



RESEARCHING WOMEN IN SILENT CINEMA

NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY MONICA DALL'ASTA, VICTORIA DUCKETT, LUCIA TRALLI

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ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
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Women and Screen Cultures is a series of experimental digital books aimed to promote research and knowledge on the contribution of women to the cultural history of screen media. Published by the Department of the Arts at the University of Bologna, it is issued under the conditions of both open publishing and blind peer review. It will host collections, monographs, translations of open source archive materials, illustrated volumes, transcripts of conferences, and more. Proposals are welcomed for both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary contributions in the fields of film history and theory, television and media studies, visual studies, photography and new media.



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Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives

Edited by: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, Lucia Tralli

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Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives

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This publication has been edited through a blind peer review process. Papers from the Sixth Women and the Silent Screen Conference (University of Bologna, 2010), a biennial event sponsored by Women and Film History International, were read by the editors and then submitted to at least one anonymous reviewer. When the opinion of the first reader was entirely negative or asked for substantial revision, the essay was submitted to a second anonymous reviewer. In case of a second negative opinion the essay was rejected. When further changes were deemed necessary for publication, the editors worked extensively with the authors to meet the requests advanced by the reviewers.

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Donna R. Casella

Women and Nationalism in Indigenous Irish Filmmaking of the Silent Period

ABSTRACT: Women in Ireland came into focus and onto the political stage during and as a result of nationalist and socialist movements that began in the mid-1700s and continued through the 1920s. Women like Anna Parnell, Constance Markievicz, and Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington participated in the land wars, struggles for independence from Britain and the suffragist movement. Indigenous silent feature filmmaking in Ireland was born out of this critical period of political and social change. From 1916 to 1935, Irish filmmakers produced over forty silent feature films only six of which have survived. A close study of these films, fragments of three others, and contemporary film reviews and archival synopses of the non-surviving films reveals how early Irish silent films tackled nationalist issues, but did little to represent the active participation of women. Women in these films are passive sisters, lovers, and mothers, impacted by rather than impacting historical events. This is not surprising. Irish silent cinema was a male-dominated industry with a nationalist agenda that perpetuated gender stereotypes. This study links nationalism and women in Irish silent cinema by looking at how female representation in these early films reflected a gendered ideology that existed in Irish culture alongside other narratives of the nation.

Women in Ireland both north and south came into focus and onto the political stage during and as a result of nationalist movements that began in the early 1800s with Robert Emmet's rising, and continued through the formation of the Irish Free State government in the 1920s. Women participated in a variety of ways on a broad range of nationalist movements: insurrections over colonial treatment; revivals in Gaelic language, art, theater and literature; movements for worker's and women's rights; and the push for Home Rule and independence. Anna Parnell and other women took over the Land League in 1881 after the men were jailed. They fought tenant evictions, held political views, often in opposition to a parliamentary system with Britain, and were generally more militant than their male counterparts (Parnell 173). British born Maude Gonne MacBride, who adopted Ireland as her home country, was an early supporter of Land League efforts and took on such causes as the rights of Irish political prisoners and the conditions of women and the poor (MacBride 96–97, 104–118; Ward, *Maud Gonne* 22–24, 65–67, 96–97, and 123). Constance Markievicz was active in *Cumann na mBan* [the Irish women's council] formed in 1914 to work with the men in the nationalist struggle. She fought in the 1916 Rising, was the first woman elected to Westminster in 1918 while she was still in jail, and the only female cabinet member in the Free State's 1st Dáil Éireann [lower house] in 1922 (see Haverty; Marreco; Van Voris). Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, whose husband Francis was also a supporter of women's rights, was active in putting women's right to vote ahead of the Home Rule issue (see Ward, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington*; *Sheehy Skeffington Papers* MS 41, 177 and 41, 178). Women participated in a

variety of ways as part of a broad range of nationalist movements.¹

Indigenous silent feature filmmaking² in Ireland (1914 to mid-1930s), born out of this critical period of political and social change for both Ireland and women, reflected these nationalist movements. Limited to the south, the industry produced thirty-eight indigenous films, beginning with *Ireland a Nation* (Walter MacNamara)³ in 1914, two years before the start of an armed fight for independence from Britain, and continuing sporadically until *Guests of the Nation* (Denis Johnston)⁴ in 1935 during the presidency of Irish rebel Éamon de Valera. Men and the handful of women who worked in front of and behind the camera made films that often addressed Ireland's nationalist struggles under British colonial rule.⁵

¹ Since silent filmmaking was limited to the south, this study focuses on southern women in nationalist movements. Many women from the north did join their sisters in the south as evident in Urquhart.

² The indigenous Irish feature films chosen for this study were made in the south by Irish film companies utilizing a predominantly Irish cast and crew. Selections were based on film history, filmographies, and contemporary sources: advertisements, newspaper articles, and articles in trade papers like *The Irish Limelight* (IE); *The Bioscope* (GB), *The Picture Show*, and *Picture Plays* (GB); and the *Moving Picture World* (US). The following films are included, though some of their crew were not Irish. For *Irish Destiny* (1926), Irishman Isaac J. Eppel used a British director, George Dewhurst, on his all-Irish film. *Ireland a Nation* (1914) was directed by Irish born Walter MacNamara who was living in America when he decided to make a film in Ireland. He returned to Ireland and employed an Irish cast and crew, but worked on the final print with a New York production staff. (K. Rockett, "The Silent Period" 12, 42; Condon 195). *In the Days of St. Patrick* (1920) was produced and directed by Norman Whitten who came from Britain to set up the General Film Supply Company of Ireland. His company initially made the Irish newsreel series, *Irish Events*. A number of scholars including Condon regard Whitten's General Film Supply Company as an indigenous film company (261).

³ *Ireland a Nation* was made in Ireland, but the film's final production was handled in New York where it premiered at the 44th Street theater (*New York Times*, Sept. 24, 1914 11; *Variety*, Oct. 10, 1914 25). World War I, however, interrupted the film's release in Ireland. According to *The Irish Limelight* one print sank coming across in May 1915, and another failed to avoid the blockade ("Between the Spools"; "Ireland a Nation," *The Irish Limelight*). A third print arrived in Ireland in late 1916 and was submitted and cleared by the censors. The film opened in Dublin on January 8, 1917 for a one-week run, but was quickly suppressed by the British military fearing it would prejudice recruiting. ("Ireland a Nation," *The Freeman's Journal*; Advertisement. *Irish Independent*, Jan. 11, 1917; "Ireland a Nation Film"; Advertisement. *Dublin Evening Mail*, Dec. 30, 1916; Advertisement. *Dublin Evening Mail*, Jan. 11, 1917; Advertisement. *Evening Herald*, Jan. 9, 1917; Advertisement. *Evening Herald*, Jan. 11, 1917; "Ireland a Nation," *Evening Herald*; Advertisement. *Irish Times*, Jan. 9, 1917; Advertisement. *Irish Times*, Jan. 10, 1917; Advertisement. *Irish Times*, Jan. 11, 1917; "Film Picture Suppressed"; "Ireland a Nation," *The Irish Limelight*). For the British version of the closing, see "Irish Film Suppressed." In 1920 the Gaelic Film Company bought the film and added later scenes of nationalist struggles. The film was re-released in 1922 after the Anglo Irish Treaty was passed by the Dáil (Advertisement. *Dublin Evening Mail* Jan. 28, 1922).

