

**Meaning and/in Materiality:
Learning and Making in Irish Communities of Craft**

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Abstract

Meaning and/in Materiality: Learning and Making in Irish Communities of Craft

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Abstract: This thesis charts a path through the networked institutions, organizations, philanthropic initiatives, and government bodies that supported, promoted and monitored the crafting and design of Irish lace in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, then traces their impact on this craft through to the present day. This narrative highlights the craft's development and cultural meaning – it is now practiced in contemporary lacemaking communities and proudly claimed as a part of Ireland's intangible cultural heritage – as well as its interconnectedness with deeply politicized, gendered, and class-based discourses surrounding design, education and industry. I revisit little-studied texts and employ unstudied archival and material sources to connect such diverse stakeholders in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century lace industry as the Cork School of Art, British Department of Science and Art, Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, and Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. Weaving together a complex network of cultural, economic and social exchanges between these diverse actors in colonial governance, philanthropy, co-operative organization, and design education, this thesis tells the story of – primarily women – designers and makers at a pivotal moment in Irish history, whose entangled co-agency was a function of their skill, class, gender, and nationality. Concluding with a consideration of my own learning and making with Irish lace communities, I chart a shift through the twentieth century in the conception of lace design as 'art for industry' and making as an economic necessity to both practices as expressions of identity, creativity and networked, 'storied' and 'placed' community-building. In employing research creation as a methodological strategy, and learning localized, embodied knowledge from contemporary practitioners, I also draw attention to the primary nonhuman agent in this network, namely the lace itself, both to assert its material vibrancy, and to contemplate the actual experience and activity of lace designing and making women, historical and contemporary. This study addresses a gap in Irish craft and design history, as well as women's and labour history more broadly, employing focused interdisciplinarity and the methodologies of materiality studies to suggest new paths and methods of inquiry for craft and design history and Irish studies.

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Dedicated to Kit, Thomas, and Léon

In memory of Lillian Gillett (née Winstanley) 1923 - 2018

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List of Abbreviations

- DATI Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland
- DIF Donegal Industrial Fund
- DSA Department of Science and Art
- IAOS Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (now Irish Co-operative Organisation Society, ICOS)
- ICA Irish Countrywoman's Association (previously United Irishwomen)
- IIA Irish Industries Association
- NAI National Archives of Ireland (Dublin)
- NAL National Art Library (London)
- NLI National Library of Ireland (Dublin)
- NMI National Museum of Ireland (Dublin)
- RDS Royal Dublin Society
- V&A Victoria and Albert Museum (London)

Introduction

*Take a piece of net larger than the design to be worked and sufficiently big to cover the sides of the frame and hold all the net taut. Tack the net on to the design, working from the center outwards.
Place the net, with design in place on the frame.
Nellie Ó Cléirigh and Veronica Rowe¹*

*Place the motifs, on the pattern in your own design. Fill between the motifs with your desired filling stitch. There should be just enough space between the motifs, to join together with 5 CH, SS to CK, then back to another motif.
Continue in a criss-cross fashion. Work out to the edge of the pattern.
Máire Treanor²*

A pattern, a series of motifs chained together

Imagine a piece of Limerick lace. Let us imagine, for the sake of argument, a veil – it is a self-sufficient object of adornment, not tacked to a skirt or applied to a pair of sleeves like a flounce or a set of cuffs. And the pattern is designed to be seen all at once, as a whole, spread across the back of a satin skirt and trailing down a stone or tiled aisle (fig. 0.1). The veil was constructed using a large piece of machine-made netting as a matrix. Tacked underneath would have been a pattern, drawn on paper or cloth. The pattern gives the outline of the shapes – floral, likely – and the job of the lacemaker is to trace them with the jab and draw of the needle or tambour hook, leaving delicate white lines to outline the flowers and vines. But she must also fill in the larger shapes with filling stitches – little dots known as ‘pops,’ perhaps stars or pinstripes – and sometimes the choice is left up to her.³

Imagine a pile of crocheted motifs: a cluster of shamrocks, a harp, a curling fern frond, and roses with three layers of tiny folded petals. The motifs are finished, made by families that have for years specialized in one, miniaturized crocheted form. But the Clones crochet lace designer-maker must finish the job by arranging them in a pleasing pattern that forms the shape of, say, a collar. Then, she must link them together with tiny bars of crochet chain ornamented with the devilishly

¹ Nellie Ó Cléirigh and Veronica Rowe, *Limerick Lace: a Social History and Maker's Manual* (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1995), 71.

² Máire Treanor, *Clones Lace: the story and patterns of an Irish crochet* (2nd Ed.) (Berkeley: Lacis Publications, 2010), 102.

³ Though some men and boys did make lace in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Ireland, lacemakers were predominately female. I have only found instances of men making crochet lace (Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 36).

difficult Clones knot, and edge the finished piece with a border of ornament, binding it all into a cohesive form (fig. 0.2).

This thesis takes its form from these methods in lacemaking: the tracing of an underlying pattern, and assemblage and connection of motifs. They are both employed as strategies to gather together pieces of the multi-faceted and little-documented history of lace design and making in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Ireland, and weave them into a narrative that highlights not only the growth, development, and shifting meaning of this craft – now proudly claimed as a part of Ireland’s intangible cultural heritage⁴ – but also its interconnectedness with deeply politicized, gendered, and class-based discourses surrounding design, education and industry. In this thesis, I revisit little-studied texts and employ unstudied archival and material sources to chart a path that connects diverse stakeholders in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish lace design and production, including government, education and organizational bodies, in order to point to the ways these worked to shape both Irish lace designers and makers as gendered, classed, and colonial subjects. Employing research creation as a methodological strategy, I also draw attention to the primary nonhuman agent in this network, namely the lace itself, both to assert its material vibrancy and to to contemplate the actual experience and activity of the otherwise usually underappreciated, but often extremely capable and talented women who produced these extraordinary works of design and craft. Weaving together a complex network of cultural, economic and social exchanges between actors in colonial governance, philanthropy, co-operative organization, and design education to tell the story of – primarily women – designers and makers at a pivotal moment in Irish history, whose entangled co-agency was a function of their skill, class, gender, and nationality, this study addresses a gap in Irish craft and design history, as well as nineteenth-century women’s and labour history more broadly, employing focused interdisciplinarity and the methodologies of materiality studies to suggest new paths and methods of inquiry for craft and design history and Irish studies.

In employing the language of lace to describe the shape and texture of my writing, I am also gesturing to the material and social practice of lacemaking that informs both the structure and content of this thesis. In *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*, the anthropologist Tim Ingold uses yet another metaphor from textile work to describe a method of study that twists strands

⁴ Ireland’s National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage includes five lacemaking traditions: Carrickmacross, Limerick, Headford, Clones Crochet and Irish Crochet. See: “National Inventory of ICH,” Ireland’s National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, <https://nationalinventoryich.chg.gov.ie/national-inventory/> (Accessed November 25, 2021).

of knowledge from different disciplines together into a single “line of interest” around a given object, in order to “study [it] from the inside.”⁵ In this introduction, I will foreground the engagement with lace as a material object through research creation that shapes the form and content of this thesis. I will go on to describe how the concept of ‘pattern’ and ‘motif’ shape the way I approach the historical study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish lace, as well as the textual interventions I employ to weave together embodied, archival, and material research. Informed by Ingold’s model of focused, materially-engaged interdisciplinarity, I gather these strands to weave a ‘line of interest’ around Irish lace.

Meaning and/in materiality

I will begin by introducing a case study that has shaped my conception of interdisciplinary research as an exercise in twisting strands of knowledge from different, but interconnected, disciplines together into a ‘line of interest’ around a single thing or issue. In an Irish Studies context, this approach has sometimes been employed by scholars working in historical and cultural geography, and the study of folkways or vernacular culture.⁶ In particular, the folklorist Henry Glassie, whose detailed and expansive studies of folklore and material culture in Ireland add layers of interpretation and critical nuance to early work in the field, such as that of Emyr Estyn Evans, has influenced my understanding of the meaning and materiality of the objects I study.⁷ In *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, Glassie explores the deep cultural meaning to be found in everyday things in 1970s County Fermanagh. Butter is a particularly evocative example. As a product primarily made by women, it was associated with the woman of the house but also with witches, who could steal, sour or hoard it. Because butter could be preserved, it was in the past a marketable product, and one that could bring in substantial revenue for a family, leading to financial advancement that might be viewed suspiciously by the community. However, by the 1970s this had changed, and small farms mostly

⁵ Tim Ingold, *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 12.

⁶ For example, geographer, archaeologist, folklorist, and early Director of the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen’s University Belfast Emyr Estyn Evans (1905-1989) worked in this way, as exemplified in *Mourne Country: Landscape and Life in South Down* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1967). More recently, historical geographer Kevin Whelan and cultural geographer Nessa Cronin have modelled the use of literature and visual art to enrich discussions of Irish landscapes and environments, past, present and future (see, for example: Kevin Whelan, “Reading the Ruins: The Presence of Absence in the Irish Landscape,” in *Surveying Ireland’s Past: Multidisciplinary Essays in Honour of Anngret Simms*, eds. Howard B. Clarke, et al. (Dublin: Geography Publications 2004); Nessa Cronin, “Writing the Natural World: Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities in Contemporary Ireland,” *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* Vol. 40 (2017): 94–119, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26333460>). In particular, Cronin calls for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary (practitioners inside and outside of the academy working together on projects with practical implications) in the environmental humanities and study of place (111-112).

