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### **Title:**

**Anger, Resentment and the Limits of Historical Narratives in Protest Politics: The Case of Early Twentieth-Century Irish Women’s Intersectional Movements**

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### **Abstract**

This essay analyses the emotions of intersectional protest. It uses the case study of early twentieth-century Irish women who subscribed to a multitude of ideological beliefs – including feminism, nationalism, socialism and pacifism – to attempt to understand the different place of emotions like hope and pride and anger and resentment in sustaining political activism. In doing so, it examines the nexus between emotions, ideology and history. Adopting both an interconnecting and comparative approach, it investigates the relative efficacy of historical narratives in sustaining the emotional and moral dimensions of intersecting and competing ideological movements. The essay concludes by exposing the limits of the emotions–ideology–history nexus, especially when it comes to feminist protest.

### **Keywords**

feminism – nationalism – protest – emotions – resentment

### **Article**

Ireland was England’s oldest imperial possession and since the 1800 Act of Union it was an equal partner in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland or, in the eyes of Irish nationalists and republicans certainly, an inferior member of the kingdom subject to a British parliament and/or a continued colonial possession. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the country experienced a renewed nationalist campaign which was dominated by a demand for Home Rule parliament to be restored to the island. The wider nationalist movement was a complex one which accommodated, and was supported by, numerous overlapping ideologies including socialism and feminism. By the end of World War I (1914–1918), this

push for a home-based parliament had transformed into a more radical republican movement which led to the Anglo-Irish War (or Irish War of Independence, 1919–1921) and the compromise that followed, namely the Anglo-Irish Treaty which confirmed the partition of the island through the creation of the twenty-six-county Commonwealth Free State and the loyal six-county Northern Irish State.

Early twentieth-century Irish revolutionaries deployed history and emotions in a multifaceted way to sustain and expand their ultimately successful anti-colonial nationalist movement. This was a long-running campaign fuelled by a range of emotions – positive and negative – from hope and pride to anger, indignation and resentment. Historical narratives which emphasised a long history of oppression at the hands of British imperialists on the one hand, and an even longer tradition of Gaelic civilisation on the other, lent legitimacy to these emotional experiences. These intermingling feelings were evoked to inspire political mobilisation.

Women participating in the nationalist movement asserted that they faced oppression on two fronts: colonial and patriarchal. Nationalist women faced challenges that their male peers did not. They had to decide whether to fight for national autonomy at the same time as fighting for feminist reform, particularly the vote. Some prominent activists, like Constance Markievicz, made the decision to delay their appeal for the vote until Ireland had its own parliament again. Others, including Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, demanded a say in the British parliament so that they could help the nationalist cause through constitutional means.<sup>1</sup> Either way, at the height of its campaign, the increasingly violent nationalist movement intersected with militant feminism in the form of a staunch suffrage campaign. Like male revolutionaries, women deployed ancient historical narratives, consisting of a mixture of mythology and history, to elicit an emotional response. However, departing from their male peers, the ancient Gaelic past that female activists evoked was one characterised by a devotion to gender equality. This historical-emotional approach aimed to achieve a number of intersecting outcomes. It worked to foster a sense of intra-group loyalty and solidarity through inspiring feelings of indignation and resentment aimed at the British. It was also designed to shed light on

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<sup>1</sup> For a history of the Irish suffrage movement, also see Rosemary Cullen Owens, *Smashing Times: A History of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement, 1889–1922* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1984); and Cliona Murphy, *The Women's Suffrage Movement and Irish Society in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).

Irish women's specific contribution to Irish history and to the modern nationalist cause, in the hope that this would elicit the Irishman's support for women's enfranchisement.

Early in the twentieth-century campaign, Irish women enacted this strategy of invoking an ancient Irish past to cultivate the emotions of nationalist feminist protest in the present. They published articles to this effect in their feminist nationalist press. However, increasingly a feeling of pessimism permeated their political discourse. This pessimism was shaped by growing confirmation that nationalist leaders and the nationalist movement were informed by an overwhelmingly masculinist agenda. Accordingly, some prominent women activists, like Sheehy Skeffington and Markievicz, trialled a different tactic. They attempted to persuade fellow nationalist women to advocate more staunchly for women's rights within the larger nationalist community. To inspire greater women's mobilisation, they turned away from stories of a glorious ancient past and towards those depicting more recent times. Whereas Markievicz adopted a well-used nationalist tradition of drawing on romanticised narratives of the bloody United Irishman's Rebellion of 1798, this time highlighting women's involvement, Sheehy Skeffington took a different path. Perhaps hoping that much more recent histories of female activism would act as a more relevant model for aspiring political women, she cited the 1880s history of the radical Irish Ladies Land League.

This essay examines the technique of deploying historical narratives to elicit the emotions of feminist nationalist protest in a subsection of Irish women's writings. It analyses the nationalist strategy of situating narratives of an ancient independent Irish past alongside those detailing centuries of British oppression to cultivate the emotions of nationalist solidarity. It then traces how growing distrust of a masculinist nationalist ideology prompted female activists to experiment with more recent historical narratives in the attempt to elicit appropriate emotional responses from fellow women. Adopting both an interconnecting and comparative approach, it investigates the relative efficacy of historical narratives in sustaining the emotional and moral dimensions of intersecting and competing ideological movements.