⁴ *Guests of the Nation* is included even though a low budget forced Denis Johnston to make a silent instead of a sound film. He intended to post-synchronize later, but never did. As a film artist, however, he was clearly interested in the techniques of silent filmmaking. In his article, "Our First Film," he notes the influence of silent filmmakers Robert Flaherty and Sergei Eisenstein on his work (80). In correspondences and a later radio talk he asserts his belief that dialogue would not have added to the film. See Adams (132) and correspondences between Johnston and P. A. O'Connor, a possible U.S. distributor, on Jan. 28, 1938; Feb. 11, 1938; Feb. 23, 1938; and Feb. 24, 1938, and between Johnston and Henry Dixon, a possible UK distributor, on July 7, 1938 and July 11, 1939 (*DJ Papers* MS 10066/290/496, 507, 509, and 623). See also K. Rockett, "1930s Fictions" (60–62).

⁵ Women wrote, directed, edited and set designed in early Irish cinema. Three romance writers had writing credits on the pre-1930 films: Ulster novelist Mrs. M. T. Pender's novel was the basis of J. M. Kerrigan's *O'Neil of the Glen* (1916); British born Dorothea Donn-Byrne authored the original story for *Land of Her Fathers* (Herbert Hall Winslow, 1925); and Mrs. N. F. Patton did the adaptation for *Knocknagow*. Among the women behind in the camera post-1930 was Mary Manning who assisted on *By Accident* (Norris Davidson, 1930), and wrote the adaptation and served as Johnston's assistant on *Guests of the Nation* (Mary Manning's interview in "Program 2: Irish Productions Find Their Feet"; D. Johnston, "Our First Film" 79; *Irish Film Society Programme*). Máirín Hayes co-edited *Guests of the Nation* (D. Johnston, 3rd *Omnibus X Book*, *DJ Papers* MS 10066/181 101).

This was particularly true prior to 1930 when popular generic forms became important vehicles of national consciousness. Many of those early films have been lost. Only the historical epic *In the Days of St. Patrick* (Norman Whitten, 1920), the war film *Guests of the Nation*, and the historical melodramas *Ireland a Nation*, *Knocknagow* (Fred O'Donovan, 1918), *Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn* (John MacDonagh, 1920), and *Irish Destiny* (George Dewhurst, 1926) have survived. A study of these films, fragments of three others, and contemporary reviews and archived synopses of the non-surviving films reveals how closely the national fervor of the period penetrated early Irish cinema.⁶ Such films, however, advocated a form of nation-building that “prescribed” women’s roles in the nationalist struggles of the period,

Lettice Ramsey and British born Frances Cautley Farrell worked on sets for *Some Say Chance* (Michael Farrell, 1934). (“Irish Film & TV Research Online”).

⁶ The following prints were viewed for this study; most are available at either the Irish Film Institute archives in Dublin (IFA) or the British Film Institute (BFI) in London: *Ireland a Nation* (Walter MacNamara, MacNamara Feature Film Company, 1914 and Gaelic Film Company, 1920, IFA), *Knocknagow* (Fred O'Donovan, Film Company of Ireland [FCOI], 1918, BFI), *Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn* (John MacDonagh, FCOI, 1920, BFI and IFA), *In the Days of St. Patrick* (Norman Whitten, Killester, BFI and IFA), and *Guests of the Nation* (Dennis Johnston, BFI and IFA). *Irish Destiny* (George Dewhurst, EppelsFilms, 1926) is available for viewing at the IFA and on DVD (Irish Film Institute, 2009). Also available for viewing are reel 1 of 2 of the comedy *Paying the Rent* (John MacDonagh, FCOI, 1919) at RTE, and 11.20 min. of the drama *Some Say Chance* (Michael Farrell, 1934) at the IFA and RTE. Fragments of the drama *By Accident* (Norris Davidson, Irish Amateur Films, drama, 1930) can be found in “Program 1: From Lantern to Slide Show.” Incomplete, unavailable negatives of the drama *Land of Her Fathers* (Herbert Hall Winslow, Transatlantic Pictures, 1925) are held at RTE (incorrectly dated 1922) and at the IFA. Contemporary sources and archival material were used to determine plots, characters and themes for the following lost films (genre and director are included when known): *Fun at a Finglas Fair* (F. J. McCormick, prod. James M. Sullivan, comedy, 1915); FCOI films – *The Eleventh Hour* (Fred O'Donovan, drama, 1916), *Food of Love* (J. M. Kerrigan, comedy, 1916), *The Girl from the Golden Vale* (romantic drama, 1916), *Irish Jarvey Tales* (1916), *The Miser's Gift* (J. M. Kerrigan, romantic comedy, 1916), *O'Neil of the Glen* (J. M. Kerrigan, social melodrama, 1916), *Puck Fair Romance* (J. M. Kerrigan, social melodrama, 1916), *Shanachie's Tales* (1916), *Treasure Trove* (1916), *An Unfair Love Affair* (J. M. Kerrigan, romantic comedy, 1916), *Widow Malone* (J. M. Kerrigan, comedy, 1916), *Woman's Wit* (J. M. Kerrigan, comedy/drama, 1916), *Blarney* (J. M. Kerrigan, comedy, 1917), *The Bynways of Fate* (J. M. Kerrigan, comedy, 1917), *Cleansing Fires* (comedy, 1917), *A Girl of Glenbeigh* (J. M. Kerrigan, social melodrama, 1917), *The Irish Girl* (J. M. Kerrigan, social melodrama, 1917), *A Man's Redemption* (drama, 1917), *Passing Shadows/A Passing Shower* (comedy, 1917), *Rafferty's Rise* (J. M. Kerrigan, romantic comedy, 1917), *The Upstart* (J. M. Kerrigan, comedy, 1917), and *When Love Came to Gavin Burke* (Fred O'Donovan, social melodrama, 1917); Celtic Film Company films—*Willie Scouts While Jessie Pouts* (William J. Powers, comedy, 1918) and *Rosaleen Dhu* (William J. Powers, historical melodrama, 1919); and the Irish Photo-Plays films—*The Casey Millions* (John MacDonagh, romantic comedy, 1922), *Cruiskeen Lawn* (John MacDonagh, romantic comedy, 1922, released 1924), and *Wicklow Gold* (John MacDonagh, romantic comedy, 1922). Credits and dates were determined by cross listing filmographies: K. Rockett, *The Irish filmography* (6–14); “Irish Film and TV Research Online”; “Film and TV Database”; Condon (274–83). Also consulted were the following credit lists on prints: the Liam O'Leary Archives (LOLA), NLI; archival collections at the TML; trade papers, particularly *The Irish Limelight*, and contemporary newspapers. There is some disagreement over both the credits and whether *Land of Her Fathers* is indigenously Irish. In his 1980 pamphlet for the London Festival of the Irish Arts, *Film & Ireland*, and in “1930s Fictions” (57), Kevin Rockett lists John (Sean) Hurley as the producer. “Irish Film & TV Research Online,” last updated in 2012, points to Winslow as the producer, and the U.S. Transatlantic Pictures as the production company. Production credits in his more recent filmography were taken from the available trims at the IFA. According to Hugh Oram and Hurley's daughter, Maureen, however, the film was produced by Hurley who brought over an American director and used a script by a British writer, Donn-Byrne; however he employed Abbey players in his cast. See Oram, and “Letter from Maureen Hurley to Sunniva O'Flynn.” Oram also notes the film had only one showing at the Grafton Cinema on October 1, 1925, since Hurley was aiming for an American market. The American distributors Hurley hired disappeared in New York with the print and apparently screened it in several US cities. His own copy was presented in 1960 to the National Library in Dublin and subsequently disappeared (13).