⁷ Estyn Evans, *Irish Folk Ways* (London: Routledge, 1957).

exported whole milk to factories.⁸ The tackle and trim of butter making is varied and expresses family identity – from methods for cleaning butter spades to lucky charms that increase butter yield.⁹ Where butter was produced also inflected its meaning. Men in the fields planting cabbages or harvesting potatoes could be seen by their neighbours, monitored and evaluated, but the dairying took place in byres attached to or in close proximity to the house, so butter could be made in secret: “Only milk holds the potential for secret profit, and only butter leads the mind toward both evil and success.”¹⁰

Glassie’s writing on butter provides a model for research that interrogates the historical context, cultural meaning, and materiality actuality of a thing. In this way, he demonstrates that one of the most quotidian foods in Irish culture can be found to have deep meaning that stretches out in many directions. It is temporal, as in the change in the production of butter is also a history of farm life in the region; geographical or spatial, in that butter acquired different flavors when cows grazed in different fields, and its nuances of secrecy and the potential for private gain come from its hidden place of manufacture; even moral and mythical, as shown in butter’s association with ideal and tainted (witch-like) womanhood, secrecy, luck, and care for or neglect of neighbors. Political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett refers to this “curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” as “*Thing-Power*,” using examples as diverse as food and gastric health, the continued life of trash, and the alchemy of metals to argue that we ignore this quality – “vibrant materiality” – at our peril.¹¹

Furthermore, considering vibrant materiality as part of – as well as generated and empowered by – a networked ‘assemblage’ opens the field for a more dynamic and comprehensive examination of the thing itself. As Glassie’s writing makes clear, butter does not hold its meaning, or ‘thing power’ on its own, but instead as a result of its environment, methods of production, associated material culture, and interaction with human producers and consumers. Building on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Bennett writes about the power of an assemblage of vibrant things, and indeed argues that all things exist in assemblages, “open ended collectives,” “uneven topographies,” using the example of a power grid to illustrate this point.¹² Bennett points out that the concept of

⁸ Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: culture and history of an Ulster community* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 532.

⁹ Glassie, *Passing the Time*, 533.

¹⁰ Glassie, *Passing the Time*, 551.

¹¹ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 6.

¹² Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 24.

‘thing power’ can isolate a thing, make it seem immovable and untouchable,¹³ and I would argue that her articulation of vibrant materiality can distract from the storied social and cultural meaning attributed to objects. And yet, other methods for studying things, notably Thing Theory as articulated by Bill Brown or Igor Kopytoff’s ‘object biography’, can isolate a material object from its everyday use and physical actuality, marooning it in the realm of the symbolic or focusing the attention solely on how it has been used and manipulated by human hands.¹⁴ Looking at things as actants in an assemblage or members of an ‘open ended collective’ allows for these varied considerations to interweave with and bounce off each other. Glassie’s description of butter is grounded in historical context; it is *both* symbolic *and* deeply related to its materiality – production, lifespan, feel and impact on its consumer – and in fact demonstrates how the mythology and moral meaning of butter emerge from its physical characteristics.¹⁵ As such, it provides an excellent model for a study such as this one that is both deeply engaged with *meaning* and *materiality*.

Learning and making with lacemakers in Ireland and cyberspace

I view lace’s ‘vibrant materiality’ as an integral strand in the ‘line of interest’ that I weave around Irish lace in order to, in the words of Tim Ingold, study it “from the inside.”¹⁶ As such, making lace, and more specifically, *learning* how to make lace, is a fundamental aspect of the methodology of this project. Incorporating this sort of creative, material engagement with a topic of investigation may take different names and forms according to region and disciplinary affiliation. It is known as “practice-based/practice-led research” in the U.K. and Australia, “artistic research” in Germany and the Netherlands,¹⁷ and “arts-based research” in the United States.¹⁸ It is known as “research creation” in the Canadian context, where work emerging from departments of Design, Studio Arts, and Communications, in particular, continues to explore and define the potential and the bounds of this

¹³ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 20-21.

¹⁴ Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 1-22, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344258>; Igor Kopytoff, “The cultural biography of things: commoditization as a process,” in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University, 1986), 64-91.

¹⁵ In thinking about networks of things I am also informed by the writing of Ben Highmore and Bruno Latour. See: Ben Highmore, “Formations of Feeling, Constellation of Things,” *Cultural Studies Review* Vol. 22 No. 1 (2016): 144-167, DOI:10.5130/csr.v22i1.4413; Bruno Latour (writing as Jim Johnson), “Mixing Humans and non-humans together: the sociology of a door-closer,” *Social Problems* Vol. 35 (1988): 298-310, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/800624>.

¹⁶ Ingold, *Making*, 12.

¹⁷ Chris Salter, *Alien Agency: Experimental Encounters with Art in the Making* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 13.

¹⁸ Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, “Research-creation: Intervention, Analysis and ‘Family Resemblances,’” *Canadian Journal of Communication* Vol. 37 (2012): 6, <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2012v37n1a2489>.

way of working. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) defines research creation as:

an approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms).¹⁹

Long-time collaborators working in Communication Studies at Concordia University, Kim Sawchuk and Owen Chapman, describe research creation as pursuing a line of inquiry through creative practice, “but also analysis, critique, and a profound engagement with theory and questions of method,” and highlight four loose subcategories: “research-for-creation,” “research-from-creation,” “creative presentations of research,” and “creation-as-research.”²⁰ Chapman and Sawchuk caution against policing and limiting the definition of a term that should in fact open new horizons for research, and offer these categories as a “starting point for defining methods of potentially rigorous academic inquiry that are essentially multifaceted, heterogeneous, and sometimes even contradictory.”²¹ They highlight the interdisciplinarity and multimodality of both practice and outcome, and indeed research creation may include anything from fiction writing to film to sound art, to any combination thereof. In this dissertation, I work between the categories of “research-from-creation” – drawing research findings from the process of creation – and “creation-as-research,” a sub-category that Chapman and Sawchuk elucidate through storytelling about their own collective practice: it is “multimodal” in outcome, “research is understood as both a noun and a verb, and creation is not perceived strictly as a stand-in for art making,” and this work often has a “looped” quality as a researcher revisits and reflects upon concepts, relationships, and things over time.²²

I frame my lace objects as tools in the research process, rather than as deliverables, outcomes, or a form of dissemination.²³ Though I agree wholeheartedly that “artistic production is

¹⁹ “Definitions of Terms,” Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, last modified May 4 2021, <https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22> (Accessed December 10, 2021).

²⁰ Chapman and Sawchuk, “Research-creation,” 19, 15. For a more detailed history of research creation in Canadian universities, see Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: a Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 4-8.

²¹ Chapman and Sawchuk, “Research-creation,” 15.

²² Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, “Creation-as-research: Critical Making in Complex Environments,” *RACAR: revue d'art Canadienne/Canadian art review* Vol. 40 No. 1 (2015): 50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24327426>.

²³ Much of the literature on research creation emphasizes the validity and importance of creative work as an end-product and deliverable. Indeed, Cinema and Media Arts Professor at York University Caitlin Fisher describes the anxiety

no longer solely an *object* of scholarly inquiry but is itself [a] legitimate *form of research and dissemination*,”²⁴ in this, my research creation work is perhaps better aligned with that of Tim Ingold or Henry Glassie. Each engages deeply with how a thing is made in order to better understand its materiality and context, as one strand in a ‘line of interest’ woven around that thing. I view my lacemaking as a *social* and *material* practice that guides my research and embeds it in the relational context and materiality of the lace that I also study through looking, through archival material and texts.²⁵

Social practice

Whereas much of my work is based on archival and material evidence, I have come to realize that I am studying and writing about a living tradition. Seeking instruction from and spending time with communities and individuals who make lace has shaped my understanding of what lacemaking means, and what it does, in the social or relational context of lacemaking groups, women’s lives, and families in Ireland (and abroad), themes that will emerge in Chapter 6. These communities, makers and historians, such as Máire Treanor (of the Clones Lace Guild and Summer School) or Nora Finnegan (of the Kenmare Lace and Design Centre), who have done extensive research on Clones and Kenmare lace respectively, have deep knowledge and a sense of ownership of the history of their regional lacemaking technique.

This contact with present-day stakeholders who are active in lacemaking inevitably raises issues of accountability and ethics that must be addressed as part of a broader commitment to social justice. In thinking about how to engage with contemporary practitioners in an ethical way as a researcher and writer, I am informed by the work of scholars such as design theorist Sasha Constanza-Chock, who advocates for “involving members of the community that is most directly affected by the issue that you are focusing on [...] both because it’s ethical, and also because the tacit and experiential knowledge of community members is sure to produce ideas, approaches and

surrounding doctoral students’ submission of long textual dissertations alongside creative work: for “safety,” for fear of ideas getting lost, and out of a desire to conform to academic standards (Caitlin Fisher, “Mentoring Research-Creation: Secrets, Strategies, and Beautiful Failures,” *RACAR: Revue d’art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* Vol. 40 No. 1 (2015): 47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24327425>).

²⁴ Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 12-13.

²⁵ That said, I do believe that we are all designers, even if not trained or particularly skilled. Design theorist Ann-Marie Willis puts it like this: “Design is something far more pervasive and profound than is generally recognised by designers, cultural theorists, philosophers or lay persons; designing is fundamental to being human — we design, that is to say, we deliberate, plan and scheme in ways which prefigure our actions and makings [...] we design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us.” (A.M. Willis, “Ontological designing,” *Design Philosophy Papers* Vol. 4 No. 2 (2006): 1-2, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/144871306X13966268131514>).

innovations that a non-member of the community would be very unlikely to come up with.”²⁶ Though Constanza-Chock’s writing is directed at designers, this principle is equally applicable to design research. Indeed, as Constanza-Chock suggests, learning from and spending time with lacemaking communities has directed this project down much more generative paths than were originally planned.

