Writing a Sexual Revolution: Contraception, Bodily Autonomy, and the Women's Pages in Irish National Newspapers, 1935–1979

MARK O'BRIEN
Dublin City University

Following independence from Britain in 1922, the Irish state embarked on a nation-building project based primarily on the precepts of the Roman Catholic majority. As 92 percent of the population identified as Catholic in the 1926 census, the church was the undisputed arbiter of morality in every aspect of Irish life. As noted by Tom Inglis, the power of the church in Ireland lay not just in its numerical supremacy but also in the way that religion permeated every aspect of Irish life, including politics, health, education, and family life.[1] Its annual message to the faithful—the Lenten pastorals—warned of the dangers lurking in foreign dances and music, alien dress codes, alcohol consumption, dance halls, risqué literature, and British Sunday newspapers.[2] What followed was a great deal of legislation designed to address the Catholic hierarchy's concerns and an acknowledgment from the political class that independence constituted a political rather than a social revolution: in 1923 the minister for justice, Kevin O'Higgins, described the new Irish political establishment as "probably the most conservative-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution."[3] All political parties were careful to publicly demonstrate that their political programs did not contradict the teachings of the church; the 1937 Irish Constitution, while granting freedom of religion, recorded the "special position" of the church as the faith of the majority of the population. By and large, the indigenous press followed a similar template. The various titles were careful to avoid issues that might incur the wrath of the church, and the women's pages were predominantly restricted to domestic related matters such as shopping tips and recipes. All the titles

[1] Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: UCD Press), 65.

[2] Census figures taken from https://www.cso.ie/en/census/.

[3] Irish Parliamentary Debates (Dáil Éireann), vol. 2, March 1, 1923.

Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 30, no. 1, January 2021

DOI: 10.7560/JHS30104

were conscious of the campaigns by a multitude of Catholic organizations against certain "objectionable" content. Indeed, a key concern for the Catholic hierarchy of the 1920s was the presence of publications—books and British periodicals—that advocated or provided advice on birth control. Following much lobbying and vigilante activity against newsagents, the state established the Committee on Evil Literature in 1926, the report of which led to the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929.[4]

Although primarily aimed at books deemed to be indecent or obscene and at newspapers that devoted substantial space to crime news of a sexual nature, the legislation also banned information on birth control. The censorship board established by the act was empowered, under section 6, to impose a permanent ban on any book deemed to advocate "the unnatural prevention of conception." In relation to periodicals, section 7 of the act allowed for a three-month ban when "several issues of a periodical publication recently theretofore published have usually or frequently been indecent or obscene or have advocated the unnatural prevention of conception." A second offense resulted in a permanent ban on the periodical. In addition, section 16 made it a criminal offense (punishable by a fifty-pound fine and/or six months' imprisonment) for anyone to print, publish, sell, or distribute any book or periodical that advocated "the unnatural prevention of conception," and section 17 banned as indecent any advertisement pertaining to medical products relating to sexually transmitted diseases or the prevention of conception. As noted by John Horgan, the parliamentary debate on the legislation "was notable for the almost universal acceptance of the edicts against literature dealing with contraception."[5] A similar process followed for the banning of contraception proper. Established in 1930, the Committee on the Criminal Law Amendment Acts and Juvenile Prostitution (better known as the Carrigan Committee) led to the Criminal Law Amendments Act 1935, section 17 of which made it an offense (punishable by a fifty-pound fine and/or six months' imprisonment) "for any person to sell, or expose, offer, advertise, or keep for sale or to import or attempt to import into Saorstát Eireann [the Irish Free State] for sale, any contraceptive." Such was the sensitivity of this legislation that normal parliamentary process was bypassed in favor of a small all-party committee examining the Carrigan Committee's report "with a view to avoiding as far as possible public discussion of a necessarily unsavory nature."[6] As Michael Cronin has pointed out, Ireland was not an exception in banning contraception:

[4] Censorship of Publications Act 1929, http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1929/act/21/enacted/en/html.

[5] John Horgan, "Saving Us from Ourselves: Contraception, Censorship and the 'Evil Literature' Controversy of 1926," *Irish Communications Review* 5 (1995): 61–67 at 66.

[6] National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI), DJ H247/41B, cited in Mark Finnane, "The Carrigan Committee of 1930–31 and the Moral Condition of the Saorstát," *Irish Historical Studies* 32, no. 128 (2001): 519–36 at 528.

France, Italy, and Spain all banned contraception in the early part of the twentieth century.[7] And as Yvonne Galligan has noted, Ireland was not an outlier in reversing its ban on contraception: Italy legalized contraception in 1968, France in 1974, and Spain in 1978.[8] It is important to note that contraception in this article refers to "barrier" methods of contraception, as the contraceptive pill, which became available in Ireland in 1963, was never banned in Ireland, since doctors prescribed it as a "cycle regulator" rather than as contraception.[9]

Books, newspapers, and magazines that addressed contraception were also banned. In May 1930 the censorship board released its first list of banned books. Of the thirteen titles, ten related to birth control: *Family Limitation*, *What Every Mother Should Know*, *The New Motherhood*, and *The Pivot of Civilisation,* by Margaret Sanger; *Wise Parenthood, Radiant Motherhood*, *Contraception*, *Early Days of Birth Control,* and *Married Love,* by Marie Stopes; and *On Conjugal Happiness,* by Leopold Lowenfeld.[10] All were banned for advocating "the unnatural prevention of conception."[11] Bans on British newspapers for the same reason soon followed: the *New Leader* was banned in May 1930 and again (permanently) in October 1930, while the *Daily Worker* was banned in 1931 and again (permanently) in October 1938.[12] By 1938 six British newspapers had been banned for "advocating" birth control.[13] This activity continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s and even led to the banning of British government reports, academic research, and, on one occasion, the impounding of *The Observer* newspaper. In October 1949 the censorship board banned the report of the Royal Commission on Population on the grounds that it advocated birth control. During the successful appeal process, it transpired that the censorship board automatically banned any book that mentioned birth control without considering, as it was required to do, the scientific merit of the

[7] Michael Cronin, *Impure Thoughts: Sexuality, Catholicism and Literature in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 69.

[8] Yvonne Galligan, *Women and Politics in Contemporary Ireland: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Pinter, 1998), 143.

