Mary Anne Sadlier’s
Emigrant Narratives, 1850-1870

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Dedicated to my parents
Mary and Tim O’Keeffe
For sharing my dream and always believing in me

Dedicated to my siblings
Caroline, Derek, Elizabeth and Audrey
For your continued friendship and wonderful memories
And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

(F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby* 1926)
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Abstract

Mary Anne Sadlier’s Emigrant Narratives, 1850-1870
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This thesis focuses on the life and literary works of Irish author Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903), specifically on her representations of the Irish diaspora in her emigrant novels in the nineteenth century. On the eve of the Great Irish Famine she emigrated to North America and so had valuable insight into the complex negotiations that emigrants must undertake in order to settle in their host country. A prolific writer with over sixty works to her credit, Sadlier enjoyed immense popularity as a writer as is reflected in her enormous sales figures. Thus, I would suggest that her writings represent the concerns of that audience. My work reads Sadlier in a specific “Irish” context as she engages in interdisciplinary conversations to do with Irish emigration and acculturation. Sadlier’s literary works encompass many themes not least how she creates and champions an Irish cultural identity for her emigrant readers who found themselves engulfed by a foreign culture and a hostile American reception. I propose that she was instrumental in the creation of a transatlantic Irish Catholic identity. Furthermore, I suggest that Sadlier (trans)formed her opinions and adapted her outlook on life in response to her ever-changing world therefore making her a role model for future generations of Irish women emigrants to North America. Within the thesis I suggest that Sadlier is negotiating a subtle resistance to the hegemonic patriarchal culture of the period. By both sanctioning and destabilising the family cell Sadlier is questioning the inherent roles within; she is not afraid to broach what would be considered taboo subjects in the nineteenth century such as alcoholism, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Sadlier’s literary merit lies not only in her didactic aspect, providing a handbook for emigrants whose rupture with the past created a sense of bewilderment and isolation, but also in her sentimental aspect. I argue that Sadlier used the affective power of the Famine to (re)energise emigrants and give them a sense of pride in their homeland. Sadlier’s emigrant novels also exhibit a socio-historical function as they represent the hardships of emigrant life through her fictive characters. What is noteworthy about Sadlier’s emigrant fiction is that it does not simply mirror the historical reality of the mass emigration that occurred from Ireland after the Great Irish Famine as reportage might do; it actively engages in and shapes the discourses surrounding the formation of the emerging Irish-American character at that time.
Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the School of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication and the Graduate Studies Office of the University of Limerick in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature. It is entirely my own work and has not been submitted to any other University of Higher Education Institution. Where use has been made of the work of other people it has been fully acknowledged and referenced in the Works Cited.

Signed: Date:

__________________________________  June 2013
Yvonne O’Keeffe

Signed: Date:

__________________________________  June 2013
Dr. Tina O’Ttoole
Research Supervisor
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Firstly, I would like to wholeheartedly thank my parents for all their love and encouragement. Over the last ten years they have provided me with valuable emotional support and a space, a room of one’s own, to explore and enjoy my dream of going to University. Their positive outlook on life has been inspirational, and I could not have achieved what I have without them.

I warmly thank my sisters and brother, Caroline, Derek, Elizabeth and Audrey for shaping me as a person. I appreciate all the laughs and hugs you have given me throughout this adventure. Thanks also to my extended family, Tom, Jack, Emily, Brian, Chloe, Jennifer and Alison.

I have been very lucky throughout my studies to have made many friends all of whom have influenced me in some way. It would take too long to list them all, suffice to say that I thank each and every one of them for their friendship. However, I must say particular thanks to my UL lunch buddies, Adrienne and Deirdre, on submission of this thesis the immediate forecast is: your research production up and Starbucks profits down;-)

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**Biography of Mary Anne Sadlier**

Mary Anne Sadlier was born in Cootehill, Co. Cavan, on 31st December 1820.\(^1\) She was the daughter of a middle-class merchant named Francis Madden. According to her daughter, he was a man of “refined and cultured taste” (Anna Sadlier 331). He paid for her private tuition (James Wilson and John Fiske 365) and encouraged her to write poetry. Her first literary effort was published in 1839 in a London periodical entitled *La Belle Assemblée* when she was nineteen years old.\(^2\) Little is known about her mother, only that her name was Mary Foy and that she died when Sadlier was a child (Carole Gerson n. pag). However, according to her daughter, Mary Foy was instrumental in forming her personality; Anna Sadlier claimed that, from Foy, “she inherited a love for the poetry and the ancient lore of that land [Ireland], so rich in inspiring memories” (331).\(^3\)

By all accounts, financial troubles and business embarrassments hastened Francis Madden’s death in 1843, and this instigated Sadlier’s emigrant journey.\(^4\)

Drawing on my archival research, I can deduce that she had family in Canada, and so when she emigrated, she settled in the parish of Sainte Marthe with the Maddens, who were relatives of her father.\(^5\) James Madden was born circa 1770 in Armagh and was brother to Francis (Sadlier’s father). James and his wife Catherine Reynolds had eight

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\(^1\) Information concerning Sadlier’s life is often contradictory, sketchy and repetitive. In order to create a clear and accurate record of her life, this detailed biography is reliant on public records and uses sources from various dictionaries, biographical entries and critical readings.

\(^2\) Michèle Lacombe, “Frying Pans” n. pag.; Richard Froggatt n. pag.; Justin McCarthy 3017; Thomas Brown 219; Sandra Yocum Mize 817; Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice* 114.

\(^3\) An entire demographic record of pre-Famine Ireland was destroyed following an explosion in the basement of the Irish Public Records office on 30th June 1922, so it is difficult to ascertain precise particulars of Sadlier’s early life.

\(^4\) Gerson records Francis Madden’s death as occurring in 1842.

\(^5\) As there is no public collection of Mary Anne Sadlier’s papers, my archival research consisted of retrieval of public records from Ancestry.com; extracts from the Sadlier-Chadwick Family Fonds (National Archives of Canada); records from the University of Notre Dame Archives and correspondence with Boston College. I would also like to acknowledge e-conversations with Daniel Madden on *Ancestry.com*. 
children; they arrived in Sainte Marthe circa 1830, and James died in 1835. His son, Francis Madden, who was Sadlier’s first cousin, was closely connected to Sadlier all her life; for example, he was a witness to her marriage, and she fostered his daughter when he died.

Sadlier’s emigration date is contested by many biographers; some write that she emigrated in 1843, via an emigrant ship named the ‘Saint John’, to St. Partridge Island, New Brunswick, while others state that she emigrated to Montréal in 1844.\(^6\) Unfortunately, there are no records to prove these assumptions. As with most pre-Famine emigration records from Canada, they were lost.\(^7\) It is well documented that New Brunswick was a busy immigration port. Between 1840 and 1845, over 33,500 immigrants arrived, eighty-eight per cent of whom were Irish. This earned St. Partridge the name “the Canadian Emerald Isle”. In 1844, the year that it is thought Sadlier arrived, two thousand Irish emigrants arrived; in 1845, six thousand Irish emigrants arrived; in 1846, nine thousand Irish emigrants arrived, and in 1847 (Black ‘47), more than sixteen thousand Irish emigrants arrived. The influx of Irish immigrants on the island during its immigration history was so strong that in 1927 the government built a forty foot Celtic cross as a Famine memorial to the Irish who died there (about two thousand people died and six hundred of them are buried on the island).

However, whilst conducting my biographical research on Sadlier I read that she emigrated to Canada with a younger brother (Justin McCarthy 3017) and that she emigrated to Canada with “other family members” (Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy 939). As previously mentioned, pre-Famine Canadian records are

\(^6\) Lacombe, *Dictionary* 293; Anne Innis Dagg 264; Gerson n. pag.; Anna Sadlier 331; William Kelly 1; Stephen Brown 270; Thomas Meehan, *Catholic Encyclopaedia* n. pag.; Maureen O’Reilly n. pag; Wilson and Fiske 365; Fanning, *The Irish Voice* 114.

\(^7\) Earlier records of Sadlier in Canada are scarce since Canada only officially became a country in 1867. The first national Census took place in 1871 in which Sadlier appeared, see Appendix A.
scarce, so in order to try to verify this “missing” brother, I examined the New York passenger lists to see if she went there first and, then, made her way to her family in Sainte Marthe.\(^8\) Whilst researching, I found an entry of a “Mary Ann Madden” and a “Francis Madden” in the *New York Passenger Lists 1820-1857* (See Appendix A.). Their arrival date in New York is the 16\(^{th}\) September 1844 aboard the Patrick Henry; the woman is detailed as being twenty and the boy is sixteen. At this point, it is important to keep in mind that emigration records were not always accurate owing to a variety of factors, e.g., lack of education and difficulties with languages/accents. The record states that they came from Liverpool in England, which at the time was quite a popular route for Irish emigrants en route to America. Based on this data, her brother’s name seems to have been Francis, tying neatly into her family history; her father and first cousin were also called Francis. Francis is also the name she chose for one of her sons. This discovery also ties into the plotline of some of Sadlier’s emigrant novels. For instance, in *Elinor Preston; or, Scenes at Home and Abroad* (1861), a book which is often considered autobiographical (Rolf and Magda Loeber 1159; Charles Fanning *The Irish Voice* 120), the protagonist Elinor and her brother George travel to New York via Liverpool, and Elinor eventually settles in Montréal where she hears that George has died suddenly of a fever. It is interesting to note that, in her review of her mother’s life, Anna Sadlier writes that “*Elinor Preston* has been erroneously believed by many to be the story of her life … [although] some of the circumstances are identical” (331). A sister/brother emigrant narrative also occurs in *Con O’Regan; or, Emigrant Life in the New World* (1864), in the form of Con and his sister Winnie, and also in the novel *Aunt Honor’s Keepsake: A Chapter from Life* (1866), which features a separated brother and

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\(^8\) Thomas Brown records that in 1844 Sadlier emigrated to New York City (219).
sister in early childhood, Charles and Rachel, who almost marry each other when they re-unite in America. If my assumption is correct, that Sadlier had a brother, there have been no further records of him.

When Sadlier emigrated to Canada, she supported herself through writing for various periodicals such as *The Literary Garland* and *The Boston Pilot.* Her first novel, *Tales of the Olden Time: A Collection of European Traditions* (1845), was initially serialised in the Catholic periodical *True Witness.* On 24th November 1846, she married James Sadlier in the parish of Saint Marthe (See Appendix A) (*Quebec Vital and Church Records [Drouin Collection], 1621-1967*). He was a junior partner of the Catholic publishing house D. & J. Sadlier & Co. and managed the Montréal branch. This marriage was a move which her daughter Anna Sadlier claims “no doubt gave an impetus to her career” (331). Indeed, this serendipitous meeting provided Sadlier with a regular publisher for her works and a husband who was a constant source of inspirational Catholic material. As William Kelly notes:

> During her husband’s life, Mrs. Sadlier frequently received most valuable assistance and inspiring encouragement from his wise counsel, keen business instincts and truly Catholic spirit. […] In return for all the aid which Mr. Sadlier rendered his devoted wife in her literary labor, he received much useful assistance from her ever-ready pen and versatile talents. (322)

Sadlier was a prolific writer, with over sixty works to her credit penned between 1839 and 1900, as well as translations of many books from French (Maureen O’Reilly n. pag.; William H. Sadlier Inc. n. pag.). Her writing ranges from historical novels and children’s literature to poetry and sentimental fiction. She was one of the first Irish

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9 Liz Szabo writes that in 1847 Sadlier contributed poems, short articles and sketches to the *Literary Garland* on a monthly basis, eventually writing longer pieces which were serialised over a six month period (“Biography” n. pag.).

10 Anna Sadlier 331; Loebaer 1156; Froggatt n. pag.; McCarthy 3017; Wilson and Fiske 365; Bridget Hourican 720.
women writers to write about the realities of emigration, as well as addressing relevant social subjects of her era such as the Irish Famine, domestic service and the role of the Catholic Church. During her writing period in Canada, her narrative scheme entailed devising the name of the novel first, and then, after she settled on a title, she wrote it chapter by chapter. Her daughter Anna Sadlier notes in an article about her mother that: “She usually consulted with her husband as to the nature and scope of the story, and his practical business instincts, combined with the unerring judgement which led many to call him ‘the ideal publisher’ were of immense help” (335). As I will discuss below, this husband and wife team became central to Irish-Canadian and Irish-American cultural life in the period 1845 to 1869 and made the publishing house of D. & J. Sadlier a household name during the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

James Sadlier’s family emigrated from Co. Tipperary in 1832, but their father died en route to America in Liverpool (Liz Szabo “Biography” n. pag.). The four boys and their sister, along with their widowed mother, settled in New York, and their first publishing venture was a monthly serial edition of Butler’s Lives of Saints and an American Catholic Bible (William H. Sadlier Inc. n. pag.). In the 1830s, they learned the trade of bookbinding, establishing their own publishing and binding firm in 1836-37 in lower Manhattan (Loeber 1156; Gerson n. pag.; Lacombe “Frying Pans” n. pag.; Fanning The Irish Voice 114). In 1853, the firm bought out the list of pioneering Irish-American publisher John Doyle, after which D. & J. Sadlier Company became the largest publishing house in America (Stacey Donohue 333; Fanning The Irish Voice 114). In 1860 the firm moved to Barclay Street and other Catholic publishing houses soon followed, making the term ‘Barclay Street’ synonymous with Catholic publishing.
The success of their firm was predominately based on the supply of bibles and school texts for North America’s Catholic population of three million.

The firm grew quickly, and they expanded their business to include offices in Montréal, New York and Boston. Thomas Meehan records that they had the largest output of books in America (The Catholic Press 233). Indeed, Lacombe associates the popularity of Sadlier’s novels in North America with the success of the business, stating, “from 1853 the Sadliers published virtually all of her work, and the publishing house grew in direct proportion with her output” (Dictionary 294). In 1850, Orestes Augustus Brownson (1803-1876) in the Brownson Quarterly Review challenged someone to “write a tale entitled the Orphan of New York or the Orphan of Boston, the Irish Orphan or the Catholic Orphan, which would be adapted to the condition of the poor orphan boys among ourselves” (qtd. in Loeber 1157). Sadlier entered the competition and won the fifty-dollar prize with her novel Willy Burke; or, the Irish Orphan in America (1850), which was later serialised in the Boston Pilot (Anna Sadlier 331; Fanning The Irish Voice 118). Stephen Brown also confirms the popularity of Sadlier’s novels in Ireland by stating that Duffys Publishing House (Dublin) published her works. He writes: “Duffy publish and keep in print very cheap editions of the standard Irish novelists”, stating that the novel Willy Burke (1850) was of good literary standard and in the ‘Prize Library’ series (321). Sadlier was also published in Ireland by M. H. Gill and in Britain, by Cameron and Ferguson which is an index of her popularity abroad (Eileen Sullivan 66).

Sadlier also contributed to James McMaster’s New York Freeman’s Journal and The American Celt, a periodical founded by Thomas D’Arcy McGee. McGee, a well-

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11 Patrick Donahoe’s Boston Pilot had a subscription list of more than 100,000 people in 1872, Sr. Mary Alphonise Frawley 79.
known Canadian statesman and convert to Catholicism, was a former Young Irelander who became an outspoken advocate for Canada to remain part of the British Empire. He was a great friend of the Sadliers, and he held Sadlier’s work in high esteem, often corresponding with her about various plotlines such as her novel *MacCarthy More; or, The Fortunes of an Irish Chief in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (1868):

> How gets on Florence McCarthy More … In Desmond you have the sea always near you, and your own seaside thoughts will often surge into the subject, I have no doubt. I begin already to look forward to the months between this and Rockaway where I shall certainly make you a visitation. (McGee qtd. in Anna Sadlier 332)

He communicated regularly with her from 1855 until his assassination in 1868. These letters are now preserved in the James Sadlier fonds in the National Archives of Canada (James Sadlier fonds R6776-0-5-E). Jason King writes that McGee frequently corresponded with Sadlier about his literary ambitions, which were his “first, and of all times … favourite, line of exertion” (McGee qtd. in King 46), stating that throughout their friendship, McGee sought to publish much of his writing under the auspices of D. & J. Sadlier & Co. McGee’s writings tried to carve out a specifically national literature for the Canadian Irish, and after his assassination, Sadlier posthumously published *The Poems of Thomas D’Arcy McGee* (1869). Indeed, Anna Sadlier noted that they were “enthusiastic friends”, and when he was assassinated in 1868, his death came as a “crushing blow both to Mrs. Sadlier and her husband” (332). Testament to this friendship was the fact that James Sadlier was a pall bearer at his funeral (Daniel Madden n. pag.). The *American Celt*, which serialised *The Blakes and the Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1850), was bought out by D. & J. Sadlier publishing house in 1857 when McGee moved to Canada, and they renamed it *The Tablet*. Sadlier became a regular contributor through her serialised stories and
editorial columns (Blain et al. 939; Meehan “The Catholic Press” 223; Lacombe “Frying Pans” n. pag.; Fanning The Irish Voice 114). Indeed, Sadlier actually became editor of the New York Tablet, though Anna Sadlier is at pains to stress that most of her work was done “in the privacy of her own library” (334) as working in the public sphere was unusual for a woman of that period.

During her fourteen years in Canada, Sadlier wrote six novels, three of them with emigrant themes, as well as a Famine narrative, despite having six children and a household to run. Her sons James and Joseph later worked for the family firm in Montréal and New York. Her daughter Anna Theresa, who was born in Montréal in 1854, obviously inherited her mother’s love of writing as she published many poems and stories in US and Canadian journals (D. J. O’Donoghue). She became an author in her own right and published her first novel in 1877 entitled Ethel Hamilton; or, Lights and Shadows of the War of Independence (Gerson n. pag.). Her novel Arabella (1907) was re-published in 2006. She was not as concerned with the welfare of Irish emigrants as her mother, instead preferring to write tales of adventure and mystery for children (Constantine McGuire 194; Blain et al. 938). Later in life, in an article she wrote for Donahoe’s Magazine in 1903, she wrote about her mother’s early life, her books and friends.12

In 1860, the family moved from Montréal to New York where Mary Anne Sadlier continued to support herself through her writing and where the family business flourished (See Appendix A) (1860 United States Federal Census). During her nine years in New York, she wrote over twenty-six books including fourteen novels (Richard Froggatt n. pag.). Indeed, J. L. Delaney states that during the 1860s Sadlier “became

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12 Irishman Patrick Donahoe who was born in Co. Cavan and founder of the Boston Pilot launched Donahoe’s Magazine which was a widely circulated periodical concerned with the interests of Catholics and the Irish and how they were represented in drama, tales, poetry and music.
one of the most popular Catholic authors of the time” (505). The Sadliers seem to have maintained addresses in both New York and Montréal as they appear in the New York censuses during the sixties, but they also appear in the city directories for Montréal. This suggests that New York was their primary home, but they frequently visited Montréal throughout the period. The Sadliers also had a summer house at Far Rockaway, Long Island, where Sadlier enjoyed the company of guests, both lay and clerical, such as Dr. Brownson, Eleanor C. Donnelly (American poet and short story writer), Octavia Walton LeVert (American socialite and writer), Sir Charles Gavin Duffy (contributor to the Nation), Fr. Matthew (a novelist) and Archbishop Hughes (Thomas Brown 219; Fanning, The Irish Voice 115). Anna Sadlier credits it as being “a place of pleasant reunions and happy memories” (335).

One drawback of using public records is that they only give the statistical details of Sadlier’s life, and whereas they are important to trace her emigrant footprint, they lack the ability to show the human aspect of her existence. To date, I have found only two sources which detail the personal side of her life, both from members of her immediate family. Firstly, as previously mentioned, her daughter Anna wrote an article entitled “Mrs. Sadlier’s Early Life, her Books and Friends”, which was printed in Donohoe’s Magazine (April 1903) and details her mother’s life. This account is a little sanitised as it was written for publication purposes and so only focuses on people she knew rather than personal details of her life. Second, there is a collection in the National Archives of Canada of her son Francis Xavier’s letters written to his mother, which is presented in the form of an album with “In Memoriam” on the front cover. It was likely compiled after his death in 1885 (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album,

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13 Anna Theresa’s article briefly preceded the news of Mary Anne’s death, which was announced in the 6th April issue of the Montréal Daily Star as well as the 11th April issue of the Boston Pilot.
MG29-C122). These letters, two hundred and eight in total, cover the period from when he was sent to a private boarding school in Manhattan up to the time of his death. The correspondence largely relates to family matters and his personal life. For instance, there is a discussion about whether he will take holy orders, and he makes repeated appeals to his parents that they allow him to join the US navy instead, which they seem to have ignored as he was ordained a Jesuit in 1885. There is also information about his sisters and a description of a Halloween party they held at home. These letters are invaluable when assessing the cultural construction of Mary Anne’s life as they give some insight into the bourgeois status they achieved in New York.

In September 1869, Sadlier’s husband James died just nine years after they moved to New York, leaving her a widow at the age of forty-nine. Far from retiring from public life, she took over the running of the publishing house until her brother-in-law Denis’s death in 1885 (Anne Innis Dagg 264; Lacombe Dictionary 294). This suggests that she was an able businesswoman, equal to the task of running a big publishing company. Sadlier also decided to re-issue most of her own books at this time (Sullivan 64). We can see from the census records that, after her husband’s death, Sadlier returned to Canada in 1871 where, with protracted visits to New York, she continued to manage the family business (See Appendix A) (1870 United States Federal Census; 1871 Census of Canada; 1881 Census of Canada; 1891 Census of Canada; 1901 Census of Canada). Foggatt writes that the business ran “efficiently enough”, but faced “increased competition, not helped by some unsuccessful investment decisions” (n. pag.). These bad business decisions were recorded in the Irish American Weekly. The article states:

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14 U.S. Census Mortality Schedules, New York, 1850-1880. The record states that James died from “Softening of Brain”.
At a meeting yesterday of the committee of creditors of D. & J. Sadlier & Co., publishers at No. 31 Barclay street, it was agreed to offer fifty cents on the dollar to merchandise creditors, payable in six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months, secured with interest. By this arrangement, if ratified by the creditors, the firm will be left with all their present stock of books, machinery and bills receivable with which to go on with the business. (August 1881)

A series of articles also appeared in The New York Times about the firm’s financial situation. A portion of its stereotype plates was valued at $40,000, and tools and machinery were valued at $6,000. In addition, Denis Sadlier owned property in Manhattan and the portion that he gave to creditors was valued at nearly $41,000 (The New York Times 24th May 1882). It appears from the US City Directories 1821-1989 that Sadlier kept her home in New York until 1879, with her final address being 239 W, 38th Street. In 1885, the death occurred of Sadlier’s “favourite” son, the Jesuit priest Francis Xavier, and she was devastated (Lacombe Dictionary 294). In response to his death, she dedicated the book Purgatory: Doctrinal, Historical and Poetical (1886) to his memory. Denis Sadlier also died in 1885, but Sadlier continued to run the family business from her home in Montréal for another ten years. In 1895, D. & J. Sadler & Co. folded, and the copyright of her novels went to her nephew William Sadlier (Loeber 1156; Lacombe Dictionary 294).

Bridget Hourican states that William Sadlier sold the copyrights of Mary Anne’s novels to P.J. Kennedy & Sons (720). They reproduced several of her earlier emigrant

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15 There is a record of Sadlier’s home in the *U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989* New York, New York: Year 1870, 1872, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878 & 1879.

16 William H. Sadlier initially joined his uncles in the family business, but then branched out in 1874 and started his own publishing firm, which is still in operation. Before William died, aged 31, he asked his wife Annie to run the family business. In a move similar to Mary Anne Sadlier, the 26 year old widow, with three children, ran the publishing company until 1896 when Annie’s son, Frank, took over the business. He brought the business into the twentieth century with new programmes in history and geography and catechesis. Helping Frank was his nephew F. Sadlier Dinger who took over the firm from Frank’s widow, Neva Sadlier, and proposed that catechesis be accompanied by exercises and explanatory material. He and his brother, William Sadlier Dinger, continue to work for William H. Sadlier Inc. which is well respected for its contribution to catechetical and educational publications for the last 175 years.
novels around the turn of the century, showing that although more than fifty years had passed since her novels were written, they still touched on the main concerns and fears of Irish immigrants. Sadlier received no royalties from these reprints, and various sources state that, owing to her reduced financial circumstances, her friends set up the “Sadlier Testimonial Fund”.\textsuperscript{17} Lacombe writes that the fund raised one thousand three hundred dollars, which she gratefully accepted (“Frying Pans” n. pag.). It has been documented that, during her lifetime, some of Sadlier’s income generated from her writings was used for various charitable purposes; M. Glazier & T. J. Shelley view her as a generous philanthropist who established “a Foundling Asylum, a Home for the Aged, and a Home for Friendless Girls” (1234).\textsuperscript{18} Anna Sadlier records that her New York charities enabled her to become friends with well-known people such as Sr. Irene, the mother of the Foundlings, and Sr. Frances, the orphans’ friend (335).

In 1895, Mary Anne was awarded the Laetare Medal by Notre Dame University for her outstanding lay contributions to the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{19} The medal is awarded annually at Notre Dame University to a Catholic “whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity” (Rosemary Skinner 877). The gold medal was presented to Sadlier by the Archbishop of Montréal. This event was reported in the April issue of the \textit{Notre Dame Scholastic} (1895). The article states:

> The presentation of this much-prized gift took place on Monday, the 1\textsuperscript{st} of this month, in the archiepiscopal palace, where a large number of

\textsuperscript{17} Loeber 1156; Lacombe, \textit{Dictionary} 294; Dagg 264; Hourican 720; Mize 817; Gerson n. pag.; Szabo “Biography” n. pag.; Donohue 333.
\textsuperscript{18} Foggatt n. pag.; Blain et al. 939; Mize 817; Szabo “Biography” n. pag.; Lacombe \textit{Dictionary} 294; Donohue 333.
\textsuperscript{19} The Laetare Medal is so named because its recipient is announced each year in celebration of Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Lent. “Laetare”, is the Latin word for “rejoice” and the medal bears the Latin inscription “Magna est veritas et prevalebit” which translates as “Truth is mighty, and it shall prevail”. Anna Sadlier 335; Stephen Brown 270; Mize 817; Gerson n. pag.; Lacombe, \textit{Dictionary} 294; Peter Berg & Michael Seadle n. pag.
friends, the élite of Canadian society, had assembled to enhance the solemnity of the function by their presence, and to pay individually their respects to the eminent lady who has been so signally honored by the far-famed University of Notre Dame. (458)

Dr. Kingston made a speech on Sadlier’s behalf and acknowledged the prestige of the award. The article states, “Mrs. Sadlier also wishes me to say how unequal she is to the merit implied in this presentation” (458). Sadlier’s contributions to society were also acknowledged in 1902, one year before her death, when she received a special blessing from Pope Leo XIII in recognition of her “illustrious service for the Catholic Church” (R. Seward 284).

Sadlier died on 5th April 1903, with an address at 96 Burnside Place in Montréal. At the time of her death, Mary Anne was living with her daughter Anna and her son Joseph. Though she died in Montréal, Sadlier was buried beside her husband at Calvary Cemetery in Woodside, Queens, New York (Thomas Brown, 220).

The inscription reads on her tombstone reads:

James Sadlier
Departed this life September 21st, 1869
Aged 48 years
Requiescat in peace
His wife Mary Anne Sadlier
Who by her pen rendered eminent service to faith and country
Died Palm Sunday April 5, 1903
Montréal, Canada

In 2007, the Sadlier family celebrated 175 years as Catholic publishers in America and in 2008, Mary Anne Sadlier was designated a “Person of National Historical Significance” by the Government of Canada.

20 Hourican 720; Thomas Brown 219; Meehan, Catholic Encyclopaedia n. pag; Mize 817; Lacombe “Frying Pans” n. pag.; Berg & Seadle n. pag.; Montréal Daily Star, 6th April 1903.
21 After her mother’s death, Anna Sadlier lived with her sister Margaret and her family in Ottawa.
22 With thanks to Daniel Madden for the photograph of Sadlier’s tombstone.
23 Designations are made by the Minister of the Environment on the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.
Introduction

This thesis focuses on the life and literary works of Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903) and sets out to define her role in the construction of a transatlantic Irish Catholic identity. In order to achieve this, the thesis focuses specifically on her representations of the Irish diaspora in her emigrant novels in the nineteenth century. As detailed in the accompanying biography, Sadlier began her writing career in Co. Cavan in Ireland, but became an emigrant herself in 1844. On the eve of the Great Famine, Sadlier emigrated to Montréal and then to New York in 1860, returning to live in Montréal in 1871 before her death in 1903. As part of an Irish emigrant community, Sadlier had personal experience of the difficulties that faced newly-arrived Irish emigrants and their emerging communities in North America. My research concentrates in particular on her novels, typified by *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861), which offers a critical viewpoint of the Irish emigrant experience. Focusing on literary representations of emigration, this thesis examines cultural constructions of identity, the emigrant family, Catholicism and gender in North America in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

In her literary negotiation of an Irish emigrant character, Sadlier can be credited with contributing to the development of an “Irish-American” identity. She accomplishes this through reinforcing a specific brand of “Irish” culture within her novels whilst celebrating certain stereotypical “American” traits. She achieves this through utilising various literary strategies: using the Famine to (re)connect emigrants to their homeland; highlighting the importance of the family and wider community as giving strength, encouragement and support to emigrants; and by underlining the centrality of Catholicism in an emigrant’s life. As a best-selling author, she had a huge influence over her reading public, which consisted mainly of emigrant Irish Catholics. Their continued demand for her fiction shows that they were interested in her writing.
style and ideologies. Contributing to Sadlier’s “Irish-American” identity construction is her own private emigrant journey. Based on readings of her personal papers, I suggest that she herself is a woman in transition who is shaped by her own emigrant experiences and that her reaction to these challenging events reveals a tension inherent in her writings.

This thesis will parallel episodes in Sadlier’s novels with historical events in the period. However, rather than focusing on the facts and statistics of emigration, Sadlier’s writings are significant in their recording of the affective aspect of the emigrant experience. Although fictional, her work is valuable as it contains “observable truths”, to borrow Charles Fanning’s phrase. Sadlier’s novels are responsive to historical circumstances both in Ireland and North America, most notably the Famine in Ireland and the reception of Irish immigrants in North America. These social and political contexts which Sadlier operated within are crucial, and according to Sean Ryder, are “no longer seen as merely secondary to literary interpretation” and are, thereby, included in this exploration of her emigrant fiction (121). What is noteworthy about Sadlier’s emigrant fiction is that it does not simply mirror the historical reality of the mass emigration that occurred from Ireland after the Great Famine, as reportage might do; it actively engages in and shapes the discourses surrounding the formation of the emerging Irish-American character at that time.

By analysing Sadlier’s own emigrant footprint from 1846 in Montréal through to 1870 in New York, one can see the progression of her portrayal of an Irish identity. By the time that Sadlier comes to write Elinor Preston; or, Scenes at Home and Abroad in 1861 she does not have to primarily concentrate on defending the Irish character as she did in The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States (1855). In North America, tensions over immigration in the mid-nineteenth century led
to the formation of the Nativist movement and the Know-Nothin movement, but the
Civil War helped to displace hostile sentiments against immigrants. These movements
are mentioned by Sadlier in the opening pages of *The Blakes and Flanagans* (1855), but
not mentioned in *Elinor Preston* (1861). It is in these later texts that Sadlier’s other
themes and discussions come to the fore. Although her main concern still encompasses
a loyalty to Ireland and a commitment to a steadfast Catholic faith, a feminist voice can
be found in her work. In her later work, Sadlier engages in writing about the rising Irish
middle-class, as typified in *Old and New; or, Taste Versus Fashion* (1862) and
experiments in the genre of romance with novels such as *Aunt Honor’s Keepsake: A
Chapter from Life* (1866). The progression of Sadlier’s portrayal of an Irish identity in
her work could be explained by her interaction with Irish emigrants. In 1846 in
Montréal, Irish emigrants were destitute and needed defending against anti-immigrant
sentiment. By the time Sadlier moves to New York in 1860 and leaves for Montréal in
1870, the social standing of the Irish emigrant is slowly changing. Also, it is in New
York that Sadlier turns her attention to philanthropic causes which focuses on the social
services available to emigrants. By reading her later emigrant novels, it becomes
obvious that Sadlier has developed her writing away from solely protecting the Irish
character to examining other cultural concerns.

What is most interesting about Sadlier’s presentation and (re)creation of an Irish
identity in North America is that she sees a way for the two entities, Irish and American,
to exist in harmony. She writes that she is in favour of plans that would “turn the tide
of emigration into a safe and saving channel” (*Con O’Regan* iv), but she clearly does
not want to close it down. A reviewer writing twenty years after Sadlier’s death, sums

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24 This desire to harmonize ties into the politics of her friends Thomas D’Arcy McGee and Orestes
Brownson.
up her writing style and outlook perfectly. The reviewer commented that *Bessy Conway* and *The Blakes and Flanagans*:

[…], offered no counsels of perfection, but suggested an acceptable via media between old and new ideas, tacitly urged the selection of the best, instead of the worst, American customs; and subtly reconciled the fine elements of American culture, and the theories of democracy and social equality with the faith and traditions of the Old World. (Agnes McGuire 188)

By tracing the progression of Sadlier’s creation of an Irish-American character, one can find that, contrary to what some critics have suggested, she is not criticising every feature of American life, but suggesting a dual existence between the two cultures. She believes that this bifurcated identity will equip Irish emigrants with the necessary skills to cope in their new location. Looking at her contemporaries, we see that the sustainability of an Irish character in an oppressive American culture was a theme of Irish-American literature, but none of her peers achieved the commercial success that Sadlier did in the period. Studying the sales figures of her novels, as outlined later in the Introduction, it becomes clear that Sadlier was an immensely popular writer who was at the forefront of a cultural movement, namely, the creation of an Irish-American identity.

*Material conditions of literary production*

Literature can play an important role in recovering experiences and perspectives from the past which are distinct from historical and sociological sources. We read literature for many purposes, aside from entertainment: it lets us vicariously live an imagined life; it serves as a tool for reflecting on our life choices to date and can determine the course of life that we follow. It can also open up a space to explore new worlds or investigate ideas that have not found expression in society as yet, and as such, it has the power to
shape the reaction to these newly-formed articulations. Sadlier’s writings helped to shape the (re)actions towards Irish immigrants in North America and, in turn, offered a role model for a successful Irish-American character. Sadlier chose the novel form as a vehicle to make people understand the trajectory of Irish emigrant experiences. The novel is a powerful tool as it has the capacity to transmit memories and construct common identities. By analysing Sadlier’s sales figures, we can see that she was highly successful in her endeavours. In his research on Irish literature, Justin McCarthy credits Sadlier as being “one of the most gifted, industrious, and successful writers of the nineteenth century” (3017). Therefore, it is fair to say that her emigrant fiction had a powerful influence on construction of the Irish-American character in the period between the Irish Famine and the end of the American Civil War.

When researching past writers, it is important to consider the modes of production they operated within and their literary output. As detailed in the biography section of this thesis, Sadlier started contributing to periodicals at the age of nineteen when she submitted a poem to a London periodical entitled “La Belle Assemblée”. Throughout her lifetime, she also contributed poems and articles on a regular basis to various other periodicals including The Literary Garland (edited by John Gibson), The Boston Pilot (edited by Patrick Donahoe) and The American Celt (edited by Thomas D’Arcy McGee). Sadlier’s prolific publishing career was due in part to her marriage, shortly after arriving in Montréal, to James Sadlier of the successful publishing house D. & J. Sadlier & Co. It was then, and is today, one of the largest Catholic publishing houses in America. There is no doubt that her attachment to D. & J. Sadlier & Co. helped introduce Sadlier to a mainstream audience who were interested in not only her religious writings, but also in her emigrant and historical novels. Sadlier was very fortunate to have the expertise and ready-made client base of D. & J. Sadlier & Co. at
her disposal, but it was a reciprocal arrangement, as the publisher benefited from her popularity with the reading public throughout a productive writing career. Owing to her success as a writer, her novels went through many editions and re-prints and stayed in mainstream circulation until the early twentieth century.

Although Sadlier can be credited with writing more than sixty works during her lifetime, there is no doubt that with a publishing giant supporting her, she became a bestseller instantly. Anne Fogarty astutely notes: “the material conditions of literary production and reception shape and influence the work of individual women and also affect their reputations during their lifetimes and posthumously” (82). Securing publishers in the nineteenth century was a difficult process, especially for women. Women often wrote using pseudonyms in order to secure a publisher, as in the case of one of Sadlier’s Irish contemporaries Charlotte Riddell (1832-1906). Riddell wrote under the name R.V. Sparling for her first novel, *Zuriel’s Grandchild*, which was published by Newby in 1856 (Margaret Kelleher “The Field of Women’s Literary Production” 118). Compared to Sadlier, who published all her life with D. & J. Sadlier & Co. and under her own name of “Mrs. J. Sadlier”, Riddell, who published over fifty volumes of fiction (including forty novels), in addition to working as an editor, was involved with seven different publishers and wrote under three different pseudonyms. She could be published under her own name of “Mrs. J. H. Riddell” only after she had achieved success as a writer (Kelleher “The Field of Women’s Literary Production” 118). Interestingly, both women ended their lives in reduced financial circumstances, despite their successful literary careers; Riddell sold her novels for fixed sums of monies and Sadlier lost the copyright of her works to her nephew. The difficulties and pitfalls associated with women authors were widespread and are described in Riddell’s
novel, entitled *A Struggle for Fame* (1883), which tells the story of her life as an author trying to succeed in England.

To be a woman writer in nineteenth century Ireland was not unheard of, despite contemporary assumptions. Anne Coleman writes that between 1800 and 1900, in excess of five hundred women were writing and publishing successfully in all genres. Women writers often had to write covertly because of their social standing and were likely to publish anonymously; their pseudonyms included initials, place names and even men’s names (203). In an effort to highlight the activity of Irish women writers, Coleman notes that authors such as L. T. Meade (1850-1915) and Katharine Tynan Hinkson (1861-1931) published about two hundred volumes during their career, but duly notes that these writers were the exception rather than the rule. Yet Coleman clarifies that “the overall publishing records of nineteenth-century women frequently indicate over twenty volumes by an individual” (204). For the supposedly submissive, repressed, domesticated Irish women in the received version of the nineteenth century, this is quite an accomplishment.

Sadlier’s fictional narratives provide a valuable interpretation of the Irish emigrant experience to North America in the nineteenth century. Her writings also address relevant social issues of her era such as the Famine, domestic service and the role of the Catholic Church. These emigrant novels have a practical value for readers of her work; they give information about the lives of Irish emigrants before they leave Ireland, when they are in America, and if they return home. While she was unusual in many ways in her choice of career, Sadlier’s emigrant novels reiterate established ideologies of the nineteenth century. They are didactic tales full of Irish nationalism and religious piety. They are formulaic in style, and she employs a series of conventions and stereotypes. Mary Reichardt notes that the writing of didactic fiction
with a view to conversion or reinforcement of doctrines is “generally tedious stuff” (xvii). However, the value of Sadlier’s work lies in her use of individual characters to illustrate larger social processes and conflicts. Therefore, there is a method and purpose to these conventions and stereotypes. For instance, Sadlier tends to outline the contentedness and happiness of the traditional peasant farmer in the motherland in an effort to point up the hazards commonly associated with emigration. It is important to note that Sadlier wants to educate and expose her readers, young and old, both male and female, to the hardships and sacrifices that lay ahead of them, should they emigrate. However, she also outlines the benefits of successful emigration and provides a template for her readers in order to achieve this.

In his extensive work on Irish-American fiction, Charles Fanning describes Sadlier as “the first important Irish-American female voice” (The Irish Voice 114), and the available sales figures of her novels support this statement. Sadlier wrote ten historical novels, starting in 1849. An advertisement by Patrick Donahoe’s Boston Pilot (the most popular Irish-American newspaper in America at that time) stated that, in January 1850, the paper would run an Irish tale of “thrilling interest, written expressively for the Pilot” (qtd. in Fanning The Irish Voice 115). The story was The Red Hand of Ulster; or, The Fortunes of Hugh O’Neill (1850), which ran in the Pilot from January to March and was then produced as Sadlier’s first novel in book form.

Briefly outlining Sadlier’s ten historical novels, Fanning goes on to detail her immense popularity both at home and abroad, stating that her Irish-based novels were very popular with a “nostalgic immigrant audience” and tended to have more editions than her American novels. There were at least five nineteenth-century editions of The Confederate Chieftains (1860), The Fate of Father Sheehy: A Tale of Tipperary in the
*Olden Time* (1863) and *The Hermit of the Rock of Cashel: A Tale of Landlordism*, while there were six editions of *The Heiress of Kilorgan* and *The Old House by the Boyne*.

One of her most popular novels, *New Lights; or, Life in Galway* (1853), which details Famine life in Ireland, had at least eight editions printed before the end of the nineteenth century (Fanning *The Irish Voice* 116). In their extensive study of Irish fiction, the Rolf and Magda Loeber record that the book stayed in print until at least 1903 (1158). What the sales figures from *New Lights* show is that the book remained very popular until the early twentieth-century before vanishing from popular reading lists. A number of conclusions can be drawn from this: it could be that interest in Sadlier’s novels decreased after her death in 1903; it could be that the need for a fiction whose sole purpose was to propagate Catholicism was no longer needed as the hostility towards Catholics had dwindled; or it could be that the second generation of Irish-Americans were no longer interested in the injustices suffered by their predecessors as they had become fully assimilated into American life. Whatever the reason, the deafening “silence”, which was found when it came to discussing narratives of the Famine, started to develop at this time (Melissa Fegan 1).

The success of Sadlier’s Irish-based novels did not restrict the success of her American-based novels. Indeed the majority of her emigrant based novels were written with a specific moral or focus in mind. Her daughter Anna Sadlier explains:

> Father Hecker suggested a story dealing with Irish servant girls in America – the result was ‘Bessy Conway’. ‘Aunt Honor’s Keepsake’ was written at the instigation of the well-known convert, Dr. Silliman Ives, at the time of the excitement against the Juvenile Delinquent Society and their fanatical dealings with Catholic boys committed to them. […] ‘The Blakes and Flanagans’ was directed entirely against the public school system and enjoyed therefore a large measure of popularity. (331)
Anna Sadlier records that seven thousand copies of Willy Burke; or the Irish Orphan in America (1850) were sold in the first six weeks of publication, and that was after it was serialised in the Boston Pilot (331). Two other publishers, in addition to Donahoe, issued it in book form in 1850, but the copyright stayed with Donahoe who re-issued it in 1851 (Lacombe “Frying Pans”; Fanning The Irish Voice 120). Stephen Brown records that it was still in print in 1909 (270). Lacombe also observes that Donahoe publishing house, who realised that there was enormous money to be made in emigrant fiction, also published Alice Riordan: The Blind Man’s Daughter (1851) before D. & J. Sadlier & Co. took up Sadlier’s novels in 1853 with reprints of New Lights and The Blakes and Flanagans (“Frying Pans”). Fanning notes that The Blakes and the Flanagans had five editions between 1855 and 1863, as well as two German editions (1857 and 1866) under the title of Alt-Irland und Amerika (Koln: J.P. Bachem) (The Irish Voice 126). Sadlier’s translation into German meant that her novels were obviously read by German-speaking people in America. This is testament to Sadlier’s wide and varied audience and deployment of universal themes of interest to emigrants in North America in general. In her research on nineteenth-century Irish-American publishers, Eileen Sullivan notes that D. & J. Sadlier & Co. printed their “fourth thousand” copy of The Blakes and Flanagans one year after publication and the “tenth thousand” copy three years later. She writes: “By 1873, or about 20 years after publication, Sadlier announced that 16,000 copies were in print” (63). The Loeber’s state that The Blakes and Flanagans was still in print in New York in 1896 (1158).

But exactly who was reading Sadlier’s novels? As previously mentioned, it is a certainty that her audience included Irish emigrant Catholics and, to a lesser extent, German emigrants and American Protestants. However, trying to ascertain just how many people heard her stories is impossible. For instance, it was a popular practice in
the nineteenth century for a learned member of the community or family, to read novels aloud, thus spreading Sadlier’s audience beyond the person who actually bought the novel. In his study on Irish reading from 1939 to 1969, Frank Shovlin notes that it is not possible to record the amount of readers of a text. He writes: “Without the aid of enormous census-like databases we cannot even begin to think about writing anything like a comprehensive history of reading in this or any other period” (129-30).

Therefore, the only legitimate record we have of Sadlier’s influence is her sales figures, number of re-prints, publications in languages other than English and the number of her novels serialised in newspapers.

Having established these statistics and Sadlier’s connection to D. & J. Sadlier & Co. publishing house, we can examine what factors made her such a famous author. She featured on the catalogues and publishing lists of D. & J. Sadlier & Co. The publishing house also sent her books for review, and they were advertised in Catholic Directories and the trade press. Sullivan records that in the 22nd April 1865 issue of the *New York Tablet*, D. & J. Sadlier & Co. listed seventy-two books in one of its advertisements; the largest category, accounting for twenty-five of the listings, was fiction (58). From 1852 onwards, D. & J. Sadlier also regularly published advertisements for novels and stories in *The Irish American*, which had a wide readership and was supposed to be “neutral on religion”, although it did not always conform to its ideology (59). One of the main attractions for the fiction of D. & J. Sadlier & Co. was its price. In order to make their books available to the widest possible readership, they kept their costs low. The cost of *The Blakes and Flanagans* in the 1850s was seventy-five cents, yet by 1873, it was advertised as twenty-five cents in D. & J. Sadlier & Co.’s Household Library. Sullivan notes: “This library represents Sadlier’s effort to make fiction and prayer available once again to the poorer Catholics”
It seems that their efforts were rewarded as *The Blakes and Flanagans* remained in print until the late nineteenth century. However, despite her enormous popularity, Sadlier does not feature in many contemporary literary studies of the nineteenth century. It is bewildering as to why such a popular author is no longer considered relevant when discussing the literature of the period. Shovlin finds that popular writers often do not receive critical acclaim and disappear from bookshelves very quickly. He writes:

> Popularity almost always ensures an early death. In terms of sales it is possible that the most popular Irish writer in the period under examination [1839-1869] was Annie M. P. Smithson, yet it is now difficult to lay one’s hands on copies of her novels, whereas the publishing disaster that was Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* (1667) can now be found in any Irish town with a bookshop or public library. Repeatedly rejected by publishers on its completion in 1940, the manuscript subsequently declared lost, it took the death of its unfortunate author for it to re-emerge to critical and popular acclaim in the 1960s.

Nevertheless, even though Sadlier is not well received in critical circles there is no doubt that her didactic novels helped emigrants who were experiencing cultural dislocation. Her novels had universal appeal as she recorded a kaleidoscope of human emotions that were ruptured by displacement. Judging by her sales figures, this formula seemed to resonate with Irish emigrants for over fifty years.

> Literature provides an important function in shaping society. John Marx explains: “Literature is a privileged representative of that amalgam of custom and belief that anthropologists call culture. […] Language in this sense is not a passive object. In representing peoples and places, it has the capacity to make and remake them” (85).

Therefore, for the emigrant, literature plays an important role for emigrants defining and shaping themselves in a foreign country. Emigrant stories are often used to open up and reveal hidden histories of national cultures because of their ability to move freely
between borders. Sadlier’s most successful American novel was *Bessy Conway; or, the Irish Girl in America* (1861), with six editions printed in the nineteenth century (Fanning *The Irish Voice* 134). Stephen Brown reiterates its popularity by stating that it was still in print in 1919 (271). There is no doubt that Sadlier’s work left an indelible mark on the Irish and American literary landscape and character in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Indeed, I would propose that the immense popularity of Sadlier’s emigrant fiction suggests that it represents the concerns of that audience and, thereby, validates my argument that she was at the forefront of the creation of an Irish-American identity.

**What did Sadlier’s novels do?**

In an era when Irish emigrants had to endure virulent hostility to Catholicism and their heritage, Sadlier’s novels not only entertained her readers, they also instructed them on how to live a more successful life and shaped discourses surrounding the newly-arrived emigrants. When Irish emigrants reached North America, they were faced with an aggressive reception and caricatured as ape-like and sub-human in popular contemporary culture. These stereotypes were propagated in the media, for instance, in Thomas Nast cartoons in magazines such as *Puck*. In order to combat this crisis on a social and cultural scale, Sadlier’s work is crucial: she wrote novels which facilitated the construction of an alternative consideration of an Irish identity. By creating “Irish” characters who are honest, hard-working and Catholic, she challenged and disproved the prevalent opinion of the Irish as dirty and lazy and, thus, can be credited with shaping discourses which (trans)formed people’s opinions of the Irish immigrant. Agnes McGuire notes that such work altered “blind, superstitious hate into intelligent opposition, respectful tolerance, or friendly admiration, and occasionally, complete
conversion” (189). Thus, not only did Sadlier’s writings sustain a cultural and ethnic pride in Irish-Americans, they also propagated an acceptable version of the Irish for the settled Anglo-Protestant community.

Sadlier’s novels are also a critical comment on the social problems of her era. She is not afraid to broach what would be considered taboo subjects in the nineteenth-century, such as alcoholism, domestic abuse and sexual assault. Her recording of them in her novels is gritty and realistic, but by associating these problems with lapsed Catholics and Protestants, Sadlier avoids reinforcing negative dominant Irish characteristics that were prevalent at that time. Indeed, Catherine Eagan states that as well as writing for a large Catholic audience, Sadlier also wrote for a Protestant audience with a view to disproving the clichéd version of Irishness (81). In her construction of an “Irish-American” character, Sadlier encourages her characters to take the best attributes of both Irish and American cultures, i.e. Catholicism and sobriety. Along with her literary contemporaries, Sadlier can be credited with educating American Protestants on the realities of the Irish Famine. By detailing scenes of landlord corruption, distressing evictions and emotional emigration, Sadlier is informing American Protestants of the injustices of the calamity. This review of New Lights appeared in The New York Times on 4th July, 1853:

Mrs. Sadlier has, no doubt, witnessed much of what she describes. The tale is one of deep and painful interest, impressing us more sensibly than any Commissioners’ Report, with the terrible wretchedness of the Western Irish. (Notices of New Publications)

Such are the powerful evocations found within New Lights that this reviewer thinks that Sadlier was an actual witness to the Famine, even though we know that she emigrated just before it started. Writing influential Famine narratives meant that Sadlier was
alerting the American public to the prejudices that the Irish endured before they reached American shores.

Another vital aspect of Sadlier’s literary endeavours is her focus on the problems experienced by second-generation emigrants. By focusing on the difficulties faced by second and subsequent generations, Sadlier operates within a complex nexus of discourses as she addresses problems such as (non)identification with the homeland and questions surrounding assimilation into American life. By discussing cultural representations of home and the policies of integration into the host country, Sadlier considers issues of (be)longing, yearning for the homeland and the quest for a new American life.

This thesis also provides a perspective on Sadlier’s engagement with two major social-control movements in contemporary North America, namely the “school question” and the “child-saving movement”. Sadlier’s viewpoint on these two debates is critical as readers were undoubtedly influenced by her writings. This is reflected in the five English editions printed between 1855 and 1863 of her novel *The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Life in America* (1855), which is a polemic reading of the school question (Fanning *The Irish Voice* 126). Her evolving position on supporting the “school question” at the cost of supporting orphanages and social services for emigrants, to vehemently supporting the “child saving mission” in 1866 is an issue this thesis addresses in Chapter Four. By tracing the development in her fiction of the issues surrounding these movements, I propose that we see a shift in Sadlier’s policies which shows a woman actively (re)acting to her ever-changing immigrant status.