Feminist geographer Gillian Rose also writes about the difficulties (and impossibilities) inherent in trying to circumvent the power imbalances and extractive qualities of research with other humans. Rather than offering a tidy solution, Rose argues that “feminist geographers should keep these worries, and work with them.”²⁷ The process of learning how to make lace has been a critical aspect of my ‘working with’ these issues. Becoming a student, I opened myself up to failure and critique – and I did fail. I am bewildered by needlepoint lace, and the increasing tension and abrupt end of my sample, started at the Kenmare Lace and Design Centre under the tutelage of Nora Finnegan is a testament to my total dependence on her teaching to guide my making (fig. 0.3). Once I left, I struggled to follow written instructions and maintain the drive to complete such fine, eye-straining work on my own, ultimately giving up – an uncomfortable admission to make! I have found myself in turn surprised, challenged, and upended by many more of the social and material dynamics of learning, making, and giving lace. In Chapter 6, I will describe my own struggles with completing my Clones crochet lace projects, my use of making as an antidote to anxiety and writer’s block, and the uncomfortable realities of giving gifts from a distance. Thinking and writing about these experiences is uncomfortable, but in this discomfort I am attentive to Indigenous anthropologist of science Kim TallBear’s image of “a researcher who is willing to learn how to ‘stand with’ a community of subjects” as one who is “willing to be altered, to revise her stakes in the knowledge to be produced.”²⁸

²⁶ Sasha Constanza-Chock, “Design Justice: towards an intersectional feminist framework for design theory and practice,” Paper presented at Design Research Catalyst 2018, University of Limerick (25-28 June 2018), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3189696>.

²⁷ Gillian Rose, “Situating Knowledges: positionality, reflexivities, and other tactics,” *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 21 No. 3 (1997): 318, <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913297673302122>.

²⁸ Kim TallBear, “Standing with and Speaking as Faith: a Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry,” *Journal of Research Practice* Vol. 10 No. 2 (2014): 2, <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/405/371>. I recognize that much of the scholarship I draw from in this section is written in the context of researching within or ‘standing with’ marginalized research subjects and/or communities. I do not claim that the lacemaking communities in which I circulated are marginalized in the same way, but I am attentive to the ways in which the lives and work of middle-aged and older women are de-valued in Western culture. I have not conducted a demographic analysis of the lacemaking groups I attended, but it is worth noting that based on my observation, they consist almost entirely of women between the ages of approximately 50-90.

Learning from established practitioners has also helped me to imagine how my work might be useful to the communities that participate in the tradition of Irish lacemaking today. Beyond simple reciprocity, which can serve to ossify the binary between researcher and researched, Kim TallBear describes the method of “overlap[ping] [one’s] agenda with that of [one’s] research subjects.”²⁹ I have tried to orient and arrange this document in such a way that it might be useful to practitioners in Ireland, many of whom already look to historic lace for inspiration, and enjoy discussing family or community connections to regional lace history. The extensive figures and appendices listing scholarship recipients and descriptions of the specimens in the Anderson collection (see Appendices A&B) are products of this intention.³⁰

Material practice

As someone interested in making material objects with my hands, I also draw from practitioners and theorists who engage with tactility, materiality, and the willfulness of matter, demonstrating how direct engagement with the materiality of a thing can fundamentally alter our understanding of its form and meaning. The Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, for example, advocates integrating or even prioritizing the sense of touch into the study of architecture and design: “the hand is not only a faithful, passive executor of the intentions of the brain; rather, the hand has its own intentionality, knowledge and skills.”³¹ Food and performance scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes about research creation as a method in performance studies, more specifically as it relates to food, providing examples of how tactile engagement can reveal embodied knowledge.³² Pallasmaa and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett draw attention to the way that materiality shapes the movement of the body during the design and (tactile) research process. A pencil, a bundle of wild leeks: these things shape their investigations, revealing ways of understanding and expressing an idea.

In conceptualizing ‘vibrant materiality’ in practice, I am particularly indebted to the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold, who describes the process of “think[ing] through making” – an apt

²⁹ TallBear, “Standing with and Speaking as Faith,” 6.

³⁰ Another expression of this intention is the video that I created (with the invaluable editing assistance of Sam Gillett) using recordings from my interviews with Máire Treanor, to show at an online event hosted by the Textiles and Materiality Cluster (Milieux Institute) and School of Irish Studies (February 17, 2021), followed by an interview with Treanor. The video file was then given to Treanor to use for her own teaching purposes.

³¹ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2009), 7.

³² Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium,” *Performance Research* Vol. 4 No. 1 (1999): 1-30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.1999.10871639>. From the field of food studies, I have also found David Szanto’s work useful as a case study in embodied knowledge (and research creation): David Szanto, “Performing Gastronomy: An Ecosophic Engagement with the Liveliness of Food” (PhD diss. Concordia University, 2015).

description of the process-based research creation methodology that I employ.³³ Ingold is concerned less with the material outcome of making, and more with what can be learned from engagement with material. In *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*, Ingold recounts two activities conducted with an anthropology class that are particularly illustrative of the generative potential of embodiment and material engagement in study. He describes making baskets with the students, by the sea in Scotland.³⁴ Only in making the baskets did the students understand that the size of the typical basket is in relation to that of the human body, because arms can only reach so far, and that a slight bend or list is common because of the strong wind off the sea that pushes the basket gently to one side during its construction.³⁵ In attempting to explore how a doorframe in a ruined cottage might impact one's view of a landscape, Ingold and his students held wooden frames about the size of the original door in the gap that had been the doorway of a now-tumbled cottage. However, they were surprised to find that instead of framing the view in an instructive way, the frame had turned the ruin into a dwelling one again, fundamentally altering their experience of the once dead, now alive, house. These anecdotes show how active engagement with the presence of a thing or space can quite literally 'reframe' an investigation – teaching us new questions beyond those we considered before.³⁶

Research creation has 'reframed' my study and revealed 'new questions' that find expression throughout this thesis. In this section, I explored how the social practice of lacemaking pushed me to consider how I might shape my research process and thesis document to be of use to the Irish lacemaking community, and encouraged me to interrogate my own experiences as a learner. In the next section, I will discuss how the material practice of lacemaking shaped my investigation, and later in this introduction I will describe how the exercise of creative speculation – textual research creation – taught me new questions to pose about the practices of teaching, learning, and inspection, and about my own positionality as a researcher.

³³ Ingold, *Making*, 6.

³⁴ Ingold, *Making*, 21.

³⁵ Archaeologist and linguist Elizabeth Wayland Barber uses these techniques in studying ancient textiles, writing that: "The first step, in my experience, is to trick oneself into focusing on every part of the data. *Draw it, count it, map it, chart it*, and if necessary (or possible) *re-create it*." (Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: the First 20,000 Years* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 295).

³⁶ Ingold, *Making*, 84.

Learning new questions

My experiences learning to make various Irish laces with lacemaking teachers throughout Ireland (and online) have both shaped the form of this project and generated its content, generating new research questions and focii. In the spring and summer of 2019, I travelled throughout Ireland attending lace workshops, classes and events, which also led to experiences discussing lacemaking projects and lace collections with makers, collectors, local historians, and teachers. Rather than conducting interviews, I attended workshops or private lessons as a student, taking notes on what was shared with me in the context of learning to make lace (see Appendix C). Sometimes, this branched off in surprising directions. At the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland, for example, I met an ambitious maker of Carrickmacross lace who invited me to visit her home and view the twelve-foot wedding veil she was constructing for her daughter, which I will describe in more detail in Chapter 6.

What began as an attempt to better understand the structure and design of the Irish laces by making them resulted in an increased focus on the relational, community, and place-based aspects of the craft as it is practiced today—giving added resonance to this historical study by lengthening the thread to include the present day. The process of learning lacemaking techniques brought me into contact with a vibrant Irish and international lacemaking community whose presence and stories indicated much more continuity than I had previously imagined in the history of Irish lace and other heritage crafts from the nineteenth century. As I will discuss below, much of the scholarship on Irish lace marks the beginning of the First World War as the end of the industry, with no reference to production in other spheres. In Chapters 4 and 5 I will begin to pick up some of the threads that I see carrying forward into the mid-twentieth-century and even to the present day, to address this gap in the current scholarship.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, preventing me from returning to Ireland to continue my study of lacemaking. However, rather than curtailing this aspect of my investigation, the pandemic travel restrictions and lockdowns served to reroute it. Enabling a series of focused conversations that resulted in an internationally-attended online event, and prompting a deeper consideration of craft, distance and care, the pandemic lockdowns' isolation paired with increased digital connection provided an opportunity to further foreground an exploration of lacemaking from the perspective of materiality studies. I attended online lacemaking classes and events with Clones crochet lace historian, designer and maker Máire Treanor, ultimately conducting a series of

interviews with her on Zoom. In Chapter 6, I will discuss Treanor's work, and my own experiences designing, making, and gifting a series of Clones crochet lace baby bonnets, as a case study in the contemporary role of lacemaking, and as an opportunity to 'speculate backwards' using my own embodied and relational experiences.

Pattern and motifs

Engaging with the materiality of lace has also led me to think about my historical research in a way inflected by the language and techniques of lacemaking, to which I alluded at the beginning of the introduction. This project has its origin in a collection of lace specimens held at the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) Decorative Arts Division, in Dublin. Alex Ward, Acting Keeper of the Art and Industrial Division, showed me the collection when I visited the museum to photograph the better-known lace items at the NMI, such as the apron in Youghal lace that features in Chapter 2, Limerick lace fan leaves and Carrickmacross lace flounces. The boxed collection of lace specimens had lain in storage for almost a century, donated in 1926 and only catalogued in 2009. They had belonged to Emily Anderson, a lace inspector for the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (DATI), a government body unique in the fact that it was administered from Dublin during Ireland's Union with Great Britain (1801-1922), and was incorporated into the new administration of the Irish Free State in 1922. Before finding employment at the DATI, Anderson grew up at Mount Corbett House, near Mallow in County Cork,³⁷ studied lace design and taught at the Cork (later Crawford) School of Art. Anderson retired in 1926, at which point she donated the collection of lace specimens to the NMI. Her long career – which was for its entirety focused on lace design and the Irish lace industry – charts a path that connects diverse stakeholders in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish lace design and production. As such, I have employed Emily Anderson's career as a 'pattern' for this investigation. Doing so has generated important insights into the overlapping and intersecting nature of these government, education and organizational bodies, and the ways in which they worked to shape both Irish lace designers and makers as gendered, classed, and colonial subjects.

