Journal of British Studies 52 (January 2013): 179–204. doi:10.1017/jbr.2012.4

"You Have Votes and Power": Women's Political Engagement with the Irish Question in Britain, 1919–23

Mo Moulton

Abstract The Anglo-Irish War of 1919–21 spurred organized political activity among women in Britain, including former suffragists who campaigned against coercion in Ireland and members of the Irish minority in Britain who supported more radical republican efforts to achieve Irish independence. Their efforts are particularly significant because they occurred immediately after the granting of partial suffrage to women in 1918. This article argues that the advent of female suffrage changed the landscape of women's political mobilization in distinct ways that were made visible by advocacy on Ireland, including the regendering of the discourse of citizenship and the creation of new opportunities beyond the vote for women to exercise political power. At the same time, the use of women's auxiliary organizations and special meetings and the strategic blurring of the public and private spheres through the political use of domestic spaces all indicate the strength of continuities with nineteenth-century antecedents. The article further situates women's political advocacy on Ireland in an imperial and transnational context, arguing that it was part of the process of reconceptualizing Britain's postwar global role whether through outright anti-imperialism, in the case of Irish republicans, or through humanitarianism and the new internationalism, in the case of most former suffragists. Finally, the article examines the failure of these two groups of women to forge alliances with each other, underscoring the ways in which both class and nationality challenged a notional common interest based on sex.

In December 1918, Constance Markievicz became the first women ever elected to the British Parliament. An ardent Irish nationalist who had taken part in the Easter Rising in 1916, Markievicz had run as a member of Sinn Féin and so refused to take her seat in Westminster, serving instead in the revolutionary Dáil Éireann in Dublin.[1] Women were not represented in the British Parliament until Lady Astor took her seat in December 1919.[2] The fact that an Irish separatist

Mo Moulton is the associate director of studies and lecturer in history and literature at Harvard University. She is currently completing a book on the legacies of the Anglo-Irish War in interwar England. Research for this article was supported by an International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council and the Joukowsky Presidential Fellowship at Brown University. She would like to thank Deborah Cohen, Kevin Grant, Oded Rabinovitch, and Susanna Rankin Bohme, as well as the editors and three anonymous readers at the *Journal of British Studies*, for their helpful comments.

[1] S. Pašeta, "Markievicz, Constance Georgine, Countess Markievicz in the Polish nobility (1868–1927)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* online ed., January 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37472 (accessed 3 June 2011).

[2] Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: The Women's Movement, 1914–1928* (London, 1997), 124.

was the only woman elected in the first election held in which women over thirty could vote was described by Cheryl Law as a "cruel irony for the women's movement's election hopes," and indeed, Markievicz's election is often ignored or treated as a bizarre footnote in accounts of the British suffrage movement.[3] Yet it is an authentic reflection of the rich intersection between British feminism and Irish nationalism. Markievicz was not the only Irish nationalist female candidate to run in 1918: Charlotte Despard ran for the Labour Party with the backing of the Women's International League (WIL).[4] Markievicz was exceptional, but she was also one of many women whose work for peace, suffrage, and Irish self-determination drew them into public politics.

This article takes up a lesser-known aspect of women's political participation at this time: the efforts made by women in Britain in support of Irish self-determination during the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–21. It examines the work, sometimes disparate and sometimes intersecting, of two particular groups of women: middle-class British women, nearly all former suffragists, who campaigned against coercion in Ireland, and working-class Irish women, members of a minority culture in Britain, who supported more radical republican efforts to achieve Irish independence. This article argues that the advent of female suffrage changed the landscape of women's political mobilization in distinct ways. In the case of the Anglo-Irish War, women were, for the first time, putting pressure on a government that they had helped to elect. James Epstein, writing about nineteenth-century radical politics, has argued that "the constitutionalist notion of citizenship was predominantly male."[5] The Irish War therefore occurred at a moment of discursive transition in which citizenship was being regendered and women were being addressed in their new status as voters. Moreover, middle-class women made use of new access to positions of power and influence within the political parties to further their views on the Anglo-Irish War. At the same time, women's patterns of advocacy over the Irish War were recognizably derived from earlier forms of women's political activity. The use of women's auxiliary organizations and special meetings and the strategic blurring of the public and private spheres through the political use of domestic spaces all indicate the strength of continuities with nineteenth-century antecedents.

The women who worked for Irish self-determination were part of a larger process of reconceptualizing Britain's global role after World War I. For Irish republicans, the British Empire was the enemy of rightful national self-determination. Midde-class former suffragists, however, situated their Irish advocacy in the context of debates over pacifism and the new internationalism. For many of them, Britain's moral claim to a global role rested on its commitments to humanitarianism and justice, a stance that opened the door to a critique of imperialism while also maintaining an implicit connection to the idea of a British civilizing mission. These women, while working closely with their former Irish suffragist colleagues, were unable to forge alliances with the immigrant and minority community of the working-class Irish republican women in their midst, underscoring the ways in which both class and

[3] Ibid., 120.

[4] Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain Since 1820* (London, 1989), 134.

[5] James A. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 23.

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2012.4 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nationality challenged a notional common interest based on sex. Virginia Woolf famously said that "as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."[6] Yet the women examined here claimed emphatically national citizenships, whether of a future free Ireland in the case of republican women or of a better Britain in the case of middle-class activists. That citizenship was symbolized by suffrage, but it manifested itself through a variety of activities, ranging from public advocacy to clandestine gunrunning, and in a variety of spaces, from the public stage to politicized private drawing rooms.[7] Ultimately, women's claims to these new forms of citizenship were shaped by political beliefs about the ethical status of empire and the future of the international order.

The state of women's politics after the granting of partial suffrage in 1918 has been the subject of much debate and revision. With full suffrage equality delayed until 1928, the decade following the war has defied easy interpretation. Some scholars have interpreted the period as a trough for British feminism in which women, like society in general, were trapped once more in a discourse of naturalized gender roles and domesticity.[8] More recently, though, scholars such as Pat Thane have reinterpreted the period as one in which women gained influence not reflected by the relatively small numbers of female MPs.[9] These more optimistic scholars tend to see not a splintered women's movement but rather a diverse organizational network enjoying considerable continuity and tackling, in Cheryl Law's words, a "vast catalogue of legislative reform" in 1918–22 that advanced women's rights in multiple areas.[10] The Irish episode is therefore an important element in the history of British women in the interwar years, contributing to a growing body of scholarship emphasizing the vibrant and multifaceted nature of women's political activities at that time.

Decades of nationalist agitation had resulted in a Home Rule Bill for Ireland, passed in 1914 but immediately suspended for the duration of the war in Europe.

[6] Woolf goes on to suggest that any sentiment of national affection this woman may feel will serve to make her "give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world." Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London, 1938), 109.

[7] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860–1914* (Princeton, 1987), 212; suffrage was a "badge of civic personality" with enormous symbolic power, but women aimed to use it pragmatically as well.

[8] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, 1993), 139; Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850–1920* (Chicago, 1985), 287–88; Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914–1945* (Cambridge, 1993), 138–39. See also Christine Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned: Race, Class, and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements, c. 1880s–1970s* (London, 2004), 50–51. For an argument that gender roles remained relatively stable even during World War I, see Susan B. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1999), 8–10.

[9] Pat Thane, "Women and Political Participation in England, 1918–1970," in *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century: What Difference Did the Vote Make?* ed. Esther Breitenbach and Pat Thane (London, 2010), 11–28; Véronique Molinari, *Citoyennes, et après?: le droit de vote des femmes et ses conséquences en Grande-Bretagne, 1918–1939* (Bern, 2009), 18, 247; Christine Collette, *The Newer Eve: Women, Feminists and the Labour Party* (Basingstoke, 2009), 57–58; Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914–1928* (Houndmills, 1989), 72; Esther Breitenbach and Pat Thane, introduction to Breitenbach and Thane, *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland*, 5.

[10] Law, *Suffrage and Power*, 3, 225. Quotation at 94.

Over the course of World War I, views on Irish autonomy polarized, with physical-force separatism in particular gaining strength after the brutal suppression of the Easter Rising. In the election of 1918, the nationalist party Sinn Féin performed well, and Markievicz joined her fellow party members in a new provisional government headed by the Dáil Éireann.[11] Within a year, a guerrilla war had developed, pitting the Irish Republican Army (IRA) against Crown Forces made up of regular soldiers, the Royal Irish Constabulary, and its two British-recruited units, the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans.[12] All of these forces, but especially the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans, soon became notorious for their role in the cycle of ambushes, violent reprisals, and counterreprisals against property, combatants, and civilians that came to characterize the conflict.[13] Reprisals carried out by Crown Forces have been the source of enduring bitterness; they ranged from small-scale personal intimidation to large-scale arson and destruction of property, but they shared the aim of deterring IRA attacks and undermining civilian support for militants.[14] In December 1920, the British regime declared martial law in parts of southwestern Ireland, sanctioning, among other things, internment and the use of selective reprisals against civilians suspected of harboring IRA members.[15]

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The conduct of the Anglo-Irish War, and in particular the specter of violent reprisals against civilians and their property, whether officially sanctioned or not, spurred the creation of a protest movement in Britain. The war was deeply unpopular in Britain, and its opponents were far more outspoken than its proponents. Whereas the military justified reprisals as a method of effectively striking back at the elusive IRA and of eroding its local popularity, many people in Britain found them brutal, unjust, and corrosive to the goodwill and order that held Britain and its empire together.[16] Moreover, the British government's use of harsh tactics to keep Ireland within the union seemed out of tune with the moment: the rights of small nations to self-determination had been a central element in the justification for participating in World War I, and it was a touchstone of the Wilsonian ideals that underpinned the new League of Nations.[17] In response to the policy of reprisals and repression, a small

[11] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600–1972* (London, 1988), 489, 495.

[12] Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance since 1848* (Oxford, 1983) 336, 350–51, 411–13.