[9] Galligan, 144.

[10] Margaret Sanger, *Family Limitation* (London: Bakunin Press, 1920); Sanger, *What Every Mother Should Know* (New York: Eugenics Publishing, 1911); Sanger, *The New Motherhood* (London: J. Cape, 1922); Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilisation* (London: J. Cape, 1923); Marie Stopes, *Wise Parenthood* (London: Putnam's, 1920); Stopes, *Radiant Motherhood* (London: Putnam's, 1927); Stopes, *Contraception* (London: John Bale, 1923); Stopes, *Early Days of Birth Control* (London: Putnam's, 1922); Stopes, *Married Love* (New York: Critic and Guide Co., 1918); Leopold Lowenfeld, *On Conjugal Happiness* (London: John Bale, 1913).

[11] "Books Banned in Free State," *Irish Times*, May 14, 1930, 7.

[12] "Free State Ban on Labour Weekly," *Irish Times*, May 28, 1930, 7; "Irish Free State Censorship," *Irish Times*, October 8, 1930, 4; "Banned Publications," *Irish Times,* August 6, 1931, 4. See NAI, 90/102/104, memo dated October 13, 1938, for correspondence on the *Daily Worker*.

[13] NAI, 90/102/137.

work along with the nature and extent of its circulation.[14] In a similar vein, Alfred Kinsey's ground-breaking works on human sexuality, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), were banned on the grounds of being "indecent or obscene."[15] And in April 1956 the secretary of the censorship board exerted pressure on *The Observer*'s importer to not distribute an edition of the newspaper that carried part 3 of its "Sex in Society" series. Entitled "Family Planning," the installment's advance advertising had caught the eye of the board's secretary, Brian MacMahon, who telephoned the distributor to warn him of the possible consequences (fifty-pound fine and/or six months' imprisonment) should the paper be distributed. Having examined the newspaper at Dublin Airport in the company of Customs personnel, the importer declined to accept the consignment and surrendered it to the state.[16]

The Media Landscape and Women's Pages

In this environment of official censorship and unofficial suppression, Irish newspapers avoided any mention of birth control lest they be accused of somehow endangering the morality of the Irish people. As Richard Breen and his coauthors have observed, the first forty years of the new Irish state (1920s–1960s) "were notable for institutional continuity rather than change [and] economic orthodoxy, Catholic social teaching, and the doctrine of self-sufficiency had proved inhospitable soil for anything but a minimal state."[17] During this period all the national newspaper titles either championed the role of the church in Irish society or knew that to critique it was to court an ecclesiastical backlash. Established in 1905 after its proprietor, William Martin Murphy, had attended a conference that heard calls for the founding of a truly Catholic Irish newspaper, the *Irish Independent* was distinguished above all by its Catholic ethos. It regularly devoted two full-page-length columns every year to the hierarchy's Lenten pastorals and was an enthusiastic supporter of the censorship legislation, which it described as "a fair and reasonable scheme for checking a grave menace to public and private morality without unduly interfering either with the liberty of the Press or the liberty of the subject."[18] As a socially conservative newspaper, it did not editorialize on the ban on contraception in 1935. In contrast,

[14] NAI, 90/102/235.

[15] Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell Baxter Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (London: Saunders, 1948); and Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, and Paul H. Gebhard, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (London: Saunders, 1953).

[16] NAI, 90/102/139.

[17] Richard Breen, Damien F. Hannon, David B. Rottman, and Christopher T. Whelan, *Understanding Contemporary Ireland: State, Class and Development in the Republic of Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 1, 4.

[18] "Evil Literature," *Irish Independent*, August 13, 1928, 6.

the *Irish Times*, established in 1859 to support the union of Britain and Ireland, adopted a different approach. In the 1920s it represented the views of the state's minority Protestant population and editorialized against developments that it viewed as impinging on the civil rights of its readership. Referring to the censorship legislation, the title asked, Why did the state seek "to enforce the teachings of one Church upon those members of other Churches who claim the right of public judgment in the matter of birth control?"[19] It also criticized the ban on contraception, noting that the ban would encourage the spread of disease and increase the rate of infanticide.[20] The third national newspaper title, the *Irish Press*, was the voice of Fianna Fáil, the center-right, conservative party that would hold power in Ireland for longer than any other over the course of the twentieth century. The *Irish Press* articulated the party's views on Irish unity, the need to revive the Irish language, the primacy of rural living, antiurbanism, and economic self-sufficiency, and it established these tenets as the dominant orthodoxies of Irish political life, to which all other parties and newspapers had to react. Established in 1931, during the following year's general election this newspaper stressed that this political agenda was in accord with the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*.[21] It did not make any editorial comment on the 1935 ban on contraception.

At all three national newspapers the women's pages confined themselves to content that primarily concerned shopping, fashion, and cookery. While it is arguable that these women's pages provided women with a media presence, it is equally arguable that such an approach was commercially driven, deprived women of a political voice, and relegated them to being considered a house-bound citizenry.[22] For example, in 1936 the women's page of the *Irish Press* observed that "women think first in terms of clothes, food and general adornment of person and home, before they put their minds to outside matters." Much of this content was motivated by the fact that women controlled most of the household's spending power—a point acknowledged by the *Press* when it noted that "the main bulk of advertising is devised for women's [*sic*] eyes and for her interest. It may not be the woman who pays, but it is certainly the woman who buys."[23] Writing scathingly in 1939 about the position of female journalists, Anna Kelly of the *Irish Press* observed that they were all too often assigned to cover "social events where the description[s] of frocks and hats were considered essential

[19] "The Censorship Bill," *Irish Times*, September 29, 1928, 8.

[20] "Criminal Law Amendment," *Irish Times*, June 25, 1934, 6.

[21] Mark O'Brien, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the "Irish Press": The Truth in the News* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), 48.