limiting those roles to the domestic sphere.

Irish studies on the intersection of Irish nationalism and women in history and literature during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century point to a complex connection between gender and national identity. As Myrtle Hill notes, women's "major contribution was seen to be in the private domain, sustaining and nurturing family life and thus perpetuating the race" (59).⁷ The Catholic Church in its alliance with the state and civil societies in the south promoted these conservative views. Carol Coulter, however, explains how a number of Irish feminists negotiated a place for themselves in the national arena: "these politically active women of the early twentieth century came out of a pre-existing tradition of women's involvement in nationalist struggles . . . this offered them a scope for a wider range of activities in public life" (3; see also Nash). Literary studies, like C. L. Innes' book and Kathryn Kirkpatrick's compilation of articles on Irish women writers of this period, reveal a similar mix of traditional and radical views of women's role in the nationalist struggles (see "Introduction." Kirkpatrick 5).

Studies connecting nationalism and women, however, have been absent from scholarship on Irish silent cinema. When nationalism is discussed, research focuses on Irish identity, the landscape or connections to the Anglo/Irish conflicts at the time of production. When either women filmmakers or images of women are discussed, the focus is predominantly on contemporary cinema.⁸ This study links nationalism and women in Irish silent cinema by looking at how female representation in these early films reflected a gendered ideology that existed in Irish culture alongside other narratives of the nation. This gendered ideology codified women as national symbols. As such, they could only serve the state in their role as maidens, wives and mothers. Such images, however, ignored women's lived experiences and their published reflections on nationhood. Irish women not only fought for self-determination in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but they also set a variety of nationalist agendas. Early Irish cinema, then, reflected one side of a deeply divided Irish culture.

Historical Images of Women

One image noticeably absent from these early films is that of women's active involvement in the narrative's historical events. The historical melodrama *Ireland a Nation* fictionalizes Robert Emmet's 1803 rebellion after Britain's dissolution of the Irish parliament in Dublin.⁹

⁷ Hill's social historical study is one of the few that discusses women both in the north and south of Ireland.

⁸ For general studies of Irish filmmaking in the silent period, see Condon (236–60); Barton, *Irish National Cinema* (23–33); McLoone, "National Cinema in Ireland"; Pettitt; K. Rockett, "The Silent Period." For works on censorship, see Martin; K. Rockett and E. Rockett; Burns-Bisogno. For film history, see the above works and Flynn, *The story of Irish film* (19–29); K. Rockett and Finn; McIlroy (4–33); Slide (1–38). For women and Irish cinema, see Barton, "Why We're Not Getting It . . ." ; Barton, "Feisty Colleens and Faithful Sons"; Meaney, "Landscapes of Desire"; Murphy.

⁹ Thomas Schatz in *Hollywood Genres* discusses the cinematic social melodrama in early American and European cinema, explaining how "melodrama" was applied to popular romances that depicted a virtuous woman or

The film, which makes a case for national self-determination and legitimizes armed rebellion, establishes the male characters as nationalist subjects. In contrast, the two women historically connected to the rebellion, Anne Devlin and Sarah Curran, are portrayed simply as the housekeeper who didn't betray Emmet and the woman who stood by him during his trial and death. They are seen as peripheral players in the nationalist struggle, not agents of history. *Women's recovered history*, however, portrays a very different Anne Devlin. Her prison journal tells of how she participated in discussions of rebel plans, organized and delivered messages, and spent three years in jail for her involvement (Finegan; Devlin; Ward, "Irish Women and Nationalism"). In the film, the full extent of her participation is avoided. Instead she is married off to fellow rebel Michael Dwyer to satisfy the narrative's romantic underpinnings.

The other historical melodramas also exclude women from any participation in the political struggles. *Knocknagow*, scripted by Ulster romance writer Mrs. N. F. Patton from Charles Kickham's 1879 novel, chronicles the landlord/tenant disputes of the 1800s. Conflicts involving the female protagonists, Bessie and Mary, center only on their romantic relationships. Similarly, in *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn*, based on William Carlton's 1855 novel, Protestant Helen is caught in the middle of the Protestant/Catholic clashes of the mid-1700s only because the man she loves is a Catholic. *Irish Destiny*, which chronicles the events surrounding the Anglo Irish War (1919-1921), features three women: Mrs. O'Hara, mother of IRA fighter Denis; Moira, the school teacher who loves him; and Kitty, the Jarvey's daughter and friend to both Moira and Denis. However, none of them effect change in the political events around them. The most active in the conflict is Kitty who helps Denis prepare for his courier run, and tells the IRA commander of her concerns about his safety. Kitty, however, is motivated only by a desire to protect the budding romance between Moira and Denis. Political conflicts in these films are addressed and resolved through the efforts of men, while women are pushed to the side awaiting outcomes that impact them only on the level of the romance.