[13] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), 79.

[14] D. M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920–1921* (Oxford, 2011), 159.

[15] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, 92–93; David Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900–1922," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge, 1996), 403.

[16] Deirdre McMahon, "Ireland and the Empire-Commonwealth, 1900–1948," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Judith M. Brown and William Roger Louis (Oxford, 1999), 143–45; "Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920–21, and the Part Played by the Army in Dealing with It," vol. 1 (War Office, 1922), 31, Sir Hugh Jeudwine MS 72/82/2, Imperial War Musuem; "The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area from after 1916 Rebellion to December 1921. Compiled by General Staff 6th Division," 61, Sir Peter Strickland P. 363 Collection, Imperial War Museum.

[17] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007); Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993), 312–13; Frank Trentmann, "After the Nation-State: Citizenship,

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2012.4 Published online by Cambridge University Press

but serious antiwar campaign developed in Britain. The Peace with Ireland Council was staffed mainly by dissident Liberals and a few dissident Conservatives; allied with it were the London office of the Irish Dominion League (IDL) and the noncoalition Liberal Party under H. H. Asquith.[18] The Labour Party also launched an investigation into conditions in Ireland and, subsequently, its own propaganda campaign.[19] These efforts, which reached their height in the winter of 1920–21, broadly supported Irish self-determination, usually in the form of a dominion, and scathingly denounced reprisals and repression by the Crown Forces in Ireland. Historians have generally concluded that the antireprisals campaign helped to push Prime Minister David Lloyd George to the negotiating table.[20] Women played important roles in all aspects of these efforts. They were prominent actors in all of the campaigns against reprisals, and the WIL in particular made Ireland one of its first postwar issues.

The issue of pacifism had splintered the suffrage movement during World War I.[21] The "peace women" helped to found an international women's peace movement that endured into the interwar decades and agitated on Ireland and other issues.[22] The International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (later the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) had developed out of a congress of women representing twelve countries at The Hague in April 1915, and its British branch, the WIL, was founded in October 1915.[23] Immediately after the war, the WIL had about 4,200 members in fifty-one branches.[24] Both membership and the numbers of local branches fell in the first several years of the peace, however, until the WIL compensated by allowing local groups, such as Labour Women's Sections and Women's Co-operative Guild branches, to affiliate with it in 1924.[25]

Empire and Global Coordination in the New Internationalism, 1914–1930," in *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950*, ed. Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann (Houndmills, 2007), 35.

[18] See "Account of the Peace with Ireland Council," (n.d.), George Berkeley Papers MS 7,881, National Library of Ireland (NLI); Edith Stopford, "Autobiographical Account," (n.d.), Edith Stopford Papers MS 11,426, NLI; D. G. Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy, 1918–22* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 65–70; G. K. Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish Self-Government, 1865–1925: From Unionism to Liberal Commonwealth* (Dublin, 2001), 89–92.

[19] *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* (London, 1921), Pamphlets Collection 320.471, Labour History Archive; Geoffrey Bell, *Troublesome Business: The Labour Party and the Irish Question* (London, 1982), 58–60.

[20] Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, 80–81; David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912–1939* (Oxford, 1998), 81; Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish Self-Government*, 175.

[21] Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: the Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain during the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2007), 1, 64–72; Nicoletta F. Gullace, *"The Blood of our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York, 2002), 4–5, 195–96.

[22] Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 105. Liddington has traced the origins of British women linking gender and peace work to the Olive Leaf groups of the 1840s, but she paints a generally bleak picture of women's place in nineteenth-century peace organizations, documenting their systematic exclusion from positions of leadership in the Peace Society (15–16).

[23] Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 55; Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (Athens, 1989), 1.

[24] Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 134.

[25] June Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women: Britain, 1880s to 1920s* (London and New York, 2002), 181, 189–91; Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 216; Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 139–40, 144. Women worked in a larger context of organizations of British people interested in a more peaceful

The WIL invested considerable energy in advocating for Irish self-determination in the fall of 1920: as K. E. Royds wrote to Catherine Marshall in November, "We are occupying ourselves mainly about Ireland."[26] The WIL directed some of its attention at the state, protesting against the government's policy on Irish hunger strikers, a policy which ultimately led to the widely publicized death of Terence MacSwiney, the lord mayor of Cork, in Brixton.[27] More often, however, its efforts were turned toward the public, broadly conceived to include both the British and the larger world community. Members of the WIL wished "to mould public opinion" in support of a policy of withdrawing troops from Ireland and allowing self-determination.[28] The Manchester branch, which represented 750 members, sent a delegation to Ireland to investigate the conduct of the war there. Marshall was very much in favor of the WIL's delegation to Ireland, which she hoped would bring back not only information but also "some representative Irish women" to fuel a propaganda campaign in Britain.[29] With regard to Ulster, members of the delegation concluded, "[D]ifferences between the Irish people there would be much more readily settled if Great Britain ceased interference."[30] They argued that the government should withdraw its armed forces, release political prisoners, and transfer power to locally elected bodies.[31] The delegation's findings were publicized through a series of "large and enthusiastic meetings" in Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Bristol, and elsewhere in autumn 1920.[32] At a London meeting at Kingsway Hall in mid-November, there were lantern slides and speakers, including Despard, Helen Chenevix of the Irishwomen's International League (IIL), Annot Robinson, and Helena Swanwick, all of whom had been involved with the suffrage movement in some fashion.[33]

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and rational postwar order, particularly the popular, respectable, and large League of Nations Union and the smaller, more socialist and pacifist No War Movement. See Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 132–33.

[26] K. E. Royds to Catherine Marshall, 9 November 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, Carlisle, Cumbria Records Office (CRO).

[27] Draft of Women's International League Annual Report, October 1919–October 1920, 8, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO.

[28] Final Agenda of the Women's International League Council Meeting, 14–15 October 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO.

[29] [Catherine Marshall] to Lord Monteagle, 2 October [1920?], Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[30] Women's International League Monthly News Sheet 6:2, November 1920, Mary and Erskine Childers Papers (hereafter Childers Papers) MS 7843/236, Trinity College Dublin.

[31] Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 138.

[32] "Meeting on Ireland," WIL Monthly News Sheet 6:3 (December 1920), 2, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO; Rosemary Cullen Owens, "Women & Pacifism in Ireland, 1915–1932," in *Women and Irish History: Essay in Honour of Margaret MacCurtain*, ed. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd (Dublin, 1997), 230; Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 138.

[33] Leaflet for Public Meeting at Kingsway Hall, 15 November [1920], Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO. Biographical details on the suffrage careers of these women can be found in Margaret Mulvihill, "Despard, Charlotte (1844–1939)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., May 2010, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37356 (accessed 17 June 2011); Leah Leneman, "Robinson, Annot Erskine (1874–1925)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48529 (accessed 17 June 2011); Jose Harris, "Swanwick, Helena Maria Lucy (1864–1939)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., October 2006, http://www.

Members of the WIL coordinated their efforts with other British organizations working on Ireland. Marshall drew on her family connection to the IDL to generate suitable language for a WIL resolution on Ireland, while Swanwick, the chair of the WIL, corresponded with the Peace with Ireland Council's George Berkeley.[34] Other women organized their own gender-specific efforts on the Irish question, sometimes in cooperation with mixed-sex groups. On 18 March 1921, there was a special women's meeting against reprisals held at the Central Hall, Westminster. Organized jointly by a committee headed by Lady Bryce and the Peace with Ireland Council, this was one of the largest antireprisals meetings the movement held.[35] The roster of speakers reflected a rising generation of female political leadership, including Lady Violet Bonham Carter and Margaret Bondfield. Lady Byles recalled that the Central Hall was "[p]acked to suffocation" and that the audience included "some dressy women" who thought the criticism ought to be directed at Sinn Féin instead.[36] Edith Stopford called this meeting the "most interesting" of the movement, as well as one of the most lucrative. The issue of pacifism still had the power to divide women's political organizations, as it had divided the suffragists during World War I. Stopford remembered that the meeting was nearly called off because of a quarrel over whether to include a peace demand in the resolution that the meeting would pass; the demand was ultimately included.[37] The success and prominence of this meeting, as well as its joint sponsorship with a mixed-sex organization, the Peace with Ireland Council, is indicative of the brand of women's politics that thrived in the context of this agitation: well heeled, well connected, and well poised to make an immediate impact on the political discourse of the moment.

At a meeting on the Irish question, Swanwick had "called on English people to insist on going to Ireland to see for themselves," a plea that one observer wrote caused "intensity of emotion throughout the audience."[38] In a similar vein, a Labour Party pamphlet directed at British women expressed the wish that every British woman should go to Ireland "and see for herself the abomination of British rule there."[39] A number of British women did travel independently to Ireland, outside of official delegations such as that organized by the WIL. Evelyn Sharp, a former suffragist and dedicated peace worker, took a series of photographs, mostly of destroyed buildings with smashed windows and burned roofs, that captured the destruction wrought by reprisals carried out by Crown Forces.[40] Joice

oxforddnb.com/view/article/38040 (accessed 24 March 2009); Angela Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing: Women's Writing and Traditions*, 5 vols. (New York, 2002), 5:566.

[34] Hon. Secretary of the Irish Dominion League to Catherine Marshall, 25 October 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO; H.M. Swanwick to George Berkeley, 15 November 1920, George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920(6), NLI.

[35] "Women against Reprisals," *The Times*, 9 March 1921, 14e.

[36] S. A. Byles to George Berkeley, n.d., George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920(1), NLI.

[37] Edith Stopford, "Autobiographical Account," 21, MS 11,426, NLI.

[38] "Meeting on Ireland," WIL Monthly News Sheet 6:3 (Dec. 1920), 3, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO.

[39] "The Strangling of Ireland: An Appeal to British Women by a British Woman" (London, n.d.), COLL MISC 0028, London School of Economics.

[40] Photographs, September 1920–January 1921, Evelyn Sharp Papers MS. Eng. misc. d. 673/12–35, Bodleian Library (BL).