[22] Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press 1922–37: Embodying the Nation* (New York: Edwin Mellin Press, 2002). For perspectives on women's magazines, see Caitríona Clear, *Women's Voices in Ireland: Women's Magazines in the 1950s and 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

[23] "Our New Page Three," *Irish Press*, March 21, 1936, 5.

to the readers' happiness." This situation was, Kelly observed, "based on the assumption that women readers take no interest in general news, that they will read only news that has a feminine appeal—a specialized appeal to the interests of their own sex."[24] The situation was no different at the *Irish Independent*, where its "Leaves from a Woman's Diary" column was written by Gertrude Gaffney. Part social diary, part travelogue, part fashion column, it too intermittently critiqued the patriarchal nature of Irish society, as when Gaffney chastised Trinity College's Philosophical Society for holding "men only" events. Was it, Gaffney wondered, "fear of feminine competition that is eating at the heart of this masculine stronghold?"[25] At the *Irish Times*, its women's page editor, Barbara Dickson, wrote social features under her own name along with fashion and cookery features under the penname Caroline Mitchell. In 1947 Mary Francis Keating, writing under the byline "A Woman Correspondent," started the "Report to Housewives" column, which concentrated on home economics, nutrition, and recipes. Occasionally Keating covered issues such as the obstacles women faced in securing part-time work, the need for legalized adoption, and the lack of support given by women to female candidates in local elections.[26] But by and large, women's pages were, as recalled by *Irish Times* journalist Mary Maher, "designed by male editors with the advertising department, for housewives whom they imagined had only one interest: to buy things to bring home." The issue of birth control was not addressed in these pages; when contraception and birth control were occasionally mentioned by newspapers it was in the context of "immoral literature" and censorship, statements from Catholic bishops, and, to a lesser extent, debates on population numbers and emigration.[27]

While continuity rather than change was the watchword of the first four decades of Irish independence, the government's decision in 1959 to abandon economic protectionism and embrace free trade had a transformative effect on the country. As GNP grew at an annual rate of 4 percent between 1959 and 1963, urbanization increased, emigration declined, and more women joined the workforce. Free secondary education was introduced in 1967, and the number of students who graduated increased from 4,500 in 1950 to 19,000 in 1970. There was a similar expansion of postsecondary education, from 7,900 in 1950 to 25,000 in 1970.[28] The introduction

[24] Anna Kelly, "Women in a Newspaper Office," *Irish Press*, February 10, 1939, 5.

[25] Gertrude Gaffney, "Leaves from a Woman's Diary," *Irish Independent*, November 11, 1932, 5. Interestingly, Gaffney traveled to Spain to cover the civil war for the Irish *Independent* in 1937.

[26] "Obstacles to Spare-Time Work," *Irish Times*, January 22, 1949, 4; "A Case for Legalised Adoption," *Irish Times*, December 3, 1949, 5; "Keeping Doorsteps Clean," *Irish Times*, September 30, 1950, 5.

[27] Mary Maher, introduction to *Changing the Times: Irish Women Journalists 1969–81*, ed. Elgy Gillespie (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2003), 11–12.

[28] Adrian Redmond, ed., *That Was Then, This Is Now: Change in Ireland 1949–99* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2000), 45–51.

of an Irish television service (RTÉ) in 1961 was a milestone, though in terms of social issues, the controversy it later generated depended on the work of a new generation of women journalists who successfully merged the role of reporter with social campaigner from the late 1960s onward. Before we turn to examine the contribution of these journalists it is important to note that even though Ireland was changing, the ban on contraception remained in force, as did the ban on birth control information. While the reforming Censorship Act in 1967 replaced the permanent ban with a maximum twelve-year ban in the case of books found indecent or obscene, the permanent ban penalty remained for books judged by the censorship board to advocate the "unnatural" prevention of conception. The penalties of a three-month ban (first offense) and a permanent ban (second offense) for newspapers or magazines that advocated contraception over several editions also remained in place. So too did the provision that made it a criminal offense for anyone to print, publish, sell, or distribute any book or periodical that advocated the use of contraception.

During this period the Catholic world awaited Pope Paul VI's response to the Papal Commission on Birth Control, which in 1966 had found that birth control for married couples was morally justifiable. The papal response in 1968, in the form of *Humanae Vitae*, rejected the commission's findings and declared that all contraception (including birth control pills, which had become available in 1961 and were never banned in Ireland) was morally wrong in all circumstances. The public disquiet was palpable: while the *Irish Independent* noted that "many married couples will find it hard to understand the Pope's reasoning," the religious correspondent for the *Irish Press* predicted the encyclical's "widespread rejection by clergy and laity."[29] For its part, the *Irish Times* noted that while the decision "may comfort those who look for a rock of certainty," it would "sorely trouble" many married couples.[30] Significantly, the church's own discussions of and divisions on the issue of contraception allowed for greater public debate of birth control and bodily autonomy—a debate that would have been unthinkable in previous years. In this environment a new generation of female journalists sought to nudge the women's pages of national newspapers away from traditional domestic issues toward topics such as family planning, feminism, and women's rights. Yvonne Galligan has described the campaign to legalize contraception as "a silent revolution on the part of women," but the opposite is the case: the campaign was media-centric, publicly political, and physical in its protest strategy.[31]

[29] "The Encyclical," *Irish Independent*, July 30, 1968, 10; T. P. O'Mahony, "Great Crisis Facing Church," *Irish Press*, July 30, 1968, 1.

[30] "As We Were," *Irish Times*, July 30, 1968, 9.

[31] Galligan, *Women and Politics*, 142.

The New Women's Pages

As Paul Ryan notes, "The manner in which Irish people spoke about sexuality changed dramatically between 1963 and 1980." Ryan attributes part of this change to the manner in which *Sunday Press* advice columnist Angela MacNamara discussed sexual issues—including homosexuality—which until then had been ignored by the national media. Although, as Ryan notes, MacNamara's advice to readers "was strongly influenced by the Catholic discourse governing sexuality that emanated from the Vatican," it is of greater significance that the issues were at least being given public ventilation.[32] A more radical intervention was the reorientation of women's pages away from household issues to those related to reproductive rights and bodily autonomy in the late 1960s. Although all three national papers made this switch, the movement was led by the *Irish Times*, which had history in this area. In the wake of the controversy surrounding the Mother and Child crisis of 1951, where the government abandoned plans for universal healthcare for new mothers and their children at the behest of the Catholic hierarchy and the medical profession, the *Irish Times* women's editor, Mary Francis Keating, had described the public health system as "something to be shuddered over as a searing experience." Following complaints from the medical profession, Keating was let go from the paper.[33] Throughout the 1960s, the *Irish Times* repositioned itself as a politically and religiously nonaligned newspaper concerned with impartial coverage of serious issues. Its news editor, Donal Foley, convinced Mary Maher to edit what Maher has described as a "women's page with serious articles, scathing social attacks and biting satire."[34] Born in the United States, Maher had begun her journalism career at the *Chicago Tribune* before traveling to Ireland and securing a reporter's job at the *Irish Times*. Having read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), "with its painstaking and painful analysis of how women's journalism had re-inforced the kitchens and nursery subjugation of American women," Maher had no interest in perpetuating staid journalism.[35] When "Women First" appeared in May 1968, it drew on international feminist discourses to cast a cold eye on the patriarchal nature of Irish society and its impact on the day-to-day lives of women. The column examined such issues as the prohibition on divorce, the ban on contraception, celibacy within marriage to avoid unwanted pregnancy, and equal pay.[36] Maher edited the page for eighteen months before going

