

'Sinful Singleness'? Exploring the Discourses on Irish Single Women's Emigration to England, 1922–1948

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In the interwar and immediate post-war years, the persistently high rates of emigration by young, single Irish women gave rise to worries over their moral and spiritual welfare. This was partly because of their assumed extreme vulnerability as women coming from rural locations to the metropolises of England. It seems that the combination of their singleness and their gender was the prime reason for the concern evinced predominantly by the Roman Catholic Church, but also by lay organisations and the Irish governments. Multiple sources of danger for girls were perceived from their journey 'across the water' to their places of employment, from which they were in need of help and protection, if not prohibition. The majority of pronouncements on the topic were negative towards women, but no equivalent amount of concern was given to male migrants often of similar age and background and who also migrated as single persons. Thus, singleness was a gendered 'problem'. Whilst studies of Irish female emigrants have focused on their experiences of being immigrants and their identity as white women who are in Bronwen Walter's words 'outsiders inside', less attention has been paid to ways in which their single status became a marker of concern over morals and behaviour. Indeed, it is argued here that this was the particular reason why such moralistic discourses existed. This article seeks to explore some of the complexities of the public and private voices engaged in the debates over whether single female emigration could be equated with sinful behaviour and the gendered implications of migrants' marital status.

Introduction

The title of this article comes from the apparent connection in the minds of many in Catholic Ireland of the 1920s, 30s and 40s between the state of singleness and the state

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of sin. Whilst persons remained unmarried their conduct was monitored and concern expressed about any perceived transgressions in behaviour. As Kennedy has argued, 'the Irish desired and received from their clergy a very strong emphasis on the dangers and sinfulness of sex among single persons'.¹

Particular concern was evoked in the context of migration, where watchful eyes could no longer ensure that single people could be kept from sin. Sinfulness and singleness were intertwined within moralistic discourses on many topics, ranging from the reading of immoral literature, watching inappropriate films, and improper behaviour at dances.² Despite a long history of migration to England and elsewhere, the advent of political autonomy brought with it a change of emphasis in discussions of emigration from being a 'tragic problem' of colonial origin to a political and moral discourse on the implications of many young, single people leaving the nation at a crucial point in political independence.³ Youth and marital status were pivotal features of these discourses, and gender and morality were lenses through which both were viewed.

Given the predominance of single women and men throughout the history of migration from Ireland, the study of emigration, in the Irish context, must include an examination of singleness, and this is particularly necessary in the time period addressed in this article. However, marital status and its sociocultural implications have been researched and theorised to a lesser extent than gender, ethnicity and the actual experience of being an immigrant. Yet it is the intersection of ideologies based on *both* gender and marital status, and specifically on singleness, which coalesced to produce the discourses under discussion here.⁴ This article will explore the ways in which, in contrast to their male peers, Irish women's single status as well as their gender became a key focus of attention.

The article utilises a combination of public and private discourses, particularly drawing upon government reports; for example, the surveys and transcripts of evidence that form the background to the report by the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems. These reports have thus far not featured heavily in historical research on the period, perhaps due to the tendency to focus on the *experience* of emigration rather than official policies or reports. Combining the two allows for a more nuanced analysis of the history and moral implications of Irish women emigrants to England in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.⁵

To briefly contextualise the issue, the period under consideration saw high numbers of Irish men and women emigrating to find better prospects in other lands. In general terms, emigrant girls from Ireland fitted a particular profile: they tended to be Catholic,⁶ very young, with one-third aged between 15 and 19 years and a further third between 20 and 24 years,⁷ were usually from rural areas, and were generally destined for domestic service jobs, although there is much evidence to suggest that they also worked in the large factories, hotels and in nursing and clerical work. Both male and female emigrants were largely drawn from the working classes engaged in unskilled or agricultural labour whose working arrangements in Ireland were generally unstable and poorly paid.⁸ Indeed, part of the concern about emigrants was their perceived inability to exercise

Table 1. Net Emigration from Ireland, 1911–1951

Intercensal period	Total persons	Males	Females	Number of females emigrating per 1,000 males
Average annual numbers				
1911–1926	27,002	13,934	13,068	938
1926–1936	16,675	7,255	9,420	1,298
1936–1946	18,711	11,258	7,453	662
1946–1951	24,384	10,309	14,075	1,365
Annual rate of net migration per 1,000 average population				
1911–1926	8.8	9.0	8.7	
1926–1936	5.6	4.8	6.5	
1936–1946	6.3	7.5	5.1	
1946–1951	8.2	6.9	9.7	

Source: *Majority Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems*, Table 86, page 111.

restraint with their newfound economic independence in England. Referring specifically to female emigrants, government officials saw economic independence as one of the key factors leading to their moral downfall in Great Britain.⁹

Despite being referred to as ‘unnatural’¹⁰ and ‘evil’ in the popular Catholic press, migration in this period was a continuation of long-established trends in Ireland. However, the period saw a shift away from the USA as the most popular destination and a reorienting of emigrants towards Great Britain. This change of destination and the steady growth in rates of migration from Ireland were both elements of the ‘moral dilemma’ that existed over the emigration of single Irish women. Table 1 illustrates the net emigration rates between the period 1911 and 1951, derived from census data.

The table shows that rates of emigration from Ireland were high throughout these years and that women predominated from 1926 to 1936 and from 1946 to 1951. Men outnumbered women from 1936 to 1946, perhaps because of enrolment in the British Army and the huge demand throughout this period for manual labour. The data must be regarded with caution, however, given the impossibility of accounting for persons emigrating when visas or other legal documentation was not, apart from during World War II (or the Emergency, as it was known in the Free State),¹¹ needed for travel.¹² Indeed, even when there were restrictions in place, the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems suggested that emigrants could claim to be going on holiday rather than emigrating in order to avoid the restrictions¹³ and anecdotal evidence suggests that women often migrated in this way.¹⁴

Irish women’s numerical dominance has always marked them out from other migrant groupings: Ireland had the highest rates of female emigration in the world at this time, with women often outnumbering their male counterparts, a fact the governments (and the Catholic Church) did *not* wish to be widely known. Although other national migrant flows had high proportions of women, the predominance of women was more marked in the Irish context. For example, among German emigrants to the

USA, women constituted 41 per cent of the total immigrant population in comparison to 52.9 per cent of Irish migrants, and although female Jewish migrants made up a considerable proportion of the flow into America, 28 per cent of them were children (compared to only 5 per cent in the Irish contingent), demonstrating their greater preponderance to migrate in family groups than Irish emigrants.¹⁵

Migration literature has only touched on marital status as a lens with which to view Irish emigration, despite its centrality in the framing and gendering of discourses on Irish emigrants.¹⁶ If more female emigrants to England or elsewhere had been married or had moved in family groups, it is doubtful whether there would have been such curiosity, vitriol or debate about them. For example, government and church documents from this period reveal repeated attempts to review single female migrants' behaviour and experiences. However, the speculative anxiety over their behaviour is not matched by evidence of deviant or 'morally reprehensible' activity and some government sources display a more balanced view. This is suggested by the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems, who argued that 'the large majority of Irish emigrants lead lives very like those of their own generation at home and similar to those of the average citizens of corresponding ages and occupations in their new country'.¹⁷ Similarly, oral history collections which provide evidence from women themselves of their migrant experiences offer anecdotal accounts of the incidence of illegitimate pregnancy in England, but posit it as a minority experience.¹⁸