Sadlier also creates a key space for the “return emigrant” in her novels. Although, historically, the numbers of Irish emigrants returning to the homeland in the mid-nineteenth century were low, the function of the return emigrant in her novels is
important as it supports the “myth of return” that is central to emigrant fiction.\textsuperscript{25} For instance, in \textit{Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America} (1861), the protagonist Bessy returns home triumphantly and is representative of the “American Dream”, whereas Simon, in the novel \textit{Simon Kerrigan; or, the Confessions of an Apostate} (1864), returns home in shame after failing in America. Interestingly, he is represented as a character who did not assimilate in the host country, and when he returns to Ireland, he is not accepted in his home country. He is isolated, on the margins of society and “in-between” borders; he is, to borrow Bernard O’Donoghue’s phrase, “neither here nor there” (117). These feelings of non-belonging are reflected in Caitríona Ní Laoire’s research on Irish return migrants. Ní Laoire questions whether returned migrants should be classed as “home-comers or new-comers”? (35).

By acknowledging the indelible link between Ireland and North America, Sadlier can be commended for contributing to the sub-genre of Irish-American fiction. The umbrella of Irish-American fiction covers a broad spectrum. In his study of 250 years of Irish-American fiction, Fanning uses the term Irish-American to describe novels and stories written by early nineteenth-century Irish Americans such as James McHenry, \textit{The Wilderness} (1823), and John McDermott Moore, \textit{The Adventures of Tom Stapleton} (1842) (\textit{The Irish Voice} 43, 29). In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Sadlier strengthened and reiterated the importance of this genre of fiction. Sadlier also made a contribution to the genre of the emigrant narrative which was already in place as exemplified by authors such as Miss Mason, author of \textit{Kate Geary; or, Irish Life in London. A Tale of 1849} (1853). Although Mason’s novel details the harsh life of Irish emigrants to London, Mason’s emigrants still encounter the same pitfalls as Sadlier’s

\textsuperscript{25} Fewer than ten percent of Irish immigrants to the New World returned to the homeland, Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner 125.
North American emigrant characters such as alcoholism and crime. The template of the emigrant narrative often focuses not only the physicality of the move, but also on the feelings of the immigrant. This emigrant narrative is still popular in contemporary literature, as is evident in Edna O’Brien’s *Mother Ireland: A Memoir* (1976). She writes:

> This was to be home. It had nothing to recommend it. Unhealthy, unfriendly, mortarish, and to my ignorant eye morbid, because I kept seeing wreaths and did not know that there was such a thing in England as Remembrance Sunday. (126-127)

Although O’Brien’s observations above are about emigration to England, her feelings of isolation and bewilderment are representative of any emigrant narrative. These feelings of loneliness are framed within a political context (the reference to Remembrance Sunday) and within a cultural context (e.g. the placing of wreaths). Sadlier often features such political and cultural clashes in her emigrant novels in a bid to highlight the difficulty of assimilation. Although she urges Irish emigrants to operate within the framework of their own communities, arguably she does promote a hybrid identity as the best defence mechanism for coping in the New World. She is mindful that emigrants often have to negotiate sensitive social contexts when they arrive in the host country, and these can further enhance their sense of alienation.

*Sadlier’s social context*

In the mid-nineteenth century, Ireland and America were experiencing similar upheavals. Industrialisation led to de-traditionalisation in rural communities and placed an emphasis on individualism within social life. With this breakdown of traditional ties came greater diversity and a plurality of lifestyles, which led to a disintegration of moral and social frameworks, all of which Sadlier details in her novels. Factors affecting
traditional family life included industrialisation and the resulting growth of large urban cities. New technologies enhanced advanced communication such as the telegraph and the newspaper, while transportation expanded in the form of the railways. Domestic ideology is linked to industrial capitalism and the separation of work and home life; it legitimated new relations between the sexes and created and reinforced separate spheres. These are all nineteenth-century developments upon which Sadlier’s writings comment.

As a writer, Sadlier was in a position to critique facets of her society, and she used her emigrant situation to explore life both in Ireland and North America. Andrew Smith explains that emigrants occupy a “position of peculiar insight” as they observe their new world (246). Writing a rigorous biography of Sadlier’s life and synthesising her life-story with her novels is important. It helps us to understand the complexities of her emigrant journey and Irish emigration more generally. Margaret Kelleher notes:

Looking back over the last fifteen or so years of scholarship, a regrettable disjunction may be observed: on the one hand, some of the most influential theoretical and critical works are characterized by a striking paucity of historical perspective and bibliographical detail; on the other hand, a number of key bibliographical and biographical studies remain, often deliberately, untheorized. (“The Field of Women’s Literary Production” 116)

However, considering that Sadlier was a middle-class, well respected writer, just how much did she have in common with the millions of working class emigrants she actively represented? By examining a selection of preserved letters written by her son Francis, some would say not a lot.26

In a collection of letters dated from November 1867 to March 1868, Francis writes to his mother to keep her informed of his life while he is at a private boarding school in Manhattan. From their home in New York he writes to tell her about

26 To view a selection of Francis Sadlier’s letters, see Appendix C.
Halloween while the rest of the children have gone to Central Park: “We came down according to arrangement yesterday morning and after having spent a very pleasant ‘Hallow Eve Night’ are now about at the limit of our stay”. In this letter, Francis details the bourgeois lifestyle that Sadlier and her family were accustomed to. He outlines the festivities of his Halloween to her:

I will begin with our Hallow Eve tricks, ? that the McGee’s did not come but that the O’Reilly’s and ? Foy did. After a very pleasant supper table ? we adjourned to the parlour and after an hour or so went down to the kitchen. Our programme was brought to life Mc Roy’s good arrangement, a very agreeable one to all. First, came the time-honoured ‘snap apple’ which caused great amusement; […] which brought us to the ‘three saucers’ of symbolic qualities, this caused a great deal of laughter and fun. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

The games he outlined are traditional Halloween games. For instance, the ‘three saucers’ game supposedly determines what path of life one will follow. Symbolic objects are placed in the saucer, e.g. rosary beads, symbolising priesthood; water, symbolising travel; a coin, symbolising riches; and a piece of cloth, symbolising poverty. The person, who is blindfolded, chooses a saucer, thereby revealing their future. Francis then goes on to describe the treats they ate:

But the arousing point of the nights entertainment was reached when the gas having been put out, ? Mc Foy came in having a dish in which some brandy had been set on fire. In this she had placed some raisins which we were required to draw out of the flames and eat. This caused immense excitement […] and were very sorry you were not here. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

This celebration of Halloween reveals the comfortable lifestyle that the Sadlier’s led. The fun and games, along with music and brandy raisins, were not typical of working-class emigrant life. Also, most working-class emigrants had no choices with regard to their futures; they were destined for a life of poverty.

In many letters, Francis writes about his experiences of school, and he actively questions his future prospects. He writes: “I am getting along pretty well in school and
hope to always be able to say the same”. When he is thinking about his choice of
career, he lists the medical and legal profession as well as the military as viable options.
He also states: “though I have a taste for the arts, I have no desire for the life of a
painter or architect”. This tells us that his education in his private boarding school was
well-rounded and vigorous. Francis also details how he spends his days; he explains
how he visited, on James O’Reilly’s invitation, the Royal College of Physicians and
Surgeons. He writes:

I remained for two lectures, one by Dr. Sands on Anatomy, the other by
Parker, the celebrated Surgeon, on the Theory of Surgery, and we also
heard part of Dalton’s on Physiology. The latter has written the best
work on Physiology, which means the body in health. (F.X. Sadlier
Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

Francis also alludes to his high standard of education by referring to Charles Dickens in
his letters. He is excited by the authors visit to America and implies that he will attend
one of his readings when Dickens visits New York. He writes:

One of the events of the week is the arrival in Boston of Charles
Dickens. It is stated that three or four thousand people assembled on the
dock on Wednesday afternoon to greet him on his arrival. He spends
some time in Boston but will be here on December 9th when he will give
readings. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

Francis also writes about the musical activities of himself and his sisters. This shows
that the Sadlier’s encouraged their children to become proficient in the arts. He writes:

Brother Jasper placed me in the ‘Junior Orchestra’ this will improve me
considerably in my music, as it accustomizes one to that quick tress and
precision, so necessary for the flute-player. We play already three pieces
and are, I may safely say, in a fair way of following in the footsteps of
our prototype the ‘Seniors’’. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album,
MG29-C122)

He tells his mother that Anna and Margaret are going to music lessons. He also tells her
that they have found a new pupil for Mrs. O’Reilly, presumably one of their friends,
which infers that they were mixing in similar affluent circles. He writes: “Annie and
Maggie get their music-lessons regularly. They have got a new pupil, Nelly Hairnes, for Mrs. O’Reilly”. Francis also writes about visiting various families and enquires about the well-known D’Arcy McGee family. He writes:

I am not able to go to see the O’Reillys yesterday, but I presume they are all in good health. [...] I see by today: ‘herald’ that Mr. McGee is very unwell. I hope it is nothing dangerous. How are the McGee’s and all our friends? (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

In the miscellaneous details of his letters, Francis also writes about visiting the store for buying groceries and stamps; paying the gas-bill, and their family pet. He writes:

Then James and I were down at the store yesterday. We got sufficient money to pay the gas-bill. […] Have you been quite well since? And Papa and Mary, too? We will be very glad to see you again. Sam too, judging from the manner in which he greets me when I go home, will nearly kill himself with joy. […] I remain your affectionate son, Frances Sadlier. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

By reading these letters, we gain an insight into the private life of the Sadliers. They reveal a secure, prosperous life that the Sadliers provided for their children, with an emphasis on education and social decorum. By Francis writing about these cultural experiences, in particular, we understand their social and moral values and how these are enacted within their lives.

Although Sadlier’s personal life seems to be at odds with the characters of her novels, she no doubt had dealings with working-class emigrants. Not only would she have witnessed first-hand the heavy influx of Famine emigrants in Montréal, she also became actively involved in New York philanthropic charities which helped emigrants with their social troubles. Just because she did not directly experience their dire poverty or live in their wretched conditions, does not mean that she did not understand their difficulties. What Sadlier’s novels display is an empathy with working class emigrants; she is compassionate towards their plight and offers help and guidance during their struggle with acculturation.
Contribution to existing research

My research aims to make a contribution to existing research on Irish emigrant women writers and diasporic fiction. By considering Sadlier’s position in the creation of an Irish-American identity, in particular, my thesis makes an original contribution to existing academic work. This research differs from existing contributions to the field in that it explores cultural constructions of gender, nationality and religious identity in specifically literary representations of Irish women’s emigrant experiences.

One element of my research is situated within the large body of scholarly research which is already in place in the historical and social sciences concerning Irish emigration (e.g., Kerby Miller, Charles Fanning, Patrick O’Sullivan, Breda Gray). However, the literary reception of Irish emigration is an area just beginning to open up to scholarly exploration. Little academic work has been done to date on the literary representation of gender in the context of emigration to North America, and so I set out to further explore the seam opened up by scholars such as Marjorie Howes and Maureen Murphy by examining Sadlier’s literary output. With the exception of the work of Maria Luddy, the experience of earlier Irish emigrant women has been particularly marginalised due to the lack of primary archival sources relating to their lives.

Bronwen Walter sees emigrant women as “invisible”, but she maintains they were the most mobile part of the emigrant population, filling gaps in labour forces in both America and Britain. In cultural terms, much of our understanding of the Irish emigrant experience has come to us via oral and popular culture. Recent developments such as the “Diasporas and Hybridity” project at the University of Northampton incorporate literary and cultural constructions of British migrant experience alongside sociological and historical research. This particular project is testament to the innovative quest for a complete picture of the emigrant experience.
Feminist projects such as “Women in Modern Irish Culture Project” at University College Dublin/University of Warwick, *The Field Day Anthology Volumes VI & V* and the “Munster Women Writers Project” at University College Cork have reiterated the growing interest in using primary materials when analysing the lives of women writers. In order to reconstruct the cultural context of Sadlier’s era, I compare episodes from Sadlier’s novels to relevant documents of the period which discuss Catholicism, the family and Irish emigration and their representations in a North American setting. Based on literary representations in Sadlier’s emigrant novels and on research on her private papers, my work will further develop an understanding of the experience of nineteenth-century women emigrants who are often missing from the history books. For example, Mona Hearn explains how domestic service was a major source of employment for nineteenth century Irish women. I will examine the construction of this experience in the novels in my study, where the protagonists engage in such work. Frequently, the story of the Irish diaspora is perceived as a narrative of oppression, deprivation and forced emigration leading to a successful outcome in the “New World” (usually in America). However, this was not always the case; often Irish women emigrants did not succeed in finding a more fulfilling life (as Angela Bourke’s recent work on Maeve Brennan suggests), a point which I shall further explore.

As recently noted in the Introduction to a special issue of *The Irish Review* on memoir, memory and migration in Irish culture, the shifts in contemporary migration have swung from mass emigration in the 1980s (circa 70,000 people) to immigration at the turn of the twenty-first century back to a predicted mass emigration in the years 2012-14, based on European Social Research Institute figures (O’Toole and King 2).\(^2\) Therefore, in a context of growing emigration figures, it seems worthwhile now more

\(^2\) This change is also noted by Gerardine Meaney in *Gender, Ireland and Cultural Change* xv.
than ever to look to our past and learn from our previous experiences of mass
emigration. My thesis examines Irish emigration from the mid-nineteenth century
against a backdrop of the Irish Famine, which created feelings of anger, bitterness and
“exile” owing to sectarian and colonial oppression in Ireland. Current experiences of
emigration reflect similar anger, but towards a different oppressor, in the form of failed
governments and economic stagnation. However, it is important to note that, as in the
mid-nineteenth century, not everyone feels “exiled” in their decision to leave; some
people see emigration as a welcome opportunity of better prospects and an opportunity
to see the world. Although the cultural context has changed greatly between the two
time periods, the resonances in the need for economic migration and the obstacles
emigrants face once they settle in the host country remain the same. This project is
timely, as questions are now being asked about the lived experience of the emigrant
beyond the historians’ statistics. O’Toole and King state: “More broadly, the socio-
economic and political consequences of Irish mass-migration at home and abroad have
long been studied, but its cultural implications both for those who left and those who
stayed are less well understood” (3). It is these “cultural implications” that this thesis
seeks to explore, using the vehicle of cultural artefacts such as the novel form.

Integral to the story of the Irish diaspora in the nineteenth century is the Great
Famine, which resulted in the emigration of an estimated one million, four hundred
thousand people to the United States and a further three-hundred thousand people to
Canada (Fanning *Exiles of Erin* 6, Kerby Miller *Emigrants and Exiles* 104). Testament
to the growing awareness about literary sources in the understanding of historical and
cultural events is the recent award by the European Research Council to Marguérite

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28 For more on “exile” theory, see Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*.
29 For a refutation of Miller’s theories of an “exiled” emigrant, see Donald Akenson, “Irish Migration to
North America, 1800–1920”.
Corporaal for a research project entitled *Relocated Remembrance: The Great Famine in Irish (Diaspora) Fiction, 1847-1921*. Corporaal notes that, whereas sociohistorical perspectives are crucial, this type of research falls short. She writes: “they fail to show the important role played by cultural artefacts in the mediation, transmission and reinterpretation of the traumatic Famine past” (“Relocated Remembrance”). The Great Famine is inextricably linked to all Irish emigrant narratives as is noted by Breda Gray on her research on twentieth-century Irish women’s emigration. She explains: “the repetitious (re)telling of the story of the ‘miserable epic of the Atlantic crossing’ gives it an iconic cultural status. The Famine emigrants become the ‘authentic’ Irish emigrants, the traumatic origin of Irish emigration” (“Gendering the Irish Diaspora” 172). If this is the case, then Sadlier as an emigrant in 1844 forms part of this “authentic” Irish emigrant group, rendering her recording of the experience through fiction as valuable source. Indeed, her fiction has an added advantage in that not only do her novels act as a “guidebook” for emigrants in the nineteenth-century, but through their literary narrative, they also serve as a reminder of those traumatic episodes in Irish history such as the Famine and subsequent waves of emigration. As Corporaal notes: “Literature is among these cultural artefacts which (re)perform the remembrance of the Great Hunger and make these processes of recollection visible” (“Relocated Remembrance”).

Research on Sadlier

My research contributes to and complements preliminary research already undertaken on Sadlier’s writing. Whereas entries on Sadlier can be found in biographical

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30 The emphasis on the importance and relevance of the Famine today is reflected in the “Relocated Remembrance” project hosting a conference entitled, “Global Legacies of the Great Irish Famine: Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspectives”, in 2013, with plenary speakers such as Peter Gray, Margaret Kelleher and Christopher Morash. Recently, the *Atlas of the Irish Famine*, edited by John Crowley, William J. Smyth and Mike Murphy, containing a mixture of images, maps and old documentation on the Irish Famine, was published by Cork University Press (2012).
dictionaries and bibliographic databases, these sources often just provide an inventory of her works but little textual analysis. Scholarly work to date has been in the form of essays and mentions in articles on other topics. For instance, Marjorie Howes discusses the use of discipline and sentiment in Sadlier’s novels and notes that her works do not merely reflect transatlantic experiences, but “theorize it, intervene in it and constitute it” (*Colonial Crossings* 37).

Marguérite Corporaal offers the most critical study of Sadlier to date. She has written two journal articles detailing her connection to memories of the Great Famine and ethnic identity. Corporaal draws on other authors such as Elizabeth Hely Walshe, John McElgun and Emily Lawless to underpin her claims and states that both Sadlier and Lawless “can be regarded as important chroniclers of their nation’s history” (“Memories of the Great Famine” 143). Corporaal has also recently published an article distinguishing three narrative templates in remigration in Irish and Irish Diaspora fiction 1860-1870. These patterns establish transcultural narrative templates that feature the figure of the return emigrant, either physically or symbolically. Sadlier’s protagonist, Bessy Conway, features in this article as the wealthy returned emigrant who revitalises her Irish family and the family farm. Through the riches Bessy accrued in her domestic job in America, she re-establishes the motherland as a locus amoenus, a place of comfort and security. Sadlier also features in an article written by Corporaal and Christopher Cusack, in which they discuss the symbolic function of “coffin ships” used on emigrant transatlantic journeys as a rite of passage between the homeland and the host country.

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31 For example: Princess Grace Irish Library (Monaco); Worldcat.org; *Ireland in Fiction: A Guide to Irish Novels, Tales, Romances and Folklore* (1919); *Irish Literature* Volume III (1904); *Appletons’ Cyclopaedia of American Biography* Volume V (1891).
Jason King has also written about how Sadlier contributes to a feminisation of the Canadian frontier, along with Dublin born emigrant poet Isabella Valancy Crawford (1850-1887). King writes about Sadlier’s involvement with Thomas D’Arcy McGee and sees her role as “instrumental” in shaping McGee’s vision of creating a self-image for the Canadian Irish (“Feminisation of Canadian Frontier” 46). King argues that, after McGee’s assassination in 1868, this quest becomes more feminist in tone as both Sadlier and Crawford celebrate the role of the Irish woman in the colonization of North America. In her work on the Irish servant girl in America, Maureen Murphy uses Sadlier’s Bessy Conway as an example of didactic emigrant fiction. She writes: “Such novels were written to warn Irish servant girl readers of occasions of sin: spending money on clothes and going to dances” (“The Irish Servant Girl” 140).

Elizabeth Szabo Hernadi focuses on Sadlier’s advice to Irish Catholic Girls going to America and argues that the novel Bessy Conway is a critique of Irish Catholic culture, a point this thesis refutes in Chapter Four. Janelle Peters’ article provides a biblical interpretation of Sadlier’s novels focusing specifically on the figure of Lot’s wife. Peters commends Sadlier for her influence on the Irish community, but states: “despite acknowledgement of her achievement for her ethnic community, her place in the history of biblical interpretation and transatlantic literary culture has been insufficiently explored” (186). While Sadlier is deemed worthy of acknowledgement by these notable scholars, to date no full-length study has been carried out. This thesis will thus contribute to the field of Irish Literary Studies and stimulate further academic analysis of the field of Irish migrant literature.
Limitations of thesis

Although Sadlier has authored many volumes of work ranging from historical narratives to children’s literature to religious texts, this thesis focuses on her emigrant narratives, which were written between 1850 and 1870. This selection of work limited the scope in addressing other themes which feature in her writings outside these years. As this thesis deals in particular with representations of Irish emigration to North America, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, it seemed that a rigorous discussion of similar-themed texts in greater detail would produce a coherent, defined picture of a significant historical period.

It is also important to note that, although Sadlier lived in Montréal for a number of years, most of her emigrant novels are set in the United States of America (with the exception of Elinor Preston and Alice Riordan, which are set in Canada). Therefore, this thesis outlines the historical, political and social factors experienced by Irish emigrants to North America and explains how these events are represented in Sadlier’s fictional narratives. Choosing to focus specifically on North America does not diminish Sadlier’s connection to Canada. Indeed, in her Preface to Elinor Preston (1861), written during Sadlier’s second year in New York, she reflects on her time in Canada. She states: “it stands in memory side by side with the land of my nativity” (7). Her devotion to Canada is undoubted as she dedicates the book to her “first friends” saying, “I know they will prize the book for my sake, as I do the name of Canada for theirs” (7).

As with any scholarly endeavour, the framing of this project threatened, at times, to get bogged down in issues of terminology. One of the main difficulties was how to address the status of the person who left Ireland and settled in North America. Critical work written in Ireland would consider these people to be “emigrants”; but much of the historical material written by American social scientists and historians, referred to their
status as “immigrants”. Contemporary theory resolves this matter by labelling them “migrants”. However, I ruled out the term “migrant” as I felt that this term symbolised a more modern view of departure and return.

Current experiences of migration are different from the nineteenth century as they are less drastic and permanent. The developments in technology have facilitated digital communication such as Skype, through which people can communicate easily, and advances in air transport, which means that people can fly anywhere in the world much more quickly and inexpensively than before, thus making living abroad less unsettling. In the end, I decided to utilise both terms, referring to protagonists as “emigrants” as they leave home and more generally, and “immigrants” when describing their context in the eyes of native Anglo-Protestant Americans. I acknowledge that the word “emigrant” is an emotionally loaded word in an Irish context full of connotations of exile and anticipation; nonetheless, I feel it represents the characters that Sadlier is writing about and the nineteenth-century audience reading them. What this conflict over terminology does prove is J. J. Lee’s observation that the diaspora is a “slippery concept” (186) and must be rigorously conceptualised.

In recent years there has been a shift in the recording of history, with the emphasis being put on social history, the reclaiming and recording of “lived” experiences of ordinary folk. This thesis suggests that Sadlier’s novels capture the mood of Irish emigration in the mid-nineteenth century and at times includes historical facts. However, it is important not to substitute her writings for a recording of actual events. Thus, this research does not claim that Sadlier is, or can be, representative of the whole nineteenth-century emigrant experience from Ireland to North America, but rather, that she opens up a conversation, particularly in relation to women’s emigration. With this mind, we are knowledgeable of the fact that there is no single narrative
structure of emigration. Therefore, Sadlier’s novels offer us her particular version of the Irish emigrant journey.

Methodology

Four themes running through Sadlier’s work are reflected in my four chapters, namely, Irish-American identity, the family, Catholicism, and women’s experiences of emigration. This thematic approach, rather than a chronological appraisal of her writings, was chosen as it facilitated discussion of her literary strategy and the continued effect of changing historical circumstances on her writings. Primary archival research has been central to this project, specifically, the retrieval of Sadlier’s out-of-print primary novels and a focus on her personal papers. It was difficult to obtain copies of Sadlier’s emigrant novels, and searching for them involved establishing her identity using a mix of marriage and maiden names. This project moved through different phases of research, using a combination of on-line resources and extensive research in National Library and archival holdings.

It was clear from the outset that the construction of a comprehensive biographical record was vital in order to understand Sadlier’s experience of the world. Sadlier was the subject of an on-line project by a graduate student named Liz Szabo as part of the “American XRoads” website run by Alan Howard at the University of Virginia. After making contact with Liz Szabo (who now works for USA Today), it soon transpired that she had little information on Sadlier as it was a graduate project, and she had not continued with her research beyond the requirements of the project. The website, although useful in its comprehensiveness of the material available to her,

32 I have undertaken a rigorous search for Sadlier’s personal papers and found letters written to her by her son Francis, which are held in the National Archives of Canada. The letters that Sadlier wrote back to her son and to Thomas D’Arcy McGee may still be in existence, but are not in the public domain. I have also made use of the Prefaces to her novels in order to reveal some personal information about her.
contained too many broken links to be of any real use. Snippets of information were gleamed from on-line biographical sources such as the Princess Grace Irish Library at Monaco; Catholic Encyclopaedia; MSU Libraries and Talbot School of Theology. However, these biographies were sketchy and repetitive at best. Biographical entries were found for Sadlier in, A Guide to Irish Fiction 1650-1900 (Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber 2006); Ireland in Fiction (Stephen Brown 1919); Catholic Builders of the Nation (Constantine E. McGuire 1935) and Irish Literature (Justin McCarthy 1904).

This thesis involved a meshing together of historical accounts with literary critical material and primary sources. Seminal texts such as Kevin Kenny, The American Irish: A History, William Griffin, The Irish Americans, Jay Dolan, The Immigrant Church and Charles Fanning’s The Irish Voice in America: 250 Years of Irish-American Fiction were used as scholarly background to the Irish immigrant experience in North America. Texts from Christopher Morash, Writing the Irish Famine, Peter Gray, Famine, Land and Politics, and Melissa Fegan, Literature and the Irish Famine 1845-1919, elucidated the impact on the Great Irish Famine on the literature of the period. This thesis also draws on existing feminist material for studying Irish women’s history such as Maria Luddy’s Irish Women’s Writing 1839-1888 and Margaret Kelleher’s “Writing Irish Women’s Literary History”. Primary documents from the period, i.e. newspaper reports from the New York Daily Times (1851-1857), aided an understanding of the specific historical conditions that shaped Sadlier. A parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts from the same historical period means that the texts constantly informs and interrogates each other. These primary documents do not merely provide context for Sadlier’s work, they become a co-text and offer a framework to understand her work more thoroughly. The outcome is a serious endeavour at valuing the material Sadlier produced whilst understanding the cultural
and political obstacles which imbued the lives of nineteenth century Irish emigrant women.

_Theoretical approaches_

There is extensive scholarship on Diaspora Studies in place in the social sciences; however, examining literary representations of this experience to further analyse the “third space” (to use Homi Bhabha’s term) enabled me to interpret the in-between world of emigrants, which itself is fractured. Only recently has the experience of Irish women emigrants begun to be addressed by scholars such as Breda Gray, among others. In _Women and the Irish Diaspora_, Gray examines the changing nature of national and cultural belonging among women who have emigrated. She examines life narratives and the role that memory plays in the construction of Irish modernity, from a feminist perspective in the twenty-first century. My thesis explores similar territory, but, as explained, from the perspective of cultural constructions and specifically _literary_ representations of Irish women’s emigrant experiences in an earlier century.

Within my research, I examine those of Sadlier’s fictional characters who form hybrid identities in order to cope with their new lives, thus forming the kind of transcultural identities described by Stuart Hall and others. As Walter explains, “[f]rom a diaspora perspective, establishment of ‘roots’ does not involve the loss of identities but the forging of new ones” (47). My thesis shows that Sadlier’s contribution to the field of Irish Diaspora Studies is invaluable as evidence of what society and culture was like for Irish emigrants in America in the period. Moreover, her emigrant writings are also valuable when considering the invention of, and intervention in, an Irish-American culture.
Throughout, this thesis employs the work of Migration Studies scholars and literary writers who analyse the effect that diaspora has on national culture and on individual identity. Salman Rushdie explains how migrants are often obliged to define themselves because natives define them by their “otherness”. Stuart Hall also queries how these minority groups become constituent elements in the construction process of new ethnicities. This thesis uses Hall’s post-modern theories on identity to show how the emigrant self is displaced and decentred and can sometimes undergo a crisis of identity. Hall explains how identity is never fixed or permanent and how it changes over time and in response to different cultural systems. Avtar Brah discusses diversity in terms of feminist and poststructuralist theory; as she deconstructs issues of identity, culture and politics, she outlines arguments of difference and commonality among the migrant community. Brah also discusses the construction and metaphorisation of territorial, political, cultural, economic and psychic borders within the diasporic space. It is within these spaces that my fictional protagonists find themselves. She writes about how belonging and otherness are appropriated and contested, while examining the intersectionality of “border” and the “politics of location”. Walter also writes about the paradoxical nature of diaspora and how it dislodges binary notions of migrant/settler, insider/outsider and home/away. In order to aid my understanding of the construction of a specific “Irish-American” identity, I also read seminal texts on how Irish emigrants collaborated with the dominant white culture and constructed their identity in North America accordingly. Noel Ignatiev’s book *How the Irish Became White* is such a text.

This thesis utilises the paradigm of diaspora offered by Mary J. Hickman, in which six features are significant: initial dispersal of emigrants, collective memory, alienation, respect, longing for the homeland, a belief in its restoration and self-definition in term of this homeland (117-136). Derived from the Jewish diaspora, this
framework is produced after a period of coercion which leads large numbers of people to resettle elsewhere. This thesis also draws on Everett Lee’s definition of migration, which suggests that one has to cross a significant boundary that involves a changed relationship to a physical environment or landscape, as is reflected in Sadlier’s descriptions of America’s grey cities or the prairies of Iowa. For Lee, migration patterns also include a sustained period of time away from the homeland, as well as a change in relationship to the local, regional and national community, a note also addressed by Sadlier which I develop further in Chapter Two (47-57). As suggested by Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, some contemporary scholars may find Lee’s definition of migration too broad, as some prefer to narrow it to include only a change of residence beyond a boundary or the exclusion of seasonal moves which last less than a year (10). However, as this thesis focuses on nineteenth-century emigration to North America, these factors, for instance migratory patterns of less than a year, are a rare occurrence; therefore, Lee’s overall framework suits this thesis.

In his work in this field, Iain Chambers contemplates the intricacies of history and who shapes its recordings. He suggest that marginalised people rarely get to record their own histories, experiences and traditions because they are dominated by the prevailing hegemonic cultural power. Chambers explains:

That is why the narrative of ‘history’, which in some accounts stands for liberation – the rise of the nation state, of modern democracy and citizenship, of science and ‘progress’, of the victories of the locally oppressed – can for others simply indicate the label of terror and repression. (127)

It is the life and histories of these repressed people that Homi Bhabha wanted to study when he found himself “unmoved” by the canonical teachings of Oxford University. Bhabha elaborates: “What was missing from the traditionalist world of English literary study, as I encountered it, was a rich and paradoxical engagement with the pertinence of
what lay in an oblique or alien relation to the forces of centering” (*The Location of Culture* xi). Writers who wrote against the grain and explored new genres and techniques of writing, literary texts that lay unread and unstudied because they were written by outsiders, these are what Bhabha considered to be “the angles of vision and visibility that enchanted me” (*The Location of Culture* xi).

People in the diaspora operate in these liminal spaces and can offer a rich multitude of texts, poems and recordings of life on the periphery. They are struggling, trying to keep two national identities alive, one from their home and one from the host country. This struggle often produces literature that contains multiple readings. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Homi Bhabha outlines some of his theories that have been most influential in the field of post-colonial theory. Bhabha explains the difference between cultural diversity and cultural difference, stating that most plural, democratic societies think that diversity of cultures is a positive thing. It is a reflection of a “cultured” or “civilised” attitude if one can accept and appreciate cultural hybridities. However, multiple cultures in Western society can be problematic because there is a limit placed on their acceptance and immersion into society. As Bhabha explains:

> A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid. This is what I mean by a creation of cultural diversity and containment of cultural difference. (sic) (“The Third Space” Bhabha qtd. in Rutherford 208)

The propagation of cultural diversity often paradoxically harbours ethnocentric beliefs. The presence of plural cultures can create an increase in racism as people try to accommodate varying forms of cultural histories and differing beliefs. Questions of “containment” of cultural difference feature strongly in Sadlier’s novels, typified by her presentation of the “school question” in *The Blakes and Flanagans* (1855), where a
hostile reception towards immigrant beliefs in North America threaten the very frameworks that were supposed to support them.

Laura Izarra writes that, if diasporic literature is located between a community of origin and a host community, it thus defines locations of belonging and locations of residence from cultural, social, political and historical perspectives. She notes that the function of the diasporic narrative is two-fold: it represents political and cultural tensions concerned with local histories and global governments, but it also represents an idyllic homeland which is very much alive in what she terms “the collective memory of the diasporic subjects” (341). The representation of an “idealised motherland” is evident throughout Sadlier’s emigrant novels, and at one point, she lends support to a political plan which will (re)create this homeland in the prairies of the American West. This seeming paradox between the reality of diasporic space and creation of a diasporic identity allows Izarra to problematise the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging in a nineteenth-century Irish community in Argentina.

Salman Rushdie recognises the intolerable agony that exists when a member of the diaspora tries to package their past in order to recall it in a different context at a future date. He writes:

All migrants leave their past behind, although some try to pack it into bundles and boxes – but on the journey something seeps out of the treasured mementoes and old photographs, until even their owners fail to recognise them, because it is the fate of the migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging. (63-64)

Emigrants invariably fall between two cultures; they forget their own culture and lose a sense of themselves while trying to belong to a new culture, a point often reflected in Sadlier’s fictional characters. Frequently, this new identity will be created in bitterness and isolation and based on somebody else’s measure of cultural success. Hall argues
that the story of the self depends on “not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our ‘routes’” (“Who Needs ‘Identity’?” 4). Therefore identity is a never-ending journey, informed by the past and present and on the intersections of political and social discourses.

Seán Ryder welcomes the current more diffuse interest in Irish literature in English, noting that in previous decades scholars tended to focus only on the early twentieth century or the Irish Literary Revival. He states that the canon sometimes stretched back to include the mid-century writings of Samuel Ferguson or James Clarence Mangan as they were viewed as a source for Revival writers and were often studied within this context (118). Ryder states that poetry and poetic drama were the most prominent genres of the Revival; therefore, poetry was given the most critical attention when scholars in previous generations examined the nineteenth century. He mentions that Maria Edgeworth or Somerville and Ross were given consideration but that, as a whole, “the vast body of Irish fiction was generally neglected by critics” (118). Therefore, this research on Sadlier’s emigrant fiction contributes to the study of nineteenth century Irish fiction as a whole.

When one researches the Irish nineteenth century and in particular, emigrant movements from Ireland in the period, one must examine the centrality of the Great Famine and the terrible legacy it left in Irish life. There is no doubt that the Famine led to unprecedented numbers of people emigrating; indeed, David Lloyd states that the Famine caused a “terrifying dissolution of social ties” (44). The Famine resulted in high rates of mortality, physical changes to the landscape and challenges to social roles, leading to Jeffrey C. Alexander’s observation that the Famine can be recorded as a cultural trauma. He explains: “A cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel that they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks
upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1).

In her study on the Irish Famine, Margaret Kelleher states that the most neglected body of writing from the historiography of the Irish Famine are women’s fictional narratives from the second half of the nineteenth century (The Feminisation of the Famine 64). Sadlier’s work is one example of this neglected corpus; others include Mary Anne Hoare’s Shamrock Leaves (1851) and Annie Keary’s Castle Daly (1875). This is puzzling, as Sadlier was one of the most popular and prolific novelists in mid-to-late nineteenth-century America, yet her work is overlooked in contemporary research on diasporic studies. This could be because the memory of Famine exodus is traumatic and, up until recently, has been couched in silence and largely glossed over in the Irish canon, a point noted by Terry Eagleton, but refuted by Corporaal. She states: “one could list numerous Irish literary works which, either directly or indirectly, produce cultural memories of the Great Famine” (“Memories of the Great Famine” 142).

Melissa Fegan’s research in Literature and the Irish Famine attempts to identify literary texts written in Ireland and England that discuss Famine narratives.

Socio-historical perspectives only show one part of the picture of the Famine. I suggest that Sadlier’s novels offer an alternative view of the Famine, and by focusing on the affective power therein, she (re)energises emigrants’ interest in sustaining a strong Irish ethnic identity abroad. Large-scale historical events such as the Irish Famine become, to borrow Jan Assman’s term, “figures of memory” and these in turn become embedded in cultural artefacts such as the novel form (129). New Lights; or, Life in Galway (1850) is Sadlier’s Famine novel, complete with mnemonic images and archetypal descriptions of evictions, disease and deathbed scenes. Morash underlines the power contained in a shared event or trauma such as the Famine. He writes: “In
accepting these shared memories, we are enlisting ourselves as part of a group – a
nation, a tribe, a race” (“Literature, Memory, Atrocity” 118).

Sadlier’s framing of the Famine is to set it against a backdrop of oppression and
the repression of Catholics. Morash explains that a “semiotic system of representation”
has replaced the Famine and that for those of us born after the Famine, “the
representation has become the reality” (Writing the Irish Famine 3-4). One must
remember that even though first generation emigrants had memories of the Famine,
second and subsequent generations did not, so they relied on “communicative memory”
from survivors and “cultural memory” from texts (Assmann 48-56). Therefore, the
Famine becomes an ideological textual creation which, according to Morash, generates
“textually generated memories” (“Literature, Memory, Atrocity” 113-114). Whilst
discussing the ability of textually generated memories to become part of an individual’s
sense of identity, he uses George Steiner’s “A Kind of Survivor”. Steiner describes
himself as a “kind of survivor” of the Holocaust, but this is not literally the case as he
left France and went to America in 1940. Morash writes:

The literature of the Famine provokes something of the same response;
when we read a Famine text, we too feel that we are ‘a kind of survivor’. It may be that when we encounter these shattered fragments of the past,
we wish to complete them; and the only way in which we can do so is by
internalising them, making them part of the narrative of our own
memories. (“Literature, Memory, Atrocity” 118)

I argue that Sadlier, in line with Morash’s view, uses the dislocation of the Famine as a
unifying force. I also suggest that Sadlier uses the Famine to question the role of the
Irish woman both at home and abroad. Kelleher’s important work on the Famine
corroborates the view that the feminine and the Famine are inextricably linked
(Feminisation of Famine). I propose to expand on her theories that not only are women

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at the forefront of representations of the Irish Famine, but that the Famine was responsible for their changed (re)presentation subsequently.

Expanding on my use of memory theory from Assman and Morash in relation to Famine and the process of remembering and being shaped by large-scale public events, I also draw on memory theory from Alison Landsberg and Pierre Nora. In her research Landsberg addresses the purpose of memory in an age of mass culture and considers how this memory has been dislocated by modernity and shaped by postmodern technologies such as time-travel. Using the film *The Road to Yesterday*, where the protagonist undergoes a reversed journey to the seventeenth century, Landsberg poses an interesting argument. She writes: “Bess gains access to memories of events through which she did not live but which she will take on as her own and which will inform her identity in the film’s present” (Landsberg 1). This is a complex process as Landsberg explains: “the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past even through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics” (2).

Such theories are useful to my understanding of Sadlier’s description of the return emigrant. For instance, although Sadler herself never returned to the “motherland”, she must have heard oral histories or read accounts of the “return journey”, and these prosthetic memories enable her to form an Irish-American character in her novels. They are also implied when I consider Sadlier’s discussion of ethnic Irish assimilation. As Landsberg notes that memories are not exclusive and can be easily transferred. She writes: “Prosthetic memories are transportable and therefore challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, ‘heritage’ and ownership” (3). Sadlier uses these prosthetic memories in order to consolidate her
newly formed Irish-American character in subsequent generations. Landsberg discusses the “organic” model of memory, which was created in the nineteenth century. She writes, “While a cultural form of memory was being articulated, it nevertheless relied on the body as both receptacle for and the transmitter of memory” (7). Although this type of memory could be construed as collective, i.e. passed down from one generation to the next, Maurice Halbwachs states that collective memories were a social phenomenon and so depended heavily on “the frameworks of social memory”, which included family, religion and class (Halbwachs qtd. in Landsberg 7). These are all components in Sadlier’s emigrant novels.

Pierre Nora uses the example of the disappearance of peasant culture in light of industrial growth in order to outline his concepts of lieux de mémoire: places where “sites” of memory exist because “real environments” of memory do not. He writes: “We have seen the end of societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, whether through churches or schools, the family or the state; the end too of ideologies that prepared a smooth passage from the past to the future” (7). These lieux de mémoire are reminders of the past and are manifested in museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals and monuments. Nora argues that we must produce these mechanisms of memory because there is no more “spontaneous” memory (12). Nora grapples with the argument of what should be remembered, what is deemed worthy of conservation and who deems it so, stating in the past that it was “great families, the church, and the state” who produced archives, whereas nowadays the proliferation of memoirs has led to the materialization of memory becoming “tremendously dilated, multiplied, decentralized, democratized” (14). These sites of memory or lieux de mémoire occur in Sadlier’s emigrant novels as reminders of the past for future generations who have no memories of the homeland.
suggest that Sadlier uses them as identity mechanisms in order to foster a sense of a distinct Irish identity and prevent emigrants from completely assimilating into their new American life, instead encouraging them to form the hyphenated identity of Irish-American.

Summaries of chapters

Chapter One questions the presentation and criteria of a nineteenth-century Irish identity within Sadlier’s emigrant novels by analysing the construction of “Irishness” in her writing. Sadlier sees the Famine as an integral element of how Ireland is imagined and framed. She uses the tragedy of the Famine to (re)engage emigrants with their homeland by concentrating on the affective aspects of the tragedy. This chapter then turns to consider the historical record of an ‘exiled’ transatlantic Irish Catholic identity and how Sadlier uses an eviction scene as a device for (re)connecting emigrants to Ireland. It then considers the hostile reception of Irish emigrants among settled Anglo-Protestants and how, through her writings, Sadler combats the negative stereotypes that were prevalent in that period. Difficulties of acculturation and assimilation rise to the surface as Sadler considers the position of second generation Irish emigrants. It is within these passages that Sadler’s suggestion of a hybrid existence, one that encompasses the best attributes of the Irish and American character, is most robust. The chapter closes considering the role of D. & J. Sadlier & Co.; it is obvious that Sadler’s novels and the publishing house are a joint venture in the construction of an Irish-American identity. It is clear from her huge sales figures and number of re-prints that as she records these questions and answers in her writings, she is helping to form society at large.
Chapter Two deals with operations within and surrounding the “family cell”, to use Michael Foucault’s term, and queries Sadlier’s presentation of the Irish family both at home and in the host country. This aids our understanding of the importance that Sadlier places on the family cell in identity construction. According to Diarmaid Ferriter, the role of the family in Irish culture has not being the subject of “sustained examination”, so this chapter offers a critical reading of what happens to family structures in a migrant situation (4). In other words, what are the roles that emerge in the emigrant family and what happens to characters who operate outside this rigid familial structure? By constructing a close reading of Sadlier’s emigrant novels this chapter argues that, even though they are imbued with sentimental rhetoric, Sadlier still has the capacity to expose a darker side to emigrant family life. By tackling issues such as alcoholism, domestic abuse and sexual assault, Sadlier’s fiction both positions and disrupts family life in order to compound her support of a bifurcated Irish-American identity.

Chapter Three discusses the emerging role and significance placed on Catholicism in nineteenth century Ireland and North America. It is clear that Sadlier views Catholicism as a sustaining force as all of her emigrant novels are a propagation of the Catholic faith. Firstly, the chapter examines the spiritual dimension of Catholicism. Drawing on fictional episodes from Sadlier’s novels, this chapter demonstrates the struggles Irish peasants in Ireland and emigrants in North America underwent in order to preserve their Catholicism. It then outlines the procedures put in place by Cardinal Cullen in order to rejuvenate interest in Catholicism in Ireland. I discuss Sadlier’s suggestion, through her fiction, that if Irish emigrants transport a strong Catholic faith, they will be bestowed with a good, honest, life in their host country, thus propagating what I term a “rewarding religion”. The chapter then
examines the educational role that Catholicism inhabited both at home and abroad. At the time of writing *The Blakes and Flanagans* in 1855, Sadlier is in fact aligning herself with the politics of Archbishop John Hughes of New York by actively endorsing Catholic schools, a policy which Maureen Fitzgerald states was directly at the cost of setting up orphanages for destitute emigrants (49). Continuing one of my central arguments, which constructs Sadlier as a woman in transition, I argue that by the time she wrote *Aunt Honor’s Keepsake* in 1866, she had withdrawn her support from promoting Catholic education at the cost of providing orphanages and hospitals for Irish emigrants, thus showing her evolving stance as an Irish emigrant woman and her reaction to her emerging Irish-American character.

Chapter Four identifies transcultural commonalities and differences in constructions and expectations of women at home and in the host country. Emigration destabilises social and economic norms and also configurations of gender roles. Using literary examples the chapter examines how Irish emigrant women subverted existing nineteenth-century stereotypes by going out to work and financially supporting their families at home. It becomes clear that Sadlier is a writer in conflict as her personal life is frequently at odds with the gender ideology propounded by her fiction. Whereas Sadlier does not engage in the feminist movement, she does engage with feminist issues in her life and writings. Arguably, she is seeking to critique and highlight the (non)compliance of women to their new lives in the host country. The chapter then considers the role of marriage and spinsterhood in Sadlier’s novels and refutes Elizabeth Hernadi’s argument that Sadlier’s emigrant fiction could be read as a critique of Catholicism. The final section of this chapter discusses the social mission of the Catholic Church both at home and abroad. It analyses women’s work with
philanthropic causes and highlights Sadlier’s own involvement in the Foundling Hospital, which shows her ever evolving identity.
Chapter One: Creating a Discourse for an Irish-American Identity

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Mary Anne Sadlier’s emigrant novels and sets out to define her contribution to the creation of a transatlantic Irish Catholic identity. Emigrants undergo an intricate renegotiation of their identity, which is engaged with the need to both remember and forget the homeland while they begin the process of integration in their host country. This effort to navigate between cultures creates conflicted loyalties and emotions. Fintan O’Toole explains Ireland’s emigrant history:

Considered geographically, Ireland is a pre-given space, standing sharply out from the ocean that surrounds it. But considered demographically, Ireland is an unbounded sprawl, an incoherent network of memories and resentments, dreams and desperations, moving between the island itself and its diaspora in … the United States. (161)

A strong feature of Sadlier’s literary writing is her emphasis on the need for creating and sustaining a uniquely “Irish” identity when emigrants they reach North America. However, as she was writing in the nineteenth century, one must remember that Ireland was not then a sovereign state but part of the British Empire, so for Sadlier this “Irishness” is cultural: it is contingent on a devotion to Catholicism, an aversion to Protestantism and a loyalty to the indigenous Gaelic tradition. This chapter interrogates Sadlier’s construction of Irishness in her fiction and explores her role in the creation of an Irish-American discourse and identity.

This chapter will discuss how an emigrant identity is formed and what role the past plays in its construction. It will examine how Sadlier develops an Irish identity through various literary techniques such as setting, character and theme. By undertaking a close textual analysis of three of her emigrant novels, this chapter discusses whether Sadlier had a tendency to romanticise “home” in her works as a narrative device to encourage her reader’s sense of a distinctive “Irish” identity. By
using motifs such as food and pastoral landscapes, this chapter considers how Sadlier juxtaposes life in the home and host countries.

I argue that Sadlier uses the tragedy of the Famine to (re)engage emigrants with their past and that her success in implementing this use of the Famine lies in her emphasis in the affective, rather than the factual aspect of the calamity. This chapter then turns to examine the historical creation of a transatlantic Irish Catholic identity, and it questions Sadlier’s use of an eviction scene from *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861) as a device for (re)connecting emigrants to the motherland. The chapter then details how Sadlier creates and champions an Irish cultural identity for her emigrant readers who found themselves surrounded by a foreign culture and a hostile reception in America. I suggest that, by incorporating stereotypical Irish caricatures such as those found in *Puck* cartoons into her novels, Sadlier is engaging in and actively challenging such pejorative stereotypes by offering an alternative view of Irish life. Conversely, using textual examples from *Con O’Regan; or, Emigrant Life in the New World* (1864) among other texts, this chapter shows how Sadlier was complicit in the nineteenth-century belief that the Irish were superior to African-Americans, which is reflected by the historical opposition of Irish emigrants to the abolition of slavery. Their sense of superiority derived from the fear that they would lose their social standing in their adopted country. She carefully marks out a distinctively white identity for Irish-Americans, in order to differentiate them from other members of the working classes.

Questions of acculturation and assimilation come to the fore as Sadlier considers the position of second generation Irish emigrants in *The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1855). By analysing her character representations, I query how emigrants form and operate in a minority community and
cope with the politics of re-location. It is within these passages that Sadlier’s quest for
the creation of a hybrid Irish-American identity comes to the fore.

Having already established how Sadlier creates an Irish character abroad in her
emigrant novels, this chapter then analyses the role of D. & J. Sadlier publishing house
in Sadlier’s construction of a transatlantic Irish-American identity. Having the support
of one of the largest Catholic publishing houses in America meant that Sadlier was at
the forefront of the Irish-American fiction market. As she was actively involved in the
publishing business, it becomes apparent that she uses a two-fold strategy of
identification through her prose and illustrations in her writings in order to reinforce her
portrayal of an Irish-American character. Moreover, she utilises her position in D. & J.
Sadlier & Co. publishing house to produce a series of “portable monuments” (to use
Anne Rigney’s phrase) to Irish culture (383). Contrary to some critics’ suggestions,
Sadlier is not criticising every aspect of American life, but suggesting a hyphenated
existence between the two cultures. She believes that this bifurcated identity will equip
Irish emigrants with the necessary skills to cope in their new location and as I will
argue, she forges a new identity for Irish-Americans in the process. Looking at her
contemporaries, we see that the sustainability of an Irish character in an oppressive
American culture was a dominant theme of Irish-American literature, but none of her
peers achieved the commercial success that Sadlier did in the period. The earlier
analysis of Sadlier’s book sales figures and reprints demonstrates that both Sadlier and
the publishing house were instrumental in shaping the emerging Irish-American
character.
Constructing an emigrant identity

As was detailed in the biography at the beginning of this thesis, Sadlier emigrated from Co. Cavan to Montréal in 1844 when she was in her early twenties. Although emigration is synonymous with the Irish Famine, there was emigration in the years preceding the potato blight, for instance among Ulster Protestants. However, pre-Famine emigration was not as widespread or as fraught as it would later become. Kerby Miller’s research helps us to establish the cultural context in which Sadlier emigrated. He reports: “Even in 1838-1844 most Catholic emigrants were neither destitute nor desperate. In 1841, census takers in County Cavan noted that most emigrants came from the ranks of middling and small farmers, not from the labouring classes” (Emigrants and Exiles 200). These census results are an accurate reflection of Sadlier’s own experience of emigration as they reflect the time-period and location from which she emigrated. Miller’s report also concurs with the personal circumstances of Sadlier’s upbringing. Her father, Francis Madden, was a respected merchant who paid for private tuition for her (James Wilson and John Fiske 365).

According to Miller, in the early 1840s in rural Ireland, forty-four percent of males and thirty-six percent of females were single; therefore, the lure of emigration to America also contained the hope of matrimony for young single people (Emigrants and Exiles 219). This rings true for Sadlier as she emigrated from Cavan as a single woman who married in Canada in 1846. It is important to note that Sadlier had already left Ireland when the Famine began, but the audience for her forthcoming novels were soon to follow her over to North America. Emigration from Ireland reached its highest numbers during the years of the Famine. Miller confirms: “More Irishmen and women

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33 See Appendix A for Sadlier Marriage Certificate (1846) Quebec Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1967.
sailed to the New World between 1845 and 1850 than in the three preceding decades combined” (*Emigrants and Exiles* 224). Mary Anne Sadlier was well-placed, having settled in North America at mid-century to translate cultural mores and act as a mediator between the newly arriving Irish and their countries of adoption.

Lawrence McCaffrey details how, during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, emigration to America continued to be heavy but not nearing the numbers of the Famine years; women tended to emigrate more than men and travel arrangements had much improved compared to the Famine years. Big, clean steamships replaced the disease ridden vessels of olden days, and the voyage was reduced from three to five weeks to just ten or eleven days (76). In 1852, New York officials opened Castle Garden at the lower tip of Manhattan, a site visited by another Irish writer, Charlotte Grace O’Brien.34 This building provided various facilities for immigrants to the USA such as bathing, cooking, postal services and places to purchase railway and boat tickets. In 1892, Ellis Island replaced Castle Garden, which led to even greater services for immigrants (Kevin Kenny *The Irish Towards the USA* 32). These advances in the treatment of immigrants were made possible by the improved attitude and resources aimed at immigrants, but, as detailed later in the chapter, it was still a bitter and sometimes violent journey for all involved.

