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Connecting Voices: An Introduction to Irish Women Writers' Collaborations and Networks, 1880–1940

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ABSTRACT

Collaborations and networks are both the *modus operandi* and focus of investigation in this Special Issue on Irish women writers between 1880 and 1940. This introductory essay sets the scene for the discussions and investigations that follow: we theorise the importance of collaboration and networks for understanding Irish women's writing and publishing, and highlight how contributors draw on extensive archival research that enables the tracing of the intersecting nodes, webs, and relationships between collaborations and networks. The Special Issue platforms the study of Irish women within collaborative sibling, spousal and other partnerships and within the context of movements, organisations, and networks. Our co-authored introduction, a product of our own feminist collaborative approach developed during the project, asserts that as the process of recovery of Irish women's writing continues, the collaborative and networked aspects of women's cultural productions become more central and significant. Their retrieval demands a suite of methodologies alongside a collective approach that pools resources, insights, and knowledge networks.

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For more than four decades after her death in 1963, Teresa Deevy's uncatalogued archive was stored in a battered green suitcase under a spare bed in her family home in Waterford, on the south-east coast of Ireland. Contained inside were scattered items of treasured but incomplete correspondence from Deevy's many illustrious connections that hint at the extent of her network of friends and admirers.¹ Also included in this makeshift archive were unpublished manuscripts of some of her finest plays, productions that had

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¹Ní Bheacháin, "Teresa Deevy and the Secrets of the Green Suitcase". Ní Bheacháin, "Mysteries of the Teresa Deevy Archive".

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premiered either on the stage of Ireland's national theatre, the Abbey, or in the sound studios of the newly formed BBC and Radio Éireann stations, along with the creative output of those of her friends and colleagues who had sought her advice and critical feedback. Deevy's green suitcase acts as a metaphor for the gradual decline and continuing oversight of the careers of many Irish women writers who, like Deevy, lost what once might have seemed like a secure place in the literary canon. There is a salutary lesson in this piece of luggage: it constitutes the material afterlife of a once luminous playwright and intellectual whose career and reputation were at first enabled and then obscured by complex literary, social, and political factors. The fate of a literary reputation relies on a network of often competing forces, and the survival of a woman's archive is often a random occurrence, dependent on the foresight, care, and resources of new generations of familial relations and others who serve as informal archivists and who make the papers available to a stream of occasional scholars over decades. For literary researchers, (suit)-cases like that of the pioneering Teresa Deevy highlight the vulnerability of archives and the monumental challenge of locating and recovering the work and achievements of women writers and their collaborations and networks within cultural history.

Unpacking Suitcases

Inside Deevy's suitcase, the juxtaposition of unsorted manuscripts alongside random notes, letters, photos, and postcards highlights the ambiguous and sometimes contentious meanings of personal papers stored in attics, basements, spare rooms, cupboards, and luggage. The unpacking and opening up of personal and professional papers are often shared uneasily by family members torn between the need for privacy, concerns for the safe return of materials, and occasionally conflicting desires to protect and enhance the reputation of the neglected author. There is frequently a temporal dimension to these networks of recovery and transmission as scholars progress their studies only so far before handing on the baton to others. Similarly, new generations within the family can become progressively distanced from and hold varying perspectives on their relation's cultural significance. Conversely, they might act more prominently as advocates for the writer in question as literary scholars reassess and reevaluate their importance.

In fact, Deevy's green suitcase is at once a material embodiment of Irish women writers' abandoned archives and a tangible reminder of the ways in which women writers' materials travel around the world, vanishing in one place and resurfacing in another. Disappearances and reappearances—just like scholarly discoveries and rediscoveries—are tied to informal and formal networks that hide or reveal, renounce or retrieve, abandon or rescue. Scholars and archivists have abundant tales about the shifting sands of women writers' archives. For example, despite Alice Stopford Green bequeathing her library to University College Dublin and their public commitment to name it “The Stopford Green Library”, the full collection is not now in UCD, and inscribed volumes very likely to have once formed part of the promised materials occasionally appear on the selling platforms of book dealers and auction houses.²

²“Mrs Stopford Green's Gift: University College's Thanks”, *Irish Times* (Feb 25, 1925): 8. While UCD Special Collections hold a number of volumes stating the provenance of John Richard Green, there is no indication that Alice Stopford Green's

Likewise, microfiche copies of Edith C. Somerville and Martin Ross's (Violet Martin's) manuscripts and correspondence that had been archived in the National Library of Ireland have gone missing,³ and Mary Carbery's journals are in private hands in a castle in Scotland.⁴ As is the case for so many of her contemporaries, Hannah Lynch's letters lay buried and invisible—among family papers, in the archives of publishing houses or other writers—and her correspondence is scattered from Dublin to Leeds, from Madrid to Paris and New York.⁵

A similar fate that befell Hermione Lee two decades ago as she struggled to piece together the life and career of Virginia Woolf currently besets the many researchers attempting to catalogue and resurrect the work of once-eminent Irish women writers. What Lee describes as the “periodic attacks of archive-faintness” that overcame her as she “contemplated the transatlantically scattered hoards of manuscripts and letters, diaries and notebooks, which would allow a really uncompromising biographer to make a record of what Virginia Woolf said, felt, did and wrote” is precisely the experience of today's researchers into Irish women's writing.⁶ It takes patience, perseverance, creativity, and conversations to locate, identify, and retrieve these archival sources. It also requires acts of care—on the side of family members, institutions, archivists, and scholars—as well as acts of attention. Only through access to these material archives can the processes of women's writing, their co-creating, collaborating, and networking, be retraced. To retrace those processes, which involve not one but many undervalued women writers, it takes a collective.

