

Women's History

The journal of the Women's History Network

Special Issue: Women and the Family in Ireland



**Summer
2020**

Articles by

*Leanne Calvert
Maeve O'Riordan
Éadaoin Regan
Emma Dewhirst*

Plus

*Seven book reviews
Getting to know
each other
Committee Report*

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Second Call for Papers

Women's History Network Annual Conference

Homes, Food and Farms

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In recent years Women's History has made a significant contribution to debates and explorations of histories of homes, families and domestic life. Women's multiple and varied roles in the production, preparation and consumption of food, as farmers, housewives, gardeners and workers in agriculture and other industries have been uncovered. The 2020 Women's History Network Annual Conference (postponed and reorganised for January 2021) aims to build upon this work and bring together those interested in interrogating and expanding women's history and the history of homes, food and farms.

Our Keynote speakers will be

Caroline Bressey – author of *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste* (2015)

Laurel Forster – author of *The Recipe Reader: Narratives, Contexts, Traditions* (2010)

And our third keynote - **Prof. Jane Whittle** – Lead Investigator on Leverhulme funded 'Women's work in rural England 1500-1700: a new methodological approach' will be giving an online presentation in September 2020.

We invite submissions of **200-word** abstracts for papers of **15-minutes in length** which take a critical look at these areas of history.

We also welcome and encourage participation from anyone interested in other areas of Women's History in the Open Strand. Contributors to this strand have the option of offering a 5 minute ignite talk, a 10 minute lightening talk or a poster. We invite submissions of 100-200 word abstracts, stating your preferred mode of delivery.

Please note that all submissions can be delivered in person in January or via virtual means.

All submissions must be on the form downloadable from
<https://womenshistorynetwork.org/the-womens-history-network-annual-conference/>
to conferenceorganiser@womenshistorynetwork.org by 27 August.

Welcome to the Summer 2020 issue of *Women's History*. This is a special issue on women and family in Ireland, edited by Dr Leanne Calvert (University of Hertfordshire) and Dr Maeve O'Riordan (University College Cork). *Women's History* is the journal of the Women's History Network and we invite articles on any aspect of women's history. We hope this themed issue inspires you and we are interested to talk to you about suggestions for future special issues.

Editorial Team: Laurel Foster, Sue Hawkins, Ellie Macdonald, Hollie Mather, Kate Murphy, Angela Platt, Katharina Rowold, Zoe Thomas, Kiera Wilkins.

Introduction

Almost thirty years has passed since Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O'Dowd and Maria Luddy issued their groundbreaking agenda for Irish women's history.¹ Writing in response to the growth of women's history and gender history in Britain and North America, they critiqued its relative lack of progress in Ireland, where women's history was still in its 'pioneering stage'.² Recognising that the dominant discourses in Irish history worked to exclude and marginalise women, the authors of the 'agenda' highlighted key areas that were ripe for an exploration of women's lives in Ireland. A recurrent theme throughout was the pivotal role that the family played in shaping the experiences of Irish women. As the primary unit of social organisation, the family intersected with many other areas of Irish life, including (and not limited to) war and conflict, politics and patronage, the economy, religion, crime and deviancy. Writing women into the historical narrative, and restoring them to their place in the historical record, would enrich our overall understanding of Ireland's past. Moreover, the 'agenda' pointed to sources that could illuminate these understudied aspects of women's lives, including family correspondence, art, literature, wills and testaments, land settlements and church court minutes - mapping out a research trajectory for future scholars. As the authors of the agenda argued, reorienting our focus towards women would revitalise the discipline, affording a unique opportunity to challenge and reshape accepted narratives in Ireland's history.³

In the thirty years following the publication of the 'agenda', research on the family and family life in Ireland has made considerable strides. Underpinned by the efforts of historians of women, a rich and flourishing body of scholarship now exists that enhances our knowledge of the family and life-cycle in Ireland. Scholarly work on the family - its making, breaking and lived experience, has grown enormously and persistently breaks new ground. Maria Luddy and Mary O'Dowd continue to lead the way and their forthcoming book, *Marriage in Ireland, 1660-1925* (2020), promises to make a major contribution to the discipline.⁴ Likewise, Diane Urquhart's pioneering new book, *Irish Divorce: A History* (2020), constitutes the first sustained examination of divorce in Ireland. Chapters dedicated to the family and family life by O'Dowd, Sarah-Anne Buckley and Lindsey Earner-Byrne in the well-received and revamped edition of the *Cambridge History of Ireland* (2018) stand as a ringing endorsement of the progression of the field.⁵ Indeed, it is notable that scholarship

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on the history of the family continues to fulfil the aims of the agenda', enhancing our understanding of family experiences by cutting across both class and confessional boundaries. Our own work is a case in point. Focusing on Presbyterian families, Leanne Calvert's work addresses a significant gap in knowledge between Ireland's better studied Anglican and Catholic communities. Her work has considerably added to our understanding of a number of key areas, including courtship, marriage, childbirth, adolescence and sexuality.⁶ Likewise, Maeve O'Riordan's work casts fresh light on the women of Ireland's landed classes, deepening our knowledge of their multi-faceted roles as household managers, entertainers, mothers, sisters and sexual partners.⁷

As the anniversary of the 'agenda' approached, we wanted to reflect on the progress that has been made in the history of the Irish family, and identify new directions in current research. Like the authors of the 'agenda', we looked to developments taking place in the history of the family elsewhere. Invigorated by new approaches, such as the history of emotions, historians of the family in Britain, North America, and Europe are expanding their focus to include relationships between siblings, step-families and wider kin.⁸ Recent scholarship has also explored the changing roles of women in the family at different points in the life-cycle, taking into



Cover Image:
Family group.
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Bantry Collection.
Boole Library Archives,
University College Cork,
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account the impact that age and ageing had on the position of women in the family. We wanted to find out whether historians of the family in Ireland were following similar pathways and how these approaches might be applied in an Irish context.

These questions culminated in a one-day symposium held at the University of Hertfordshire in June 2019. Entitled, *Women and the Family in Ireland: New Directions and Perspectives, 1550-1950*, we brought together established scholars, early career and postgraduate researchers, working on all aspects of the family and its relationships in Ireland. Generously funded by the *Women's History Network Small Grants Scheme*, the symposium intended to start new conversations, spark collaborations between scholars, and identify new directions in the research agenda of the Irish family. The period-focus of the symposium was intentionally long to allow for themes to emerge and for scholars to share methodological approaches to similar questions. The event attracted researchers at all career levels from across Ireland, Britain, France and New Zealand. This issue brings a selection of these papers together and stands testament to the rich scholarship being undertaken on women and the Irish family. As we considered how the field has developed and where it is heading, several themes emerged. Scholars presented work which utilised family correspondence, art, literature, wills and testaments, land settlements and church court minutes, material culture, as well as new digital databases which allow new mapping methods to be used on family history.

A major theme that emerges not only from this collection, but also from the symposium itself, is that scholarship on women and the family in Ireland continues to challenge and refine our understandings of Ireland's past. New perspectives on 'traditional' source material, coupled with the release of new archival collections, means that Irish historians are continuously working at the cutting edge of their discipline. Maeve O'Riordan's exploration of unmarried women in elite Irish families uses personal correspondence, memoirs and diaries to illuminate the lives of women who have been hitherto overlooked. Her article presents a continued challenge to the assumption that women's lives gained importance through their status as mothers and wives. The women in her article played an integral role in their families

throughout their life courses, while also retaining individual spirit and flair, carving out their own interests, hobbies and pursuits. Re-examining sources with new perspectives is a theme continued in Éadoin Regan's feminist rereading of the works of George Egerton. Applying concepts derived from Jungian and psychoanalytical theory, Regan interrogates what Egerton's texts can tell us about contemporary ideas concerning women's mental health. Her article highlights both the universality, as well as the individuality of Irish women's experiences of maternity, sexuality and the family. Leanne Calvert's piece on marital breakdown demonstrates the important contributions that Presbyterian church court records make to our understanding of Irish society. As Calvert stresses, these sources are overlooked and underused by Irish historians, who dismiss them on account of their assumed differences from the Irish population at large. In the absence of a comparative archive for the Irish ecclesiastical courts, these sources are ripe with potential for unlocking the intimate worlds of women and men in Ireland's past. Calvert presents us with tantalising flashes into the reasons for, and methods of, marital breakdown, including domestic violence, separation, bigamy and cohabitation. Indeed, as Emma Dewhirst's article reveals, the release of new archival material means that we can have a new appreciation for the integral role that the family - and particularly women, played in the creation of political revolutionaries in Ireland. Dewhirst draws largely on the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC), which was made digitally available as recently as 2016.⁹ Released in the run-up to Ireland's *Decade of Centenaries, 1912-1922*, the collection brings together a searchable database of hundreds of thousands of individual accounts that shed light on the activities of nationalists in Ireland during the revolutionary period. Her use of family history could reshape accepted narratives on Ireland's revolutionary history.

The overriding theme that emerges from this collection is that current frameworks for understanding the Irish family are in need of revision. We were struck by the very many different ways in which Irish families were made, functioned and deviated from 'traditional' nuclear forms. While scholarship on the Irish family has certainly flourished in recent years, the overwhelming majority of this literature remains focused



'Women and the Family in Ireland Symposium participants, University of Hertfordshire, June 2019'.

Credit: Maeve O'Riordan.

on the vertical relationships between parents and children, and husbands and wives, without making distinctions between and within biological ties. Such a focus obscures the distinctive experiences and contributions of other individuals in the family, such as stepparents and stepchildren, siblings, half-siblings and wider kin. As the contributions which follow demonstrate, the 'Irish family' was pieced together, made and remade, by both biological family members in their roles as aunts (unmarried and married), uncles, sisters and brothers, as well as adopted care-givers, through death and remarriage, with no clear biological ties. It is only by embracing a wider definition of 'the family' that we can fully capture the diversity and multi-faceted nature of Irish family life.

Moreover as O'Riordan argues in her article, 'the concept of the family cannot be limited to those living under one roof creating children together'. The boundary of an individual family could be fluid. That not all families lived together neatly under one roof is demonstrated in Calvert's article on marital breakdown. The records of the Presbyterian church courts reveal how individuals remade families outside of accepted legal frameworks. Spouses simply walked out of unworkable marriages, leaving behind children. Some contracted new relationships and lived together with their new partner (and their subsequent children) under the guise of husband and wife. Dewhirst demonstrates that the concept of family should not be limited by life stage and that the childhood influences of parents could live on into adulthood, while Regan uses literature to explore how an absence of critical familial relationships might have detrimental impacts on women. Each of these papers use a data source which might not be available for the wider population: Calvert sheds light on the historical goldmine that is the Presbyterian church courts; O'Riordan had the benefit of using extensive family papers which can be the preserve of gentry and aristocratic families, preserved and archived by the National Library; Dewhirst's families were deemed exceptional because they contributed to the national struggle; while the families explored by Regan are fictional. Yet, they can all enrich our overall understanding of Ireland's past and tell us something about the history of the Irish family more broadly during the late-eighteenth to the early-twentieth centuries. If women played these extensive and influential roles within these families, might not the 'traditional' family need to be re-examined across the entire social spectrum? We hope that this issue provokes further conversations among scholars of the family, of gender and of wider society, not only in Ireland but further afield.

Notes

1. Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O'Dowd and Maria Luddy, 'An Agenda for Women's History in Ireland, 1500-1900', *Irish Historical Studies*, 28/109 (1992), 1-37.
2. *Ibid.*, 3.
3. *Ibid.*, 5, 37.
4. Maria Luddy and Mary O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland, 1660-1925* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020). See also, Maria Luddy, *Matters of Deceit: Breach of Promise to Marry Cases in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Limerick* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2011); Maria Luddy, 'Marriage, Sexuality and the Law in Ireland', in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge,

Cambridge University Press, 2018), 344-62; Mary O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland, 1500-1800* (Harlow, Pearson Education, 2005); Mary O'Dowd, 'Marriage Breakdown in Ireland, c. 1660-1857', in *Law and the Family in Ireland, 1800-1950*, ed. Niamh Howlin and Kevin Costello (London, Palgrave, 2017), 7-23; Maria Luddy, 'Marriage, Sexuality and the Law in Ireland', in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 344-62.

5. Mary O'Dowd, 'Men, Women, Children and the Family, 1550-1730', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland. Volume 2, 1550-1730*, ed. Jane Ohlmeyer (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 298-320; Sarah-Anne Buckley, 'Women, Men and the Family, c. 1730-c.1880', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland. Volume 3, 1730-1880*, ed. James Kelly (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 231-54; Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'The Family in Ireland, 1880-2015', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland. Volume 4, 1880 to the Present*, ed. Thomas Bartlett (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 641-72.
6. See for example, "He Came to Her Bed Pretending Courtship": Sex, Courtship and the Making of Marriage in Ulster, 1750-1844', *Irish Historical Studies*, 42/162 (2018), 244-64; "A More Careful Tender Nurse Cannot Be Than My Dear Husband": Reassessing the Role of Men in Pregnancy and Childbirth in Ulster, 1780-1832', *Journal of Family History*, 42/1 (2017), 22-36; "Do Not Forget Your Bit Wife": Love, Marriage and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in Irish Presbyterian Marriages, c. 1780-1850', *Women's History Review*, 26/3 (2017), 433-54.
7. See for example, Maeve O'Riordan, *Women of the Country House in Ireland, 1860-1914* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2018) and 'Elite Courtship: The Case of Mabel Smyly and Dermot O'Brien, 1901-1902', in *Sexual Politics in Modern Ireland*, ed. Jennifer Redmond, Sonja Tiernan, Sandra McAvoy and Mary McAuliffe (Sallins, Co. Kildare, Irish Academic Press, 2015), 36-52.
8. See for example, Lyndan Warner, ed., *Stepfamilies in Europe, 1400-1800* (London, Routledge, 2018); Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and Social Relations in Georgian England: Share and Share alike* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012); C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011); Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012).
9. Military Archives, 'Military Services Pensions Collection', [<http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923>].

“Her husband went away some time ago”: marriage breakdown in Presbyterian Ulster, c. 1690-1830

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'A wife waits on a stormy night for the return of her husband'.

Wellcome Collection (CC BY 4.0)

Introduction

In May 1703, the Kirk-Session of Carnmoney, county Antrim, summoned Mary Cunningham to appear before them after a report was spread that her husband, Thomas Hamilton, 'went away sometime agoe' with a woman named Agnes.¹ Mary confirmed the truth of the report and in response to the Session's questioning 'what on her part' had 'provoke[d] him to leave', she 'declar'd she gave him none but study'd to carry as a dutifull wife'.² Mary emphasised that the separation was not her decision, adding that she was 'jealous' of Thomas and 'that woman' and 'she was both grieved for her family and angry at him' for his actions.³ The following month, Thomas and Agnes appeared before the Session and acknowledged living together in adultery.⁴ Both were deemed censurable for their offence and were ordered to appear before the congregation and undergo public discipline. The pair were also instructed to end their relationship.⁵ A note made by the Session in September 1703 indicated that they had separated as Agnes had given birth to a child and was living in her father's house. Thomas, who was described at this point as a 'poor contemptible soldier' with 'no place of constant abode' was denied the privilege of presenting the child for baptism – this benefit instead being awarded to Agnes 'who would better see to the child'.⁶ It is unclear whether Mary Cunningham was ever reunited with her errant husband.

Cases such as this offer a tantalising glimpse into how marital breakdown was experienced and achieved by the lower ranks in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland. Although divorce was not formally available to the large majority of Irish society until 1996, it is well established that women and men in Ireland made their own informal agreements to dissolve unworkable marriages. As in the case of Mary Cunningham

and Thomas Hamilton, spouses who were unhappy had the option of simply leaving the marital home, and some did so with the intention of forming a new relationship. That this was common in Ireland is indicated by the phrase "Divorce Irish Style", which referred to the practice of dissolving relationships through either desertion or mutual separation.⁷ Indeed, this practice was apparently so prevalent in modern Ireland that it has been described by David Fitzpatrick as 'ubiquitous'.⁸

Save some notable exceptions, much more is known about marital breakdown in Ireland following the mid-nineteenth century, than in the period preceding it.⁹ This can partly be explained by the fact that this period coincided with major legislative changes to the breaking of marriage – notably, the 1857 Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act. This piece of legislation transformed divorce in England and Wales by transferring the legal process from parliament to a court-based system. In doing so, it brought divorce more into line with the Scottish provision.¹⁰ Ireland, however, was excluded from this legislation. Divorce continued to be under the remit of the Irish parliament and was restricted to those with wealth and privilege. Given that the costs of securing a parliamentary divorce could reach up to £5,000, it is unsurprising that this method of marital dissolution was out of reach of most.¹¹ That only eleven private divorce acts were passed by the Irish parliament between 1730 and 1800 further underscores this point.¹² Moreover, access to formal divorce was gendered and weighted heavily in favour of men. Whereas adultery alone was sufficient cause for men to divorce their wives, women had to prove that their husbands had committed additional offences, such as bigamy, rape or other 'unnatural' practices.¹³

Consequently, much historical attention has been devoted to exploring how and why the Irish system deviated

from that followed elsewhere in Britain. Diane Urquhart's work has led the way in this respect, demonstrating how Ireland's retention of parliamentary divorce at the end of the nineteenth-century was unique in the wider context of the British Empire.¹⁴ Indeed, Ireland would not fall into line with the rest of the United Kingdom until later in the twentieth century. Whereas Northern Ireland moved from the parliamentary to the court-based system in 1939, the Irish Free State operated without a mechanism for processing parliamentary divorce and passed a constitutional ban upon it in 1937. Divorce was not legally recognised in the Republic of Ireland until 1996.¹⁵

The modern period is also much better studied because the source material is both more plentiful and accessible. Until its disestablishment in 1869, the Anglican ecclesiastical courts were the first port of call for matrimonial suits in Ireland. These courts intervened in disputes between spouses, considered requests for separation and determined the validity of marriages.¹⁶ It is therefore regrettable that the records of these courts are not extant, having been largely destroyed during the Irish civil war. Surviving fragments tease at the richness of the material, with cases involving divorce on the grounds of impotency, as well as allegations of domestic violence, adultery and abuse.¹⁷ As Mary O'Dowd has noted, the loss of such archival material 'means that the writing of Irish social history will always have its limitations'.¹⁸ There are, however, other sources that can shed light on marital breakdown for this period in Ireland's history: Presbyterian church court records. These sources are largely overlooked and underused by Irish historians on account of their (assumed) differences from the wider Irish (Catholic) population at large. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, Irish Presbyterian sources tell us something new about many aspects of the Irish family, including courtship, sex, marriage, childbirth, and the law.¹⁹ Drawing on the minutes kept by the Irish Presbyterian church courts, this article will explore how women and men in Presbyterian Ulster negotiated the dissolution of their marriages. In doing so, it will demonstrate the rich contribution that their study can make to our knowledge of the breaking (and remaking) of marriage in Ireland.

Sources: Irish Presbyterian church courts

Presbyterianism arrived in Ireland in the seventeenth century, brought over by Scottish settlers. Sustained waves of migration thereafter helped to create a Presbyterian stronghold in the north-eastern counties of the island. Over the course of the following century, the province of Ulster emerged as an area of dense Presbyterian settlement.²⁰ Indeed, while Presbyterians were a minority in Ireland as a whole, accounting for around eight per cent of the entire population in 1835, they outnumbered both their Anglican and Roman Catholic counterparts in the province of Ulster.²¹ Following the example of its parent church in Scotland, the social, religious and cultural life of the Irish Presbyterian community was underpinned by a series of three church courts. These courts were hierarchical in their arrangement and, in ascending order of power, consisted of the Kirk-Session, the Presbytery, and the Synod. At the meetings of these courts, a clerk was appointed to keep a record of proceedings. While minute books do not survive for every congregation in Ireland, those that do afford a remarkable insight into the intimate worlds of women and men in these communities.²² All aspects of family life came under the

purview of these courts, including marriage, sexuality, leisure and lifestyle. There were three broad categories of offence: sexual misconduct, including adultery, incest and fornication; breaches of social and religious norms, such as drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking and slander; and marital offences, including bigamy, irregularly celebrated unions, elopement and petitions for divorce.

The Kirk-Session operated at a local level and was made up of the minister and a body of ruling elders, who were men elected by the community to act as their representatives. The Session was responsible for local matters: it dispensed church poor relief, organised collections and made preparations for the celebration of religious rites. The Session was also the first port of call for cases of church discipline. Elders were empowered to watch over the spiritual and moral welfare of the community and dealt with violations of Presbyterian standards of behaviour. If the Session was unable to resolve a matter of discipline, it was elevated to the next level of church court: the Presbytery. This court acted at a regional level and was made up of the ministers in a given area and representatives from the eldership. Presbyteries were responsible for the installation of new ministers, they oversaw the education of probationers (men who were training to be ministers), they dealt with complaints put against ministers, and they also heard complicated cases of discipline. Aggravated cases of adultery or incest generally came before the Presbytery, as did complicated questions about the legality of marriages. The Synod stood at the very top of the church court pyramid. This body was made up of all the ministers and representative elders under its care. It generally met once a year and was responsible for the oversight of the whole church, from the discipline of ministers and the laity, to the management of funds for widows and families of ministers, and the exercise of church polity.²³

While some members of the community voluntarily appeared before the church courts and confessed wrongdoing, the indiscretions of most came to light through the prying eyes and ears of their neighbours, families and friends. Networks of informers brought many cases to the notice of the church courts. Presbyterian women and men actively spied on one another, they eavesdropped on conversations and kept watch for any behaviour that seemed out of the ordinary.²⁴ For instance, in December 1705, George Kelso admitted to Carnmoney Session that he was the source of a rumour that James Young and Margaret Lyk were guilty of adultery. According to George, the pair raised his suspicions when he witnessed their 'indecent' behaviour in coming 'out of a room or pantrie having their face red as he suppos'd with heat or shame'.²⁵ The motivations of informers were varied. While some undoubtedly acted out of a commitment to moral and religious principles, there is evidence that others raised reports out of malice. The Session of Cahans, county Monaghan, for example, decided not to pursue a case of sexual misconduct against Elizabeth Cortney in March 1768 when it emerged that her accuser, John Stuart, had reported it when a dispute arose between Elizabeth and his mother.²⁶ Indeed, the church courts were aware that this happened and took pains to punish those who made malicious accusations.²⁷

If found at fault, the Kirk-Session would generally impose punishment. The type of punishment awarded varied, depending on the type of offence committed, the notoriety of the indiscretion, how recently it had occurred and the nature of the evidence offered.²⁸ In most cases resolved by the Kirk-

Session, offenders were denied access to the church privileges of baptism and communion – a punishment that effectively excluded them from church membership. Offenders could only be restored once they had undergone a public rebuke on at least two successive Sabbaths. These public measures further underscore the communal nature of Presbyterian discipline. The process itself was not designed to be purely punitive, but was about upholding and reinforcing standards of agreed behaviour. In instances where offences were aggravated or required further deliberation, the Kirk-Session generally referred such cases to the Presbytery for a decision.

That only a minority of offenders rejected church authority and refused to undergo discipline is testament to the central role that the courts played in the lives of the community.²⁹ Indeed, the communal nature of Presbyterian discipline is important when we consider that offenders had no legal obligation to abide by their decisions. Although the Presbyterian church courts claimed the right to exercise authority over the lives of members – including the making and breaking of their marriages, its ability to do so was contested throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is because the power to preside over marriage law in Ireland was vested in the ecclesiastical courts, which were controlled by the Anglican establishment. Relations between the two were hostile throughout the period, and marriage continued to be a point of contention until 1845, when marriages performed by Presbyterian ministers were confirmed as legally unassailable.³⁰ For this reason, it is important to be mindful that the Presbyterian church courts had no authority over marriages contracted by those outside of their own communion, and that their decisions in matrimonial suits did not carry the same legal weight as those of the Anglican church. While generalisations cannot therefore be made about the rest of Ireland from these cases, they do offer an otherwise unrivalled insight into how Presbyterian women and men negotiated the breakdown of their marriages.