This investigation of the nexus between emotions, ideology and history goes beyond the revolutionary years (c.1912–1923). In the 1920s, the majority, but not all, of Ireland achieved partial independence from Britain. Almost immediately afterwards, postcolonial Ireland experienced a notorious

anti-feminist turn. Nationalist ideology was effectively reconstituted to exclude women. When it became progressively clearer that fellow Irish men were not going to accord their sisters equal rights with them in the new Irish Free State, women like Sheehy Skeffington redirected their feelings of anger and resentment away from the British and towards the Irish man. Resentment replaced memories of solidarity and camaraderie. How then did feminists approach the nexus between history, ideology and resentment when their feelings of resentment were being redirected to their internal community of like-minded nationalists? What versions of the past did activists like Sheehy Skeffington use to incite the emotions of feminist protest in this new postcolonial sphere? Through examining the emotional language and emotional strategies of feminist nationalists, especially Markievicz and Sheehy Skeffington, who were both leading critics, as well as influencers, of gendered framings of nationalism, this essay aims to contribute towards a deeper understanding of the different place of emotions like hope and pride, and anger and resentment in sustaining intersecting political activisms.

### **Politics, Nationalism and Emotions**

Despite the obvious presence of emotions in politics, until recent decades historians have been reluctant to analyse the emotional dimensions of political life.<sup>2</sup> However, an emotional or affective ‘turn’ has led to an expansion of historical and sociological studies of the roles that emotions play in politics. As this essay aims to explore the diverse roles that emotions have assumed in intersecting nationalist and feminist campaigns, the most pertinent branches of this growing body of literature are those on emotions in social and political movements, and the emotional dimensions of nationalism.

Over the past two decades, sociologists have increasingly turned their attention to extending our understanding of the powerful role that emotions play in social movements – emotions as strategically deployed or as experienced and embodied feelings. They have investigated the role of emotions as means of

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<sup>2</sup> The construction of an artificial binary between emotion and reason – a binary which has since been largely dismantled – discouraged scholars from investigating the role of emotions in political life. See for example, Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, ‘Introduction: Why Emotions Matter,’ in *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, ed. Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1–27 (1–2); and Carol Johnson, ‘From Obama to Abbott: Gender Identity and the Politics of Emotion,’ *Australian Feminist Studies* 28, no. 75 (2013): 14–29 (15).

motivating, sustaining or even bringing about the demise of political movements.<sup>3</sup> Over the past few years, historians have begun to build on sociological research, to now consider the influential and complex role of emotions in past political lives.<sup>4</sup> This essay builds on calls from sociologists, like Helena Flam and Debra King, to embark on complex journeys to understanding how proponents of social and political movements selected specific emotional formulas in order to cultivate their desired emotional milieus.<sup>5</sup> It also keeps in mind Deborah Gould's and James Jasper's observations that, while activists often purposely endeavoured to construct their emotional environments, they also reacted less purposely to the emotions surrounding them. Often these strategically developed and spontaneous emotional responses intertwined to shape and propel the movement.<sup>6</sup>

Historians researching everyday aspects of nationalism assert that, unsurprisingly, nationalism studies have also been affected by the affective turn. National movements and state-led nationalisms 'abound with dramatic outcries, passionate pleas and heart-breaking mourning'.<sup>7</sup> 'It may seem trivial and mere common sense to note that revolts and revolutions are deeply emotional moments', write Joachim Häberlen and Russell Spinney.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the only surprising thing is how long it took scholars to tackle the topic, assert others.<sup>9</sup> This essay takes up a number of questions posed by scholars of nationalism and nationalist revolts. How do we understand the ideological processes through which nationhood becomes our dominant, even only, way of understanding the world we live in? Group solidarity is fragile and therefore

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example: James Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Helena Flam and Debra King, 'Introduction,' in *Emotions and Social Movements*, ed. Helena Flam and Debra King (London: Routledge, 2005), 1–18; and, Deborah Gould, 'Concluding Thoughts,' *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 4 (2014): 639–44.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of recent histories of emotions in politics, see Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Emotions of Protest,' in *Sources for the History of Emotions: A Guide*, ed. Katie Barclay, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, and Peter N. Stearns (London: Routledge, 2020), 198–211.

<sup>5</sup> Flam and King, 'Introduction,' 2–3.

<sup>6</sup> Deborah Gould, 'Life During Wartime: Emotions and the Development of Act Up,' *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2002): 177–200 (177). See also Gould, 'Concluding Thoughts'; and Jasper, *Emotions of Protest*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Stynen, Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, 'Introduction: Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History,' in *Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History*, ed. Andreas Stynen, Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (London: Routledge, 2020), 1–15 (1–2).

<sup>8</sup> Joachim C. Häberlen and Russell A. Spinney, 'Introduction,' *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 4 (2014): 489–503 (489).

<sup>9</sup> Stynen, Van Ginderachter, and Núñez Seixas, 'Introduction,' 2.

such a difficult thing to sustain over long periods of time, so how do nationalisms achieve this?<sup>10</sup> What makes national narratives so convincing when compared to other narratives?<sup>11</sup>

Here, in an attempt to address these questions, Monique Scheer's concept of emotional practices proves fruitful. Scheer argues that understanding that an injustice is being perpetrated is not enough to inspire feelings of anger or resentment, those strong enough to spur action. Rather, this conceptual knowledge needs to be transformed into bodily knowledge, thereby creating strong sensations, for instance indignation, resentment or anger.<sup>12</sup> In line with Scheer's thinking, then, mobilising emotions is an emotional practice. Eduardo Romanos uses the example of indignation to exemplify the practice of mobilisation. He claims that feelings like indignation – elicited via an awareness that suffering has been inflicted on an undeserving person or group and that this should not be allowed to happen – can constitute a force that is mobilised against the wrongdoer.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Irish nationalists' protests against British imperialism, which drew on narratives of dispossession and oppression to elicit enough anger and resentment to spur anti-colonial activism, can be understood as an emotional practice.