Six Voices

Reader, this introduction reaches you thanks to the collaboration of six voices that are part of a network. And this network, in turn, came into being because of a long-standing collaboration of two of those six voices. The unweaving of *how* exactly this project of a Special Issue on Irish women writers' collaborations and networks between the decades from 1880 to 1940 came into being would mean an intricate mapping of the circulation of books, corridor chats, conference programmes and dinners, email exchanges, happenstance introductions, and serendipity in the archives prompted by shared curiosity. Most immediately, the origins could be dated to a two-day symposium on “Collaborations & Networks” in September, 2021 that was hosted by the Irish Women's Writing (1880–1920) Network (IWWN). Equally, though, it could be traced to Kathryn Laing and Sineád Mooney's founding of the IWWN, or perhaps even to when Laing and Mooney first met. Alternatively, we might see the origins of what became the network at the point when either of them first read and learned about the Irish women writers that would become their research *foci*, or when the Irish women writers who are explored here first wrote and collaborated, or when those literary, cultural, political, and social

library was either incorporated or named in her honour. Volumes from Stopford Green's dispersed library have recently been presented for sale by bookdealers located as far apart as Australia and the UK, and these books can tell a remarkable story about her interests and connections. See Mitchell and Ní Bheacháin, “Scholar-Diplomats, Protodiplomacy and the Communication of History,” 198–229.

³Stevens, “The Mystery of the Disappeared Drishane Archive”.

⁴Sineád Mooney in private conversation with Stephen Evans-Freke (July 26, 2020).

⁵See Binckes and Laing, *Hannah Lynch (1859–1904)*.

⁶Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 1.

networks that facilitated and circulated Irish women's work were set up. This variety of options for the origins of the network begs the question: where does any collaboration or network begin?

Collaborations and networks are both the *modus operandi* and focus of investigation here. Our six voices are amplified by the international voices of our thirteen contributors, following an invitation to investigate the intersecting nodes, webs, and relationships between collaborations and networks. Notes and scraps, manuscripts and correspondences, acknowledgements and footnotes, columns and productions, translations and reviews, texts and images, drafts and paintings constitute the material manifestations that enable gleanings of the processes of collaboration across media and the wider networks Irish women writers established, shaped, and developed, as well as those that supported or stifled their cultural productions. Listening to these past voices, we pick up on harmonies and dissonances. What is the relationship between a collaboration and a network? What motivates their initiation? What shapes and forms do they take? How and where do collaborations and networks intersect? What kind of collaboration is practiced, and how is it connected to the network with which it is associated? And in what ways might the chorus of twenty-first century feminist academic voices be involved in a conversation with past practices within the cultural sphere?

In order to begin to answer these questions, we start with our own collective, then provide an account of the six-strong editorial entity responsible for bringing these thirteen essays together, and of the collaborative ethos this work embraces as part of an emerging new model of feminist scholarly practice. The editors came together as members of a larger IWWN team that was founded by Laing and Mooney at the 2016 inaugural symposium on *Occluded Narratives*, held at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.⁷ Building on the “palpable energy” of the field described by Margaret Kelleher in her plenary lecture,⁸ the Network evolved to ensure that new ideas, recovered writers, and expanded knowledges of Irish women writers were captured not only as conversations at the symposium, but also in print in Laing and Mooney's edited collection on *Irish Women Writers at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Alternative Histories, New Narratives* (2019). With the aim of facilitating international and interdisciplinary exchanges between researchers recovering, studying, and teaching the lives and work of Irish women writers—novelists, poets, journalists, historians, correspondents—there are four key strands to the network's activities: firstly, the IWWN promotes and extends its research remit through the hosting of symposia and panels at conferences internationally; secondly, it has an established web presence in service to the worldwide research and teaching community where resources on relevant archives and extensive bibliographies are gathered; thirdly, it advances scholarly debates through academic publications in the form of two series in association with Edward Everett Root Press (*Key Irish Women Writers* and *Irish Women Writers: Texts and Contexts*); and, fourthly, it fosters and promotes collaborations between scholars at various stages of their careers and seeks to amplify the voices of PhD candidates and early career scholars. The IWWN website with its blog, interview series (*Research Pioneers* and *Emerging Voices*),

⁷The team includes website administrator and blog editor Deirdre Flynn; postgraduate and early career research assistants Sophie van Os, Eliza Spakman and Geraldine Brassil; and advisors Elizabeth Tilley and Kathleen Williams on archives. For further information on the Network, please see: <https://irishwomenswritingnetwork.com>.

⁸Kelleher, “Literary Cabinets and ‘Who's in, Who's Out’”.

and a regular newsletter to its members constitutes a digital salon that connects a diverse international community of postgraduate researchers, early-career and established scholars, archivists, interested readers, and creative writers.

Each of us brings our own expertise in women's writing across genres, and collectively our research interests crisscross the Irish Revival, *fin-de-siècle* and New Woman writing, theatre history, reception studies, early modernism, print and visual culture, book history, periodical culture, communications, intellectual and business history, and network and collaboration theory. Together, we infiltrate and bridge the porous boundaries of literary periodisation, propelled thanks to transformations in recent scholarship on collaborations and networks in Victorian and modernist studies.⁹ This six-voice collaboration, then, owes a debt to the diverse networks that each member is a part of and that enabled the crossings of paths over the past two to three decades.

The web of these informal and formal networks leaves its traces in introductions, footnotes, and acknowledgements in articles and books that point to the conversations we have with each other in scholarly works, panels at conferences, and—ultimately—in co-authored and co-edited works. Laing and Mooney's initial collaborations, a 2005 conference on the work of Edna O'Brien and a subsequent co-edited essay collection, sprang from a chance encounter with Maureen O'Connor by the elevator in the Arts concourse at University of Galway, and they have since gone on to engage in a long series of editorial collaborations. Whitney Standlee and Anna Pilz first met at the University of Liverpool and, as an American and a German respectively, bonded over their shared position as outsiders to Irish literature who had been unaware of a tradition of Irish women's writing prior to the twentieth century. Regularly exchanging ideas on their respective projects, they forged a joint ambition to bring further attention to the political contents and contexts of *Irish Women's Writing, 1878–1922* (2016) in their co-edited collection. Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin brought her study of intellectual networks, her ongoing writing partnership with Angus Mitchell, and the greater openness to collaboration of her Communications lectureship into a fruitful dialogue with her research interests at the interface of Irish and cultural studies. Julie Anne Stevens' experiences at conferences across the world have brought her into contact with nearly all the other collaborators here at one point or another, and her books, *The Irish Scene in Somerville and Ross* and *Two Irish Girls in Bohemia*, concentrate on one of the most prominent collaborations in Irish writing during the period under consideration. Somerville and Ross's writing partnership inspired Stevens to co-edit and to co-author in her own turn. Out of these collaborations emerged new alliances and friendships.