The main immigration services provided at the port of entry into Canada were at Partridge Island, New Brunswick and Grosse Île; a small island situated in the St. Lawrence River. Canadian fears of a cholera epidemic which had swept across Europe resulted in the opening of Grosse Île in 1832, and it continued to service as an immigration port throughout the Famine exodus (Michael Quigley “Canada’s Famine

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34 Charlotte Grace O’Brien (1845-1909) was a Protestant woman, daughter of William Smith O’Brien, and a member of the landlord class who campaigned to improve the conditions of female emigrants’ onboard emigrant ships to America.
Memorial” 136). These points of entry into the US and Canadian states were more than just sites of administration and border control; they also gave a clear message to immigrants that they needed to be kept off-shore and access to the mainland was restricted until they passed various medical tests and were deemed suitable for entry. It is these parameters that formed the backdrop to Irish emigrants’ first encounters with the New World and no doubt shaped their attitudes towards it.

When Sadlier arrived in Canada, she had to find herself a suitable career in order to support herself. As mentioned in the biography, she did this through writing for various periodicals such as The Literary Garland, True Witness and The Boston Pilot. In the Preface to Tales of the Olden Time; A Collection of European Traditions (1845), Sadlier states that she wrote because of financial necessity: “Had it been my fate to belong to that fortunate class which is happily exempt from the necessity of working, I should, in all probability, never have presented myself before you” (qtd. in Lacombe “Frying Pans” 99). This statement, recorded in Sadlier’s first novel, reflects the necessity for emigrants to create a new entity for themselves when arriving in the host country and so marks the beginning of their (trans)formation.

Throughout her life Sadlier mingled with people from many different cultures and nationalities as she lived in Montréal and New York. Stuart Hall investigates what it is to have a national identity and how this is entangled with a country’s cultural identity and heritage. A national identity is not inherent within us, but learned through a process of societal influences and cultural inscriptions. As Hall explains: “national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation” (“The Question of Cultural Identity” 292). In other words, a nationality is tied up in a system of cultural representations. In the nineteenth century, Ireland was under English rule. However, Ireland had been a sovereign state before
English occupation, and that cultural memory remained. People like Daniel O’Connell, who fought for and achieved Catholic Emancipation in 1829, influenced the resurrection of a national culture and created a consciousness that would, in the years to come, help to re-create a sovereign Irish state.

Building upon this established culture, I propose that Sadlier can be read as the Literary Revivalists’ antecedent in her attempts to create and sustain a specifically “Irish” heritage within her writing. Moreover, I argue that Sadlier faced great difficulties in sustaining this Irish heritage as she was an emigrant writer in a foreign land, and therefore, she employs various techniques within her novels to help her in her endeavours. As I will demonstrate, Sadlier believes that a common bond is imperative; she strives to create the sense that people belong to a nation and share in its achievements and downfalls which make us part of the fabric of a national culture.

Likewise, Hall writes: “As members of such an ‘imagined community’ we see ourselves in our mind’s eye sharing in this narrative” (italics mine) (“The Question of Cultural Identity” 293). These narratives not only create and shape the nation, but also facilitate identity construction. Emigrants, in particular, have to work hard at forming and sustaining an identity which links to their sense of themselves in their original homeland. As McCaffrey explains:

In their efforts to overcome hate and discrimination and to achieve respectability in the United States, they cultivated ethnic pride, fostered self-sufficiency and exploited political talents to achieve power. Irish Catholic responses to the challenges of Anglo-American prejudice established precedents for identity-seeking and survival politics that have influenced the conduct of other minorities. (6)

Within her writings, Sadlier invokes an intense form of nationalism (based on her idea of an Irish heritage) to remind emigrants of their past. More overt signs of her patriotism are reflected in her recording of Irish history through her fictionalised
accounts of Irish battles such as those found in *The Confederate Chieftains: A Tale of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (1868). She makes these historical events accessible to the everyday reader by meshing factual details with romantic plots and presenting them in the form of a novel. She embeds other elements of ethnic belonging in her narratives through the insertion of Irish ballads, customs and folklore, for example, the recital of the ballad “The Shannon Side” on the voyage across the Atlantic in *Bessy Conway* (56). Sadlier can be credited with constructing a national and ethnic character through her emigrant works in which she uses references to the poetry of Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Moore as well as allusions to Irish mythology. In other words, long before W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge and others involved in the Irish Literary Revival, Sadlier knew what it was to construct an Irish cultural identity. Reading these novels created a sense of cultural pride among emigrants and provided them with a sense of home and belonging.

Sadlier creates an Irish cultural identity in her novels using various narrative techniques such as setting, character and theme. In the opening lines of *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861), she sets a romanticised rural scene in Ireland where she describes in lush detail the pastoral landscapes of the homeland. She writes:

> In the heart of the rich and fertile county of Tipperary, not far from the banks of the silvery Suir, and almost in the shadow of the mouldering castle of Ardfinnan, there is a snug and comfortable farmhouse owned by one Denis Conway, as decent a man, so the neighbours say, as you would find in the five counties. (7)

In her research on the Irish pastoral tradition, Oona Frawley explains that pastoral landscapes are reminiscent of a pre-colonial age that is untouched by British rule, thereby representing an authentic “Irish” identity (23). Immediately, Sadlier is connecting to her Irish emigrant readership by drawing on elements of the pastoral. She

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35 See Appendix E for drawing of Ardfinnan Castle found in *Bessy Conway* (1861).
knows they will compare the beauty of Ireland’s green lands with the harshness of America’s grey cities, where many of them found themselves. Within Sadlier’s novels, the city is portrayed as a place of violence where morals are tested. In *Con O’Regan; or, Emigrant Life in the New World* (1864), Paul Bergin’s brother describes the filth and grime of the city:

> This is the place for them (Iowa) not the smoky, dirty suburbs of the cities, where they’re smothered for the want of pure air, and, worse than all, where they get into all sorts of ugly scrapes by reason of bad company they fall in with, and the bad examples they see wherever they turn. (335).

Sadlier depicts rural life in Ireland as simple and demanding, but ultimately rewarding, whereas American life is complicated and unfulfilling. Marguérite Corporaal acknowledges the power of the pastoral landscape on emigrants, stating that “[t]he pastoral becomes a point of ethnic identification through which the immigrants can recollect and reconstruct a sense of Irishness in exile” (“Pastoral Homelands” 342). Sadlier also invokes ethnic identification through her insertion of pastoral illustrations within her emigrant writings.36

Sadlier also mentions the role of the Irish neighbour and places importance on their opinion, influence and status in their local communities. Sadlier continues to describe the character of Bessy’s peasant Irish father Denis Conway:

> Denis is what you may call a “sponsible farmer”, he holds some fifty acres of as good ground as any in Tipperary, and that at an easy rent, so easy, indeed, that Denis is putting by something every year for the “rainy day”. (*Bessy Conway* 7)

In one sentence, her use of local accent entwined with well known place names reconnects emigrant readers with their local dialect and customs. The tone of this passage is intimate and would feel familiar to the emigrant reader. By stating that Denis

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36 For examples of Sadlier’s illustrations of pastoral landscapes in her emigrant writing, see Appendix E.
is a responsible and respected farmer who has fifty acres of good land, she establishes a context with which the emigrant reader can connect. Denis is presented as a role model trying to make an honest living on the land and is representative of the kind of worker that an emigrant reader might aspire to be. Thus, in the first paragraph of her novel, she has created nostalgia for the homeland through a deliberate association of the Irish physical landscape with the responsibility of the individual farmer within his local community.

Sadlier employs literary techniques such as narration and focalisation in order to explain her thoughts on the theme of emigration. In the opening pages of *New Lights; or, Life in Galway: A Tale* (1853) the omniscient narrator introduces the plot of the narrative. The novel oscillates between internal and external focalisation which produces a rounded storyline. The narrator gives a panoramic view of the setting when it describes the landscapes and characters of the novel. The narrator writes:

This village, which we shall call Killany, though having in itself little to interest the traveller, is still a desirable sojourn for the summer months, ‘while the grass is on the fields and the blue is on the sky’. […] The inhabitants of Killany are for the most part poor, though there are several families residing there who, as the saying is, hold their heads pretty high. (5-6).

The story is framed by a Famine narrative within two pages and the characters are established in relation to their recent hardships. The narrator is presented as an all seeing narrator and knows what is happening in every character’s lives throughout the story. The reader becomes familiar with the characters through the narrator’s detailing of the scene and the descriptions of the clothes the characters are wearing. The narrator writes:

Meanwhile there was a dialogue of a different character going on in another corner, under the shade of a large old sycamore tree. The speakers were a young man and an old one: the former clad in a faded-looking blue coat with brass buttons, and pantaloons of drab cloth
considerably the worse for wear, and the latter in a dark brown surtout, with knee breeches of gray corduroy, and a broad-brimmed hat that had once been a good beaver.

The reader is introduced to the O’Daly’s, the protagonist family of the novel. The omnipresent narrator sketches the gloomy scene where he meets the local priest outside the local church. Within the conversation between the father of the household, Bernard O’Daly and the priest, we are first introduced to Sadlier’s position on emigration. The narrator writes:

“Has he thoughts of America then?” “Well! I don’t know, your reverence,” replied the old man hesitatingly, “times are bad here, and we haven’t the same way of doing that we had. Cormac things – poor fellow! that if he was in America he could do something to help us, and ---” “And so he might, Bernard! And I would strongly advise him to go, and Daniel, too --- it is the very best thing they could do”. (Italics mine) (sic) (15).

Sadlier uses the figure of the priest in order to lend authenticity to her assertion that in certain circumstances, emigration is the best possible option. By allowing the local priest to encourage emigration to America she is re-affirming to the reader the logic and necessity of the move because the priest is an educated man and is well respected in the community. In order to further reiterate the benefits of emigration during poverty-stricken times Sadlier also lets the popular character of Phil Maguire agree with the prospect of emigration:

“Pho! pho!” said Phil, evidently much relieved, “if that’s all, I don’t pity you much. Why man, myself thought by the hummin’ and hawin’ you had – not to speak of Cormac’s pitiful-lookin’ face – that some o’the young ones had been wheedled away by the Jumpers! My sowl to glory, O’Daly, but it’s glad I am to hear what you tell me” (Italics mine) (sic) (27).

Within the novel the narrator’s character voice shows that the narrator is not involved in the action of the plot. We are however, sometimes exposed to subjective narration.
when the narrator describes the feelings and thoughts of a character or mood. He
narrator writes:

> There was a heavy sorrow in the house of Bernard O’Daly when Cormac announced his intention of going to America. The girls thought, at first, that he spoke only in jest and the old woman, from her high-backed straw chair in the chimney-corner, loudly declared her incredulity. (46).

In general, the narrator’s voice can be found most frequently at the beginning and end of every chapter. The omniscient narrator demonstrates an over-arching point of view and this lends an authenticity to the plot. The ubiquitous narrator is knowledgeable with regard to the character’s histories as can be seen with the explanation of Mr. Ousely’s relationship with his daughter Eleanor. This lends an air of authority to the narrator’s voice and contributes to the truthfulness of the plot. There is no doubt that the role of a narrator is crucial to the purpose of the novel. Sadlier is careful with her choice of narrator as it has the power to establish a relationship with the reader and therefore compound her thinking on the emigrant situation.

Themes of relocation and unfairness often feature in Sadlier’s emigrant novels, and she utilises the affective power contained therein to sustain a distinctive Irish cultural identity. In order to connect to her emigrant readership, Sadlier details the scene in *New Lights* where Bernard O’Daly’s son Cormac decides to emigrate to America and their mother is distraught and beyond consolation. She writes:

> But when Cormac went over and sat down beside her, and took her two thin, wasted hands in his, and squeezed them hard, without uttering a word, then the poor mother understood the mute eloquence of her son’s eyes, and she burst into a passionate flood of tears, and for some time refused all consolation. In vain did her daughters and husband try to comfort her – she would only put them away with her hand, and cry all the more. *(New Lights 46)*

The focalisation within this scene is from the mother’s perspective as we feel the effect of her son’s emigration on family life. This literary scene would have echoed
sentiments experienced by emigrants, especially if they had left their family behind in Ireland. Sadlier uses class and religious distinctions to define her view of a Catholic Irish identity. For example, in order to emphasise a poverty-stricken Famine identity, Sadlier introduces the comfortable life of the Protestant landlord, Mr. Ousely, by way of contrast. She writes:

A bright coal fire was burning in the polished brass grate, the table was set in front of the fireplace, and nothing could be more elegant than the snowy damask cloth, the silver tea service, and the beautiful Dresden china. The tea-kettle was steaming away on a stand with the fender, and a large plate of buttered toast was placed on a steamer close by, awaiting the time appointed for its demolition. (New Lights 84)

This opulent description of Mr. Ousely’s breakfast is in stark contrast to the O’Daly’s supper of porridge, made with watered-down milk in order to make it go further. Irish emigrants would have been incensed by the injustice of this instance of Protestant landowning wealth in Ireland and would have despised British landlords for keeping their Irish families in states of poverty and destitution. Corporaal notes that Sadlier’s use of the food motif is two-fold. She writes, “Sadlier not only uses the issue of food to contrast the cruel landlord with the suffering, starving farmers, but also to propagate her Catholic beliefs” (“Memories of the Great Famine” 148).

When Irish emigrants reached their host countries, memories of the poverty and disease that the Famine had brought to Ireland were still resonant for them. Sadlier exploits the emotional state of newly arrived emigrants by writing New Lights, a story set in Ireland during Famine times, a point I will expand on later. She knows that it will not only remind emigrants of their Irish roots and their consequent indelible connection to Ireland, but also further help to create a sense of political identification among Irish-Americans. Using the Famine as a sub-plot to support the main theme of the novel is
not an unusual literary technique for nineteenth-century writers, as Melissa Fegan explains:

But the form of *Jail Journal* and *The Last Conquest* follows more closely the model we come to expect in fiction, where the Famine becomes the background to a related concern: inheritance in *Castle Richmond*, violence and murder in *The Black Prophet*, religious conversion in many late nineteenth-century novels, and injustice, rebellion, and autobiography in *Jail Journal*. (24-25)

In other words, just as John Mitchel (1815-1875) uses the Famine to spur readers to rebellion, so Sadlier uses the Famine to prompt feelings of an Irish heritage in emigrants.37

*New Lights* is set in a Connemara village and on the first page the narrator outlines its natural beauty, again reconnecting with the pastoral. The narrator writes:

> Far away in the extreme west of Ireland where the waters of Lough Corrib reflect the changeful hues of that ever-changing sky, there is a large, straggling village running up along the bank of a rivulet, from near the shore of the lake, for a distance of nearly two miles [...] The country around is, indeed, beautiful though somewhat wild in its character, for the mountains of Connemara stand like giant sentinels in the neighbourhood, receding from the inland view in many a grand perspective. (*New Lights* 5)

Sadlier positions the natural beauty of the landscape in stark relief, by contextualising it within the Famine period: “Famine has been busy in the neighbourhood, and with it came its handmaid pestilence, and the misery of the people was great” (*New Lights* 6).

Sadlier explains that the Famine can affect every person regardless of their social standing. She outlines the story of Bernard O’Daly, father of six children and one of the strong farmers in the village of Killany, describing his subsequent fall to ruin. In order to highlight the erosion of national identity in Ireland, Sadlier recalls how O’Daly’s children started to learn English as it was the way of the commercial world, yet the parents spoke in Irish as the older generation spoke of English as “‘the strangers’

37 For more on John Mitchel, see Fegan 24-28; Kevin Kenny *The Irish Towards the USA* 30.
tongue’’ and were initially reluctant to embrace change (New Lights 8). In an interesting twist, Sadlier blames their downfall not only on the potato blight of 1845 and the subsequent death of their cattle, but also on Bernard’s brother-in-law’s unpaid debt of forty pounds, which put considerable strain on family resources. In other words, her focus is also on honesty and fair dealing. These are two characteristics which all her successful characters possess.

As the novel progresses, it details historical facts from the Famine, as recorded by historians and literary critics, such as the presence of Protestant proselytising activities through the presence of “soup houses”.

Throughout the novel, Sadlier uses realistic dialogue to convey her message; proselytising agents are known as “Jumpers” and “Bible-readers”; Hiberno-English, or an Anglicised version of the Irish language, features regularly in phrases such as “ma bouchal bawn” or “Whisht”. The deployment of familiar phrases from “home” lends authenticity to her account of life in Ireland. Sadlier cleverly incorporated traditional aspects of Irish life such as the family, religion and nationalist sentiment into her work in order to connect to her emigrant reader. Reading about these themes generated a common bond between emigrants and helped to sustain their link to homeland and create an Irish character abroad.

_The Great Irish Famine as a vehicle of identification_

In his research on American newspaper coverage of the Irish Famine, Neil Hogan observes that the news from Europe was brought over from Liverpool to Nova Scotia in the British Royal Mail Ship _Cambria_. On 1st October 1845, a newspaper editor called William Annand reported in the weekly newspaper, the _Nova Scotian_, that the potato crop had failed and that the consequences would be disastrous for Ireland (155).

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38 Soup kitchens came into operation in 1847 and wound up the same year. See Cormac Ó Gráda 45-46.
Several days later, the news was reported in the Montréal Gazette, so this is probably how Sadlier initially found out about the impending disaster in Ireland. It is also important to remember that Sadlier lived in Montréal during “Black ’47”, so would have had first-hand experience of the influx of the starving Famine Irish in Canada. With this in mind, I propose that Sadlier used the Famine as a vehicle of identification for Irish emigrants in order to propagate a specific Irish identity. Rather than concentrate on the statistics of the Famine, i.e., the numbers of dead people or emigrants, Sadlier concentrates on the affective aspect of the Famine. This is vital line of investigation. J. J. Lee observes that the impact of the Famine on diasporic identities was “not only a matter of numbers, but of memories and mentalities” (213).

Sadlier presents the Great Irish Famine in three of her emigrant novels, namely, New Lights; or, Life in Galway (1853), Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America (1861) and Elinor Preston; or, Scenes from at Home and Abroad (1861). However, Sadlier’s novels do not portray the Famine as vividly as, for instance, the American travel writer Asenath Nicholson does in her Annals of the Famine in Ireland in 1847, 1848, and 1849 (1851). This may be a reflection of the fact that Nicholson was an on-the-spot witness whereas Sadlier was in Canada when the disaster happened. The differences in graphical representations of the Famine between these two writers can be contributed to the genres that the women work within. As a travel writer, Nicholson presents detailed images of her findings based on her observances of the poverty and destitution of peasant life. As a fiction writer, Sadlier uses literary devices like symbolism and characterisation in order to portray her version of the Famine. Nicholson’s account tends to be quite factual and specific, whereas Sadlier’s account of the Famine is one component in a sprawling storyline of emigration. Nicholson
includes in her eye-witness account of the period, descriptions of the starving poor. She
writes:

He [a peasant] had been sick with fever; the clothes of his family that
would fetch any price had been pawned or sold, and all were starving
together. […] The man mentioned was emaciated to the last degree; he
was tall, his eyes prominent, his skin shrivelled, his manner cringing and
childlike; and the impression then and there made never has nor never
can be effaced; it was the first, and the beginning of these dreadful days
yet in reserve. (38-39).

Nicholson’s *Annals* include details of Irish housekeeping habits, the Indian meals given
to the poor, the Central Relief Committee’s efforts, drinking habits, funerary rituals,
clergymen, poor houses and various characters she meets along her travels. It is a stark
and unflinching account of the affliction Irish peasants endured during the period.
Sadlier’s account of the Famine is not as explicit as Nicholson’s, but she does present
the suffering of ordinary people through the motif of food and starvation as detailed
above.³⁹ Sadlier does not dwell on the graphic representations of the Famine as she
does not want to invoke an overwhelming sense of mourning and loss for the
motherland. She reveals just enough of the plight of Famine peasants to encourage
emigrants to live prosperous lives in America and to send remittances home to their
families in Ireland. As a writer, Sadlier also tends to concentrate on the figure of the
unmerciful Protestant landlord and painful subsequent evictions, highlighting discourses
of colonisation.⁴⁰ One could argue that Sadlier is in fact trying to remedy Ireland’s loss
of home-grown narrative under English rule and, specifically, to bear witness, through
her fiction, to the national trauma caused by the Famine. This is particularly pertinent

³⁹ For more on the travels of Asenath Nicholson around Ireland, see Maureen Murphy “Asenath
Nicholson and the Famine in Ireland” 109-124; Margaret Kelleher “The Female Gaze: Asenath
⁴⁰ Between 1.1 and 1.5 million people died of starvation or Famine-related diseases between 1845 and
1851; at least 500,000 were evicted from their homes by landlords, Miller “Revenge for Skibbereen” 181.
given the extent of misinformation about the Famine and its causes in the British media at that time.

As noted previously, there is an impetus to create a specific Irish narrative in English at this time, and Sadlier participates in this endeavour. In her creation of an Irish character, her focus on the symbolism and importance of land to the Irish is not unfounded. Tim O’Neill notes: “The attachment to land was more than an economic one, it was an attachment to place, to landscape and to local societies” (30). When one considers Sadlier’s presentation of the Famine within her emigrant novels, the issue of spatial displacement comes to the fore. Her Irish-American characters are stirred to think of memories of the Famine when certain incidents occur such as a funeral bell tolling or while preparing a meagre meal in the slums in Boston. Even though these characters are miles away from Ireland and the Famine, they still connect to the misery of the people they left behind. Detailed descriptions of the Famine only occur in Sadlier’s Irish-based novels or if an Irish-American character returns home. Sadlier’s emigrant status and the fact she has physically distanced herself from Ireland gives her the scope and freedom to comment on the Famine and use it for her construction of an Irish identity. However, at times Sadlier is conflicted as to how to present the Famine; her repression of the misery through sentimental nostalgia is in direct contrast with her portrayal of the injustice and the tyranny of the landlord system. As detailed below, it seems that Sadlier highlights parts of the Famine narrative in order to aid her construction of a specific Irish-American character.

*New Lights; or, Life in Galway* was published in 1853, almost a decade after the Great Famine in Ireland. I would suggest that this particular book falls within the remit of what Christopher Morash calls a “portable Famine”, as in his research he questions how some textual accounts of the Famine are widely read while others are completely
forgotten about (“Making Memories” 41). *New Lights* was a very popular Famine narrative and had at least eight editions printed before the end of the nineteenth century (Charles Fanning *The Irish Voice* 116). This textual transmission of Famine stories and the portability of literary representations of the Famine are important in relation to the Irish diaspora. Morash questions how textually generated memories of the Famine have been “distributed and maintained” throughout the world (“Making Memories” 41). As noted by Corporaal, Sadlier would not have had any memories of the Famine in Ireland having emigrated in 1844 and so would have resorted to stories of the Famine from emigrants and newspapers in order to form her Famine narrative (“Memories of the Great Famine” 144).

In order to view *New Lights* within its context, it is important to understand the cultural and social history of the period. Sadlier notes the negative effects of proselytising and commercialisation in all of her emigrant novels, but the presentation of these themes within *New Lights* is different because the novel is set in Ireland, the epicentre of European starvation and devastation in the mid nineteenth-century. Irish peasants were faced with two prospects during Famine times: permanent emigration abroad or a destitute rural life in poverty in Ireland. The peasantry lived in constant states of destitution and fought daily against the battles of hunger, malnutrition and disease. Miller extends a degree of sympathy to the peasantry when he states that their apathy towards life was both reinforced by and resulted from poverty. He states, “The cultivation of their potato patches took less than three months each year, and paid employment was increasingly infrequent. In these circumstances, it was understandable that the Irish poor passed much time drinking poitín, loitering at fairs and fighting” (*Emigrants and Exiles* 53). This social context in Ireland created an Irish stereotype abroad of Irish people being idle and troublesome.
Pre-Famine life in Ireland, both rural and urban, was punctuated by violent outbursts. Miller explains that some of this fighting was whiskey-fuelled, but much of it was well organised. He writes: “The most frequent instances of violence were ‘faction fights’ between groups of men numbering from a few hundred to several thousand, usually armed with heavy sticks and rocks and often abetted by crowds of women who supplied ammunition and verbal encouragement” (Emigrants and Exiles 60). However, this violent activity within the Irish peasantry took a political turn during Famine times when local peasants fought against the tyrannical oppression which surrounded them. Sadlier documents this violence in New Lights when local peasants rally with pitchforks and weapons to fight against bailiffs and policemen during Bernard O’Daly’s eviction from his house. The challenge is led by Owen, Bernard’s son, as he is angry that his family is being evicted from their ancestral home. In a scene depicted in an illustration at the front of the novel, Owen is stopped by policemen from going into the house to help his father and sisters. The baliffs are portrayed as cold-hearted thugs when they order Bernard’s daughter, Kathleen, not to take her father’s overcoat even though she protests that it is freezing outside and that it will be the death of him. Sadlier writes: “ ‘I don’t care a damn whether it does or not!’ returned the heartless ruffian. ‘My orders are to seize everything that can be sold. Out with you now, the whole set of you – do you want us to have the trouble of lifting you out?’ ” (New Lights 261).

Owen and the peasant mob want to crush the bailiffs and repossess the home in an act of triumph for their miserable suffering, but Bernard pleads with him not to fight. As Owen grabs a policeman’s throat, threatening to choke him, he is presented as the hot-headed youthful Irishman who will do anything to protect his family. His father

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41 To view the eviction illustration in New Lights, see Appendix E.
Bernard is presented as the level-headed elder who knows that local fighting will only lead to manslaughter. He says to his son: “‘What good can you do us, Owen dear? You can’t put us into the house again, for it’s not ours any longer, an’ you’ll only be the cause of bloodshed, an’ maybe loss of life’” (New Lights 255). The factious scene is finally ended by the local Catholic priest, Fr. O’Driscoll, who commands the peasants to retreat and let God be the judge of Mr. Ousely. I would suggest that the outcome of this scene is typical of Sadlier; while she is political, as is reflected in her nationalistic outlook and dealings with Thomas D’Arcy McGee (1825-1868), a point I expand later, she is not a radical and does not condone any sort of mass physical violence toward the oppressor. 42

Instead, she couches her nationalism in religious discourse, which is the ideology that motivates and sustains her. In a similar vein to Archbishop John MacHale, who stated that the Famine would “scatter … the blessing of the Catholic religion over distant lands” (qtd. in Miller “Revenge for Skibbereen” 182), she ultimately decides to concentrate on the positive outcome of the Famine, rather than its destructive aspects.43 She states that the Famine gave rise to the opportunity, through emigration, to spread the word of Catholicism, echoing providentialist views of the Famine in the 1840s. In her Preface to Willy Burke; or, The Irish Orphan in America (1853), she outlines her views:

The exiled children of Ireland have a noble part to play over all the earth, - that of spreading the true faith; and they should never forget this glorious prerogative has been earned for them by the ages of suffering and persecution which their fathers have endured for the sake of conscience and religion. (iii/iv)

42 This type of thinking is reminiscent of Daniel O’Connell’s policy of achieving his goals through political and non-violent means.
43 Archbishop Paul Cullen stated that the Famine was “a calamity with which God wishes to purify … the Irish people” (qtd. in Miller Revenge for Skibbereen 182).
This type of thinking was reported in an American newspaper article on “The Roman
Propaganda in Ireland”, which detailed the appointment and activities of Cardinal
Cullen in Dublin. The New York Daily Times, in October 1855, reports:

They looked upon death by Famine, if the lucky victim did murmur and receive the rites of the Church, as the surest passport to heaven, and they firmly believe that the exterminated homesteads of Ireland afford silent testimony of the truth of their religion, and that the dispersion of the Irish race to strange lands is one of the inscrutable agencies of Providence for the spread of Catholic doctrines among the benighted heretics with whom they are forced into contact. (4).

However, Sadlier’s view on the Famine does not stop her from highlighting the role that the English colonisers played in facilitating the suffering and hardships.

Sadlier’s criticisms of the English are not as vehement as the Irish nationalist activist John Mitchel’s. Mitchel lived in the U.S. as a political exile in the 1860s and claimed that the Famine was an artificial one, stating that “[t]he almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the Famine” (qtd. in Kenny The Irish Towards the USA 30). A more recent analysis of the Famine, Cecil Woodham-Smith’s The Great Hunger, condemns the ideological blindness demonstrated by the British Government. Indeed, these sentiments were echoed by President Mary Robinson when she visited Grosse Île in 1994. She noted that while the failure of the potato was a “natural disaster” across Europe, “in Ireland it took place in a political, economic and social framework that was oppressive and unjust” (qtd. in Quigley “Grosse Île” 37).

The nineteenth-century public had an insatiable appetite for Famine accounts and for commentary arguing the political rights and wrongs of the matter. Therefore, realistic Famine scenes of this nature retold in Sadlier’s novel New Lights presumably stirred a sense of nostalgia and excitement within emigrants, as well as righteous anger at the injustice of it all.
Sadlier also uses the Famine as a vehicle for identification for Irish emigrants in *Bessy Conway*, albeit in a different manner. Within this novel, Sadlier uses the tragedy of the Famine to highlight the benefits of living a successful Catholic emigrant life – an emigrant life which encapsulates the best qualities of being Irish and American. In *Bessy Conway*, Bessy actively chooses to emigrate and leaves her home in a state of rural bliss in pre-Famine times. While she is in America working as a domestic servant and slowly building her savings, Famine strikes Ireland and significantly affects her family. The narrator observes the dystopian scene:

[…] there was no beauty in the picture, for the look of comfort and neatness that belonged to the place in former days was gone and had left scarce a trace behind. […] the house had a desolate, neglected look in painful contrast with its former appearance. […] the horse was gone from the stable, and even the sty had lost its tenants - the overgrown sow was no longer there with her squeaking brood, nor the wellcared bacon pigs […] the fowl were gone from the barn door, for no grain was there to gather them around it (259-260).

Just as Bessy’s sickly sister Ellen is being worn away by hunger and disease, Bessy swoops in to save the family farm with the monies she has accrued in America, just as the family are being evicted. The narrator comments:

“They’re not going to be sold” said Bessy with quite an air of authority […] “An’d have you that much money, Bessy?” said the father with tears in his eyes-tears of joy. “Yes, and a trifle more to the back of it”, said Bessy in her gayest tone (272).

In this scene, Sadlier emphasises the benefits of emigration by allowing a returned emigrant to save the family left at home. Sadlier warns her readers that only certain people succeed in America, and these people normally adhere to Catholicism, sobriety and display thrifty habits with their wages, personality traits typified by Bessy Conway. Bessy’s good character and saved monies restore happiness and health to her family because she is able to afford groceries for the starved family. The narrator notes: “After a little Nancy [Bessy’s sister] returned with a large basket of baker’s bread, whilst a boy
from the village carried another containing tea, sugar, butter and meat” (247). Sadlier wrote passages like these to encourage Irish emigrants to continue sending monies home to their families in Ireland. These remittances were vital for the peasant family and also important for the local economy. Within this scene, she affords the returned emigrant an elevated status, a status of wealth and power. She endows their ability to transform Irish poverty with magical qualities. The narrator states: “Every object was so changed that it seemed as if a magician’s wand had waved all over it” (278). By writing a tale of Famine tragedy and triumph, Sadlier strives to connect to Irish emigrants and help them identify with their Irish roots and newly adopted American habits.

The Great Irish Famine also appears in Elinor Preston in a minor way, but its presentation by Sadlier is interesting. Although Sadlier writes that Elinor Preston’s motivation to emigrate is based on her own free will, one must remember that she emigrates to Canada against the backdrop of the Famine and agrarian suffering. She is evicted from her home after her father’s death, and her narrative of loss and trauma is thus displaced by her excitement at the prospect of emigration. By presenting the character of Elinor in such a manner, it could be argued that Sadlier is actually further repressing the trauma of the period. Another example of this repression can be found in Con O’Regan; or, Emigrant Life in the New World (1864). When Con O’Regan arrives in Boston, he goes to visit Paul and Nora Bergen, who live in a cellar with their four children. Having offered to share his food with Con, Paul apologises for the paucity of the meal. He says:

[...] things are not so plentiful here as we all remember them in the farmer’s houses about Ballymullen; we haven’t the big fat pots of bacon and cabbage – or broth that a spoon would stand in; no, nor the fine baskets of laughing potatoes that would do a man’s heart good to look at them (22-23)
Considering that Con emigrated in 1844 out of poverty, this cozy picture of peasant life lacks credibility. It seems that Sadlier is conflicted in her presentation of the Great Irish Famine. As demonstrated, she blatantly uses it to propagate her version of an Irish identity, as well as using it as a tool to connect emigrants to the homeland. However, her reluctance to write a novel which graphically portrays the destitution or the reality of the situation shows her willingness to relegate the Famine nightmare to the background of her concerns. It seems that she uses just enough Famine narrative to create empathy, both among Irish Catholics and American Protestants, but does not invoke too much tragedy as she does not want to immerse Irish Catholics in a lament for the motherland. Instead, Sadlier wants them to remember their homeland with fond thoughts and to prompt remittances, but she also wants them to adopt good American habits of conscientiousness and industrious behaviour, which will lead to a balanced version of an Irish-American character.

_The creation of a transatlantic Irish-American Catholic identity_

Stuart Hall writes about the different positions from which we speak or when we write, considers who the projected ‘I’ is narrating. Our identity within cultural practices is formed in a series of representations. We speak or write from “ourselves” or from our experiences of life, but these are always quite specific to a particular place and time; therefore, those experiences are automatically contextualised by external conditions. The authenticity of identity is never constant and is always changing according to place and time. Hall argues that this means that identity is not as transparent or straightforward as one thinks. He sees “identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 222). It is ever-shifting and changing, depending on
different structures of history, culture and power. Concepts of identity are formed not only by present discourses, but also by the past which we emerge from. Hall explains that “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 225). Thus, when thinking about what forms an emigrant cultural identity, we need to be aware of the role of the past as well as the influences of contemporary discourses.

To become a successful emigrant, one needs a certain vision, a belief in a better way of life, the courage to plan a life in an unknown world and the personal strength and independence to execute that plan successfully. According to Miller, many Irish Catholics in the nineteenth century felt they had no choice with regard to emigration and, even though they were subject to the same social poverty as those Protestants who emigrated, they felt it was political pressure and religious tyranny which pushed them out of their own country (Emigrants and Exiles 103). Their resistance to English rule and feelings of “banishment” led to resentment and bitterness on the part of Irish Catholics, not only towards the English, but also their newly formed Irish-American identity because they were full of animosity towards the dominant Anglo-Protestant discourse of their new homeland. While the colonial context was part of their reason for emigrating, peasant Catholics left Ireland out of economic necessity because of the Famine.

This involuntary exile took place in a context of devastation, regret and grief. As Miller explains: “For emigration ideally demanded all the features or virtues of ‘action’ – individual initiative, personal responsibility, independence from traditional constraints – whereas exile connoted the absence, even the opposite of all these
qualities” (*Emigrants and Exiles* 111). Many emigrants left home because another relative had made it possible for them to do so as part of the process of chain migration. Established Irish-American emigrants often paid for passage for younger members of Irish families to make the voyage across the Atlantic to a land believed to be full of promise and good things. However, for many Irish people, this dream soon transpired not to be the case. Peasants were lured by attractive prospects, and in an attempt to avoid religious and political persecution in their homeland, they often became indentured servants once they reached North America. This meant that their passage was free to America, but they then would have to work for nothing for a set number of years as Miller explains (*Emigrants and Exiles* 139). This type of chain migration led to the breaking down of the traditional family structure, a point I will develop in Chapter Two, and forced emigrants to form a new family structure, which included an extended community when they reached the host country. In other words, the circumstances in which many Irish-Americans emigrated to and settled in North America did not lend themselves to an easy process of assimilation.

Miller attributes the problems experienced by Irish emigrants in America to Gaelic and Catholic features of their culture clashing with native Anglo-Protestant settlers. He argues that Irish-American Catholics saw themselves as “exiles” rather than emigrants. They always dreamed of returning home, therefore psychologically refusing to settle into their new lives, instead creating barriers to economic and social mobility. In her research, Breda Gray explains these anxieties further, stating that emigration was seen by the Irish as “potentially undermining their national and religious identities” (*Women and the Irish Diaspora* 2). As explained above, experiences of the Famine and

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44 In his research, Donald Akenson challenges Miller’s argument that Irish Catholics felt like they were exiled from their own country. Also, not all emigration was seen in terms of turmoil. Fitzgerald and Lambkin explain that emigration could be viewed as an exercise of freedom and the pursuit of economic opportunity 20.
the oppressiveness of British landlords were fresh in emigrant’s memories, and as they read Sadlier’s *Bessy Conway*, which details Denis Conway’s eviction from his home in Ireland, they would have empathised with Conway’s plight. In other words, Sadlier in her fiction is trying to evoke a sense of an Irish national character through feelings of large-scale solidarity. French theorist Ernest Renan agrees with this method of using collective trauma. He writes: “Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort” (19). Sadlier sets a rural cottage amid a typical Famine scene where the reader can feel the desolation of the inhabitants in order to reinforce ethnic identification.

Traditionally, as father and head of the household, it would have been Denis’s duty to provide for his family and assume his manly responsibilities. While Nancy stirs a pot of nettles, water and a handful of oats for a meagre dinner, Denis tries to keep spirits up while the boys return home from a half day’s work with little money, which is spent on bread for their sickly sister. Sadlier writes:

> At home, the old man tried to conceal his feelings, for he knew that the wife of his youth and the children of his love were pining and wasting day by day under the blighting hand of misery, and he felt it incumbent on himself to set them an example of fortitude and resignation”. (*Bessy Conway* 265)

Events take a turn for the worse when Denis sees the bailiffs coming up the road, and momentarily, he is relieved that they are headed for a neighbour’s house and not his own home. However, the moment he feels this relief, he feels a rush of shame and disgust at his own self-preservation instincts. It becomes apparent that the bailiffs are indeed set to evict the Conways, and Denis trembles with fear at the outcome. This type of Famine narrative was very popular with emigrants because it reinforced their sense of injustice and collective loss. Peter Gray writes that the coupling of evictions with extreme emotions and political antagonisms was often reported in the press, stating that
“[e]victions were often regularly reported in an emotive manner, and sectarian and political motives were frequently appropriated to proprietors” (45). In the next scene of the novel, Conway’s disgrace is evident and he is humiliated as he begs the bailiffs to refrain from emptying the house. It is only Bessy’s triumphant return from America at this critical point that saves the family from the British landlord’s eviction. By allowing Bessy to be the hero of the story, Sadlier is re-affirming the belief that emigrants can help their forsaken families in Ireland by sending home remittances, thereby instilling a sense of purpose and value to their emigration.

Sadlier was not the only writer who was incorporating the figure of a returned Irish-American into her emigrant novels. Such a figure features in the work of a contemporary, Thomas O’Neill Russell’s *The Struggles of Dick Massey; or, the Battles of a Boy* (1860). Russell, who relies on prosthetic memory of the transatlantic journey from emigrant friends, features the returned emigrant in the form of Norah and Tom, following the death of Norah’s mother, Mrs. Conway. Ironically, Mrs. Conway survives the crossing to America, which is detailed with stereotypically unhealthy conditions on board and culminates in a shipwreck. However, the severance of ties to the homeland and assimilation to the new culture attributes to her death, and Norah and Tom find no solace in America and decide to return “home”. As Corporaal and Cusack observe: “The homeland seems to offer a better life than the American ‘jungle’ and their uneventful passage back to Ireland, which is more tranquil than the voyage out, prefigures a happy future life in Ireland as husband and wife” (350). In these instances, both Sadlier and Russell corroborate Miller’s argument of the Irish refusing to settle in their new homeland and longing to return home.

Furthermore in *Bessy Conway*, Sadlier validates the belief in the returned “Yank” who is healthy and wealthy after years of working in America, but who has no
interest in putting down roots in the adopted country. However, in reality, the romanticised dream of the returning emigrant rarely happened. Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner state:

Among Italian immigrants to America, more than forty percent returned to live in their homeland. Among Poles and Hungarians, more than fifty percent returned. And among Greek immigrants, more than sixty percent went back to their native land. But fewer than ten percent of Irish immigrants to the New World ever returned to ‘Mother Ireland’” (*Out of Ireland* 125).

Nevertheless, as the fictive Bessy displaces the stereotypical Famine narrative, it was the overriding belief of the returned “Yank” that sustained many Irish emigrants and created within them a sense of worth that had been diminished in their home country. The importance of remigration in *Bessy Conway* is highlighted by Corporaal, who argues that the novel falls within one of three specific narrative templates of remigration. The transnational narrative scheme within the novel allows the protagonist to move in a linear movement to the host country, but her return to the homeland facilitates a “reversed pattern”. Corporaal notes that “the return in space from host to native settings additionally involves a symbolical movement backward in time, as the Ireland in which they land resembles a pre-Famine society” (“Remigration” n. pag.). Corporaal explains that the importance of remigration to a heavenly homeland facilitates the protagonist to reverse colonisation procedures put in place by the British, as can be seen in *Bessy Conway* when she reclaims her parent’s farm (“Remigration” n. pag.). Images of warm cosy homesteads and an abundance of food are facilitated by the emigrant’s saved monies from their time in the host country, making the journey of emigration an essential act. Thus, the narrative template of remigration functions on several levels within Sadlier’s emigrant novels.
The North American reception

When analysing the construction of the kind of “Irish” identity that Sadlier presents in her novels, one must remember the cultural context in which Sadlier was writing. Steve Garner reminds us that “[t]he nineteenth century witnessed an extraordinary set of developments in the ways in which ‘race’ was understood and used as a determining point of social difference” (93). Sadliers novels must be interpreted with this context in mind. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Americans tolerated Irish emigrants because they were a cheap source of labour and their relatively small numbers could be contained and controlled. William Griffin explains that the American attitude towards the Irish emigrant changed from the 1820s, by which time the Irish had built up a growing amount of respect in the USA, to the Famine-ridden years of the 1840s, when diseased, low-skilled Irish emigrants landed on American shores. He writes: “The Irish immigrant, previously perceived as a necessary nuisance – a source of cheap labor, despite his Popish superstitions and his cultural eccentricities – now took on a more sinister aspect, that of the beggar, the rioter, the criminal” (219). There was also the aspect of boundary anxiety, in which native Protestant Americans believed that mixing with the Irish would lead to an outburst of contagious diseases. By the time that Sadlier emigrated in 1844, she would have been faced with an increasingly hostile American attitude towards her people.

For settled Anglo-Protestants, the link between the Irish emigrant and the Catholic Church was inextricable. Ridiculed for their backwardness and their popish ways, the immigrant Irish became stereotyped and was branded as dirty, drunken and violent by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants were an ethnic elite with high social status and political power, who increasingly became known as WASPs. Immigrant stereotypes of the Irish were perpetuated by WASPs in
newspapers and pamphlets of the period as a means to presume their place in the social hierarchy. In a letter to the editor of the New York Daily Times, in January 1855, the spokesperson from the Children’s Aid Society maintains these stereotypes:

Below them is a class of whom many of us have long been warning society – the neglected, ignorant, unprincipled young men and women – many of foreign birth – who have grown up from this multitude of outcast and vagabond children […] thieves, loafers and vile women, who almost fill certain quarters of the City, and who only need this torch of the working-men’s poverty to light a conflagration of desperate rapine and revolution. (2)

These types of sentiments towards immigrants and the poor of New York City can be contrasted to Sadlier’s presentation of a Catholic Irish person. Sadlier always writes her Irish Catholic emigrant characters as well-behaved, respectful, honest and hard-working; these are the characters that enjoy a successful life within her novels.

Sadlier saw her task as a writer to try and present Catholic Irish emigrants as decent, moral and trustworthy in her novels.45 Eagan sees Sadlier’s efforts as strategic and commends her for this approach. She writes: “Because Sadlier has portrayed the Catholic Irish as fellow civilized whites concerned with religious faith and education, the starvation, property confiscation and demoralization that they face would have been all the more horrifying to Anglo-American readers” (81). Eagan outlines the perceptions of Catholicism in America and how Irish-American writers overcome that negative perception. She discusses the various techniques and skill involved in re-addressing the propaganda that was so prevalent surrounding the Irish. Indeed, some of Sadlier’s novels contain scenarios where the whole plot is concerned with comparing the lives of those who invest in Catholicism and those who choose to ignore it. As I will detail in Chapter Two, inevitably the Catholic families triumph throughout the novel, while the atheists or “lapsed” Catholics fail miserably and have a horrible life.

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45 Sadlier acknowledges this in her conclusion to Old and New; or, Taste Versus Fashion (1862) 486.
Eagan saw this as a writing tool and a feature of the Famine era writers. She comments: “Authors were careful to arrange dialogues and plot situations so that the novels’ heroes got plenty of opportunities to enlighten English and American Protestant characters as to Catholicism’s respectability and sophistication” (67). Sadlier’s presentation of the Famine within her emigrant novels also educated American Protestant characters as to the suffering occurring in Ireland under the control of British Protestants. This could be seen as a tool for explaining the hostility and suspicion of Irish Catholics towards American Protestants.

In her discussions of the emigrant Irish and their quest to obtain a sense of racial belonging, Eagan demonstrates that Irish-Americans actively associated themselves with “whiteness” because they felt it was their right to do so. However, they had to overcome the pejorative stereotypes of the Irish that were widely circulated in periodicals and posters in the period. Fears of the slovenly, non-white Irish contaminating the WASP population were not exclusive to America; the same type of thinking was sweeping through Britain at that time. James Murphy illustrates this fear using examples from Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855) and Fredrick Engels *The Condition of the World Class in England* (1845). There, he writes that “it was feared that Irish emigrants might make the English working class more like themselves” (211). Consequently, Irish emigrants were presented as an unruly, disease-ridden mob. I suggest that what Sadlier’s fiction purports to do is to reverse this thinking and present a new type of character with the best attributes of both Irish and American cultures.

Settled Anglo-Protestants viewed the Irish as lazy and inebriated and in clear violation of their lifestyle, which was the complete antitheses of the stereotypical Catholic Irish. This type of discriminating attitude towards Irish emigrants was reflected in national and local cultural society. Maureen Murphy details the
representations of emigrant Irish servant girls in caricatures towards the end of the nineteenth century in various periodical such as *Puck* and *Harper’s Weekly*. In her assessment of the cartoons drawn by Frederick Opper from *Puck* magazine, she accuses him of using simian features in order to suggest Irish animalistic characteristics and purporting a damning stereotype. She writes:

> Another group of more nativist cartoons (in *Puck*) ridicules Irish immigrants by reinforcing the negative beliefs, values, and stereotypes associated with the Irish urban poor: their dirt, their ignorance, their neglect or abuse of their children, their penchant for drink and violence. (“Bridget and Biddy” 155)

Murphy’s research also details the portrayal of Irish-American servants in caricatures, grouping them into well known stereotypes such as the Irish “Bridget” or “Biddy”. Sadlier employs these characters within her novels for her readers so that they can connect to her stories. In *Bessy Conway*, Sadlier’s portrayal of the servants mirrors closely Murphy’s evidence found in caricatures representing the newly arrived “Irish”. For instance, Bridget is the cook who is easily angered with a bad temper and a sharp tongue full of profanities. These would have been stereotypical qualities of an “Irish” cook, as Murphy explains:

> As a rule, the younger Bridget, usually the subject of the numbskull jokes and sometimes of the purloined hospitality cartoons, is treated more sympathetically than the older, more formidable Biddy, who has worked her way up in the household, usually to the position of cook. It is Biddy who allows *Puck* artists to exploit the negative Irish female stereotype. She is bellicose, bossy, and frequently, like her male counterpart, boozy. (“Bridget and Biddy” 167)

However, Sadlier also presents a softer side to the cook when the reader learns that she saves her wages and sends remittances home to her family in Ireland. In her portrayal of Bridget, Sadlier manipulates the common perception of an Irish cook, which in turn presents the reader with a different perspective of an Irish stereotype.

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46 For more on scientific racism like craniology see Garner 93.
As a writer, it must have been very difficult for Sadlier to create a likeable Irish character which appealed to both her Irish and American readers. In reality, during the period, Irish communities were impoverished, dysfunctional and rife with violence. This came to the fore during the Civil War on the streets of New York in 1863 when the Draft Act came into law. This Act stated that men who were drafted could pay $300 to provide a substitute as a commutation fee to buy exemption from service. Religion became a contentious issue as wealthy Anglo-Protestants could pay the fee and avoid the battleground but the poor Irish had to fight. According to all accounts, the Irish fought bravely on both sides during the Civil War. However, many Irish emigrants did not want to liberate African-Americans because they were worried that emancipation from slavery would overinflate the marketplace and lower wages. Garner explains that “it was argued that freeing the slave population would create a massive pool of cheap labour, which would then lower wages in the Northern cities in which immigrants were already pitted against each other” (101). But McCaffrey believes that it was more than economic difference that divided the Irish and the African-Americans. He writes that “much Irish Catholic antagonism to Blacks was based on sheer bigotry. Since Anglo Protestants considered them a human subgroup, in Boston they were thought of as inferior to Blacks, Irish Catholics got an ego lift by feeling and acting superior to another despised minority” (73).

Indeed, Noel Ignatiev states it was only by enacting this form of “race consciousness” that actually liberated the Irish from their inferior status and gave them “white” acceptance (137). However, Garner informs us that for most of the nineteenth century, settled Protestants saw the Irish and African-Americans in similar terms. He writes: “In the eyes of WASP America, the two groups were perceived in racist discourse as being comparable if not interchangeable, as late as the 1870s” (98).
Although Sadlier features these sentiments within her novels, they occur more as a subtext of her work. In *Con O'Regan* (1864), Sadlier uses pejorative language such as “spiteful old nigger” (329) to reiterate racial superiority, and she also accuses wayward second-generation Irish-Americans of imitating other ethnic groups. One of the characters in the novel, Nora Bergen, who lives in a damp cellar with her husband and four children, tries to correct her son Patsy’s bad behaviour as he disrespects his parents and refers to new emigrants pejoratively as “Irish Paddies” (236). Nora suggests he has learned this deviant behaviour by “imitatin the darkies” (sic) (234) and so the family decides to leave the perilous urban setting of a New England city and settle in the farmlands of the West in Iowa.

The transformation of the little boy when removed from the evil influences of the city is evident when Con comments on “the healthy influences that had changed the little Yankee rowdy into a genuine Irish boy, full of the traditional virtues of his people, and susceptible of every noble and generous feeling” (373). Sadlier’s position on promoting racial supremacy indicate that she endorsed the view that the emigrant Irish should adopt a “white” identity in order to assimilate into American life more easily. Garner explains:

> The attainment of whiteness meant above all the banishment of blacks. Whiteness safeguarded access to the labour market, the vote and a degree of social prestige constituted from its antithesis, and ensured a constant flattering comparison with occupationally and residentially segregated blacks. (98)

By referring to another ethnic group as being of lower status, one automatically gives the impression that one is superior and, therefore, more accepted by mainstream society. These racial incidents are found in the margins of Sadlier’s work, but they inform her whole ideology of white Catholic supremacy. Jason King notes that “her black characters frequently appear in burlesque form as congenitally incapable of
comprehending ‘Catholic books’ or liturgical practices” (49). Sadlier features such an African-American character called Wash in *Bessy Conway*. He is depicted as the servant in the staff of Mrs. Hibbard and occupies the lowest position in the household, i.e. cleaning boots, knives, etc. As a reader, we often see him being bossed about by Bridget or arguing with her over politics. Sadlier shrouds him in mystery and refers to him in the dialogue of other characters using names such as “darkey” (72) “nigger” and “black devil” (88). In a discussion with Bessy and Bridget, he claims that Catholics pay for confession in order to “get whitewashed” (*Bessy Conway* 88). This is an interesting play on words within the discourses of the white/black dichotomy that surrounds the characters. The suggestion by a black servant that the Irish are not really white is correlated with their souls being blackened by sins, i.e. by becoming a lapsed Catholic or by being tempted by Protestantism. Sadlier juxtaposes these two ideas in order to highlight that in order to “get whitewashed” and achieve a proper social standing, they must attend confession and be good Catholics. Her reference to paying for confession can be seen as a slur on emigrant Irish Catholics who put wealth over spirituality, as typified by the character of Miles Blake, a point I will expand on in Chapter Two. This use of colour and race by Sadlier highlights the difference in identity at a physical and cultural level as she always depicts Wash as “malicious” (72). Therefore the racist inclination found in *Bessy Conway* which was written in 1861 was reflective of the overall sentiment of Irish emigrants towards African-Americans, which came to the fore in 1863 with the riots and killings stemming from the Draft Act.\(^{47}\) The emerging gulf between Irish Catholics and African-Americans further separated a country which was already divided by religious and ethnic differences.