This essay undertakes a close reading of a small selection of Irish women's printed speeches, writing and interviews to comprehend their use of the press to elicit the emotional responses required to spur both nationalist and feminist activism. In doing so, it recalls Barbara Rosenwein's assertion that rhetoric and emotion are intertwined: 'One cannot separate feeling from rhetoric, which is crucial for emotional expression'.<sup>14</sup> While this essay sets out to examine the means by which nationalist feminist Irish women deliberately cultivated the emotions of protest, as well as the ways in which they less purposely responded to the emotions around them, it does so by paying specific attention to their use of historical narratives to

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<sup>10</sup> Siniša Malešević, 'The Chimera of National Identity,' *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 2 (2011): 272–90 (283). See also Jonathan G. Heaney, 'Emotions and Nationalism: A Reappraisal,' in *Emotions in Politics: The Affect Dimension in Political Tension*, ed. Nicolas Demertzis (New York: Palgrave 2013), 243–63.

<sup>11</sup> Stynen, Van Genderachter, and Núñez Seixas, 'Introduction,' 6.

<sup>12</sup> Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion,' *History and Theory* 51 (2012): 193–220 (209–10).

<sup>13</sup> Eduardo Romanos, 'Emotions, Moral Batteries and High-Risk Activism: Understanding the Emotional Practices of the Spanish Anarchists under Franco's Dictatorship,' *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 4 (2014): 545–64 (554).

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling. A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8–9.

sustain their intersecting activisms. Through doing so, it reveals the opportunities and the limitations inherent in deploying the past for the purposes of protest in the present.

### **Resentment, Pride and History Interrupted**

Scholars theorising the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism assert that although the concept of the nation may be relatively new in that it is rooted in the modern era, nations have their origins in ethnic myths that are far older than those nations.<sup>15</sup> New myths (such as ‘romantic acts of self-sacrifice by heroic elites’) may be manufactured in order to legitimise these newly emerging nations, but these new myths do not override or obliterate older ethnic myths; rather, they overlies them. There is a strategy, then, involved in constructing a national identity.<sup>16</sup>

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish nationalists were aware of this relationship between historical and/or mythological past and national feeling.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, they drew on alternating historical narratives to variously inculcate feelings of anger and resentment or pride and hope to bolster their campaign for national autonomy. While sporadic events or acts could produce acute, intense, short-term emotions – perhaps an outburst of anger – an analysis of the writings of some leading Irish nationalists reveals that the repeated propagation of long narratives of oppression and injustice could cause long-term or ‘settled’ feelings of resentment.<sup>18</sup> The temporal link between emotion and story here is not surprising. Some sociologists, like Warren TenHouten, have pointed out that the English term ‘resentment’ stems from the French for re-experiencing strong feelings. In more recent times, this notion of strong feelings has been

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<sup>15</sup> See John Hutchinson, ‘Myth Against Myth: The Nation as Ethnic Overlay,’ *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 1–2 (2004): 109–23. Hutchinson and other scholars rely on the ground-breaking work of sociologist Anthony Smith, who has written extensively on ethnicity and nationalism.

<sup>16</sup> Hutchinson, ‘Myth Against Myth,’ 122.

<sup>17</sup> This issue is a deep and complex one, drawing as it does on perceptions of colonisation, modernity, ethnicity and other categories like gender. For an insight into some of these complexities, see, for example, Angela Bourke’s early case study of Bridget Cleary. Angela Bourke, ‘Reading a Woman’s Death: Colonial Context and Oral Tradition in Nineteenth Century Ireland,’ *Feminist Studies* 21, no. 3 (1995): 553–86.

<sup>18</sup> Didier Fassin, ‘On Resentment and *Ressentiment*: The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotions,’ *Current Anthropology* 54, no. 3 (2013): 249–67 (251). For a brief introduction to the latest debates on the nature of anger, see the series of articles published in *Emotions: History, Culture, Society* 4 (2020), including Thomas Dixon, ‘What is the History of Anger a History of?’, 1–34; Barbara Rosenwein, ‘Angers Past and Present,’ 35–38; and W. Gerrod Parrott, ‘Recognising Similarity in “Angers” across History,’ 39–42.

narrowed to strong negative feelings.<sup>19</sup> Historical narratives which depict a long past of undeserved hardship at the hands of an unjust aggressor can cultivate deep, long-lasting feelings of resentment, especially if those narratives are promulgated time and again. Whereas some commentators oppose the use of historical narratives to sustain resentment, viewing this strategy as ‘a cynical instrumentalization of history’, Irish nationalists saw it as a justified tactic in the war against British imperialism; as a legitimate tool in the campaign for restoring national pride.<sup>20</sup>

Modern conceptions of resentment, which focus on negative feelings only, mean that resentment has gained a reputation for being undesirable.<sup>21</sup> However, some academics argue that resentment has been, and continues to be, useful as a motivating impulse. TenHouten, for example, differentiates between ‘helpless’ and ‘forceful’ resentment. ‘Helpless’ resentment is linked to Nietzsche’s use of the French term *ressentiment* to encapsulate the meaninglessness, powerlessness and helplessness of those who feel frustration and hostility but have no ability to directly express this.<sup>22</sup> ‘Forceful’ resentment, on the other hand, is conceived of as a moral sentiment that is capable of motivating a forceful behavioural response when confronted by a wrongdoing. Relying on the works of Adam Smith and David Hume, TenHouten argues that whereas helpless resentment can be sublimated, thereby failing to lead to action, forceful resentment, if wielded by those with sufficient power and wilfulness, can be voiced and acted on.<sup>23</sup> Given that Irish nationalists believed that an injury had wrongly been inflicted on them by the British through the process of colonisation, and given that they acted on their resulting feelings of frustration and hostility by launching multiple political and violent campaigns that eventually led to national independence, then forceful resentment is the most relevant emotional framework for the bulk, if not all, of this study.