While co-authorship and collaboration were shared experiences for all the editors, their joining as six voices in the one text was altogether new. The more voices there are, the more time the process takes; and time is a rare commodity in the neo-liberal climate of academia. What's more, group-authored scholarship is still a relatively new

⁹See, for instance, Phegley's Special Issue on "Collaboration in Victorian Periodical Production, Scholarship, and Teaching," 173–199; Cozzi's article on "Exploring Late Victorian (Co-)Authorship," 33–54 which includes a discussion of Somerville and Ross; Stewart's "'The Limits of the Imaginable,'" 39–57; Shattock's "Professional Networking, Masculine and Feminine," 128–140; McDonald's study of *Modernist Literary Collaborations between Women and Men* argues for a wider collaboration between publishers, authors, and illustrators; Redwine's *Gender, Performance, and Authorship at the Abbey Theatre* explores the collaboration between playwrights and actresses; Annika Forkert edited a cycle of contributions on the theme of "Collaborations, Networks, Failures, Weak Ties," for *M/m*, <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/collaborations-networks-failures-weak-ties>. Accessed 27 June 2022.

approach to knowledge creation and sharing in an academy that, as Jennifer Phegley reminds us, still “privileges the concept of individuality in promotion, tenure, and other reward structures”. Phegley further notes that humanities scholars “often echo these institutional values” with a focus “on uncovering every possible detail about a few prominent literary, artistic, or historical figures. However, the truth is that the achievements of the canonical figures we tend to study are rarely solo efforts.”¹⁰ In other words, literary scholarship has tended to concentrate on the individual voice of the lone genius, and has neglected the wider ecosystem of support, exchange, input, and collaboration that enables that voice to be more broadly heard. This recognition is even more important when our research involves non-prominent (or non-canonical) writers. Co-authorship challenges the status quo of scholarly merit in the present as much as it challenged the status quo of literary merit in the past. As Heather Ingman and Cliona Ó Gallchoir have argued in the context of Irish women writers, “the sometimes popular and collaborative nature of their work meant that it had no lasting place within a canon of Irish literature founded on notions of literary greatness epitomized by the individual literary genius”.¹¹ These challenges continue to be reinscribed in the lingering “minority interest” position of women’s writing within the academy.

Indeed, despite an increasingly rich and varied scholarly landscape and ongoing efforts to diversify the curriculum both in terms of writers and texts, as well as in terms of the scholarship that shapes discussions, working on turn-of-the-twentieth-century Irish women’s writing can still feel like something of a “solo effort”. Many of us have had the experience of being the only such scholar at our institutions, or, with increasing professional precarity—particularly, though not exclusively, for early-career scholars—of being researchers without academic posts or institutional affiliation. Even with the advantage of institutional support, researching the historically marginal in the gaps and occlusions of the canon, tracking elusive pseudonyms through periodical archives, catching tantalising glimpses of relationships, collaborations, and mentorships for which little or no archival trace remains, can be a frustratingly tenuous as well as a solitary matter, hence the importance of the IWWN’s collaborative ethos. It is a vision springing from, and with the specific aim of enabling, collaborations that help to render the recovery of the writing lives and publications of forgotten or neglected Irish women visible and accessible for teaching and research. And it does so in both real and virtual spaces.

The Collective Voice

While the IWWN’s first symposium was a traditional, in-person event focusing on the 1880 to 1920 period, our second symposium, *Collaborations and Networks in Irish Women’s Writing 1880–1940*, was held virtually during the Covid pandemic on 3 and 4 September 2021. In expanding our remit a further twenty years, we recognised the importance of tracing the temporal dimension and influences of “exogenous effects” on the development and transformations of networks during the Cultural Revival, political and social revolutions, and state formation.¹² Acknowledging the advances that had

¹⁰Phegley, “Collaboration in Victorian Periodical Production, Scholarship, and Teaching,” 174.

¹¹Ingman and Ó Gallchoir, “Introduction,” 16.

¹²For an analysis of how exogenous effects impacted networks, see Dolton’s study of the Bloomsbury Group in “Identifying Social Networks Effects,” 1–15.



LADY LAND LEAGUERS AT WORK AT THE DUBLIN OFFICE

Figure 1. “Lady Land Leaguers at work at the Dublin office”. *The Graphic*, November 12, 1881. Copyright: Private Collection.

been made in recovering a tradition of Irish women’s writing across the centuries thanks to a burgeoning body of research, our CFP asked for work that opened out from single-author approaches to consider both women writers’ individual collaborations across genres and media, and the ways in which their wider networks, personal and professional, enabled or frustrated the telling, circulation and reception of their stories. A rich stream of new critical approaches translated into virtual conversations across two days during which 27 presenters workshoped their case studies of various collaborations in which Irish women writers had engaged during the period, including those that fell under the headings “Clubs, Communities & Sisterhoods”, “Publishers, Editors, & Journalists”, and “Transnational & Migrant Networks”. Presenters also explored the extent



Figure 2. Six voices at home at work (23 September 2022).

to which “Staging Collaborations” operated in the context of Ireland’s theatre, with studies of well-known figures such as Molly Allgood and Lady Gregory alongside the theatre’s more obscured female contributors such as Dolly Robinson. Further contributions addressed the ways in which collaborations and networks enabled “Politics & Activism” (see Figure 1) and “Interventions, Interactions & Mediations”, paying attention to figures such as Alice Stopford Green, the Parnell women, and Kate O’Brien.¹³ The workshop structure of the symposium entailed probing questions that were asked of the participants, an ensuing dialogue between editors and contributors, and ultimately the invisible network of double-blind peer reviewers who influenced the finished contributions. Furthermore, this extended process of preparing the manuscript shaped the development of the new research platformed here. What started to emerge was a chorus of voices through which the sum became greater than its parts. The self-consciously collaborative approach of this contemporary network illuminates and enriches the study of past networks, collaborations and synergies in ways both tangible (events, outreach and publications) and intangible (validation through synergy).