The breaking of marriage: divorce

In common with other religious traditions operating in Ireland at this time, the Presbyterian church also had its own set of rules that governed the making of marriage. The Presbyterian form of marriage and its guidelines were enshrined in two main documents: the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Directory for Public Worship*.³¹ These texts outlined the steps that needed to be taken to formalise marriage and the pre-requisites of the persons to be married, including freedom from prior contracts, and the degrees of consanguinity and affinity. Unlike other traditions, however, Presbyterianism also made allowances in its standards for remarriage and divorce. According to the *Confession*, divorce could be obtained in cases of ‘wilful desertion’ and adultery, enabling the ‘innocent Party’ to ‘marry another, as if the offending Party were dead’.³²

Examples of how this worked in practice can be found in the minute books of the church courts. Such a route was taken by George Huston in August 1806 when he petitioned the Reformed Presbytery to grant him a divorce from his estranged wife, Ann Long. According to George, the couple were married on 3 May 1802 and after just six weeks of marriage, Ann ‘left him without any just cause & refused to return’.³³ George further strengthened his case by adding that Ann had since gone on to have a child with another man – underlining the fact that

she had entered into a sexual (and adulterous) relationship. After a period of deliberation, the Presbytery voted to approve George’s request, noting that they were satisfied that Ann ‘had completely broken the conjugal vow’.³⁴

George Huston’s case, however, is in the minority. As was the case in Scotland, petitions for divorce on the grounds of desertion and adultery rarely came before the Presbyterian church courts in Ireland.³⁵ One possible reason for this was that the process of securing a divorce was by no means easy. While Presbyterian standards made room for divorce, it could only be granted in cases where there was no possibility of the situation being ‘remedied by the church or civil magistrate’.³⁶ Moreover, spouses could not initiate divorce proceedings privately, but were to follow a ‘public and orderly course’ – meaning, that marital problems would be aired publicly and shared with the wider community.³⁷ As Mary O’Dowd has noted, such measures reflected the concerns of the Presbyterian church courts ‘to maintain bonds [rather] than dissolve them’.³⁸

The church courts made every effort to reconcile unhappy wives and husbands, taking on informal roles as marriage counselling services and peacemakers in family disputes in the process.³⁹ Conflict, although undesirable, appears to have been regarded as a normal part of married life. That the Kirk-Session believed that marital conflict could (and should) be resolved, is clear from the minute books. Samuel Thoburn and Jenat Girvan were rebuked by Carnmoney Session in June 1703 on account of ‘their sin & great folly’ in parting ‘some time ago’.⁴⁰ Relations had apparently been frosty in the marriage for some time. Two years previously, Samuel had appeared before the Session and complained that his mother-in-law, Mary Kell, had accused him of adultery – a charge he denied.⁴¹ While no action was taken against Samuel on the adultery charge, it is worth reiterating that adultery was technically grounds for divorce. In taking the case to the Session himself, Samuel may have been attempting to clear his name and prevent his wife from leaving him. The Session subsequently exhorted the pair to ‘be more watchful ag[ains]t these things wch occasion’d animostys’.⁴²

The church courts held a tight grip on divorce in order to ensure that married couples did not terminate unions without sufficient reason. Indeed, some Sessions acknowledged that there was the possibility of spouses applying for divorce on false grounds. The case of Robert Wray, which came before Ballymoney Session, county Antrim, in May 1829 is a good example. When Robert wrote to the Session and asked that the ‘marriage engagements’ between himself and his wife, Martha Pinkerton, be ‘formally dissolved’, he immediately roused suspicion.⁴³ According to Robert, he and his wife ‘had not agreed well together’ and ‘agreed to separate upon certain conditions’.⁴⁴ Following this, Martha had allegedly committed adultery and had a child with another man – actions that met the requirements for a divorce.⁴⁵ The Kirk-Session were not convinced and expressed their doubts about the veracity of the case: Robert was not a regular member; it was known he had treated his wife poorly and ‘forced’ her to leave; and he had a ‘disreputable’ character.⁴⁶ After conducting an investigation, the elders rejected Robert’s petition for divorce on the grounds that ‘his only motive [was] his anxiety to get married again’.⁴⁷ As this case demonstrates, applications for divorce were not easily granted. Indeed, while guarding access to divorce may have protected some women (and men) from false allegations of adultery, it also had the effect of trapping spouses in unhappy marriages.

Mutual separation

One alternative to divorce that was taken up by Presbyterian women and men was separation. The minutes of the church courts provide some tantalising insights into both the reasons for separation, as well as how it worked in practice. A number of women who appeared before Carnmoney Session over the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and made a case for separation, did so on the grounds of neglect and abuse. Domestic violence likely underlay the appeal of Lettuce Wilson in July 1697 for the Session's 'concurrence' in her separation from her husband, Alexander McDowel. According to Lettuce, she had 'no peace in her family because of her husband's hard usage'.⁴⁸ Instead of securing the Session's approval, Lettuce and Alexander were cited to appear again together, so that 'the matter [could] be heard & differences remov'd'.⁴⁹ Other women drew attention to the failure of their husbands to provide for them and their families. In July 1702, Marion McCrackin complained that her husband, Robert Shanks, did 'not cohabit with her and mars her livelihood'.⁵⁰ Both were appointed to be at the next meeting of the Session, but by the following March it was noted that Robert Shanks had 'fled the country'.⁵¹

Separated spouses posed a number of potential problems for the church courts: errant partners might participate in sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse, resulting in adultery and possible illegitimate children; individuals might contract new relationships that would be technically bigamous; and communities themselves might become responsible for the financial support of families left behind. When Kirk-Sessions were made aware that a married couple were living apart, they intervened and did all they could to reconcile estranged spouses and prevent further misconduct. For example, when Carnmoney Session found out in August 1698 that Jenat Colbeart was 'not living with her husband' Alexander, they cited her to appear and explain.⁵² Jenat told how she could not 'have a life' with her husband and that he would 'not labour to get [the family] bread'.⁵³ Her willingness to 'dwell wth him' again if he would make 'provision for the family' laid the groundwork for the Session's subsequent efforts to reconcile the pair - a separation which they remarked was 'a scandalous way of living for man & wife'.⁵⁴ The Session tracked Alexander down to the nearby community of Templepatrick, and cited him to appear and explain his cause for leaving.⁵⁵ When the Session met again the following December, they ruled that there were 'failings ... on both sides' and reported that Alexander was now willing to 'dwell with his wife & maintain her as he could' on the condition that she relocate to Templepatrick.⁵⁶ Jenat, however, was unwilling to make the move and refused to cohabit again with her husband unless he moved back to Carnmoney. In a reversal of fortunes, Jenat now became the subject of the Session's disapproval. Whereas she was reproved for her 'hazard' in voluntarily 'deserting her husband', Alexander was advised to 'seek counsell whether he may not be legally desir'd seeing she will not cohabit wth him'.⁵⁷ In this case, the church court was less concerned with attributing blame than it was with reconciling estranged spouses.

While the church courts certainly disapproved of marital separation, there does appear to have been some leeway in cases where domestic discord reached unacceptable levels. The example of Margaret Kerr and James Boyd, which

came before the Presbytery of Route in 1703 is a case in point. James first came to the attention of the Presbytery in December 1701 when he was cited for refusing to submit to discipline for the sin of adultery with two different women.⁵⁸ That James's adulterous affairs had a negative impact on his family life is suggested by the minutes. In February 1702, the Presbytery noted how James was so obstinate that he 'refuse[d] to let his family be orderly; or to be catechized' while he was under suspension.⁵⁹ After much back and forth, James eventually acknowledged his fault and in April 1702 was publicly rebuked for his offence.⁶⁰ The following year, an angry James reappeared before the Presbytery and accused them of granting Margaret a divorce.⁶¹ As it turned out, what the Presbytery had awarded Margaret was not a divorce, but a testimonial - a certificate of good behaviour that would enable her to leave the bounds of her congregation and join another wherever she pleased. That the Presbytery viewed the testimonial as a passport to a new life for Margaret is indicated by the reason they offered for granting it:

The meeting knowing that they granted her a testimoniall ... that she might be admitted a member in any Christian congregation, in regard James Boyd her husband who had been convict of divers adulterys grew so abusive to her that she fear'd for her life in his company being beaten grievously by him.⁶²

Although keeping marriages together was the ultimate aim of the church courts, when those unions threatened the lives of spouses, upset the peace of individual families and their wider communities, there was sometimes room for manoeuvre.

While animosity underlay some separations, in other cases couples appear to have mutually agreed to terminate unworkable relationships. In her study of Presbyterian marital and sexual behaviour in eighteenth-century Scotland, Katie Barclay argued that the laity's awareness that divorce was a *possibility* had a major impact on their attitudes to marital separation. Some Scottish couples devised their own elaborate separation agreements, with the view to dissolve their existing marriages and contract new ones in the future.⁶³ Similar examples appear in the minutes of the Irish Presbyterian church courts. This is what is alleged to have happened in the case of James Kirkwood, who was suspended from church privileges after he independently annulled his first marriage and remarried without gaining the consent of the church courts.⁶⁴ According to James, he and his first wife were married by an 'irregular clergyman' and shortly after, she deserted him and despite his 'repeated solicitations ... could not be prevailed on' to return.⁶⁵ Unable (and unwilling) to reconcile, the pair agreed to dissolve their marriage and 'gave under their hands with mutual consent [that] they were to have no further intercourse nor after claim'.⁶⁶ Regarding himself as a free man, James then married his second wife and was subsequently suspended from church privileges in his local congregation at Finvoy, county Antrim.⁶⁷

James's case was escalated to the Presbytery on account of its complex nature. Technically, his second marriage was bigamous. While the Presbyterian church disapproved of marriages conducted by 'irregular' clergymen - a term used to describe suspended ministers, they could not declare them invalid. Such marriages, after all, were valid in the eyes of civil law.⁶⁸ The Presbytery decided to rebuke James for his irregular

marriage and then to restore him to church privileges.⁶⁹ The reasons for their relative leniency in this case are unclear. It is possible, however, that the written agreement to separate was enough to convince the church courts that James was telling the truth.

As was the case in England, evidence also exists that suggests that some separated couples went on to establish new households, complete with new spouses and children, firmly in the knowledge of where their estranged partner was living. For example, when John Haslett appeared before the Presbytery of Down in March 1786 and confessed antenuptial fornication with his wife, Mary Maytre, and marrying her 'wt License'; he also admitted that Mary had been married once before.⁷⁰ According to John, Mary had been married to a man named Benjamin Robinson, who had deserted her ten years previously and was now 'living wt another woman as her husband & had several children'.⁷¹ That Mary was aware of her estranged husband's whereabouts is notable: both parties had evidently moved on from the failed marriage. Indeed, it is likely that the desertion would never have come to the notice of the Session were it not for the fact that John was charged with antenuptial fornication. It is probable that Mary was either pregnant or had recently given birth, sparking the interest of the Session into the date of their marriage. The case was returned again to the Presbytery for consideration in May 1787, which decided that 'after some conversation' to admit the marriage as 'valid' and rebuke John for the scandal of antenuptial fornication.⁷² In this case, the previous marriage was overlooked.

Desertion

While some couples did agree to separate and live apart, many others were unwilling victims of desertion. Scattered throughout the minutes of the Presbyterian church courts are instances of men and women whose partners 'went off' or 'eloped' from them shortly after contracting marriage. A number of such cases appear in the minute book of the First Dromara Kirk-Session, county Down: in October 1794, Elizabeth Gleny complained that her husband 'went off and left her' after they married; in April 1796, Elizabeth Adams expressed her sorrow for marrying irregularly and 'promis'd if her husband came home to her' she would be regularly married; and in April 1800, Elizabeth Walker appeared and acknowledged her irregular marriage, 'her Husband being eloped from her'.⁷³

Many cases of desertion came to the notice of the Session precisely because women and men wanted to remarry. While civil law permitted individuals to remarry if their partners were missing for seven years or more, in reality the cases that came before the church courts were more complicated.⁷⁴ For example, in October 1805, the Presbytery of Monaghan considered the case of Jane Beatty, who 'wish[ed] to know the propriety & lawfulness of her entering into the married state'.⁷⁵ Jane's husband had deserted her five years previously – two years short of the legal minimum.⁷⁶ However, her case was complicated by the fact that her estranged husband had 'got himself proclaimed in church under a fictitious name & was married to another woman'.⁷⁷ If Jane's account was true, not only was her husband's second marriage bigamous, she would also have been unable to marry. Unfortunately, the outcome of this case is not recorded in the minutes. Jane failed to reappear before the Presbytery and provide further details.⁷⁸

Two years later, in October 1807, a similar case with different complications came before the Presbytery. The Session of Clontibret wrote to the Presbytery for advice on how to deal with Margaret McKeifer, who wanted to know the 'propriety and lawfulness of her entering into the married state'.⁷⁹ The Session explained that Margaret had been married fourteen years previously to a man named Robert Allister, who 'in less than a year after their marriage deserted her without just cause, and took off [with] his sister-in-law Jane McKeifer, with whom he committed adultery & incest'.⁸⁰ Robert had since gone to America, where it was reported he had married for a third time.⁸¹ Margaret certainly had a case for divorce (should she have asked for one) according to Presbyterian guidelines: her husband had wilfully deserted her and committed adultery. Weighing up the merits of the case, the Presbytery ruled that it was 'lawful' for her to marry on account of the 'circumstances' of the application and her 'prudent sober behaviour'.⁸²

New relationships

In cases of long-term desertion, it was not uncommon for individuals to assume that their spouse was deceased and to remarry, only for their estranged partner to return. A fairly detailed example of this can be found in the case of Hugh Gebby, who appeared before the Presbytery of Down in February 1823 to explain the circumstances of his bigamous marriage. Hugh claimed to have married innocently, telling the Presbytery that he was sure his first wife was dead. Hugh, a solider, had been posted 'abroad' in 1805 and his wife was unable to join him. One year later, he received a letter from her, in which she told him she was confined to bed in a London hospital with sickness. This was the last communication Hugh claimed to have had with his wife. Nine years later, in 1815, Hugh arrived back in England and received a letter from his brother in Ireland that stated his wife was 'said & believed' to be dead. He then remarried. Two years later, in 1817, his estranged wife turned up at his house in 'strahtened circumstances' and disappeared again after receiving assistance.⁸³ Taking into consideration the extreme circumstances of the case, the Presbytery looked favourably on Hugh Gebby and decided not to exclude him from communion.

While some couples did take steps to make new relationships 'official' and remarry, many others simply cohabited with a new partner. Those who did so often found themselves called before their local Kirk-Session. As much as the Presbyterian church was concerned to maintain marital bonds, it was just as scrupulous in separating couples they believed were cohabiting bigamously. In March 1721, Templepatrick Session ruled that Andrew McElvan and his wife 'should be parted' after it emerged that her former husband, Archibald, 'who ha[d] been long abroad' returned home.⁸⁴ They further judged that Andrew was guilty of adultery with the woman he considered his wife.⁸⁵ A similar charge was levied against Thomas Halliday of the community of Clarkesbridge in July 1815, when it emerged that the husband of his supposedly widowed wife, Jane Monaghan, was alive and living in Canada. The Presbytery of Monaghan, who oversaw the case, decided that he too was chargeable with adultery.⁸⁶

For many couples, the labelling of their relationships as 'bigamous' or 'illegitimate' must have come as a shock, particularly for those who had been living together for considerable periods of time. Such an example can be found

in the case of John Leech, who was referred to the Presbytery of Route for the sin of 'uncleanness' with Elizabeth Dunsmoor, 'a supposed married Woman'.⁸⁷ John, a 'single man', had 'constantly' cohabited with Elizabeth for ten years without knowing 'whither her husband be dead or alive'.⁸⁸ Whereas John expressed his 'designs to Marry' Elizabeth, the Session told him 'to put her away immediatly & acknowledg his sin of Adultery'.⁸⁹ They further threatened to excommunicate him and declare him as an 'obstinate adulterer' if he refused to comply.⁹⁰ The refusal of the church court to acknowledge the existence of their relationship stood in stark contrast to the lived experience of individuals like John and Elizabeth, who had spent considerable periods of time together.

Other couples endured long battles with the church courts to accept their new relationships. Such an example can be found in the case of John Hovey, who petitioned the Presbytery of Monaghan to admit him to church ordinances for over six years. His case was referred to the Presbytery by the Session of Coronary in May 1804, who had initially barred him from ordinances after he contracted a second marriage. James claimed that his first wife, Fanny Sharp, had 'eloped from him without ... just cause' and that he married again three months later to another woman, to whom he now had six children.⁹¹ The Presbytery were unable to come to a decision and returned the case to Coronary for further investigation. Despite appearing again in September 1804, with the added detail that he and his second wife now had seven children, the case remained unresolved.⁹² Six years later, in 1810, James again petitioned the Presbytery. By this time, he and his second wife had eight children. James told the Presbytery that not only had Fanny Sharp eloped from him, but that she was guilty of adultery and was reported to have gone to America and died.⁹³ Neither this new evidence, nor the fact that James and his second wife had clearly established a stable family unit, was enough to sway the Presbytery. Unable to come to a decision, they again sent the case back to Coronary Session for further investigation.⁹⁴

James Hovey's case is notable for its length. By his last appearance before the Presbytery in 1810, James and his second wife had lived together as a conjugal unit, with their eight children, for at least twelve years. By all accounts, they were a functioning family unit. That they were able to cohabit for this length of time suggests a degree of toleration from their surrounding community. We cannot know for sure what underlay James Hovey's dogged desire for reconciliation, but his repeated efforts to secure it indicates the importance of community membership. While the Presbyterian church had no legal authority over the marriages of its members, many sought its approval and guidance regardless.

Conclusion

As the examples in this article have shown, marital dissolution was an achievable reality for Presbyterian women and men in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland. Whether by mutual agreement, or as unwilling victims of desertion, married couples took active steps to terminate unworkable relationships. While divorce was technically an option for those belonging to the Presbyterian community, it was not undertaken very often. Instead, married couples appear to have held a much more flexible attitude to the breaking of marriage than either their church or state. Such evidence lends further support to the argument of O'Dowd that the depiction of Ireland in this period as a society 'bound by a puritan code of sexual morality' is misleading.⁹⁵ As was the case with the making of marriage, women and men in Presbyterian Ulster negotiated the breaking of marriage according to accepted community values.⁹⁶ In a society where access to formal divorce was restricted on the grounds of wealth, privilege and gender, Presbyterianism's more liberal attitude to marriage dissolution gave its members the confidence to pursue alternative relationships. An examination of the minutes of the Irish Presbyterian church courts therefore



'A husband returns to his wife, the children rush out to greet him and an older woman stands in the doorway'.

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casts fresh light on the history of the breaking and remaking of marriage in Ireland. Indeed, in the absence of a comparable archive for the ecclesiastical courts, Presbyterian minutes offer Irish historians an alternative window into this understudied aspect of Irish social history.

Notes

1. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), MIC1P/37/4/9, Carnmoney Kirk-Session minutes, 30 May 1703.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 8 Jun. 1703.
5. *Ibid.*, 8 Jun. 1703; 23 Jun. 1703; 30 Jun. 1703.
6. *Ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1703.
7. The phrase ‘Divorce Irish Style’ was coined by an article in the *Evening Press* by Joseph Cole in April 1967. See, Diane Urquhart, *Irish Divorce: A History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020), 202; Diane Urquhart, “Divorce Irish Style”: Marriage Dissolution in Ireland, 1850–1950’, in *Law and the Family in Ireland, 1800–1950*, ed. Niamh Howlin and Kevin Costello (London, Palgrave, 2017), 107–24; Deidre McGowan, ‘Class, Criminality and Marriage Breakdown in Post-Independence Ireland’, in *Law and the Family in Ireland, 1800–1950*, ed. Niamh Howlin and Kevin Costello (London, Palgrave, 2017), 125–41.
8. David Fitzpatrick, ‘Divorce and Separation in Modern Irish History’, *Past & Present*, 114 (1987), 174.
9. Exceptions include, Urquhart, *Irish Divorce*, Maria Luddy and Mary O’Dowd, *A History of Marriage in Ireland, 1660–1925* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2020); Mary O’Dowd, ‘Marriage Breakdown in Ireland, 1660–1857’, in *Law and the Family in Ireland, 1800–1950*, ed. Niamh Howlin and Kevin Costello (London, Palgrave, 2017), 7–23; Maria Luddy, ‘Marriage, Sexuality and the Law in Ireland’, in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 344–62; John Bergin, ‘Irish Private Divorce Bills and Acts of the Eighteenth-Century’ in *People, Politics and Power: Essays on Irish History, 1660–1850, in Honour of James I. McGuire*, ed. James Kelly, John McCafferty and Charles Ivar McGrath (Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2009), 94–121.
10. Urquhart, “Divorce Irish Style”, 107–08; Sarah-Anne Buckley, ‘Women, Men and the Family, c.1730–c.1880’, in *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, volume 3, ed. James Kelly (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 251.
11. Luddy, ‘Marriage, Sexuality and the Law’, 349. David Fitzpatrick has noted that in Ireland, the costs of an undefended action exceeded £300, putting it outside of the reach of those lower down the social scale. See, Fitzpatrick, ‘Divorce and Separation’, 175.
12. Luddy, ‘Marriage, Sexuality and the Law’, 349.
13. *Ibid.*, 350.
14. Urquhart, “Divorce Irish Style”, 108.
15. Diane Urquhart, ‘Ireland and the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857’, *Journal of Family History*, 38/3 (2013), 314–15.
16. O’Dowd, ‘Marriage Breakdown’, 7.
17. See, O’Dowd, ‘Marital Breakdown’, 8–12. The records for the medieval diocesan court in Armagh have survived. See, Art Cosgrave, ‘Marriage in Medieval Ireland’, in *Marriage in Ireland*, ed. Art Cosgrave (Dublin, College Press, 1985), 25–50.
18. O’Dowd, ‘Men, Women, Children’, 298.
19. Leanne Calvert, “He Came to Her Bed Pretending Courtship”: Sex, Courtship and the Making of Marriage in Ulster, 1750–1844’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 42/162 (2018), 244–64; Leanne Calvert, “What a Wonderful Change Have I Undergone ... So Altered in Stature, Knowledge & Ideas!”: Apprenticeship, Adolescence and Growing Up in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ulster’, *Irish Economic and Social History*, 45/1 (2018), 70–89; Leanne Calvert, “A More Careful Tender Nurse Cannot Be Than My Dear Husband”: Reassessing the Role of Men in Pregnancy and Childbirth in Ulster, 1780–1832’, *Journal of Family History*, 42/1 (2017), 22–36; Leanne Calvert, “Do Not Forget Your Bit Wife”: Love, Marriage and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in Irish Presbyterian Marriages, c. 1780–1850’, *Women’s History Review*, 26/3 (2017), 433–54; Leanne Calvert, “I am Friends Wt You & Do Entertain No Malice”: Discord, Disputes and Defamation in Irish Presbyterian Church Courts, 1700–1830’, in *Law and Religion in Ireland*, ed. Kevin Costello and Niamh Howlin (London, Palgrave, forthcoming 2020).
20. A.R. Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770–1840* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 4; D.M. MacRaild and Malcolm Smith, ‘Migration and Emigration, 1600–1945’, in *Ulster since 1600: Politics, Economy and Society*, ed. Liam Kennedy and Philip Ollerenshaw (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 141–4; Calvert, “He Came to Her Bed”, 247.
21. S.J. Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dundalk, Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1985), 3.
22. Less than twenty Kirk-Session minute books survive for the eighteenth century. While this may be the result of some communities not practising discipline, it is likely that many Kirk-Session minute books have simply been lost over time.
23. See, J.M. Barkley, *A Short History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Belfast, Presbyterian Church Publications Board, 1963), 83–84.
24. Calvert, “He Came to Her Bed”, 252–53.
25. PRONI, MIC1P/37/4/9, Carnmoney Kirk-Session minutes, 15 Dec. 1705.
26. PRONI, CR3/25/B/2, Cahans Kirk-Session minutes, 27 Mar. 1768.
27. This issue is covered in detail in Calvert, “I am friends wt you”.
28. A.R. Holmes, ‘Community and Discipline in Ulster Presbyterianism, c. 1770–1840’, in *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation*, ed. Kate Copper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge, Boydell, 2005), 272.
29. Andrew Blaikie and Paul Gray, ‘Archives of Abuse and Discontent? Presbyterianism and Sexual Behaviour During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, in *Ireland and Scotland. Order and Disorder, 1600–2000*, ed. R.J. Morris and Liam Kennedy (Edinburgh, John Donald, 2005), 69–70, and discussion in footnote, 257.
30. Holmes, *Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian*, 214; Calvert, “He Came to Her Bed”, 59.
31. Presbyterian Church in Ireland, *The Constitution and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church; with a Directory for the Celebration of Ordinances, and the Performance of Ministerial Duties, Published by the Authority of the General Synod of Ulster* (Belfast, 1825); *The Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter*

catechisms, with the scripture-proofs at large (Glasgow, 1757).