To elicit feelings of shame and resentment, Irish nationalists painted a picture of the Irish as a long-subjugated and oppressed people; as a people who for over seven hundred years were unjustly ruled over by British imperialists. To prompt pride, they evoked an ancient lineage: a people connected by culture, art,

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<sup>19</sup> Warren D. TenHouten, ‘From *Ressentiment* to Resentment as a Tertiary Emotion,’ *Review of European Studies* 10, no. 4 (2018): 1–16 (1).

<sup>20</sup> Fassin, ‘On Resentment,’ 254.

<sup>21</sup> Fassin quotes Adam Smith, who labelled resentment as ‘unsocial passion.’ See Fassin, ‘On Resentment,’ 251.

<sup>22</sup> Discussed in TenHouten, ‘From *Ressentiment*,’ 2–3. See also Fassin’s discussion of Nietzsche in Fassin, ‘On Resentment,’ 252.

<sup>23</sup> Discussed in TenHouten, ‘From *Ressentiment*,’ 4–5.



war. This tactic was apparent in one of the foundational republican documents of the time, Sinn Féin's manifesto for the General Election of 1918. Sinn Féin (translating from the Gaelic as 'We Ourselves') was the separatist republican party which won a landslide victory in the 1918 British elections, just prior to the Anglo-Irish War. The manifesto listed Irish people's grievances, including: the 'enforced exodus of millions of our people,'<sup>24</sup> the decay of our industrial life, the ever-increasing financial plunder of our country, the whittling down of the demand for the 'Repeal of the Union'<sup>25</sup> ... and finally the contemplated mutilation of our country by partition'. It then went on to legitimise nationalists' calls for nation-state status based on 'our unbroken tradition of nationhood, on a unity in a national name which has never been challenged, on our possession of a distinctive national culture and social order, on the moral courage and dignity of our people in the face of alien aggression'.<sup>26</sup>

This double-edged strategy of invoking oppositional emotions – a process of using negative and positive emotions to create tension which motivates or demands action, what James Jasper terms 'moral battery'<sup>27</sup> – was devised to produce and sustain nationalist resentment. It provided the legitimisation of the ideology, nationalism, through its evidence of oppression. It depicted the sheer injustice of this oppression by depicting a people whose ancient Gaelic culture was equal to, if not superior than, that of the oppressor. The result was a mixture of pride and righteous resentment. This spur to action was not left implicit; rather, it was issued as a challenge: would the Irish people choose to march out into 'the full sunlight of freedom' or 'remain in the shadow of a base imperialism that has brought and ever will bring in its train naught but evil for our race'?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This refers to, among other things, the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century. For a nationalist explanation of Britain's complicity in this tragic event, see for example, renowned nationalist activist Maude Gonne's essay 'The Famine Queen,' *United Irishman*, 7 April 1900, in *Maud Gonne's Irish Nationalist Writings, 1895–1946*, ed. Karen Steele (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), 54–56.

<sup>25</sup> The union of Ireland and Britain which came into force in 1801.

<sup>26</sup> Sinn Féin Standing Committee, *The Manifesto of Sinn Féin as Prepared for Circulation for the General Election of December, 1918*, CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork, accessed 13 January 2021, <https://celt.ucc.ie//published/E900009/index.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Jasper asserted that 'An emotion can be strengthened when we explicitly or implicitly compare it to its opposite, just as a battery works through the tension between its positive and negative poles.' See James M. Jasper, 'Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research,' *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (2011): 285–303 (291).

<sup>28</sup> Sinn Féin Standing Committee, *The Manifesto of Sinn Féin*.

In the modern history of Ireland, tumultuous events sparked anger that led to direct protest. Arguably, Britain's attempt to introduce conscription in Ireland in 1918 produced the outrage that was needed to fire up the republican movement, which subsequently led to the country's war of independence. However, to be successful, these outbursts of anger and outrage had to also harness the latent resentment that kept the nationalist ideology simmering along. Continued promulgation of historical narratives of oppression fed these feelings of resentment.

### **Historical-Emotional Practices, Markievicz, Sheehy Skeffington and the Nationalist Feminist Press**

Women have long had an uneasy relationship with the nation-state and nationalism. Some nationalist movements offered women opportunities for public representation and participation that they could rarely find elsewhere. Yet, overwhelmingly, the nationalist project cast women in a reductive symbolic role: the nation as allegorical woman who relied on the protection of her masculine other.<sup>29</sup> Ireland was no different. Radical branches of the nationalist movement, represented by the republican Sinn Féin and the socialist Irish Citizen Army, offered women opportunities for direct participation as electoral candidates or even soldiers. Others, like the more moderate Home Rule party, the Irish Parliamentary Party, reduced women's participation to that of cultural guardian (reviving the Irish language, protecting traditions and rituals).