\(^{47}\) The Civil War Military Draft Act came into effect on 3\(^{rd}\) March 1863 leading to the New York Draft Riots on the 13\(^{th}\)-16\(^{th}\) July 1863.
This inter-racial hatred and class divide worked both ways as demonstrated by the fact that settled Anglo-Protestants were appalled at the way the Irish lived and were critical of them for not improving their conditions in life. This sectarianism led to many riots and lengthy periods of unrest. Griffin explains: “During the 1830s recurrent outbursts of xenophobia led to the burning of a convent school near Boston, attacks on Catholic churches in Philadelphia and anti-Irish riots in many towns” (50). One of Sadlier’s emigrant novels, *Simon Kerrigan; or, the Confessions of an Apostate* (1864), details such an attack. This tale, which was first serialised in the *Tablet* in 1858, features an Irish Catholic farmer’s son who emigrates to America and marries the daughter of a Protestant deacon. The first-person narrator tells the reader how, in order to avoid ridicule, he distances himself from his Irish roots by giving up Catholicism and changing his name from Kerrigan to Kerr. In New Haven, he enjoys a prosperous life, but is tormented by the denial of his past and his disavowal of his family in Ireland. All of his children die, except Joel who, in a dramatic twist after finding out about his father’s past, calls him a hypocrite and an alien, in response to which Simon knocks him down and almost kills him. Full of remorse for his behaviour, he gives Joel his business, returns to the Catholic Church and moves to Boston. Sadlier inserts historical realism into *Con O’Regan* when she tells the tale of Simon, who is visiting a priest in Philadelphia in 1844, seeing Joel at the head of a mob attacking St. Augustine’s church, and saying in response: “Never shall I forget the demonical expression of his once handsome features as he waved his arm and called on the others to burn down the ‘mass-house’ and clear the city of the rascally Irish” (250).

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48 Kenny reports of this riot having occurred in the period, which stemmed from a dispute over which version of the scriptures to teach in public schools, the Protestant King James version or the Catholic Douai Bible, *The Irish Towards the USA* 20.
It is obvious that Joel has become part of the Know-Nothing movement. The Know-Nothing movement represented anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant prejudices by Protestants. The party was known as the “Know-Nothing” because many of its members were violent local nativists and part of anti-Catholic societies who were sworn to secrecy and, if questioned by the police about anti-social behaviour, supposed to reply that they “knew nothing” (Miller *Ireland and Irish America* 75). The Know-Nothing movement activities were well reported in the press and often the subject of opinion columns. Such an example can be found in the *New York Daily Times*, in December 1854:

> We believe the present movement is due mainly to the conviction that the liberty we grant to aliens of becoming American citizens has been grossly abused; that under cover of this privilege the pauperism, the ignorance, the crime of the old countries have been emptied out upon our shores with hostile recklessness of our interest and our rights. (5)

The Know-Nothing movement claimed that Catholics were committed to hierarchal structures and that they were in thrall to Rome. They believed that this loyalty to religious belief hindered their participation in a liberal society. The newspaper article continues to explain:

> The Roman Catholic vote has been held in a compact, disciplined mass, under the immediate and supreme control of a hierarchy whose interests and sympathies lead them to resist and denounce every attempt at the freedom for the people […] The Irish – the foreign Catholic – will become the degraded, the depressed, the menial race. The Saxon must gain victory. But what a victory it will be! (4)

The character and actions of Joel represents somebody from the Know-Nothing movement. When Simon sees his son filled with so much rage and hatred for the Irish, it fills him with regret and grief. As noted by Ignatiev, the violent racist attacks detailed above, and typified by Joel, were often targeted at the Catholic Church, or organisations
they were associated with, in order to apply maximum damage to local Irish communities (150).

The violence of the Know-Nothing movement was notorious, and it was considered to be a hindrance to the act of emigration. A copy of an article entitled “Irish Emigration to America” was re-printed in the *New York Daily Times*, dated 4th June 1855, and it shows the perspective of an Irish newspaper’s attitude towards the act of emigration to America. It states:

> All parties agree in complaining of the dreadful persecutions which await them from all the powers of Know-Nothings in the hitherto boasted land of liberty, we feel it our imperative duty to raise our voice in protest and reclamation. Bad as home is, and cold as is the prospect that awaits our people under a system of laws that obstinately refuse security for tenant industry, it is better to remain and battle with the ills they know than fly to others of a more revolting kind. (2)

The article continues to issue a cautionary warning to those thinking of emigration from Ireland to America. It states: “A quiet death in the old land of saints, with the aid of religious consolation in that awful hour, is better than contact with the awful demoralization and *almost total absence* of religious comforts which await the emigrant beyond the Atlantic” (2). Therefore, by 1855, the violent tribulations which faced Irish emigrants were well reported on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Irish however were not entirely helpless victims. They too engaged in unruly and violent behaviour. McCaffrey argues that this largely occurred as a result of the Irish experiencing a psychologically traumatic shift from a rural to an urban environment (2). He states that they were unable to cope with their new surroundings; they were free from an oppressive Catholic church, but homesick for their loved ones and a familiar way of life. In a bid to solve this problem the Irish Emigrant Aid Convention was conceived by Thomas D’Arcy McGee and convened in 1856 in Buffalo. Politicians and businessmen proposed to form joint-stock companies which
would buy large tracts of rural land in the Midwest and sell them to Irish immigrants in an instalment plan in a bid to remove them from the overcrowded cities. *Con O’Regan; or, Emigrant Life in the New World* (1864) was obviously written to promote the ideals of McGee which he outlined at the Irish Emigrant Aid Buffalo Convention in 1856.  

Sadlier herself writes in the preface that if the suggestions at the conference:

> Had been generally adopted and carried out, [it] might have been of incalculable benefit to many thousands of the Irish race, by removing them from the overcrowded cities of our Atlantic seaboard to safer, calmer, and more healthful pursuits of agricultural life, whether on the smiling prairies of the West, or by the great waters of the North. (iii)

 Having already utilised the British colonisation of Ireland as a means for fostering a sense of Irishness in emigrants, Sadlier was well aware of the sensitive history between Irish people and their land. The relationship between the two is inseparable and often fraught. John Wilson Foster claims that the Irish are “possessed by place” and have a “preoccupation with place as an unseverable aspect of self” (30). With this in mind and considering that most Irish emigrants landed in overcrowded urban ghettos where they shared an apartment room with several families, their sense of self was severely threatened. The Emigrant Aid idea must have seemed like a solution to the diseased, over-populated cities as emigrants demonstrated qualities endemic to country life.

In her novels, Sadlier encourages the emigrant Irish to retain and strengthen their Catholicism, believing that a strong faith could help emigrants overcome the hardships of relocation by providing a specifically “ethical” and communal structure. In her Preface to *Bessy Conway*, she notes the difficulties that faced emigrants with regard to keeping their faith when living in an anti-Catholic culture. She creates binary opposites and presents Ireland as a land “where virtue and religion are the basis of society”.

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49 Fanning speculates that *Con O’Regan* was written in 1856 as it had been serialised in McGee’s *American Celt* before being serialised in the *Tablet* in 1863. It was published as a novel in 1864, *The Irish Voice* 127.
whereas America is presented as having the potential to be a dark place with an “awful
depth of corruption weltering below the surface” (iii). Her novels compound the
message that Catholic emigrants must first have allegiance to their homeland and must
not forget where their roots are. Kelly writes that Sadlier’s books were aimed at making
Irish emigrants feel that:

[n]o matter what other country they owed allegiance and fealty, [they
should remain] proud of their native land and their mother Church; and
at keeping alive and active their affection for the old folks at home and
the good old Catholic customs and practices of their forefathers. (323)

Thus, from the very beginning of the novel, Sadlier reinforces the belief that a strong
Catholic faith would be a key asset to the struggling emigrant. Catholicism is an
integral tenet in Sadlier’s formation of a nineteenth century Irish identity, and it plays a
powerful role in all of her writings.

Sadlier’s ambition to create an admirable Irish character was aided by Irish
participation in the Civil War (1861-1865), where their demonstration of bravery and
loyalty to their newly adopted home changed negative Irish stereotypes. After the Civil
War, nativism dwindled because people were concentrating on the country’s economic
climate. People were more concerned with reconstructing the South and the expansion
of industrialisation in the North, and they realised that railroads and factories needed a
large labour force. Emma Lazarus’s statement on the Statue of Liberty, erected in New
York harbour in 1886, expressed a new American attitude toward European immigrants:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me;
I lift my lamp beside the golden door. (qtd. in McCaffrey 104).

Although these lines are very inclusive and reflective of America’s new attitude towards
its immigrants, they are a little exaggerated. Describing immigrants as “wretched
refuse” was no longer accurate in the case of the Irish immigrants. This was because, by the end of the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants were no longer as desolate and desperate as they were at the time of the Famine. They were now a different type of immigrant, better educated since the introduction of the compulsory state school system, and they had lost their “banished” psychological status. McCaffrey confirms: “By 1900 the literacy rate in Ireland was higher than in the United States. Irish arrivals at Ellis Island may have been technologically unskilled, but they could read and write and express themselves clearly in English, instruments of economic and social mobility” (79). This statement on the Statue of Liberty reveals that America still considered itself to be the land of promise and of the free, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the hyphenated presence of Irish-Americans were well established and amongst the writers of the welcoming message for new immigrants, rather than amongst readers of it as they had been a century previously.

**Analysing second-generation assimilation in Sadlier’s novels**

As Sadlier’s work shows, the problems of assimilation were prevalent among first-generation emigrant Irish, but subsequent generations assimilated more easily because they were born in North America. There is a distinct difference between emigrant and ethnic Irish. Donald Akenson explains that the term *emigrant Irish* concerns first generation Irish people who left Ireland and settled in American, whereas the term *ethnic Irish* comprises second generation Irish and their descendents, i.e., people who deem themselves to be of Irish ancestry (112). Second and subsequent generation emigrants tend to forget the homeland because they do not have direct memories of it, and they need to be reminded of their heritage, which often takes place in the form of, to borrow Pierre Nora’s phrase, *‘lieux de mémoire’*. Nora writes:
Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory. (7)

Nora’s theory, which addresses the complex relationship between memory and history over time, is a good framework for accessing the anxiety that surrounds second-generation emigrant memory. Nora further explains his theory: “These *lieux des mémoire* are fundamental remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it” (12). I argue that this structure for purposely creating memories to remember historical events can also be linked to the creation and sustainability of an ethnic identity. In a way, for the second-generation emigrant, memory has been “torn” and “abandoned”, and the second-generation emigrant needs a specific reminder of what took place. In other words, the second generation of the Famine emigrants need to be reminded of their “Irish” identity because they have not experienced it directly. These memories that are invoked are sustained in festivals, cemeteries and anniversaries because, Nora claims, there is no longer “spontaneous memory” (12), and so remembering becomes a deliberate ritual.

This conflict of identities between generations is particularly evident in Sadlier’s *The Blakes and the Flanagans: A Tale, Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1855), which not only addresses educational debates in America, but also questions the criteria for claiming an Irish heritage. This question of what constitutes Irish heritage comes to the fore when the headmaster of the Catholic school announces the
celebrations for the upcoming St. Patrick’s Day. Nora explains the importance of *lieux des mémoire* in recollecting memories and, I would argue, forging an identity:

> The defence, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux des mémoire* - that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away. We buttress our identities upon such bastions, but if what they defended where not threatened, there would be no need to build them. (12)

This leads us to conclude that such remembering processes are carried out under threat – threat to an identity structure – and the process inevitably creates tension and insecurity, which some members of society may find disconcerting. I propose that in this novel Sadlier uses the festival of the St. Patrick’s Day parade to remind her emigrant readers of their homeland, and she achieves this through setting and characterisation. Mr. Lanigan is depicted as the epitome of nineteenth-century Irishness; he reads the Dublin *Freeman’s Journal*, which he receives by post from Ireland, is interested in Irish history, is full of love for the Irish language, and is strictly devoted to the Catholic faith. Sadlier dedicates a whole chapter to the festivities of the day, the obligations of attending mass and the ceremony of the parade, in order to encourage an Irish sense of identity. This was definitely a narrative ploy on Sadlier’s behalf. Miller explains:

> “Middle-class emigrants often encouraged Irish self-consciousness for political purposes, inventing the annual St. Patrick’s Day celebrations to express interclass ethnic solidarity and political strength” (*Emigrants and Exiles* 274).

Sadlier’s presentation of a St. Patrick’s Day in the mid-nineteenth century can be compared to coverage of the national day in the local press. In an article entitled “Celebration of St. Patrick’s Day” the *New York Daily Times* records the events of the Saint’s day in 1853, just two years before the publication of *The Blakes and Flanagans* (1855):
The anniversary of St. Patrick was celebrated yesterday, with a spirit and display superior to any previous observance of the occasion. [...] The Civic Societies which took part in the procession were: [...] Hibernian Benevolent Burial Society [...] Ancient Order of Hibernians [...] Hibernian Universal Benevolent Society. [...] Dodworth’s celebrated Band, Shelton’s, Manahan’s and others were engaged for the day, and enlivened the march with Irish and American airs. (1).

This newspaper account enhances the verisimilitude of her novel when Sadlier records these events in a fictionalised setting. Irish family values are enshrined in *The Blakes and Flanagans* when Tim Flanagan walks in the parade under the banner of the Old Hibernians with his three boys while his wife stays at home to prepare a nice stew and look after the two younger children. Before the family goes to bed, they engage in family prayers to St. Patrick to protect “them and theirs” during the ensuing year. Sadlier views St. Patrick’s Day as a family day, and she details the gaiety of the occasion and the enthusiasm of Irish emigrants for wearing an emblem of their country to honour their patron saint. Icons of Irishness such as the harp, a cross and the shamrock emblazoned in green are symbolic of their homeland, which gives them a sense of identity and community.

However, not all of her characters are happy to be labelled as Irish; Harry Blake, who attends a non-denominational school, is annoyed that he has been taken out of school to partake in the festivities. He fears he will lose his top ranking in the school table because he has missed a day’s school, and he is also afraid of the jeering he will receive from other (Protestant) boys in his class. As a second generation Irish-American, he feels that he does not belong to the group celebrating before him. He feels fully “American” and is alienated from ballads such as “The Exiles of Erin” which plays in the streets.

Sadlier suggests that Harry queries his identity because he is not Irish by birth. Hall argues that people must not only be legal citizens of a nation, but they must accept...
the idea of a common nationality. He states that in a pre-modern age, people identified with tribes, religions and regions, but in Western societies these became replaced by the quest for a “national culture”. Therefore, a national culture, complete with symbols and representations, creates a discourse which shapes our conception of ourselves and the image we project. Hall explains: “National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about ‘the nation’ with which we can identify” (“The Question of Cultural Identity” 293). These meanings are produced in stories, memories and images, and in the novel, Harry feels he cannot identify with a sense of “Irishness” if he is to be a “true” American. In a conversation with Edward his cousin, Harry is unequivocal about this:

‘And what are we then?’ demanded Edward in surprise. ‘Why, Americans, to be sure – were we not born here?’ ‘Well I suppose so’ returned Ned coolly ‘but what of that? aren’t we the sons of Irishmen, ay! and the sons of St. Patrick too […]. ‘Yes I guess I have heard enough about what he did for Ireland, but that won’t do for me; it ain’t very likely that he’ll help me to get my place again. […] I wish they wouldn’t keep Patrick’s Day here; they might leave it behind in Ireland’. (34)

Nora also outlines the difference between “true memory”, which is portrayed through gestures and habits inherent within the body, as well as through skills which are filtered through generations and “memory transformed by its passage through history”, which is the antithesis of true memory. Instead of being intuitive, it is classed as being “deliberate, experienced as a duty, no longer spontaneous” (13).

In this passage, Sadlier is showing us the difficulty in making people remember with the desired effect. T.S. Eliot writes that emigrants take only part of their parent culture and merge it with native customs and other emigrant beliefs. This creates what Eliot calls “peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture clash” (63-64). Homi Bhabha labels this space as “partial” culture and describes it as “the contaminated yet
connective tissue between cultures – at once the impossibility of culture’s containedness and the boundary between” (“Culture’s In-Between” 54). Minority groups, such as emigrants, occupy this space when they settle abroad. They disturb the national culture and occupy what Bhabha calls culture’s “in-between” (54). Therefore, emigrants form part of a cultural cross-identity, are locked in this in-between state, both alike and different to the local and parent culture.

Sadlier notes that young emigrant people “gradually lose sight of their sorrow, in the novelty of everything around” (Willy Burke 16). It is interesting to note that, in this instance, Sadlier associates being Irish with “sorrow”, thus linking to earlier arguments of the “exiled” condition experienced by Irish emigrants. Harry’s detached response is typical of second-generation Irish-Americans who assimilated into American life with more ease because they had no recollection or memories of Ireland. This acknowledgment of apathy by second-generation Irish concurs with Nora’s theory that the people who need to, or are forced to, deliberately remember are “a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past” (12). The reason some second-generation immigrants assimilated so easily was due to the fact that many Irish-Americans were only sentimental supporters of Irish nationalism and culture. In reality, they were happy with a passing, nominal interest in Irish affairs and were more interested in their newly discovered American life and culture. Furthermore, many second generation Irish emigrants would have witnessed the hardships of their parents: a forced emigration owing to the calamities of the Famine and their subsequent success in America so may not have wished to go back to that place of trauma and poverty. When Sadlier re-creates memories in order to foster and sustain an “Irish” identity, she gives careful attention to her selection process, a point also noted by Nora: “Memory,
insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it” (8). Therefore, Sadlier becomes a manipulator of memories in her bid to influence the formation of an Irish-American identity.

Second and subsequent generations were reared fully in America and had been provided with an American education, which in turn enabled them to occupy better jobs than their parents. This is reflective of Sadlier’s son Francis, who went to a private boarding school called ‘Manhattan College’ in New York City. In a letter to his mother, we read that he is well educated, attending lectures at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and learning to play the flute. He is also very much aware of his parents’ wishes for him to enter the priesthood, while he himself wants to join the navy. Within these letters, we read that although Sadlier and her family were wealthy and well-respected, the problems of assimilation were just as prevalent for the middle-to-upper classes. In a letter, dated 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1867, sent from his home in New York, Francis writes to his mother about his feelings concerning his place of birth, Montréal, and about his ancestral home, Ireland. Within these passages lies Sadlier’s principle in the possibility of a two-country loyalty, which is espoused by her son. He writes:

Talking of Hallow-Eve how quietly the time goes, dear Mamma, just think last night was our second Hallow-Eve in this house. Last year Anne McCann was here, and Lizzy too. Truly changes have been arranged us since then. One to now in California: the other in that ‘Frozen Chime’ I call my own [Montréal]. There is another country too from which I am equally proud to claim parentages and blood – Ireland. Of that I never will be ashamed. At school many of the Irish – New Yorkers there, are ashamed of being thought Irish, but I hope never to be. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

From this passage we can assume feelings of embarrassment and humiliation on the part of other Irish New Yorkers, but not from Francis. Francis’ individuality and passionate feelings towards Ireland can be seen in his underlining of the word ‘I’ in the passage.

\footnote{To view a sample of Francis Sadlier’s letters, see Appendix C.}
Instead, Francis remains ‘proud’ of his ancestral homeland, yet equally attached to his birthland of Montréal. It is reasonable to conclude that Sadlier encouraged these feelings of a dual-identity in her children.

Within her emigrant novels, Sadlier tackles the problems of second generation Irish-American assimilation. It is within these identity construction scenes that Sadlier reveals her true position on acculturation. It is obvious that Sadlier wants her readers to make the most out of their lives in America, but to remember where their origins are. An example of such a scene can be found in *The Blakes and Flanagans*. Harry Blake becomes friends with, among others, Zachery Thomson, who eventually encourage him to disrespect his elders and turn to secular ways. Sadlier presents Harry as a misguided youth: he obtains money from his father under false pretences and attends the theatre; he is ashamed of his Irish roots and “mortified” when his parents dance an Irish reel; he considers himself to be a “true” American and changes his name to “Henry” in order to aid his assimilation into professional life; and, ultimately, he abandons his religion and marries a Protestant. This upbringing is shown to be a result of his father Miles’ view of Irish integration into American life, which is one of total immersion and assimilation into American ways:

> I have a sort of notion that as our sons must grow up Americans, whether we like it or not, and have got to live amongst Americans, they had better learn from their infancy ‘to do as the Romans do;’ you understand me, I hope? My idea is, that men can’t be Irishmen and Americans at the same time; they must be either one or the other. (160)

The dialectic construction of an Irish identity versus an American identity frequently occurs throughout Sadlier’s emigrant novels. In a cultural and political context that was fraught with a crisis of self, Sadlier offers alternative imaginings of an Irish identity, namely a newly-formed Irish-American identity. Contrary to Miles’ belief that one
would not want to see their children grow up as a “half-in-half Irishman” (159), Sadlier posits all her successful characters as those who form hybrid identities.

In Sadlier’s chapter entitled “A Family Party”, a neighbour Mike Sheridan notes that Harry and Eliza are not present at the gathering; Edward observes that “it may be for all the better; they are not, I grieve to say, neither with us nor of us” (158). Within this passage, Sadlier is developing the reader’s ideas as to what it is to be an Irish person living in America. By playing out this debate between two young characters, Sadlier is highlighting the problems of assimilation that second generation emigrants experience. Here, Sadlier is making a significant contribution to existing debates on acculturation and integration. By suggesting that emigrants form a hybrid identity, she is not repudiating the liberalism and individualism that energised American culture as suggested by Thomas Brown (220), but actually encouraging people to embrace the New World without forgetting where they came from. Her most resonant espousal of this bifurcated identity is represented by one of the second-generation Irish emigrants in her novel:

‘I beg your pardon uncle,’ said Edward Flanagan, ‘I cannot agree with you there. I myself am living proof that your position is a false one. I was brought up, as you well know, under Catholic – nay, more, under Irish training; I am Irish in heart – Catholic, I hope, in faith and practice, and yet I am fully prepared to stand by this great Republic, the land of my birth, even to shedding the last drop of my blood, were that necessary. I love America; it is, as it were, the land of my adoption, as well as of my birth, but I cannot, or will not, forget Ireland […] Yes, my dear uncle, I am both Irish and American, and so I will continue, with God’s help. (Blakes and Flanagans 160)

Here, Sadlier is highlighting Catholicism as a component of this newly-formed Irish American identity because she believed that a strong faith could assist emigrants. Throughout the novel, Edward is displayed as a character that is respectful, educated and diligent in his work. In the nineteenth century, these qualities were stereotypically
associated with American Protestants. Therefore, Sadlier is encouraging her Irish Catholic readers to espouse these good American habits in order to achieve a thriving emigrant life. Sadlier’s construction of an Irish-American character can be favourably compared to a request by P. Lynch, the editor of the *Irish American*, to all Irish people to conduct themselves with decorum at all times. He writes:

> Remember that we, Irishmen, to deserve our position here, should be peaceful, industrious and loyal Republicans. We should perform our duties, whatever form of physical or intellectual labour they may assume, with quietness, diligence and propriety. If we do, we may rest assured the American mind will justify us, public opinion sustain us, and that all unhealthy clamour and wild excitement raised against us by fanaticism, bigotry, faction, or the personal knavery of dodgers and demagogues, will subside. (1)

At a time when identities were being (re)formed, one cannot underestimate the importance and function of the printed word.

*The role of D. & J. Sadlier & Co. publishing house*

As I have established, Sadlier was developing an Irish-American identity in her fiction using various literary techniques. However, Sadlier had an advantage on other Irish-American writers of the period. With the backing of one of the most successful publishing houses in the country, D. & J. Sadlier & Co., Sadlier had a perfect platform to launch her Canadian and American writing career and to reach a sprawling Irish emigrant Catholic audience. As explained in the biography of Mary Anne Sadlier at the beginning of this thesis, D. & J. Sadlier and Co. was owned by her husband and brother-in-law. The family publishing business started in 1832 when Denis and James opened in Carmine Street in New York City. Their business flourished and at the peak of their success they had offices in New York, Montreal and Boston. They mainly published religious materials, but they also published non-fiction, fiction and children’s literature.
They also owned a Catholic newspaper, the *New York Tablet*, which Sadlier became the editor of in later years. Lacombe notes the popularity of the newspaper: “Who, fifty years ago, did not hear of the *New York Tablet*? What Catholic family that had the means did not subscribe to it? It was Mrs. Sadlier’s organ. She conducted it, wrote its telling articles, its stories” (Lacombe “Frying Pans”). With this kind of public exposure, Sadlier had the edge on other writers of the period because D. & J. Sadlier published and serialised all of her works throughout the nineteenth century.

D. & J. Sadlier & Co. was not the first Catholic publishing house in America; in her research on Irish-American publishers, Eileen Sullivan informs us that during the first half of the nineteenth century about sixty Catholic publishers operated throughout the country (42). With the influx of Irish Famine emigrants during the mid-nineteenth century, the Catholic population in America exploded. The numbers of Catholics in America rose from 300,000 in 1830 to 3.1 million in 1860 and 7.3 million by 1880 (Miller *Emigrants and Exiles* 291, 569). Having bought out the list of pioneering Irish-American publisher John Doyle, D. & J. Sadlier & Co. was in a perfect position to service this Catholic audience. Eileen Sullivan observes: “Irish immigrant-owned firms dominated the field in numbers, reputation, and productivity, and D. & J. Sadlier was the most distinguished among them” (42). Their influence and power in the realm of Catholic publishing in the nineteenth-century is undeniable. Sullivan continues to explain:

D. & J. Sadlier published more titles than the other Irish-American publishers during its years in business. By 1854, after nearly 20 years in operation, the firm had published about 100 titles. By the late 1890s, 652 D. & J. Sadlier imprints had appeared. Most of the books were published in the 40 years from 1840 through 1880, the firm’s most active period. (51)
D. & J. Sadlier & Co. was the largest Catholic publishing house in America during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, but it was still small in comparison to large American secular publishers. Although they occupied a niche market, their influence was both extensive and profound; therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that D. & J. Sadlier & Co. played a formative role in the lives of emigrant Irish Catholics.

So what kind of material were D. & J. Sadlier & Co. producing, besides immigrant fiction, for homesick Irish Catholics? A large part of the D. & J. Sadlier & Co. publishers’ list was comprised of devotional works and Catholic school books, i.e. didactic writings for adults and catechisms. Sullivan notes that D. & J. Sadlier & Co. published Catholic standards from previous centuries such as Pastorini’s *The General History of the Christian Church* (1771), but they also focused on nineteenth century European Catholic scholars such as T. W. M. Marshall’s *Christian Missions: Their Agents, and Their Results* (1862) and Jamie Balmes’s *Fundamental Philosophy* (1858). D. & J. Sadlier & Co. also published books on Irish history such as Abbe James MacGeoghegan’s *The History of Ireland* (1844). However, Sullivan observes the firm did not publish the writings of contemporary Irish nationalists such as John Mitchell’s *Jail Journal* (1854) or Charles Gavan Duffy’s *Young Ireland* (1880) (47). D. & J. Sadlier & Co. published a lot of fiction, particularly by Catholic writers in Ireland such as the works of Gerald Griffin and the Banim brothers, John and Michael. Sullivan also observes that while the firm did not publish Maria Edgeworth, they did publish Lady Morgan and Charles James Lever (49). Although D. & J. Sadlier & Co. mostly published in English, it is widely known that Sadlier wrote many translations to French,
and Fanning records that there were two German editions of *The Blakes and Flanagans* in 1857 and 1866 (*Irish Voice* 126).\(^{51}\)

There is no doubt that D. & J. Sadlier & Co. aided Sadlier in her role to construct a Catholic Irish-American identity. Newly-arrived Irish emigrants were far from their homeland and seeking to create a new identity for themselves. D. & J. Sadlier & Co. and Sadlier’s writings gave these emigrants an anchor in a sea of turmoil. They could identify and connect to Sadlier’s tales of Irish history, nationalism, Catholicism and emigration. Sullivan confirms: “The [Catholic] publishers provided an intellectual and emotional base for this Irish-American Catholic identity” (44). Reading Sadlier’s emigrant novels created cultural pride among emigrants and provided them with a sense of home and belonging. As writer and producer of her novels Sadlier had considerable influence over the production of her writings. Being married to James Sadlier meant that she was involved in a novel from conception through to distribution. In her construction of a transatlantic Irish Catholic identity, Sadlier relies not only on her written words, but also on the illustrations within the emigrant novels. To compliment her prose detailing pastoral landscapes in Ireland, she includes pictures of the Glen of the Downs in Wicklow and Eagles Nest, Killarney in the novel *Elinor Preston* (1861). Additionally, in order to reinforce the injustice of British landlords, she includes black and white drawings detailing an eviction scene and death-bed scene in *New Lights* (1853). This dual means of communication aided her quest for the creation of an Irish culture on American soil.\(^{52}\)

By further examining *New Lights*, we can see Stuart Hall’s theory of cultural representations in operation, as Sadlier saw to it that the book itself was an artefact

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\(^{51}\) For examples of D. & J. Sadlier’s publishing lists, see Appendix D.

\(^{52}\) To view the pastoral drawings from *Elinor Preston* and the illustrations of the eviction scene and death-bed scene from *New Lights*, see Appendix E.
which signalled its Irishness from the front cover. The promotion of cultural materialism is evident in the hardback red covering from my first edition copy, which boasts an intricate Celtic design in gold etchings surrounding an Irish harp and shamrocks. These are deliberate symbols of Irishness, placed on the cover to evoke memories of the old homeland. D. & J. Sadlier, New York, published the edition I am using, so I would argue that Sadlier had some influence over the design of the cover. As the novel was largely sold to a North American and Canadian readership, these symbols could be considered to be marketing ploys in order to encourage the Irish emigrant to remember their country of origin. These symbols on the front cover became a vessel for spreading Irish culture abroad, and it is reasonable to deduce that these powerful images and texts provided a much-needed space for the diaspora to remember and reminisce about the motherland.

Indeed, the whole novel creates a huge sense of nostalgia for Ireland and would have been particularly resonant for the emigrating nineteenth century Irish community. In her preface to the novel, Sadlier dedicates the book in a grand gesture to “THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND” and describes them as ‘faithful’ and ‘much-enduring’. She applauds them for their efforts in remembering Ireland and the families they left behind as a result of emigration. She writes: “to those who still cling with undying love to the beautiful land of their birth, enduring all things rather than break asunder the tie which binds them to ‘the Niobe of nations’” (Preface). Her reasoning here is complicated and two-fold; firstly, she is directly associating an Irish identity with birth, and

53 To view samples of covers of Sadlier’s emigrant fiction, see Appendix E.
54 Other examples of Sadlier fostering an Irish identity through print culture can be found on the cover of Aunt Honor’s Keepsake: A Chapter from Life (1886) as well as in the vignettes found in The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States (1855) and on the drawings of pastoral landscapes of Killarney found in Elinor Preston; or, Scenes from Home or Abroad (1861)
55 In Greek mythology, a conflict occurred between Niobe and Leto which led to the death of all of Niobe’s children. Thomas Bulfinch writes, “She [Niobe] was changed to stone within and without. Yet tears continued to flow” (Chapter 14).
secondly, she is reiterating that, even if one emigrates, one automatically has a tie to one’s homeland and that, if one wants to break free from it, then one has to consciously sever it. This is problematic for the emigrant community as a whole because this message may be applicable to first generation emigrants, but it will become void for second and subsequent generations who are born in the Americas.

Furthermore, linking a person’s identity to their place of birth is reductive because a person may be born in a particular country, but end up living somewhere else for the majority of their life, resulting in a shifting or splitting sense of identity as was the case in many Irish-American character formations. Those emigrants who wanted to assimilate completely into American life were viewed by many, including Sadlier, as traitors to the homeland. Sadlier uses sentimental rhetoric in order to bond with the emigrant reader, thereby creating a patrilineage to connect to past generations in Ireland by stating that the book is dedicated “to those who, like myself, have left the graves of our fathers, to seek a home beneath foreign skies – all alike bound together by the one glorious bond” (Preface 3). This passage raises important questions about assimilation for emigrants and the problems associated therein. Assimilation can be viewed differently by both the home and host country. The host country normally wants immigrants to blend in and adopt their ways of living and culture in order to create a seamless transition into mainstream life. However, emigrants normally want to retain the teachings and customs of their homeland, and this can create problems and result in emigrants always being on the outside of mainstream society.

Sadlier does not want her readers to forget where they came from, as demonstrated by her successful characters’ rejection of some of the components of American life, preferring to stay within their own community and draw support from their Irish cliques. I would argue that, when reviewers claim she is creating a fiction
which urged “cultural isolation” that, in turn, produced an “insecure Irish-America” (McCaffrey 89), this is a result of Sadlier’s deliberate engagement with and renegotiation of these competing discourses which surrounded her. Fanning views Sadlier’s writings as deriving from a defensiveness about her own Irishness, and this may be commended or at least understood in the cultural context in which she lived (The Irish Voice 140).

So, where did Sadlier’s fiction fit into this cultural landscape that she emigrated to, and just how successful was she in her quest to influence the Irish emigrant population? Sadlier’s audience was ready-made for her. Over three million Irish Catholic emigrants, the majority retaining sentimental thoughts about their home country and fighting against the rising tide of unpopularity in their adopted countries. One must also remember that she had an enthusiastic audience in the form of Irish parents in Ireland, who were keen to read about adventures of the Irish in America. These parents, perhaps too old to travel, lived vicariously through her stories, stories which also opened up the possibility of changing the lives of younger siblings who were left behind. As her writings are not radical and fit for general family entertainment, their message was far-reaching. Kelly complements her style of writing by saying that “her work was all the more valuable because there were few persons then capable of performing it in the acceptable manner she did” (325).

At times Kelly’s review tends to present Sadlier as a stereotypical nineteenth-century woman, concentrating on her talents of conveying her religious message without offending the masses. However, considering her involvement in public life, Sadlier’s literary ideology was often at odds with her personal life. Kelly’s celebration of her works are not unfounded, as J. L. Delaney records that Sadlier became one of the most popular Catholic authors of the 1860s (505), and the increase in Irish immigration
during the 1880s led to the republication of several of her earlier novels (Bridget Hourican 720). Sadlier’s works contain reminiscences of old Catholic Ireland through her descriptions of pastoral landscapes, colourful stereotypical characters and colloquial language. Kelly believes her influence was unprecedented in the range and breadth of people that she influenced. He writes: “it is doubtful if a single one can be found whose works exerted in their day… a wider, deeper or more beneficial influence that those of Mrs. James Sadlier” (321). Her audience and circulations were mostly among Irish-Americans, but as already stated, Eagan notes that she also wrote for a Protestant audience with a view to disproving the stereotype of the Irish as lazy, drunken and immoral. Her Irish-American novels received attention from the Protestant majority as well as their reliable Catholic audience when Orestes Brownson reviewed them in his periodical entitled Brownson’s Quarterly Review. Brownson was a former Protestant who converted to Catholicism and so had influence on both sides of the religious divide. He criticised emigrant novels for being overly nationalistic and for placing too much emphasis on being “Irish” and not enough attention on religion; a balance that Sadlier seemed to get right in his view.

Sadlier was part of an entire generation of Famine writers in North America; her counterparts include writers such as Peter McCorry, whose third novel The Lost Rosary; or, Our Irish Girls, Their Trials, Temptations, and Triumphs (1870) is dedicated to “the ever faithful Irish girls in America”, in a vein similar to Sadlier’s. In the Preface, McCorry says that the need for such a novel was suggested to him by Patrick Donahoe, “the eminent Irish and Catholic publisher of America”, and he hopes that “our IRISH GIRLS will profit by every line of what is written especially for their benefit” (v-vii)” (qtd. in Fanning The Irish Voice 81-82). Also writing for a specifically Irish-American

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56 For more on the politics of Brownson, see Carey 31; Dale Light 131; James Daly 123-125.
Audience was John McElgun, who wrote *Annie Reilly; or, The Fortunes of an Irish Girl in New York* (1873). His novel provides a description of the Queenstown (Cork) to Liverpool to New York journey undertaken by many Irish immigrants. Like Sadlier’s novels, his novel outlines the pitfalls for immigrants while providing an easy, entertaining story for an eager audience. Other authors of her generation and genre include the American born Fr. John Roddan, who was an editor of *The Pilot* and who wrote the novel *John O’Brien; or, The Orphan of Boston, A Tale of Real Life* (1850). He was part of a Boston coterie of Catholic intellectuals which included Orestes Brownson, and Sadlier would have no doubt been familiar with his work.57

Another contemporary of Sadlier’s was Fr. John Boyce, author of *Shandy McGuire, or Tricks Upon Travellers* (1848) and *Mary Lee; or, the Yankee in Ireland* (1859). *Shandy McGuire*, which appeared in Brownson’s *Quarterly Review*, is set in Co. Donegal after the Famine, and it details the conflict between local Ribbonmen and the Orange Lodge. Loeber reports that Brownson critiqued the novel for inciting racial hatred: “*Quarterly Review* (Boston, 1849) alleged that the Irish-American author’s insistence on making ‘the tyrant … a Saxon, and the victim a Celt …’ turned ‘a war against oppression for common justice into a war of races’”. Sadlier is careful not to incite this type of extreme hatred within her novels. As she was also concerned with other issues such as Catholicism and Irish family values, Sadlier’s focus on racial fractions becomes diluted and displaced with in her novels. Within *Mary Lee; or, the Yankee in Ireland* (1859), Fr. John Boyce created a character called Ephraim Weeks, a Yankee from Ducksville, who tries to marry Mary Lee in order to secure her fortune. He is presented as a dishonest individual who is more concerned with social mobility than living a decent life (he turns out to be a cousin of the man he is pretending to be).

57 For more on Fr. John Roddan, see Loeber 1143.
Writers like Boyce wrote these novels in order to counteract the attacks on the Irish character. Fanning observes that “[f]ighting fire with fire, Boyce has created a satirical portrait of a Yankee in Ireland to counter Yankee caricatures of the Irish in America” (*The Irish Voice* 105). Even though it is clear that Sadlier was not the only person defending the Irish character in North America in this period, it seems that she did it in a non-offensive manner. She suggests to her readers that certain American personality traits are to be admired, and she encourages an amalgamation of the two cultures in order to facilitate a seamless integration into North American life.

**Conclusion**

In her emigrant novels, Sadlier tries to suggest a realistic Irish-American cultural identity to which nineteenth century Irish emigrants can aspire. Through the use of recurring mnemonic tropes and emplotment, she fosters memories of the homeland in order to create a particular brand of nostalgia. These simple and creative mnemonic tropes, such as ballads, local dialect, and pastoral landscapes help the emigrant to remember information about the homeland. By reading a novel about a returned emigrant or an eviction scene set in Famine times, the emigrant retains the information for a longer period. Sadlier re-affirms an Irish identity by empathising with emigrant struggles and providing emigrants with a link to their homeland through the use of the Irish Famine among other literary techniques. Her novels force her emigrant readers to re-examine their conceptions of what it is to be Irish, what characteristics they cherish and the range of ethics and morals they designate as important to uphold while living in the diaspora. In other words, in lines where identity has become distorted, Sadlier is actively sustaining a cultural and ethnic pride in Irish-Americans.
She acknowledges that organic memory is severed when it comes to second-generation Irish emigrants, and she lays the responsibility of good childrearing firmly with the parents. Subsequent generations have a mixed reaction to their ethnic identity; some are happy to embrace it while others feel trapped by it. What becomes evident is that for subsequent Irish emigrant generations in America, an “Irish” identity is a learned set of cultural codes through prosthetic memory and that an “Irish-American” identity is a culturally created entity. This entity is created and sustained through ethnic festivals, reinscribed practices, and a nominal love of the motherland, all of which are recorded in Sadlier’s emigrant novels.

However, it is important to remember that diaspora identities are constantly producing and reproducing representations of themselves which belong not only to the past but to the changing present. This shifting identity contributes to writers’ cultural representation of, and reaction to, the Irish emigrant experience. Her didactic novels have a self-proclaimed distinct purpose and should be read within the social context in which they are set; Sadlier wants to (trans)form the conceptions of an Irish identity in North America. In an era where Irish emigrants were despised and ridiculed, Sadlier credits a space for questions of identity formation and ultimately recommends a dual-identity in the form of an Irish-American entity. In order to overcome the cultural dislocation that nineteenth-century Irish emigrants felt, Sadlier recommends operating within a specific Irish community which perpetuates the cultural aspects of Irishness. However, she does also highlight the value of American habits of sobriety, frugality and a good work ethic and believes a combination of these two cultural identities is an ideal compromise for the aspirational Irish emigrant.

The impact of Sadlier’s cultural construction was widespread as is reiterated by her enormous sales figures in a burgeoning market for popular fiction. It is obvious that
D. & J. Sadlier and Co. played an influential role in shaping Sadlier’s reputation. As they (re)printed her writings throughout the mid-to-late nineteenth century it guaranteed that her ideological message pervaded Irish Catholic consciousness in an emigrant setting. As I have outlined above, various factors such as race and religion shape interaction and assimilation with cultures and peoples in the host country. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, Sadlier saw Catholicism as rejuvenating and sustainable and a vital component of a successful emigrant life. This type of thinking was consistent with contemporary writers of Catholicism as a staunch resistance to English domination; or an emblem of nationality, as Kevin Whelan explains: “In post-Famine Ireland, religious affiliation increasingly became a surrogate for national identity as the effective agent of communal solidarity” (“The Cultural Effects of the Famine” 140). Throughout her time in Canada and North America, Sadlier became a skilled reader of the zeitgeist, and as a result, her novels capture the spirit of a transitional time and become valuable social documents. Sadlier uses the personal journey of her fictive characters to reflect the common Irish emigrant experience, but more importantly throughout her novels, she acknowledges the ever-shifting position of Irish emigrants and their immersion into American society, thereby creating a discourse for the creation of an Irish-American identity.
Chapter Two: (De)constructing Family Ties in Sadlier’s Emigrant Novels

Introduction

Sadlier holds the family in high esteem and views its role in society as imperative. Her novels set in Ireland epitomise a traditional rural family life while her emigrant novels, which mainly detail life in North America, present the ideal Irish-American family in a romanticised light, employing sentimental clichés in order to reinforce her portrayal. However, despite her promotion of lofty family values, she is not afraid to challenge the official rhetoric of an idealised family structure and expose the darker aspects of family life. Various discourses inform and shape the ideology surrounding the family, and in an Irish context, religion and nationalism are vital to the propagation of the family unit.

For Sadlier, Irish family values are irrevocably entwined with Catholicism, and their implications within the family unit are central. In her novels, Sadlier presents Catholicism as being representative of “home” culture; whereas, Protestantism is presented as a “foreign” concept which is something to be avoided and discouraged. As a writer, she sees it as her duty to protect Catholicism (and thereby, home) from the threat of foreign invasion, and her literary work reinforces these beliefs. Sadlier also links the honour of the family to patriotism, thus constructing the family as a framework for a particular Irish identity. This presented the family as a privileged construct and it pervaded social consciousness in the nineteenth and twentieth century, one which was eventually presented as the cornerstone of the new Irish nation-state. Indeed, De Valera would go on to copper-fasten such values in the 1937 Constitution, stating that the nation-state was interested in preserving the family “as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of society” (Bunreacht na hÉireann, Article 41.1).
This chapter examines operations within and surrounding the “family cell”, to use Michel Foucault’s term, in Sadlier’s emigrant novels, namely *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861), *The Blakes and Flanagan: A Tale, Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1855) and *Willy Burke; or, The Irish Orphan in America* (1850) in order to understand the importance that Sadlier places on the family structure in identity construction. The use of the term “family cell” refers to the nuclear family unit of parents and siblings and its meaning is two-fold. Firstly, the word “cell” can be read in its biological function as a living organism which needs certain components to survive, i.e. parents. Secondly, the word “cell” can be read as a type of confinement, like a prison cell, in order to regulate the people within. Kathryn Conrad, a literary critic, interprets the Irish family cell as being traditionally representative of “enclosure and containment” (4), imbued with images of suppression and exclusion, but Sadlier construes the family cell as being a site for instruction and a place of refuge and happiness. When reading her novels, it becomes apparent that Sadlier is concerned that, the traditional Irish family cell becomes distorted or, worse still, destroyed by emigration.

By engaging with the primary novels mentioned above, this chapter focuses initially on the reasons for emigration and the resulting turmoil of the family left behind. This creates a historical context around the Irish emigrant character which informed Sadlier’s construction of an Irish-American identity. The chapter then progresses to underscore the role of the community, both in the host country (North America) and at home (Ireland). The community is credited by Sadlier as a place where identity is reinforced and maintained. Various communication practices, such as letter-writing, highlight the importance placed on community networks in an emigrant setting. Within the chapter, I highlight Sadlier’s command of her subject and her courage in broaching
what would be considered taboo subjects in the nineteenth century. Within *Bessy Conway* alone, she tackles uncomfortable subjects surrounding Irish family practices such as alcoholism, domestic abuse and sexual assault. By constructing close reading of her novels, I argue that, even though Sadlier’s novels are imbued with sentimental rhetoric, she still has the capacity to expose a darker side to Irish emigrant life in the nineteenth century.

Having already examined the external structures influencing the family, i.e. the community, I then look closely at the internal power structures within the nuclear family while emphasising the important but distinct roles that parents and siblings inhabit in these narratives. I suggest that Sadlier’s emigrant fiction positions and disrupts Irish families as she constructs a character that imbricates both Irish and American identities in order to form a new one with the best aspects of both. Finally, I discuss how religious discourse informs and shapes the ideology surrounding the family cell. Religion, and its framework of morality and integrity, encourages people to behave appropriately and in adherence to the rules of their church, thereby ensuring the dominance of Catholic ideology in this case, and this type of thinking is propagated within a specifically emigrant setting within her novels. However, it soon becomes apparent that even emigrant families are susceptible to hegemonies, and ultimately, everybody in her novels, regardless of their nationality, religion or gender, is a prisoner within some form of family cell.

*The effects of emigration on the home country*

In Sadlier’s emigrant novels, emigration is portrayed as having the capacity to destroy or rebuild Irish family life both at home and in the host country. Her novels detail the experiences of various characters who leave Ireland and settle in different parts of North
America and Canada. This dichotomous capacity to destroy or rebuild family life can be found in novels such as Bessy Conway, The Blakes and Flanagans and Willy Burke. Sadlier creates multi-layered plot lines sometimes spanning several generations in order to show the effects of emigration on Irish families and in turn, on the Irish-American character. In Bessy Conway; or; The Irish Girl in America (1861), the novel opens with Bessy Conway, a Catholic country woman from Tipperary who has just secured passage to America in the service of a captain’s lady. By employing M. F. Nimkoff’s classifications of family types, the reader can deduce that Bessy’s family originates from the extrinsic categories of a rural and working-class background. The initial pages of the novel immediately show the disrupting influence of emigration when the reader learns that Bessy is insistent on travelling to America despite her parents’ unhappiness at her decision. Bessy’s stubborn streak and persistence on emigrating to America against her parents’ wishes contradicts Kerby Miller et al.’s theory that, “Save for runaways, Irish emigration was based on family – not individual – decisions” (“For Love and Liberty” 47). As discussed in Chapter One, people left Ireland owing to extreme financial hardship, and they often felt “exiled” in their decision to go. However, by showing this disharmony between Bessy and her parents, I argue that Sadlier is outlining and questioning the reasons as to why women in particular left Ireland in huge numbers in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, a point I will develop further in Chapter Four.

Rural Irish women leaving their nuclear families or, the “family of orientation”, as Nimkoff labels them, was a regular occurrence in nineteenth century life as married women left their birth families in order to set up a new life with their husbands in his

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58 Nimkoff’s classification, although dated, is still regarded as a seminal text in familial technology.
59 For discussion of communal emigration see Patrick Blessing 16.
nuclear family home, what Nimkoff labels, the “family of procreation”. However, the increased outflow of people emigrating and the reality that they would never return shattered the traditional familial frameworks which existed in mid nineteenth-century Ireland. I argue that this produced a new type of family, a “family of emigration”, which consisted of a mixture of family types, specifically stem, lineal and fully-extended families, cocooned in an overarching community and manifested in the newly created Irish-American neighbourhoods. This refiguration of family frameworks concurs with and expands on Maureen Murphy’s theory, “The Fionnuala Factor”; Murphy conceptualises an emigrant woman, having been dislocated from her nuclear family in Ireland, eventually reconstructing her complete family unit in terms of her siblings in the host country through chain migration. Murphy bases her conceptualisations on the literary image of Fionnuala, the only daughter in “The Exile of the Children of Lir”, who saves her brothers after a period of separation. She writes:

For the Irish immigrant woman, re-formation of the sibling unit, or a portion of it, was not an obligation, but the way to re-imagine the family unit in America. […] By reforming the family unit, it may have been possible to reframe one’s life in terms of something other than exile. (“Irish Sibling Emigration” 99-100)

The research findings from Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball’s study of a rural farm community in County Clare and ensuing family lifestyles agree with Murphy’s assertion that dislocation does not break family ties. These two American anthropologists lived among the people of north Clare and Ennis in the early 1930s. They recorded what they observed and what they were told about the lives, relationships and economy of the farming community. Their research findings highlighted the importance and centrality of the family within a rural lifestyle. In relation to emigration, they state: “this necessary dispersal of the members of the family at its

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60 For further classifications of familial typologies see Nimkoff 13-40.
reorganization does not ordinarily destroy family ties. The bonds of affection and family obligation still hold” (143). My classification of “families of emigration” to which these emigrants belonged consisted of an assortment of people, some dejected and exiled, others excited and hopeful, but all with one thing in common: they were all displaced by the economic stagnation which engulfed Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century.

Sadlier depicts Bessy as being selfish in her dreams of seeing the world and dwelling on her parents’ grief at her absence. She outlines a character who is essentially manipulative, and although we are told that she would never have emigrated without her parents’ final consent, her constant persistence and insistence on never finding happiness at home meant that, as the narrator expresses it: “the old couple were forced to give in” (Bessy Conway 8). Chapter Four of this thesis disputes Hasia Diner’s argument that women’s reasons for leaving Ireland did not stem from a want of freedom or autonomy, but concurs with her reasoning that women wanted to provide a better life for their family and that this in turn represented a commitment to basic Irish Catholic culture and its way of life. As Diner explains, “Their actions [i.e. emigrating] stemmed from family loyalties. They reckoned that they could support and succor brothers, sisters, and parents better from America than on the “ould sod”” (xiv). Sadlier writes about the reaction of Bessy’s parents who, although devastated by her departure, fulfil their parental roles by ensuring that she “should want for nothing on her long and tedious voyage” (Bessy Conway 8); they give her money in case things do not work out in America. The Irish women who emigrated to America in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland were strong-minded and courageous human beings who defied the stereotypical notion of femininity in the period as feeble and passive. They believed that their new role in the American labour market could enable them to contribute to their families in a
financial capacity that was usually reserved for men in Ireland. This created a self-
sufficient and decisive woman who was willing to venture outside the domestic sphere
and embrace the public sphere, a point I expand on in Chapter Four. In nineteenth-
century Ireland, most women had been forced to live and work in the domestic sphere,
but in America, they had the freedom to experience other opportunities, and this must
have seemed like an exciting prospect.

