

2023-09-22

The Pub Snug, Culture Night 2023

James Murphy

Technological University Dublin, james.p.murphy@tudublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/tfschcafoth>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Hospitality Administration and Management Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Murphy, J (2023) The Pub Snug, Culture Night 2023-School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology Presentations, East Quad Building, City Campus, Dublin 7: TU Dublin. DOI: 10.21427/B72Z-HK31

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Other resources by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](#).

The Pub Snug

A Liberated Space within the Irish Pub



Doheny & Nesbitt's.



Ryan's Pub.



Crown Bar.

Presentation Overview

1. Introduction.
 2. Origins of the snug.
 3. The pub snugs of Ireland.
 4. Conclusion.
- References.
- Questions / Thank You.

1. Introduction

- ❑ Universally accepted fact that there is nothing better than going to the pub and successfully getting a seat in the snug' (O'Connor, 2018).

- ❑ A beloved feature of Irish Pubs, cherished for its privacy, ease of access to the main bar if affords to its lucky inhabitants.

- ❑ Snugs, traditional component of the pubs of Ireland and Irish Pubs around the World; they capture an old drinking notion which is becoming more difficult to source in modern pubs.

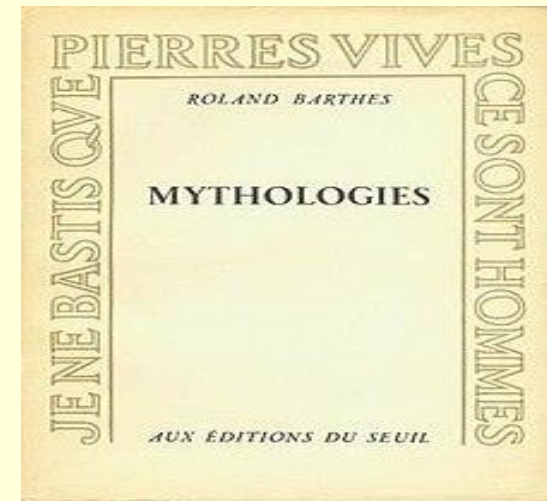
- ❑ In this presentation we will explore;
 - the **origins** of pub snug,
 - their **social and cultural** contribution to the Irish people and tourists alike from their golden era in the late 1890s,
 - their **temporary demise** during the modernisation period of the 1950-60s
 - their **renewed interest** in 21st century Ireland.

2. Origins of the snug [Tavern configuration].

- ❑ One of the most **enduring features** of the Irish pub is the snug.
- ❑ **Secluded areas** which differ in their shape and size.
- ❑ **Snugs** have collectively embodied the **semiotic relationship** between the pub environment in which **boundaries** between the private and public spaces were contested, negotiated and defined. (Barthes, 1972).
- ❑ The **material properties** of the snug and the **cultural values** they transmitted have included observing social conventions and reinforcing class divisions.