[32] Paul Ryan, "Asking Angela: Discourses about Sexuality in an Irish Problem Page, 1963–80," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 2 (2010): 317–39 at 317, 319.

[33] Mary Francis Keating, "Failure of Health Plan Sad Shock," *Irish Times*, April 14, 1951, 5; see also Mark O'Brien, *The "Irish Times": A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 140–41.

[34] Maher, introduction, 11–12.

[35] Mary Maher, "Coming of Age with a Vengeance," *Irish Times*, October 26, 1974, 6.

[36] Anon., "Divorce and Women's Rights in Old Ireland," *Irish Times*, June 13, 1968, 8; Mary Maher, "A Short History of the Pill in Ireland," *Irish Times*, March 14, 1968, 11;

on maternity leave. She was succeeded by Maeve Binchy, who continued the page's pioneering focus on serious issues.

In relation to the issue of contraception, "Women First" foregrounded the direct experience of women in a frank manner. One such contribution was based on the life experience of Maire Mullarney, a mother of eleven children who noted that "when you read the more doctrinaire theologians you'd think that . . . people who are not satisfied with rhythmic marriage [the rhythm method] are obsessed with sex." She also called on the church to recognize the negative physical and mental effects of marital celibacy among "very numerous couples who already have about two more children than they have room or means to bring up in any sort of decency." Noting that *Humanae Vitae* had declared that abstinence from sex "brings to family life rich fruits of serenity and peace," Mullarney wondered whether its authors had consulted "even one ordinary couple who had tried say, fifteen years of rhythm, and then a few with the pill, to learn which were more serene?"[37] "Women First" also exposed the ambiguities in the law by noting that while it was illegal to import contraceptives for sale or personal use, the latter offense was not punishable. It also noted that the presence of the contraceptive pill "has made a pretence of the law in that it is permitted here as a medication, and sold and used widely as a contraceptive." Bearing these facts in mind, "Women First" launched a survey of readers to determine where they stood on the legalization of birth control.[38] A total of 429 readers responded to the survey, all but 5 of whom supported legalization.[39] Significantly, it published the claim of an anonymous Catholic priest that Dublin's Catholic archbishop, John Charles McQuaid, was theologically incorrect in his assertion that the use of any form of contraception in any circumstance was morally wrong. The priest urged his ecclesiastical colleagues to accept that "there are circumstances, in cases of birth control, as in all other spheres of morality, which can lessen, and at times even remove, the guilt of those who break the law." Such an understanding was, he concluded, "not a denial of the law, nor a refusal to inform one's conscience as to what that objective moral law is, but simply a realisation that there is no such thing as an immoral act which is always morally sinful for everyone."[40] "Women First" also tackled the reluctance of political parties to engage with the issue. Given that the state had banned contraception, "Women First" flatly rejected the erroneous assertion by Taoiseach (Premier) Jack Lynch of Fianna Fáil that "contraception was a matter of conscience in which the state did

---

Maire Mullarney, "Marital Celibacy," *Irish Times,* August 1, 1968, 6; Mary Maher, "Equal Pay: Women Are Sick of Nothing but Promises," *Irish Times*, September 12, 1968, 6.

[37] Maire Mullarney, "Marital Celibacy," *Irish Times,* August 1, 1968, 6.

[38] "What the Law Says," *Irish Times*, December 15, 1970, 6.

[39] "Contraception: What Do You Think?," *Irish Times*, December 22, 1970, 6.

[40] "Contraception: The Two Basic Problems," *Irish Times*, December 15, 1970, 6.

not interfere."[41] Reporting on the Fine Gael national conference, Nell McCafferty observed how, during a debate on contraception, one delegate declared that "the family was the unit and life-blood of society and a couple who couldn't face up to their responsibilities should not look to the state to relieve their difficulties." As McCafferty noted, the delegate did not address related issues such as "over-crowding in slum rooms, inadequate wages, deserted wives, non-Catholics, or freedom of conscience."[42] It also published readers' letters, including one memorable example that noted how the correspondent was "sick and tired of all those bachelor clergymen telling us how many children to have, how to educate them. . . . It's high time they got married and really earned the name of father; maybe then they might agree to contraception and stop begging for millions for bigger and more expensive churches."[43] Such coverage and frank language would have been unthinkable only a few years previously. "Women First" also highlighted developments in family planning in other jurisdictions such as Britain, which in 1973 introduced a free family planning service administered by its National Health Service, and France, which legalized contraception in 1967.[44]

In a modernizing Ireland, other newspapers scrambled to emulate "Women First." At the *Irish Press*, editor Tim Pat Coogan appointed Mary Kenny as its women's editor in 1969. Looking back on this time, Kenny recalled that she felt it "outrageous that the state should police the bedrooms of private citizens. . . . My animus was directed more against the state than against the church—though of course I was against the church, in this matter, as well. I was a young woman rebelling at full throttle against most of the established order."[45] Describing Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* as "an influential text in Ireland," Kenny also noted that Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), and Eva Figes's *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970) were instrumental "in winning converts to what was then called women's liberation."[46] In his memoir, Coogan recalled that Kenny "arrived in Burgh Quay like a comet exuding in its wake a shower of flaming particles from burning bras [and that she] surrounded herself with a coterie of talented young women, like Anne Harris, Nell McCafferty, Rosita Sweetman, June Levine, and Máirín de Burca."[47] Another regular contributor was Nuala Fennell, who later established the first refuge for women in Dublin and was elected to

[41] "What the Law Says," *Irish Times*, December 15, 1970, 6.