32. *The Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, with the scripture-proofs at large. Together with the sum of saving knowledge ...* (Glasgow, 1757), 133–34. See also O'Dowd, 'Marriage Breakdown', 12.

33. PRONI, CR5/5A/1/2/A, Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery of Ireland, August 1806.

34. *Ibid.*, March 1807.

35. Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, *Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland, 1660–1780* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989), 193. Holmes has noted the existence of three such cases in Ulster, two in the Burgher Presbytery of Upper Tyrone and one in Ballymoney Kirk-Session. See, Holmes, *Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian*, 223.

36. *Confession*, p. 134.

37. *Ibid.*

38. O'Dowd, 'Marriage Breakdown', 12

39. Calvert, '“I am friends wt you & do entertain no malice”'; Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002), 266; Leah Leneman, 'Defamation in Scotland, 1750–1800', *Continuity & Change*, 15/2 (2000), 209–34.

40. PRONI, MIC1P/37/4/9, Carnmoney Kirk-Session minutes, 23 Jun. 1703.

41. *Ibid.*, 7 Dec. 1701; 14 Dec. 1701; 17 Dec. 1701.

42. *Ibid.*, 23 Jun. 1703.

43. PRONI, CR3/1/B/4, Ballymoney Kirk-Session minutes, 9 May 1829.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. PRONI, MIC1P/37/4/9, Carnmoney Kirk-Session minutes, 14 Jul. 1697.

49. *Ibid.* The case does not appear again in the minutes.

50. *Ibid.*, 22 Jul. 1702.

51. *Ibid.*, 19 Aug. 1702.

52. *Ibid.*, 3 Aug. 1698.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, 12 Nov. 1698.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*, 7 Dec. 1698.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, Belfast (hereafter PHSI), 31 Dec. 1701.

59. *Ibid.*, 3 Feb. 1702.

60. *Ibid.*, 7 Apr. 1702; 12 May 1702.

61. *Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1703.

62. *Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1703; 2 Mar. 1703.

63. Katie Barclay, 'Marriage, Sex and the Church of Scotland: Exploring Non-Conformity Amongst the Lower Orders', *Journal of Religious History*, 43/2 (2019), 177–78.

64. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Route, 26 Jul. 1814.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. Luddy, 'Marriage, Sexuality', 347; Calvert, '“He Came to Her Bed”', 260.

69. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Route, 26 Jul. 1814.

70. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Down, 15 Mar. 1786.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, 2 May 1787.

73. PRONI, T1447/1, First Dromara Kirk-Session minutes, 3 Oct. 1794; 22 Apr. 1796; 25 Apr. 1800. These cases are also discussed in Calvert, '“He Came to Her Bed”', 262.

74. O'Dowd, 'Marriage Breakdown', 13.

75. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Monaghan, 8 Oct. 1805.

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1807.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Monaghan, 18 Feb. 1823.

84. PRONI, CR3/12/B/1, Templepatrick Kirk-Session minutes, 19 Mar. 1721.

85. *Ibid.*

86. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Monaghan, 4 Jul. 1815; 29 Aug. 1815.

87. PHSI, Minutes of Route Presbytery, 18 Jul. 1704.

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

91. PHSI, Minutes of the Presbytery of Monaghan, 29 May 1804.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*, 4 September 1810.

94. Hovey's case does not appear again in the minutes. Unfortunately, the outcome is not known.

95. O'Dowd, 'Marriage Breakdown', 23.

96. Calvert, '“He Came to Her Bed”', 263.

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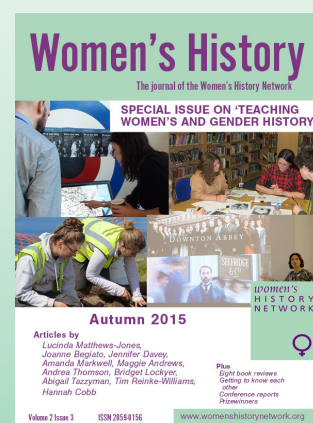
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'The supplementary spinster'? Unmarried women in the Irish ascendancy family, 1860-1926

Maeve O'Riordan

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The ascendancy class in Ireland and Britain traditionally derived their wealth from land rental and inheritance, while male family members held positions of power across society. This power was held by a relatively small number of families with little dramatic change over centuries before the turn of the twentieth century when land ownership patterns began to change. Towards the end of the nineteenth century in Ireland, their power and wealth was waning as a result of economic challenges, the Land War, and changing political priorities. Marriages within this class were always a means of cementing connections between families of similar backgrounds. The property which a woman brought with her upon marriage could bolster the finances of her marital family. The children she provided were the next generation of powerholders. Unmarried women within this class could not fulfil these duties, but their families still made multiple demands of their energy. Unmarried daughters of the ascendancy class might be devoted to a professional, philanthropic or artistic calling, but their families were still an important bind on their time. Familial duty was expected of all members regardless of marital status. Mabel O'Brien, who had married into an ascendancy family, recognised this need in herself and her wider family. In a draft pamphlet entitled 'The supplementary spinster', she relayed a memory of an unmarried woman at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, who as she

hastened to the assistance of some related family which had been visited by an epidemic, or a new baby, or any one of the thousand natural shocks that married life is heir to [commented] "Married people are a feeble folk and they make their dwelling among the spinsters".¹

The impermanent nature of unmarried women's living arrangements was a crutch of care, which was used to prop up the 'main' stem of the family, who continued to live in the family seat generation after generation. Pat Jalland observed that 'thousands of spinsters cared for aging parents until their deaths; they acted as surrogate wives to bachelor brothers ... they became resident maiden aunts, permanent childminders and nurses, and unpaid housekeepers'.² However, this crutch was rarely acknowledged. Gertrude Foster wrote to her sister Ethel O'Brien in 1896 criticising their aunt Louisa who she described as becoming an 'old maid', writing that Louisa was 'in the most frightfully discontented mood', complaining that she was "loosing[sic] her soul and intellect" in living with another 'meek' aunt, Lily.³ Louisa was clearly unhappy, but there was little sympathy given her by her niece. This letter reveals something of the challenge facing unmarried women within the family; they would never complete their assumed God-given duty of providing a house with legitimate heirs, and so, they could not reap the social rewards associated with motherhood within marriage.

A significant minority of women who came of age during the late nineteenth century did not marry. Some like

Eva Gore-Booth who were not interested in men succeeded in setting up households with their lifelong female partners.⁴ Others remained unmarried for a host of reasons; perhaps they had no interest in the men who proposed to them, perhaps they devoted their adulthood to the needs of aging parents, perhaps they did not receive offers of marriage at the right time, perhaps they were deemed unmarriageable owing to health or other matters, perhaps they were deemed less attractive than wealthier women who could provide greater financial solvency to a potential spouse, or perhaps they simply preferred to live without a marriage partner. In one study of thousands of women from professional families in Dundee, Scotland, during the Victorian period, at least half of traceable daughters remained unmarried; in one family, across the generations, it was found that only one in four daughters married.⁵ Jalland was convinced, based on her study of political families in Britain, that the pattern of one spinster per family was 'the consequence of parental pressure'.⁶ In a past where unmarried women were not only common, but almost equal in number to their married sisters, the concept of the family cannot be limited to those living under one roof creating children together; it is as important to look at horizontal and diagonal, and indeed step-ties as it is vertical family relationships.⁷ In looking at women before marriage, or throughout their adult life if they never married, this article continues to challenge the assumption 'that a woman's life was of little importance until [or unless] she married'.⁸

Amy Froide's ground-breaking work re-orientated the landscape of research on unmarried women in the early-modern period and many of her findings can be applied, or interrogated, for later periods and indeed beyond her middle-class focus. Throughout this article, when referring to women as 'unmarried' I am referring both to Amy Froide's category of 'never-married' women as well as 'not-yet-married' women who would marry at a later stage in their lives. Historians of the ascendancy in Britain and Ireland increasingly examine unmarried women and do not dismiss them once they aged out of the not-yet-married bracket to be discussed in terms of courtship and their efforts to become wives. A number of studies on familial or political networks in Britain have used biographies of individual women to highlight the complex challenges, and some opportunities afforded to elite unmarried women.⁹ In the Irish context, Deborah Wilson's work has been central to understanding how unmarried women managed their property and income, demonstrating that in terms of financing, unmarried women might play an invaluable role within their family network.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Rachel Murphy's microhistorical analysis followed the life of one daughter of the class from not-yet to never-married, highlighting her social challenges along the way.¹¹

Family history within this social bracket was tied psychologically to property; the family seat defined the family, and the family seat was preferably in the ownership of a male, ideally married and reproducing, family member. The system

of primogeniture, bequeathing land and power to legitimate male heirs, did not have an overt purpose for unmarried or 'non-productive' women. Women, or indeed men, who did not marry were rarely remembered in family histories and memoirs.¹² Genealogical records published to chronicle elite families always followed the family seat and title, with unmarried daughters less likely to have their dates of birth, death, or even their names recorded.¹³ This reductive view of women as heir-makers can be found in John Bateman's seminal publication listing the large landowners of Britain and Ireland who held estates worth £3,000 or more per annum in 1878.¹⁴ Disregarding the fact that some of these landowners were women,¹⁵ he described the challenges and expenses facing 'John Steadyman of Wearywork Hall, Cidershire, b. 1825, s[ucceeded] 1860, m. 1851', a 'typical [£]5,000 a year [income] squire'.¹⁶ This fictional landlord lived in England, but his Irish cousin's family responsibilities would have been no different. The estate income supported 'His late father's two maiden sisters, Jane and Esther Steadyman, who each have a rent charge of £180 per annum. (N.B. Both these old ladies seem immortal)', his mother, Lady Louisa Steadyman was entitled to a rent charge of £700 per annum and 'his sisters, Louisa, Marian, and Eva (all plain)' also received payments of £150 annually. If these sisters were two, four and six years younger than their brother, the youngest of them would be forty-five. The contemporary reader would have assumed that they would never marry and that Steadyman would be making these payments for some time. Only 'his one pretty sister' had married. Her marriage had forced him to take out a mortgage to ensure that she was suitably 'paid-off'. The interest on this mortgage amounted to £150 per annum. The landowner's brother had emigrated, but still asked for about £50 per annum.¹⁷

This summary reveals many assumptions about both married and unmarried women. The commentary on whether his sisters were 'plain' or 'pretty' suggested that it was purely physical appearance which determined whether a female member of the gentry would marry – those who did not marry had no choice in the matter; they were just too 'plain'. However, if we look at the marriage of his parents, it is clear that his untitled father saw something other than looks in marrying the titled 'Lady' Steadyman. His mother was born into a family of higher social status than his father. Such a marriage was a common means for men to bolster the status or income of their estate. The fictional account also inferred that a woman who did not marry could do nothing for the good of the estate – the squire's aunts' 'immortal' qualities were not deemed their best feature. Even those women who did marry, according to Bateman, became burdens once their eldest son inherited. Bateman made these generalisations to highlight the cost of running an estate, suggesting that any landowner could expect to financially support several 'plain' women. The pin money due to his own wife was not listed among these charges suggesting that her living costs fell within the category of his own personal survival (or that she had the good grace to die after providing the estate with a marriage settlement and an heir). Presenting genteel unmarried women as nothing more than unwanted financial drains on their natal families was a reductive and indeed inaccurate assumption about a class where unearned income and inherited wealth was the aspiration for both sexes.

Bateman was writing in a time when the unproductive genteel unmarried woman was criticised across all cultural

expressions. In George Moore's Irish novel, *A Drama in Muslin*, the character of Mrs Gould warned Alice not to turn out like Lord Roshill's seven daughters who all wanted 'to marry people in their father's position', and as a result married no one.

My advice to young girls is that they should be glad to have those who will take them. If they can't make a good marriage let them make a bad marriage; for, believe me, it is far better to be minding your own children than your sister's or your brother's children.¹⁸

Mrs Gould's advice suggested that there could be no positives for women who did not want to marry. Women's perceived purpose was reduced to their biological function of producing heirs. In this and many other popular literary representations of unmarried women (e.g. Sonya Rostova in *War and Peace*, Mary Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*), the unmarried female characters were heterosexual in the modern sense; they wanted to marry men, but owing to their own failure, misplaced affection or over-reaching hopes, they failed. An article published in the *Irish Monthly* in 1885 by 'Mrs Frank Petrill' advised women to accept that they were never-married as soon as possible, and to accept that as such their life would not be 'bright or brilliant'. She sought to confine unmarried women to subservient roles advising them to make themselves as 'useful and agreeable as possible'.¹⁹ While entire families of unmarried heiresses like Moore's fictional Rosshill daughters (who were probably based on the Ladies Sarah, Jane, Elizabeth and Charlotte Anne Boyle who co-inherited their father the Earl of Cork's vast estate) were rare, the numbers who remained unmarried were not insignificant. Mrs Gould's advice suggested that women had some choice, with at least the option of making a 'bad marriage', but Petrill's article held a more essentialist view of the unmarried, as though they were marked out for the entirety of their adult lives.²⁰

The average age for a sample of daughters of Munster landlords to marry during the period 1860-1914 was twenty-five.²¹ So it was not unusual for a woman to be unmarried for much of her twenties and to take on caring roles associated with never-married women before marrying and completing the role of wife and mother. In 1923, thirty-nine year-old May Grehan, daughter of a Catholic landowner in North Cork, who had acted as her father Stephen's companion throughout his twenty-three-year widowhood, married. This was not a 'bad marriage', May was marrying a suitable man of similar background, but Stephen still recorded his shock in his diary: 'Fancy May at her age'.²² May's younger brother jokingly referred to her in 1919 as 'the aged one' in the family.²³ There is no record as to why May Grehan chose to marry, or why she had not married before then. May had close bonds with her wide network of sisters, aunts and cousins, and was the editor of a family journal which allowed them to keep up to date with their comings and goings.²⁴ Within that family were plenty examples of women who engaged in sports and who travelled extensively without marrying.²⁵ Her younger sisters had married in 1910, 1916 and 1922; the last of her sisters marrying might have made living at home a little lonelier. As the only woman (of her own class) living with her father at their home of Clonmeen, she could be expected to take on certain housekeeping and hosting duties. Whether May married or not, her period as the woman of the house could be expected to end. Her brother, the heir, was expected to marry (he did in

1925) and with the arrival of his wife, May would lose much of her status at Clonmeen. Through marriage, she could retain the right to order a staff of servants.

Kathrin Levitan has noted that the census played a part in increasing moral panic around elite women who refused to partake of marriage, and to produce legitimate children (just as working-class women were being criticised for having children outside of marriage).²⁶ From 1851, it was possible to determine the numbers of unmarried adults, of both sexes, for the first time.²⁷ The 1851 census recorded 2.5 million unmarried women, and further that there were 500,000 more women than men in a total population of 20 million people in Britain.²⁸ On census night in Ireland in 1851 there were 122,601 more females than males. By 1901 the sexes were equal. The below table shows that in the period between the Great Famine and Independence, any dramatic excess of women in Ireland was entirely imaginary.²⁹

Despite the numerical balance, the phenomenon of the unmarried continued. People in Ireland typically married late or not at all, and Ireland had one of the lowest marriage rates in the world between 1870 and 1970.³¹ Nearly forty-five per cent of women aged twenty-five to thirty-five recorded in urban District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) in the 1901 census had never been married.³² Ten years later, thirty per cent of the women aged thirty-five to forty-five in the same DEDs were still unmarried, and might be categorised as never-married. In 1901, twenty-two per cent of women aged forty-five to fifty-five were unmarried, and amongst older women in the sixty-five to seventy five, and eighty-five to ninety-five age brackets the figure hovered around twenty per cent. In rural Ireland the proportion of unmarried women was even higher, with fifty-four per cent of women aged twenty-five to thirty-five, twenty-five per cent of forty-five to fifty-five-year-olds, and again around twenty per cent of older women unmarried. Ten years later, thirty-five per cent of women aged thirty-five to forty-five were still unmarried in rural electoral districts.³³

Head of household status in the census record can be interpreted as a mark of independence – both financial and personal.³⁴ In urban areas, just eight per cent of unmarried women aged twenty-five to thirty-five were heads of household.³⁵ Across Ireland in 1901, 94,884 unmarried women aged twenty-five to thirty-five lived with their parents. As women got older and parents naturally died, their unmarried daughters did not necessarily live alone. These women were within the age bracket where they might be defined as ‘not-yet-married’ and in need of the supervision of a relative rather than as ‘old maids’ who could live unfettered by social constraints. The proportion of unmarried women who were

heads of household increased as women got older, peaking in the sixty-five to seventy-five age group where thirty per cent of unmarried women reported themselves as being heads of household. However, unmarried women as heads of household were rare in real terms. Unmarried women made up just fifteen per cent of total female heads of households in that age bracket. Unmarried women could not live on their own with the same freedom as their widowed sisters, or when living with siblings or other relatives, were less likely to hold the status of ‘head of household’.

At the very pinnacle of Irish society, seven unmarried women were recorded in the 1901 census with the occupation ‘peer’s daughter’. All but one lived with her parents. Georgiana Mary Vesey lived with her married brother, Viscount de Vesci, his family and their nine servants. It must be assumed that her inherited wealth would have permitted her to rent a home if she had wished to, and her and her society’s sense of propriety allowed it. Of ninety-six unmarried women aged seventeen or over who returned their occupation as ‘lady’ in the 1901 census for County Cork, forty-nine lived with a parent, twenty lived with a sibling, nine were head of the family, four were in the home of their niece or nephew, two were cousins of the head of family, while thirteen were visitors, seven were boarders, one a niece and one described as ‘no relation’ of the head of family. Of the eight unmarried County Cork ‘ladies’ who were returned as head of their families, the youngest was forty-nine. A similar pattern can be found among a sample of 99 unmarried women returned as ‘ladies’ in Dublin for the same year. Almost half were living with their parent or sibling. Just thirteen were recorded as heads of household. In Dublin there were more options to live away from one’s family, sixteen were living as boarders or paying guests. A sample of one hundred unmarried women across Ireland whose relationship to head of household was defined as ‘other’ in 1901 included, step-daughters, lodgers, sisters-in-law, friends, visitors, cousins and adopted relatives.³⁶ The ‘typical’ female role of wife and mother cannot begin to cover the range of female experience in the past. As Earner-Byrne has observed, ‘the Irish were creative in forming surrogate families through a network of celibate siblings, uncles, aunts, and fosterage’.³⁷ For each individual, the family structure in which they lived was their lived reality.

From this sample, it is clear to see that adult unmarried women from middle- and upper-class families were most likely to live with an immediate natal relative in 1901. This could be read as a sign that women were dependent on their family for a home. However, the fact that these unmarried women lived with their families does not illuminate the nature of that relationship. While some people might feel trapped in the

Year	Total Pop.	Males	Females	No. of females per 100 males
1851	5,111,557	2,494,478	2,617,079	105
1861	4,402,111	2,169,042	2,233,069	103
1871	4,053,187	1,992,468	2,060,719	103
1881	3,870,020	1,912,438	1,957,582	102
1891	3,468,694	1,728,601	1,740,093	101
1901	3,221,823	1,610,085	1,611,738	100
1911	3,139,688	1,589,509	1,550,179	98
1926	2,971,992	1,506,889	1,465,103	97

Table 1 Census data for Ireland from 1851 to 1926.³⁰



*Nelly O'Brien with her brother Dermot, c. 1875.
Private ownership. Copyright Anthony O'Brien.*

home of their birth, others might have enjoyed the freedom of living with people who they knew all of their lives. Lady Ina White, who grew up in Bantry house, reminisced about the time before her marriage, when she lived in her childhood home with her as-yet unmarried brother.³⁸ In Bantry House she was able to be mistress in a way that she never achieved during her unhappy marriage to an extremely wealthy man. Ellen Lucy (Nelly) O'Brien³⁹ was eager to live with her brother when they were both unmarried and living in Dublin.⁴⁰ Maud Gonne and Mary Spring-Rice both seem to have derived pleasure from the role of companion to their father during their young unmarried days.⁴¹ Wifehood could bring its own disabilities in terms of physical freedom, access to property and the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth.⁴² There could be some benefits for women in moving to the category of 'old maid'. By ceasing to be categorised as 'marriageable', travel and movement, as well as freedom of association, could become more liberated. Older unmarried women could gain independence through invisibility.

The nature of the household system for collecting census data could hide the real numbers of women who operated as one-person economically-independent households moving between relatives and friends as they wished.⁴³ The census also hides those women of landed-birth who established careers and left their families behind. Nelly O'Brien was not recorded as a 'lady' in the census, but instead claimed for herself the profession of 'Artist Painting' in 1901. Her father was a county

Limerick landlord, her grandfather was the Young Islander William Smith O'Brien, her maternal uncle was the Baron Monteagle and her paternal second-cousin was the Baron Inchiquin. At the time of the census recording she lived alone in a flat on Mount Street Lower, Dublin. The house, which was described as a tenement contained three distinct households: a post-office clerk and his wife, three sons, a boarder and a visitor in five rooms; HESSIE PALMER, fifty-eight 'living on income', in a four room flat; and the thirty-six-year-old Nelly with her two-room home.⁴⁴ Nelly lived not as an 'old maid' in the sense described by Mrs Petrill, devoting all of her time to being useful, but as a woman who had complete freedom of movement. In her own words she spent her time 'gadding round a good deal as usual & enjoying it', as she got 'frightfully sick of my own company if I have more than 2 or 3 evenings running by myself'.⁴⁵ There was no fear there. She described musical evenings, lectures, concerts and parties, even one where a friend returned on the roof of a taxi.⁴⁶ She had control over her movement, her relationships, and her opinions. She worked at her painting 'til lunch & get a good outing in the pm' followed by a night modelling class she attended 'conscientiously 3 or 4 times a week'.⁴⁷ Her afternoon outings might entail a cycle to the country to collect gorse and cowslips.⁴⁸ In 1898, she was giving 'elementary' art lessons three nights per week.⁴⁹ Though at times of bereavement she preferred to be with family, and on one occasion 'wired' to her favoured aunt to arrange a visit.⁵⁰

Nelly's independence was facilitated by her family circumstances. In her teens, Nelly gained a stepmother who she referred to as Aunt Julia and soon much younger half-siblings. With a young and wealthy wife for her widowed father, there was no foreseeable need for Nelly to act as his carer or companion. Nelly was entitled to a sum of £1,500 through her parents' marriage settlement. Her father transferred this inheritance to her in 1896 when she was thirty-two (perhaps signifying her perceived transition from not-yet to never-married).⁵¹ The first evidence of her having her own headed notepaper printed up with her address dates from this year; she had established her own household, and paid rent on her own lodgings.⁵² Still her income was less than she would have liked, and her income from her art was modest; her landlady commissioned a portrait of her son, to be offset against her heating and potatoes for the winter.⁵³ In 1899 she rented out one of her two rooms, slept in her studio and ate in the houses of friends.⁵⁴

Nelly's independence and artistic career were hard won after many years of snatching time to work between family commitments. In 1890, at the age of twenty-six, she illustrated the numerous challenges for any young woman of this class wishing to embark on an artistic career, as well as the positive role of generous relations:

I am in the seventh heaven of bliss! What do you think has happened? I have got Uncle Arthur to let me have the billiard room in the boathouse to paint in, & I have just carted down all my things & regularly settled it up as a studio you can't think how glorious I feel & I was simply getting into a despair for what between the measles, bad weather, no place to paint ... with any comfort & having my things hustled about from one room to another, 2 hours Latin [teaching] every 2nd day with the boys in Father's absence, visitors, A[unt] M read to, & domestic life generally I had



*Nelly O'Brien at her easel.
Private ownership. Copyright Anthony O'Brien.*

hardly got anything done. ... Now this seems like the beginning of a new era & I ought to get something done even if it is only flower studies for I can bring down great armfuls & make as much mess as I like & leave them there as long as I want. ... Uncle Arthur is quite keen about the studio & I have his men & a boy bustling about in my services putting up shelves bringing down screens, easels, pots etc! There is a very good light, charming views from the windows & though of course the billiard table takes up a good deal of room there is quite enough space at the further end I hope you will sympathise with me. My only fear is that I will neglect my duties in the delight of having these new facilities for painting.⁵⁵

It was not the beginning of a new era. This studio was not her own and other family members were less facilitatory. Her frustration at her mobile lifestyle sometimes revealed itself. In 1894, she wrote 'I am sick of carting round my things'.⁵⁶ Before 1896 Nelly was living in the boundary between not-yet and never-married; the chaperoned and the chaperone. In 1887 (aged twenty-three) she was forbidden by her father to act as a teacher and companion for a teenage boy travelling through Europe on the grounds of propriety.⁵⁷ As she entered her forties and the new century, Nelly had no qualms about travelling alone. In 1907, a letter from Viareggio in Italy told her brother that she had taken a studio for herself there at three

francs per week.⁵⁸ Nelly had an important model of unmarried female independence in her family through her paternal aunt, the activist, Charlotte Grace O'Brien.