If these films are to be understood, as some scholars have argued, in terms of their connection to the political upheavals at the time of production, then the absence of women is particularly telling. Ruth Barton explains that the popularity of both *Knocknagow* and *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn* depended on their creation of a national belonging through their presentation of both an imagined and historical past (*Irish National Cinema* 30). To look at these films, however, one would conclude that women had no role in nationalist movements throughout Irish history. As a number of scholars have pointed out, not all women supported nationalist causes. Of those who did, not all contributed outside the domestic sphere (Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* 248; McCarthy 100). But there were women in Ireland very active in various nationalist struggles in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, though Irish

couple victimized by repressive and inequitable social circumstances, particularly those involving marriage, occupation, and the nuclear family" (221–222). In the historical melodrama, social circumstances are intertwined with political events. Romance may or may not be central to the narrative, but is always featured.

history for the most part has ignored or marginalized them. Cultural historians like Louise Ryan, Margaret Ward, Ruth Taillon, and Sinéad McCooole have recovered women's lived experiences in Irish history (L. Ryan and Ward; Taillon; McCooole, *Guns & chiffoin*; McCooole, *No ordinary women*), while the women's memoirs, journals, and other personal accounts tell us how these women saw their role in Ireland's changing political and social scene.

When the first of these historical films, *Ireland a Nation*, was screened in 1914, women were actively involved in public efforts at self-determination. Some were speaking up for Home Rule, while others advocated complete independence. By the time *Knocknagow* and *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn* graced the Dublin screens in 1918 and 1920 respectively, nearly two hundred women had already taken part in the 1916 Rising as couriers, gun runners, nurses, doctors, armed combatants, commanders, and ghosts (persons prepared to assume the duties of a dead leader), and many were to continue in these capacities during the ensuing fight for independence.¹⁰ Nora Connolly O'Brien's memoir speaks of her nationalist passion in the days leading up to the Rising. She moved between the north and the south delivering messages that united the efforts of rebels throughout Ireland (20–21, 31, and 80). Linda Kearns' memoir reads like a textbook case of post-traumatic stress disorder. A nurse and dispatcher, Kearns was captured and held in Walton Prison in Liverpool for transporting men and weapons. In her memoirs she describes her nightmares: "Well, it is all over now, but still sometimes . . . a terrible feeling grips me for the moment, and an icy fear descends upon me that I am asleep – asleep in Walton Jail, and that I only dream that I am free!" (28).¹¹ When *Irish Destiny* was released in 1926, Ireland had already established an independent government and women like Constance Markievicz, Mary MacSwiney, Alice Stopford Green, and Jennie Wyse Powers were active in the running of that government (Haverty 187–230; Fallon 75–157; Comerford, "Alice Stopford Green"; O'Neill). Women's activism took many forms prior to and during the formation of the Irish Republic government in 1919 and the later Free State government in 1922. They were, in fact, very much a part of Ireland's nation building.

Early Irish filmmaking seems to have taken a lesson from the annals of a male-centered history, however, writing women out of the frames much as they have been written out of history. Instead of presenting women's varied social and political roles, the films advocate a nationalist ideology where women function as symbols of an Irish nation struggling for self-determination. Such iconography configuring the nation as female is not unique to Ireland. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias point out how women function in multiple symbolic ways during periods of national liberation: "Women do not only teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic and national groups. Very often

¹⁰ For couriers during the Anglo/Irish conflict, see K. K. Behan and B. Behan; Donnelly; Comerford, "Women in Struggle"; McCooole, *No Ordinary Women* (172); Clarke. For the nurses and doctors, see Kearns (28); McCooole, *No Ordinary Women* (177–178, 181). See also the women's stories of participation in Ward, *In Their Own Voice*; Taillon (xxi–xxvii); Shiubhlaigh and Kenny (164–167).

¹¹ See also the writings of Mary Spring Rice and Molly Childers who endured a month at sea smuggling weapons into Ireland for the Rising. (Spring Rice, "Diary of the Asgard: 1-26 July 1914"; "Letters from the Asgard, July 1914").

they constitute their actual symbolic figuration” (315; see also Anthias, Yuval-Davis, and Cain 28, 115; Kristeva 34; Hearne). In Ireland this link between women and nationalism is evident in the three foundational female images of Irish national discourse: the pre-Christian sovereignty goddess, the seventeenth-nineteenth century *aisling*, and the nineteenth century Catholic Republican Irish mother. One can trace both the *aisling* and the Irish mother to the sovereignty goddess trope from native Irish tradition. In pre-Christian Ireland the goddess is seen as a personification of the land; when she suffers so does the land. Later she emerges in Irish mythology as the warrior queen: Queen Medbh of Connacht who in the Ulster cycle brings land and wealth to a marriage, and defends and expands that land in wartime.¹² In the literature of modern Ireland (post seventeenth century), this image is reflected in the representation of Ireland as a woman, and in the association of women with the land. In late seventeenth century poetry, the more timid *aisling* enters the national discourse as an embodiment of a suppressed Ireland under British rule. And in the nineteenth century, with the growing influence of the Catholic Church, a related image appears: that of the suffering Irish mother who sacrifices her male children for “Mother Ireland.” The Kathleen ní Houlihan figure of poetry, prose and drama surfaces as a combination of all three: the sovereign, the *aisling* and the Irish mother.¹³ In each of these images, women serve as the site where different threads of male power intersect. Eventually, these images find their way into early Irish cinema.

Feminization of Ireland

In the first of these cinematic images women emerge as symbols of an “imagined” nation, bearing the burden of threat to that nation. As Gerardine Meaney notes in her study of contemporary filmmaking, “From the beginning, the way in which Irish women were represented on screen was intimately connected with the way Ireland itself was perceived” (“Landscapes of Desire” 238). This feminization of Ireland is evident in *In the Days of St. Patrick*. Patrick feels a calling to return to Erin, which is suffering under the rule of an oppressive king. This manifests in the form of a dream featuring a collective of women, arms outstretched, beseeching him to return. When he does, these very same women populate the crowds that come to hear him advocate religious and civil freedom. That gendering of Erin transfers from the collective in his dreams to the figure of the Queen of Erin. She appears physically weak as she pleads with her husband to listen to Patrick whose very presence is the key to a more stable nation. It is Patrick, however, who unifies the country. His closing remarks to his religious followers reflect directly on an Irish national identity that is both Catholic and Irish-speaking: “if they remain as Irish as the soil I have so often blessed in

¹² The following collections of Irish histories, myths and sagas were used in this study: Gantz; Carson; Jackson; *Lady Gregory's Complete Irish mythology*; Byrne; Ó hÓgáin.

¹³ See the discussion of all these images in Cullingford 79–88; Sawyer 1–46; Nash 111–116; Innes 9–62; Hywel; Reynolds.

their land, they shall live on for eternity.” Women’s role in this nation-building is purely representational. The female image is the embodiment of a nation not yet formed.