[42] Nell McCafferty, "Fine Gael: Morality without Mammon?," *Irish Times*, May 18, 1971, 6.

[43] "Women First," *Irish Times*, March 5, 1973, 12.

[44] "Family Planning in Britain," *Irish Times*, November 27, 1973, 6; "Contraception: The French Experience," *Irish Times*, April 3, 1974, 14.

[45] Mary Kenny, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2000), 237.

[46] Kenny, 238.

[47] Tim Pat Coogan, *A Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), 145.

the Irish parliament in 1981 before being appointed junior minister for women's affairs in 1982. Kenny's "Woman's Press" page published articles such as a three-piece series of testimonies written by abandoned wives, a feature based on an interview with two female prostitutes, a provocative (for the time) quiz designed so that a reader could establish whether she was an "emancipated woman or sheltered lady," and a frank interview with the feminist Eva Figes in which she discussed female self-pleasure.[48] In April 1970 the "Woman's Press" page profiled Senator Mary Robinson, who declared that "for many people divorce and contraception are part of their civil rights."[49] The following September, Kenny and her *Irish Times* counterpart, Maeve Binchy, addressed clerical students at the national seminary in Maynooth; Binchy boldly told them that the day was gone when women were "going to take advice from celibate priests," while Kenny condemned legislation that "makes you a criminal if you want to plan your family."[50] In October 1970 "Woman's Press" published a full page on the case for and against contraception for which Mary Kenny interviewed two campaigners on the issue: Monica McEnroy, who advocated lifting the ban on contraception, and Mena Cribben, who favored the ban's retention. According to McEnroy, the ban was "wrong medically," as it criminalized "people who want to use medical means of avoiding random impregnation." Offering an alternative perspective, Cribben observed that because the Catholic Church, "in which most of the people in Ireland believe, has forbidden contraception . . . that in my opinion is enough for the people of Ireland." Referring to the Catholic belief that sex should be for procreation purposes only and that contraception interfered with this, Cribben described contraception as "murder by anticipation" and, referring to those who advocated change, declared that "nobody's forcing them to live in Ireland." In response, McEnroy observed that she disagreed with "a law which goes into a maternity hospital and says to a young woman with a bad heart 'I demand that you live a celibate marriage or accept random pregnancy.'" Such polarized viewpoints would continue to characterize debates on sexual matters—contraception, divorce, abortion, and homosexuality—in Ireland for decades to come.[51] In a later article Kenny declared that Catholicism in Ireland "is in a pretty flabby condition if its rulings have to be enforced by coercive legislation by the

[48] "Deserted Wives," *Irish Press,* September 30, 1969, 6, October 1, 1969, 6, October 2, 1969, 6; "Emancipated Woman or Sheltered Lady—Which Are You?," *Irish Press,* July 6, 1970, 6; "Meeting Eva Figes," *Irish Press,* October 29, 1970, 8.

[49] "The Young Senator Who's Fed Up with Parliament," *Irish Press*, April 30, 1970, 8.

[50] Tomas MacRuaire, "Presswomen Speak at Maynooth," *Irish Press*, September 26, 1970, 3.

[51] "The Case for and against Contraception," *Irish Press*, November 3, 1970, 8. For an overview of these issues, see Chrystel Hug, *The Politics of Sexual Morality in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

state."[52] As Coogan recalled, Irish Press Group chairman Vivion de Valera did not think much of this new departure in women's journalism and referred to Kenny and her contributors as "wild wild women."[53]

The other national daily, the *Irish Independent*, also sought to reinvent its women's page, though as the socially conservative paper of middle-class Ireland, there was a limit as to how far it could push its boundaries. "Independent Woman" first appeared in 1970, edited by Mary McCutchan, with regular contributions from Mary Anderson, Nuala Fennell, and Janet Martin. Its first appearance mixed a "peace plan for the sex war," which noted that "the logical end for feminism is to persuade the world that women are people," and an article on "the lethal side of electric blankets."[54] In many ways, "Independent Woman" was caught in a bind; with its competitors blazing a trail on substantive women's issues, it needed to make itself relevant, but as the organ of conservative, Catholic Ireland, its readers objected when it tackled contentious issues, as when in October 1970 Janet Martin criticized the government's "downright refusal to look at the question of contraception [and] this country's insular approach to abortion, unwanted babies and unmarried motherhood."[55] This statement prompted a "regular reader" to write to the paper to ask whether Martin was advocating that Ireland "follow England's example [and] allow the sale of contraceptives and legalize abortion, despite the fact we would be breaking God's law by doing so?"[56] When a subsequent "Independent Woman" page reported the founding of the Irish Family Planning Rights Association the paper was inundated with protests.[57] One reader advised the page to "stop trying to putrefy the women of this country, lest God takes a direct hand against you," while another claimed that "the Catholic Irishwoman is appalled by such publicity to subjects which are against our Church's teaching."[58] Thereafter, mentions of contraception in "Independent Woman" disappeared—apart from another article by Janet Martin in 1972 in which she took "a lighthearted look at ancient methods of family planning, from swallowing live tadpoles to a young bride sitting on her fingers in the wedding coach."[59]

But not all reaction was negative. Addressing the Irish Housewives Association in March 1970, Senator Neville Keery described the new generation of women journalists as "the real radicals of journalism" and observed that

[52] Mary Kenny, "The Contraceptive Laws: The Facts Not the Fiction," *Irish Press*, March 22, 1971, 6.

[53] Coogan, *Memoir*, 148–49.

[54] "Independent Woman," *Irish Independent*, September 1, 1970, 7.

[55] Janet Martin, "The Facts about Women's Wrongs," *Irish Independent*, October 15, 1970, 8.

[56] "Rights Not Wrongs," *Irish Independent*, October 24, 1970, 7.

[57] "Growing Opposition to Birth Control Laws," *Irish Independent*, October 27, 1970, 6.

[58] "A Strip Torn Off," *Irish Independent*, November 4, 1970, 6.

[59] Janet Martin, "Family Size: An Old Problem," *Irish Independent*, January 12, 1972, 6.