Charlotte managed to fulfil her familial caring duties without denying her other interests and her independent status. She had taken on the expected roles of an unmarried woman in nursing her widowed father, and then acting as surrogate mother to her widowed brother's children, Nelly, Dermot and Mary.⁵⁹ In line with her deceased sister-in-law's wishes, Charlotte took on the position, both physically (in the best bedroom in the house) and symbolically, which was generally reserved for the landlord's wife. Stephen Gwynn, Charlotte's nephew, wrote a brief biography on her in the year of her death. He reduced her important work for the rights of Irish unmarried female emigrants as a symptom of her 'need to be needed'.⁶⁰ When her brother's children no longer needed her as a 'mother who was no mother', with the arrival of their stepmother in 1880, for the first time 'at the age of thirty-four, she had to shape her own life', ignoring the fact that she had already embarked on a literary career publishing poetry and a novel.⁶¹ Charlotte directly contradicted the view that she only completed her independent work as a result of an absence. To her, this independence was framed positively. In an article that she wrote, 'The Making of our Home', Charlotte recalled her desire to build her own house: 'no sooner did I, at twenty-one, begin to handle my own money than a vision of a cottage at Foynes, my own building and my own forming, began to hover before me'.⁶² This decision suggests that Charlotte expected that she would never marry, did not wish to marry or at least did not wish to be reliant on male family members for a secure home long before she might be termed an 'old maid'. Charlotte justified her decision to establish her own household as an act of 'real use and charity' in 'maintaining honest labour' and providing a purpose for the 'unemployed and uncultivated' in the locality.⁶³ Such arguments were long used to justify the position of male landlords and grand estates.⁶⁴ Throughout his description of Charlotte, Stephen contrasted her unfavourably with his own mother, Lucy. Where Lucy was neat, Charlotte was 'a big, large boned-woman, rough in her movements – could not enter a room without knocking things down, and as a girl had been the despair of those who wished her to tie her shoe-laces'.⁶⁵ Like Bateman's fictional Steadyman family, physical qualities were an implied determining factor in the marriageability of the two sisters. Nelly O'Brien inherited Ardanoir from her aunt Charlotte Grace O'Brien on her death in 1909, allowing Nelly a secure living space and garden in County Limerick, or a source of rental income if she preferred to remain in the cultural centre of Dublin near to valued friends and connections.⁶⁶ There were times in her adult life when both were more appealing.

Being unmarried did not mean that Nelly could not join in family discussions on marriage attraction.⁶⁷ She was similar to another artistic landed daughter, Edith Somerville, in this regard.⁶⁸ Nelly saw the funny side when she heard a rumour that she was engaged to her cousin Lucius Gwynn, writing to congratulate him on his 'discernment'.⁶⁹ Still Nelly was trapped by conventions of her time and class, even within the revolutionary and artistic circles in which she moved and feared financial and social retribution from her parents if she formed an unconventional relationship.⁷⁰ She was close to the artist Walter Osborne, who was friends with her brother Dermot and cousin Stephen Gwynn (who he painted in 1885).⁷¹

Osborne painted a pastel study of Nelly which was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1893, but remained in her ownership along with *Greystones*, a portrait of her aunt, *Miss Charlotte Grace O'Brien and her dog* and a painting of Charlotte's, and later her, house, *Ardanoir, Foynes*.⁷² Her feelings for Osborne made her feel 'horribly lonesome' when he went to England and were known by some of her more permissive relatives, and he was commissioned to paint many of them.⁷³ Sadly, Osborne died of pneumonia in 1903 at the age of forty-three.⁷⁴ Nelly loaned three paintings to his posthumous exhibition. It is impossible to know whether they would have married, but they had not done so in over a decade-long acquaintance. In 1894 Nelly revealed the difficulty for an unmarried woman in balancing her own desire with parental fealty, and economic dependence, telling her brother;

[I] have been giving in to it to an extent which would horrify the parents I believe if they only knew. Not that I want to conceal anything from them but they are so anxious minded & rigid in some ways they might think he wasn't behaving honourably because he hasn't got a secure income or something of that kind & might cut off the supplies so that I couldn't come up here. ... Indeed I am old enough – 30 next month isn't it frightful the way time is passing.⁷⁵

On the 'dismal occasion' of her thirtieth birthday, she wrote that she felt 'very low' about her relationship with Osborne.⁷⁶ She believed that it 'was quite impossible to speak out' to her parents. The result of her silence was guilt and the feeling that she was behaving 'horridly' towards them.⁷⁷ The relationship was ongoing in some form in 1901 and they would spend time painting in each other's studios.⁷⁸ In the wedding photo of Nelly's brother and long-term confidante Dermot to her friend, Mabel Smyly, in 1902, Nelly stood behind the couple as bridesmaid, beside Walter Osborne, who was best man. Her parents were in Alassio, Italy,⁷⁹ so it is not clear if she ever made a clean-breast of her relationship.

Mabel Smyly, daughter of the renowned doctor Sir Philip Smyly was thirty-two when she married Nelly's brother

and had started to take on the characteristics of the 'social mother'; devoting much of her time to charitable activities in her native Dublin.⁸⁰ She was also actively interested in painting, literature and translations.⁸¹ Her experience as an unmarried woman in her thirties may explain why she was conscious of the demands she was placing on her unmarried relatives when she became a wife. When depending on Nelly in the later stages of pregnancy with her second child she wrote:

I am going to write to Nelly and get her to come on Tuesday. ... It is rather a come-down for me to have become the married woman who makes the spinsters her prey. I always vowed that I would be proudly independent of sisters and sisters-in-law and lone female friends but there seems to be no help for it, and I don't think Nelly will feel it an infliction to come here for a bit.⁸²

Mabel was rarely at home alone (with the servants) without Nelly, or another unmarried woman, Evelyn, while Dermot travelled to complete artistic projects. While she advised Dermot to stay focussed on his commissions, she did not perceive of her sister-in-law as having an artistic career worthy of the same respect. Married couples relied on their unmarried sisters to act as companions and carers for wives in the later stages of pregnancy and early motherhood, freeing husbands to be away from home for long periods. In 'The Supplemental Spinster' Mabel O'Brien reflected on unmarried women and their sometimes difficult position in relation to their birth families writing,

All young women were supposed to be candidates for matrimony ... That any girl should wish to be independent and live her own life was unbelievable and absurd. 'Wait till Mr Right comes' said the kindly elders with a smile; and if 'Mr Right' delayed his coming or did not come at all, the unmarried woman was looked upon as a failure, she had missed her only chance of ceasing to be supplementary. Either she had loved and lost, which was tragic; or she had never loved, or been loved, which was humiliating.⁸³



Wedding party of Dermot and Mabel O'Brien (née Smyly), 1903.

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Mabel's article criticised the demands placed on unmarried women and yet in her own life, she continued to make those demands. Unmarried women were central to the system of care used by ascendancy families and were anything but supplemental. The unmarried woman was essential in filling the gaps provided by illness or death. While only wives could provide heirs, their sisters and daughters were expected to manage the house, organise children, and act as secretaries and companions to married members of the family. Unmarried women were expected to be just as devoted as wives to the demands of family with little thought spared for their outside interests. Both Nelly and Charlotte Grace O'Brien had extensive interests outside their family which have not been discussed in detail here – Nelly was an artist and Gaelic-League activist, and Charlotte Grace was an activist and author. Yet, within their families, women who were unmarried were susceptible to reductive assumptions based on cultural norms which equated women's worth with their marital status.

Notes

1. Mabel O'Brien, 'The supplementary spinster' [ND, mid twentieth-century], National Library of Ireland, Cahermoyle Collection, NLI/MS/36/829.
2. P. Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), 254.
3. Gertrude Foster to Ethel O'Brien, 21 Jan. 1896, Inchiquin Collection, NLI/MS/45, 503.
4. M. McAuliffe, *Margaret Skinnider* (Dublin, UCD Press, 2020); S. Tiernan, *Eva Gore-Booth: An image of such politics* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012).
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48. Ibid., 16 May [N.D.], NLI/MS/36/799/2.
49. Ibid., 27 Mar. 1898, NLI/MS/36/799/2.
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59. S. Gwynn, *Charlotte Grace O'Brien; Selections from her Writings and Correspondence with a Memoir by Stephen Gwynn* ([Dublin, 1909] Charleston, S.C., 2012), 32, 35-6.
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61. Ibid., 43.
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Charlotte Grace O'Brien, 'The Making of our Home', first published in *Irish Gardener*, reproduced in Gwynn, *Charlotte Grace O'Brien*, 219.
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70. R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, Allen Lane, 2014), 124-26, 129.
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82. Mabel O'Brien to Dermot O'Brien, 10 July 1904, NLI/MS/36,699/8.
83. Mabel O'Brien, 'Supplementary spinster', n.d. c.1940, NLI/MS/36, 829.

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'There's [al]most always a cause', madness and/or a mother complex: a Jungian reading of selected George Egerton stories

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Introduction

This article provides a feminist rereading of two short stories by George Egerton and applies elements of both Freudian and Jungian analytical theories. Egerton, whose real name was Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright, was an Irish fiction writer of novels, short stories, and plays from 1893-1925. These stories primarily depict the complicated and varied domestic experience of women of the *fin de siècle*, with stories sometimes taking place in Ireland. While this project draws upon a Freudian understanding of hysteria in women it primarily engages with Jungian mother complex theories, specifically the negative psychological impact of biological mother-daughter relationships. By conducting a psychoanalytic reading of the selected texts, I argue that Egerton's stories suggest that hysteria is not solely produced by sexuality but can be produced by negative experiences of motherhood or mothering. Furthermore, I argue that the women represented are aware of this aetiology.

While this article provides a feminist reading of Egerton's texts, the use of Freudian and Jungian analysis means that there are of course aspects of the methodology to contend with. Though it is important to consider Freud and Jung within the context of their time – a period which coincided with the composition of the selected Egerton texts – psychoanalytic theory is useful for an alternative reading of fiction since it helps to explore the impact of patriarchal society on women's mental health as represented in the selected fiction. As explained by Charles Bernheimer, while the *fin de siècle* was a time of growing social unrest, those who could not partake in protests and reform efforts for women instead 'developed unconscious defensive strategies whereby they disavowed the intense anger and aggressive impulses for which the culture gave them no outlet'.¹ In his biography of Sigmund Freud, Paul Ferris discusses the backlash of both contemporary and modern-day feminist critics of psychoanalysis whose primary contention was, and still is, that Freud's theories exacerbated the situation for women since his theories suggested women were universally sex-driven and thus unfit to govern themselves.² Indeed, the founder of psychoanalysis and his followers did nothing to help their case. As Ferris explains, the tendency was – and still can be – to respond 'to hostility by deciding that only the converted were capable of understanding the system'.³ This article, however, focuses on aspects of psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology that, considered in conjunction with the varying perspectives of the woman characters, provide an enlightened revised reading which demonstrates the extent to which contemporary women were aware of the causes and cures of their psychological disorder.

This article focuses on two short stories: 'Wedlock' from the *Discords* (1894) collection and 'Oony' from the *Symphonies* (1897) collection.⁴ In conjunction with Sigmund Freud's teachings on hysteria and Carl Jung's theory of the mother

complex, this paper ultimately argues that the fiction represents the potentially dangerous psychological experiences of both mother and daughter characters who are forced into or are victims of enforced motherhood.⁵ It also explores the mental impact on characters who are denied the opportunity for a biological mother-daughter relationship. By utilising feminist psychoanalytic theory and acknowledging the historical and cultural context depicted, Egerton's texts suggest that *fin de siècle* women had a significant understanding of their mental health which was not universally conducive with a sexual aetiology. Thus, Egerton's stories distinguish the represented experiences as dependent upon the individual, departing then from contemporary society's 'established prescriptions of what [women] *should* have experienced'.⁶

Why Egerton and psychoanalysis?

Egerton's narratives proved contentious amongst many of her contemporary critics due to their overt representations of female sexuality in a period which deemed such topics as dangerously provocative. Consequently, Egerton was associated with the New Woman movement, a nineteenth-century ideal which inspired feminist literature, art and calls for political reform. For Egerton, the comparison was a source of exasperation, evidenced in a letter dated 1900, wherein she wrote, 'I am embarrassed at the outset by the term "New Woman" ... I have never met one – never written about one. My women were all eternally feminine – old as Eve'.⁷ As discussed in this article, Egerton's personal view of motherhood as women's greatest contribution to the world is noteworthy when considering the negative psychological experiences represented in the selected texts. This appreciation of motherhood was largely inspired by the works of the German philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche who, it is prudent to acknowledge, was also admired by Sigmund Freud.⁸ However, as stated, Egerton's narratives depict negative aspects of motherhood and mothering, both of which are at odds with the *fin de siècle* societal expectation that mothers and daughters ought to be content in their confinement to the domestic sphere. Using both Freudian and Jungian analysis, the psychological impact of both enforced and inhibited biological mother-daughter relationships within the texts can be more intricately discussed.

In 1893, Freud's research into hysteria provided, for the first time, an opportunity for women to vocalise their own experiences of mental health issues which Freud believed stemmed from the repression of unacceptable, and unconscious, urges. The definition of repression, as outlined by Freud, is the 'process (defence mechanism) by which an unacceptable impulse or idea is rendered unconscious' and this act is something the person in question is unaware of.⁹ This conjecture first appeared in the only combined work of Sigmund Freud and his thereafter estranged mentor, Josef

Breuer, which documents their study of hysterical women; conspicuously entitled *Studies on Hysteria*.¹⁰ However, since the ego functions to forcefully prevent unconscious material from surfacing, and the ego is largely influenced by society's views of what is acceptable behaviour, this proved problematic for women of the nineteenth century given the essentialist environment they lived in. As Claire Kehane explains, hysterics tended to suffer from gaps in memory since, when their unconscious material did break through the ego's defences, their conscious memory could be momentarily compromised.¹¹ The case studies then, with Freud as narrator, justified the use of psychoanalysis as a means to 'fill the gaps' in these narratives.¹² However, the societal oppression of women in combination with Freud's sex-centric interpretation of their experience, which he argued was a universal one, makes him an unreliable narrator of the female experience in his case studies. In contrast, I argue, Egerton's narratives provide us with a window into the fictional female psyche and thus allows us to bring psychoanalysis directly to the source.

While this article does not suggest that Egerton's narratives were a purposeful and direct response to Breuer and Freud's *Studies*,¹³ Egerton's texts do represent fictional instances of the double conscious or, as Freud would later title it, the 'unconscious'. Consequently, then, the reader is provided with first-hand fictional accounts of the unconscious processes which allow us to analyse, from a feminist perspective, the depicted cause of the hysterical symptoms. As such, Egerton's narratives subvert Freud's understanding that the male analyst can explore the female unconscious more accurately than the women themselves. In addition, Egerton's stories disprove Freud's argument, at least within her fiction, that the cause of hysteria is sexuality. However, as Egerton's characters provide an alternative understanding of the cause of mental illness for mothers and daughters alike, it is apt then to incorporate in this literary analysis theory by Carl Jung; specifically, the mother complex. After all, despite his misogynistic view of women,¹⁴ Carl Jung's theories on the archetype, particularly of the mother, are useful in the analysis of these stories as they do not confine female neuroses to sexual repression but instead argue alternative aetiology.

Carl Jung: the mother complex

While Jung maintained that the mother complex comprised of both positive and negative effects, this article solely draws upon negative fictionalised representations. The negative theory of the mother complex, as defined by Jung, is a trauma which manifests in a daughter as a direct result of either the undesirable traits of the mother or because the mother expects of the daughter adherence to values which she cannot uphold.¹⁵ This theory was founded upon Jung's proposition of the 'archetype',¹⁶ summarised by Susan Rowland as the 'inborn potential for a certain sort of image ... [which] reflect[s] the conscious experiences of the person as a subject in history, culture and time'.¹⁷ For the selected texts, in particular, the manifestation of the mother complex is represented in Egerton's texts through the exploration of two situations of maternity for the protagonists. The first depicts the psychological disorder experienced due to both enforced and denied motherhood. The second represents the damaging effects on the child that arise due to the physical absence of a biological mother figure who is then displaced by two woefully



'Mrs. William Notman and Annie, Montreal QC. 1864.
By William Notman and licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.5

inadequate maternal figures. It also focuses on the mental impact of the displaced daughter's severed opportunity to become a mother in her own right.

Wedlock: 'she'd be better if she could cry'

The short story 'Wedlock' depicts the disturbing psychological impact of both forced step-mothering and prohibited biological mothering. The unnamed narrator introduces the stay of an unnamed writer in a boarding house managed by Mr and Mrs Jones. Mrs Jones, we are assured, is an alcoholic who is beaten by her husband for this reason and the writer is frank with Mrs Jones about her husband's judgement though not his choice of punishment.¹⁸ However, the reader is assured that 'it is not that [the writer's] sympathies are less keen since she took to writing, but that the habit of analysis is always uppermost'.¹⁹ Indeed, the writer's role in prompting Mrs Jones to reflect on the reasons for her unseemly and often violent behaviour is reminiscent of the dynamic between analyst and analysand in the midst of a psychoanalytic session.²⁰ However, it is important to note some deviation in the facilitation of the cathartic method, more commonly known as the talking cure, in 'Wedlock'.²¹

Firstly, Mrs Jones willingly offers insight into the reason behind her alcoholism, stating that she 'never knew a woman drink for the love of it like men, there's [al]most always a cause'.²² Mrs Jones is not only aware of her condition but more importantly, is aware of the specific reason for her behaviour: the trauma she experiences following forced separation from her biological daughter. Much of this initial interaction between the writer and Mrs Jones focuses on a discussion surrounding the events leading up to and immediately after her marriage. The reader learns that Mrs Jones only agreed to marry Mr Jones on the condition that he help her to retrieve the child she loved but gave birth to out of wedlock. However, as he did

not fulfil this promise Mrs Jones admits that she releases her suppressed anger, born of repressed grief, and transfers it onto her stepchildren in the form of abuse.²³ This self-awareness of the cause and cure, the latter being the reunion of Mrs Jones and her daughter, is something that Freud's analysis would not have acknowledged in women since he universally attributed neuroses to a sexual, unconscious influence. However, Jungian analytical psychology does acknowledge that sexuality is largely unremarkable in terms of its impact on the psyche. Indeed, Jung's elaboration on what he termed the 'Hypertrophy of the Maternal Element' supports this article's reading of the powerful impact the loss of biological motherhood, not sex, has on women such as Mrs Jones. As explained by Jung, from the time some mothers give birth they cling

To [the child], for without them [the mother] has no existence whatsoever. Like Demeter, she compels the gods by her stubborn persistence to grant her the right of possession over her daughter. Her Eros develops exclusively as a maternal relationship while remaining unconscious as a personal one.²⁴

This statement is important in understanding the traumatic implications on the psyche of the mother. Mrs Jones' inability to shower love upon her husband and stepchildren is rooted in the fact that her Eros cannot exist in the conscious if she is separated from her biological child. This Jungian reading explains why Mrs Jones cannot access that Eros, or love, as it is deeply embedded within her unconscious and can only move to the conscious upon being reunited with her biological child. Thus, Mrs Jones is both the Evil Stepmother archetype of popular fairy-tales, to her stepchildren, and the wise woman archetype, being aware of the reason for her psychological disorder.

The text's second departure from Freud's view on the usefulness of the cathartic method is its representation of the significant impact of the gender dynamic and its role in facilitating a more forthcoming discussion of experienced trauma. As Breuer and Freud noted in the introduction of *Studies*, during their research there was a hesitancy on the part of female patients when talking to a male analyst. Instead of questioning if the gender dynamic might have influenced the rapport, Freud instead contended that it was 'in part because what is in question is often some experience which the patient dislikes discussing'.²⁵ The unconscious holds urges or fantasies which are not approved by the culturally influenced ego. As I argue, however, Egerton's text shows that the gender dynamic between analyst and analysand is still significant as it depicts the success of subverting the structure of Freud's initial sessions from 1893 to 1895. Instead of portraying a male analyst surveying a female patient, this story instead describes a safe space within which to discuss the trauma that is lost motherhood, which is an experience exclusive to women. As can be gauged in the text, Mrs Jones is encouraged to use her voice to discuss the psychological impact of being deprived of biological motherhood. Consequently, and consistent with the benefits of the cathartic method, Mrs Jones' mental state and behaviour towards her non-biological children begin to improve. For example, Mrs Jones is described as kissing her husband affectionately, baking for her stepchildren and sewing. However, upon discovering that Susie (Mrs Jones's daughter) has died and that her husband prevented communication

alerting her to the fact that her daughter was ill, Mrs Jones again displays symptoms of hysteria.

At the child's wake, Mrs Jones takes little Susie from her coffin and sings to her but as her daughter is nailed into the coffin Egerton describes how Mrs Jones 'sits bolt upright in the kitchen, with the same odd smile'.²⁶ Commenting upon the danger of repressing grief, the 'fat matron' states that 'she'd be better if she could cry'.²⁷ Egerton, it seems, through employing the fat matron character as the voice of reason is pointing out the absurdity of suggesting that the physical act of crying would negate the neuroses Mrs Jones is experiencing. As George Hagman argues, the common opinion of mourning 'does not recognize the complexity and uniqueness of each mourning experience ... [Thus] normal processes should be judged within a broad context that includes multiple variables'.²⁸ This is something Egerton seems to have been arguing over a century before Hagman's contention and as Mrs Jones' processes of mourning are unrecognized by the society around her, she is forced to retreat into the unconscious by way of daydreams. As Freud explains, 'the mind harbours wish or desires that lie outside awareness but that nevertheless manifest themselves at night or in dreams ... [This is] the unconscious material'.²⁹ Indeed, at the closing of the story, Egerton depicts the dangers of society's inability to acknowledge the psychological repercussions of this loss of biological motherhood as Mrs Jones' fantasies transform into a nightmarish reality.

Following the funeral, a workman who has been building houses and walls in the neighbourhood, approaches the house and comments anxiously that there are dark omens present and he is 'afear'd, an' I dunno wat I'm afear'd on ... he dare not explain the creeping dread'.³⁰ Though Egerton's stories are often ambiguous, Mrs Jones' fantasies are, it is suggested, realised and this fear is confirmed by a new, unknown narrator who describes the events transpiring inside the Jones residence: Mrs Jones has murdered her three stepchildren. This is further supported by the description of the pools of blood running from the stepchildren's rooms at the top of the stairs, seeping 'thick sorghum red, blackening as it thickens, with a sickly serous border'.³¹ The narrator then describes how Mrs Jones sits in a chair, peacefully imagining her Susie's corpse playing, as 'her tiny waxen hands scatter poppies, blood-red poppies, in handfuls over three open graves'.³² When Mrs Jones is studied in the light of the Freudian understanding of hysterical symptoms, the relapse of Mrs Jones following her talk with the writer, from baking for her stepchildren to murdering them, I argue, is an extreme consequence of suppressing her anger towards her deceitful husband. However, considering the text in its entirety, I argue that Egerton is placing blame on society as she depicts the desperate act of a woman who feels she cannot escape from her grief, the stepchildren who she acknowledges remind her of the loss of her biological child, and the husband who prevented that biological connection. Mrs Jones, then, encompasses the alternative form of hysteria which Freud theorised; that of the hypnoid state which is a sufficiently disassociated state that allows the repressed material to come to the fore with little to no resistance from the ego.³³ I argue that at the loss of her daughter, Mrs Jones enters into this 'hypnoid' state as her grief destabilised the ego's ability to control her actions.