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Nankivell traveled to Ireland with her husband, and the two jointly wrote a compelling, novelistic account of war-torn Dublin.[41] In February 1921, Barbara Hammond and her husband, J. L. Hammond, toured Ireland with Margaret Buckmaster and Desmond MacCarthy. She visited prominent nationalists, toured Dublin and Cork, and attended a trial in Mallow before the group returned to antireprisals campaigning in Britain.[42] The call to investigate in person echoed a long tradition of women working as social investigators and caseworkers who could testify about the horrors they witnessed. The descriptions produced by such visits provided important ammunition in a campaign that relied upon the word of respectable observers to challenge the government's account.

Middle-class British women who opposed coercion in Ireland, and the men who sought to influence them, built on a legacy of female activism that had simultaneously addressed issues of international and, especially, imperial justice and had sought to assert the right of British women to full enfranchisement.[43] The irrelevance of women's experience to foreign policy and war had been a major plank in the antisuffrage platform.[44] In response, Antoinette Burton has argued, "liberal bourgeois feminists involved in various aspects of the women's movement conceived of empire as a legitimate place for exhibiting their fitness for participation in the imperial nation-state," working to rescue the degraded native woman through campaigns against *sati*, for example.[45] Imperial paternalism could be found in the Anglo-Irish relationship, too: for instance, in the efforts of aristocratic British women to relieve hunger during the Irish famine in ways that treated the Irish "as children, wilful and foolish perhaps, but above all else, in need of nurturing and protection," as K. D. Reynolds puts it.[46] During W. E. Gladstone's campaign for Irish Home Rule, Liberal women successfully described the Irish question as a social and humanitarian issue and hence one that should properly concern women, drawing on domestic metaphors of marriage and divorce to argue for the Home Rule solution.[47]

In 1919–21, too, activists argued that the suffering of Irish women and children should make the conflict particularly poignant to women. This rhetoric was altered, however, to reflect the fact that women were concerned about such problems as citizens rather than only as empathetic mothers or sisters. Such appeals made sense in the context of women's ongoing involvement with relief work, especially in connection with the Fight the Famine Council and its later iteration, the Save the Children Fund.[48] Erskine Childers, an English Liberal who joined the republican forces

[41] Joice M. Nankivell and Sydney Loch, *Ireland in Travail* (London, 1922).

[42] Account by Barbara Hammond, [1921?], MS Hammond 165/151–269, BL.

[43] See Susie Steinbach, *Women in England, 1760–1914: A Social History* (New York, 2004), 265.

[44] Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (New York, 1978), 75–76.

[45] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill & London, 1994), 207. See also Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi, 1998), 4; Steinbach, *Women in England*, 211–12.

[46] K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), 121.

[47] Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2007), 89.

[48] Some women viewed relief work as "counterproductive to the fight for equality," while others valued its affirmation of women's work caring for others and, in doing so, opposing war: Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 193. See also Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 134–35; Susan Zeiger, "Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s," *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 1 (1999): 69–86.

in Ireland, produced a considerable body of propaganda detailing the misuse of force by the British in Ireland. Many of the articles he published in the *Daily News* used the hardships faced by women as an emotional focal point. Describing the horrors of late-night house raids, many of which turned out to be futile, Childers focused on the experiences of "women and terrified children," arguing that disregard for women's status bred immorality and brutality: "Imagine the moral effect of such a procedure on the young officers and men told off for this duty! Is it any wonder that gross abuses occur: looting, wanton destruction, brutal severity to women?"[49] That "brutal severity" formed the heart of another article by Childers, titled "What It Means to Women," published on 7 April 1920. This article presented a series of anecdotes, nearly all featuring pregnant women or young mothers who were mistreated by raiding soldiers or police entering their bedrooms at night while their husbands were under arrest or absent. Childers did not explicitly accuse Crown Forces of rape, and indeed scholars still debate whether rape was used in this conflict. Louise Ryan has argued that British forces systematically targeted Irish women for sexual violence in their campaign of intimidation.[50] Sarah Benton, however, contends that while there is no doubt that "forces of the crown" subjected women to "acts of sexual humiliation," there is no evidence of mass rape being carried out by British troops.[51] David Leeson challenges gendered assumptions about sexual violence by suggesting that Crown Forces might have used sexual humiliation more systematically against Irish men.[52] For Childers, however, the metaphorical implication of rape provided the emotional buildup to his conclusion that British women, in their new status as voting citizens, were directly responsible for the sufferings of Irish women: "[A]nd once more the officer gains entry to the sick room, in spite of vehement protests; for the lady's nerves are now utterly unstrung. As a concession, he enters alone, leaving the fixed bayonets outside. But this is the climax: there are pitiful screams at every movement—the flash of his torch, the opening of a wardrobe door…. Women of England, you have votes and power; this is *your* responsibility."[53] Other activists suggested that British women could feel a sense of sympathy for Irish demands in general, not only through the mechanism of a shared sisterhood with Irish women. One, probably Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, suggested using "the idea of identification of English women and the Irish people" as a motivating concept.[54] She did not elaborate on the exact meaning of such an identification, but it seems likely that it would have been based in the perception that the Irish were as disenfranchised and disempowered in a national sense as English women had been on the basis of their sex.

As Childers's conclusion suggests, however, British women could now be addressed as people with "votes and power" and hence with "responsibility" as

[49] Erskine Childers, *Military Rule in Ireland: A Series of Eight Articles Contributed to The Daily News March–May, 1920* (Dublin, 1920), 6.

[50] Louise Ryan, "'Drunken Tans': Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919–21)," *Feminist Review* 66 (Autumn 2000): 73–94. Kent also asserts that rape occurred. Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918–1931* (Houndmills, 2009), 100–101.

[51] Sarah Benton, "Women Disarmed: The Militarisation of Politics in Ireland, 1913–1923," *Feminist Review* 50 (Summer 1995): 148–72, cited in Ryan, "Drunken Tans," 76.

[52] David Leeson, "The Black and Tans: British Police in the First Irish War, 1920–21" (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2003), 187–88; Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, 181–82.

[53] Childers, *Military Rule in Ireland*, 9–10.

[54] E. P. L. to Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, 28 July 1921, Sheehy-Skeffington Papers MS 24,088(2), NLI.

well as moral duty. Such rhetoric appeared frequently in the campaign against Irish coercion. In a letter announcing the women's meeting on Ireland at the Central Hall in London in March 1921, the organizing committee explained that they were protesting reprisals as "women citizens, to whom the principles of humanity and of national morality should be peculiarly important." Women citizens thus had a special obligation to act: "[I]f we permit this policy of reprisals to continue unchallenged, we shall be neglecting a grave duty which as women citizens we owe the State."[55] The Labour Party, too, issued a pamphlet warning British women that unless they spoke out "for justice and humanity in Ireland," they "will be branded before the world, and in the long memories of the Irish people, as callous and cruel, deaf to the call of liberty, narrow-minded and slothful."[56] The Labour Party's pamphlet drew on negative stereotypes of women—"narrow-minded and slothful"—to make its point, and its suggested action of speaking out was less emphatically political than the women's meeting committee's reference to the "grave duty" owed by "women citizens" to the state. Yet both the party and the committee asserted that women had a rightful and indeed necessary place in the debate over the Irish question.

The WIL explicitly asserted the right of women to be heard in international relations, and in so doing, they contributed to the ongoing debate over Britain's role in the postwar world.[57] Often overlooked in histories of the WIL, which emphasize its work on European causes and global issues such as disarmament, the Irish campaign sheds important light on the WIL's understanding of its role as an internationalist body of British women working for peace. Marshall argued that the task of publicizing the truth about what was happening in Ireland should be part of a more general program to combat violence. She compared Ireland to "any other country in Europe where 'Terror' is in force, & pogroms & military occupation."[58] Swanwick, writing in the WIL newsletter in December 1920, used the first-person plural to suggest that British women were an integral part of their nation and so were to be held accountable for its misdeeds.[59] Why, she asked, was the British government waging war against the Irish people?

> Because we love to dominate? (Is that decent?) Because we are frightened by bogey-tales of the "rooted-hatred" of the Irish for the British? (Whatever hatred exists is rooted in domination and will wither when the fertile soil is withdrawn.) Because we fear for that little corner of irreconcilables that we had the folly to plant in Ulster? (But the Republicans are prepared to make treaties and give guarantees on all these matters.)
>
> Our security and our welfare, just as much as our good name in all the world, are concerned in the reversal of this cowardly and cruel and dishonest policy of militarist domination in Ireland.[60]

[55] "Women against Reprisals," *The Times*, 9 March 1921, 14e.

[56] "The Strangling of Ireland: An Appeal to British Women by a British Woman" (London, n.d.), COLL MISC 0028, London School of Economics.

[57] Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, 131, 180; Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 109.

[58] [Catherine Marshall] to Lord Monteagle, 2 October [1920?], Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[59] Swanwick was chairman of the WIL from 1915 to 1922. See Harris, "Swanwick, Helena Maria Lucy (1864–1939)."

[60] H. M. S., "Needs Must When the Devil Drives," WIL Monthly News Sheet 6:3 (December 1920), 2, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO.

Swanwick offered explanations for conflict—the love of domination and the superstitious fear of "bogey-tales" about the enemy—that fit into a larger argument about the higher nature and desirability of peaceful international cooperation. Addressing her remarks to an organization of women dedicated to world peace, she insisted that the Anglo-Irish relationship was not an exception to a world that must be governed by self-determination rather than "militarist domination." Her argument did not rest on a particular vision of women's contribution; instead, it presumed that British women were now faced with crucial choices about national policy upon which the nation's security, welfare, and "good name in all the world" depended.[61] Marshall, her colleague in the suffrage movement as well as in the WIL, wrote from a similar perspective, telling her cousin, Lord Monteagle: "It is too ghastly our sitting helplessly looking on at such iniquities being perpetrated in our name."[62] The alternation in these calls to action between a gendered assumption of women's pacifism and a universal duty to promote justice is instructive. The language of sexual difference and the invocation of nongendered citizenship were not mutually exclusive. Women deployed both in the service of the more immediate aims of their political activity—in this case, Irish self-determination.