Energised by this process, our Special Issue prioritises the study of Irish women within collaborative partnerships and the context of movements, organisations, and networks. For many decades and by necessity, feminist scholarship focused on the recovery of individual writers, artists and activists. This essential recuperative work continues and, indeed, the co-editors of this volume individually work on their own specialised topics and subjects. However, as this foundational work progresses, the networked and collaborative aspects of women’s cultural production become more central and significant, and its retrieval demands a suite of methodologies and a collective approach that pools resources, insights, and knowledge networks. The pleasure, solidarity, and

¹³We would like to acknowledge the significant contribution to the conversation about collaborations and networks in Irish women’s writing made by all speakers. The symposium schedule is available in full at <https://irishwomenswritingnetwork.com/virtualsymposium/conference-schedule/>.

challenges of our working in a collective of common purpose naturally prompts a re-evaluation of our subjects in terms of their collaborations and networks, and the opportunities and practical supports that emerge from the strong and weak ties that surround us. Such a realisation is not new: many of the writers discussed here (Eccles, Stopford Green, Salkeld, Sheehy Skeffington, Gregory, and so on) were acutely aware of the role of the salon or network in shaping an individual's destiny or a national project. The network could provide women writers with information and opportunities; but, crucially, it was also a living organism that could influence and impact individuals and creative cultures in profound ways—both positive and negative.

A Note on Process; or, How Six Voices Make a Chorus

Our collaboration is one of thinking, editing, and writing as a collective. Much of this involved learning by doing. Our method consisted of regular online meetings (usually on MS Teams; see Figure 2), with varying degrees of recordkeeping. Conversations birthed phrases and ideas that connected to threads we tried to catch in our individual note taking. We dispersed into separate writing tasks that were then copied and pasted into one Google document, our different voices inadvertently visible in the form of different fonts or colours that gradually merged and faded to a uniform black. And then it got interesting. The circularity of our conversations began to become increasingly important: the symposium abstracts, the extended articles, and then the revised articles, went back and forth between the editors and the contributors, as well as between the editors themselves. Meanwhile, although we had discussed the idea that deciding on a method was crucial, we never *actually* decided on any single or specific methodology despite the acknowledged need to sketch out some parameters and ways of weaving our ideas together. After all, writing is personal. The personal is political. Writing as a personal practice means that we each bring an individual “attachment” to words, how we write, how we think in terms of patterns and structure, keywords, phrases and other scholars and their scholarship that have shaped us individually as well as moulded the field. What happens to that individual voice in the collective?

Subsequent work on drawing together a selection of the papers given at this symposium and editing them was enabled by technology, as the six editors were spread across different parts of Ireland, England, Scotland, and the US. In “Models and Methods for Collaboration in Periodical Studies, 1990–2020”, April Patrick relays the experience of a previous generation of scholars undertaking long-distance collaboration: Gilbert and Gubar, two thousand miles apart, co-wrote their *Madwoman in the Attic* through telephone conversations and the posting of chapter drafts.¹⁴ Postal collaboration, of course, had already been employed by nineteenth-century Irish writers such as Somerville and Ross or Emily Lawless and Shan Bullock.¹⁵ For our twenty-first century virtual collaboration, we faced our own challenges. Even with the enabling forces of online meetings to discuss foundational concepts and methods, a WhatsApp group, and a shared Google Drive folder, the experience of working collectively was complex, moving from personal encounter through Covid online tech-supported

¹⁴Patrick, “Models and Methods for Collaboration in Periodical Studies, 1990–2020,” 332.

¹⁵See Lewis, *Edith Somerville, A Biography*, 120–121 and Hansson, *Emily Lawless 1845–1913*, 144.

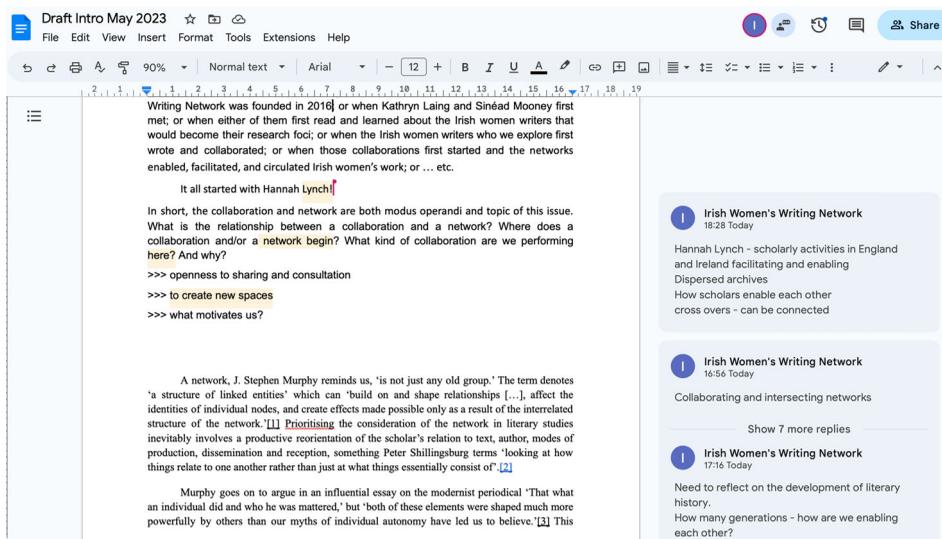


Figure 3. Six voices making a chorus.

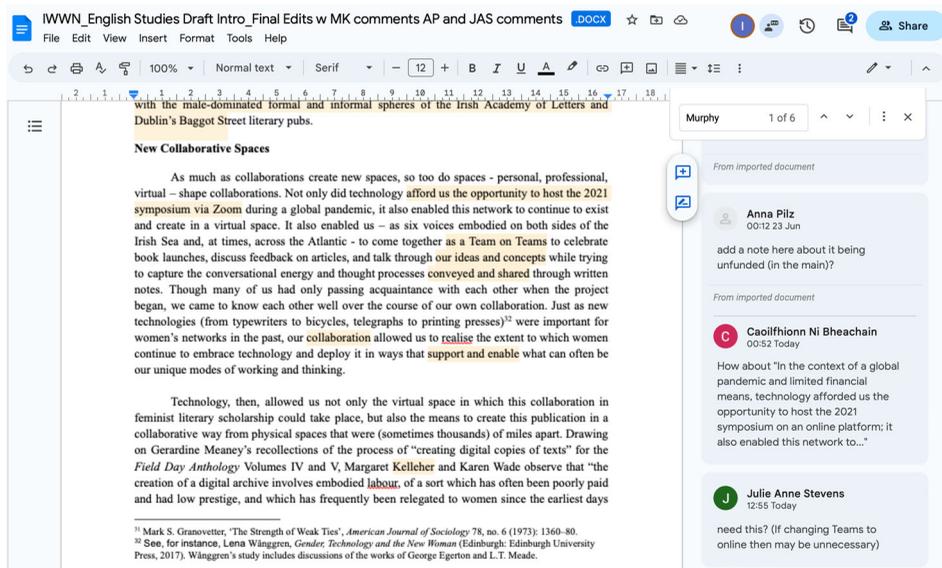


Figure 4. Six voices making a chorus.

work, trying to schedule meetings that were suitable for those operating across widely varying time zones, dealing with illness and childcare when working from home, experimenting with the best ways of sharing knowledge, producing texts which, like this multi-authored introductory essay, are a palimpsest of many conversations, and then collective writing, peer reviewing, rewriting, and editing.

