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University College Cork — Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
National University of Ireland
Women's Studies
Head of Department: Dr. Clare O'Halloran (Chair of the Board of Women's Studies)
Supervisors:
Dr. Clare O'Halloran, Women's Studies, University College Cork
Prof. Linda Connolly, Department of Sociology, Maynooth University



Feminist Fusions: Irish Socialist Feminists, 1900s-1940s

Thesis presented by

Elizabeth Kyte BA MA

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Elizabeth Kyte

Abstract

This thesis concerns the connections Irish socialist women made to radical individuals, groups and movements from the 1900s to the 1940s (see Figure 1: 'Mapping Feminist Connections to Radicalism' which follows). This is a biographical study which aims to expose these connections through the activist lives of ten Irish socialist women; Constance Markievicz (1868-1927), Eva Gore-Booth (1870-1926), Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946), Rosamond Jacob (1888-1960), Patricia Lynch (1894-1973), Sighle Humphreys (1899-1994), Kathleen Lynn (1874-1955), Nora Connolly O'Brien (1892-1981), Charlotte Despard (1844-1939), and Helena Molony (1883-1967). The thesis aims to foreground the voices and diverse experiences of Irish socialist women to counter assumptions within the historical record. Therefore, the purpose of the project is to reveal Irish feminists' identification with socialism, as well as the breadth of radical interests and causes they pursued across their sustained and productive political lives.

The study explores thematically their backgrounds and politicisation through the pre-revolutionary counterculture. It examines how they diversely engaged with the suffrage campaign from 1908 until 1923. The thesis then shifts focus and traces Irish socialist women's connections with the international left through major discourses in international socialism. It follows Irish socialist women's personal experiences of violence through a decade of social and political upheaval (1913-1923). The dynamic development of these insights into a resistance to militarism is investigated. The diffusiveness of feminism in Irish feminists' engagement with republicanism and communism in the Irish anti-imperialist movement is explored. At the forefront of their politics in the 1920s and 1930s, anti-imperialism provided a space for this group of women to expand feminist consciousness in their attempts to gender socialist republicanism. They were also active organising in the unemployed movement, supporting Soviet Russia, and through anti-fascist activism in support of the Spanish Republicans. The Spanish Civil War marked the end of their political journeys and a

decline in interwar radicalism as the approaching Second World War changed the landscape of the left.

This study about Irish socialist women asks questions about the wider phenomena of Irish feminisms; the assumptions made about it, the ways we can (re)define it, and how we should historicise it. What do the interactions between Irish socialist women and radicalism say about the relationship between feminism and social change? How do the unconventional backgrounds and diverse political identities of Irish socialist women affect who is included within the description 'Irish feminist'? This study investigates how Irish women attempted to fuse the claims of class, gender and nation, and the implications these experiments have for understanding the assumption that division was an overwhelming dynamic in Irish feminism. The thesis interrogates whether Irish socialist women were able to develop a woman-focused politics in Irish socialism, and what this can tell us about the relationship between feminist ideas and activism. The study also explores the implications of this relationship for exploring the boundaries of Irish feminism, and whether Irish socialist women were a radicalising influence on Irish feminism. The implications that a biographical focus has for expanding the historical understandings of Irish feminisms are explored.

Focusing on the biographical sources foregrounds the activist experiences of Irish socialist women to expose the range of connections they made; to each other, to left-wing individuals, groups and movements. This biographical study of Irish socialist feminism provides an alternative lens through which to view Irish feminism and shift the historical narrative. The privileging of immediate narratives, such as letters, diaries, and eyewitness accounts, draws attention to how Irish socialist women balanced competing claims on their political identity, made alliances and formed a new feminist dynamic through their everyday activist encounters.

Therefore, this thesis makes conclusions about how biography shifts the perception of nationalism as the dominant movement with which feminists interacted, towards socialist alliances and the broader counterculture which facilitated these complex

interconnections. The presence of a group of Irish socialist women identified in this study lends Irish feminism a more inclusive quality than has previously been assumed. The thesis documents the fluid and shifting approaches Irish socialist women took towards the different political choices they made, and this suggests the dynamic quality of Irish socialist feminism necessary to overcoming tensions and building alliances. Irish socialist feminists' gendering of radicalism through domestic discourses highlights the presence of a broadening feminist consciousness and the diffusiveness of Irish feminism. The radicalising impact of Irish socialist women on Irish feminism is evidenced through the expansion of suffrage demands by 1923. Irish socialist women's interwar radicalism extends the usual historical timeframe beyond suffrage and nationalist accounts, and establishes a persistent feminist presence across the first half of the twentieth century. All of these conclusions relate to how Irish socialist women's lives indicate an interactivity, plurality, dynamism, diffusiveness and persistence presence to Irish feminism, changing how we perceive the history of Irish feminism.

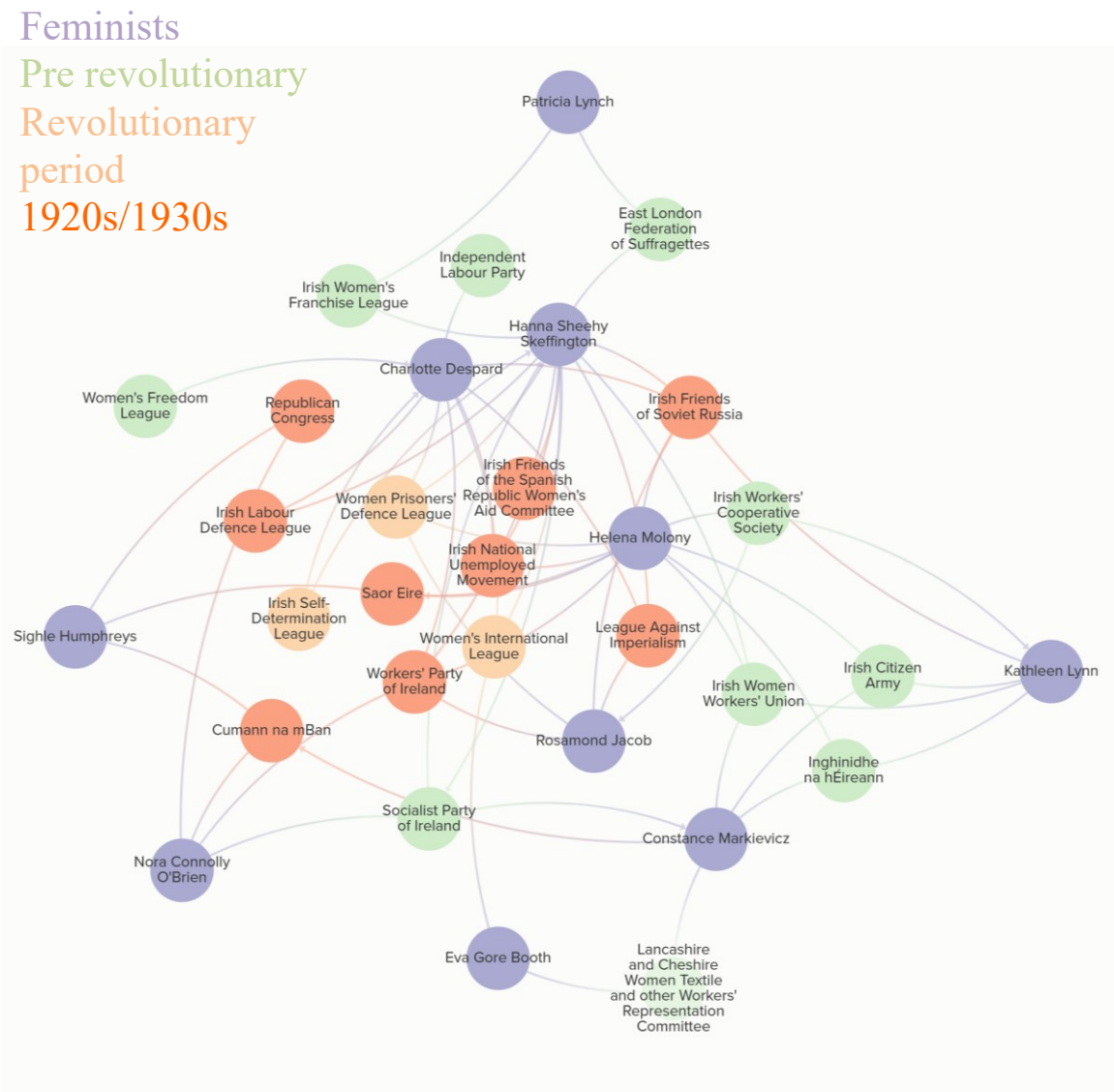


Figure 1. Mapping Feminist Connections to Radicalism

Interactive version available at:

https://www.kumu.io/lizkyte/feministfusions#map-v0npCota

Acronyms

Communist Party of Ireland (CPI)

Dublin Trades Council (DTC)

East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS)

Independent Labour Party (ILP)

Independent Labour Party of Ireland (ILPI)

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)

International Workers' Defence League (IWDL)

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)

Irish Citizen Army (ICA)

Irish Friends of Soviet Russia (IFOSR)

Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee (IFSRWAC)

Irish Housewives Association (IHA)

Irish Labour Defence League (ILDL)

Irish National Aid Association (INAA)

Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents' Fund (INAAVDF)

Irish National Unemployed Movement (INUM)

Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)

Irish Republican Army (IRA)

Irish Republican Prisoners' Defence Fund (IRPDF)

Irish Self-Determination League (ISDL)

Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP)

Irish Textile Workers' Union (ITWU)

Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC)

Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU)

Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund (IVDF)

Irish Women's Suffrage Federation (IWSF)

Irish Workers' Co-operative Society (IWCS)

Irish Women Workers' Union (IWWU)

Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL)

Irish Women's Reform League (IWRL)

Lancashire and Chesire Women Textile and other Workers' Representation Committee (LCWTWRC)

League against Imperialism (LAI)

Munster Women's Franchise League (MWFL)

PEN (Poets, Essayists, Novelists)

Socialist Democratic Party (SDP)

Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI)

The Revolutionary Workers' Groups (RWG)

Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG)

Women's Freedom League (WFL)

Women's International League (WIL)

Women's Peace and Freedom League (WPFL)

Women's Peace Crusade (WPC)

Women Prisoners' Defence League (WPDL)

Women's Social and Progressive League (WSPL)

Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)

Workers' Party of Ireland (WPI)

Workers' Suffrage Federation/Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF)

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Introduction

This thesis aims to expose how Irish socialist women were connected to each other and to radical individuals, groups and movements from the 1900s to the 1940s (see figure 1: 'Mapping Feminist Connections to Radicalism', p.8). The diverse ways in which Irish women made these alliances through their activism are explored through the use of biography in this study. A sample group of ten Irish socialist feminists comprise a base line study from which these circles of interconnection are widened to encompass additional feminist allies and the proliferation of activist groups over time. This sample group includes: Constance Markievicz, Eva Gore-Booth, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Rosamond Jacob, Patricia Lynch, Sighle Humphreys, Kathleen Lynn, Nora Connolly O'Brien, Charlotte Despard and Helena Molony. Exploring the shifting priorities and differing alliances made by individual Irish women in their attempts to develop a socialist politics, aims to recover feminist histories and advance new understandings of Irish socialist feminism during the first half of the twentieth century.

This thesis is concerned with the experiences of Irish socialist women and how these alter the ways in which we define and understand Irish feminism. It is about seeing these ideologies and social movements in relation to one another. Mary Cullen notes that in women's engagement with nationalism and socialism: 'an implicit feminist awareness appears to have informed almost all of the developments even when the objectives were not explicitly feminist' (Cullen cited in McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016, p.16). According to Senia Pašeta, nearly all of the nationalist women identified themselves as suffragists, and even those who did not were shaped by feminism because; 'it offered them frameworks for women's political activity' (Pašeta, 2013: 14). So this thesis also examines the diffuseness of Irish feminism and the ways in a feminist consciousness permeated the boundaries of nationalism and socialism.

The women featured in this study were part of a generation who from 1900 were politicised by feminism, nationalism and socialism. Mary McAuliffe and Liz Gillis note that by 1916 there was a 'real interaction between nationalists and feminists' and that 'many of the more radical nationalist feminists were also socialists' (McAuliffe and Gilllis, 2016: 16). This study then follows the lives of Irish socialist women through the revolutionary period, where the political space became more contained for female activists. Differences over whether to prioritise suffrage or the nationalist struggle resurfaced in this period (McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: 34). Socialist women found space within anti-militarist campaigning where they were able to emphasize women's vulnerability to violence and forge a role in resisting it.

The timeframe of this thesis extends beyond the usual watersheds of nationalist or feminist histories of 1918 with the decisive election of Sinn Féin and defeat of constitution nationalism, and the Representation of the People Act partially enfranchising women. The timeframe adopted in this thesis reflects the continued activism of socialist women and the persistence of many of the debates. Although there was a new socialist context to the interwar period with the formation of the Communist Party of Ireland (1921), the ways in which communism engaged with anti-imperialists in this period provided greater fluidity for Irish socialist women to combine their concerns. With the Nazi invasion of Soviet Russia in 1941 and the popular neutrality policy of the Irish government, the Dublin CPI was dissolved by the Comintern to allow the party to pursue a pro-Allied policy in the North (O'Connor, 2004: 230). The changing context of the international left with the outbreak of the Second World War therefore defines the close of the period explored in this thesis. The death of Despard in 1939 seemed to mark the decline of this group of radical women, whose overlapping careers often persisted to the end of their lifetimes.

Roy Foster in *Vivid Faces*, his dynamic study of the pre-revolutionary generation, has suggested that unravelling moments of 'irreversible change', depends upon revealing 'the complexity of revolutionary commitments among individuals' (Foster, 2014: xxii). Hence, this study is not an organisational history. Irish socialist feminists were

not conveniently organised within any single group, or indeed movement. Rather they were an obscured dynamic of Irish feminism, who operated at the boundaries of the major social movements of early twentieth-century Ireland. This thesis, therefore, necessarily adopts a biographical focus in tracing the political life histories of Irish socialist feminists to reveal how they wove together the differing elements of Irish radicalism through their ideas and activism. As Sheila Rowbotham has described in her biography of the British radical Edward Carpenter:

> This time around I have sought to bring out the remarkable range of *interconnections* evident in his thinking, through his life, through his networks, his mix of causes, his interests and his thinking (Rowbotham, 2008: 4).

Irish socialist feminists were contemporaries of Carpenter and his circle of socialists, feminists, anti-imperialists and early pioneers of sexual freedom. Carpenter counted Despard, one of the women featured in this thesis, amongst his correspondents (Rowbotham, 2008: 2). Like Carpenter and his networks of radicals, Irish socialist feminists refused to be confined by any single movement or ideology. As Rowbotham suggests, these connections between the different aspects of radical politics can be illuminated through biography; through the experiences of events, thinking, relationships and actions which reconstruct the history of a life.

This study makes novel use of biographical sources to foreground the activist experiences of Irish socialist feminists and map the complex ways they were connected to radical movements, organisations and individuals. It is only by examining the diversity in the ways Irish feminists constructed their politics, that we can retrieve their engagement with socialism. It has been argued that the full political identities of Irish women have been obscured by historical misrepresentation of their republican politics (Pašeta, 2013:12).

Some of the women who feature in this study, such as Markievicz and Sheehy Skeffington, will be familiar, but not as socialists. Markievicz and Sheehy

Skeffington are well-known for their contributions to Irish nationalism and feminism respectively. Although lesser-known personalities, Lynn, Molony, Humphreys and Connolly O'Brien have also chiefly been associated with nationalism. Gore-Booth is remembered for her contribution to the Irish literary revival rather than her political work, and Jacob, 'if she registers at all, is a lesser-known novelist' (Lane, 2010: 2). Despard has been more associated with the English suffrage movement, through her suffrage novels and militant suffrage activism. The less familiar women in the group, such as Molony, reflect the wider invisibility of Irish socialist women's contribution to Irish radicalism. Senia Pašeta writes in her preface to Nell Regan's recent full biography of Molony how she h'seems to have been everywhere', and yet until very recently she was nowhere in the historiography. Molony is a woman 'whose career had been unjustly overlooked by generations of scholars', and 'she represented the wider omission of women from the historical record' (Pašeta in Regan, 2017: 17).

Pioneering research into feminist activists has indicated the significance of how far to the left some of these women were, but also the lack of research into Irish feminists' relationship with radicalism (Cullen and Luddy, 1991: 6). Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy's edited volume includes biographical articles on four of the women involved in this study: Sheehy Skeffington, Molony, Lynn and Jacob. The only books directly concerned with aspects of labour or socialist feminism in Ireland are Mary Jones' study of the Irish Women Worker's Union (IWWU), *These Obstreperous Lassies* (1988) and Dolores Dooley's, *Equality in community: sexual equality in the writings of William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler (1996)*. Theresa Moriarty's chapter, 'Delia Larkin: Relative Obscurity' (1998) and Denise Kleinrichert's article 'Winifred Carney: Socialism and Women in Irish Textile Trade Unions in Belfast' (2007) are biographical studies which situate their working class subjects within specifically labour and socialist contexts. Luddy's chapter 'Working Women, Trade Unionism and Politics in Ireland, 1830-1945' (2005) is a broader overview of working-class women's agency in labour and nationalist politics. For mapping connections between feminists to the labour movement, Rosemary Cullen Owens' article, "Votes for Ladies, Votes for Women": Organised Labour and the Suffrage Movement' (1983) and Moriarty's chapter, 'Larkin and the Women's Movement' (1998) provide useful detail.

A number of key texts have also been important to contextualising feminism within Ireland's broader history of social change are: Margaret Ward's *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (1983), Cullen Owen's *Smashing Times: A History of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement* 1889-1922 (1984), *Senia Pašeta's, Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (2013), Mary McAuliffe and Liz Gillis', *Richmond Barracks 1916: We Were There – 77 Women of the Easter Rising* (2016), and most recently, Margaret Ward's, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings* (2017). Most of these studies acknowledge feminists' connections to socialism or labour, but do not fully integrate the full extent of the connections radical women in this period made between nationalism, feminism and socialism. This is evident even in the title of Ward's very recent monograph, despite a foreward by Sheehy Skeffington's grand-daughter, Micheline, who describes 'my feminist, nationalist and socialist grandmother' (Ward, 2017: xviii). The exception is McAuliffe and Gillis' very recent forensic study of the women who participated in the 1916 Rising. Through detailed analysis and contextualisation, they establish that the key pattern or commonality between the women rests on their involvement in two or more of the three dominant ideological movements; feminism, nationalism and socialism (McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: 32).

This thesis considers what the lives of Irish socialist feminists featured in this study tell us about the wider phenomenon of Irish feminisms. It interrogates the history of Irish feminism, the assumptions made about it, and the way in which we define feminism in an Irish context. The thesis is concerned with understanding the context within which Irish feminism intersected with other radical movements of the early twentieth century through its socialist dynamic. The history of Irish feminism is contextualised within a broader history of political change. Irish socialist feminists' attempts to fuse feminism, socialism and nationalism, to develop new radical currents in thinking, demanded complexity and nuance in political thought and activism. Do these complexities and nuances alter how we define Irish feminism? Subsequently, this thesis will ask questions about the relationship between Irish feminism and radicalism, and about the plurality and limits of Irish feminism; whether it was broad

enough to encompass diverse currents of feminist thought and activism. This study also explores the role of conflict within feminism, and asks whether fusing together gender, class and national concerns was in fact a creative tension, part of a broader dynamism to Irish feminism? Also of interest is how Irish socialist feminists developed new thinking and what the relationship between thought and activism were. By interrogating the relationship between feminism and the women's movement, we can explore the boundaries of the women's movement and the diffusiveness of feminism. Lastly, this thesis examines whether Irish socialist feminists radicalised Irish feminism, whether they contributed to a consistent feminist presence in Ireland, a crucial element in its ability to effect social change.

This is a Women's Studies thesis and hence biography is advanced as an interdisciplinary approach, combining feminist theory and methodology with women's history. The empirical evidence is analysed alongside feminist theories in order to extrapolate the significance of Irish socialist women to feminism more generally. It seeks to challenge assumptions made about radical women and feminism in the historiography, by foregrounding the voices and activism of socialist women garnered from biographical sources (Connolly, 2003: xv).

As this is an interdisciplinary thesis, a thematic approach has been adopted allowing us to explore the complex ways in which Irish socialist women attempted to fuse their feminism to Irish socialism. The lives of various socialist women are therefore woven though the text. A theoretical framework and historiographical review are provided as a means of re-thinking Irish feminism to recover the hidden connections which underscore a socialist dynamic within the existing literature. A methodology chapter considers how biography can be used to expose the interconnections between radical movements, activists and organisations. The second part of the thesis contains four case studies of Irish socialist women in relation to radicalism, suffrage, anti-militarism and anti-imperialism. These themes were included because they represent common campaigns, ideas and groups around which Irish socialist women could work together. At the same time themes also allow us to interrogate the differences amongst Irish socialist women in how they attempted to bring together claims of

gender, class and nation. Some of these issues provide new sites of analysis, particularly in relation to Irish women's anti-imperialism; others, such as the chapter on suffrage, revisit familiar ground but from socialist women's perspective.

Part One – Foregrounding Irish Socialist Women's Experiences: Theories and Methods

Chapter One, 'Re-Thinking Irish Feminisms and Recovering the Socialist Dynamic', seeks to address persistent assumptions made about Irish feminism which have obscured a socialist dynamic. The first part of the chapter advances a conceptual framework for interpreting the alliance between feminism and socialism in Ireland. Therefore, concepts regarding the intersectionality of feminism are discussed. The chapter considers definitions of the terms 'socialist' and 'feminist' to identifying socialist women in Ireland. It considers these definitions in relation to the diversity of political identities constructed by socialist women. Other concepts explored which are helpful to locating Irish socialist women's voices relate to how we interpret divisions within feminism and how socialist women's politics evolved in relation to the way in which they were experiencing events occurring around them. The diffusion of feminist consciousness outside the formal boundaries of the women's movement, and following the connections made by socialist women, rather than contextual timeframes, are also considered as alternative conceptual frameworks for foregrounding Irish socialist women's experiences. This theoretical framework therefore posits a number of different concepts for expanding our interpretations of Irish feminism and shifting the historical narrative through a socialist feminist lens.

The second part of this chapter uses these alternative concepts for re-thinking Irish feminism to test assumptions within the historiography. This section is interested in the dominance of the nationalist-suffrage nexus within histories of Irish feminism, and the resulting stereotypes of exceptional and elitist socialist feminists that emerge within this view. The concentration on tensions and paradoxes within Irish socialist women's politics is also of concern, as is the disconnection of activists' ideas from their activism. Lastly, the overconcentration on the early twentieth century and the

suffrage movement has particular implications for this biographical study, which traces Irish socialist women's political life histories from the 1900s into the 1940s, well beyond the standard timeframes of suffrage histories.

The second chapter, 'Biography and Feminist Fusions', looks at how the connections the ten women featured in this study forged through their activism can demonstrate a socialist dynamic to Irish feminism. The selection of subjects included in the sample group of women is discussed and a mapping exercise is advanced as a means of tracing the interconnections between activists and groups. The methodology is feminist in that it allows the experiences of socialist women to be foregrounded through biographical sources. The value of the biographical evidence associated with each of the ten women is considered in terms of the multiple ways they identified with socialism. The merits of first-person testimony are discussed in relation to archival silences and bias. The chapter confronts the narrative of division in the history of Irish feminism and considers how biographical materials can be used to tell a different story of interconnection. The concept of feminist communities as a new focus for interrogating the representativeness of this group of women is applied to this thesis. Assumptions about the women's family backgrounds are tested and considered in relation to their connections to counterculture.

Part Two -- Gender, Class and Nation 1900s-40s: The Socialist Feminist Lens

Part two of the thesis, Gender, Class and Nation 1900s-40s: The Socialist Feminist Lens, is premised on the biographical evidence relating to the ten socialist women featured in this study, and it proceeds in a thematic and chronological fashion. The themes; feminism and counterculture, suffrage, anti-militarism and anti-imperialism, reflect the political spaces and causes through which Irish socialist feminists attempted to meld together claims of gender, class and nation. It is this process by which feminism is informed by other radical social movements which can provide a lens on the various ways in which feminism is continually adapted and redefined in new contexts.

Chapter Three, 'Experiments in Fusion: Feminism, Counterculture and Changing the Fabric of Feminism', examines how Irish socialist feminists variously interacted with radicalism, and the implications this had for both the interactivity and pluralism of Irish feminism. How the unconventional personal lives of Irish socialist feminists provided motivation for wider political transformation is explored in this chapter in reference to issues of politicisation, education and secularism. In particular, this chapter is concerned with how thought and action were linked through Irish socialist women's experimentation in fusing new ideas together within the context of radicalism. The chapter examines the interaction of alternative feminist ideas about sexuality and gender roles within a counterculture, so the diffusiveness of a feminist consciousness is a key concern of this chapter.

The question of how Irish socialist feminists were able to synthesise claims of gender, class and nation through the issue of widening the franchise is the subject of Chapter Four; 'Suffrage'. Rather than viewing the Irish suffrage campaign from how it interacted with a particular standpoint, nationalism or labour for instance, this chapter argues for the necessity of viewing these political platforms in relation to each other through radicalism. The chapter interrogates key activist moments in the Irish suffrage campaign through which ideological and interpersonal connections were made: the demand for women's enfranchisement and Home Rule, 1908-1912, militancy, the Lockout, the First World War, and after the 1918 Representation of the People Act. The connections between British and Irish socialist suffragettes are of particular note and add a further dynamic to the interactivity of Irish feminism with radicalism. The chapter explores both the range of positions adopted in relation to suffrage by Irish socialist feminists and how these ideas were developed through activist moments. Hence, how Irish socialist feminists experienced the issue of suffrage differently has much to say about both the plurality and fluidity of Irish feminism.

Chapter Five, *"*British Militarism As I Have Known It"; Experiencing and Resisting Militarism', focuses on whether Irish socialist women were able to connect Irish feminist concerns with violence to anti-militarism. So, this chapter discusses the

interaction of feminism with a major discourse of international socialism. In particular, this chapter interrogates the dynamism of Irish feminism in the light of apparent paradoxes between Irish socialist feminists' critiques of imperialist militarism and their defence of militancy or revolutionary violence. There were specific instances when opposition to militarism raised these tensions and exposed how Irish socialist women experienced the violence happening around them. These events form the chapter's main areas of interest: pre-war anti-militarist militancy, suffrage and opposing the First World War, the 1916 Rising and the women's personal experiences of militarism, the War of Independence, The Treaty and Civil War. The centrality of resistance to Irish socialist feminists' anti-militarist activism reflects the creative way in which they were able to make common cause between a feminist concern to protect women and children from violence, with the defence of working class communities and subject peoples. Contingent upon unravelling this contradiction is the need to explore the pluralism of Irish feminism through the socialist perspective of anti-militarism. Specifically, the chapter aims to re-examine the assumed essential division within Irish feminism as between pacifist and republican feminists.

Chapter Six, "Of Ancillary Service"; Feminism and the Domestication of Irish Anti-Imperialism in the 1920s and 1930s', looks at the interaction between Irish feminism and a further, but connected dynamic of international socialist discourse, anti-imperialism. The ambiguous position of Irish socialist feminists within left republicanism is explored through their use of traditional female concerns to construct a woman-focused politics. Hence, issues usually seen as domestic or the preserve of women (housing, soup kitchens or childcare), were used by Irish socialist feminists to orchestrate their entry into anti-imperialist activism. Irish socialist feminists acted as the human links between these movements and their activism evidenced the diffusion of feminist consciousness in three important case studies spotlighted in this chapter: the unemployed movement and housing activism in Ireland, defending Soviet Russia, and anti-fascist activism, especially in relation to the Spanish Civil War.

In Chapter Seven, 'Conclusion', we return to the central question of the thesis, of

what the insights garnered from biographical sources for the ten socialist women featured in this study have to say about how we define Irish feminism. This final chapter will employ key concepts for re-thinking feminism outlined in Chapter One to consider how the evidence revealed in the previous chapters, concerning Irish socialist feminists' engagement with counterculture, suffrage, anti-militarism and anti-imperialism, allows us to view Irish feminism differently through its socialist dynamic. Hence this chapter will draw conclusions in relation to the following qualities which this thesis claims are attributable to Irish feminism: interactive, plural, dynamic, diffuse and possessing a persistent presence.

PART I: Foregrounding Irish Socialist Women's Experiences: Theories and Methods

Chapter One: Re-Thinking Irish Feminism and the Socialist Dynamic

This chapter aims to suggest ways in which we can retrieve the socialist current in Irish feminism by reframing how we think about Irish feminism itself. As has been asserted in the introduction, this thesis is as concerned with the feminist consciousness which informed and shaped socialist women's politics, as it is with the intersection between two different creeds.

In Part I of the chapter, theories derived from histories of feminism are discussed in order to understand how Irish socialist women may have differently and variously defined feminism. The interaction between feminism and socialism rests upon socialist women's ability to translate feminism within different settings. This in turn shapes who we include in the category 'Irish feminist'. This analysis has generated five characteristics of feminism that are useful to shifting persistent assumptions about feminism and, thus, elucidating a socialist feminism current; interactive, plural, dynamic, diffuse and providing a persistent presence. Together these categories will provide an analytical tool for both retrieving Irish socialist feminism and for understanding its historical expression within the context of Irish feminism. These five areas form the theoretical framework for the thesis.

The purpose of the second part of this chapter is to consider these areas in relation to the history of Irish feminism, in particular how to illuminate the socialist dynamic within this history. Engaging with the existing literature is important to the task of making Irish socialist feminism visible. The existing literature has at times reflected some of the persistent assumptions about Irish feminism that are prevalent within the broader historical narrative. These assumptions will be challenged in this chapter, particularly in a new wave of biographical studies and histories that have explored the complexity of individuals' responses to moments of immense change.

Part One: Re-Thinking Feminism

Interactive

Firstly, and perhaps most pertinently for a study of the intersection between two 'isms', is the interactive nature of feminism. This thesis essentially concerns the relationship between feminism and the political left. In defining the Irish women's movement, Linda Connolly argues that a dominant characteristic is that it is an 'interactive entity (historically it had mobilized across and between societies and is networked to other social movements and political institutions)'. This is an important contention to make because of misconceptions by historians of Irish feminism's assumed exceptionality in terms of an association between Catholicism and an innate traditionalism. Connolly challenges this assumption through longitudinal analysis of the women's movement that demonstrates the consistent presence of feminism throughout the twentieth century. So, this thesis builds on Connolly's assertions, by situating a persistent dynamic of Irish feminism within the left and therefore contesting the notion that Irish women were a homogenous group who merely accepted the traditional Catholic status quo. This is not to say that Irish feminism was automatically representative of Irish women, but as Connolly has demonstrated, the Irish women's movement has always, even in periods of less intense activity, included women 'dismissed as conservative, Catholic or moderate'. The Irish Housewives Association (IHA), for instance, whose constituency would not appear radical, engaged in protests against rising food prices and slum housing issues in the 1940s and 1950s. This activism provided a continuous feminist presence during the twentieth century and the IHA was one of the groups which facilitated the emergence of a second-wave of feminism in the late 1960s (Connolly, 2003: 13, 24-25).

The distinctiveness of Irish socialist history in the light of the nationalist struggle requires a different approach to situating Irish socialist feminists. As June Hannam and Karen Hunt have indicated in their study of English, Scottish and Welsh socialist women, the nationalist question raised a different set of concerns for Irish socialist women. In addition, the Irish socialist movement was distinct from British socialist parties and much smaller in the first decades of the twentieth century; 'Irish branches of the SDF and the ILP were almost non-existent' (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 7). This

study traces Irish socialist feminists entry into radicalism via a pre-revolutionary counter-cultural milieu (Foster, 2014), through the revolutionary period and the communist/Irish Republican Army (IRA) influenced inter-war period. Suffrage activists from the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) crisscrossed between other key elements of pre-revolutionary radicalism, such as the Irish Cultural Revival, or the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), discussed further in chapter three. As Richard English has suggested in his study of Irish socialist republicans, radicals' lives were 'lived across rather than within categories' (English, 2008: 5), so we need to understand Irish feminism through activists' connections to a range of other social movements. Hence a more elastic understanding of 'socialist' has been advanced in this thesis, particularly given the fluidity within Irish radicalism that existed prior to the Irish revolution and the advent of Irish communism by the 1920s, both of which would dramatically change the socialist context. The emergence of Irish communism was particularly transformative in terms of opening up opportunities for radical left-wing women to actively participate, as Despard recorded:

> ...Communism is growing extraordinarily. We mean to try and start a group here. So far as Society is concerned that is the only hope for the future of the world. The trial of our imprisoned comrades in England has done much to quicken the movement (CDD, D2479/1/9, 25 January 1926).

Despard's diary entry also conveys the interconnected nature of Irish socialist women's concerns in her reference to how the issue of prisoners hastened the emergence of communism amongst Irish left republicans.

This fluid approach to defining socialism has been adopted particularly in relation to the United States, where the issue of race lends additional nuances to the study of feminism. In Christine Bolt's study of the history of race and class in the British and American first wave women's movements, she uses the term labour women, 'for convenience, to encompass women in the labour movement, including trade unionists and supporters of the political left'. Similarly Meredith Tax emphasizes a 'United Front' of left-wing oriented women (Bolt, 2004: 192; Tax, 2001: vi).

The focus of this thesis is not so much on groups or organisations, such as in Hannam and Hunt's study of women in the British Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) and Independent Labour Party (ILP) (Hannam and Hunt, 2002), but on the individual activist trails of Irish socialist feminists. More often than not they are found at the boundaries of social movements, where ideas, activists and tactics collided and then proliferated. Socialist feminism should be understood within the context of both socialism and feminism, both of which arise from particular historically located social and economic circumstances which have compelled individuals to take collective action for change. Thus, as Christine Collette suggests in her study of the British 'Women's Labour League', we will only be able to understand socialist feminism by exploring its expression within specific historical settings:

> Socialist feminism, the genie of the lamp, is obviously a connection of feminist and socialist concepts. Before the genie appears, we can only guess its guise. We grope towards an understanding of socialist feminism. It would be premature to begin the account of the Women's Labour League with one inflexible idea of socialist feminism; there are many definitions. The League history has to conclude with an identification of its own brand of socialist feminism… (Collette, 1989: 4).

This interconnected tendency reflects socialist feminism elsewhere, where several varieties of socialism operated at any one time and overlapping membership in a variety of social movements, political parties and organisations were common (Banks, 1986: 7; Damousi, 1994: 6; Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 6-7).

Irish socialist women were both aware of and connected to their peers outside of Ireland, so this counterculture was also markedly internationalist for the time. This study has explicitly contextualised Irish socialist feminism in relation to an international radicalism which represented 'a sweeping assault against all the orthodoxies of the nineteenth century' (Wexler, 1984: 188). As early as 1891 an emerging and interconnected form of feminism was already evident within the

activism of the American feminist, Frances Ellen Harper, 'Among English-speaking races we have weaker races victimized, a discontented Ireland and a darkest England'. By 1913 the British Fabian Beatrice Webb declared in the *New Statesman* that this feminist 'awakening', which was as concerned with 'pure' feminist issues as it was with the international class struggle and 'unrest amongst the subject peoples', was well under way (Rowbotham, 2010: 209-211). The Belfast trade unionist and revolutionary republican Winifred Carney acknowledged the influence of Olive Shreiner's *An African Farm* (1883) for instance, and Shreiner was closely connected to Edward Carpenter's notable English free-loving, feminist, vegetarian, pacifist, and 'new life' socialist circle. In common with the Irish Cultural Revival, a key element of Irish counterculture in the early twentieth century, new life socialism was 'just as likely manifested in cultural forms, prefiguring the new relationships of the future socialist society in the everyday lives of individual socialists' (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 4). Sheehy Skeffington's personal papers testify to her myriad of international contacts with notable left-wing feminists of the day whose personal lives reflected their socialist politics too; Sylvia Pankhurst, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Ethel Mannin and Emma Goldman all feature in correspondence. It is striking how through these contacts shared left-wing ideals and demands such as internationalism, humanitarianism and civil liberties, seeped into the melting pot of Irish counterculture across the first half of the twentieth century.

Plural

The presence of socialist women is important to viewing feminism as a pluralistic entity. An additional layer to this is to understand the diversity amongst Irish socialist women in order to challenge assumptions by contemporary writers and historians about their contributions to the revolution. How we define 'Irish socialist women' therefore is of significance to the selection of women for inclusion in this study and in terms of understanding how they might have constructed their political identities. Hannam and Hunt, in their study of British socialist women, proffer a baseline definition of a 'socialist'. They focus on women who identified with socialism and were active in the variety of socialist groups; 'all shared a belief that the capitalist

system, based as it is on private ownership, profit making and competition, should be replaced by a society characterized by collective ownership and co-operation' (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 5-6). There was still a range of views about the exact meaning of socialism and how it would be achieved. This is distinct from labourists, 'for whom the representation of working men [*sic*] in parliament was an end in itself rather than a means to fundamental social change.'

In Ireland James Larkin attached his brand of syndicalism, which advocated One Big Union (OBU) as a means of exerting workers' control over the means of production, to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). Despite the potential for women's engagement in the most strongly socialist-influenced union in Congress, Larkin established the Irish Women Workers' Union (IWWU) in 1911 as separate and subordinate to the ITGWU on the basis that a member was defined by the ITGWU as male. Hence, this thesis does not primarily concern feminists in the labour movement, such as the IWWU President Louie Bennett, because they were not necessarily socialists. In 1938 Bennett was elected to the Commission on Vocational Organisation and was enthusiastic about its corporatist vision. Molony attempted to highlight the association between corporatism and fascism, and instead pointed to a socialist vision 'implicit in the papal encyclicals'. Mary Jones, historian of the IWWU notes that; 'Miss Bennett did not self-evidently have a commitment to socialism of this or any other variety'. Jones suggests that Bennett's non-identification with socialism was more the norm in the IWWU. Molony was distrusted because it was feared she was exploiting the union for socialist recruitment and propaganda purposes: 'To an extent, however, and as a direct implication of her commitment to a socialist future, she was viewed with some disquiet within the IWWU' (Jones, 1988: 156). Although some Irish socialist feminists were active in these groups, such as Molony, it is their socialist organising within the labour movement which is of interest, rather than the careers of trade unionists.

The Labour Party women also fall outside the criteria of this study because it was not explicitly socialist. James Connolly's emphasis on labourism was combined with a growing nationalism in his initiation of the Irish Trade Union and Congress and

Labour Party (ITUCLP) in 1914. However, the merging of the economic and political arms of the labour movement in to one body, the ITUCLP, ensured the political would be subordinated to the stronger trade union elements (O'Connor, 1982: 82). The ITUCLP would not formally endorse socialism until 1918, and even then it appeared to be more of a rhetorical device, as its actions practically sought to distance itself from militant trade unionism.

A study of women's participation in the Communist Party also falls outside the boundaries of this study; however, the ways in which Irish socialist republican women associated with unofficial communist groups which were not affiliated to the Comintern is of interest. From 1923 onwards, attempts were made to establish a Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) affiliated to the Third International. These attempts all failed, but by the late 1920s and early 1930s an anti-imperialist alliance emerged between Communist front groups and the left of the IRA (see O'Connor, 2004, Ó Drisceoil, 2003). These groups were not subject to the discipline of official Communist parties which were members of the Third International. This created a more fluid environment within which Irish socialist women could attempt to advance a woman-focused politics. This study gives attention to the following groups which feature in the women's biographical sources: the Worker's Party of Ireland (WPI), the Irish National Unemployed Movement (INUM), the Labour Defence League (LDL), the League against Imperialism (LAI), the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia (IFOSR), Saor Éire, Republican Congress, and the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee (IFSRWAC).

Despite providing a reference point for understanding what a 'socialist' was in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, Hannam and Hunt are also careful to point to the mutability of political identities and the undesirability of fixed categories. The latter applies particularly in relation to feminist politics, where essentialist identities, such as woman or feminist, have been disputed with the emergence of class and ethnic critiques in feminist theory (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 5-6, 11). Rowbotham has suggested that feminism itself is hard to define because it has always had diverse political meanings, remaining ambiguous over time (Rowbotham, 1992: 310).

However, Delmar is able to offer a starting point where a feminist is, 'someone who holds that women suffer discrimination on the basis of their sex', although as with defining socialism, why women are oppressed and how this situation should be remedied are still contested (Delmar, cited in Connolly, 2003: 49). The term 'feminist' has been used in this thesis in relation to women who may not have described themselves as such – socialists, middle-class or rural women for instance – but who used other euphemisms to convey their participation in a shared struggle with self-declared 'feminists' for women's rights.

Although Irish socialist activists were conscious of feminist ideas that they derived from reading, attending talks and through exchanges in feminist networks, a key argument advanced in this thesis is that these ideas were then adapted and developed through local activism. The latter part of this process may not have been as self-conscious process due to chaotic and dynamic nature of political activism, however, the point being that activists themselves would not have necessarily associated themselves within a particular feminist current. They were busy 'doing' activism. There was more unity within first-wave feminism around the suffrage campaign, in spite of tensions about different styles of activism and activists. In fact, many Irish female activists may not have described themselves as 'feminist' to allow for the variety of socialist positions regarding issues such as the vote. Molony argued that Irish suffragettes, socialists and republicans were 'all fighting the same fight for Equal rights' (Lane, 2010: 26). The language of human rights, democracy or humanism, also employed by Markievicz who similarly avoided the label 'feminist', was an established means by which socialist women could identify their support for suffrage (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 10).

Connolly and O'Toole's documentary history of the Irish women's movement emphasizes the diversity and complexity within feminism. Indeed, it is more accurate to perceive of Irish *feminisms* (Connolly and O'Toole, 2005: 13). This relates not only to their feminist or socialist identities, but how they identified with the nationalist movement. Thus, as Bolt argues in her transatlantic study of the women's movement:

> race and class clearly defined women as importantly as gender, and equally clearly disturbed and shaped the development of feminism; yet their impact was very different in the two countries [US and Great Britain] to contemporaries and historians alike (Bolt, 2004: 2).

The distinctly anti-imperialist context to *Irish* feminism in the early twentieth century is particularly of note and laid bare multiple sites of oppression – class, gender *and* race – that demanded an inclusive collective movement for emancipation. The Government of Ireland Act 1920 partitioned and established the six counties as Northern Ireland. The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty recognised the 26 counties of southern Ireland and the Irish Free State in 1922. Hence the very idea of an 'Irish' feminist is in itself a contested identity. Identity for nationalist oriented women was partially constructed through involvement in nationalist politics. In his biography of the radical Ernie O'Malley, Richard English discusses how Irish republican revolutionaries held a shared sense of religious, cultural, political and historical values (English, 1998: 405). For Irish socialist women it was important to share these republican values to be accepted within this community. Hence, these women joined the Gaelic League, educated themselves in nationalist histories and contributed to nationalist newspapers and groups. However, these shared republican values could also be a source of tension in socialist women's political identities. The majority of women in the sample group were unconventional in their religious backgrounds, either from Protestant denominations or not religious, and this conflicted with the increasingly association between Catholicism and mainstream nationalism.

This thesis assumes an expansive interpretation of Irish identity, recognising the multi-layered and constructed nature of national identity, and the importance of self-identification amongst these women. Once again, a biographical focus has been useful in substantiating these individual political journeys. The Irish socialist women who are the subjects of this thesis were at various points in their lives Irish immigrants, emigrants, residents of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The transatlantic socialist feminist activist links have been well documented (Bolt, 2004, Mooney-

Eichacker, 2003, Rowbotham, 2016). For instance, Connolly O'Brien lived in the United States and by 1910 was the business agent for the Irish Socialist Federation's paper, the *Harp* (McGuire and Quinn, 2009). Despard's identification with Ireland can be traced to her Irish relations, the Frenchs, and her marriage to the Irish merchant, Maximilian Despard (Linklater, 1980, Mulvihill, 1989). She supported the Irish suffrage and labour causes, and became increasingly involved with Sinn Féin. She moved permanently to Dublin in 1921, but was effectively exiled to Belfast a decade later due to anti-communist violence. Gore-Booth and Lynch moved to England and worked within the working-class women's suffrage movement. Gore-Booth's life partner, Esther Roper, thought of herself as half-Irish through her mother's family (Tiernan, 2012:30).

Dynamic

The pluralism in feminist thought reflects the diversity amongst feminists and the need to fuse feminism with different ideologies. As Carol Dubois has suggested, these discourses are really contests about the meaning of feminism, and for control over the political direction of the women's movement (Dubois, 1991: 253). Tax views these disputes as part of a process of coalition building which is rooted in the aforementioned ideas of difference (Tax, 2001: vi). It is an important distinction to make, to view conflict as an implicit part of the political process of feminism and socialist feminism as key to this, as it is in constant dialogue with other forms of feminism. Taken outside of the wider context of the history of feminism as a political discourse, these ideological cleavages are often reduced to stereotypes of women fighting amongst themselves (Connolly and O'Toole, 2005: 13). Bolt has argued that class and racial cleavages were an intrinsic part of the women's movements in Britain and the United States, and constituted a healthy dynamic, although not unproblematic or unavoidable. She also notes that it took exceptional women to overcome class barriers (Bolt, 2004: 4-5). The importance of detailed comparative studies such as Bolt's in highlighting the underlying complexity of feminism, of the need to understand it as a multifaceted and highly mutable phenomenon. Division need not be the inevitable outcome of difference and this has a significance beyond feminism,

for contemporary concerns with issues of race, migration and marginalisation. Bolt's work highlights the importance of looking at instances where women were able to transcend these differences, create common cause amongst women, and achieve real changes in women's lives.

Documentary evidence also demonstrates that Irish feminists adapted feminist ideas to the local context (Connolly and O'Toole, 2005: 49), fusing together the often competing claims of class, gender and ethnicity. These efforts have often been regarded as paradoxical and are vulnerable to misunderstanding when the different strands of their politics are taken in isolation. They were aimed at challenging existing paradigms or transcending false dichotomies, such as the ideology of separate spheres. The way in which activism infused the personal lives of socialist feminists appears to contradict the public notion of activism, as well as highlighting the tensions between self-transformation and broader cultural change. Socialist feminists found freedom in politicising the personal and challenging the notion of separate spheres, but, as a consequence of their counter-cultural lifestyles, especially as women, they were arguably contained within alternative but separate spheres of existence (Foster, 2014: 328). In expressing a radical solidarity with the marginalised, they embraced it themselves as dissidents. On the defining issue of suffrage in first-wave feminism, socialist feminists tried to evade the tension between limited woman suffrage and adult or universal positions through the fluidity of their activism, and attempted to make common cause between Irish women and other marginalised groups. Perhaps the most obvious example of a paradox at play in Irish socialist women's activism is with regards to the use of force; their backing of the armed republican struggle, whilst campaigning for world peace. Irish socialist feminists adapted a socialist anti-militarist framework to the Irish context by insisting that the weak (Irish women and children) should be defended by the use of force, and in opposing British militarism. Lastly, the contradiction between Irish nationalism and internationalism was resolved by placing Irish nationalism within an international socialist anti-imperialism, and gendering this discourse.

This non-linear dynamic has led historians of feminism to comment on the 'shifting

and unstable' nature of socialist feminism in particular, which is in constant dialogue between two ideas and movements (Dubois, 1991: 254). Part of this dialogue is constructed by the ways in which socialist feminists organised at the boundaries of social movements, often fusing activists and ideas together through campaigns or activism. So activism was a way of driving collaboration and unity, but as Connolly has pointed out activism also drives and informs feminist theories, and vice-versa. As Connolly suggests, 'feminism is a diffuse and active mobiliser of ideas' (Connolly, 2003: 47).