The vision of international justice promulgated by the WIL fit into a larger discourse that Frank Trentmann has described as the new internationalism, which "simultaneously sought to civilise global relations by inserting new transnational institutions and to overcome a democracy gap between state and citizen at home."[63] As Daniel Gorman has demonstrated in his work on antitrafficking campaigns, women were able to deploy the new internationalism as they sought greater influence in transnational and imperial affairs.[64] In the Irish case, the WIL functioned as an international information network and maintained contact, in particular, with the IIL.[65] Jane Addams, an American cofounder of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, was in touch with the Manchester branch as well as the Irish branch of the league regarding her own participation in an American Commission on Ireland.[66] Two members of the WIL delegation also traveled to the United States to publicize their findings.[67] Although Swanwick was clear that British women were accountable for their nation's policies, the WIL nonetheless imagined the international community as an alternate resource of power to which it could appeal in order to rein in the British government's excesses in Ireland.

[61] Vellacott denies that the democratic suffragists involved in the WIL based their efforts on a "claim of female moral superiority," arguing that what they claimed instead was the need "to bring the full spectrum of human resources to bear on the problems of living in the world." Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, 173.

[62] Catherine Marshall to Lord Monteagle, 2 October [1920?], Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO. See also Lord Monteagle to Catherine Marshall, 30 September 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO. On Marshall, see Olive Banks, *The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists,* 2 vols. (New York, 1990), 2:141–44, and Jo Vellacott, *From Liberal to Labour with Women's Suffrage: The Story of Catherine Marshall* (Montreal, 1993).

[63] Trentmann, "After the Nation-State," 35.

[64] Daniel Gorman, "Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children in the 1920s," *Twentieth Century British History* 19, no. 2 (2008): 186–216.

[65] Helena Swanwick to Molly Childers, 16 November 1920, Childers Papers MS 7843/235, Trinity College Dublin.

[66] Jane Addams to Emily Balch, 9 November 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO.

[67] Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 138.

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By taking up the Irish question, campaigners felt, the League of Nations would seize an excellent opportunity for international governance to prove its worth. The WIL's International Sub-Committee "mooted the question as to whether we English women could by any means appeal to the League of Nations against our own Government on this matter."[68] Marshall took action on that sentiment while in Geneva in November 1920. As she explained to Swanwick, she lobbied numerous people, looked into obtaining formal statements by "various representative bodies in Ireland and England," and wondered whether it would be possible to get "British Colonies to plead for recognition of Ireland as a self-governing Dominion qualified to be admitted to the League of Nations."[69] The work of those interested in international issues is not always accounted for in histories of women's political activity, perhaps because the activists themselves sought to distance their work from a constraining narrative based on gender.[70] Indeed, Sharp ultimately left the WIL, "because she no longer saw any necessity for separatist women's organisations," moving closer to the Labour Party and the left-wing press instead.[71] However, the WIL's work on Ireland demonstrates the existence, in the immediate aftermath of World War I, of an avowed women's organization that nonetheless imagined its remit to include the most pressing international questions of the moment.

The Irish campaign offered women multiple opportunities to hone new skills and consolidate new channels of power. Here, too, there are several late nineteenth-century antecedents. Women had gained direct political power through the Municipal Franchise Act of 1869, which gave married women the vote as compound householders and meant that women began to serve in local government service, elected, in John Belchem's words, "on the basis of their gendered aptitude for 'caring' social policy."[72] Women had attracted the attention of political parties after the passage of the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, because of the need for volunteer work in electioneering.[73] Advocacy efforts for Irish Home Rule had also expanded the boundaries of what was permissible female political activism, including addressing public gatherings and engaging with matters of constitutional reform.[74] The activism around the Anglo-Irish War saw these trends pushed further.

[68] K. E. Royds to Catherine Marshall, 9 November 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/4/82, CRO.

[69] [Catherine Marshall] to Helena Swanwick, 25 November 1920, and [Catherine Marshall] to Lord Monteagle, 2 October [1920?], Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[70] However, the distinction between those interested in international peace and those interested in "women's issues" should not be too sharply stated: the second Congress of the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace in Zurich in 1919 drew up a Woman's Charter. Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 87.

[71] Ibid., 193.

[72] John Belchem, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Houndmills, 1996), 177.

[73] Law, *Suffrage and Power*, 127; Steinbach, *Women in England*, 242–44.

[74] Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, 90, 94–95. Similarly, Law has argued that electioneering work in the 1880s in general helped to politicize women, who gained skills that they soon turned to their own causes. Law, *Suffrage and Power*, 127. Conservative women also practiced political skills through an Irish campaign, the Help the Ulster Women campaign of 1914, which proved to be a prototype for later relief work in World War I. David Thackeray, "Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 4 (October 2010): 826–48.

The three major political parties were eager to court women voters in the early 1920s, explicitly addressing them in their campaigning and forming women's organizations within the party structures.[75] Large numbers of women joined political parties in these years, and they were able to parlay their presence in the parties into influence.[76] When the London Liberal Federation considered the possibility of a national campaign on Ireland, for instance, it was at the instigation of the women's subcommittee.[77] Marshall actively pressed for the Labour Party to take stronger action on Ireland "in order to get these horrors stopped," visiting "chief Labour people" and urging them "at least to insist on the withdrawal of the army & the disarming of the R.I.C."[78] Throughout 1920, she worked with the Mid-Cumberland Divisional Labour Party to organize and encourage local branches; the twin issues of war in Russia and in Ireland appear regularly in her notes on this work.[79] In June 1920, Marshall attended the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough, where she advocated for the IDL's proposals and tried to facilitate connections between Lord Monteagle and Labour luminaries such as James Ramsay MacDonald, J. R. Clynes, Philip Snowden, and Arthur Henderson.[80] On the local level, Marshall organized a delegate conference in Keswick on 28 August 1920, which sent a telegram to the king appealing for the immediate release of hunger striker MacSwiney and passed resolutions urging a change in government policy on Ireland, Russia, Egypt, and India.[81]

Women were highly visible as public speakers in the campaign against coercion in Ireland, echoing the precedent established in the Home Rule agitation. The Labour Party mandated that each public meeting hosted by the party on Ireland would be addressed by "a woman speaker" in addition to a member of the commission and an MP or other prominent figure.[82] This rule is consistent with the larger effort by the major parties to include women in formal and visible ways in order to appeal to the new mass of female voters. It is striking evidence also of the ways in which the parties' desire to appeal to women created new opportunities for politically active women, in this case as public speakers. Many of the women involved in advocacy on Ireland took advantage of public or even professional opportunities within the movement and went on to further relevant positions later in the 1920s. Swanwick, for instance, attended the Special Labour Party Conference on Ireland in December 1920 as a delegate from the Richmond Labour Party. While there, she

[75] Law, *Suffrage and Power*, 127–28; Molinari, *Citoyennes, et après*, 44.

[76] Thane, "Women and Political Participation in England," 13–15. On the Labour Party, see Collette, *Newer Eve*, 68, 161. For a comparison between the Conservative and Liberal parties, see Thackeray, "Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain," 848.

[77] C. R. Cooke-Taylor to George Berkeley, 23 November [1920], George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920 (1), NLI.

[78] [Catherine Marshall] to Lord Monteagle, 2 October [1920?], Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO. See also Lord Monteagle to Catherine Marshall, 30 September 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[79] See Circular from Catherine E. Marshall, Secretary pro-tem, Divisional Labour Party, 13 August 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[80] Lord Monteagle to Catherine Marshall, 2 July 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[81] "Mid-Cumberland Divisional Labour Party. (Cockermouth & Penrith Parliamentary Division)," 30 August 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.

[82] "The Labour Party Report of the Twenty-First Annual Conference" (London, [1921]), 24, Labour History Archive.

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spoke only briefly, to urge the party to follow the lead of prominent Liberal politicians in taking a more public stance on the matter.[83] Four years later, in 1924, she attended the Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations as a substitute delegate at the request of the first Labour government, indicating that her participation in 1920 was just one part of a larger trajectory of professional and political involvement.[84] Edith Stopford was one of the few paid employees of the movement, working first for Sir John Simon and then for the Peace with Ireland Council.[85] She later moved to Dublin and worked as an assistant to J. L. Hammond for his book on Gladstone and Ireland.[86] Marshall nearly became another employee of the Irish cause when Lord Monteagle, a leading figure in the IDL, approached her about taking on a full-time paid organizing job at the organization's London office. In this, he was acting on a proposal made by Lady Byles to hire one or two traveling organizers to foster grassroots support around the country. Marshall's sex was seen as an asset by Lady Byles and, implicitly, Lord Monteagle as well: "[H]er experience is that women would be as good for this purpose as men, if not better," he explained.[87] Marshall declined the position, though she remained active on the Irish issue in other ways. Annot Robinson, who had a paid post as the Manchester organizer for the WIL from 1918, traveled to Ireland in that organization's deputation and publicized its findings; she later became the vice chair of the Manchester Labour Party.[88]

Finally, middle-class activists on Ireland made strategic use of public and private spaces in order to further the cause, carrying on a long tradition of female political engagement. Clare Midgley's description of women's antislavery work in the nineteenth century provides a useful comparison. Although women were excluded from "positions of formal power in the national antislavery movement in Britain," they were nonetheless "an integral part of that movement."[89] Female abolitionists "were involved in constructing, reinforcing, utilising, negotiating, subverting or more rarely challenging the distinction between the private-domestic sphere and the public-political sphere,"[90] whether they were raising funds, spreading information, influencing public opinion, or organizing the boycott of slave-grown sugar that effectively merged "the domestic and the political."[91] The British antislavery movement, like the campaign against coercion in Ireland, contained seeds of both imperialism and anti-imperialism. In Midgley's words, "[O]n the one hand, it was a philanthropic middle-class campaign promoting an imperial Christian mission; on the other, it was a popular movement for human rights regardless of race."[92] As "the first large-scale political campaign by middle-class women, and the first

[83] *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland*, 118.
[84] Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 198–200.
[85] León Ó Broin, *Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: The Stopford Connection* (Dublin, 1985), 164.
[86] Edith Stopford, "Autobiographical Account," 28, MS 11,426, NLI; G.K. Peatling, "New Liberalism, J.L. Hammond and the Irish Problem, 1897–1949," *Historical Research* 73, no. 180 (February 2000): 60.
[87] Lord Monteagle to Catherine Marshall, 6 July 1920, Catherine Marshall Papers D/MAR/5/3, CRO.
[88] Leneman, "Robinson, Annot Erskine (1874–1925)."
[89] Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London, 1992), 3.
[90] Ibid., 5.
[91] Ibid., 60.
[92] Ibid., 93.