By entering a marriage on the condition of a promise to rear and nurture her biological child, Mrs Jones is unable to repress her grief at the displacement of the role she feels she

has a right to, but which society prevented. The story 'Wedlock' thus depicts the most extreme violation of maternity with Mrs Jones' final act of filicide but Egerton, I argue, places the blame firmly at society's door for its refusal to allow her to raise her biological child. However, it is not just society that Egerton's stories suggest can contribute to neuroses in the biological mother figure as she also explores an alternative contributory factor to psychological disorder in 'Oony'; the effect of the child losing her biological mother.

Oony: 'the irrational gladness that quickens our heart before despair'

In 'Oony', published in the *Symphonies* (1897) collection, the titular protagonist is born of a mixed Catholic-Protestant marriage and, following the murder of her parents, is adopted by the Catholic, Mrs Jack O'Sullivan. As discussed earlier in this article, Jung's mother complex contends that the maternal figure is the main contributory factor in the origin of psychological disturbance in her children as 'the child's instincts are disturbed, and this constellates archetypes which, in their turn, produce fantasies that come between the child and its mother as an alien and often frightening element'.³⁴

A psychoanalytic reading of this text suggests that the character of Mrs Jack is a representation of the consequences of the mother complex not only through her treatment of her adopted daughter, Oony, but also her biological daughter, Mary Kate. The latter appears to take pleasure in playing the part of Oony's chief tormentor, following her mother's example who is herself depicted as cruel and physically violent towards Oony.³⁵ As Jung explains, neuroses can occur in the child if they divert too far from their personal development to merge with the example set by the mother. Furthermore, Jung describes how 'the daughter leads a shadow-existence, often visibly sucked dry by her mother, and she prolongs her mother's life by a sort of continuous blood transfusion'.³⁶ Indeed, following Mary Kate's rejection by a potential suitor, she is described as being confined to the cottage with her vindictive mother, sewing and cleaning with no further hopes of securing a husband.³⁷ In contrast, Mrs Jack unashamedly declares her son as her sole priority since her focus is to ensure his entry into the priesthood, declaring that she would not entertain anything that 'interfered with the ambition of her life'.³⁸ This characterization of Mrs Jack is in line with Jung's assessment of the mothers who are the chief cause of their children's hysterical symptoms since 'driven by [a] ruthless will to power ... they often succeed in annihilating not only their personality but also the personal lives of their children'.³⁹ However, in the case of the protagonist, the mother complex is represented as having a negative psychological impact for Oony who, devoid of an adequate replacement for her biological mother, is instead left to the devices of an abusive, adoptive one. For example, when Oony arrives to live with Mrs Jack following the murder of her parents, she is described as wild and ill-suited to the domestic sphere. This is the justification used by Mrs Jack to beat Oony, but it could be argued that Oony was misbehaving due to the absence of her biological mother and the realization instead she must suffer a nightmarish replacement mother figure. Throughout her time living with Mrs Jack, there is no maternal concern shown for Oony, despite various descriptions of Oony as being fragile and thin. Evidently, Mrs Jack is insufficient in her maternal role as she overlooks not

only the emotional wellbeing of Oony but also the physical manifestation of psychological stress. Following a particularly brutal beating at the hands of Mrs Jack, a witness to the event, Miss Anne, becomes Oony's primary carer instead.⁴⁰

Portrayed as kind-hearted and maternal, initially, Miss Anne is a far more suitable mother figure for Oony. However, she is largely absent and Oony's symptoms mirror the despair she felt at her initial trauma, the murder of her biological mother. This lack of maternal presence proves particularly debilitating for Oony when the man she is in love with, Eugene O'Dogherty, ends their relationship and marries someone else.⁴¹ The text suggests that the neuroses Oony subsequently suffers is not simply due to heartbreak but because it diminishes her chances to gain the psychological fulfilment of a mother-daughter relationship by becoming a mother herself. Indeed, Oony's further mental deterioration is reflected in her physical appearance as Egerton draws a stark comparison between the blooming weather and Oony's dwindling health. The third-person narrator notes that by the time Oony is seventeen she is 'egg-white with the curse of the Irish girl, chlorosis'⁴² but the physical manifestation of her neurosis grows more apparent at the lost chance to become a mother as 'the warm, Irish spring that followed made the girl more languid; her eyes hollowed, and her skin took a greener tinge'.⁴³ According to Karl Figlio, until 1925 the term 'chlorosis' was used to refer to hysterical symptoms and was largely associated with pubescent girls.⁴⁴ The inclusion of this term in the fiction then suggests an awareness, not simply on the part of the author but also wider society, that this rural Irish community has a detrimental psychological impact on the young women who are denied any opportunities which lie outside the domestic space. Indeed, Egerton further elaborates on Oony's worsening symptoms and implies that her symptoms are exacerbated by the society which allow her to remain isolated and afraid in the cottage. Specifically, the absent mother figure leaves Oony vulnerable to predatory action from Paddy the Fairy, later referred to as a changeling, who ominously watches Oony from the bushes 'with an ecstasy of devotion'.⁴⁵ In need of company, Oony invites Paddy into the cottage, thus placing herself in danger and this is something Egerton's contemporary readers familiar with folklore would have recognized. Oony comments that though she makes food for the changeling, she describes how 'strange nausea overpowered her at the sight of it'.⁴⁶ Freud argued that a lack of appetite is a chief symptom of hysteria but considered alongside Oony's physical isolation, lack of maternal care, rejection by Eugene O'Dogherty and subsequent loss of her maternal opportunity, her depicted symptoms give significant cause for alarm which are only recognised by the reader. Ultimately, the psychological impact of these factors manifests physically and leaves Oony vulnerable to the changeling figure.

The character of 'Paddy the Fairy', or changeling, in the text, is significant as he represents the link between Oony's symptoms and inherited stigma. The modern understanding of the changeling myth is that it originated from the parental rejection of a child with a mental or physical disability. As C.F. Goodey and Tim Stainton have noted, supernatural abilities were seen as a key characteristic of a changeling, but the most prominent evidence was their failure to thrive.⁴⁷ As has been discussed, Oony's malnourished figure is repeatedly referred to by the narrator but there is an alternative factor in the confirmation of a changeling presence made by Goodey and Stainton which is important in understanding this text – the

circumstances of the conception of the child.⁴⁸ As a child born of a mixed-faith marriage in the nineteenth-century Catholic countryside, from the outset Oony is treated with suspicion and contempt by Mrs Jack who comments that she had to take Oony in because 'one couldn't let them swaddlers [Presbyterians] get hould av her ennyway'.⁴⁹ Her mixed-marriage background is, it seems, enough to distinguish Oony as Other within her community. This explains why Eugene O'Dogherty's cruel dismissal of Oony has a significant impact on her mental health; Eugene was rare in that he had, initially, overlooked the Otherness of her conception. I argue Oony is aware of this and that her opportunities to forge another relationship which would allow her to marry and produce children herself, and thus heal the lack of a biological maternal bond, are exhausted. With this realisation, Oony's neuroses are permitted to consume her by way of hallucinations:

She lay on her bed and slept from sheer weariness
... Miss Anne would return to-morrow; she felt
glad at the thought ... [The] odd buzzing in her
ears she had felt of late, made her forget things.
The shadows creeping closer in the cottage
frightened them: she felt cold ... chill fingers
creeping along her spine.⁵⁰

To escape these shadows in the cottage, with no maternal figure to warn her of the dangers nearby, Oony leaves for the fairy hill as Paddy plays songs of 'the irrational gladness that quickens our heart before despair...the red glove of madness'.⁵¹ On folk tales, Séamas Mac Philib notes that the changeling or fairy is often depicted playing music, however, in Egerton's text the inclusion of this act is purposeful.⁵² Egerton's text suggests that the songs Paddy plays when Oony is finally taken by the fairies are recognized by the locals as a warning signal of what is taking place. The narrator describes how 'as the notes stole out, a drunken song on the road below stopped suddenly, as the revellers crossed themselves, and hastened home'.⁵³ Despite the locals' awareness of the sinister implications of leaving Oony exposed to the influence of the fairies, it is not until the next day that they dare venture to the hill after which 'they carried the little white maid home'.⁵⁴ I argue Egerton is using the music in the narrative to reinforce the isolation of Oony from mother figures and society itself. This contention is supported by earlier references in the text to the community's efforts to banish Oony's illness using methods, according to Mac Philib, which are used to banish changelings, as commonly depicted in fairytales: beating, administering of herbs, and exposure.⁵⁵ Indeed, Oony experiences each of these 'cures', often at the hands of her inadequate mother figures: she receives beatings from Mrs Jack; Moll the Hat, a villager, provided herbs for Oony's appetite; and Miss Anne's absence facilitates Oony's death by exposure on the hill.⁵⁶ Theorising on how young girls could escape the effects of the mother complex in instances where the ideal mother figure is unattainable, Jung argues that the daughter will be unable to find her individual or the Self. As such, Jung states that the only way to avoid the manifestation of symptoms is for the daughter 'to be abducted or stolen from her mother'.⁵⁷ As the closing scene suggests Oony is ultimately taken by the fairies and she is finally described as content, I argue that the text represents the separation of mother and daughter as necessary when the relationship grows hostile.

Conclusion

This article argues that the mother complex is represented in Egerton's texts by three scenarios. Firstly, the potentially dangerous psychological effects which can manifest as a result of society's prevention of a mother to raise their biological child simply due to the timing of the child's conception. In doing so, given the consequential violence Mrs Jones enacts on her stepchildren, Egerton's text also can be read in terms of Jung's warnings about the toxic nature that a forced or unhealthy mother-child relationship can have on the psyche for both child and mother. The text, I argue, reinforces Jung's warning of the need for separation of the mother and child when the relationship becomes detrimental to the psychological wellbeing of one or both instead of confining them to the domesticated sphere. This is also reflected in the story of 'Oony' through the violent mother figure of Mrs Jack but the complacency of and separation from Miss Anne, on the other hand, is represented as equally dangerous for Oony. In assigning the protagonists a female voice – in comparison to Freud's case studies which were largely summarised by a male analyst – Egerton's narratives provide an enlightening fictional representation of the wider contextual nature of mental illness during the *fin de siècle* period. While Egerton does explore the rewarding and instinctual experience of motherhood for women in other stories such as 'A Cross Line' in her *Keynotes* collection (1893), she also portrays the fictional repercussions of the psychological disorders this same path can produce in others. By providing an outlet through her protagonists with which to represent that universality but also individuality of the experience of women with regards to maternity, marriage, sexuality and family, Egerton successfully depicts causation and cure of psychological disorder.

On feminist debates around emphasising the 'woman and madness' genre, Helen Small argues that we as readers and critics expect madness from women writers because it is wrongly perceived that 'nothing less than madness can testify to a proper sensibility of female oppression'.⁵⁸ Indeed, Nicole M. Fluhr, argued this in a psychoanalytic reading of selected Egerton short stories, emphasising the use of these texts to construct alternative identities for women during the New Woman movement. However, this article contends that by utilising aspects of both Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology, Egerton's texts can also be read as fictional challenges to contemporary assertions that women were unaware of the cause and cure of their neuroses. In doing so, these stories explore the complexities of a woman's situation during the late nineteenth century, conscious or unconscious. By using narrators who have access to explore the female psyche, the protagonists encourage the reader not to judge the women characters as insane but, instead, point the finger elsewhere.

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Notes

1. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kehane, eds, *In Dora's Case: Freud – Hysteria – Feminism* (London, Virago Press Ltd, 1985), 5-6.
2. Paul Ferris, *Dr Freud: A Life* (London, Pimlico, 1998), xii.
3. *Ibid.*, xii.
4. George Egerton, *Discords* (UK, Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1894) and George Egerton, *Symphonies* (London, John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1897).
5. For further information see Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies On Hysteria (1893-1895)*, trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud, Volume II (New York, Basic Books Ltd, 2001) and Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York, Princeton University Press, 1980).
6. Mary Cullen, 'Foreword', in *Gender Perspectives in Nineteenth Century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres*, ed. Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1997), 5.
7. Ann Heilmann, ed., *The Late Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts, Volume 5* (London, Routledge/Thoemmes, 1998), 53.
8. For further information, see Part 7 in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Vintage Publications, 1989).
9. Charles Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London, Penguin Books, 1995), 157.
10. See Breuer and Freud, *Studies On Hysteria (1893-1895)*.
11. Bernheimer and Kehane, *In Dora's Case*, 21.
12. *Ibid.*, 21.
13. In a letter dated 1931, Egerton discusses the psychological influences of her works and admits while there is a connection to be made in hindsight between Freud's theories of the unconscious and the content of her stories this is more due to her belief of the nature of the mind rather than any direct correlation. Egerton explains, 'If I did not know the technical jargon current to-day of Freud and the psycho-analysts, I did know something of complexes and inhibitions, repression and the subconscious impulses ... I used them in my stories'. This is plausible considering her first short story collection *Keynotes* was published in 1893 – the same year Freud began his joint studies with Breuer, the results of which were not published for another two years. This letter is available in George Egerton, 'A Keynote to Keynotes', in *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward Their Definitive Bibliography*, ed. John Gawsorth (London, Ernst Benn Ltd, 1932), 58.
14. For example, Jung often made comments such as, 'By taking up a masculine profession, studying and working like a man, woman is doing something not wholly in accord with, if not directly injurious to, her feminine nature'. See C.G. Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 10: Civilisation in Transition*, trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull (New York, Princeton University Press, 2014), 117-118.
15. Carl Jung, *Aspects of the Feminine*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London, London Ark, 1986), 50.
16. It is worth noting, however, that while Jung's definition of the archetype was based upon the understanding that male and female characteristics are present in all genders he largely neglected to expand upon the male quality animus present in women thus further demonstrating his bias against women.
17. Susan Rowland, *Jung: A Feminist Revision* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002), 29.
18. Egerton, *Discords*, 129.
19. *Ibid.*
20. This term pertains to people undergoing psychoanalytic treatment and, according to Charles Rycroft, was created to avoid use of the word 'patient'. See Charles Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London, Penguin Books Ltd, 1995).
21. George Egerton, 'Wedlock', in *Discords*, 117-44.
22. *Ibid.*, 130.
23. It is important to differentiate between instances of suppression and repression. Suppression is a wilful and conscious act. Repression is the ego's purposeful attempt of keeping the unconscious from fulfilling desires which it deems to be incompatible with societal rules or morally acceptable behaviour.
24. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 88.
25. Breuer and Freud, *Studies On Hysteria*, 3.
26. Egerton, 'Wedlock', 139.
27. *Ibid.*
28. George Hagman, 'Beyond Decathexis: Towards a New Psychoanalytic Understanding and Treatment of Mourning', in *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss*, ed. Robert Neimeyer (Washington, DC, American Psychological Association, 2001), 18.
29. Sigmund Freud, *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis* (London, Vintage, 1995), 397.
30. Egerton, 'Wedlock', 143.
31. *Ibid.*, 144.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Breuer and Freud, *Studies On Hysteria*, xviii.
34. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 85.
35. George Egerton, 'Oony' in *Symphonies* (London, John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1897), 134.
36. Jung, *Aspects of the Feminine*, 117.
37. Egerton, 'Oony', 141.
38. *Ibid.*, 122.
39. Jung, *Aspects of the Feminine*, 116.
40. Egerton, 'Oony', 139.
41. *Ibid.*, 155-6.
42. *Ibid.*, 153.
43. *Ibid.*, 139.
44. Karl Figlio, 'Chlorosis and Chronic Disease in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Social Constitution of Somatic Illness in a Capitalist Society', *Social History*, 3/2, (1978), 167-97.
45. Egerton, 'Oony', 153.
46. *Ibid.*, 157.
47. C.F. Goodey and Tim Stainton, 'Intellectual Disability and the Myth of the Changeling Myth', *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences*, 37/3 (2001), 225.
48. *Ibid.*, 229.
49. Egerton, 'Oony', 129.
50. *Ibid.*, 157.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Séamas Mac Philib, 'The Changeling (ML5058); Irish Versions of the Migratory Legend in Their International Context', *Béaloides*, 59 (1991), 126.
53. Egerton, 'Oony', 158.
54. *Ibid.*, 159.
55. Mac Philib, 'The Changeling (ML5058)', 29.
56. Egerton, 'Oony', 159.
57. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Selective Unconscious*, 97.
58. Bernheimer and Kehane, *In Dora's Case*, 5-6.

‘The spark struck on the hearthstone will fire the soul of the nation’ : women, family, and Irish nationalist activism

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‘The spark struck on the hearthstone will fire the soul of the nation’, quoted in a pamphlet entitled *Irishwomen and the Home Language* written in the early twentieth-century by Gaelic League member, Mary Butler, highlighted the importance and influence of home, stories, and family to the Irish cultural and national revival.² Previous studies have noted that there were ‘generational tensions’ between parents and their children caused by shifts in the Irish political landscape in the early twentieth century.³ Specifically, it has been suggested that young Irish nationalists rejected the constitutional nationalism adopted by their parents and rebelled in favour of physical force republicanism. The important role of the family in transmitting political ideas has subsequently been underacknowledged by historians.⁴ A number of individuals were inspired by their familial connections to republicanism and nationalism to join activist circles.⁵ This included the likes of Kathleen Clarke and Sighle Humphries.⁶ Drawing on records from the Bureau of Military History and Military Service Pensions Collection, this article reasserts the place of the family, particularly mothers, in the creation of Irish revolutionaries.⁷

Previous studies have shown how integral family support was to the Irish independence movement.⁸ Surveying the Military Service Pensions collection, it is possible to map family connections across several organisations. A total of 215 families can be identified across 606 pension applications, approximately six per cent of the applications currently released. In total, thus far, 689 individuals have been identified as related to another member of at least one Irish nationalist and/or republican organisation including: the Irish Citizen Army, Irish Republican Army, *Na Fianna Éireann*, *Cumann na mBan*, Irish Republican Brotherhood, *Clan na Gael*, Hibernian Rifles, Irish Volunteers, Irish National Volunteers, and *Sinn Féin*. To date, at least, 202 sisters and sister-in-laws, eight mothers, twenty-six fathers, 346 brothers and brothers-in-laws, nine siblings, ten uncles, three aunts, seven nephews, one niece, twenty-two cousins, fifteen daughters, twenty-eight sons, forty-five husbands and forty-four wives have also been identified.⁹ The largest family identified – the Conlon-Mahoneys from Monaghan, had eleven family members in the Irish independence movement.¹⁰ Families were therefore a crucial factor in prompting individuals and, at times, whole families, to join Irish nationalist organisations and engage in revolutionary activism.

The pathways to joining a movement were multi-faceted and varied from individual to individual.¹¹ Motivations could range from education, literature, kinship networks, religion, cultural revival, tradition, occupation, ideology, certain events (especially traumatic ones) and gender. Although this article will not focus on factors such as religion, learning and teaching such influences in a familial setting are reflected in revolutionaries’ testimonies.¹² Furthermore, as Katy Turton in her study of revolutionary Russia has stated, ‘despite ... assertions of independent arrival at revolutionary thinking

... further investigation clearly reveals that familial influence was also important’.¹³ And equally, as with Ireland, in the ‘Russian revolutionary movement political activity and family life were inextricably linked’.¹⁴ By studying the family, Turton also highlighted that historians can further examine the role of men and women inclusively and thus bridge the history of ‘revolutionary movement[s] and women’s involvement in it’.¹⁵

In *Irishwomen and the Home Language*, Mary Butler emphasised the important influence Irishwomen could have in the effort to revive the Irish language.¹⁶ Women, according to Mary Butler, held an influential public and private, domestic role:

If nationality is to have any reality, if it is to imply a living force and not an empty formula, it must permeate every department of life, must have its origin in the home, and spread thence to church and school, to press, platform, and market-place. Women can do this for nationality.¹⁷

This was ‘an issue to be placed before our countrywomen’, as ‘those who have the interest of the movement at heart, recognise that the attitude adopted towards it by the women of the country may well be regarded as the determining factor in the situation’.¹⁸ Butler cited ‘prominent [authorities]’ such as Reverend Dr Henebry who espoused that, ‘when the women of a country become denationalised, the very hearthstone, the foundation of true nationality, is uprooted and overturned’.¹⁹ As David MacPherson has argued, Mary Butler engaged in public activism through her work in newspapers.²⁰ Yet her writing conveyed a message which was gendered and catered towards the Gaelic Leagues and Catholic Churches’ ethos of a woman’s place being in the home. Clearly, women were seen as fundamental to the future cultural and political identity of Ireland. This was, however, ultimately through their role as ‘homemakers’ and nurturers.

Such views were also expressed by *Bean na Éireann*, the monthly newspaper published by *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland) the Irish nationalist women’s political organisation established ‘for and by women’.²¹ The group evolved from the Ladies’ Committee for the Patriotic Children’s Treat which was organised as a protest against Queen Victoria’s visit to Ireland. Therefore, it is no surprise that one of its first activities centred on teaching history and the Irish language to Irish children. It later advocated the use of Irish products, took part in anti-recruiting activities against the British Army, and other propaganda work. In December 1910, Mary McLaren (a member of *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*) wrote an article for *Bean na Éireann* calling for the establishment of more branches of the group in Ireland:

Besides educating and encouraging each other to serve their country and shun its enemies, the girls would also educate each other to improve their methods of doing ordinary household

work ... This may seem trifling, when looked at from a national standpoint, but it all has a direct bearing on the welfare of the nation. The neater and cleaner our homes are kept the more all - girls and boys - will become attached to them and hence will be slower to leave them. The neater the girl appears the greater her influence on her brothers and friends, and if a member of Inghinidhe, this increased influence will be on Ireland's side.²²

During its initial stages of publication *Bean na Éireann* did feature more domestic content focusing on the kitchen, household and fashion. Calls to arm for Ireland later replaced such gendered pieces with Helena Moloney's series on legitimising physical force and Countess Markievicz's 'Woman with a Garden'.²³ Despite this advocacy by *Bean na Éireann*, Karen Steele has highlighted that the idea of a woman taking up arms would have been 'balked at' by the readers of the journal.²⁴ Indeed, such content was unique at a time when other nationalist women, such as Mary Butler, Maud Gonne, and Alice Milligan depicted women's political activism as 'raising voices or nationalist children'.²⁵ Both cultural and political organisations therefore viewed a woman's key influence to be in the home, and, by providing the correct upbringing, they could indoctrinate children with the right ideals. The role of women as mothers had long been recognised by earlier revolutionary movements in eighteenth-century France and America.²⁶ Ireland, as a nation, was not exceptional in propagating a domesticated role for women in in which their duty was to properly educate the country's future citizens. Moreover, it was not atypical in regard to nationalist, gendered notions of a woman's place within the nation.

Indeed, Anne McClintock has highlighted that nationalism itself is inherently gendered, 'all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender ... No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state'.²⁷ This statement is applicable across different time periods. Donald Horowitz contends that nation-states are 'super-families' linked by mythical ties of a shared history and ancestry.²⁸ Women were viewed as central to this ideological, nationalist concept as 'preservers' of tradition as 'active transmitters and producers of the national culture'.²⁹ In late nineteenth-century Bengal, for instance, there was a nationalist glorification of motherhood which was seen as the 'ultimate identity' of Bengali women.³⁰ Equally, Brett Schmoll has shown that in Spain before, during and after the Civil War women's primary function was advocated as wife and mother: 'she occupied a central symbolic place in the gender culture of Spain; thus, fascist and republican motherhood, in their most general form, sprung from the same essentialized image of the mother as the reservoir of good in the nation'.³¹ In Southern Lebanon the importance of motherhood was also espoused by women activists who claimed that, 'the woman that rocks the cradle with her right [hand] rocks the world with her left'.³² Nationalism, not just Irish nationalism, therefore promoted gendered constructs of women and of women as mothers. Women were expected to have a prominent influence upon the household and those within it, especially children.