Chapter 1 traces the early history of lacemaking in Ireland and discourses surrounding nineteenth-century needle work and needle workers, as well as introducing the British Department of Science and Art's (DSA) design education system, of which the Cork School of Art was one outpost.

³⁷ Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, email, July 21, 2020. Mount Corbett House is now a luxury holiday rental, and can be booked for vacations. See: <https://fivestar.ie/self-catering/luxury-equestrian-manor/>.

In Chapter 2, I introduce the Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace in London, and the Cork Industrial Exhibition, which both occurred in 1883 and served to draw public attention to the Irish lace industry and mark the beginning of what the South Kensington Museum's textile expert Alan Cole would call the 'renaissance' of the Irish lace industry. Emily Anderson exhibited work at the Cork Exhibition, and almost certainly attended Alan Cole's lectures on lace presented in the fine art galleries as part of the exhibition programme. Following the Cork Exhibition, the Cork School of Art developed a lace design class with branch classes in rural areas; Anderson was a student of this first lace design class and taught at least one branch class.

Chapter 3 examines the series of competitions instituted in the years following the 1883 exhibitions, to which Emily Anderson and her fellow students at the Cork School of Art and other Irish municipal art schools submitted lace designs. Anderson won numerous prizes in these competitions during the 1880s, before teaching at the school in the 1890s. I consider her designs, reproduced in publications and in some cases still extant, as evidence of how lace design was taught, and how it developed in Irish design schools at this time, alongside Alan Cole's writings about the industry, which shape the Irish lace maker as a gendered, classed, and colonial subject.

Chapter 4 branches off to consider lace design and making in a very different context, that of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society (IAOS), linked to Emily Anderson through family connection and personal involvement. In 1897, the IAOS, of which Anderson's brother R.A. (Robin) Anderson was secretary for most of his career, began forming Home Industries Societies, which produced textiles, woodworking, and other crafts on a co-operative basis. The IAOS collaborated with other cottage industries initiatives to distribute lace patterns, which I examine alongside three co-operative home industries as evidence of nascent amateur practice and the development of communities of craft. Emily Anderson inspected some of these Home Industries Societies in her role as Inspector of Lace (or Home Industries) for the DATI, which was established in 1899.

In Chapter 5, I discuss Anderson's work for the DATI, using the collection of lace specimens she donated to the NMI in 1926 as material evidence of DATI inspection and teaching practice. Anderson's reports for the DATI in the later years of her career document a lace industry in crisis, threatened by machine lace, cheaper foreign copies, changing styles, and the disruption of the First World War. And indeed, most scholars end their discussion of 'the Irish lace industry' in 1914, implying its disappearance at this time. However, in Chapter 6, I trace the continuation of lacemaking in various contexts, from small regional industries to amateur practice and organizations that promoted traditional crafts through the twentieth-century. I situate the discussion in my own

learning and making of Irish laces, in particular Clones crochet lace, exploring the uses, spaces, and meanings of Irish lacemaking in the present day.

Using Emily Anderson's career as a pattern for a broader investigation of the networked organizations, government bodies, and educational institutions that informed Irish lace design and making in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries serves to widen the scope of Irish design history – and indeed Irish history. In her 1986 article “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women in Design,” Cheryl Buckley argues that a feminist design history must not simply insert formally-trained women designers into the canon, but cease privileging individual designers altogether, shifting the attention to consumers, materials, and multiplicity of reception and use.³⁸ In the case of Irish lace, sustained scholarly attention already rests almost exclusively on networks of production and consumption, social and political meaning, rather than on the lace itself, and those that designed and made it. Elizabeth Boyle's 1971 *The Irish Flowerers* remains the only book-length scholarly study of Irish lace, and focuses primarily on the social history of the Irish lace industry.³⁹ Janice Helland has written extensively about the primarily British patronesses of Irish cottage industries, and the commissions, exhibitions, and advertising that sustained much of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish lace industry.⁴⁰ Joanna Bourke has conducted an

³⁸ Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women in Design,” *Design Issues* Vol. 3 No. 2 (Autumn 1986): 3-14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511480>.

³⁹ Elizabeth Boyle, *The Irish Flowerers* (Ulster Folk Museum and Institute of Irish Studies Queen's University Belfast, 1971).

⁴⁰ Janice Helland, “A Gift of Lace: Queen Mary's Coronation Train, 1911,” *Textile History*, Vol. 49 No. 1 (2018): 92-111, DOI: 10.1080/00404969.2017.1380971; “A Delightful Change of Fashion: Fair Trade, Cottage Craft and Tweed in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland,” *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* Vol. 36 No. 2 (2012): 34-55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41955428>; *British and Irish home arts and industries, 1880-1914: marketing craft, making fashion* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2007); “‘Caprices of Fashion’: Handmade Lace in Ireland 1883-1907,” *Textile*, Vol. 39 No. 2 (2008): 193-222, <https://doi.org/10.1179/174329508x347089>; “Exhibiting Ireland: the Donegal Industrial Fund in London and Chicago,” *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review* Vol. 29 No. 1/2 (2004): 28-46. DOI:10.7202/1069676ar; “‘Good Work and Clever Design’: Early Exhibitions of the Home Arts and Industries Association,” *Journal of Modern Craft* Vol. 5 No. 3 (2012): 275-294, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174967812X13511744764444>; “Ishbel Aberdeen's ‘Irish’ Dresses: Embroidery, Display and Meaning, 1886-1909,” *Journal of Design History* Vol. 26 No. 2 (2013): 152-167, <https://doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1093/jdh/eps046>; “Philanthropy and Irish Craft, 1883-1900,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement: Making It Irish*, ed. Vera Kreilkamp, 165-177 (Boston: McMullen Museum, 2016); “Philanthropic Fashion: Ireland, 1887-1897,” *Costume* Vol. 48 No. 2 (2014): 192-192, DOI: 10.1179/0590887614Z.00000000049; “The Craft and Design of Dressmaking, 1880-1907,” in *The Routledge Companion to Design Studies*, eds. Penny Sparke and Fiona Fisher, 89-98 (London: Routledge, 2016); “The performative art of court dress,” in *Women artists and the decorative arts, 1880-1935: the gender of ornament*, eds. Bridget Elliot and Janice Helland, 96-113 (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2003); “Translating textiles: ‘private palaces’ and the Celtic fringe, 1890-1910,” in *Fashion, Interior Design and the Contours of Modern Identity*, eds. Alla Myzelev and John Potvin, 85-104 (London: Routledge, 2010); “Working Bodies, Celtic Textiles, and the Donegal Industrial Fund 1883-1890,” *Textile* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2004): 134–155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17518350.2004.11428639>.

economic study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish home industries more broadly.⁴¹ Sophie Cooper has explored the role of Limerick lace wedding veils from Ireland as important signifiers of migrant identity and “community heirloom[s]” in the Irish Catholic communities of Australia, Susan Elizabeth Cahill has detailed Limerick lace’s international influences, and Mary Burke has traced Irish lace’s historical and political resonances in post-war couture at home and throughout the diaspora.⁴²

The few books detailing the history of a single lacemaking tradition and published by museums, guilds, makers, and collectors, are crucial resources in the study of Irish lace, offering a closer look at the lace itself. By situating these individual traditions within a broader historical and theoretical context, this project builds on the work of these writers and makers, such as Nellie Ó Cléirigh, Nora Finnegan, and Máire Treanor. Curator of the Limerick City Museum Matthew Potter’s history of Limerick lace, *Amazing Lace: a History of the Limerick Lace Industry*, provides an extensive history of the Limerick industry, with some mention of the other Irish laces.⁴³ Along with Nellie Ó Cléirigh and Veronica Rowe’s *Limerick Lace: a social history and maker’s manual* and Máire Treanor’s *Clones Lace: the story and patterns of an Irish crochet*, it is one of the few sustained studies of a single Irish lacemaking tradition.⁴⁴ These books offer glimpses into collections of patterns and specimens held in closed convents and private family collections, made possible by the authors’ local and familial connections.⁴⁵ They also often include instructions and patterns, integrating the kind of engagement with lace’s materiality that is foundational to this project.

⁴¹ Joanna Bourke, “Home Industries,” in *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914*, 109-141 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); See also: Joanna Bourke, “I Was Always Fond of My Pillow’: The Handmade Lace Industry in the United Kingdom, 1870–1914,” *Rural History* Vol. 5 No. 2 (1994): 155–69, doi:10.1017/S0956793300000650. For another investigation of the economics of lacemaking that touches on the Irish context, see: Stanley Chapman and Pamela Sharpe, “Women’s employment and industrial organization: commercial lace embroidery in early nineteenth-century Ireland and England,” *Women’s History Review* Vol. 5 No. 3 (1996): 325-351.

⁴² Sophie Cooper, “Something borrowed: women, Limerick lace, and community heirlooms in the Australian Irish diaspora,” *Social History* Vol. 45 No. 3 (2020): 304-327, DOI:10.1080/03071022.2020.1771864; Susan Elizabeth Cahill, “Crafting culture, fabricating identity: gender and textiles in Limerick lace, Clare embroidery and the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework” (M.A. thesis, Queen’s University at Kingston, 2007); “Mary Burke, “Grace Kelly, Philadelphia, and the Politics of Irish Lace,” *American Journal of Irish Studies* Vol. 15 (2019): 31-46; Mary Burke, “The Cottage, the Castle, and the Couture Cloak: ‘Traditional’ Irish Fabrics and ‘Modern’ Irish Fashions in America, c. 1952-1969,” *Journal of Design History* Vol. 31 No. 4 (2018): 364-382.

⁴³ Matthew Potter, *Amazing Lace: a History of the Limerick Lace Industry*, ed. Jacqui Hayes (Limerick City and County Council, n.d.).

⁴⁴ Ó Cléirigh and Rowe, *Limerick Lace*; Treanor, *Clones Lace*.