Diffuse

A further assertion being made in this thesis is that feminism is a diffusive entity and that this is partly attributable to the presence of socialist feminism. It also complicates feminism's expression though, because it results in an ambiguity in the relationship between feminism, the women's movement and a more general collective identity amongst women. So Connolly has argued that 'it is possible to separate feminism from the multiplicity of those [people] concerned with women's issues…' (Connolly, 2003: 48). So socialist feminism can still be situated within the history of feminism because feminism is about a female or group consciousness which seeks to challenge the gender hierarchy (Cott cited in Le Gates, 2001: 4). Olive Banks has suggested that defining socialist feminism is also problematic because it is more of a diffusive idea than a concrete movement (Banks, 1986: 7). Dubois has asserted that despite the tensions within socialist feminism, making its essence difficult to capture, as well as its instability and fluidity; it still constitutes a 'distinct and authentic political territory'. This substantive politics is both 'self-aware and self-defined…' (Dubois, 1991: 253). This self-definition manifests itself through the activism of the subjects in the sample group.

This thesis assumes a symbiosis between feminist ideology and the women's movement, with feminism providing the framework, if you like, for feminist activism (Sabrosky, 1979: 5). As Connolly argues, although the women's movement is feminist politics in its privileged form, feminism is more than its organisational

boundaries, and 'produces feminist action in more diffuse and informal locations…' (Connolly, 2003: 49). This has obvious implications for Irish socialist feminists whose activism was at the boundaries of the women's, republican and/or labour movements. It was more militant in tone and conducted outside of formal, establishment structures.

The constant proliferation of feminist ideas and groups has arguably diluted the meaning of feminism, which Rowbotham maintains 'remains ambiguous over time' (Rowbotham, 1992: 12, 310). In part this is due to feminist activists' 'refusal of confinement' (Rowbotham, 2009: 8), or to not be categorically identified with a particular strand of feminism, or as feminist even, as well as to the constant flow of activists and ideas between social movements. Instead of searching for definite meanings, Rowbotham recommends viewing feminism in a more diffuse manner, as a consciousness. In *Dreamers of a New Day*, she describes this consciousness as an 'awakening' (Rowbotham, 2010: 3), expressed as a 'radicalizing force in the larger history of feminism' (Dubois, 1991: 253). If socialist feminism is to occupy 'a distinct and authentic political territory' within the history of feminism that can transcend its inherent instabilities, then its diffuse character must be understood as part of the processes and origins by which feminism is constructed (Offen, 1988: 22).

Persistent presence

The proliferation of Irish feminism through its diffuse forms, including where feminism intersects with various aspects of radicalism, is central to how we evaluate the relationship between feminism and change; how Irish feminism was intrinsically always shifting or 'fragmenting' and how this drove wider social change. For continual reinvention implicitly critiques and alters the status quo, questioning injustices which have acquired a permanence through the historical record and suggests another future world is possible. In a sense, these women were re-writing the history of women and Irish feminism through a continually evolving agency. In terms of the Irish women's movement, Connolly points to the way in which difference and fragmentation defined feminists' agency, but paradoxically provided continuity

between peaks in feminist activism (Connolly, 2003: 52). She also locates the Irish women's movement within a wider process advancing social change, 'of mediation, resistance and constraint over extensive periods of time'. Connolly's argument here, based on the link between the persistence of a feminist presence and social change, is that 'significant changes in women's rights would not have been "passively" introduced if the women's movement did not persist' (Connolly, 2003: 12). A key argument of this thesis is that socialist feminists were an important part of this process of proliferation within Irish feminism because they lent it diversity, dynamism and diffusion. Socialist women were also key to providing continuity to Irish feminism through the diffuse organisations they established at the boundaries of the women's movement. For example, it has been argued that the Women Prisoners' Defence League (WPDL), a group dominated by socialist feminists, was the only vaguely feminist organisation left in Ireland by 1930 (Ryan, 1991: 407). In particular, these women were incredibly prolific in their activist lives, remaining active approaching the mid-century. They provided the activist connections between organisations emanating from first-wave feminism and new organisations such as the IHA which would lay the foundations for a new wave of activism in the late 1960s.

Delmar has concluded that in order to construct a history of feminism we must be able to specify what that feminism is; a key contention here is that a defining feature of feminism is that it attempts to alter the position of women (Delmar, cited in Connolly, 2003: 49). Having asserted that socialist feminists have contributed the key elements to Irish feminism that drive social change, such as links to wider radicalism, diversity, dynamism, and diffusion, it also follows that we can argue for their place within a history of Irish feminism. Connolly argues for more an inclusive history of Irish feminism that includes the 'rich history of socialist feminism' (Connolly, 2003: 63). We need to examine socialist women's cutting edge activism at the boundaries of women's movement, where it overlapped with left republicanism or the various currents of Irish socialism, to trace their role as 'a radicalizing force in the larger history of feminism' (Dubois, 1991: 252). This is why a critical stance towards the existing literature has been advanced, employing the feminist theories adapted in this section to re-locate a socialist feminist dynamic. Having established this framework, it

is now possible to interrogate the existing literature.

Part Two: Exposing the Socialist Dynamic

The second part of this chapter applies this framework to the existing literature. This thesis is primarily located within Irish women's history and builds on a body of work which since the 1970s has attempted to retrieve the collective political agency of Irish women; their attempts to expose the subjugation of women, feminist activism and feminists' participation in wider political change. The dominance of the nationalist-suffrage nexus within the field and 'exceptionality' of the more high profile socialist feminist activists will be tested using the concept of Irish feminism's interactivity. It has been argued that the links between labour and suffrage movements rested on a few individuals. Related to suggestions of the exceptionality of feminists who were involved in labour and/or socialist activism, is the way in which radical women are regarded as 'elitist', and, therefore, unrepresentative of the wider women's movement or working-class women. The plurality of Irish feminism is thus explored. The enduring stereotype of conflict amongst women is re-visited using the idea of the creative tension inherent in feminism, particularly as a facet of fusing class and gender claims. Paradoxes in the women's activism and stereotypes of socialist republican women are examined from the perspective of feminism's dynamic potential to develop new thinking. The characterisation of a representative socialist feminist, Constance Markievicz, as unserious, and of engaging in activism without thought, interrogates the relationship between feminist thought and activism. This misrepresentation is re-examined from a perspective that views feminism in a more diffuse manner, where feminism was happening outside the boundaries of official movements or institutions. The chapter concludes by looking at the implications of the concentration on early twentieth-century feminism within the literature. It discusses the different trajectory of socialist feminists' activism and its implications for a persistent feminist presence in twentieth-century Ireland.

Socialist women were aware of the historical significance of their participation in many of the crucial moments that drove dramatic changes in twentieth century

Ireland. As Foster claims, biographical sources 'can reflect the way that young dissidents saw themselves making history' (Foster, 2014: xx). Yet socialist women also displayed a consciousness of the importance of establishing their roles as women within the revolutionary movement. Irish socialist feminists had a keen sense of radical history and drew on this in constructing an alternate image of how a new, free and more socially just Ireland might look. Their activism deliberately developed a collective memory of republican resistance, particularly the United Irishmen. What was important was the way in which they engaged with this cultural memory as feminists to assert their claims for women's place within this radical movement. Jacob wrote several political novels on the themes of nationalism and suffrage, as well as a history of the United Irishmen (Lane, 2010: 308). Alice Milligan and Inghinidhe na hÉireann members connected themselves with their radical heritage through their *tableaux vivants* featuring Robert Emmett and Anne Devlin, or depicting 'Erin Fettered and Erin Free' (Morris, 2012: 267-269).

Yet, Irish socialist women were aware of the precariousness of their newly established position within this counterculture. They were conscious that the process of undermining women's participation in the revolutionary movement was underway within their lifetimes, and attempted to arrest this because they understood the impact this would have on the advancement of women's rights.

Markievicz is a case study in point. Her political legacy reflects the historical omission of socialist women and the wider, continued marginalisation of Irish women in public life. Sonja Tiernan notes in her centenary reassessment of *The Shaping of Modern Ireland*: 'When O'Brien first published the Shaping of Modern Ireland, Markievicz's work had not only been forgotten but it had actually been undone. By 1960 no other female politician had held a cabinet position in an Irish government since her' (Tiernan, 2016: 192). Markievicz's biographer, Lauren Arrington, argues that writers such as W.B. Yeats, Sean O'Casey and Sean O'Faoláin served as 'the architects of Constance Markievicz's legacy' (Arrington, 2016: 267). Molony was keen to counter O'Faoláin's biography of Markievicz, which she described as; 'very bad, inaccurate and misrepresents her character' (Statement of Miss Helena Molony,

BMH, WS391: 63). Arrington provides further evidence of Connolly O'Brien and Roper's dismay and attempts to challenge O'Faoláin's misrepresentations (Arrington, 2016: 271). Catherine Morris, in her recent biography of the Irish Cultural Revivalist and feminist Alice Milligan, reports on how Milligan was so incensed by O'Faoláin's 1934 biography of Markievicz that she declined to attend the Irish PEN[1] annual conference that year, and wrote a letter to the press expressing her concerns. Morris goes on to argue that the issue reflected how radical women such as Milligan were conscious of how their own human rights were being 'further erased in Irish social, political and cultural life. One of the key methods of erasing human rights is to erase people from history' (Morris, 2012: 74, 292).

Tiernan concludes that these attempts to discredit Markievicz's involvement in the nationalist struggle have been 'successfully challenged' in works such as Senia Pašeta's, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (Tiernan, 2016: 187). Yet Arrington draws attention to the outstanding issue of Markievicz's obscured socialist identity. She claims that de Valera's acted as 'one of the most influential sculptors of Markievicz's legacy' through the 1932 commemoration of Markievicz. Markievicz was a founder member of Fianna Fáil in 1926. In an event that marked Fianna Fáil's landmark election, Arrington argues de Valera attempted 'to forge a narrative of a continuous Irish past of which Fianna Fáil was the inheritor and guardian'. Arrington documents how this 'required excising most of Constance Markievicz's political thought and revising the history and nature of socialism in Ireland' (Arrington, 2016: 265). In the light of de Valera's commemorative speech, Sheehy Skeffington set about reasserting Markievicz's socialist credentials in the July 1932 *An Phoblacht* article, 'Constance Markievicz – died July 13, 1927 –what she stood for?' In it she wrote:

> Connolly's ideals, so far from being realized today by any parliamentary party are as 'revolutionary' as ever – and as unattained. Both Connolly and

[1] PEN, originally conceived in 1921 as the acronym for 'Poets, essayists and novelists' but known simply as PEN, promotes literature and freedom of expression internationally, see PEN International (2014). *Our history*, London: PEN International, available from http://www.pen-international.org/our-history/ [accessed 22 May 2017].

> Markievicz stood for a Workers' Republic. Constance Markievicz was a disciple of Connolly, a member of the Irish Socialist Party (Ward, 2107: 301).

This suggests the significance of Markievicz and Irish women to the history of early twentieth-century Irish socialism. Tiernan's assessment that the importance of Markievicz's legacy lies in, 'her role as a politician and labour activist', underscores Sheehy Skeffington's claims for Markievicz's socialism (Tiernan, 2016: 187).

Nationalism and Suffrage

The interlinking commemorative and literary processes that orchestrated the occlusion of Irish socialist women from the public record have in turn influenced the historiography of Irish women's activism. With regard to Markievicz, Arrington notes how: 'Every biography since has taken O'Faoláin's book as its starting point, lured in by his tantalizing anecdotes and eminently quotable vitriol' (Arrington, 2016: 267).

These misrepresentations remained uncontested because the wider relationship between Irish women and socialism has been neglected within Irish women's history. As Pašeta comments: 'The political history of Irish women, and especially of nationalist women in the early years of the twentieth century, is probably the most extensively covered of all areas in Irish women's history…' (Pašeta, 2013: 2). This was inevitable given the centrality of nationalism to histories of modern Ireland. As Pašeta suggests, nationalism provided 'a compelling context for research' into Irish women's experiences of participation in public life. The relationship between nationalism and feminism initially focused on the nationalist-suffrage nexus (Cullen Owens, 1984, McKillen, 1982, Ward, 1989). This overconcentration had a distorting effect on the historiography, overshadowing the breadth of feminist concerns which included labour, socialism, militarism, sexual and domestic violence and broader issues of citizenship (Pašeta, 2013: 3).

Although the concerns around which nationalists and feminists were able to co-operate have been expanded upon (Hearne, 1992, Ryan, 1996), the way in which these

relationships have been represented has minimised the importance of the socialist dynamic. For instance, Rosemary Cullen-Owens posits:

> While individuals within the IWFL [Irish Women's Franchise League] and the IWSF [Irish Women's Suffrage Federation] brought both groups closest to an alliance with Labour, this was due to the beliefs of individual members rather than official policy (Cullen-Owens, 2005: 106).

Cullen-Owens also suggests that the involvement of working-class women was 'minimal' (Cullen-Owen, 2005: 107). In essence, Cullen-Owen's conceptualisation of the relationship between suffrage and labour emphasizes the exceptionality of the socialist women who established these links, and raises the question of the representativeness of socialist women.

To address this assertion, it is useful to return to the figure of Markievicz, whose exceptionalism has often been highlighted. Yes, she clearly was exceptional for the ways in which she transgressed both social class and gender roles. She was the first woman ever to be elected to the British House of Commons in 1918 and the first female cabinet minister in an Irish government in 1919 (Tiernan, 2016: 190). But this thesis will argue that she was not exceptional as an Irish socialist woman, that she was part of a group of influential and politicised women whose political lives reveal the intersections between socialism and feminism across the first half of the twentieth century.

Pašeta's discussion on 'social activism' amongst nationalist feminists between 1910 and 1917 stresses that despite the official IWFL policy of non-alignment:

> many feminists did move increasingly in a leftward direction, especially after the Labour Party and a number of trade unions and trade unionists began to openly support women's suffrage while the major Irish parties remained resolutely opposed (Pašeta, 2103: 123).

Pašeta also highlights how Moriarty's study of the interactions between James Larkin and the women's movement demonstrates how Ireland's 'socialist and feminist circles nonetheless frequently and increasingly overlapped through common membership and ideals' (Moriarty in Pašeta, 2013: 124).

It is notable that Markievicz is the subject of two new double biographies in the light of the centenary of the 1916 Rising; Arrington's *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Arrington, 2016) and Tiernan's chapter, 'Countess Markievicz and Eva Gore-Booth', in the *The Shaping of Modern Ireland*: *A Centenary Assessment* (Tiernan, 2016). These relationships were influential in the politicisation of socialist women. It was Markievicz's sister, Gore-Booth, who was the key influence on her socialist politics (Tiernan, 2016: 187, 194). These studies which examine Markievicz's political life in relation to others, suggest the importance of overlapping relationships in revealing socialist feminism in Ireland. By contextualising Markievicz amongst wider circles of female socialist activists, we can begin to address the assumption that she was exceptional for her socialist politics. These overlapping circles reveal other previously obscured socialist feminists. This is evident in the controversy over O'Faolin's biography, where Milligan, Connolly O'Brien and Molony lept to the defence of their lifelong friend and political ally.

Recent full-length biographies are useful to recovering the forgotten contributions of key socialist feminists Jacob, Molony and Gore-Booth, because they situate their subjects within the radical milieu of the time (Arrington, 2016, Lane, 2010, Morris, 2012, O'hOgartaigh, 2006, Regan, 2017, Tiernan, 2012). In particular, Regan's biography reveals how Molony is emblematic of Irish socialist feminists in her complex, interwoven, but invisible political life. In her preface to Regan's book, Pašeta describes how Molony, '…has, in many ways come to represent the intersectional nature of Irish radicalism in the early twentieth century', citing her feminist, republican, trade unionist and actor roles. This theme of intersectionality amongst radical women has been foregrounded in recent studies marking the centenary of the 1916 Rising. Foster follows the revolutionary generation 'through their overlapping circles of activity' to try 'to trace networks of interests and

preoccupations which reflected new currents of thought, in personal relations as well as abstract commitments to radical principles' (Foster, 2015: xi). Building on Foster's approach of following routes to radicalism, Mary McAuliffe and Liz Gillis remark in, *Richmond Barracks 1916: We Were There – 77 Women of the Easter Rising* (2016):

> There was not one single organisation or ideology that politicised Irishwomen in the early decades of the twentieth century, instead it is necessary to understand the cross fertilisation which occurred as a result of exposure to and involvement in several strands of activism and idealism (McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: 18).

Although not reflected in the title, Ward's *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings (2017),* goes someway to expanding on Sheehy Skeffington's often limited association with suffrage and nationalism. Ward notes the incomplete nature of Sheehy Skeffington's 'Unpublished Memoirs' and how, 'the most important events in her life – the suffrage campaign and the murder of her husband Frank – are barely alluded to in these memories of the past'. Ward surmises that Sheehy Skeffington attempted to 'record those areas in her life that were less well known' (Ward, 2017: 1), and this broadening in Sheehy Skeffington's political identification begins to emerge in the significant political writings the book has retrieved from obscurity. For instance, in the chapters, 'After the Rising: In America' and 'Travels in Europe', Sheehy Skeffington's alliances with Irish and American radicals, her internationalist outlook and intersectionality are all brought to the fore.

Middle-Class Leaders and Working-Class Women

The overlapping political interests and identities of socialist women also made it difficult to fit them into an identifiable category. Like Molony, Gore-Booth organised women workers and was involved in the working-class women's suffrage movement. It has also been suggested Gore-Booth was a lesbian, in a life-long relationship with Roper, who was also her close political partner. Tiernan argues that Gore-Booth's

disappearance from history was due to 'an inability to label her relationship with Roper'. Citing the biographer Gifford Lewis, Tiernan builds on the argument that it was Gore-Booth and Roper's complex and overlapping political identities which made them in effect unrecognisable within the public record:

> in their time Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth were seen as a pair of oddities who did not fit any tidy categorisation within the official women's suffrage movement and have inevitably "disappeared from history" along with many other women (Tiernan, 2012: 28).

Other socialist women have evaded attention because their activism also fell outside of a more defined group of elite middle-class socialist feminist leaders. Leeann Lane surmises that Jacob failed to secure her place in history as an activist because she never assumed a leadership role. However, Lane argues for the recognition of Jacob's role as unofficial journalist of the period because of 'her close observation of the different political, cultural and feminist campaigns that variously intersected and converged throughout the first five decades of the twentieth century' (Lane, 2010: 4, 9).

These socialist women's activism transcended not only social movements, but categories within the existing literature which claim socialist women as either part of an elite, middle-class 'feminist' leadership, or as grass-roots working-class women. This thesis argues for a more complex view of the ways in which socialist women related to each other as a group. These fixed categories are unhelpful in retrieving a history of Irish socialist women's lives because they obscure the levels of complexity and diversity in the ways socialist women constructed their politics. Molony, Roper, Gore-Booth and Jacob's relative obscurity in comparison to a figure like Markievicz, rest on the fact that they do not fit either of these stereotypes. They were not easily identifiable within either group.

There is a persistent assertion in the existing literature around Irish feminists' elitism and lack of representativeness of Irish women. This is mostly clearly expressed in the

work of Mary Daly (1995), but Ann Matthews has also questioned the authenticity of Markievicz's class solidarity, and of the wider feminist context to women's participation in wider political change (Matthews, 2010, 2012). Whilst clearly departing from this view in his situation of women's activism within both feminism and the wider pre-revolutionary counterculture, Foster's study associates the politicised women who were feminists, socialists and nationalists with a middle-class revolutionary elite:

> But their approaches perhaps underestimate the radical mindset and contribution of students, women, intellectuals, journalists and emigres. The biographies of the revolutionaries suggest the need to accommodate such class and education profiles. A middle class or privileged background is often glossed over afterwards, notably in the cases of women, who could – and did – feel imprisoned by the limitations and expectations (Foster, 2014: 15).

Whilst McAuliffe and Gillis incorporate a detailed analysis of the motivations, experiences and actions of the women in the ICA, they draw on similar distinctions to Foster. The ICA women are categorised as either middle-class socialist feminist leaders, or working-class trade union women who joined as a direct result of their involvement in the Lockout (McAuliffe & Gillis, 2016: 31).

This thesis builds upon work which demonstrates the complexity in socialist women's alliances, and the changing contexts within which they occurred, to suggest a permeability to these categories. Luddy provides an overview of women's participation in working-class politics from 1830 to 1945 in Fintan Lane and Donal Ó Drisceoil's *Politics and the Irish Working Class, 1830-1940* (2005*).* Luddy's study emphasizes the fluidity of alliances made between the Ladies' Land League, suffrage groups and trade union women. Jones' history of the Irish Women Workers' Union, *These Obstreperous Lassies: A History of the IWWU* (1988) and Moriarty's chapter about Larkin's relationship to the women's movement, demonstrate how women's labour groups provided a space through which the socialist women active in feminist or nationalist movements could work together with the trade unionists (Pašeta, 2013:

124). Pašeta and Louise Ryan's work includes detailed chapters on the alliances between feminists and women in the labour movement (Pašeta, 2013, Ryan 1991). Arrington and Tiernan's biographies, and Ryan's study highlight the wider links between Irish socialist feminists, such as Markievicz and Gore-Booth, and the working women's suffrage campaign in Britain (Arrington, 2016, Tiernan, 2010, 2016, Ryan, 1991). These links were then reaffirmed in Ireland as organisers such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Despard and Roper made alliances with feminists in Ireland around the 1913 Lockout and later in the context of anti-militarist campaigning.

Hence, this study sees more fluidity in Fosters' contention that the pre-revolutionary generation comprised an almost a separate social sphere in terms of their values, politics and lifestyles (Foster, 2014: 328). Likewise, McAuliffe and Gillis' description of the politicised women as 'a minority within a minority' appears to exacerbate the polarity between middle-class leadership and working-class activists, narrowing the political space in which we can find socialist women (McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: x). Rather than understanding socialist women's politics through more static categories such as their class backgrounds, this thesis suggests we should examine the varied ways in which they tried to include the claims of working-class women and develop a representative form of feminist politics.

Divisive Feminists

Pašeta notes that the early works on the relationship between nationalism and feminism (McKillen, 1982, Ward, 1983) set the tone for studies that followed on this dynamic (Pašeta, 2013: 2). The main argument made is that the inevitable tensions between nationalism and feminism ultimately overwhelmed activists (Ward, 1983: 3). Cullen Owens and McKillen advanced this argument further in relation to the suffrage movement, suggesting that feminists' relationship with the nationalism acted as a destructive dynamic within Irish feminism (McKillen,1984, Owens, 1984).

This representation of feminism as a divisive force and feminists as a conflictual element within wider movements for political change, relates to assumptions made

about feminists by contemporaries of socialist women within the Labour movements and the broader political left. Larkin, for instance, was suspicious that middle class suffragettes would use their votes to undermine the position of working class men. Despite the interventions made by the field of women's history since the 1970s to recover and critically examine feminists' participation in wider political change (Cullen Owens, Luddy, Ward, et al), many of these insights have yet to be adequately integrated within the mainstream historiography. This is of particular relevance to the field of Irish labour and radical histories. Feminist organising within socialist groups has not been scrutinised in any substantial manner within histories relating to Irish labour or socialism. The repercussions of not recognising feminists within wider movements for political change are apparent in the ways they are represented within histories of Irish socialism. As late as 1994, historical misrepresentations of Markievicz's contribution to Irish socialist republicanism persisted. Markievicz's

> Smug, self-deceiving declaration from 1918 – 'Thank God we are not a materialistic nation…' established the flavour of much republican idealism of the period. That it was essentially self-deceiving, disguising the social realities and impulsions which motivate people's actions (English, 1994: 45).

When the feminist context to women's participation within wider movements for political change go unrecognised and the complex negotiations in women's politics necessary to such a position are overlooked, then the persistent assumption that feminism was a divisive and destructive dynamic resurfaces. Hence, the argument made in this thesis for the necessity of understanding the relationship between Irish feminism and socialism, because it interrogates these broader questions over the cohesiveness of feminism and the operations of gender in movements for social change.

However, the centenary of the 1916 Rising has prompted new ways of looking at the event which are more inclusive of gender. Fearghal McGarry's, *The Abbey Rebels of 1916: A Lost Revolution* (2015) integrates the political life history of Molony. The focus in Irish labour history reflects the broader distinction between middle-class

feminists and working-class women, and has focused on the recovery of women's trade union activism (Jones, 1988, Kleinrichert, 2007, Luddy, 2005, Moriarty, 2006, Woggon, 2000a, 2000b). As McGarry's *Abbey Rebels* outlines, socialist women's lives did not fall neatly into these categories. Molony, a member of Inghinidhe na hÉireann which was famed for its involvement in nationalist drama, interwove this with her commitments to the IWWU, ICA and the Irish Workers' Co-operative Society (IWCS). Despite her difficult lower middle-class background, Molony associated with both the middle-class socialist feminist leadership and organised within the women's trade union movement. Her complex, plural and creative politics, rather than her background, allowed her to transcend such divisions.

Within Irish women's history, Pasta's more recent study of Irish nationalist women explores the idea that gender provided many of the women who worked within the Irish nationalist and feminist movements with the basis for a shared "common historical experience"' (Urquhart in Pašeta, 2013: 7). Pašeta reappraises the relationship between nationalist and feminist movements, seeing 'a remarkable level of cooperation' persisting (2013: 5). Drawing on Jones (1983) and Moriarty (2006), Pašeta substantiates this cooperation in two case studies of nationalist feminists' 'social activism'; school meals campaigning between 1910 and 1914, and the feeding of women and children during the 1913 Lockout. In particular, Pašeta is interested in the ways in which radical women have pursued the 'equal but different' concept which underpinned much of women's entry into public life from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Feminists demanded equal citizenship with men, but argued that they would use these rights in a different, more female way. Lucy McDiarmid's study, *At Home in the Revolution* (2015), is very much concerned with this theme of women creatively orchestrating their entry into the revolution, often via the domestic discourse of the private sphere. Women used concepts that were available to them to negotiate tensions between the private and public, and to transcend 'the ambiguous situation of women in public space…the unsettled state of their political status' (McDiarmid, 2015: 4).

Thinking and Acting

When socialist women's activism is divorced from their feminism, when their campaigning is viewed in isolation from the development of their thinking, historical stereotypes resurface. De Valera attempted to remove any socialist intent from Markievicz's legacy by claiming that for Markievicz '"freedom won would have meant very little unless it had brought with it real freedom for the individual"'. He also tried to deny the feminist claims she made through her insistence on women's right to participate in the national movement '"To many she was simply a strange figure following a path of her own and not accustomed paths, but she did that because she was truly a woman"' (De Valera in Arrington, 2016: 265). According to O'Faoláin, Markievicz was 'superficial about the most serious things, Worst of all, she was, it is clear, sexually cold' (O'Faoláin in Arrington, 2016: 271). O'Faoláin's latter claim about her sexuality underscores the perception that Markievicz's political activism transgressed gender roles. It also relates to the idea that Markievicz revelled in the violence for the thrill of it, rather than out of any serious ideological basis. And yet, these misrepresentations are very persistent. In 1991 Markievicz was still being described as 'unscholarly', 'woolly', and as exhibiting a 'blurred definition' regarding her support for Fianna Fáil in 1926 (English, 1994: 37, 40). The suggestion here is to again question the serious political intent to her politics, to decontextualise Markeivicz's activism from her political ideas.

In order to circumvent the persistence of these stereotypes in relation to socialist women, this thesis builds on works which privilege socialist women's own voices, and takes into account the gendered aspect to women's participation in nationalist and socialist spaces. Recent studies which revisit the 1916 Rising have challenged this stereotype, particularly in relation to Markievicz's supposed glorying in shooting Constable Laffin whilst she was second in command of an ICA company at St. Stephen's Green during the 1916 Rising. Given the multiple conflicting reports of the event, together with Markievicz's own denial to her sister Gore-Booth, the consensus view seems to be that Markievicz probably was not present at the time of the shooting. Markievicz joined her posting later because she was delivering first aid supplies with Lynn. Based on a later recollection of the event to her sister Gore-

Booth, Arrington posits that Markievicz may have thought she was merely firing a warning shot which grazed Laffin's arm, but makes clear the intention was not to kill (Arrington, 2016: 131, McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: 75).

Bringing socialist women's own voices to the fore is one crucial element in challenging these misconceptions of Markievicz's actions, but as important is the gender questions it raises about the ICA. Markievicz was mostly likely missing at the time of the shooting because of the ambiguous position of women in the ICA. Whilst the ICA undeniably attracted socialist oriented nationalist feminists because of the ICA's 'atmosphere of equality', there was a women's section which carried out gendered roles, such as first aid, ambulance duties, and cooking (McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: 22). Lynn was Chief Medical Officer of the ICA. Markievicz was missing at the time the shooting allegedly because she was delivering medical supplies with Lynn and Brigit Davies to the City Hall garrison; this complicates the narrative still further (McAuliffe and Gillis, 2016: 41). It underscores the importance of gender in compiling an inclusive history of events, as well as refuting misrepresentations of Markievicz and the wider associations with socialist women.

Arrington has suggested that Roper's *Prison Letters* (1934) acted as a 'quiet riposte' to O'Faoláin (Arrington, 2016: 273). Arrington's biography contextualises the detail of Markeivicz's radical and socialist prison reading, to 'undermine assumptions that her politics were vacuous, lacking in grounding in any theoretical basis.' Arrington describes Markievicz's political thought as combining, 'the ambitions of the Irish revival, particularly the instructive vision of George Russell, with the Marxist teachings of Connolly, Litvinov, and Lenin.' She also argues that Markievicz's belief in a return to cooperative agriculture reflected the concerns of contemporary cultural revivalists Darrell Figgis, AE and Aodh de Blacam (Arrington, 2016: 190, 273). Arrington's analysis of Markeivicz's political writings is significant in the challenges it makes to the historiography and identification of Irish socialist feminists. This challenge has been bolstered by recent collections of the political writings of Gore-Booth and Sheehy Skeffington from Tiernan (2015) and Ward (2017) respectively, which evidence the thinking behind their activism, their political influences, and

sophistication inherent in a politics which attempt an intersectionality.

Markievicz discusses her political reading and thought whilst in prison through correspondence with her sister, Gore-Booth. What stands out is its evolving nature and that a large part of these conversations reflected on activism, such as in the suffrage movement, and the drawing on these experiences in framing of future demands. In discussing Gore-Booth's suffrage deputation to Westminster, Markievicz flippantly suggests using militant republican tactics because this would be the only means of getting something from the English Parliament. In 1923, there is an altogether more serious tone and endorsement of constitutional methods to extend the franchise to women under thirty on the basis of their participation in the republican 'fight', but crucially for Markievicz, from the Irish Free State. She draws on women's militant activism to justify a more constitutional approach, so there is a shift in terms of both demands and tactics (EGBP, MS 21,816, Letters to Eva Gore-Booth mainly from Constance Markievicz c.1917-1926, Note to 'Beloved O.F.' headed 'St Mary's, Frankfort Av, Rathgar, Co. Dublin).

So key drivers of theorising for Irish socialist women were influential friendships and applying insights from activism to advance feminist thought. We also see this more diffuse feminist dynamic at work within the relationship between the Belfast trade union organisers Winifred Carney and Ellen Grimley (Nellie Gordon). On visiting Dublin with James Connolly in 1913, Grimley remembers looking at a copy of Olive Schreiner's *Story of a South African Farm*; 'I explained that I had never read it but Winnie Carney had copy and that she said it was good. He was tickled to death and kept chuckling' (Woggon, 2000:31). Schreiner's book was an influential socialist feminist text of this period and Connolly was pleased that Carney and Grimley were educating themselves in international socialist feminist ideas.

Molony took a particular interest in the IWWU library, which she hoped would politicise ordinary members, who were more interested in improving the immediate material conditions for women workers (Regan, 2017: 190). This interest in politicisation appears to counter the persistent portrayal of Molony as 'a practical not

an abstract politician'. Regan notes that this insight from an interview with Francis Stuart (Maud Gonne McBride's son-in-law) informed her recent full biography of Molony (Regan, 2017:32). Stuart's suggestion here is that Molony was not an authentic theoretical socialist in the vein of Connolly. What this view misses is that Molony's contribution to socialism was the way in which she creatively borrowed ideas from socialism and feminism and fused them together through the practice of politics. So her politics was practical in the sense that it was concerned with experimenting in the connection of different ideologies through activism, but in an original and creative manner which elevates her political practice beyond the pragmatic. This is a key misunderstanding within the historiography which will be revisited in the thesis through examining how socialist women experimented with different forms of socialism and feminism in various countercultural settings. In addition, the fact that feminist ideas and theorising were diffusing amongst working-class women, more associated with the trade unionism, the ICA and nationalist struggle, reflects how a feminist consciousness permeated all the major social movements of the day. It also questions the assumed distance between middle-class politicised women and working-class trade unionist women.

Over Concentration on Early Twentieth Century Suffrage History

Within Irish women's history the suffrage narrative ends by 1920, usually marked by the partial achievement of the enfranchisement of women in the 1918 Representation of the People Act and the winding down of the IWFL's *Irish Citizen* paper (Ryan, 1991). However, it has been argued that feminist activism did not cease because the organised women's movement had collapsed (Connolly, 2003). Key feminists and groups outside of the formal women's movement, such as the WPDL, the IWWU, and later the IHA, played an important role in linking peak waves in feminist activism across the twentieth century (Connolly, 1996, Ferriter, 1995). The role socialist women played in the maintenance of a feminist presence beyond the life of the Irish suffrage movement is a concern of this thesis. Correlating to this is the radicalising impact socialist feminists may have had on the remaining feminist presence in Ireland, contrasted with a period marked by a reassertion of traditional gender roles in

Irish society. The interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s was marked by a new dynamic within Irish republicanism - the emergence of an Irish communist presence. This provided a new context for Irish socialist feminist activism and thus extends the usual timeframe of studies pertaining to the history of Irish feminism into the first half of the twentieth century.

A concentration on the early period of suffrage activism and the links to wider political change within the literature means that socialist women fade out of view after 1920. Far more attention has been given to socialist women's organising in the Irish labour movement during the period (Cullen Owens, 1984, Daly, 1985, Jones, 1988, Moriarty, 1998). For instance, recent biographies of Molony and Markievicz have emphasised the significance of their trade union and labour careers in this period. Nell Regan describes how 'From the end of the Civil War until her retirement from public life in 1941, Molony's primary work was as a trade unionist' (Regan, 2017: 183). Similarly, Tiernan argues that it was Markievicz's role as a politician and labour activist, rather than nationalist activist, which 'made the greatest impact on the shaping of modern Ireland, especially in relation to gender equality' (Tiernan, 2016: 187, 194).

Socialist women's use of the labour movement for propaganda purposes has also received attention, especially in Jones' history of the IWWU (1988) and in Regan's biography of Molony (2017). Jones and Regan's exploration of Molony's socialist organising within the IWWU is focused on Molony's alleged 'public connection with communists', specifically her involvement with the IFOSR and participation in the 1930 Dublin Trade Council Delegation to Soviet Russia. The Delegation's report caused tension within the Trades Council and this spilled over into the IWWU. A dispute ensued over Molony's request that the union take one hundred copies of the report on a sale or return basis. As a result, a motion was tabled at the IWWU annual conference which amounted to a 'personal attack' on Molony. Bennett suggested that the executive should take over Molony's organisational role and Bennett threatened to resign; Molony eventually agreed to 'let bygones be bygones' (Regan, 2017: 198).

Jones suggests that this event signified the wider contentious position of socialist women in the IWWU:

> The consistent ideological differences between members represented by Helena Molony and Sighle Dowling, and those represented by Louie Bennet and Helena Chevenix, had by tradition long been accommodated by both parties and their colleagues among the rank and file…(Jones, 1988: 98).

Jones views these tensions as 'largely creative' (Jones, 1988: 165) and these ideological differences are represented as spilling over into personal conflicts and battles for political control of the union between Molony and Bennett. For instance, Jones argues that Bennett threatened resignation on more than one occasion to reassert her authority over the union. Regan's biographical framework allows for Molony's experiences and political choices to come to the fore which is of interest in illuminating socialist women's roles in the labour movement. Regan discusses how ideological tensions came to a head over Molony's involvement with Saor Éire, a socialist political platform adopted by the IRA in 1931. Bennett suggested Molony would have to resign as IWWU representative to the DTC or from Saor Éire. Regan records that Molony resigned as an executive member of Saor Éire, but intended to stay on as an ordinary member. Regan concludes: 'It was significant that, again, when forced to choose between trade union work and non-union involvement, she chose the union' (Regan, 2017; 198). However, what is of interest to this study is the delicate balance Molony negotiated here between her feminism, socialism and republicanism. Molony may have given up her executive position in Saor Éire, but she did not abandon this alliance between the IRA and the republican left on this occasion, or in the future. A fuller analysis is needed of the entirety of socialist women's political experiences, within and outside of the labour movement.

Finding Irish women as socialists within the existing body of literature, independent of the labour movement, requires more persistence, but they can be found. As Hannam and Hunt have outlined, the political context during the 1920s and 1930s made it harder for socialist women to influence the national agendas of labour groups

and socialist parties, or to develop a 'woman-focused' politics, without the support and unity of a women's movement. They also note how at the same time traditional gender roles were being reasserted in this period, and that the left was preoccupied with the fascist threat and stressing class unity. Research into socialist women's position in the British Labour Party and broader labour movement in this period suggests women were able to maintain a broad commitment to 'feminist' principles and had more influence at a local level in areas such as health, which it was assumed women were well suited to (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 19). Insights from the British historiography therefore indicate the importance of organising at a local level and of discourses around the domestic in finding socialist women in the Irish literature during this period.

Irish women can be located as members of socialist and communist-fronted republican organisations during this period within histories of socialist republicanism, but they are not the focus of the research, rather the unsuccessful alliance between socialists and republicans in Ireland (English, Keogh, Mitchell, Patterson et al). The newer biographies yield valuable data on Irish women's socialist politics both within and outside of the labour movement during the interwar period. Arrington has evidenced Markievicz's overlooked local government work towards the end of her career in the mid 1920s (Arrington, 2016: 249). By 1923, Markievicz was dismayed by the betrayal of former Sinn Féin colleagues, the decline of Sinn Féin, and the disarray Jim Larkin's return from the United States had brought to the ITGWU. 'Unable to effect political change at a national level', Markievicz redirected her attentions to Rathmines Urban Council, where forty-thousand residents of Rathmines were without sanitary facilities. She secured a resolution in October 1925 from the Council to build public baths and a washhouse. Markievicz also worked closely with Lynn to change council legislation to allow for the urban poor to keep livestock. According to Regan, Molony was an Urban District Councillor on the Rathmines and Rathgar District Council, where she attempted to establish an affordable housing scheme in 1929 (Regan, 2107: 190). Sheehy Skeffington's political writings collated from a lifetime's work as a journalist and political activist also evidence how Irish socialist feminism extended beyond the attainment of adult suffrage and the

establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Ward's collection features Sheehy Skeffington's opposition to the Free State's circumscribing of women's rights in the 1920s and 1930s, and in particular how this 'feminist fightback' was also promoted within radical republican periodicals, such as *An Phoblacht*, in this period (Ward, 2017: 308-354).

Despite the rise of fascism in the 1930s, Irish socialist women were not overwhelmed by the increasing internationalism of the Irish left; in fact, it provided a new context within which they could advance a woman-focused politics. Organisations such as the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic (IFSR) allowed them to gender the socialist discourse of anti-imperialism, but at times tensions were manifested in extreme forms, such as pro-Nazism and antisemitism. As such, they are of particular concern to this thesis and hence specific case studies have been used to document these political journeys throughout the thesis. As we have seen, socialist women's life histories are important to expanding the history of Irish feminism and suggesting its consistent presence. Following socialist women's political journeys also reconnects their ideas and activism, foregrounding a diffuse feminist consciousness which allows us to challenge persistent misrepresentations of socialist women. Biography can also arguably illuminate the socialist strand to Irish women's thought that has been airbrushed out through processes of commemoration, most notably in the case of Markievicz (see Arrington, 2016: 265). Examining the experiences of socialist women's lives and the complexity of political choices they made, also allows us to understand the dynamic of how feminists worked together, as well as the tensions which arose. In agreement with Anna Davin in her suggestion that feminist and labour histories are 'indispensable to each other', one way of incorporating understandings from each field is to explore women's 'total life experiences'. This perspective allows us to bypass the dichotomy often found within the historiographies of labour or women's histories, of activists as either militants or victims (Davin, 1981: 180). Hence, the next chapter explores the biographical approach of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Biography and Feminist Fusions

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest biography as a means of illuminating the interconnections between activists, organisations and movements to recover a history of Irish socialist feminism. Biographical sources have been used to document the activism of the initial ten women selected and create a baseline study in socialist feminism in Ireland. First-person narrative through personal texts is considered as a way of locating Irish women's socialism. This approach has been informed by recent advances in the use of biography in Irish women's history, in particular the use of 'real time' sources to challenge assumptions within the historiography regarding division amongst feminists. The representativeness of this group of women is considered in relation to the concept of feminist communities. The chapter concludes by re-examining generalizations made about this group of women's family backgrounds, because these discourses feed into understanding motivations for women's engagement with feminism and wider political change.

Biographical Sources of Activism and Making Radical Connections

The methodological premise of this study is feminist in that it places women's voices centre stage; the starting point is located within the experiences of Irish socialist feminists in their everyday activism (Maynard, 1994: 20). Using personal texts such as diaries and correspondence allows women to speak for themselves through the research (Purvis, 1994: 178). McDiarmid refers to these forms of life writing as 'real-time sources', the 'eye-witness accounts' in diaries and letters which illuminate women's experiences of activism, their feelings, relationships and conflicts. First-person narratives foreground women's experiences of events, which are central to understanding the construction of women's political identities (McDiarmid, 2015:9, 13). Hence, Leeann Lane relates the value of using biography to highlight women's experiences of activism to this study: 'the actual lived experience indicates the holistic

approach many activists took in considering Irish political, cultural and feminist advancement in the period' (Lane, 2010: 26). Diaries such as Jacob's, letters, and the political ephemera (suffrage pin badges, posters and handbills), provide rich sources for socialist women's activism in Ireland, and yet they are underused and often previously unpublished. These biographical and unconventional sources are a particularly feminised form of activism and therefore have significant potential to challenge to the existing public record.

The Irish socialist women included in this study all identified with socialism at some point in their political careers and did so from a gender perspective. They may not have identified themselves as 'feminists', but they attempted to develop a 'woman-focused' politics within Irish socialism. These women may have been active in the labour movement, but they have not been included in this study on the basis of the trade union membership alone; it is their socialist organising in this area which is of interest. Likewise, republican women are included in the study because at times their nationalist politics overlapped with socialism through their participation in left republican circles. In the 1920s and 1930s, these radical republican circles were strongly influenced by an anti-imperialist alliance between the left-wing of the IRA and communists. Irish socialist women who were involved in the various anti-imperialist communist front groups are of interest to this study, but not women who self-identified solely as official Communist Party members.

A mapping exercise was carried out to identify Irish socialist women, their connections to each other, to radical groups and movements. These women were identified from archival data and secondary source material. A sample group of ten women were selected as a base line study from which further subjects and connections could be expanded upon (see figure 1 'Mapping Feminist Connections to Radicalism, p.8). As is apparent from their central positioning on the map, four women emerged as a core group, and have particularly strong sets of personal papers in terms of exposing interconnections through activism; Despard's papers held at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI); Jacob and Sheehy Skeffington's at the National Library of Ireland (NLI), and Lynn at the Royal College of Physicians

of Ireland (RCPI). Humphreys' papers at University College Dublin Archives (UCDA) provided useful sources on socialist republicanism in the interwar period, but they represent a narrower timeframe and scope of interconnections in comparison with the other four collections. Lynch's papers at the NLI were also consulted, yet their value is constrained by Lynch's premature exit from activism and emphasis on her literary career.

The mapping exercise also highlights the fluidity of pre-revolutionary radicalism, where a greater number of groups and connections between them are visible. Conversely, there is a contraction of groups in the revolutionary period, but a much denser level of connections between them and activists. This indicates that feminists found it harder to find the space to organise within a milieu which was dominated by the republican struggle, although they were brought into closer alliances within a smaller number of groups. The 1920s and 1930s period sees an increase in the number of groups connected to the sample group, with a new internationalist outlook. The activists most associated with republicanism, and Cumann na mBan in particular, are more on the periphery of the map, suggesting that alliances with republican feminism were harder to advance and that the tensions in these relationships created greater instability.

An additional advantage to focusing on the four core collections is that they provide personal texts and biographical evidence for other subjects in the case study without collections of personal papers of their own, such as Connolly-O'Brien and Molony. These core collections offer a deeper level of biographical data and proof of the relationships between activists in the sample group. In addition, the biographical information generated from the collections also introduces wider circles of socialist feminists who feature in this thesis, usually by relationship to the sample group. Hence, feminists such as Roper and Madeleine ffrench Mullin, as life partners of Gore-Booth and Lynn respectively, also feature in this study. Winifred Carney, ME Duggan, Sarah Harrison, Katherine Gillet-Gatty, Sylvia Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethwick Lawrence, reflect the local and international personal contacts which were essential to the widening of socialist feminist activism in Ireland. Broader recent

biographical sources have also been integrated with the archival sources in the study, they provide a deep analysis of sources and additional personal texts for Sheehy Skeffington, Markievicz, Gore-Booth, and Molony.

Letters

Sheehy Skeffington's papers (1877-1946) are the most significant collection of material, both in terms of the sheer volume and the breadth of the political activities and contacts that they represent. Letters are a redolent form of self-expression, of beliefs, thoughts and feelings. Letters provide an audience and therefore they enhance the audibility of Irish socialist women's voices. The correspondence is also a veritable 'who's who' of Irish and international radicalism, testifying to the close personal and political connections between socialist feminists, and to wider circles of socialist women. The significance of both Dublin and international feminist communities is a key insight from Sheehy Skeffington's papers, suggesting that they found it easier to advance a gender politics within the left through local politics and internationalism, rather than at a national level dominated by the nationalist movement in Ireland. Details of local socialist feminist organising, particularly around suffrage, emerge through letters from Grace Neal, Duggan, Carney, Molony (IWCS), Harrison, Connolly O'Brien, Jacob, Andrée Sheehy Skeffington, John Brennan (Sidney Czira) and Markievicz. Sheehy Skeffington's international address book boasted contacts with some of most prominent socialist feminists of the day: Gore-Booth and Roper (Lancashire & Chesire Women Textile and other Workers Representation Committee), Lynch (ELFS), Pankhurst (ELFS), Ellen B. Wilkinson, Pethwick Lawrence, Ethel Snowden, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Ethel Mannin, Emma Goldman, Marion Mitchell, and Gillet-Gatty.

Markievicz's letters to her sister Gore-Booth reflect their close familial and political bonds. The letters were written whilst Markievicz was imprisoned on various occasions between 1917-1926 (CM, MS 21,816, Letters to Gore-Booth mainly from Markievicz) and published in a collection by Roper in 1934. Whilst many of her political papers were lost because of the frequent raids on her home and going on the

run, Markievicz had carefully kept all of sister's letters. They were, however, burnt in a fit of jealously by her daughter Maeve who discovered them after her mother's death (Arrington, 2016: 259). The letters reference Gore-Booth's influence on Markievicz in terms of her trade union activism. According to Tiernan, Gore-Booth was a 'noteworthy' trade unionist in Manchester, where she had moved to be with her life-partner, the trade unionist Roper. (Tiernan, 2016: 188). Gore-Booth worked amongst many Irish female emigrants in Manchester, and she ran successful campaigns to secure better conditions for women in precarious occupations, such has pit-brow girls and barmaids. She invited Markievicz to work with her on these campaigns, and Tiernan claims Markievicz would apply these insights to her activism in Ireland. In 1896, Gore-Booth and Markievicz formed the Sligo branch of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association (Tiernan, 2016: 188). The letters should be seen in the context of her feminist and socialist-oriented activism in this period. Markievicz was a member of the more radical nationalist organisations, Inghinidhe na hÉireann and the ICA, and was subsequently made Cumann na mBan President whilst imprisoned during 1916. She was the only woman to be elected as a Sinn Féin MP in the 1918 election (although she never took her seat in Westminster). Markievicz continued to use her influence to ensure the newly established Irish Free State formalised gender equality and extended voting rights to all citizens, regardless of sex (Tiernan, 2016: 191).