Government Investigations into Irish Emigration to Britain

Successive Irish governments avoided instituting an official migration policy and emigration remained an issue that was frequently part of public debate but not part of the political agenda. Indeed, the Government was reluctant to enter into any aspect of the emigration debate, either legislatively, through policy initiatives, or by providing aid or information to emigrants, preferring to view it as part of the 'pastoral remit' of the Catholic Church. Perhaps, as Connolly has observed, 'Irish governments feared that by directly helping emigrants it might appear that they approved of emigration', a position that ran counter to nationalist ideologies at this crucial stage of nation building.¹⁹

During the 1930s and 1940s, two government reports were issued in order to investigate the issue of migration, but neither substantively changed the way in which migration to England or elsewhere was dealt with. They also reveal the implicitly gendered outlook of the period whereby attention to the migration patterns of males focused on such issues as conditions of employment, in contrast to the discussion of sexual activity associated with illegitimate pregnancy and female migrants.²⁰ In 1937 the Inter-Departmental Committee on Seasonal Migration to Great Britain was set up to investigate the scale and conditions of recruitment, accommodation and employment of Irish workers who travelled seasonally to agricultural areas of Great Britain.²¹ The report mainly focused on the available details of conditions, but also contains information on female agricultural workers. The Committee found that women constituted a small proportion of seasonal agricultural workers who generally worked as part of family groups and were headed by a 'gaffer' or foreman:²²

The normal group consists of about twenty-five workers and a 'gaffer'. Of this group of twenty-five workers, probably only a few are male adults, the remainder being women, boys and girls.²³

Such groups were engaged almost exclusively in picking potatoes. The report does *not* comment on the marital status of the women involved in this type of migration, despite their numerical predominance in many of these groups of workers who migrated regularly from Ireland to England. This suggests that this was either not investigated and/or that it was not thought to be important. It appears that this lack of attention, despite fervent interest at the time in the media and by the Catholic Church in the status of female migrants, may be due to the fact that these women were encased within a traditional, patriarchal unit, working either as wives, sisters, daughters or relatives alongside boys and men. Although female agricultural workers were not a large group within the overall female migrant flow, they were a continual feature (see information on travel permits below), and this still does not explain why they were not subject to the same type of censure, analysis and critique as women working in other occupations. This would appear to be an interesting anomaly: marital status and its implications on gendered behaviour were less important when females were perceived to be within a 'safe' grouping directed (and surrounded) by male relatives. Ryan has argued that the lack of response from the Government on the issue at this time was because women's emigration facilitated male employment and the 'safety valve' it provided allowed for the continuation of ideological constructs of domestic femininity.²⁴ In the case of seasonal workers, this would appear to be the case—women were merely doing abroad what they did on their families' farms at home, and such activity did not cause controversy. The governments of this period were also distinctly uninterested in promulgating policies around female employment, so the overlooking of this phenomenon is not surprising.

In 1948, the new Inter-Party Government—Ireland's first coalition government—was faced with the interrelated topics of rural depopulation and emigration. The Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems was instituted in April 1948, producing their report in 1954. In contrast to the 1937 Inter-Departmental Report, the single status of female emigrants was emphasised, no doubt because of the consistent female migration in the intervening period and the nature of the commentary on these women (see below). Arnold Marsh, one of the members of the Commission, submitted papers to the Manuscripts Department of Trinity College Dublin containing much detailed information on various aspects of emigration including the statistical data presented above. Memos and transcripts of interviews conducted with persons who submitted evidence provide a fascinating insight into perceptions of emigrants and reveal that one of the key issues investigated by the Commission was the motivations of single female migrants and possible connections between their desire to migrate and their desire to marry. It also focused on their economic motivations, questioning whether these could be equated with those of male migrants or whether there were other, less pressing and more suspect reasons. Divergent opinions arose, but members of the Commission frequently returned to this point when questioning interviewees, suggesting that they believed that women might not be economic migrants. Evidence

from these papers will be discussed below, but it is first necessary to examine how far singleness has been researched and analysed in the historical literature on Irish women's emigration to England in this period.

Women in Irish Migration Research

The gendered nature of the Irish migration flow has been best analysed so far in historical studies of migration to America, the UK, Australasia and Canada. Louise Ryan's work on media representations of migrant women, as well as her analysis of the societal context of migration and her small-scale oral history research has done much to extend our knowledge of how men and women have been differently represented and constructed as migrants in relation to UK immigration. For example, her study of newspapers of the period, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, 'provides an insight into the complex and multifaceted nature and opinions in the Irish Free State'.²⁵ Others such as Mary J. Hickman, Bronwen Walter and Breda Gray have drawn on theories of race, ethnicity and gender to explain the Irish experience of migrant/immigrant status and experience, showing how meanings of 'Irishness' are themselves migrated, translated, accommodated and transmitted to members of the next generations.²⁶ However, singleness as a marker of identity has tended to be assumed rather than interrogated within this body of work. For example, Ryan's oral history research with eleven Irish domestic servants in England simply describes their marital status (two were engaged, one married, with the rest being single) without further examination of the topic.²⁷ Rather, her focus is on the *experiences* of the work and of being an immigrant.

Past studies have also often privileged the analysis of one type of discourse or another, by *either* analysing private experiences or public rhetoric. Thus, governmental or media discourses are reflected upon without reference to private discourses such as oral history and vice versa.²⁸ The opportunity has been lost, therefore, to ask migrants about their knowledge or opinions of media representations of those who left. This would have been useful in showing how women migrants, speaking with hindsight, reconstructed their lives in relation to competing public discourses. It would also help to gauge the impact of these discourses on private decision making over migration issues.²⁹ Did the warnings against migration play any role in the decision to migrate? Were emigrants offended at accusations of loss of faith or morals in England? This would have been particularly useful to know in the case of women, whose character was most sullied in public discourses on emigrants.

Louise Ryan has argued that the moral implications of female emigration led to the construction of three main models of female emigrants:

Firstly, women/girl emigrants embody the failures of the state to tackle problems of unemployment, rural deprivation and emigration. Secondly, women/girls embody the evils of emigration, the threat to morality, Irishness and Catholicism. Thirdly, women/girl emigrants represent the absent bodies of rural Ireland and hence symbolise the threat of rural depopulation, low marriage rates and falling birth rates.³⁰

These three categorisations cannot be accepted unproblematically, particularly because of the active denial of women's right or need to work in Irish society at this time, as

evinced in successive Irish legislation to limit women's economic opportunities.³¹ In addition to this, as Mary E. Daly has argued, women's ability to earn money did not increase their status in Irish society: 'a woman's money was regarded as benefiting her family, either her parent's family or that formed with a husband'.³² Thus, single women's failure to obtain employment in Ireland was *not* viewed as a reflection on the state's ability to provide employment, and was reflected upon more often as an indication of the low marriage rate (which would have removed many women from employment) and the state's failure to reverse the culture of delayed marriage in Ireland.