Reflecting the unpredictability of this varied nationalist landscape, many women took it upon themselves to establish a lively press in which to disseminate nationalist propaganda. However, reflecting their intersectional interests, this press also served as a vehicle for voicing allegiance to sometimes competing political ideologies – nationalism, socialism, feminism and pacifism being among these. These intersecting and competing allegiances created passionate debate in the pages of, for example: the *Shan Van Vocht* (translating from the Irish as *Poor Old Woman*, and run by two poets, Alice Milligan and Anna Johnson, in the north of the country from 1896 to 1898); the *Bean na hEireann* (*Woman of Ireland*, 1908–1911, the organ of Inghinidhe na hEireann (Daughters of Ireland), a radical nationalist, pro-militant

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<sup>29</sup> Since the 1980s, many feminist historians have produced excellent theorisations of women and nationalism. One more recent example is Cynthia H. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

women's group that was to later merge with Cumman na mBan, the women's wing of the Irish Republican Army); and, the *Irish Citizen* (established by Margaret and James Cousins and Hanna and Francis Sheehy Skeffington as the organ of Ireland's militant suffrage organisation, the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL), lasting from 1908 to 1920, when its presses were destroyed by British forces in the Anglo-Irish War).<sup>30</sup>

Prominent female revolutionaries also individually voiced their differing allegiances to these intersecting political priorities, and made use of this press to do so. Two of the most well-known of these are Constance Markievicz and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.<sup>31</sup> Whereas Markievicz prioritised nationalism over feminism, in that she championed securing national autonomy and then demanding female suffrage in an Irish parliament, Sheehy Skeffington did the opposite. She demanded a say in the British parliament currently ruling over Ireland, which she would then use to help secure Ireland's freedom. Both women advocated for militancy and/or violence in both the anti-colonial nationalist and feminist campaigns but only Markievicz actively deployed physical force. A nationalist, socialist and feminist politician and soldier, Markievicz trained boys and young men for armed combat through the militant Fianna na hÉireann, a nationalist version of the Boy Scouts, which she helped to launch in 1909.<sup>32</sup> Markievicz was sentenced to be executed for her role in the failed 1916 uprising (commuted to imprisonment because of her sex), and was the first woman elected to British parliament but instead helped Sinn Féin to form the first Dáil Éireann (Irish parliament). Until her death in 1927, she opposed the treaty which divided the country, alongside peers like Sheehy Skeffington and Éamon de Valera. Although a fierce nationalist, Sheehy Skeffington reacted stridently to nationalist Irish men's role in thwarting the success of the women's suffrage campaign. This obstruction was made official in 1912 when the nationalist Irish Parliamentary Party, holding the

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<sup>30</sup> See C. L. Innes, "'A Voice in Directing the Affairs of Ireland': *L'Irlande libre*, *The Shan Van Vocht* and *Bean na h-Eireann*," in *Irish Writing: Exile and Subversion*, ed. Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 146–58; and Murphy, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, 29–34.

<sup>31</sup> For more on Markievicz, see Sinéad McCoole, *No Ordinary Woman: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2003); Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900–1922* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2010); Karen Steele, 'Constance Markievicz and the Politics of Memory,' in *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags*, ed. Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), 62–79. For more on Sheehy Skeffington, see Margaret Ward, *Fearless Woman: Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Feminism and the Irish Revolution* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2019); and *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings*, ed. Margaret Ward (Dublin: UCD Press, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Marnie Hay, 'An Irish Nationalist Adolescence: Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–23,' in *Adolescence in Modern Irish History*, ed. Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 103–28.

balance of power in the Westminster Parliament, blocked the passing of the Conciliation Bill which would have seen women enfranchised across Britain and Ireland. Irish nationalist men sacrificed women's suffrage aspirations for the chance to secure Irish Home Rule. The pages of the nationalist feminist press accommodated women's diverse political allegiances while, in the main, supporting the common use of historical-emotional practices, practices which were flexible enough to reflect the growing spectrum of feminist nationalist opinion.

There is only space here to introduce a few examples of the ways in which women's papers enacted historical-emotional practices.<sup>33</sup> For example, in the 1890s, the *Shan Van Vocht* declared that during the period of Queen Victoria's reign, processes of 'de-Celtifying' and 'Anglicising' had been brought to near successful fruition.<sup>34</sup> During this time, England had almost succeeded in realising its aim of supplanting native Irish habits with those from its own land, thereby spoiling 'what civilization might have naturally grown up among the people'.<sup>35</sup> A proud Irish history had been interrupted. English novels and songs had supplanted traditional Irish culture. Unity of purpose was what was needed if they were to resist the 'strong tide of Saxon influence' – if the country was to 'cast off the shackles of her debasement'.<sup>36</sup> A decade later, the *Bean na hEireann* asserted that since the seventeenth century, British imperialists had used the colonising process to attempt to train the Irish people to scorn all things Irish as being 'native', 'low and vulgar', and to revere all things modern.<sup>37</sup> The erosion of Irish nationalism was part of this process, as modernity was constructed as the antithesis of nationalism. Taught to hate their nation and feel ashamed of their nationalism, the Irish made what the *Bean na hEireann* said was 'a servile, imitative, inglorious attempt to bring itself up to the foreign standard of happiness, which might be described, not unjustly, as ostentatious discomfort'.<sup>38</sup> The Irish bought into a narrative imposed on them during colonisation that

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<sup>33</sup> For a much more detailed analysis of how the feminist nationalist press deployed emotional practices to motivate a reversal of the shame of colonisation, see my chapter on this topic in Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890–1920* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 61–86.

<sup>34</sup> *Shan Van Vocht* 2, no. 6, 7 June 1897, 108–09.

<sup>35</sup> *Shan Van Vocht* 1, no. 10, 2 October 1896, 197–98.

<sup>36</sup> *Shan Van Vocht* 2, no. 6, 7 June 1897, 108–09.