During this period, she returned to signing herself as 'Constance de Markievicz, I.C.A.' (Arrington, 2016: 190). Markievicz had already been making pro-Bolshevik speeches in the spring of 1919, when she chaired a speaker meeting for Sylvia Pankhurst in May 1919. Pankhurst had formed the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF) in the wake of her split from the WSPU. Pankhurst urged the Irish to consider a Soviet system of workers' councils as an alternative to the Dáil Eireann. Although Markievicz had discussed the adoption of a soviet model for Irish government, she was loyal to the idea of the Dáil founded on the will of the people. Similarly, Arrington describes how on her 1923 Scottish speaker tour Markievicz was 'unrestrained in her support for Bolshevism, although on one occasion she qualified this, claiming her 'first duty was to clear the British out of Ireland' (Arrington, 2016:

186, 231). In the Dáil Treaty debates of January 1922, she expressed a commitment to Connolly's vision of a workers' republic, or 'co-operative commonwealth' which encompassed a belief in devolved power: 'applying the principles and structure of the cooperative movement more widely in the Republic' (Arrington, 2016: 213). As national politics became less conducive, Markievicz's later years witnessed a return to the community-based politics and concern for the marginalised of her Inghinidhe na hÉireann years; speaking out against child labour and planning a playground near Charlemount Street to create safe recreational spaces in 1923, and expanding the Republican programme to include care for elderly. In 1925, she worked through Rathmines Urban Council on sanitation and small holding issues for the urban poor (Arrington, 2106: 244, 249).

Diaries

Diaries present an ambiguous form of self-expression. Depending on the motivations of the author, they may provide a private space to chronicle inner lives, or they may be a form of life writing designed to capture participation in the public sphere. In a climate of political hostility to feminism and socialism, they also provided a safe space to explore radical politics, particularly engagement with communism. It is noteworthy that the women whose diaries survived record their trips to Soviet Russia, and Jacob's diary constitutes a separate one hundred-page travel diary within the main text, enhancing the sense of involvement with a clandestine organisation. The writer's motivations may be unclear in this respect. The personal papers contain diaries for Jacob, Despard and Lynn. Jacob and Lynn's are in the form of daily diaries, providing very immediate first-person narratives of events, increasing the volume of Irish socialist women's responses. Despard's entries are less complete, more sporadic, reflecting her active commitment and prominence within a number of movements. Her diaries provide the detailed evidence for women's organising and therefore their approaches to negotiating multiple political claims. So diaries are about the voices and ideas of socialist women, but they also document day-today organising and experiences of activism.

Jacob's daily diary (1897-1960) is a particularly valuable source for understanding Irish socialist women experiences of criss-crossing between the multiple left-wing causes to which they were committed (Lane, 2010:9, 21). Jacob came from a Quaker family in Waterford and through her involvement in local suffrage and nationalist politics became acquainted with the women involved in radical Dublin circles, eventually moving to Dublin in late 1919 to pursue her writing career. Refusing to officially join the IWFL because she objected to demanding a vote from an English parliament, Jacob situated herself within the various campaigns of the Irish Cultural Revival, but always maintained a feminist perspective, insisting that feminism and nationalism were not necessarily counter-posed. A committed pacifist, whilst supporting militant republicanism, Jacob involved herself in the Women's International League (WIL), the WPDL and Sinn Féin in the revolutionary period. During the 1920s and 1930s, she participated in cultural communism of the period, such as attending Russian projector show evenings and poster displays, and becoming a member of the WPI, the LAI, and visiting Soviet Russia with the IFOSR in 1930. Jacob worked for the Irish Republican Congress during the mid-1930s. In a hidden inner diary she confides her failed clandestine affair with left republican Frank Ryan. Jacob perceived herself as an outsider within radical circles, but at the same time she provided invaluable support to more prominent figures such as Sheehy Skeffington (Lane, 2010: 224). Jacob's complex and ambiguous situation as a lapsed Quaker and single woman attempting to live independently means that her diary also provides an alternative insight into the backgrounds and lived experience of this unconventional group of women. These were motivating factors in socialist women's radicalisation, their backgrounds set them apart, taught them to think critically and provided them with a sense of self-awareness and an alternative perspective on events happening around. Diaries are therefore significant sources for illuminating feminists' engagement with the different Irish countercultures which spanned the first half of twentieth century.

Despard's diaries (1918-1926) revealed a wealth of information about collaborations between Irish and British socialist feminists in the suffrage campaign and 1913 Lockout through Despard's membership of the British Women's Freedom League

(WFL) and the ILP. Despard was a prominent pacifist and her diaries are also of significance for the way in which they evidence connections between Irish and British socialist women's anti-militarist activism through the Women's Peace Crusade (WPC)/ILP anti-conscription campaigns in 1918 and the Irish WIL/Irish Self-Determination League (ISDL) speaker tours during the War of Independence (1919-1921). As a result of these joint ventures, Despard made a permanent move to Ireland in 1921 and her diaries chart her political journey from Christian pacifist to Irish anti-imperialist. She was a founding member of the WPDL in 1922, and her daily diary entries provide a wealth of organisational details of Irish socialist women's attempts to gender socialist republicanism through the main anti-imperialist groups. The WPI and INUM, formed in 1926 by Roddy Connolly and Despard, who was women's organiser and paid Connolly a monthly wage, was the most significant to socialist women (Lane, 2010: 246). Despard's diary also details her activism with the related communist anti-imperialist groups, the ILDL, LAI, and IFOSR. Despard was amongst seven Irish women who visited Soviet Russia with the IFOSR from 1929-1931. Despard's diaries end in 1926 but the rest of her journey can be followed through correspondence. Evidence was also garnered from letters and socialist songs written by Despard which were particularly evocative of her British 'new life' socialist heritage in the ILP (Hannam & Hunt, 2002: 4).

Lynn's diaries (1916-55) held at the Royal College of Physicians provide a rich volume of material in relation to militant republican feminists. Her diary starts in 1916 with her involvement in the ICA, of which she was the Chief Medical Officer. Lynn founded St Ultan's Children's Hospital in 1919 and went on to pioneer maternal and child health, childcare and public health through the Dublin Corporation, on which she served as a councillor in the 1920s. So, her diary entries are a fascinating insight into how socialist women tried to advance a woman-focused politics in areas of traditional female concern, such as health and education, at a local level. Given these seemingly progressive politics, her diaries also reveal her support for fascism and antisemitism during the Second World War. The other more personal area of her life which her diaries testify to relates to her life partner ffrench-Mullin. Lesbian partnerships are an important dynamic within this group of women, with Molony and

Gore-Booth also finding life partners through their feminist activism.

First-Person Narratives of the 1916 Rising

Lynn's diary also tells us about her friendship with Molony. It could be argued that Molony is the central socialist feminist activist binding together this group of women and advancing feminist connections, and yet her presence in the archives does not always reflect this. Despite this discrepancy, Regan still considers Molony's testimony to the Bureau of Military History (BMH, Witness Statement 391) in May 1950, as 'remarkable, as is the level detail', in even this partial statement of her activities in the period (Regan, 2017: 249). Regan notes the lack of space devoted to the period from June 1917 to 1921, which is ascribed to Molony's fading memory of the period. Of direct relevance to the aims of this study is the existence of an earlier version of the statement eventually submitted to the BMH. Molony removed key sections of the original version relating to Maud Gonne McBride's separation from John McBride, her own theory surrounding Anna Parnell's death, and Molony's illness in 1914. The removal of these details reflects how these events transgressed contemporary social mores, particularly around divorce, domestic violence, suicide, and Molony's own alcoholism and mental health. What is even more interesting is that Molony donated the original version annotated with her handwritten notes to Kilmainham Gaol Museum, ensuring that an unfiltered version of her first-person testimony would survive to counter the gendered constraints of the time in which it was written. This demonstrates considerable awareness of historical processes, the operations of gender, and a realization of the importance of her contribution as a socialist and feminist. Hence, the Kilmainham Gaol Museum statement is referenced in this thesis.

As is to be expected for a document which she used to substantiate her own and other women's role in the 1916 Rising, her involvement in Inghinidhe and the ICA are to the fore in the narrative. There are also references to the IWWU and Irish Workers' Co-operative Society (IWCS) which Molony was asked by Connolly to take over in August 1915 after Delia Larkin, the previous General Secretary of the IWWU, left for

England. Molony also cites the centrality of the WPDL to everything she and other socialist feminists did in the revolutionary period. The narrow timeframe of the investigation means that much of Molony's important socialist activism in the interwar period was not of concern to the BMH investigators because it fell outside their 1921 timeframe. Her involvement with the IFOSR and trip to Soviet Russia with the DTC in 1929, the fact that she was founder member of Saor Éire in 1931 and that agitation around these causes resulted in tension during her long tenure as organising secretary within the IWWU (1915-1941) are all omitted. In the case of the BMH statements, the containment of socialist women's narratives within a pre-Civil War timeframe reflects the broader reluctance to re-open old conflicts of the Civil war period and the activities of those who still actively opposed the Irish government.

Gore-Booth and Lynch both wrote personal accounts of the Rising which were written in the immediate aftermath. Lynch was a paid organiser for the ELFS in London and wrote the London notes for the *Irish Citizen*. Sheehy Skeffington wanted Lynch to set up an Irish branch of the WIL in London. Lynch was known to Pankhurst who recruited her as a free-lance journalist to report for the *Workers Dreadnought* on the Rising. "Scenes from the Rebellion", in *Rebel Ireland* was published by The WSF, and is believed to have been the first eye-witness report recorded following the rebellion (MS 34,931 Thesis: 'The Life & Works of Patricia Lynch' by Anne M Griffin, August 1992, 5, 9,35, 39).

Gore-Booth's speech on her return from Dublin in the aftermath of the Rising provided one of the first accounts of the insurrection to London society. Her speech raised her longstanding anti-militarist concerns from her anti-conscription campaigning in 1914 onwards, but now in the context of British rule in Ireland. She had spent the week in Dublin visiting her sister, Markievicz, imprisoned for her role in the Rising, and helping those families of those who had participated in the Rising and were either imprisoned or had been executed. One such family were the Sheehy Skeffingtons and Gore-Booth used her connections to lobby the Prime Minister for an enquiry into Francis' murder during the Rising. Gore-Booth was a central figure in the campaign to reprieve Roger Casement, and for improvements in prisoners' rights.

In April 1918 she helped with the Irish anti-conscription campaign by providing propaganda articles for the British press. Sheehy Skeffington joined Gore-Booth in March 1919 to organise a meeting in Essex Hall London calling for the release of all Irish prisoners being held in England. This meeting was attended by Despard who was also prominent in English and Irish anti-militarist activism. On Markievicz's subsequent release from Holloway Prison that month, Gore-Booth arranged for Markievicz to meet British trade unionists and socialists to discuss economic matters before her return to Dublin for the reconvening of the Dáil in April 1919 (Tiernan, 2012: 161, 175, 181-182, 185, 212-3, 218).

Political Artefacts

Another means by which Irish socialist women were able to express themselves was through public activism. Their experiments in fusing feminism, socialism and, frequently republicanism, provided a creative means of self-expression. Sheehy Skeffington's personal papers could act as a museum exhibition of the political artefacts of radical Dublin, bringing to life the countercultures of the first half of the twentieth century. They document every facet of organisation; from well-kept membership cards, annotations scrawled on agendas and minutes, hastily scribbled notes to colleagues, draft speeches and lectures, carefully designed fundraising event invitations, worn political posters, dog-eared political pamphlets, rusty badges, underlined manifestos, and half-finished memoirs. This was a politics in progress, of activism as it occurred, of Irish socialist feminism in the making. Through these items socialist women's political development unfolds in a fascinating and up-close manner. These political ephemera can broadly be categorised within three differing contexts: the pre-1916 Rising generation, the revolutionary period, and the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. The early era is dominated by women's organisations which reflects the emergence of a first-wave in feminist activism in Ireland. As a result of her husband Francis' murder during the 1916 Rising, Sheehy Skeffington came to be more actively associated with both anti-militarism and militant republicanism in the revolutionary period, through Sinn Féin and the WPDL, the WIL, and the ISDL. The 1920s and 1930s sees an expansion of women's entry into socialist republican

organisations under the auspices of an anti-imperialist alliance between the left of the IRA and communist-front organisations. Sheehy Skeffington's papers associate her with The Workers' Party of Ireland (WPI), the INUM, the ILDL, the League against Imperialism (LAI), the IFOSR, and the IFSRWAC. Sheehy Skeffington visited Russia in 1930.

Humphreys' agitation for a 'social policy' within Cuman na nBan in the late 1920s and early 1930s is revealed in her papers housed at UCDA. Her activism in Saor Éire (founded 1931), and the Republican Congress of 1934 is also apparent. Her papers mainly contain organisational documents, but her views and attempts to weave together socialism and feminism are apparent in conference notes and the various pamphlet articles she wrote in this time. Connolly O'Brien was another Cumann na nBan member. Her diary and correspondence, which were captured and then held in the BMH at the Cathal Brugha Barracks are useful in evidencing her relationship to the Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI) in 1921, a venture to unite socialists in the ICA with the IRA. She was involved in an attempt to re-constitute the SPI as the CPI. The captured documents also document consulting Larkin on the way forward for socialism in Ireland whilst he was in prison in the United States in 1922. Connolly O'Brien made various further attempts to maintain her father's political legacy; joining her brother Roddy and Despard as executive members of the WPI in 1926, and later participating in the 1934 Republican Congress.

First-Person Narratives and Finding Socialist Women within the Archives

Lane recognizes that even if diaries such as Jacob's were intended as private documents, the act of writing in itself changes events and emphasizes the constructed nature of the diary (Lane, 2010: 7). In *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell famously argued writing is a political act in itself (Orwell, 2013). Given the repressive nature of Irish society towards women in the early twentieth-century, leaving a diary, writing a memoir or autobiography could therefore be considered as a feminist act; women who were able to do so staked a claim to a place in the public sphere of politics. As Hannam and Hunt point out, whilst the existence of an

autobiography or biography does not guarantee recognition of participation in public life, those women who did not write their own life stories or have not been the subject of biography until recently, are overlooked in the historiography (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 34). Sheehy Skeffington was aware of the significance of autobiography to Irish female activists: 'But at least it is up to me to leave a personal record of a life that has been chequered, but which has had moments' (Ward, 2017: 2). In particular, Sheehy Skeffington emphasizes the importance of women's control over their own narratives because the alternative was already manifesting itself in relation to the obscuration of Irish women's participation in radicalism: 'much of the toil and passion of the years will never be told and worst nightmare of all, the successful politicians at home or the patronising visitors from abroad will write us up, distort the facts (and it has already been done)'(Ward, 2017: 2).

However, the difficulties for radical women in writing their own versions of their political lives were considerable and are articulated in Sheehy Skeffington's unpublished memoirs. She refers to how her activism 'kept me from it' [writing her autobiography], to the extent that Peadar O'Donnell considered her to be more of an activist than a writer. Sheehy Skeffington also acknowledged that radicalism and the attention this garnered from the authorities inevitably resulted in 'gaps that the raids (military – British and our two home governments) have made,' in historical papers. She also feared that the memories of their radicalism that had survived would be subsumed by the passage of time: 'dusty, overcrowded with the junk of the years'. Yet tellingly the most pressing obstacle to writing her memoirs derived from her economically precarious position as a widowed single mother and political dissident: 'the eternal job, the daily bread that doesn't come by praying for it' (Ward, 2017: 2).

This is especially pertinent to women from working-class backgrounds, like Molony, whose contribution went unnoticed 'because she never seemed to seek publicity and was generally happy to work in the background, little has been recorded about her' (Maura Breslin in Regan, 2017: 26). A recent account of the Abbey Rebels of 1916 substantially includes Molony, but repeats Breslin's assumption: 'A committed agitator and an effective public speaker, Helena became a prominent activist, although

she tended to play second fiddle to more dominant mentors' (McGarry, 2015: 66). Regan's biography provides first-person testimony of Molony's mentoring role and influence over leading activists at the time, Lynn and Markievicz (Regan, 2017: 71-72). Women like Molony were faced with the double demands of earning a living and commitment to their activism. McGarry records conflict with the Abbey Theatre manager, because Molony took advantage of the lengthy break between scenes in William Boyle's play *The Mineral Workers*, to address a strike meeting at Liberty Hall (McGarry, 2015: 78). Women in Molony's position simply did not have the time or resources to collect personal papers. This is underscored by Regan's account of how she happened upon some of Molony's personal papers:

> In the early 1980s, Hugh O'Connor, a local historian, was walking near his home in Palmerston when he spotted a bulging folder, stamped with the insignia of 'International Labour Organisation', in a pile of rubbish (Regan, 2017: 25).

Amongst the refuse were biographical items of historical value to substantiating her socialism, including a Christmas Card from Gonne McBride, articles about Connolly and a women's clothing co-operative, and also illustrate the construction of Molony's varied political identities.

Molony's discarded papers do not appear as a collection of personal papers in archival catalogues. How to find socialist women and unearthing sources detailing their political lives within the archives was a major challenge. The organisation of archives both shape and reflect the established historical discourse, with its implicit bias towards nationalism or liberal feminism in Ireland. Pašeta has discussed this issue in relation to the BMH sources for example, which she argues reflect the mores of the period in which they were produced. She views socialism and feminism as 'the chief casualties of the projection of contemporary values on historical reconstruction found in the witness statements' (Pašeta, 2013: 14). Arrington has also noted how archives are structured in a gendered and conservative manner, whereby women's activities, socialist, trade unionist, and Republican documents are 'marginalized'. She

particularly draws attention to the underrepresentation and inaccessibility of the radical press (Arrington, 2016: 276). Descriptive catalogues had to be approached with a critical eye to discern the most likely location of items pertaining to socialist activism. Biographical material provides first-person narratives, such as correspondence or diaries, and these items can be used to circumvent bias in the archives. Correspondence allows the researcher to follow socialist feminists' 'intellectual trails', as Rowbotham refers to them, the spread of feminist and radical ideas through people (Rowbotham, 2010: 31-32). Hence, extensive use was made of correspondence between like-minded individuals, files pertaining to the types of issues which resonate with left-wing feminists, or files relating to groups in which these socialist women could be found together.

A distinction is made in this thesis between the more immediate first-person sources, letters, diaries, or political ephemera produced in the moment by activists - and memoir or life stories written at a later date. For this reason, the BMH testimonies need to be approached with care, not just because of the context within which they were produced, but as Foster argues, the memories of the revolutionary generation 'are not always the most reliable guide', as with the passing of time, they can reflect disillusionment or entrenched conviction (Foster, 2014: xxii). Whilst this study draws on Molony's original version of her BMH testimony deposited to the Kilmainham Gaol Museum because it contains her original, unedited version, on the whole this thesis relies more heavily on correspondence and diaries of Irish socialist women.

Everyday Interactions and 'Real Time' Sources

Cullen and Luddy's (2001) collection of individual biographies of radical Irish feminists uses individual biographies to stimulate debate about what connected these women, and suggests the significance of radicalism to these interactions. This thesis builds on Cullen and Luddy's work by examining the women's political life histories to generate key themes common to their politics. It is not a traditional biography in that it does not follow a life history narrative, but rather draws on common activist moments and insights from across these women's political lives. There has been a

new focus amongst historians on the multiplicity of interconnections running through periods of radical change in Irish history. This intersectional approach is apparent in recent biographies of Jacob, Milligan, Lynn, Molony and Gore-Booth; all have highlighted the complexity of radical Irish women's lives and their interactions with Irish socialism as an integral element within this (Lane, 2010, Morris, 2012, O'Haortigan, 2006, Regan, 2017, Tiernan, 2012).

The political journeys of Irish socialist women provide a focus on connection, rather than the division between suffragettes and nationalist women which has characterised Irish feminism within the historiography. In agreement with Pašeta (2013; 5), Lane's study of Jacob finds a focus on 'connection, rather than disconnection' in Jacob's daily diary of political life:

> Moving in the same small circles, female activists and women involved in the nationalist campaign were forced to establish a *modus vivendi*; the necessities of day-to-day interaction worked in many instances to transcend or shelve dissension (Lane, 2010: 26).

Of particular relevance to this thesis, Lane argues that the interconnections so crucial to illuminating Irish socialist women have been occluded because of the types of sources selected by researchers of Irish feminist history (see Cullen Owens, 1984, for example). The nature of these sources have sustained attention on the political division amongst Irish suffragettes: 'Attention has focused on polemical and journalistic speeches or retrospective autobiographical accounts, rather than on the more immediate narratives of which Jacob's diary offers an example' (Lane, 2010: 27).

Biographical materials provide the first-hand accounts of Irish socialist women that evidence the various strategies Irish socialist women employed in negotiating their involvement in multiple causes. These negotiations were resolved in the documents of women's day-to-day political organising: diaries, letters, notes and drafts of speeches and articles. These materials evidence the nitty-gritty, not so glamorous,

fundamental detail of women's activism.

In *At Home in the Revolution,* McDiarmid is interested in Irish women 'negotiating small obstacles associated with gender' in their attempts to participate in the 1916 Rising. As Lane suggests in relation to Jacob's day-to-day political life, McDiarmid sees social change as happening 'in actual encounters in the field', rather than in political discussion contained in newspapers and memoir. These moments are often considered 'trivial' by historians using more traditional approaches and examining sources such as official manifestoes or legislation. Instead, McDiarmid foregrounds women's narratives 'written in real time as diaries and letters or recorded later in memoirs and witness statements'. These biographical materials focus on moments which echo the domestic sphere or traditionally female interests, such as cooking with bayonets, or soothing a female prostitute (McDiarmid, 2015: 4-5, 8). McDiarmid's domestic view of the 1916 Rising interrogates the ways in which women have used their association with traditionally female roles to orchestrate their entry into public life. Pašeta highlights the importance 'domestic' discourses amongst Irish feminists, who influenced by the idea of 'equality of difference', used the argument of women's distinctive qualities to justify their participation in public life (Pašeta, 2013: 9).

The types of sources primarily consulted in this document reflect this feminised approach to politics, an almost alternative form of activism. Sheehy Skeffington's collection includes a treasure trove of socialist women's political ephemera; invites to suffrage 'at homes' and meetings, books auctions raising funds for the campaign to release Frank Ryan, sit alongside handbills, agendas and minutes, badges and posters. The more feminised forms of political activism intermingle with the more conventional public face of activism. Above all, there are reams and reams of correspondence, the evidence of the convergence between personal and political relationships between local and international socialist feminist contacts. Whilst socialist women found it harder to find political space at a national level, the light these letters shed on local activism is significant to recovering socialist feminism in Ireland. So, for instance, the correspondence regarding Harrison, councillor on Dublin Corporation, in Sheehy Skeffington's papers is therefore of interest (see for example,

HSSP, MS33,604, 12 January 1915, TS letter IWRL, from HS Chevenix, IWRL to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington re. Miss Harrison's election). Internationalism also provided an alternative political sphere for socialist women. Many of the letters refer to personal contact at international events or through activism, and they became a means to complement and reinforce these personal bonds (Rowbotham, 2010: 31-32). This was a politics which drew on the personal and everyday experiences of socialist women in Ireland, such as Jacob, Lynn and Despard, which have been buried in their largely unexamined personal diaries. In particular, for feminists the interplay of the personal and private is reflected in the ways in which personal lives and public activism were interlinked.

Feminist Communities and the Representativeness of Radical Women

As has been discussed in relation to the historiography, there is a persistent assumption regarding the elitism of Irish socialist feminists, which questions the representativeness of this group. Liz Stanley claims that a feminist focus upon the 'obscure' as opposed to 'the circle of the great and famous, a largely self-perpetuating elite' has greater historical significance (Stanley, 1995: 252-3). Outside of Markievicz and Sheehy Skeffington, many of the other women featured in this study have remained relatively obscure, with biographical studies only emerging in the last ten years for Molony (Regan, 2017), Milligan, (Morris, 2012), Gore-Booth, (Tiernan, 2012), Jacob (Lane, 2010), Lynn (O'Haortigan, 2006). Although these publicly political women could not claim to be wholly representative of women of the period, Barbara Caine claims perspectives on the lives of women outside of leadership elites can be applied to the broader situation of women and that feminist biography uses a collective lens to bring attention to these women (Caine, 1994: 251-252).

Through the core group of the four women who have very rich collections of personal papers, we can trace links to the other women in the case study, and to identify wider circles of socialist women from their letters, diaries and memoirs. So, this thesis is not confined to the initial ten women investigated, but draws in more socialist feminists from their ever increasing networks. For example, Sheehy Skeffington's

correspondence highlights the roles of Harrison, a social activist, non-militant suffragist, and independent feminist member of Dublin Corporation, who spearheaded the adoption of school meals campaign by the Corporation (Pašeta, 2013: 212). Another Sheehy Skeffington correspondent, Gillet-Gatty, was the Irish representative for the International Committee for Spanish Refugees, and an important link to international anti-fascist activism. There are friends, lovers and political allies who figure prominently in the original ten women's papers. It is impossible to read Lynn's diaries without realizing the extent to which she and her life partner fFrench-Mullin were comrades in arms, meeting whilst volunteering at the 1913 Lockout soup kitchen and participating in the 1916 Rising alongside each other in the ICA (Pašeta, 2013: 100). Likewise, Gore-Booth was the inspiration and 'greatest influence' on her sister Markievicz (Tiernan, 2016: 194). In turn, it was Roper, Gore-Booth's lover, who was instrumental in recruiting both Markievicz and Gore-Booth to the cause of the working women's suffrage campaign and socialism (Arrington, 2016: 11, 50). The huge range in Irish socialist women's interactions with different radical ideas and causes extends to their influential political friendships and networks.

These networks of radical women could constitute feminist communities which, according to Jacob's biographer, Lane 'offered support networks and friendships independent of political persuasion' (Lane, 2010: 28). Stanley has highlighted how these networks reflect the establishment of feminist communities in her case study of Emily Wilding Davidson. Stanley considers Wilding Davidson's multiple political identities including feminism, socialism, animal rights, vegetarianism, pacifism, and anti-imperialism, to be:

> …a feminism of action in the public sphere and, overarching everything else, one expressed through a growing and widespread women's community embedded in a myriad of local groups, organizations and friendship networks (Stanley, 1995: 221).

This description of Wilding Davidson's diverse feminist network is remarkably similar to the situation in Ireland. Her 'feminism of action in the public sphere' was

rooted in the community and local level, and its complex connections to wider political change suggests its broader relevance to the majority of women who were neither active in public life nor politicised. Lane emphasizes the community based activism of Irish radical women, and cites how Jacob's 'diary testifies to the manner in which female activists were centrally local within the revival ethos of the early twentieth century' (Lane, 2010: 28).

Lane also notes how Jacob's diary reveals how these networks provided a safe, tolerant and cohesive space, 'how the female activists of Jacob's circle were able to express divergent viewpoints and still maintain and negotiate relationships within a female grouping' (Lane, 2010:28). So feminist biography which reveals these circles of feminists can reveal the complexity and diversity of feminism (Caine, 1994: 258).

Exploring Unconventional Backgrounds Through Biography

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, there have been many assumptions made in the historiography as to the class identities of Irish socialist women, particularly those who were involved in groups such as the ICA, which involved working-class women and so-called middle-class politicised women. Biography can be used to challenge the fixed categorisation of Irish socialist women according to their class backgrounds which appear within the existing literature. Pašeta persuasively argues that there was diversity and fluidity in the class backgrounds of the so-called politicised leadership of the ICA, but 'what they did have in common and what set them apart not only from the other women in the ICA but in Irish society more generally was that they lived deeply unconventional lives' (Pašeta, 2013; 164). This unconventional characteristic can also be applied to other aspects of their circumstances: their participation as women in public life, their religion, and their Irish identities. Irish socialist women's alternative backgrounds facilitated their entry into the countercultures which flourished at various points across first half of twentieth-century Ireland. These radical circles were a melting pot of people, whose diverse and fluid backgrounds sustained the multiple and overlapping political identities required to transcend the tensions between class, gender and nation.

In discussing assumptions within the historiography made about the class backgrounds of British socialist women, Hannam and Hunt argue that it is 'misleading to differentiate them on the basis of their class position using broad categories of middle and working class' (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 35). Pašeta claims that whilst the politicised republican women in the ICA could not be described as working class, their collective higher social status has been 'overstated'. In relation to the socialist women in this study Markievicz, Gore-Booth and Despard could all draw on family money. The money may have provided a financial basis for their activism and their aristocratic eccentricities made their social transgressions more socially acceptable (Pašeta, 2013: 163-164). Molony's testimony of Markievicz's first Inghinidhe meeting provides an insight into the types of class transgressions which took place amongst this group of women:

> This meeting of the Inghinidhe would be at 8 o'clock, and, having made her bow at the Castle, she would come down to the meeting. She often afterwards said; "Oh I love the Inghinidhe, because it is the only place in Erin where I am not treated as a Countess…" She also found what she had been seeking for a number of years, a real revolutionary spirit (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 7).

Tiernan describes Gore-Booth's connection with Roper, whose family background was working class, and inspired Gore-Booth to reject her life of privilege at Lissadell House in Sligo and move to the poor industrial quarters of Manchester. The move represented a shift in social status: 'This move represented a mammoth decision and would certainly have caused deep concerns within the Gore-Booth family, crossing culture and class boundaries at a time when society frowned upon such interactions' (Tiernan, 2012: 47).

Pašeta claims Markievicz was 'anything but careful with her family money' (Pašeta, 2013: 163-164). She lived 'lavishly' whilst studying in London at the Slade School of Art, at the same time living in close proximity to the poor and working class.

Arrington suggests that 'the urban environment awakened her to the extreme economic disparity that had been masked by the Gore-Booths' patronage of their tenants in Sligo'. The Gore-Booths were unconventional and progressive Anglo-Irish landlords, and they had established the Drumcliffe Creamery Cooperative Agricultural and Dairy Society in 1895. Arrington attributes this exposure to class differences as her initial politicisation and entry into London's non-Marxist socialist circles, where the cooperative economics proposed would have already been familiar to Markievicz (Arrington, 2016; 3). Markievicz died on 14 July 1927, probably unnecessarily and prematurely, of complications from appendicitis. She insisted on being admitted to the public ward of Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital (Tiernan, 2012; 256).

Despard financially supported many of the causes to which she also gave her time. In 1926 alone she transferred money for the Jam Factory employing ex-prisoners, payed monthly instalments to Roddy Connolly for organising WPI, and donated £20 for a printing press for WPI (CDD, D2479/1/9 18 March, 9 April, 6 October 1926). However, her radical lifestyle eventually left her financially vulnerable. She confided in Sheehy Skeffington how Gonne McBride and her family had allegedly taken advantage of her situation after her forced exile to Belfast:

> Madam McBride is now in full possession of Roebuck House and grounds. She has bought a fine property at half its value. My last months there were not happy at all and I want never to see it again. It was my own fault. I trusted too much (Letter from Despard to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP MS33,607/2, 2 February 1934).

The fluidity and precariousness of the economic situation of this group of women further complicates the relationship between class and feminism. Radicalism also set this group of women apart and contributed to their social and economic marginalisation, particularly in periods of social conservativism. In particular, the influence of radicalism interrogates in more detail the middle-class women's lives in this study, which is important to consider because as Hannam and Hunt suggest, the term 'middle-class' has been used 'very loosely' in existing literature. For instance,

this label could refer to family background or to occupation, the latter of which they consider to could apply to quite different economic situations (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 25). Hannam and Hunt make the point that the single largest occupation group amongst British socialist women was schoolteacher, and they were often viewed as middle class. Yet some schoolteachers, like Sheehy Skeffington, were able to avail of a university education or attend a training college, whilst others had to train through the pupil teacher system or learn on the job, like Lynch.

Pašeta makes further distinctions within the category middle class. She refers to Lynn, ffrench-Mullin and Gifford as having been raised in 'very comfortable professional families' for instance, whilst Molony, Carney and Marie Perolz, were from 'lower middle class, bordering on working class in some cases' (Pašeta, 2013; 163). Pašeta describes Perolz as living 'a hand-to-mouth existence', prioritising unpaid nationalist and socialist activism. Both Carney and Molony's early lives were marked by family breakdown and dysfunction. Carney lived with her mother who owned a sweet shop on the Falls Road in Belfast after the marriage had broken down (Pašeta; 2013, 164). Molony appears to have had a particularly unhappy childhood. Her parents were grocers, but her parents died young and she was left in the care of a stepmother who was a drunk. Maire Cromerford also suggested Molony's father was a drunk and gave her drink as a baby. Molony and her brother, Frank, left home in 1899, when she was 16 and he was 21 respectively, and shared a home until he emigrated with his wife to America in 1910 (Regan, 2017; 36). When Molony's small family bequest ran out, she found herself in an increasingly precarious situation, reliant upon her position at the IWWU for income. Regan suggests that the conservative middle-class leadership of the IWWU made several attempts to force Molony's resignation because of her association with socialist republicanism, eventually forcing her into early retirement in October 1941 (Regan, 2017: 228). Due to a change in union rules prior to her departure, she was not entitled to a pension despite working for the IWWU for over 25 years. Reliant on a small disability allowance, she was forced to apply for raises, a limited Military Services Pension (for pension purposes she was awarded four years for Easter week and 261 days out of 358 for the following year; her claim for the years up to 1923 was denied). Hence,

she was reduced to borrowing money from friends. When she died in 1967, she had a little more than £91 in savings; her funeral costs amounted to just over £82 (Regan in Cullen & Luddy, 2001: 166, Regan, 2017; 219, 238, 244).

To these women identified by Pašeta as being from lower middle-class and working-class backgrounds, we can also add Jacob, Connolly-O'Brien, Humphreys, Lynch, and Sheehy Skeffington. These women's precarious economic position meant they had to seek some form of paid work. Although activism could leave socialist women in a financially vulnerable position, it also provided opportunities. When Sheehy Skeffington lost her position as a teacher because of her militant suffrage activism in 1912, she became a journalist, mainly writing for the radical press in the aftermath of her husband's murder during the Rising (Pašeta, 2013: 217). Her allies in the interwar period were radical left-wing republicans, Frank Ryan and Peadar O'Donnell, and when they were imprisoned she edited their journals (Tiernan, 2016: 231).

The situation is more nuanced as Sheehy Skeffington relied upon less comfortably-off women, such as Jacob, to help domestically and facilitate her own activism. It is notable that Jacob and Despard were also writers in the niche field of suffrage fiction (Lane, 2010: 77, 223-224). Lynch's separatist and militant nationalist family background and determination to be a writer set in train her journey as a radical woman and eventual entry into Dublin's radical circles of the early 1920s. In a November 1946 interview, she acknowledged the part her unconventional family background played in her political journey: "I was bought up to think that the best thing I could ever do would be to die for Ireland, and was simply crazy to do something for 'the cause'". Ann Griffin traces Lynch's career as a noted children's author through her late teens and early twenties in London, where she worked for the *Christian Commonwealth,* before encountering Pankhurst and becoming involved with the suffragette movement. Lynch was a paid organiser for Pankhurst's WSF; her business card in her personal papers describes her as 'organiser for the Worker's Suffrage Federation' (PLP, MS 40,334/2). Griffin notes the radical links Lynch made to socialist women whilst in Dublin: '…she was told to find a Miss Harrison who lived in Baggot Street, and who would give her instructions'. On her return to Dublin

in 1922, she re-located to Glasnevin with her husband R.M. Fox the socialist and writer, and moved in literary and radical circles amongst Sean O'Casey, Peadar O'Donnell, Liam O'Flaherty, A.E, Erskine Childers (MS 34,931 Thesis: 'The Life & Works of Patricia Lynch' by Anne M Griffin, August 1992, 5, 9,35, 39). Trade unions also provided a career, particularly for the working-class women. Connolly O'Brien was an official in the ITGWU, and Molony of course was a founding member of the IWWU.

What is notable is how Molony's trade union career intersected with her parallel career as a professional actress with the Abbey Theatre between 1911 and 1915. Regan discusses how Molony borrowed theatrical techniques from her dramatic work, employing disguise and street theatre during the 1913 Lockout in particular, but also later during the 1916 Rising and in WPDL public demonstrations (Regan, 2017; 102-103). This radical use of drama as a means of synthesising nationalist, feminist and socialist concerns has been discussed in relation to Milligan's use of theatre at a community level during the Rising (Morris, 2012). So the crossover between careers in radicalism and the artistic avant-garde is of particular note in these women's lives (Arrington, 2016: x).

An important issue was accommodation for single women who could not afford to live alone. Jacob lived in shared accommodation with friends, but her diaries document the constraints this placed on a single woman in this period, particularly in relation to sexual freedom (Lane, 2010: 181). As a single female, it was often impossible socially and economically to live independently, as the tragic later life of Milligan illustrates. As a single woman, it was expected that Milligan would live with and care for her alcoholic brother and his vulnerable dependents, to the extent that she gave up writing post-1919, effectively becoming '…sort of interned prisoner for nineteen years' (Morris, 2012: 61). In contrast to Milligan's isolation, Gore-Booth, Lynn, Despard and Molony were all sustained by female companions, and indeed a significant dynamic within this group as a whole is the cross-over between close working relationships and personal friendships. In particular, Molony was supported through mental health and alcohol addiction by her friends. Lynn nursed her and gave her somewhere to live (Regan, 2017: 242).

A second assumption made about Irish socialist women in the historiography, that they were Protestant, is related to interpretations of their social status and involvement in the suffrage movement. Whilst most of the women were from Protestant families (Jacob, Lynn, Gore-Booth, Markievicz and Despard), as Pašeta has outlined in terms of their class identities, the most significant feature is the unconventional nature of their religious backgrounds (Pašeta, 2013; 99-100). Their unorthodox religious beliefs allowed them to identify with a secular republicanism. The only conventionally practicing member was Lynn, who was a member of the Church of Ireland. Although not religious, Jacob's politics were influenced by Quaker culture, which provided a basis for countercultural beliefs (Lane, 2010; 15, 19). Humphreys was critical of the conservatism of the Catholic hierarchy, Sheehy Skeffington and the Gifford sisters were noted agnostics (Foster, 2014: 36). Jacob described how Molony called herself, 'not a very good Catholic', and Markievicz called herself 'a lapsed Episcopalian' (RJD, MS32, 582 (21), 21 May 1918). A further significant feature of their religious identity was fluidity. Arrington describes Markievicz and Gore-Booth's experiments in the socialist and occultist theosophical circles in the late 1890s. According to Banks, almost ten percent of prominent feminists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century joined the Theosophical Society at some stage (Tiernan, 2012: 234). Gore-Booth and Despard were attracted to the alternative spirituality of the Theosophical Society; a new age esoteric religion which is claimed were 'more amenable to feminist politics' (Tiernan, 2012: 234). Despard and Markievicz both subsequently converted to Catholicism in an attempt to connect with the shared spiritual values held by the majority of Irish republicans (Arrington, 2016: 7, 206-7). In her later life, frustrated with her political marginalisation, Molony emphasised the spiritual aspects to social justice in her work in the IWWU, deploring 'the modern materialistic spirit' (Regan, 2017: 256).

This chapter has examined how biography can be employed to expose connections to radicalism and recover the socialist dynamic to Irish feminism. The selection criteria for including activists in the sample group has been discussed, and a mapping exercise which traces the interconnections between feminists and radical groups outlined. The

availability and value of the various personal papers of the women in the study has been evaluated, and these sources triangulated with broader historical sources to compensate for inbalance in sources for the sample group. Foregrounding women's experiences of activism from first-person narratives is consistent with the feminist approach adopted in this study. These narratives are derived from the biographical sources in the form of letters, diaries, eye-witness/first-person testimony, and political artefacts. The evidence for this group of women's socialist identification has been advanced in relation to biographical sources of interconnections made through activism. It has been argued in this chapter that immediate narratives, such as diaries or letters, can provide an alternative lens through which to view feminism in this period, because they can demonstrate the lived experiences of activists making connections through activism and negotiating tensions in 'real time'. Correspondence situates Irish socialist women within wider local and international socialist feminist communities and these types of biographical materials have been used to challenge concerns with the representativeness of radical women. It has been demonstrated that the common feature to Irish socialist women's backgrounds is there unconventionality and this disrupts any simple correlation between class, religion and politicisation. Rather it suggests a link between women from unconventional backgrounds and their connection with counterculture, which is the subject of the next chapter.

PART II: Gender, Class and Nation, 1900s-1940s: The Socialist Feminist Lens

Chapter Three: Experiments in Fusion - Feminists, Counterculture and Changing the Fabric of Feminism

This chapter explores socialist women's participation in counterculture during the pre-revolutionary period and beyond. It begins with an examination of how women established a place within Irish radicalism through the Irish Cultural Revival, before moving to a discussion around the relationship between unconventional backgrounds and the politicisation of Irish socialist women. Important to a discussion on politicisation are the issues of education and secularism. The remainder of the chapter turns to how socialist women were able to politicise the private sphere through countercultural lifestyles imbued with a diffuse feminist consciousness. Gender roles and sexuality are therefore key areas of enquiry. The conclusion reflects on the ways in which counterculture provided an experimental space for Irish socialist women to try different ways of fusing feminism with socialism and nationalism through radical activism. This chapter considers the implication these experiments in feminist fusion have for defining and understanding Irish feminism through the interaction between the thoughts and activism of Irish socialist women.

Feminists and Counterculture

The 1897 protests against the Royal Visit heralded the dawn of a new century and the rise of a counterculture, in which diverse revolts against the passing century were synergised: the Irish Cultural Revival, militant republicanism and feminism. Molony testified that her imprisonment during the 1897 Inghinidhne na hÉireann protest for throwing stones at a picture of the Royal couple was amongst 'her brightest memories' because she became the first female political prisoner since the days of the Ladies Land League (BMH WS391). Gonne McBride and Connolly's projection of magic lantern images of the famine in the West of Ireland onto Dublin city walls were also a feature of the protest. Their audacious activism was inspired by Milligan's pioneering use of the visual iconography of the Irish Cultural Revival as social

protest. Milligan had trained Inghinidhne na hÉireann in the use of tableaux vivant, agitprop theatre and magic lanterns (Morris, 2012: 276).

The 1897 Royal Visit protest was a microcosm of an alternate community, with its multiplicity of interconnections between radical activists, such as members of Inghinidhne na hÉireann, cultural revivalists like Milligan and socialist republicans such as Connolly. In their edited survey, *European Women on the Left: Socialism, Feminism and the Problems Faced by Political Women, 1880 to the Present,* Jane Slaughter and Robert Kerns discuss the implicitly close relationship between feminism and radicalism:

> women have fought, demonstrated, and served as leaders whenever radical political or social movements emerged in the past centuries of European History (Slaughter and Kerns, 1981: 3).

Ireland was certainly no exception. Sheehy Skeffington was advancing a revolutionary basis to her politics in the context of women's participation in the national movement as early as 1909. In her first writing on the subject in the text for a speech given to the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League (the organisation of the Irish Parliamentary Party or IPP), she argues, 'Sinn Féin is theoretically at any rate, a revolutionary party,' and that for this reason female activists were more attracted to revolutionary, rather than parliamentarian nationalism (Ward, 2017: 51) . In her unpublished memoirs, Sheehy Skeffington discusses the alliance between the SPI and the IWFL, before suggesting how the volunteers and Cumann na mBan, 'and all movements tended to strike in one form or other at the base of the entrenched authority'. She argues these radical alliances resulted in the historic inclusion of the rights of citizenship for 'Irishwomen in the 1916 Proclamation' (Ward, 2017: 13).

Irish feminist organising and feminism within Irish radicalism have not been a significant feature of the historiography pertaining to wider political change in Ireland (Boyce, 2003, English, 1994, Keogh, 1989, Milotte, 1984, Mitchell 1974, McGarry,

1999, O'Connor, 1988, Patterson, 1989, Rumpf, 1977). However, a new wave of biographies have begun to situate Irish feminists at the heart of Irish countercultures (Arrington, 2016, Lane, 2010, Morris, 2012, Regan, 2017, Tiernan, 2012, Ward, 2017). For instance, Lane captures Jacob's early twentieth century activism amongst:

> a circle of women based in Dublin, women committed to suffrage, nationalism and the cultural activities of the Gaelic League, women who imbibed and lived in the exhilarating atmosphere of the turn the century cultural revival (Lane, 2010: 25).

The plurality of Irish counterculture made it attractive to feminists frustrated with the lack of opportunities for women and whose feminist consciousness was already showing signs of a broadening identification with other causes. Radicalism was redolent with the rhetoric of equality, and promised meaningful roles for women from which they were ordinarily excluded in mainstream society (Foster, 2014: 148).

The 'networks of interest' described by Foster can be explored through the relationships between activists (Foster, 2014: 23). We see this fusion dynamic at work in Jacob's more grass-roots activism:

> Jacob's need to give meaning to her life explains in large part her membership of almost every Left-wing, counter-cultural and feminist organisation in Irish society from the early twentieth century to her death (Lane, 2010: 21).

Similarly, Morris' work on Milligan uses 'the radius of her friendship' to trace the 'textured networks of connection' woven between her cultural and political activism, and concludes: 'Their greatest achievement was probably the networks of solidarity that they forged with each other in a colonial landscape that advocated exile, poverty and isolation' (Morris, 2012:16, 285).

So whilst feminists found themselves at the centre of this alternate community, this position simultaneously indicated their alienation from mainstream society, particularly in terms of gender and generational conflict. In sewing together strands from a number of different counter-cultural movements which appealed to their pluralistic identities, feminists often found themselves working at the boundaries of social movements. This was a situation which Milligan, as a formative influence on the Irish Cultural Revival, was particularly acquainted with:

> As a figure working on the boundary of conventional ideas of literature and politics, Milligan placed herself literally at both the centre and the periphery of the Revival... (Morris, 2012: 18).

A recurrent theme in Irish socialist women's activism is solidarity with the marginalised and dispossessed; famine-struck communities of the western seaboard, the starving locked-out workers of 1913, vulnerable women, mothers and children, the unemployed and homeless of the Great Depression, Irish communists and renegade republicans, Soviet Russians, Spanish Republicans and Basques. Described by Milligan's friend Molly Killeen as 'the remnant who stayed outside...', Milligan and other radical women attempted to forge a more inclusive democracy for outsiders (Morris, 2012: 291). The alternate political careers of these radical women underline frustration with their exclusion from the public sphere and centres of power, as well as their simultaneous embracing of what Foster has termed as the 'separate spheres of existence' inhabited by this revolutionary generation (Foster, 2014: 328). This apparent paradox has been described by Morris in relation to Milligan's work as 'a cultural activism connected by solidarity', for example through her poetry which agitated for the freedom of Roger Casement. The shared experience of oppression provided a platform for activists from diverse backgrounds. In particular, the issue of political prisoners resonated with feminists such as Milligan who: 'In writing about and by staging personal, political and cultural states of imprisonment...explored what it was to be "othered" and to have empathy with "the other"' (Morris, 2012: 278).

Certainly, the radicalism of the revolutionary period, of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, provided the kind of fluid environment which was an essential element in the association between left-leaning feminists and European countercultural movements more generally (Slaughter and Kerns, 1981: 5). Fluidity enabled female activists to transcend prescribed gender roles, it brought them a form of freedom; a freedom which they grasped and then garnered both for their own *and* wider ends, such as the cultural revival. So activists such as Milligan were interested in what Morris describes as 'everyday democracy', realising freedom in the cultural, such as dress, consumerism, dance, music and theatre, in order to inspire a change in communal consciousness (Morris, 2012: 284). This had obvious implications for feminism, in the opportunity to change attitudes towards gender roles and sexualities. The link between self-transformation and wider social change lies in a highly radical stance adopted by Irish socialist women like Milligan, who 'assumed democratic freedom in order to prove its existence' (Morris, 2012: 16). In other words, they did not wait for freedom to be given them; they embraced mental freedom and then lived it through an alternative community.