This association of women with the land also is evident in the historical melodramas, where nationalist clashes impact both women and the land. During the Anglo Irish War in *Irish Destiny*, the raiding Black and Tans displace villagers and fracture families. Denis is engaged to be married to Moira, but leaves her to run messages for the IRA. In his absence she is abducted by the British informer Beecher, leader of a gang who is raiding the land to make poteen. Beecher imprisons her in the poteen mill and threatens her with rape. Kathleen Murphy in her brief discussion of this film equates the raiding of the land with the raping of Moira. This connection between women and the land is obvious when Denis saves his village and Moira from both Beecher and the Black and Tans (31). In *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn*, Helen’s body becomes the figurative site of a nationalist conflict. Because of Willy and Helen’s religious differences, her father encourages her to marry Whitecraft. Motivated by bigotry, Whitecraft uses anti-Catholic laws to drive Willy away. This sends Helen into a catatonic state, and her deteriorating condition reflects a disjointed Ireland that is in need of healing. In the end, Willy returns and their mixed religious marriage is an endorsement of a more united Ireland. Though operating from two different, but related political arguments—one for a united Ireland and the other for a complete break from Britain—the two films present women as symbols of an Irish nation. Their suffering echoes the nation’s suffering.

In *Knocknagow* land disputes, evictions, and poverty have put an “imagined” agrarian utopia of budding romances, the Knocknagow of old, in abeyance. Corrupt land agents, an inefficient legal system, and the British dragoons that enforce that system interfere with the business of building families and farming the land. This is reflected in the relationship between Norah and Billy. Daughter of poor tenant farmers, Norah is seriously ill, but the family cannot afford medical care. Flashbacks showing Billy and a healthy Norah walking in the countryside contrast sharply with the escalating evictions that are ripping the Irish from their land. Her physical deterioration parallels the violated pastoralism of Knocknagow. At the end of the film, Norah dies. She is a casualty, like Ireland, of colonial rule. Barton argues that the film was probably not intended to be read as an example of nation-building, “but as a tale of simple folk whose innate goodness enables them to overcome injustice. It is redolent of the cult of the peasant that imbues Irish cultural representations of the period, displacing onto the country people of its central narrative the values of the imagined nation” (Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 25). However newspaper advertisements and reviews indicate that the film’s attention to a lost pastoral ideal at the hands of an unjust colonial land system in the 1800s resonated in a country struggling for political independence from Britain in the 1900s (Advertisement. *Irish Independent*, Apr. 24, 1918; “Empire Theatre”; “Knocknagow A Splendid Irish Film Play”; “Knocknagow: Filming of Kickham’s Famous Novel”). By aligning Norah’s destruction with the ruptured pastoralism, the film also acknowledges women as figurative representations of the land.



In *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn* (John MacDonagh, 1920), Helen's body becomes the site of the nationalist conflict between Protestants and Catholics. Protestant Helen (background) is in love with Catholic Reilly, but their relationship is thwarted by landowner Whitecraft, a British sympathizer during the land wars of the mid-1700s, who wants Reilly's land and Helen as his wife.

Courtesy of Irish Film Archive.

The symbolic rhetoric of Irish femininity is further evident in the second female image found in early Irish cinema, that of the eighteenth and nineteenth century literary *aisling*, the helpless maiden of colonial Ireland.¹⁴ In early poetry and ballads, her misfortunes are an allegory of Ireland's problems after the Williamite land confiscations at the end of the seventeenth century. The films drew on two nineteenth century popular literary types in the *aisling* tradition: the Colleen Bawn and the Rosaleen Dhu.¹⁵ The Colleen Bawn appears throughout nineteenth century romances as an innocent, childlike woman confronted with competing suitors, one of whom is an emotional and physical threat to her. A similar stereotype is found in James Clarence Mangan's popular nineteenth century ballad "My Dark Rosaleen," which features a young maiden suffering at the hands of a colonial oppressor. Rosaleen's sorrows are borne out in the damage to the land: "O! the Erne shall run red / With redundance of blood" (Mangan 273–275). That both Colleen and Rosaleen could be saved in literature brought hope to an Ireland suffering under the economic and political oppression of colonial rulers.¹⁶

The cinematic *aisling* owes much to her literary ancestors. The same gender polarities are evident in the construction of masculinities and femininities in the films. Female protagonists are inert, passive, and innocent, while male protagonists are strong, active, and knowledgeable. In *Ireland a Nation*, Anne Devlin and Sarah Curran remain fixed in the domestic settings, while Robert Emmet moves freely through the countryside leading the United Irishmen of Ireland against the invading British. In *Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn*, Helen is helpless in the hands of a jealous suitor who emotionally and physically abuses her, though they are of the same religion. Willy protects her while at the same time fighting to keep his land from the Protestants. And in *Irish Destiny*, Moira is confined to the village, while Denis joins the IRA and runs messages between Dublin and his village. This polarity is further reflected in a gendered relationship to the land. Women are composed in tight frames that reveal their association with an imagined idyllic land. Moira is placed beside the foliage outside her home, Helen is posed amidst her father's luscious gardens, and Mary in *Knocknagow* is profiled against Slievenamon, the mountain of the women. In contrast, the men are filmed in loose frames as they hold meetings and battle on the land fighting for Irish rights. It is the feminized image of Ireland and the land that the men struggle to preserve.

¹⁴ An entire genre developed around this helpless image of women as evident throughout the *An Duanaire*, a collection of Irish poetry that spans the period from the collapse of the Gaelic culture in the seventeenth century to its revival in the twentieth century (Ó Tuama).

¹⁵ McLoone in *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* argues that female stereotypes dominated Irish national ideology, along with the heroic male, the supportive Parish priest and the "nasty" colonizer (90). Mary Trotter makes a similar argument in her discussion of theatre history in *Ireland's National Theatres* (38–39). See also Nash, (114).

¹⁶ As Gibbons notes in "Identity without a Centre: Allegory, History and Irish Nationalism," such figures "promised apocalyptic deliverance from the Williamite confiscations in Ireland" (366).

Contemporary reviews and filmographies of the lost titles suggest the popularity of both the Rosaleen Dhu and Colleen Bawn images, though only a few of these films allude to nationalist struggles. The Celtic Film Company's 1919 historical melodrama *Rosaleen Dhu* (William J. Powers) is set during the Land Wars of 1879-1882.¹⁷ When a Fenian is evicted from his home by evil land grabbers, he joins the French Foreign Legion where he meets and marries a local Algerian woman who proves to be the kidnapped heiress of a murdered Irish landowner. An advertisement in the *Irish Times* calls the film "A Tense Thrilling Historic Irish Drama of the Land League Days."¹⁸ The film features all the key Rosaleen players: the colonial oppressors, the female victim, and the Irish hero who not only rescues her, but sees that Irish land is returned to its rightful owners.