During that process we asked ourselves, "how, as we begin the process of merging each other's voices and sections, do we go forward? Do we add comments? Do we leave on

track changes? Do we intervene in structure before checking with others? What's allowed? Where are the boundaries? What are our hard lines (too few or too many semi-colons)? To what extent can we be flexible as long as the core idea remains?" The screenshots of our working document offer an indication of how six voices make a chorus (Figures 3 and 4). The possibility of including an introduction format that would embrace marginalia via comments posted from each of us and left in the margins was discussed. It would have afforded us the opportunity to write about research peripheries, including marginal or alternative networks, setting up unconventional spaces that disrupt patterns and go against dominant strands but that become critical in shaping culture and—in our case—literary criticism. This would have demanded amounts of time that none of us have; ideas about marginalia thus turned into a marginal idea, to be discarded for future rediscovery.

We were particularly inspired by the collective who wrote *Scholarly Adventures in the Digital Humanities* and the associated groundbreaking Modernist Archives Publishing Project.¹⁶ In the context of pandemic restrictions, we sought to achieve something resembling the model of “egalitarian polyphony” that they identified as central to their own practice. We were not alone in grappling with such challenges. In her introduction to the Special Issue on “Collaboration in Victorian Periodical Production, Scholarship, and Teaching”, Phegley speaks of pivoting to online collaborative work and this resonates in so many ways, including the sharing of collaboration stories. One of the anecdotes cited, about the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the well-established practices of scholars Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa SurrIDGE that identified a shift in voice from pre-pandemic collaborative publications to work completed in the midst of lockdown, is particularly striking for us.¹⁷ The question of voice is intensified for six collaborators who have seldom met in person but regularly encounter each other via an array of platforms. Our discussions about the Special Issue and how to introduce the diversity of essays were punctuated with constant questions we are perhaps only now resolving, here in our introduction, such as what kind of collective voice we wish to create and what is the voice of the Network.

Collaborations and Networks

Collaboration theory concentrates on authorial practice. It draws attention to the process of creativity and the new spaces that emerge when people work together; it forces us not to think of the individual writer, but to examine the alchemy that results when two or more create together. In *Confessions of a Young Man*, George Moore refers to the “mystery of the *séances* of collaboration, the trysts, the discussion”, the ability to create something that emerges through communion with the other—a kind of magic.¹⁸

The theoretical study of collaboration derives in part from rhetoric and composition theory that sees writing as a process. Carol Singley and Elizabeth Sweeney note the

¹⁶Battershill et al., *Scholarly Adventures in Digital Humanities*, 50. Clay's exploration of women writers' networks *British Women Writers, 1914–1945: Professional Work and Friendship* and subsequent *Time and Tide: Connections and Legacies* project (<https://www.timeandtidemagazine.org>) also provided further inspiration for building a network of our own.

¹⁷Phegley cites an email from SurrIDGE where the latter concludes how “the material circumstances of production affect expression and meaning”, 190.

¹⁸Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man*, 31.

theory's debt to the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia, "linguistic multiplicity", that suggests the dialogue of different voices that occurs during collaboration. Moreover, its particular interest in women's writing gives feminist emphasis to some of its arguments, including the stress on "relational thinking, socially constructed knowledge, and shared stories and experience".¹⁹ Studies of female collaboration are interested in alternative writing practices that show the need to reframe the way that we look at literature more generally. Ideally, a frank and open co-authorship will challenge hierarchical order, contesting the myth of the solitary genius and, in so doing, disrupting traditional ways of examining texts. In practice, however, power differentials often reveal themselves in complex ways, as illustrated in the contributions here in which, for instance, James Little explores the Irish language theatre translation collaboration undertaken by Lady Gregory and Douglas Hyde, Natasha Remoundou examines the complex spousal collaboration of Edward and Christine Longford at the Gate Theatre, Nora Moroney highlights the intricacies and tensions within the personal and professional relationship of Dolly and Lennox Robinson, and Naoise Murphy offers a camp analysis to spotlight queer collaboration between Molly Keane and John Perry in the London West End. None of these collaborations is straightforwardly egalitarian and their inclusion and juxtaposition in this collection reveals the impossibility of generalising about the nature of collaboration.

Collaboration theory has had special purchase in women's writing: Bette London points out that "collaboration has historically ... been a resource of the culturally marginalized" and often occurs in the "outer reaches of British identity – in Scotland, Ireland, and Australia".²⁰ Because of the ongoing tendency throughout history to marginalise both women's work and collaborative writing projects more generally, studies of female collaboration often recover forgotten or overlooked authors while at the same time attending to a range of authorial practices. This area of study has thus extended its reach over time to include the recovery of female writers within collaborative work that expresses itself in different ways: letter-writing as a means of collaboration; translation as collaboration; mentorship, patronage and collaboration; the collaborative space of the séance and automatic writing; and collaboration in the form of the illustrated text. It also shows that working together can be a fraught process, often complicated by a range of pressures including a book industry that promotes single authorship.

Significantly, given our concentration on Irish women writers in this Special Issue, a pair of writers that have featured centrally in collaboration theory is Irish: Edith CE. Somerville and Martin Ross. Somerville and Ross were popularly known as "Two of a Trade",²¹ as Somerville once described a partnership that extended beyond the grave through the practice of automatic writing, and they thus offer a striking example of how an authorial collaboration challenges the way people think about a text. As Lorraine York points out, the reception of Somerville and Ross's work in both the past and present evidences a strong "desire on the part of the public to parse or disentangle the collaboration, to force these two unruly collaborators into the conceptual mould of individual creativity and genius".²² Yet the co-authorship of Somerville and Ross did not appear

¹⁹Singley and Sweeney, "In League with Each Other," 68. The authors rely on Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarula's description of female learning in *Women's Way of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic, 1986).