Molony's memories of the significance of her part in the 1897 protest encapsulates a more militant and liberated way of thinking, a profound change in consciousness, which would be necessary to effect change at an ideological level and dismantle the ingrained ideas of separate spheres, colonised mentality and class deference. As Liam de Róiste, a republican contemporary of Molony's, observed in 1923, 'I am changing and things around me change' (Foster, 2014: 6). So, there is this sense that changes happening in individual consciousness, of assuming freedom in the now, anticipated broader upheaval. This was articulated by Molony in her memories of Easter Monday 1916, ‘we felt in a very real sense that we were walking with Ireland into the sun’ (Regan, 2017: 130). Likewise, the magic lantern projections of famine images at the 1897 Royal Visit were subversive and shocking methods of altering consciousness. Molony's testimony is also startling for its *self*-consciousness, aware that her own subversiveness was part of a wider transformation occurring.

This chapter will now explore how left-wing feminists influenced a counterculture at different levels; culturally via the Irish Cultural Revival, at an intellectual level through politicisation, secularism and education, at a social level through sexuality and gender roles.

The Irish Cultural Revival

The Irish Cultural Revival was a key element in this alternate community, deriving its dynamism from 'multiple sources and constituencies'; linguistic, theatrical, literary and co-operative in its pursuit of 'everyday democracy'. A central group were first-wave feminists, who were drawn in large numbers to Irish cultural activism, and developed life-long female alliances through the diverse constituent parts of the revival (Morris, 2012:17, 151, 284). The Gaelic League, Inghinidhne na hÉireann, the Abbey Theatre, and Cumann na mBan and an accompanying wealth of journals and newspapers provided women activists with new opportunities to participate in society on a more equal basis (Lane, 2010: 28-9). Pašeta describes the Gaelic League founded in 1893, 'as a kind of springboard into more radical and open political activity for a number of women for whom it was simply not political enough' (Pašeta, 2013, 24). These more politicised women were more likely to graduate from the League to Inghinidhne na hÉireann, Cumann na mBan, and later Sinn Féin. Socialist women were also more likely to gravitate towards Inghinidhne na hÉireann, and then the ICA, than Cumann na mBan. The two former organisations were more radical in terms of both their republicanism and feminism, but also in their relationship to socialism. Whilst Inghinidhne na hÉireann maintained strong links to the left through its social activism (Pašeta, 2013, 122-127), the ICA was a 'small, leftist faction of the many local volunteering organisations that were provoked by the formation of the Ulster Volunteers, who were opposed to Home Rule' (Arrington, 2016: 102).

However, there was some overlap and movement in these organisations which has a bearing on their attraction to socialist women. Although Cumann na mBan was formed in April 1914, obstensibly defining its role as to 'assist in arming and equipping the volunteers', according to Arrington it was radicalised in terms of

women's participation in more militarist activities by the incorporation of the Inghinidhne na hÉireann by the end of May 1914. Controversy surrounded Markievicz's membership of both Cumann na mBan and the ICA, particularly in the light of Sean O'Casey's demand that she resign from either Cumann na mBan or the ICA, insisting in his view that they had conflicting aims. In what would become a repeated strategy in not only Markievicz's, but also other socialist women's activism, such as Carney who also was involved in both groups, Markievicz insisted on maintaining her membership of both groups (Arrington, 2016: 104). In fact, Markievicz's participation in Cumann na mBan was more fluid, adopting a more peripheral relationship to the executive prior to Rising, before being made President whilst she was imprisoned during 1916; the experience of which brought her closer to the organisation (Arrington, 2013: 199). Markievicz continued to remain attached to a diverse range of groups, alternately assigning herself as 'Constance Markeivicz, I.C.A. or I.R.A.' dependent upon the audience (Arrington, 2013: 166).

Yet despite the appearance of inclusivity, women still experienced exclusion from elements of the cultural revival (the *Northern Patriot* and the 1798 Centenary Committee), which prompted the establishment of autonomous organisations, such as the Celtic Society. For women such as Milligan, whose feminism was 'embedded' within all her cultural revival activism and who aligned her work closely with Irish women's organisations such as Inghinidhne na hÉireann, autonomous women's organisations guaranteed women's place within the revival. Inghinidhne na hÉireann became synonymous with Milligan's innovative agitprop theatre and propelled women to the forefront of nationalist political consciousness (Morris, 2012: 150-152).

From the outset, Irish socialist women identified with the language revival, adopting Gaelic pseudonyms (for instance Molony was known as 'Emer' and Markievicz, 'Maeve'). Jacob was an avid Gaelic Leaguer and consistently attended Irish lessons, and Inghinidhne na hÉireann taught Irish to their members, to poor children in the slums of Dublin, as well as to the Fianna scouts. This was a conscious identification with language as the 'revolutionary weapon' of the cultural revival. Renaming referenced the way in which language was a means of experiencing the democracy of

the republic in everyday life and signifying the centrality of culture to this alternate community as a powerful, politicising force (Morris, 2012: 281-284).

The use of Gaelic names by socialist feminists was a symbolic membership card of this countercultural community, a multi-layered community criss-crossed by feminist networks. One of the key ways in which this community was connected was in a diffusion of Milligan's feminist theatre, not only through Inghinidhne na hÉireann, Delia Larkin's Irish Workers' Dramatic Society and Gore-Booth's theatre group for working women from textile factories in Manchester, but also in the professional careers of Molony in the Abbey Theatre's troupe and Markievicz in the Independent Theatre Company. The association of women with the theatre, in particular the connection between Inghinidhne na hÉireann and the Abbey Theatre, made women integral to nationalist consciousness raising (Foster, 2014: 81). The imaginative space opened up by theatre was used by radical women to invoke the past as a means of visualising a future republic and creating a communal consciousness. It was no coincidence that Inghinidhne na hÉireann's most commonly performed tableau vivant was "Erin Fettered and Erin Free", where an imprisoned woman symbolises national colonisation. According to Morris, the silence of the tableaux was a very visual political act, a cultural platform for women otherwise excluded from public debate. Likewise, the iconic photographs of the women hunger strikers of 1923 posing in a tableau of Anne Devlin and Robert Emmet, was a self-aware and modern visual means of reclaiming public space for women within this 'outlawed' community (Morris, 2012: 265, 273). This appropriation of visual culture was revisited by Irish socialist feminists in the 1930s, when they literally projected alternate visions of a future republic amongst Dublin radicals through their slide shows, talks and poster exhibitions of Soviet Russian culture.

The written word was also a significant feature of how this group of women interacted with the cultural revival. Jacob, Despard, Lynch, and Milligan and were fiction writers, whilst Gore-Booth was a noted poet. Tina O'Toole argues that the Irish aspect of the 'New Woman' question has been occluded and situates New Woman writers such as Jacob and Gore-Booth within radical social movements of their day. In

particular O'Toole suggests that, 'Irish identities in their fiction are used to disrupt the fixed ideological markers of nationality, ethnicity, and class and also to subvert gender and sexual norms' (O'Toole, 2013: 5). Jacob's diaries are full of references to cycling, to smoking (describing an IWFL social as 'a sort of orgy of cigarette-smoking'), modern clothes ('John Brennan' aka Sidney Gifford resembled 'a comic opera actress'), the arty orientalism of Markievicz's bohemian home, all of which operated as a challenge to the gendered norms of the time (Diary entries, RJD, MS 32,582/22, 28 July 1911: 94-97, MS 32,582/36, 14 October 1919: 49).

Friendships amongst Irish feminists and feminists from elsewhere were sustained through the written word; 'letters like newspapers are the key to understanding the Irish Cultural Revival'. With up to eight posts a day, letters were the currency in terms of maintaining networks and sharing ideas (Morris, 2012: 291-3). For example, Lynn records meeting Pankhurst at dinner with Markievicz (she was 'nice & quiet'!), whilst Mitchell, recognises Sheehy Skeffington's prominence amongst British socialist feminists, 'You may have seen inc the report of Mrs Despard's birthday celebration ('Press' of 16th) that your name is among the signatures on the Roll of Homage…' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/1, 6 May 1919; Letter from Marion Mitchell to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, 16 July 1937). As Rowbotham has suggested, personal connections were particularly important to the spread of this new, broadening feminist consciousness, which was as concerned with revolutionising the political sphere as it was with women's everyday lives, including their relationships and living arrangements (Rowbotham, 2010: 32). Pankhurst was keen to introduce Sheehy Skeffington to this new approach to living by providing her with connections to the American feminist settlement house communities, where feminists lived in a communal environment immersed in social reform activism:

> when you are going to America will give you an introduction to Miss Jane Addams at Hull House, Miss Wald at Henry Street settlement, New York, and some other people, suffragists… (Letter from Pankhurst to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/39, 28 July 1916).

What was happening with American feminists can be seen on a more intimate level in Ireland, where independent Irish feminists shared living accommodation. We know that Jacob variously lived with Sheehy Skeffington, Dororthy Macardle and Lucy Kingston. Molony at times stayed with both Markievicz and Lynn, whilst Despard shared her home with Gonne McBride; although this arrangement ended disastrously for Despard with the suggestion that Gonne McBride exploited Despard's vulnerability to acquire her home (Letter from Despard to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP MS33,607/2, 2 February 1934). Jacobs describes the bohemian interiors and communal atmosphere on her stay with Markievicz and Molony (Diary entries, RJD MS32582/22, 28 July 1911: 94-97). The wooden floors that Jacob describes are of particular note. Rowbotham makes much of the significance of the simplification of homes to socialist women associated with Carpenter's 'new life' socialism (Rowbotham, 2016: 2).

Communal arrangements for domestic life and a co-operative approach to consumption were a further dynamic of the cultural revival appropriated by left-wing feminists, synthesising aspects of the cultural revival with class and gender politics. One of the highlights of Inghinidhne na hÉireann's 1901 theatre show was 'the introduction for the first time in the metropolis of a cottage ceilidh scene representing the actual everyday life - the amusements and occupations of the people of the Irish speaking districts' (Morris, 2012: 254). Interestingly this domestic theme was echoed in Jacob's diary of her visit to the Soviet Union in 1931, where she recorded discussions with Russian women about 'queuing for foodstuffs, and concerns relating to marriage arrangements', and her talks on her return from the Soviet Russia gave her impressions of, 'leisure pursuits, palaces of culture, games, theatres, pictures, galleries…' (Jacob cited in Lane, 2010: 242-244). The co-operative movement combined this concern with 'democracy in everyday life' as a means of encouraging a different way of thinking and living, with a spirit of praxis. 'Self-reliance is our only hope' argued Milligan, and this sentiment was expressed politically in a call for a boycott of English products and Irish products marketed to England (Morris, 2012:172-177). The clothing co-operatives had multiple effects; they were microenterprises providing community employment, they bypassed the exploitative

textile industry by directly clothing working families and were also a relief to the burden of domestic labour. This was very much about situating feminism within a working-class community.

Women such as Molony were to the fore in establishing these pioneering experiments in socialist clothing co-operatives from c.1915:

> He [Connolly] invited me down, and asked me would I take charge of the workshop – a co-op: – in Liberty Hall… Connolly asked me: 'Will you come down and be secretary? (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391, 1949: 15).

The chief motivation for the co-operative was to provide vulnerable young women with an income of their own: 'The girls at that time who went into the factories were poor, and had not very much education'. The co-operative clothing workshop and store emerged out of a period of intense crisis and repression during the 1913 Dublin Lockout:

> It had started out of the strike – to give the girls work instead of the dole. They made children's underclothing and shirts. With the subsidence of the strike, it went off a bit, but Connolly said we should keep it on as a permanent undertaking – making shirts for the quay men… (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, 226 NCR, 1949: 15).

What is striking is how Molony continually locates the co-operative as at the heart of a radical community, in addition to providing employment and clothing, 'Above all, it made a port of call for people to come down to see Connolly – Pearse, MacDonagh and those. All came to see Connolly. The premises was in a row of shops. There was a pub at the corner. One was a barber's shop. They were all Liberty Hall property'. No. 31 also facilitated the printing and publishing of the *Workers' Republic* during this period, so that community and politics were now fully integrated. In future times of crisis this community spirit of co-operation which had emanated from the defeat of

the 1913 Lockout could be summoned once again. Here Molony describes how her female colleagues from the co-operative provided the rations to the ICA from Liberty Hall during the 1916 Rising:

> All this preparation of food went on upstairs. Some brought their own rations; some had to be provided with rations. There were large joints cooked, in order to give rations to the men who were short. As a result of the calling off, the rations were there. All the co-operative girls were busy cutting up bread, butter and cooked meat. We allowed two pounds of bread, two pounds of meat for each person. The girls were killed working (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, 391: 36).

The idea of the communal provision of food is only upheld here within the exceptional military circumstances of the 1916 Rising. Whilst Connolly advocated an egalitarian ethos with regard to military activism in the ICA, gender roles with regard to domestic labour were maintained. It is striking that Jacob rather beautifully alludes to the legacy of the Rising in domestic terms, describing the detailed workings of the clothing co-operative on a visit:

> There were 7 girls with 6 sewing machines & a machine for making buttons, & they had a motor working their machines & a frightful noise of course. In the next room they have the table at which all the leaders breakfasted on Easter Monday, now used to cut out shirts on. They had a great concert there on Easter Sunday night (Diary entries, RJD, MS 32,582/30, 21 November 1916: 193-194).

The elegiac images of the last supper are replaced by the productive whirring of the sewing machines. The clothing co-operative indicates how socialist feminists' drew on traditional female roles to reassert women's place within radical circles in the chaotic post-Rising period. Jacob records attempts by Irish socialist women to maintain the co-operative idea: '[we] created a lovely stall…then one suggested we should have a portrait of Connolly, being the Connolly Co-operative Society…'

(Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/30, 7 December 1916: 230). The clothing co-operative continued for some years but did not thrive, and eventually Lynn's diary records her concern about it from 1919 to 1921, attempting to meet with trade union leaders before finally admitting defeat in March of 1921: 'sold shirt factory machines' (Diary entries, KLD, KL/3/1, 7 January, 2 June 1919, 23 March 1921). The clothing co-operative may not have survived the revolutionary period, but socialist feminists' attempts to keep the co-operative alive suggest how important it was as a symbol of a feminist presence at the centre of the labour movement and socialist republican activism.

Thinking Differently: Politicisation, Education and Secularism

We have explored how women established a presence within the cultural revival, through the establishment of feminist communities and co-operative ventures which drew on the domestic to validate their roles in public life. But what about women's motivation for participating in a countercultural space, and how relevant were their unconventional backgrounds to radicalism? Examining the process of politicisation, and how socialist women developed their thoughts regarding education and secularism can answer these enquiries.

Having read of Tolstoy's life, Markievicz argued:

> co-operation is good, but by no means a panacea. The old problem always remains: how to prevent all the money and power etc. getting into the hands of a few, and they establishing themselves as a ruling tyrant class. I am beginning to believe that everything must begin from schools… (Letters from Markievicz to Gore-Booth, 6, 11 December 1920, in Roper (ed), 1934: 256, 259).

As with other aspects of this counterculture, feminists displayed a strong concern with self-transformation and self-awareness in the process of politicisation. In her BMH statement Molony describes the radicalising intent of Inghinidhne na hÉireann and of

her role as Markievicz's political mentor. She testifies that Markievicz's own conversion was prefaced by research, 'she read, read' (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 66). Jacob ended each year of her diary with a summation of political books which had influenced her. So, for 1913, the year of the Dublin Lockout, Connolly's *Labour in Irish History* was listed amongst her top ten books, whilst the inclusion in her 1926 list of Bertrand Russell's *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* reflected an in interest in Bolshevism and Soviet Russia (Diary entries, RJD, MS32, 582/26, December 1913: 32, MS 32,582/55, December 1926: 30). Yet, as Markievicz alludes to above, they were also aware of the need to disseminate these radical ideas and provoke a shift in consciousness, and hence education was a key theme in their thinking. Markievicz's reference to Tolstoy was insightful and displayed a libertarian socialist turn in her thinking. Tolstoy had been immersed in progressive educational experiments and his teaching has been described as 'highly libertarian in character', a free collaboration between student and teacher based on methods advocated by Godwin (Woodcock, 2004: 189). Irish socialist women's educational work is of consequence in how it relates to libertarian socialist ideas. American anarchist-feminist Emma Goldman engaged herself with the Modern School Movement as a means of reconstructing society through education and example. The anarchist educational philosophy was to encourage people to think and act for themselves, to reject conventional notions of behaviour and allowing the fullest expression of individuality (Marshall, 2008: 405, 651). It is no coincidence then that we find Markievicz commenting in December 1920, 'I have always used my influence towards decentralisation, and to make people think and act independently' (Roper (ed), 1934: 256).

Irish socialist feminists' interest in education can be traced to the turn of the century. Molony details Inghinidhe na hÉireann's community provision of education to Dublin's impoverished children living in the slums and Markievicz's work with the Fianna Éireann, the boy's youth movement she set up in 1909. It is notable that Molony places her defence of Markievicz under the heading 'Madame Markievicz and Fianna Éireann'. The prominence of Markievicz's youth and educational work within Molony's testimony indicates the symbolic importance education had for Irish

socialist feminists and delineates the distinctly libertarian socialist character of their thinking in this area. The Inghinidhe started classes for impoverished Dublin children and referring to Markievicz's new Fianna initiative, Molony describes the Inghinidhe's main focus as education: 'As far as the Inghinidhe were concerned…their job was teaching classes'. Firstly, Molony describes how Markievicz's motivation for founding the Fianna was located in her commitment to ensure that boys' educational provision was catered for:

> The Inghinidhe had children's classes. We had abandoned the boys' classes. We found them too hard to manage. We were hard pressed to cope with everything, and we let the boys' classes go. That was the reason that Madame formed a special movement for young boys.

The Fianna was meant to be a republican alternative to Baden Powell's Boy Scouts. In this militaristic setting we see the contradictory methods of the Inghinidhe: 'The Inghinidhe always taught history. They always had that idea of physical force'. It was a very Irish republican slant on 'progressive' education. Alongside military training were camps at Markievicz's country cottage, which she personally attended and instructed the boys herself (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 63-72).

Irish socialist feminists' ideas regarding education are noteworthy because they modelled educational provision which was outside of the control of the Catholic Church and was based in the community. At an IWFL meeting in 1919 Jacob read George Bernard Shaw's polemic on parenting and children. Shaw was also critical of formal, institutionalised education. Despite Jacob's intention of stimulating debate on parenting, she records the strong interest in alternative educational models amongst Irish feminists, 'but of course they did not discuss the things I wanted them to, but went off on education...' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/36, 27 October 1919: 71). By the late 1930s Jacob was piecing together the importance of education to questioning the cultural power of the church:

> I'm reading a book belonging to Prionnsias [Frank Ryan] - 'the ruin of education in Ireland' by F.H. Donnell, 1902 – the most awful indictment of C.[Catholic] bishops for their general attitude & doings toward education, by a thoroughly Catholic layman – oh its grand. I'm sure you have read it. Its full of revelations to me (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/27, 26 November 1937).

Secularism was a feature of Irish radicalism and feminists were quick to recognise the implications of church power for women's social position. Sheehy Skeffington noted in her skeleton plan for her memoirs, 'Chapter II, subheadings, 'Political activities – The seething pot of Irish life – various cultural movements – anti-clericalism' (Sheehy Skeffington, draft memoirs, HSS MS 33,618). Markievicz was also prescient in her understanding of the nature of cultural authority. In a letter to her sister, Gore-Booth, after the establishment of the Free State she argues:

> For every church and every sect is but an organisation of thoughtless and well-meaning people trained in thought and controlled by juntas of priests and clergy and used to do all the things that Christ would have most disliked (Letter from Markievicz to Gore-Booth, EGB, MS 21,816, 1923).

Jacob captures this more unconventional spirituality during the Revival: 'He is really interested in talismans & such too, and cannot accept the prohibition of free thinking by the Catholic Church, which horrifies his friends' (Diary entry, RJD MS 32,582/30, 11 December 1916). Unsurprisingly the personal papers of Irish socialist feminists reflect a healthy cynicism with regard to organised religion, scattered with references to agnosticism, atheism and paganism. Irish socialist feminists' departure from the mainstream Catholic consensus was summarised by Jacob in relation to one of her initial meetings with Molony ('Miss M'):

> I spent the morning talking to Miss M who is a rock of sense in nearly every direction, and did not go to mass at all, only for a stroll around the town. She

> says she is not a very good Catholic, & when I told her about Madeline [ffrench-Mullin] going to early mass on weekdays and not wanting to travel on the Wednesday before Easter, her comment was "I didn't think she was as bad as that". It seems Constance Markievicz (with whom she lives) is a lax Episcopalian, more of a pagan than anything else (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32582/21, 21 May 1911).

A discussion between Sheehy Skeffington, Jacob and friends, recorded in the latter's 1916 diary, indicates the critical stance towards religion per se, in a country which was not only overwhelmingly Catholic, but also devoutly practising: 'I think she [Sheehy Skeffington] & I shocked them a little when we got talking about the next life and professed not to know whether there was one or not' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/30 16 June 1916). Jacob reflects a radical identification with atheism: 'He [Mr Brown, ILP member] has been doing a lot of work helping conscientious objectors at tribunals & visiting them in prison, and he said to our great delight, that the avowedly atheistical ones were steadies & more dependable in their principles than the evangelicals' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/30, 16 June 1916).

However, the secularism of the Irish left proved incendiary during the interwar period, with 'foreign' and perceived anti-clerical ideas associated with communism seen as a direct challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church. The 1930s witnessed a rise in clerically-sponsored violence against radicals, including feminists. Despard was forced to flee her own home and radical meeting place, Roebuck House, for Belfast in 1931. Left republican Frank Edwards was forced out of his teaching post in Waterford for his activism and membership of the communist influenced Republican Congress (a party of former IRA members) in 1935 and for investigating slum landlords, the Archbishop allegedly being one of the latter. Edwards refused to cow to threats from the Catholic Church not to attend Congress and was subsequently dismissed. Sheehy Skeffington received invites to speak on behalf of 'The Frank Edwards Defence Cttee' and to join the committee's membership (Letter from Frank Ryan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33, 607, 23 January 1935, 26 January 1936). Interestingly,

left republican Frank Ryan stressed the independent nature of the committee from the Republican Congress. This allowed independent socialists such as Sheehy Skeffington to defend fellow radicals without endorsing communism per se. Despard's 'distress' at hearing of Sheehy Skeffington's alleged communism underscores the complexity of Irish socialist feminists' political identities:

> I am distressed to hear that any aspersions can have been cast upon your character. I have no doubt however, that Mr. McGonagle [Irish solicitor who represented suffragettes] will succeed in making the truth known. Is it clerical, I wonder, Catholic Action!! Is very active now (Letter from Despard to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,178/82, 12 February 1934).

Whilst Irish feminists found it hard to be openly secularist in Ireland, their views outside of Ireland brought them recognition as part of the wider international left: 'I'm glad you aren't praticante [practising Catholic] …. & glad you haven't gone Theosophical & aren't a protestant either' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 5 June 1937).

Gillet-Gatty in her letters to Sheehy Skeffington assumes a shared anti-authoritarianism towards the Church: 'And this great army of parasites, crawling like filthy hungry insects, & exercising such powers over the peoples' thoughts & acts' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 5 June 1937). In a similar vein, Mannin discusses with Sheehy Skeffington whether to call her new book concerning the Church 'Opiums for the People' (Letter from Mannin to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,608, 30 April 1940).

As the representative for the IFSRWAC in France and Spain, Gillet-Gatty's correspondence to Sheehy Skeffington is chiefly concerned with countering pro-Franco propaganda in Ireland which emphasised Spanish republican anti-clerical

violence. Gillet-Gatty's discomfort at compromising her own secularist principles in order to defend Spanish republicans reflects the marginalisation of Irish radicals and the extent of church power during this period:

> Spain is being forced (by all these visitors from Catholics like Madame Malarine Selliers & Miss Monika Whately & the Dean of Chichester & the Churches & so on of the Protestant Religions) in the face of public opinion throughout the world against the Anti-Catholic conduct of the Spanish workers to let the Church seep back again (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 20 May 1935).

Models of secularist states were important for feminists, as they provided a vision of a future Irish republic in which women were freed from clerical interference in their domestic and sexual lives. Gillet-Gatty relates to Sheehy Skeffington that an Irish journalist would not be able to pursue the adoption of an orphaned Spanish child: 'We both [Madame Braun and Gillet-Gatty] think it would be best not to risk Ireland. You know what the priests' power, there, is' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 20 May 1935). Irish feminists communicated to their international contacts church attempts to control free speech and women's sexuality through its close relationship to the state. Mannin refers to the infringements of free speech and censoring of contraceptive information in the 1929 Censorship Act: 'Fantastic there shld be any talk of banning Maura L[averty]'s book; suppose it was over the facts-of-life talk in it…' (Letter from Mannin to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,608/6, 21 September 1942).

Sexuality

There was an ambiguous attitude towards the social institution of marriage amongst Irish socialist feminists, summed up by Duggan of the Irish Women's Reform League (IWRL), who mocks Sheehy Skeffington's IWFL for its 'increasingly matrimonial tendency': 'It is positively dangerous to belong to it. I have even heard it called the

"Marriage market"!' (Letter from Duggan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,604/3, 7 February 1914). Duggan's light-hearted poke at the militant suffragettes alludes to the apparent disparity between IWFL radical suffrage politics and their ostensibly more conventional sexual behaviour. Although Irish socialist feminists were critical of the legal institution of marriage, many did marry, suggesting a more complex relationship with monogamy than the outright rejection of marriage by free love advocates who could be found in radical socialist circles elsewhere. This did not necessarily mean that they accepted the traditional construct of a heterosexual monogamous relationship which maintained the separation of gendered spheres.

Molony provides important testimony about the marriages of Markievicz and Gonne McBride, in particular stressing the separate living arrangements and the women's independent lives, made possible by their economic independence 'she [Gonne McBride] was certainly a very wealthy woman'. Of the latter's marriage, she conveys a sense of inherent dislocation, both geographically and emotionally:

> They differed, and they had a row. The result of that was that she was not settled down in Ireland to live. She kept a little house there, and lived in Paris. McBride could not live in Ireland…The separation happened quite suddenly, and finished quickly (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 4).

In particular, Gonne McBride's refusal to be the subservient wife and comply with blatantly discriminatory custody laws or play the part of the traditional mother is framed by Molony in libertarian terms. Gonne McBride could not return to England or Ireland because she risked losing custody of her child, Iseult. Although 'she was an adoring mother' caring for Iseult in France, Iseult was later cared for by her godmother in Ireland because Gonne McBride was 'a bird of passage' (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 15).

Molony is interested in the operations of social control and public opinion with regard to marriage breakdown. She is well aware of the power of social censorship, discussing its impact in relation to the breakdown of Gonne McBride's marriage and

estrangement from her husband: 'It had horrible repercussions in Ireland, because she represented largely the extreme movement in Ireland. The British publicised it all they could, and in the most disgusting fashion'. In this case, Molony sidesteps the issue of the sexual control of women by emphasising how the British used the information to undermine the advanced nationalists. Her response is to try to undermine the role of public opinion by insisting that an individual's sexual life is not a matter for public scrutiny: 'The Inghinidhe were devoted to her [Gonne McBride], and the men were too. They said: "We will not talk about either of them. If they are going to continue in politics, we are not going to talk about them"'. In a similar vein Molony refuses to be drawn on the sexual scandal relating to the Parnell's marriage: 'I think that in such cases, and like that of Parnell's, the less said about them, the better. They are not a matter of historical interest…' (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, 226 NCR, 1949: 4-5). Whilst Molony's stance clearly reveals her critique of the use of public opinion to control women's sexual lives, she risks reinforcing the underlying ideas regarding the separation of spheres in her insistence that the issue of marital breakdown was not political, and in not critiquing the ways in which marriage oppressed Irish women. Her emphasis on the role of public opinion reflects her more libertarian tendencies. Goldman called gossip or public opinion the 'jailors of the human spirit', imploring women to defy convention by insisting on their own freedom from within (Wexler, 1984: 194).

Molony also documents Markievicz's unconventional marriage, implying a more open and freer relationship that was atypical of the time. In a revealing excerpt, she suggested that Markievicz was:

> not separate from her husband…the reason they were not living together was that he was in Poland…He would have, as John Brennan put it, his flying column with him – young men about town writing plays, painting pictures… Sometimes she would get bored of him not the slightest intention of separating… (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 71).

Molony presents a view of marriage in which it is implied there is a level not only of intellectual, physical and sexual freedom, but of artistic connection. The image of Casimir Markievicz and 'his flying column' of artistic young men certainly suggest a marriage which may have accommodated his suggested bisexuality and her political radicalism. The personal papers of Irish socialist women suggest that their unconventional marriages provided further evidence of their countercultural lifestyles and more radical attitudes towards relationships.

Whilst Irish socialist feminists clearly understood lesbianism as a cultural dynamic of the international women's movement, there was a consciousness of homosexual love from the early years of the twentieth century amongst Irish socialist feminists themselves. For instance, Mannin mentions the British socialist feminist Dorothy Evans' same-sex relationship; 'Sybil Morrison with whom she lives is a very dear friend of mine' (Letter from Mannin to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,608/6, 30 November 1943). Jacob captures the non-conformist intent amongst Irish socialist feminists with regards to sexuality in her account of meeting Molony:

> She is extremely good company and very hard to shock. She seems to regard men, as men, more as the relaxation of an idle hour than in any more serious light, does not appear to believe much in the one love of a lifetime, but rather in one minor flame after another. She prefers women and Madame prefers men (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32, 582/22, 4 July 1911: 118).

The latter reference to Markievicz as preferring male company, coupled with the description of her husband's conversation as 'a mixture of childishness & wickedness', suggests a disregard for conventional notions of gender roles. This ambiguous sexuality, perhaps deliberate but more likely the product of a refusal to fit into any kind of socially prescribed sexuality or gendered role, is recognised by Sheehy Skeffington in Jacob herself, as the latter reports:

> She said she had imagined a romance about me & Ben, but also that she had imagined me like Dr Lynn & Madeleine, having no use at all for men (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32, 582/65, 22 October 1919: 63).

Jacob has a very modern and Freudian influenced concern with the centrality of sexuality at both the societal and individual levels. She is both open and curious, recounting a conversation with 'Ned': 'we soon got onto sex. He was very interested in my difficulties, when I said could it be unnatural in me not to admire female beauty more than male…', and he educates Jacob on classical historical reference points for female same-sex love (Diary entry, RJD MS 32,582/36, 6 November 1919:84-85). Jacob never offers any moral response, implying a non-judgmental stance of one who might share that same sense of alienation from mainstream sexual mores, and adding to the sense of ambiguity. Jacob's detached sexuality is quite at odds with the emotional frameworks within which the relationships of both Lynn and ffrench Mullin, and Gore-Booth and Roper are represented.

Lynn describes being reunited with ffrench Mullin (M.ffM) whilst imprisoned after the Rising: 'Saw M.ffM early this mg. Greatest joy. Emer, she & I have cell together, such joy....Madam Markievicz here in solitary...when we are all together about 10 ICA, CnamB etc.' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/1, 2 May 1916). Lynn's emotional response to the reunification with 'Emer' (Molony), Markievicz and the small band of ICA and Cumann na mBan women also suggests how their relationship should be seen within the context of a wider network of feminist friends and activists. The importance of these feminist friendships and more intimate relationships to sustaining activists and their work is underscored by the emptiness Lynn expresses after the death of her life partner ffrench Mullin in May 1945:

> Hadn't to leave W.P till 10.10 D.G. & I had been v. nice with M. but the loneliness coming back, with no M ffM to greet me & say what barren wilderness it had been while I was away! (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 5 June 1945).

Lynn's diary testifies to the emotional intimacy of their relationship which could not have found an open expression in a society which neither acknowledged nor tolerated lesbian relationships, or any deviancy from heterosexual relationships within marriage. Tiernan argues that it was in fact this inability to clearly categorise these same-sex relationships that led to the erasure of lesbian feminists, such as Gore-Booth and Roper, from history. Yet it is only by acknowledging the true nature of these relationships that we are to fully understand the biographical context which underscores these women's very radical gender politics (Tiernan, 2012: 28-29). Lynn's diary also reveals that the feminist community in Ireland openly acknowledged their relationship and supported Lynn in her grief:

> 28th Whitsunday, 7.30 R.mines, a beautiful day, got some wee flowers in garden & bunch of yellow roses & went & said good bye to the earthly M ffM & sat there a while in the stillness, the yellow roses make the coffin so sweet. Later they all came & Mary just in time to see the last of her & then crowds at Whitefriar St. All knew me & not the family My hand was tired shaking. Back & tea with Sighle & Emer came & later Poppy here (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 28 May 1945).

Lynn is clear to establish her role as chief mourner in her statement: 'All knew me & not the family', and that Lynn and their circle of feminist friends were closer to ffrench-Mullin than her family. It is significant that it was her friends Humphreys and Molony (Emer) who provided emotional support to Lynn after the funeral. Lynn's unofficial status as ffrench Mullin's widow found some public and legal acknowledgment through ffrench Mullin's financial legacy:

> 29th Whit Mon. 8 a.m. S. B's, a glorious day all thro' Lily Kelly came & was v.nice M. leaving her money to me, dear M, it will be an added responsibility but D.V. I'll make good (Diary entry, KLD/KL/1/3, 29 May 1945).

Lynn's sense of moral responsibility in disposing of ffrench-Mullin's bequest acknowledges the vulnerability of her position, of being a lesbian woman living in a

homophobic society and of trying to honour her lover's memory with dignity, but being forced to do so covertly and in the context of a sexually and emotionally repressive culture. That she also had the financial freedom to maintain her relationship with ffrench-Mullin at some level makes Lynn exceptional at this time. Yet the hidden nature of her relationship, the fact that it only really found open expression within the pages of her private diary and amongst close and trusted allies, is indicative of the wider repression of Irish women whose sexuality and relationships fell outside the accepted norm of heterosexual marriage. We know now from the thousands of women interned in Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalen laundries during the twentieth century that the control of women's sexuality was widespread and institutionalised.

Irish feminists shared new ideas of 'free love', or sex outside of marriage, which were prevalent amongst left-wing feminists elsewhere. According to Jacob, Sheehy Skeffington was witness to the tensions that this could provoke, when, at an international suffrage congress held in Holland debates about 'free love' became a source of tension:

> Mrs. Chapmann Catt & the other American delegates made a disgusting fuss about the morality of some continental delegates, & finally got 2 of them expelled because they thought it would be bad for the cause to have free lovers at the congress. One of the 2 fought it out, & went home very angry & roused feeling about it in Holland (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/30, 8 June 1916: 5).

In response to the American suffragists' behaviour Jacob defines feminism as inclusive of sexual freedom: 'Women's rights means right to free love in some countries more than in others, it seems'. Sheehy Skeffington's support for free lovers appeared to be political, as suggested in this extract from Jacob's diary: 'I had some conversation with Hanna on sex at dinner; she said she was glad to be through with sex & regarded it as rather a nuisance & a hindrance in life' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32, 582/65, 22 October 1919: 63).

Jacob's support for free love was borne out in her personal life. Her awareness of sexuality is ever present; she constantly appraises both men and women's physical and sexual attractiveness, commenting on Sheehy Skeffington, 'Dear me what a delicious voice she has' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/, 7 October 1919: 36). Most notably she was involved in a clandestine sexual relationship with the IRA socialist Frank Ryan in the late 1920s/early 1930s, intimate details of which she confided in a secret, inner diary (Lane, 2010: 7).

The operations of religious control through conventional morals governing sexuality and gender roles are sharply contrasted with the personal lives of left-wing Irish feminists. Their ability to express their sexuality freely or to raise sexual issues publically was therefore still very much contained. Sheehy Skeffington recalls in a 1929 review of Vera Brittain's 'Halcyon, or the Future of Monogamy' for the WFL's *The Vote:*

> I recall a personal experience when first women were appointed on Dublin's City Council – a colleague, not daring to refer, even indirectly, to venereal disease (though a grant to a city hospital for treatment was on our agenda) found a way out by asking us to turn our downcast eyes to the 'fourth word of the second-last line on page 21' (Ward, 2017: 409).

The city hospital referred to is Lynn's St Ultan's hospital for mothers and babies, which proved to be a more acceptable means by which feminists could channel funds for the specialist care of babies born with venereal disease. Kingston expressed shock at Jacob's sexual attitudes: 'talking B. Russell's book & sex morals – she rather surprised at mine' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/65 5 September 1930: 34). Bertrand Russell's 1929 *Marriage and Morals*, sought to disconnect sex from conception. The logical conclusion to this is the idea that sex could be pursued for pleasure alone, and that, for women, access to birth control was essential.

Despard records in her 1916 diary a meeting at Caxton Hall, London: 'Mrs. Cunningham was speaking on the Birth rate & Baby saving. Her speech was

followed by a little discussion. A man Malthusian spoke and I answered' (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/3, 23 February 1916). Despard's diary entry does not record her personal views on this occasion, but she reveals how ideas about women's reproductive rights competed with anxieties about the fate of the British empire.

Jacob notes in her diary that Sheehy Skeffington was in favour of family limitation (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/35, 29 October 1918: 6). It is unsurprising, therefore, that Sheehy Skeffington would emerge as an unwavering critic of the 1929 Censorship of Publications Act, which provided for a mandatory ban on books or periodicals advocating contraception, eviscerating it in plain libertarian terms: "We are to be regimented till we are exterminated for our own good". Castigating the bill as 'entirely the work of male legislators', she cites it as an attack on the issue of access to birth control and openness regarding sexual matters: 'Another point was that the censors would ban publications which contained advertisements dealing with birth control, venereal diseases and suggested remedies…'. She specifically links this to oppression of sexuality per se:

> The bill, she said was presumably meant to deal with obscene publications, but it might easily be switched off to political publications and editions being interpreted as obscene, it was to ban reading that was calculated to excite sexual passion. Mrs Skeffington said that might apply to the "Songs of Solomon," and to many of Shakespeare's plays ('Irish Censorship, Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington's attack', HSSP, MS 33, 617/3, 8 November 1928).

Sheehy Skeffington clearly links the issue of censorship of birth control to a libertarian concern with free speech and she more than likely had in mind her own use of *The Irish Citizen* to transmit information about sexually transmitted diseases. The end of her reported response to the proposed censorship bill is quite revealing about the reaction amongst feminists in general, but also of her distinct approach:

> Most of the women's societies have sent in resolutions or signed petitions against the bill. Mrs Despard has signed a petition. I have not, for I don't

> consider that any amendment or improvement would make the measure in the least degree possible. The principle is poisonous and dangerous… ('Irish Censorship, Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington's attack', HSSP, 33, 617/3, 8 November 1928).

Sheehy Skeffington's critique of the bill confirms her consistent concern with opposing 'poisonous and dangerous' authoritarian intrusions on ordinary people's lives, particularly the lives of women. What changes is the way in which she reacts and, on this occasion, what is interesting is her refusal to engage in politics at all on the matter. This anti-political response only serves to further underscore her libertarian critique of government limitation of individual rights.

Concerns with Irish women's lack of access to birth control persisted after the passing of the 1935 Criminal Law Amendment Act which prohibited the advertising, sale and importation of contraceptives. Jacob critiqued the sexual control of Irish women in 1940; 'a man must have free will', she comments astutely; 'Pity free will isn't let apply to birth control' (Diary entry, RJD, MS32,582/90, 13 January 1940: 99). Mannin confirms Sheehy Skeffington's long-standing commitment to reproductive rights in a letter from 1941: 'I have written Mrs.W that my "Catholic friend" Mrs S Skeffington has said she is in favour of birth-control!! I wrote her a post-card'. In fact, Sheehy Skeffington appears to have disapproved of a proposed book by Mannin which she assumed implied a Catholic view point on social issues. In response, Mannin is obviously at pains to assert her shared libertarian credentials with Sheehy Skeffington:

> Because one is able to see the Catholic point of view on such things as divorce & birth control it doesn't mean one <u>subscribes</u> to that point of view. How could I, with my record – and with my impassioned belief in the importance of rational marriage & the spread of contraceptive knowledge. And the Catholic church's attitude to Spain alone wd be enough to keep people like myself away from it forever – even if one could get over the initial difficulty of that little matter of the immac. Concept. – which I was at some pains to point out

> in my book figured in pagan religions long before Jesus was alleged to become Christ (Letter from Mannin to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,608/6, 10 January 1941).

Also of interest here is Mannin's reference to 'rational' marriage, which we must assume means not necessarily for reproduction but based on mutual sexual attraction to a partner, secular and, therefore, also dissolvable should this relationship become unviable. This was a realistic and modern concept of an institution which, in reality, reinforced Irish women's sexual, social and legal subordination.

Gender Roles

Irish socialist feminists were also concerned to present a more realistic view of motherhood and contest the Victorian ideal of 'the angel in the house'. In correspondence to Sheehy Skeffington, who herself was ambivalent about motherhood, Pankhurst confides:

> I did not get your letter as far as I recollect and I was away ten months. Having my son on top of much else – you know and also don't know of stress – seemed to run down my energy and I am still six to nine months behind with everything!... the second came out in October: "Save the Mothers!" (Letter from Pankhurst to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41,177/39, 28 February 1931).

In many ways this extract could have been written today, with contemporary concerns about combining work and motherhood dominating public discourse around mothering. Pankhurst's reference to a shared understanding of how motherhood undermines women's careers and independence is certainly underscored by Sheehy Skeffington's violently-felt resistance to motherhood, as recorded in Jacob's diary:

> Had a lot of interesting conversation, about the time Owen was born & how badly the doctors acquitted themselves, & how the first evening she got back

> from the nursing home & the nurse had gone for a walk, Skeffington said with an air of great secrecy – "Now let us take the baby to pieces!" Another instance of his abnormal courage (Diary entry, RJD, MS32,582/36, 1 November 1919: 76).

It is an uncomfortable confession, but nevertheless conveys the ambivalence shared by feminist husband and wife here towards the duty of having children, which is clearly out of step with more idealised representations of motherhood more prevalent in this era.

Despite the power of religious teaching regarding the sanctity of the home and primacy of the family unit, Irish socialist women raised the reality of mothering in working-class communities. They pioneered the idea of socialising motherhood through free school meals, community kitchens and the provision of maternity clinics. The significance of these services relates to relieving the burden on working-class women in particular, and in raising socialist discourses around state intervention and the relationship between socialism, feminism and nationalism (Pašeta, 2013: 121).

One of the chief concerns of the revolutionary republican women's organisation, Inghinidhe na hÉireann founded in 1900, was to improve the material reality of the lives of poor Dublin children through a free school meals campaign:

> It was necessary to take parliamentary action to legalize payment from local rates for this purpose. The fact that any school manager or Local Authority in any place in Ireland can supply children with a decent meal is entirely due in the first instance to the work of Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH WS 391: 9).

Sheehy Skeffington was in possession of resolutions from a 'mass meeting of the Workers of Dublin' calling on the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) to introduce a Bill extending the 'Feeding of School Children Act' to Ireland. The resolutions pressed the Dublin Corporation to support the resolution of Councillor F. Lawlor to grant city

funds to 'the ladies Voluntary Committee for the feeding of necessitous School children' (Resolution, HSSP, MS 33, 618/10, n.d.). Extensive school meals campaigns were carried out by the British Women's Labour League from 1908 onwards (Collette, 1989: 120-127). The radical potential of the school meals campaign lay in its attempt to remove some of the burden of childcare and domestic labour off the shoulders of impoverished women. The collectivisation of domestic labour was a direct challenge to the ideology of separate spheres. This is reflected in the correspondence between Sheehy Skeffington and socialist feminists Duggan and Harrison, who took up the mantle of the school meals campaign in 1914/15. Duggan details the opposition they encountered from various members of the establishment and the Church. Sheehy Skeffington mentions that the IWFL support for Harrison's re-election campaign for Dublin Corporation was in the context of her work on school meals (HSSP, MS 33,604/3, 7 September 1914, *Irish Citizen* notes c.1915, MS 33, 620/2). Harrison was a significant figure because she was the first woman elected to the city council in 1912 (Moriarty, 1998: 93). The school meals campaign captured the subversive intent of Irish socialist women's theorising with regard to traditional gendered constructions of the domestic sphere and it represents an occasion where sex and class demands were sharply privileged over those of religious and nationalist interests.

Despard provision of food and maternity care to impoverished nursing mothers and infants in Battersea, London provides context to the support she gave to Lynn's St Ultan's Hospital when she arrived in Dublin in 1921. Her work had been amongst the 'Sad! Half-starved women with small babies…', who informed her campaigning 'I spoke for the maternity clinic' (Diary entries, CDD, D/2479/1/2, 17 August 1914, D2479/1/3, 24 February 1916). She also records helping at a restaurant for the impoverished 'which is going briskly', subsequently describing Pankhurst's community-based activism amongst working-class women: 'She has a nice little house with a hall and convenient for cooking in the Old Ford Road' (Diary entries, CDD, D/2479/1/2, 14 January, 28 August 1914).

Given her interest in the issue, it is unsurprising that Lynn records Despard's immediate engagement with St Ultan's hospital for mothers and babies on her arrival in Ireland in 1921. She records that Despard had donated £100 to the hospital and she was interviewed by a reporter about child welfare (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/1, 5 April 1921).

Throughout 1921 Lynn records her efforts to secure a 'Child Welfare Scheme' which would provide maternal and child health services through a 'Child Welfare Centre' in Harold's Cross, Dublin (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/1, 27 April, KL/1/2, 21 November 1921). Lynn also mentions that 'Madeleine interviewed a woman re. playground in Charlemont St' (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/1, 21 April 1921). Despard later refers to community childcare provision: 'Wrote evening to Dr Lynn. To my relief Dr Lynn will have the child at St Ultans' (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/8, 28 March 1924).

Irish socialist women observed a model of State support for mothers in practice when they visited Soviet Russia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In her 1929 Delegation Report from her visit, Molony recalls:

> We saw much of the educational work being done by the Soviets for children and for adults, and we also visited children's welfare centres, clinics etc, which are so plentiful in Russia and have nothing but admiration for these efforts to raise humanity and prevent suffering ('Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Report of the Irish Labour Delegation', Helena Molony, Robert Tynan, PT Daly, HSSP, MS 41, 205/2, 1929: 12).

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, the sense that a new world was possible was bolstered by the existence of Soviet Russian social provision for mothers, even if Irish socialist feminists may have had their doubts about the extent of liberation under communism.

Gillet-Gatty was more explicit about the class and gendered consequences of the curtailment of women's rights and presence within the public sphere during the 1930s.

In 1936 de Valera enacted the Conditions of Employment Bill, which gave legal power to restrict women's participation in the work force. The moral justification for this measure was then articulated in the 1937 Constitution which reflected Catholic social teaching, placing women's role within the home. Gillet-Gatty clearly had both pieces of legislation in mind when she commented on the 'heart breaking' condition of Ireland and blamed it on de Valera's 'unfortunate religious temperament' and cited the effects of clerical influence as 'a cruel impediment to the welfare of the Irish working man & especially women…' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 5 June 1937).