The Colleen character was a company staple for the Film Company of Ireland (FCOI), which produced social melodramas and romantic comedies in addition to the historical melodramas *Knocknagow* and *Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn*. Female desirability, vulnerability, and dependence are at the center of films like their 1916 social melodrama *O'Neil of the Glen*. Based on a story by romance writer Mrs. Pender, the film features a woman (Nola) tormented by a suitor (Graves) who is blackmailing her father for a murder he committed many years earlier. Nola rejects Graves' offer of marriage, because she is more interested in Don O'Neil. Like the other women in early Irish films, she has little control over the direction of her life. The conflicts are settled by the men as Nola waits in a distant village.¹⁹ The popularity of the Colleen image is further evident in the company's twenty five romantic comedies all of which featured some aspect of the Colleen character.²⁰ *Paying the Rent* (John MacDonagh,

¹⁷ William Powers shot this film, *Willie Scouts While Jessie Pouts*, and the incomplete *Irish Vendetta* (1920) around Wicklow and supposedly developed the film in barrels behind his barber shop. A copy of *Rosaleen Dhu* survived but was destroyed in the 1932 floods in Little Bray. See O Fearail, "For the Film"; "Bray Notes"; Flynn, "Bray's Film Pioneer"; and the Celtic Film Company File (LOLA).

¹⁸ For reviews and other information on *Rosaleen Dhu*, see "Celtic Film Company's 'Rosaleen Dhu'"; "Rosaleen Dhu"; "Irish Film & TV Research Online"; Condon (238); Advertisement. *Irish Times*, May 1, 1920; Advertisement. *Dublin Evening Mail*, May 1, 1920.

¹⁹ For plot summaries and reviews of *O'Neil of the Glen*, see: Paddy; *The Bioscope* Sept. 14, 1916 1060; Advertisement. *The Bioscope* Aug. 24, 1916; "Advertisement," *Irish Times*, Aug. 7, 1916; "Stage and Gallery"; Advertisement. *Dublin Evening Mail*, Aug. 12, 1916; K. Rockett, "O'Neil of the Glen"; "'O'Neil of the Glen,' 1916 Programme"; "Irish Film & TV Research Online"; Condon (239-242). According to a later advertisement in the *Evening Herald* on May 3, 1920, the film reemerged for a three-day run (2). Another social melodrama from the FCOI, *When Love Came to Gavin Burke*, is interesting for its message about women and marriage. Because they have no earning power, women must consider the financial worth of potential partners. The film features two generations of women, Kate and later her daughter, Grace, who are both courted by suitors of different financial means. According to "When Love Came to Gavin Burke" in *The Irish Limelight*, "Kate is torn between conflicting emotions, but finally, determines that her head instead of her heart must govern" (6). She marries the prosperous hotel-keeper, instead of the poor farmer. Years later her daughter is faced with the same decision, but follows her heart and marries the man she loves.

²⁰ Unfortunately, most of the FCOI's comedies were lost in Dublin fires during the 1916 Rising ("What the Irish Film Company Is Doing"; K. Rockett, "The Silent Period" 17). Reviews and advertisements of the lost films, however, point to the popularity of this image: "Market at a Glance (An Unfair Love Affair)"; "The Miser's Gift"; "Rafferty's Rise." See also reviews and advertisements for Irish Photo-Plays which produced romantic comedies in this tradition: *The Casey Millions* ("Casey's Millions"; "Public Amusements"; "Before the Footlights"; "The Casey Millions, Program"); *Cruiskeen Lawn* ("Cruiskeen Lawn"; "An Irish Film"); *Wicklow Gold* ("Cinema Notes," *Irish Times*, Sept. 9, 1922; "Cinema Notes," *Irish Times*, Sept. 16, 1922; "Amusements in

1919).²¹ Here Molly is at the mercy of a mother who promises her daughter in marriage to a wealthy fifty year-old bachelor as part of a deal to help her parents make the rent payments. The surviving RTE reel includes intertitles describing Molly as “young and fair” with “big blue eyes and golden hair.” Her drunken father even bets on a horse appropriately named Molly Bawn. Though many of these FCOI comedies were not historical, they carried on the Colleen image, now firmly embedded in the national discourse.

The Irish Mother

The aisling model is deeply rooted in Ireland’s Catholic teachings, which early established the Virgin Mary as a model of female behavior. Roger Sawyer argues that the Church’s influence in these matters dates back to the days of St. Brigid (fifth and sixth century) when the cloister tradition enforced a virginal, self-sacrificing code of behavior that removed women from any influence in public affairs (8–10).²² By the late middle ages, the Cult of the Virgin Mary wedded this code with the spiritual ideal of the Virgin Mary, prescribing female traits like humility, obedience, compassion, and purity (Warner 185; Lyons; Innes 26–42; Crilly).²³ According to Belinda Loftus, the nineteenth century Irish famine produced another view of Mary, the suffering Mater Dolorosa. In the twentieth century, the image assumed political significance as mothers gave their sons to the fight for independence (58). This Lady of the Sorrows shaped cinema’s third iconic image of womanhood: the self-sacrificing Irish mother.

The Irish mother was a powerful image in the national discourse surrounding the struggle for self-determination and formation of Irish Free State. Women were important not as individualized citizens, but in their association with the men who fought and died for Ireland’s freedom. Their value resided in their biological role as producer of male warriors for the state, and in their social obligation to transmit Irish culture to their children. Eamon de Valera’s 1932 eulogy delivered upon the death of Margaret Pearse, mother of slain 1916 Rising leaders Padraic and William, praises this “ideal Irish woman” who served the aspirations of the state in her role as mother: “Yet it was from her that . . . [her sons] learnt that ardent love for Ireland and for Gaelic culture and tradition that became the passion of their lives. It was from her that they inherited the strength of soul that made them resolute and unshrinking in the career they foresaw would end in death” (Valiulis 117). Like the

Dublin”; Advertisement. *Dublin Evening Mail*, Nov. 20, 1922; “Wicklow Gold”; “Irish Picture at the Empire”) See also K. Rockett, *The Irish filmography* (10–11); P. B. Ryan (37–38, 47).

²¹ See the program for *Paying the Rent* and other material related to the film in the FCOI File (LOLA).

²² Women in early medieval Ireland did not enjoy many of the benefits that have gathered around the legend of St. Brigid. Lisa Bitel reminds us that “all women in early medieval Ireland, including saints, were legally disenfranchised At best, Irish gender ideologies were generally ambivalent toward women and, at worst, rigorously misogynist” (2).

²³ The Cult of True Womanhood in eighteenth and nineteenth century US and European culture prescribed similar conservative values sanctioned by a Christian religion. See Barbara Welter’s frequently quoted article on this subject: “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820 to 1860.”

