Ireland to reconnect with his roots and discover the truth about his biological father. The film was a Quinn family enterprise: brother, Paul Quinn, wrote the script (based on a story told by their mother of her past in Ireland) and directed the film, Declan Quinn did the

cinematography and Aidan Quinn was a central actor—playing the Irish father of the protagonist (seen in flashbacks). This film, which is also the focus of some of Quinn's interviews to be discussed subsequently, displays both his familial connection to Ireland and a broader desire to explore and give voice to the Irish-American identity explored in the film's narrative.

While there are plenty of interviews of, and articles on, Aidan Quinn that do not focus particularly on his Irish, Irish-American or American identity, a number of them do. I will reference a collection of these here in order to illustrate how Quinn deliberately frames his hyphenated national identity as part of his promotional star image by speaking about it. In three articles from around the time *This Is My Father* was released, Quinn discusses the film and his own connections to its themes. Ireland, Quinn's ties to it and its representation in the film are discussed in similar ways throughout the two US publications—the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Stein 1999) and the *New York Daily News* (Hamill 1999)—and the Irish publication, *Hot Press* (Dillon 1998). However, the Irish article does pay closer attention to stereotypes that arise in the film (which was the closing film of the Galway Film Fleadh in 1998, at the time it was written), ultimately concluding that "although [the film] contains every cliché in the stage Irish canon, it somehow transcends them" (Dillon 1998). Commenting on the pitfalls (such as stereotypification) of doing a period piece in Ireland, Quinn acknowledges his family's experience in the country as directly contributing to the success of the film:

We were very conscious of it but I don't think we would have got Stephen Rea, Brendan Gleeson, Colm Meaney or any of the other Irish actors to do it if there had been any element of paddywhackery going on. I think that was a tribute to the script, and to the fact that we had spent a lot of time here. It's very different than for Irish-Americans who have never spent time in Ireland; they don't know how things are or how things work. I think you have to live in a place, in a way (Dillon 1998).

Quinn is, of course, promoting his film here and using his background to do so, 'authenticating' both the film and his own performances of Irish-American identity, by locating himself (with lived experience) in Ireland as well as America. Quinn also makes an important point about the diversity of the group categorised (and often self-categorised) as Irish-American in this statement, especially regarding their (first-hand) knowledge of Ireland. In doing this, he sets himself apart from what could be considered the 'average' Irish-American as a result of his time living in Ireland, perhaps trying to raise his esteem or credibility with Irish audiences. Quinn further 'authenticates' his performance of Irishness in a subtle way through his description of gaining weight for *This Is My Father*: "Paul had me gain about two stone and I haven't lost it since" (Dillon 1998). By referring to his weight in stones rather than pounds, Quinn uses the Irish unit of measurement rather than the American. Interestingly, he goes on to conflate the terms saying, "I've only lost about five pounds of it", and then, "now I have to lose about a stone". While Quinn demonstrates an awareness of both cultures here, the fact that he cannot stick to one country's terminology enacts and performs a hyphenated persona—blurring the lines between cultures, unable to fully remain in one. At the same time, while Quinn goes on to compliment Ireland by stating that he'd "make a film here every year if [he] could" (Dillon 1998), his statement implies that he cannot actually do this, most likely as a result of establishing his adult life and family in America. In this sense, despite harking back to the significant amount of time he spent living in Ireland, invoking this as part of his persona, and hinting at his willingness (and even desire) to do so again, Quinn has chosen one side of his hyphenated identity to predominantly (though not fully) remain in—America.