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movement in which women aroused the opinion of the female public in order to put pressure on Parliament," the antislavery movement is an important antecedent to the Irish campaign of 1919–21.[93]

Socially prominent women made use of the networks of middle- and upper-class society in order to advocate for a change in policy on Ireland. Lady Byles was particularly effective at this type of personal lobbying. Lord Monteagle called her "a good medium for diffusing" information about Ireland within English society.[94] On one occasion, she raised the matter of Ireland's woes at "a small garden-party of Liberal women (mostly poor)" who "spontaneously gathered 14/6 together for the Prisoners' Dependents' Fund," to which she herself added a further £5.[95] Farther up the social hierarchy, she had a "[l]ong talk" with Erskine Childers over lunch in September 1920, and she also introduced Berkeley, head of the Peace with Ireland Council, to Eleanor Acland, who later wrote a pamphlet on Ireland for that council.[96] Such encounters could occur at a variety of social gatherings, but women also organized events with an eye specifically to the Irish issue, as when Mary Ffrench invited Berkeley to tea with the note, "I am having a few people interested in Ireland and hope you can come."[97]

Maneuvering between separate spheres typified the activities of the extraordinary Molly Childers and her husband, Erskine, an author, soldier, and parliamentary clerk. K. D. Reynolds has argued that in the aristocratic political culture of the Victorian years, "the 'theatre of politics' frequently found its stage in the drawing-rooms and salons of the political hostesses." The hostess was often an "incorporated wife," a woman "implicated in, yet excluded from, the organizational structure" of her husband's career.[98] Molly Childers demonstrates that the "incorporated wife" could wield her distinctive power in a very different historical and political context as well. Even before the Irish question came to dominate their lives, Molly had been politically active in the years since her marriage brought her from her native Boston to London. Having established themselves firmly in the context of respectable liberalism in Edwardian London, the Childerses dedicated their lives over the course of the next decade to an increasingly extreme form of Irish republicanism. In 1914, the Childerses used their yacht, the *Asgard*, to smuggle guns to the Irish volunteers.[99] Both Erskine and Molly took active roles on the British side in World War I; Molly worked extensively with Belgian refugees during World War I and was decorated by the king for her efforts.[100] Yet the Irish issue still loomed large for them. Losing patience with the moderate Liberal approach to Ireland,

[93] Ibid., 202.

[94] Lord Monteagle to George Berkeley, 18 February [1921?], George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920(3), NLI.

[95] Lady Sarah Anne Byles to Erskine and Molly Childers, n.d., Childers Papers MS 7847–51/153, Trinity College Dublin.

[96] S. A. Byles to George Berkeley, 5 March [1921?], George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920(1), NLI; Erskine Childers, Diary, 9 Sept 1920, Childers Papers MS 7811, Trinity College Dublin.

[97] Mary Ffrench to George Berkeley, May 3 [1920?], George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920(2), NLI.

[98] Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society*, 155.

[99] Andrew Boyle, *The Riddle of Erskine Childers* (London, 1977), 187.

[100] Rachael Barton, "My Memories of Aunt Molly Childers" (n.d.), 8, Childers Collection MS03–08 1/8, Boston College, Burns Library.

Erskine made contacts with Sinn Féin, and after much soul searching, the two decided in 1919 to move to Dublin full-time.[101]

Once in Ireland, each partner had significant duties within the movement. Erskine took on considerable work for the Republican Department of Propaganda as well as serving as a republican magistrate and for the new Land Bank, while Molly served as an administrator for the massive loan raised for the republican effort. She also turned their new Dublin home into a refuge for men on the run and a salon of sorts for nationalists and curious English visitors.[102] The Childerses functioned as a personal bridge between Sinn Féin and mainstream Liberal opinion in England, providing a conduit in 1920 and 1921 for information on reprisals from the republican perspective into the Liberal antiwar campaign and also introducing key players, such as Berkeley, to other people interested in starting an organization in England on the Irish question.[103] Nearly every account written by Liberal and pro–Home Rule English visitors to Ireland from this period mentions going to the Childerses' house.[104] When Nankivell and Sydney Loch "paid visits to Mrs. Erskine Childers," they described her house as "one of the rocks of Republicanism," where "all sorts of people on the run" stayed, out of view of "the ordinary visitor." Molly Childers made effective use of her femininity as well as her class: "The nationality of Mrs. Childers, and the fact that she was a person of breeding … made her valuable, and all wandering strangers whose sympathy it was desirable to enlist, were taken to her with the words, 'Oh, you must see Mrs. Erskine Childers. She can tell you so much.' Mrs. Childers, refined, daintily dressed, intellectual, lying on her couch, put them right on the wrongs of Ireland." Erskine, meanwhile, was described as so hardworking that he looked "as though he might die and still sit upon his bicycle with his legs going round and round."[105] This resembles the classic divide between a masculine public sphere and a feminine private sphere: Erskine out on his bicycle working himself to death, Molly (whose physical movement was limited by a childhood injury) holding court at home.[106] However, this dichotomy must be modified to reflect the fact that the house in Dublin was anything but a private domestic space. A constant stream of visitors passed through, ranging from English journalists to famed Irish revolutionary Michael Collins. The home served

[101] See Erskine Childers to Molly Childers, 1 October 1919, Childers Papers MS 7852–5/1142, Trinity College Dublin; Erskine Childers to Molly Childers, 27 March 1919, Childers Papers MS 7852–5/1069, Trinity College Dublin; Molly Childers to Erskine Childers, 27 March 1919, Childers Papers MS 7860/973, Trinity College Dublin; Erskine Childers to Molly Childers, 15 March 1919, Childers Papers MS 7852–5/1061, Trinity College Dublin; Memo from [Art O'Brien], 10 June 1919, DFA/Prov. Govt./IFS Reps/LONDON, 1919–1921, National Archives of Ireland (NAI); Boyle, *The Riddle of Erskine Childers*, 210, 245.

[102] Jim Ring, *Erskine Childers* (London, 1996), 220–21; Boyle, *The Riddle of Erskine Childers*, 259; Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, 45.

[103] Helen Landreth, *The Mind and Heart of Mary Childers, As Shown in Selections from a Personal Correspondence with Helen Landreth* (Chestnut Hill, MA, 1965), 17–18, Helen Landreth Collection MS 01-44 2/23, Boston College, Burns Library; M. A. Childers to George Berkeley, 2 October 1920, George Berkeley Papers MS 10,920(1), NLI.

[104] Account by Barbara Hammond, [1921?], MS Hammond 165/187, BL; Henry Nevinson, Diary, 9 December 1920, Henry Nevinson Papers MS Eng. Misc. e. 621/5, BL; A.D. Lindsay to J.L. Hammond, 26 May 1921, MS Hammond 18, BL.

[105] Nankivell and Loch, *Ireland in Travail*, 248–49.

[106] On her injury, see Ring, *Erskine Childers*, 19.

also as a bureau for republican propaganda, a repository of documents, and one of the central offices for republican loan operations.[107] The Childerses's home was a hub of republican activity and needs to be analyzed both for its appeal as a domestic, civilized space and also for its very real political utility.[108] The Childerses ultimately supported the antitreaty side in the Irish Civil War, and Erskine was executed by the Free State in November 1922. The couple's efforts during the conflicts of 1919–22, like the personal lobbying efforts of British women involved in the Irish cause, demonstrate that even as the granting of partial suffrage opened new avenues of political influence and new modes of political discourse for women, it did not disrupt longer lines of continuity.

■ ■ ■

Molly Childers, unlike most of the women discussed so far, was a radical republican. Yet she and her husband also maintained connections with their former British Liberal colleagues and friends. In doing this, she directs attention to another aspect of women's involvement with the Irish cause at this time: the way in which middle-class Irish republicans served as a tenuous but significant link between middle-class activists and working-class Irish republicans, two groups of women in Britain who were otherwise deeply separate. There is value in finding the familiar women of the British suffrage movement in an unfamiliar context, working on a cause that has received comparatively little historical attention yet seemed to contemporaries to be one of the deciding moral questions of the day. They appear here less scattered by the divisions over feminism and more united in their explicit goal of improving Britain's policy toward Ireland and the implicit role of claiming their rightful place in the full range of politics. Jo Vellacott has argued persuasively that the split of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1915 over the peace issue effectively foreclosed the organization's earlier progress toward building alliances with working-class men and women and with the Labour Party.[109] Later in the war, Jill Liddington argues, peace efforts building on both feminist and socialist networks were able to cross class boundaries: the Women's Peace Crusade of 1917–18 in particular drew women's peace work "well beyond its Liberal-suffrage roots" and into new geographical and class territories.[110] Many of the women who participated in the Peace Crusade went on to join the Labour Party's new Women's Sections after 1918.[111] The final section of this article will take the story of women's participation in the cause of Irish self-determination beyond the "Liberal-suffrage" nexus into the realms of the working class and the republican movement.