The research available on emigration certifies that the people left behind in the
rural communities were just as affected by emigration as those who boarded the
transatlantic vessels. 61 Within the wider community, news of Bessy’s insistence of
accepting the offer of passage is portrayed as the family’s “first grief” (Bessy Conway
7). 62 The terminology associated with emigration in the novel is closely linked to that
of a death, the belief that parents would never again see their children after they
emigrated. Also, it becomes clear to the reader that, from Sadlier’s perspective, this is
the death of the personality of the emigrant as they will never be the same again after
they are exposed to the tribulations and temptations that lay before them in America.
Sadlier’s narrator mourns their loss of innocence and ignorance, seeing it as a type of
purity that emigration destroys. This mournful narration refers to an anxiety that if
single Catholic emigrant Irish girls engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage,
they will forget traditional family values which, in an Irish context, was seen as socially
destructive and disastrous for a girl’s reputation. 63 The omniscient narrator also lays the
blame for encouraging emigration on the generation of parents who are fooled by the

61 For a contemporary analysis of the affect of emigration on the people left behind by emigration in 20th
century Ireland see the oral archive project entitled, Breaking the Silence: Staying ‘at home’ in an
Emigrant Society (2000-2002) carried out by the Irish Centre for Migration Studies based at University
College Cork and headed by Dr. Breda Gray.
62 For more on the heartache of the emigration scene see Grace Neville 203.
63 For more on the consequences of women’s sexual misconduct see Maria Luddy, Women in Ireland,
1800-1918 (7).
idealisation of emigrant life in America. The ignorance of the peasants about the New World is referred to when somebody calls to a departing emigrant to look up a man in Halifax for her not realising “the trifling difficulty that his [the emigrant’s] destination was Philadelphia” (Bessy Conway 10). This shows the reader that Sadlier thought many Irish peasants had no real concept of the vastness or culture of the land where their families and friends were emigrating to.

Sadlier’s reasons for writing her emigrant novels is two-fold; not only is she instructing Irish emigrants on how to behave once they reach their host country but she is also educating the people who are left behind about real life in America. Sadlier writes:

Some may say that I have drawn too gloomy a picture. Such persons know little about it. The reality exceeds my powers of description, and I have only to say in conclusion, that the fathers and mothers who so suffer their young daughters to come out unprotected to America in search of imaginary goods, would rather see them laid in their graves than lose sight of them, if they know the dangers which beset their path in the New World. (Bessy Conway Preface)

Thus, at the beginning of the novel, Sadlier presents a woeful picture as the reader is met with a scene of farewells at the quayside. Parents, siblings, relations and friends go to the port to say their goodbyes, to wish the emigrants good fortune and to pass on messages to people gone before them. Bessy’s parents are devastated by her departure, and when she embarks on the boat and begins to sail away, the narrator observes, “They felt at that moment as if they had left Bessy in the churchyard clay” (Bessy Conway 10). Sadlier idealises this family scene which is full of emotion and fraught with sentimentality as a means to focus on the sacrifices that were made by, and sometimes forced on, Irish people. This romanticised departure scene makes the relinquishing of family ties more heartfelt and permanent. We are told:
Away and away she goes, the wharf is cleared, loud from the shore rises the parting cry of sorrow from the crowd of friends and relatives, back from the boat the echo comes, a sad, wild chorus, in which many voices mingle. Messages to friends in America are for the last time called out to those on board, injunctions to write as soon as they landed, and all the late last words with which affection seeks to prolong the intercourse that will soon cease, perhaps forever. (*Bessy Conway* 9)

This scene is not entirely ominous as there is the promise of money being sent home once the emigrants are settled. These remittances would be used to enable other members of the family to emigrate or to sustain the family farm and, in the time of the Famine, to sustain the family, thus in some cases emigration was seen as a necessary evil.\(^\text{64}\) As Bessy sails away from Ireland, Sadlier draws attention to the topography of the Irish landscape and the cultural memory imbued in it, mentioning Strongbow’s wedding to the reluctant daughter of McMurrough as an allegory for the colonisation of Ireland (*Bessy Conway* 10). These descriptions not only emphasise her geographical removal from the country, but also an impending cultural disruption as Marguérite Corporaal and Christopher Cusack affirm: “her geographical dislocation is made to prefigure the cultural identity crises that the travellers will have to negotiate during the voyage and upon arrival in their new homeland” (246), a point I expand upon later in the chapter.

The role of the community at home and in the host country

In her study of familial relationships from 1500 to 1900, Rosemary O’Day employs the theories of historian Peter Laslett (1915-2001). She credits him with inventing different terms to describe households of the past, and although since refined, they remain the basis for much current familial research (6). Using Laslett’s definitions, we might say that Bessy originated from a “simple family household” (often termed “nuclear” or

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\(^{64}\) For more on remittances see, Arensberg and Kimball 143; Hasia Diner 52.
“biological”) in rural Ireland, which consisted of a married couple with children, but she loses this status when she emigrates alone to America. What is noteworthy about Laslett’s categorisations is that there is no possibility of a single person creating and living in a “household”. As O’Day explains, “When the conjugal unit disappears so does the real household” (7). As such, Bessy has to rely on the wider community to provide her with essential social frameworks that she misses owing to her emigrant status.

Sadlier’s idealised presentation of Irish family life, both in Ireland and in the host country, emphasises the need for communication within a family at a micro-level and the need for involvement in a larger community at a macro-level. Through her multiple plot-lines, Sadlier shows a concern for the whole community rather than one specific individual; as a result, her novels encompass the fortunes and trials of the whole neighbourhood. The protagonist, or the “self”, is seen as a social subject who operates within and is influenced by a wider community. In her study of antebellum women’s domestic novels, Nina Baym outlines such a Victorian viewpoint of a community while underscoring the importance of it. She explains, “[Domestic novels] were Victorian also in their perception of the self as a product, firmly and irrevocably embedded in a social construct that could destroy it but that also shaped it, constrained it, encouraged it, and ultimately fulfilled it” (36). Therefore, the community is seen at the mid-century as playing a vital role in shaping and moulding people. Baym’s account explains why Sadlier stresses the importance for emigrants to create and live within a specifically “Irish” community abroad. For Sadlier, this community is representative of a nineteenth-century culture of “Irishness” which adhered to a loyalty to nationalism and a strict observation of Catholicism. In all of her novels, the community, both at home and abroad, plays a crucial role in the formation of an individual identity.
The importance of communal structures is evident in *Bessy Conway* when, on the ferry crossing to Liverpool, the characters are introduced and the reader can see alliances being formed. Sadlier is anxious to protect Bessy’s virtue by having her travel with chaperones; her family in Ireland have ensured that she is accompanied by good neighbours such as the Murphys and the Finigan’s because she is travelling alone to America without a father or brother to protect her. Bessy and her mistress, Mrs. Walters, have to stay in Liverpool for a few days before they get their connecting ship to New York, and Bessy does not have time to visit her neighbours who are staying in a lodging-house nearby. Another character, Mary Murphy is incensed by Bessy’s neglect of her old Irish neighbours and thinks Bessy is abandoning her roots in order to succeed to a better class of living with her new employer, thus gesturing to the aforementioned “death of personality” caused by emigration. Community relations are again strained when Paul Brannigan warns Henry Herbert, a Protestant landlord who is travelling on the ship, to stay away from Bessy as he believes he is not a good influence on Bessy.

Sadlier keeps an element of realism in her novels by detailing the places and process of Bessy’s voyage to America. Although Irish emigrants left from Cobh in Cork to Canada, many more emigrants took the ferry to Liverpool to make the transatlantic journey. Kevin Kenny explains:

> From the mid-1830s onward the British port of Liverpool emerged as the primary point of departure for Irish transatlantic emigrants, with New York City rather than Canada as the primary destination. The average sailing to both Canada and the United States was six weeks. Passage from Liverpool to New York was generally safer and faster than from Ireland to Canada, but it was still more expensive, so many of the poorer emigrants continued to go to British North America direct from Ireland and made their way from there to the United States. *(The American Irish)*

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65 For more information on chaperoning see Rita Rhodes 266.
66 For an expanded discussion on disloyalty to one’s roots see Arensberg and Kimball 90.
As Bessy has her passage paid for her by her new employers, it is believable that she is using the Liverpool route rather than the passage from Cork. Sadlier was not alone in detailing the stages of the emigrant journey and in foregrounding the experience of those travelling in steerage on these transatlantic vessels. A contemporary of Sadlier’s, John McElgun, also provides a detailed description of the voyage between Queenstown in Cork to Liverpool to New York in his novel *Annie Reilly; or, The Fortunes of an Irish Girl in New York* (1873). He writes:

> Nothing further worthy of notice occurred to our heroine during the voyage, which may be termed a pleasant one, excepting a few stormy days crossing the banks of Newfoundland, when the face of the ocean changed from its calm aspect, the waves ran high and angry, tossing the ship from side to side, drifting tin cans, kettles, boxes, passengers, and baskets hither and thither in every direction. The storm lulled as they approached the American coast, and on a beautiful warm evening Sandy Hook lightship came into view. All crowded to the vessel’s side, crushing and climbing over each other, to get a view of the new land in which they intended living. (129)

McElgun also lends authenticity to his novel when one of the protagonists James O’Rourke is swindled into believing he has a fictitious job set up for him in a hardware store once he disembarks in America. Kenny explains that this trickery happened frequently to emigrants as they waited for their ship to set sail from England. He writes “On arrival in the city [Liverpool], the Irish were preyed upon by a variety of hucksters, confidence tricksters and small-time entrepreneurs who populated the fringes of the emigrant trade” (*The American Irish* 58). By portraying a character who is duped and fooled by a stranger, McElgun is cleverly highlighting the loss of confidence in people that emigrants posses once they move away from their own, safe rural environment. He is also exposing the ulterior motives and the “masks” that people wear as well as the new identities that people forge in order to survive, which Sadlier refers to also, as I will show.
In *Bessy Conway*, the sea voyage from Liverpool to New York serves as an introduction to the main characters in the community that will surround Bessy when she lives in America. The sea voyage also outlines the main plots of the novel and exposes the newly-formed emigrants to the reality of emigrant life. As Corporaal and Cusack note, “These immigrant ships are [...] not merely places of death, but also places of transition” (354). We learn that Henry Herbert is pursuing Bessy by following her to New York, that Ned Finigan is interested in Ally Murphy, that Dolly Sheehan is looking for her lost son, and that Paul Brannigan is going to help her find him. These sub-plots surrounding community members will inform and shape Bessy’s experience of America.

Furthermore Sadlier includes a chapter entitled “The Storm”, which is vital for plot progression. Fanning posits the recording of a sea-voyage complete with a fierce storm as a “wrenching rite of passage” in emigrant literature marked by violence and turmoil, and Sadlier’s account chimes with this (*The Irish Voice* 76). The narrator explains that the sea crew nailed the hatches on the steerage quarters to keep lower-class passengers underground during the storm, an event which mirrored real life on deck during a storm in the period. Sadlier is able to isolate her central characters from the rest. We are left with only a few passengers on deck, and the framework for the story is laid bare, and during the storm, two pivotal events occur which are the basis for the novel’s climax: the reader learns that Henry is harbouring a secret that only Paul knows about which he must confess before he can achieve redemption at the end of the novel; also, when a huge wave crashes against the boat threatening to take Henry’s life, it is Bessy who volunteers to save him outlining her underlying desire for him.

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67 According to Miller, 30% of people perished during the transatlantic crossing on the coffin ships, *Emigrants and Exiles* 292.
68 In *The Irish Voice* Fanning states that the emigration of Charlie O’Grady with his aunt in *Aunt Honor’s Keepsake* is presented as a “powerful; initiatory event, complete with raging storms at sea” 121.
As Sadlier unfolds her American plots, she evokes the kind of memories of Ireland that sustained her emigrant readership in the host country. These memories of “home” include not only the immediate family but also the wider community. Bessy thinks about her family life; her duties and her sisters, but she also remembers with great fondness the local community dances she enjoyed back home. This sense of nostalgia for home is re-created once on-board the vessel, and the passengers engage in storytelling and singing traditional, nationalistic songs such as “The Shannon Side” (Bessy Conway 55). The nuclear family structure is represented in this scene by the presence of the full Murphy clan, and the importance of having a close family to support the emigrant is evident when Paul agrees to look after the aging Dolly Sheehan in America as if she were his own mother. Paul states: “So bear witness that if Mrs. Sheehan doesn’t find her son Philip in America where she’s goin’ to look for him, I’m willn’ to take her for a mother and do for her as if she was my own” (Bessy Conway 60). This is a big, public commitment on Paul’s behalf and is not entered into lightly; it simultaneously reinforces the bonds of family and the sacredness of the relationship between a mother and her child.

As depicted in Chapter One of this thesis, the importance of community can also be seen in Sadlier’s Irish-based aspect of the plot when the neighbours rally together in response to Bessy’s father, Denis Conway, being evicted and, again, when the neighbours are subsequently delighted and satisfied by Bessy’s return from America to rescue the Conways with her saved earnings. By presenting Bessy as a successful “returned Yank”, concerned for her family’s welfare and anxious to live with them again, Sadlier is anticipating future emigrant patterns.69 Indeed, by the turn of the

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69 For a discussion on the “returned Yank” see Hasia Diner 50. For more on circular migration and migration streams see Caroline Brettell 236-237.
century, women return from America so frequently to choose a husband and marry in Ireland that Maureen Murphy labels these returners as “self-dowered daughters”, claiming that they are “sojourners rather than emigrants or exiles” (“Irish Sibling Emigration” 86).

Following these emigrant scenes, the reader learns that the Famine has swept through Ireland, and Sadlier shows how the peasants are dependent on emigrants. The boys, upon returning from a half day’s work, tell their parents about the misfortunes of the surrounding neighbours and everybody feels helpless. One of Bessy’s brothers, Tommy, is annoyed with Bessy for neglecting them in their time of need, and he does not understand why she does not respond to their letters. It is important to realise that women were normally the ones who kept up contact with home. Caroline Brettell explains, “Families in international migration were less “uprooted” than “transplanted” and ties to the homeland were rigorously maintained, particularly by women” (246).

Bessy’s brother Tommy complains, “she was very good at offering us money when we didn’t want it, but when the bad times came on us and the potatoes failed, and the cattle had to go, an’ everything we had, then when we wrote to let her know how matters stood, she could give us the cold shoulder and wouldn’t even write us a scroll” (Bessy Conway 263). Tommy is referring to the now infamous “American letter” sent home by the emigrant which often signalled remittances for the family in Ireland. This episode also reflects the social networking mechanisms of the period in which letter writing was paramount.

The main way for emigrants to stay in contact with family was to engage in letter-writing. This type of communication was relatively cheap, and letters could be re-read at times of loneliness and disillusionment. Ruth Ann Harris’s work deals with the use of emigrant’s letters as viable historical documents; she makes the valuable point
that only Irish people with a certain amount of schooling could engage in writing letters thereby excluding poorer emigrants from her study (169). It is important to note however, that even though poorer emigrants were often illiterate they could still engage the services of other members of the community, i.e. the schoolmaster or the parish priest, in helping them to communicate with home by post. Harris discusses themes of expectation and reality among emigrants and how these concerns were reflected in the letters sent home.\textsuperscript{70} The emigrant had to decide whether to keep up pretence of what was expected of the “American Dream” or to reveal the truth, whether good or bad (172).

Throughout the novel Bessy engages in correspondence with her family through letters, telling them stories of her new life. Sadlier credits the family bond, which may be maintained through letter writing, for producing special types of feelings that can never be replicated by friends or colleagues. She posits the parents as key components to a closely-knit family. In Bessy’s lowest moments when she craves the will to continue, the narrator tells us that “Bessy was made happy by the receipt of a letter from home, full of that fond affection which is seldom or never found beyond the golden circle of the family” (italics mine) (Bessy Conway 204). It is through statements like these that Sadlier shows the reader that in Irish families the interplay between parents and siblings is fundamental to the upkeep of the family cell. When families are separated through emigration, letter-writing is a viable way of staying in contact, and it provides the space for writers to imagine life in the “other” country (David Fitzpatrick Oceans of Consolation 36). These letters are read not only in private, but also within a community setting as in one scene the priest reads out Bessy’s letter to a full room of Irish peasants in Ireland. Marjorie Howes deems this exercise essential for the lonely

\textsuperscript{70}For more on letter-writing see Diner 34.
migrant as it serves as “the means of extending the private self and connecting it to other selves” (“Discipline, Sentiment and the Irish American Public” 167). Letter-writing becomes cathartic for Bessy and provides an opportunity for her to reflect on life in Ireland.

Harris’s research on emigrant letters reflect on the lives of domestic servants in particular, which gives us a valuable insight into their existence in the host country. It also shows the development of an Irish-American identity as they recorded their American lives whilst remembering and connecting to the homeland. Women, in particular, wrote a lot more letters than their male counterparts, but generally they stopped writing home after a few years. This could be because their family or siblings had by then moved to America or because they settled into their jobs and homes and assimilated successfully into American life (172). Nevertheless, Sadlier’s characters constantly remain in contact with their families in Ireland and a letter from home has the capacity to break the remoteness and solitude that emigrants felt. Although Fitzpatrick’s research concentrates mainly on the emigrant experience in Australia, his comment that feelings of loneliness and isolation were common in every emigrant resonates with the experience of these emigrants in America. He writes about the importance of communication between families: “The letter from a distant relative, whether received in Ireland, Britain, America, or Australia, was a token of solidarity and an instrument of reassurance, confirming the durability of long-established familial groups” (Oceans of Consolation 20). In this novel, unbeknownst to Bessy’s family, the local postal clerk has stopped delivering letters to and from the Conways, so Bessy is unaware of the plight of her family in Ireland. Bessy’s mother and brother complain about her lack of empathy but Bessy’s father is quick to jump to her defence claiming
that her lack of action was out of character. Although, in public, Denis defends Bessy, we learn that, in private, he is not so sure. Sadlier writes:

One of the hardest of his trials was the apparent neglect of Bessy, for, although he tried to excuse her to the rest of the family, he was far from being satisfied himself, and feared either that something must have happened to her, or that her heart had grown hard and cold, as hearts often do in the lapse of years, especially away from home and home ties. *(Bessy Conway 265)*

This was a real and distressing threat for the family members who remained in Ireland, that their loved ones who emigrated would forget about them once they settled into their new lives in America.

As discussed in Chapter One, Sadlier also romanticises Ireland’s communities in the way she describes the landscape and the style of living of its inhabitants. She creates a picture of Ireland where the countryside is beautifully framed against a backdrop of friendly folk. When she writes about Ireland, the scenery is always fresh, pure and unharmed by pollution. This is in stark contrast to the city grime that Bessy encounters when she moves to America. Echoing Arensberg and Kimball’s findings on their 1930s study of rural Ireland, Sadlier depicts rural life in Ireland in the nineteenth century as simple and hard, but ultimately rewarding; whereas, American life is presented in her novels as being complex and demanding. As previously mentioned, when referring to Ireland, Sadlier always mentions the support of the rural community and the kindness of the neighbours helping each other through tough times or keeping spirits high when faced with troubles. When Bessy gets to America, she misses this rigid family structure and extended community. She comments to Dolly, an old Irish emigrant, “it’s a lonesome thing to be among strangers; no matter how good they are still you can’t open your mind to them and make free with them as you would with your
Diner also suggests that the community structure provided much-needed assistance to emigrants. She writes:

Aid and support at times of crisis certainly derived from the informal channels of community and neighbourhood where Irish women lived. From all accounts – personal, journalistic, literary – Irish women did in fact rely on their extensive female social networks, and their friendships with each other played important social roles in Irish communities.

Indeed, it is the presence of a strong Irish-American community that reinforces a sense of Irish culture and tradition in Bessy and encourages her never to forget her family in Ireland.

Taboo topics: Alcoholism, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Within her fiction, Sadlier champions the bonds of the family structure, but she is well aware of the negative side to family life and is not afraid to discuss controversial subjects using her characters. Her novels narrate various family combinations, and whilst she presents some of them sentimentally, others she presents more realistically, even grimly. As mentioned previously, she incorporated details of emigrant life on board a transatlantic vessel within *Bessy Conway*, and she continues to document life in America once the emigrants have landed. The reader learns that Bessy finds domestic service with a widow who lives in the fashionable Seventh Ward near Madison Street. Paul Brannigan finds a job in a small shoe store and settles with Dolly in a room in a tenement house in Oliver Street. Peery Murphy and his two sons find employment after a lengthy period, and his daughter Mary gets a position as a housemaid in a respectable family in Houston Street. Ally Murphy, who wedded Ned Finigan at sea, stays with her mother initially while Ned finds a way to make a living. He eventually

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71 This is reflective of the reality of living in a notorious slum like “Five Points” in New York, where, at the intersection of five streets a huge sprawling disease-ridden slum contained Irish emigrants, amongst others.
decides to open up a tavern called “The Castle Inn”. In a similar vein to Sadlier using the image of the Celtic Cross on her book covers, Ned hangs a picture of Ardfinnan Castle over the door in order to stimulate nostalgia among his punters for the families and the way of life they left behind in Ireland. The picture of Ardfinnan Castle also contrasts the history of Ireland to the relative newness of the American state as the narrator explains, “it’s little they know of castles in America! -- still it makes a fine show, and the Tipperary boys are as proud of it as can be!” (Bessy Conway 98).

The pub and, more pertinently, alcohol is seen by Sadlier as the root of all evil and its perils are constantly forefronted in Bessy Conway. Ned runs a successful, bar but has a sleazy clientele; however, he does not care so long as they can pay for their drink. He organises a smoking club twice a week and hosts a dance to entertain his guests and keep them drinking. Paul notices that Ned has taken to drinking brandy along with his guests, and he frequently asks Ally to help him with serving, especially when he has had too much to drink. Paul notices her changed appearance and is shocked to see her serving drinks in the bar, a space normally reserved for men. The narrator writes, “Very soon Ally had to be sent for to lend a hand at the bar, and Paul could hardly believe his eyes when he saw her in the full glory of artificial flowers, and ribbons, and lace, looking as consequential as that ‘Woman of the Three Cows’ famed in Irish song” (Bessy Conway 92). Sadlier subtly evokes a class divide here by naming that particular ballad about rebuking the pride of a woman; it, in turn, became a common phrase to lower the pretentions of a boastful person. This cultural insertion is not an accident as the lines of the song foreshadow the events which unfold later in the novel. The lyrics of the song include lines such as, “For worldly wealth soon melts

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72 The poem, the ‘Woman of the Three Cows’ written by James Clarence Mangan, appeared in the Irish Penny Journal (D.J. O’Donoghue) 29th August 1840.
away, and cheats the very miser/And death soon strips the proudest wreath from
haughty human brows” (Mangan 13-14). Despite her ridiculous dress, Paul notices that Ally is still a good worker and wastes no time in serving drink to waiting customers.

It is within this family saga of Ned and Ally Finigan that Sadlier addresses issues of alcoholism and domestic violence. In Ned’s quest to secure customers for his tavern he frequents low society and loses his sense of morality and respect for life. Although he is initially seen as a caring character who looks after Bessy and finds a job for Ally’s father as a horseman, his character slowly deteriorates under the influence of alcohol and poor company and creates havoc within his family. Three years later, the narrator comments on Ned’s physical decline. He is no longer the strong, athletic man he used to be but reduced to a “cumbrous load of blubber” (Bessy Conway 216). His wife Ally is also changed physically; she has lost weight and is laden down with worries and anxieties. The narrator explains that although on the surface they had made a success of the tavern and, to the general public, had achieved the “American Dream”, they were in fact poverty stricken in the spiritual aspects of family life and relationship.

Events come to a climax when Herbert and Dixon offer Ned a free drink, and Ally refuses on his behalf, claiming he has had enough to drink already. Ned is furious with her and retorts to physical violence to try to regain his manhood. This is described thus:

Roused from his torpor by the mocking laughter of Dixon and Herbert, and the good-natured raillery of one or two others who chanced to be present, Ned raised his foot and gave poor Ally a kick that sent her far enough out of his way, and in he marched with the air of a conqueror, followed by the two worthy associates. (Bessy Conway 218)
Ally is left tearful by his actions, but not overly surprised, which leads the reader to believe that this is a regular occurrence.\(^3\) Alcohol has poisoned their marriage, and Ally no longer recognises the man she married. Sadlier presents Ned as a foolish drunk who does not realise that he is being manipulated by Dixon and Herbert. We are told:

> It might have been well for him if the significant nods and winks exchanged between the two he left had come under his observation, or if Ally’s renewed expostulation had been attended to --- but neither was the case. Herbert and his associate took good care that their stupefied host did not see what was passing between them, and Ned only gave Ally an ill served answer for her pains, then took his way back to the inner room where his company awaited him and the bottle. (sic) (Bessy Conway 219)

In a desperate plea, Ally reaches out to Paul after he finds her crying following the violent incident. She confides in him that she fears that Ned will lose everything if he does not change his ways. Sadlier writes: “‘Nothing new, Paul ! nothing new’ sobbed Ally, lowering her voice to a whisper so as to reach only the ear for which it was meant; ‘he’s at his old trade again worse than ever. He’s ruining himself as fast as he can, and there’s no earthly use talking to him God help me! I don’t know what to do!’” (Bessy Conway 221). When Bessy returns to Ireland at the end of the novel and the neighbours are enquiring after the emigrants who left, the reader learns that Ned Finigan has died and that Ally is going to sell the tavern and move back in with her parents. Bessy later tells her father in private that Ned had died “a dreadful death of delirium tremens; that it took four men to hold him in the bed, and he fancying he saw all kinds of horrible shapes, and fairly out of his senses” (Bessy Conway 284). Here, Sadlier is demonstrating to the reader the importance of the private workings of the family structure and how some information is best kept privately within a family rather than circulated among the general community.

\(^3\) For more on alcohol and domestic abuse in emigrant culture see Diner 16.
Although classed as a sentimental writer, Sadlier does not skirt the issue of domestic violence within her emigrant fiction. Indeed, I would argue that she is foreshadowing the work of second-wave feminists such as Michele Barrett, who writes that domestic violence reveals the vulnerability of those within the family cell and essentially undermines the dominant ideology of the family as a safe haven. Although Sadlier’s concern is for the survival of the family unit, her fiction reveals that she wants it to operate in a safe manner. Sadlier includes multiple incidences of violence which highlights her concern at the susceptibility of women to violence in particular.

Evidence of this can be found in the character of Sally, who is a maid working with Bessy. She falls out of favour with her mistress and loses her place in the household. She is homeless and destitute and is forced to work, cleaning a salon filled with drunks, for a basic wage. She marries her beau, Jim, who is lazy and not interested in working. Initially, their married life together is fine, but he turns to drink and disappears for weeks on end only to return demanding money for drink. Things go from bad to worse when they have two children, and Sally can no longer work because she falls ill. She is forced to beg from door to door with her children and happens upon Bessy’s place of employment one night. Bessy gives the beggar food and thinks she recognises her and so follows her into the night only to witness Jim demanding money from her and beating her in the street when she refuses. The omniscient narrator informs us that that Jim’s beatings had reached a frenzied form and “the demon of selfishness cleared his head of human pity and natural affection” (Bessy Conway 228). Sally’s beating is interrupted by a passing M.P., and Jim is hauled away to prison. The child is terrified at what happened, but Sally does not notice as she is “absorbed in her own misery” (Bessy Conway 229). Their family life has been ripped apart by a mixture of Jim’s unwillingness to work, the excess of alcohol and the brutality of domestic violence.
Sally returns to her lodgings and dies a few days later, “in a state of delirium, without priest or sacrament” (Bessy Conway 229). Jim’s selfish actions result in the two children being adopted by “those benevolent individuals who make merchandise of the souls of men” (Bessy Conway 229) and so are susceptible for conversion to Protestantism which in Sadler’s views, is detrimental to their spiritual welfare.

Sadlier was acutely aware of the charitable organisations in New York City as she herself took an active interest in Catholic organisations such as The Founding Hospital, St. Joseph’s Home for the Aged and the Association for Befriending Young Girls. By leaving Sally’s children in the novel under the welfare of Protestant charities, she is critiquing the state while subtly highlighting the provision and legal right of such services to her audience. Witnessing these types of social issues, complete with the threat of protestant conversion for the cost of shelter, must have spurned her involvement in local Catholic charities which provided much-needed support for struggling emigrants.

In her presentation of family life, Sadlier is careful to depict the realities of the emigrant experience. Sadlier writes about the reality of tenement life among emigrants, stating that Paul and Dolly’s home was up three flights of stairs, an obvious hardship for an elderly woman. She also tells the story of Mary Murphy, a pretty girl who imprudently squanders her money on frilly dresses instead of saving it. She is presented as self-consumed and as never thinking of giving money to her family. She marries unwisely, and her husband soon enlists in the army and leaves for Mexico. Through his neglect of his family duties, she is left to raise their paralysed child on her own. Although presented as a good woman who works hard and cares deeply for her child, she is flawed by her excessive pride. She is shown to be a foolish character who will not ask for help from the surrounding Irish community, and she eventually turns to
drink for comfort. One day, when she leaves her child alone in her room to go to the
grocery store, the tenement burns to the ground, and her child is killed; Mary herself
dies soon after in prison, after being accused of stealing. By shaping this morality tale
in this way, Sadlier is highlighting the sin of pride as well as reiterating the value of the
help that exists within the wider community if you are willing to seek it out and the dire
consequences if you do not.

Sadlier underlines the effects of urbanisation on a community where ghettos
were easily formed and people were often intimidated. The incidents of violence that
take place in Sadlier’s novels echo the problems faced by emigrants living in slums
such as “Five Points” in New York. At around the same time, Charles Dickens,
accompanied by his wife, made a tour of North America and recorded his experiences in
a travelogue entitled American Notes for General Circulation (1842). He dedicates the
book to his friends in America and hopes that they could accept his representation of
that part of the world because he had written it in a “good humouredly and in a kind
spirit” (Preface).74 In the first paragraph of Chapter Six, his chapter on New York, he
states that the city is not as clean as Boston and makes direct reference to Five Points,
stating that it is full of “filth and wretchedness” (32). He is given a police escort while
he travels through the area:

Poverty, wretchedness and vice, are rife enough where we are going now
[…] Debauchery has made the very houses prematurely old […] Many of
those pigs live here. Do they ever wonder why their masters walk
upright in lieu of going on all fours? and why they talk instead of
grunting? (35)

It is with this description in mind that we consider the verisimilitude of Sadlier’s
recording of emigrant lives as she details an attempted incident of sexual assault. The
ring-leader of the gang is Hugh Dillon, son of an Irish emigrant family who had bullied

74 Francis Sadlier makes reference to Charles Dickens’ 1867 visit to New York in his letters to his
mother, F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122, see Appendix C.
Harry Blake in his youth, sneering at him for his Irish and papist inclinations. Hugh’s parents are tradespeople; his father a carpenter and an illiterate man. Determined that his son should be educated, he decides to send him to the local Ward school (i.e. Protestant) instead of the Catholic school where he fears he will spend his time praying rather than learning. Under the influence of the comrades from the Ward school, Hugh soon tires of family life and eventually robs his own mother and father, leaving the homestead to roam the streets. His parents are rendered distraught by his actions and offer him several chances of redemption. The narrator describes this thus: “Often and often they had tried to reclaim him both by fair means and foul; they had wept and prayed, scolded and threatened” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 180). The reader is told that Hugh tries to get an apprenticeship with a butcher in the market, but he leaves it because it is too much hard work. He also tries to be a stage coachman, but it is pointed out that he can keep no regular employment owing to his “loafer” attitude. The narrator describes his character: “Religion he had none, natural affection was dead within him, the word honour was meaningless for him, and he knew no other law than that of his own will” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 181).

In the *Blakes and Flanagans*, when the Sheridans leave Tim Flanagan’s house after midnight to walk home, they pass symbols of the degraded city such as gin-shops, taverns and a “filthy” brothel: places which perpetrate “deeds unholy” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 173). Three drunks emerge from one of the taverns bragging about not paying their bill, and they spot Annie Sheridan, a fair-haired youth and sister to Mike Sheridan, who is friends with Ned Flanagan, one of the central protagonists. One of the drunks, Hugh says, “I say, boys, there goes a first-rate gal – who’ll try his fortune? – I will, for one!” “Go it, old fellow!” cried both of his comrades, “we’ll stand to you like bricks” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 174). They threaten to beat up Mike and his father and
sexually assault Annie and her mother, so a street fight ensues after Hugh grabs Annie. “There’s two of them” said one of the ruffians – the fellow addressed as Jim – “let’s knock down the fellows and we’ll have them slick. Come along, we’re three to two, and one of them’s an old ’un” (Blakes and Flanagans 174). The women’s virtue is saved as Mike Sheridan beats Hugh “senseless” with a stick and breaks one of the ruffian’s arms while his father Dan, punches and kicks the other assailant. This is an interesting scene as Sadlier is primarily presented as a Catholic writer who upholds Catholic virtues, yet it appears here that she actively encourages violence when it comes to protecting the family cell.

Violent acts were stereotypical of the Irish-American character and so it is important for Sadlier to address this within her emigrant fiction. She is anxious to present Hugh’s violent outbursts along religious lines in order to propagate a specific Irish-American Protestant identity. In order to achieve this, Sadlier sometimes romanticises life in Ireland in order to portray the Catholic Irish character in a good light. This is evident when Molly, the old apple vendor, is violently mugged and robbed on New Years Eve. This incident is juxtaposed with life in Ireland as Molly exclaims, “I’d be many a day an’ year sellin’ apples in ould Ireland before anybody ’id use me that way” (Blakes and Flanagans 259). This view is highly romanticised as Miller reports that peasants in Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, frequently engaged in fraction fights within their local communities (Emigrants and Exiles 60). Hugh Dillon, again the perpetrator of the crime against Molly, later in the night tries to go into a German tavern, but the owners resist his entrance and shoot him dead. Sadlier notes in a footnote that this storyline is based on a true life incident, thus reflecting her knowledge of the lives of real emigrants.
In her emigrant novels, Sadlier also critiques the power structures that operated in nineteenth-century America. As explained in Chapter One, the wealthy, settled people in the community are sometimes referred to as ‘WASPs’, a disparaging term which is an acronym for White Anglo Saxon Protestants. These people are white Americans of British descent who control most of the property and employment within the community. These Protestant masters often abuse their power and bully their employees, as can be seen when Bessy refuses to say Methodist prayers in her domestic service job. Mrs. Hibbard, her employer, is furious with her and fires her even though Bessy has been an excellent servant in the past (Bessy Conway 208). In these novels, the police are rarely seen defending crimes against Catholics, such as those against Molly or the Sheridans. In short, the social context here is seen as a threat to the morals and structures of the Irish family unit. Through various prejudices, injustices and racist beliefs, the public/WASP sphere tests the domestic/Irish sphere, which can only survive if it operates within the confines of Catholicism, nationalism and honour.

The importance of the nuclear family

Charles Fanning constructs Sadlier as a “Great Hunger” writer, and as we know, she is a first generation emigrant to America. This historical fact colours her perceptions and presentation of American life and culture. As an emigrant herself, to Montréal in 1844 and New York in 1860, as well as being a mother of six children, she is well aware of the concerns of Irish emigrant families and second-generation Irish-American emigrants. In her dedication to The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States (1855), she devotes the book to the loving memory of her father and mother and the upbringing she received. She writes:
To the memory
of
MY FATHER AND MOTHER
whose teachings and example
where a rich inheritance to their children.
They are with the past;
They rest in peace;
They have joined their kindered dust
in Holy Ireland
but their memory is green and fresh in
my heart; and to that ever-living
remembrance I dedicate this work. (Blakes and Flanagans Preface)

This dedication is highly sentimental in tone and dedicated to parents who were dead by
the time Sadlier was twenty-two. Therefore their “rich inheritance” left by “teachings
and example” was bestowed on Sadlier at a young age.

Within the domestic practices of a nineteenth-century Irish Catholic family unit
the parents are given responsibility for the functionality of the family. The mother
holds a prime position within the domestic sphere, but in the nineteenth century, both
parents are ultimately responsible for the upbringing and disciplining of their children.
This type of thinking is underlined in Maria Luddy’s examination of Catherine
Alexander’s (1786-1863) pamphlets, which were circulated in Ireland at that time.
Alexander, as a member of the landed Protestant ascendancy, occupies a privileged
position in society and offers advice to mothers on the rearing of their children. She
visited the homes of her tenants and, reading from her pamphlets, which included
quotes from the Bible, she instructed women and mothers, in particular, on domesticity,
obedience, values and morality. Luddy underscores the emerging importance of the
mother in cultural discourse and places her at the centre of nineteenth-century social
life. She writes:

It is through women, and mothers specifically, that the regeneration of
society could take place. The centring on women reveals a concern with
the maintenance of the family as the prime civilizing agency in society
and the importance of the role that women played within that society
[... ] Women were the moral custodians of society” (*Irish Women’s Writing* X).

In *The Blakes and Flanagans*, Sadlier depicts Harry’s misfortunes as stemming from his secular education and credits his mother for being more aware of the social influences of the Ward school than his father. This is evident when Harry’s mother exclaims, “It’s them companions of yours that are leading you astray – I see that plain enough; and if God hasn’t said it, they’ll bring you to an ill end!” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 58). These predictions come true as Sadlier illustrates Harry as enduring a life of debauchery and misery. The significance of Mary’s submissive role in Harry’s upbringing despite her insight, as demonstrated in the quote above, is significant. Sadlier is questioning the patriarchal structures that surround Mary that prevent her from enforcing her views, a point I will develop in Chapter Four. Sadlier uses diverging types of maternal figures within her emigrant fiction in order to highlight the importance of the mother in the Irish family cell which in turn informs identity construction. In *Bessy Conway*, the mother is doubtful, echoing the uncertainties of the exact benefits of emigration. In *Old and New*, the mother is pushy, highlighting the class divide that exists within the emigrant community. In *New Lights*, the mother is pious, reiterating Sadlier’s stance on the importance of Catholicism. In *Willy Burke*, the mother is naïve, demonstrating the foolishness and gullibility of some Irish emigrants. And in *Elinor Preston*, the mother dies early in the novel, denying Elinor matriarchal structures that could have benefited her when her father died. Within these novels, the reader is in no doubt that the mother figure occupies a pivotal role in helping her children form an identity. Therefore, a mother’s attitude to life, her social skills and her reaction to difficulties often influence how children grow up and, in turn, what kinds of adults they will become. Placing an emphasis on the important role that mothers inhabit
is not unusual in literature. As Baym states, in nineteenth-century thinking, “Women could change others by changing themselves and the phrase ‘woman’s sphere is in the home’ could appear to mean ‘woman’s sphere is to reform the world’” (49).

Throughout the novel the Flanagans are seen to discipline their children and encourage them to practice their Catholicism; whereas, the Blakes are too soft on their children. The narrator suggests that they loved them “not wisely, but too well” (Blakes and Flanagans 4). It is interesting that Sadlier should use a quote from Shakespeare’s Othello (1603) in order to describe the love the Blakes have for their children. By quoting the words used by Othello just after killing Desdemona (Act 5, Scene 2), Sadlier is paralleling their feelings of love, a love that is sincere and intense, yet shows signs of misplaced loyalty and corruption, a love which will ultimately produce disastrous consequences. In her portrayal of the character of Miles Blake, Sadlier warns her emigrant readers that an emphasis on materialism rather than spirituality can ruin a family. She is disdainful of Miles because he is too greedy, even though he provides a comfortable lifestyle for his family. He does not instruct his children in their Catholic precepts and does not listen to his wife when she becomes anxious that Harry is fighting on a daily basis in the Ward School. Indeed, the novel is filled with violence, which is attributed by Sadlier to a lack of authority and respect and stands as a testament to poor child-rearing practices. Here, Sadlier’s attitude to parenting in America is similar to Alexander’s attitude to parenting in Ireland, as Alexander writes in her pamphlets: “Parents have, generally speaking, a great deal to blame themselves for, in the misconduct, idle habits, and vices of their children” (Alexander qtd. in Luddy Irish Women’s Writing 6).

The family was the most important unit in nineteenth-century Irish society, and people located their primary identity in their families and local communities, rather than
as members of broader social groups as they do today. Miller’s construction of the
nineteenth-century family is less sentimental than Sadlier’s, but he still underscores the
importance of family duty and loyalty in the period. He writes: “Whether an Irishman
actually felt affection for particular kin was unimportant; intrafamilial strife was often
endemic, but family members strove to present a united front to the outside world”
(Emigrants and Exiles 54). Therefore, the family cell must maintain a certain image
within society; an example of this in Sadlier’s work is in The Blakes and the Flanagans
when Mary Blake realises that her son Harry has been going to the theatre in secret.
Frequenting the theatre is frowned upon by the local priest as he believes it will lead
good Catholic boys astray and tempt them into wicked ways.

This was an emerging belief among the clergy in the Catholic Church who
viewed the theatre, films, books and dance-halls as culturally deplorable and sites for
vice and immorality. Such fears later resulted in the publication of a pastoral on “The
Evils of Modern Dancing” in 1927 and are also in evidence in the Censorship of
Publications Act in 1929. As Margaret MacCurtain confirms, “They [the Catholic
hierarchy] listed the dance-hall, the bad book, the film and immodest fashions in female
dress as contributing to the general decline of public morals” (49). It is interesting to
note that Sadlier lets these “threats” appear in an American context half a century earlier
and that the victim, Harry, suffers as a result of attending a Protestant school.

Mary decides not to tell her husband Miles or the priest about her son’s new-
found interest in the theatre and tries to deal with the matter herself.75 By doing this
Sadlier is displaying gender subversion within the family cell and is presenting Mary as
a character who, by trying to connect and reason with her wayward child, signifies what
Marguérite Corporaal terms an “emblem of reconciliation” (“Memories of the Great

75 For an interesting discussion on the mother as “intercessor” or “facilitator” see Rosemary O’Day 37.
Famine” 144). Friedrich Engels stresses that the role of the father is one of supremacy as he works to support his family, so Mary’s interfering course of action would not have been welcome in a nineteenth century context (105). Mary, as a wife, is confined in her motherly role, but instead of letting her husband assume the commanding role, she scolds Harry and makes him promise not to return to the theatre. However, he does not take her seriously, dismissing her views as old-fashioned and overtly religious, and returns in secret. This is a prime example of a family cell struggling to operate within the temptations offered in an emigrant setting and of a mother immediately reacting by taking control and hiding her son’s bad behaviour. Conrad writes: “The family cell regulated itself by keeping to itself; when social laws were transgressed in the family, self-preservation meant attempting to hide transgressions from the eyes of those who might punish them, whether it be the local community, the church, or the colonial authority” (9). Eventually, the local priest finds out about Harry’s transgression and approaches his father Miles about it. The family cell has been corrupted in two different ways: firstly, the patriarchal domination has been challenged as Mary did not tell Miles about the theatre incident, instead, choosing to deal with the matter herself, and secondly, their role as capable parents has been called into question.

Sadlier uses this novel as a social commentary on the American “School Question”, which was controversial at the time of writing in 1850. The “School Question” concerned the funding offered by the state to Protestant schools or non-denominational schools, otherwise known as Ward schools. The Catholic schools, conversely, were largely unfunded by the state. By writing about the extra pressures that emigration brings to the family cell, in this instance, in the form of the Ward school, Sadlier is warning parents about the possible distortion of traditional “Irish” family values once they reach the host country. At times Sadlier depicts the relationship
between parents and their children in a typical nineteenth-century manner, where children “should be seen and not heard”. When Eliza asks her father if she can change schools in order to be with her cousins, he sternly tells her that her opinion does not matter and she should not listen to her uncle’s disapproval of her school. He says, “The school you’re at is a very good one, Eliza, and as long as your mother and myself are pleased with it, you need not object […] let me hear no more if it or I’ll not be pleased with you” (Blakes and Flanagans 8).

As is seen from her Preface, Sadlier credits the early years as being crucial in identity formation. She sees it as an optimum time to instil a sense of religious and social responsibility in a child. From the outset, the Ward school is blamed for the deterioration of the Blakes’ children as initially they are presented as high-spirited and affable but this slowly changes as the novel progresses. Eliza is sent home with a book as a prize given to her by her teacher, Miss Davison, but the book details the effect of the Reformation on Catholicism, and Eliza is upset and resentful when her uncle and father make her return it. Here Sadlier uses this opportunity to show the patriarchal dominance and frustrations within the family cell and the ensuing violent rows over the up-bringing of the children. Eliza chooses to stay with her aunt rather than go home because she fears her father will be in a “passion” because her uncle is questioning his choice to send her to a ward school. Her aunt is horrified and states: “Why sure he never says anything to you, Eliza? I know he gives it to your mother now and then, and sometimes Harry comes in for his share” (40). As mentioned previously, this allusion to domestic abuse is reiterated throughout other Sadlier novels and its reoccurrence in this instance reinforces its prevalence among the Irish emigrant community and nineteenth century life as a whole.
As I have established, external forces can be detrimental to the operations of the family cell; however, forces operating inside the family cell are shown by Sadlier to be just as harmful. Traditionally, literary modes of examining family structures have concentrated on relationships between parents and their children, but the relationship between siblings can be just as important and can further expand our understanding of emigrant frameworks. When we examine the sibling relationship between Harry and Eliza in *The Blakes and Flanagans*, we see that from a young age they are complicit in trying to fool their parents, and this is evident when Harry asks Eliza to keep multiple secrets about their newly-found experiences in America as he knows that his father will disapprove. These “secrets” include the fact that they have been mixing with local Protestant and secular boys and girls and playing kissing games; stealing money from their parents; frequenting the theatre and eating meat on a Friday (which was against Catholic precepts at that time). Eliza is hesitant at first to fool her parents and betray her religion, but she is easily won over by her brother. Sadlier writes: “The sixpence judiciously expended on candy, was the most conclusive argument of all, and did more to overcome Eliza’s scruples than all her brother’s eloquence” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 54). The two siblings are ashamed of their Catholic heritage and do not want their friends to exclude them, so they agree to hide their transgressions from their unsuspecting parents. Sadlier posits Miles as a dominant patriarchal figure whom Harry is initially afraid of, commenting to his friends: “I don’t know, but father would kill me if I stayed any later; as it is I’m afraid to go home” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 57), but Harry’s fear soon abates as he grows up. At times, Miles threatens to whip Harry for his inappropriate behaviour, but on one occasion, he is talked out of disciplining his child by the persuasive Protestant, Mr. Thompson, whom Miles is anxious to please as

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76 For more on the complex relationship between siblings, see Juliet Mitchel.
Mr. Thompson is a respected businessman in the community. Here, Sadlier is critiquing American Protestants for questioning the control that the Catholic church has over Irish family life. Mr. Thompson puts doubts in Miles’ mind over the extent of influence of the Catholic Church on his life by commenting:

A’n’t you a better judge of your own business than this man – this Father Power, can be? – what right has he to control your actions?” “We Catholics, sir” and he hesitated, “are in the habit of obeying our priests – they’re wiser than we are, Mr. Thompson, and besides, we look upon them as ministers of God”. “Look on them as you please, they are only men after all, and their opinions are merely human; only to be estimated, my dear Miles, by their intrinsic vale as human opinions. (Blakes and Flanagan’s 89)

Mr. Thompson believes that Miles is making a fuss over a “mere trifle” and dismisses the disrespectful behaviour that Harry displays, claiming that “boys must have amusement” (87). The portrayal of an ineffectual father is not unusual in Irish literature; indeed, Declan Kiberd suggests that this void in the family is often filled by an all-powerful mother (381). However, in this instance, Mary cannot rise above the dominance of the patriarchal structures which surround her. Miles’ susceptibility to the corruptible nature of Mr. Thompson and his inability to deal with his children’s deviances means that they are destined to a life of perdition.

According to Diner, siblings who were often rivals while living at home together often became closer through emigration because the threat of competition for inheritance was diminished. She argues: “The importance of sibling relationships in adulthood also survived the transoceanic journey. […] They succored one another and provided support in the cycle of crises of poverty and illness, desertion and widowhood” (Diner 45). This view, although a little romanticised, holds fast for the sibling relationship between Harry and Eliza, albeit in a negative manner; however, in some of her novels, Sadlier presents a much harsher reality of sibling ties. In Willy
“Burke; or, The Irish Orphan in America” (1850) the reader sees a family slowly collapsing after the father of the household, Andy Burke, dies at sea. His widow is left to raise six children in New York, two of whom, due to the hardship of the journey and lack of food, die almost immediately from fatigue. Biddy Burke is left with two boys and two girls to rear with very little money. Her employer, Mrs. Watkins, takes pity on the mother’s efforts and offers to pay for one of her boys to attend the local school; Biddy values education as a means for advancement in American society, so she agrees with this arrangement. She is unaware Willy is actually attending a Protestant school until one day when Willy returns home with a book denouncing Catholicism. Biddy is furious and immediately tells Mrs. Watkins that Willy can no longer attend the school. Mrs. Watkins thinks that Biddy is over-reacting and believes that the boy would be much better off with a sound education, which included Protestantism. When Mrs. Watkins calls to Biddy’s house to see if she has changed her mind, his older brother Peter agrees to take his place at the Protestant school, much to the dismay of his mother. Up until this point, Peter has been presented as a good Catholic boy who works locally, for little money, and dutifully gives his savings to his mother each week to help her to run the household. By her actions, Mrs. Watkins has immediately created a sense of dissent within Biddy’s nuclear family as Willy is shocked at his brother’s willingness to risk his religious upbringing for the sake of an education.

In the novel, Mrs. Watkins is cast as the wicked stepmother and adheres to the stereotypical presentation of an American Protestant. She is portrayed as a bigoted woman who believes that Irish people have been fooled by Catholicism. She feels sorry for Biddy’s ignorant ways and comments to Peter on her way out of the house: “I hope, Peter, you will not listen to anything your mother can say against your coming; for, though she is a good, well-meaning woman, she has no knowledge of the world” (Willy
In this one cutting sentence, she has questioned the authority within the family circle by undermining the mother figure. Indeed, Sadlier presents Biddy’s family as an easy target for this rich, Protestant woman as they have no father to protect them from religious threats and to discipline Peter when he goes against his mother’s wishes. This is a turning point in the novel for Biddy’s family as Willy and Peter fight furiously and, subsequently, fall out with each other. The narrator observes: “Mrs. Watkins retired, little caring for the heavy load of misery she had cast on the already afflicted widow, and heedless of the fearful seeds of dissension so recklessly sown in that hitherto united and affectionate family” (Willy Burke 48).

The brothers fight bitterly throughout the novel, and religion is always at the very basis of their arguments. When Willy calls to Mrs. Watkins’ house to tell Peter to attend confession, he is astonished when his brother tells him that he is old enough to mind his own affairs and sends him away. The narrator writes, “Never had his [Willy’s] young heart been so heavily crushed. Never had he felt so wretched. Keenly susceptible as his feelings were, this first instance of unkindness from this only brother wrung his very heart” (Willy Burke 66). This piece suggests that the brothers had lived in harmony when they lived in Tipperary, but that their friendship was threatened in the migrant context. However, although producing this dynamic storyline about two brothers, Sadlier once again succumbs to sentimental rhetoric when they put aside their sense of bitterness for the sake of their dying mother and when their irrevocable love for their family aides them in their tremendous grief. By writing a character like Willy Burke, who encompasses both Irish and American characteristics, Sadlier is again propagating a specific Irish-American identity for her emigrant readers. She writes in the Preface: “If my young countrymen would all take Willy Burke for their model —

77 For more on the “missing father” emigrant figure see Patrick Blessing 26.
humble as he is – I will venture to promise that the Irish in America would soon become wealthy, esteemed and respected” (Preface iii).