⁴⁵ The English publishing company Colin Smythe has published several of these books, and their multiple editions indicate a ready market in the tourism and amateur craft markets. They are sold for example, at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Sunnyvale Lace Museum in California. See for example: Eithne D’Arcy, *Irish Crochet Lace: Motifs from County Monaghan, collected and described*. 4th Ed. (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 2015); Nellie Ó Cléirigh,

Though museums throughout Britain and Ireland hold collections of Irish lace – the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin and the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in London being two particularly strong collections – it has not benefitted from sustained scholarly research and is often discussed in relation to the clothing that it adorned.⁴⁶ I have determined several specimens of lace in the V&A to have been designed by Emily Anderson, but their online catalogue record makes no mention of a designer (see figs. 3.31, 3.32 and 3.35). Cheryl Buckley’s imagining of feminist design history calls for study of women designers alongside increased focus on consumption, reception, and materials. I have already discussed how this investigation foregrounds Irish lace’s materiality. Furthermore, using Emily Anderson’s career as a pattern to chart the connections between diverse agents and events in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish lace design serves to introduce an unstudied designer into the canon of Irish design history while also expanding the field of ‘design’ to encompass networks of teaching, learning, inventing, and adapting that range from lectures and formal lace design programs to patterns distributed in magazines and modified by amateur makers at home. It demonstrates how non-aristocratic, Irish women may have been able to express agency through careers in teaching, lace design and inspection, paralleling the work being done on other, better-known Irish designers and craftswomen such as the Yeats sisters, which highlights the networked nature of their workshop and its interaction with cultural and political forces.⁴⁷

Tracing Emily Anderson’s career serves to establish a network of connections, drawing into my investigation considerations of design education and method, inspection practice, the practicalities and affordances of lacemaking as a craft, and the tensions between centre and periphery, between ‘good taste’ and the demands of industry. In order to substantiate my discussion, I assemble case studies, archival and material sources around the central context of each chapter, as

Carrickmacross Lace: Irish Embroidered Net Lace. 2nd Ed. (Gerrard’s Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990); Ó Cléirigh and Rowe, *Limerick Lace*.

⁴⁶ Ada K. Longfield, *A Guide to the Collection of Lace (National Museum of Ireland)* (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1970). I have only found one source that attempts to look closely at the work of a lace designer, and this brief article focuses primarily on a man trained at South Kensington, Michael Hayes (Veronica Rowe, “Two Forgotten Talents of Limerick Lace: Michael Hayes and Eileen O’Donohue,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, Vol. 15 (1999): 61-70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20493046>).

⁴⁷ Nicola Gordon Bowe, “The Arts and Crafts Movement in Dublin,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Dublin and Edinburgh: 1885-1925*, ed. Elizabeth Cumming and Nicola Gordon Bowe (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 77-85; Elaine Cheasley Paterson, “Crafting Empire: Intersections of Irish and Canadian Women’s History,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* Vol. 34 No. 2 (June 2013): 242-267, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jcanaarhist.34.2.243>; Elaine Cheasley Paterson, “Crafting a National Identity: The Dun Emer Guild, 1902-1908,” in *The Irish Revival Reappraised*, ed. J. Murphy and B. FitzSimon (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 106-118.

outlined above. Drawing from the terminology and techniques of Irish crochet, I conceptualize these sources as motifs. Motifs are the building blocks of Irish crochet, completed individually – roses, shamrocks, ferns, harps, lilies – and then joined together with a zig-zag of chain stitches to create a cohesive pattern.

Historical events such as the Mansion House and Cork Exhibitions of 1883 discussed in Chapter 2 function as motifs, and so too do representations of lace in various media – cartoons, exhibition catalogues and government reports, for example. The lace designs published in *The Irish Homestead* and three Home Industries Societies that I discuss in Chapter 4 are also motifs, drawn into the discussion as a way to think through the IAOS’s impact on lace and other traditional crafts. In Chapter 5, the central motif is Emily Anderson’s lace collection, now at the NMI and perhaps the most comprehensive archive of her work that remains. The motifs I gather move progressively towards the lace itself, as a material object: from representations in print media and text to photographs of lace specimens and discussions of design techniques, to folders of crochet lace samples tacked onto silk-covered card, and finally to my own lace learning, making and giving.

In assembling these ‘motifs’ of events, texts, and case studies, I am attentive to how this project situates itself alongside existing research on Irish lace, and within the context of Irish history more broadly. Investigating lacemaking in an Irish context calls for a consideration of the interwoven nature of colonialism and gender, as well as issues of class and regional identity. Janice Helland, in her work on Irish lace and other crafts, has focused on issues of patronage, philanthropy and politics, in particular the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland and the growth of Irish nationalism.⁴⁸ Helland’s focus on aristocratic patronesses such as Ishbel Aberdeen, and socially-engaged philanthropic women such as Alice Hart, has brought much needed attention to women’s agency in social and political spheres as expressed through craft and fashion related philanthropic projects. However, in *British and Irish home arts and industries, 1880-1914: marketing craft, making fashion*, Helland acknowledges that her focus is necessarily on the patronesses of craft industries, attributing the lack of information about lacemakers to a lack of documentation, and in fact brackets the text with mention of this in both the introduction and conclusion, problematizing this lacuna and – to my mind – offering a challenge to try and find creative ways to correct it.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Helland, “Caprices”; Helland, “A Gift of Lace”.

⁴⁹ Helland, *British and Irish home arts and industries*.

In existing scholarship, lace is rarely discussed in terms of creative processes, influences and iconography, perhaps because of what craft theorist Glen Adamson astutely notes as “its makers’ combination of extreme skill and equally extreme lack of agency,” which isolates it from other forms of craft that prize individual expression – especially during the nineteenth century, when an Arts and Crafts ethic was prevalent in artistic spheres.⁵⁰ Heather Castles’ 2011 thesis “Hybrid stitched textile art: contemporary interpretations of mid-nineteenth-century Irish Crochet lace making,” is one notable exception, tracing the origins and characteristics of early Irish crochet design.⁵¹ The interest in Irish lacemaking expressed in the nineteenth century was more in the labour, the amount of skill that it took to make such “fairylake” textiles, as well as in the location of this labour, the Irish cottage, and the almost miraculous elevation of textiles from so humble a location to the aristocratic bodies and homes of Britain.⁵² Here, discussions surrounding Irish lacemaking show remarkable similarity to those surrounding textile work – and indeed craft on the whole – in India, and gesture toward the structures of imperial and philanthropic benevolence that sought to control colonial minds and bodies while also ‘elevating’ and ‘improving’ their moral and physical wellbeing.⁵³

Accordingly, it is important to locate this study within the long history of British presence in Ireland, the networks and ideologies of the British Empire. Emily Anderson’s career at the DATI spanned from 1899 to 1926, and much of my discussion of Irish lace is located in the years between 1883 and about 1910. As such, it is situated more specifically in the context of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland, which occurred in 1801 and was not dissolved until the foundation of the Free State in 1922.⁵⁴ There is a robust body of scholarship that situates Ireland within the framework of postcolonial theory, as originally articulated by Edward Said.⁵⁵ In more recent years, many Irish

⁵⁰ Glen Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 221.

⁵¹ Heather Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art: contemporary interpretations of mid-nineteenth-century Irish Crochet lace making” (PhD diss. University of Ulster, 2011).

⁵² Alan S. Cole, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lacemaking* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1888), v, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924014557130>; James Brenan, “The Marketing of Irish Lace,” In *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural*, Ed. W.P. Coyne (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1902), 433, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=WAUtAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA430&hl=en>.

⁵³ See: Sarah Richardson, “Women, Philanthropy, and Imperialism in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain,” in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and its Legacies*, eds. Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 90-202; Lara Kreigel, *Grand designs: labour, empire, and the museum in Victorian culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 113.

⁵⁴ The Acts of Union of 1800 came into force on January 1, 1801, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

⁵⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003). Geraldine Meaney points out that “the extent of Irish filiation to the late Edward Said’s foundational model of postcolonial critique is in part accounted for by his understanding of Joyce and Yeats as paradigmatically postcolonial modernists.” (Geraldine Meaney, *Gender, Ireland and Cultural Change: Race, Sex and Nation* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 15).

Studies scholars have adopted the view that Ireland was a “hybrid” of colonized and colonizing society, recognizing Irish agency in empire and the role of whiteness in Irish social integration and identity building.⁵⁶ The brief history of Irish lacemaking outlined in Chapter 1 demonstrates how the lace industry was dependant on an Anglo-Irish social elite even before the time of Famine, when new lacemaking techniques were introduced by philanthropists as a form of famine relief. Chapters 2 and 3 in particular will consider the role that Irish lace and lacemakers played in texts produced for British audiences, drawing from the work of postcolonial design theorist Arindam Dutta to analyse the DSA’s lace design program in Ireland.⁵⁷

However, I am attentive to the fact that postcolonial theory as applied to the Irish context can sometimes be unhelpful in relation to the study of women’s work, cultural production and agency. It can serve to belie the continuity in gendered forms of oppression experienced by Irish women under Union and in the Free State. The construction of the Irish lacemaker as a symbol of pure and uncorrupted rural Irish womanhood, and rhetoric of control over women’s bodies and homes that I will discuss in Chapter 3, did not disappear with separation from the United Kingdom. If anything, this expectation of Irish women intensified, expressed in the Irish Constitution (1937), which affirmed the place of women as wives and mothers in the home, and the Catholic conservatism that enabled such coercive and abusive institutions as the mother and baby homes and Magdalen asylums – sometimes sites for the production of lace.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Jason C. Knirck, “The Dominion of Ireland: The Anglo-Irish Treaty in an Imperial Context,” *Éire-Ireland* Vol. 42 No. 1&2 (Earrach/Samhradh/Spring/Summer 2007): 230, DOI: 10.1353/eir.2007.0019. Geraldine Meaney also highlights the danger of postcolonial theory being “co-opted into a discourse of the authentic and native” for political purposes, and the Irish use of “colonial stereotypes” in contemporary aid work (Meaney, *Gender, Ireland and Cultural Change*, 15-16). For more on Ireland’s complicated relationship with empire, see: Mary L. Mullen, “How the Irish Became Settlers: Metaphors of Indigeneity and the Erasure of Indigenous Peoples,” *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 20 No. 3 (Autumn/Fómhar 2016): 81-96, DOI: 10.1353/nhr.2016.0041; Michael de Nie, Timothy McMahon and Paul Townend, eds. *Ireland in an imperial world: citizenship, opportunism, and subversion* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). For a case study of the Irish as empire-builders and enslavers, see: Giselle Gonzalez Garcia, “Caught Between Empires: Pre-Famine Irish Immigrants in Santiago de Cuba, 1665-1847” (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 2020). For a case study of the Irish as settlers in North America, see: Erick Boustead, “Green Isle to White City: Chicago Irish [Male] Assimilation and Relational Ramifications” (M.A. thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2021).