British and Irish suffragists had their own history of cooperation and contention. The Irish Women's Franchise League, formed in 1908, was independent of its militant British cousin, the Women's Social and Political Union, but the two movements

[107] Rachael Barton, "My Memories of Aunt Molly Childers" (n.d.), 8, Childers Collection MS03-08 1/8, Boston College, Burns Library; Ring, *Erskine Childers*, 225.

[108] For another recent view of the relationship between public and private spaces in this era, see Vicky Long, "Industrial Homes, Domestic Factories: The Convergence of Public and Private Space in Interwar Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 50, no. 2 (April 2011): 434–64.

[109] Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, 95, 98, 112–13.

[110] Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham*, 109, 129.

[111] Ibid., 131.

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had connections nonetheless. In her important essay on the topic, Margaret Ward emphasizes disjunctures between Irish and British suffragettes and argues that British women merely used Irish affairs to further their own interests, "accentuating divisions which Irish women had hoped to modify."[112] Ward suggests, therefore, that the national question effectively sundered the British and Irish women's movements. She places the blame at the feet of tone-deaf British suffragists who ignored the salience of Irish nationalist issues in their single-minded pursuit of women's suffrage. Yet looked at from other perspectives, the suffrage and women's movements and Irish republicanism have significant shared history. British suffragettes and Irish republicans were linked, for example, by political practice, particularly in the use of the hunger strike while in prison, which, as Kevin Grant has shown, traveled from Russian revolutionaries to British suffragettes and then to their Irish counterparts. James Connolly, a militant socialist and a strong supporter of the Irish suffragettes, followed suit in 1913, bringing the hunger strike permanently into the republican tradition.[113] Some Irish suffragists had also turned their energies to international peace.[114] In 1916, the IIL had been formed as a branch of the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, with full support from the British branch.[115] After 1918, the IIL was active in promoting Irish self-determination on the international stage, despite the "often radically differing political loyalties" of its members and allies.[116]

In 1919–21, former British and Irish suffragists worked together again, but this time for the national cause of Irish independence. Markievicz, Despard, and Mary MacSwiney made regular appearances at public meetings in Britain.[117] These women were often remembered for their ability to infuse romance and radicalism into the movement's British image. Nationalist historian Dorothy Macardle lobbied personally in Britain against death sentences for IRA men, "looking rather Kathleen-ni-Houlihan in a long cloak," in Stopford's words.[118] When Stopford brought her republican sister Dorothy Stopford to a Liberal meeting in Birmingham, Dorothy refused to stand for the loyal toast, but her gesture opened the door to more

[112] Margaret Ward, "Conflicting Interests: The British and Irish Suffrage Movements," *Feminist Review* 50 (Summer 1995): 145.

[113] Kevin Grant, "British Suffragettes and the Russian Method of Hunger Strike," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1 (January 2011): 141. On the transfer of the hunger strike from British to Irish suffragettes, see also Kevin Grant, "The Transcolonial World of Hunger Strikes and Political Fasts, c. 1909–1935," in *Decentering Empire: Britain, India, and the Transcolonial World,* ed. Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy (Hyderabad, 2006), 252–53.

[114] See Caitriona Beaumont, "After the Vote: Women, Citizenship and the Campaign for Gender Equality in the Irish Free State (1922–1943)," in *Irish Women and the Vote: Becoming Citizens*, ed. Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (Dublin, 2007), 231.

[115] Owens, "Women and Pacifism in Ireland," 226–27.

[116] Ibid., 229.

[117] "Souvenir Programme of Demonstration. Free Trade Hall, Manchester, Sunday, Nov. 30, 1919" (Dublin, 1919), Irish Pamphlets GT, Salford, Working Class Movement Library; *Report of Proceedings at the Fifty-Second Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1920), 355–56; Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 773 Gilbert F. Barrington (December 1952), 10, NAI. The Conservative Help the Ulster Women campaign also distinguished the roles available for speakers based upon their class. Thackeray, "Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain," 834.

[118] Edith Stopford, "Autobiographical Account," 22, MS 11,426, NLI. Kathleen ni Houlihan was one of the female embodiments of Ireland, made famous by W. B. Yeats's play of the same name.

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personal conservation: the Liberal chairman, who came to luncheon the next day, "was obviously entranced by her courage, and would talk to no one but her."[119] Another frequent visitor was Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, a former suffragist and Irish nationalist whose husband, the pacifist socialist Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, had been killed during the 1916 Rising.[120] During her extensive tours of England, Sheehy-Skeffington spoke not only to local branches of Irish nationalist organizations such as the Irish Self-Determination League (ISDL) and the Cumann na mBan but also to local Labour parties.[121] Sheehy-Skeffington also addressed meetings organized specifically by women: she was invited, for instance, to address an "Anti-munition [*sic*] meeting in Stevenson Square" by the Cheetham, Manchester branch of the Cumann na mBan.[122]

Such activities exemplify the hopes of the new internationalists for transnational cooperation on issues of justice and self-determination. More prosaically, they testify to the enduring strength of the networks forged by politically active, middle-class women during the long struggle for the vote. Given the popularity of speakers like Sheehy-Skeffington and Despard at meetings across the social spectrum, their activities might have served as a bridge between middle-class British activists and their working-class Irish republican counterparts in Britain. In fact, any such connections were tenuous at best. Working-class or republican women appear in the accounts of the middle-class anticoercion movement only as disruptive elements, usually in rowdy audiences at political meetings. One London meeting had an audience that allegedly "was too sympathetic, and contained a noisy group of Sinn Feiners," while at the Peace with Ireland Council's major demonstration at Albert Hall in December 1920, H. H. Asquith was heckled by audience members, including "a woman with an Irish voice," urging a stronger stance with cries of "Shame."[123] This is not, however, because working-class Irish republican women in Britain were inherently disorganized or inactive. Rather, they were part of a grassroots mobilization that supported the war effort in Ireland through fund-raising, gunrunning, and propaganda as well as a campaign of sabotage.[124] There is an ever-present danger of writing political history from the top of the social hierarchy, revealing only the activism that trickled downward, in this case in the form of former suffragists addressing working-class women. Yet such an approach obscures the autonomy of minority or subaltern activism, such as that found in the Irish minority in Britain and among the women of that community. The release in 2003 of the testimonies

[119] Edith Stopford, "Autobiographical Account," 20, MS 11,426, NLI.

[120] Sybil Oldfield, "Skeffington, Johanna Mary Sheehy- (1877–1946)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38533 (accessed 24 March 2009).

[121] B. Murphy to Sheehy-Skeffington, 1 March 1921, MS 24,088(1); T. Moody (Independent Labour Party, Birmingham Federation) to Sheehy-Skeffington, 30 June 1920, MS 22,691(3); I.S.D.L. (Widnes) to Sheehy-Skeffington, 19 April 1920, MS 22,691(1); Philip Kelly to Sheehy-Skeffington, [May 1920], MS 22,691(2); Mary McKee (Bradford I.S.D.L.) to Sheehy-Skeffington, 9 June 1920, MS 22,691(3); F. Heeran (Rochdale I.S.D.L.) to Sheehy-Skeffington, 21 March 1921 MS 24,088(1): all Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, NLI.

[122] Maíre Nic Éoghain to Sheehy-Skeffington, 28 June 1920, Sheehy-Skeffington Papers MS 22,691 (3), NLI.

[123] [Raphael Knowles?] to George Berkeley, 11 January 1921, George Berkeley Papers MS 10,921(2), NLI; "Mr. Asquith Heckled," *The Times*, 6 December 1920, 17c.

[124] Peter Hart, *The I. R. A. at War, 1916–1923* (Oxford, 2003), viii–ix, 127–28, 193.

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by participants in the Anglo-Irish War, compiled beginning in 1947 by the Irish Bureau of Military History's team of government officials and professional historians, provides a particularly rich, though complicated, source for documenting these women's activities and, even more, their own perceptions of their roles both in Britain and in the Irish conflict.[125]

Irish nationalism tended to be conservative in its gender politics. Officially, women's work was contained within an auxiliary organization, the Cumann na mBan, which had branches in Britain as well as in Ireland and was headed by Markievicz.[126] Some women worked outside of this organization as well, including as members of nationalist organizations such as the ISDL in Britain. As Ward and Jason Knirck have argued, the Irish revolution was ultimately no revolution at all in terms of gender equality.[127] Irish women in Britain, too, struggled to find equality within nationalist organizations that privileged men over women, but that struggle did not prevent them from contributing to the cause of independence energetically and effectively, casting themselves as citizens of a future Ireland. Their organization and work can also be situated in the tradition of British working-class radicalism, which grew out of the same urban districts around London and in the industrial north that saw the strongest manifestations of Irish nationalism. Working-class women had organized female friendly societies, meeting in a pub or a chapel, from the nineteenth century onward.[128] They also formed labor organizations such as the West of Scotland Female Power Loom Weavers Association.[129] Women had supported the Chartist movement as activists and auxiliaries, forming "over a hundred and fifty flourishing female Chartist associations in England, and at least twenty-three in Scotland." They eventually found themselves marginalized, however, by the Chartists' demands for "the exclusion of women from the work force through pressure on the state to pass factory legislation."[130] Indeed, Anna Clark has argued that "the making of the working class" in the nineteenth century was "in part a struggle by radicals to universalize" the middle class's notions of gendered separate spheres as fundamental to respectability.[131] The working-class Irish women in Britain, therefore, drew on lineages of female organization as they struggled to fit into class and national traditions that were deeply invested in the perpetuation of women's exclusion from politics. They did so as members of a minority population—in 1921, approximately 1 percent of the population of England and Wales, and 3 percent of the population of Scotland,

[125] See Eve Morrison, "The Bureau of Military History and Female Republican Activism, 1913–23," in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (Dublin, 2009), 59–83; Fearghal McGarry, *Rebels: Voices from the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2011), xii; Evi Gkotzaridis, "Revisionist Historians and the Modern Irish State: The Conflict between the Advisory Committee and the Bureau of Military History, 1947–66," *Irish Historical Studies* 35, no. 137 (May 2006): 99–116.