Robert Barthes

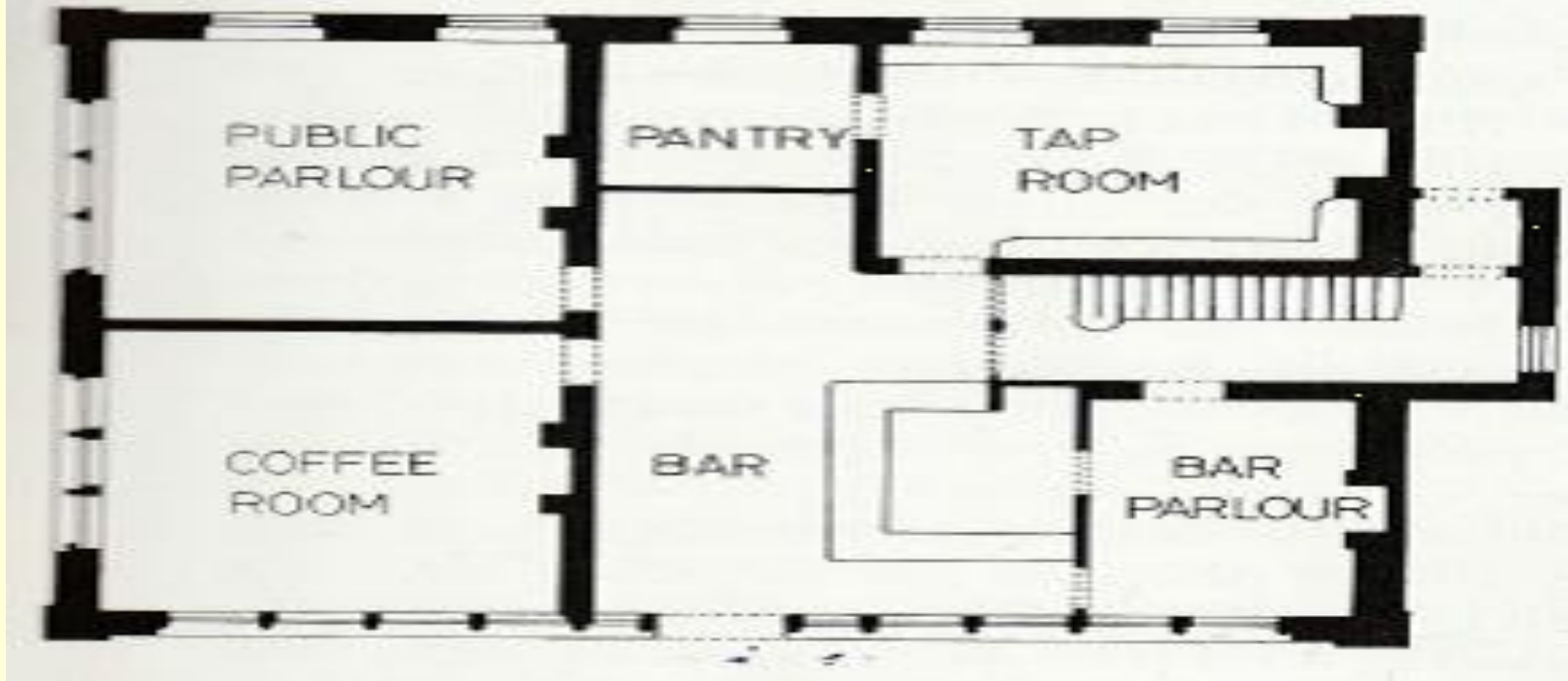


Mythologies, 1957

2. Origins of the snug [Tavern configuration].

- ❑ **1800s England:** standard tavern consisted of five separate rooms: a public parlour, tap room, bar, kitchen and publicans private parlour, the **last two** of these were not accessible to the public (Girouard, 1984, p.24) ; (LVCTJ, 1899, p. 804-6),
- ❑ **Style of tavern layout:** served to maintain the class divide in the pubs of England which existed well into the Victorian period.
- ❑ **Some upper classes** enjoyed ‘deliberate slumming’ (Girouard ,1984, p. 6).
- ❑ **Changing Times:** Business and professional classes, viewed public houses as vulgar, unless it contained ‘restaurant (coffee room)’ (LVG, 1888, p.6),

Fig 2.1: (1855) Sample ground floor tavern layout.



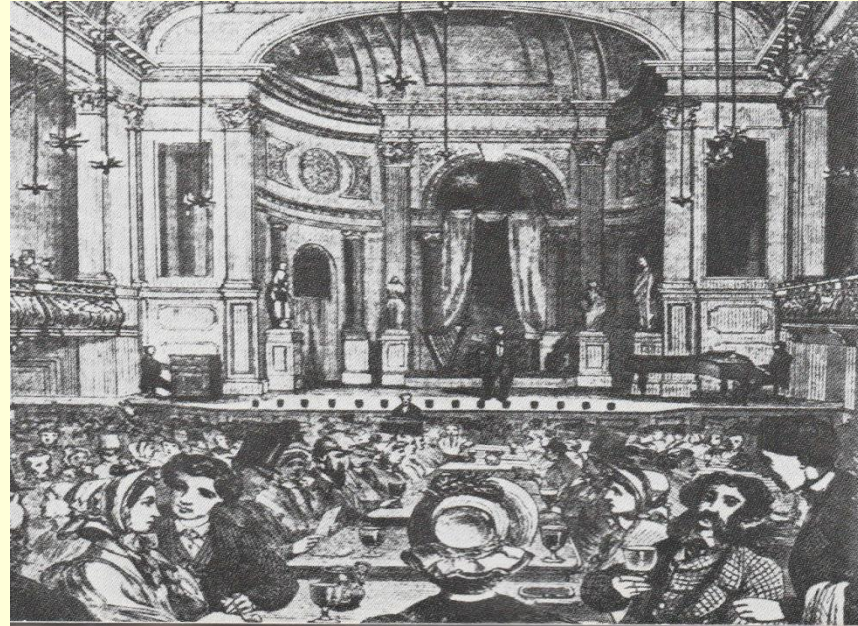
2. Origins of the snug [Tavern configuration].