<sup>37</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 3, January 1909, 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 3, January 1909, 10.

celebrated the great ‘intellectual advance from the dark ages of Irish barbarism’.<sup>39</sup> It was up to Irish women to lead a revival of Irish culture, thereby restoring long lost pride.

As nationalism scholar Romanos avers, within protest movements, specific emotions do not often appear on their own.<sup>40</sup> On the contrary, they are more likely to appear as a constellation of emotions. Here, in the pages of these turn-of-the-century women’s periodicals, long histories of oppression and degradation were evoked, amid reminders of a once glorious past, in the effort to transform this awareness of injustice into bodily knowledge, creating feelings of anger, resentment, indignation and pride; feelings which hopefully would motivate political action.

While Markievicz and Sheehy Skeffington agreed with the broad nature of this historical-emotional practice, they both amended it somewhat to reflect their growing distrust of nationalist men and what they perceived to be an increasingly masculinist nationalist ideology. In 1909 and 1915, *Bean na hEireann* and the *Irish Citizen* reprinted a radical call to arms issued by Markievicz to all Irish women. It was preferable, she said, that women arm themselves with guns rather than trust to the ‘problematic chivalry’ of men.<sup>41</sup> Early Irish history provided her with the material which justified this radical suggestion: ‘I have never heard in the early history of any country so many stories of great fighting women as I read in the history of Ireland’, she declared. Here she was referring to the stories, mythological and real, of Maeve, of Macha, of Granuaile, of Fleas, and many others.<sup>42</sup> Fighting was in the Irish woman’s blood. ‘Ancient Ireland bred warrior women, and women played a heroic part in those days’, she asserted.<sup>43</sup> Here, Markievicz appeared to be expressing an unflinching faith in early history’s ability to inspire nationalist feminists with the sentiments needed to rise up as women and as nationalists.

Sheehy Skeffington was less convinced. In passages that reveal her deeply reflective critique of the role of history in Irish society, she asserted: ‘We all, Unionists and Nationalists alike, live overmuch on our

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<sup>39</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 3, January 1909, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Romanos, ‘Emotions, Moral Batteries and High-Risk Activism,’ 554.

<sup>41</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 9, July 1909, 8; and *Irish Citizen* 4, no. 23, 23 October 1915, 137.

<sup>42</sup> *Irish Citizen* 4, no. 25, 6 November 1915, 150. The women mentioned here were both mythological and real. For example, Maeve – or Mebh – was a legendary queen of Connaught, in the west of Ireland, who was renowned in Irish mythology for being a fierce warrior. Granuaile – or Grace O’Malley (c.1530–c.1603) – was chieftain of the Ó Máille clan, also of Connaught. Many folk tales tell of her legendary exploits as a leader of fighting men on sea and on land.

<sup>43</sup> *Irish Citizen* 4, no. 23, 23 October 1915, 137.

past in Ireland. Our great past condones our empty present, and seems to deprecate, instead of stimulating endeavours. Living thus in our past, one is apt to over-draw one's bank account.'<sup>44</sup> She questioned the efficacy of evoking a sense of the past to inspire feelings and actions in the present. Her scepticism addressed a country-wide reliance on the past, but it was a pessimism that was specifically informed by feminist, rather than nationalist, ideology:

Nowhere in the pitiful tangle of present-day life does the actual more sadly belie the far-off past. It is barren comfort for us Irishwomen to know that in ancient Ireland women occupied a prouder, freer position than they now hold even in the most advanced modern states, that all professions, including that of arms, were freely open to their ambitions (indeed, 'open' is scarcely the word, for it implies concession whereas the right seems never to have been questioned) that their counsel was sought in all affairs of the state.<sup>45</sup>

Quoting Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', she asked: "'Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'" Does the vision of the past mitigate the abject present? Is the degradation of the average Irishwoman the less real...?'<sup>46</sup> Knowledge of an equal past and unequal present circulated in the feminist press but, as Sheehy Skeffington argued, on its own, this knowledge could not mobilise action. Accordingly, both Markievicz and Sheehy Skeffington shifted the historical moments in their historical-emotional strategies in the attempt to more effectively mobilise fellow women's feelings.

Markievicz worked to recall the contributions of women to the rebellions of 1798.<sup>47</sup> In 1798, she said, women 'actually fought in the ranks, like Ireland's Amazon women of the past'.<sup>48</sup> Middle-class ideals and practices of sex segregation, foisted on the Irish as an example of 'civilisation', had signalled death to the warrior woman. This was dire for Irish women, for 'To-day', she said, 'we are in danger of being

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<sup>44</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 13, November 1909, 5–6.

<sup>45</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 13, November 1909, 5–6.

<sup>46</sup> *Bean na hEireann* 1, no. 13, November 1909, 5–6.

<sup>47</sup> The Irish Rebellion of 1798 was staged by the Society of United Irishmen (established 1791) which was inspired by the Enlightenment ideals of the American and French revolutions. The Society advocated parliamentary reform and the elimination of British rule in Ireland.