The most public challenge Irish socialist feminists mounted against attempts to limit women's public lives was in their opposition to aspects of the 1937 Constitution which attempted to define women's role as wife and mother within the home. Jacob's dismay at prevailing attitudes towards gender roles, even by women's organisations, is consistent with her libertarian critique in other areas of social control but also underscores her distance from mainstream cultural values:

> the joint committee of women's societies met today to decide on applying for representation in the Senate…some of them are awful. The aim of the Mothers Union is to safeguard the sanctity of marriage and instruct mothers how to rear their families in purity and strictness of life. Doesn't that sound like a chunk out of the new constitution? I don't know how the government could with any face refuse to do anything that such a society asked them. The only excuse they could make for disregarding it would be that the society was not under the direct control of the clergy, and therefore not entirely correct. And the aim of the Girls' Friendly Society is to promote purity in young girls (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/27, 26 November 1937).

The difference between Jacob's views and those of other women's groups is grounded in her emphasis on sexuality, as opposed to more mainstream groups such as the IWWU, who critiqued the Constitution on the basis that it restricted women's

economic independence. Irish socialist women sought solidarity from feminists outside of Ireland. For instance, the British feminist Marion Mitchell thanks Sheehy Skeffington for:

> your thought in letting me know from enclosures, what is being done to try & stop these reactionary clauses going through the Constitution. If women in Ireland are getting up a signed protest against them, please will you add my name (Letter from Mitchell to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 177/32 16 May 1937).

Mitchell's solidarity emphasises the internationalism of the countercultural environment within which Irish socialist women operated and the connections feminism and the wider international left provided to other like-minded socialist women. This was unusual for a time when most women were not only confined within the home, but would not have had access to travel or the means to make connections with women outside of their own experiences of life. This kind of alternative internationalist perspective set Irish socialist women apart from mainstream society and this outsider status was used to their advantage through their participation in countercultural politics. Their unconventionality provided a motivation for engagement in radical politics, a motivation based on connections. Counterculture provided them with companionship amongst like-minded people and through feminist communities locally and internationally. This opened up new influences and perceptions to them, such as constructing alternative relationships or co-operative arrangements. Because these experiments took place within the context of wider political change, they used political practice to develop ideas and attempt to fuse feminism to nationalism and/or socialism. So, the ways in which socialist women experimented within a counterculture environment also demonstrates how they were always linking their thinking to their activism.

Radicalism also incorporated an element of solidarity, of siding with the underdog and marginalised, so there was also an implicit empathy and awareness of the need to connect with the lives of others based on their own sense of alienation.

Counterculture provides a lens on how these women experienced the world around them, their perceptions of events, awareness that change was occurring around them, and their use of radicalism as space to navigate their responses to these changes. Their own experiences in the radical Dublin circles throughout the first half of the twentieth century informed the way in which they constructed their political identities as Irish socialist women. There is an understanding in this thesis that change is constructed on many levels, and that socialist women's experiments in fusing multiple political identities though activism was changing the fabric of feminism in the process:

> The changes that convulse society do not appear from nowhere; they happen first in people's minds, and through the construction of a shared culture, which can be the culture of a minority, rather than the majority (Foster, 2014: 8).

Hence, the changes occurring in Irish socialist women's minds, the experiments they conducted through activism in fusing feminism to socialism, drove wider political changes. An important strand in this 'culture of a minority' was the interaction between suffrage and socialism through Irish socialist women's activism and this is the topic of the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Suffrage

Irish socialist women were also set apart from the mainstream of the women's movement over the central demand of first wave feminism, suffrage. The issue of suffrage is therefore examined in-depth in this chapter. It was a potentially divisive issue because in general the women's movement strategically campaigned for limited women's suffrage. Suffragists who took this position prioritised the immediate extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as men, but they took no position on extending the franchise to all men. Socialist feminists outside the official boundaries of the women's movement demanded full adult suffrage without age or property qualifications. In this respect, socialist feminists' engagement with the Irish suffrage movement provides an ideal case study of how Irish socialist women were able to exploit their links to radicalism to experiment with a range of positions in relation to the issue of suffrage. By placing their feminism within the counterculture through their commitments to socialism and nationalism, Irish socialist women were able to make connections with other marginalised groups such as the Dublin and Belfast women who were locked out in 1913, and the working-class women of the London's East End.

In Ireland the additional experience of the national independence struggle lends a distinct diversity to the political identities and politics of the Irish suffrage movement. Despite extra challenges faced by Irish suffrage activists, the pre-war environment in Ireland fostered a uniquely fluid and radical political atmosphere, where the issues of women's suffrage, labour militancy and Home Rule were all of concern to radical activists of the pre-revolutionary generation. So, although this chapter necessarily adopts a more defined thematic and chronological framework, it aims to explore the diverse range of suffrage positions in detail adopted by Irish socialist feminists and how these were adapted within the context of rapid political change. How Irish socialist women synthesised claims of class, nation and gender through the theme of suffrage will be explored in relation to key activist moments: the interpenetration of

female suffrage and the Home Rule question between 1908-1912, the issue of militant suffrage, the 1913 Dublin Lockout and the impact of the First World War. The aim of this chapter is to explore the nuanced nature of the suffrage campaign in Ireland which takes into account the multiplicity of standpoints adopted by Irish women in relation to suffrage. This entails tracing the tensions, as well as the alliances which were used to overcome them. What is of particular interest is the degree to which activists were able to move between the various platforms within a rapidly changing political context and transcend the assumption that various political identities must necessarily conflict.

As this thesis is also concerned with challenging notions of Irish women's, and therefore, Irish feminism's supposed insularity, the absence of any consideration in the histories of the Irish suffrage movement of the role of British-based socialist suffrage activists in the Irish campaign is quite striking. Annie Besant, Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethwick Lawrence and the role of Irish socialist suffrage activists based in Britain such as Lynch, May O'Callaghan and Gore-Booth are all missing. A factor in this oversight is the emphasis on division amongst feminists in the historiography of the Irish suffrage movement, particularly with regard to nationalist politics. Lane (2010: 26) in her work on Jacob has contended that the situation was much more complex and fluid. Citing Molony, Lane argues that in practice the small network of women politically active during the Irish Cultural Revival worked together despite their political differences. It appears to be a question of emphasis, and this chapter will explore the nuances of socialist women's engagement with suffrage politics in Ireland from a perspective of political connections.

With the exception of Ryan's thesis (1991), the connection with British socialism and the suffrage movement has not been elucidated in any detail in the historiography of the Irish women's suffrage movement. Ward (1995a, 1995b, 2004) and Cliona Murphy (1989), have rightly placed the Irish women's movement in the context of Irish nationalism, and latterly Karen Steele (2007) and Lane (2010) have done so more broadly in relation to the Irish Cultural Revival. Whilst exploring important concepts such as the gendered nature of the nationalist movement and reclaiming

women's role in the struggle for national independence, the role of religion and press reaction in the suffrage campaign, feminism in this period must also be considered in relation to the emergence of Irish socialism. Murphy (1989: 82) concludes that the vexed relationship between the Irish and British suffrage movements, and the former's determination to maintain its autonomy, were the overriding features of the IWFL's campaign. Murphy refers to the 'imperialistic ambitions' of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) towards the IWFL in the context of Sheehy Skeffington's polemical articles in the *Irish Citizen*, which sought to underscore the IWFL's nationalist credentials and independence from the British suffrage campaign. Bolt (2004: 47-8) disputes Sheehy Skeffington's claims that British suffragettes did not support the nationalist cause, and Cullen Owens notes the establishment of IWFL and Irish Women's Suffrage Federation (IWSF) branches in London by 1913 (1983: 87). An examination of the biographical material in relation to socialist suffragettes also provides an alternative reading of the supposed insularity of the Irish suffrage movement. Correspondence between individuals on political matters is both friendly and co-operative, whilst diary entries note the extensive political interconnections entwined in British and Irish socialist suffragette friendships. In other words, in exposing the connections to British socialist women we make visible the influence of socialist women in the Irish suffrage movement.

In adopting a relational and interconnected perspective, it is not only the human connections which are understood, but also the flow of political ideas. Prior to 1916, Connolly and Francis Sheehy Skeffington were central figures in influencing socialist orientated women who became involved in the Irish suffrage movement from 1908 onwards. Both of these men were strongly influenced by the British socialist feminist Sylvia Pankhurst, who emphasised both militancy and the needs of working-class women's autonomy in the suffrage campaign. After the deaths of Connolly and Francis Sheehy Skeffington in the 1916 Rising, the scope for broadening the limited demand of the Irish suffrage movement appears to have narrowed, as political connections dwindled and nationalist feminists were absorbed into the independence struggle. Luddy's (2005) study of working women's politics during this period acknowledges how little is known about working-class women's engagement with the

Irish suffrage campaign, and her survey draws on Owens' (1983) work on the alliances between the IWFL, IWRL and the labour movement. Both Luddy and Owens' work convey the philanthropic concerns of middle-class labour feminist leadership, which merely adds to the impression that working women were simply not perceived as political in their own right, but were expected to support the limited suffrage demand of the women's movement. Owens (1983: 88) notes that there was no equivalent of Pankhurst's ELFS in Ireland, but Ryan's work is unique in its treatment of the debates over adult and limited women's suffrage positions in Ireland (Ryan, 1996). Denise Kleinrichert's (2007) valuable study of Carney's socialist suffrage activism in Belfast is a rare account of both a working-class activist engaging with suffrage politics and of suffrage activists arguing for the working-class women's right to vote (2007: 205).

The suffrage movement in Ireland has more usually been discussed in relation to a particular standpoint, whether the women's movement (Cullen Owens 1984, Quinlan, 2002), nationalism (Murphy, 1989, Pašeta, 2013, Steele, 2007, Ward, 1995a), or labour (Cullen Owens, 2001, Luddy, 2005, Kleinrichert, 2007). This chapter contends that rather than viewing these particular platforms in isolation, we need to view them in relation to each other, both through interpersonal and ideological connections. Viewing the development of Irish suffrage campaigners' ideas through the prism of their activism reveals the particular consistencies and contradictions which arose through the merging of socialist and feminist approaches to suffrage in Ireland. By re-constructing the history of the Irish suffrage movement from the bottom up, socialist feminists active at the boundaries of the official movements of their day are revealed. Irish socialist women not only chose to work from differing platforms, women's, labour and nationalist, but often their activism transcended the formal boundaries of these movements.

This leads us to the question of how the suffrage movement in Ireland has been perceived to date. Ryan's thesis contends that the Irish suffrage movement was evidence of a wider women's movement in Ireland in the early twentieth century, because of the inter-linkage between feminist, class and national concerns (Ryan,

1991). Therefore, in this chapter, rather than chart an organisational or movement history, it is proposed to examine a sequence of interrelated campaigns around which Irish socialist feminists coalesced: the specific demand for *Irish* women's inclusion in any extension of the franchise, the development of militancy and the demand for working-class women's enfranchisement, suffrage activism around the Dublin Lockout, suffrage activism during the First World War, and citizenship politics after the passing of 1918 Representation of the People Act. These activist moments reflect where the Irish suffrage movement overlapped with other interests, where the negotiation of political identity happens outside the confines of a movement, pulling Irish feminism in an outward direction.

To date a distinction has been made within the existing literature between Irish women's activism as nationalist, labour or suffragist. Much has been made of the separatist character of the IWFL's rhetoric and its relations to the British based WSPU in particular, reflecting the influence of nationalist revisionism within Irish feminist history (Murphy, 1989, Pašeta, 2013, Steele, 2007, Ward, 1995a). However, this was only one aspect of the IWFL's suffrage politics. An examination of the suffrage campaign from the perspective of Irish socialist women's activism reveals the impossibility of making such differentiations. For instance, Molony makes it clear that just because Irish socialist feminists worked from different platforms, it did not preclude co-operation around feminist issues: 'Of course on the principle of Equal Rights we were all united, and worked in the most-friendly way with the Irish "Suffragettes" (Lane, 2010: 26). This chapter will consider whether in fact Irish socialist feminists viewed the issues in a more interrelated manner, so that they could position Irish women's enfranchisement as a way in which both the nationalist and women's cause could be advanced; it was just the platform from which they chose to operate that differed. This enabled Irish socialist feminists to work with women outside of the women's movement, and it is these interactions that support the contention of this thesis that Irish feminism was a plural and interconnecting entity.

The Demand for Women's Enfranchisement and Home Rule, 1908-1912

Independent socialist women's suffrage activism was galvanised by the formation in 1908 of the intentionally militant IWFL; a group frustrated by the glacial pace of change and the constitutional tactics of the existing Irish women's suffrage societies. Their goal was specifically egalitarian, the enfranchisement of Irish women on the same terms as Irish men (Owens, 1983: 91). Initially the IWFL demand, with its claims to sex and nation, contrasted with the majority view of Irish labour movement. James Larkin's programme for the ITGWU included full adult suffrage for all men and women over the age of twenty-one as early as 1909 (Moriarty, 1998: 93). However, Larkin claimed that his success in securing the commitment of the Irish Labour Party and the subsequent backing of Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC) for full adult suffrage in 1912, was based on the counter-posing of sex and class claims; he had warned that votes for middle-class women could be used against working-class men. Looking beyond Larkin's rhetoric, Moriarty argues that, in fact, Larkin distinguished between constitutional and militant suffragists, and it was with the latter that he advocated an alliance built on sympathetic militant tactics. The ITUC annual report for 1914 records the refusal to allow a guest speaker from the IWRL to address the conference on women's suffrage. This was because the speaker, Miss Moser, the league's nominee and a Poor Law Guardian in the Pembroke township of Dublin, had failed to sign an agreement to employ only trade union labour. Larkin mistrusted those who did not fully support the demands of the working class: 'In his dismissal of the woman suffrage speaker at the ITUC conference, Larkin had declared that delegates would not object to a militant suffrage speaker' (Moriarty, 1998: 94).

Irish socialist women who remained outside of the IWFL add to the nuanced picture, because although they refused to prioritise suffrage, they refuted any artificial distinction between claims of sex, nation and class. Although some Irish socialist women, such as Jacob and Markievicz, were opposed to demanding a vote from an English parliament, this did not prevent them from taking a position on suffrage per se. In a letter to her sister Gore-Booth from Aylesbury Prison in 1917, Markievicz wrote:

> It is such years since we served on committees together: not since we went out to force a suffrage bill through the English parliament. I have no ambition to have a vote in an English parliament, and don't suppose I would use it. I don't think that Parliaments are much use any how (Letter from Markievicz to Gore-Booth, 9 June 1917, Roper, ed., 1934: 173).

Markievicz's republicanism was framed within a revolutionary socialism which was questioning of parliamentary democracy, and, for a time, incorporated anarchist critiques of the corruption of power within the State.

As well as her objection to seeking a vote from an English parliament, Jacob was, in any case, suspicious of separate women's organisations, believing that they would result in women's auxiliary status within the wider nationalist movement (Diary entry, RJD, MS, 32,582/24, March 1913: 248-251). Yet Jacob was a fellow traveller of the IWFL, braving 'violent public disapproval' to march with it in 1913. She also lectured at IWFL meetings addressing broader issues of interest to feminists in this period than the vote, such as human rights, animal rights and reading from 'the wider socialism' (Diary entries, RJD, MS, 32,582/24, March 1913: 236-242, MS 32,582/30, 12 December 1916: 248).

Jacob, whilst acknowledging the claims of women, also emphasised the vote based on humanity rather than property, as in her record of this exchange: 'and then we argued about the franchise, he maintaining that no one, man or women who did not pay taxes should have a vote, & I upholding adult suffrage. We didn't touch on female suffrage at all' (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582,17, 23 July 1909: 127). Markievicz similarly evaded any convenient separation of Irish suffrage, nationalist and labour movements, contending at an IWFL meeting in 1913 during the time of the Lockout that all were part of the 'extension of human liberty' (Cullen Owens, 2005: 82). Duggan chose to work within the IWRL, which campaigned around issues of direct interest to working-class women - the provision of school meals and free dental clinics. In correspondence with Sheehy Skeffington, Duggan acknowledged the differing emphases Irish suffragists accorded to either economic or political power: 'I am not

going to ask you to come into this as I know your views as to suffrage first…', but in asking here for Sheehy Skeffington's assistance in making introductions, she suggests a common cause (Letter from Duggan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33, 604/3, 7 February 1914). The sense of a shared goal and vision, of a mutual understanding appears to substantiate Molony's claims of gender solidarity (Lane, 2010: 26). Yet the nuances do reveal the particular class and national cleavages Irish socialist feminists sought to steer around, and suggest that the boundaries between the feminist, socialist and nationalist movements in Ireland were far more permeable than has previously been thought.

What seems to have galvanised the independently minded socialist women organising around the IWFL was the embryonic emergence of an indigenous Irish socialist movement (rather than the labour movement), which provided them with the political space to negotiate the multiple claims to citizenship they were making as Irish women and socialists. Sheehy Skeffington recalled in her unpublished memoirs the significance of the support of Connolly for women's suffrage and through him an alliance between the IWFL and the SPI, who shared the same meeting rooms (Ward, 2017: 12). In 1910, Walter Carpenter, Acting Secretary of the SPI, wrote to Sheehy Skeffington, 'A great number of members of the SPI have expressed a hope that you accept our invitation to lecture here' (Letter from Walter Carpenter to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/5, 19 February 1910). Sheehy Skeffington, her IWFL co-founder Margaret Cousins and the independent Dublin Corporation member Harrison lectured on Mary Wollstonecraft, sex equality and politics, and nationalism and internationalism respectively as part of a SPI lecture series (SPI programme, HSSP, MS 41,205/1, 1910). The lecture topics indicate how Irish socialist feminists were contextualising the Irish suffrage campaign within a universalising framework, drawing on the libertarian intent of Wollstonecraft's appeal to women's rights as human rights and situating the Irish national struggle within an anti-imperialist framework more characteristic of socialist and women's internationalism.

Alliances with British socialist suffragettes were central to the motivations and organisation of militant and radical suffrage in Ireland from an early juncture. In May

of 1902, Esther Roper organised for a petition for women's suffrage to be presented to the House of Commons, signed by women graduates including Sheehy Skeffington. According to Sheehy Skeffington, it was through Roper that she first became a suffragette and was introduced to Irish suffragists:

> I first became aware of Mrs Haslam (or, rather she of me through Esther Roper, Eva Gore-Booth's lifelong friend) when the latter was organising women graduates in Manchester by means of a gigantic petition to the House (Ward, 2017: xx, 69).

In 1911 Sheehy Skeffington invited the British socialist suffragist Despard to join the Irishwomen's deputation to the IPP MPs: 'I shall be most delighted to form one of a deputation of Irishwomen to Mr Burke and Mr Redmond. You know, I think, that I came of an Irish family, and that I married an Irishman. Therefore, in a true sense, I belong to you' (Letter from Despard to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41, 180, 1, 15 December 1911). Cementing this internationalising perspective, Despard embarked on an *Irish Citizen*-funded speaking tour the following year (Murphy, 1989: 63). These instances of cross-movement activism formed an important prelude to the convergence of class, sex and national interests which would come to the fore during the 1913 Dublin Lockout and have a decisive impact on the character of Irish socialist women's activism in its aftermath. Being Irish is extended here to a political identification with the Irish nationalist struggle, but from a distinctly socialist and women's internationalist perspective. Indeed, Sheehy Skeffington made this nuanced understanding of Irish women's particular position more explicit by broadening the basis of activists' claims and forming a cross movement alliance amongst Irish socialist women. For instance, she recruited constitutional nationalists such as Harrison to recognise Irish women's claims to citizenship:

> I did my duty last Sunday by quietly saying to Mr John Redmond when saying goodbye to him, that I knew he was going to receive a deputation of my sisters tomorrow & I hope he would find it possible to have the Municipal Franchise

put into the Home Rule Bill (Letter from Harrison to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,180/3, Easter Day, 1912).

A subsequent significant development within Irish socialism widened the available political space for Irish socialist women, as well as realising some political capital from their suffrage campaigning. In her speaking notes entitled 'Citizenship for Women' Sheehy Skeffington prefaces her 'associations with the ILP Dublin' within a very specific milieu, referring to 'James Connolly and free speech', and to the South African socialist feminist, Olive Shreiner's *Women and Labour* ('Citizenship for Women', Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41, 201/5).

Short-lived branches of the Independent Labour Party of Ireland (ILPI), chaired by Walter Carpenter, were established in Belfast and Dublin in May and June of 1912, where a resolution demanding the inclusion of votes for women in the Home Rule Bill was passed (Levenson, 1983: 125). After Sheehy Skeffington's imprisonment and hunger strike in December 1913, she thanks the ILPI, alongside the IWSS and the IWRL 'for their resolutions and help on my behalf' (Ward, 2017: 362). These instances testify to a closer alliance between the IWFL and Irish socialists, but also reflects the official policy of the British-based ILP, whose tactical support for enfranchisement of women, even on a limited basis, was seen as paving the way for universal suffrage.

Hannam and Hunt (2002: 112-113) note the importance of regional variations in ILP branches with regard to the limited women's suffrage position in evidencing pluralism both within the party and amongst socialist women. For instance, they cite the influence of Tom Johnson, the editor of the Glasgow ILP newspaper *Forward*, an active supporter of women's suffrage, who stimulated an extensive debate between adult and women's suffragists in the paper. *Forward* appears to have connected common elements of the British, Scottish and Irish socialist suffrage circles, as Irish socialist Connolly, Sheehy Skeffington and Pankhurst were all frequent contributors to Johnson's paper. The anti-imperialism of the Scots and Irish was fused with the internationalism of socialist women such as Pankhurst, and this broadening outlook

unified, rather than counter-posed different political interests, such as adult and women's suffrage.

As cosy as the IWFL/ILP alliance sounds on paper, this did not imply that all Irish socialist women likewise tactically prioritised limited women's suffrage. Some socialist minded nationalist feminists, like Jacob, who although in common with limited suffrage supporters prioritised access to political power, could not demand the vote from an English parliament. She expressed this tactical conflict by articulating her preference for working through mixed sex organisations at an IWFL meeting in 1913, but went some way towards attempting to refine and redefine her position afterwards in her diary by recording her wish for a nationalist women's franchise organisation (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/24, March 1913: 248-251). Jacob's conflict arose not from which claim to prioritise, but rather the basis upon which those demands were made; some nationalist-oriented socialist women did not want equal citizenship in an imperial state that they actively resisted on a daily basis. Hence, Jacob's analysis of her exclusion from political power rests on the fact that she was an *Irish* woman.

Likewise, there were similar differences with regard to the class basis of the women's suffrage demand which the IWFL's 1913 'Suffrage Catechism' makes explicit:

> Then you approve of restricting the vote to people of property?
> Not necessarily. Some suffragists do and some don't. What they are all agreed on is whatever entitles a man to vote should entitle a woman also – that she should not be forbidden to vote simply because she is woman (IWFL 'Suffrage Catechism', in Murphy 1989: 21-22).

As Murphy has suggested, the actual IWFL position was quite ambiguous, on the one hand containing a 'same-termist' perspective but on the other, in the final analysis, demanding the inclusion of women in any franchise extension; thus leaving their position open to subsequent shifts within socialist women's suffrage politics between strategic prioritisation of adult or of limited women's suffrage.

Carney was another Irish socialist woman who, whilst committed to women's political emancipation, ultimately could not prioritise it over class and national concerns. Influenced by Pankhurst's advocacy of the political emancipation of working women and stressing their autonomous and militant organisation, Carney's application of this strategy in Belfast suggests that such tactics demanded a much more complex negotiation of political claims within Ireland. By 1912 she had launched a campaign within the newly-established Irish Textile Workers' Union (ITWU) specifically demanding votes for working women. Carney held a series of meetings which brought together middle-class Dublin socialist suffragists and working-class Belfast women (Kleinrichert, 2007: 198-199). According to the Belfast ITWU organiser Ellen Grimley, Markievicz addressed the Belfast ILP in 1914 on 'Strikes as a revolutionary weapon', referring to Russia, the Baltics and the 1913 Lockout and the Workers' Republic (Woggon, 2000b: 50).

In 1916, however, Carney abandoned the suffrage campaign to join the ICA believing it to be: 'the militant embodiment of the working class, regardless of gender or political affinity, and more significant than a continued effort on the sole issue of the vote' (Kleinrichert, 2007: 200). Her positioning of suffrage as a single issue campaign, alongside her unequivocal prioritising of economic over political power in her foregrounding of working-class militancy, could easily be read as a straightforward dichotomy between sex and class which has characterised much of the existing historiography. Yet Carney's move from suffrage militant to class warrior was not actually that great; she emphasised the consistency of a multi-layered political identity in her emphasis on the ICA's inclusivity, of its broad appeal to both sex and nation under the banner of working-class revolution. Carney's rejection of the prioritisation of suffrage was part of a more complex attempt to integrate all three competing identities, of class, gender and nation. Although the exact configuration of priorities shifted, the refusal to accept any dichotomous political categorisations challenged existing paradigms through a consistent militant approach. Hence the need to examine the importance of militancy to Irish socialist feminists.

Militancy

The discreteness of the main social movements in early twentieth century Ireland was further eroded by developments in the style of activism increasingly adopted by the new generation of Irish suffragettes embodied in the IWFL. Sheehy Skeffington cites how the IWFL's militancy 'followed the example of the WFL and the Women's Suffrage and Political Union [WSPU]', both British militant groups (Ward, 2017: 311). The relationship between radical Irish and British suffragettes was therefore significant at the outset of the militant Irish campaign. Tiernan notes how Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested and later imprisoned for disrupting a Liberal Party meeting and spitting at a policeman. This incident anticipated a deep rift within the British suffrage movement, reflected in Gore-Booth's refusal to continue supporting her former protégé, Pankhurst, because she 'abhorred' militant actions (Tiernan, 2015: 12). Apart from a minority of pacifist-oriented feminists such as Gore-Booth and Duggan, the main faction of Irish socialist feminists in this study were drawn to a militant style of suffrage activism. However, their justification for using militant tactics was complex and indicated the various ways in which they were negotiating between socialism, feminism and nationalism.

Duggan's alternative position on suffrage was not only premised on a prioritisation of class claims but on her rejection of militancy from a pacifist feminist point of view. In her polemical pamphlet entitled, 'Education and Suffrage', she equates the WSPU with the Puritans, stressing the potential for the abuse of power through the stress on violence within militancy. Duggan argues that the emphasis on direct action undermined suffragists' attempts to counter stereotypes of women's supposed inferior intellectual capacity and thus their claim to equal citizenship ('Education and Suffrage', M.E. Duggan, HSSP MS 33, 620/4, n.d.). In her overriding concerns to refute sexist stereotypes, Duggan's argument operates within the existing binary concepts of a patriarchal society, emotional woman/intellectual man, it accepts the parameters of the debate, and in this sense it would seem that her tactics reflect an emphasis on reformist labour and feminist identity.

On the other hand, Irish socialist women who favoured a militant style did so because they were frustrated with the existing pace of change and used militancy as a means to completely circumvent the male-defined debate. Militancy allowed Irish socialist women to re-define the parameters of the suffrage debate by situating their activism within the politicising context of Irish radicalism. In arguing for the right to employ more militant methods of civil disobedience towards the prison authorities, such as hunger-striking or damaging property, Sheehy Skeffington suggested 'People were first "nervy" over the window breaking at first' (Letter from Sheehy Skeffington to IWFL Committee, HSSP, MS 201/5, c.1908-1912).

The advent of a revolutionary process did not come out of a vacuum; it was part of a complex integration of revolutionary thought which crossed international boundaries. Irish socialist women's tendency towards militancy must also be seen in relation to the main theoretical proponents of suffrage militancy within British socialism and feminism: the Glasgow ILP and the WSPU. As discussed, Irish socialist feminists were linked to the Glasgow ILP's *Forward*, which was distinctive for its sympathy towards the militant suffrage movement (Hannam and Hunt, 2002:112-113).

However, Irish socialist women were careful to distil this tactic through an Irish lens, ensuring that the expression of suffrage militancy in Ireland was more nuanced, reflecting the more complex negotiation of political identities at work. During her imprisonment in Mountjoy for militant activism, Sheehy Skeffington expressed political solidarity with 'other suffragist prisoners', the hunger-striking English WSPU members, imprisoned in Ireland for an attempted assault on Edward Carson, on the basis of their right to engage in militancy:

> Personally I may say (& I am not alone in the matter) I cannot undertake to continue in enjoyment of my first-class privileges, hard won as they are, if hunger-strike and forcible feeding are being resorted to in case of other suffragist prisoners… (Letter from Sheehy Skeffington to IWFL Committee, HSSP MS 201/5, c.1908-1912).

At the same time, Sheehy Skeffington was careful to assert the IWFL's independence by qualifying its window breaking activism as less 'advanced' and 'extreme' than the WSPU's militancy, which she claimed amounted to 'guerrilla warfare'. This statement appears incongruous when we bring to mind Sheehy Skeffington's later support for the guerrilla war carried by radical Irish republicans in pre-independence Ireland, but arguably reflects the shifting process of political identification in a very fluid pre-war political environment. Sheehy Skeffington's justification for militancy was complex; she attempted to integrate feminist, nationalist, as well as socialist perspectives. For instance, she represented IWFL 'associations with the ILP' in the context of the 'rebels' and 'extreme types' Louise Michel (the French anarchist active in the 1871 Paris Commune) and Mary Wollstonecraft. In doing so, Sheehy Skeffington was drawing on prior revolutionary feminist and libertarian socialist claims to militancy which pre-dated the association between militancy with the WSPU in the early twentieth century (HSSP, MS 41, 201/5, c.1912). She repeated these claims to the 'new militancy' as revolutionary – those suffragettes who engaged in random acts of violence in order to highlight the dysfunction of a society which refused to enfranchise half of its population. If society would not meet the demands of 'passive militants', the only victims of which were the suffragettes themselves, then 'society as at present constituted must go' (Ward, 2017: 83). By contextualising the IWFL within a historic socialist and feminist militant heritage, Sheehy Skeffington was able to make an authentic claim to militant feminism independent of the WSPU and balance her nationalist credentials.

From outside of the suffrage movement, Markievicz made the same appeal to militant suffragism, but based it on quite different claims. By 1917 while imprisoned in Aylesbury she sought to disassociate herself from her participation in the Sligo Women's Suffrage Association in the late 1890s on the basis of its constitutional style:

> Notices of motion about rubbish taking the place of the divine inspiration of the moment, and then all that twaddle about amendments and addenda and procedure of every kind… (Letter from Markievicz to Gore-Booth, 9 June 1917, in Roper, ed., 1934: 164).

Resorting to stereotype, Markievicz portrayed constitutionalism as 'English', and the militant spirit, the 'divine inspiration of the moment', as almost instinctively coming to the Irish (Roper, ed., 1934: 164). This was a less subtle attempt than that employed by Sheehy Skeffington to base claims of militancy on national identity. However, as ever with Markievicz it is impossible to take any one of her statements in isolation because her political outlook was constantly evolving.

Whilst the contested nature of suffrage militancy allowed for the continual re-negotiation of Irish women's relationship to revolutionary feminism, we can see a consistent libertarian concern developing within Irish socialist feminists' confrontations with the State and experiences of prison. Sheehy Skeffington represented the association between IWFL militancy and ILPI Dublin branch within a civil liberties context. She prefaces her speaking notes on 'Citizenship of Women' by referring to the pursuit of 'free speech' with 'Mr Connolly' ('Citizenship of Women', Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41,201/5). Sheehy Skeffington states the Irish socialist suffragettes' determination to deliberately confront the State in defence of free speech:

> We all trust that no fixtures will be postponed & we are all of the opinion that the abandonment of the Park meeting was a mistake. We are pleased, therefore, that there is to be no further alteration in programme for open-air meetings. If the police stop them that is quite another matter (Letter from Sheehy Skeffington to the IWFL Committee, HSSP, MS 201/5, c.1908-1912).

Describing herself as 'Late of Mountjoy', the prison experiences of Sheehy Skeffington become the central theme in her militant suffrage narrative in 'Citizenship of Women'. The pre-amble to the dramatic highpoint of her militant experience depicts the literal incarceration of the female population as symbolic of women's wider subjugation by the patriarchal State 'Women as a law-breaker, 2000 women as prisoners'. The militant campaign transforms woman as victim into woman as 'law-breaker', as an act of defiance and self-liberation. Thus, we are not surprised to find

her account of 'prison experiences' spun positively, citing the 'comradeship' and 'prison a liberal education'. Imprisonment acted as a political epiphany for American anarchist-feminists such as Goldman, transforming them into the staunchest defenders of civil liberties (Wexler, 1984: 79). So the spectre of State coercion, of hunger-strike and force feeding, radicalised Irish socialist feminists in an emphatically anti-authoritarian direction, 'Prize liberty only when you have lost it…' ('Citizenship of Women', Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 201/5, c.1908-1912). This last statement about the educative potential of prison is indicative of Sheehy Skeffington's approach to disenfranchisement more generally, which she described as a 'symbol' of women's oppression. She emphasised how the use of militancy by Irish socialist women was more concerned with attempting to educate women in the limits of their freedom and convert them to a revolutionary form of feminism ('Citizenship of Women', Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41, 201/5).

Lockout

Any discussion of converging political philosophies under the banner of militancy would be incomplete without exploring the relationship between suffragettes and the 1913 Dublin Lockout, which had long-term repercussions for the strategic direction of both the Irish and British suffrage campaigns. The Lockout was firstly about economic power, the militant defence by Dublin working class of their right to organise as workers. Yet, the involvement of both Irish and British socialist suffragists hinted at ways in which the Lockout was emblematic of the complex interaction of the economic *and* political exclusion of diverse groups. The Lockout represented a key moment where Irish socialist feminists had the opportunity to negotiate the class and gender claims that were central to their political identity.

Other responses incorporated an economic perspective within a political campaign prompted by the links between Irish and British socialist suffragettes. British socialist suffragettes understood the implications of a simultaneous Home Rule crisis for the British suffrage campaign, with the IPP forming an important voting bloc in the British parliament which had prevented women's suffrage. This was recognised by

Sheehy Skeffington who took the opportunity to send an IWFL fundraising appeal in 1913 to Despard, who responds:

> You will know that I am much interested in all you are doing…I will help you a little next year, but I can not tell for certain…The need of the Dublin workers, especially the children, has appealed to my Irish feelings, I have sent help through the Daily Herald (Despard to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33, 603/20, 31 October 1913).

The tug between class, gender and nation is clearly apparent in Despard's letter to Sheehy Skeffington, and on this occasion, Despard is compelled by the urgency of the crisis to unify class and nation claims, rather than suffrage. Despard's emphasis on the exceptional character of the Lockout and acknowledgement of how her shifting priorities were contingent upon political circumstance is indicative of the fluid pre-war political space where identities were continually open to re-negotiation.

A subsequent re-configuration of political identification amongst British and Irish socialist suffragists who agitated as such around the Lockout was to integrate organising for both economic and political power, forming an alliance between militant labour and militant suffrage. Reminiscing in 1941, Sheehy Skeffington acknowledged the importance of this shift: '1913 saw Lansbury, Nevinson, Dora Montefiore, Despard, the Pankhursts and Pethwick Lawrences among our speakers' (Ward, 2017: 79). This alliance was, 'Drawing rebel forces together,' with Frank Sheehy Skeffington volunteering for a fortnight for Lansbury's unsuccessful election campaign in Bow and Bromley (Ward, 2017: 79). Pankhurst and Despard were to the fore in organising a mass meeting at the Royal Albert Hall, London in November 1913 to support the locked-out Irish workers, sharing a platform with Irish socialist suffragists Connolly and Francis Sheehy Skeffington (Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 306, Crawford, 2003: 184). The mass meeting precipitated a split within the WSPU over Pankhurst's alliance with militant labour, after which she departed to form the ELFS and advocated the autonomous and militant organisation of working women within the suffrage campaign.

It was after this meeting that both Connolly and Francis Sheehy Skeffington began to advocate Pankhurst's tactic of an alliance between working women and militant suffragists in Ireland. Sheehy Skeffington remarked in 1914 on Pankhurst's tactic of an alliance with militant labour: 'Ultimately your strength in Belfast will come from an alliance – open or tacit – with militant labour. Pankhurst's policy is, I am satisfied, the right one for industrial centres' (Owens, 1984: 88–89). Several leading figures within British socialist suffragism lent their weight to the IWFL campaign in early 1914 in the light of their active support for the locked-out workers in Dublin. Lansbury, founder editor of the *Daily Herald*, which had spearheaded the British socialist response to the Lockout, spoke to the IWFL on women's suffrage and Home Rule in March (IWFL handbill, HSSP, MS 33, 604/4, 24 March 1914). Sheehy Skeffington engaged the British WFL activist, Pethwick Lawrence, to deliver a 'Votes for Women' talk to the IWFL. Irish labour leader William O'Brien connected her presence at the IWFL meeting to her support for militant labour during the Dublin Lockout:

> Your speaker tonight has a special claim to our support because of the practical sympathy which she displayed during the recent Dublin dispute…Apart from that Mrs Lawrence is one of the foremost fighters in the battle for women's emancipation, and as organised labour in Ireland has on many occasions stressed its approval of the aims of your movement…. (Letter from O'Brien to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS33, 604, 2 August 1914).

Irish socialist feminists allied themselves with British socialist suffragists who also stressed the nuances within gender identity and were able to broaden out the suffrage agenda to incorporate economic questions. This inclusive internationalising framework facilitated an alliance between militant suffrage and labour, allowing socialist women to evade the assumed dichotomous relationship between class and gender, regardless of their national identity. Labour leaders, such as Larkin, suspected that if middle-class women were given the vote they might use it against working-class men.

The First World War and Suffrage

The outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 witnessed the consolidation of a gendered perspective that was soldered to other claims, and shared by the IWFL and the British socialist suffragists who had broken with the WSPU. The ELFS's deputation to Prime Minster Asquith in June 1914 signalled that those with a broader suffrage position might be heard more successfully than those pursuing a limited suffrage agenda; after all the Liberal Asquith's opposition to female suffrage was based on his fear that enfranchised middle-class women would vote conservative. Despard records how the ELFS deputation signified this pivotal split in the suffrage movement which had occurred and its political impact: '…Asquith would see the East End deputation. Strange! But will it effect anything? (Diary entry, CDD, D/2479/1/2, 19 June 1914). This change had an important consequence for the Irish campaign, for if working-class women could make claims, so could Irish women raise their specific claims to the vote. In her 20 June 1914 *Irish Citizen* article, 'Two deputations', Sheehy Skeffington made common cause between the Irish and ELFS deputations. In particular, she details the violence used by mounted police against the working women and men from the East End to disrupt their demonstration. In the same article, Sheehy Skeffington proceeds to describe the Irish deputations' invitation by the United Suffragettes to address 'an indignation meeting' where they were able to make: 'a strong protest against the treatment, by Mr Asquith and Mr Redmond, of the deputation who had come from Ireland for the purpose of pleading with them for Home Rule for Irish Women' (Ward, 2017: 92).

Yet in the immediate weeks after Britain's declaration of war on Germany, Sheehy Skeffington wrote an article which cast doubt on the viability of any such alliance between Irish militants and British socialist suffragettes. In her 15 August 1914 *Irish Citizen* article entitled, 'Duty of Suffragettes', her classed use of language suggests a disingenuous attitude towards her own and other radical women's prior community organising and solidarity with working women:

> How often have we been invited to drop our troublesome propaganda to show our fitness for citizenship by 'being good', by slumming, by playing at municipal reform, by devoting ourselves to poor law work, by any and every imaginable side-issues. Anything but votes for women (Ward, 2017: 105).

This article has been more widely cited for Sheehy Skeffington's call to arms for Irish suffragettes 'not to abandon propaganda, to roll up the suffrage map of Europe' during war time. This has been viewed as a radical feminist and anti-war position, and yet it stressed how war revealed the limitations in Sheehy Skeffington's socialist suffrage politics in the counter-posing of working class and feminist demands.

The article also highlights the dissonance between polemical writing and the actual everyday activist experiences of Irish socialist women evidenced through more biographical evidence, the latter of which displays a more consistent alliance with British socialist feminists. For instance, in the immediate weeks before war was announced, Pankhurst requested an article from Sheehy Skeffington on a Dublin shooting from a 'women's perspective' (Letter from Pankhurst, HSSP, MS 33, 604/5, c.1914). In the same month as hostilities broke out, Pankhurst wrote to Sheehy Skeffington that a proposed rent strike had to be postponed as 'our people are not ready for it yet, but of course we still go on with suffrage work'. She continues, 'I am interested in what Mr Devlin says I will write you again about that' (Letter from Pankhurst to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33, 604/5, 24 August 1914). It was a shared strategic decision to continue with the women's suffrage campaign during the war exemplified this inclusive women-centred perspective. The anti-war stance of the ELFS and their continued and broadening suffrage work are directly linked here to multiple permutations of gendered relations; their proposed rent strike cited a tactic which allowed socialist women to gender class politics, and the reference to the IWFL's lobbying of the Irish nationalist leader suggests a gendered anti-imperialist perspective.

It is also worth noting that by November 1914, Sheehy Skeffington's class politics returned in her critique of 'unskilled duchesses and influential ladies', who

volunteered in hospitals out of a sense of patriotic duty, but 'usurp the functions of the skilled workers'. In the *Irish Citizen* article, 'Emotional Nursing', Sheehy Skeffington urged the nurses 'to organise and to insist on their profession being recognised' (Ward, 2017: 108).

The early years of the conflict reflect something of a consensus around this widening women's suffrage position to include links to Irish national and/or class claims. Jacob recorded how the Sheehy Skeffingtons persuaded her to attend a proposed Pankhurst meeting, to take place in Dublin during March 1915, protesting the potential exclusion of women from war employment by the 1915 War Munitions Act (Lane, 2010: 72). In July ELFS organiser O'Callaghan wrote to Sheehy Skeffington expressing 'how nice it would be to be more in touch with the 'Irish Citizen' (Letter from O'Callaghan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS33,604/13, 18 July 1915). In September, Lynch accepted Sheehy Skeffington's request to represent the IWFL at a WSPU meeting, whilst Gore-Booth offered to speak in Ireland for the IWFL: '…as the war has become so appalling – if you are still holding outdoor meetings when I come up as I have settled on the 2nd Sept. I would [unreadable] come to your meeting & if you want an extra speaker, speak…' (Letter from Lynch to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,604/10, 27 September 1915; Letter from Gore-Booth to Sheehy Skeffington, EGB, MS 22,666, n.d.). The claims of women, class and Ireland were all being tried out and interwoven as the platforms from which these political identities were advanced continually shifted, making for a complex and rich synthesis of ideas.

As the war progressed, tensions between whether to emphasise women's or adult suffrage within the British suffrage movement came to the fore once more, with the potential to de-stablilise the short-lived consensus around an expansive women's suffrage position. Pankhurst invited the IWFL to a conference of suffrage societies to be held in January 1916 (Circular TS letter from Pankhurst, HSSP, MS 33,604/15, 26 December 1915). Despard records Pankhurst's attempts at this conference to steer those suffrage societies who continued campaigning during the war towards an adult suffrage rhetoric: 'adultists and same termers. The A[dult] S[uffragists] led by East London suffr [*sic*] failed to carry their resolution' (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/3, 21

January 1916). It is most likely that Despard is referring here to a meeting which concluded a week of suffrage activism at the January 1916 Labour Party Conference. Although the meeting called for the inclusion of women in any franchise extension, the rhetoric used in agitation around the conference by some socialist women drew on ideas of universal or 'human suffrage' (Hannam and Hunt, 2002: 123). Socialist women sought to ensure that the class perspective of the adult suffrage position was not exclusive and deliberately organised under a more universal suffrage banner, but on their own terms by insisting that women's suffrage was integral to the adult suffrage claim. Despard's activism expresses this strategy, confessing, 'I have come to feel that the only way is adult suffrage' and describing a 'lively debate' in the WFL as to whether to co-operate with the adult suffrage campaign, for which she secured agreement, but only 'with the resolution that we should adhere to our original resolution. No more votes for men, unless women are included' (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/1, 14, 21, January, 1 April, 17, 25, 27 August, 1 September 1916).

Although we have no record of Irish socialist women's attendance at this conference, their activism at this time suggests that their position, which incorporated their insistence on the inclusion of women in any extension of the franchise, was framed alongside adult suffrage rhetoric, and was therefore consistent with the general strategy of some British socialist women. This is reflected in Despard's record of a WFL committee meeting, the agenda of which acknowledged Irish socialist women's shared claims for the suffrage demand:

> Talk about the Annual National Council. Ireland's representation and a resolution by S. Pankhurst that we should object to higher age for women. Most of us thought it unwise to suggest that it could be done (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/3, 21 September 1916).

Irish socialist women within the IWFL shared the strategic emphasis of British socialist suffragists on both the insistence on sex as an integral basis for extending the franchise and a libertarian vision of the right to political representation for all. This strategic emphasis on sex within a universalising framework incorporated the often

competing claims of class and nation. An IWFL meeting notice for November 1916, advertising Despard speaking on 'Woman suffrage' under the auspices of the IWFL, confirms how this strategy allowed socialist women to transcend class and national divisions without compromising their gendered perspective (IWFL notice, HSSP, MS 33, 620).

A somewhat uneasy alliance of the IWFL, Cumann ma mBan and Sinn Féin women was tested during the 1918 General Election. This was a significant election for Irish suffragettes because of their new freedom to vote and stand as candidates with the passing of the 1918 Representation of the People Act. For socialist feminists, it was however complicated by the Labour-Sinn Féin election pact which saw Labour withdraw in deference to resolving the pressing national question. Sheehy Skeffington also cited what she perceived as Labour's 'reactionary attitude' to feminist questions as an additional reason why otherwise socialist-oriented women gravitated towards Sinn Féin (Ward, 2017: 22). In reality Sinn Féin was prompted into selecting Markievicz, Carney and Sheehy Skeffington as candidates for the 1918 election (although the latter declined to accept), after a concerted campaign by Cumann na mBan (Arrington, 2016: 172). Markievicz describes in relation to the 1918 election how socialist women were forced to choose between platforms:

> Hanna S could have been an M.P. if she had wanted to. A seat was offered her. She is not altogether an S.F. [Sinn Féiner] I think, and I know prefers to work from the Women's platform (Letter from Markievicz to Gore-Booth, 22 January 1919, Roper, ed.,1934: 192).

Although Markievicz was elected by a comfortable majority, this was allegedly due to the majority of the work being undertaken by the IWFL. Sheehy Skeffington and Meg Connery of the IWFL castigated Cumann na mBan for its 'dismal efforts' on behalf of its' own president. Sinn Féin offered little support to Carney, who ran on a highly radical 'Workers' Republic' platform and failed to secure the return of her deposit. The support of Belfast's 'most prominent republican feminists and socialists', including Marie Johnson, Milligan and Maeve Phelan of the more radical

Belfast Cumann na mBan, proved inadequate in the face of the conservatism of the constituents. Despite these disputes, Cumann na mBan's Jenny Wyse Power continued to urge co-operation based on their 'common desire' to see women elected to public bodies (Pašeta, 2013: 263-4).

Although the 1918 Representation of the People Act took the first step towards women's enfranchisement by according women over the age of 30 who met the property qualification the vote, it clearly did not meet the demands of socialist women who agitated for the extension of the franchise to all adult women and men. In Ireland, efforts to further extend the franchise to all women now also attracted Irish socialist women who had previously prioritised nationalism over suffrage before 1918, and there was a continued concern to maintain a broader women's position within the IWFL. Markievicz, having become the first woman elected to Westminster but refusing to take her seat as an abstentionist member of Sinn Féin, urged Sheehy Skeffington to read her copy of Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought* (Letter from Markievicz to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, 41,177/31, 26 June 1919). Sheehy Skeffington's October 1919 *Irish Citizen* article 'Our policy and our critics' appears to suggest she had followed Markievicz's advice. Referencing 'papers like the Woman's Dreadnought, edited by Pankhurst, became socialist', Sheehy Skeffington proceeds to align the *Irish Citizen* with the policy of the WFL's *Vote*:

> still continued its feminist and suffragist propaganda, and hopes to do so until **all** women have the vote equally with men and until women have secured the other rights that enfranchisement involves, of which the vote is but a small part and but a symbol (Ward, 2017: 182).