[126] See Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (1989; London, 1995), 119–55, and Pašeta, "Markievicz, Constance Georgine."

[127] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 248; Jason Knirck, *Women of the Dáil: Gender, Republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty* (Dublin, 2006). The IIL foundered in the Free State and broke up in the 1930s. Owens, "Women and Pacifism in Ireland," 238.

[128] Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, 1995), 41.

[129] Ibid., 207.

[130] Ibid., 228 (first quotation), 236–37 (second quotation). See also Iowerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830–1870* (Cambridge, 1997), 28.

[131] Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, 2.

was Irish born, though the Irish community including second- and third-generation immigrants was certainly larger.[132] That population tended to be nationalist; although only a small number of individuals became committed republican activists, many more took part in more peripheral nationalist activities such as attending dances or donating funds.

Active Irish republican women in Britain were frequently single women or widows who earned livings through work that had to be squared with a busy political life. Roisin ni Chillin, a teacher who had moved from Manchester to London, organized meetings and lectures on Ireland and also gave talks herself on various topics relevant to the cause of Irish nationalism.[133] Ni Chillin was described by another activist as a "good lecturer" who was "very well versed in historical and literary matters."[134] Sorcha Nic Diarmada, an active member of the Cumann na mBan in London, was a teacher born in Leeds whose father had been a Fenian obliged to leave Ireland in the 1860s.[135] She situated herself in a genealogy of Irish nationalism: "I had the same great, great grandfather as Seán McDermott who was executed after the Rising of 1916."[136] Yet her devotion to the Irish cause was balanced with her career as a London schoolteacher. Appointed as a delegate to the 1917 Sinn Féin convention in Dublin, she had to request three additional days of leave without pay in order to attend.[137] Another prominent republican in London, Elizabeth Eadie, had come to England at 15; her husband died in 1919 as a result of exposure during his war service. She worked at the Ministry of Pensions and also devoted herself and her home to the republican cause.[138]

Women's homes were politicized much like Molly Childers's political salon in Dublin. They provided crucial safe houses for those on the run and space to store arms and carry on other illegal activities. Women were leaders in the effort to support Irish prisoners, visiting them while detained and providing shelter for them after their release.[139] James Cunningham, a gunrunner in Birmingham, made his headquarters "with a family named Staunton (who were from Mayo), in Trent Street, a slum area near the Bull Ring." Paddy Staunton was from Mayo; his wife, Mary, was "a third generation Irishwoman."[140] Mary Duffy, one of the main organizers of the Birmingham ISDL, credited their hospitality with enabling her to keep the branch going, describing their home as "the shelter of many of Ireland" and a place where "there was always a welcome & a share of the last crust

[132] Sean Glynn, "Irish Immigration to Britain, 1916–1951: Patterns and Policy," *Irish Economic and Social History* 8 (1981): 56.

[133] Roisin ni Cillen [*sic*] to Art O'Brien, 12 July 1920 and Art O'Brien to Roisin Ni Chillin, 10 February 1921, Art O Briain Papers MS 8433, NLI.

[134] Art O'Brien to T.W. Smartt, 12 September 1919, Art O Briain Papers MS 8433, NLI.

[135] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 5, NAI.

[136] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 1, NAI.

[137] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 4, NAI.

[138] "Bombs in a Flat," *The Times*, 22 July 1922, 7c.

[139] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 847 Patrick O'Donoghue (May 1953), 7, and Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 924 Mrs. Michael Cremen ("Cis Sheehan") (February 1954), 5, NAI.

[140] "Statement by Mr. James W. Cunningham: Contractor, Carrick, Co. Donegal," n.d., 5, Reminiscence Collection, London Metropolitan University, Archive of the Irish in Britain.

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of bread for whoever might be in need."[141] In London, Mrs. Mary Egan's house "was 'port of call' for officers of the first and third Cork Brigades."[142] Especially considering that Egan, the "wife of a railway servant, and housekeeper to a Moorgate-street business firm,"[143] was also involved in smuggling weapons, this was no easy role: "the house was under surveillance, visitors scrutinised and neighbours questioned."[144] Local IRA man Paddy Daly eulogized the efforts of a Mrs. McCarthy of Aintree, near Liverpool, calling her "representative of a type, an Irishwoman living in a foreign and sometimes hostile city" who worked for a living but also sacrificed much to help "strike a blow for that country which she rarely saw."[145] Eamon de Valera stayed with Mrs. McCarthy while he waited for his chance to go to the United States, where he conducted a massive fund-raising tour.[146] These women also handled clandestine mail services to facilitate communication within the IRA.[147] Such women were not political hostesses or incorporated wives; instead, they blurred the boundaries of the domestic and the political by turning their homes into spaces for an underground militant movement.

This mixture of the homely and the military was also evident in the activities of the Cumann na mBan. In London, the Cumann actually created a cover group, the Irish Women's Distress Fund, in order to distance putative relief work from military endeavors. This fund provided large numbers of garments to the needy in Ireland.[148] A large Irish social dance at Holborn Hall organized by this committee raised £300.[149] Nic Diarmada explained that the name "the Ladies' Distress Committee" allowed the group to get halls for their dances, but in republican contexts, such as MacSwiney's funeral, the name Cumann na mBan was openly used. "I was Secretary of both societies and I kept a separate book for each of them," she recalled.[150] This dissimulation did not fool everyone, of course. When Eadie was arrested in 1922 for having a box containing bombs in her flat, she claimed to belong merely to "a sewing party" that benefited destitute Irish women and was

[141] Mary Duffy to Joseph Fowler, 26 July 1923, Joseph Fowler Papers MS 27,097(6), NLI.

[142] "Mrs. M. Egan, Ban Oglach, An Cean Brigaide Corcaigh" (1990), H. P. O'Brien Collection, Reminiscence Collection, London Metropolitan University, Archive of the Irish in Britain. In the same collection see "Tara Hall" (1983), 2, listing Egan among a group of women who provided temporary lodging for young Irish people newly arrived in London.

[143] "The Irish Deportees," *The Times*, 18 October 1923, 9f.

[144] "Mrs. M. Egan, Ban Oglach, An Cean Brigaide Corcaigh" (1990), H. P. O'Brien Collection, Reminiscence Collection, London Metropolitan University, Archive of the Irish in Britain.

[145] Notebooks, Paddy Daly, n.d., Ernie O'Malley Papers P17/136, 8, University College Dublin Archives.

[146] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 814 Comd't. Patrick G. Daly, M.D. (March 1953), 22, NAI. Belchem reports that Cathal Brugha also convalesced there after the Easter Rising: John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800–1939* (Liverpool, 2007), 265.

[147] In September 1920, for example, the local Liverpool "safe" addresses were shifted to Mrs. O'Hanlon and Mrs. Healys, both of Bootle: Memo, 23 September 1920, Richard Mulcahy Papers P7/A3, University College Dublin Archives. In London, Lady Claire Annesley provided her address as well. Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 814 Comd't. Patrick G. Daly, M. D. (March 1953), 16, NAI.

[148] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 924 Mrs. Michael Cremen ("Cis Sheehan") (February 1954), 7, and Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 5, NAI.

[149] *The Irish Exile* (April 1921), Joseph Fowler Papers MS 27,097(1), 4, NLI.

[150] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 5–6, NAI.

asked during cross-examination, "Did they not do a little drilling as well as sewing?"[151]

The cross-examiner was correct: republican women were also actively involved in the more military aspects of the Irish cause, though within gendered limitations. Indeed, in September 1921, about a dozen women broke off from the main London Cumann and formed a new branch, discontented with having to "masquerad[e] as The Ladies' Distress Committee" rather than drilling in uniforms as the Cumann did in Ireland.[152] Throughout the conflict, British Cumann na mBan branches raised money for arms and transported guns to Ireland.[153] In London, Egan bought "souvenirs" from ex-soldiers, including bullets and occasionally revolvers, hiding them in safe locations in the city.[154] Cis Sheehan took many clandestine trips, transporting arms, ammunition, and "sums of money that were raised in America" to Dublin on overnight journeys planned to require just one day's leave from work.[155] Branches of the Cumann na mBan also assisted the IRA in Britain in its various campaigns of sabotage and intimidation. Women collected and stored the paraffin oil used to set fire to Liverpool warehouses and timber yards in November 1920, for example.[156] On the Tyneside, Cumann members acted as "escorts" for men involved in the arson campaign, so that they looked like unsuspicious "courting couples"; these escorts were more than decorative, however, since they also carried arms after the job was completed.[157] Sheehan played an identical role in London during the effort to intimidate the relatives of Black and Tans. She stood aside while "an IRA boy" told the sister of a Black and Tan "to get her brother to leave Ireland or else she would suffer reprisals. … My function was to act as a cover and make it appear that we were just a boy and girl out for a walk and if he were attacked to help in his escape by taking his gun."[158]

Tensions could arise when women attempted to take a more active role in running guns or raising money. In Manchester, a men's meeting was apparently arranged to "forestall" a planned women's meeting on Ireland, a symptom of "the same old jealousy" in the words of a local female organizer.[159] Nic Diarmada refused Reggie

[151] "Bombs in a Flat," *The Times*, 22 July 1922, 7c.

[152] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 6–7 (quotation, 6), and Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 924 Mrs. Michael Cremen ("Cis Sheehan") (February 1954), 10, NAI. Markievicz addressed the Dáil in her Cumann na mBan uniform. Pašeta, "Markievicz, Constance Georgine."

[153] Memo, 3 February 1921, Richard Mulcahy Papers P7/A4, University College Dublin Archives: "The £50 I mentioned was given to us by the C. na mBán for no specific purpose per Mrs Lanigan. We used it for the same purpose as the ordinary fund." See Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 5, NAI.