⁵⁷ Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (London: Routledge, 2007). Proquest EBook Central.

⁵⁸ See “Article 41: The Family,” Constitution of Ireland, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html#article41> (accessed November 17, 2021); Fintan O’Toole, “Exquisite Lace and Dirty Linen” the Taming of Girl Power,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement: Making it Irish*, ed. Vera Kreilkamp, 179-193 (University of Chicago Press, 2016). Differentiation of pay according to sex was not phased out of the civil service until 1925, at which point Emily Anderson would have been about to retire, and the ‘marriage bar,’ which would have forced her to retire from the Civil Service upon marriage, was not removed until 1973 (Finola Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche: Family Change in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2001), 185, 114).

This issue is also relevant in relation to literature and other forms of cultural production. In a 1997 essay published to accompany her poem “Daughters of Colony,” the Irish poet Eavan Boland describes her own discomfort with the postcolonial framework in studies of Irish literature, which left little space for women’s expression.⁵⁹ Boland goes on to discuss the poem “Lament for Art O’Leary,” and the ways the gendered context has historically been erased from this lament uttered by a grief-stricken young widow.⁶⁰ Literary scholar Angela Bourke has argued that in order to counter the denigrating “colonialist rhetoric” that characterized the Irish as “brutish and ignorant,” the more troubling (emotional, sexual, embodied, feminine) aspects of the poem were obscured even as it was incorporated in the burgeoning canon of Irish literature.⁶¹

Colonial rhetoric characterized the Irish not only as ‘brutish and ignorant,’ but as feminine. In Chapters 2 and 3, I will discuss how texts and images produced for British audiences characterized Ireland as a young woman in order to portray the country as weak and biddable. In writing about *The Knitting Map* (2005), a project that I will discuss in more detail below, performance artist Jools Gilson suggests that the massive textile installation was too feminine for an Irish public with a keen awareness of history: “Having been symbolically female as a term of abuse, being represented internationally by an excess of femininity fuelled public rage.”⁶² Gilson’s analysis is perceptive, and I wonder if this is why the craftwork of the Irish Countrywoman’s Association, for example, has historically been undervalued by the arts ‘establishment’ in Ireland,⁶³ and why needlework is still a relatively new tool to be leveraged by exhibiting artists in an Irish context.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Boland writes of a story of grief and displacement told to her mother and passed on to her: “...it did not fit either history nor into the postcolonial narrative – though that name would never have existed then – created by the literary critique that gradually developed to accompany a literature that followed colony.” (Eavan Boland, “Daughters of a Colony: a personal interpretation of the place of gender issues in the postcolonial interpretation of Irish literature,” *Éire-Ireland* Vol. 32 No. 2-3 (Samhradh/Fómhar / Summer/ Fall 1997): 14, doi:10.1353/eir.1997.0013).

⁶⁰ More recently, “Lament for Art O’Leary” has been claimed by Irish women writers as a foundational performance/text. See: Doireann Ní Ghríofa, *A Ghost in the Throat* (Dublin: Tramp Press, 2020).

⁶¹ Angela Bourke, “Performing, Not Writing: The Reception of an Irish Woman’s Lament,” in *Dwelling in Possibility: Women Poets and Critics on Poetry*, Eds. Yopie Prins and Maera Shreiber (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997), 139-140.

⁶² Jools Gilson, “Navigation, nuance, and half/angels *Knitting Map*: a series of navigational directions,” in *Textiles, Community and Controversy: the Knitting Map* eds. Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 16.

⁶³ A notable exception to this was in 2016, when established Irish artist Rita Duffy’s *Souvenir Shop* (an installation of ‘souvenirs’ problematizing commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising) included a series of knitted figures and jam made by the County Cavan ICA. See: http://www.cavanarts.ie/Default.aspx?StructureID_str=6&category=&guid=123.

⁶⁴ For example, in *Elliptical Affinities: Irish Women Artists and the Politics of the Body*, the recent high-profile group exhibition at the Highlanes Gallery in Drogheda, only one artist’s very recent work – Rachel Fallon’s *The Assumption* (2018), *Maternal Chain of Office: Order of Our Lady of the Blessed Food Bank* (2018), and *Mother Medals 1-5* (2017) – employed embroidery and knitting (Fiona Barber and Aoife Ruane, eds., *Elliptical Affinities: Irish Women Artists and the Politics of the Body, 1984 to Present* (Published by the Highlanes Gallery, 2020). In other European and North American contexts, women artists have increasingly employed these mediums (with their creative and symbolic potential) since the 1970s and 1980s, and such

My work, therefore, situates Irish lacemaking in what Janice Helland describes as the “complicated form of colonialism” enacted through the philanthropic activities and consumption habits of British women and the DSA’s ‘bureaucracy of beauty’ as theorized by Arindam Dutta, as well as in the context of gender, of women’s work, agency and representation.⁶⁵ I also note the ways in which tensions such as those between regional industries and urban centres transmute from a United Kingdom to an Irish context. Conflict between centre and periphery did not disappear with the foundation of the DATI, which has been called “the first truly indigenous ministry of Irish government.”⁶⁶ As I will discuss in Chapter 5, DATI inspectors were sometimes resented by workshop managers and local politicians for interfering in local matters. In a similar way, class inflected discussions of crafting women both in Britain and Ireland, and I will draw from literary theorist Elaine Freedgood’s work on lace and labour in Britain in my discussion of Alan Cole’s writings.⁶⁷

This investigation considers multiple organizations and government bodies alongside and in relation to each other: the Cork (later Crawford) School of Art, the British Department of Science and Art, the Irish co-operative movement, the British Board of Women Factory Inspectors, Ireland’s Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, and the Irish Countrywoman’s Association, among others. Following lace design, education, and making through these diverse contexts allows for a focused study of how design and its attendant networks are bound up with notions of class, gender, and empire. In the following and final section of this introduction, I will outline the textual strategies that I use to weave this historical and theoretical content together with the social and material practice of lacemaking. These textual interventions are another form of research creation, employing as they do techniques from speculative fiction, memoir, and cultural geography. Each forms a strand in the ‘line of interest’ that I construct in this text, shaping both my approach to and presentation of the material.

groundbreaking works at Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* (first exhibited at the San Francisco Art Museum in 1979), which featured embroidered table runners (see: Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch* (London: the Women’s Press, 1984), 209, plate 103).

⁶⁵ Helland, “Caprices,” 200.

⁶⁶ James Kennelly, “The ‘Dawn of the Practical’: Horace Plunkett and the Co-operative Movement,” *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* Vol. 12 No. 1 (Spring 2008): 71-72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25660755>.

⁶⁷ Elaine Freedgood, “‘Fine Fingers’: Victorian Handmade Lace and Utopian Consumption,” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 45 No. 4 (2003): 625-647, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3829530>.

Imaginary Emily: ‘textual collage’ and the relationality of research

My reflections on learning to make lace – on being the student, the inspected, as well as on the process of designing, making and gifting lace objects – both shape my historical study, and take textual form throughout this thesis, creating a ‘textual collage.’ In a 2006 doctoral thesis entitled “Finding Home: Knowledge, Collage, and the Local Environments,” Kathleen Vaughan employs the term “textual collage” to refer to the way in which her text includes “juxtapositions of personal, observational, historical, and theoretical content” – as well as images of mixed-media collages produced alongside it.⁶⁸ Writing in a “personal and conversational” tone, and engaging with the practices of autoethnography and memoir, Vaughan creates a “textual collage whose component elements’ edges are blurred, rather than distinct,” in order to “both show and tell.”⁶⁹ Borrowing from Vaughan’s construction of the ‘textual collage,’ I integrate writing in a variety of modes into the body of the text, the margins, and the spaces between chapters. Each chapter begins with a speculative interlude that imagines a moment in Emily Anderson’s lace education and work, and footnotes tie the body of the text to the project’s context. I place these texts alongside the primary, scholarly investigation, keeping them distinct while allowing the reader’s understanding to refract off of them and hit the central, historical text differently. However, as the text circles closer and closer to the lace itself, moving from lantern slides and photographs to specimens sewn in paper folders, to my own hands, struggling to keep even tension or winding the perfect Clones knot, the edges of the collage’s component parts become more blurred. In Chapter 6, ‘field notes’ from lace learning and making shift from the footnotes to the page proper, and I weave my experience together with theory.

Speculating

Perhaps the most immediately evident form of ‘collage’ present in this document is the series of italicized texts preceding the body of each chapter. In my writing, I incorporate speculation on Emily Anderson’s career and my own experience with lace, with being the inspector and the inspected,

⁶⁸ Kathleen Vaughan, “Finding Home: Knowledge, Collage, and the Local Environments” (PhD diss., York University, 2006), 19. Vaughan also discusses this way of working in: Kathleen Vaughan, “Pieced together: Collage as an artist’s method of interdisciplinary research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* Vol. 4 No. 1 (2005): 27-52, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940690500400103>.