Indeed, women's economic motivations for emigration (and thus their 'need' to work at all) were continuously questioned, particularly in Irish government circles, and only male migrants appeared to be able to claim the 'respectability' of the legitimate claim of economic necessity as their reason for leaving the country. Women's status within the domestic sphere (even as unpaid farm workers) did not allow them to access the legitimating discourses of economic necessity as they were seen as neither economically active nor productive. Ryan's analysis does, however, highlight the fact that female emigration was discursively reproduced within an inherently moral framework, tied not only to marital status but to sexual behaviour, fertility, nationalism, religion, economics, and the rejection of the traditional female roles of wife and mother. There was an absence of such constructions of male migrants, who were primarily seen as motivated by economic factors, regardless of whether they had a family to support or not.

'What about the Girls?'³³ Competing Discourses on Irish Female Emigrants as Economic Migrants

As other historians have noted, the decision to emigrate anywhere has always been primarily made on the basis of the economic needs of the household at that time. In the context of female emigration, motivating factors can be found in the lack of employment opportunities in Ireland and the nature of the economic demands in the UK, which had an emphasis on service sector occupations that were available to women.³⁴ Coupled with this, although gendered wage differentials existed in most countries for which data is available, they were more extreme in Ireland;³⁵ female rates of pay throughout the 1940s up to the 1960s were just over half those of men.³⁶ However, while economic necessity was accepted as the primary rational motivating factor for Irish male emigrants, for women, marital status and the desire to improve marriage chances were intertwined within the discourses on female emigration and employment prospects.

Women's economic necessity to migrate was a topic hotly debated in the hearings of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems. Contrasting views and evidence were put forward, demonstrating that discourses on emigrants, and female emigrants in particular, were not hegemonic, but rather, competing and conflicting. The Commission, however, appeared to attempt to achieve a consensus opinion by probing interviewees to offer an opinion supportive of the 'fact' that Irish women were not going to England for economic reasons. For example, Mr D. Kennedy,

asked by the Chairman of Tipperary (South Riding) County Council about the employment opportunities for women in his local area, responded as follows:

- Chairman: What about the girls? Do your remarks cover the girls as well?
 Mr. Kennedy: Yes. Of course you cannot get the present-day girl to work in the rural areas at all; they find the work too heavy. Consequently, they are all gone to England.
- Chairman: Is there employment for them elsewhere in Ireland?
 Mr. Kennedy: If you are referring to the people who require maids, they will tell you they cannot get them. One of the root causes of sending our girls to England is due to the fact that they never had any Organisation to look after them and they were very badly paid.
- Chairman: Not that there is a lack of employment?
 Mr. Kennedy: Well, the employment is not much at the best of times.³⁷

The quality, payment, conditions or other circumstances of the work did not appear to matter in this line of questioning: the key point being that girls were apparently *refusing* jobs and choosing to emigrate instead. Similarly, in the evidence given by members of the Irish Housewives Association (IHA), the Commission repeatedly asked the delegation to agree that economic opportunities were not the only reason women were leaving, and that marriage prospects could also be a consideration, even though Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, a leading feminist and founding member of the IHA refuted this statement in a number of her answers.³⁸

Dr Geary, a statistician and member of the Commission, also showed a gendered bias in his views on migrants, arguing that: 'It is probably true that large number of men are forced through unemployment and poverty to emigrate'.³⁹ However, he believed women did not give the country a fair chance, and that 'emigration is largely just the result of a desire for change or to make more money'. This view, whilst toned down somewhat, comes across in the final report, where it is argued that for women, 'the purely economic cause is not always so dominant'.⁴⁰ Marriage prospects may well have been a motivating factor, particularly for those such as domestic servants who had little chance of marriage in Ireland (see below). Yet there was no factual basis for viewing marriage prospects as necessarily more pressing than financial considerations for women emigrants. This evidence supports Ryan's account of competing constructions of Irish womanhood as either homemakers or workers, and the diversity of discourses and value judgements about motivations for female emigration that were expressed within Irish society at this time.⁴¹ However, the fact that such motivations were not approved of suggests once again that women emigrants' single status was perceived as problematic.

The report's focus on non-economic motivations has another interesting dimension. Surveys around the country undertaken by the Commission show the desire to marry as a motivating factor for young men but see no way of achieving this without obtaining steady employment. Some of these young men rejected employment in Ireland even if the wages they could obtain in Britain were no higher. For example, Case C (R. Gallagher), aged 23, single, and interviewed in Portarlinton, was summarised in the following report by the Secretariat to the Commission:

He wants to emigrate to see England for himself and would prefer to do so than accept a permanent job at home at even £4 a week. He does not intend to come back if he finds conditions to his liking in England—stated that his prospects of marriage in England are much brighter than in Éire.⁴²

The stated desire to improve marriage prospects does not, however, emerge as a dominant trope for men in the way it does for women, although it is mentioned at times in relation to Irish couples. In fact some reports stated that young Irish women and men decided mutually to emigrate in order to marry as economic conditions and the lack of housing prevented this at home.⁴³

The attention to marital prospects detracted from the very real need to earn an income and the denigration of female workers in Ireland. For example, a female clerk told Louie Bennett, representing the Union of Irish Women Workers at the 1948 Commission: 'Nobody sets any value on us here. We count for nothing in Ireland'.⁴⁴ Evidence from oral history studies of female migrants consistently emphasise the economic imperatives migrants faced in their decision to leave Ireland. King and O'Connor's study of women from all over Ireland who settled in Leicester from the 1940s to the 1980s⁴⁵ examined the reasons given for immigrating to England. As Table 2 shows, for their sample of fifty women, one of the only studies of this kind, good job opportunities were ranked first, while social and cultural aspects of migration were downplayed.

A further paradox emerges when examining the attitudes towards single Irish women's emigration. While they were not constructed primarily as economic actors, their labour and wages were essential to the economy. Ireland needed its citizens to emigrate in order to maintain households overburdened by multiple children and inadequate incomes. Irish emigrant women's remittances were essential for keeping some families from becoming a burden on the state, often helping keep rural households on unprofitable farms afloat. Such was the scale of the money sent home by migrants that from 1936 to 1941 total postal and money orders received in the Free State amounted to £7,483,559⁴⁶ and the by the 1950s net remittances contributed £12 million of Ireland's Gross National Product,⁴⁷ or the equivalent of between \$ 635 and \$ 952 million each year in today's money.⁴⁸ Such benefits of emigration were rarely alluded to. And when unmarried daughters were in employment in Ireland their position could

Table 2. Reasons for emigrating to England (n=50)

Reason for Emigrating	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Unimportant	No answer
Close to Ireland	15	21	1	12	1
Same language	2	25	4	18	1
Similar Culture	1	24	5	18	2
Good Job Opportunities	27	13	1	8	1
Knew People There	18	14	5	12	1

Source: King and O'Connor, 'Migration and Gender: Irish Women in Leicester', *Geography* Volume 81(4), Table 1, page 317.