The emphasis on all women's enfranchisement is reminiscent of the acceptance of a more inclusive suffrage position amongst Sheehy Skeffington's British socialist allies such as Despard and Pankhurst. The perception of the vote as a means to secure wider 'social, economic and political' reform for women reflects an important shift here in the IWFL's position towards a more broadening feminism.

We see this perspective at work in Sheehy Skeffington's endorsement in her unpublished memoirs of her own and fellow feminists' election to the Dublin City Corporation in January 1920, where she cites how 'these women did good service in their representative capacity' (Ward, 2017: 27). In what appears to be a retraction of her earlier war-time polemic which dismissed women's local political participation as a distraction from the vote and as, 'playing at municipal reform', Sheehy Skeffington regrets that her career in public representation was only 'put to an end by circumstance' (Ward, 2017: 27). Sheehy Skeffington's ability to overcome tensions within her suffrage politics was important. Irish socialist women's activism at a municipal level was one of the many ways in which they provided a persistent feminist presence in an adverse political climate after the foundation of the Free State.

Later that year Sheehy Skeffington had an appointment with Pankhurst at the Workers' Suffrage Federation (WSF) (Letter from Alison Lieberston, WSF, to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS22,691, ii, 17 May 1920). Subsequently, Markievicz advocated Pankhurst's concern to eradicate the age qualification in debates about extending the franchise within the newly established Irish Free State of 1922:

> We bought in a bill to enfranchise women under 30. Griffith turned it down[;] quite spontaneously the demand arose here – women everywhere through the country suddenly finding their positions to be humiliating & it was the fight that did it! (Letter from Markievicz to Gore-Booth, EGB, MS 21, 816, n.d.).

Likewise, Lynn noted, 'Griffith v insolent to women deputies re. adult suffrage, he doesn't do his side any good that way' and 'I.R.A. convention has decided no elections till adult suffrage' (Diary entries, KLD, KL/3/1, 26 February, 22 March 1922). So, after 1918 it appears that Irish socialist women who remained outside of the women's movement did maintain a gendered critique of a rapidly de-colonising nation and argued for an inclusive women's suffrage position within a nationalist framework. What is distinctive about this political claim is the broader socialist framework within which they demanded full adult suffrage applied to all women regardless of age. Specifically, the age question was concurrent with Pankhurst's

universalising campaign to politically emancipate all working-class women and was secured with earlier success within a de-colonising context than on mainland Britain. Ironically, once the vote had been won for all Irish women over 21 years of age with the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, the political space available to Irish socialist women was more contained. The women's movement became diffused without the focus of the suffrage campaign, the political environment became more conservative as the Catholic influenced Cumann na nGaedheal government took power and the SPI was restarted and infiltrated by communist republicans.

Viewing the Irish women's suffrage movement through the prism of its socialist feminist dynamic indicates that activists in reality adopted a wider range of suffrage positions than has previously been assumed. Although the claims upon which Irish socialist feminists based their suffrage demands shifted, we see variations of limited women's and adult suffrage variously fused into a campaign specifically addressing *Irish* women's disenfranchisement. The suffrage issue provided an overarching cause through which shifting class, national or gender identities could be balanced and was largely an inclusive and pluralistic platform from a gender perspective. Irish socialist women were able to make common cause between diverse groups of women, from the locked-out women workers in Belfast, to the women workers of East London.

This intense and chaotic political environment both magnified the pressure on Irish socialist feminists to choose between sex and nation, or sex and class, and conform to the established ideological binaries of the masculinised public sphere. Sheehy Skeffington's immediate response to the outbreak of the First World War indicates the moments when external pressures highlighted the potential limits of Irish women's radicalism through a privileging of sex interests above those of class or nation. However, this chapter concludes that despite these momentary instabilities, Irish socialist feminists were able to exploit this fluid environment to create varied and shifting ways of connecting suffrage with socialism. In particular, an alliance between the revolutionary counterculture (both at home in Ireland and with British socialist feminists) and feminism provided a creative nexus through which competing

claims could be balanced. Militancy therefore took on a specific importance within the explosive political environment of pre-war Ireland.

In a more unpromising post-independence political environment, Irish socialist women were forced to adopt a broader humanitarian political perspective than the more tightly feminist focus of the suffrage campaign. As the formal boundaries of the women's movement contracted, the smaller direct-action oriented groups, such as the WPDL, would now become central to maintaining a feminist presence in the interwar years through both municipal politics, militancy at home and internationalism. Socialist women who had played a decisive part within the Irish suffrage campaign were now central to these women's groups which aimed to draw attention to the specific subordination of Irish women in relation to issues of nation or class. The long-term impact of Irish socialist women's engagement with the issue of suffrage therefore consolidated this broadening consensus, particularly in relation to internationalism, to which we now turn our attention.

Chapter Five: *'British Militarism As I Have Known It'*: Experiencing and Resisting Militarism

This chapter explores how socialist women variously experienced the violence of the revolutionary decade as it unfolded around them and how this influenced their politics. In many ways the activist lives of Irish socialist women were framed by the issue of physical force; from the police brutality of the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the First World War (1914-1918), the 1916 Rising, the 1917 Russian Revolution, to the War of Independence (1919-1921), and the Irish Civil War (1922-1923), the opening decades of the twentieth century were marred by prolonged and extreme episodes of organised violence. The issue of militarism, the civil power conferred on the military and its role in international conflict, was therefore unavoidable for Irish feminists as the struggle against British imperialism became more violent and directly impinged on their lives.

For socialist feminists the international situation provided additional context. Anti-militarism was an implicit component of the socialist critique of imperialism, understood as an alliance between capital and militarism. Yet at the heart of anti-militarism is the apparent paradox which has arguably obscured the contribution of radical Irish feminists to the revolutionary period. Anti-militarism, because it concedes that revolutionary violence is sometimes necessary to prevent the oppression of the weak, is strongly associated with the radical left. Militants and revolutionaries have emphasised the use of direct action or civil disobedience to defend the rights of the vulnerable and oppressed. There is a gendered implication to this paradox. Feminist pacifists emphasised women's supposedly essentially pacifist nature as mothers, and this stereotyping has been counter-posed with the idea of 'extreme' Irish republican women. Socialist feminists who were anti-war, yet supported revolution and use of direct action, did not fit into either convenient gender stereotype.

This chapter will explore the impact women's own experiences of violence had on negotiating tensions between essentialist pacifist and nationalist feminist positions in relation to violence. It begins with an appraisal of formative anti-militarism prior to

the outbreak of First World War through the militant organisations, Inghinidhe na hÉireann and the ICA, then follows with the heady mix of suffrage and anti-war activism, before examining how women's personal experience of violence during the 1916 Rising shaped their activism. The chapter concludes with an exploration of how Irish socialist women fashioned a feminist anti-militarism through the issue of prisoners, a long-standing issue of importance to radical women, in the context of Ireland's War of Independence and the Civil War.

Yet anti-militarism is a problematic lens through which to view Irish history. It sits outside of existing narratives of the revolutionary decade, which are essentially framed by militarism, a predominantly male experience of the era, and one which has arguably obscured the experiences and activism of women. In order to properly recover this lost history and move beyond the inadequate existing stereotypes of hysterical and extremist radical women, we can use the alternate lens of anti-militarism to reveal the diverse experiences of both Irish women and feminists. Historians of Irish feminism have argued for the importance of the distinctive local experience of Irish feminists, whilst understanding feminism as an international ideology and movement, with many parallels between national feminist movements (Murphy 1989, Pašeta 2013, Ryan 1997, Ward, 1997b). It has been contended that the distinctiveness of Irish feminist internationalism lies in a de-lineation between 'nationalist feminists', whose primary relationship was with the anti-colonial movement, and what Ward has termed 'essentialist feminists', who emphasised absolute feminist pacifism to the exclusion of all other causes (Ward, 1997b: 61). Despite an acknowledgement that there may have been nuances within essentialist and nationalist feminist positions, and of the importance of a wider 'political radicalism' to the latter perspective (Ward, 1991: 68), thus far it has not been clear what the impact of international socialism was on Irish feminism. We know that socialist feminists in other Western countries were highly engaged in anti-militarist activism (Bolt, 2004, Hannam and Hunt, 2002, Liddington and Norris, 1978), so it seems reasonable to assume that given the strong alliances Irish feminists had with left-leaning feminists in Britain and America in particular, that we would find evidence of socialist women's anti-militarist activism in Ireland too. Lane has

correctly observed that the Irish feminist peace movement attracted activists because of its 'holistic' appeal, namely, the interconnection of a number of strands of interrelated ideas: feminism, nationalism and internationalism (Lane, 2010: 151). However, two key aspects of this have been occluded to date: the role of socialism in mediating these interconnecting ideologies and what the diverse experiences of Irish socialist women reveals about Irish feminist internationalism. This chapter sets out to demonstrate that socialist feminists in fact forged a divergent form of feminist internationalism in Ireland, rooted in a gendering of socialist anti-militarism. It will be argued that this specifically Irish feminist anti-militarism provides a counter-narrative to the militarist focus of Irish history of the revolutionary period. It will thus illuminate the hidden history of Irish women's experiences of violence, and, of equal importance, will examine women not merely as passive victims of militarism, but also as agents in their own right through their resistance to militarist ideology and actions.

Pre-War Anti-Militarist Militancy

Although the atrocious impact of militarism on individual Irish activists was what galvanised Irish socialist feminists into more organised anti-militarist activism, this experiential impetus was prefaced by instances of anti-militarist activism that indicated a concern with civil liberties and the use of civil disobedience. These initial approaches were eventually synergised into a more cohesive anti-militarist framework in Sheehy Skeffington's extensive speaker tours of the United States.

Beresford Ellis has established that on the advent of the First World War, anti-militarist articles in the Irish radical press were markedly humanitarian in tone and were specifically concerned with how war impacted upon the civilian population and radicals. For example, in response to Padraic Pearse's glorification of war, Connolly remarked in his article 'Can warfare be civilized?' in *The Worker* of 30 January 1915*:* 'there is no such thing as humane or civilized war, citing, "the Socialist contention that all war is an atrocity" (Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 45).

This broader humanitarian socialist perspective is also behind Connolly's argument that war erodes basic human rights, such as civil liberties. Hence discussing military technology in 'Ballot, Bullets, or -?' from the October 1909 issue of the *International Socialist Review*, Connolly emphasised how militarism undermined civil liberties: 'the consecration of the flying machine to the cold task of holding in check the working class, and the making safe and profitable all sorts of attacks upon social and political rights' (Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 204). After the onset of the First World War, Connolly was more explicit that war or revolution as direct action may be necessary to free women or colonised populations, arguing in *The Worker*, 30 January 1915, that 'War may be forced upon a subject race or subject class to put an end to subjection of race, class or sex' (Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 45). This definition of war as waged against specific groups, including women, is fundamental to the gendered implications of Connolly's Irish anti-militarism. It defines women not only as part of the working class, but also implies feminists have a part to play in the anti-militarist movement. Anti-militarism was a concept which could be adopted by Irish socialist women to legitimise their participation as revolutionary socialists. Militant feminists were not merely victims of war, they were active participants in the 'war on war'; and this radical stance clearly distinguishes anti-militarism from a more so-called 'essentialist' pacifist feminist position.

Anti-militarist sentiment and activism were alive and well in the more radical feminist press, with Molony as editor of *Bean na hÉireann*, the paper of the feminist, separatist Inghinidhe na hÉireann, recording how it attracted other similarly-minded Irish activists, such as Markievicz 'who felt the need of something more active, revolutionary'. Molony emphasised how she joined the Inghinidhe na hÉireann specifically because of its open and direct opposition to British imperialism. In her 1949 statement to the BMH, she provides an account of their anti-recruitment campaign which continued up until the First World War (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH WS391: 8).

Initially in 1913, anti-militarist resistance by Irish socialist women was more of a community response, such as the setting up of soup kitchens and the 'Save the

Kiddies' scheme. Close allies of Irish feminists, including the left-wing British feminists, Pethwick Lawrence, Montefiore and Neal, formed a Committee during the 1913 Dublin Lockout to evacuate starving children temporarily to sympathetic socialist homes in Britain under what became known as the infamous 'Save the Kiddies' affair (the scheme was eventually thwarted by forceful clerical opposition and harassment). The British feminists were roundly denounced by male labour leaders, clerics and media outlets, but the scheme had a precedent in the 1911 textile strike in Lawrence, where community support provided to the wives and families of striking workers by American anarcho-syndicalist feminists was violently obstructed by clerics and the police. In 1913, the anti-militarist and international feminist intent of the three feminist activists was recognised by the Irish feminists by an invitation to speak at the IWFL in May 1914 (IWFL correspondence, HSSP, MS 33,604/3, 6 September 1914, MS 33, 604/5, 14 May 1914).

In the immediate aftermath of the Lockout Carney also extended the definition of locked-out worker to women by organising women mill workers into trade unions in Belfast, fundraising for the locked-out workers, and finding housing for the women workers who had moved to Belfast from Dublin (Cullen Owens, 1983: 36; Kleinrichert, 2007: 199). So whilst radical women found a place for themselves as community activists, the violence and intimidation many female activists experienced at first-hand during the Lockout convinced them that only through a total transformation of society would they be safe from British militarism. Molony articulates this shift: 'After the 1913 strike had ended, there was a social and intellectual revolution. The Citizen Army was founded and the volunteers came into being soon after' (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 12). Thus, socialist women became highly visible in the ICA once it transformed into a revolutionary and military organisation in 1914. Whilst Molony noted the centrality of the ICA to this revolutionary period, it also represented an important watershed in the revolutionary identification of Irish socialist women. Women were able to participate in the ICA on equal terms with men through direct action: 'Connolly – staunch feminist that he was – was more than anxious to welcome women into the

ranks on equal terms as men' (Newsinger, 2004: 114; Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, MS391: 14).

Suffrage and Opposing the First World War

With the onset of war, Irish militants in the IWFL were to the fore in devising a radical response. An *Irish Citizen* poster defiantly proclaiming 'The Irish Citizen, August 15, 1914 – One Penny, 'Votes for Women NOW Damn your war!', is archived alongside a card for 'The campaign for the renunciation of war and for disarmament' in Sheehy Skeffington's papers (IWFL handbills, HSSP, MS 41,201/5, Ward, 2017: 100). Significantly, and in line with Connolly's socialist anti-militarist ideas, Sheehy Skeffington premised her anti-militarist arguments on the vulnerability of impoverished women and children. In her 15 August 1914 *Irish Citizen* article, 'Duty of Suffragettes', she argued that women demanded a political voice because it was they who 'faced starvation at home for themselves and their children' (Ward, 2017:104).

The IWFL's continuation of suffrage campaigning as an anti-militarist stance prefaced British socialist feminists' responses to the war. Despard sought to place the WFL's suffrage activism within a broader radical anti-war movement: 'On to office saw Mrs Stephens and found Mrs S Florence there. Had a talk with her about the idea of internationalism being pushed through the women's movement' (Diary entry, CDD, D/2479/1/2, 23 September 1914). The IWFL's broadening internationalist politics were acknowledged through its invitation to send delegates to the May 1915 International Women's Conference in The Hague, announced in the *Irish Citizen* as an opportunity to represent its resolution on 'small nations and peaceful decolonization' (*Irish Citizen* article, HSS MS 33,604/15A, c.1915). Although in the event only Louie Bennett succeeded in obtaining a passport, the arrangements and aftermath of the conference cemented relations between Irish and British socialist feminists.

Sheehy Skeffington was forced to defend the IWFL's militant position of continuing suffrage campaigning and opposition to the war in her July 1915 letter to the *Irish*

Citizen, 'The IWFL and the war'. In the letter she contrasts the civil disobedience of the Irish suffragettes, consistent with her husband Francis' passive resistance ideas, with militarism: 'We may ask women, too, to die for suffrage: we do not ask them to kill for it. That is the main and vital difference between the militant and the militarist ideal' (Ward, 2017: 122). In making this delineation, Sheehy Skeffington establishes the beginnings of an anti-militarist critique, but stops short of advancing a more socialist emphasis on the use of physical force to defend the working class, or in revolutionary struggles.

A closer alliance with British socialist feminists and her own personal experiences of British militarism would challenge Sheehy Skeffington's passive resistance and extend it in a more socialist anti-militarist direction. In October 1915 Mrs Helena Swanick, the noted British socialist feminist and anti-militarist, spoke at an IWFL meeting on 'The women people', evoking language more in line with the adult suffrage campaign (IWFL meeting notice, HSSP, MS33, 620/14). A year later Sheehy Skeffington tried to encourage the London based Lynch, an organiser in Pankhurst's ELFS, to establish an Irish branch of the Women's Peace and Freedom League (WPFL) in London (HSSP, Lynch to Sheehy Skeffington, MS33,604/13, 9 November 1915).

By December 1915, the closer relationship between radical left-wing Irish and British suffragettes over the issue of anti-militarism was reflected in an invitation from Pankhurst to a conference of women's suffrage societies to be held in early 1916 (Letter from Pankhurst to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS33,604/14, 16 December 1915). Yet this conference had a much wider significance beyond whether to continue with activism during the war; the conference proceedings in Sheehy Skeffington's archive reveal the conference to have been a key stage in the socialist feminist definition of anti-militarism. Sheehy Skeffington's papers confirm left-wing Irish suffragettes were fully aware of the developments amongst their like-minded British counterparts. Her archive contains speeches from the conference made by close allies of Irish feminists, including the left-wing British feminist Pethwick Lawrence, a member of the 'Save the Kiddies' Committee during the 1913 Dublin Lockout. The

vision of new, anti-militarist and internationalist world order articulated by Pethwick-Lawrence at the 1916 Conference of Suffrage Societies reflected the increasingly politicised framework and alliances within which radical Irish as well as British feminist activists were situating their activism:

> After the war, there would be a tremendous awakening of the democratic forces, but the element which desires coercion in the industrial field, the strengthening of the rights of privilege and property, and the extension of military systems, would also be striving to attain a greater power. The women would have to decide which side they should take. If the present leaders of the suffrage movement would do so they should link up the question of votes for women with the Great People's Charter of Liberties, which would be fought for after the war (TS Minutes of Conference of Suffrage Societies, Essex Hall, London, HSSP, MS33, 604/15, 21 January 1916,).

There are strong echoes here of the 'broadening' feminist consciousness described by Rowbotham which was taking shape within the international women's movement at this time (Rowbotham, 2010: 209-211). There is the appropriation of state-of-the-art political critiques, referencing Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxembourg's new theories of the industrial military complex within an explicitly international feminist framework, and then a melding of these two elements together with a more libertarian socialist emphasis on civil liberties and strong democracy. Yet Pethwick Lawrence's vision of this new politics is a departure from Lenin and Luxembourg's more orthodox Marxism. Presciently anticipating the rise of authoritarianism which would characterise the interwar period, she demonstrates highly libertarian socialist concerns: 'after the war the supreme issue would be liberty and democracy versus compulsion and autocracy. The movement for liberty was led by men because they had already very large organisations; could the women's movement be linked up with that?' (TS Minutes of Conference of Suffrage Societies, Essex Hall London, HSSP, MS33, 604/15, 21 January 1916). So Pethwick Lawrence's speech discussed the process she saw happening around her: how women's experiences of militarism would precipitate an 'awakening' or politicisation, just as they were imminently and explosively about to a few short months later in Dublin.

The 1916 Rising and Women's Personal Experiences of Violence

The most immediate impact of the Rising on the lives of socialist women who fought was imprisonment and this became a politicising experience which drove campaigning around political prisoners' rights and support for the families of executed or incarcerated republicans. Cumann na mBan was 'especially active in this area' and provided the main impetus for several new groups which supported and campaigned on behalf of prisoners and their dependents. The issue of prisoners would be a persistent concern for socialist women, in and outside of Cumann na mBan, throughout the revolutionary period and in opposition to the founding of the Free State. Cumann na mBan's Kathleen Clarke initiated the Irish Republican Prisoners' Defence Fund, which was soon changed to the less republican title of the Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund (IVDF), and distributed money to women who did not yet know the fate of their relations in the immediate aftermath of the Rising (Pašeta, 2013:199). Jacob, for instance, collected for the IVDF in Waterford (Paseta, 2013: 206).

Cumman na mBan women also had a 'strong presence' in the more broadly based Irish National Aid Association (INNA), which quickly overtook the IVDF's efforts and the two organisations were eventually amalgamated in August 1916 as the Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents' Fund (INAAVDF). A Ladies' Committee visited families in need and the ICA had its own female district officer, suggesting a level of co-operation amongst republican women on the issue of prisoners from an early stage (Pašeta, 2013: 209). According to Pašeta, Cumman na mBan, under the auspices of the INAAVDF, were also adept at fundraising and campaigning abroad, sending Margaret Skinnider, Min Ryan and Nellie Gifford on a US tour. Although she distanced herself from Cumann na mBan publically because she was strongly opposed to what she considered their auxiliary status, Sheehy Skeffington conveyed a message to President Wilson on their behalf during her own speaking tour of 1916-17 (Paseta, 2013:210). This unlikely alliance was made possible because of the radicalising impact the Rising had at a personal level for socialist women like Sheehy Skeffington.

Alongside the execution of fellow socialist and injured revolutionary Connolly, the murder of Francis Sheehy Skeffington – shot by a deranged British officer as he attempted to organise a citizens' militia to prevent looting and assist the injured on both sides – appeared to epitomise the anti-militarist critique of British imperialism during the 1916 Rising. Both men were feminists and close friends of many Irish socialist women, so their loss personalised the conflict. It is arguably these women's direct experiences of violence which further radicalised and gendered their anti-militarist critiques. In particular, Gore-Booth relates the experiences of Sheehy Skeffington and her young son during the Rising, capturing the mood of fear and underlying threat of sexual violence experienced by the civilian population and women in particular:

> Both she & her husband were strong pacifists, and possessed no weapons, but the windows of the room in which we sat were still broken by the volley fired into it by soldiers when there was no one in the house but herself & her little boy of nine (Holograph account by Gore-Booth of visit to Dublin after Easter Rising, EGB, MS21,815, May 1916).

Gore-Booth noted how whilst the fate of the Sheehy Skeffingtons during the 1916 Rising exemplified a more pacifist spirit, it also spoke of the huge power differential between the unarmed and the might of the military authorities. The vulnerability of the women and children in Gore-Booth's account is clearly evoked and perhaps also suggests why most Irish socialist feminists rejected absolute pacifism, instead adopting a more militant brand of anti-militarism influenced by their experiences as women of violence during the revolution. So whilst left-wing feminists were clearly inspired by Francis Sheehy Skeffington's radical use of civil disobedience in countering militarism, they also held that vulnerable groups had a right to defend themselves, an idea rooted in socialist anti-militarist ideas of a war being waged against the marginalised, be they subject classes, races or sexes. Molony, in her own words an 'extreme militant', was one of many radical Irish feminists clearly inspired by the pacifist activism of Francis Sheehy Skeffington, whom she described in her witness statement to the BMH as 'the fighting pacifist' because of his radical use of civil disobedience in response to British militarism. Yet Molony is careful to

distinguish Francis Sheehy Skeffington's non-resistance from her own support for revolutionary violence: 'he believed one had to suffer for peace not to inflict peace, but to suffer peace…he said "'I am willing to die for Ireland, but not to kill for Ireland…"' (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, WS391: 42). Jacob captures the problem Irish socialist women had with the absolute pacifist position: 'Christ was only bearing oppression himself, he was not standing by while the weak were massacred & injured' (Diary entry, RJD, MS32,582, 33 January 1918: 44-46). Perhaps this explains why Sheehy Skeffington would depart from her husband's pacifism and define militarism as: 'an institutionalised response by authority to neutralise challenges to its power. They were not opposed to the weak using whatever power was at their disposal to win their battle' (Ward, 1997: 67-8). Amongst the Irish socialist women, it was Sheehy Skeffington who was one of those most personally affected by the violence of the 1916 Rising and who most publically channelled this traumatic experience into a form of women's anti-militarist resistance.

'British Militarism as I Have Known It' (Sheehy Skeffington, 1917)

> [W]e expect to discuss compulsory military training a bill on which is now before the United States Congress…In view of the fact, Lloyd-George has just announced, according to the cables, that conscription is going to be imposed on Ireland, why can you not[,] provided you are in the city[,] drop in in the course of the evening and give a little insight into militarism in Ireland as you know it? (Letter from Socialist Party, District of Columbia, Washington DC to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33, 605/17, 10 April 1918).

Sheehy Skeffington embarked on a speaking tour of the United States during 1917 after the failure of her campaign to hold the British military authorities to account for her husband's murder. She gave over 250 lectures from 6 January 1917 which were initially entitled, 'British Militarism As I Have Known It' and was published as a pamphlet that year. Sheehy Skeffington changed her emphasis to call for the recognition of the Irish republic as a small nation at the Peace Conference to follow the end of the war. The pamphlet *Impressions of Sinn Féin in America* was not

published until 1919 due to wartime censorship, but captured the deeply biographical nature of her tour (Ward, 2017: 143-4). It drew on her own personal experience of war atrocities and widowhood, and situated the specific experience of women during the 1916 Rising within a socialist and anti-militarist context. For instance, Sheehy Skeffington used the pamphlet to highlight the refusal of passports to the British socialist feminists Pethwick-Lawrence and Margaret Bondfield who intended to campaign with the American suffragists and attend Labour Congress respectively, as well as the censorship of the British and Irish radical press in North America. Furthermore, she anticipated the lifting of wartime censorship of the American press and its rigid application in Great Britain, so that 'it will be more and more possible for the Progressive element in all countries to get in touch with one another' (Ward, 2017: 152).

According to Ward, Sheehy Skeffington's lecture tour was 'widely praised by American radicals and the Irish American Community' (Ward, 2017: 143). Indeed, Sheehy Skeffington confirms in *Impressions of Sinn Féin in America* that much of her anti-militarist propaganda was conducted under the auspices of women's, socialist and anti-war groups in the United States, such as the Socialist Party of Columbia, Washington DC (HSSP, MS 33,617 9(1), 1919: 6, 14-15, 18). It seems certain her entry into the American anti-militarist movement was facilitated through her feminist contacts, such as Alice Paul, the socialist and pacifist, whom Sheehy Skeffington sent all her articles to, which were widely disseminated amongst radical circles in America (Ward, 2017:390). This fostered strong links to the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers of the World (IWW), popularly known as 'the Wobblies'. She made a point of meeting with Gurley Flynn, IWW activist, Dr Marie Equi, suffragist and sympathizer of the IWW, and Goldman, anarchist and organiser of the 'No Conscription League' (Mooney Eichacker, 2003: 158-175).

The Socialist Party of Columbia, Washington DC speaker invitation also attests to the rapidly changing political context by April 1918, whereby the issue of the military 'draft' which had followed Sheehy Skeffington throughout the US tour became heightened due to its threatened introduction in the States and, more explosively, in

Ireland. In *Impressions of Sinn Féin in America*, Sheehy Skeffington elaborates on why anti-conscription was at the heart of her anti-militarist critique: 'I am interested particularly in the anti-conscription movement in Ireland because it was my husband Francis Sheehy Skeffington who first advised that pledge which has since been administered generally throughout Ireland'. She proceeds to allege that her husband was murdered 'at the bidding of the Liberal Government' for his anti-conscription resistance, and that her anti-conscription lecture in San Francisco was interrupted by British attempts to censor her anti-militarist activities (Ward, 2017: 170).

Sheehy Skeffington suggested to Jacob that the increasing popularity of her lectures indicated that her activism was part of the growth in mass resistance to militarism:

> She talked about America and said the people seemed cowed & she talked about the war fever & she thinks it is only very temporary except amongst capitalists & Anglophiles, & that she feared she would be suppressed or turned out when the US declared war but on the contrary her meetings were bigger than ever after that… (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32,582/34, 19 August 1918: 30).

Sheehy Skeffington also described to Jacob the climate of fear and suppression surrounding her anti-militarist activism, which reflected a 'Red Scare' in the United States against a backdrop of the 1917 Russian Revolution and discomfort with growing IWW anti-militarism and labour movement unrest. Hence the press boycotted Sheehy Skeffington's tour after her visit to Butte, Montana, on 3 June 1917, where general labour unrest coincided with IWW anti-draft riots a few days after her meeting. IWW activists were arrested for distributing anti-draft leaflets at her lecture (Markievicz would subsequently visit Butte with the IWW as part her 1922 anti-Treaty speaking tour). The cycle of militant activism followed by State oppression of radicals which surrounded her speaker engagements in Butte, anticipated the growing controversy surrounding Sheehy Skeffington's anti-militarist tour; perhaps because she was a woman, confronting the public with disquieting direct experiences of militarism, which in the light of conscription, would become increasingly difficult to ignore. It was perhaps also because she had politicised these experiences by

expressing them within a highly radical milieu and for a woman to keep such company was highly subversive.

Sheehy Skeffington was not dissuaded by the controversy; in fact, she seemed to embrace it. She took a keen interest in the Mooney case: Irish born socialist, anti-militarist and labour organiser, Tom Mooney, his wife Rena and associate Warren Billings who were trying to unionise a division of the United Railroads in San Francisco, but were arrested in 1916 and framed for a bombing in the city which took the lives of ten people. After being approached by Mooney's mother at one of her meetings in April 1917, Sheehy Skeffington visited Mooney a few days later in the city prison and attended the trial of his wife Rena. She spoke at a meeting on 16 April 1918 at the Civic Centre Auditorium, San Francisco calling for a new trial for Mooney. A telegram in Sheehy Skeffington's papers shows that the event was organised by a communist front organisation, the International Workers' Defence League, which had an Irish branch to which Sheehy Skeffington would later belong in 1930 (Telegram from International Workers' Defence League to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 33,605/17, 12 April 1918).

Sheehy Skeffington's defence of the Mooneys indicates that her anti-militarist activism in the United States also encompassed a growing concern with the ways in which militarism was also employed to silence radical opposition to America's entry into the war. In *Impressions of Sinn Féin in America* she discussed the framing of the Mooneys and also attacks on other radicals, such as the Butte Labour leader, Frank Lyttle, citing how: 'these outrages had their origin, not in any Pro-Ally feeling, but in economic and social causes' (Ward, 2017: 154). Mooney was so associated with communism that Sheehy Skeffington recalled in an unpublished piece from c.1945, 'Tom Mooney: Three Visits': 'When the Russian Revolution burst out, all US was roused by the news that the revolutionaries had stormed the doors of the American Embassy in Moscow, clamouring for the release of 'Muni' (Ward, 217:389). There were attempts to censor Sheehy Skeffington's anti-militarism and her defence of radicals throughout the rest of her tour, where she did not shy away from opportunities which courted civil disobedience. Police claimed to have found IWW

literature at a San Francisco meeting on 24 April 1918 at which she spoke. She was shortly detained on suspicion of espionage before her case was dismissed.

'Thrilling and Appalling…' Women and the Irish War of Independence

It was significant that Irish socialist women organising in the United States were making links with the anarcho-syndicalist IWW and with Larkin, for it chimed with the rise of a syndicalist-influenced popular resistance to British militarism in Ireland. Connolly defined the working class as international, hence he envisioned the Irish working class not just as at the heart of the 'workers' republic', but part of a continental wide rebellion against militarism. Anti-militarism was therefore an inherent part of the Irish socialist republican struggle: 'If these men must die, would it not be better to die for their own country fighting for freedom for their class, and for the abolition of war…' (Connolly, 'A Continental Revolution' *Forward*, 15 August 1914, in Berresford Ellis, ed.: 241). Connolly synthesised these ideas through a revolutionary socialist philosophy, and during the War of Independence, his syndicalist ideas influenced a wave of popular militancy against British militarism as a form of anti-imperialist revolt:

> Our programme in time of peace was to gather into Irish hands in Irish trade unions the control of all forces of production and distribution in Ireland. We never believed that freedom would be realized without fighting for it …'peacefully if possible, forcibly if necessary'…that the destinies of the world and the fighting strength of armies [would be] at the mercy of organized Labour as soon as that Labour becomes truly revolutionary. Thus we strive to make Labour in Ireland organized – and revolutionary (Connolly, 'Can warfare be civilized?', *The Worker*, 30 January 1915, in Berresford Ellis, ed.: 219).

Irish socialist women's anti-militarism in the United States had increasingly focused on the issue of conscription and defending syndicalist anti-militarist militancy, and

this really anticipated a period of popular resistance to militarism in Ireland which melded together these concerns.

There were three general strikes in Ireland in 1918-1920, all of which were instances of popular militancy which attempted to undermine aspects of British military rule in Ireland. The first one-day strike was against the attempted introduction of conscription to Ireland referred to by the Socialist Party of Columbia, Washington DC, in April 1918. Irish socialist women had supported anti-conscription before it became a more popular cause, with Jacob recounting a Quaker and ILP member speaking to her Society of Friends meeting in October 1916 about supporting conscientious objectors, noting appreciatively that the 'steadiest' amongst them were the atheists. Jacob applies her acerbic wit to the Irish press's subservience to war propaganda: 'I went to Dr Lynn's to breakfast, and Maev Kavanagh discovered a gorgeous leading article in the *Irish Times*, about the ruin & infamy awaiting us if we don't have conscription…' (Diary entries, RJD, MS 32,582/30, 7 October, 27 November 1916: 150-151, 212).

Despard was a prolific speaker during the 1918 WPC tour of Britain, where she organised resistance to the war amongst working-class communities, either by politicising women's experiences of war, or by supporting families of conscientious objectors. Of her Bury talk she remarks: 'Our Peace Re [Resolution] passed with acclamation…another pleasant good little home of earnest workers. The son is a C[conscientious] O[objector] at Dartmoor…' While in Bradford she asked women who had lost male relatives to support the WPC's 'People Peace' resolution:

> When I began there was deep silence. Something in the crowd stirred and these sad eyed women with shawls about their head chiefly – and I spoke more freely than last night…we passed our resolution… (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/4, 9 July 1918).

Throughout 1918, Despard was increasingly aware of British militarism and carefully followed the conscription crisis. Despard recorded the spirit of mass resistance to conscription during the general strike of 23 April 1918:

> Papers gave news of the finely organized one-day strike in Ireland. The streets of Dublin like Margate Sands on a holiday. May the spirit last… Fine news from Ireland. One million people have taken the pledge against cons!' (Diary entries, CDD, D247/1/4, 24, 25 April 1918).

Jacob provides a first-hand account of grass-roots support for the strike: 'This was the day where all work was stopped & everyone signed the pledge to avoid conscription, Mamma & I went down to the club a.d. & signed it…' (Diary entries, RJD, MS32,582,33, 23 April 1918: 177). The anti-conscription campaign prompted 'the most spectacular of all anti-conscription protests' and one which 'came to be associated almost exclusively with the Cumann na mBan – Women's Day or Lá na mBan on 9 June 1918'. Pašeta argues that the campaign and its reach were premised on an alliance between Cumann na mBan and the IWFL, IWWU and WIL, who had previously been sceptical of Cumann na mBan's militarism and alleged subservience to the male volunteers (Pašeta, 2013: 241-4).

Socialist women made further alliances on the issue of prisoners under the auspices of Cumann na mBan in the context of founding the revolutionary First Dáil in January 1919. As President of Cumann na mBan, Markievicz used her position, 'to campaign for the recognition of Irish internees as political prisoners', and in conjunction with Maud Gonne, Sheehy Skeffington of the IWFL, Molony of the IWWU, and Bennett of the Irish WIL 'drafted an appeal to women's organizations in other countries to pledge support for Irish prisoners'. The appeal was printed in the *Irish Bulletin* by the Dáil's Propaganda Department (Arrington, 2016: 199).

As revolutionary dissent and the wave of militancy spread, a general strike was organised in Limerick in April 1919 in reaction to the introduction of a military curfew in the town to stem IRA guerrilla activity. Irish socialist women such as Lynn

provide testimony of their increasing identification with, and support, for mass resistance to British militarism. She notes in February 1919: 'Saw Foran[,] there may be great happenings soon. Bolshevism seems to be rapidly coming to the front on all side. D.G. [Dear God] How puny are the efforts of the rich to resist the spirit of freedom', subsequently noting the progress of the Limerick General Strike during April 1919 'Limerick goes well' (Diary entries, KLD, KL/3/1, 4 February 1919). A second general strike was held on May Day 1919. This anti-militarist militancy attracted British socialist women to the cause of Irish prisoners under the auspices of the ISDL, an English branch of Sinn Féin. Later that year, the ISDL organised a demonstration at the Albert Hall in London. It was attended by Despard who made a commitment to joining the ISDL afterwards, which would have significant consequences for joint campaigning by Irish and British socialist women: 'A meeting was being held at [illegible] Baths for Irish Self. Det. Not a full audience but some good speaking. I promised to become a member of the League' (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/5 19 February, 15 November, 3 December 1919).

In April 1920, a third two-day strike in support of the several thousand republican prisoners held by British military authorities, some of whom were hunger striking and successfully demanding release. It is estimated that over 40,000 people protested outside Mountjoy prison on the strike days, with women prominent amongst this number (Yeates, 2012: 112). From 1920 to 1921, Despard and Sheehy Skeffington took part in an exhaustive tour the length and breadth of England for the ISDL, often in joint association with the Labour Party or WIL, to make the case for Irish self – determination. What was significant was the way in which Irish and socialist women chose to make this case very much premised on anti-militarism, particularly the plight of Irish republican prisoners and hunger strikers. In May 1920, Despard visited hunger striking Irish prisoners in Wormworth Scrubs, after which she took her message to English workers in Wood Green. She then joined a Labour May Day procession from her Nine Elms stronghold to the Embankment, from which she secured a message of solidarity for the Irish prisoners. Subsequently Despard organised a hospital ward that would take the Irish hunger strikers. In the same month, she spoke at a demonstration in Deptford regarding the treatment of the imprisoned

republican Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who was on hunger strike, where she specifically appealed to 'English labour' to intervene. She subsequently met with his sister Mary MacSwiney and wrote to the *Irish Times* on the matter. At the procession which commemorated Terence MacSwiney's death, she described marching under the Battersea ISDL banner, 'Never have I seen or felt anything so impressive'. Both Despard and Sheehy Skeffington appeared together at a Southwark Park demonstration on 12 September, with Despard continuing on to a rally in Hyde Park on the same day to speak on the Communist platform on the coal crisis and Ireland[2].

There is further evidence of Irish socialist women's support for militant anti-militarism in this context. Lynn records her involvement with Rathmines District Council discussions during March 1920 in the lead up to the general strike for the hunger strikers on 13 April 1920: 'Council meeting 10 am re. Strike…;' and her satisfaction at the boycott by railway workers, dockers and sailors of British military goods from April to June 1920 (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/1, 7 January, 4 February, 24 April 1919, 24 March, 18 June 1920). The coal crisis resulted from National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) members' refusal to handle munitions in 1920. The munitions boycott was supported by transport workers and dockers in Britain and Ireland in protest at the violence of police auxiliaries, the so-called 'Black and Tans'. Later that year Molony sought to apply Connolly's theory that the Irish labour movement would have to be revolutionised in order to confront British militarism, by trying to galvanise it behind the tide of syndicalist revolutionary activism. Lynn recorded a, 'Great Labour conference re. Railway Stoppage, Emer pleased with it.' Molony or 'Emer', as IWWU representative at the ITUC of November 1920, was the only delegate to call for support from Congress for the militant workers whose strike

[2] For details of Sheehy Skeffington's participation in the ISDL speaker tour, see speaker requests to Sheehy Skeffington from Irish Labour Party/Labour Party and ILP branches in Britain: HSSP, MS 33,606/1, MS33, 606/5, MS33,620/14; and meetings recorded in Despard's diary, CDD, D2479/1/6, 4, 11 February, 26 March, 30 April, 1 May, 6 May, 6 July, 23, 28, 30 August, 12 September, 10, 16, 17, 28, 29, 31 October, 2, 5, 6, 7, 15, 19, 21, 28 November, 5, 11, 29, 31 December 1920).

blocked the transport of British munitions (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/2, 17, 28 November 1920).

Molony's marginal position at the Congress underscores the dissonance between socialist women's public discourse of equality as female militants, the freedom they gained through radical activism, and the lack of public representation of women within the labour movement. Socialist women seemed to be very much aware of women's effective exclusion from the revolutionary leadership and decision-making. On the meeting of First Dáil on 7 January 1919, Lynn records: 'Saw Count Plunkett who said Dáil Eireann went well, D.G. for its first meeting. It would have been nice to have had a woman on it,' whilst a meeting of Irish labour on 30th of the same month reflected the same gender exclusivity: 'JJ Welsh [Sinn Féin leader] & others tried to meet Labour men in m.g. [*sic*]at Mansion Ho, only succeeded in summoning of men.' Lynn continues to note the exclusion of women from the revolutionary leadership throughout the revolutionary period. In November 1920 she writes: 'May this New Year bring our freedom. Women must work well now for it,' (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/1, 7,' 30 January 1919, KL/1/2, 17, 28 November 1920).

Women had to be quite creative in making broader feminist alliances during the revolutionary period. Irish socialist women were able to more directly critique the ways in which militarism impacted upon Irish women through several investigations into conditions in Ireland and the impact of war on the civilian population during 1920, under the auspices of the British Labour Party, the WIL and an American Commission. Sheehy Skeffington's statement to the American Commission focused on women and children, and drew particular attention to the issue of sexual assault. In 1921 Sheehy Skeffington was appointed as an executive member of the White Cross committee established to distribute funds raised by the American Committee for Relief of Ireland (Ward, 2017: 175). The WIL was the British branch of the international pacifist feminist WPFL. The membership of the WIL deputation to Ireland were mainly socialist feminists who had connections with the Irish left, either through the IWFL or the 1913 Lockout. Despard described the 1920 WIL's deputation report on their fact-finding visit to Ireland to gauge the effects of militarism on the

female population as 'thrilling, appalling'. Subsequently demonstrations were held in Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle and Kingsway Hall, London which featured the WIL delegation's exposé (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/6, 14 October 1920). Sheehy Skeffington spoke at the Birmingham WIL demonstration on 3 November 1920 demanding 'Peace with Ireland, Withdraw armed force & grant national assembly,' and later on the 14th of the same month she was billed on a joint WIL, Irish Labour Party and Newcastle Labour Party platform at:

> A Public Demonstration to hear report of Deputation of Women who recently visited Cork, Dublin & Belfast etc. to secure first-hand knowledge of the present-day State of Affairs in Ireland together with Prominent Representative Irish Women who returned with the deputation…Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington, Mrs. Annot Robinson, Mrs. Swanick, Dr. Ethel Williams… (WIL posters, HSSP, 33,620/4, 3, 14 November 1920).

During the final three months of 1920, Despard alone spoke on 12 occasions; including WIL demonstrations with leading British socialist feminists Annot Robinson at the Kingsway Hall meeting and alongside Montefiore and Roper in Bedford; and at huge meetings in Plumstead and Finsbury. Despard was increasingly fusing feminism with militancy against anti-militarism, addressing a meeting of a women's section of organised workers in Wood Green (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/6, 12 September, 10 October 1920). In the fading months of 1920 Despard also met with Roper's brother, Reginald, and Gonne McBride to discuss Gore-Booth's sister Markievicz's re-arrest and imprisonment. Markievicz's plight and those of civilian women and children increasingly concerned Despard who by the end of 1920 hoped to relocate to Ireland to: '…start a relief scheme for the unhappy women & children. Goodbye 1920. You have been a year full of strange experiences. I do not regret you' (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/6, 31 December, 1920).

The Treaty and the Civil War

Despard saw potential in the republican independence struggle for constructing a new society, one which she hoped would be more inclusive of the needs of women and children. Lynn captures this optimism in her report of a Sinn Féin convention held shortly after the truce between the IRA and the British;

> August 1921, '12 o/c Ard Chomhairle in Mansion Ho[*sic*]. Nearly all delegates new. Profitable mg. [*sic*], stressed well importance of women having their proper place. Dev took kindly to idea of helping Russia…
> (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/2, 23 August 1921).

However, Despard and Lynn's optimism proved premature. The Treaty debates of late 1921 and early 1922 would expose the divergent views within the republican movement as to what kind of freedom they were fighting for, and this had specific implications for the kind of alliances socialist women were able to make post-Civil War. In 1920, Sinn Féin women had found in a more limited way 'their proper place' in local politics, in the election of five councillors, including Sheehy Skeffington, to the Dublin Corporation. In Rathmines, six out of the 21 councillors were women, including Lynn and ffrench-Mullin. Sheehy Skeffington provides interesting insights into how it was feminist councillors who opened up council posts and children's libraries, concluding: 'These women did good service in their representative capacity. The Treaty split drove us apart, however, not to meet again' (Ward, 2017: 27, 430n22).

The feminist Sinn Féin councillors were not the only victims of division over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921. Most Irish socialist and radical republican women took the anti-Treaty position in the debates, objecting to the proposed Free State's dominion status, the oath of allegiance and, 'emphasizing the material consequences for the country'. Markievicz argued that the Treaty would disestablish the democratically elected Dáil, devolved power, and she reiterated her commitment to Connolly's 'Workers' Republic' (Arrington, 2016: 211-213). Problematically, Markievicz announced Cumman na mBan's anti-Treaty position ahead of their

convention, with allegations from Jenny Wyse Power that Markievicz had misappropriated the organisation's funds and sent anti-Treaty propaganda to the membership without executive approval. In the event, the anti-Treaty stance was overwhelmingly carried, but it precipitated a split in the organisation. Pašeta notes that Cumann na mBan was one of the first political casualties of the disagreement amongst republicans over whether to accept the Treaty, and furthermore, this split signalled the end of feminist alliances which had been made on the issues of prisoners and conscription in the context of the organisation (Pašeta, 2016: 268).

Depsite the loss of potential alliances and space to organise through Cumann na mBan, Irish socialist women's anti-militarist activism persisted through this period because of their links to a diverse range of radical organisations. Lynn records further campaigning on the issue with Molony and ffrench Mullin in the lead up to the Treaty debates:

> Back to town after dinner, to Women's Protest against Treatment of prisoners & internees, fine crowds & good speakers. M [Madeleine Ffrench Mullin] & I on different lorries. Emer [Molony] & Mrs. Little spoke v. Well (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/2, 27 November 1921).

As the new government sought to take control, incarceration of, and violence against anti-Treaty republicans continued under the provisional Free State government, during the Civil War and into the early years of the Free State. Free State militarism was a major catalyst to the formation of a new, highly radical women's organisation that campaigned on the issue of prisoners as means of opposing the Free State. Lane contextualises Jabob's participation in campaigning around prisoners against the transfer of militarist repression from the British to Free State government:

> As the conflict [Civil War] emerged into the open she attended meetings to discuss the treatment of prisoners in Mountjoy…The refusal to grant prison access to family members of the incarcerated led to the establishment in 1922 of the Women Prisoners' Defence League (WPDL) (Lane, 2010: 209).

Despard and Gonne McBride were founding members, but this was a group around which many of the women featured in this study coalesced, claiming Skeffington, Molony, Lynn, Jacob and Markievicz as active members. The WPDL announced its official launch in August 1922 with a mass meeting of women in the Mansion House (WPDL handbills, HSSP, 41,195/2, n.d.), and it certainly appears from Lynn's papers that from September 1922 the issue of prisoners dominated the political agenda of Irish socialist women during the early 1920s. Lynn testifies to the lengths WPDL members went to in their protests against the now Free State military authorities:

> Madam Gonne & Mrs Despard turned out of FS [Free State]Parliament for protesting against the treatment of prisoners.
>
> Mrs Skeffington kicked out of Dáil today for heckling abt. Prisoners (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/2, 20, 21 September 1922).