While it is natural for Quinn to praise Ireland and his own connections to it while interviewing in that country, he also does this in his American interviews. He again highlights his time spent living in the country: "I spent four or five years on and off in Ireland when I was

young, so I feel a very strong connection" (Stein 1999). He also frames his youth in Ireland in a more positive light than that in America: "I sowed more wild oats that year in Ireland [at age 13] than I did in the ensuing five years back in the States. It was a wild year because it was the year I gained some confidence in myself" (Stein 1999). Comparatively, in America he claims he was considered an outsider because of his immigrant parents: "I was never part of the popular clique. I was always a weirdo. I just kind of embraced that" (Stein 1999). His 'outsider' status in the US, linked here to his Irish parents and, likely, his time spent abroad, speaks to a certain liminal quality of some hyphenated identities, not fully belonging in either side of the hyphen as long as the other side remains, instead caught somewhere in between. One way of combating this, as Quinn does here, is *choosing* to belong in one place over the other at any given time, illustrating the flexibility of the hyphen. In this instance, Quinn 'embraced', and publicly displayed his status as outsider during his school years in America. As an adult, however, Quinn no longer appears to be an outsider in the United States, having chosen it as the location in which to base his life. Still, he remains drawn to his Irish side and even dreams of owning a home in Ireland as well as New York, but notes that his Italian-American wife (actress Elizabeth Bracco) does not have the same connection or desire as him (Stein 1999). Quinn's home ownership in only one country ultimately marks a tangible example of how the two sides of his hyphenated identity are necessarily separated and given unequal weighting; Quinn's home in America bases his identity there and naturally tips the balance towards his American side, making his performances of Irishness necessarily more overtly stated when enacted.

Just as Quinn shifts between Ireland and America, so too does his stardom. He acknowledges that he is a bigger star in Ireland than in America, but that he doesn't get the 'star treatment' when he visits: "They treat me better, and they are in awe of me a little. But the thing about the Irish is, they never get in awe of anybody a lot. That would be totally against the Irish character" (Stein 1999). This statement is particularly interesting in that it attributes Quinn with insider knowledge of the 'Irish character' while at the same time separating him from the Irish; his modified status as Irish-American is reflected through his use of 'they' in reference to the national category rather than 'we', which would include himself in their designation. A similar knowledge of Ireland, but differentiation of the Irish-American, is expressed in Quinn's other US interview, this time regarding the film industry:

> For a long, long time, Ireland exiled its best creative artists […]. Now, the creative climate has changed. There has been an explosion of great film making coming out of Ireland in the last 10 or 15 years. The prying-off of the cement lid of oppression in Ireland has exposed the sexual abuse, the Catholic Church's domination, the repression of sexuality, the repression of freedom. With that new freedom of spirit plus a roaring economy dubbed The Celtic Tiger film making in Ireland is flourishing. But the Irish-American experience is still untapped […]. I don't know why that is. But some of us are starting to make those Irish-American movies, stories that need to be told (Hamill 1999).

The purpose of this interview was for Quinn to promote the First Annual Irish International Film Festival in New York, of which Quinn was a board member and where *This Is My Father* made its New York debut, so it is natural for him to praise Irish film and highlight the Irish-American experience, connecting American audiences and the Irish-American population to both the festival and his film. However, with this statement he also marks himself out as a proponent of the Irish-American experience (both traditional and evolving)—giving voice to it by telling the stories that 'need to be told'. At the same time, he puts his own Irish-American identity on display through a demonstration of his connection to Irish arts and culture, and his desire to bring them to American audiences with festivals such as this one. By doing this he further stimulates both a deeper cultural understanding of Ireland and a feeling of connection or attachment to the country for Irish-American, or even just American, audiences, perhaps inspiring new Irish-American performances (through both the films and his own stardom) for these audiences.