equally be perceived as problematic. For example, a rural survey of Drogheda by two members of the Commission highlighted an invidious change in family dynamics due to the employment of single daughters:

More important, however, was the undermining of parental control and authority in homes where the weekly earnings of daughters, individually or collectively, exceeded those of the father. Instances such as the following were quoted in evidence:—In one home 3 daughters employed in a boot-factory earned a total of £11.5.-d. per week while the father, an unskilled labourer, earned £3 per week. Parental authority was fast becoming proportionate to the contribution to family budget.⁴⁹

‘In England Young Men Actually Marry Domestic Servants’: economics and marital status in domestic service

Economic reasons for migration were frequently cited by Irish emigrants in domestic service. Oral history accounts, such as those conducted by Catherine Dunne or Lennon, McAdam and O’Brien examining evidence from emigrants themselves, show this as the primary reason given.⁵⁰ To quote an Irish woman who migrated from Cork:

there was nothing there for us at all. We couldn’t find any work, unless you went to scivvy, scrub floors or something like that, you know. That’s the only kind of work, and that was very poorly paid. But no way would I do that, I was always very proud, you know, and I wouldn’t go down on my knees for anybody.⁵¹

Similarly, the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems found that ‘Large numbers of girls emigrate to domestic service in Great Britain because they consider that the wages, conditions of work and also the status of domestic service in this country are unsatisfactory’.⁵²

However, this rejection of domestic service work also illustrates a connection between singleness, class status and economic opportunity for women in Free State Ireland.⁵³ Many Irish women were happy to work in domestic service in England but not in Ireland where the status of work for women, particularly domestic work, was much lower, and believed that being a servant hampered their marriage prospects at home but not abroad. A letter signed simply by ‘Domestic’ indicates that whilst wages were the primary concern for the emigration of Irish girls to service in England, better marriage prospects were also a consideration:

In England young men actually marry domestic servants, and are proud of them. In Ireland the young men, if they marry at all, choose anyone other than a domestic. Since most women want to marry, is it surprising they go where they are most honoured?⁵⁴

Here both the status of domestic service and marital prospects are articulated as motivating factors for female emigration.

It is not surprising, therefore, that employment in domestic service—predominantly in private homes, but also in hotels and hospitals—remained a popular employment option throughout the period. Throughout the war years, the number of women going to England to domestic service jobs greatly outnumbered those going to agricultural, nursing and factory work. For example, from 1943 to 1947, a total of 42,098 women

Table 3. Classification of Intended Employment of Women Granted Travel Permits to Britain (June 1948-December 1951)

Employment	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Domestic Service	21,903	53.6%
Nursing	5,578	13.7%
Agriculture	689	1.7%
Clerical work	1,237	3.0%
Factory work etc.	11,412	28.0%

Source: Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems Report, page 323.

went to domestic service jobs compared to 1,675 to agricultural jobs, 12,772 to nursing, and 9,863 to factory work.⁵⁵ Table 3 illustrates the occupations of Irish female emigrants who were granted travel permits to Britain in the later period of governmental regulation.

As can be seen from the data, almost twice as many women applied for permits allowing them to work in domestic service as did women going to factories or industrial employment. The stark difference in wages must be seen to be a strong motivating factor: resident maids with some experience received £1. 17s. 6d. per week in Britain in comparison to 25 shillings in Ireland.⁵⁶

Ironically, in Britain, Irish women's desire to enter domestic service offset the shortfall in women willing to do this work, as British women were increasingly reluctant to become servants. Irish women were perceived as lower in social and racial terms, and were often given rough jobs to do,⁵⁷ or as Rossiter has observed: 'Irish women were considered unsuitable for work which brought them into close contact with their employers'.⁵⁸ Despite this, domestic work in England was reported time and again as preferable to engaging in similar work at home.

Protection and Dangers at Places of Employment

The reported 'dangers' to their 'modesty and virtue' of single female emigrants at their places of employment⁵⁹ suggest a lack of recognition of the widespread trend of Irish women living with relatives, friends or neighbours from home, or living in accommodation provided by their employment, such as in nursing, hotel work, or domestic service. The protections provided by these arrangements were largely ignored in the discourse on the vulnerability of female migrants. A Department of External Affairs memorandum in 1947 constructed the migration of women, in contrast to that of men, as lonely, unsafe and unprotected:

there is a significant difference between male and female emigrants: the former usually proceed in groups to factory or building work where arrangements are made for their moral and religious welfare and often for the maintenance of an Irish atmosphere, whereas the bulk of the female emigrants who are engaged in domestic service or allied work take up employment individually and are scattered singly throughout Great

Britain, the moral atmosphere of which young and inexperienced girls are only too often unfitted to withstand.⁶⁰

This assessment denies the fact that while some women may have emigrated singly, they did so within a wider nexus of family and social support. As Lambert has noted, family links and support were crucial to the emigration process, as women were 'less likely to sever family ties than to adopt strategies of maintaining them from a distance'.⁶¹ Such links were maintained by socialising with relatives and friends in England, regular visits to Ireland, the exchange of letters and news and the sponsoring of other relatives to migrate. The Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems defined the process of Irish female chain migration to England in their survey of Athlone:

(i) In the case of females under 30 years, they usually went as (i) two sisters together; (ii) one sister and after a year another sister went; or (iii) two or three girls who were 'pals' went together. Very often when a girl came home from England on a holiday a sister or school friend returned with her.⁶²

This evidence demonstrates the interconnectedness of female migration, and complicates constructions of Irish female migrants as rejecting Irish patriarchal values through the process of migration. For example, whilst Gray correctly argues that women were particularly negatively cast as deficient or immoral due to their 'choice' in leaving Ireland, her interpretation of this action is rooted in a modern feminist viewpoint of striking a blow for independence:

Women emigrants were pathologised for leaving, for being attracted or lured away from the country where they rightly belonged. While pathologising Irish women, these discourses also acknowledged, at an implicit level at least, the potential of Irish women to undermine a patriarchal and family-oriented Irish national identity.⁶³

Whilst the desire to experience greater social and economic freedom may have factored in the decision to migrate, Irish women's maintenance of family ties were generally retained and many went on to marry Irish men and live lives very similar to ones they would have done in Ireland. Thus 'undermining' may be too strong an assertion. Rather, a renegotiation of family ties in new circumstances may be a more appropriate definition of their behaviour. It seems that their single status was the principal reason for this criticism, making them symbolically vulnerable despite the fact that they were migrating within chain migration networks.

'The Moral Aspect of the Problem is Very Serious':⁶⁴ contemporary assessments of female emigrant behaviour

Discourses on moral behaviours and 'dangers' can be broadly categorised as revolving around different 'gendered axes' for men and women. For women, moral behaviours associated with sexual activities were of paramount concern whereas for men, where such discourses existed, they tended to focus on the suitability of accommodation, their drinking habits and their tendency to work on Sundays. Furthermore, 'moral danger' was almost a code for 'sexual danger': none of the reports in newspapers, sermons in

churches, or official studies of migration issues appears to be worried about girls becoming gamblers, drug addicts or dealers, vagrants or alcoholics,⁶⁵ but rather they are concerned with their sexual purity and morals. Thus 'moral danger' in this context can be equated with 'sexual danger' or 'exploration'. Indeed, the difference between 'failed' and 'successful' female emigrants appeared to hinge on their sexual behaviour—failed emigrants were to be found in maternity homes; successful emigrants sent money home to their mothers.