Molony's testimony to the BMH reveals much about why the WPDL was a major feature of Irish socialist women's activism during this period:

> Between one thing and another, it was mostly organizing the Prisoners Defence League [WPDL]. Then there were a lot of spasmodic meetings held all along, just to keep the flag flying. On any pretence, we would hold a meeting probably because it was forbidden (Statement of Miss Helena Molony, BMH, 283 NCR, 1949: 61).

Molony pinpoints the significance of the WPDL to Irish socialist women's anti-militarist politics; their defence of civil liberties and use of civil disobedience to publically resist militarism and test the limits of democracy. As Morris has highlighted, prisoners were powerful symbols of the disempowerment of Irish people under colonial rule. The imprisoned body was also a metaphor for 'personal, political and cultural states of imprisonment', through which radical feminist activists, such as

Milligan, 'explored what it was to be 'othered' and to have empathy with 'the other' (Morris, 2012: 15).

And of course, the militancy to which Molony and Lynn testify, underscores the subversive nature of a group engaging in such acts, blatantly defying gender norms in order to undermine militarism. Lane takes this occluded gender dimension to the WPDL's activism further. She argues that the WPDL facilitated women's entry into revolutionary politics through the well-rehearsed language and constructions of domesticity. The WPDL was established after family members of republican prisoners were refused access, and membership was therefore premised on familial relationships to a prisoner. Lane suggests that:

> The fact that members needed a familial connection to one of those incarcerated in the jails of the Free State meant that these women have not been viewed as active participants in the republicanism of the 1920s, but instead, in terms of their family or domestic role (Lane, 2010: 210).

Yet those from the wider republican community, such as Jacob, could still participate in the WPDL's vigils. Lane maintains that the women who participated in the WPDL's demonstrations and provided safe houses: 'underscored the fact that the republican opposition had invaded the domestic sphere or, alternatively, the domestic sphere was increasingly indistinguishable from the public sphere' (Lane, 2010: 210). McDiarmid has discussed how women's participation in the 1916 Rising was often mediated through issues traditionally of interest to women: the domestic, relationships, emotions and male authority (McDiarmid, 2015: 13-14). McDiarmid echoes Lane's depiction of how radical women's presence on the streets confused the public and domestic. For McDiarmid the 1916 Rising represents: 'one of the many "borderlands" to offer women a field of service between 'the family world of the household and the family' and 'the public, male-dominated world of politics' (McDiarmid, 2015: 200).

Women's experiences of militarism, as civilians and as radicals, exposed the operations of power, and of the violence underpinning the social control of women, which were perhaps subtler in times of relative peace. Imprisonment of radical republican women can be seen as a metaphor for not only military control in Ireland, but also the ways in which fear of violence underpins women's oppression, and this is of course amplified in times of conflict. Hence the empathy with the hunger strikers' cause, which must surely have resonated with militant suffragists who had previously deployed the same tactic. On her false arrest and subsequent imprisonment in Mountjoy for striking a policeman whilst leafleting Bonar Law in November 1914, Sheehy Skeffington noted in 'Mountjoy re-visited' for the *Irish Citizen*, that the whole experience induced 'thoughts that create anarchists' (Ward, 2017: 365). It is notable that Sheehy Skeffington's second tour of the United States as part of the 'Irish Women's Mission' to raise funds for prisoners and their families in October 1922, commenced with a visit to Sing Sing Prison, where Larkin had been incarcerated since 1920 for criminal anarchism and helping to organise the American Communist Party (Ward, 2017: xxiii). By 1946 Sheehy Skeffington would confide in Ethel Mannin that she was 'more and more' inclined towards Mannin's anarchist point of view' (Ward, 2017: 372). The *Manchester Guardian* also reported that the socialist republican Muriel MacSwiney, widow of the martyred Terence MacSwiney, had worked hard to secure Larkin's release whilst she was on a fundraising tour of the United States in the same year. MacSwiney interpreted her activism in a particularly socialist and anti-militarist manner; it was for 'the relief of the wounded men and their dependents', as opposed to 'the prosecution of hostilities,' but interestingly she underscored the economic angle in advocating for a boycott of British goods, 'it would help America if she traded with Ireland, and it would help Ireland gain her freedom' (O'Connor, 2004: 86; Mooney Eichacker, 2003: 158-175). Indeed, the militarism of the Free State was a radicalising factor in the increasingly libertarian socialist preoccupation of Irish socialist women with the issue of prisoners and their locating it with an Irish anti-militarist context.

Imprisonment in itself radicalised Irish socialist women and encouraged further dissent during the Treaty debates and the resulting Civil War. For instance, in early

1922 Jacob was looking after Sheehy Skeffington's son, Owen, whilst Sheehy Skeffington was on the 'Irish Women's Mission' tour of the United States. Acting on what Jacob thought were Sheehy Skeffington's instructions of providing a safe house for republicans on the run, Jacob had allowed republicans to set up a typing station in Sheehy Skeffington's home. Subsequently Jacob was imprisoned for this, but her diaries reveal how Jacob enjoyed, 'the sense of community the prison experience engendered similar to the manner in which she enjoyed the communal nature of political activism' (Lane, 2010: 212). In particular, Jacob relished the talks and debates she was delegated to organise, so there was an element of political education to socialist women's imprisonment which was central to their radicalisation. After her release in February 1922, Jacob spoke about her prison experiences at a WPDL meeting, although Despard and Gonne McBride felt her pitch was not 'half strong enough' (Lane, 2010: 213).

Interestingly, Jacob records in her diary the prison activism of Cumann na mBan activist Humphreys and her mother Nell, who 'favoured constant conflict with prison authorities' as means of resisting and drawing attention to prison conditions (Lane, 2010: 213). Humphreys was a central figure in attempting to radicalise Cumann na mBan, which she had joined in 1919, was later elected director of publicity in 1926 and according to Ward she would be its' 'main driving force for the next decade' (Kyte, 2011: 32). Humphreys' politicisation can be traced back to her prison experiences during the Civil War, where she encountered the socialist republicanism of Liam Mellows (Kyte, 2011: 28). Mellows was a significant figure in the development of socialist republicanism and as a martyr to the cause of anti-Treatyite republicanism. In early 1922, Markievicz and other republican TDs established a new newspaper to argue the anti-Treaty case, *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, which was edited by Mellows, then Republican defence minister (Arrington, 2016: 216). By late 1922 Mellows was supporting the social and economic programme promoted in *Workers' Republic* by the communists Roddy Connolly and Sean McLoughlin. Mellows was executed shortly after in retaliation for the assassination of the Free State TD Sean Hales, however, republicans suspected Mellows was targeted because of his support for the newly established Communist Party of Ireland.

It is clear from socialist women's reactions to Mellows' execution that they shared this view and were increasingly associating with socialist republicanism. On her tour of Scottish Republican Clubs in January 1923, Markievicz condemned the Free State's execution of republican prisoners and was 'unrestrained in her support for Bolshevism' (Arrington, 2016: 231-2). Jacob was shocked by Free State militarism in the execution of Mellows: 'I can't see that there is any further height of atrocity left for the FS government to reach' (Lane, 2010: 215). Humphreys' 1924 diary contains a draft Cumann na mBan circular in which she outlined the re-positioning of the organisation in relation to the Free State: '1. Soviet Government. 2. Elections – Parliamentary a) when possible b) when necessary c) when valid'. Humphreys also sought to replace Cumann na mBan's 'Old activities', its militarism and cultural nationalism, with the 'Object of present struggle & right of women to participate', directly linking the issue of prisoners with women's right to participate in socialist republican anti-militarism (Kyte, 2011: 28). The long-term influence of Mellows' politics is evident in her 1934 pamphlet, 'Account of Liam Mellows' Policy', in which Humphreys emphasised the need 'to define the sort of freedom we are working for' and outlined the strategy of promoting anti-capitalism to undermine British imperialism (Kyte, 2011: 33).

The impact of Mellows' execution and the influence of Soviet Russia indicates a shift in emphasis amongst Irish socialist women towards anti-imperialism. They saw themselves as central to the resistance to British militarism and therefore expected a pivotal role in the burgeoning anti-imperialist movement coming to the fore amongst Irish radicals in the post-revolutionary period. Leading WPDL activists Despard and Gonne McBride would soon be identified by undercover representatives of Free State intelligence as at the forefront of promoting the IFOSR. Irish socialist women's role in this communist-linked organisation will be the subject of the next chapter.

So Irish socialist women's anti-militarist activism should be seen within the context of their long-standing links to radicalism. The increasing instability of the global situation provided a more expansive international socialist discourse within which

Irish socialist women could frame feminist pacifist concerns with the impact of violence on women and communities. Drawing on their own experiences of violence, Irish socialist women were able to re-construct a narrative of resistance through anti-militarism activism. It indicates how women both experienced *and* resisted British and Free State militarism through activism in groups such as the Inghinidhe na hÉireann, the IWFL, Cumann na mBan, the WIL and the WPDL. Bringing Irish socialist women's experiences centre stage – such as participation in mass demonstrations, speaker tours, and anti-conscription activism – casts a light on both women's opposition to war and their engagement in direct action to counter militarism. This of course situated their politics as very much part of radicalism, adopting approaches of the IWW through anti-conscription campaigning and making alliances with the British left to highlight the impact of British rule in Ireland during the War of Independence. This complex and nuanced view of Irish feminism foregrounds how Irish socialist women experienced the world around them and used this distinct perspective to creatively balance their feminism with their increasing involvement with anti-imperialism. This was often unstable, as we can see in the inability of socialist women to make anti-militarist alliances through Cumman na mBan after the Treaty split. This political space was only really expanded through the changed context of the anti-imperialist movement as a dissenting force in the new Free State. How socialist women were able to orchestrate their entry into interwar radicalism through this second major discourse of international socialism is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Six: 'Of Ancillary Service': Feminism and the Domestication of Irish Anti-Imperialism in the 1920s and 1930s

Molony's assessment of Irish women's involvement in the 1929 ITUC/DTC delegation to Soviet Russia as 'of ancillary service' raises questions about the extent to which Irish socialist women were able to engage within the anti-imperialist movement in the interwar period and develop a woman-focused politics. This chapter explores the ambiguous space Irish socialist women occupied within the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland. So, how this ambiguity related to their ability to overcome tensions and make alliances is of particular interest in this chapter. This chapter considers whether the international socialist discourse of anti-imperialism, which linked Irish republicanism to communism in the 1920s and 1930s, provided the kind of fluid and creative countercultural environment within which Irish socialist women were able to fuse together complex claims of gender, nation and class. To this end, three case studies of activism which foreground Irish socialist women's experiences in the Irish anti-imperialist movement are explored in this chapter: the INUM and housing activism, defending Soviet Russia, and anti-fascist activism, with a particular focus on the Spanish Civil War.

An Irish anti-imperialist discourse had been developed by Connolly and this Irish interpretation was refined in the lead up to the 1916 Rising. This has specific implications for the ways in which Irish socialist women understood and experienced the Irish national struggle for independence which was unfolding all around them. Connolly drew on Lenin who recognised anti-imperialist movements as part of the wider process of socialist revolution:

> For to imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices and semi-proletarian masses against landlord, church, monarchical, national and other oppressions –

> to imagine that means repudiating social revolution (Connolly citing Lenin, *Berner Tagwacht*, 9 May 1916, in Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 36).

Connolly applied Lenin's anti-imperialism to the national struggle for independence, but relocating it within an internationalising revolutionary socialist framework:

> As the separate individual is to the family, so the separate nation is to humanity. The perfect family is that which best draws out the inner powers of the individual, the most perfect world is that in which the separate existence of nations is held most sacred ('What is a free nation?', James Connolly, *Workers' Republic,*12 February 1916, in Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 142).

Yet the way he did so also raised the question of gender through his use of the family analogy. Connolly's comparison between 'the perfect family' and 'the most perfect world' immediately raised the issue of women's position alongside the rights of small nations. In this respect Connolly's vision of Irish anti-imperialism echoed developments which were simultaneously occurring in international feminism. Rowbotham describes how a more internationalising and radical feminist consciousness emerged from the beginning of the twentieth-century as feminism diversified from a white, middle-class Anglo-American movement to make common cause with women experiencing multiple forms of oppression, such as African American and Irish women (Rowbotham, 2010: 209-211).

'The Housekeeping of the Nation'

The primary context for much of Irish socialist women's anti-imperialist activism was around the boundaries of the burgeoning Irish socialist republican movement of the 1920s and 1930s. This was a post-civil war environment where dissident republicans included left-wing groups who rejected the outcome of the 1921 Treaty, the agreement with Britain which gave rise to the Irish Free State in 1922, but also to a separate statelet of Northern Ireland which was to remain part of the Union. Radical republicans never accepted this partition of the island and instead agitated for the realisation of the Irish revolution in the form of a socialist or 'workers' republic' in a

united Ireland. They regarded the 'Staters' (supporters of the Free State) as capitalist imperialists with a green tinge. What is of interest here is how socialist feminists were able to foreground issues of gender through their socialist republican activism, to create an inclusive vision of Connolly's 'workers' republic'. Following the ideas and activism of Irish socialist women indicates an alternative feminist rhythm to existing narratives of Irish socialist republican histories. The works of Fergal McGarry (1999) and Emmet O'Connor (2004) paint a picture of a very fluid political environment, of the continual reinvention of a plethora of small left republican groups, but what has yet to be explored is the extent to which Irish socialist women were able to exploit this dynamic context. In considering this question, the issues of unemployment and housing which were adopted by Irish socialist women will be examined in detail.

Unemployment and Revisiting the Politics of Production

The issue of republican prisoners held by Free State forces persisted as a major concern of the Irish left in the immediate years of the establishment of the Free State. For instance, Sheehy Skeffington reports on 'a monster meeting held by the DTC in O'Connell Street to demand the release of the prisoners' in the article, 'Trying to hoodwink with explanations' for the *Irish World* in May 1924 (Ward, 2017:205). The meeting was addressed by Larkin, other Labour leaders and republicans. The WPDL permeated the boundaries of the republican, women's and socialist movements and as such it remained an important site of anti-imperialist activism amongst Irish socialist women throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s. Ward argues that this was because radical republican women, such as Sheehy Skeffington, regarded the Irish Free State as a betrayal of the ideals of the 1916 revolutionaries. These women worked together through the WPDL to oppose the Free State (Ward, 2017: 308). Although the 'monster meeting' described by Sheehy Skeffington centred around anti-militarist concerns with the use of State force to repress republicans, Irish socialist women expanded on this anti-militarism which had framed their activism during the War of Independence and the Civil War, to incorporate an economic perspective. Unemployment became one of the issues Irish socialist women challenged the Irish

Free State on in their campaigning for republican prisoners through the WPDL during 1924. Despard's diary evidences activism from February to July 1924 all centred around unemployed ex-prisoners:

> Good rally of the Defence League [WPDL] and considerable enthusiasm. These are fine young souls. Left M [Maud Gonne McBride] in Dublin…She had been on the Unemployment Commtt. Money is coming to me. We are talking seriously of how we can arrange a communal meal for our ex-prisoners (Diary entry, D2479/1/8, 27 February 1924).

The WPDL organised an unemployment committee, raised funds and made representations to the Labour Ministry. Yet the most interesting aspect to Irish socialist women's work with regard to unemployed ex-prisoners is their community organising which clearly placed their activism within a tradition of feminist organising present in anarcho-syndicalist protests in the United States and Spain (Kaplan, 1992, Rowbotham, 1992: 159). Despard discusses planning the communal meal above, but also of a community festival, an ex-prisoners' club, a jam factory, community allotments, a fruit and vegetable van, and 'a small distributing agency. Object to give work and to bring consumers & producers nearer one another' (D2479/1/8, 28, 29 February, 8 March, 3, 10 May 1924). This co-operative spirit, with specific references to circumventing the middle-man within food distribution, reflects socialist feminist concerns in Britain, Canada and Australia with the organisation of housewives and co-operative approaches to food supply (see Guard, 2012, Gillian Scott 1998, Smart 1986).

The melding of class, gender and national concerns, initially previewed and modelled through activism around the unemployed in the WPDL, was applied directly by Irish socialist women to their activism in WPI, a socialist republican party formed around Roddy Connolly in 1926, intended to become an official affiliate of the Comintern. Although active in a myriad of often short-lived and volatile socialist republican groups in inter-war Ireland, Irish socialist women were most successful at organising around a woman-focused anti-imperialism within the WPI. In addition, rich and

detailed documentary evidence survives in Despard's diaries as to Irish socialist feminist organising with the WPI, which was the only documented socialist party to have a women's section.

As recession gripped the world and as social conditions in Ireland deteriorated during the last six months of 1926, the issue of the unemployed became central to Irish socialist women's focus within the WPI and it was the women who embraced the formation of INUM:

> …meeting of the new Nat. Unem Movement [sic] to Smithfield. Considering the short notice a good attendance. C. Markievicz spoke well.
>
> Helen Moloney [sic] came in the evening. She is very active in the Unemployed Movement.
>
> Also an unemployed Demonstration. At my request they sent two speakers to our platform...Mrs. S.S. [Sheehy Skeffington] spoke finely… (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/9, 14 March, 30 July, 21 August 1926).

Despard records 'planning programme for our Nat. Unemployment Movement' with Molony during July 1926. The launch of the INUM followed shortly and this diary entry of Despard's also illustrates the continuity within Irish socialist women's activism around unemployment, whether that was within the context of political prisoners in the WPDL or in the changed circumstances of world recession:

> This was the memorable day of our Unemployed Rally: Jack White in the chair. Some feeble efforts at opposition which failed completely. The two slogans unity. action. Before breaking we passed a Resolution inaugurating the National Unemployed Movement and elected a comtee. [sic] of 11 persons. Afterward; Political prisoners (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/9, 17, 18, 23, 26 July 1926).

The latter reference to 'Political prisoners' in Despard's diary entry is the same reference to the 'Political Prisoner's Committee' which Sheehy Skeffington included in her August 1926 report to the *Irish World* on the 'Congress of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom'. Describing how the WIL delegates of various nationalities addressed open air meetings held by the IWWU and the Political Prisoners' Committee, 'supporting eloquently our plea for freedom for prisoners and better conditions for workers', the delegates subsequently heard from, 'A delegation of the unemployed' (Ward, 2017: 221). By raising the issue of prisoners, workers' rights and unemployment at the WIL conference Irish socialist women were deliberately framing Irish anti-imperialism within a feminist consciousness.

What is interesting from a feminist perspective is how Despard consciously approached her activism with the INUM very much from her position as WPI 'Women's Organiser'. Firstly, there are features of community organising indicative of anarchist feminist activism elsewhere. After a demonstration in April 1926 Despard describes how the activism goes beyond traditional forms of street protest with the collective provision of food for the protestors:

> On one of these days, Thursday I think, there was a demonstration of Dublin Union [by the Unemployed]. I followed them. The women became exhausted, and, on the return of the delegates - work was to set on food for 400 men - I proposed food and tea somewhere for the women... (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/9, 26 April 1926).

What is inescapable is her consciousness of the women's particular predicament and double burden. Despard draws attention to the exhaustion of women already engaged in domestic labour in the home and the expectation that these women would then feed the men without any provision for their own needs. She directly confronts the idea of the 'colony within a colony', of the subordination of women within revolutionary and liberation movements, by ensuring that the women were not relegated to the stereotypical role of 'tea-makers' within the socialist republican movement. On this occasion Despard chooses to remedy this inequity by providing food for the women,

but significantly she recognised the importance of organising them separately: '…I am trying my hardest to organize the women. I wonder if I shall succeed. On Tuesday 14 Oct we are making an effort to get them together at 47 Parnell Sq...' It is clear that Despard viewed her interventions through the INUM from a feminist perspective, turning down the Presidency of the INUM to concentrate on organising the women:

> As regards the NUM [INUM] we are organizing. Some of them wanted to make me President. I am not quite sure. I have begun to try hard to draw the Unemployed women together for activities next year (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 24 December 1926).

Despard records in her diary for 20 May 1926 a meeting of the WPI women's section at which Molony discussed a demonstration to support the coal miners locked-out during the 1926 British General Strike. This was followed by plans for a speaker meeting about the miners (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 20 May 1926, 20 November 1926). The gendering of the unemployment issue by Irish socialist women through their activism in the INUM and support for the British coal miners was an important ideological step. The issue of unemployment allowed Irish socialist women to contest the dominance of production within Irish class politics and to make the class struggle more inclusive by demonstrating how unemployment impacted on the wider community of women and families. This theoretical development was expressed through Irish socialist women's organising around the issue of unemployment within the broader Irish labour movement. In July 1926 Despard notes that the chief business of the INUM's first meeting was 'arrangements for a Demonstration at Galway when the T.U. Congress will be meeting' and subsequently 'H. Moloney [sic] returned from Galway with us. Deputation to the L Party appointed' (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 27 July, 12 August 1926). This activism was underscored by ideological intent on behalf of Irish socialist women:

> As regards Labour - we, the Unemployed have the Trades Hall as our centre. We have started educational lectures - the first I gave 'Place of the unemployed in the class struggle'. M McCabe, 'The Causes of Unemployment' both were well attended and followed by intelligent questions (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 20 November 1926).

Here is a clear instance of Irish socialist women attempting to expand definitions of the class struggle which would provide the basis for an anti-imperialist politics incorporating multiple claims to political identity.

Housing and Housewives

The women concentrated on organising a children's festival for the New Year and on collecting food and money for distribution. On 26 October Despard records 'to-day I hear we have fed 16 persons…parcels will be given to about 50 persons'. Distributing food placed Irish socialist women within marginalised communities and exposed them to the conditions under which destitute families were forced to subsist: 'visiting unemployed and going from place to place to get provision for the children's meal...' and, 'Our unemployed meeting this afternoon was at Gloucester St in the midst of a poor & sordid district' (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/9, 7 May, 10 August 1926). Of the general condition of Dublin's working classes Despard notes:

> Day to day the country becomes poorer. The cry of hunger in the land. How I have never had so many asking piteously for work and bread and all this the church disregards alleviations. St Vincent de Paul charities night refuges orphan homes and so on; but no effort to get at the root of the disease (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 29 October 1926).

They witnessed the scourge of unemployment on the whole community through housing evictions and slum conditions: '...in the evening a C.C. Committee after of Unemployed. Saw dep. on an ejected family. Planned strongest measures', and, '…I arranged food for Kilbride and his family. Wife ill, another baby coming and these

are starving!' (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/9, 4, 7 August 1926). Despard's response, 'Planned strongest measures', with its inferences of militant resistance to evictions, indicates the politicisation of the domestic through the housing issue by Irish socialist women. Their community organising became increasingly militant: 'The Un. Movement taken up much time. To-day our committee met re. the eviction case. Saw the man O'Flaherty and his wife. Decided if eviction took place to resist it' (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 24 August 1926). Resistance to eviction became an organised tactic with explicitly militant intent employed by Irish socialist women leading the INUM and protests intensified during August and September of 1926:

> This was rather a remarkable day. I went to H.Q. in the morning. About 100 men came together and marched to Drumcondra. Police and inspectors were there - asked what we wanted to do. "To resist eviction". Told it was illegal. Answer "so was the so-called law." Midday came - no bailiff - drove to sheriff's office and found that there would be no eviction that day. Withdrew our men (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 27 August 1926).

On the foot of resisting evictions, deputations to the Poor Law Commissioners were arranged to demand that Section 13 of the Poor Law (Ireland) Act of 1892 be implemented. Despard notes how clashes with the police escalated with further 'battles - arrests, protest meetings, chiefly re. conditions' at the Dublin Union, regarding condemned housing, the tenants of Cumberland Street, and 20 evicted families. An attempted forcible entry of a vacant house was prevented by police and further meetings were followed by arrests of INUM leaders (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/9, 26 October 1926).

The issue of housing resurfaced again in the early 1930s as a group of Irish socialist republican women clustered around Saor Éire, a socialist platform adopted by the IRA, and Republican Congress, a republican organisation formed by communist-oriented ex-IRA members. Humphreys and Molony were founding and executive members of Saor Éire when it was formed in 1931. Molony's activism in Saor Éire was contained by censorship from the IWWU for her associations with the suspected

communist group and she subsequently became an ordinary member. The influence of socialist republicans such as Mellows, who Humphreys encountered during the Civil War, led to her eventual conversion to socialism and determination to politicise Cumann na mBan. Humphreys proposed a 'Connollyite' manifesto for the organisation which overtly subverted the idea of the domestic whilst raising the issue of slum housing. Under the subheading of 'The Principle of "Equal rights to all Citizens"' she wrote:

> First of all 'what is economics, and what has it to do with Cumann n mBan?' the usual and accepted definition of economics is that it is the science of production and distribution of wealth. In simple words it is the housekeeping of a nation and just as the housekeeping of family is primarily the woman's work, so the housekeeping of the nation should concern the women of the nation ('Easter Lily honours Principles', article in *The Easter Lily*, Humphreys, SHP, P106/1261, c.1932).

Humphreys draws upon domestic imagery and ties this to the idea of nation to justify the involvement of women in politics, economics and the vision of a socialist Irish republic. Ostensibly Humphreys' appropriation of the domestic does not appear radical. Humphreys clearly accepted the gendered division of labour within the home. Historically socialist feminists often used the ideology of separate spheres to assert class identity, but of course they risked reinforcing the very barriers they sought to remove (Bolt, 2004: 111). Nonetheless, it has been argued that drawing on the language of separate spheres was the only feasible way communist feminists elsewhere in particular could appeal to women and identify specific gendered problems women faced (Damousi, 1994: 212). The risks posed by Humphreys' appropriation of the separate spheres rhetoric also related to classed distinctions. In the 1932 *Easter Lily* article she upholds middle-class notions of a domestic respectability as the republican ideal: 'We are determined that wives will be given the chance of keeping house amidst surroundings that will encourage cleanliness, thrift, good temper and culture…' ('Easter Lily honours Principles', article in *The Easter Lily*, Humphreys, SHP, P106/1261, c. 1932). In this respect the article displays a lack

of insight into the 'double domestic toil' of working-class women's lives, and the impression that class concerns were on occasion subordinated to an idealised nationalist representation of the Irish woman (Berresford Ellis, ed., 1988: 194).

However, the radical potential of Humphreys' appropriation of the domestic lies in the implicit challenge her feminism poses to the private/public divide. She uses the metaphor of the domestic economy for the national economy to justify the inclusion of 'ordinary' women in politics. This was radical at a time when the socialist movement was traditionally dismissive of housewives' political potential (Tax, 2001: 20). Leading Russian socialist feminist Alexandra Kollontai acknowledged this in her 1913 address to the WCG in England; 'it was always said that factory women could be politicised but housewives, never, they could never get outside their homes' (Scott, 1998: 11).

Yet appealing to housewives is a documented form of socialist feminist organising. The WCG basically amounted to a trade union for working-class housewives and the German Social Democratic Party primarily related to its female members as housewives (Evans, 1977: 161, Scott, 1998: 11). In America housewives participated in the Lawrence textile strike and Connolly influenced anarcho-syndicalist feminists agitated within the IWW for the use of technology and mass production to modernise domesticity and create a 'free communal life' (Rowbotham: 159, Tax, 2001: 20). Socialist feminists in Spain, Canada, Australia and Britain engaged in a politics of consumption, addressing issues such as rent and shopping; everyday activities which could be politicised as gendered and had potential for socialist women to reach out to the 'ordinary' housewife' (Davis, 1996, Frank, 1985, Hannam & Hunt, 2001, Levine, 1991, Kaplan, 1992, Scott, 1998, Smart, 1986). Thus, Humphreys' foregrounding of working-class married women's concerns around housing is significant because it asserts their right to shape the anti-imperialist movement, to contribute towards a feminist vision for the socialist republic.

Humphreys' experiments in integrating socialism into Cumann na mBan continued after the collapse of the short-lived Saor Éire in 1933. Humphreys was to fore in

founding a second republican socialist platform, the Republican Congress, in 1934. In September 1933, she had already initiated a secret meeting between members of Cumann na mBan and the IRA to agree on a common social policy, and advocating Connollyite methods, Humphreys even countenanced engaging with the parliamentary system with people, 'of the proper outlook'. According to O'Connor, the shift in emphasis towards social democratic methods reflected the influence of the Comintern's United Front policy as a means of countering anti-communism, and: 'the shift in Ireland was unquestionably precipitated by Republican Congress' (O'Connor, 2004: 189).

At the 1934 Cumann na mBan convention Humphreys referred to this policy as, 'an opportunity to embark on a constructive programme', in response to the election of Fianna Fáil in 1932 (Kyte, 2011: 32). In her 1934 pamphlet, 'Account of Liam Mellows' Policy', Humphreys applied a Connollyite critique of Fianna Fáil: 'Under the Fianna Fáil government industry is organised for the benefit of British combines or for British or Irish capitalists'. She indicated how Cumann na mBan could strategically apply an anti-capitalist strategy by questioning Fianna Fáil's failure 'to avail of their opportunity to weaken the power of our enemies' (Kyte, 2011: 33). The Cumann na mBan convention endorsed the executives' decision to adopt a social policy and inserted the following clause into the constitution which radically changed the purpose of the organisation from militarism and cultural nationalism to: 'educate the people of Ireland in and urge them to adopt a social policy as outlined by James Connolly'. To this end, Humphreys published a series of lectures in *An Phoblacht* during 1934 which applied the concept of Connolly's 'Workers' Republic' to Cumann na mBan activism. Humphreys also wrote exam questions with detailed instructions, as she intended these lectures to raise the political education of the organisation and planned an organisation-wide exam (Kyte, 2011: 32).

However, due to enforcement of the Public Safety Acts against Republicans, the series of lectures in March 1934 were interrupted. Although opposition to the Public Safety Acts provided an opportunity for dissent, this marked the limits of Cumann na mBan's radicalisation in this period. As with socialist women's anti-Treaty organising within

Cumann na mBan, Humphreys' links to Republican Congress and attempts to ally Cumann na mBan with it, resulted in a split and the anti-communist members leaving. Humphreys resigned from Republican Congress in July 1934. In her resignation letter, Humphreys cited the infiltration of 'foreign, pagan and materialist ideas', but in later life she claimed to have: 'agreed completely with the ideas behind Republican Congress…But neither of us [Humphreys and Eithne Coyle] felt happy at the wide breach that then opened between it and our friends in the movement' (Kyte, 2011: 33). Brian Hanley has suggested that the militarism of Cumann na mBan's rank and file made it impossible for Humphreys to completely abandon the IRA and physical force tradition within the republican movement (Hanley, 2002: 103). It is also indicates the limits of Humphreys' socialism and its incompatibility with republican militarism.

Humphreys' challenge to Cumann na mBan to envisage a socialist feminist vision of a free Ireland reflects the sense of opportunity the burgeoning anti-imperialist movement provided Irish socialist women with in terms of their power to re-define the parametres of the Irish revolution. Connolly's actions in 1916 arguably expanded the definition of socialist revolution, that is, incorporated class in national revolts and was inclusive of all citizens regardless of sex, and this had implications for Irish socialist women drawn to the anti-imperialist movement. The immediate impact of the Russian revolution is reflected in Irish socialist women's discourses which became much more oriented towards revolution, Russia and the Communist International. Although the vogue for Russian culture in radical Dublin has received comment (Lane, 2010: 243), biography also provides evidence of the ways in which the Russian revolution permeated Irish socialist women's activism and ideas at multiple levels. Irish socialist women appropriated aspects of Soviet-style communism in Ireland to re-define anti-imperialism from a feminist perspective. Anti-militarism, women's rights in Soviet Russia, secularism, and civil liberties were all concepts encompassed within the fledgling Soviet republic which interested Irish socialist women.

Flirting with Communism: the Ambivalent Relationship between Irish Socialist Women and Soviet Russia

The immediate international context following the failed Irish Rising of 1916 was not only the ongoing First World War, but the 1917 Russian Revolution and this changed the internationalist discourses of socialist women:

> By 1917 a language which referred more explicitly to countering imperialism and to the virtues of socialist internationalism became more apparent among socialist women who opposed the war (Hannam and Hunt, 2001: 186).

The 1917 Russian Revolution provided a new dynamic to the international socialist movement in the Third International or the Comintern, the international organisation of communism. However, this organisation was quite distinct from the existing international organisation of socialist parties or groups under the Second International, in its ideological adherence to orthodox Marxism and communist party discipline directed from Soviet Russia. Although Communism retained formal support for women's rights and the Russian feminist Clara Zetkin organised a Communist women's international from 1920-1925, the Comintern would not tolerate women's autonomous organising 'necessary to give it meaning' and failed to develop any corollary feminist movement to the Third International (Dubois, 1991: 252). Hannam and Hunt argue in their study of British socialist women similarly that 'although internationalism was integral to the Comintern and was often read as merely loyalty to Moscow, the gender dynamic within internationalism was less apparent'. 'Fitful' and 'ambiguous support' to the organisation of women, alongside the distinction between cadre and supporter women in the party effectively left 'little space for a gendered understanding of internationalism' (Hannam and Hunt, 2001: 180).

In Ireland an additional layer of context was of course the anti-imperialist struggle. The alliance of Irish and Soviet Russian interests was based on a perceived common struggle against imperialism, the front-line of which was defending the creation of the first revolutionary socialist state. The rhetoric of Irish socialist women after the

Russian Revolution and post-Irish independence became markedly more anti-imperialist in the sense that they placed their Irish anti-colonialism within an internationalist framework. Irish socialist women were active in various Soviet sponsored international campaigns to defend Russia against anti-communist imperialism, such as 'Hands-off Russia' and most prominently the IFOSR, which allowed them to pursue a feminist agenda of anti-militarism and women's rights at the same time. Yet this multi-layered activism inevitably contained complexities, around secularism and the limits of revolution with regard to delivering gender equality.

'Hands-off Russia': From Anti-Militarism to Revolution

The October revolution was greeted with enthusiasm by Irish feminists, with Lynn noting: 'Mansion Ho. Meeting congratulating Bolsheviks, Maeve [Markievicz] spoke well, Round Room packed, 2 overflows & street meeting' (Diary entry, KLD, KL1/2, 25 October 1917). Jacob recorded in her diary Soviet inspired events at the IWFL during 1919, where meetings were held on the Soviets and feminism, and women and capitalism (Diary entries, RJD, MS32,582/35, 8 April 1919: 126-128; MS32,582/36, 47, 13 October 1919).

Yet the Russian Revolution inspired more than a vogue for 'cultural communism'; a fashionable love affair with Russian revolutionary posters, films and slide shows conducted by Irish radicals. It marked a much deeper re-evaluation of their politics and activism. This process was articulated by Despard:

> I am writing on this new [unreadable] and in the afternoon I got hold of Studies in Socialism by Jean Tavies. I think he makes it perfectly clear that the old forms of Revolution are over. That it will not come until the Proletariat are prepared for it and that meanwhile the best method is to strengthen the associations and gain [unreadable] powers (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/5, 6 August 1919).

Against a backdrop of world conflict, this process of adopting a revolutionary socialist perspective was incorporated within an international feminist concern with halting militarism. As early as January 1916 Despard was already speculating: 'Will I see the revolution that will bring this awful war to an end'. By November 1918 Despard's activism amongst working mothers as victims of militarism prompts a re-evaluation of what revolution might mean from a feminist perspective: 'Our women came together on the afternoon and I spoke to them chiefly on what the word Revolution means' (Diary entries, CDD, D2479/1/3, 14 January 1916; D2479/1/4, 19 November 1918).

Despard's 1919 WPC tour largely addressed 'International solidarity' and made peace contingent upon the success of the Soviet revolution. Her tour culminated in a 'Hands-off Russia' demonstration at the Royal Albert Hall in February 1919 at which Sheehy Skeffington also spoke (Diary entry, CDD, D2479/1/5, 8 February 1919). A decade later, Jacob and Lynn also recorded the 'Hands off Russia' campaign, collecting names for a disarmament petition and opening of the 'disarmament shop' in July 1931 (Diary entries, RJD, MS32,582/67, 28 July 1931: 20, 49, 54; Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/1, 19, 20 February 1930). Lynn captures this fear of aggression towards Russia, 'On all sides we hear Eng. preparing for war with Russia' and dismisses 'religious fervor' directed against Soviet Russia as 'capitalism and war propaganda'. It is this concern with militarism which also informed the establishment of a new socialist republican organisation which attracted a critical mass of Irish socialist women, the IFOSR; its first leaflet encouraging Irish activists to, 'Prepare to repel the war-makers who seek to destroy the Workers' State'. It was this threat which Lynn specifically cites as her motivation for joining the IFOSR along with Sighle Dowling and Molony, seeing 'communism only solution to evils of capitalism...' (Diary entries, KLD, KL/1/1, 19, 20 February 1930). The IFOSR, which was co-founded by the communist Mick Fitzpatrick and Despard, a generous sponsor of the organisation, together with ex-IRA members in February 1928. Jacob's diary is strewn with references to 'FOSR' socials, meetings to organise IFOSR delegate visits, poster displays, and speaker meetings which heavily featured returning female delegates (Dowling, Despard, Sheehy Skeffington, Brennan, Molony, and Kathleen Price) to

Soviet Russia throughout 1930 and 1931.[3] Jacob's diary also contains a discrete travel diary charting her own visit as a delegate of the IFOSR in May 1931 (Travel diary, RJD, MS32,582/66, 19 April-30 May 1931: 50-100).

Writing to Sheehy Skeffington, Despard highlighted the significance of the IFOSR to Irish socialist women:

> Our various organizations – the ILDL [Irish Labour Defence League] and the FOSR [Friends of Soviet Russia] especially the last one in which we have many women are advancing rapidly and we hope to start the WIR [Workers' International Relief] before long (Letter from Despard to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS33, 607/1, 2 February 1934).

The IFOSR clearly provided the right balance of political identities for this network of Irish socialist women in the same way as the WPDL had done. What is notable about the IFOSR was the consistency of membership and demands with the WPDL. There was considerable overlap between the two organisations. The WPDL dissidents were increasingly identified with Soviet anti-imperialism; the Minister for Justice referred to WPDL activists Despard and Gonne McBride as 'those who are trying to bring in the Soviet Condition…' (Ward, 1995a: 217). A Department of Justice intelligence report of a WPDL meeting indicates that some socialist republican women also used the WPDL to promote the newly formed IFOSR:

> Mrs Despard's speech was almost inaudible but it referred principally to Russia, and she advised those present to join an association called 'Friends of Soviet Russia.' They could do this at 32 Lower Abbey Street between 3 and 5pm any evening ('Meeting of Women Prisoners' Defence League Held at Gloucester Street Extension', Anti-State and Communist Files, Department of Justice, 19 October 1930, National Archives, S2846).

[3] See numerous references to these events in RJD, MS32,582/65, 8 September, 13, 17, 24 October 1930: 49, 61, 63, 71; MS32,582/66, 23, 27, March, 14, 15,18 April 1931: 34, 37, 45, 47-49; MS 32, 582/67, 8, 25-26 June, 5, 9-10,12, 19, 24 August, 2, 10-11, 13 September 1931: 5-9,21-22,54,57-59, 62, 66, 71, 79,83-85.

Molony, with Kathleen Price (ex-SPI Executive/Nurses Union), took part on the first ITUC/DTC delegation to Soviet Russia in October 1929, thus helping to revive the IFOSR in January 1930 with a mainly republican membership. Despard, Sheehy Skeffington and Dowling (President of IWWU) visited Soviet Russia in August 1930, holding speaker meetings throughout the following year to counter anti-Soviet Russian press coverage in Ireland. During May 1931 Jacob and Connery also participated in an IFOSR organised tour (O'Connor, 2004: 132, 147-150).

Irish socialist women, such as Jacob, were also quite definite that the appeal of Soviet Russia lay in its support for anti-imperialist causes in colonial states. She recalled a talk at the Palace of Labour in Moscow during her 1931 trip to Soviet Russia, which concerned the 'communist duty of freeing Ireland, India & Egypt' (Diary entry, RJD, MS32,582/66, 20 May 1931: 90). This was emphatically an internationalist definition of anti-imperialism, which could be extrapolated beyond Soviet Russia to colonial nations whose struggles were at various stages considered as part of the worldwide socialist revolution. The papers of Sheehy Skeffington and Despard contain membership forms for IFOSR which claimed it was in the process of formation following the visit of the Irish delegation to the country. The leaflet explicitly lays out the IFOSR's anti-imperialist agenda:

> ...the experiences of our own partitioned country and the record of its glorious past struggles against the Imperialism which is now leading the attack on the Soviet workers will make the Irish people real defenders of the one country in which the rights of nationalities have been so completely recognized... (IFOSR leaflet, CDP, D/2479/3/1, HSSP, 41,178/68).

The initial attraction for Irish socialist women was the model of the self-sufficient Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the defence of its sovereignty against a potential capitalist imperialist counter-revolution. Irish socialist women were also impressed by the supposed autonomy of ethnic minorities within this vast Union and

by Soviet support for anti-imperialist revolt elsewhere as part of a worldwide socialist revolution.

In direct contrast to Catholic Ireland, Soviet Russia provided a model of an alternative society in which the State organised social provision and secularised all social institutions. Whilst Jacob is clear that she does not share the popular anti-religious sentiment, she is curious about secularism, detailing her visit to an 'anti-religious museum' and discussed the role of education in disseminating secularism in Russia (Travel diary, RJD, MS32,582/66: 92). Yet, Irish socialist women were only too aware of the ramifications of being too closely associated with anti-clericalism back home. Molony suggested to Lynn that anti-communist feeling in Ireland had been inculcated by the Catholic Church fearing any loss of power under a more secular society: 'Emer [Molony] says this anti Communism incited to by R.C's clergys' sermons & is aligned with A.C.As [Army Comrades Association] & aims at crushing all non R.Cs out of the state' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/1, 4 April 1933). Hence, Jacob set out to test Soviet Russia's claims to religious tolerance, visiting numerous churches which were still delivering mass, and she would refer to these visits in speaker meetings on her return.

*'*Of Ancillary Service…': Women's Rights, Civil Liberties and Soviet Communism

Whilst Molony gave a largely glowing report regarding the social and economic transformation of Soviet Russia on her return from a ITUC/DTC sponsored visit in 1929, she felt that the Irish women delegates would only be of 'ancillary service' to the Soviet cause (O'Connor, 2004: 149). This was a palpable shift in Irish socialist women's optimistic rhetoric about Soviet Russia; a move away from the celebratory rhetoric which greeted the dawn of the first socialist state and Despard's optimistic claims that it was the IFOSR in which 'many women were advancing rapidly', to a more critical position, especially with regard to women's rights and civil liberties.

Irish socialist women were explicit about using their travels to Soviet Russia to investigate the actual position of women and other marginalised groups in a post-

revolutionary society. Sheehy Skeffington researched the issue of women's rights prior to the trip, consulting the Moscow-based journalist Kathleen O'Brennan, who advised: 'I think you ought to try and get Andrée Violli's book, *Seule en Russie*, as it covers very fully the position of women and deals particularly with the questions in which you are most interested' (Letter from O'Brennan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,178/68, n.d.). In her notes for 'Russia as I see it' which formed the basis for her many talks on her trip, Sheehy Skeffington welcomed women's freedom from 'the tyranny of the pots and pans', a reoccurring motif in her writing from this point on. She was also impressed by 'freedom granted to children, communal life, free welfare and no unemployment' (Ward, 2017: 268). Questions concerning women's progress in the new State are woven through Jacob's travel diary, and she maintains a critical edge. She is as surprised at encountering women tram drivers, as she is at the lack of women in a group of government representatives at a mass demonstration (Travel diary, RJD, MS32,582/66, 23 May 1931). Whilst the facilities at the 'Institute of Mother and Child Welfare' and access to contraception and abortion impress Jacob, it is clear from her tone she has no maternal interest herself:

> Taken with whatever women were there, between delegates & others, to the Institute of Mother & Child Welfare – a grand place full of every hygiene device & good advice, pictures, consultation rooms all sorts – hospital for childbirth & gynaecology cases – room full of horrid little newborn babies and lots of information – contraception & abortion (latter only if necessary, but contraception free & cheap, & in spite of it highest birthrate in world. Nice wooded garden round the hospital part. Horrible wax models of childbirth, & all sorts of educational pictures re. nursing, work etc (Travel diary, RJD, MS32,582/66, 4 May 1931: 65-66).

Rather than the children's village ('while we waved to the perpetual children'), mother and child welfare institute, or the sanatorium for children, Jacob and her travel companion, Connery, appeared more interested in the material aspects of Russian women's lives. Jacob recorded the lengthy queuing for food and other essential provisions (Travel diary, RJD, MS32,582/66, 14, 17, & 25 May 1931: 85, 79, 96).

She gave full rein to this more domestic perspective during the propaganda tour she undertook when she returned to Ireland, which she recounts to Sheehy Skeffington: 'I stood on a chair and described all I could of Russian spare time, amusements and studies…' (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/27, 10 August 1931). It is of note in terms of class tensions that Jacob and Connery were less concerned with the socialisation of motherhood which were of particular relevance to working class mothers, and more interested in issues of consumption and leisure.

Jacob was acutely aware of class and gender tensions within the IFOSR. She warned Sheehy Skeffington: '…never let them send anyone here in the future who is not a factory worker, a docker, a farm labourer, or a railway man – nothing else is wanted' (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41,177/27, 27 May 1931). This discomfort was familiar to Sheehy Skeffington, whom in her 1930 notes on, 'Russia as I see it', advises, 'Leave umbrella behind – it's bourgeois' (Ward, 2017: 286). Lynn captures the appeal of joining the IFOSR campaigns, a mixture of Utopianism and membership of a countercultural movement: 'I went to Social for F.O.S.R, saw many of the best of old times people & many young. It is a movement for the future, D.G. We see it beckoning' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/1, 16 January 1931). Sheehy Skeffington also viewed Soviet Russia as a potential model and inspiration for a 'Workers' Republic' in her November 1930 speaking notes for the 'Russian Anniversary Meeting':

> What they could do we also could. How often, when showing us their creches and schools, their cultural parks their pleasant guesthouses, their Soviet Farms did they say 'Why cannot you do this in your own country?' (Ward, 2017: 286).

Yet the issue of Soviet Russia was perhaps more divisive because Irish socialist women found themselves in-between an uncompromising brand of Soviet-style communism and fervent anti-communist sentiment. Soviet Russia made the importance of defining socialist revolution and the nature of their class politics unavoidable now for Irish socialist women. This process of defining their class

politics would be tested more explicitly by Irish socialist women with regard to the issue of civil liberties in Soviet Russia, as it explored the boundaries between the authoritarian and libertarian left.

In addition to women's rights, Irish socialist women were also critically interested in the rights of other marginalised groups in Soviet Russia, underlining the way in which they increasingly positioned their feminism within a wider humanitarian context. In particular, Irish socialist women identified as objective eye-witnesses, examining religious tolerance, treatment of prisoners, democracy and authoritarianism in Soviet Russia. It was this critical eye which distinguished them from communist women with official party membership; they were 'fellow travellers', but they remained autonomous from orthodox Marxism and party discipline.

From the outset, Irish socialist women approached their visits to Soviet Russia as investigative journalism. Sheehy Skeffington conversed with Moscow based socialist journalist O'Brennan about the potential for writing a book on women's rights in Russia, with O'Brennan opining that Sheehy Skeffington would be 'hitting the tide' in capitalising upon popular interest in the world's first Soviet State (Letter from O'Brennan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,178/68, n.d.). Again we have the persistent concern with the treatment of prisoners, which Molony's report attributes to the Irish delegates' own experiences: 'The Governor asked us were any of us ever in prison. Some of us told him we were' ('Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics, Report of the Irish Labour Delegation', Dublin Trades Union and Labour Council, HSSP, MS 41,204/2, 1929: 37). Despard noted that 'there were no locked doors in the prisons, the prisoners managing their own affairs', whilst Jacob was impressed by the 'wisdom and humanity' of the prison system (O'Connor, 2004: 170). Much of Jacob's travel diary and subsequent correspondence reads like reportage, capturing the extreme differences in Russia. She noted the grandeur of the 'yellow and white buildings in Leningrad', including the Winter Palace and 'the wonderful oriental domes on some churches', but also the gritty subterranean horror of the coalmines and the sprawling bleakness of the industrial cities: 'Before we were 3 days in a hideous coalmining district (Stalina) and were kept 3 hours down in a coalmine there…it was

exactly like hell' (Travel diary, RJD, MS 35, 582/66, 28 April 1931: 56; Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, 41,177/27, 27 May 1931). Jacob relates rumours of poverty in Russian cities:

> There have been awful accounts of general poverty in Russian cities in the press, from Manchester travellers named Ryan and Toole, which bear all the outward marks of truth on them and have caused me great disturbance of soul (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41,177/27, 3 September 1930).