- ❑ **1880-1900s:** introduction of bigger undivided bars which were subdivided by partitions and private bar areas (Girouard, 1984, pp. 67-69),
- ❑ **1890s:** Small bars (boxes or jugs) introduced, desire for privacy within main bar space.
- ❑ **Compartmentation:** tendency in Britain, not adopted throughout Ireland, pubs of Victorian Ireland contain a bar & a small bar area referred to as a snug, but most Irish pubs just contained a bar (Girouard, 1984, p. 241).



2. Origins of the snug [\[privacy\]](#)

- ❑ **Snug:** term derives, 1860s English music halls, contained ‘snuggeries or small private apartments’.
- ❑ **Bashful gentlemen could retire:** would share wine with a recent acquaintance’ (Greenwood, 1869, p. 319).
- ❑ **Customers paid** little extra on their drinks for this privacy.
- ❑ **Dangerous to supervise:** losing your license if convicted of allowing drunkenness, prostitution or gambling on their premises, (Girouard, 1984)
- ❑ **Solution:** snob screens introduced, 1890s, drinks served through a gap below the eye level, frosted screens, hinged panels instead of fixed glass which could be opened for observation.



3. The Pub Snugs of Ireland [cultural & social contribution].

- ❑ **High society:** enjoyed privacy, hidden from temperance movement
- ❑ **General society**

Women

1960s social convention, respectable woman didn't drink in public bars.

Women slipped into snugs (away from husbands) to;

'after shopping or dealing a couple glasses of porter' (Ryan, p. 110)

'to hold little family meetings, gatherings or meeting local TDs' (Hynes p. 150)

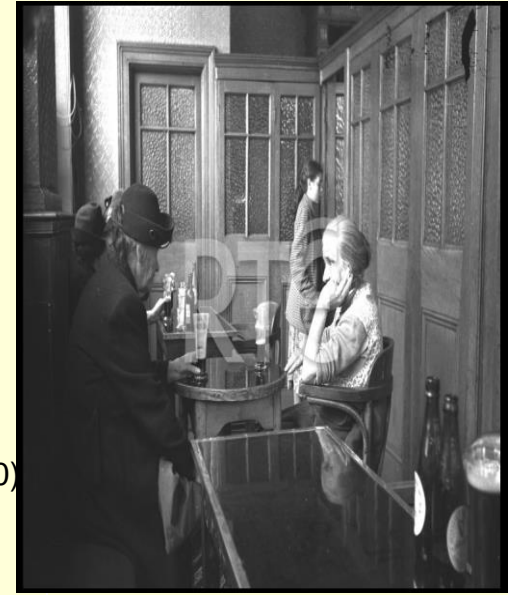
'after a funeral, the women'd all go off and make a day of it' (Ryan, p. 201)

'grannies went into snugs because they were beyond sin' (Johnston, p. 214)

'street dealers would enjoy a glass of Guinness and breast feed their babies' (Dillon p. 230).

Men

- ❑ after-hours drinks (Hynes cited in Kearns, 1996, p. 150),
- ❑ animal trading & price bartering (pigs, horses) (Hughes cited in Kearns, p. 192).
- ❑ opportunity share problems, snug 'confessional' barman 'curate' (Share, 2003, p. 76).