Although not in relation to *This Is My Father*, additional interviews where Quinn reflects on Ireland and Irish-America are generally linked with his numerous Irish films or his career as a whole. In an interview for the Chicago Tribune, he finds a way to connect Ireland and America:

> I think there's a down-to-earthness with Midwesterners [in the US] and with people from the Midlands—which is where my family is from—in Ireland. It taught me very early not to take the highs too seriously and not to be brought down too much by the lows either and to take things with a sense of humor. (Drew 2010)

While Quinn draws a connection here through the general character of each location's population, he equally creates clear separations between the two countries in other interviews. One such example is when he reveals that his parents still haven't decided if they want to be buried in Ireland or America, but that he has already chosen a graveyard near his home in upstate New York for himself (Egan 2008). While his hyphenated Irish-American persona may allow for performed existence between places, the choice between one side and the other ultimately needs to be made. As with home ownership, one's final resting place offers another tangible example of the division between the two sides of a hyphenated identity and their unequal balance. While the decisions that enforce a separation of the hyphenated sides are often geographical in nature, they ultimately alter the construction and performance of each side of the identity, further separating them beyond geographical boundaries—a fact revealed throughout other Quinn comments. For instance, he notes in the same interview (where the Irish interviewer goes as far as to link Quinn with Ireland and its countryside by describing his style of eating as that of a 'bog man') that "when he thinks of the things he did in the few years he lived as a teenager in Ireland they are stronger in his imagination now than they were then" (Egan 2008). This perfectly captures the crystallisation of his Irish life in memory and the sense of nostalgia (also experienced by many Irish abroad) with which he views this past, while at the same time connoting the nostalgic way Ireland is often framed by Irish-Americans. Although Quinn has returned to the country often since his youth, visiting and filming there a number of times, the fact that his life is now primarily based in America prevents him from staying fully up-to-date with his knowledge of Ireland. Quinn reinforces this in another interview when he reveals during a discussion of Irish politics that he is not as familiar with them as he used to be because the majority of his time is spent in America now (Kennedy 2016). Interestingly, in this same article, hypothesising on what Michael Collins' opinion would be regarding current Irish politics, Quinn says: "A part of him would be proud and part of him would be dismayed and pissed off, like the rest of us" (Kennedy 2016). Presumably, the 'us' here refers to the Irish, as they would be most familiar with Irish politics, and, unlike in the other interview where he excludes himself with the use of 'they', Quinn includes himself here with 'us'. Once again, Quinn puts on display the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Irish-American identity in the national context, as well as the flexibility of the hyphen.

As Quinn performs his identity in terms of national affiliation, both including and excluding himself across different contexts, it is important to consider how his fans in both Ireland and America perceive this in order to consider the success of his hyphenated persona. While space does not allow for an extensive examination of Quinn's audience here, the following examples broadly demonstrate, and allow us to infer, several ways in which attention is (or isn't) paid to Quinn's nationality across audience contexts. Quinn is linked with Ireland through his eating habits by the Irish interviewer mentioned above, but is more explicitly attributed with Irishness, yet still 'othered', by another Irish journalist interviewing him for an Irish publication and audience:

> Having starred in such seminal Irish films as **Michael Collins** and **Evelyn**, as well as Hollywood hits like **Legends of the Fall** and **Practical Magic**, it's no wonder we want to claim this Emmy Award-winning Irish-American as

> entirely our own. Having moved around between Dublin, Birr and Chicago as a youngster, Aidan Quinn now does a pretty good job at fooling even ourselves - or perhaps that's more of a testament to his skill as an actor. (Mulligan 2008)

Mulligan, while expressing a desire to 'claim' Quinn as solely Irish and noting his realistic performances as such, also acknowledges that he is not and refers to these performances as 'fooling' Irish locals. In this sense he is placed in a unique category, able to pass as Irish, but removed from being considered as completely 'authentically' Irish because of the American side of his identity.