²⁰London, *Writing Double*, 119.

²¹Somerville and Ross, "Two of a Trade," 79–85.

out of nowhere, nor was it an isolated phenomenon: it in fact had its origins in an extensive web of Irish women's networks, partnerships, and collaborations. As our contributors show, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries Irish women writers' supporting networks encouraged collaboration (and vice versa): Geraldine Brassil demonstrates how friendships and connections to groups such as the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth in London, or a Dublin-based philanthropic network, encouraged the work of the Banim sisters. Across the Atlantic, Lola Ridge's New York weekly salon brought together anarchist and artistic networks, as Lucy Collins notes. James Little, Tricia Cusack, and Deirdre Brady respectively examine Lady Gregory's "Coole Workshop", the artist Sarah Purser's Dublin salon, and the reading committees of the Irish Women Writers' Club that afforded extensive opportunities for collaboration across Ireland.

The ongoing interest in collaboration derives in part from the fact that there are many and varying ways through which the practice can occur: for instance, via the literary or artistic partnerships of family members and married/same sex couples, or collaborating with the dead through seances and automatic writing. Yet many existing studies of intimate partnerships, from Phyllis Rose's *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (1983) to Carmela Ciuraru's *The Lives of the Wives: Five Literary Marriages* (2023), have tended to focus on relationships that were well-known, and often as a result have overshadowed marginal (and marginalised) writers. Thus, the examination in this Special Issue of lesser known spousal creative processes in the Irish context attends to self-effacing figures and the barely visible traces of their work in a series of delicate and careful studies: Christine Longford, who, as Natasha Remoundou affirms, had an important role in the Gate Theatre in the 1930s and 40s through her collaboration with her husband Edward; or Dolly Robinson who, Nora Moroney argues, served as a "lynchpin" within Irish literary circles and made significant contributions to the Abbey Theatre.

The writers considered in this Special Issue often forged alternative routes into the literary milieu and/or did not fit readily into traditional categories of Irish literature because they connected and collaborated across national boundaries. Margu rite Corporaal's study of Irish women writers and their transnational networks not only shows how female translators of Irish women's fiction extended Irish women writers' networks, but also reveals the challenges that translators of literary works collectively faced. She considers German translations of Rosa Mulholland's fiction by Marie Morgenstern and Clara Commer and explores the different ways each translator dealt with the issue of translating local dialect. Meanwhile, in her study of Dublin-born Lola Ridge, Lucy Collins examines the evolution of Ridge's poetry in the context of New York radical networks.

A recurring theme within the contributions is the spaces and places where women could meet or host their connections—from the city centre caf s and hotels selected for meetings by the committee of the Irish Women Writers' Club to Dolly Robinson's

²²York, *Rethinking Women's Collaborative Writing*, 88. Somerville and Ross are a significant model of collaboration in London's *Writing Double*; Laird's *Women Coauthors*; and Ehnenn, *Women's Literary Collaboration, Queerness, and Late-Victorian Culture*. And although Wayne Koestenbaum concentrates on male collaboration in *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration*, he also includes observations on Somerville and Ross in his discussion of collaborations of the *fin de si cle*. Anne Jamison's important study of collaboration revolves around the lives and works of Somerville and Ross and shows the impact of copyright law on collaboration during the period in which they wrote. See E. C. Somerville & Martin Ross: *Female Authorship and Literary Collaboration*.

Dalkey cottage. Proximity (or propinquity) was an important consideration for women seeking creative inspiration or professional opportunities, and many moved to metropolitan centres such as Paris (Hannah Lynch), London (Charlotte O'Connor Eccles), and New York (Lola Ridge) in order to access the increased range of networks afforded to them in these urban spaces. Moreover, cities are recognised as important sites of mobility and innovation.²³ Within them, certain areas or suburbs become creatively energised and important: for example, Bedford Park in London emerged at the *fin de siècle* as a vibrant hub for, among many others, the Yeats and Morris families to create and collaborate, while the Victorian male-dominated “Clubland” in the heart of the city was chosen as a site of feminist resistance when the female-only and suffragist Pioneer Club was founded there in 1892. Occasionally, tensions resulted from the competing priorities of networks. For instance, in her study of Erminda Rentoul Esler’s London networks, Giulia Bruna notes that conflicting ideas about Irish interests had a tendency to emerge when London-Irish and Irish networks in the city overlapped. And although these London spaces were often imperative to Irish women, some (like those involved in the Dun Emer Industries) eventually realised the importance of relocating the engine of the revival to Ireland.

Central to a feminist cultural historiography are concerns about how we choose sources, critically read those sources and, significantly, what constitutes a source in the first instance. Certainly, sources for women’s literary, intellectual, or artistic networks are often different from those used for conventional political or state histories, and the cultural historian must be alert to the manifestations of bonds and connections that leave traces in unexpected places. For example, a personal and professional evolution is carefully mapped by Elise Garritzen in her analysis of the acknowledgements, footnotes, and other paratextual elements in two works by the historian Alice Stopford Green. Tricia Cusack meanwhile foregrounds Sarah Purser’s portrait of Jane Barlow as evidence of a deep connection between women embedded in wider overlapping networks. Tara Giddens shows how Charlotte O’Connor Eccles’ column for *The Lady of the House* on “Distinguished Irishwomen in London” maps out the ways in which Irish women writers developed their careers within and through national and international networks. Through their meticulous archival research, these contributors uncover a range of social practices, professional agency, and cultural politics that are not often visible in general accounts of the period.