"the days of the woman's page or magazine programme devoted exclusively to knitting patterns and recipes have gone [and] problems of sex and marriage, politics and education are now the dominant themes." He also declared that the "reports of the women's page reporters and the comments of the women's page editors have often an accuracy and depth which is lacking in the report and comment in general newspaper or broadcasting coverage."[60] Over the course of 1970, the new women's pages continued their coverage of the contraception issue. In October Mary Maher, June Levine, and Mary Kenny appeared on RTÉ television's *The Late Late Show* and called for the establishment of "a liberation movement for women."[61] During the following week, the *Irish Times*' "Women First" page ran a series on "women's lib" that examined the origins of the women's liberation movement in America, its emergence in Britain, the Irish experience and case studies of what different Irish women thought of it, the journalists' personal views on it, and how advertisers targeted women as consumers.[62] It also published a page of readers' responses that were supportive and critical of the series.[63] Such journalistic activity ultimately ensured the migration of the contraception issue from the religious sphere to the political sphere.

Journalism and Social Campaigning

By early 1971 the contributors to the new women's pages had, along with female doctors, activists, and academics, established the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM), an entity that arose from informal gatherings that met to discuss the position of women Irish society. As Anne Stopper notes, the majority of the founding members of the IWLM were journalists whose "influence in the media is what made all the difference in terms of the IWLM's impact on society. . . . If the founders had not been able to use the media as effectively as they did, it is unlikely that Irish women outside of Dublin would have known much of their existence and their aims."[64] Whereas previously the journalists had simply advocated for legislative reform in their respective women's pages, the foundation of the IWLM marked their entry into the political arena, which was very much a male preserve. Publication of the movement's manifesto, "Irish Women: Chains or Change," led to an invitation from RTÉ television's *The Late Late Show* in March 1971 to discuss its demands: equal pay; equality before the law; equal education; an end to the ban on contraception; rights for abandoned wives, unmarried mothers, and widows; and housing rights.

[60] "Bouquet for Us," *Irish Press*, March 2, 1970, 13.

[61] "Woman, Get Back on Your Pedestal," *Irish Press*, October 13, 1970, 10.

[62] "Women First," *Irish Times*, October 5–10, 1970, 6.

[63] "Women's Lib: What Do You Think?," *Irish Times*, October 15, 1970, 6.

[64] Anne Stopper, *Mondays at Gaj's: The Story of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2006), 2.

The all-female panel consisted of Senator Mary Robinson, historian Mary Cullen, television producer Lelia Doolin, activist Máirín Johnson, and journalist Nell McCafferty, while the all-female audience included other IWLM activists along with journalists Mary Kenny, June Levine, Mary Maher, and Nuala Fennell. A declaration by Mary Kenny that male politicians did not understand women's issues prompted a male parliamentarian, Garret FitzGerald, to drive to the television station and insist on being allowed to rebut Kenny's statement. However well intended, the sight of a male politician demanding to be allowed to participate in an all-woman television debate ensured that the program descended into—as Brian Devenney, the *Irish Independent*'s television critic, described it—"an ebullient shout-in."[65]

Related events in parliament also raised tensions. In March 1971 parliament refused Senator Mary Robinson permission to introduce a private members' bill to lift the ban on contraception and contraception information. As Robinson herself recalled, she was "denounced from Catholic pulpits all around the country."[66] Robinson was well known to the women journalists, and her reform agenda aligned with theirs. Others, however, falsely equated the demand for legalized contraception with the legalization of abortion, an issue that neither Robinson nor the IWLM nor the women's pages ever discussed. As news of Robinson's proposed private members' bill leaked out, the Catholic hierarchy expressed its displeasure at "pressures being exerted on public opinion on questions concerning the civil law on divorce, contraception, and abortion."[67] This concerted effort to mislead the public about the campaign of the IWLM and the women journalists prompted Mary Kenny of the *Irish Press* to declare that the legalization of contraception would not "instantly pave the way for divorce, abortion, euthanasia, mass prostitution of 11-year-old children and epidemic VD" and observe that people were "running around the place in a state of fevered hysteria as though the whole thing was a mandate for the statutory introduction of the Permissive society."[68] Tit-for-tat recriminations continued the following week. When Dublin's Catholic archbishop, John Charles McQuaid, issued a pastoral letter describing the possible legalization of contraception as "an insult to our faith" and "a curse upon our country" many members of the IWLM walked out of the masses at which it was read, and some later held a protest outside the archbishop's palace in Drumcondra.[69] McQuaid's pastoral also prompted the normally staid

[65] Brian Devenney, "The Late Late Lib Show," *Irish Independent*, March 10, 1971, 10.

[66] Mary Robinson, "Denounced from Catholic Pulpits All around the Country," in *The State in Transition: Essays in Honour of John Horgan*, ed. Kevin Rafter and Mark O'Brien (Dublin: New Island, 2015), 191–96 at 193.

[67] John Horgan, "Church Not in Favour of Law Changes," *Irish Times*, March 12, 1971, 1.

[68] Mary Kenny, "The Contraceptive Laws: The Facts Not the Fiction," *Irish Press*, March 22, 1971, 6.

[69] "Pastoral Seen as Challenge," *Irish Press*, March 29, 1971, 1.

"Independent Woman" page to examine the issue of contraception from a medical perspective, to outline the law in relation to contraception, and to report on the formation of the Association for the Protection of Irish Family Life.[70]

Exchanges continued between women journalists and the politicians and religious leaders who opposed them. In April 1971 the IWLM held its first public meeting at Dublin's Mansion House; over a thousand people attended to hear views that ranged "from extremely personal to the intensely political."[71] The following month, IWLM members, including three journalists (Mary Kenny, June Levine, and Nell McCafferty), traveled by train to Belfast to purchase contraceptives. Upon their return they were met by customs officers at Dublin's Connolly Train Station, which led to a well-publicized stand-off, during which many—but not all—of the products were dropped at the feet of the officers. Afterward the group marched to a nearby police station, where McCafferty read a statement declaring the law against contraception to be obsolete.[72] The *Irish Times* was the only newspaper to support the IWLM's demand for legalization, though not its methods. While the article noted that "it is not healthy to have a law on the statute books which can be seen to be openly and with impunity flouted [as] it brings the law into disregard," it also noted that "a loud and persistent campaign, whichever way it ends, could be more disruptive than a speedy passing of the necessary legislation."[73] For its part, the *Irish Independent* quoted a Belfast priest as condemning the protest as "undignified and unworthy of a woman," while the editor of the *Irish Press*, Tim Pat Coogan, noted that while he defended the right of the women to protest, their actions might reinforce the belief among Ulster unionists that the southern state was "a clerically dominated society."[74] Religious figures also reacted: Bishop Thomas Ryan of Clonfert declared that "probably never before, certainly not since the penal days was the Catholic heritage of our country subjected to so many insidious onslaughts on the pretext of conscience, civil rights, and women's liberation."[75]