As I have demonstrated, operating within a family cell can be difficult, and negotiations need to take place in order to ensure its smooth operation. Often it demands the self-sacrifice of the persons contained therein, and Sadlier highlights this demand by way of the subplot of the friendship between Tom Reilly and Annie Byrne in *The Blakes and Flanagans*. It was known among the young people that Tom and Annie were close friends and could have easily wed, but Tom decided to sacrifice his desire to his friend Mike Sheridan in order to keep his widowed mother happy. His feelings are acknowledged in the chapter “Tom Reilly’s Secret”, and the narrator believes he has done the right thing by his mother, judging by the praise bestowed on him. In an unusually frank conversation with her son, Mrs. Reilly questions Tom about “keeping company” with Alice. Her mood is quite petulant as she probes him about bringing a daughter-in-law home to her. Fanning, in his analyses of this scene, states that Mrs. Reilly accuses Tom of infidelity – to her! Tom assures his mother that, although fond of Alice, he has chosen to stay with her, stating: “I thought you had the first claim to me, so I made up my mind that I’d try and get over my foolish notions, and, with God’s help, I have succeeded. […] I have been, and I’m sure am still, all the world to you, and it was only natural that you should wish to have no rival in my affection” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 342/3).78 In a scene fraught with filial duty, Fanning notes that Sadlier reiterates “the moral of this fierce lesion in the necessary self-immolation of children on behalf of their parents” (*The Irish Voice in America* 125). Sadlier decorates Tom with the highest Catholic honours, stating that “the recording

78 For an overview of the “smothering” relationship between mothers and sons in post-Famine Ireland see Kerby Miller *Ireland and Irish America* 310. See also, Alexander Humphreys 245-247.
angel marked it in lustrous characters in the book of life. Tom had offered up on the alter of filial love the dearest affections of his heart; […] But Tom had made the required sacrifice, and it made his good mother happy, and drew down the blessing of God, for God loves, and promises to reward self-denial” (Blakes and Flanagans 345).

As Sadlier clearly demonstrates, this type of loyalty to one’s family, even at the cost of personal happiness, was firmly embedded in the social culture of 1855. Fanning notes that this type of fidelity was discussed widely in literature. He writes “The negative impact of all-encompassing devotion to family becomes a major theme of Irish-American fiction in the twentieth-century” (The Irish Voice 125). In his research on the Irish family, Alexander Humphreys agrees with Fanning, stating that prolonged celibacy among children frequently occurred, and filial piety led to subordination and parental control in the interests of family welfare. Humphreys observes: “The uniquely advanced age at which spouses marry and accede to family control […] has profound and singular effects […] it makes for a pronounced glorification and veneration of the aged, especially for the authority of the father and the affection and devotion of the mother” (247). Even when Mike and Annie announce their engagement, Tom disguises his feelings and puts on a brave face. The narrator states that “no one could ever suspect him of any lingering regret for what he was about to lose for ever. His pale cheek might have been a shade paler than usual as he asked Alice to dance, and his mother, the only close observer of his actions, felt sorry that she had permitted him to expose himself to such a trial” (Blakes and Flanagans 349). Tom’s mother feels completely justified in demanding Tom’s obvious self-sacrifice, and in an ironic twist of fate, they both become the god-parents to Annie and Mike’s baby.
Catholicism and the emigrant family

In *The Blakes and Flanagans* (1855), Sadlier’s literary technique is very simplistic; her main plot centres around these two families. The Flanagans are presented as a decent, honest and moral family, headed by parents who believe in a Catholic upbringing for their children; they therefore send them to St. Peters, the local Catholic school, under the patronage of Mr. Lanigan. Sadlier describes them as a family whose “Religion was the sun of their solar system, giving life and warmth to themselves and all around them” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 3). In stark contrast, the Blakes are presented as proud and interested in capitalism; they believe that sending their children to the local Ward school will ultimately serve them better when it comes to making a living, and although the parents are presented as honest and affectionate, Sadlier states that “Both husband and wife were more anxious for making money than anything else” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 3). Here, Sadlier is placing an emphasis on the importance of spiritual welfare over material objects: an attitude that may seem outdated in the twenty-first century, but which formed the cornerstone for DeValera’s ideal Ireland in 1943 when he stated in his famous St. Patrick’s Day speech: “That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to things of the spirit” (qtd. in Terence Brown 113). Indeed, even when DeValera made this speech in the mid-twentieth-century his sentiments were somewhat misguided. Historian Sharon Lambert suggests that his broadcast “epitomised the idealised rural Ireland which dominated official rhetoric and ignored the reality of economic stagnation and high emigration” (153). Sadlier is careful to compare similar families for maximum impact; both families have businesses: Tim and Nelly Flanagan work in the leather trade, and Miles and Mary Blake own a grocery store. Like traditional Irish emigrant Catholic families, both have
children. The Flanagans have five children: three boys, named Ned, Thomas and John, and two girls, named Ellen and Susan. The Blakes, although having had “several” children, only two remain: one boy and one girl, Harry and Eliza respectively. Nineteenth-century Irish readers would have related to this family composition as they too may have lost children, owing to disease and poor childbirth practices that resulted in high mortality rates among infants.

As I have established, Sadlier sees Catholicism as a regulatory ideal for emigrants and the essence of a successful family unit. However, when individuals migrate from the nation-state, it opens up previously restricted categories of identity as some people do not feel confined by expectations from “home”. Conrad examines this transformation of identity through the example of the contemporary gay community, but I would argue that the same change is evident in some of Sadlier’s characters after emigration particularly in relation to Catholicism (66). She shows how they felt a sense of freedom from a restrictive religion and how being physically away from the keepers of their faith, the immediate family and the wider community, made it easier for them to forget their faith. In order to erase their Irish identity, the emigrant has to first reject and then break away from the family cell. Conrad details instances where members of the family expose the private workings of the family, thereby informing against the family cell, “the abused wife who informs on her husband […] or the queer child who exposes his family’s non-heteronormativity, or the pregnant daughter who names her own father as the father of her child” (16). These members of the family, who pose as threats, are constructed as “foreign bodies in the cell, pathological invaders threatening the very coherence of the cell” (Conrad 16). Through his constant physical fighting in school and disrespecting his parents and their values, Harry Blake from The Blakes and Flanagans is a good example of somebody working against the family cell. He does his
best to distance and alienate his parents from the Irish community in New York as he is ashamed of his heritage and the cultural implications of being Irish. Sadlier expels the defunct member of the cell so that the rest of the family cell can remain intact and begin to function again. The Blakes banish him from the family circle as they do not want to make a fuss or stand-out; they want to remain within the confines of the family cell and remain “normal” within their community. As Conrad explains, any deviation that shatters the family cell has the capacity to destroy the normative ideology that people work so hard to create (67).

However Sadlier is keen to show that the ability to create a new persona did not work for all emigrants; some who may have thought that emigration was a “way-out” of the family cell, and therefore Catholicism, found that they could not escape it. They were hounded by their sense of Catholic guilt, and feelings of betrayal to the original “homeland” rendered them incapable of creating a new identity. Harry’s sibling Eliza is a prime example of this; in her youth, she is troubled when she neglects her Catholic religion, but she tries to ignore her feelings of betrayal and grows up to marry a Protestant.79 By not adhering to her community’s tradition of endogamous marriages, Eliza has disregarded conventions and cut herself off from her community as well as her religious faith. This was a very precarious position to be in, given the constraints of contemporary Irish culture; as Janet Nolan tells us: those who broke with conventional marriages were met with “pity and scorn” (75). Eliza is presented as a character who scorns her Irish heritage and refuses to see her mother socially. When Eliza’s mother does call to the house to see her, she has to use the servant’s entrance. When Eliza says in a scornful tone, “How tiresome these Irish servants are!”, Sadlier is showing how Eliza has adopted the Know-Nothing attitude towards emigrant workers. However,

79 For more information on endogamous marriages see Patrick Blessing 26.
when Eliza runs into complications at childbirth, consumed with fear and guilt, she calls for a Catholic priest who arrives too late, and she dies a terrible death. Fanning argues that the deathbed scene is a narrative technique employed by Famine writers and was used to illustrate to the readers the life that was led by the recent dead. He writes: “The good die peacefully, surrounded by loving family and not without occasional angelic music and lighting; the bad die horribly, weeping, gnashing their teeth, and calling – too late – for a priest” (The Irish Voice in America 77). By killing a central character in such a horrific manner, Sadlier is reminding her readers that being a Catholic by birth will not lead to automatic redemption.

Conclusion
Detailed historical analysis has been undertaken on the patterns of Irish emigration and its subsequent impact on family life. Historians have relied on data from various registers and census information to establish trends in emigration activity. Diaries and letters have aided this process of discovery and now scholars are examining literary sources as viable documents which are a reflection of the times they were written in as they detail the social and cultural, as well as the affective aspects of family life. In the Prefaces to many of Sadlier’s Irish emigrant novels, we gain an insight into the objectives of her novels which reinforce the thesis that Sadlier is contributing to the construction of an Irish-American character. Sadlier’s work is highly didactic, and her lessons on morality and religion reinforce stereotypical Irish Catholic nineteenth century family mores. The role of the family is central to Sadlier’s idealistic portrayal of Irish life, and being an emigrant to North America herself, she is well aware of the challenges that await Irish emigrants when they reach the shores of their host country. She stresses that they must not sacrifice their morality or social code in order to succeed
in the New World. She believes that retaining the teachings of their Irish upbringing within the family cell and amalgamating those with the best traits of being an American will enable them to achieve success in their new endeavours. As discussed, within an Irish context, religious discourse is central to the propagation of the family unit. The domestic practices of the family unit often influence its wider implications within society; thus, when the domestic set-up is threatened by emigration, the family cell has the capacity to fall apart. Throughout her novels, Sadlier tries to remind emigrants that a strong family unit and supportive “Irish” community can ease the geographical and emotional transition that they must undergo. However, the family cell is highly regulated and employs normalising techniques in order to ensure its survival; the dangerous implications of operating within a family cell ideology are that the people who do not neatly fit within its categories are excluded from society. They are forced to live on the fringes of the public sphere and are always presented as the “other”. For those who remain with the cell, it is also difficult as they are constantly trying to regulate and control it, and they often find themselves trapped within it, as Sadlier’s morality tales illustrate all too well.
Chapter Three: Catholicism: A Tool or a Marker of Difference?

Introduction

When studying Sadlier’s literary works, it becomes obvious that one of her main motivations for writing was the promotion and (re)generation of Catholicism in North America and Ireland. Sadlier is writing for two audiences, one at home (Ireland) and one in the host country (North America); but the Catholic cultural contexts in each country were quite similar as Catholicism was undergoing changes in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, as I discuss below. In her contribution to the formation of an Irish-American character, Sadlier gives Catholicism prime position. In her emigrant novels, it becomes clear to the reader that Sadlier transports the moral values and rituals of Catholicism with the emigrant as a means to help them in their endeavours to settle in their host country. It is also apparent that Sadlier presents the Irish family as being irrevocably entwined with Catholicism. This correlates with Fanning’s observation that Sadlier believes that there is “an unshakeable identification of Ireland with Catholicism” (The Irish Voice 117) as it is filtered through the family mechanism and passed on through generations. Thus, the family and the wider community play a central role in sustaining Catholicism in both countries in Sadlier’s writing.

In order to consider the Catholic dimension to Sadlier’s novels, this chapter discusses the emerging role and significance placed on Catholicism in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century in Ireland and North America. To facilitate this consideration of the Catholic dimension to Sadlier’s novels, the discussion focuses on two aspects of Catholicism: the spiritual dimension and its educational role, whilst analysing how these aspects interact with Sadlier’s emigrant novels. In order to create cultural context, the chapter begins with a brief historical overview of Catholicism in pre-Famine Ireland and outlines the position that Catholics held in society. Examining a key text written by
Sadlier while based in Ireland, just after the Famine, namely, *New Lights; or, Life in Galway: A Tale* (1853), I will show how Irish people in Ireland had to fight to preserve their Catholicism just as Irish emigrants did in North America at that time. I will then discuss the procedures put in place in the period 1849-1872 by Cardinal Paul Cullen in order to rejuvenate interest in Catholicism among Irish people, procedures which culminated in the “Devotional Revolution” in Ireland.

Turning to North America, the chapter outlines the emerging presence of the Catholic Church and the conflicts surrounding its place there. Sadlier faced difficulties as an emigrant writer in combating emerging Irish stereotypes in her works, and this chapter explores how these are played out in religious narratives. I propose that Sadlier suggests that, if Irish emigrants transport a strong Catholic faith to their new home, they will be rewarded with a good, honest life in their host country. Sadlier places the onus of sustaining a Catholic identity on each and every Irish emigrant, and by implementing this type of thinking in her novels, she is promoting what I term a “rewarding religion”.

Using material from *The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1855), this chapter then turns to the educational role of the Catholic Church in North America. At the time of writing *The Blakes and Flanagans* in 1855, Sadlier was in fact aligning herself with the politics of Archbishop John Hughes of New York by actively endorsing specifically Catholic schools. Yet Maureen Fitzgerald’s research shows that these Catholic schools were created directly at the cost of setting up orphanages or Catholic reformatories for destitute emigrants (49). Continuing my central thesis argument, that Sadlier is an emigrant who is constantly re-negotiating her identity, I argue that by the time she wrote *Aunt Honor’s Keepsake: A Chapter from Life* in 1866, Sadlier had changed her mind about supporting Catholic
education at the cost of providing orphanages, asylums and hospitals for Irish emigrants.

_Catholicism in pre-Famine Ireland_

When Sadlier writes about religion, she is writing about Catholicism, specifically, nineteenth-century Irish Catholicism. Often writing sentimental rhetoric, which was a popular style of fiction in the mid-nineteenth-century, typified by Maria Susanna Cummins _The Lamplighter_ (1854), Sadlier’s emigrant novels also espouse a didactic fiction that was typical of her era.\(^8^0\) The characters that Sadlier creates are often steeped in tradition and respectful towards their cultural heritage when they leave Ireland but these feelings are actively challenged once they reach America. In her preface to _Bessy Conway_ (1861), Sadlier leaves the reader in no doubt as to the purpose of her writing the novel. She explains:

>The object of the book is plain; so plain, indeed, that there is no possibility of any one’s mistaking it for a better or a worse. It is simply an attempt to point out to _Irish Girls in America_ - especially that numerous class whose lot it is to hire themselves out for work, the true and never failing path to success in this world, and happiness in the next. (iii)

Her preface sets up the novel as a Catholic instruction booklet. Her words of counsel are written in an unflinchingly moralistic tone, and she portrays a simplistic view of work and life. Yet, it is with these sentiments that she declares _Bessy Conway_ to be written from “a sincere and heartfelt desire” for the moral wellbeing of her readers (iv).

The opening paragraph of the Preface carefully outlines the objectives of the novel and immediately the reader becomes fully aware of Sadlier’s religious agenda.

She aims this novel at young Irish working-class Catholic women who are going to

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\(^8^0\) Fred Lewis Pattee states that the American reading public, who were mostly women, found _The Lamplighter_ (1854) “delightful”, complete with its mix of “sentimentalism and melodrama with a saving dash of morals and religion” 111.
America to engage in domestic work. She refers to these women in idealised words, calling them “simple-hearted peasant girls of Ireland” (iii). She suggests that when exposed to the “evil influences” that awaits them in America, they are in danger of losing their morality and respect for their religion. Immediately, Sadlier sets up Ireland as a matriarchal figure, her lands producing wholesome peasant girls and sustaining them through simple living and rigorous Catholic beliefs. The well-used trope of “Mother Ireland” has been engaged by contemporary feminist scholars in order to differentiate between the lives of actual Irish women and this symbolic status in Irish culture, but it is used here as a tool for emphasising Ireland’s connection with Catholicism. Sadlier uses the metaphor of boats being tied to a dock to represent the safety that the home country provides. She writes: “The vast member of these girls, their unprotected state, generally speaking; the dangers of every kind awaiting them after they have slipped the moorings which bound them in safety to the old Christian land” (iv).

She underscores the importance of Christian faith, especially when abroad, and explains how difficult it becomes for Irish girls to keep the Catholic faith alive when faced with such “precarious living” (iii). Sadlier depicts the ideal Irish emigrant woman as sensible, religious and hardworking. She believes that emigrant women have a certain amount of agency and can decide their own fates in their host country. They will be successful and happy, but only if they engage in good behaviour, possess a deep reverence for God and a dutiful respect for authority. She writes: “Let them be assured that it rests with themselves whether they do ill in America, whether they do honor to their country and their faith, or bring shame and reproach to both” (iv). In short, Sadlier’s novels reinforce her view of the importance and necessity of Catholicism in the process of successful emigration.
Throughout the novel *Bessy Conway*, in dealing with different characters, Sadlier reinforces the belief that Catholicism is universal and can be adopted by anybody. Paul, a hunchback who we meet on the emigrant ship, is devoutly religious and severely moral. He looks after Bessy and knows the evils of a life filled with drink and gambling. He becomes friends with Dolly, an elderly woman on the emigrant ship, and he adopts her as a mother figure. He is rewarded for his kindness and respect towards her when she comes into a large inheritance from her dead son, who she was going to visit in America. Paul remains rigorously self-disciplined throughout the novel and becomes a preacher to street children who sell newspapers for a living. Sadlier advances her sub-plot of the virtues of Christian teaching when Paul (through the device of teaching the children) instructs the reader in Catholicism, touching on topics such as the Blessed Trinity and the importance of the Virgin Mary. The reader is made aware that Paul has this knowledge because he has received good Catholic instruction in Ireland. These scenes become increasingly sentimental as Paul educates these poor boys in teachings that he believes will provide them with “wealth” in the next life. It is interesting to note that Paul only instructs street boys in the novel, perhaps suggesting that the girls have a better chance to receive their religious education in the domestic sphere. I think that by drawing the reader’s attention to these “lost boys”, Sadlier is indirectly expressing her concern at a whole second generation of Irish-Americans who have lost their faith through lack of exposure to religious doctrines. This lack of exposure is directly related to the provision of state education both in North America and Ireland.

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81 This sub-plot may derive from Sadlier’s involvement with Fr. Drumgoole’s Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, now housed at Staten Island but initially housed in Manhattan, Lower East Side. Fr. Drumgoole instructed street boys in Catholicism whilst encouraging their education.
During the pre-Famine period (1750 to 1844), the commercialisation of Ireland’s rural economy and the Anglicisation of Irish culture under colonialism profoundly changed the structure of Irish society. Kerby Miller explains:

> By eroding the insularity of Gaelic culture, Anglicisation exposed Irish Catholics to the lure of emigration overseas and to the ‘modern’, entrepreneurial values accompanying commercialisation, thus threatening Catholic Ireland not only with depopulation but also with cultural subjugation to the Protestantism and materialism of English society (Emigrants and Exiles 27)

However, large-scale Irish Catholic emigration actually only occurred as a result of the Famine. Kevin Kenny notes that most of the emigrants before 1830 were Protestants, rather than Catholics (Diaspora and Comparison 136).  

Sadlier idealises the homeland for forming a strong Irish Catholic faith, and by her writings, she hopes to encourage Irish emigrants to continue that faith once they move to North America. She underscores the importance of a strong faith in the homeland, but is acutely aware of the threats to Catholicism, especially following the Famine and subsequent hardships. Sadlier presents proselytising activities as a real and immediate danger to sustaining an enduring Catholic faith both in the home and host countries. She is well aware of the plight of Irish Catholics and of their need to promote and sustain the faith in spite of great hostility.

Indeed, she is drawing on centuries of oppressive attitudes towards Irish Catholicism emanating from the injustices of the Penal Laws, which really tested people’s commitment to Catholicism. The laws were created in order to demean and demoralise people, in the hope that they would convert to Protestantism; the rules were strict and marginalised Catholics, making them second-class citizens in their home

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82 In 1834, the Commissioners of Public Instruction calculated that 80.9% of the population were Catholics, 10.7% were members of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland and 8.1% were Presbyterians. For more on religious affiliation in Ireland in 1861 and 1901, see Sean Connolly 3.
country. These limitations actually made Catholics more determined to continue their faith, albeit “underground”, and often, they were forced into rural areas to carry out their worship. The absence of chapels and illegality of priests meant that mass was carried out in the open at “mass-rocks” up to the end of the eighteenth century. The Catholic hierarchy knew the importance of recruiting young people, and so the “hedge-schools” were created to give the necessary religious instruction to children in the hope that they would carry on the faith for future generations. Catholic schooling using catechisms was essential for creating and sustaining good Catholics. To combat the persistence of these illegal Popish hedge-schools, the British state tried to Protestantise the Irish by sending them to Charter schools that were state-subsidised; this type of thinking was mirrored in North America, as I will detail later.

Tom Inglis explains the influence of state schools: “The Charter Schools were based on the principle of the State intervening and detaching children from their ignorant, uncivil and immoral parents so that they ‘may be instructed in the English tongue and in the principles of true religion and loyalty in all succeeding generations’” (101). The English wanted to provide a standardised system of education which would regulate the Irish and adapt them to an English way of life. However, following a large grassroots mobilisation of Catholics, Daniel O’Connell secured Catholic Emancipation for the Irish in 1829, which in turn secured civil and political rights previously denied to Catholics. Nicknamed the “The Liberator”, O’Connell and other politicians went on to appeal the Act of Union, which was created in 1800 and had abolished Ireland’s parliament. These political changes revolutionised the Irish cultural landscape as the

83 Examples of the Penal Laws include conditions such as: Catholics were not allowed to buy land, receive gifts from Protestants or hold a lease for more than thirty one years; also, substantial restrictions were placed on religious teaching and Catholic education
84 Rural worship also included “The Stations”, which took place just before Christmas and just after Easter. See Larkin *The Pastoral Role of the Roman Catholic Church* 189. William Carlton published his story “The Station” about this practice in 1829.
Catholic Church had legally regained its place in society, and it began to flourish. However, another impending threat to Catholicism and Irish national culture presented itself in the form of the Irish Famine.

Sadlier documents these hard times in Ireland in her novel *New Lights; or, Life in Galway* (1853). Based in a Connemara village, it narrates the life of farmer Bernard O’Daly who is poverty-stricken after the Famine. Sadlier glorifies his character as, although starving, he refuses to accept food from the proselytisers in return for religious conversion. Marguérite Corporaal notes: “She [Sadlier] even suggests that surrendering to the hunger instead of accepting food that conflicts with religious conscience is a statement of independence” (“Memories of the Great Famine” 150). However, not all characters are so staunch in their religious beliefs; in the first chapter, Sadlier introduces the character of Katty Boyce, a widowed peasant who is penniless. During the Famine, Irish peasantry lived in constant states of destitution and fought daily against the battles of hunger, malnutrition and disease. In the face of such hardship, Sadlier’s character Katty has been persuaded by local proselytisers into enrolling her name in the “book” of converted Protestants in return for food. The local Catholic community are scornful of her betrayal, and they see her as a traitor; another character, Tom Hynes, says of Katty: “‘Don’t mind her, your reverence, she gets soup from the Bible-readers – she’s not to be trusted, Father O’Driscoll’” (*New Lights* 17). However, Sadlier presents the priest as a tolerant and fair man who listens to her plight. We learn that Katty’s husband has died, and she has no means of earning money for food for her children and that Mrs. Perkins who was “as sweet as sugar” told her to go to the soup-house for relief. Although Katty first refuses, as she knows that she will have to convert to Protestantism, Mrs. Perkins assures her that she will not be asked about her religion.
The figure of the Katty, the Catholic widow, protecting her children connects with Margaret Kelleher’s theory that women in Famine texts are frequently depicted with “strong evocations of the Madonna and child” (Feminisation of the Famine 23). After a week of soup and bread, she is questioned about her religious status and told that, if she wants to keep receiving food, she must convert. After she refuses to do so, she is verbally abused by the Protestant in charge of the “book” of recorded converts, as Katty explains, “then he began to look very angry, an’ says he, ‘Get you gone, you ignorant slave of’ – something – I don’t remember what the other long word was – ‘never darken this door again, you may starve and die like a pig, for you’re no better” (New Lights 19). We learn that a “smooth-faced, well-spoken, gentlemen with a black coat an’ a white cravat” makes a deal with Katty; if she sends her children to the local Protestant school, she can keep her name out of the “book” and continue to receive provisions. However, Katty refuses this offer as she does not want to involve her children in Protestantism, but she agrees to let her name be put in the book, as she explains to the priest:

“I did, your reverence – the Lord forgive me! – because I said to myself that so long as they didn’t ax me to go to their church, it didn’t make so great a difference, an’ that so long as God an’ your reverence an’ all good Christians would know me for a Catholic, I mightn’t care much about them havin’ my name in their book”. (New Lights 21)

Katty is viewed by the Irish community as one of the “Jumpers”, a pejorative term used to describe Catholics who converted to Protestantism, but Sadlier is sympathetic to her plight and writes at the end of the novel:\footnote{For a full discussion on “Jumpers”, see Miriam Moffitt.}

Does not every day’s experience show the poor Jumpers or Soupers (as they are derisively called) returning to the old religion, when once the pressure of the famine is past? When they get money from abroad, or permanent employment at home, is not ‘their first race’, as they would say themselves, ‘to the priest’, and their first act to become reconciled to

\footnote{For a full discussion on “Jumpers”, see Miriam Moffitt.}
that holy Church, which their temporary apostasy has made all the more dear to their heart? (440)

Ultimately, the Protestant community kidnap Katty’s children and bring them to the Protestant school, and an upstanding Catholic, Phil Maguire, eventually gets them back for her. Sadlier presents this dramatic scene as a lucky escape for Katty and her family and a direct reflection of the reality of the perils of proselytising activities in Ireland.

Sadlier’s emigrant fiction provides an insightful commentary on Irish Catholic values and teaching during the nineteenth century both in the home and host country. In pre-Famine Ireland, the Church was divided and thought to be in need of strong leadership in order to get people back to the sacraments. Historian Sean Connolly cites Miller’s 1975 work as concrete evidence of poor church attendance based on figures from a detailed survey carried out in 1834 by the Commissioners of Public Instruction (47). Catholicism was often infused in Ireland by pagan beliefs and a belief in the supernatural, some believing that physical objects such as crops, tools and food were governed by forces of nature beyond their control. Nineteenth-century Irish culture was also suffused with Irish mythology, and these folk-beliefs were transported with emigrants when they left their homeland. Images of fairies and folklore are scattered throughout Sadlier’s novels and are often used as a warning device about respecting a country’s heritage and beliefs.

This is evident in Bessy Conway when the British landlord Mrs. Herbert orders a fairy fort to be dug up. The local Irish peasantry refuse to do this work as they know that the curse of the fairies will fall upon them and are horrified at Mrs. Herbert’s nonchalant attitude. Two men agree to do it, and misfortune follows them as Bessy’s brother Owen testifies: “I tell you she did, and she couldn’t get a man to do it – only Bill Morrow and Harry Grimes – by the same token, Bill broke his arm before he got
home the day they finished the job, and Harry Grimes found the best cow he had lyin’ dead in the byre a week or two after” (Bessy Conway 290). Bessy observes that nothing happened to Mrs. Herbert, and asks whether perhaps the rich are outside the revenge of the fairies, but Sadlier gives Mrs. Herbert her comeuppance on Halloween night as the narrator notes:

Next day the whole country was thrown into a state of fearful excitement. Word went out that Mrs. Herbert had been found dead in her bed that morning, and as soon as the awful news had been fully verified, it was set down as an act of fairy vengeance. People crossed themselves and looked at each other, and shook their heads “She knows the difference now,” one said with religious solemnity. (Bessy Conway 291)

Irish peasants believed that fairies possessed the ability to signal an approaching death of the family member or, conversely, to be capable of malevolence, stealing healthy infants and leaving sickly “changelings” in their place. Moreover, fairies were often used to explain the bizarre nature of life. Miller explains: “Many rural Irish also believed in witches and the evil eye; like the fairies, these also helped to explain the often cruel, arbitrary nature of the peasant’s world” (Emigrants and Exiles 72). The Church tried to suppress these beliefs and condemned the supernatural as being mere superstitions and presented those who practiced it as heathens. Connolly explains the discord and widening gulf created by these rituals. He writes: “Traditional festivals such as the celebration of St. John’s Eve and the patterns held at holy wells, the festive wakes held over the bodies of the recently dead, road-side dances and other assemblies for amusement, were all denounced as occasions of drunkenness, bawling, idleness and sexual immorality” (52). By detailing the paganism of the Irish peasants, Sadlier is framing a particular type of Irish Catholicism. I propose that her presentation of pagan and Christian beliefs is more flexible than the Church’s doctrines as she wants to connect to her readers; this flexibility is also reflected in her propagation of a
“rewarding religion”, a point I will expand on later. When Sadlier discusses folk religion in her novels, it is always the Protestant (and therefore the Anglo-Irish) community who fall foul because they do not treat it with care and respect; this is sometimes constructed as a revenge for Protestant mistreatment of Catholics in Ireland.

The plot of New Lights documents more encounters with Protestants and encompasses Fanning’s observations that Famine writers have very specific aims and therefore very specific themes. He states that Famine writers follow the predictive pattern of presenting great suffering in Ireland, marked by landlord exploitation and painful eviction from the homestead (The Irish Voice 76). The novel hinges on two pivotal events: Bernard’s wife Honora falls ill and begs the Protestant landlord, Mr. Harrington Ousely, to extend their rent payments so they can keep their family home, but Ousely is depicted as selfish and virulently anti-Catholic and refuses her request. As a direct consequence, Honora dies, but not before forgiving Ousely from her deathbed in a dramatic, sentimental scene. The second event, the bailiffs coming to evict Bernard from his home, is pivotal because the house was the homestead of his father and grandfather. During this scene, Sadlier is cleverly highlighting and questioning the right of the Protestant colonisers to oust Catholics who have been in situ on Irish land for generations. Bernard is distraught, ashamed and humiliated by the bailiffs, and unlike in Bessy Conway, there is no happy ending here. Two of his sons emigrate to Philadelphia and send remittances home, but it is too late to save the family home.

Although nationalistic in her writings, Fanning observes that Sadlier exercises a particular type of political conservatism. When the neighbours threaten the bailiffs with spades and violent gestures, the local priest steps in and prevents the ensuing fight. Fanning sees this as an extension of Sadlier’s Catholicism, the need to experience suffering and humiliation in order to do penance and earn the right to eternal life.
Fanning writes: “The repudiation of violent redress here is a part of Sadlier’s more general acceptance of suffering, including that experienced during the Famine, as God’s plan for His chosen people” (117). I would refute this statement as Sadlier’s protagonists do not generally accept suffering in any of her novels. All of her central characters are people of action; they are hard-working and initiators of their own destiny within the constraints of their circumstances. Also, Sadlier is not averse to condoning violence as documented in Chapter Two. Nonetheless, I agree with one aspect of Fanning’s observation: Sadlier does not advocate violence on a large scale; thus, we may see her as espousing political conservatism. By placing the O’Dalys at the mercy of the Protestant landlord, what Sadlier is doing is stirring a sense of Irish identity through the use of nationalism.

The black and white drawings found at the front of the novel aid this suspenseful scene. The first drawing details the eviction scene, and Owen, one of the characters, can clearly be seen trying to push past policemen to get into his family inside the house. The neighbours are in the background with their raised shovels, and women and children are weeping outside the house. The other drawing details Honora’s deathbed scene with a caption: “‘Tell your father’, said she slowly and with difficulty, ‘tell him Honora O’Daly forgives him’” (New Lights n. pag.). The deathbed picture is fraught with emotion, and Catholicism is suggested by a priest and by a large crucifix hanging on the wall. It is important to note that, even before the reader engages with the written words of the novel, a sense of anger, loss and anguish is prompted by the grim pictures detailing the injustices perpetrated by the landowners, constructed as a Protestant community.
The Devotional Revolution

As I have detailed above, threats to Catholicism were rampant in the mid-nineteenth century in Ireland both in the form of proselytising and Protestant evictions. However, a changing tide of respect and reverence for the Catholic Church in Ireland occurred after the Famine. In 1849, Pius IX appointed Paul Cullen as archbishop of Armagh, primate of the Irish Church and apostolic delegate. It is believed that the increase in churches, schools and convents in this period are owed to the innovativeness of Cullen in taking advantage of a decreased population after the Famine and emigration.  

Lawrence McCaffrey explains his position:

Not only did he build buildings, he also improved clerical education and discipline; significantly enlarged the number of religious vocations; created a public face of harmony among the hierarchy; successfully cultivated attendance at Mass, parish missions, and a variety of devotions (forty-hours, stations of the cross, benediction and the rosary) and increased reception of the sacraments among the people. (81)

These huge changes led to what Emmet Larkin has coined the “Devotional Revolution” (“The Devotional Revolution in Ireland” 649). Cullen’s appointment was reported in the New York Daily Times in October 1855 as “the inauguration of a new era of Church discipline” (4).

The Church took a prime position in everyday Irish life, and Catholics actively participated in the newly-established rituals. An increased attendance at mass, confession and communion were recorded, and while women placed a special emphasis on private devotion using rosaries and medals, the creation of confraternities and sodalities became popular with men. Large numbers of the rural poor had emigrated in the meantime, leaving room for the more prosperous farming community to invest in the Church as Connolly explains: “As the tenant farmer became increasingly the

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86 For an expanded discussion on the Ultramontane rival, see Desmond Bowen 164.
87 For more on the “Devotional Revolution”, see Larkin, “The Devotional Revolution” 625-652.
dominant figure in the Irish countryside, the potential for a close identification between priests and people increased” (41). The wealth of the Irish Church increased and became more visible with the building of towering Churches and grottoes. Inglis explains that the opulence and ornateness of the Church interiors generated a lot of interest among congregations, and detailed articles and pictures were often featured in Catholic magazines such as *The Catholic Penny Magazine* (120). Irish people were encouraged to have more respect for the clergy than in the past, and they treated them with a type of reverence. Indeed, it was often the case that, if the second son in the family became a priest, then the social standing of the family would increase.

This type of thinking was obviously carried across the Atlantic, as in Sadlier’s own emigrant family. Her second son Francis Xavier was ordained as a Jesuit three months before his untimely death. However, her son seems to have been at odds with this choice of career. In a letter dated March 5th 1868, addressed to “My dear Mamma”, Francis puts forth an impassioned plea that his parents relent in their expectations that he enters the priesthood. He writes:

> But dear Mama music is not the special object of this letter. I have been giving some attention to a subject lately, which is of great importance and as such I think it will that you be acquainted with it. It is then, my future profession in life. I am well aware, that your wishes in this regard point to the priesthood but somehow I have never had any particular inclination to that calling and through I am sorry to say it. […] I think I may conclude that I have no particular vocation for the priesthood. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

He continues to explain his feelings concerning his choice of future profession. He writes:

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88 Connolly blames the visual lack of material display within the church in the local community and the unimaginative rites of worship for the demise in Catholicism in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. This point is addressed by Sadlier when she writes of Elinor Preston’s wonder and awe upon seeing *Notre Dame de Montréal* (a Catholic church in Montréal) for the first time (*Elinor Preston* 220).

89 To view Francis Sadlier’s letter dated 5th March 1868, see Appendix C.
What do I feel an inclination to? Neither to the medical, legal, nor military professions. I will not be an artist since, though, I have a taste for the arts, I have no desire for the life of a painter or architect. I may as well tell you at once that all my wishes are directed to the life of a sailor. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

Instead of becoming a priest, he wishes to go to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. He anticipates the possibility of war with England and states: “though born under the English flag, I would readily assist in tearing it down and this I can do in the navy as well as the army” (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122). Francis also suggests that the navy will give him a good education; as good as the Brothers and writes that he looks forward to the day when he will be called “Captain Sadlier”, saying that it would be a “privilege” to join. He states emphatically: “I would like to go” (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122). However, he is afraid of his disappointing his mother and father and he implores them to give it some serious thought. He continues to write:

I am almost afraid to mention it since I know that both papa and you are opposed to that profession but still if you will reflect a little on it you will, I trust relax your opposition. It is a glorious thing for a young man to do something for his country, and I think that of our family one at least should be devoted to take that course. (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122)

At the time this letter was written, Francis still seems to be on good terms with his mother as he signs off, “Hoping to see you on Sunday. With fond love, I remain, Your Ever Affectionate Son, Francis” (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122). However Lacombe notes that at the time of his death from pneumonia, Mary Anne seemed to be estranged from her son after spending some time apart from him, and the above letter could explain this estrangement (“Frying Pans”).

This Catholic determination to have a priest in the family shows the cultural importance of the priestly role. Inglis explains: “[a priest] was a model of morality and
civility, a shining example of what could be produced from a tenant farmer background” (emphasis mine) (143). A degree of power came with this role through the confessional ritual, and the priest was usually at the heart of the community performing major rites of passage such as birth, marriage, death. The priest is a character that often features in Sadlier’s novels, taking on different forms: a man of mystery in *Bessy Conway*, a man of decency in *New Lights* and a man of compassion in *Willy Burke*. Indeed, as in Sadlier’s novels, priests and nuns were actively seen in the community, either caring for the sick in hospitals or teaching, thus creating a visible moral superiority over other state organisations. This led to an adherence to the Catholic Church through schooling, health, etc., which in turn resulted in people becoming moral in a Catholic framework, rather than obtaining ethics through secular means. Inglis sums up the ideology that swept over Ireland in the mid-to-late nineteenth century when he writes that “Attaining social prestige in Ireland became reliant not so much on being secularly civil as being a good Catholic i.e. adhering to the Church’s rules and regulations” (170).

*Transporting Catholicism to North America*

The influence that the Irish Catholic church had on its people in the nineteenth century is in no doubt. Donald Akenson writes that “the success of the Catholic Church in holding the faithful (and in reindoctrinating those who had become virtually irreligious) is one of its proudest claims” (113). When Irish emigrants arrived in North America in search of a new life, they were imbued with the culture and heritage of the land they left behind.⁹⁰ They brought with them their Irish traditions, folklore, beliefs and religion,

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⁹⁰ The American Catholic population increased from circa 318 thousand in 1830 to 4.5 million in 1870. For more on Catholic populations in America, see Patrick Carey *The Roman Catholics in America* 31. Statistics show that, in 1847, at the height of the Famine, Irish emigration to Canada peaked at seventy four thousand arrivals in Quebec City alone; an estimated ninety percent of those arriving at Grosse Ile were Catholic. For more on Catholic emigration to Canada, see Sheelagh Conway 87.
which proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the Irish culture that was
found in newly-created Irish-American neighbourhoods provided consolation and
comfort for the lonely emigrant; however, these traits of being distinctively “Irish”
separated them from the predominately Protestant culture, and they quickly occupied
the place of the “other”. William Griffin explains: “In the Anglo-American reading of
history, the Irish were a savage, inferior species, treacherous and priest-ridden, given to
violence and whiskey. […] Catholicism was, and would long remain, the distinguishing
mark of Irish ‘otherness’” (217).91

It was widely understood that Catholic bishops in Ireland feared that urbanized
American ghettos endangered Catholic faith and their strict moral expectations.
McCaffrey explains how the bishops encouraged young emigrants to settle in rural areas
compatible with their agrarian and Catholic backgrounds in a bid to keep the faith alive
for future generations. He names various Catholic leaders such as Bishop Timon
(Buffalo’s bishop in 1850), who strenuously tried to encourage Irish Catholic emigrants
to settle in his rural diocese.92 However, New York’s Archbishop John Hughes
disagreed with Bishop Timon. He believed that the church, that was already stretched
financially and spiritually, could best serve emigrants and protect them from Protestant
proselytism in higher density areas such as the city. In the 1890s, Archbishop John
Ireland (Archbishop of St. Paul) purchased a large quantity of rural Minnesota land and
brought over Belgian and Connaught Irish peasants to farm it. The Belgians prospered,
but the Irish abandoned the fields in order to work on the railroads (69). McCaffrey
writes about the social conditions of the settling Irish and their reasons for choosing to

91 For more on an “immigrant tradition” of American Catholicism, which included cultural isolation,
institutional separatism and an aggressive minority consciousness, see Carey The Roman Catholics in
America 31.
92 This links into previous discussions on the Irish Emigrant Aid Buffalo Convention as discussed in
Chapter One.
stay in the cities rather than settle in the countryside. Even though Irish emigrants came from a rural background in Ireland, he believes they were reluctant to travel inwards and set up farms because they lacked the necessary skills to operate large farms.

McCaffrey also maintains that the Irish were psychologically unsuited to be farmers in America as farms were spread out, and owing to harsh snowy winter conditions, rural life could become quite lonely. This was in stark contrast to rural life in Ireland where townlands were full of bustling conversation and gossip. Men worked in the fields all day, and then, in the evenings, neighbours sang and danced in each others’ cottages (68). As McCaffrey explains: “American cities were rough, tough, corrupt, dirty, violent and unhealthy, but extroverted Irish Catholics found them congenial because they were close to relatives and friends” (68). It is this aspect of emigrant life that Sadlier focuses on when she writes about the struggles of emigrants. The plots of her novels are normally surrounded by extended family and friends all struggling to survive in an emigrant Irish community.

Having dealt with proselytising in Ireland, Sadlier turns her attention to the same topic in the urban ghetto in Willy Burke (1850). Biddy Burke lets her employer pay for education for her son Willy. She has come from Ireland and fully understands the importance of schooling in a child’s life. She considers it to be vital in assimilating into American life as well as sustaining his Catholic faith in a foreign land. Biddy’s beliefs are not unusual as historian John Logan articulates that “[t]he school became the usual way of promoting an individual’s inclusion in a national civil and religious culture. Those who looked to the national school for instruction may have imagined it to hold the key to a transformed way of life” (49). However, Biddy is unaware that the school that Willy is attending is Protestant, and her naivety about American culture is an immediate threat to her son’s Catholic upbringing. When this becomes apparent, Willy
forgoes access to an education and refuses to go to school, generating what Catherine
Eagan describes as a certain type of sympathy for the lifestyle of ordinary Irish Catholic
emigrants. She suggests that novelists such as Sadlier romanticise Ireland through
various dialogues and plot lines. She writes, “Like many American sentimental novels,
these Irish-American novels often feature a child as the hero. The child is usually
faithful to his or her religion and refuses to convert or go to a mixed school” (80). His
brother Peter makes a deal with the employer to take Willy’s place, so he goes to the
school instead. Even though he believes he can retain his Catholic faith, Peter quickly
surrenders to Protestant teachings. His religious downfall occurs at the expense of his
mother’s job, illness and subsequent death. She is distraught and appalled that her son
is being led astray, and she feels powerless against the pervasive Protestant system in
America. Marjorie Howes writes that this type of thinking is linked directly to tales of
the Famine in which Protestants who ran soup kitchens encouraged peasants to convert
from Catholicism and the turncoats were labelled “soupers”. She writes: “It was
intimately connected with the history and mythology of souperism, a term invoking the
alleged proselytizing activities of Protestants who ran soup kitchens in time of the
famine […] such a sale constituted a simultaneous betrayal of self and country” (Yeats’s
Nations 48).93 Biddy Burke feels ashamed that one of her children is associated with
rich Protestants, and she is fully aware that the local Irish community will gossip about
her and the way she has reared her family.

What quickly becomes evident in Sadlier’s emigrant novels is that the
repercussions of good, honest, Catholic life are felt both in the home and in the host
country. All of Sadlier’s characters who adhere to Catholicism are happy and
successful in America. As documented elsewhere in this thesis, monies were sent home

93 For a historical account of the formation of “soup kitchens”, see Peter Gray 262-298.
from saved wages which enabled chain migration and often saved a family in crisis. In her novels, she depicts Ireland as a religious country where Catholicism is seamlessly infused into everyday life. Religious phrases and saints are duly called upon during moments of crisis, anger and excitement. In the novel *Bessy Conway*, Denis Conway constantly reiterates one central dictum upon which the novel hinges. In moments of extreme emotion within the novel, he always says calmly to his wife: “God is a good provider”. Whether referring to emotional comfort that his wife seeks after Bessy leaves for America or physical petitions uttered when the bailiffs come to possess their house, his belief in heavenly intervention is steadfast. The narrator relates:

So from bad to worse things went on, till everything was wanting in the once plentiful household, everything except the grace of God and His holy peace. […] The old man himself never allowed distrust of fear to enter his mind: no patriarch of old ever trusted more firmly in the Lord Almighty, and the darker the clouds that gathered around him the more steadily he fixed his eyes on the light that glimmered afar in the firmament. (*Bessy Conway* 265)

His countenance in his moments of deepest desperation does not go unnoticed by Sadlier. Aided by his profound religious beliefs, he manages to keep his family alive in the darkest of Famine times. Sadlier notes that Denis’ trust in providence does not go unaided, observing that “his cheerful and patient reliance on Divine Providence was well rewarded” (*Bessy Conway* 7).

He is triumphant when Bessy returns home and rescues the family farm with her saved wages from her American domestic job. He exclaims to his wife, “ Didn’t I tell you God would never desert us!” (256). Sadlier engages in writing stories with what I term “rewarding religion” because it keeps emigrants hopeful that their faith will provide them with personal happiness and help the family they have left behind. This is in direct contrast to many typical nineteenth-century religious teachings that encompassed the heavy influences of Augustinian and Jansenist traditions that
emphasised man’s sinful nature. Miller explains: “Adam’s fall severely limited the scope for self-regeneration through reason and ‘good works’ and thus placed primary reliance on negative sanctions (‘Thou shalt not…’) and church-centred devotional practices and penances, rather than on ethical behaviour, as means of obtaining grace” (Emigrants and Exiles 117). By introducing an element of “rewarding religion” in turn for good behaviour and selfless acts, Sadlier is breaking away from negative religious Christian teachings and connecting with her readers whom she hopes will not only receive her message that God is loving and can be a provider to all, but also that they will retain it long after the novel has been read.

Emigrant women and Catholicism

Emanating from her investment in Catholicism, one of Sadlier’s key concerns was what happened to the Catholic faith of Irish emigrant women once they left Ireland. Originating from a fundamentalist viewpoint, she abhors the lifestyle that some emigrant women lead. In order to address the diminishing numbers of emigrants attending church, she expands her sub-plot around religious instruction to try to encourage readers to attend mass in their new host county. Sadlier herself notes in her Preface the difficulties that emigrants face with regard to their faith. She writes that “it is a matter of surprise that so many of the simple-hearted peasant girls of Ireland retain their home-virtues and follow the teachings of religion in these great Babylons of the west” (Bessy Conway iii). She exposes the predicaments faced by women emigrants through the troubles of her characters. Sadlier wants to underscore the importance of keeping the religious faith and acknowledges the fact that not all emigrant women keep
the commandments of their church in the host country, thus becoming an example of Miller’s assimilation interpretation.  

As mentioned before, Bessy represents the ideal, romanticised version of the Irish woman. Bessy’s commitment to her faith is carefully constructed by Sadlier. She presents Bessy in very positive terms within the novel and alludes to the fact that her fortune is linked to her Catholicism. Bridget the cook, on the other hand, is representative of a hardworking, decent woman, but she has lost touch with her faith and with the rituals she used to fulfil in Ireland. Chapter Six of the novel opens at eight-thirty on a Sunday morning with Bridget under pressure to get the breakfast ready for the household. She is running late and Bessy assumes that she went to an early mass. Bridget snaps at her and tells her that she is too busy to go to mass and cannot come and go as she pleases because she has duties to attend to. The reader learns that Bessy has been to eight o’clock mass and has fulfilled her religious obligations by speaking with her mistress and arranging what time was convenient for her to go to mass. Bessy is amazed that Bridget has not been to mass and tries to understand her reasons for not going, but she cannot. Bessy exclaims: “But my goodness! Why didn’t you get up and go to six o’clock mass” said Bessy in utter amazement; “you’d have been back at seven and had plenty of time to do your work” (81).

Here, Sadlier is linking religion to the successful completion of household chores, thereby connecting responsible workmanship and spiritual welfare simultaneously. Bridget responds sharply and calls her a “fool”, but Bessy persists and tells her that there is mass at nine o’clock, and if she hurries up, she could make that.

94 “The assimilation interpretation implies that, as immigrants experience greater degrees of socio-economic integration into their adopted country, they shed Old World social customs and cultural traits for those prevailing in the host societies.” Miller, Ireland and Irish America 246–47.

95 The threat of capitalism corrupting Catholicism is also recorded by the character of James O’Rourke in John McElgun’s Annie Reilly, thus highlighting the prevalent fears of cultural contamination.
Bridget replies, “Will you not be botherin’ me Bessy Conway? Mind your own business and maybe you find it enough! God doesn’t expect impossibilities!” (Sadlier 80). Bessy quickly agrees with her, but retorts that if she does not attend mass then it is her own fault. Here Sadlier turns the question of sustaining a religious faith as dependent on each and every individual emigrant; she notes how quickly people forget their obligation to their faith. Sadlier believes that everybody has a certain amount of agency, and it is often people’s attitudes, not circumstances, that prevent them from attending church. Bridget eventually hounds Bessy from the kitchen, but from their dialogue the reader knows Bridget does this out of feelings of guilt and possibly shame. Bessy is puzzled by Bridget. Her personality does not correspond to somebody who does not attend church. Bessy notes: “Isn’t it curious? For the little I’ve seen of Bridget, I really think she’s an honest, decent girl, for all her bad temper, and then see how she sends so much of her earnings home to her mother, still she thinks nothing of losing Mass on a Sunday! Well! God help her! More’s the pity!” (82).

By using Bridget as an example of somebody who has become lax about their faith once reaching their host country, Sadlier is making her readers aware that even seemingly well-balanced, respectful and honest people are just as capable of losing their faith as those who possess lesser qualities. In her Preface, Sadlier herself offers an explanation for this happening. She writes about “the awful depth of corruption […] and the utter forgetfulness of things spiritual” (iii) that engulfs emigrants once they reach new shores. This type of thinking shows that Sadlier cannot conceive of someone having ethics or a sense of community and civic responsibility unless it is framed and directed by a religious faith.

Through her writings, Sadlier is particularly trying to re-energise emigrants’ commitment to their religious faith, even when faced with the strongest adversity. She
suggests that those from other faith backgrounds, scattered across emigrants’ paths, are cluttering up their ability to continue steadfastly practicing their faith. Particularly in North America, many Irish emigrant women went to work in Protestant households. Diner explains that one of the most significant problems that faced Catholic domestic workers was the temptation to be lured away from their faith by their Protestant employers. The clergy were afraid that servants would stop worshipping and observing Catholic rituals, and all of this led to a rescuing mission to save the servants from the temptation of conversion. Hasia Diner writes:

The Irish press published possible answers that the Irish girls might offer to employers who sought to lure them away from the Church, and novels, sermons, and special books all appealed directly to the thousands of servant girls to remain firm in their faith and unsullied by the values and lifestyles that surrounded them. (92)

What these novels reveal is that Sadlier was part of this rescuing mission for unsuspecting Irish domestic servants. Trying to sustain Catholicism in a foreign environment amid teachings and practices of Protestantism proved to be too difficult for some, so through her novels, Sadlier tries to show that other people faced such adversities and overcame them successfully.

Such an example of this is when Bessy’s new mistress, Mrs. Hibbard tries to get her to join in Protestant prayers in the evening. Bessy refuses quietly, and Mrs. Hibbard is shocked: “Bessy! did I understand you aright?” asked Mrs. Hibbard in real or affected surprise. “I thought you were too good a girl to refuse to join in the prayers of any family with whom you lived!” (Bessy Conway 207). Here, Sadlier is making the point that conformity to authority is admired, but it is not supposed to be at the expense of religion. Writing that Mrs. Hibbard’s surprise was either “real” or ‘affected’ insinuates feelings of slyness and underhandedness in Mrs. Hibbard. This reinforces beliefs that Protestants tried to convert unsuspecting Catholic girls by luring them into seemingly
innocent prayers to the point of threatening their jobs if they did not participate. Mona
Hearn explains that domestic servants were particularly vulnerable to exploitation by
their employers. She states: “Being predominately female […] they were more easily
intimidated. They were usually young and the vast majority were untrained when they
entered service” (166). However, Bessy stands up to the demands of Mrs. Hibbard, and
seeing how brave and resolute Bessy is, the other Catholic staff stand up for their right
to chose to opt out of prayers as well.