The methodology for recovery work and scholarship on women’s literary history and creative practice more often than not demands collaboration, and more specifically a type of collaborative effort that is reliant on a multitude of individuals and networks sharing scant information in relation to the archives, periodicals, and private collections where much of the history of Irish women’s writing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lies buried. Feminist literary scholarship, then, is grounded in an openness to share, consult, and exchange ideas and information in a necessary process of weaving together the many strands of Irish women’s history of literary collaboration. Despite the lingering bias against collaboration in the humanities, there is a palpable shift currently taking place that has been accelerated by a new expansiveness in research topics in literary studies. This development has ushered in re-examinations of older research

²³Evans, *Threshold Modernism*.

questions and led to an acknowledgement that new research *foci* require new methodologies. These methodologies are, in turn, increasingly collaborative and collective. Often, it is only through conversations with colleagues, students, archivists, librarians, local communities, or surviving descendants that traces of obscure turn-of-the-twentieth-century Irish women writers can be located. Kathryn Laing and Faith Binckes, for example, tracing the literary networks and connections Hannah Lynch forged in Dublin, London and Paris, were at a late stage in the production of their joint monograph *Hannah Lynch (1859–1904): Irish Writer, Cosmopolitan, New Woman* when contact with a great nephew of Lynch's led to the acquisition of the only known photographic image of Lynch. This anecdote aptly illustrates the larger gendered occlusions that recovery projects such as this aim to combat.²⁴ Conversation, information-sharing, and collegial generosity are essential to restoring Irish women to their former position of prominence in the literary milieu.

Researching networks and the networked lives of literary subjects is vital to challenging canonical approaches to cultural and literary history. Such efforts illuminate the webs of attachments that provide opportunities to work, collaborate, socialise, publicise and publish, while also highlighting the distinct and often overwhelming challenges that confronted women intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Homosocial networks in the professions or in elite politics were intrinsically exclusive to men, and women's agency and professional ambition must be sought for and identified in the alternative spaces, reciprocal relationships, and counter-public spheres that they developed.²⁵ Indeed, networks are defined by their edges or margins, and they could be complicated for those seeking entry or who were disabled by their social background or physical limitations. Teresa Deevy's deafness and straitened financial circumstances made her participation in Dublin society particularly challenging, for instance, but these difficulties were ameliorated by the support of family and friends, and through membership of associations like the Irish Women Writers' Club. Thus, being embedded in a network could be enabling and empowering, whereas other groupings could foment damaging gossip or exclusionary practices. Indeed, the quality and typology of one's network and the quantity of ties that individuals have within it can determine one's fate much more than might be commonly assumed.²⁶ In her study of the Irish journalist Charlotte O'Connor Eccles, Tara Giddens highlights the significance of formal and informal networks for Irish women in London in allowing them to exchange ideas and afford each other opportunities. However, Giddens also foregrounds the elitism and dangers of some of these hybrid spaces and arrangements, revealing the particular vulnerabilities of women within them.

Networks are an essential context for human communication and organisation, and they can be visible in the form of professional associations with formal rules of engagement or they can be less clearly structured, as in friendship groups. Such networks are not static: they change over time. Stewart describes networks as "ever-expanding organisms

²⁴Laing and Binckes, *Hannah Lynch (1859–1904)*.

²⁵Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*; Mitchell and Ni Bheacháin, "Scholar-Diplomats, Proto-diplomacy and the Communication of History," 198–229; Brady, *Literary Coteries and the Irish Women Writers' Club (1933–1958)*; Nancy Fraser's framing of counter publics is helpful in this context in "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy".

²⁶See, for example, Fowler and Christakis, *Connected*.

within which nuclei form through temporal and contextual bonds”.²⁷ A network, J. Stephen Murphy reminds us, “is not just any old group,” but a system that can “build on and shape relationships [...], affect the identities of individual nodes, and create effects made possible only as a result of the interrelated structure of the network”.²⁸ Prioritising the consideration of the network in literary studies also inevitably involves a productive reorientation of our understanding of the relationship between an author, her text(s), and the modes of production, dissemination and reception that they undergo: in other words, what Peter Shillingsburg terms “looking at how things relate to one another rather than just at what things essentially consist of”.²⁹

Despite great strides in feminist recovery projects in recent years, feminist scholarship on often little-known women writers, to put it simply, requires a great deal more engagement with the mechanisms and conduits by which Irish women were able to produce and disseminate their work, as well as what Margaret Cohen has influentially termed the “great unread”.³⁰ Excluded by their sex from traditional male networks of power, Irish women writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had to evolve their own spaces/places of collaboration, inventing and negotiating a terrain consisting of the co-creation of literary texts, women writers’ clubs, diasporic networks, and the “imagined communities” of readers. In this Special Issue, Giulia Bruna examines the “virtual networking” of Ermina Rentoul Esler and her young readers via the textual space of *The Young Woman* magazine, and how these instances of sharing and promoting helped to shape Esler’s own short stories. In a complementary analysis, Giddens examines how Charlotte O’Conor Eccles’ journalism and fiction unofficially guided other professional women to safely navigate the London publishing milieu. Beth Rodgers’ examination of a writing contest for girl readers jointly staged by Irish author-editors Alice Corkran and L. T. Meade meanwhile focuses on their differing attitudes to readers’ attempts at composing fiction, and in so doing reveals not only the bonds that form but also the compromises that must be made when imperatives diverge in collaborative relationships.

Networks are comprised of nodes or individual actors, links, and different types of ties (strong, weak, absent or invisible). Different social networks can overlap, and connectors are those individuals who traverse between groups and circles. Such individuals are critically important for the spread of ideas and information, and salon culture provided a vital site for women to exert influence at the *fin de siècle*.³¹ Norms within peer networks are often responsible for what is accepted and for the development and extension of the network over time, and thus diversity and complexity within a circle can be enormously generative. The subjects of the studies presented here inhabited distinct social worlds and yet their networks frequently gave them access to social and professional opportunities that would otherwise be closed to them. In that context, Cathal O’Byrne’s recollection of being hosted at the London home of Alice Stopford Green highlights the significance of women’s spaces in the cultural and political revival:

²⁷Stewart, “‘The Limits of the Imaginable,’” 40.

²⁸Murphy, “Introduction,” iii–xv, vii.

²⁹Shillingsburg, *From Gutenberg to Google*, 197.

³⁰Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*, 23.