Politicians also lined up to condemn the actions of the IWLM, with their focus very much on the outspoken Mary Kenny of the *Irish Press*. Addressing his party's annual conference, Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave declared he could match the IWLM's penchant for publicity if he sent his deputies out in "hot pants." The conference also heard one delegate call on the party to resist the "sex-tyranny" represented by Kenny and her

[70] "Contraception: Curses and Confusion," *Irish Independent*, March 30, 1971, 10.

[71] Elgy Gillespie, "Women Seek Real Equality," *Irish Times*, April 15, 1971, 1.

[72] Nell McCafferty, *Nell* (London: Penguin, 2004), 226.

[73] "Desperate Remedies," *Irish Times*, May 24, 1971, 11.

[74] "Pill Trip Criticised," *Irish Independent*, May 24, 1971, 1; "TV Priest Says 'Answer Back,'" *Irish Press*, May 24, 1971, 3.

[75] "Insidious Onslaughts on Catholic Heritage," *Irish Times*, May 24, 1971, 13.

IWLM colleagues.[76] Opposition politicians also refuted Kenny's claim that male politicians were out of touch with the real-life experiences of women. They did not, David Andrews observed, "need an organization led by her [Kenny] to tell us about our obligations to deserted wives, to the unmarried mother, or to the position of the illegitimate child in our society."[77] There followed a somewhat heated interview of Andrews by Kenny in the *Irish Press*, in which he stated that he favored incremental change: while he empathized with the objectives of the IWLM, he wanted "a proper social security structure brought about in an evolutionary fashion rather than in a revolutionary fashion." In what he referred to as "stunting on The Late Late Show," Andrews claimed that Kenny had "abused [her] position in this country as woman editor of one of our national newspapers and as a member of Women's Lib." In response, Kenny described Andrews as "a classical example of the threatened male."[78]

But, just as quickly as it had appeared, the IWLM disappeared, split over how it should respond to the Forcible Entry and Occupation Act of 1971, which criminalized squatting. As recalled by Nell McCafferty, faced with such division and "with no hierarchy and no structure, the movement began to collapse under its own weight."[79] By this time the new women's pages were coming to an end. The pages lost one of their most vocal advocates when in July 1971 Mary Kenny left the *Irish Press* to join the *London Evening Standard*. Tired of the Irish Press Group chairman "harping on" about Kenny, editor Tim Pat Coogan appointed a man, Liam Nolan, as the paper's women's editor. Nolan, a broadcaster with RTÉ, was "alert to what was happening in society, but compared with Mary he could justly be termed a conservative [and] his sojourn put an end to Vivion's fixation with the women's page," according to Coogan.[80] Over at the *Irish Independent*, "Independent Woman" continued on its relatively nonoffensive way. Meanwhile, as Brian Girvin has shown, opposition to the legalization of contraception became more organized, with entities such as the Irish Family League, Mná na hEireann, and the League of Decency campaigning for the status quo; these groups used organs such as the *Irish Catholic* newspaper to supply readers with sample text enabling them to write to politicians in opposition to any change in the law.[81] Nonetheless, the *Irish Times* continued to highlight gender inequality. Prior to the 1973 general election it published an open letter to politicians calling for the introduction

[76] Nell McCafferty, "Fine Gael: Morality without Mammon?," *Irish Times*, May 18, 1971, 6.

[77] Irish Parliamentary Debates (Dáil Éireann), vol. 254, May 25, 1971.

[78] Mary Kenny, "A Meeting of Opposites," *Irish Press*, May 31, 1971, 6.

[79] McCafferty, *Nell*, 228–31.

[80] Coogan, *Memoir*, 148–49.

[81] Brian Girvan, "Contraception, Moral Panic and Social Change in Ireland, 1969–79," *Irish Political Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 555–76 at 569. Girvin provides a detailed outline of the political response to the demands for legal change.

of legislation on child maintenance payments and its ideal all-female cabinet; it also profiled all sixteen female electoral candidates.[82] It also published a questionnaire on social issues and women's rights that it had given to all political parties and subsequently devoted two days of its space to outlining the various parties' positions on equal pay, discrimination in the workplace, the legalization of contraception and divorce, and the right of women to sit on juries.[83]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

By the early 1970s other factors beyond the reinvented women's pages helped to keep the contraception ban on the political and news agenda. The ban was challenged in the High and Supreme Courts, with the latter finding in December 1973 that while the ban on the importation and sale of contraception was not unconstitutional, there existed a constitutional right to marital privacy that also allowed for the use of contraception.[84] Thus began a series of tortuous political maneuvers to give effect to this ruling. In July 1974 the government introduced legislation to legalize contraception for married couples only but then voted the legislation down in parliament. With the imperative to legislate still alive, the *Irish Times* "Women First" made itself obsolete in October 1974, with its editor, Christina Murphy, observing that women's affairs had become "such a focus of public and political attention" that they had left "the cosy confines of the women's page and [moved] onto the front page of the newspapers where it belongs."[85] When, five years later, a new government moved responsibility for resolving the contraception issue from the Department of Justice to the Department of Health, the ensuing legislation, the Health (Family Planning) Act of 1979, allowed for the availability of contraception for "family planning or for adequate medical reasons," provided the purchaser had a doctor's prescription.[86] The new law also removed the ban on the publication and distribution of birth control information. Those who opposed birth control denounced the legislation. Addressing parliament, the conservative parliamentarian Oliver J. Flanagan pointed the finger of blame directly at the journalists who had reinvented the women's pages and made contraception and bodily autonomy a central journalistic concern:

[82] "Open Letter to the Members of Dáil Éireann," *Irish Times*, January 29, 1973, 12; "Introducing Our All Women Cabinet," February 14, 1973, 6; "The 16 Women Candidates," February 26, 1973, 12.