Nonetheless, Irishwomen became involved within politics in an unprecedented way in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³³ However, Irish nationalist women's

perceptions of their political activism and own roles within the fight for independence existed within differing spheres. Many women, not just *Cumann na mBan* members, for example, supported the movement within the home through providing accommodation and medical assistance to Irish Republican Army members. Mothers should not, however, be identified simply with motherhood. Motherhood in a revolutionary context constitutes its own form of activism. Nancy Naples used the term 'activist mothering' to depict how the spheres of politics, mothering, labour and work intersected women's lives and their activist work within communities.³⁴ Activist mothering is a useful term to highlight the variety and type of roles women and mothers could have, without the term being isolated to child rearing, but encompassing political activities as well. Indeed, inspiring and prompting revolutionary thought is its own form of political activism.

One fundamental way in which Irish mothers were activist mothers was through the way in which they created future Irish radicals. Irish Volunteer Thomas Hevey, for example, commented in his witness statement:

At the request of the Bureau of Military History, I have agreed to commit to writing my recollections of that period of Irish history which is now generally described as the War of Independence, together with some autobiographic notes which will, perhaps, indicate what went in to the making of an Irish Volunteer.³⁵

Thomas Hevey went onto to depict that his 'making' was a product of his parents' guidance, 'of course, I see clearly since that this conditioning of my mind was a protracted process and was the result of my father's tales of Ireland's misadventures, together with my mother's hostile attitude towards everything English'.³⁶ Thus, whilst his father was 'moulding' his and his brother and sisters' 'mind[s]', his mother took, what Hevey described as, 'the more practical road' and only used products of Irish manufacture.³⁷ His mother, for example, 'hated using coal [because] it came from England' and subsequently used Irish turf even though it 'made too much dust'.³⁸

This Irish Volunteer attributed his nationalist outlook and subsequent decision to join the fight for independence to his parents. His father taught him Irish history which served to indoctrinate many future Irish revolutionaries. Irish history and ideology was eminent within Ireland and in Irish nationalism as Tom Garvin elucidates, 'the history of Ireland and its relationships with Britain was commonly thought of as extension of these family histories, thereby creating a direct psychological link between the individual, his [or her] family and the history of the island as an entity'.³⁹ The way in which Hevey's mother and father indoctrinated an innate hatred of 'all things English' highlighted the way in which families and family history as well as Irish legends and history served to mould the minds and paths of future Irish revolutionaries.⁴⁰

Kathleen Clarke [née Daly], founder member of *Cumann na mBan* and political activist, reported to have had a comparable Irish republican upbringing. The Dalys, in fact, had a significant Irish republican background. Her uncle, John Daly, was arrested and charged for being a 'dynamitard', whilst her father was also imprisoned for his involvement in the Fenian rising of 1867.⁴¹ Kathleen depicted her father as the 'most refined and gentle man [she had] ever met, kind and generous to a fault, and like Uncle John he had a deep and

passionate love for Ireland.⁴² This passion was also apparent with her Aunt Ellen who told stories:

from her store of historical knowledge, she would keep us children entranced for hours; she had a wonderful way of recounting things ... She would dwell particularly on the Fenian period, in which she had taken an active part; this she painted in the most glowing and romantic colours so that all our early enthusiasm was centred round the Fenians.⁴³

Kathleen Clarke's mother was equally supportive of radical politics and the Fenian cause.⁴⁴ Her grandmother instilled nationalism within all her family, as Kathleen Clarke recalled:

She was a very devout Catholic, and took great pleasure in teaching us our prayers. At bedtime we knelt around her and repeated the prayers after her. The first was always for Ireland's freedom, and when Uncle John was imprisoned the second was for his release. Then we prayed for all the relations alive and dead, ending up with 'God make a good child of me.' She was the kindest and most generous-hearted woman I ever met, with a fine broad outlook on life; she could see good in everyone and everything but England.⁴⁵

Kathleen Clarke and her family grew up in an atmosphere that was distinctly Irish republican, where hatred for England was impressed from an early age through story telling. Undoubtedly, this later had a significant influence on both Kathleen Clarke and her brother, Ned Daly, who also became involved in revolutionary activity. The Irish republican tradition was to be passed on to Kathleen Clarke's own children with her revolutionary husband, the 1916 leader, Tom Clarke. When her second son was born Tom Clarke reportedly exclaimed, 'another son, he said, for a free Ireland'.⁴⁶

Irish Volunteer, Michael Doherty also recalled having a strong Irish nationalist background.⁴⁷ He recalled how, 'my mother was deeply interested in the *Sinn Féin* movement. She read a lot about the persecution of tenants by the landlords, and often recalled stories told by her grandmother about the persecution and sometimes execution of the Irish people on account of their Catholic belief and practices'.⁴⁸ Doherty's father was a Fenian and this, combined with his mother's inherent nationalism, created a distinct Irish nationalist upbringing. Doherty went on to join the Ancient Order of Hibernians and later the Irish Volunteers to 'combat Carson's Volunteers'.⁴⁹

Another Irish Republican Army member, Edmund Power, equally attributed his Irish nationalist beliefs to his parents and upbringing:

My parents belonged to the farming community and my early schooldays were spent at Clonea National School. As a young chap I played hurling with the Clonea Club and I can safely say I always had a strong national outlook. This I attribute mainly to my parents, my father being a very ardent 'Land Leaguer' and my mother a fluent Gaelic speaker.⁵⁰

He never joined the National Volunteers as he 'disapproved

strongly of the pro-British influence of John Redmond', but later joined *Sinn Féin* after a branch was established following the Easter Rising of 1916.⁵¹ Likewise, James Gubbins parents were school teachers and distinctly recalled that his outlook was influenced by them as well as those of his older brother. He subsequently joined the Gaelic League and Irish Volunteers.⁵²

Likewise, whilst in the Irish Republican Army, Michael Colvet, their Commandant, emphasised the clear and important influence of his mother who was a 'fiery patriot'.⁵³ Colvet's mother preached nationalism and 'often recalled to her children that an ancestor of hers had been hanged in 1798'.⁵⁴ This family history and link to the struggles of the Irish past against British rule, preached and retold by his mother, had a significant impact upon Colvet who subsequently 'had a deep detestation of British misrule, and eagerly prepared himself for the chance to destroy it'.⁵⁵ Such stories had a definite influence on the outlook of future Irish rebels and their subsequent decision to join the likes of the Irish Volunteers or *Cumann na mBan*. Seán MacEoin reiterated the impact such stories had upon his childhood and subsequent decision to join the Irish Volunteers; he 'never questioned the accuracy' of his mother's stories and recalled how 'fantastic' these stories were of Ireland's struggles against the British.⁵⁶

Having family who were already politically active and radical Irish nationalists was a clear pathway into revolutionary activism. Nancy Wyse-Power, for instance, recalled that 'discussion on Irish politics were in my ears from the time I could hear anything, as both my parents had been actively engaged in public affairs'.⁵⁷ She emphasised, particularly, the influence of her mother who had also grown up in a 'nationalist atmosphere' as 'her father's house in Dublin was a resort for Fenians and one of her brothers had gone straight from Synge Street School to Tallaght on the day of the Rising planned in 1867'.⁵⁸ Nancy recalled that her mother, Jennie Wyse-Power, an Irish feminist, activist, Ladies' Land League veteran, *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* member as well as leader of *Cumann na mBan*, and her father, John Wyse-Power, Fenian and founder member of the Gaelic Athletic Organisation, 'were ardent Parnellites and after the death of Parnell took no part in politics until the new movement began to take shape about the beginning of the present century after the visit of Queen Victoria during the Boer War'.⁵⁹

As Shelia Humphries, political activist and member of *Cumann na mBan*, asserted in regard to her radical nationalist childhood, 'a question I am very often asked is what brought me into the republican movement. The answer is that I could have never avoided becoming involved'.⁶⁰ She went on to state that one of the first things she was taught by her mother as a child was patriotic hymns and how her aunt taught her Irish as well as recalling her closeness to her uncle Michael (The) O'Rahilly's side of the family.⁶¹ The political indoctrination of such eminent Irish revolutionaries was clearly a result of a radical Irish republican familial background combined with the beliefs these family members subsequently instilled into their children.

There are other examples of politically active families and mothers.⁶² However, sociologists Doug McAdam, Ronnelle Paulson, and Jocelyn Viterna have suggested that the reason why some mothers chose to be inactive or simply not join revolutionary movements is due to their biographical availability and salient identity.⁶³ Viterna, in her work on guerrilla mothers, commented that, 'a person's identity as

“mother” may compete with a potential movement participation identity, especially if participation in the movement could jeopardize the woman’s perceived ability to be a good mother, and therefore her identity as a mother’.⁶⁴ Both identities could be important, for example as an Irish nationalist and mother; however, her identity as a nationalist must be salient enough to compete with her identity as a mother. Equally, an individual’s biographical availability impacts on their decision to join a movement: in sum, a person with less family and/or work responsibilities is more available and therefore more likely to join a movement, especially if they have strong network ties with existing participants.⁶⁵ Interestingly, Viterna, in her research on women’s mobilisation into the Salvadoran Army, concluded that, typically, politically active women were ‘pulled’ into activism by strong participation identities. However, routes into activism are extremely varied and are dependent on the interaction of networks, biographical availability, and situational context.⁶⁶ In regards to mothers, children became barriers to participation because, ‘their needs limit the work a woman may perform outside the home.’⁶⁷ Young women with no children, Viterna concluded, had the fewest barriers to participation.⁶⁸

There are instances where some nationalist Irish women chose to cut ties with the republican movement in favour of their family life. Mary Browne, for example, reduced her official role in *Cumann na mBan* after her child was born in 1920. She did, however, continue to shelter IRA men, carry dispatches, store arms and ammunition, and as a consequence was subjected to raids.⁶⁹ After the War of Independence, Mary left *Cumann na mBan* and took no further part in the republican movement as she ‘[did not] bother any more [as she] had a family or at least a home’.⁷⁰ Likewise Eileen Murphy [née Walsh] was active in *Cumann na mBan* as a commandant before 1916 but when she married she was ‘mostly taken up with the affairs of my family and house, giving also any help I could to the national movement without being an active member of *Cumann na mBan*’.⁷¹ By comparison, her husband remained active with the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Volunteers.⁷² For these women their identity as a mother and wife outweighed their nationalist activist identities, although they did proceed to support the fight for independence through providing shelter. This infers that neither of the women left *Cumann na mBan* because the fighting intensified but because they wanted to remain with their children. For instance, Mary Browne continued to be an active *Cumann na mBan* member up until the Truce. In comparison, Turton, in her study of revolutionary Russia, depicts parents giving up their political careers in favour of their families due to the inherent dangers of being a revolutionary, and, as she noted, significantly, ‘for the revolutionary movement it often meant losing experienced agents, particularly women’.⁷³

The needs of families did prevent some Irish revolutionaries from taking a more active role in the fight for independence. Katherine Barry-Moloney, sister of Kevin Barry, provided a noteworthy example of how her responsibilities within the family outweighed her desire to join *Cumann na mBan*:

as a family were in full sympathy with the republican movement and gave every help that came our way, such as, contributing to the collections, selling flags, keeping things for

people, etc. ... I personally was most anxious to join *Cumann na mBan* but, for family reasons, as I was the oldest of seven and my mother’s chief adviser in all her affairs, I felt my first duty was to her. We had a business in Fleet Street and a farm in Carlow, both of which required her constant attention, not to mention the rearing and educating of my six young brothers and sisters. My mother depended on me for decisions and up to 1920, when the war became intense, I felt that it would be selfish to run the risk of depriving her of my moral support. It was the intensification of the war with England at that stage that swept all other considerations aside. In the meantime, my two brothers had joined the Volunteers and my sister, Sheila, joined *Cumann na mBan* in Tombeagh, where she mostly lived. She was up to her neck in any Volunteer activity that took place there.⁷⁴

Katherine’s commitment to her mother allowed her siblings to become active revolutionaries whilst she provided her mother, a widow, with the support needed to run both a business and take care of the family and home. Katherine eventually joined *Cumann na mBan* in 1920: her statement implies that she did so because she felt that *Cumann na mBan* and the Irish Republican Army required her assistance more than her mother at this stage.⁷⁵ She nevertheless admired her mother’s nationalism and sacrifice for her children:

I should like to say here, for fear it was not been made clear in my story, that my mother was magnificent all along the line. She accepted the fact that Kevin was a Republican soldier and that whatever came his way in that capacity was to be faced cheerfully and without complaint by his mother. At the time we all took this for granted. It is only now when our own children are grown that we realise the real heroism of the mothers and fathers of the war of independence who had been reared in a gentler age and who so heroically accepted the position of their children throwing away not only their lives but their careers and prospects.⁷⁶

Her mother conformed to the nationalist ideal of sacrificing sons for Ireland and this concept was further proliferated by Katherine as she described her and her family’s last visit to Kevin Barry before he was executed. She depicted her mother as ‘bravely battling’ not to show her tears in the ‘face of the enemy’ and then berating a chaplain for not recognising her sons’ heroics as she declared, ‘Canon Waters, I know you are not a Republican. But is it impossible for you to understand that my son is actually proud to die for the Republic?’⁷⁷ Her mother is not portrayed as a victim but instead a brave, widowed woman who provided for her family and raised good Irish nationalists, willing to fight and die for Ireland, as well as supporting the Irish independence movement herself. For example, Katherine noted in her statement that her mother, ‘was Sean T. O’Kelly’s first nominator for the 1918 election’.⁷⁸

The nationalist ideal of brave mothers raising children, specifically sons, to fight that cause for Irish freedom was also depicted by Irish Republican Army member, Henry O’Mara. In

his witness statement he devoted a section which expressed admiration towards Irish mothers and their commitment to Irish independence. Specifically, he recalled the nationalist Mrs Loughnane's influence on her family:

Mrs Loughnane was one of those gentle Irish mothers who had inspired her children from their earliest days with that combination of simple, unwavering faith and a burning love of country which had sustained us as a nation during the long seven hundred years of British butchery. She typified, too, the mothers of her time (that awful Black and Tan period) whose devotion to Faith and Fatherland added lustre to our country's history and noble traditions. Throughout those terrible years there were in every street of every town and in every townland of every parish, mothers like her who had reared families whose loyalty to God and Ireland proved that there was in us an indomitable spirit that would never be cowed.⁷⁹

This mother was exemplified as the ideal nurturer and nationalist, preaching nationalism to her children due to her devotion to Ireland. Similar to Katherine's mother, her sons were later murdered by the British forces.⁸⁰

Fathers faced such a decision too. However, they had less difficulty in undertaking the role, and dual identity, of father and Irish Republican Army member as, for instance, with Eileen Murphy's husband.⁸¹ This stance was supported by society during the early twentieth-century as it was assumed that children would be cared for by their mothers. Men would not have to sacrifice their family life in the same way to become revolutionaries.⁸² Indeed, between *Cumann na mBan* and the Irish Volunteers there was a gendered division of labour especially in the pre-revolutionary period up to 1916. When *Cumann na mBan* was first established in 1913 women inside the home washed, cooked, and cleaned, whilst outside the home they sewed haversacks, learned first aid, and 'raised money for their men.'⁸³ Many *Cumann na mBan* members had family in the Irish Volunteers which supported this work.⁸⁴ These divisions lessened, to an extent, during the War of Independence where *Cumann na mBan* members undertook important tasks doing intelligence work and scouting duties. Margaret Ward also stated that 'the older women – those with families to care for and farms and businesses to look after – provided safe houses, food and medical help.'⁸⁵ This highlights that their biological availability impacted on their activist identity as looking after their families and their age impeded the ability of women to take on more active work outside the home, or they may simply have chosen not to do this work. The average *Cumann na mBan* (and Irish Republican Army) member was young and single which enabled them to complete such tasks without the constraints of family ties or obligation within the home.⁸⁶ Indeed, married women, according to *Cumann na mBan* member, Eithne Coyle, were 'able to work from the home.'⁸⁷ Such work, from the domestic sphere, was crucial, however, to the fight against the British. Women were fundamental to the cause for Irish independence through providing safe houses for revolutionaries on the run as well as storing weapons which were both essential and dangerous tasks due to the increased risk of being raided by the British and being subjected to brutalities.⁸⁸

Overall, it has been noted that a significant amount of *Cumann na mBan*'s work during the War of Independence was completed within the home.⁸⁹ The home became the battlefield for these activist, militant women. Innumerable women provided shelter, not just *Cumann na mBan* members, as revolutionaries depended on the kinship networks provided by friends and family.⁹⁰ Nora Casey was one of ten children belonging to a strong family network of republicans. Her three brothers and cousin were in the Irish Republican Army and Nora and her sister were in *Cumann na mBan* (her other siblings had emigrated), whilst her parents, uncles and cousins were also all involved in the republican movement. Her home was subjected to raids as a consequence of her family providing food and shelter to 'large numbers of Irish Republican Army men.'⁹¹ She described herself, sister and mother as having been 'worked off our feet. Baking, preparing meals, washing, making beds, ... storing rifles, and putting them in safe keeping'.⁹² Likewise, Catherine Conlon was a mother to eleven children all of whom participated in the fight for independence. Her home was also the headquarters for the local company of the Irish Republican Army and was subsequently subjected to raids.⁹³ Margaret Broderick-Nicholson depicted the risk of supporting and working for independence when, in 1920, the Royal Irish Constabulary and Black and Tans (a British force made up of ex-soldiers) saturated 'every door in the house with petrol' to 'evidently ... burn us all in our rooms'.⁹⁴ Margaret was raised by parents with 'a strong nationalist outlook, especially [her] mother'.⁹⁵ Subsequently, Margaret and her brother joined *Cumann na mBan* and Irish Volunteers respectively.⁹⁶ Such families were inevitably targeted by the British auxiliaries and during another raid she recalled her mother telling her to be brave as Margaret Broderick-Nicholson had her hair shorn.⁹⁷ The bravery of such women was commented on by Irish Republican Army member, Gerard Doyle:

I was the eldest of a family of seven, five boys and two girls, all of whom took an active part in the War of Independence. ... I was really worried about my mother who had a heart of gold and great courage to meet the situation facing her at home, which was of grave concern to me.⁹⁸

Other women decided to be both mothers and active Irish republicans. Maeve MacGarry's mother was also an Irish nationalist, and feminist. She commented that her mother:

was always interested in the national movement as a young girl from Parnell's time. My father on the other hand did not agree with her outlook, although he never interfered with her national or political activities. He was very quiet and so my mother was able to bring up us children in the way she wanted.⁹⁹

She had an obvious dominance over the household as well as its members. Maeve MacGarry's mother equally chose where her children went to school and often took them to Gaelic League gatherings.¹⁰⁰ She is aptly dubbed in Maeve MacGarry's testimony as an 'Irish-Irelander' and 'active participant' in *Cumann na mBan* and subsequently she brought Maeve to the first meeting.¹⁰¹ Marie Collins was another active revolutionary. Her three sons were in the Irish Republican Army and she formed a branch of *Cumann na mBan* in May 1918. Marie undertook intelligence work, housed and cared

for Irish Republican Army members, supplied first aid, as well as carrying dispatches. She was later imprisoned in 1921 for the possession of ammunition and lost her job in the local post office. Her sons were also imprisoned for their activities in the Irish Republican Army.¹⁰²

Likewise, Catherine Rooney's mother had a prominent role in instilling Irish nationalism within her children as well as prompting them to participate in the independence movement. Embracing the movement, Catherine joined *Cumann na mBan* in 1915 along with her sister, and her eldest brother joined the Irish Volunteers. It is also noteworthy that Catherine's mother informed her that the Easter Rising was about to take place, instructing her to gather up equipment to be used during the fight. They later parted ways as her mother went to Liberty Hall to meet a friend.¹⁰³ This is significant as few mothers took part in the Easter Rising yet many encouraged their children and families to participate in the fight.¹⁰⁴ Catherine had younger siblings, but it is not clear who looked after the children in her mother's absence as Catherine's father was sympathetic to the republican movement, presumably either he or another older family member or neighbour cared for the children.¹⁰⁵ Catherine's mother appeared to have a less active role outside of the home during the War of Independence where she stored arms and provided a safe house. The local Active Service Unit, who were dubbed 'the Guards' used the house for meetings as well as for dumping arms (a dump was later made by Catherine Rooney's father at the side of the fireplace). This Unit used their house so frequently that her mother was affectionately known as 'the mother of the Guards'.¹⁰⁶

Irish revolutionaries were not so different from their parents: most shared the same ideals, nationalist outlook and actively fought for Irish independence. Indeed, in many cases, they were extensions of their parents, and while there may have been a difference in the manifestation of how they practically fought for independence, their political attitudes were a product of the nurturing and political indoctrination provided by the family, particularly mothers and fathers. This 'new' generation was part of an increasingly militaristic society and some radical nationalists aimed to achieve independence through violence rather than constitutional nationalism. Formative experiences and the influence of family are one of many factors that led individuals, both before and after 1916, to join separatist organisations. Family is one factor that led to participation, highlighting that although the older generation may not have participated in the Irish independence movement or may have even actively discouraged their children from adopting the physical-force tradition, many had a hand in the creation and nurturing of 'natural radicals'.¹⁰⁷ Overall, mothers, as activists, had a key role in the creation of radicals through the upbringing of children, in inspiring and promoting Irish nationalism and, if at times unwittingly, revolutionary violence. This role was varied and important, whether they remained in the home or went outside of it. The political activity of Irish mothers was also diverse, but for many women one of their first acts of political activism, as mothers, was to tell their children stories, make their homes Irish and actively encourage participation in the independence movement as well as taking part in the fight themselves. Whilst Mary Butler may not have written her pamphlet with Irish independence in mind, perhaps ironically, her words of encouragement and inspiration depict one of the many important roles mothers and women had in twentieth-century Ireland when she stated,

'they will have the proud consciousness of knowing that in making the homes of Ireland Irish they will be doing the best day's work that has ever been done to make Ireland a nation in the fullest, truest sense of the word'.¹⁰⁸ This article has shown what can be gained by re-examining women and the family in the Irish revolutionary period. Inclusive analysis of witness testimony and pension records has highlighted that ordinary Irish revolutionaries were not so different from their parents as previously thought. The home and family were the battlefield for Irish independence.

Notes

1. This article is based on a section of a chapter of my PhD thesis, which focuses on the broader role of families in inspiring revolutionary radicalism. My sincere thanks goes to Professor Diane Urquhart for her unwavering support, help and comments throughout my PhD thus far. Mary E Butler, *Irishwomen and the Home Language*, Gaelic League Pamphlet 6 (Dublin, c. 1900), 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 3.
3. Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, Allen Lane, 2014); Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), 23.
4. *Ibid.*
5. As noted, this article will specifically explore the role of mothers. My PhD examines the influence of other family members such as fathers, grandparents, and siblings.
6. Helen Litton, ed., *Kathleen Clarke: Revolutionary Woman* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1997); University College Dublin Archives, Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/976.
7. Although the focus of this article is on Irish mothers, it also includes fathers. This is important to truly undertake an inclusive analysis.
8. Peter Hart, for instance, analysed the last names and residences of Irish Republican Army men in Cork using newspapers based on some of the rebels interned after the Easter Rebellion. See Peter Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916-1923', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 228.
9. These findings are based on the examination of 586 Military Service Pension application files. Irish Military Service Pensions Collection, 31/08/2019. The collection can be accessed online: <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923>
10. Alice Conlon-Mahoney in her application for a military pension stated that she had ten siblings also fighting for Irish independence. Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC), Alice Conlon-Mahoney, MSP34REF64344.
11. Jocelyn S. Viterna, 'Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army', *American Journal of Sociology*, 112 (2006), 2.
12. For studies that go into these motivations in more detail, see, Foster, *Vivid Faces*; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising, Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010); Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013); Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*.
13. Katy Turton, *Family Networks and the Russian Revolutionary Movement, 1870-1940* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 5.