⁶⁹ Vaughan, “Finding Home,” 24, 21. Vaughan also notes that the text’s accessibility and welcoming nature is a critical component of the project’s ethos – its audience is not only the institution, but the curious reader she has met on a neighbourhood dog walk, or anyone with whom she may engage about the project in a teaching context (24-25). I am also aware of the issue of accessibility and usefulness in writing this thesis, which I have offered to send to the lacemaking groups that I have attended.

learner and maker.⁷⁰ These interludes form a useful linking device, reminding the reader of the ‘pattern’ that underlies the text. However, as each ‘Imaginary Emily’ segment took shape, I found that they seemed to be giving expression to something else altogether.

My imagining of Emily always circled back to my own experiences. The feeling of sitting in a darkened room lit by the glow of slides on a screen, a bubble of excitement rising as the idea for a future research project alights? Drawn from my memories of the undergraduate – and underground – second year Art History lecture theatre at Queen’s University, in Kingston, Ontario. I am more explicit about the alignment I imagine between Emily Anderson’s trip to London with Caroline Beatson and my own experience travelling with a fellow student for research, though in my case, our trips only overlapped, and we were there to work on very different projects. Each text shifts between my own voice and a second person narration of Emily’s imagined life; sometimes I am clear about why I have written a particular thought or experience for her, sometimes less so. Many facts of Emily’s young life and early career that I gleaned from her family and the archives seemed to me in blurred, sepia-toned parallel with my own. I worried about her, and hoped for her. When she was out on her inspection visits, did she feel awkward, intrusive? I felt that way sometimes visiting lacemaking groups. Did she have or make friends on the road, as I did? I thought about Emily as I lay in a white-plastered room near Galway – kindly offered to me by a family I had barely known the day before – and tried to untangle the riddle of hospitality, given and received. What was it, exactly, that made this a room where I could sleep deeply, that made dinner draw out into a game of charades with the children and a long conversation with their parents in front of the fire? Her times and her work were different than mine, but we both spent periods moving alone between towns and houses, drinking tea and sleeping in beds, in a country often cold and dark. I felt sure she would have revelled, as I did, in the feeling of a warm home after several evenings of furtive cups of tea carried past the landlady up creaking stairs to a room with damp sheets.

Beyond creating an affinity between Emily Anderson and myself in terms of our material engagement with lace, the interludes have been a generative exercise, pointing me towards aspects of this lace narrative, and of her career, that I may not have considered otherwise. They are important in terms of the wider ambitions of this thesis, though not always answerable. Why did she study at the Cork School of Art, and with whom? Did she attend Alan Cole’s first lectures in Ireland? Where

⁷⁰ I am thankful to Susan Cahill, a member of my supervisory committee for the first two years of my doctoral program, for encouraging me to consider how I could incorporate creative non-fiction, speculative fiction, and textual interventions into this project.

did she stay when she travelled? What did it mean to be an unmarried woman in the Civil Service in the early days of the Free State, or a County Cork-born Protestant of Scottish ancestry working for Ireland's 'first indigenous government body'? I am hopeful, too, that these spaces for speculation reveal something about my own positionality in the material. Writing the 'Imaginary Emily' interludes gave me an opportunity to blur the line that I had drawn between my project and the activities and preoccupations of Emily Anderson. These pieces function as a space to lean into the troubled and much-problematized relationship between the researcher and subject of research. Rather than pretending an impossible objectivity, this was a way to give a clearly-defined moment to the imagining, the process of reading the scarce handful of facts through the lens of my own experience. They remind the reader that I am here, always – though not to the extent that I do intentionally in these speculative sections – interpreting my sources through the lens of my own experience and context.

Situating

The 'Imaginary Emily' sections discussed above also work alongside the footnotes that dot the text, drawing the reader's attention to places, people and events that have shaped this project in ways that fall outside of the typical footnote to an archival source, important book, or "private communication with the author" on the matter at hand. In effect, they document the project's entanglements. In an essay on knitting, aesthetics and politics, political scientist Kate Daley foregrounds her own identity as both a knitter and political being. Daley highlights the fact that the very nature of her arguments require an acknowledgement of entanglement, and of subjectivity, even as she weaves them together with the work of such canonical voices as Heidegger and Lacan: "I could choose to go on, in the style popular in much of academia, and pretend that I am not entangled. This would be, at best, disingenuous, and at worst, a rejection in practice of the arguments I make here in theory."⁷¹ Daley's writing models rigorous engagement with theory alongside an avowal of her own situated nature, a characteristic of much feminist scholarship that traces back to Donna Haraway's influential 1988 article "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," as well as feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose, whose work is discussed above.⁷²

⁷¹ Kate Daley, "Crafty Entanglements: Knitting and Hard Distinctions in Aesthetics and Political Theory," *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 11 (2013): n.p. <https://contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=664> .

⁷² Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* Vol. 14 No. 3: 575-599, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>; Rose, "Situating Knowledges."

Though it is more immediately evident in my research creation practice, centered around learning how to make lace in Ireland, my historical writing is also informed and enriched by an embodied, situated, relational aspect of research. ‘Doing research’ takes up space and time in a life, it causes a body to move in certain ways, go to particular places. It places the researcher in relationships that would not otherwise have existed and adds another facet to those already in place. Perhaps the clearest and most fundamental example of this is the fact that the entire structure and focus of this project arose from the generosity of two women, on opposite sides of the world and connected by an email sent years ago about some sketchbooks belonging to an Irish lace designer. While showing me lace patterns, Alex Ward, curator at NMI Collins Barracks, remembered a message years earlier sent by a relative of one of the designers, and went to great lengths to track that relative down, and put her in touch with me. Patricia Anderson, Emily’s great-niece, now lives on Vancouver Island, and I was finally able to visit her in October 2021, after almost three years of corresponding via email. This prolonged visit to Patricia Anderson occurred at the same time as my long-awaited visit to my nephew, born in British Columbia in November 2020, for whom I made one of the three bonnets discussed in Chapter 6. I discuss the documents related to Emily Anderson and her family that Patricia Anderson shared with me in the conclusion.

The fact that I had to wait so long to visit Patricia Anderson and my nephew points to the presence of another factor that shaped the form and content of this thesis. While I was beginning the first drafts of my thesis chapters, with plans to return to Ireland for further research, Covid-19 shut down Montreal and much of the rest of the world. The pandemic prevented travel from March 2020 until late in the writing process, which meant I worked with what I had collected on previous research trips, and to gather other resources from my own computer at my desk in Montreal and rural Ontario. I was not able to re-photograph key lace specimens and texts of which I had originally taken quick snaps, thinking they would only be for reference.⁷³ Returning to consult local archives for information about individual DATI and IAOS lacemaking schemes would be impossible. The project had to stretch: back in time to focus more on Alan Cole and the British Department of Science and Art – newspapers, parliamentary reports and debates being available online – and

⁷³ The glare on glossy magazine pages and blurred nature of many of the lace images included in this thesis are themselves a record of this project’s original intentions and the impact of Covid-related travel restrictions. An improvement of my knowledge of photography and access to a better quality camera meant clearer pictures of my own lace work in 2020, but by then it was impossible to use these tools to better document the Irish specimens.

forward in time to meet the Clones crochet lace teacher, Máire Treanor, who was venturing into the world of online teaching and agreed to talk to me over Zoom.

In order to situate my research within this network of relationships and events, I have used footnotes – in a slightly different font than that of the formal citations – that point to people, places, and happenings outside of the text.⁷⁴ There are those that situate the text in space and time, linking the text to events or places outside of it that impact its form and content. Some of the footnotes cite information, turns of phrase or ideas that appear in the text to individuals, conversations, or texts in a way that would not be required for formal citations; they function almost as an interwoven acknowledgements section, drawing attention to the project’s relational nature. I think of this framework of footnotes like a pattern drawn on tissue paper: the work can be unpicked, lifted off, without losing its meaning. But the pattern gives context, shows the brushstrokes or pen marks of another’s hand. For those who want to know, it shows why the finished piece *is the way it is*.

There are various precedents for writing this way, but I am perhaps most indebted to a collection of essays centred on *The Knitting Map*, a textile art performance coordinated by the performance artists half/angel and produced by a group of women in Cork City.⁷⁵ *The Knitting Map* itself aligns with many of the themes that I explore in this project, particularly in my research creation practice: women’s work, place and relationality in community craft, and the making as a site for the production of knowledge. Several of the essays in the collection also play with the notion of the piece as a map, and of the acts of both mapping and knitting as “social practice” – something that is not so evident once the process concludes and all that is left is the physical artefact: map, knitted or otherwise.⁷⁶ Jools Gilson’s “Navigation, nuance, and half/angels *Knitting Map*: a series of navigational directions,” provides an introduction to the project, its intentions and reception, while also reflecting on her own experience as the ‘captain’ of the project, which ultimately met with fierce opposition in Cork and Ireland more broadly.⁷⁷ It includes excerpts from texts including a Debbie

⁷⁴ In choosing to investigate the affordances of these peripheral spaces on the page, I am conscious of the notion of the ‘paratext’ as theorized by Gérard Genette. Genette suggests that the material surrounding a text – footnotes, titles, illustrations, small print – reveals ideologies, assumptions and vital contextual information that the body of the text may obscure. See: Gérard Genette, trans. Marie Maclean, “Introduction to the Paratexte,” *New Literary History* Vol. 22 No. 2 (Spring 1991): 261-272, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/469037>.

⁷⁵ Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat eds., *Textiles, Community and Controversy: the Knitting Map* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

⁷⁶ Christopher Perkins, “Performative and Embodied Mapping,” in Kitchin R. and Thrift N. eds. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (London: Elsevier, 2009), 2.