[83] "Women First," *Irish Times*, February 7, 27, 28, 1973, 6.

[84] The case was taken by Mary McGee, who had been advised not to have any more children on health grounds. After she ordered contraceptive products from Britain, the products were seized by the Irish Customs Service, which monitored the postal service for such goods.

[85] Christian Murphy, "Pastures News," *Irish Times*, October 26, 1974, 6.

[86] Government of Ireland, Health (Family Planning) Act 1979, sec. 4.

> There has not been any widespread demand for legislation of this kind but it has been the subject of agitation by certain liberal-minded people, certain liberal-minded journalists in the Press, on radio and television, all anxious to help to establish a completely materialistic State without any regard for the need to maintain some reasonable degree of moral standards. When wildcat, crazy, daft journalists put their pens to paper it is to advocate a society in which marriage would be pushed into the background, in which abortion is not to be decried, in which countries are described where economic progress and abortion are portrayed side by side. These liberal-minded journalists think it is part of their modern obligation to pen articles which are evilly designed, an attack on family life and on the family as we have known it.[87]

The legislation was, according to Flanagan, "dangerous, ill-conceived, and evilly disposed." Flanagan also rejected the necessity for the legislation that arose from the Supreme Court judgment and declared that a referendum was the most appropriate mechanism for deciding the issue.[88]

How much the reinvented women's pages or the IWLM contributed to the liberalization of the law is difficult to quantify. Their campaigning and the successful case—based on privacy rights—taken against the contraception ban by Mary McGee in 1973 cannot be viewed in isolation from each other: the former raised and kept the issue of bodily autonomy visible in the public domain as a political and legislative issue, while the latter (which may have happened regardless of the new women's pages / IWLM) forced the government to rescind the ban. While, as Mary Kenny noted, the IWLM "raised awareness among men that women needed to be included in public life" it is important to note, as Linda Connolly has observed, that the IWLM was not particularly coherent in its campaigning; its rise and collapse were partly due to how it emerged in an "erratic, disorganized and chaotic fashion in 1970–2."[89] Connolly also noted how the Irish women's movement neither began nor ended with the IWLM. There were antecedents (such as the Irish Housewives Association) and successor entities (such as the Women's Political Association).[90] But what made the IWLM different was its media-centricity: as noted by Anne Stopper, its short-lived campaigning power derived from its ease of access to national media outlets, courtesy of the journalists responsible for the women's pages who were instrumental in its formation.[91] It was also extremely vocal and engaged in the first protests that publicly and physically challenged the authority of the political and ecclesiastical authorities on the issue of bodily autonomy.

[87] Irish Parliamentary Debates (Dáil Éireann), vol. 313, April 5, 1979.

[88] Irish Parliamentary Debates.

[89] Kenny, *Goodbye*, 240; Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 129.

[90] Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, 71–72.

[91] Stopper, *Mondays at Gaj's*, 2.

In terms of the reinvented women's pages, Mary Maher, founding editor of the *Irish Times*' "Women First" page, observed that "the women's pages were an open forum for the [equality] campaign. . . . [I]t was certainly helpful to the cause that those of us organising the crusade had such prominent platforms."[92] In contrast, a prominent contributor to the "Women First" page, Nell McCafferty, noted that "outside the women's pages, the media did not take us seriously."[93] Reviewing the contribution of the women's pages, Olivia O'Leary declared that "some of the most influential, far-seeing and truthful examples of journalism at its best appeared under women's page headings" and that such journalism represented "a brave and unapologetic onslaught on social shibboleths of all kinds."[94] Perhaps the key impact of the reinvented women's pages was their role in making and keeping the issues of bodily autonomy and the bans on contraception and birth control information visible in public discourse and in offering new, feminist ways of thinking about these issues, in stark contrast to past practices. The pages provided a platform for debate and discussion on the existing law and a mechanism for establishing social attitudes (through readers' surveys) toward legalization of contraception, and they allowed the articulation of personal experience in terms of how the ban impacted martial life, economic well-being, housing conditions, and physical and mental health. They also challenged political inertia on the issue and highlighted that the ecclesiastical ban was not as theologically watertight as some conservative forces would have the public believe. The pages forcibly placed these issues and a new way of analyzing them at the heart of the media and political agenda. They stubbornly refused to let the issue of contraception drop into the obscurity it had previously enjoyed when it was discussed only in the context of Catholic Church teaching, literary censorship, or population debates.

Ultimately, this coverage of contraception as a legislative, political, and health issue rather than as a moral issue had real impact on Irish society. Such arguments were crucial components of the successful legal action against the ban in 1973, and it can be argued that the reframing of the issue in the media sphere (and thus public consciousness) facilitated the migration of governmental responsibility for contraception from the Department of Justice to the Department of Health, which in turn allowed the government flexibility in resolving the issue, albeit in a limited manner. More broadly, the pages altered the form and structure of women's journalism. In 1979 the national broadcaster belatedly initiated a radio show, *Women Today*, that continued the coverage of issues pioneered by the women's pages.[95] But the ethos of the reinvented women's pages also lived on in print. With abortion and divorce dominating the social affairs agenda from the early

[92] Mary Maher, "How Women Came First," *Irish Times*, March 27, 2009, 37.
[93] McCafferty, *Nell*, 228.
[94] "Praise for 'Bravery' of Women's Pages," *Irish Times*, September 30, 1974, 9.
[95] See Betty Purcell, *Inside RTÉ: A Memoir* (Dublin: New Island, 2014).

1980s onward, journalists such as Nell McCafferty, Mary Holland, Pat Brennan, Mary Cummins, and Nuala O'Faolain continued to examine the lived experiences rather than the idealized existence of Irish women, though from this time forward in their publications' news pages.

About the Author

Mark O'Brien is associate professor of journalism history at Dublin City University. He is the author of *The Fourth Estate: Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (2017), *The "Irish Times": A History* (2008) and *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the "Irish Press": The Truth in the News?* (2001). His coedited works include *Politics, Culture, and the Irish American Press, 1784–1963* (2021), *The Sunday Papers: A History of Ireland's Weekly Press* (2018), and the two-volume series *Periodicals and Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (2014, 2021).