<sup>48</sup> *Irish Citizen* 4, no. 25, 6 November 1915, 150.

civilised by men out of existence'.<sup>49</sup> British-imposed notions of modernity were stifling, and they were at odds with the future that this nationalist woman imagined for the country. The difference, she instructed readers, between the warrior women of old and women today is that the women of old owed 'no allegiance to any man'.<sup>50</sup>

Sheehy Skeffington, on the other hand, turned to a much more recent past, that of the 'the glorious days of the Ladies' Land League' when sisters Fanny and Anna Parnell successfully took over the national and international work of their imprisoned brother Charles Stewart Parnell and his Irish National Land League, which advocated for security of tenure for Irish tenant farmers.<sup>51</sup> As Sheehy Skeffington put it, a couple of years later, 'when women had done the work they were set aside' so that the newly freed men could renew their nationalist campaigning.<sup>52</sup> The political zeal and the competency of these women were 'so lightly diverted, repressed, ultimately lost for ever to the cause of nationalism'.<sup>53</sup> The ignominious end to one of modern Irish history's most glorious periods of women's political activism meant that this history was not as well-known as it should be. Sheehy Skeffington had harboured the hope that the history of the 'saddened, and overshadowed' Ladies' Land League could be mobilised; used as 'one of those glorious failures, more illuminating than any "low success", that lead, phoenix-like, to larger triumphs of a larger day'.<sup>54</sup> Yet, the absence of adequate public knowledge of this history rendered it inadequate in terms of inspiring feminist and/or nationalist activism. The practice of mobilising the emotions of protest through inspiring tales of the past could only be effective if those stories of the past were known. Displaying an astute prescience, she signalled that nationalist victory would outflank feminism. 'One is too near to one's own epoch to judge it properly', she wrote, 'but it will be a matter of wonderment to a future historian of Ireland to note the silence imposed on Irishwomen from the early eighties down to the dawn of the twentieth century.'<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Irish Citizen* 4, no. 23, 23 October 1915, 137.

<sup>50</sup> *Irish Citizen* 4, no. 23, 23 October 1915, 137.

<sup>51</sup> Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, 'Women and the Nationalist Movement,' 19 February 1909 (speech), published in *Irish Nation* 6, no. 13, 20 March 1909, and in *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, ed. Ward, 48–58. For a brief account of how the work of women like the Parnell sisters established the foundations of later women's nationalist organisations, see Matthews, *Renegades*, 14–15.

<sup>52</sup> Sheehy Skeffington, 'Women and the Nationalist Movement.'

<sup>53</sup> Sheehy Skeffington, 'Women and the Nationalist Movement.'

<sup>54</sup> Sheehy Skeffington, 'Women and the Nationalist Movement.'

<sup>55</sup> Sheehy Skeffington, 'Women and the Nationalist Movement.'

## Postcolonial Ireland, Anti-Feminism and Intra-Group Resentment

Indeed, revolutionary Irish women's achievements were to be silenced for much longer than this, as a postcolonial Irish state, characterised by Catholic conservatism, consigned women – past and present – to the invisible private sphere.<sup>56</sup> It seems that in the face of such a formidable opponent, no amount of recalling the past could inspire a feminist triumph. Irish feminism had exposed the limits of using the past to inspire protest in the present.

Whichever side of feminist nationalist politics they were on – whether siding with Markievicz or with Sheehy Skeffington – all Irish feminists were disheartened and angered by the formalisation of anti-feminism within the new postcolonial Free State. Since the independence of the twenty-six counties, and under the strengthening influence of the Catholic Church, the state had introduced a series of anti-feminist measures, including: the restriction of women's right to serve on juries in 1924 and 1926; the 1929 Censorship of Publications Act; 1932 ban on married women in the civil service; 1934 ban on contraceptives; and the 1935 restriction of women in industrial employment.<sup>57</sup> However, the 1937 Constitution delivered a particularly cruel blow in that it was shaped by de Valera, a colleague to many of these women during the revolutionary years.

De Valera had been a leader in a failed but highly romanticised uprising in 1916, president of Sinn Féin, and a revolutionary leader in the subsequent War of Independence. Alongside a majority of the women who fought in the War of Independence, he opposed the compromise that followed the cessation of the conflict, fighting on the pro-Republic, anti-Free State side of the Irish Civil War (1922–23).<sup>58</sup> However, it was from here that de Valera's and revolutionary women's fortunes diverged. De Valera went on to establish the Fianna Fáil party in 1926 (with the aid of many republican women like Markievicz and Sheehy

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<sup>56</sup> Many feminist scholars have undertaken extraordinary work to recover revolutionary Irish women's histories. For a summary of some of these, see the chapter 'Revolutionary Nationalists' in Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Vera Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism* (London: Routledge, 2019), 79–124.

<sup>57</sup> See Margaret Ward's introduction to Sheehy Skeffington's writings in the 1930s in *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, ed. Ward, 308–10.

<sup>58</sup> Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 146; Matthews, *Renegades*, 266–82.



Skeffington), became prime minister (Taoiseach) in the Commonwealth state in 1932 and then later president in the official Republic of Ireland.<sup>59</sup> In this new postcolonial state, revolutionary women were recast as irrational and lacking in respectability. Along with other Irish women, they were consigned to the invisible private sphere.<sup>60</sup>

Markievicz died before she could experience feelings of feminist disillusionment wrought by the gendered policies of the new Free State, but Sheehy Skeffington did not. In her unpublished memoirs, she articulated her fear that her memory, and that of her revolutionary female peers, would be ‘lost in old newspaper files or dusty museums’ or, even worse, would be used and abused by politicians for their own ends.<sup>61</sup> The shrewdness of her observations is inherent in the fact that both fears came to be realised. For much of the twentieth century, revolutionary Irish women’s achievements were hidden. Moreover, where they were remembered, their memory was massaged to suit the purposes of relevant politicians. Markievicz is a case in point. In 1932, when unveiling a statue to his former revolutionary peer, who had died five years previously, de Valera sanitised Markievicz’s memory by reducing her from a radical revolutionary to a feminine philanthropist. Sheehy Skeffington, moved to defend her friend and colleague, expressed anger and indignation at this unwarranted transformation. She was ‘no patronising Lady Bountiful, no well-meaning philanthropist’. She had ‘the divine discontent of a Joan of Arc’. She was ‘above all, a bonny fighter: her militant spirit was that of Queen Maeve or Granuaile, her countrywomen. She had no early Victorian repressions and inhibitions, none of the sheltered femininity of the drawing-room type.’<sup>62</sup>

Temporality was important. Markievicz defied British-inspired Victorianism. She was more akin, her friend said, to the warrior women of old. But the domination of historiography by masculinised processes of nation-building and nationalism meant that Irish society would soon have no legitimate narrative of the past that could accommodate her and her achievements. At the time that Markievicz and Sheehy Skeffington

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<sup>59</sup> The official republic was created by the Republic of Ireland Act 1948, although it was one in effect with the 1937 Constitution.