[154] "Mrs. M. Egan, Ban Oglach, An Cean Brigaide Corcaigh" (1990), H. P. O'Brien Collection, Reminiscence Collection, London Metropolitan University, Archive of the Irish in Britain.

[155] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 924 Mrs. Michael Cremen ("Cis Sheehan") (February 1954), 5–6, NAI.

[156] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 814 Comd't. Patrick G. Daly, M.D. (March 1953), 19, NAI. See Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 263.

[157] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 773 Gilbert F. Barrington (December 1952), 9, NAI.

[158] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 924 Mrs. Michael Cremen ("Cis Sheehan") (February 1954), 6–7, NAI.

[159] Nelly [Mallor?] to Sheehy-Skeffington, 7 May [1920], Sheehy-Skeffington Papers MS 22,691(2), NLI.

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Dunne's request to hand over the money that the Cumann na mBan had raised at a dance to the local men's military unit. She later recalled that he "praised the work I did but did not like me personally because on some occasions I refused to take his orders."[160] A woman in Oldham who "had secured six rifles and three revolvers in that town" was stopped by local Irish leaders from carrying them home to Cork, possibly because of her sex, to the annoyance of Michael Collins in Ireland.[161] Collins preferred to keep as many small channels open and running as possible, rather than try to create a centralized gunrunning system. The goal was, as Edward Brady recalled, that "every conceivable avenue was used to procure arms."[162]

The Anglo-Irish War was suspended by a truce in July 1921, and negotiations between Sinn Féin and the British government produced a treaty in December 1921 that laid the foundation of the Irish Free State as a dominion and established the partition of six Ulster counties into Northern Ireland, a self-governing part of the United Kingdom. The treaty led to a violent civil war between those who accepted it as a workable compromise and those who wanted armed struggle against Britain to continue. It also left the women who had supported Irish self-determination in opposing camps. Most embraced the treaty as a necessary, even reasonable, compromise.[163] Poignantly, Buckmaster extolled the joyful coincidence of the negotiations being successful "so soon before my wedding."[164] In Ireland, the Stopford sisters, Dorothy and Edith, were split by the Irish Civil War, while Childers lost her husband to execution.[165] Having sided with the antitreaty forces, Markievicz was elected to the Dáil for the last time in 1927 as a candidate for the new Fianna Fáil party led by de Valera; she died that summer.[166]

Some republican women in Britain participated in the struggle to keep faltering organizations alive as well as to continue to forge their lives in a place they perceived as foreign and, sometimes, hostile. They could be leaders within the nationalist movement, at least at a local level, and they sometimes cooperated with other organizations. By 1923, Mary Duffy had devoted a great deal of energy to keeping the Birmingham ISDL branch alive almost single-handedly, yet she was still called upon to justify her leftist political connections by Joseph Fowler, one of the main republican leaders of interwar Britain. Duffy told him plainly that she had been a member of the Communist Party "for quite a long time," a fact which she said had "nothing to do

[160] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 7, NAI.

[161] Memo, 28 August 1920, Richard Mulcahy Papers P7/A10, University College Dublin Archives.

[162] Edward M. Brady, *Ireland's Secret Service in England* (Dublin, [1928?]), 76.

[163] Dorothy Williams to Molly and Erskine Childers, 6 December 1921, Childers Papers MS 7847–51/1305, Trinity College Dublin; Mary Spring Rice to Molly Childers, 8 December 1921, Childers Papers MS 7847–51/1220, Trinity College Dublin; Frances Melland to Molly Childers, 6 December 1921, Childers Papers MS 7847–51/803, Trinity College Dublin; Lady Sarah Anne Byles to Molly Childers, [December 1921], Childers Papers MS 7847–51/152, Trinity College Dublin.

[164] Margaret Buckmaster to Molly Childers, 7 December [1921], Childers Papers MS 7847–51/132, Trinity College Dublin.

[165] On Childers, see Petitions, [1922], MS 1881 Supp. Box VI, Boston Public Library; note dated 4 May 1927 by George Berkeley on telegrams from November 1922, George Berkeley Papers MS 7,879, NLI; Mary Spring Rice to Molly Childers, 25 November 1922, Childers Papers MS 7848–51/1221, Trinity College Dublin. Molly Childers remained in Dublin, where she raised their two sons—one of whom, Erskine Childers Jr., became a prominent politician, serving as the president of Ireland in the mid-1970s. On Stopford, Edith Stopford, "Autobiographical Account," MS 11,426, 28, NLI.

[166] Pašeta, "Markievicz, Constance Georgine."

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with my activities" for Irish independence. Indeed, she had offered to resign from the ISDL if her branch had objections, but they did not. Finally, Duffy appealed to pragmatism and the necessity of forming strategic alliances: "Anyway we had to ask assistance from them at most of our public meetings or we couldn't have carried on."[167]

The British government regarded antitreaty republican women as a sufficient enough threat to include them in the arrest and deportation of over one hundred people involved in the republican movement in March 1923.[168] The round up included leaders such as Art O'Brien and Seán McGrath and caused considerable disruption in the movement in Britain.[169] Sheehan stated frankly that she and others were arrested "because of activities against the Treaty and during the Civil War."[170] Nic Diarmada described the experience of deportation vividly in her statement to the Bureau of Military History. She recalled being rousted from bed and arrested at midnight. At the police station, she denied that the rubber-stamped paper she was shown ordering her deportation was valid: "And I quoted the four Acts that are the cornerstones of liberty."[171] In diction that echoed her work as an English schoolteacher, she claimed the rights of the freeborn British citizen even for Irish republican women. She recalled being "thumped" in the back for asking to attend Mass, and hustled instead onto a train, where she recognized "many of the detectives because they used to attend our Whist Drives."[172] Once in Ireland, Nic Diarmada met a former hunger striker who was now working for the Free State and mocked him for having betrayed the die-hard republican cause: "He said, 'You want to die for Ireland.' I answered, 'There was a time when you did too and don't forget that you gave me your photograph with the words "freedom or death" after twenty-three days hunger strike in Wormwood Scrubbs,' and he went as white as a sheet."[173] The deportations were later ruled illegal and the deportees were released and returned to Britain.[174] In autumn 1923, the British government formed a tribunal to recompense deportees for ill treatment in Dublin, ultimately awarding just over £54,000 in damages.[175] Nic Diarmada received £600 in recognition, she said, of her ill treatment.[176] Egan was awarded £1,500 in damages.[177] Less fortunate was the lecturer and teacher Ni Chillin, who had by 1923 become an established figure within republican London, serving as the secretary of the Roger Casement Sinn Féin Club even as she continued in her work

[167] Mary Duffy to Joseph Fowler, 26 July 1923, Joseph Fowler Papers MS 27,097(6), NLI.

[168] Paul Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland, 1921–1941* (Oxford, 1985), 80; Paul McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels: British Intelligence and Ireland, 1916–1945* (Woodbridge, Sussex, 2008), 107.

[169] See, however, the claim that the police missed the most important people: Notebooks, Dennis Brennan, n.d., Ernie O'Malley Papers P17/100, 89, University College Dublin Archives.

[170] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 924 Mrs. Michael Cremen ("Cis Sheehan") (February 1954), 10, NAI. See "The Week-end Arrests," *The Times*, 14 March 1923, 12e.

[171] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 10, NAI.

[172] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 11, NAI.

[173] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 11–12, NAI.

[174] Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland, 1921–1941*, 80.

[175] McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, 108.

[176] Bureau of Military History Witness Statement 945 Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954), 12, NAI.

[177] "The Irish Deportees," *The Times*, 18 October 1923, 9f, and "Treatment of Women Deportees," *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1923, 4.

as schoolteacher for the London County Council (LCC).[178] Her employment by the LCC was terminated following her deportation.[179] The LCC's education committee debated its decision in February 1925 after "a number of Labour organizations" sent letters of protest. One member called it a "scandalous case of political persecution," but another defended the termination on the grounds that "Miss Killen held certain views which in the opinion of the Committee it was not right that a teacher in a London school should hold." A different committee member remarked that she "was known to be a member of the Roger Casement Society, which was a society of traitors."[180] The attempt to have her reinstated failed.

The participation of women in campaigns for Irish self-determination in Britain during 1919–23 provides striking evidence of the political power that women were able to wield in the years immediately after the enactment of partial suffrage. Some of their work was consistent with the "women's work" of earlier generations: lobbying discreetly in drawing rooms, organizing sewing parties, and throwing benefit functions. In other respects, however, women were able to expand their repertoire of activism. They were central figures of public meetings and demonstrations and took on leadership roles as well, joining delegations to Ireland, pushing political parties forward, and organizing events. Even in the rigidly gendered republican movement, women took part in gunrunning and sabotage campaigns. Ideologies of gender difference were reflected in many of these activities and in the discourse that surrounded them: women's domesticity and their special investment in peace and humanitarian concerns recur. Yet separate spheres were sometimes used instrumentally and to political advantage, as in the ways that Childers and Irish women in Britain used their homes to provide a safe space for political activities. Moreover, the new category of the female citizen had entered debates on the proper role for women in politics, especially as women intervened in the traditionally masculine realms of war and foreign policy. Interwar feminism has been criticized for its tendencies to splinter and to acquiesce to feminized auxiliary roles. The Anglo-Irish War, however, provides striking evidence that British and Irish women effectively asserted political power in this new era of suffrage. The campaigns for Irish self-determination drew together women who had been divided by nationality at key moments in the past, but it did not transcend the boundaries of class that kept middle-class and working-class activists in decidedly separate spheres.

[178] See "The Irish Deportees," *The Times*, 18 October 1923, 9f, and "Treatment of Women Deportees," *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1923, 4.

[179] See "Irish Deportee's Claim," *Manchester Guardian*, 24 October 1923, 4.

[180] "Later Dancing in Hotels," *The Times*, 6 February 1925, 12d.