Lady of the Sorrows, she was obligated to sacrifice her sons for the larger good. In *In the Days of St. Patrick* this is the image of Begninus' mother who sacrifices her son to Patrick's ministry. His departure is heart-wrenching, but she must lose her son to save Ireland from a "darkness" brought on by an oppressive king. The image of the suffering Irish mother is also prevalent in the 1919 non-fiction film, *The Dáil Bonds*, shot during the filming of *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn*. This short film features Michael Collins seated behind the block on which Robert Emmet was beheaded. He is selling Dáil Éireann bonds to raise money for the new government. The women notables supporting the bonds are introduced in the intertitles as mothers, wives, and sisters of Ireland's martyrs: the mother of Padraic Pearse, the mother of Michael O'Hanrahan, the daughter of James Connolly, and the widow of Tom Clarke – all of whom sacrificed children, fathers or husbands to the national cause.²⁴

The self-sacrificing Irish mother is central to both *Irish Destiny* and *Guests of the Nation*, but in vastly different ways. *Irish Destiny* was released five years after the 1921 peace treaty that ended the Anglo Irish War. The film looks back at that struggle for self-determination and its impact on the villages of Ireland. Two nationalist symbols of Ireland figure in this film: the home and the Irish mother who never leaves it. The country's political instability threatens to disrupt the O'Hara home whose matriarch is troubled by rumors of British soldiers pillaging villages. By the time the Black and Tans invade her village in search of rebels, she has both emotionally and physically deteriorated: "Oh, Denis! Everything turns black when I'm startled, my sight is failing." When she learns that Denis has joined the fight and no one has heard from him, she physically collapses. The family priest echoes this association between her now troubled home with all of Ireland: "We and Ireland's Destiny are in the hands of God." The film ends with Denis escaping prison and returning home to his ailing mother.²⁵ The reunion is bittersweet. Though her physical strength starts to return, her sight does not. Mrs. O'Hara's sacrifice, however, does not go unnoticed. The return to stability in the home, the film tells us, marks the beginning of freedom and harmony for all of Ireland.²⁶ *Guests of the Nation* paints a very different picture of the Irish mother. As the Irish silent period came to a close with this film, the industry already was abandoning its reliance on both nationalist stereotypes and historical melodramas. Set during the Anglo Irish War, *Guests of the Nation* is a war film. Void of the romantic underpinnings of the historical melodrama, the film is more

²⁴ A viewing copy of *The Dáil Bonds* (John MacDonagh, 1919) is in the IFA. (MacDonagh 11; K. Rockett, *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn*; Palmer "Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn, exhibition video"; *Reviewing the Revolution. Ireland 1916-23 on Film*).

²⁵ Denis' escape from prison, along with other prisoners, sets this film in 1921, the year of the massive Curagh prison break of IRA Volunteers. Shortly after, the Anglo Irish War came to a close and the Irish Free State was born.

²⁶ *Irish Destiny* was banned in Great Britain, not surprisingly given its pro-Republican message. However, the universal appeal of the Irish mother is evident in a recut version that removed the nationalist underpinnings. Re-titled *An Irish Mother*, the film had a successful run in Britain in 1928. An advertisement in the *British Kinematograph Weekly*, quoting the *Sunday Express Review*, writes "An 'Irish Mother' is Ireland's most notable contribution to the screen. The story is concerned with old political disturbances and the exploits of the Irish Republican Army. It is an interesting and a charming picture of Irish life and scenery" (6). See also "An Irish Mother."



Mrs. O'Hara is the self-sacrificing Irish Mother in Isaac Eppel's *Irish Destiny* (1926), set during the Anglo Irish War that followed the 1916 Uprising. Two nationalist symbols are at the center of this film: the home and the Irish mother who never leaves it. As Black and Tans terrorize the peaceful village of Clonmore, Denis comforts his mother. After Denis joins the IRA and fails to return, she physically and emotionally collapses. Courtesy of the Irish Film Archives.

critical of the female stereotypes, particularly the Irish mother. Two women worked behind the camera on this film: Mary Manning adapted the script from a Frank O'Connor short story and Máirín Hayes co-edited the film with director Denis Johnston.²⁷ The film features two women: a courier in a minor role and an old woman. In contrast to the O'Connor short story, which is narrated by one of the Irish soldiers guarding the British prisoners in the old woman's home, Manning's adaptation places her at the center of the conflict. The prisoners are her surrogate sons. Many Irish women voiced their resistance to British presence by opening their homes to the Irish Volunteers during the 1916 Rising and subsequent Anglo

²⁷ In 1930 Manning directed the non-fiction short *Bank Holiday* ("Irish Film & TV Research Online").

Irish War. Johnston's own mother, a Home Ruler, was one of them.²⁸ But the old woman in Manning's screenplay holds none of the nationalist views that motivated women to open their homes to Irish freedom fighters. When the captors prepare to move the prisoners, she fears for their safety: "Where are you taking them?" The picture of the Virgin Mary adorns the wall behind her. After the prisoners are executed, she is seen saying her rosary in an empty house. The Irish mother holds no symbolic value here. She has given no sons to the nationalist cause, nor is she able to care for other mother's sons. *Guests of the Nation* provided an alternative view of the nationalist struggle and exposed the stereotype of the Irish mother for all its limitations. The film, however, had a very limited run and Johnston never made another film.²⁹ In fact, few films were made in Ireland between *Irish Destiny* and *Guests of the Nation*. The Irish film industry was already faltering by 1930.³⁰

The pre-1930 films,³¹ however, with their images of innocent maidens (aislings), suffering Irish mothers and virulent male rebels resonated with audiences of the period. The popularity of these films reflected the way in which nationalist traditions are created and maintained through cultural practices. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, "cultural and literary traditions (including the most ancient ones) are preserved and continue to live . . . in the objective forms of culture itself (including linguistic and discursive forms)" (qtd. in Todorov 85).³² These indigenous productions boasted enthusiastic audiences who cheered on-screen struggles for independence. Both *Knocknagow* and *Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn* had long runs with packed houses and repeated screenings in later years. During *Knocknagow's* third week, the

²⁸ In Pat Brennan's interview, Johnston notes, "My mother very properly brought tea for the boys. It seemed very natural . . . There was nothing frightening about it" ("First Night Jitters 52 Years Later" 11).

²⁹ According to Johnston's *Miscellaneous Notebooks*, the film premiered at the Gate Theatre on January 20, 1935 in a private showing, and again at the North London Film Society and the Paramount in March (*DJ Papers* MS 10066/167 107, 114, and 115).