Quinn is placed in a similarly unique category by Irish audiences commenting on the actor on the Irish online forum Boards.ie. For example, in a thread titled 'Most convincing non Irish actor in an Irish role', an individual asked for examples of such, but made this distinction:

> Now it can be a bit tricky defining who is and isin't [sic] Irish in the case of someone like Aidan Quinn who was born in the States but spent a considerable amount of their childhood in Ireland. So for arguments sake lets [sic] say someone who did not grow up in the old sod. (darkdubh 2015)

Once again, Quinn is included in the category of being Irish (without argument from any of the users that respond to the thread), but an explanation is needed for this, highlighting the fact that he is not completely Irish. Therefore, Quinn is placed in his own category—occupied by few—distinguished from traditional conceptions of the Irish-American because of his time spent living in Ireland and his ability to authentically pass as Irish in off and on-screen performances, but equally not quite the traditional conception of Irish. Instead, another hyphenated modifier could be attached to Quinn, labelling him almost-Irish for his Irish audiences. In other instances, however, rather than 'passing' as Irish, Quinn *is* simply accepted as Irish. Another thread on Boards, titled 'Non Irish Films with 2 or more Irish Actors', noted numerous examples of major international films that happened to star two or more Irish actors in non-Irish roles, with one user providing the example of 'The Mission (1986): Liam Neeson, Aidan Quinn and Ray McAnally' (FrCrilly 2008). Equally, in a thread on 'Actors who failed to reach their potential', one user commented: "From an Irish perspective, Aidan Quinn, damn good actor but doesn't have a big profile that he deserves. Arguably one of our best" (WoollyRedHat 2011). In both cases Quinn is considered an Irish actor, with no distinction made about the fact that he is also American, and no other users in the thread take issue with this categorisation. While it is possible that some Irish audiences would not accept Quinn as Irish, these examples illustrate that many do validate his performances of his Irishness.

In America, on the other hand, some audiences may not even realise that Quinn is Irish. While there are numerous American articles referring to Quinn's Irish heritage and time spent in Ireland (as previously discussed), there are also a number of articles focusing solely on Quinn's American roles or other issues of importance to him, such as his daughter's autism. On a site dedicated to television, fan reviews of the show *Elementary*, in which Quinn plays a New York cop, refer to his acting ability—both as "remarkable" (megd06 2015, AuroraGu 2015) and "a bit of an overactor" (sheajoy9 2013)—and his qualities: "(that voice, those eyes)" (megd06 2015). However, none of the users—fans of the American show—comment on Quinn's links to Ireland. While this is not unusual, as it is not a prominent feature of the show, it does reveal that Quinn's Irishness may not be a topic of particular importance for some of his American audiences, or even something they are aware of in certain instances, given that the American accent he normally speaks with signifies solely his Americanness. At the same time, though, an international fan site dedicated to Quinn (labelled as 'the ultimate fan site') extensively details his connections to, and experiences in, both countries in its biography of the actor, even quoting Quinn on the matter: "'We got used to living in two different cultures and being able to go back and forth', he once said in an interview. 'With Declan, Marian and myself it's always back and

forth, Irish-American, American-Irish…'" (Garcia 2001). Not only does this once again display Quinn's oscillating connections between the countries, noting a reprioritising of what comes first in the order of both hyphenation and performance dependent on context, it also reveals the fact that fans of Quinn (as distinguished from his general audiences) have likely spent time learning about the actor and following his interviews. As such, his fans should be aware of both his national affiliations and the way he performs these across his acting roles, interviews and promotional appearances.