On Sheehy Skeffington's return from her trip to Soviet Russia, Jacob captures this sense that the feminist delegates displayed a critical eye towards the new regime: '…because people rely on you for impartial truth who would not listen to the average delegate' (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41,177/27, 3 September 1930). Returning from her own tour of Soviet Russia, Jacob reiterates that her standpoint is premised on a feminist critique of society: 'But I think that the accounts of women's equality are exaggerated – wherever we go we find men in authority, Just as at home' (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41,177/27, 27 May 1931). Lynn's distrust of Soviet Russia, despite her pro-Lenin sympathies, was expressed with regard to the fate of Trotsky and the risk of communist dictatorship:

> Frau Grabish to dinner, she says most remarkable a/c in papers of 16 Russians sentenced to death for plotting with Trotsky agst. Soviet, they abjectly confess & said death too good for them, is this result of torture? (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/2, 24 August 1936).

Whilst the issue of civil liberties was already indicated in Irish socialist women's activism through the IFOSR, anti-authoritarianism became a major theme of their activism around the Spanish Civil War.

'We Small Fry': Republican Congress, IFSRWAC and Anti-Fascism

Anti-fascist activism in Ireland was prompted by the shift towards a 'United Front' in Comintern policy between 1934-5, to counter the rise of fascism and anti-communism internationally. As a result, some members of the IRA left the organisation to form the Republican Congress in 1934, and these members included women from Cumann na mBan such as Humphreys, Connolly O'Brien and Cora Hughes (Lane, 2010: 247-8). As previously discussed in relation to Humphreys' participation in Republican Congress, socialist women found it hard to advance a feminist or anti-fascist politics in the short-lived group because it dissolved in September 1934 amidst tension between Congress and the IRA over abandoning the use of physical force (Lane, 2010: 248). Belfast branch Cumann na mBan founder member, Connolly O'Brien, organised the Belfast contingent of the Republican Congress into Workers' Republican Clubs during 1934. She was part of the break-away faction which split the Congress at its first conference in September 1934. Along with her brother Roddy and Michael Price, she backed a workers' republic party, rather than the Comintern influenced policy endorsed by O'Donnell of pursuing a united front through a republican party. In her memoir, *We Shall Rise Again*, she voices her suspicions of communists, who she referred to as 'wreckers' (Connolly O'Brien, 1935:24).

However, members of Congress also went on to form the Connolly Column as the Irish contingent of the international brigades, who supported the anti-fascist Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. It was this new context which would provide socialist women, such as Connolly O'Brien and Humphreys, with the space to organise around anti-fascism, but with some distance from the Communist Party. Jacob had also been involved in Congress in a more peripheral manner: typing material for Michael Price relating to housing problems, selling copies of *Republican Congress* during 1934 and later in 1936 engaging in election work on behalf of Frank Ryan, who stood as a Congress candidate in the May corporation elections (Lane, 2010: 233). Her diaries sum up why the Spanish conflict became the focus of Irish women's activism as the interwar period drew to a close:

> Of course the outstanding external happenings were the collapse of the Republican resistance in Spain – the victory of Franco was the most horrible thing that happened in Europe since the last war – and the outbreak of European war in the beginning of September. That has darkened all the time since, with evil news & worse apprehensiveness…F[rank] R[yan] said the volunteers are said to be full of IRA men (Diary entry, RJD, MS 32, 582/90, 1939: 79).

It is significant that Jacob emphasises the role of IRA men in the International Brigade volunteers, for the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic (IFSR) is indicative of the way in which Irish socialist women related the international situation to home-grown anti-imperialism.

This anti-imperialism was immediately recognisable in a new women's group, the IFSR Women's Aid Committee (IFSRWAC), formed 'at the instance of a number of friends of those Irishmen who have recently joined the International Column in Spain' (TS circular letter, Sheehy Skeffington, IFSRWAC, HSSP, MS41, 204/5, 4 January 1937). The IFSRWAC was essentially a 'home-front' organisation. With over one hundred of the most committed and radical male Irish activists having left to join the republican volunteers in Spain, the IFSRWAC became associated with left-wing republican women (McGarry, 1999: 100).

Through the IFSRWAC, Irish socialist women found a space from which to gender the campaign to support the Spanish republicans. McGarry alludes to IFSRWAC internationalism, 'despite the small numbers involved, the organisation was active in forging international ties' (McGarry, 1999: 100). It is clear from the traditionally gendered rhetoric employed at the establishment of IFSRWAC that Irish women activists were aware of their marginal position in this essentially male movement and of the need to appeal to the dominant militarist narrative. The republican credentials of the Irish international brigade volunteers were lauded: 'This gallantry of the Irish brigade, most of whom are IRA men, was recognized and appreciated by the Spanish Loyalists in a manner that makes us feel proud'. The IFSRWAC's initial publicity

also relied on familiar gender stereotypes of the republican movement where women acted in a subordinate, non-combatant role:

> We serve as a link between those at home and their kin in Spain; we collect funds and despatch parcels in response to requests for things not easily obtainable in Spain. We furnish First Aid equipment, clothes, food, cigarettes and other comforts… ('Irish Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy', Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee, HSSP MS41,204/3, c.1937).

To this end, their activism also appeared outwardly conventional: book auctions, whist drives, speaker meetings with refreshments and circular appeals for contributions. Several of the invitations to public meetings organised by the IFSRWAC are of particular interest, billed as a 'receptions' or 'welcome home' events for returning or injured International Brigade volunteers from Spain (Women's Aid Committee invitations, HSSP, MS 204/1&2, c.1937-1939).

Yet Ryan's letter to Sheehy Skeffington hints at the wider context to the IFSRWAC's fundraising, of the difficulties in winning the political arguments around anti-fascism in Ireland at this time:

> Various letters received also tell me of the hard struggle your Committee has to provide for our lads… (Letter from Ryan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS204/5, 25 October 1937).

His reference to their 'hard struggle' refers to the hostile political climate faced by the IFSRWAC. In an interview given with regard to the newly founded Women's Social and Progressive League's (WSPL) campaign against the clauses inserted into the 1937 constitution which defined Irish women's place within the home, Sheehy Skeffington described 'the insidious but strong tendency of the present regime towards fascism' (Ward, 2017: 346). Ireland was overwhelming pro-Franco, with the republican supporters aligned with communism, anti-clericalism and widely denounced by the

Catholic Church. To take a stand in support of the international far left at this point in Ireland was far from conventional and constituted a radical political position, even if the activism itself appeared to fit within the boundaries of what was considered appropriate public political roles for women. Hence, even the IFSRWAC's efforts to secure support from potentially sympathetic republican groups, trade unions and Labour also met with 'little success' (McGarry, 1999: 100). It is this complex weaving of political identities and ideas through anti-fascism activism around the Spanish Civil War which has not been subject to sufficient scrutiny and deserves to be considered as seriously as the military activism of Irish male volunteers who fought with the Spanish republicans. In a volatile and hostile political climate in Ireland, the actions of the Irish volunteers in Spain were misunderstood and poorly supported. It was the work of the IFSRWAC to attempt to underpin their male counterparts' actions by contextualising them within an anti-fascist context, and to do so within a climate of overwhelming pro-Franco support and suspicion of the communist-associated left.

The wider anti-fascist context to the women's fundraising is well underscored in other archival items, such as a telegram to Sheehy Skeffington extending 'Revolutionary greetings to Irish comrades celebrating anniversary Easter week' from the 'James Connolly Unit of International Column' (Telegram from 'James Connolly Unit of International Column' to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 204/5, n.d.). Supporting anti-imperialism in Ireland and now in Spain, was considered by the Comintern as part of the revolutionary process in colonised countries. A propaganda Christmas card with a picture of an International Brigade volunteer in red being parachuted onto the earth with the greeting; '!Adelante hacia la Victoria sobre el fascismo en 1938!' ['Forward to the victory over fascism in 1938'], and containing seasonal greetings in Irish from Prionnsias O'Riain [Frank Ryan] neatly underscores this point (Christmas card from Ryan to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS33, 607, Christmas 1937). On learning of the Christmas card, Jacob remarked to Sheehy Skeffington 'That is what makes me feel it worthwhile to have him on the continent' (Letter from Jacob to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/27, 12 January 1938).

Jacob's diary captures how high the political and personal stakes were for Irish socialist republicans in the Spanish Civil War, but it also said much about how the gender dynamics of the Irish socialist scene had made this far flung campaign a much more intimate affair. Volunteers from the Irish Brigade were captured by pro-Franco forces, most notably Brigade Commander Ryan. Ryan was Jacob's former lover and her diaries highlight how Spain dramatised Irish women's activist lives, through the interweaving of political and personal lives. It captured perfectly a moment in which Irish socialist women were able to diffuse political, sexual and economic identities through a wider focused internationalist lens. For instance, Jacob's diaries betray the awkwardness of an ultimately unrequited love in their oscillation between the organisational to the familiar regarding the Ryan release campaign: '…went to Frank Ryan committee at Linda K's [Kearns] we agreed to pay the next month's…says P [Proinsias aka Frank]s much better treated and taking English class…' (Diary entry, RJD, MS32,582/91, 9 March 1940).

Other Irish socialist women who had no romantic attachment to Ryan also related the personal nature of the Spanish conflict, such as Lynn who lamented, 'Hear poor Frank Ryan in great danger, God protect him!' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 8 June 1938). Hence, members of the IFSRWAC formed the 'Frank Ryan Defence Sub-Committee' in order to 'render him whatever assistance possible' (TS letter from 'Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee', Sheehy Skeffington, Chairman, HSSP, MS41, 204/3'). Although this was initially envisaged as parcels of provisions conveyed by the International Red Cross to prisoners held in a 'Fascist concentration camp' and an appeal against the death sentence for Ryan, this was eventually expanded to the release campaign for Ryan who was held by Fascist forces after the civil war ended. The Frank Ryan Defence/Release campaign materials recall the well-rehearsed language of civil liberties long employed by Irish socialist women in their campaigns at home in respect of republican political prisoners. For instance, in the leaflet *The Agent of General Franco is Now in Dublin – But Frank Ryan is still held in a Spanish Jail*, the commutation of his death sentence to life imprisonment is drawn attention to, as well as the conditions under which he was held: 'Fourteen months ago he was captured in battle and from the beginning has been denied

prisoner-of-war treatment…He is not allowed to write or receive letters' (Leaflet, 'The Agent of General Franco is Now in Dublin – But Frank Ryan is still held in a Spanish Jail', Friends of Frank Ryan Committee HSS, MS 41,204/3, n.d.).

Initially the committee appealed to public opinion to leverage political pressure. Jacob records how the 'Frank Ryan release Committee' organised a: 'Petition to ask Irish Gov, to make rep. to Franco for his release signed by some thousands of citizens and fifty public representatives' (Diary entry, RJD, MS32, 582/92, 24 March 1939). The campaign to free Ryan continued through various routes, including the Irish embassy in Spain. Lynn records how 'Sighle (Dowling) and Mrs Skeff interviewed Spanish minister [Kerney] re. F Ryan' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 31 May 1939). LH Kerney, the Irish Minister Plenipotentiary to Spain, advised 'The best thing is to have no more publicity about Frank' (Letter from SH Kerney to Sheehy Skeffington, HSS,33, 607/17, 21 June 1938). Kerney's advice to Sheehy Skeffington should be seen in the context of what McGarry has described as a 'campaign of misinformation' carried out by the Irish Government to deflect attention from their complex diplomatic negotiations with Franco's government to secure Ryan's release. Ryan's eventual 'escape' from Burgos Prison in 1940 with the apparent approval of the Irish Government, and subsequent 'peculiar status' in Germany, was potentially embarrassing and politically sensitive (McGarry, 1999: 106).

Given this situation, it is difficult to imagine how the IFSRWAC could ever have been satisfied with a fundraising role alone, for in order to leverage political advocacy on behalf of political prisoners in Spain and galvanise public opinion behind the Irish volunteers, it would have been impossible not to engage in public advocacy. This is exactly what the IFSRWAC did do from the outset, immediately translating the well-rehearsed language of internationalism to Spain:

> These men…. feel that it is their duty to throw themselves into the fight for democracy against Fascism now waged on the Spanish Front
> (TS circular letter, 'Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee', Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS41, 204/3, n.d.).

Yet a more detailed analysis of the personal papers of Irish socialist women provides a much broader understanding of the IFSRWAC's activism, as well as contextualising it within the radical political scene in which it was firmly rooted. In particular, if we take seriously the documentary evidence of their activism which is normally excluded from more organisationally focused studies, such as event tickets, leaflets, posters and organising notes, the politicisation of this women's group is fully exposed. One of the public meetings held by the IFSRWAC for the first anniversary of the Irish International Brigade was billed as 'A Year in the Battle for Democracy', and they more explicitly challenged the weight of Irish public opinion in the leaflet, 'Are you against Fascism? And for the Spanish Republic in its struggle for Democracy', before urging support of the IFSRWAC to 'Do your Bit at Home!' (Leaflet, Women's Aid Committee, HSSP, MS 41, 204/1, n.d.).

The speaker meetings held by the IFSRWAC always referenced international politics, and although the invited speakers were often volunteers from the Spanish front, Sheehy Skeffington invariably presided over these occasions, which also featured other left-wing republican women speakers such as Connolly-O'Brien and Mary Donnelly. The internationalising agenda of the group is clear in their application of the Spanish struggle to the political situation in Ireland in their April 1937 speaker meeting entitled, 'The Spanish War and its Meaning for Ireland' (Speaker meeting poster,'The Spanish War and its Meaning for Ireland', Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee, HSS MS41, 204/2, April 30 1937). By drawing direct comparisons between the Spanish and Irish republican causes Irish socialist women were doing much more than making the tea and selling raffle tickets, they were subverting the familiar patterns of women's public activism to engage in a subversive anti-fascist campaign and broaden Irish anti-imperialism within an international socialist framework.

A Fragile Unity: Feminist Internationalism, Anti-Fascist Activism and Limitations

Gillet-Gatty was well informed about the rise of authoritarianism and antisemitism in Germany, relaying this information for campaigning purposes to Irish socialist women: 'I have a lot of very important details of the new religious persecutions (catholic & protests [protestants] as well as Jews) now happening in Germany, if any Irish catholic paper would accept a [unreadable] article' (Letter from Gillet-Gilley to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 20 May 1935). Lynn was quick to take note of the anarchist revolution in Spain and its implications for the revolutionaries in Ireland: 'Gt. Revolt in Spain, railways seized etc', and 'Terrible poster re. Spain. Emer says we should [illegible] slacken army service to assert our position I.C.A. [Irish Citizen Army]' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/2, 9, 14 October 1934). Indeed, Gillet-Gatty in correspondence with Sheehy Skeffington reflected on how the Irish women were perceived as part of a feminist response to this growing international socialist and anti-fascist momentum:

> Don't give up hope, I believe you'll live to see a Left Ireland emerge. Think of the Church in Russia & in Spain & be hopeful… Labour must go left to escape ruin & Labour will see it has to organise & unite against capitalism as Ireland becomes more industrialised. There are the Irish outside of Ireland (still Catholic alas!) who are about all Leftists (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, Paris, n,d.).

Like its socialist equivalent, feminist consciousness was internationalising, and Irish socialist women were able to make common cause with women and children who were victims of fascist imperialism in Spain. Irish socialist women initially did this in relation to Spain through their own unique take on feminist pacifist politics, 'anti-militarism', discussed in depth in the previous chapter.

Gillet-Gatty was the Irish representative for the International Committee for Spanish Refugees and it appears the IFSRWAC effectively functioned as its Irish branch (Letters from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17). The focus of this group was to provide medical aid specifically to Spanish refugees, the majority of

whom were women and children. As a result of the German Luftwaffe's aerial bombardment of the Basque country in the Spring of 1937, the IFSRWAC established a special appeal for Basque women and children:

> My committee has decided to open a special fund for the relief of the Basque women and children who find themselves homeless as a result of air bombardment of undefended Basque towns. We have already sent a subscription as a gesture of sympathy from Ireland for this valiant people in their suffering and we would be glad of your support and co-operation in this matter (TS circular letter from Sheehy Skeffington, the Irish Friends of the Spanish Republic Women's Aid Committee, HSSP, MS41, 204/3, n.d.).

This does not appear to be a very radical departure from the Committee's initial role, to fund supplies for Irish volunteers joining the International Brigades fighting with the Spanish republicans. Yet, because the Spanish republican cause was so much broader than an anti-imperialist struggle on Spanish shores, it was inevitably a deeply politicising issue. Their conscious decision to support Basque women and child victims of fascist militarism was significant because it indicates that they were readily able to adapt an international feminist consciousness to home-grown activism. The IFSRWAC Basque appeal was not an end in itself:

> The Spanish authoress called 'Madrecita', Sofia Blasco, who spoke yesterday …She says not to bother about Ireland sending ambulances & hospitals & food ships & woollies….If Mrs Skeffington & her son & we-small-fry would give out pro-Government propaganda Spain would be deeply touched (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 17 January 1937).

This was humanitarian aid with political intent, and provided a platform for Irish socialist women to engage in anti-fascist propaganda. It meant these 'small-fry', from a small nation at the periphery of the European continent, could amplify the political

power of their activism by contextualising their anti-militarism and anti-imperialism within an expansive international feminist consciousness.

In February 1937, Jack Carney, a Belfast member of IFSR, discussed with the London-based Irish labour journalist Desmond Ryan the possibility of getting Irish writers to collaborate on a statement in support of the Spanish republicans. Carney described Peadar O'Donnell, Sean O'Casey and possibly Yeats as sympathetic (McGarry, 1999: 101). Indeed, O'Donnell asked Sheehy Skeffington with regard to 'using your committee' as a vehicle for the promoting the statement which would counter:

> the lying fascist propaganda that the war is a religious war & not a fight of the people of Spain & of the small nations within Spain, for their independence against International fascism. Hail the great fight of Euzkadi, Catalonia & the whole Spanish people' (Letter from O'Donnell to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS204/5, n.d.).

A moderate letter eventually written by Frank Ryan failed to gain support from P.E.N through Sean O'Faoláin or from O'Casey through Carney. McGarry argues that Ireland simply did not have the middle-class intelligentsia which had supported a similar campaign in Britain (McGarry, 1999: 101). Correspondence from Sheehy Skeffington to Desmond Ryan concerning the viability of an Irish writers' appeal underscores the limits of Irish intellectual support: 'PEN is indeed bourgeois - & worse. It even accepts now a censorship of kinds' (Letter from Sheehy Skeffington to Ryan, HSSP, MS41, 177/45).

The issue of countering fascist propaganda that the war in Spain was against socialist anti-clericalism (communist and anarchist) became the defining, although vexed, issue of the Irish socialist women's activism around the Spanish Civil War. Whilst Irish socialist women's anti-imperialism was to the fore in exposing the threat fascism posed to Spanish republicanism, they found their socialist tendencies tested in regard to their anti-clerical sympathies. The mainstream (Catholic) media and political

propaganda featured anti-clerical atrocities committed by republican forces in Spain, whilst under-reporting the same acts carried out by Franco supporters. Gillet-Gatty posted details of fascist brutality towards Basque priests who refused to support Franco (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 20 May 1935, & n.d.).

So, whilst it is clear from their personal texts that in private Irish socialist women held anti-clerical views, they were compromised in the extent to which they were able to express these opinions in Catholic Ireland. The personal papers of Irish socialist women reveal the often complex relationship between personal conviction and public activism. Whilst one can often trace a linear journey of radicalisation from private conversion to the Gaelic revival to very public roles in revolutionary Irish republicanism, the same cannot be said in relation to the Spanish Civil War. In relation to Spain, propaganda strategising by Irish socialist women reveals the extent to which their public anti-fascist activism on Spain as part of the United Front was at the expense of expressing anti-clerical sympathies.

With the rise of two polarising ideologies in the interwar period, anti-clericalism gained in popularity on the European Continent: 'It is a funny thing to find Communists and Nazis alike agreeing against (all) the Church(es) or rather Le Clericalisme c'est l'ennemie'. Yet there was no real history of an anti-clerical movement in Ireland. At the January 1937 Congress of the 'International Co-ordination Committee for Aid to Governmental Spain' Gillet-Gatty was the Irish representative. She revealed Catholic and pro-nationalist pressure on de Valera to abandon his policy of neutrality and recognise the Franco government: 'I said that de Valera had at least delayed breaking off diplomatic relations until the Pope took that step & that our task was the dissemination of reliable facts' (Letters from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 17 January, 22 February 1937).

Gillet-Gatty provided plenty of 'reliable facts' to Sheehy Skeffington's committee:

> Remember this: everyone in Spain told me how the Spanish priests had told the people, before the Spanish Parliamentary elections of last February (when a Left United Front was being talked about) that they "would not confess anyone who voted for a Left candidate." That, of course, was no way to talk to a Spaniard as you may imagine! (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 30 January 1932).

There is no evidence that any of this anti-clerical material made its way into Irish propaganda. Instead, the strategy arrived upon for Ireland was to emphasise the Catholic supporters of the International Brigades in Spain, despite the potential for this to be counterproductive:

> Spain is being forced (by all these visitors from Catholics like Madame Malarine Selliers & Miss Monika Whately & the Dean of Chichester & the Churches & so on of the Protestant Religions) in the face of public opinion throughout the world against the Anti-Catholic conduct of the Spanish workers – to let the Church seep back again (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 20 May 1935).

Gillet-Gatty makes several references to the Six Point Group representative Monika Whately: 'the labour woman & R.C. 'praticante', who is trying to found an International R.C. Leftist League!!!', and notes Whately: 'is now engaged in speaking twice a day trying to form a pro-Spanish international league of Catholics & has heard, with pleasure, of our Irish efforts' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 17 & 30 January 1937).

Gillet-Gatty applies the same anti-clerical analysis to Ireland, telling Sheehy Skeffington that an Irish journalist would not be able to pursue the adoption of an orphaned Spanish child: 'We both [Madame Braun and Gillet-Gatty] think it would be best not to risk Ireland. You know what the priests' power, there, is' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 20 May 1935). Later she critiques the Irish press where the: 'death of priests takes up enough space in the daily

press 313 times per annum to allow foreign affairs a page or two…' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 22 February 1937).

Thus, the IFSRWAC activism in Ireland was explicitly anti-fascist: 'we must try & do a campaign in Ireland (1) to stop sympathy with Franco & the Duffy volunteers', but without the overt anti-clericalism of European counterparts. Once again, the distinctiveness of Irish socialist feminism is revealed through the explicit appeal to Irish Catholics: 'I am trying to get a Spanish pamphlet written for Catholics to tell them the actual facts,'and, 'I am still awaiting more information as to Catholics on the Governmentalist side', and 'I want to get all the Catholic support into my pamphlet' (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, Paris, n.d.).

Gillet-Gatty embarked on a speaking tour of Ireland as representative of the International Co-ordination Committee for Aid to Governmental Spain in early 1937 at the Irish Labour Party Congress, again stressing her association with prominent Catholic socialists:

> I am ready to go anywhere & to speak at any time [underlined]….to tell people how I was in Spain with Vera Brittain's husband, Professor Catlin, an R.C. &, in Paris with Miss Monika Whately, an ardent R.C. too (Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 1937).

Whilst Spain exposed some of the potential fault lines in Irish socialist women's anti-fascist activism, it was the intensification of the fascist threat in Germany that caused more tensions for Irish republican women. It is clear that some Irish socialist women's anti-imperialism with regard to Spain was premised on an internationalist and expansive anti-fascism, because they were rapidly able to apply these politics to opposing Nazism. Hence, Gillet-Gatty was clearly prescient about not acting on the fascist threat:

> No one in post war pre-1932 Germany even thought of the peril of the Centrum Party (the Catholics of Germany) & they & the Social Democrats are

> all now suffering in consequence (Letter from Gillet-Gatty to Sheehy Skeffington, HSSP, MS 41,177/17, 22 February 1937).

Lynn was aware of the Nazi persecution of the Jews quite early on and planned anti-fascist activism as a result:

> Read terrible sufferings of Jews…on ret. here found Emer & Sighle & they feel there must be a protest from Xtians here. How God's prophesies are working out (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/4, 13 November 1938).

However, Jacob testifies to the invidious position of socialist republican women as a section of the IRA sought to make anti-British imperialist alliances with Nazis during the war: 'A whole lot of terrifying war talk among the men first, what might happen here, agreement that the IRA wd help the Nazis etc…', and: 'Talked of awful Nazi IRA leaflet that had been posted up round Dublin – I said it shd be answered' (Diary entries, RJD, MS, 32,582/92, 23 May, 37, 18 August 1940: 131-132).

Pacifist feminists such a Jacob took a consistently anti-fascist and internationalist approach with regard to fascism during the Second World War, yet other socialist women, most notably Lynn, were more conflicted. At times her extreme Anglophobia gives way to unabashed admiration for the Axis powers: '…Hitler's death in action announced to-day. It is well he is gone. Poor man, for he was great in many ways' (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 2 May 1945). On occasion, these sentiments were expressed in actual antisemitic activism:

> We got an indictment of Childers by Members of Indust Devel assoc, he acted scandalously to favour Jews. How terrible that they do such things & then the Hitlers retaliate & one knows why. We shld strive to convert the Jews (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 12 May 1943).

Arresting as it is to read the numerous references to 'poor Mussolini' and unconcealed delight at allied losses, the over-riding tone to Lynn's war years diaries reveals a complete reversal in her socialist politics, from membership of the revolutionary

socialist ICA in 1916 to pro-Nazism by the end of the 1930s. Despite the fact that information about the concentration camps and the other Nazi atrocities across Europe were censored during the Second World War to maintain Ireland's policy of neutrality, it is clear Lynn knew about the persecution of Jewish communities as early as 1938. Lynn's underlying anti-Semitism is of note, indeed Donal Ó Drisceoil discusses the prevalence of anti-Semitic views and actions in Ireland during this period. These views were censored during this period and the activities of reactionary anti-Semitic groups were also suppressed (Ó Drisceoil, 1997: 75). It was clear that by April 1944, Lynn was well aware of what was happening to the Jews in Nazi Germany throughout the war: 'Mr Cross gave forth on horrors Jews suffer in Nazi lands (KL/1/3, 16 April 1944). Yet, her anti-Semitism persists and her lack of empathy for the Jews is apparent in her clumsy analogy:

> the 8 M.Ps etc have gone to see German prison camps 1st hand & all the horrors, when one thinks of what they did to us & the U.S. to the natives, one knows their insincerity. Poor Germany almost squeezed in betw. enemies & surely they are no worse than the Allies (Diary entry, KLD, KL/1/3, 21 April 1945).

Given that other socialist women in the sample group rejected the attempted alliance between the IRA and Nazis, Lynn's fascist activism questions the extent to which she can be identified as socialist. It suggests that her socialism was only asserted when it did not contradict the prioritisation of her republicanism. On this occasion, an extreme Anglophobia which was a part of Lynn's republican identity, in conjunction with antisemitism, deviated into a completely conflictual political identification with fascism.

Lynn's fascism interrogates the conflicts between socialist and republican identification and indicates the limits of internationalism for those whose identification with Irish republicanism was prefaced on 'othering'; through either Anglophobic or antisemitic ideas. Although some Irish socialist women were readily able to access an expansive version of Irish republicanism through an international

socialist discourse of anti-imperialism, and, equally significantly, a broadening feminist consciousness, Lynn's case suggests that this fusion was highly unstable where that republicanism was not expansive and held alongside apparently latent reactionary beliefs. The Spanish republican cause did, however, also represent a broad left coalition of republicans, pacifists, feminists, and Christian socialists in an anti-fascist alliance, and as such provided expanded opportunities for Irish socialist women to internationalise their politics. This was apparent in the medical aid for Basque women and children campaign which unified the central concerns of Irish socialist feminists.

Soviet Russia also acted as a lightning rod, fusing multiple concerns for Irish socialist feminists and igniting their political imaginations as to what might be possible in an Irish society potentially transformed by socialist revolution. Yet it was an expanded version of socialist revolution, as Irish socialist feminists were certainly not unquestioning of the new regime in Russia, approaching the new State with a critical eye in matters of gender and anti-imperialism. Disillusioned with the version of freedom they experienced in the Free State, Irish socialist women turned outside the confines of the narrowing political space in Ireland to find an expansive version of revolution emanating from Soviet Russia.

At home, we see a radical, internationalising feminist consciousness at work through activism around unemployment and housing in the socialist republican movement. These issues allowed Irish socialist women to use the domestic to subvert existing definitions of class and expand the space available for feminist organising within the Irish anti-imperialist movement. Irish socialist women chose to work with the most marginalised and destitute in society, the homeless and unemployed. This activism expanded definitions of the working class by organising within the community, providing communal kitchens and fighting evictions. Hence in attempting to create a place for women within left republicanism during this period where traditional gender roles were being reasserted, Irish socialist women focused on local activism through which they were more successfully able to engage in issues which were seen as traditionally female and domestic preserves, such as housing. In asserting their place

within this counterculture of the 1920s and 1930s, Irish socialist women indirectly 'domesticated' Irish anti-imperialism. There were limits to the ability of socialist women to organise within the anti-imperialist movement and these constraints were evident in Humphreys and Connolly O'Brien's involvement with Saor Éire and the Republican Congress. This failed because of the tensions socialist organising raised between social democratic methods, and the relationship between the Communist Party and the militarism of the IRA.

In expressing solidarity with women within the unemployed movement or women and children experiencing fascist violence in Spain, or looking to Soviet Russia for models of women's emancipation, Irish socialist women exhibited a broadening feminist consciousness through their Irish anti-imperialism. This diffuse feminist consciousness was expressed through activism, and was therefore often unstable and complicated by trying to balance the demands of gender, nation and class. Religion and the position of women in anti-imperialist groups were consistently vexed issues for Irish socialist women in the expression of this diffuse feminist internationalism. Yet what is striking is its persistence in multiple radical contexts across the first half of the twentieth century, suggesting a strong connection between Irish socialist women and the international left. This conclusion about what the political lives of Irish socialist women from the 1900s to the 1940s demonstrates about Irish feminisms' interactive character is now considered alongside evidence garnered from the previous chapters.

Conclusion: Feminist Fusions

Returning to title of this thesis, 'Feminist Fusions', it seems fitting to conclude by considering what this study, which pieces together the political lives of ten Irish socialist feminist activists, has to say about the wider phenomena of Irish feminisms. The preceding chapters reveal the rich seam of Irish feminism permeating the lives of the ten socialist activists featured in this study, but it is how this woman-focussed politics is blended with their socialist concerns that is of particular interest to this study. Exploring Irish socialist feminists' experiences, ideas and campaigns, suggests the diverse and complex ways in which they attempted to connect claims of gender, class and nation. There was also variety in the political careers of individual socialist women, with shifts in the political spaces in which they organised and their priorities over the course of their lives. It is this process of constructing the political identities and lives of Irish socialist women which expands our definition of Irish feminism. Tracing their attempts to make these feminist fusions has been carried out thematically through the previous chapters in this thesis: of feminism and counterculture, suffrage, anti-militarism and anti-imperialism. Hence this thesis concludes by considering how the political lives of Irish socialist feminists allow us to view Irish feminism in an alternative light, and support interpretations of Irish feminism as interactive, plural, dynamic, diffuse and exhibiting a persistent presence.

The manner in which this has been achieved is significant to this thesis, which is concerned with highlighting the connections made by socialist women to radicalism. The innovative feminist approach of foregrounding biographical evidence draws directly on the activist experiences of Irish socialist women to recover Irish feminist histories and advance new understandings of Irish socialist feminism in the first half of the twentieth-century. The connections between ten feminists and the radical groups they organised around have been mapped out to form a sample group. This group of ten women featured here provide a baseline study for Irish socialist feminism and further circles of connection are widened throughout the thesis, but also point to the potential for further mapping projects which connect feminism to radicalism. The evidence considered in this study has deliberately been weighted in favour of

immediate narratives in order to reveal the activist experiences of socialist women. It is through this holistic perspective of women's political life histories that we acquire an alternative lens on the history of Irish feminism, seeing the connections made and creative approach to resolving tensions. This dynamic quality which socialist women lent to Irish feminism is premised on differing and nuanced political life histories. In re-examining their class and religious backgrounds, we are left with the conclusion that what sets this group of women apart is their unconventional lives. This was a group of women whose self-conscious dissent from the political and social mainstream, provided an alternative world-view conducive to creative experiments in fusing feminism with socialism and other radical currents of the day.

Foregrounding women's activist experiences from first-person narratives is consistent with the feminist approach adopted in this study. These narratives are derived from a range of biographical source material; letters, diaries, eye-witness accounts, first-person testimony, and political artefacts. The evidence for this group of women's socialist identification has been advanced in relation to biographical sources. It has been argued in this study that immediate narratives, such as diaries or letters, can provide an alternative lens through which to view feminism in this period, because they can demonstrate the lived experiences of activists making connections and negotiating tensions in 'real time'. Correspondence situates Irish socialist women within wider local and international socialist feminist communities and these types of biographical materials have been used to challenge concerns with the representativeness of radical women. It has been demonstrated that the common feature to Irish socialist women's backgrounds is there unconventionality and this disrupts any simple correlation between class, religion and politicisation. Rather it suggests a link between women from unconventional backgrounds and their connection with counterculture.

One of the key insights garnered from the collated biographical evidence is the way in which activists' lives were woven into the various countercultures which spanned the first half of the twentieth century. The productiveness of these political lives indicated the extent to which Irish socialist feminists were the social 'glue' between a

range of radical causes. This leads us to our first conclusion, namely that Irish feminism is an interactive phenomenon, intersecting with sympathetic left-wing elements of other major social movements through activists and their ideas. The unconventional backgrounds which set this group of women apart were used creatively through their immersion within counterculture to make a series of connections; between activists, ideas and the lives of the marginalised. Left-wing feminists tapped into key aspects of Irish radicalism: the Irish Cultural Revival, ideas of 'the new woman' and 'free love' within more left-wing feminist circles, militant labour, and later, the October revolution and cultural communism of the late 1920s. They attempted to integrate aspects of these various strands of radicalism to promote change in their personal and public lives.

Personal and political contacts between Irish socialist feminists and their counterparts outside of Ireland are important to understanding how the socialist strand to Irish feminism made connections to the international left. We see this in terms of suffrage activism, where the interchange between Irish and British socialist suffragettes, through alliances between the IWFL and the ELFS/WSF, is of particular note. A further way in which Irish socialist feminists were also able to link Irish feminism to radicalism was through their adoption of international socialist discourses. It is no coincidence that Sheehy Skeffington's anti-militarist speaking tours of the US in the wake of the 1916 Rising were strongly linked to the anarcho-syndicalists, the IWW, who spearheaded militant anti-conscription campaigning during the First World War. Irish socialist feminists' activism in defence of Soviet Russia and their anti-fascist support for the Spanish republicans firmly situated their republicanism within movements of the international left.

A second understanding from this thesis is that Irish feminism is pluralistic, bringing together divergent strands of feminist thought and activism, such as socialist feminism, under an overarching and cohesive framework. For instance, Irish socialist suffragists operated from an inclusive gender platform in order to build the broadest cross-sex alliances. As citizens of a subject nation within the British Empire, Irish socialist suffragists in the IWFL were able to make common cause with other

marginalised groups. Cross-class alliances were made with the militant labour women involved in the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the IWWU and the ICA, and working-women from the East End of London. There was also diversity amongst Irish socialist feminists in the political choices they made. It was acknowledged by Markievicz that in contrast to her own career as a Sinn Féin TD, Sheehy Skeffington chose to continue working from 'the women's platform' after 1918 (Roper ed, 1934: 192). Yet both women collaborated around the 1913 Dublin Lockout and suffrage campaigning. This suggests that they both campaigned on socialist and feminist issues, but the political spaces in which they organised differed.

Elements of Irish socialist feminists' activism are often presented as paradoxes or contradictions, and as continually shifting. Creative tensions and fluidity lent a dynamic quality to Irish feminism, where ideas and activism were constantly developed. Socialist women thoroughly immersed themselves in various facets of the counterculture, anticipating the changes they attempted to bring about in the public sphere in their personal lives. Irish socialist women consistently embraced ambiguity with regard to sexuality, relationships and created alternative gender roles in a bid to disrupt the ideology of separate spheres.

By continually shifting priorities, Irish socialist feminists integrated multiple claims to political identity and formed interlocking campaigns. Carney shifted her political identity by re-prioritising militant labour activism in the ICA over her campaigning work to enfranchise working women. By representing this shift as merely a change in priorities and by emphasising the ICA's inclusivity, she was able to balance claims of class, gender and nation. Following the political journeys of Irish socialist women demonstrates how their anti-militarist activism developed in relation to their own personal experiences of violence in the 1913 Dublin Lockout and the 1916 Easter Rising. These experiences shaped their distinct response to militarism because they understood their specific vulnerability as women in the midst of imperialist and class conflict. Resistance through a militant anti-militarism became their attempt to marry claims of gender, nation and class. For instance, during the First World War, as a committed pacifist Gore-Booth supported conscientious objectors, but it is significant

that in her holograph account of her visit to Dublin in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, she amplifies British atrocities and refuses to vilify the armed rebellion (Tiernan, 2015: 183).

A further implication that Irish socialist feminists' lives have for re-evaluating Irish feminism is in terms of the diffusion of feminist thought and activism. This understanding implies a symbiosis between thought and activism, a suggestion that feminism is broader than the women's movement; it also aims at more pervasive changes in consciousness. Through their more public campaigning for free school meals and alternative educational models, Irish socialist women attempted to introduce ideas of socialising motherhood and challenge the notion that women were the sole providers of childcare and domestic labour. In their co-operative ventures, they suggested that women could be economically independent outside of the home and within a worker-controlled venture. Community organising channelled the self-help/home-grown ethos characteristic of the Irish Cultural Revival. Socialist women orchestrated their entry into Irish anti-imperialism through their appropriation of the domestic to create a woman-focussed discourse. In this area, they also organised co-operatives but to provide for female political prisoners. Concerns with the domestic were raised again within the context of the anti-imperialist movement in Irish socialist feminists' campaigns to resist housing evictions and community organising amongst the women and children of the unemployed movement.

The last area in which evidence from this thesis relates to Irish feminism concerns feminism as a persistent force for social change during the first half of the twentieth century. The political life histories of this group of women demonstrate that their participation in both feminism and wider political change did not end with the attainment partial suffrage in 1918, or full suffrage as a result of independence in 1922. As demonstrated in the two chapters concerning Irish socialist women's involvement in movements premised on discourses of international socialism, their connections with international feminist and socialist movements extended Irish socialist feminists' connection to radical circles in Ireland beyond the usual bounds of suffrage or nationalist histories, up to the 1940s. Their commitment to maintaining a

feminist focus to their participation in radical movements during this extended period lent a persistent presence to Irish feminism.

During the Irish suffrage campaign, Irish socialist women developed a universalising humanitarian consciousness, connecting claims of class, sex and nation. This refusal to make artificial distinctions between claims strengthened gender solidarity and had a radicalising effect on the Irish suffrage movement. In 1918, the franchise was partially extended to women of property who were over the age of thirty. By 1922, Irish suffragists were demanding full citizenship without regard to age or property qualifications. In fusing their feminism with international socialist discourses of anti-militarism and anti-imperialism, Irish socialist feminists exposed Irish feminism to new ideas, demands and tactics. Whilst they courted controversy in their associations with Irish republicanism and communism, Irish socialist women looked to the Soviet Russia for models of communal provision of domestic labour, the secularisation of society and prison reform. Through Irish socialist feminists' anti-militarist activism, they forged a discourse of resistance which proliferated in small, direct action women's groups. One of these, the WPDL, was an important presence in the politically hostile climate of 1920s and 1930s. Ward discusses how the WPDL was a continual dissident presence from 1922 and the only radical group to defy the ban on proscribed organisations under the 1931 Public Safety Act by renaming itself (Ward, 1995: 217). The WPDL was also the only republican organisation to openly criticise the Spanish nationalists and appeal for Ryan's release in the late 1930s amidst popular support for Franco (McGarry, 1999: 97-101).

Although this thesis is very much concerned with connections between radical activists and movements, there were limits to this intersectionality. Sheehy Skeffington's assessment of her own political career in her unpublished memoirs as 'a life that has been chequered, but which has had moments', could be applied to the record of Irish socialist feminists more generally (Ward, 2017: 2). Socialist women's organising in the nationalist movement in particular garnered criticism either for the potential dilution of class politics from socialists, or for creating division amongst nationalist women. Hence, O'Casey's unsuccessful attempt to prevent Markievicz's

alliance with Cumann na mBan, and the serious splits which anti-Treaty and Republican Congress organising precipitated within Cumann na mBan. These initiatives led to pro-Treaty and later anti-communist IRA members leaving the organisation, but also to further diffusion within the nationalist feminist movement, through the formation of new groups such as the pro-Treatyite Cumann na Saoirse. Although this created tension within the nationalist movement, proliferation of women's groups is regarded as a healthy tendency within feminist theorising as it maintains a feminist presence. This suggests that an alliance between socialist women and feminists was less problematic than with nationalists. Socialism threatened republican unity because it exposed power struggles within the republican movement over the meaning and definition of national freedom and the future direction of the republic.

That being said, inconsistencies in Irish socialist women's politics are indications of the limits of their socialism and interrogate the extent to which some of the women in this study can be described as unqualified 'socialists'. This applies to women who prioritised their feminism over class politics, as it does to republican women. There were 'moments' where claims to political identity were counter-posed; such as when Sheehy Skeffington dismissed 'slumming', poor law and municipal political activism as distractions from the vote; or her and Jacob's visits to Soviet Russia, when Sheehy Skeffington and Jacob were conscious of their bourgeois backgrounds and awkward position in relation to the workers' struggle.

Some women's identification with socialism was expressed when it did not inherently contradict their closer identification with either feminism or nationalism. This was the case for Humphreys and Connolly O'Brien, whose respective resignation and split from Republican Congress was prompted by their suspicion of the Communist Party, their inability to embrace social democracy and completely relinquish their support for republican militarism. A second limitation on the ability of socialist women to fully identify with international socialism relates to their activism around the Spanish Civil War. They were constrained in their ability to defend Spanish republicans and effectively build an anti-fascist alliance because of their identification with a largely

Catholic and anti-communist republican movement.

The most glaring and dramatic example of the limitations of Irish women's identification with socialism is Lynn's anti-Semitism and fascism in the lead up to the Second World War. The extent of her pro-Nazi views cannot be explained simply in the context of the alliance attempted by the IRA with the Nazis. Other socialist women, such as Jacob, were clearly appalled by these developments and were actively involved in anti-fascist activism around the Spanish Civil War. Neither was Lynn's fascism a product of the war-time censorship which suppressed news of Nazi atrocities and Irish anti-Semitic groups; from her diary accounts and contacts with Germans living in Ireland, she was well aware of the Nazis' extermination of the Jews, but chose to support it. The case of Lynn would suggest that for some socialist women, socialism was at various stages of their political lives a convenient vehicle through which to promote or further other causes. Hence, Lynn's activism with the ICA could be seen more closely within the context of her revolutionary republicanism, and her work on public health as an extension of her feminist activism. At best her identification with socialism should be seen in a highly superficial and transitory manner because it is completely incompatible with her later fascist activism. This is underscored by the fact that socialists, anarchists and political opponents of the fascists and Nazis were amongst their first victims.

Viewed collectively, Irish socialist feminists' political life histories represent a history of feminist fusions, a bewildering array of interconnections made across half a century of activism. These women constantly reinvented feminist ideas, campaigns and relationships through their attempts to fuse together claims of gender, class and nation, but their broader, humanitarian and universalising ideals burnt brightly throughout their political careers. They may not have achieved their radical vision for Irish women in their lifetimes, but the significance of these feminists' serious attempts to realise their ambitions endures in the relevance of many of their ideas to the future.

The influence of Irish socialist women's radicalising of a feminist consciousness is apparent in the appropriation of socialist feminists' subversion of the ideology of

separate spheres by a number of new women's organisations and campaigns which were formed in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The demands of these new women's groups carried a radical imprint despite the politically hostile climate. These groups represented a resurgence in Irish feminism as they were determined to resist the continued efforts by successive Governments to re-confine Irish women to their roles as wives and mothers after the foundation of the Free State. These repressive moves culminated in article 41.2 in the 1937 Irish Constitution. Interviewed by Dorothy Thomas for *Independent Woman* in March 1938, Sheehy Skeffington claims one of the most militant women's organisations involved in this fightback was the WSPL, whose slogan was: 'The State is the Home writ large. Women demand their place in it' (Ward, 2017: 246). The WSPL called for equal pay for equal work, better working conditions and increased public representation of women.

The Irish Housewives Association (IHA) was established in 1942 by Sheehy Skeffington's daughter-in-law Andrée. Sheehy Skeffington supported the IHA for its links with working-class women. The IHA politicised housewives and sought to give them a voice on issues of war-time poverty, housing and food prices (Ward, 2017: 374). Sheehy Skeffington's address for the 1943 general election as an independent progressive and feminist candidate claimed: 'Our own country needs desperately the experience and help of its women in the National Housekeeping'. Appealing to Connolly's 'Workers' Republic', she stood on a platform which defined the 'national housekeeping' in socialist feminist terms, including demands such as: equal pay abolition of the means test, pensions for the aged, widows, the blind and nurses, school meals and books, family allowances, clean milk, an effective anti-TB campaign, and the civilised treatment of the unemployed (Ward, 2017: 384).

Many of the persistent themes of Irish socialist women's activism culminate in this address, particularly school meals, public health and unemployment. The influence of socialist feminism is evident in Humphreys' appropriation of the domestic in her language of 'the housekeeping of the nation' which was used by feminist groups and campaigns of the 1940s. We also witness the influence of socialist feminism in the demands raised by the WSPL, Sheehy Skeffington's election campaign and in the

formation of the IHA, an organisation which together with the IWWU, would form a bridge to the next wave of feminist activism in the late 1960s. Socialist feminism equipped Irish feminist groups with a broadening agenda in a period of wartime deprivation, ensuring feminism's relevance and survival until a second wave of radical feminists emerged. Socialist feminists in Irishwomen United (IWU) were involved in protests against slum and inadequate housing, supported women trade unionists' activism, equal pay, the civil rights movement and northern feminist republicanism, anti-Vietnam war protests, and challenged censorship (see Kyte, 2006, unpublished MA thesis).

Some of the problems that surrounded Irish socialist feminists in the first half of the twentieth century and motivated them to join radical causes persist in this decade of centenary commemorations: housing, childcare, women's access to reproductive rights and freedom in their sexual lives, the continued underrepresentation of women in Irish politics, and violence against women and children. Internationally, the kind of issues Irish socialist women negotiated through their anti-militarism and anti-imperialism have resurfaced in twenty-first century form with conflict in the Middle East, the future of a united Europe and of the border with Northern Ireland, and the rise of the populist far right in the United States and Britain. In particular, right-wing populism threatens to divide the left, prompting calls for privileging a particular claim over others. Hence, the feminist fusions ignited by Irish socialist feminists featured in this study, what twenty-first century Irish feminists now refer to as 'intersectionality', continue to burn brightly in the idea and vision that a different kind of world is possible.

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