14. *Ibid.*, xiii.
15. *Ibid.*, xix.
16. Butler, *Irishwomen and the Home Language*.
17. *Ibid.*, 5.
18. *Ibid.*, 2-4.
19. *Ibid.*, 4.
20. David McPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation: Gender, Culture and Irish Identity, 1890-1914* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 121.
21. Pařeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, 33.
22. Inghinidhe na hÉireann, *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*, December 1910, 14-15.
23. Karen Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival* (New York, Syracuse University Press, 2007), 112.
24. *Ibid.*, 113.
25. *Ibid.*
26. A comparable pamphlet Mary Butler's *Irishwomen and the Home Language* was produced at the beginning of French Revolution in 1789 by an anonymous Parisian which appealed to parents but more so to mothers. The pamphlet praised mothers for instilling patriotism, but equally urged French mothers to provide a nurturing, moral education and to encourage their children to be 'patient, kind, and obedient of military discipline'. Again this stands as an example of a gendered appeal to mothers as educators of their children. Moreover, the early American ideal of 'Republican Motherhood' espoused similar gendered notions: eighteenth and nineteenth-century American mothers were to have, 'received an education in reading, writing, arithmetic, and civics in order to teach their sons virtue and morality in an effort to raise ideal citizens'. Newberry Library's French Revolution Pamphlet Collection, FRC 2651, *Danger des Patrouilles exercées par les Enfants, 1789*. Cited in Julia M. Gossard, 'Child Gangs and Motherly Duty at the Onset of Revolution', [https://ageofrevolutions.com/2017/08/07/child-gangs-and-motherly-duty-at-the-onset-of-revolution/, accessed on 17/08/2019].
27. Anne McClintock, 'Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family', *Feminist Review*, 44 (1993), 61.
28. Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkley, University of California Press, 1985). Cited in Patrizia Albanese, *Mothers of the Nation: Women, Families, and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006), 17.
29. N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, eds, *Woman-Nation-State* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), 7. Cited in McClintock, 'Family Feuds', 62.
30. Jasodhara Bagchi, 'Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25/42 (1990), 66.
31. Brett Schmoll, 'Solidarity and Silence: motherhood in the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 15/4 (2014), 456, 478.
32. Zeina Zaatari, 'The Culture of Motherhood: An Avenue for Women's Civil Participation in South Lebanon', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2/1 (2006), 34.
33. Pařeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, 1.
34. Nancy A. Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War of Poverty* (New York & London, Routledge, 1998).
35. Bureau of Military History (hereafter BMH), Witness Statement (WS) 1668, Thomas Hevey, 31 Aug. 1957, 1.
36. *Ibid.*, 2.
37. *Ibid.*, 4.
38. *Ibid.*, 4.
39. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*, 113.
40. BMH, WS 1668, Thomas Hevey, 31 Aug. 1957, 2.
41. Maria Luddy, 'Kathleen Clarke [née Daly] (1878-1972)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), [https://www.oxforddnb.com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-55444, accessed 31 August 2019].
42. Litton, *Kathleen Clarke*, 19.
43. *Ibid.*, 13-14.
44. Helen Litton, *Edward Daly: Sixteen Lives* (Dublin, The O'Brien Press, 2013), 17.
45. Litton, *Kathleen Clarke*, 13.
46. Litton, *Kathleen Clarke*, 51.
47. BMH, WS 1583, Michael Doherty, WS 1583, 18 Feb. 1947, 1.
48. *Ibid.*, 1.
49. *Ibid.*
50. BMH, WS 1130, Edmund Power, 18 Mar. 1955, 1.
51. *Ibid.*
52. BMH, WS 765, James A. Gubbins (Seamus O Goibin), 8 Dec. 1952, 1.
53. *Ibid.*, 7.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. BMH, WS 1716, Seán MacEoin, 6 Dec. 1957, 3.
57. BMH, WS 541, Nancy Wyse-Power, 5 Jan. 1951, 1.
58. *Ibid.*, 1-2.
59. BMH, WS 541, Nancy Wyse-Power, 5 Jan. 1951, 3-4; Maria Luddy, *Women in Ireland, 1800-1918: A Documentary History* (Cork, Cork University Press, 1995), 265.
60. University College Dublin Archives, Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/976.
61. *Ibid.*
62. To be discussed later in the paper.
63. Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen, 'Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism', *American Journal of Sociology*, 99/3 (1993), 640-67; Viterna, 'Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded', 1-45.
64. Viterna, 'Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded', 5.
65. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
66. *Ibid.*, 38.
67. *Ibid.*, 17.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Irish Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF56849, Typed statement of service by Mary A Browne, 12 Mar. 1940.
70. *Ibid.*
71. BMH, WS 480, Eileen Murphy [née Walsh], 26 Feb. 1951, 9-10.
72. *Ibid.*, 9.
73. Katy Turton, 'Children of the Revolution: Parents, Children and the Revolutionary Struggle in Late Imperial Russia', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 5/1 (2012), 62.
74. BMH, WS 731, Katherine Barry-Moloney, 27 Sept. 1952, 6-7.
75. *Ibid.*, 1, 6-7.
76. *Ibid.*, 23-24.
77. *Ibid.*, 45.

78. *Ibid.*, 6.
79. BMH, WS 1652, Henry O'Mara, 1957, 14.
80. *Ibid.*, 11.
81. BMH, WS 480, Eileen Murphy [née Walsh], 26 Feb. 1951, 9.
82. Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1983), 195. Cited in Katy Turton, 'Children of the Revolution', 59.
83. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 98.
84. *Ibid.*, 96.
85. *Ibid.*, 145.
86. Robert Lynch, *Revolutionary Ireland, 1912-25* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 73; Hart, 'The Social Structure', 216.
87. Eithne Coyle, Interview, Dublin 1975 in Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, Pluto Press, 1995), 145.
88. Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, The Collins Press, 2007), 138.
89. *Ibid.*, 140.
90. *Ibid.*, 125.
91. Irish Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF29416, Handwritten letter signed by Nora Casey, 26 Jul. [Year Unknown].
92. *Ibid.*
93. *The Irish Echo*, 8 Nov. 1947. Found in Irish Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF64344, Alice Conlon-Mahoney.
94. BMH, WS 1682, Margaret M. (Peg) Broderick-Nicholson, WS, 27 Sept. 1957, 3-4.
95. *Ibid.*, 1.
96. *Ibid.*, 2-3.
97. *Ibid.*, 4.
98. There was less gendered segregation within the Irish Citizen Army under James Connolly. However, only two members, Constance Markievicz and Maria Norgrove, were mothers. During the Easter Rising Maria fought alongside her husband and children, a son and two daughters, whilst Constance's daughter, Maeve, had been left to be raised by her grandmother at Lissadell House. BMH, WS 1511, Gerard Doyle, 15 Oct. 1956, 30; Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Citizen Army in Easter Week' *Socialist History*, 49 (2016), 40.
99. BMH, WS 826, Maeve MacGarry, 31 Mar. 1953, 1.
100. *Ibid.*, 1.
101. *Ibid.*, 2.
102. Irish Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF58602, Maria Collins, 11 Jul. 1940.
103. BMH, WS 648, Mrs. Catherine Rooney (Byrne), 1 Feb. 1952, 1-2, 11.
104. Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, 190.
105. BMH, WS 648, Mrs. Catherine Rooney (Byrne), 1 Feb. 1952, 1-2, 11.
106. *Ibid.*, 15-16.
107. BMH, WS 1043, Colonel Joseph V Lawless, 9 Dec. 1954, 1.
108. Butler, *Irishwomen and the Home Language*, 7.

Book Reviews

Julian Hale, *Women in Aviation*, Oxford: Shire Publications, 2019. £7.99. 978-1-78442-363-6 (paperback), pp. 64

Reviewed by Nina Baker
Independent Scholar



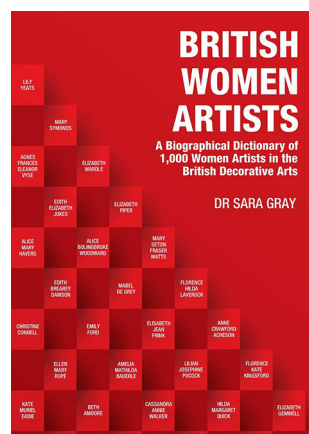
I should start this review by admitting that I have loved the Shire Publications series of books for many years, and often receive one in my Christmas stocking. *Women in Aviation* retells the familiar stories of the 'star pioneer' women of the early 20th century – the USA's Amelia Earhart and her friend, the UK's Amy Johnson. They each get detailed chapters apiece, about their lives, achievements and untimely ends. Probably almost

everyone will have heard of these two and the now-famous 'Spitfire Girls' of the Air Transport Auxiliary in the Second World War, which together make up the bulk of the book. However, far fewer non-specialists will know of Harriet Quimby in her purple satin flying suit, the first woman to fly across the English Channel, or the various aristocratic women, such as Lady Heath and Lady Bailey, who deployed their money with adventurous spirits and technical talents to take to the air. The book briefly introduces some of the other notable 'aviatrices' of

the early years, including Frenchwoman Elise Deroche, the first woman in the world to gain a pilot's licence, and Bessie Coleman the African-American woman who, due to a race-bar in the USA, had to travel to France to be able to take flying lessons. The concluding chapter looks at the 'firsts' achieved by women in the 1960s and more recently. This is somewhat selective in which women are thereby credited, which may reflect the author's specialism in military aviation history. For instance, the first female aircraft captain in a British commercial airline, is named as Yvonne Sintes in 1972, which unfortunately does not therefore credit Winnie Drinkwater who was flying for Scottish Air Ferries some 40 years previously. The first women in the USAF and RAF were not admitted to military flying until 1976 and 1991 respectively and in 1994 the RAF qualified Joanna Salter as its first fast jet pilot, although a female civil service aeronautical researcher had piloted such planes a decade earlier. As is usual with these Shire history books, there is an appendix with suggestions for further reading and places to visit, in the UK and USA. Now within the Bloomsbury publishing empire, Shire books have been producing these intensively illustrated paperback books on mainly historical topics for about 50 years. This book should be regarded as an introductory 'taster' to the subject. I do not mean this (nor my earlier critique of who is or is not a 'first') to imply anything negative about this book. It is a good, but elementary introduction to the subject, very nicely produced. It would be excellent, for example, for use with teenagers, as a way to introduce how women have been involved actively in aviation from its very beginning, and that this is not a modern phenomenon.

Sara Gray, *British Women Artists: A Biographical Dictionary of 1000 Women Artists in the British Decorative Arts, Oakamoor: Dark River, 2019. £19.99, 978-1-911121-63-3 (paperback), pp. vii + 381*

Reviewed by Lucy Ella Rose
University of Surrey



This book is a welcome and valuable reference source for scholars and arts enthusiasts alike, offering a vast range of biographical entries on women who contributed to and shaped the British decorative arts in recent history. It traces the professionalisation of women artists – long defined in relation to celebrated male artists as amateur practitioners, assistants and copyists – offering fascinating insight into their

lives and careers. It covers women working in a plethora of fields including sculpture, stained glass, ceramics, metalwork, leather and lace work, bookbinding, illumination, embroidery, jewellery, woodcarving and illustration, highlighting the mutidisciplinarity, richness, fluidity and originality of women's creative practices. 'British' is used in the loosest and most inclusive sense, encompassing artists who trained, moved or were born abroad. As a dictionary in which the chosen women are listed alphabetically by surname, it resists the allocation of women to separate creative spheres, and allows the personographies to speak for themselves. The book as a whole is refreshingly accessible and eschews esoteric scholarly discourse with its factual and economical writing, though the italicisation of titles of works would have been helpful to the eye scanning for artistic outputs and publications.

Gray's book features famous Arts and Crafts names like Barbara Hepworth, Gertrude Jekyll, Ernestine Mills and Phoebe Anna Traquair, but its strength lies in its dedicated reclamation of talented yet historically-neglected women. Less widely known artists include embroiderer Mary (wife of Walter) Crane (p. 73), illustrator Rosie Pitman (p. 265) and sculptor Ellen Mary Rope (p. 289), while other artists including embroiderer Mary Symonds (p. 325), illuminator Betty Goldsmith (p. 125), bookbinder Gwendoline Ridgway (p. 283) and engraver Ellen Rushton (p. 294) are rescued from obscurity. Entries, ranging from a few lines to multiple columns, typically summarise each figure's creative field/s, family history, artistic training, outputs and achievements, and contributions to exhibitions, institutions, circles and movements – particularly the Arts and Crafts movement. It highlights the proliferation of women artists' societies and developing networks among women, as well as their progressive formation of marital creative partnerships. For example, Edith and Nelson Dawson 'formed a design partnership' on marriage (p. 81); Jessie and Francis Newbery both had 'demanding careers at the Glasgow School' (p. 245); and Mary and George Watts collaborated on part of the Surrey Hills mortuary chapel (p. 357). Other biographical details coincide with the renewed fascination with Pre-Raphaelitism: for example, Madame Maria Zambaco

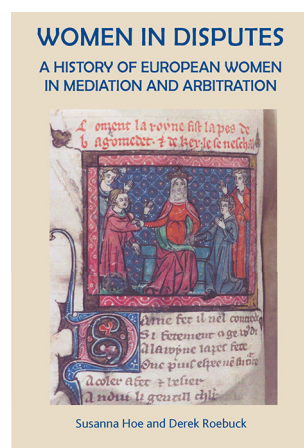
was the model and mistress of Edward Burne-Jones, but with her money and independence became a reputable portrait sculptor and medallist who exhibited at the Royal Academy (p. 380).

The presentation of 1000 biographies is in itself is a commendable feat which reflects the impressive breadth, painstaking research, and ambitious scope of this project. The sheer number of entries testifies to the active contribution of women to the wider creative arts and their undervalued roles as professional, successful and influential cultural producers. While this dictionary of British decorative women artists may be the largest of its kind, both in book dimensions and number of entries, its precise conceptual and chronological parameters – as well as the selection and number of women – are not entirely clear from the short four-page preface. This offers a helpful if rather general overview of art and design history, laying the groundwork for the ensuing entries. The scarcity of integrated illustrations to animate the entries is a shame in a publication on visual culture, and the exquisite few included in the first and final pages leave the reader pining for more.

Nonetheless, this book remains highly useful as an inventory and dictionary, and will no doubt influence and inspire projects in the fields of, for example, Art History, Art and Design, and Women's Studies. It is fitting that this book, containing entries on suffragette enameller Ernestine Mills, suffrage banner-maker Mary Lowndes, and suffragist designer Mary Watts, was published in the immediate wake of the suffrage centenary. It is comparable, for example, with Elizabeth Crawford's *Art and Suffrage: A Biographical Dictionary of Suffrage Artists* (Francis Boutle, 2018). Gray's book highlights both the personal and the political aspects of women's decorative arts, and makes a significant contribution to the preservation of women's history.

Susanna Hoe and Derek Roebuck, *Women in Disputes: A History of European Women in Mediation and Arbitration*, Oxford: HOLO Books, 2018. £20, 978-0-9572153-2-0 (paperback), pp. xiv + 260

Reviewed by Emily Ireland
The University of Adelaide



Derek Roebuck and Susanna Hoe are both accomplished academics with impressive publishing records in their respective fields of mediation and arbitration, and women's history. *Women in Disputes*, the first co-authored offering from this husband and wife team, is published through the authors' own publishing house, HOLO books, and has been designed to appeal to both the academic and casual reader.

Much work on the history of women's involvement in law as litigants, where constraints abounded, has been undertaken by scholars such as Tim Stretton and Margaret Hunt. The history of women's involvement in the more informal setting of arbitration is less

developed, and a book dedicated to the matter overdue. The publishing of this volume is particularly pertinent in the wake of The Pledge for Equal Representation in Arbitration in 2015, which called to increase the number of women appointed arbitrators. *Women in Disputes* challenges the assumption that women's involvement in dispute resolution has been minimal throughout history. It ably shows that women have been involved in arbitration, both as parties and as mediators, for a significant period. Roebuck and Hoe adopt the delightful term 'peaceweavers' to describe the women under study. These European women, evidently constrained by the strictures of patriarchy, were willing to secure 'peace and harmony' and 'prevent hostility, by whatever means worked' (p. 5). As each chapter demonstrates, this could involve marriage, advising, will-writing, going to law, or 'riding out on a donkey between two armies' (p. 5).

The book covers a vast time period and geographical area. The first chapter focuses on women of ancient Greece and Rome. The reader is then guided through an exploration of women of Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Elizabethan England, fourteenth and fifteenth century France, and fifteenth-century Malta, amongst others, ending up in the eighteenth-century civil and criminal courts of England. This journey is navigated via a series of discrete, meticulously illustrated vignettes regarding the involvement of various women, or groups of women, in dispute resolution. Rarely does a history book include a cast of characters from such diverse periods and regions. This is perhaps the first time Deborah from the Old Testament has rubbed shoulders with Isabella of France and Bess of Hardwicke.

The chapter on the Age of Elizabeth is well-researched, covering women as regular petitioners in the Privy Council, Chancery and Court of Requests, and detailing women's involvement in the resolution of clashes over private family matters concerning property and land, as well as commercial disputes. The story of Queen Elizabeth's involvement in resolving a dispute between Bess of Hardwicke and her husband is indicative of the inevitable skew towards wealthy, titled women, dictated by the sources available. This bias is remedied, however, in a chapter on untitled women in Medieval England that demonstrates mediation was readily accessible to the less-wealthy spinsters, wives and widows of the era.

The chapter on the eighteenth century similarly focuses on untitled women and makes use of a vast array of sources from informal out-of-court agreements to the formal settings of English courts, including the Old Bailey and Chancery, as depicted in court records and Justice's notebooks. Old Bailey and Quarter Sessions Judges demonstrated willingness to use alternative methods of dispute resolution. Similarly, Rhiannon Markless' archival research informs a section on Chancery detailing how Lord Chancellors regularly ordered cases to be resolved by arbitration. However, as a case heard at the Devon Assizes evidences, mediation and arbitration did not always favour women, and their involvement with the law 'was not necessarily to their advantage' (p. 230). Women in France, seeking to ensure peace within their families, used will-writing to avoid future disputes.

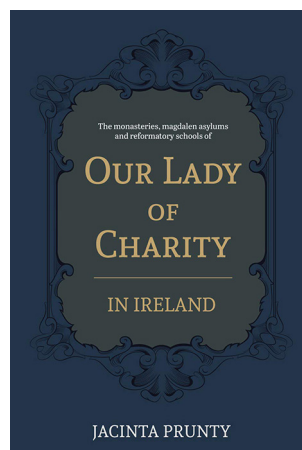
A chapter dedicated to the formidable Lady Anne Clifford, a woman who resolutely refused to arbitrate over the ownership of her father's entailed lands, closes the book with an interesting juxtaposition. This case study of a woman who

demonstrated such autonomy and determination is a fitting sign-off.

The writing is sometimes clunky, this has perhaps not been helped by the decision to work references to secondary and primary sources into the text (with a bibliography at the end of each chapter) instead of providing footnotes. This also makes locating the origin of certain quoted passages difficult. A little more analysis and narrative threading the work together would also not have gone amiss. But, overall the book may be viewed as a useful encyclopaedia of women involved in arbitration over history; one that surely provides a springboard for future, concentrated work on particular women, places or time periods within the history of dispute resolution. As the authors themselves conclude, 'We hope our efforts will stimulate others to continue this exploration' (p. 261).

Jacinta Prunty, *The Monasteries, Magdalen Asylums and Reformatory Schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland 1853-1973*, Dublin: Columba Press, 2017. £34.99, 978-1-78218-322-8 (hardback), pp. 608

Reviewed by Tahaney Alghrani
University of Liverpool



In September 1996, the last Magdalene Laundry, the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity on Sean MacDermott Street, Dublin, closed its doors. The history of these institutions has been unfolding through an oral testimony of the mistreatment, exploitation and long-term detainment of females in the Magdalen asylums. There has been a recent controversy surrounding the graves unearthed in various locations in

connection to various institutions, and the publication of the McAleese Report in 2013 concluded that there was no evidence of physical or sexual abuse in the institutions which it investigated. Against this backdrop, Jacinta Prunty has researched and published this detailed historical book on the monasteries and Magdalene of Our Lady of Charity. Prunty states that she hopes that the book will contribute 'to deepening the knowledge and understanding of the complex issue of Magdalen refuges and laundries' (p. 26). Prunty draws on extensive archival records to which she had access in Dublin, Caen and Rome, concentrating on the documentary records of the Institutions run by the order of Our Lady of Charity.

The book contains a detailed and extensive study of the institutions, with reference to the social and economic landscape throughout this period. The first three chapters start from the historical beginning, detailing the history of the order right back to its establishment in Caen, France, in the 17th century to their arrival in Ireland in 1853 to the refuge in Drumcondra. Prunty locates their arrival in Ireland shortly after the Irish famine when poverty, destitution and starvation

were at their peak and the nuns came to help alleviate and offer refuge to destitute women. The comprehensive history offers insights into the social changes and urban landscape. As well as the history of Magdalens, Prunty's next two chapters focus on the history of the reformatory and industrial schools. These institutions were designed to house adolescents and children up to the age of 16, which were established in 1854 in England, and Prunty cites the philanthropist and reformer, Mary Carpenter, in this regard: 'The advocate for the reformatory movement best known in Ireland was Miss Mary Carpenter' (p. 177). Prunty maintains that the Red Lodge Reformatory was cited as the model for the regime at St Joseph's juvenile reform movement. The child-centred approach to reform was a move away from detaining children with adults.

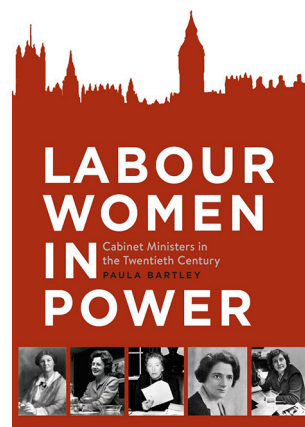
The remaining chapters describe the changes that occurred over time from the nineteenth century to the early 1970s. In the chapter 'The Remaking of Gloucester Street Magdalene Asylum and Convent in the Period 1887-1949', Prunty states that the laundry business was 'more of a drain on resources than a generator of income' (p. 267). Prunty also includes data on admissions to the institutions, in which she is keen to highlight that females were entering and exiting the laundries and the number who remained longer, for more than two years, was very small. Prunty outlines the individual admission case of Mary Amelia, who had stayed briefly in the asylum, returning 18 years later to escape an abusive relationship; she remained in the institution until her death due to being blind and bedridden for the last six years of her life. The individual details of the girls admitted to the institutions are limited in the book and draw attention to the lack of detailed histories we have of the females who were admitted to the Magdalen asylums and reformatories between 1853-1973.

The book draws upon extensive archives and includes quantitative data, as well as photographs and maps. Prunty was in the privileged position to access the institutional archives in Dublin, Caens and Rome. However, we must rely on her interpretation of the extensive historical sources, which are not within the public domain. Public access to these archives for further historical researchers may open up further research projects, in particular more research on the females who were admitted to these institutions, particularly details on how the girls themselves navigated these institutional spaces. What were their pathways into the institutions, the period of incarceration and their lives after leaving? What were the histories of the females who have for decades been trying to voice their experiences of these institutions? Although this may prove difficult in light of ethical considerations and data protection, it would provide a complete history and a perspective from those who were resident, not just the institutional perspective. Notwithstanding the many issues surrounding the Magdalen institutions and reformatory schools at this present time, the book offers detailed historical research on the institutions of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland between 1853-1973.

Paula Bartley, *Labour Women in Power: Cabinet Ministers in the Twentieth Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. £22.99, 978-3-030-14287-2 (paperback), pp. xii+324

Reviewed by Anna Muggeridge

University of Worcester



In *Labour Women in Power*, Paula Bartley offers the first collective study of the Labour women Cabinet Ministers appointed before 1997: Margaret Bondfield, Ellen Wilkinson, Barbara Castle, Judith Hart and Shirley Williams. That only five women were appointed is, she justly claims, 'a lamentable statistic': 'nearly one hundred' male Labour MPs held Cabinet office in the same period (p. 1). Nonetheless, as Bartley demonstrates, all five made a

remarkable contribution to British politics. The five were united in that they were the only female Labour MPs awarded Cabinet positions before 1997 but, as is made clear throughout, they were in all other respects very different. In their early lives and entry into politics, these contrasts are most marked, but even once in government, the distinctions continued: all positioned themselves politically in different wings of the party, and all sought to govern in their own unique way. Despite these at times marked contrasts, however, the five were united in that 'all functioned in a male world' (p. 14). *Labour Women in Power* explores the contributions the five women made to British politics, from inside and outside of the Cabinet.