³¹Parejo Vadillo, “New Woman Poets and the Culture of the Salon at the fin de siècle,” 22–34; Ní Bheacháin and Mitchell, “Alice Stopford Green and Vernon Lee: Salon Culture and Intellectual Exchange,” 77–94.

when we went to London to give a series of Folk-song Recitals, we were the honoured guest at a dinner given by Mrs. Green at her beautiful house in Westminster, overlooking the Thames, a house that was the cultural centre for authors, poets, writers, musicians, politicians, and persons of literary and social distinction of every country and every grade whatever.³²

Stopford Green (like Lady Gregory, Dolly Robinson, Sarah Purser, and Mabel and Mary F. Robinson) was a connector who hosted evening dinner parties and afternoon salons, making introductions, extending invitations, and forging links between otherwise unconnected individuals and groups. Mark Granovetter's concept of "weak ties" is helpful in theorising the importance of such individuals and their networks.³³ He demonstrates that acquaintanceships and casual connections are frequently a better source of new information and opportunities than the close friendships or familial ties that sustain us emotionally but can be self-limiting. Such weak ties often provide access to alternative resources, information, and social circles, and are particularly important to women writers who may not have access to formal spaces of government, culture, education, or business. Deirdre Brady's study of the Irish Women Writer's Club explores an association that was developed by Irish women to counter their marginalisation within what was in the 1930s the new Irish Free State, highlighting the professional networks which strengthened the position of individual writers and allowed members to support peers with feedback, acclaim, and reviews. In her essay here, Brady demonstrates how the winners of the club's illustrious annual prize, the "Book of the Year", constitute a network of leading figures within the club itself and simultaneously spotlight an alternative female literary landscape that coexisted with the male-dominated formal and informal spheres of the Irish Academy of Letters and Dublin's Baggot Street literary pubs.

New Collaborative Spaces

As much as collaborations create new spaces, so too do spaces shape collaborations. In the context of a global pandemic and limited financial support, technology afforded us the opportunity to host the 2021 symposium on an online platform and for this network to continue to exist and create in a virtual space. It also enabled us—as six voices embodied on both sides of the Irish Sea and, at times, across the Atlantic—to come together online to celebrate book launches, discuss feedback on articles, and talk through our ideas and concepts while trying to capture the conversational energy and thought processes shared through written notes. Though many of us had only passing acquaintance with each other when the project began, we came to know each other well over the course of our own collaboration. Just as new technologies (from typewriters to bicycles, telegraphs to printing presses)³⁴ were important for women's networks in the past, our online collaboration allowed us to realise the extent to which women continue to embrace technology and deploy it in ways that facilitate what can often be our unique modes of working and thinking.

³²O'Byrne, "Famous People I have Known," 93

³³Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," 1360–80.

³⁴See, for instance, Wånggren, *Gender, Technology and the New Woman*. Wånggren's study includes discussions of George Egerton and L.T. Meade.

Technology, then, allowed us not only the virtual space in which this collaboration in feminist literary scholarship could take place, but also the means to create this publication in a collaborative way from physical spaces that were (sometimes thousands) of miles apart. Drawing on Gerardine Meaney's recollections of the process of "creating digital copies of texts" for the *Field Day Anthology* Volumes IV and V, Margaret Kelleher and Karen Wade observe that "the creation of a digital archive involves embodied labour, of a sort which has often been poorly paid and had low prestige, and which has frequently been relegated to women since the earliest days of computing history".³⁵ Kelleher and Wade make the case that women's embodied labour deserves to be not only remembered but studied, as "feminist scholarship continues to embrace and engage with digital records, archives, and methodologies".³⁶ Digital methods facilitated this collaboration: our editorial Team met regularly and virtually on Teams calls (often on Friday afternoons between four and six, sometimes extending to seven) and from an array of personal contexts and imperatives, which could mean that some joined from the sidelines of football pitches at which children were playing, some during their annual leave, some from breakfast tables very early in the morning in North America. The process of scheduling had to accommodate not only those who worked in different time zones, but also those who could only meet after their day job as, for them, research had to take place "out of hours". In other words, for some of the Team, conducting research and shaping feminist literary scholarship has been part of their paid employment; for others, the contribution to this project came as a free labour of love and belief in the value of feminist scholarship and comradeship.

Conclusion

In the years before the 2021 symposium that generated this Special Issue, Pilz and Standlee began mapping contemporary networks of pioneering and emerging scholars in the fields of Irish women's writing from 1880 onwards. This ongoing project, which features eighteen interviews at the point of our writing of this introduction, echoes Charlotte O'Connor Eccles' "Distinguished Irishwomen" series, plotted carefully in Tara Giddens' contribution here. Such echoes, resonances, and repetitions—as well as related acts of recognition, retrieval, and redress—highlight the cycles of remembrance that persistently underpin feminist scholarship. They are companion pieces, material embodiments of alliances across time, of writers and scholars. Both practices create a record of the processes of "how books make communities".³⁷ Similarly, Elise Garritzen's work on Alice Stopford Green's paratexts demonstrates the longstanding feminist concern with citation practices, foregrounded in recent work by Sara Ahmed when she argues that "Citation is feminist memory. Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow".³⁸ Our citational maps, evident in the articles included in this Special Issue, present an alternative literary and intellectual topography. Indeed, what the networks and collaborations discussed by our contributors suggest is

³⁵Kelleher and Wade, "Irish Literary Feminism and Its Digital Archive(s)," 249–250.

³⁶Ibid., 250.

³⁷Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 17.

³⁸Ibid., 15.

that women have always struggled to be accepted into the spaces and networks of power, privilege, and profile, and that this marginalisation and obfuscation continues to be challenged by scholars and activists today, many of them unpromoted and/or precariously employed women on the edges of the academy, including several of the editors of and contributors to this very publication.

This publication affords an alternative space of collaboration and networking across time and space. In it, we join not only each other as editors, but with each of our contributors. We also include in our collaboration the women writers whose careers, initiatives, activities, creative work and published output we are actively acknowledging and promoting through this Special Issue. There are glaring omissions in Irish literary history, and most of them are female. Scholars like ourselves are creating the alternative spaces in which Irish women's careers and importance can be reclaimed and acknowledged through a generous, democratic, enticing cluster of knowledge about the extent and energy of Irish women's literary collaborations in the past. It is a project that has been enabled, again and again, by conversations, collaborations and networks in the present. We form just a small part of these retrieval efforts that are gaining in energy and importance, and that gesture to the future of Irish literary research in a diversity of directions that complicates and expands the existing narrative. Reader, we invite and encourage you to join us in bringing Irish women writers out from the shadows; in unpacking other metaphorical green suitcases of knowledge and bringing them into the light of Irish and global literary histories.

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