3. The Pub Snugs of Ireland [cultural & social contribution]

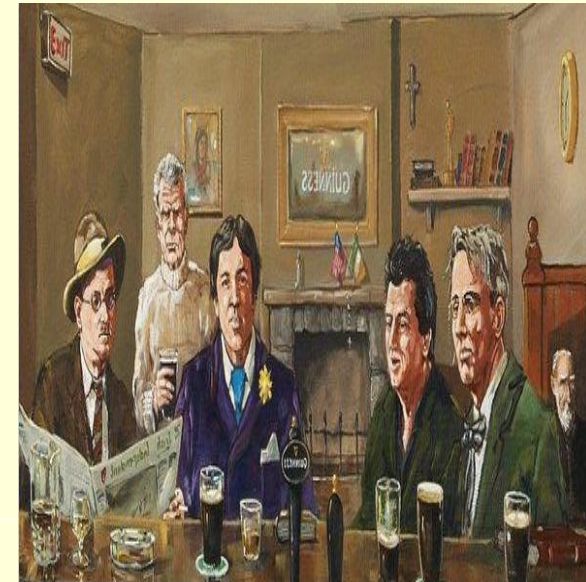
Revolutions, defiance and romance

- ❑ **Fenians, Irish invincibles, War of Independence** plotted in snugs (Gorham cited in Bulsons, 1969, p. 11).
- ❑ The **matchmaker** a trusted old man who would also discretely arrange marriages between the sons and daughters of local farmers and shop keepers in this space (Molloy, 2002)
- ❑ Pub snug pivotal to igniting many **romances** (Fennell & Bunbury, 2008, p. 11).

Literati

- ❑ **James Joyce**: dark snug of O'Neill's, Suffolk St, Dublin
- ❑ **Flann O'Brien**, 'licensed tabernacle of choice', Palace Bar's snug, Fleet Street
- ❑ **W.B Yeats** and Oliver St John Gogarty enjoyed his first (a sherry) Toners, Baggot Street snug declared;

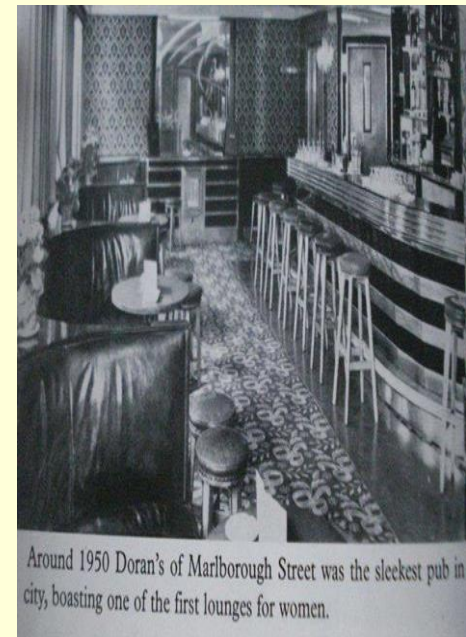
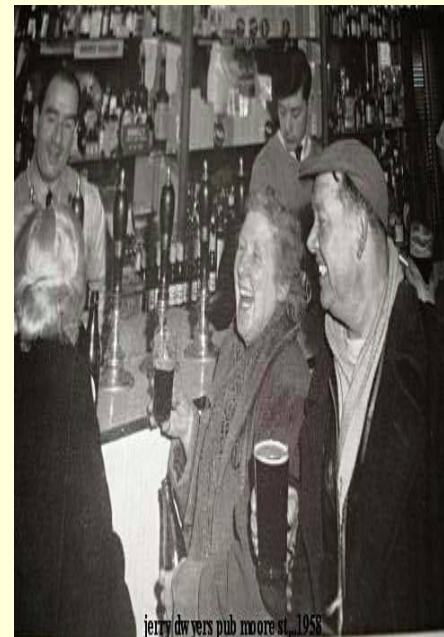
'I've seen a pub, Now would you kindly take me home' and without a glance at the colourful décor went out and stepped into a waiting carriage' (Malone, 2001 pp. 121-22).