<sup>60</sup> See Lisa Weihman, ‘Doing My Bit for Ireland: Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising,’ *Éire-Ireland* 39, no. 3–4 (2004): 228–49; Louise Ryan, ‘“Furies” and “Die-Hards”: Women and Irish Republicanism in the Early Twentieth Century,’ *Gender and History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 264–70; and Sarah Benton, ‘Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913–23,’ *Feminist Review* 50 (1995): 148–72.

<sup>61</sup> *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, ed. Ward, 2.

<sup>62</sup> Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, ‘Constance Markievicz – Died July 13, 1927 – What She Stood For,’ *An Phoblacht*, 16 July 1932, in *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, ed. Ward, 301.

were active, women were already being written out of historical narratives. Foundational national narratives were already being constructed around the, by now, heavily masculinised theme of fighting and war. A history that was only about war and men was hardly going to prove useful to women who desired to inspire feminist activism. Irish women's allegiance to feminist ideology, however deep their loyalty to nationalism, exposed the limits of a strategy that deployed the past for the sake of mobilising protest in the present.

What was left for revolutionary women in terms of emotional practices, then? In 1936, an embittered Sheehy Skeffington wrote that the position of women had remained stationary, at best, or had retrogressed, at worst, since Ireland obtained partial independence more than a decade previously.<sup>63</sup> Two years later, in an interview for an American journal, *Independent Woman*, she remarked that the situation had worsened. The new Constitution had come into effect and had formalised women's confinement to the domestic sphere. The American article clarified for its readers that Irish women, especially 'those women who gave up personal careers and went to prison to work for de Valera' (during the revolutionary years), deeply 'resent[ed]' the Constitution.<sup>64</sup> Without recourse to a robust historical narrative of gender equality, this was a helpless and inactive form of resentment.

## Conclusion

Irish women's responsive use of historical-emotional tactics to effect intersecting feminist and nationalist reform demonstrates the potential fluidity or flexibility of emotional practices. The emotional practice which these female activists relied on before, during and after the Irish Revolution remained relatively static. In line with nationalist tradition, they deployed historical narratives to variously inculcate feelings of pride and shame, anger and resentment, with the aim of spurring action against the British imperialist. They followed a similar historical-emotional pathway when attempting to foster and sustain both nationalist men's and Irish women's support for feminist demands such as the vote. However, to serve the unique challenges, constraints and demands of intersectional campaigns, nationalist feminists amended aspects of this process.

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<sup>63</sup> Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, 'Women in the Free State: A Stocktaking,' *New English Weekly*, 19 March 1936, in *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, ed. Ward, 334–37.

<sup>64</sup> *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*, ed. Ward, 343–46.

In response to external stimuli, such as the nationalist movement's increasingly masculinist character, they changed their emotional language. They alternated between motivating and cajoling, and expressing anger, distrust and resentment. While they continued to advocate for intertwining feminist and nationalist reform, the targets of their emotional strategies changed. They switched from addressing the British oppressors, to directing their discourse towards Irish nationalist men and fellow Irish women. They also altered their selection of historical case studies. As their twinned activisms developed, as they tried to overcome increasing feminist-nationalist hurdles, they appealed to historical moments that they considered would have more efficacy in inciting the necessary emotional reactions to inspire activism, from ancient times to early in the modern period to more recent decades.

This essay has worked to trace the adaptability of historical-emotional practices. However, through its focus on Irish women's ultimately failed attempts to achieve simultaneous and long-lasting feminist and nationalist reform, it has also exposed the limited effectiveness of these political strategies. While nationalist feminists' continued reliance on such historical-emotional mobilisation revealed the malleable nature of such tactics, what also became apparent over the long road to settled nationhood was that it was essential to negotiate and maintain a fragile balance of emotional language, targeted audiences and historical case studies if intersectional political campaigns were to prevail. This sense of fragility was largely absent from men's more straightforward espousals of nationalism. The role of history in the larger edifice of nationalism is pivotal here. As Sheehy Skeffington so astutely observed, even before the revolutionary years, women were already being omitted from the pages of Irish history. The Ladies Land League was a poignant and telling example. Accordingly, she had little faith that the history of early twentieth-century feminist nationalists' endeavours would escape a similar fate. If not entirely written out of history, their contributions were already being subject to men's revisionism, as demonstrated by the sanitising of Markievicz's memory. With history- and myth-making effectively removed from women's control, and subject to the immediate masculinist project of postcolonial nation-building, the opportunities to integrate appropriate historical narratives into their intersectional emotional practices were severely curtailed. The nexus between ideology, history and emotions continued to prove fruitful for postcolonial men, but not so for postcolonial women. Without access to powerful historical narratives to feed their claims, Irish nationalist women's resentment,

this time aimed at the masculinist culture of the new Free State, was rendered more ‘helpless’ than ‘forceful’.

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