As outlined above, economic necessity was not always seen as the paramount cause, or else was viewed as a motivating factor in tandem with the much more dubious desire to explore city life, unshackled from family and community restrictions or responsibilities. These 'explorations' by single women were always seen as morally suspect, given the apparent ease with which single women could mix with single men in England, including English, Protestant men, an undesirable outcome to say the least. Thus the moral/virginal character of Irish women was contrasted with a vision of sexual impurity as a *result* of migration.

The shift in the destination of migrants from the USA to the UK appears to be part of the reason that the moral aspects of emigration became more prominent in this period. One example from a Catholic newspaper, *The Standard*, quoted 'advice' from the Bishop of Elphin:

If you have to go to England or Scotland do not do so without bringing a letter of introduction from your priest. I would advise you, however, not to go to these countries, for everywhere throughout England there are snares that will beset you—especially for Catholic girls. If you find you must leave Ireland, go to America, where your Catholic brethren are more numerous and influential.⁶⁶

There are a number of interesting features to this short piece of advice. Firstly, it appears that it is not so much advice as admonition, with the distinct undertone that something bad may happen to one abroad, particularly a Catholic girl. Secondly, the rather indirect allusion to 'snares' for girls undoubtedly refers to those of a sexual nature, i.e. illegitimate pregnancy, immorality or prostitution and the word is used repeatedly in articles such as this.⁶⁷ The convergence of geography, religion, politics and influence are thus viewed in this instance as creating 'snares' or traps that will most particularly endanger single Irish Catholic girls.

In December 1936 Gertrude Gaffney, an *Irish Independent* journalist, wrote a series of articles on the 'girl emigrant problem', based on investigations in London and Liverpool. The use of the term 'problem' is indicative of the tone adopted throughout. Her articles have been used since by historians in their analysis of female emigration because they seem to be indicative of the particular tone adopted in public discourse on female emigrants—one of censure and sensationalism in equal measures.

The series of articles was lauded by the *Irish Independent* as giving the *real* facts, but they tend to examine the worst case scenarios of 'sinful singleness', most particularly those women who became pregnant before marriage, a sin greater than any other according to many at the time and the greatest moral dilemma for single women. These were the 'failed' emigrants of popular imagination and their minority status within the overall cohort of female migrants was ignored. Although stating as a proviso, 'I want to

make it plain now that ... I am still convinced that the majority of the decent, good-class Irish girls with plenty of back bone who go to domestic service in England, and find themselves suited to the work, make good',⁶⁸ Gaffney found the minority of 'fallen women' to be in 'every shelter for the destitute, in every maternity hospital, in every home for unmarried mothers, or, worse still, in the common lodginghouses [*sic*] in certain parts of the great cities'.⁶⁹ And so her series of articles focuses on those who have fallen into sin by their own lack of judgement and restraint. The fact that these are a *minority* of cases is forgotten: all that is actually emphasised is that these were all single women who came to England from Ireland, and thus this could happen to *any* single woman making the same trip.

Importantly though, Gaffney points out that the 'whole root of this matter' lies in Ireland, not England: she found evidence of Irish girls coming to London and Liverpool to conceal pregnancies; thus the site of their sin was not England, but rural, pure, modest Ireland. Paul Michael Garrett refers to the fact that by the 1950s and 60s, 'PFI' or 'Pregnant from Ireland' had become 'part of the everyday vocabulary of the social workers who dealt with unmarried mothers arriving from Ireland'.⁷⁰ Migration due to pregnancy has been outlined elsewhere as part of the 'hidden history' of Irish migration. For example, Lyndsey Earner Byrne and Paul Michael Garrett have both written on the repatriation scheme that operated between Ireland and England from the 1930s.⁷¹ Here the differences between the concerns of the church and the government emerged, with the church becoming more concerned about the welfare issues involved, and the state wishing to minimise the negative image of Ireland embodied by such a phenomenon. Both Earner Byrne and Garrett have revealed the large network of organisations that were involved in the scheme through the Catholic Church, and the extent of the flow of pregnant women coming from Ireland. Indeed, this was perceived to be a significant problem by many, including one priest in Southampton, interviewed by the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems, who stated that:

One great problem was the catering for the pregnant unmarried girl, both before and after the birth of her baby. Convents and other welfare societies co-operated very well. This problem is, I understand, very acute and to my mind needs some authority to deal with it and suggest that a priest ... should do so in an advisory capacity.⁷²

Whilst there *is* evidence to show that some Irish female immigrants 'slipped' in their moral standards when they arrived in England, oral history testimonies of Irish female migrants reveal a much more mundane experience than was conveyed in the press. Such girls were generally not attempting to live modern, gregarious lifestyles and their pregnancies are not evidence of this, but rather reveal their ignorance in sexual matters. Thus, focusing on illegitimate pregnancy, whilst important in illuminating hidden aspects of history, must not overshadow the fact that this was not the experience of most female migrants. The framing of such incidence of immorality was within a *criminal* discourse and also had an impact on the way in which unmarried pregnant women at the time were viewed. As Garrett argues, the term 'first offender' was often used to describe pregnant women and 'multiple offenders' were looked upon with much less

sympathy.⁷³ It was perhaps the almost obsessive focus on sexual behaviour and morality at this time which led to the overstatement of the extent of illegitimate pregnancies to Irish women in England as a result of migration.

It is also worth considering the fact that many single Irish women became involved in church sodalities and Catholic lay organisations such as the Legion of Mary, themselves involved in helping girls facing illegitimate pregnancies. Thus, they were not always the 'sinners' themselves, despite being single in a 'pagan' country. The potential exaggeration within the press was, however, recognised by the Commission, who stated in their final report:

We consider that there is a good deal of exaggerated comment on the point, based for the most part on statements by welfare workers and others who, in the course of their work, come into closer contact with individual cases of moral delinquency than with the behaviour of emigrants as a whole.⁷⁴

Bride Famine and Empty Cradles

Historical analyses of the Irish cultural construction of womanhood have established the gendered roles advocated for women as revolving around motherhood and marriage. In the case of emigration, it was often argued that it was immoral to leave Ireland and abandon this 'national' duty. Women's connection to the reproduction of the nation has maintained their position as dependent and embedded within the family structure. As Walter has observed:

The trope of the family is widespread in the figuring of national narratives—homeland, motherland, fatherland, daughters and sons of the nation. This imagery serves to naturalise a social hierarchy within an apparent unity of interests so that its gendered formation is unquestioned.⁷⁵

Extending Walter's analysis, the female emigrant from Ireland can be seen to be contravening the national order by removing herself from the traditional schema, and hence transgressing the physical and psychological boundaries of the state.