3. The Pub Snugs of Ireland

[Temporary demise]

- ❑ **1960s Ireland:** huge changes, economy rising, liberal opinions changing.
- ❑ **‘Men only’** pubs had to go.
- ❑ **Women demanded** that pubs be refurbished (Fell cited in Kearns, 1996, p. 163).
- ❑ **Modernization period:** Lounge bars, couches, carpets and ladies toilets.
- ❑ **Open Spaces & Increased access:** beautiful snugs disappear (Martin, 2016, p.3), lose also linked to Publicans desire open spaces and increased access to the bar (Molloy, 2002).



4. Conclusion [renewed interest]

Snugs initial purpose: reinforcing Victorian class divisions, supporting illegal activities and observing Irish social conventions.

My contentions: Semiotic relationship between private & public pub spaces;

- (a) towards the eventual **liberation of the gender and social class** divides of its original conception.
- (b) served as private **counselling clinics**, religious and rebellious **contact points** during troubled times.
- (c) a private space to conduct local **business and trade**
- (d) integral in promoting **intellectual discourse** among literati of many generations
- (e) assisting towards sowing the **seeds of love and romance** for many couples.
- (f) fine examples of Ireland's **built heritage**
- (g) enjoyment of **good company and great conversation** in 21st century Ireland

Recognition & renewed interest:

- ✓ **Food and beverage companies and tourist boards:** re-discovered this special space
- ✓ **Best Irish Pub snug awards:** Started 2010, winners Toners, Dublin (2010), Dylan Whiskey Bar, Kilkenny (2011) (Shelf Life, 2011).



References

- Bulsons, R. (1969). *Irish Pubs of Character*, 30 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2: Bruce Spicer Ltd.
- Fennell, J. and Bunbury, T. (2008) *The Irish Pub*, London: Thames and Hodson
- Dublin City Council. (2018). *Pubs*, available at <http://www.dublincity.ie/search/site/pubs> accessed [27.11.18]
- Girouard, M. (1984). *Victorian Pubs*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Greenwood, J. (1869). *The Seven Curses of London*, London: Victorian London Ebooks.
- Ireland.Com. (2018). The Crown Liquor Saloon, available at <https://www.ireland.com/what-is-available/food-and-drink/pubs-and-bars/articles/irish-pubs-crown/> accessed [27.11.18]
- Kadel, B. (2015). *Drink and culture in nineteenth century Ireland: the alcohol trade and the politics of the Irish public house*, London: I.B Tauris.
- Kearns, K. C. (1996). *Dublin pub life and lore: an oral history*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.
- LVCTJ. (1899). *The Licensed Victuallers and Catering Trade Journal*, 26th July, London.
- LVG. (1888). *The Licensed Victuallers Gazette*, 3rd August, London.
- Malone, D. A. (2001). *Historic Pubs of Dublin*, Dublin: Prion.
- Martin, K. (2016). *Have ye no Homes to go to: The History of the Irish Pub*, Dublin: The Collins Press.
- Molloy, C. (2002). *The story of the Irish pub: an intoxicating history of the licensed trade in Ireland*, Dublin: Liffey Publishers Ltd.
- O'Connor. A.(2018). Snug life: How Ireland fell in love with the pub snug, *The Journal.ie*, available at <https://www.thejournal.ie/snug-history-ireland-4182321-Aug2018/> accessed [24.11.18].
- Parl Papers. (1897). *Royal Commission on Liqueur Licensing Laws, 1896-8* (Chairman, Viscount Peel), UK: Parl Papers.
- RTE Archives. (2018). Pubs, available at https://www.rte.ie/archives/search/?q=pubs&filter=programmeid:30004608%20OR%20uri:*%2F%2Fwww.rte.ie%2Farchives%2F*&page=1 accessed [27.11.18]
- Share, P. (2003). *A genuine 'Third Place'? Towards an understanding of the pub in contemporary Irish society*. 30th SAI Annual Conference, Cavan, 26 April: Institute of Technology, Sligo.
- Shelf Life. (2011). Powers Whiskey Ireland's Best Snug Search 2011, available at <https://www.shelflife.ie/powers-whiskey-irelands-best-snug-search-2011/> accessed [26.11.18].

Questions / Thank You

