assumption in the volume that this *did happen*, that a clear and separate 'gender order' *did take place* rather than adopt a more critical and sceptical approach not only to the contested nature of this, but *perhaps to its very impossibility* in a very real sense (for working women, for harem slaves, for migrant women working on settler plantations) because no 'order' of patriarchy has been able to wield such hegemonic power. This brings me to my second point: the volume is weak both in its lack of close engagement with 'class' and 'empire.' We can only concede that this genteel form of 'gender order' was successfully implemented if we forget the millions of working class, peasant and landless women who formed the majority of womankind. Women in South Asia and Africa continued to do battle with both indigenous and colonial patriarchies well into the middle of the 20th century, and it is by no means clear that the colonial rule of difference (predicated on the necessity of accumulation on a global scale) could afford to gentrify the vast body of humankind in this world. Contributions that drew upon scholarship on Asia and Africa more fully would have helped raise sharper questions on 'global history' and the workings of gender, nationalism and 'class'.

The strength of '*Gendered Nations*' is that it provides useful analyses and overviews of the disenfranchisement of women in Europe and Britain in the heyday of Empire. It is also an engagement with theoretical and methodological questions as to the ways of integrating and carrying out interdisciplinary work that genuinely seeks to link understandings of the worlds of the peoples who were deeply and radically marginalized through the workings of power. I was left with a sense of how much further work is required to evolve frameworks that do justice to this and I look forward to further detailed scholarship that will engage seriously with the call to 'grasp the complexity of the "unequal relations among/between peoples"' (p.109), and that will take into account the hierarchies and experiences of women and men across the globe.

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doi:10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400122

Gender, identity and the Irish Press, 1922–1937: embodying the nation

Louise Ryan; The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York, 2002, 320 pp, HbK ISBN 0-7734-7298-3, £74.95

Historians have traditionally used newspapers as one of a number of key sources in providing historical evidence, context and insight into past events and historical debates, thereby allowing them to formulate new arguments and ideas. This fact is as true for the history of women in the Irish Free State throughout the 1920s and 1930s as it is for any other period in modern history. Moreover, the role and status of women in the Irish Free State has attracted considerable historical attention in

recent years (see for example Valiulis (1995), Daly (1995), Beaumont (1999), Clear (2000)). These studies explore in particular the impact of nation building, Catholic Social Teaching, economic factors and traditional gender roles on the construction of the ideal Irish woman citizen.

What is unique about Louise Ryan's new book *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press, 1922–1937: Embodying the Nation* is that she focuses primarily on one source, the Irish Press, in order to cast more light on the experiences of women in the newly formed Irish Free State. Highlighting accounts of women's lives in a variety of settings and situations in a selection of national and regional newspapers, Ryan provides a detailed and fascinating account of the social history of Irish women during these years, thereby making an important contribution to this field of Irish history. Equally significantly Ryan argues throughout the book that the portrayal of women in Irish newspapers at this time illustrates the way in which images of womanhood were used by the State, Church and the press to reinforce Irish national identity following independence from Britain.

The book is divided into six chapters, each reflecting the wide-ranging nature of this study. The many and varied themes discussed include the embodiment of Ireland as a nation in female form, women in the workforce, emigrant girls, the vilification of Republican women and the portrayal of women accused of infanticide and other illegal acts. In Chapter 1, Ryan clearly outlines her methodology in using newspapers as her primary source and justifies her selection of particular journals. The fact that she refers to both national and regional newspapers is one of the major strengths of the book ensuring that the urban/rural dichotomy is well represented. It is only in the discussion of the position of women in the 1937 Constitution that Ryan refers to the national press alone, which is a pity as there was considerable coverage of this issue in the regional press at that time and comparisons would have been interesting.

Having established the link between representations of Ireland in Chapter 1 with the portrayal of heroic and maternal women, Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the contradictions that emerge when the press turned their attention to the modern girl and women as workers. Ryan argues that discussions surrounding the modern girl or flapper reveal the underlying tensions that existed about the role of women in the Irish Free State. These young women with their taste for independence and modern fashions were regarded as a threat to the ideal of Irish womanhood. They did not conform to the chaste, humble Irish Catholic girl who would become the mother of future Irish citizens. However, as Ryan points out, the modern girl was also used by newspapers to sell advertising for cars, fashion accessories and cigarettes despite criticism of their behaviour in other parts of the paper. The reporting of women as workers in the Irish Free State and as emigrants to Britain also raises questions about the ideal image of Irish women who were expected to devote themselves to home and family and in doing so safeguard Irish culture, nationalism and Catholic Social Teaching. Women workers, especially those seeking

employment in industry, prompted discussion about the suitability of such work for women and the danger of women workers neglecting their homes and families. Newspaper coverage of the major social problem of female emigration throughout the 1920s and 1930s also highlighted the contradictions between the idealized view of Irish women and the reality of emigration for women who saw no future in the new Irish Free State. Chapter 4 highlights the stark reality of life for the majority of Irish women who did conform to the role of Irish Catholic mother. Despite attempts by the State and Catholic Church to promote domesticity and traditional family life, the reality of grim slum conditions, overcrowding and lack of welfare services were frequently reported in the national and regional press. Section 2 of this chapter provides a rare insight into domestic violence and family deviance, which Ryan argues were explained in terms of evil influences from abroad, and so 'un-Irish', and the need for greater State and religious control.

The final two chapters explore newspaper coverage of Irish women who did not conform to the constructed ideal of the good, noble Irish Catholic mother. Chapter 5 highlights the way in which Republican women were viewed not only as enemies of the State following the end of the Civil War but were also presented as enemies of Irish womanhood. Terms used to describe such women included 'furies', 'die-hards' and 'neurotic girls' and are reminiscent of the portrayal of militant suffragettes. In detailing the reporting of infanticide cases, Chapter 6 once again illustrates the contradictions that existed within Irish society following independence. While Catholic Social Teaching strictly forbade sex outside marriage and the use of contraceptives, the high incidence of infanticide suggests a major social problem that neither the State, the Church nor indeed the media was willing to address.

This book, which is well written and clearly argued, provides a much-needed insight into the broad range and variety of experiences of Irish women in the Irish Free State. In addition, the author presents a sound argument regarding the ways in which the Irish Press constructed a gendered notion of Ireland and Irishness through its reporting and portrayal of women's lives. For those interested in Irish social and women's history, gender studies, media studies and criminology, this book makes for essential reading.

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doi:10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400123