The single status of these Irish female emigrants also meant that the country was losing future wives and mothers, which led to rather hysterical discourses on 'the empty cradle' in Ireland, or, as King and O'Connor phrase it, a 'bride famine'.⁷⁶ Motherhood was seen as a fundamental role for women, specifically valued in the public sphere in Ireland through the 1937 Constitution.⁷⁷ As Dr Casey, bishop of Ross exclaimed when lamenting the issue of high female emigration: 'One may well ask where the Irish mothers of the future are to come from'.⁷⁸ Throughout this type of discourse, however, no evident parallel concern for the lack of husbands or fathers in Ireland was evinced, despite high levels of male migration. This was despite the fact that disappointment and concern was expressed in the media after the publication of each census. The disquiet over Ireland's demographic position was captured in a well-publicised book of reflections on the state of the country, *The Vanishing Irish*, which expressed alarm at the 'fading away of the once great and populous nation of Ireland'.⁷⁹

The reality of emigration as a much needed 'safety valve' demonstrates, as in Kathrin Levitan's analysis of British population debates in the early nineteenth century,⁸⁰ the

tension between the realisation that the country's economy could not support a large population, and the desire to abundantly populate the land in a triumphant show of successful post-colonial independence. However, the debate was never framed in terms of a 'surplus woman problem', as in Levitan's period, but rather the concern was the motivation and independence of the women who migrated to improve their living and working conditions.

Conclusion

Singleness appears to be the lynchpin of the concern over female migration from Ireland to England. Female emigrants' single status was the pivotal factor in the framing of the discourses around them, and may explain why these discourses were so negative. Catholic and secular newspapers frequently reported on the terrible moral dangers to the Irish of living in a city and/or working for non-Catholics, ignoring the fact that many single women migrated with their families, had relatives in England and frequently went into live-in jobs such as domestic service or nursing. No such cautionary advice was given to single male migrants, often of similar age and background. Thus, singleness was a gendered 'problem'. As Katherine Holden has noted: 'The institution of marriage casts its shadow over all women, who are routinely judged in terms of their relationship to it'.⁸¹ The fact that the majority of female migrants were single and appeared to be 'depriving' Ireland of future wives and mothers because of their migration meant that they were judged harshly indeed.

The gendered nature of discourses on emigration is illustrated by the ways in which female singleness was equated with vulnerability and morally ambiguous behaviour, whilst male singleness or marital status was barely mentioned. Women's single status made them simultaneously vulnerable to corruption and prone to temptation and 'bad' behaviour, and 'fear' of single women occurred in tandem with the belief that they were in need of special protections. Thus, unmarried Irish women were discursively constructed in these years paradoxically as both instigator and victim of immoral behaviours. The gendered aspects of this construction are apparent in the absence of similar moral discourses on unmarried Irish men.

Female migration gave rise to a range of concerns over their moral and spiritual welfare, particularly because of their supposed vulnerability as young, single women often migrating from rural locations to the metropolises of England. It seems that their singleness was the prime reason for the concern evinced predominantly by the Catholic Church, but also by lay organisations and individual members of successive Irish governments. Multiple sources of danger for these girls were perceived, from their journey 'across the water' to their places of employment. Help and protection, if not prohibition, was necessary both from their own misdeeds and those of foreign, devious 'others'. This included their use of public transport, including the ferryboat, where operatives of the white slave trade were believed to target Irish women.

Singleness was thus ascribed as a category of identification for women but much less so for men, paralleling the ways in which women are generally 'marked' as gendered whilst men are not. The belief that single women are somehow suspect, not to be

trusted, yet at the same time extremely susceptible to danger and in need of 'special' care is not of course confined either to Ireland or this period. Sinful singleness, therefore, is a potent historical trope.

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Notes

- [1] R. E. Kennedy (1973) *The Irish: emigration, marriage and fertility* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 14–15.
- [2] Much has been written on the frequent exhortations to young people in Ireland to cease such behaviour, and such articles in the press and issues raised in Lenten pastorals, for example, always refer to single people, not to younger married persons who presumably would not be acting in this way. For more on this see, for example, M. Valiulis (2004) *Subverting the Flapper: the unlikely alliance of Irish popular and ecclesiastical press in the 1920s*, in A. Heilmann & M. Beetham (Eds) *New Woman Hybridities: femininity, feminism and international consumer culture, 1880–1930* (London: Routledge), pp. 102–117 and L. Ryan (2002) *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press, 1922–1937: embodying the nation* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press).
- [3] Throughout the article Ireland refers to the twenty-six counties of southern Ireland, referred to variously as the Free State or An Saorstát, Éire, and later the Republic of Ireland. Ireland became an independent country with the Government of Ireland Act (1920), which divided the country into two jurisdictions—Northern and Southern Ireland. Ireland's Free State officially came into being on 6 December 1922.
- [4] The scope of the study on which this article is based relates to these three decades. However, I am aware that discourses on the 'problem' of female emigration existed before this time and continued after it. The importance of considering these discourses particularly in this period relates to the fact that it was thought that emigration would stop on the advent of independence. Thus there was a movement from blaming an external 'other' for the problem to blaming the people themselves.
- [5] The Arnold Marsh collection of papers held at the Manuscripts Department of Trinity College Dublin contains minutes, private drafts, transcripts and the detailed surveys conducted by members of the Commission throughout its lifespan. Although some of this evidence went into the Report, much evidence, particularly the memos submitted by various organisations and the transcripts of the Commission's interviews with such groups has not been used by historians to a great extent. Notable exceptions are Tracey Connolly (1999) *Emigration from Independent Ireland: 1922–1970* (PhD thesis, University College Cork), E. Delaney (1997) *Irish Migration to Britain, 1921–1971: patterns, trends and contingent factors* (PhD thesis, Queen's University of Belfast), and Mary E. Daly (2006) *The Slow Failure: population decline and independent Ireland, 1920–1973* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press).
- [6] A comparison of Protestant and Catholic migration is beyond the scope of this article, as the chief purpose is to examine the dominant modes of moral discourses on single women, which generally assumed that female migrants were Roman Catholic. Protestant migration often took a different form, particularly in this period when whole Irish or Anglo-Irish Protestant families migrated from Ireland as a result of the British withdrawal of police, army and personnel.