It is explained that Mrs. Hibbard came into contact with Rev. Joel, a local
Methodist minister, and he had told her that “a very heavy responsibility rested on her
with regard to her Catholic help, and that there were no hopes of her own salvation
unless she snatched those brands from the burning” (208). Mrs. Hibbard is mortified by
the reluctance of her staff to join in prayers and blames Bessy and, subsequently, fires
her for her staunch beliefs and contumacious conduct. However, rather than the
protagonist ending up desolate because of her actions, she is rewarded by Sadlier when
she finds a Catholic household to work in. Mrs. Delany, being a conscientious Catholic,
allows all her staff to attend mass, believing it to be a mortal sin if they do not attend
and one of which she would be found guilty were she to aid and abet them in their crime
of apathy. She remarks to Bessy:

I feel humbled and mortified to this day […] because of the half-heathen
state to which I see so many Irish girls reduced here. You have seen a
good many of them yourself since you have been in New York – have
you seen any of them fully impressed with the solemn obligation of
hearing Mass on Sundays and holydays? – for my part, I have met very,
very few during the ten or twelve years I have been employing them –
almost every one of them gives me the same trouble to get them out on
Sunday morning. It makes me shudder to think how they act when in
Protestant families. (213)

Bessy tells her that it is because Irish girls are among Protestants and have nobody to
remind them of their duty. Mrs. Delany agrees with Bessy, but remarks that it does not
excuse their behaviour. Sadlier reports her staff to be particularly “negligent and, indeed, utterly indifferent about healing mass” (210). Sadlier uses these characters to show her Catholic American readers that regardless of the environment, personal integrity and determined Catholicism could, and should, be sustained.

*The Schools Question and Sadlier*

These cultural clashes between the emigrant Irish and native Protestant Americans did not just occur as a result of the Famine and consequent displacement. Indeed, the “School Question” became an issue in the 1830s and 1840s, long before the potato crop failed. In 1832, New York passed laws making it mandatory for all children whose families were partaking in charitable relief to attend school. However, the Catholic community complained that proselytizing activities were taking place in the public schools, and they asked for state aid to build their own religious schools. Maureen Fitzgerald argues that the emigrant Irish were reminded of the mandatory British Protestantism that was taught in Irish national schools at that time and were anxious for the same control not to be repeated in a different country (43). Fanning records that, in 1842, the state legislature secularised the public schools by replacing the Protestant-dominated administration with a “common school system” (*The Irish Voice* 122). But Archbishop John Hughes was not satisfied; he wanted to build and staff specifically Catholic schools in order to provide a proper Catholic teaching, free from the influences of Protestantism.

Maureen Fitzgerald explains that his insistence on building these Catholic schools, whilst utilising cheap labour in the form of religious orders, came at the cost of

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96 For more on the “School Question”, see Patrick Blessing 29.
97 These policies were aligned with Archbishop Cullen’s views on denominational education in Ireland in the nineteenth century. For more on the Synod of Thurles in 1850 and his desire to set up a Catholic University, see Larkin *The Making of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1850-1860* (33-34).
sustaining orphanages and asylums for poorer people. Many Catholics did not agree with spending vast amounts of money on providing alternative Catholic schools, and Fitzgerald documents that only one third of Catholic voters supported Hughes when he organised that Catholic Party in the autumn of 1841\textsuperscript{98}; furthermore, with the huge onslaught of impoverished Famine emigrants, she writes that “Hughes’s efforts to funnel Catholic funds and labor power into the Catholic educational system seemed to Protestants and many Catholic observers a heartless dismissal of the depth of misery around him” (50).\textsuperscript{99} It is important to note that, although Archbishop Hughes visited the Sadliers at their home in Rockway on Long Island at a later date, Sadlier did not emigrate to North America until 1844, and therefore would have been uninvolved in this particular dispute.

However, Sadler was well aware of these controversies surrounding schools and orphanages. Whilst living in Montréal, Sadlier wrote *The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1855), which dealt with the “School Question”; it was initially serialised in McGee’s *American Celt* and then published in 1855 as a novel. It is obvious from reading this novel that Sadlier vehemently supports Archbishop Hughes position on the religious teaching of youths. The book, which spans over three generations, is set in the 1830s and details two Catholic families who send their children to different schools; one Catholic and one “Ward”. As detailed in Chapter Two, the two families are subjected to different trials which seem to occur as a result of their choice of school. Sadlier’s distaste for Protestant Americans is portrayed via characters who are in favour of the Ward School. For instance, Mr. Thompson, an

\textsuperscript{98}The Catholic Party was organised by in the Fall of 1841 to influence state educational legislation. John Hughes became Bishop of New York in 1838 and Archbishop of New York in 1850.

\textsuperscript{99}In 1852, the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor recorded that half of the people assisted that year were Irish; three out of every four aided were Catholic. In 1858, sixty-four percent of the people admitted to the city’s Alms House were Irish. For more figures of the impoverished, see Jay Dolan 33.
influential American businessman, is portrayed as having the potential to corrupt Miles Blake when he states: “I know the priests are opposed to our common schools, though why they are so, is a mystery to me. I guess it’s because they are afraid of their people becoming wiser and more learned than themselves” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 95).

Sadlier is acutely aware of the limitations of the Ward school that Eliza attends. Sadlier does not hold these public schools in high esteem, and her narrator pokes fun at their teachings, claiming that Eliza actually learnt very little of benefit to her there. We are told, “There she learned a something of everything, without obtaining a real knowledge of anything in particular” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 123). The narrator complains that, when Eliza studies history, Ireland is omitted from the curriculum, except when it is linked to the war with England. The third generation of the Blakes also fall into Protestantism when they attend Columbia College, which their father also attended; we are told that it is “quite probable” that they joined the “Know-Nothing” movement where they engaged in “a crusade against the religion of their fathers and the children of their own race” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 374).100 At the end of the novel, Sadlier leaves the choice of personal salvation to each and every parent. She states: “I have merely strung together a number of such incidents as we see occurring every day in the world around us, growing out of the effects of good or bad education” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 386). As discussed in Chapter Two, she states that the responsibility lies with the parents and claims that their “folly” to send their children to Ward schools is “more inhuman than the heathens of China and Madagascar who destroy their helpless infants. They throw them to be eaten by dogs or swine, or expose them to the savage denizens of the forest, but what is the destruction of the body in comparison to

100 For background on the ‘Know-Nothing’ movement of the 1850s, see Miller *Ireland and Irish America* 75.
that of the soul?” (Blakes and Flanagans 386). Engaging in direct speech at the end of the novel, her narrator confirms her political agreement with Hughes by writing that “[i]n our present position the school-house has become second in importance only to the House of God itself” (Blakes and Flanagans 387). The date of this emigrant novel and Sadlier’s inherent message is 1855; however, a decade later, Sadlier completely shifted her views on the importance of a Catholic education at the cost of charitable services.¹⁰¹

One wonders what caused Sadlier to change her views so radically from her support of the “School Question” in 1855; it seems to me that Sadlier is evolving as a person and a writer as she moves from Montréal to New York. Up until this moment, Sadlier, after courageously crossing the Atlantic to start a new life, has been living in the safety of the domestic sphere; it is only when she arrives in New York, in 1860, that she enters the public realm where she embraces a legitimate space in the form of her philanthropic works and her subsequent takeover of D. & J. Sadlier and Company. It is ironic that her involvement with Catholicism also provides this woman with a platform for her emerging political voice. It has been well documented that, when Sadlier arrived in New York, she soon became the centre of the hub of New York’s intellectual Catholic community. For instance, her daughter Anna Sadlier writes that she held frequent social gatherings at her home on East Broadway and at her summer place at Far Rockaway on Long Island where among the guests were Thomas D’Arcy McGee, Orestes Brownson and New York’s Archbishop John Hughes. It is paradoxical to note that, whilst frequenting the company of Archbishop Hughes, Sadlier was to revise her position on supporting the Catholic education reform at the cost of charitable services.

¹⁰¹ By 1860, it is estimated that 63% of the Catholic population was Irish, the rest being mostly of German descent. Carey The Roman Catholics in America 32.
organisations and engage her energies in philanthropic work, a point I expand on in Chapter Four.

New York charities that she supported included, among others, the Foundling Hospital, the Association for Befriending Young Girls, the St. Joseph’s Home for the Aged and the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin. Her interaction with these charities seems to have been influential in the wider community, with Kelly claiming that she “aided them to the best of her ability with both purse and pen” (324). As I have established elsewhere in this thesis, Sadlier was a middle class woman and so had the financial means to support these causes. However, she occupied a special position because, by her writing, she also highlighted the social problems of state-run charities to a wider audience as is evident in Aunt Honor’s Keepsake: A Chapter from Life (1866). Here, Sadlier vehemently states in the Preface that “[n]o unprejudiced person reading it through can fail to be convinced that the great want of our day in these American cities is Catholic institutions for the protection of destitute children” (Aunt Honor’s Keepsake), thus, firmly putting her support behind the philanthropic charities abandoned by Archbishop Hughes over two decades earlier.

Aunt Honor’s Keepsake is told in first-person narrative by Charlie O’Grady as he documents his life from that of a young peasant boy in Ireland, being evicted from his home, to the journey across the Atlantic and arrival and subsequent life in New York. He remembers Honor (the story is told in retrospect) as a, “comely woman, with a mild expression of countenance, who, although she was not my mother, loved and cared for me as a mother” (Aunt Honor’s Keepsake 10). He also recalls an old prayer book which Honor gave to his siblings, who had gone to America before him. As

102 The Association for Befriending Young Girls is aligned to the Sisters of Divine Compassion established in New York in 1886 by Mary Dannat Starr.
discussed elsewhere in this thesis, Sadlier adopts a realist style to describe the tenement that he and Honor inhabit: “The steam of the washing, the smell of the soap suds mingling with that of the cooking, such as it made it scarcely possible to breathe, especially for those coming in from the fresh air, if fresh it could be called in that low, narrow street, so densely peopled, and by no means remarkable for cleanliness” *(Aunt Honor’s Keepsake* 18).

A “bible-reader” visits the tenement and, on hearing that Charlie is an orphan, offers to mind him and place him in an orphanage. Honor’s friend, Ally, explains to her the proselytising motives behind the woman’s “kindness”, and Honor refuses. On Christmas Eve, Charlie and his friend Dan go out running in the streets because they are cold; they come upon a bakery where Dan steals a loaf of bread. The police catch up with them, and they spend Christmas Day in a jail cell and are brought before a magistrate who labels them “vagrant boys”; here Sadlier’s motivation for writing the novel presents itself as, despite plea’s from Honor, the two boys are placed in a House of Refuge belonging to the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents. There, Charlie is chastised for saying grace and Aunt Honor is forbidden from visiting him after she urges him not to forget his Catholic prayers. It is during her confrontation with the Assistant Superintendent that the reader learns that all the boys entrusted to them are converted to Protestantism. He explains to Charlie the error of Honor’s ways: “I fear she is a very imprudent woman, and I see she is extremely ignorant. I know what would have become of you had you remained much longer with that woman” *(Aunt Honor’s Keepsake* 69).

William D. Kelly, a late nineteenth-century Catholic writer, outlines the reality and extent of Irish people losing their faith upon arrival in America through what he describes as the constant assault and misrepresentation of Catholicism and how those
Irish who are tempted to leave are encouraged by Sadlier’s writings, “her writings in which the Catholic Church and faith are defended with such womanly warmth, the rewards of fidelity to Catholic teachings so pleasantly described and the consequences of disloyalty thereto so graphically portrayed” (Kelly 321). It seems to me that the novel loses its credibility when it details the deathbed scene of Kevin O’Byrne as, instead of continuing with a critical comment on the “child-saving” mission of the Protestants, it lapses into sentimental Catholic rhetoric as the narrator states “The penalty imposed on Kevin O’Byrne for repeating that same prayer on the following day was the last he had to undergo; the cup was filled to overflowing; the little confessor of the faith was called to receive in another world the reward of his fidelity in this” (152). Fanning also notes that “[w]hat began with a realistic rendering of tenement life ends in sentimental melodrama” (*The Irish Voice* 121).

Charlie is later “placed-out” with a Methodist minister and his family in Illinois. There he falls in love with the minister’s daughter, Rebecca Brown. Sadlier writes: “I do not know when it was that I began to love the quiet, simple-hearted girl with whom I was brought into such close and intimate companionship … I was, to use a hackneyed phrase, head over heels in love, and though that heaven itself would be scarce worth the winning, without Rebecca Brown” (*Aunt Honor’s Keepsake* 170). However, Rebecca urges him to marry Rachel O’Grady as she feels that they would be more suited, and so he proposes to Rachel instead. The night before the wedding, Rachel’s brother Patrick returns to the family home, and when he talks of his past, Charlie finds the names strangely familiar. He sees a prayer book lying on the table and recognises it as the one his Aunt Honor gave to his siblings on their departure for America. In a frantic scene he realises that Rachel and Patrick are his siblings, and he rushes from the house after narrowly escaping an incestuous marriage.
In her prologue, Sadlier connects these strands of family separation and misidentification with her mission. She writes: “Its [Aunt Honor’s Keepsake’s] object is to call attention to the unjust and unconstitutional system carried out in New York House of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents with regard to the religious training of the children committed thereto” (Aunt Honor’s Keepsake 313). Sadlier underscores the injustice that has occurred as a result of the siblings being separated as well as being coerced into a different religion. Sadlier goes on to detail the public funds received by this institution and claims that no Catholic instruction is offered to its charges (441 were Irish and presumably Catholic out of 730 inhabitants). She claims that, if they truly wanted “reformation”, then they would allow multiple religious instruction take place. She deems their actions unconstitutional, stating: “Is it in accordance with the spirit of the American Constitution to take possession of children, separate them from their parents, give them a new religion by cutting off all connection with the old, and deprive them of all opportunities of receiving instruction in it?” (Aunt Honor’s Keepsake 814). Claiming that the Irish Catholic population is mainly, “thrifty, industrious, even laborious, engaged in all manner of hard, toilsome activities” and that the children of the poor are their only “treasures”, she tells her audience that, if parents find themselves on hard times, they can rely on the services of the Protection of Destitute Roman Catholic Children whilst urging people with money to spare to support their cause. By writing Aunt Honor’s Keepsake, Sadlier’s message is two-fold: she is urging parents to be mindful of the proselytising activities that threaten the faith of their children whilst encouraging wealthy people to invest their time and efforts into charitable causes.

Sadlier’s opinion was heeded by many; Kelly believed that no other author produced works that could muster up nostalgia and affection for the Catholic Church like Sadlier’s. He writes: “[people wrote to her] thanking her for a moral victory won or
a better spirit awakened by the perusal of her books” (Kelly 325). However, some biographers find Sadlier’s writing to be too focused on Catholicism and are critical of her pious style and moral tone (Stephen Brown 271; Richard Froggatt n. pag.). Robert Hogan sees Sadlier’s work as an indication of what the uneducated homesick Irish-American audience was reading when they emigrated. Kelly readily admits the function of Sadlier’s work when he states that her novels were “aimed at making Irish-Catholics … proud of their native land and their mother Church; and at keeping alive and active their affection for the old folks at home, and the good old Catholic customs and practices of their forefathers” (Kelly 323).

However, McCaffrey saw this exultation of Irishness and Catholicism as dangerous as it was typically exclusive and prevented true assimilation of Irish emigrants into American life, a point I challenge in Chapter One. He comments: “Her widely read fiction exposed a dour, insecure Irish America and expressed hostility to the general American milieu, urging cultural isolation as protection for Catholic faith and values” (89). Indeed, Sadlier herself does not try to hide her desire to keep Irish people faithful to Catholicism. Her book *Purgatory* (1886), which is dedicated to the “gracious memory” of her dearly beloved son Rev. Francis X. Sadlier, is intended, according to the Preface, to increase devotion of the living to suffering souls of the dead in Purgatory. Sadlier admits in her own words that all of her works have been predominately influenced by her faith and she sees this as a blessing. She writes, “I have written many books and translated many more on a great variety of subjects, nearly all of which, I thank God now with all my heart, were more or less religious, at least in their tendency” (Intro).
Conclusion

Many of Sadlier’s emigrant novels address religious issues such as the difficulties associated with sustaining a Catholic faith while underlining the common threat of conversion to Protestantism both in Ireland and in North America. One cannot doubt the extensive influence she held over Irish Americans at a time when emigrants were looking for leadership and guidance with regard to their new lives in North America. Through her characters, she compounds the duty of Catholicism and lays the blame of lapsed faith with every individual emigrant. Her sub-plot of religious teaching serves as a tool for reminding the reader of the basic components of the Catholic faith as well as for promoting the infallibility of the Bible and the expansion and distribution of the Catholic faith. By placing these messages into her novels, she is demanding empathy and not mere sympathy from each and every Catholic reader. Despite her heavy investment in, and involvement with, the clergy, I argue that Sadlier (re)considers her position on the importance of Catholicism and the “School Question” in a response to her ever-changing world. Although she initially seems to be in favour of Archbishop’s Hughes’ policy of providing specifically Catholic schools, I suggest that when she arrives in New York in 1860, she is horrified at the destitution of women and children, so she withdraws her support for the “School Question” and starts to engage in her philanthropic mission. Religion in the nineteenth century often defined and limited a woman’s place in society, but paradoxically, it proved to be quite liberating for some women as it provided them with a legitimate opportunity of working in the public sphere, a point I develop in Chapter Four. It is clear from reading Sadlier’s emigrant novels that Catholicism is a central tenet of her writing; therefore, it is important to acknowledge and recognise the role it played in her (re)construction of the Irish-
American identity. To deny the centrality of Catholicism in Sadlier's writing would be to deny an essential aspect of Sadlier herself.
Chapter Four: Analysing the (trans)formation of Irish Emigrant Women

Introduction

Contemporary literary critics are divided over their appraisal of the works of Mary Anne Sadlier. Some have credited her with writing didactic emigrant novels which performed a “real service beyond mere entertainment” (R. Seward 284) and claim that “her output is without doubt of socio-historical interest” (Richard Froggatt n. pag.). Other literary critics have categorised her writings as “conservative”, “anti-feminist” and “overly sentimental” (Stacey Donohue 335-337). Stephen Brown claims that Willy Burke is “somewhat ‘goody-goody’” (270), while Confessions of an Apostate is “melodramatic and somewhat unreal” (271). On a first reading, Sadlier’s writing seems to indulge in stereotypical characterisations, simplistic conflicts and moralising themes, but these were literary devices used within Sadlier’s work in order to propagate a specific Irish-American identity.

Furthermore, if one takes into consideration the cultural context in which Sadlier wrote, one may find that a complex ideology lies behind her sentimental rhetoric. Nicola Diane Thompson writes about the types of labels ascribed to nineteenth century woman novelists such as “feminist”, “radical” or “sensational”. These labels serve to reduce women’s writing to a simplistic formula that can be summarised in one word, while ignoring the ideological culture that surrounded writers and their novels, which in turn distorts the complexity of the discourses in which the novels are embedded (4). Although Sadlier’s novels are a fictive account of the emigrant experience from Ireland in the nineteenth century, they are representative of the cultural upheaval of the time. This realist element to her writing is critical in deciphering and documenting Irish women’s position in nineteenth century society. Within her emigrant novels, Sadlier has created a lineage of female characters who are portrayed not only through their
feelings and intuition, but also through their (re)action to their circumstances in nineteenth-century society; therefore, her record of them remains significant.

This chapter examines Sadlier’s construction of Irish women in Ireland and Irish emigrant women in North America and Canada in the mid-nineteenth century, using her novels *Elinor Preston; or, Scenes at Home and Abroad* (1861), *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861) and *Old and New; or, Taste Versus Fashion* (1862) as examples. Disparaged by critics for being a conventional writer, what Sadlier does offer the reader is an exploration of attitudes towards women’s nature and role both at home and in the host country. Although sometimes making unfashionable comments on women’s roles and duties, conservative novels have their own merit: they serve as a reminder to contemporary feminists of where we have come from and how much we have achieved to date. The first section of this chapter examines the working lives of Irish women; the opportunities available in pre and post Famine Ireland and their new employment in the host country. Sadlier’s ostensible ideological position is that women belong at home occupying the role of dutiful wife or loyal daughter, but arguably, she does explore women’s aspirations for a more independent life in a sympathetic manner. Located in didactic, sentimental literature, Sadlier wrote most of her emigrant fiction with particular purpose in mind as her daughter Anna Sadlier explains: “Most of them have a history attached to them, and all have some praiseworthy object in view” (331). Sadlier was part of a “rescuing mission” for Irish emigrant women, so she can be credited with writing “responsive” literature to combat the pernicious anti-Catholic literature that was being circulated at that time. However, it seems to me that Sadlier is a writer in conflict with herself; what is certain is that after reading her emigrant narratives, no one truth emerges as different stories seem to contradict each other as I will detail later.
The chapter then turns to address Sadlier’s involvement with the American Feminist cause, which came to prominence in 1848 with the First Woman’s Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York. It has been noted by scholars that Sadlier does not ostensibly engage with the feminist movement. However, one could argue that Sadlier does engage in feminist issues within her life and writings. This is evident as she seeks to critique and highlight the (non)compliance of women in their new lives in the host country. The chapter then discusses the role of marriage and spinsterhood in Sadlier’s emigrant novels and disputes Elizabeth Hernadi’s argument that Sadlier’s emigrant fiction could be seen as a critique of Catholicism. The final section of this chapter discusses the social mission of the Catholic Church both at home and abroad. Through their work with philanthropic causes, mid-nineteenth century Irish women carved out a new identity for themselves by organising and managing many charitable organisations; thus introducing them to, and legitimising their place in, the public sphere. Indeed, as noted in a biography by William Kelly, in 1891, Sadlier herself became a private donor to many New York charitable organisations, one of which, the Foundling Hospital, was unique because not only did it invest in “fallen” woman, but it also emphasised the needs of the mother as well as the orphaned child. I suggest that through the writing of *Aunt Honor’s Keepsake* and her financial and physical investment in the Foundling Hospital, Sadlier is publically entering into, and actively engaging in, the politics of women’s rights.

The working lives of Irish women before and after the Famine

From a cultural perspective, women’s social position in pre-Famine Ireland was filled with repression and submission to a Catholic patriarchal society. However, from an economic perspective, women were valuable to society as they demonstrated multiple
skills by engaging in traditional women’s work such as farming and spinning. Women were capable of earning money as well as running a family home. Consequently, women were reasonably happy or, at least, resigned to their lives in Ireland, as Kerby Miller notes: “Most scholars conclude that the reason comparatively few women left Ireland between 1815 and 1844 was that their status in pre-Famine rural society was relatively favourable” (Ireland and Irish America 301). Sadlier documents this ubiquitous domestic arrangement in Bessy Conway (1861) as Bessy and her sisters’ work on the family farm before she departs for America. The role of the daughter in pre-Famine Ireland was predestined; a middle-class father of the bride was expected to pay a dowry to the father of the groom, so a financial burden was put on the bride’s family in order to achieve a good “match” for their daughter. David Fitzpatrick labels these daughters as “redundant dependent females” (“The Modernisation of the Irish Female” 169). As a result of these women having to change their surnames to that of their husbands, they could not continue a lineage of descent for the family name. The “promised” daughter was also expected to transfer her abilities and loyalty to her new husband and in-laws. But what happened to the daughters who were not entitled to a dowry and, therefore, had diminished chances of matrimony? They had relatively few options open to them; they could continue to work on the farm and look after their fathers and brothers or they could enter the religious life or they could try and find someone who would marry them without the financial incentive. Whereas Sadlier does not overtly deal with the social ramifications of having more than one daughter in the pre-Famine family, she does address it by creating a female character who emigrates to America.

During the Famine years, all prospects of public employment for women were diminished. Their opportunity for earning much-needed extra money was gone, and
they were forced to stay at home full-time to deal with caring for family members suffering from disease. For many women, it was a struggle just to live, and scores of them ended up in Irish Workhouses.\textsuperscript{103} The Irish Poor Relief Act came into effect in Ireland in 1838 with the establishment of Workhouses and Poor Law Guardians. The surplus of women in Ireland at that time is coined by Dympna McLoughlin as “superfluous and unwanted deadweight” (66).\textsuperscript{104} Sadlier addresses the demise of employment for women after the Famine in the characters of Margaret Gilmartin and her mother in \textit{Elinor Preston} (1861). The reader is told that Margaret and her mother worked for the neighbouring farmers and lived in a little cottage when Mr. Gilmartin left for America promising to send for them in time. But as Famine took over the country, there was no more work for them, and the house was taken by the bailiffs. The father, having had several accidents on a construction site in America, was delayed in sending for them. As a consequence, they were forced to beg. When local charity could no longer support them, they went to the poorhouse in order to escape starvation. Sadlier details the desolation of life in the workhouse and the heartache of Margaret when her mother dies from disease.

As documented by McLoughlin, a type of “emigration strategy” which developed at the time of the Famine was to leave children in the workhouses for up to five years while the parents emigrated until enough money was raised to send for them (77). However, Margaret is moved from the workhouse by authorities and placed in service, and when her father eventually sends for her after four years in service, the reader is introduced to her on the emigrant ship to New York, along with Elinor and her brother George. By creating female characters who face turmoil and hardships as a

\textsuperscript{103} For a detailed description of the Workhouse system, see Dympna McLoughlin 66-89.
\textsuperscript{104} McLoughlin notes that over 50,000 pauper women were assisted to emigrate from Ireland to North America in the period 1840-1870 (66). See also Janet Nolan \textit{Ourselves Alone} 3.
result of the Famine, Sadlier is connecting to her Irish emigrant readership, who might have found themselves in the same situation. These fictional incidents, corroborated by documents in Irish history, prove that Sadlier’s accurate presentation of women is a vital source of information about women’s (re)action to the Irish Famine and their subsequent response to the process of emigration.

In his research on Irishwomen, migration and domesticity in Ireland and America, Miller examines the “push” and “pull” factors relating to female emigration. The “push” factors were post-Famine economic changes and a shift in attitudes towards marriage, resulting in fewer marriages and the development of a marriage system reliant on dowries. The “pull” factors are noted as the promise of economic independence and greater marital opportunities, as detailed in emigrant’s letters home. In post-Famine Ireland, there was a substantial rise in the number of female emigrants, and in the period from 1881 to 1900, women actually outnumbered male emigrants. I propose that this steady increase in the number of Irish women travelling, often unaccompanied, to the United States and Canada reflected their quest for independence from a repressive patriarchal rural society. These trans-Atlantic tickets purchased not only a voyage to North America, but also bought young female emigrants a new persona. Compared to women in other cultures, these Irish women were unique in their patterns of lone emigration. Íde O’Carroll writes: “This pattern differed greatly from the movement of Jews or Italians at this time. Jews tended to travel in family groups and Italian men came alone sometimes arranging to bring family later” (18). This pattern of lone migration reflects both their sheer determination to escape from their dreary lives in rural Ireland and their quest for adventure in the form of a new life in North America or

105 For more on emigrant letters, see Hasia Diner 34.
106 See Ide O’Carroll 18; Janet Nolan Ourselves Alone 3; David Fitzpatrick, Women and the Great Famine 68.
Canada. However, Miller warns how dangerous it can be to generalise patterns of emigration as motives for leaving vary considerably depending on class, regional and cultural backgrounds (*Ireland and Irish America* 303-304). There is no doubt that generalisations omit the details of lived personal experience, but one undeniable fact remains from statistics: that huge numbers of Irish women left Ireland after the Famine.

There is no doubt that the Famine was pivotal for Irish women as it contributed to their experience of “gradual awakening” during the nineteenth century (Margaret MacCurtain 46). Not only were they becoming more aware of their social conditions, economic loss and educational needs, but they were also living longer. Using information gathered from the Census of Ireland 1841 and 1851, Fitzpatrick reports that male mortality outnumbered female mortality in every age-band.¹⁰⁷ This type of statistic removes the label of “victim” from Irish women and portrays them as a force to be reckoned with. The women who emigrated after the Famine were strong-minded and courageous human beings who defied the stereotypical notion of femininity as feeble and passive. Hasia Diner believes that women’s reasons for leaving Ireland did not stem from a want of freedom or autonomy, but from a desire to provide a better life for their family (xiv). She asserts that Irish female emigrants believed that their new economic role in America could enable them to contribute to their families in a financial capacity that was usually reserved for men. However, in *Elinor Preston* and *Bessy Conway*, where the emigration scene is detailed from Ireland, Sadlier partly disagrees with Diner’s theory and writes women protagonists who are searching for a new, exciting, independent life. By constructing two strong female characters that have no overwhelming economic need to leave Ireland, Sadlier is suggesting to her readership that women sometimes leave Ireland for no other reason than a fresh, autonomous start.

¹⁰⁷ For more information on mortality rates, see David Fitzpatrick *Women and the Great Famine* 50-57.
in a new country. It is important to note that although Elinor Preston emigrates to Canada against the backdrop of the Famine she has plenty of opportunities to build a successful life in Ireland but instead she chooses to emigrate.

Although Bessy does support her family financially with her saved American wages, initially she is portrayed as being “selfish” in her reasons to leave home. Sadlier records in great detail the hardship she causes her parents with her decision to emigrate; her eventual departing is shrouded in sadness, but also couched with a touch of excitement at the thoughts of a new life flood her mind. This presentation of young women as “selfish” is a turning point for Irish women who up until this period were largely portrayed as selfless in their deeds for family and nation. As Rita Rhodes explains, “The scale of female emigration was too large to be ignored by the nationalists who exalted life on the land and criticized the self-interest that was perceived in female emigration” (300). In Elinor Preston, Sadlier constructs a scene of excitement and possibility when George tells Elinor that he has decided to emigrate; Elinor is immediately taken with the idea and consumed in her own delight:

I would fain have remonstrated against this sudden project, but I must confess there was something in it that took my fancy. There was somewhere far down in my heart of mind, a latent love of adventure – a desire to see the world abroad; and though I did not at once say so, I made up my mind in an instant. (156)

Emigration symbolised change, recognition of the limitations of home and the courage to pursue a new life elsewhere. Leaving the familiar behind must have seemed a thrilling prospect for some; indeed, Diner notes: “Certainly, by the beginning of the twentieth century the ‘boy’ who inherited the land or the ‘girl’ whom he married, instead of being the chosen, became the leftovers” (12). However, amid all this newfound independence for women, Diner argues that they led the same kind of lives in
their new location because psychologically they were still imbued with a sense of religious and patriarchal duty and obligation.

How did these emigrant women fare once they reached foreign shores? What kinds of skills did they bring with them from Ireland, and what type of employment did they engage in once they reached their host country? As stated earlier, one of the most cherished roles for women in nineteenth-century Ireland was that of a loving obedient daughter or a dutiful hardworking housewife. Women in particular were constructed to be the “moral” guardians of society, and everybody knew their role as Tadhg Foley explains: “Men had their interests: women had their duties” (24). Women were believed to possess innate qualities of honesty, selflessness, kindness and good ethical judgement in comparison to their male counterparts, who were driven by greed, lust and depraved behaviour. As Foley observes, “Women were the keepers of tradition, the exemplars of morality as traditionally defined, the disinfecting element in a morally dissolute society” (21). This sense of morality in women was considered to be the most coveted achievement of womanhood, and it needed no encouragement or recognition.

Sadlier romanticises the role that Irish women fulfilled at home through her protagonist Bessy Conway. Sadlier explains Bessy’s Irish role to the reader through Bessy’s nostalgia for home. Bessy fondly recollects her duties of milking cows and homely duties. She is portrayed as a kind daughter, who every night at bedtime makes her father “posset” (explained by Sadlier in a footnote as a warm drink made of sweet and sour milk which together form whey). She wonders which one of her remaining sisters will inherit her duties and whether they will do them to the same standard. Sadlier presents Bessy’s role in Ireland on the farm and in the home as one that is hardworking and selfless. Women who failed to display selflessness and champion a sense of virtue were considered to be wicked. Writers often deploy both types of women in their
writings as a technique for showing readers the repercussions for acting out against the prescribed norms for women of the period.

The gender dichotomy which existed in the nineteenth century served to facilitate the creation of public and private spheres. Women occupied domestic space, i.e. the “private sphere”, which meant their place was primarily at home, looking after the household and nurturing the family; whereas, men inhabited the “public sphere”, which meant their place was in the outside world conducting their daily business and having access to public services. Many people believed these spheres were strictly separate, but Margaret Kelleher challenges the notion of “separate spheres” in an Irish context, claiming that “interconnectedness rather than separateness is frequently evident” (Gender Perspectives 16) and that the public and private domain actually influenced and were shaped by each other. Mary Cullen also reinforces this belief and states that the supposedly divided spheres were “intermeshed and interdependent” (Foreword Gender Perspectives), which creates a fresh way to examine the operations and importance of gender in nineteenth-century Ireland.

A woman’s employment opportunities in the host country were dependent on what type of upbringing she had in Ireland before she emigrated. Literacy was an advantage, but not all emigrants were equipped with these skills. Historian John Logan explains that until the 1880s people who were illiterate were among those most likely to emigrate, but from then onwards the reverse was the case (40). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, only a small minority of children attended school. Over the century, this number steadily rose, and an increased interest in learning resulted in the implementation of compulsory attendance legislation in the 1890s and 1920s. Initially, boys were favoured over girls when it came to a decision about who could be sent to school, but by the end of the century, the numbers had equalled. Religious institutions
and political forces combined to provide for these schools and cover their costs, to enable all members of society to attend regardless of class position. Attendance was higher in urban areas, and less-well-off families sometimes chose to keep children at home to help with rural and domestic duties. For these families, home-schooling was the most likely option, with lessons being carried out after chores, if possible. Many women found a suitable role as joint governess and nurse to middle class families, and the payment was the price of their bed and board (Logan 41).

These professions are reflected, in Sadlier’s emigrant novel *New Lights*, in the characters of Kathleen and Bridget O’Daly, who were the two eldest girls and were the “kindest and best of nurses ay! and the best of housewives, too” (7). However, during this time of supposed educational progression, the sexual divide was widened when religious orders such as the Presentation sisters (1775), the Mercy sisters (1827) and the Christian brothers (1802) established schools, which, according to Logan, reinforced a sexual division through their curriculum, single-sex profiles and regulations, with girls studying needlework and boys studying book-keeping (43). Therefore, the girls who attended school were essentially domesticated and followed a curriculum which would help them create a home and live in the private sphere rather than give them literary and craftsmanship skills, which would have provided them with a chance of working in the public sphere. As Logan explains:

> The paradox of nineteenth-century school reform is that, despite the apparent promise that it would weaken the barriers deriving from class, religion or race, it became instead an instrument that promoted a knowledge of the immutability of those forces. In the case of gender formation it provided equality of access, but to a curriculum that emphasised and reinforced gender difference. (49)
Ironically, pauper women in workhouses received industrial training such as spinning, weaving and needlework, which actually made them more proficient in working in the public sphere once they reached America.

In the host country, domestic service was considered an appropriate role for young single Irish women emigrants and one that afforded them a comfortable living and enough money for remittances. Indeed, it has been documented that Sadlier herself engaged in duties as a domestic servant when she first arrived in Canada. Mona Hearn explains why it was such a suitable career: “Domestic service was also acceptable to the ideology of the time which considered the home, albeit someone else’s home, the natural place for a girl or woman” (149). Servants lived in a healthier environment than those who worked in the mills, and they often lived in the nice areas of the city. They led a more comfortable life in comparison to that of their factory colleagues: they were in demand, so could pick and choose where they worked, they got free lodgings, they ate the leftovers of good food and they commanded a higher wage. All of these factors meant they could save more money to send home to their families in Ireland or to spend as they wished. Irish women entered the labour market in North America at the bottom and worked their way up. They took jobs that only African Americans and another marginalised groups in America would have taken as Diner explains: “Native born Protestant girls in the nineteenth century found the notion of domestic work so odious, so demeaning, so beneath their sense of self that they in fact often took lower paid jobs in mills and in factories and even willingly accepted less as seamstresses and needlewomen rather than humiliate themselves in someone else’s home” (81). Protestant women felt it was degrading and beneath them to serve and clean up after others. It is also likely that American women decided against taking domestic service
jobs because it was synonymous with the Irish and the cultural stereotype that surrounded Irish peasant women.

The stereotype of an Irish woman was one lacking in manners and intelligence, but likeable to some degree because she was visibly struggling to support her family. The Irish male, on the other hand, was despised on all levels because he was constructed as being lazy, drunken, violent and had stunted cultural development which prevented him from obtaining and holding onto any type of formal employment for long periods. Overall Irish women working in the mills, factories, needlework and domestic service, endured long hours, relatively poor pay and physical hardships. However, Diner still believes this “new” life was a better deal. She writes: “But when one considers the material and economic standards of life they had had in Ireland and understands the dearth of options for them there, the work histories of these millions of labouring women constituted a rise in both actual conditions and in expectation” (72). Sadlier’s character, Bessy, finds employment in New York as a domestic servant to Mrs. Walters. There, Bessy finds that her work is challenging, demanding that she be hardworking, but there is one distinct difference from her farm work in Ireland: she is paid for her work in America. When Mrs. Walters asks her what she will do with her earnings, Bessy replies that she will write home to offer money to her parents and put the rest of it in a savings bank. She says, “‘maybe I’d go home to them some fine day when they least expect me, and help to do for the boys and girls. Wouldn’t that be a grand thing entirely, Mrs. Walters’ said the girl earnestly, her face all radiant with the anticipated joy of such a meeting” (120). It is through these types of remarks and Bessy’s actions that Sadlier presents a newly-created determined woman, ready to embrace her new economic independence, confident in her ability to manage her own monies and not daunted by travelling alone back across the Atlantic to Ireland.
Sadlier’s fictional literary representation of feisty Irish women emigrating to obtain a new life is also found in historical and sociological sources. Janet Nolan’s research on her grandmother details the story of Mary Ann Donovan, who emigrated to Boston in 1888 at the age of sixteen. She was an orphan at the time of her emigration and had one brother who stayed in Ireland in order to sell the family farm. Her sister had already gone to America and sent home for her younger sister. Nolan details Mary Anne Donovan’s emigrant journey as a wage earner, wife, mother, and community activist. She states that Mary Anne was not an isolated case but similar to thousands of women who made that journey across the Atlantic and “had seized control over their lives, by themselves, alone” (8). Nolan contends that in order to regain their wage-earning capabilities, which had been taken from them as a result of the Famine, women needed to emigrate to recover the status of adulthood which they had lost in rural Ireland (74). Sadlier often infantilises her women characters in order to present women’s naivety in relation to men or money matters and to underline the importance of their being well-informed. Even her fictitious protagonist Elinor, who holds a good position in the community as a paid school teacher, finds it difficult to achieve adult status in the eyes of the local priest, who diminishes her decision to emigrate and settle in Canada as “a childish fancy” (Elinor Preston 17). Elinor’s capacity to earn money in America gives her the freedom to choose where to live and gives her the luxury to stay single rather than have to marry a man for economic security.

Rebuffing Miller’s theories of the “emigrant as exile”, Nolan states that women gained economic and social autonomy which they were deprived of in post-Famine Irish rural society. She explains: “They saw themselves less as exiles than as entrants into a new world of opportunity” (93). Nolan’s theory also suggests that women emigrated in order to raise their marital prospects as the marriage age for women had risen in Ireland
following the Famine; whereas, in North America, marriage ages resembled those of pre-Famine Ireland (74). However, Diner contests this, stating that women settled in large urban American cities where Irish women outnumbered Irish men and the popularity of domestic work among Irish female emigrants proved that they had little interest in early marriage or an endogamous marriage. Miller criticises both Diner and Nolan for making clear distinctions between the economic and marital motives of Irish female emigration, stating that they are drawn “too sharply”. Instead, he proposes a meshing of the two theories, stating that in all probability female emigrants viewed “the successful appropriation of the former as the key to the successful acquisition of the latter” (*Ireland and Irish America* 315).

Once settled in their host countries, Irish emigrant marital patterns were similar to those of native-born Protestant Americans; whereas, the patterns of marital fertility differed greatly with Irish families producing more children. Miller attributes this difference to cultural status, stating that children offered a type of insurance to Irish families, as well as being reflective of the Church’s teachings on the evils of contraception (*Ireland and Irish America* 315). This observation correlates with Sadlier’s own personal life; examining her biographical details, we can deduce that Sadlier had seven children and one foster child between 1847 and 1859 while she lived in Montréal. During that period, she was surrounded by a Catholic Church that remained hugely influential over Irish emigrants in their host countries. This was no accident, but a sustained campaign on behalf of the Catholic Church, which was fearful that Irish emigrants would lose their Catholicism and be corrupted by what they deemed to be the spiritlessness of North American cities.
Sadlier as a writer in conflict

In July 1849, Brownson published an article in the Quarterly Review that called for the creation of a popular Catholic literature to counter the anti-Catholic literature that was circulating at that time. Literature typified by Maria Monk’s Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montréal (1836), which detailed false stories of priests having forced relations with nuns and resulting infanticide.\(^{1}\) He held a competition to find a story that would combat these accusations. Such works, he said, “would amuse, interest, cultivate in accordance with the truth the mind and the affections, elevate the tone of the community, and, when they did not directly promote virtue, they would still be powerful to preserve and defend innocence, often a primary duty”. This set of instructions was the guiding force for Sadlier’s novel Willy Burke (1850). As Sadlier is writing to prescribed guidelines, one has to wonder if they coloured her perceptions of the Irish family or at least her presentation of them. Was she blinded to the faults of the Irish emigrant family, which was overtly patriarchal and diseased? I propose that Sadlier, operating within the confines of her era, actively challenges some aspects of the hegemonic culture which surrounded her.

As detailed in Chapter One, Sadlier initially wrote out of financial necessity. In her Preface to her first novel Tales of the Olden Times (1845) she states:

> Authorship is a perilous craft … seeing there are so many masters to be pleased. It is foreign to a woman’s nature, moreover, to “move in the uncongenial glare of public frame” – hers are, or should be, the quiet shades of retirement, and woe to her who steps beyond their boundary, with the hope -- of finding happiness. (italics mine) (qtd. in The Literary Garland (1845) 576)

Thus, at the very beginning of her writing career, Sadlier is fully aware of the confines of a woman working in the public sphere. In this Preface, Sadlier is pondering the fate

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\(^{1}\) For more, see Maureen Fitzgerald Habits of Compassion 26; Kenny The American Irish 80.
of women in the mid-nineteenth-century and moves from resignation to caution. She is fully aware of the “roles” that are expected of women and seems to be undecided as to whether she agrees or disagrees with them. She muses: “There is so much wisdom as melancholy beauty in the well-known wish of a distinguished writer, ‘May my sons be talented – and my daughters, happy!’ Alas! that the distinction should be so just” (Preface Tales of the Olden Times qtd. in The Literary Garland 1845 576). This conflict remains with Sadlier throughout her emigrant writing as her literary ideology clearly is at odds with her personal life and political projects.

These conflicts can be seen in Old and New; or, Taste Versus Fashion (1862). In this later novel, Sadlier has moved beyond the literary plot of exclusively protecting Catholicism and the Irish character and focuses on the materialistic lives of the middle-to-upper classes in a novel similar to Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice (1813). It is a novel that is concerned with the marriage market in New York City in the nineteenth-century and features the lives of various families such as the Hacketts, the Gallaghers, the Fogartys and the Von Wiegels. Three “brown-stone houses” (9) in a row represent the worldly manifestations of success: Henry Hackett is a widower and a grocer with three daughters, Tom Gallagher is a butcher with six daughters and William Fogarty is a baker with one daughter. All of the girls are indulged with lavish fashions and finishing school educations and, in a vein similar to Henry and Eliza Blake in The Blakes and Flanagans, they are ashamed of their Irish background and try to avoid acknowledging it. Through the narrator, Sadlier shows her disapproval of the Hackett daughters, who play the piano, read French and paint all day (13). They are presented as silly women who refuse to do housework and would love to live in a bigger house (they live in a two-storey residence). It is interesting that Sadlier should discourage young ladies from learning French within her novels considering that she and her daughter Anna were
fluent in French and that she was the author of several translations. Also, in a letter (dated 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 1867), Francis Xavier, Sadlier’s son, writes to her from his boarding school in Manhattan stating that his sisters are progressing with their music lessons with Mrs. O’Reilly. He writes: “Matters at home are going on very well. Annie and Maggie get their music-lessons regularly”, and in a letter from the family home in Manhattan (dated 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1867), he writes: “We are all quite well […] learning to play the flute which I hope to play on by the time you return” (F.X. Sadlier Correspondence Album, MG29-C122).\textsuperscript{109} In a novel depicting the foolishness of “new” wealth Sadlier seems to be advocating a life that is completely different to her own.

In the novel, Bertha Von Wiegel and her mother live in a modest house; her mother is the daughter of an aristocratic German Catholic family. In a typical Sadlier novel of binary opposites, Bertha is presented as the complete antithesis to the other daughters in the novel: she does chores and recites Irish poetry and songs (81). Early in the novel, the marriage takes place between Sam Fogarty and Eliza Gallagher (the eldest children of the two families); it is a high-society event, and they go on a thousand dollar honeymoon to Niagara Falls. Mrs. Gallagher goes to Saratoga Springs with her daughters for a summer of husband-hunting, where Mag and Ellie court two owners of plantations in South Carolina.\textsuperscript{110} This literary theme links into sensation novel plots that focus on the need for a woman to marry well, as Nancy Armstrong notes: “During the 1850s and 1860s, in other words, fiction made the selection of a husband into the most important thing a woman did” (113). However, when their father Tom Gallagher loses his money in a bank failure, the men leave the two girls, and the family has to move out of their four-storey house and into a two-storey house. Fanning states that, in

\textsuperscript{109} To view these letters from Francis Sadlier’s Correspondence Album, see Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{110} In 1832, a railroad opened at Saratoga Springs, making it a popular tourist spot with New Yorkers. In 1863, a race course opened there, and it became well known as a gambling city.
the mid-to-late nineteenth century, home ownership was seen as “a badge of middle
class respectability in America” (Irish Voice 135), and so Sadlier uses their interest in
worldly items to critique their lifestyle.

Meanwhile, Sarah Hackett falls asleep while reading The Fatal Secret, a book
which the girls have been hiding from their father as they got it from the library, but the
reader is not privy to its contents. The narrator describes it thus:

The book was placed in her hands by the younger sister, and, after
mumbling over a few prayers, Sarah Eugenia half undressed herself, and,
throwing a shawl over her shoulders, sat down at a small table near her
bed to unweave by the light of a camphene lamp the mystic web which
enwrapped the Fatal Secret. (238).

However, during the night Sarah knocks over the oil lamp which starts a fire and
destroys their house and business; the only “good” to come of the event is that Sarah
loses all her “foolishness” and develops a “horror of bad books” (243). In a classic
move, Sadlier rewards Bertha by marrying her to an Irish officer in the British army (a
convert to Catholicism), and she moves into an Irish castle. In a twist of fate, Annie
Gallagher works as her maid, and in a letter back to her sisters, she writes:

I can now see the difference that exists between Taste and Fashion – the
Old and New, in other words the quiet, easy, natural life of those to
whom wealth and position are not new, when compared with the empty,
artificial, make-believe life of people who are, as were ourselves, wholly
devoted to show. (453)

Even though this may seem like an attack on the rewards of the “American Dream”,
Sadlier suggests that is not so. In her conclusion, she criticises “a prevailing folly of
Irish-American society” (480), but interestingly states: “Not that I would have them
love America less as the great and free and noble country of their birth, but I would
have them respect Ireland more than they do” (484).

Within this novel, Sadlier is presenting and critiquing the attributes expected of
bourgeois women: they must come from a good family, have cultural “skills” and find a
suitable husband as soon as possible. In most of her novels, Sadlier prizes the woman’s place in the domestic sphere, yet, as detailed in the biography, Sadlier herself was a businesswoman operating in the public sphere, serving not only as editor of a newspaper, but also running a publishing business for over thirty years. This contradiction between her literary ideology and her personal life poses more questions than answers, especially with regard to the act of emigration. On the one hand, she seems to be advising Irish girls to stay at home through the observations of Bessy Conway: “my heart bleeds to tell it … keep your girls at home”, yet, on the other hand, she seems to be encouraging women to emigrate, provided they have support systems in place: “If they keep in a state of grace, and go regularly to their duty they’re all right, and sure, thanks be to God! There’s thousands of them that do” (Bessy Conway 294-297). Therefore, from her successful portrayal of the emigrant character of Bessy, among others, embodying the “American Dream”, it would seem that Sadlier ultimately views emigration in positive terms for women.

As documented elsewhere in this thesis, Elinor Preston has been noted by critics as being an autobiographical account of Sadlier’s own life. What is particularly interesting about reading this middle-class emigrant novel is that Sadlier’s middle-class characters do not contend with the same circumstances as those confronting her working class characters, as typified in Bessy Conway. Sadlier shapes the character of Aunt Kate as a modern and learned woman; however, perhaps unsure of the reaction of her audience to this, she imbues Aunt Kate with a sense of vanity and the ridiculous in order to avoid offence. Aunt Kate is depicted as a middle-class woman with a myriad of idiosyncrasies. She despises the fact that her brother married beneath him, and her contemptuous references to “shopkeepers” reiterate her privileged position. Her character is constructed as somebody who is a little odd, but ultimately likeable, as
Elinor records: “Dear Aunt Kate was a special favourite with our most distinguished visitors, to whom her little odd ways were worth gold, while the sterling value of her character commanded their esteem” (Elinor Preston 24). Aunt Kate’s intellectual range is confirmed as she mingles with “distinguished guests”, including barristers and lawyers, where her outspokenness and confident personality is noted. However, even though Sadlier writes of her in the highest regard she still pokes fun at her vanity and quirkiness.

We are introduced to Aunt Kate early in the novel; she is a spinster and lives with her brother and sister-in-law and their family. She is trying on an outfit she has bought and frightened herself when she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. The narrator notes:

For in a large arm-chair, near the fireplace sat, or rather reclined, my Aunt Kate, looking more like a spectre than a thing of the living flesh and blood. She had evidently changed her dress since we saw her an hour or so before, and such a dress as that in which she now appeared no sane mortal ever wore in our generation, at least off the stage. (Elinor Preston 30)

By introducing her character in such a manner, it seems to me that Sadlier removes all her credibility. At best she is a ghost who bears no resemblance to a “sane mortal” and at worst, a character from the then-notorious world of theatre:

The robe was of some dark, heavy material, literally covered with spangles, especially about the bosom, and the head-dress consisted of a turban-like roll of scarlet gauze, ornamented with short marabout feathers, presenting a woful contrast to the corpse-like countenance of my poor aunt. (sic) (Elinor Preston 30)

By decorating the aunt in spangles and feathers, she is adding to her theatrical appearance, and by giving her a turban, she is placing her firmly in the realm of the exotic. Aunt Kate is mortified at the whole family finding her in this state, and she tries to regain her dignity as she asks Elinor’s mother to take her upstairs after receiving
smelling salts to calm her nerves: “Thank you, she said in her most dignified tone to my father, who had offered his arm, and she swept past him with the air of an empress” (Elinor Preston 31). However, the whole episode is presented in a comical manner, resulting in the reader never quite taking Aunt Kate seriously, despite her apparent intelligence and strength of character. This is further evidence of Sadlier as a writer torn between opposing ideas; she seems unable, or unwilling, to present an intelligent woman without flawing her character.

Analyzing the (non)compliance of women in the host country

According to Hasia Diner, Irish emigrant Catholic women did not support the suffragette cause in America as Irish female emigrants were led to believe that the suffragette cause was aligned to Protestant beliefs. She explains:

According to the Irish-American male world view, the convergence of feminism and sexual vice flowed naturally from the fact that the vast majority of activists in the women’s movement were native-born Protestant women of Anglo-Saxon stock who subscribed to a religious ideology allowing divorce and greater sexual freedom than did that of Catholic Ireland. (146)

Reading her emigrant novels, it would appear that Sadlier was against the suffragette movement; in Old and New (1862), she ridicules a character called “Mary Wollstonecraft”, who goes door to door in aid of the suffrage movement. However, despite Sadlier’s ostensible rebuff of the suffragette movement, she is in fact displaying feminist tendencies in her writings. There is no doubt that Sadlier placed a greater emphasis on constructing an Irish identity, but this is not untypical of that time as Gerardine Meaney explains: “For much of this period [the nineteenth-century] women’s relation to nationalism … was a much more important issue in their writing than feminism” (“Women’s Writing” 766). As established in Chapter Three, once they
reached the host country, Irish emigrant women were the targets of a “rescuing mission” by the Catholic Church. The Church provided valuable assistance with regard to housing, jobs and health and would have been a welcomed sight in a world of uncertainty. The suffragettes actively questioned many teachings of Catholicism, and Irish women could have seen this as an attack on their ethnicity. It could also be assumed that the tenets of feminist thought were not a priority for these hard-working Irish emigrant women. They were busy trying to forge a new life for themselves and probably did not have the energy or interest in suffrage, as Diner affirms: the movement “addressed questions they found offensive, particularly those of divorce, abortion, birth control and sexual freedom” (152). However, even though Irish emigrant women were uncomfortable with the policies of the suffragette movement, it seems they were more than happy to explore their new-found freedom even if it was within the remit of the Catholic Church. Their independent status afforded them the opportunity to enjoy a professional and material engagement with their new world.