Fans of Aidan Quinn may even be aware of his role in the January 2017 Ford Ireland advertisement celebrating one hundred years of Ford in Ireland, which further highlights Quinn's connection to both America and Ireland. In the advertisement (shot in Ireland), Quinn walks along an empty Irish beach considering the past, the future and new technologies; this is blended with the use of Ford's "go further" slogan and a reference to Henry Ford crossing "that ocean" one hundred years ago "to open a Ford plant in his ancestral home" (*Ford 100* 2017). A sense of nostalgia is expressed in the advertisement as Quinn looks out contemplatively over the beautiful scenery—itself evocative of nostalgic, rural considerations of Ireland—and connects our desire to push forward with new developments to things from the past that will always remain (i.e. love and rain falling on a windscreen). Equally, the Irish-American connection is heavily evoked—through Ford's ancestry, the longstanding operation of the American business in Ireland and the use of Irish-American actor, Quinn, who embodies the connection in this advertisement and beyond it (as seen in the construction of his hyphenated persona). An article in the *Irish Examiner* about the Ford 100 campaign reiterates this, noting that "according to the company Aidan Quinn perfectly encapsulates the relationship between Ireland and the USA" (Graham 2017), which is why he was chosen for the role. This statement is similarly found on the Ford Ireland website for the campaign, which also highlights Quinn's "joint US and Irish nationality" and links his relationship with both countries to Henry Ford's (whose own roots are traced from County Cork to Michigan) (Ford Ireland 2017). However, economic motivations clearly underpin the advertisement; it is designed to draw upon Ford's connection to Ireland, as well as the popular actor's, in order to sell cars there. Therefore, the expression of Irish-American identity on display in the advertisement has both been purchased, in the hiring of Quinn for the role, and is designed to sell—marking the identity, and connection between the two countries, as a type of selling point for the public. At the same time, the casting of Quinn in this advertisement because of his pre-established Irish-American persona—evidenced by his prior roles in films, his interviews and his involvement with cultural organisations—further reinforces this persona (as successful) for him.

Ultimately, Quinn's own existence between Ireland and America during his youth and, to a lesser extent, his adult life makes his performances as Irish-American strong examples of constructing the identity in perhaps its most active sense—more closely connected to Ireland than the traditional Irish-American, but not quite as distinctly Irish as the 'New Irish' immigrants to the United States. Quinn's direct experience in each place, and the knowledge of each that stems from this, affects his connection to both countries and, ultimately, how his hyphenated persona is enacted, promoted, and received. Despite currently living in America and largely being raised there, his significant time in Ireland and his Irish parents have made Quinn outspoken about the Irish aspect of his identity as well as Irish-American identity more broadly. This is not only reflected in his roles as an actor, and his promotional interviews, but also in the active roles he takes in bringing Irish culture to America and in putting a voice to Irish-American identity—from his involvement with the Irish International Film Festival in New York to narrating documentaries about the Irish experience in America. Both Quinn's legal and social senses of identity (as performed above) reflect his status as a contemporary, active, Irish-American, simultaneously revealing the connections and divisions that accompany this. However, although Quinn remains strongly attached to both countries, his connections to each are often divided and affected by his current geographical location, just as his childhood was separated by time spent in each country. Quinn, himself, recognises this, acknowledging that his

knowledge of Irish current affairs slips with time spent away from the country, which necessarily distances him from it. Just as one must choose a final resting place (and Quinn's is America), one must also choose a primary national identification (albeit open to renegotiation). As a consequence of this choice, then, constructions of this identification will stay current while the other(s) unavoidably fades, rooted in particular moments of time. While secondary national identifications can still bear influence on the performance of an individual's overall identity, the multiple nationalities of hyphenated identities are necessarily separated not only by a hyphen, but by various identity performances, geographic location, and time.

End Notes

[i] Dyer's notion of a 'star text' is neatly defined by Christine Gledhill as "an intertextual construct produced across a range of media and cultural practices" (1991, p. xii). The 'star text', therefore, considers the full range of the star's appearances in the media for the construction of their 'image'.

[ii] The commercial use of the Irish-American celebrity identity was particularly evident when Hollywood actor Tom Cruise, who has distant Irish ancestry, was presented with a Certificate of Irish Heritage by Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland) Eamon Gilmore in 2013 as part of 'The Gathering' tourism campaign. The ceremony for, and subsequent publicity of, Cruise's certificate promoted both tourism and the purchasing of Certificates of Irish Heritage which were available to anyone of Irish descent from the Irish Government—a scheme since scrapped due to only three-thousand being sold (Halpin 2015). The certificates, which ranged in cost from €45 to €120, offered documentation to reinforce performances of Irish-American identity, but also embodied the literal selling of the identity—promoted through Cruise's performance.

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