- [7] P. Travers (1997) 'There Was Nothing for Me There': Irish female emigration, 1922–71, in P. O'Sullivan (Ed.) *Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London: Leicester University Press), pp. 146–167, p. 148.
- [8] Although it is true to say that there were also professional, middle-class emigrants, these did not make up the majority of the migrants from Ireland, hence the generally accepted classification of emigrants as originating from the working classes. Both male and female emigrants often worked as unpaid relatives assisting on farms at home before leaving Ireland.
- [9] Unsigned Memorandum for Government, 'Emigration of Irish Girls for Employment in Great Britain', Arnold Marsh Papers, 8300/12/2.
- [10] *The Irish Catholic*, 7 May 1927, p. 1.
- [11] The Irish Free State chose to remain neutral in World War Two and adopted the term 'the Emergency' to refer to the war. Restrictions on travel were imposed after the fall of France in June 1940. These included restrictions on the type of worker who was allowed to migrate, the area they were emigrating from and their age, and were part of the regulations instituted under the Emergency Powers Act 1939. Restrictions on advertisements for employment in Britain were instituted in 1942 (Statutory Instrument No. 241) as part of the Emergency Powers legislation in response to the perceived critical drain on the country's 'manpower'.
- [12] From 1 July 1946 female workers were no longer required to be regulated by the British Government, thus the regulation of their movement became impractical for the Irish Government and work permits were dropped. Men and women under the age of twenty-one were still required to get the permission of their parent or guardian to obtain a travel permit.
- [13] The Commission consisted of a mix of academics, clerics, civil servants, and politicians. The following were members of the Committee: Dr James P. Beddy (Chairman); Dr W. R. F. Collis; Rev. Father Thomas Counihan, S.J.; Rev. Father Edward J. Coyne, S.J.; Aodh de Blacam, Uas.; Mr William Doolin; Professor G. A. Duncan; Mr Alexis Fitzgerald; Dr R. C. Geary; Mr W. A. Honohan; Dr J. D. Hourihane; Rev. A. A. Luce; Rev. Father C. Lucey; Mr Stanley Lyon; Professor M. D. McCarthy; Mrs Agnes McGuire; Mr John McElhinney; Mr Arnold Marsh; Mr James F. Meehan; Mr Patrick J. Meghen; Mr Peadar O'Donnell; Mr John Richards Orpen; Mr Ruaidhri Roberts; Mrs Frances Wrenne and Mr James J. Byrne, Trinity College, Dublin (Secretary to the Commission).
- [14] See, for example, M. Muldowney (2005) *The Impact of the Second World War on Women in Belfast and Dublin: an oral history* (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin), her subsequent book, M. Muldowney (2007) *Irish Women and the Second World War: an oral history* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press), and D. Ferriter (2005) *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900–2000* (London: Profile Books).
- [15] H. Diner (1983) *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish immigrant women in the nineteenth century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 30.
- [16] For examples of this, see Kennedy (1973) *The Irish*, which examines marriage in correlation to emigration and J. Nolan (1989) *Ourselves Alone: women's emigration from Ireland, 1885–1920* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky), which argues that female emigrants wanted to fulfil traditional roles that were not available to them in post-famine Ireland, including marriage and motherhood.
- [17] *Majority Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems*, Section 320, pp. 137–138.
- [18] For example, Irish unmarried women becoming pregnant are mentioned by the participants in both Catherine Dunne's and Lennon, McAdam & O'Brien's books, with interviewees referring to a single or a small number of cases that they knew of. See C. Dunne (2003) *An Unconsidered People: the Irish in London* (Dublin: New Island) and M. Lennon, M. McAdam & J. O'Brien (1988) *Across the Water: Irish women's lives in Britain* (London: Virago Press).
- [19] T. Connolly (1999) *Emigration from Independent Ireland: 1922–1970* (Ph.D. thesis, University College Cork).

- [20] The report of the Committee on Emigration and Other Population Problems contains information speculating on the extent of illegitimacy and refers to the incidence of pregnancy among unmarried female emigrants in England, but no information on unwed fathers. This would probably not have been considered relevant given the traditional focus on women in relation to pregnancy and children and the tendency to see it as *their* 'sin'.
- [21] The Committee was set up by the Minister for Industry and Commerce and included the following members: Mr Sean Moylan T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry and Commerce; Mr J. J. Keane, Chief Employment Officer, Department of Industry and Commerce; Mr F. H. Boland, Principal Officer, Department of Industry and Commerce; Mr T. O'Connell, Chief Inspector, Department of Agriculture; Mr J. C. Gamble, Senior Inspector, Land Commission; Mr Sean Moran, Director, Gaeltacht Services, and Mr Leon O'Brien, Assistant Principal, Department of Finance.
- [22] These groups of seasonal migrants were often known as 'Achill Workers' due to the predominance of workers from Achill Island, off the coast of Mayo in the West of Ireland and the surrounding regions.
- [23] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Seasonal Migration to Great Britain, 1937–1938*, para. 19, p. 12. Dublin: Stationery Office. National Library Reference R65/1.
- [24] L. Ryan (2003) Leaving Home: Irish press debates on female employment, domesticity and emigration to Britain in the 1930s, *Women's History Review*, 12(3), pp. 387–406, p. 403.
- [25] *Ibid.*, p. 402.
- [26] Much has been written on Irish migration in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although specific studies on women's experience in the 1920s–1940s have been completed, they exist mainly in the form of journal articles, and no major text devoted to the history of Irish women's emigration to England in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s has yet been produced. There is also a dearth of autobiographical or biographical material, particularly in comparison to the memoirs and research based on the Irish male navy experience. For research which highlights some of the moral discourses on women, see the work of Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, E. Delaney (2000) *Demography, State and Society: Irish migration to Britain, 1921–1971* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), and the numerous articles by Louise Ryan among others. In the study of more recent periods of migration, and discourses and theoretical constructions of later and second generation migrants, the work of Bronwen Walter, Mary Hickman and Breda Gray is also relevant.
- [27] L. Ryan (2003) Moving Spaces and Changing Places: Irish women's memories of emigration to Britain in the 1930s, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29(1), pp. 67–82.
- [28] This is a methodology perpetrated even by historians who engage in both oral histories and discourse analysis, yet who continue to do so separately. For example, Louise Ryan's oral history research on emigrant experiences with twelve older Irish women appears in three separate journal articles and one newspaper article and is analysed methodologically in L. Ryan (2006) *Passing Time: Irish women remembering and re-telling stories of migration to Britain*, in K. Burrell & P. Panayi (Eds) *Histories and Memories: migrants and their history in Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies), pp. 192–209. However, there is no evidence that she asked participants to reflect upon media representations of female emigrants. Media discourses are analysed separately without integration of the two methods of historical inquiry in *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*. Similarly, the oral history collections of Dunne and Lennon *et al.* contain few references to governmental or societal discourses, privileging instead the narratives of the interview participants.
- [29] For more on Irish oral history narratives of women's lives, see Muldowney (2007) *Irish Women and the Second World War*.
- [30] Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, p. 112.
- [31] Reference is made here to such legislation as the 1925 Civil Service Act and the 1935 Conditions of Employment Act which regulated the type of industries in which women were allowed to be employed.