Sadlier uses the character of Sally in *Bessy Conway* in order to juxtapose the predicaments of Irish female emigrants and their new autonomous lifestyle. Her treatment of her is two-fold: firstly, she demonstrates what happens when young Irish women indulge in new-found wealth and social dalliances, and secondly, Sadlier uses her as a vehicle to address the underlying issue of employment rights. Sally is the housemaid in Mrs. Hibbard’s household, where the protagonist Bessy works. Sally does not save her wages, but instead, spends them on frilly silk dresses and bonnets. This represents a shift in the attitudes and responsibilities of emigrant women away from family obligations and towards self-centred pleasure. Sally’s shift in behaviour from dutiful servant to solipsistic individual is attributed to her newly found wealth and lack of responsibility, and her new autonomous lifestyle and consumerism is portrayed
as a threatening vice in the female species. This observation of shifting attitudes in women is widely recorded in historical documents. Ruth Ann Harris’s work on immigrants’ letters reveals a similar situation. Letters from Mary Gayer Anderson, who employed an Irish woman from Co. Down and brought her over to America to work as a domestic servant, outline the problems that many employers faced. Initially, the Irish servant girl, Margaret, is hard working and diligent. She is friendly, willing and extremely grateful for her job and the opportunities. However, once she has been in America a while and gets to know the system of domestic labour with regards to chores and wages, she becomes restless and lazy towards her chores. She also becomes impertinent, according to her employer, when she asks for more wages. Her mistress tries to appease her by helping out with the chores, despite the fact she disapproves of her keeping company with “sweethearts”, but eventually Margaret ends up being discharged because she “gets into trouble”, i.e., gets pregnant (173). While the above account of an emigrant’s demise is rather one-sided because it is told from the perspective of the employer, it does reiterate what Sadlier is trying to warn against through the fictitious character of Sally.

Our first encounter with Sally is when she is annoyed because Mrs. Hibbard asked her to stay in and serve guests dinner on her night off. In a twentieth-first century context, the reader could view Sally as a worker standing up for her rights. However, in the nineteenth century, emigrants were not supposed to engage in activism. They were supposed to be grateful for their jobs and the opportunities that they had compared to people left at home in Ireland. We learn that she is dressed to go out with Jim, her beau, to the local dance. Sally is defiant, saying that she will not be treated like a servant even though she is one. She believes that she has a right to her night off, and Mrs. Hibbard is in the wrong demanding that she stay in and serve. She is hot-headed and seems to be
indifferent to the consequences of her challenge to authority. She states: “‘I’ll go if I lose my place for it. I a’nt so green that folks can treat me so’ and she shook out the folds of her plaid silk dress as though it were a flag of defiance. ‘A nice thing indeed to be told that you can’t go out, when you’ve had the trouble of dressing’” (Bessy Conway 73). Bridget, the cook, and Wash, the hired hand, encourage Sally to stand up for her rights, claiming that America is a free country, but through her pacifying comments, the reader knows that Bessy takes the side of Mrs. Hibbard and believes that Sally should stay in if she is asked to.

The scene comes to a climax with a knock on the basement door and the parlour bell ringing simultaneously. Jim enters, and Sally, ignoring the parlour bell, is just about to leave when Mrs. Hibbard enters the kitchen and questions her. Sadlier indicates that Sally may have reacted differently if Jim had not been there, but Sally tells Mrs. Hibbard that she is going out even though she was asked to stay in because she is entitled to her night off. She pretends that Jim is her brother and creates a story about going to see their mother. Mrs. Hibbard remains cool and tells her not to return only for payment of what is due to her; she then arranges with Bessy to tend to her guests. Sally is insolent until the end, claiming as she walks out the door with Jim that she could easily find a better place than Mrs. Hibbard’s. Sadlier writes this scene to record the power struggle between employers and employees. This was reflective of domestic life in the nineteenth century as historian Mona Hearn observes. The only real power that servants possessed, according to Hearn, was the power to leave their situation if their circumstances became unbearable (168).

As the plotline progresses, the kitchen goes quiet, and the scene that has unfolded stuns Bessy. She enters into a conversation about human rights with Bridget, and Bessy’s compliance to authority is undoubted: “To be sure I heard it [it was Sally’s
evening off]” Bessy replied very gently “but what of that? Couldn’t she stay at home for this one evening. Maybe she’d be better off if she staid in every evening” (Bessy Conway 75). It becomes obvious to all that Bessy does not approve of Sally’s lifestyle of dances, local fairs and flamboyant attire. As she scuttles away to work, Bessy remarks to herself, “Are they losin’ their senses, or what’s the matter with them at all!” (Bessy Conway 76). The concept of standing up for one’s rights and going against authority is completely foreign to Bessy, and she is amazed by the seeming madness of it all. Sally’s outspokenness comes at a price; after being fired from her situation for her non-compliance, she is forced to beg for her job back, thereby reducing her to a subservient servant again. However, the reader is told that Sally does not last in the position for long, owning to her defiant attitude, and is soon replaced permanently. While the narrator is critical of Sally’s ungracious and rude attitude towards her employer, if one reads against the grain of the text, perhaps Sadlier is actually sympathetic towards Sally and her situation and, in fact, is critiquing the dominant culture of the time.

Women, marriage and spinsterhood

As I have demonstrated, Sadlier lays particular emphasis on the changed role of the emigrant woman within her novels. This has been examined above by looking closely at women and their professions and women and feminism, but what can Sadlier tell us about the reaction of emigrant women to desire? Having established herself as a conservative writer in a socially repressed era, one might say that Sadlier can tell us very little. The absence of sexual desire from nineteenth-century novels is well documented among scholars. Siobhan Kilfeather uses Grania (1892), by Emily Lawless (1845-1913), to address the lack of sexual desire in novels in the nineteenth
century. Kilfeather notes the difficulty of trying to trace sexuality through Lawless’s work as desire appears to be lacking throughout. It is important to note that Sadlier does not concur with the view of Irish sexuality as being so materially located in culture as to suppress desire and sensuality completely; this is obvious in Bessy’s love for Herbert, despite his being disinherited, and in Arthur’s marriage to Maria, who was without a dowry in place (even though, later in the novel, it transpires she does have one, but it was concealed at the offer of marriage). This also challenges Nolan’s findings that after the Famine, a dowry and not romance, determined a woman’s ability to marry (33).

Kilfeather notes that none of Lawless’s characters are liberated, except in death, from the novelist’s presentation of “a narrow and rigid world-view” (“Sex and Sensation” 83). Kilfeather does not blame nineteenth-century novelists for their lack of sexual expression within their work as she believes that the frameworks for recording these desires were not in place. She explains: “The very posing of the problem of how to articulate desire within the novel suggests that the sociological or anthropological model for recording Irish sexualities is inadequate to the lived experience of those sexualities” (84). Other research in the area shows similar results. Valerie Sanders examines the work of anti-feminist woman novelist Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897) and finds that sexual needs are scarcely acknowledged, “partly from prudery but also because Oliphant genuinely seems to have felt that other issues were more important” (Sanders 35). This framing of “other issues” is definitely true for Sadlier, as she seems to be more interested in perpetrating an acceptable brand of Irishness, especially in her earlier emigrant novels.

As chronicled in the last few chapters, Sadlier contests the definitions of stereotypical Irishness and tries to subvert the prevalent caricature of the day by creating
Irish Catholic characters who are hard-working and honest. Arguably, she is doing the same with regard to the role of women within her novels. Instead of just writing women who always conform and live “happily ever after”, Sadlier is actually questioning and exploring the attitudes and roles of different classes of women in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. However, Sadlier had to be responsive to her audiences’ and publisher’s needs. *Alice Riordan; The Blind Man’s Daughter; A Tale for the Young* serialised in the *Boston Pilot* in 1850 and appeared as a book in 1851. Lacombe notes that disgruntled readers informed Sadlier of their reaction to the autonomous character of Alice. In response, she amended the book and re-printed it in 1854 and included “the traditional love interest and a happy ending” (Lacombe “Frying Pans”). The readers expected the heroine’s struggle to revolve around matrimony, so Sadlier had to oblige and write in some romance, alongside her themes of assimilation and spiritual salvation. Set in the 1840s, Alice and her blind father Cormac emigrate to Canada through chain migration from the West of Ireland. Cormac has a brother-in-law in Montréal who has left Catholicism and married a Protestant. The novel details the life of Alice as she finds success in her job at the dressmakers and tries to convert her uncle and his family. Within the novel, Sadlier plays on the imagery of blindness and insight to comment upon what are the important things in life.

Throughout her emigrant fiction, Sadlier writes counter-narratives of women’s traditional fulfilment and happiness. This is reflected in her literary discussions of alcoholism, domestic abuse and sexual violence, as detailed in Chapter Two. Elizabeth Hernadi argues that *Bessy Conway* is in fact a “surprisingly strong critique” of Irish Catholicism for a writer who “so often represents herself as a defender of propriety and the establishment” (202). However, I would contest this statement: as is evident in Chapter Three, Catholicism is central to Sadlier’s life and she has recorded it as being
such. I suggest that her reasons for creating these tumultuous scenes may be more complicated. I propose, instead, that Sadlier is critiquing the patriarchal systems that surround women both in the home and host country. This would explain her writing women characters that were so keen to emigrate and a character who willingly chooses to remain a spinster, which I will return to later. Hernadi writes about the “double bind of Irish women” (202) who must obey the rules of the Catholic church and the orders of their husbands, even when they are in direct conflict with each other, as can be seen in *The Blakes and the Flanagans* when Mary Blake wants to send her son to a Catholic school even though her husband disagrees. As detailed in previous Chapters, this decision contributes to her son’s eventual downfall. However, Sadlier’s narrator criticises Mary’s character for not standing up to her husband. Through the character of Tim Flanagan, she writes: “And then, Mary too. I know she’s at bottom, as much against sending the children to the Ward school as you or I, but she hasn’t the pluck in her to say so. She’s *so* submissive, and *so* willing to leave it all in Miles’s hands, just as if she hadn’t as good a right to the children as he has!” (*Blakes and Flanagans* 13). Tim’s opinion of Mary is quite contemporary and directly at odds with the cultural context of the time. Sadlier’s use of italics within the sentence emphasises her exasperation, which translates a sense of frustration to the reader, at the lack of action on Mary’s behalf.

Hernadi continues to argue that:

Sadlier’s fiction critiques one of the most sacred institutions in Catholicism; marriage. More than half the marriages depicted in Bessy Conway are absolutely dreadful. In fact, all of the young women in Bessy Conway – Ally Finigan, Sally Murphy, Mary Murphy, end their lives as abused wives. Their husbands either desert or beat them, and either way they die in poverty, unloved, and alone. (*Advice for Catholic Girls* 203)
However, I would suggest that Sadlier is not critiquing marriage, but the patriarchal structures that surround it. All of the marriages above end not because they are Catholic, but because the men in them have succumbed to alcoholism and have refused to find work to support their family. Other Catholic marriages in her novels operate successfully when the husband and wife do not over-indulge their vices; for instance, Tim and Nelly Flanagan enjoy a drink but not to excess. Also, Tim and Nelly are often seeing talking about their children and making joint decisions about their futures, which was very progressive in a nineteenth-century context.

Through an analysis of Elinor’s diary in *Elinor Preston*, I propose that Sadlier is acknowledging the reality of spinsterhood as a definite choice for many emigrant women. Sadlier records the trivia of Elinor’s daily life and aspects of her experiences that test her, such as when her father dies, and she must cope without her privileged lifestyle. The nuns take her sister Carry into their care and offer Elinor the opportunity of becoming a nun and working in the local school, but she turns them down. (Her sister Emily is already a Presentation nun.) This is unusual for a nineteenth-century Catholic woman as to become a teaching nun was considered to be a good career decision. Instead, Elinor moves in with her friend Maria and her husband Arthur. Whilst living with them, she meets the Fitzmaurice Brothers and gives them a tour of Dublin and dines with them at dinner, but these men do not interest Elinor. She writes:

> During the evening I was honored (dare I say bored?) with the particular attention of Fitzmaurice Brothers, especially the junior partner who was really quiet and most insufferably soft […] once I made a dart into the adjoining room in order to escape their most unwelcome assiduities” (*Elinor Preston* 127).

The presentation of the heroine as coldly reflecting on her emotional life does not exactly conjure thoughts of stereotypical nineteenth-century romantic love. The reader slowly realises that Elinor is fussy with her choice of men, unlike her friend Maria, who
does not want to die “an old maid” as she tells Elinor: “I must e’en take what I can get” (sic) (Elinor Preston 79).

The law and religious beliefs provided axioms for women’s behaviour, and Maria’s view of spinsterhood is an accurate view of women’s life in nineteenth-century Ireland. Indeed, MacCurtain notes that forty-three point three per cent of women were single in 1861, and that rose to forty-eight point six per cent in 1911 (48). As mentioned previously, Aunt Kate is a spinster and is ridiculed for her single status, being the casualty of a practical joke when the counsellor sets her up on a blind date that goes wrong. According to David Fitzpatrick, the role of the Irish spinster in the period was one of “humiliation and despair” (“The Modernisation of the Irish Female” 173). This attitude of the Irish single woman as tragic and flawed was challenged with the onslaught of emigration. Indeed, a lot of Irish women actively chose to remain single once they settled in their host country. 111 Culturally, there are a number of reasons for this, one being that a lot of single Irish women entered into domestic service and enjoyed economic independence and the power of sending remittances home to Ireland. As Diner explains, “Unlike the Italian culture, which stressed both female supervision and early marriage, nothing in Irish culture worked against the young female migrants who had chosen to live in other peoples’ homes and perform domestic duties” (90).

Sheila Jeffreys’ research on the construction of spinsterhood in the Victorian era states that the commonly depicted plight of the middle-class spinster, desperate for a husband, is not an accurate picture. She contends that remaining single was a positive choice for women. She writes: “They made such a choice, either because they regarded marriage as a form of humiliating slavery and dependence upon men, or because they wanted to pursue a career and fulfil their potential in a way which would not have been 111 See Miller, Ireland and Irish America 322.
allowed to them by their husbands” (88). Jeffreys writes that Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was one of those women who refused to marry. I propose that Sadlier’s protagonist Elinor is cast as one of those women who refused to marry as she does not actively look for a marriage partner. Throughout the novel, Elinor receives three marriage proposals and, considering her status as a woman in the nineteenth century, it is unusual that she does not accept any of them. When one reflects on the character of Elinor, there is no doubt that she is emotionally complex and unfulfilled by her life. In a twenty-first century context, she may perhaps be seen as unusual in remaining celibate, but one wonders why she forsook all her potential marriage partners or a life as a teaching nun in Ireland, where her friends were? Elinor is a characterisation that directly challenges the theories of both Diner, who stated that women emigrated for economic independence, and Nolan, who stated that women emigrated in order to secure an early marital partner. As is evident from Sadlier’s creation of Elinor’s character, she has demonstrated a resistance to patriarchal and societal control. With her new life in Canada, Elinor achieves professional economic independence and actively chooses to remain single.

**Women and philanthropy**

Philanthropic activities became popular with predominantly middle-class women in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, in both Ireland and North America. Although more commonly associated with Protestant communities, philanthropic duties were open to women of all religious beliefs. Middle class women thought it was their religious duty to aid people who were more unfortunate than themselves, thus creating an archetypal bountiful lady assisting a destitute woman complete with ragged children in tow. Also, having originated from the domestic sphere, women were more comfortable with the
role of carer and nurturer, and it was perceived by society that they could offer a more
effective means of social intervention to combat these “public nuisances”.

For many of these women, philanthropy provided them with the first step towards engaging in a public life. Maria Luddy explains:

> For middle-class women, philanthropy became an acceptable means of conducting a moral mission in public, and such activity brought them very clearly into the public realm where they controlled finances, raised funds, ran institutions and catered for the needs of thousands of the poor and destitute. (Women in Ireland 10)

Philanthropic activity was also undertaken by the nuns in Ireland and religious women in North America. Women religious, like the Sisters of Charity, were autonomous groups in America until 1846, but in Ireland the clergy were very influential over decisions taken by philanthropic organisations. Luddy explains this further: “In societies organised by Catholics the clergy exerted a powerful control over the direction taken by women philanthropists, seen particularly in the formation of female religious congregations, and the impact of such influence shaped the conservative nature of Catholic social action among both lay and religious”(Women in Ireland 13).

Luddy finds that Irish women developed two strands of philanthropic activity, and he uses terminology from American historian Anne Boylan to label them as “benevolent” and “reformist” traditions (Women and Philanthropy 5). The dominant form of philanthropy in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century was benevolence; the second form of philanthropy, “reformist”, was found in the latter stages of the nineteenth-century, as Luddy explains: “In a limited number of voluntary organisations...

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112 For more on the moral and spiritual superiority of women, see Luddy Women and Philanthropy 214.
113 In 1800, there were 120 nuns in Ireland; by 1851, that number had risen to 1,500 and to over 8,000 by 1901, Luddy Women and Philanthropy 23. In the United States, between 1830 and 1900, Catholic women established 106 new foundations of religious women, and their collective workforce was approximately 50,000. In New York alone, the number of women in these foundations rose from 82 in 1848 to 2,846 in 1898, Maureen Fitzgerald 3.
a minority of women attempted to improve the plight of the poor and outcast generally through public and political action” (Women and Philanthropy 5). Luddy states that there are similarities to be found in philanthropic organisations in different countries, but notes that Ireland is unique in the extent of the involvement of the Catholic church. She writes: “In Ireland the impact of religion on women’s charitable work is of major significance” (Women and Philanthropy 5).

Indeed, philanthropic activities in both Ireland and North America are very similar; for example, we may consider the work of Margaret Louisa Aylward (1810-1889). Jacinta Prunty documents that she was a wealthy, well-educated, unmarried Catholic woman who, after trying to settle into other religious orders, eventually founded her own in the Sisters of the Holy Faith (55). With the onslaught of the Famine, she was distressed by the poverty of destitute women and children on the streets of Dublin. She aligned herself with the Ladies of Charity Association in a bid to eliminate some of the suffering she encountered. As Prunty writes: “From her standpoint, religious and humanitarian values were inextricably bound together” (61). She set up a Catholic orphanage and, like her American counterparts, was met by resistance from the local bishop. Although concerned with the proselytising activities in Ireland at that time, Bishop Cullen refused permission as he thought it would become his responsibility (Prunty 67). St. Brigid’s Orphanage was a great success, with two thousand, seven hundred and seventeen admissions recorded from its formation in 1857 to Aylward’s death in 1889 (Prunty 70). Aylward’s orphanage operated what Fitzgerald terms a “revolving door” system, whereby women who were too ill to look after their children could come back and collect them when they were both physically and financially sound (4).

115 The Sisters of the Holy Faith was canonically approved in 1867.
The catastrophe of the Famine certainly led to an outpouring of philanthropic work as is detailed by Anne O’Connell’s account of the work undertaken by Charlotte Grace O’Brien (1845-1909). She was a Protestant woman, daughter of William Smith O’Brien, and a member of the landlord class who campaigned to improve the conditions of female emigrants onboard emigrant ships. O’Connell observes, “She believed in making public what Victorian society would have preferred to keep hidden” (242). In 1882, she travelled to New York to examine for herself the conditions that female emigrants had to endure; she was appalled at her findings. Once she had inspected Castle Garden, the emigrant reception centre, she called on Fr. John Riordan who was Chaplain there to help her with her endeavours. Up until that point, the Catholic Church had refused to become involved in her philanthropic work, but it did not deter her from converting to Catholicism, and in 1884, O’Connell notes that Fr. Riordan established the mission of Our Lady of the Rosary (250).

As detailed above, philanthropy was becoming a legitimate way for women to engage in the public sphere. The manifestos of women such as Charlotte Grace O’Brien were clearly aligned with those of their American counterparts. Luddy notes that, “Members [of the Ladies’ Association of Charity], through their work, believed they had succeeded in ‘tackling the ignorant, rescuing the poor from proselytisers, protecting widows, sending children to school, procuring employment and places for the destitute [and] bringing absentees to their duty’” (qtd. in Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century Ireland 39). These public declarations could be the intentions of any American philanthropic organisation.

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116 Charlotte Grace O’Brien opened the O’Brien Emigrants’ Home in Queenstown (Cobh) where she offered bed, breakfast and evening meal for two shillings per adult, Anne O’Connell 247.
117 Between 1884 and 1890, the mission helped 25,000 women, and Bishop Ireland continued her work once she returned to Queenstown, now Cobh, in Co. Cork, O’Connell 250.
However, philanthropic work for the Irish in America took on a new meaning as it encouraged ethnic solidarity and helped foster an awareness of an emerging Irish community. By examining institutions in Philadelphia, Dale Light argues that these Catholic organisations were paradoxical as they were quite “Protestant” in their thinking because they embodied many of the values associated with Protestant culture. He writes that members were expected to be “diligent, temperate, patriotic, and thrifty, to submit to civil authority, to educate themselves and their children, to adopt clear and orderly personal habits, and to be devout Christians” (114). Therefore, although these Catholic organisations separated them from the dominant Protestant culture, they also assimilated them to many of the tenets associated with that culture.

It is well documented in this thesis that Sadlier, in particular, was interested in rescuing children from moral and spiritual neglect, and this can plainly be seen both in her creation of the character of Harry Blake in the *Blakes and the Flanagans* and her description of Paul’s missionary work in *Bessy Conway*. This is also reflected in her financial support for the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, which was set up to protect homeless and destitute children by Fr. Drumgoole in 1871. However, I suggest that one can trace Sadlier’s emerging political voice for women’s rights in her choice of support for the Foundling Hospital, a derivative of the Founding Asylum. Indeed, Kelleher astutely observes that, in all narratives written after 1850, philanthropic work was “the only form of quasi-political action open to women” (“Women’s Fiction” 925). The Foundling Asylum Sisters of Mercy was set up by Sister Mary Irene Fitzgibbon and her colleague, Sister Teresa Vincent McCrystal, who raised the funds though a combination

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118 For identity and community formation through philanthropic organisations in Ireland, see Luddy *Woman and Philanthropy* 217.
119 The Foundling Asylum housed an average of six hundred women and 1,800 infants at a time, whilst providing day care for working mothers, a maternity hospital for poor women and children and a shelter for unwed mothers, Maureen Fitzgerald 1-2.
120 For more on philanthropy and political activism, see Kilfeather “Irish Feminism” 99.
of private investors and the city taxes collected as a result of the male Irish Catholic control of Tammany Hall (Fitzgerald 2). Sadler’s “close” friendship with Sr. Irene is recorded in Anna Sadler’s article on her mother. There, Anna details her mother’s involvement in the inception of the New York charity. She describes Sr. Irene as having a “beautiful” personality and labels her “the mother of the Foundlings” (335). She confirms her mother’s firm friendship with Sr. Irene by documenting that she was often a guest at Sadler’s weekly reception in her summer house at Far Rockaway, New York.

What is interesting for me about this particular charity is that it supports not only the abandoned child, but also it serves the needs of the mother, which was quite revolutionary in its time, as most Protestant philanthropic charities were primarily interested in rescuing the child since it was thought that the child could be “saved” if removed from the negative influences of the “fallen” mother. However, the Foundling Hospital also concentrated on supporting the mothers, claiming that one needed to address their “destitution and denigration” (Fitzgerald 224). The Foundling Hospital catered for both married women, who may have been widowed or deserted, and single mothers; their ethos was to keep the mother and child unit together. History records Sadler as being a staunch Catholic, yet I argue that it is interesting to note that she invested her monies in a charity which did not cater for specifically Catholic people. What is remarkable about the Foundling Hospital is that it catered for everybody. Fitzgerald clarifies, saying that “the Foundling Asylum was the largest institution of its kind in the country and the only one in New York City to guarantee care for all children.

121 Diner notes that the Sisters of Mercy did not define the role of the order as that of helping poor young emigrant women enhance their prospects for marriage; instead, they sought to make these women and their daughters “economically self-sufficient” Diner 137.
and women who came to its doors, regardless of religion, race or ethnicity, marital status, or ability to pay for care” (2).

In order to combat the direct “placing out” of children living on the streets to Protestant homes in the Midwest, the nuns cared for the children for up to three years, in order to give the biological mother the best possible chance of taking up her responsibility and claiming back her child. The admittance of the child was at the parents’ initiation, and it was believed to be on a temporary basis only (Fitzgerald 4). However, because they did not means-test their entries, the system was open to abuse, and Protestants claimed that it bred a culture of dependence as there was no “shame or stigma” associated with the institution; however, the nuns felt it was their duty to provide relief to the poor and that to deny charity was “cruel”; whereas, the Protestants believed that the nuns should “compel the poor to change their moral habits and behaviour” (Fitzgerald 6).

It is important to note that although lay and religious women did tremendous work in setting up and sustaining these philanthropic organisations, receiving their help did not come without a price. The “outcasts” of society whom they helped were often termed as such because they did not adhere to middle-class ideologies of “respectability”; these were people who were shunned by society because of their actions, e.g. unmarried mothers. Indeed, Rachel Fuchs argues that many charities denied help to unmarried mothers as it may have been seen to encourage their “licentious behaviour” (Fuchs 164). In both countries, the ethos of many of these institutions was one of control, reform and regeneration. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, Luddy notes that “many such institutions had become places of confinement rather than refuge” (“Women’s History” 57). Furthermore, a wave of anti-religious literature, which defined nuns as
“non-normative” and which glorified the lives of wives and mothers, was generated by Protestants in order to discredit the chosen convent life of many Irish Catholics, as typified by the aforementioned sensation novel *Awful Disclosures*.

I propose that Sadlier’s decision to support a cause that is not specific to Catholicism, but one that encompasses all religions is a sign of her independent mindedness and development as a person. Indeed, she seems to have progressed beyond supporting specifically “Irish” issues and moved past her extreme propagation of Catholicism. This is also reflected in her willingness to hire a non-Catholic maid in her home towards the later years of her life. Studying the census records from her marriage to James Sadlier in 1860, Sadlier employs two domestic servants who are recorded as being Catholic and Irish. However, in the 1901 Census of Canada, it is detailed that Sadlier employs an English maid who is recorded as being from the Church of England. I suggest that these developments show Sadlier in a new light; not just a writer of prescriptive Catholic literature, but an Irish emigrant woman is constantly (re)negotiating her identity and adapting her ideas to meet changed circumstances.

*Conclusion*

In this chapter I have discussed what happened to nineteenth-century gendered practices and discourses in the process of emigration to North America and Canada. In both Ireland and North America, huge numbers of people moved from rural areas to cities (in Ireland’s case, emigrant cities). Women outnumbered men in both countries, but at different times, and this proved to be troublesome to societal equilibrium, thus generating demeaning attitudes towards women in general, with Fitzgerald labelling married women as “redundant” and McLoughlin labelling single women as
“superfluous”, as discussed earlier. However, I suggest that out of the ashes of the Great Famine emerged a strong, fearless figure who was created out of necessity, a woman who found herself occupying a central role of responsibility in a family structure in America; whereas, in Ireland, she would have been on the margins. This occurred as a result of a great shift in the mindset of Irish women towards their new status in their host country. They were no longer reliant on men financially, yet statistically, still could marry earlier than in Ireland if they so wished. However, as discussed earlier, many Irish emigrant women deliberately chose to remain single thus defamiliarising the hegemonic view of marriage as essential to women’s happiness and economic prosperity.

This chapter has also stated that Sadlier did not explicitly espouse “women’s rights”, but she did so implicitly. As she challenges traditional gender roles within her fiction she is reflecting what historical records tell us. However, Sadlier’s writing on the society and culture of her time is only one point of view, as Thompson reminds us: “The lives and the fictions of Victorian women writers reveal endlessly contradictory perspectives on the woman question” (3). These contradictions implies that there is more room for research and argument on the question, but there is little doubt that the repressive patriarchal rural grip that women endured while in Ireland was loosened by the journey across the Atlantic and subsequent dwelling in North America and Canada. In her research on a group of female nurses who emigrate from India to the US before their husbands, Sheba Mariam George considers the cultural implications of women becoming the breadwinners in the family, a concept foreign to most Indians. She looks at the reactions and consequences of such a move, both in India and in the US. Although her research is based in the twentieth century, its results can be useful in deciphering attitudes towards the power of the patriarchal structure within a country and
the shifting of that power to women once they emigrate. She poses a thought-provoking question for her readers, asking: “In other words, how resilient is patriarchy when its material base is eroded?” (20). What she does find is that patriarchal dominance begins to disintegrate in the host country once women become more independent, a process, I argue, through which Irish women emigrants went after the Great Famine. As a result of emigration, Irish men no longer held the title of head of the household. Women became representative of the power and status that once belonged to men because they were now the chief earners in roles such as domestic workers and as professionals like nurses and teachers. These changes occurred naturally and without a pointed refusal of traditional Irish cultural values by women. These changes were inevitable if women were to survive, but it is important to note that women’s liberation from the private sphere did not come at a cost of men’s downfall from the public sphere. It came in spite of it.

This new-found freedom was not just limited to single women, as married women could also get involved in the public sphere once they had the wealth to do so. By engaging their energies in philanthropic activities, women found a site of self-fulfilment, but also a platform for political expression. It is important to keep in mind that the women’s movement in the nineteenth century, as today, was not just a single issue movement, but rather encompasses many different issues whilst embracing many different kinds of women. Although constructed as a conservative writer, I argue that, by choosing to support a charity that specifically looks after the mother as well as the child, Sadlier is voicing her approval for women’s rights, albeit, in a tentative manner. By aligning herself with the need for orphanages, hospitals and reformatories, she is providing emigrants with a social safety net when they land on new shores. More than being just a writer of prescriptive religious literature, I argue that Sadlier has become a
political agitator for not only religious, but also for social reform. In keeping with societal rules of her era, Sadlier, like so many other women, seized the opportunities available to them to enter into the public sphere. I suggest that there can be no doubt that these myriad of philanthropic societies became a quest for women’s autonomy and provided them the opportunity of carving out a new path of freedom and self-expression.
That night was, as it were, the threshold between two stages of life. It was neither of the past nor of the present, but a solitary measure of time, separating them one from the other. (Sadlier, *Elinor Preston* 199)

The legacy of Mary Anne Sadlier is one that should not be forgotten. Through an examination of her emigrant novels, this thesis has demonstrated that she was instrumental in the creation of an “Irish-American” identity in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. This thesis has also shown that Sadlier, as an Irish emigrant herself, changed and adapted her outlook on life in response to her new surroundings in North America therefore making her a role model for future generations of Irish women emigrants to North America. A good writer knows her audience, and Sadlier had some insight into the feelings and needs of the one and a half million Irish emigrants arriving on North American shores. The quotation above, taken from her novel *Elinor Preston; or, Scenes at Home and Abroad* (1861), shows how all emigrants must go through the “threshold between two stages of life” and foreshadows the negotiations that must take place in the host country in order to find happiness. Sadlier exercised her craft well, striking the right balance between satisfying the average reader’s need for amusement and escapism while compounding her own agenda of creating a hybrid Irish-American identity which retained facets of both cultures.

These newly arrived Irish emigrants faced cultural differences, religious antagonisms, linguistic adjustment and economic competition for jobs. Sadlier’s literary merit lies not only in her didactic aspect, providing a handbook for these desperate emigrants whose rupture with the past created a sense of bewilderment and isolation, but also in her sentimental aspect. As this thesis has argued, Sadlier used the
affective power of the Famine to (re)energise emigrants and give them a sense of pride in their homeland. Sadlier’s emigrant novels also exhibit a socio-historical function as they represent the hardships of emigrant life through her fictive characters. As outlined in the Introduction, Sadlier was a hugely popular writer in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and there is no doubt that she influenced the formation of an Irish-American identity in its constructive period. In short, Sadlier’s legacy is worth remembering and examining with Lacombe reiterating that she is, “A Victorian woman writer whose voluminous fiction has escaped canonization” (Dictionary 293).

This thesis created a dialogue between critical theory and literary analysis (by means of close reading of primary material) in order to focus on Sadlier’s engagement with cultural hybridity in emigrant settings. This research has noted that Sadlier’s reasons for representing the Catholic emigrant Irish in her literary novels as honest and hard-working are twofold; firstly she is challenging the prevailing hostility that was aimed at Irish immigrants in the period and secondly she is providing a framework of ethics for recently-landed Irish emigrants. In essence what Sadlier does is problematise hegemonic and monocultural constructions of Irishness. She does not want to condone stereotypical Irish drinking habits and so encourages her most successful protagonists to adopt American habits of sobriety and prudence. Throughout her emigrant novels Sadlier repeatedly recommends that Irish emigrants take the best attributes of both cultures; it is those characters who do so in her novels who achieve happiness and success, as is typified by the Captain in Old and New; or, Taste Versus Fashion (1962) who proudly states that he is both Irish and American.

Sadlier tackles the thorny issues of identity and belonging and does not urge cultural isolation among Irish emigrants but rather proposes a merging of cultures. This
thesis has considered Sadlier’s interest in second-generation assimilation and their attitudes towards their home and host country. She is upset at the negative stereotyping of Ireland and its people and she wants to remedy it. Her main concern of propagating a love of Ireland comes to the fore in the closing comments of *Old and New* (1862) when she urges the second-generation “not to laugh at Ireland through the exaggerated and unnatural caricatures drawn by her enemies for stage effect” but rather “to study what Ireland was, and is, to see what Ireland and the Irish race have done, and so to judge of her claims and to share of those world’s respect” (484). In the emigrant novels examined, Sadlier constructs and solidifies a particular brand of “Irishness”. Sadlier structures her version of Irishness around a framework of Catholicism, the family and a love of Irish heritage. As she has stated, the entire corpus of her work was an acknowledgement of Catholicism and this aspect of her writing should not be diminished. Indeed the amalgamation of nationalism and Catholicism and the vital role they played in sustaining one another has been well documented in Irish Studies, for example, in Terence Brown’s, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History* (1985).

This thesis underlines the fact that Sadlier suggests that Catholicism can be a vital support for emigrants. Indeed, her work on Catholicism helps those of us living in a secular age to understand why it was such a potent force in Irish culture at that time. As demonstrated, Sadlier sees Catholicism as an essential component of the successful upbringing of a child and through her writings we see that she advises that religion should be taught in the family circle and then extended to the community through the local church and school. This thesis has discussed Sadlier’s ideology for creating a specific Irish-American family cell and documented that when people venture outside its teachings and protection it inevitably leads to their downfall. Family values are re-
negotiated after emigration; a lot of emigrants were steeped in tradition and wanted to
retain their sense of Irishness but others were weighed down by the expectations of
home and they saw emigration as a way-out of the traditional family cell. From the
outset this thesis has suggested that Sadlier displayed some feminist tendencies in her
writing. Within *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861) alone she broaches
uncomfortable subjects surrounding family practices such as alcoholism, domestic
abuse and sexual assault. Citing these social problems, Elizabeth Hernadi argues that
her emigrant novels are a strong critique of Catholicism. Instead, this thesis has argued
that Catholicism is a central tenet in Sadlier’s life and she is in fact critiquing the
patriarchal structures that surround her. In fact, all of Sadlier’s novels reiterate her
viewpoint that Catholicism is rejuvenating and a sustaining force and she encourages
everyone to embody it.

This thesis proposes that Sadlier is negotiating a subtle resistance to the
reinforced hegemonic culture of the period. By writing against the grain of patriarchal
discourse Sadlier questions the dominant values of her day but she does not give the
reader any easy answers. She critiques patriarchal structures using characters such as
Elinor Preston, who refuses to accept traditional marriage. Indeed, her novels open up a
discourse surrounding women and spinsterhood, a nineteenth-century phenomenon. At
times, she defies the paradigms of the marriage plot by not providing a “happy ending”
to all her novels. However, Sadlier seemed to placate the nineteenth-century reader as
can be seen when she re-wrote the ending of *Alice Riordan: The Blind Man’s Daughter. A
Tale for the Young* (1851) to include a happy marriage. Also, *Bessy Conway* can be
read as a conventional love-story with Herbert distributing Famine relief at the end of
the novel. These may be seen as the techniques of a conservative writer but then, as
literary scholar Ann Ardis suggests, even “radical” writers of the period often toed the line. She writes: “Radical writers were as likely as conservative to write boomerang plots that either catapult their rebellious heroines back into conventionality or show the next generation’s backlash against their mother’s feminism” (190).

This thesis lays particular emphasis on Sadlier’s representation of the Irish emigrant woman both at home and in their host country. As discussed in Chapter Two, women were confined within a family role and had to conform to regulatory structures, both social and political. Women were seen as passive in Ireland whereas moving to North America gave them agency and a more active role as shapers in the newly emerging Irish-American culture. Their new status shattered the archetypes of female passivity and victimisation which shrouded them in their lives in Ireland. By courageously venturing across the Atlantic, often travelling alone, ironically these determined women turned out to be the key players in shaping the future of the Irish-American dream. There is no doubt that women occupied a precarious position in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and at times Sadlier struggles with her portrayal of them. In the Preface to Bessy Conway Sadlier states that “Every woman has a mission” (iv) and she gives them personal responsibility for implementing a moral, ethical and religious framework in their lives. As shown within this thesis, the women in Sadlier’s emigrant novels have varying functions; she presents the idealised portrait of the suffering Irish mother while giving non-married and widowed women the most social power. It is within these constructions that Sadlier creates the figure of a strong, determined, autonomous emigrant woman, but one who is faced with a sometimes competing way of life.
As this thesis has documented, the circumstances of Sadlier’s life were ideal in facilitating her endeavours to create an Irish-American identity. As wife and later owner of the largest Catholic publishing house in the country, D. & J. Sadlier, she had a ready-made platform and audience for her literary ideologies. By printing Sadlier’s emigrant novels full of stories of nostalgia for the homeland, proselytising, and the difficulties of acculturation, the publishers gave emigrants a sense of belonging in an uncertain world. D. & J. Sadlier & Co. became part of the process of generating an Irish-American identity not least through their design of book covers and choice of published material. By charting their rise to become one of the most popular publishing houses in North America, there is no doubt that they played a formative role in helping Sadlier establish her ideologies. By all accounts Sadlier was a very affable woman with a keen sense of purpose, indeed Lacombe sees her as a “matriarch and a public figure” (Dictionary 294). Sadlier’s frequent gatherings in her summer house at Far Rockaway introduced her to influential figures in the public sphere. Yet Sadlier, like her contemporary Harriet Beecher Stowe, championed domestic passivity while leading a very public life.

It is this contradictory stance that infers that Sadlier was a woman with conflicting ideas. As noted in the thesis, personally she encourages her own children to learn music and recite French yet in her writing, she opposes such advancements and categorises characters who practise them as superficial. At the end of Bessy Conway her opinion of emigration for women is conflicting; through her character Bessy she urges women to stay at home if they can and yet she claims that Bessy has grown as a woman because “experience is the best teacher” (280). This thesis has suggested that through women’s work with philanthropic causes, mid-nineteenth century Irish women
carved out a new identity for themselves, thus establishing them in the public sphere. In her own life, Sadlier’s philanthropic involvement with The Foundling Hospital, which was revolutionary for its time, shows how much she had developed especially since it welcomed people from both sides of the religious divide. By tracing her emigrant footprint and her support of the “schools question”, we see a woman who has moved away from her once-rigid ideological position in opposition to such social justice efforts. In light of this fact, this thesis proposes that this shift in Sadlier’s policies shows a woman actively responding to her own changing beliefs and immigrant experience, thereby lending authenticity to the fictional record of emigrant life she created in her novels.

In order to understand more fully our sense of an Irish identity in a twenty-first century context, it is instructive to look to the past to see how it was constructed and how it developed. Seán Ryder places particular emphasis on the importance of such recovery work. He writes: “the Irish nineteenth century has begun to look like a fascinating and essential field for any understanding of Ireland’s difficult and remarkable cultural history” (135). Sadlier’s emigrant novels are valuable tools and can be used to understand the trajectory of Irish emigrant experiences in North America. Her fictional novels are a useful rendering of the historical times in which they were written and are an invaluable comment on the complex nexus of discourses which ultimately formed the Irish-American identity. This thesis has striven to incorporate and discuss not only Sadlier’s own literary works but also the cultural and historical context which influenced her. By examining primary documents from the period as well as looking at other literary writers who surrounded and interacted with her we gain a more fulsome picture of Sadlier’s life. “Exile” has become a familiar word in the
lexicon of Irish diaspora studies owing to the nineteenth century exodus and by comparison the struggles of contemporary twenty-first emigrants may seem paltry. However, earlier emigrant fiction should be seen as a learning tool; contemporary emigrants can garner a lot from earlier emigrant fiction as the trials and emotions of settling in a host country are still resonant as is reflected in the reprinting of Sadlier’s novels right up to the present day.

This thesis makes a contribution not only to the field of Diaspora Studies but also to the cultural legacy of the Famine. Studies by Morash, Kelleher and Fegan discuss the Famine in fiction and other modes of writing such as poetry, drama and travel narratives. As mentioned in the Introduction, Corporaal’s current project Relocated Remembrance underlines the importance of cultural constructions of the Famine, specifically literary interpretations, placing a new focus on the power of literature in cultural formations. Famine memories are scattered throughout Sadlier’s works, not least in her Famine narrative New Lights; or, Life in Galway (1853), but also in other novels such as Elinor Preston (1861) when the image of the spectre at funerals haunts Elinor as it is representative of the Famine exodus and disrupts her from fully settling into Canadian life. Sadlier’s use of narration, recurring mnemonic tropes and emplotment may be considered by some twenty-first century reader as formulaic and mechanical yet they emphasised feelings of Irish nationalism and Catholicism by constantly reminding her readers of the paradigmatic experiences of the Famine. The exploration of the importance of the affective power of the Famine rather than the statistical aspect is timely given the recent publication of The Atlas of the Great Irish Famine (2012). This publication, although credited for its detail in maps, images and extensive documentation neglected to examine the cultural implications of the Famine.
in any detail. As one reviewer Kevin Whelan notes: “The volume is weakest where it addresses culture … The narrow discussion of Famine literature misses the really significant picture” (“The Long Shadow”). Nonetheless, this publication underlines the wide-ranging interdisciplinary research in the field of Famine Studies and establishes it as a resurgent interest in Irish Studies scholarship more generally.

There is no doubt that Sadlier’s emigrant novels have created a cultural commentary on both Irish and North American life in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Her interesting life, prolific career and immense popularity as a writer make her an ideal subject for research. This thesis has highlighted, among other things, the importance of her contribution to the construction of an Irish-American identity thus concentrating on the ethnic framework and cultural aspect of her work. Future research into Sadlier would benefit from a study between the interactions of her literary texts and her religious beliefs. Owing to her literary works being situated in such a hostile and changing period in American history, it is fair to say that a theologian would find her portrayal of Catholicism very interesting. Future scholarship also lies beyond my specific reading of her novels as a cultural artefact to a more general application of research undertaken in this thesis on the literary production of emigrant or Famine novels. Building on Rigney’s theories of novels being a “portable monument” one could ask what the physicality of texts and the use of colour and images convey to a reader even before they engage with the written word. Whatever future research is undertaken on Sadlier it will be sure to produce interesting results as it will encompass a resourceful, pious businesswoman who adapted to her host country whilst all the time (trans)forming her opinions in response her ever-changing world.


Hernadi, Elizabeth Szabo. “Mary Anne Sadlier’s Advice for Irish Catholic Girls”.


---. “The Fionnuala Factor: Irish Sibling Emigration at the Turn of the Century”.


Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”.


Appendix A

Public Records
Mary New Huddleston 50
Pamela  30  10
Mary Anne Madden and James Sadlier Marriage Certificate (1846)
1860 U.S. Census Record

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Note: The records above include individuals from families living in New York, including their ages, sexes, races, occupations, nativity, and places of birth.
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Appendix B

Mary Anne Sadlier’s children
Mary Frances
(born Montréal 12th September 1847 - died sometime after 1901).
She married a Montréal barrister named Charles Victor Jean Baptiste Leblanc
and had two daughters, Antoinette Marie and Marie Ernestine.

James Louis
(born Montréal March 1850 - died New York 28th June 1876).
He never married and is buried with his parents.

Francis Xavier, S. J. (Frank)
(born Montréal 18th January 1852 - died Massachusetts 14th November 1885).
Ordained as a Jesuit three months before his death.

Anna Teresa
(born Montréal 19th January 1854 - died Carleton, Ontario 16th April 1932).
She was partially educated in New York City at Mademoiselle Lagarde’s French
School and graduated at the convent of Villa Maria, near Montréal, in 1871
(Gerson n. pag.; Wilson and Fiske 365). In school she studied French, Italian
and German (Blain et al 938). She never married and lived with her sister,
Margaret Rose, in Ottawa after her mother died in 1903.

Margaret Rose
(born Montréal April 1856 - died Ottawa 8th June 1937).
She married Francis John Chadwick, a barrister and Member of Parliament. She
had five daughters and a son.

Joseph Oliver
(born Montréal 29th April 1859 - died Ottawa December 1945).
He never married.

Plus her foster child:

Catherine Madden
(born Sainte Marthe 10th June 1847 - died Sainte Marthe 3rd March 1916).
Following her father’s (Francis Madden, Sadlier’s first cousin) request in his
will Sadlier provided her with a home between 1865 and 1870. In 1870 she
married Peter Monaghan in Montréal; they were first cousins (his mother and
her father were siblings).
Appendix C

Francis Sadlier

Extracts from correspondence album
Francis Sadlier

Frank Sadlier, Montreal, Québec, May 1871. Photo by J. Inglis

1984-137; Sadlier and Chadwick families;
$52362

Inscription: 52362; Frank Sadlier/With fondest love to dear sister Anna/New York
May 14th/71; (stamped) J, INGLIS, 101 GREAT
ST, JAMES STREET/MONTREAL
Copyright nil

CREDIT: J, Inglis/ National Archives of
Canada/ PA-165023
Francis Sadlier’s letter dated 22nd November 1867

[Handwritten text on paper]
Francis Sadlier’s letter dated 1st November 1867

Francis Sadlier’s letter dated 5th March 1868
Francis Sadlier’s full letter dated 1st November 1867

Dear Mamma,

He came down acc¬
cording to arrangements yesterday morning and after having spent a very pleasant Hallow¬
Eve Night are now almost at the limit of our stay. If I was here all alone, I may say for
the children with Miss M‘Kay have gone to Central Park, I
seized the opportunity to write to you. James has already done so, but as he wrote yesterday after¬
noon of course he could not tell you all the news. Well, I will begin with our “Hallow-Eve tricks.

promising that the M‘Gres di¬
not come, but that the O'Reillys and Miss Foo did. After a very pleasant supper table performance we adjourned to the parlor, and after an hour or so went down to the kitchen. Our programme was, owing to Miss M's good arrangement, a very agreeable one to all. First came the time-honored "snap-apple," which caused great amusement; then another performance of minor importance which brought us to the "three jacks," which caused a great deal of laughter as usual. After this we had a knock at the game between James and I called "mock-fighting," and the product of which is as follows: two contestants get down on the floor, and were then dressed up like fools, in such a manner that to move was almost
impossible, we then fought cachetin with our feet, and those who got knocked over first cannot get up again, and is therefore held vanquished. But the crowning point of the night entertainment was reached when the gas having been put out, Mr. Roy came in bearing a dish in which some brandy had been set on fire. In this she had placed some pieces of which we were required to draw out of the flames and eat. This caused immense amusement, to see one of our little crowd, plunge in his or her hand, and draw it out dripping with fire, and then to look at poor Emily's look of horror at our recklessness. In fact we had an exceedingly evening, and were very sorry how we are not there. Tell Mrs. Zay all about this, and also that I've sometimes thought of
TheSimilar evenine we all have had together. Talking of Hallow-eet how quickly the time flies, dearman—just think! last night was our second Hallow-Eve in this house. First year Anne McCann was here, and Lizzie too. Truly changes have been amongst us since then. One to new in California; the other in that "frozen Chine" I call my own. There is another country too from which I am peculiarly proud to claim parentage and blood—Island. If that I never will be ashamed. At school many of the Irish—New Yorkers there are ashamed of being thought Irish, but I hope never to.

By Yester-ay afternoon we went to the store to get some necessaries, and while there I met and was speaking to Mr. Mitchel. He had on a big long coat that looked the personification of Winter.

This morning after Mass I went, on James O'Neill's invitation to the College of Physicians and Surgeons.
He remained for two lectures, one by Dr. Sands on Anatomy, the other by Mr. Parker, the celebrated surgeon on the theory of Surgery, and we also heard part of Dalleron on Physiology. The latter has written the best work extant on Physiology, which means the body in health. One thing which Parker said struck me very much. This is that knowledge is a mere something which people are fond of talking of, but which they cannot describe to you, if asked to do so. He said that if any person present knew its meaning, he'd let him know for he didn't. This for Mary's benefit who is so fond of saying that she disbelieves, tell her also that of all people in the world who should be to see them but that mysterious gentle
with the "black whiskers" of Rockaway memory, whom we desired to know something about and whose cognym we took to be "Lawrey," which as Dickens says "a very nice name, it is, too."

Before closing I must mention Bro. Paulian's wish to be kindly remembered to your most respected parents. Apropos of him I must say he is a very fine man although not quite so well-liked as Bro. Patrick. I am getting along pretty well in school and hope to always be able to say the same. We are all quite well; as for me I have no remains at all of my old troubles. I am now told you learning the flute which I hope to play on, by the time you return. If you have time I will be glad if you will answer this. Remember me to Mr. & Mrs. Lizzy Bratty, Mr. & Mrs. the MS. Gees, James.
and all our friends, not forgetting that immortal pattern of the good old maid, Mrs. Colgan, the ever-constant. To papa and Mary give my love, and also to yourself. I am in union with all, send the warmest love.

Your ever affectionate son,

Francis Gladan

P.S. Please direct my letters direct to the College, as I will receive poorer from do so. I have had a letter from Aunt Margaret. F. Gladan.
Appendix D

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Appendix F

Publications and Conferences

Yvonne O’Keeffe B.A., M.A.
Publications


Conferences

2008  *Writing the Irish Diaspora*  
*University of Limerick, Ireland*  
Conference Administrator.

2009  *International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL)*  
*University of Glasgow, Scotland*  
Title: Narratives of the Past: Constructing a Migrant Cultural Identity in the novels of Mary Anne Sadlier.

2010  *New Voices: Inherited Lines*  
*University of Limerick, Ireland*  
Conference Organiser.  
Title: Home is where the Heart is: (De)constructing Family Ties in the novels of Mary Anne Sadlier.

2010  *Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas (MESEA)*  
*University of Pécs, Hungary*  
Title: Passports and Prayers: Relocating an Irish Religious Identity in Mary Anne Sadlier’s novels.

2012  *Famine Memory and the Irish Diaspora: Migrants, Remembrance, Performance*  
*University of Limerick, Ireland*  
Title: Writing Across the Water: Tracing the Narrative Journey of Irish author Mary Anne Sadlier.

2013  *Global Legacies of the Great Irish Famine: Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*  
*Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands*  
Title: The Great Irish Famine: A Tragedy or Tool? Analysing the affective power of the Famine in Mary Anne Sadlier’s emigrant novels.