After a general introduction, the five are profiled in order of first appointment. In turn, one chapter gives a general biography of the individual's life to this point, then a chapter examines her experiences as a Cabinet Minister and afterwards. Some of these profiles are more familiar than others. Interestingly, as Bartley notes, Bondfield and Hart are yet to be the subjects of scholarly biographies, although this volume does go some way towards correcting this oversight. In contrast, Castle, Williams and especially Wilkinson have all been the subject of several biographies—indeed, the chapters on Wilkinson here draw heavily on Bartley's own 2014 biography. Taking a collective approach, however, allows *Labour Women in Power* to reframe some of these more familiar stories, contextualising individuals' successes and failures, and comparing the circumstances by which all were able to rise into the upper echelons of government—if not the very top.

Although a significant proportion were touted, at one time, as potential first woman Prime Ministers, none of the five were appointed to one of the four great offices of state—Prime Minister, Chancellor, Home Secretary or Foreign Secretary. Even at Cabinet level, women 'tended to be offered posts thought to be extensions of the home and family' (p. 10). In their various appointments, some had more success than others, although Bartley is sympathetic to those who were commonly felt to have failed, pointing to the often extremely challenging circumstances in which they had to operate. For instance, Bondfield was widely condemned by feminists and

Labour politicians for cutting women's unemployment benefits in 1931 but as Bartley notes, she cannot be held responsible for the worldwide financial crisis which was at least partially responsible for the need for the cut (p. 66).

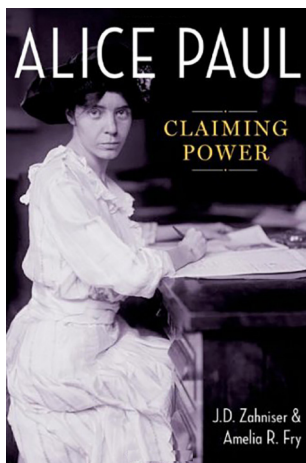
In constructing these biographies, Bartley draws upon a wealth of scholarly research and primary sources. All five women left an extensive archive of personal and political papers, and Bondfield, Castle and Williams also published diaries or autobiographies. Given this wealth of material, it is inevitable that the sections of the book which do not concentrate on the years an individual was in Cabinet are covered in somewhat sweeping summaries. Castle's decade as MEP in Europe, for instance, is covered in a little over a page and a half. Of course, the main focus of the book is the roles these women held in Cabinet and considering their experiences after this, even briefly, truly highlights their differences.

As is demonstrated throughout, the personal and political experiences of the five were dissimilar, and all, of course, worked in different circumstances and roles, at different times. It is therefore somewhat challenging to draw general conclusions about what it took to be a Labour woman in power. In the final chapter, then, Bartley looks forward, considering the ways the five women's presence in Cabinet contributed to women's widening participation in politics throughout the twentieth century, which increased in 1997 when Tony Blair appointed five women to his first Cabinet. This was progress, she suggests, but these five still had to operate in a male world—as, arguably, women politicians still must today.

Labour Women in Power will be extremely useful to undergraduates studying twentieth-century British political history, while also informing scholars interested in the history of the Labour Party and in women's participation in politics. Most importantly, however, its highly readable style is accessible to a general audience, allowing the significant contributions these five women made to British politics to be more widely recalled and celebrated.

J. D. Zahniser & Amelia R. Fry, *Alice Paul: Claiming Power*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. £24.49, 978 0 19 093293 0 (paperback), pp. xii + 395

Reviewed by Elizabeth J. Clapp
University of Leicester



While perhaps not as well-known as some of the other American suffrage leaders, Alice Paul (1885-1977) has, nonetheless, been the subject of several studies. This new biography draws on extensive research and argues that it was Paul's leadership of a previously moribund suffrage movement that was instrumental in gaining the Federal Suffrage Amendment in 1920. The work has had a long gestation period. Research was started by Amelia Fry in the early 1970s when she

interviewed Paul as part of the Suffragist Oral History Project at the Bancroft Library. She continued to explore Paul's life in archive collections in the United States and Great Britain, until

ill-health forced her to give up the project and the biography she had begun to draft. J. D. Zahniser, an independent scholar, agreed to complete the work following Fry's death in 2005, utilising Fry's research notes and drafts.

The resulting biography gives us a very detailed portrait of Paul's life from her Quaker roots in New Jersey, to her career as a suffrage activist in Britain and the United States. The first part of the book covers Paul's early life and education, together with her apprenticeship as a suffragist in Britain. She became committed to the suffrage cause during her studies at the Quaker Woodbrooke Centre in Birmingham, when a speech by Christabel Pankhurst inspired her. Paul gradually became more involved in the Pankhursts' militant campaign for suffrage in Britain, learning the efficacy of direct action and the publicity value of being arrested, imprisoned and going on hunger strike. She was force-fed by the prison authorities, causing lasting damage to her health, but the consequent newspaper coverage meant that when she returned to the US in early 1910 she was already well-known as a militant.

The bulk of the book is concerned with Paul's leadership of the more radical branch of the American suffrage movement. Zahniser and Fry ascribe the new energy of the suffrage movement in the second decade of the twentieth century to Paul's organisational and tactical skills. When Paul returned to the United States, the authors contend, the existing suffrage movement was stagnant, focused predominantly on unsuccessful state campaigns, and lacking an inspirational leader who would encourage younger women to join the suffrage cause. Paul focused on gaining the vote through a federal amendment to the Constitution. She introduced some of the strategies she had learned in Britain and secured a younger following for the American campaign. Though increasingly at odds with the leadership of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), she organised parades and spectacles in Washington in order to influence Congress. She also adopted the Pankhursts' tactic of holding the party in power responsible for the slow progress of the cause, blaming President Woodrow Wilson in particular. Putting the pressure on Wilson, Paul posted pickets outside the White House and organised demonstrations which prompted her own arrest and imprisonment, where she again faced force-feeding. Paul was a consummate publicist and succeeded in forcing the suffrage cause into the political consciousness of Americans. But, the authors acknowledge, there were some shortcomings in her methods. Paul was not particularly inclusive, preferring to rely on wealthy white women and averse to including African American suffragists in any of her parades, believing their presence to be detrimental to the cause. She also clashed constantly with Carrie Chapman Catt, the leader of the NAWSA, splitting the movement. However, the authors argue, Paul and the Congressional Union ultimately secured the Nineteenth Amendment.

This is a very well researched biography, which offers new details about Alice Paul's life and makes a strong case for her importance in securing the federal suffrage amendment. It has some limitations however. Despite extensive research, it reveals little new about Paul's personal life. Paul was an intensely private person and the authors have not probed beneath the surface to uncover Paul's close personal relationships. Nor do we learn much about the ideas or values that motivated her – the authors often mention Paul's Quaker roots, but a deeper examination of what her spiritual life meant to her is missing.

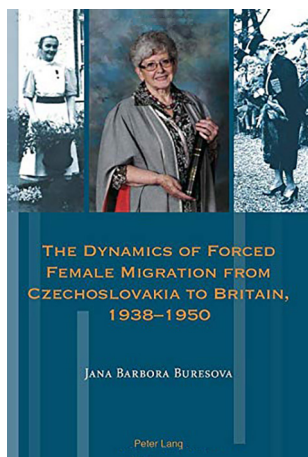
Moreover, it is incomplete as the story of Paul's life, ending with the passing of the federal amendment in 1919. The ratification campaign and the rest of Paul's life as a woman's rights activist is covered in a few hurried pages. It is also a very traditional biography, centred on Paul herself and seen through Paul's eyes, sometimes to the extent of being almost hagiographical. The authors' interest is with Alice Paul and they make little attempt to place her life in the context of the wider suffrage movement or the extensive scholarship on the issue. The details of Paul's activism are certainly interesting, but an evaluation of her contribution to the suffrage cause is lacking.

Jana Barбора Buresova, *The Dynamics of Forced Migration from Czechoslovakia to Britain, 1938-1950*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019. £48.00, 978 1 78874 446 1 (paperback) pp.xxii + 326

Reviewed by Susan Cohen

Independent Scholar

Honorary Fellow of the Parkes Institute, University of Southampton



The subject of forced migration is of historical and topical interest, and Jana Buresova's book is a timely addition, for it fills a gap in the Anglo-Czechoslovakian historiography by providing a unique and nuanced insight into the various experiences faced specifically by women refugees from Czechoslovakia to Britain between 1938-50. This is undertaken against the socio-political background of the major political upheaval which resulted from two totalitarian regimes,

Fascism and Communism. Introductory notes provide essential background to the complicated geopolitical history of Czechoslovakia, which suffered the 'foreseeable, but unintended' (p.15) fallout from the Munich Agreement in September 1938. Handing over the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia to the Germans precipitated the first wave of flight from Nazi oppression, followed by a surge when the whole country was occupied in mid-March 1939. Her focus on the work of the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), established in October 1938, has enabled Buresova to examine the cases of some of the 500 women whom the BCRC helped to escape to Britain and to consider the challenges which confronted them on arrival and beyond. Her use of oral interviews adds 'layers of meaning to the topic of refugee women in exile' (p.13), and importantly, the interviewees' memories are substantiated and supported by a wide range of private documents. Adjusting to life in Britain was a huge challenge, and many women were billeted in hostels, a far cry from private home life and their Central European family structure. The 'model' hostel set up by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund (CRTF), the successor to the BCRC, in Fortis Green, East Finchley, was an exception, and harmoniously housed some fifty women and children, but elsewhere communal life led to 'considerable tension, even friction at times' as well as health issues (p. 39).

As Buresova demonstrates, women refugees were severely

disadvantaged by Britain's restrictive immigration policy, for entry generally depended upon the issue of a domestic work or nursing permit, satisfying the needs of the labour force rather than those of the refugees. Domestic service in particular caused problems, for many of the refugee women had employed maids and servants themselves, and knew nothing about housework or cooking, and the role reversal was hard to deal with. Some interviewees felt 'humiliated and offended at having to use the separate servants' entrance and toilet "as if we were dirty"' (p. 52).

Czech refugees were considered friendly enemy aliens in 1939, and the introduction of a policy of mass internment in Britain in May 1940 had a negative impact on their status. The transition from being a 'self-respecting refugee' to being interned on the Isle of Man 'like criminals' and further isolated from the real world was 'a cause of misery' to many (pp. 71-2). Many mothers and children who were separated from one another suffered enormously, and, as Buresova describes, 'endured the pain of separation, displacement, adjustment, and, in some cases, rejection, their feelings variously concealed or conveyed in actions, words and letters over the years' (p.133). Nevertheless, following their release in circa 1941, these same women showed a determination to 'make the best of the situation' (p. 96) and, as anti-Fascists, to support the British war effort. They had a new purpose in life and for some it offered unexpected freedom and independence. Many of them worked for the largely unknown Czechoslovak Red Cross (CRC), temporarily established in London on 1 September 1940, whose remit was 'wide-ranging and far-reaching' (p.101). Others were employed variously as machinists, another trained as a journalist, whilst one worked as a bus conductor in South Manchester. Exceptionally, Dorrit Epstein became the only known Czechoslovak in the Women's Royal Naval Service (p.121). Amongst the unsung heroines of the war were several Czechoslovak women who were engaged in secret service operations, from working as translators at Bletchley Park to making contact, through the 'Y service', with German pilots and deliberately misdirecting them.

In her conclusion, Buresova weighs up the cost of forced migration for the women in her study. Their perseverance in the face of adversity enabled them to settle and to 'gradually assimilate over the years, absorbing "British" culture without necessarily abandoning their own' (p. 265). Re-adjustment came at a price, for like their British counterparts they had to give up war-time jobs, newly-found freedoms and independence, in favour of returning servicemen. Many went on to make great contributions in the fields of medicine, teaching and social work, but 'personal achievement evaded some women ... who never realized their aspirations in exile' (p. 280). Not surprisingly, the long-term impact of expulsion was huge, especially for Jewish Czechoslovaks, whose families were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Buresova successfully weaves social history, politics and oral history in this excellent study, and whilst acknowledging that Britain provided a safe haven for many Czechoslovak women from 1939, she leaves her readers to consider whether Brexit 'will preserve or destroy Britain's goodwill towards Czech and Slovak citizens in the future?' (p. 289).

POSTSCRIPT: In November 2019, Jana Buresova was awarded the Honorary Silver Medal of Jan Masaryk for her personal contribution to the development of relations between the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom.

BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALLS FOR REVIEWERS

The following titles are available for review, so if you like to review any of the titles listed below, please email Katharina Rowold, Book Reviews Editor, at bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org.

You don't have to be an expert to review. If you have a general interest and knowledge of the relevant historical period or territory then that will count for a lot. The ability to summarise a work (within the word limit!) and write interestingly about it is the most important thing. Any suggestions for books to review are also welcome - just email the book reviews editor as above.

Akko Takeuchi-Demirci, *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States and Japan* (Stanford University Press, 2018)

Keridwen N. Luis, *Herlands, Exploring the Women's Land Movement in the United States* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018)

Honey McConie, *Hildegard of Bingen: Rediscovering the Genius of the Medieval Composer, Theologian, and Visionary* (University of Illinois Press, 2018)

Penny A. Weiss (ed.), *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (NYU Press, 2018)

Fiona J Griffiths, *Nuns' Priests' Tales: Men and Salvation in Medieval Women's Monastic Life* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018)

Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds), *Irish Women and the Vote*, new edition (Irish Academic Press, 2018)

Rose-Marie Crossan, *A Women's History of Guernsey 1850s-1950s* (Mòr Media, 2018)

Brianna Leavitt-Alcantara, *Alone at the Altar: Single Women & Devotion in Guatemala, 1670-1870* (Stanford University Press, 2018)

David Bell, *Reds, Rebels and Radicals: Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire* (Five Leaves, 2019)

Martin Sheppard (ed.), *Love on Inishcoo, 1787: A Donegal Romance* (Matador, 2018)

Jean Barman, *Invisible Generations: Living between Indigenous and White in the Fraser Valley* (Caitlin Press, 2019)

Jennifer Godfrey, *Suffragettes of Kent* (Pen & Sword, 2019)

Lucy Ella Rose, *Suffragists Artists in Partnership: Gender, Word and Image* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018)

Bonnie G. Smith, *Women in World History: 1450 to the Present* (Bloomsbury, 2020)

Diana Peschier, *Lost Souls: Women, Religion and Mental Illness in the Victorian Asylum* (Bloomsbury, 2020)

Dawn Durante (ed.) *100 Years of Women's Suffrage: A University of Illinois Anthology* (University of Illinois Press, 2019)

Roberta J.M. Olson, *Artist in Exile: The Visual Diary of Baroness Hyde de Neville* (D Giles, 2019)

Karen Harvey, *The Imposteress Rabbit Breeder: Mary Toft and Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 2020)

Cassia Roth, *A Miscarriage of Justice: Women's Reproductive Lives and the Law in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Stanford University Press, 2020)

Teresa Crompton, *Adventuress: The Life and Loves of Lucy, Lady Houston* (The History Press, 2020)

Julie Peakman, *Licentious Worlds: Sex and Exploitation in Global Empires* (Reaktion, 2019)

Frances B. Singh, *Scandal and Survival in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: The Life of Jane Cumming* (University of Rochester, 2020)

Patricia and Robert Malcomson (eds), *The Bedford Diary of Leah Ansley, 1943-1946* (The Boydell Press, 2020)

Lara Freidenfelds, *The Myth of the Perfect Pregnancy: A History of Miscarriage in America* (Oxford University Press, 2020)

Emily Priscott, *Singleness in Britain, 1960-1990: Identity, Gender and Social Change* (Vernon Press, 2020)

Committee News

The Steering Committee last met on 18 April 2020 via Slack [online].

Budget and membership

Our finances are healthy. As of the 15th April we have the following in our bank accounts - £25,994.76 (£22,952.80 15th April 2019) current account, £10,066.86 (£10,046.59 15th April 2019) savings account. With committed spending including the extra £4700 we allocated in January's meeting to various

bursaries/grants/prizes and projected income until the end of August 2020 this brings our projected balance on the current account of approximately £16,000 which, together with the savings account, gives us funds of £26,000.

Membership is fairly quiet at this time of year, although we have had a few new members. It has been agreed that the period of grace from non-payment of renewal to suspension should be increased to six months, applied to anyone due to renew from February onwards.

We have redirected some of our funds into a 'Corona Virus Hardship Fund', and have funded several applicants to date.

Women's History Journal

The journal is in good shape for the immediate future, with a number of exciting forthcoming issues planned. We are having a number of exciting discussions about potentially revising some of the additional content of the magazine, which we will report back on soon.

Blog

Do remember to take a look at the Women's History Network blog which is very active! Recent posts include: 'Unseen: Women in Policing in Devon and Cornwall' by Pam Giles, 'How Has the Media Shaped Feminism? An Example from the West German Women's Movement' by Jane Freeland and 'Modern Mothers in Ghana's Newspapers 1960–1975' by Holly Ashford ... amongst many others.

Annual Conference for 2020

Following a Steering Committee meeting at the end of April and with the full consideration of the current Corona Virus pandemic, we have decided to postpone our 2020 Annual WHN Conference. The new date for the conference will be the

15–16 January 2021. This conference will be a slightly scaled-down version of what was originally planned in September, with the first day of the conference being dedicated to a series of workshops on women's history.

We are hoping that the majority of accepted papers will be delivered in January, but we will also have a number of internet activities taking place when the conference should have occurred at the beginning of September. Look out for further details nearer the time and go to

<https://womenshistorynetwork.org/homes-food-and-farms/> to see our new extended second call for papers for the January conference.

Date of next meeting

September 2020 [exact date to be confirmed]. All WHN members are welcome.

Getting to Know Each Other

Name

Nancy Highcock

Position

Postdoctoral Researcher at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge.

How long have you been a WHN member?

I have been a member and committee member since September 2019.

What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?

I came to women's history later in my academic career as I was beginning my PhD. I had always been interested in women's history but had but didn't take a serious interest until taking a PhD course in feminist and gender archaeology. In this course, I not only took up a keen interest in women's material culture, craft activities and socio-economic roles, but began to think more critically about how archaeologists and historians write about women in the ancient past.

What are your special interests?

I am currently working on an article with Christina Tsouparopoulou about the types of objects that women dedicated to the divine from the 3rd through 1st millennium BCE in ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq). Some of these objects bore inscriptions with information about the female dedicants so we can also learn things about how these women constructed their own identities. I am particularly interested in the non-elite women who had access to such objects and temple spaces. This research stems from our larger project which is analysing all aspects of ancient Mesopotamian

identities and religious practice through the objects and inscriptions they donated to the gods.

Recently, I published a piece on toggle-pins that are common across the ancient Near East during the Bronze Age (3rd and 2nd millennium BCE). These pins, often made from precious metals, were often presented to women upon marriage, consecration as a priestess, or included in her funerary offerings. I am particularly interested in how women could use these clothing adornments as capital, trading them in or selling them during times of financial hardship. This has led me to become interested in the relationship between women, their precious items and modern pawn shops, and I hope to pursue some comparative work in this vein. In ancient Anatolia (Turkey) where I excavate, women could also use these pins as stamp seals and I am currently working on a paper which examines why women used their pins to stamp loom weights—looking at the intersection between clothing adornments and female textile workers 4000 years ago.

Who is your heroine from history and why?

Professor Dorothy Garrod was the Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge (1939-1952) and the first woman to hold a chair at either Oxford or Cambridge. At this time, women could not be full members of the university and she could not vote on university business until 1948. In 2019, the McDonald Institute held a special event for the unveiling of her long overdue portrait which was painted by a young artist, Sarah Levelle. Looking around at the numerous female faculty members, my fellow postdocs and students, I felt very proud for how far women in archaeology have come!

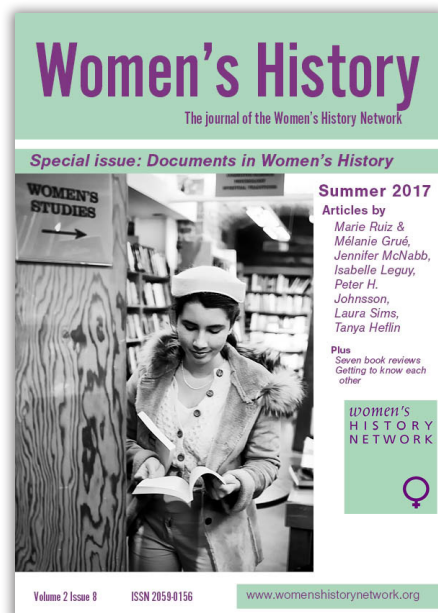
Publishing in *Women's History*

Women's History welcomes contributions from experienced scholars and those at an earlier stage in their research careers. We aim to be inclusive and fully recognise that women's history is not only lodged in the academy. All submissions are subject to the usual peer-review process.

Articles should be 3000-8000 words in length. Contributors are requested to submit articles in final form, carefully following the style guidelines available at:

[www.womenshistorynetwork.org/
whnmagazine/authorguide.html](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org/whnmagazine/authorguide.html)

Please email your submission, as a word attachment, to the editors at
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org



Women's History Network National Steering Committee and Other Contacts - 2019

Maggie Andrews (Chair)
chair@womenshistorynetwork.org.

Laurel Foster - deputy chair and Journal

Becki Hines – Treasurer

Lyndsey Jenkins - (Archive) Secretary

Amy Dale - Schools Liaison

Gillian Murphy Newsletter Editor

Beth Jenkins - Charity Rep

Sian Edwards Social Media

Susan Cohen - Joint Membership Secretary

Jane O'Neill - [Joint](#) Membership Secretary

Kate Law - Blog

Dr Alexandra Hughes-Johnson - Conference support role

Anna Muggeridge - IFRWH

Nancy Highcock - Website and publicity

Sarah Frank - Prizes and grants

Zoe Thomas - Journal Liason

Non Steering Committee members of the Journal Editorial Team: Sue Hawkins, Hollie Mather, Angela Platt, Ellie Macdonald and Kiera Wilkins.

Kate Murphy - WHN Journal Editor

Katharina Rowold - Journal Book Reviews Editor

For Journal submissions and peer review, journal/magazine back issues and queries please contact
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

To submit books for review please email the book reviews editor with details of the book to be reviewed.
bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

Chair of Book Prize Panel - Paula Bartley
bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

Chair of Community History Prize Panel - Elspeth King
communityhistoryprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

*To join the WHN just go to
www.womenshistorynetwork.org/join-us/ and follow the instructions.
Donations and Gift-Aid declarations can all be
accessed online as well*

Why not join the Women's History Network?

The **Women's History Network** is a national association and charity for the promotion of women's history and the encouragement of women and men interested in women's history. Following our establishment in 1991 we have grown year by year and today we are a UK national charity with members including working historians, researchers, independent scholars, teachers, librarians, and many other individuals both within academia and beyond. Indeed, the network reaches out to welcome women and men from any background who share a passion for women's history. The WHN is controlled by its members who elect a national steering committee who manage our activities and business.

Conference

The annual WHN conference, which is held each September, is a highlight for most of our members. It is known for being a very friendly and welcoming event, providing an exciting forum where people from the UK and beyond can meet and share research and interests. Each year well known historians are invited as plenary speakers and bursaries are offered to enable postgraduate students or those on a low income to attend.

Prizes and Grants

The WHN offers annual community history and book prizes, grants for conferences and ECR and independent researcher fellowships.

Networking

Of course, talking to each other is essential to the work and culture of the Women's History Network. We run a members' email list and try to provide support for members or groups who organise local conferences or other events connected to women's history that bring people together.

Publication

WHN members receive three copies of our peer reviewed journal, *Women's History*, each year. The content of the journal is wide ranging from articles discussing research, sources and applications of women's history, to reviews of books, conferences, meetings and exhibitions, as well as information on calls for papers, prizes and competitions, and publication opportunities. The journal is delivered electronically in PDF form to all members via email, but members, can elect to receive a printed hardcopy of *Women's History* for an increased membership fee.

WHN membership

Annual Membership Rates (*/ with journal hardcopy / with journal overseas delivery*)

Student or unwaged member	£15 / £20 / £30
Low income member (*under £20,000 pa)	£25 / £30 / £40
Standard member	£40 / £45 / £55
Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£350
Retired Life Membership(includes journal hardcopy)	£175

The easiest way to join the Women's History Network is online – via our website – go to
<https://womenshistorynetwork.org/join-us/>