- [32] M. Daly (1981) Women in the Irish Workforce from Pre-industrial to Modern Times, *Saothar*, 7, pp. 74–82, p. 74.
- [33] This quote is taken from a question from the Commission to an interviewee, asking if his comments on emigration from his area due to economic reasons applied to females as well as males. Arnold Marsh Papers 8307-8/1, 'Evidence Submitted by Mr. D. Kennedy, Chairman Tipperary (S.R.) County Council', Friday 29 October 1948.
- [34] See Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*.
- [35] M. E. Daly (1997) *Women and Work in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Economic and Social History Society), p. 53.
- [36] R. King & H. O'Connor (1996) Migration and Gender: Irish women in Leicester, *Geography*, 81(4), p. 313.
- [37] Arnold Marsh Papers, 8307-8/1.
- [38] Arnold Marsh Papers 8307-8/3.
- [39] *Ibid.*
- [40] *Majority Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems*, Section 303, p. 134.
- [41] For further discussion, see, for example, Louise Ryan, 'Leaving Home'.
- [42] 8306/S17 Rural Surveys, Arnold Marsh Papers.
- [43] See, for example, Arnold Marsh Papers, Rural Surveys, 8306/S1, for evidence of this from County Mayo.
- [44] This quote comes from evidence of the Irish Women Workers' Union. Louie Bennett, representing the Union with her colleagues, stated that she was told this by a female clerk. Arnold Marsh Papers, 8307-8/8.
- [45] Due to the time period covered by King and O'Connor's study, not all responses are relevant for the period under review in this article, but it is a useful source of evidence and gives some insight into the motivational factors of a sample of female emigrants.
- [46] Department of Industry and Commerce Memorandum, 'Remittances from Great Britain and Northern Ireland', Department of the Taoiseach files, National Archives, S12865.
- [47] Lennon *et al.*, *Across the Water*, p. 25.
- [48] Dunne, *An Unconsidered People*, p. 4, quoting from the Mayo News, 2001.
- [49] Rural Survey of Drogheda by Mr. Byrne and Mr. O'Leary, 8306/S17, Arnold Marsh Papers.
- [50] See Dunne *An Unconsidered People* or Lennon *et al.*, *Across the Water*.
- [51] Lennon *et al.*, *Across the Water*, pp. 93–94.
- [52] *Majority Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems*, Section 305, p. 134. This finding was also backed up by the prior investigations of the Department of External Affairs in 1947—see Memorandum for the Government from the Department of External Affairs, p. 4, 30 August 1947, Department of Foreign Affairs files, National Archives, DFA 402/25 for discussion of migration patterns of women. Note that the moral and social dangers to females are explicitly stated in this document, demonstrating government concern for female morality.
- [53] Mary Daly argues that the impact of women's refusal to enter into domestic service in Ireland was felt most in the 1950s; thus the period under discussion includes the collapse of the domestic service industry in Ireland. See Daly (1981) 'Women in the Irish Workforce', pp. 74–82.
- [54] From letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, 22 December 1936, p. 4.
- [55] Calculations are made from the table entitled 'Female Workers to Great Britain and Northern Ireland' in Memorandum for the Government from the Department of External Affairs, p. 4, 30 August 1947, Department of Foreign Affairs files, National Archives, DFA 402/25. Note that the data is flawed to the extent that it is impossible to know with certainty exactly how many people migrated (as many circumvented official procedures by claiming to go on holiday to England), but the figures are a good indication of trends in general.
- [56] Evidence taken from a memo submitted by the Irish Housewives Association relating to 1948, Arnold Marsh Papers 8305/9.

- [57] K. Holden (2004) Personal Costs and Personal Pleasures: care and the unmarried woman in inter-war Britain, in J. Fink (Ed.) *Care: personal lives and social policy* (Milton Keynes: The Open University), p. 58
- [58] A. Rossiter (1996) In Search of Mary's Past: placing nineteenth century Irish immigrant women in British feminist history, in J. Grant (Ed.) *Women, Migration and Empire* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books), pp.1–29, p. 16.
- [59] Quoting Dr MacNamee's Lenten Pastoral, *Irish Independent*, 8 February 1937.
- [60] Memorandum for the Government from the Department of External Affairs, p. 4, 30 August 1947, Department of Foreign Affairs files, National Archives, DFA 402/25, p. 6.
- [61] S. Lambert (2004) Irish Women's Emigration to England, 1922–60: the lengthening of family ties, in Hayes & Urquhart (Eds) *Irish Women's History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press), p. 16.
- [62] Arnold Marsh Papers 8305/2
- [63] B. Gray, (1997) Unmasking Irishness: Irish women, the Irish nation and the Irish diaspora, in J. McLaughlin (Ed.) *Location and Dislocation in Contemporary Irish Society: emigration and Irish identities* (Cork: Cork University Press), pp. 209–235, p. 209.
- [64] Memorandum for the Government, contained in the Arnold Marsh Papers, 8300/12/2 entitled 'Emigration of Irish Girls for Employment in Great Britain'. This is not signed or dated, but information in the document reveals that it is from 1948.
- [65] Although intemperance is referred to as a danger to emigrants, this was associated as a more common moral problem for males rather than females.
- [66] *The Standard*, 11 May 1929, p. 1.
- [67] For example, reporting of the 1930 Lenten Pastorals in the *Irish Catholic* also refers to 'snares for the unwary'—*Irish Catholic*, 8 March 1930, p. 8.
- [68] *Irish Independent*, 7 December 1936, p. 5. Gaffney's articles were published in pamphlet format as 'Emigration to England: what you should know about it, Advice to Irish Girls', published by the *Irish Independent* in 1937.
- [69] *Ibid.*
- [70] P. M. Garrett (2000) 'The Hidden History of the PFIs: the repatriation of unmarried mothers and their children from England to Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 19(3), pp.25–44, p. 26.
- [71] *Ibid.* See also his other article on the subject, P. M. Garrett (2000) The Abnormal Flight: the migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers, *Social History*, 25(3), pp. 330–343 and L. Earner Byrne (2004) 'Moral Repatriation': the response to Irish unmarried mothers in Britain, 1920s–1960s, in P. J. Duffy (Ed.) *To and From Ireland: planned migration schemes, c.1600–2000* (Dublin: Geography Publications), pp. 155–174. See also L. Earner Byrne (2003) The Boat to England: an analysis of the official reactions to the emigration of single expectant Irishwomen to Britain, 1922–1972, *Irish Economic and Social History*, 30, pp. 52–70. This subject has also been dealt with by M. Luddy & C. Murphy (Eds) (1990) *Women Surviving: studies in Irish women's history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press). Space does not permit a detailed examination of the history of unmarried mothers and welfare policies in Ireland.
- [72] Memorandum Number 61, 'Memorandum on the Spiritual and Social Welfare of Irish in Great Britain Based on Personal Experience of Problems Relating Thereto to the Irish Commission on Emigration, Submitted by Rev. Fr. Walshe, P.P., The Presbytery, 29, Balaclava Road, Bitterne, Southampton'. Arnold Marsh Papers, TCD Manuscripts Department. The memorandum is not dated but is probably from 1948 as it is a part of a series of memos from that year in the collection.
- [73] Garrett, 'The Abnormal Flight', p. 332.
- [74] Commission on Emigration report, Section 319, p. 137.
- [75] B. Walter (1995) Irishness, Gender, and Place, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13, pp.35–50, p. 37.
- [76] King & O'Connor, 'Migration and Gender' p. 312.

- [77] Article 41.2 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (the Irish Constitution) of 1937 specifically values women's place within the home: 'In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, women gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved'. This article remains in the Constitution to the present day.
- [78] *Irish Independent*, 20 November 1936, p. 8.
- [79] J. A. O'Brien (Ed.) (1955) *The Vanishing Irish: the enigma of the modern world* (London: W.H. Allen), p. 7.
- [80] See Levitan, Redundancy, the 'Surplus Woman' Problem, and the British Census, 1851–1861, in this issue, of which the author kindly let me see an earlier draft.
- [81] Holden, 'Personal Costs and Personal Pleasures', p. 47.