³⁰ Only two feature films were made between *Irish Destiny* and *Guests of the Nation*: *Some Say Chance*, about the relationship between a prostitute and her estranged daughter, and *By Accident*, a psychological drama about a young man obsessed with a woman who doesn't return his affections. For information on *Some Say Chance*, see: "Irish Amateur Film"; "Some Say Chance"; "New Irish Film"; and the Michael Farrell File (LOLA). For information on *By Accident*, see: "Program 1: From Lantern to Slide Show"; "Producing Films in Ireland"; "Film Makers at Work"; "Irish Amateur Films in Dublin"; "Dublin May Rival Hollywood If Film Productions Pay"; "Irish Girl Makes Film Name." The Irish film industry suffered as a result of foreign imports, personal tragedies and a dwindling interest in filmmaking. Advertisements in newspapers and trade papers between 1907 to 1934 (*Dublin Evening Mail*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times*, *Evening Herald*, *Evening Press*, *The Irish Limelight*, and *The Bioscope*) confirm competition from foreign imports. See also "Impressions of a Dublin Playgoer, the Joseph Holloway Diaries (1851-1930)." The prolific FCOI had already ceased making films in 1919 when its producer James Mark Sullivan's wife and child died of the flu, and William J. Powers' Celtic Film Company stopped producing when he died in a riding accident during the filming of *Irish Vendetta* in 1920 (Condon 238, 254). Slide explains in *The Cinema and Ireland* that a number of filmmakers, like J. M. Kerrigan and Norman Whitten, left to work abroad in the 1920s (10, 11, 47, 82, 101). Others like John MacDonagh, Fred Donovan, Mary Manning and Máirín Hayes lost interest and returned fulltime to their work in theatre (Dean; "Program 2: Irish Productions Find Their Feet").

³¹ Advertisements and articles in all Dublin newspapers and those in the Provinces (*Clonmel Chronicle*, *Connaught Telegraph*, *Connacht Tribune*, *Limerick Leader*, *Tuam Herald*, *Nenagh Guardian*, and *Westmeath Examiner*) between the years 1914 and 1935 were examined for information on film screenings and reception.

³² In "From Notes Made in 1970-71," Bakhtin argues that literature cannot be studied outside its cultural context (Morris 53).



Guests of the Nation (Denis Johnston, 1935) featured the only female role in early Irish cinema that directly reflected the work of women who participated in the Anglo Irish War. Shelah Richards, a Gate Theatre actor, played a courier in a minor role. During the war, many women served as couriers, including Nora Connolly O'Brien who delivered messages between the north and the south of the country. Courtesy of the Board of Trinity College, Dublin.

Phibsboro' extended its run because so many people had been turned away (Advertisement, *Evening Herald*, May 16, 1918). When *In the Days of St. Patrick* was first shown in 1920 during the annual National Festival, "full and appreciative audiences" applauded the Irishness of the film ("A Look Around: Dublin's Theatre Attractions" 2). A "deafening ovation" was heard throughout the showings of *Irish Destiny* ("Attractions of the Week" 2). And when *Ireland a Nation* had its brief two-day run at the Rotunda in Dublin, crowds shouted "Up the rebels!" and cheered on the demise of British soldiers ("Ireland a Nation," *The Irish Limelight* 19). The film was quickly withdrawn for inciting audiences with national fervor ("Film Picture Suppressed").

The gendered images of Irish nationalism extended beyond cinematic practices and into the political rhetoric of the period. In the 1920s, the newly formed Irish Free State government passed measures that limited civil examinations on the basis of sex, excluded women from jury duty, and regulated women's employment because such activities kept women from their prescribed roles in the home (Beaumont). Such measures were disconcerting to many of the women who were serving in the Free State government at the time (Valiulis 120–126; O'Neill 135–165).³³ By 1937 a constitution was in place recognizing "the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of the Society," and "that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved" (Article 41, "Bunreacht Na Héireainn [Constitution of Ireland]" 236).³⁴ Drafted by then president de Valera, a man who refused to fight alongside the women soldiers during the 1916 Rising,³⁵ this document reinforced a political climate that already viewed married women's work outside the home as an act of selfishness. As Mary E. Daly notes in *Women and Work in Ireland*, "Attitudes in the Irish Free State were extremely hostile to the employment of women, particularly married women outside the home (49). Many women had participated in Ireland's nation-building, but when the country settled into the business of governing, their place in the national model was dictated by a gendered ideology that restricted their identity in Irish society and politics just as it had restricted their identity in Irish popular cinema.

Women in Ireland faced social, economic, and political prejudice well into the 1970s and 1980s when protests took to the streets and women spoke openly about the restrictions on their lives (Meaney, "Sex and Nation"; Beaumont). In the same period women emerged behind the camera and, together with the men, made films that challenged the gender stereotypes of early Irish cinema. The work of Pat Murphy, Joe Comerford, Cathal Black and Margo Harkins offered multiple perspectives on women, nation, and society. Murphy was one of the first of these early women directors. With *Anne Devlin* (1984) she inserted women back into Irish history, destabilizing the nationalist image of women found in the early silent

³³ For a discussion of women deputies who supported these bills on the grounds that they protected women's rights in and outside the home, see Clancy.

³⁴ For a discussion of the impact of this Constitution on women, see Scannell (123–36).

³⁵ See the interview with Sighle Humphries in Crilly's film *Mother Ireland*; McCarthy (56), and Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* (110).

films.³⁶ Murphy's camera rarely leaves Anne who owns the cinematic space. This is Anne's story as we follow her developing understanding of her role in the 1803 fight for sovereignty. While posing as a housekeeper in the rebel headquarters in order to divert suspicion away from their activities, Anne finds an outlet for her republican leanings. She listens intently to plans for the insurrection and inserts her own views on strategy. Before her arrest, she is hiding important papers, helping the men escape and running messages. Anne's commitment to an active role in this nationalist movement is further evident when she meets Emmet in the prison yard at Kilmainham Jail. Already a condemned man, he urges her to inform on him to save herself. Pacing back and forth in front of Emmet, she refuses to look at him, asserting, "I'll not swear one word against you. It was not for you we did it."³⁷ Murphy's Anne is a nationalist who, like the historical Devlin of the Kilmainham prison journals, made her voice known even in her silence.

Murphy's cinematic female protagonist appeared seventy years after *Ireland a Nation* featured a very different Anne Devlin. This 1914 film ushered in a silent period in which filmmakers gave women no voice in the Irish national struggle. Tapping into foundational images of Irish national discourse, these films presented women as innocent victims of British atrocities or mothers of rebel sons. Historically, both genders helped forge a common history of struggle for self-determination in Ireland. Women were active in eighteenth century rebellions, helped run the nineteenth century Land League, and were contributors to Irish republicanism in the early twentieth century. However, silent cinema in Ireland favored images of women more palatable to the patriarchal national consciousness. As such, Irish women in all their diversity remained absent from early indigenous Irish cinema.

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³⁶ *Anne Devlin* (Pat Murphy, Bórd Scannán na hÉireann [Irish Film Board], 1984, IFA). This and Murphy's *Maeve* (BFI Production Board and RTE, 1981, IFA), gives voice to women's attitudes and involvement in both national and civil struggles.

³⁷ For studies of this and other Murphy films, see Gibbons, "The Politics of Silence"; Gibbons, "Lies that Tell the Truth"; Sullivan; C. Johnston.

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