⁷⁷ *The Knitting Map* was commissioned for Cork’s year as European Capital of Culture, and came under fire from various media outlets for its cost, and ultimately, as Gilson convincingly argues, for its “scale, duration and femininity,” which were uniquely provoking in an Irish context (Gilson, “Navigation, nuance, and half/angels *Knitting Map*,” 15. For more of

Bliss knitting pattern book and Royal Yachting Association manual, as well as a series of footnotes containing letters describing the context of her writing (the ebb and flow of writing itself, the weather and daily tasks of a cottage somewhere near Cork, her childcare and community commitments). Nicola Moffat’s “The edge of the *Map*” take this deconstruction even further, using three distinct fonts to weave together contextual information and critical analysis, personal reflection, and poetry and prose from other writers.⁷⁸ Both essays weave together varied perspectives on a single issue – *The Knitting Map* – creating a richly-textured text that engages thoroughly with the project’s political and critical context while also foregrounding its relational, embodied, and imaginative nature.

A ‘line of interest’: Irish lace

In this introduction, I have described my approach to interdisciplinary study and foregrounded the engagement with lace’s materiality through research creation, as both a social and material practice, that has shaped the form and content of this thesis. I have outlined how I will employ the career of a lace designer and inspector, Emily Anderson, to network the diverse agents in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century lace design, production and consumption, and place this investigation in its gendered, classed and colonial historical context. Finally, I laid out the textual strategies of speculation and situation that I use to convey and complicate my archival and material research. Throughout the course of this thesis, I assemble these strands of knowledge into a ‘line of interest’ that I weave around Irish lace in order to, in the words of Tim Ingold, study it “from the inside.”⁷⁹ In employing research creation and focused, materially-engaged interdisciplinarity as methodological strategies to explore lace’s networked assemblages of meaning and materiality, I address a lacuna in the study of Irish craft and design history, while also contributing to a more holistic understanding of Irish women’s and labour history.

Gilson’s writing on *The Knitting Map*, see: Deborah Barkun and Jools Gilson, “Choreographed Cartography: Translation, Feminized Labour, and Digital Literacy in half/angel’s *The Knitting Map*,” Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings, 2010, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/9/>; Deborah Barkun and Jools Gilson-Ellis, “Orienteering with double moss: the cartographies of half/angel’s *The Knitting Map*,” *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* Vol. 3 No. 2-3 (2007): 183-195, DOI: 10.1386/padm.3.2-3.183_1.

⁷⁸ Of particular interest to me is how Moffat uses the technology of mapping to draw the reader’s attention to the embodied process of reading, embedding sets of coordinates in the text, and then providing a code for the reader to decipher the significance of each. The reader must flip back through the pages to identify each location, and reflect on why Moffat may have chosen to insert it at precisely that point (Nicola Moffat, “The edge of the *Map*,” in *Textiles, Community and Controversy: the Knitting Map* eds. Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat, 58-76 (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

⁷⁹ Ingold, *Making*, 12.

Oriented around a series of historical, textual, and material ‘motifs,’ and using Emily Anderson’s career as a ‘pattern,’ my investigation moves from considering lace in the abstract – as printed images in newspapers, lantern slides flickering on a screen, and a concept discussed in reports – to engaging with lace as a material object, and eventually learning to make it and designing/making lace wearables of my own. In tracing this narrative, I chart a shift in the conception of lace design as ‘art for industry’ and making as an economic necessity to both practices as expressions of identity, creativity and networked, ‘storied’ community building – a process that I argue has its roots in the early decades of the twentieth century, when Emily Anderson travelled throughout Ireland as a DATI Inspectress, her collection of lace specimens neatly tacked into cloth-lined folders and tucked into a carrying case.

Figures: Introduction



Figure 0-1 Limerick lace wedding veil, c. 1856, originally worn by Janet Scrimgeour. Collection of Museums Victoria. Photograph by Taryn Ellis. © Museums Victoria CC BY. Source: <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1320530> (Accessed November 23, 2021).



Figure 0-2 Collar & cuff in floral design with shamrock knot (triple Clones knot) ground, Westport, Co. Mayo, c.1900 – 1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.24 1&2). Photo by the author.

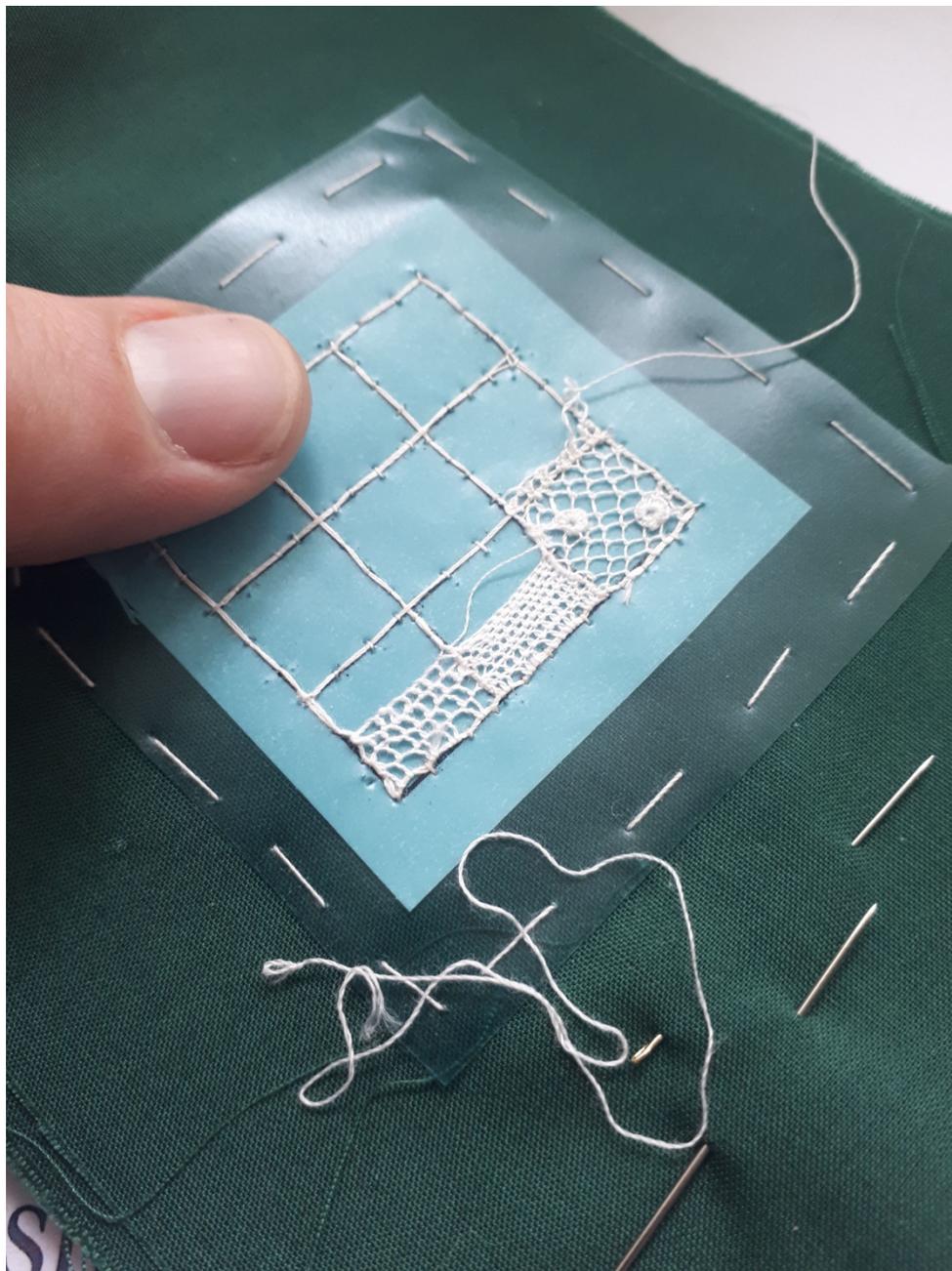


Figure 0-3 Kenmare needlepoint lace sampler in progress, 2019. Photo by the author.

Chapter 1

Lacemaking and Design Education in Ireland to 1883

Imaginary Emily

The first time I spoke with Emily's great-niece Patricia Anderson, on the phone in May 2019, she told me about the magazine that Emily had designed and produced together with her siblings: The Mount Corbett Magazine, named after their house near Mallow, in County Cork. I was struck by how many of these little paper publications the children had made, and how much work this represented. Patricia Anderson remembered a whole chest of magazines, before most of them were thrown out (her father salvaged only two dozen or so). Emily's illustrations in The Mount Corbett Magazine were delicate and floral, like the borders of an illuminated manuscript. I loved the idea of a through-line in Emily's work: that as a child she was already drawn to the sweeping curves and complex interweaving of vines and flower stems she would render as an adult – a lace designer – in chalk and India ink.

I don't know when Emily Anderson enrolled at the Cork School of Art, but it is easy to imagine her as a hardworking, even passionate student. She attended morning classes with the other young ladies, but if she stayed to spend the day at the School, working quietly on her sketches in pen and ink, watercolour, or pastels, she sometimes overheard the evening students discussing their work in Cork's various industries.⁸⁰ Michael Holland was often there, one of the few who knew exactly what he was doing at the School. Emily had heard him talking about crochet lace, how the industry could be improved and expanded in the County with better business sense and designs. She wasn't so sure. The Irish crochet her mother had was from the time of the Famine and it was slipshod work, mottled with stains, hardly worth wearing at all, let alone now. When her mother took the lace out of its paper wrapping, her eyes held a sadness that Emily came to associate with the empty cottages along the edge of the railway field at Mount Corbett.⁸¹

As children, she and her brother Robin would roam the farm, playing archaeologists, or land surveyors, or soldiers, like their father. They would circle closer to the empty dwellings that fringed the fields, half afraid the owners would return, or something worse would be waiting inside. Greeted only by silence, they ventured in, climbing into empty window frames to curl up like snails in the sun and digging in the earthen floors for artefacts. In unspoken agreement, they didn't tell the adults about their explorations. Their parents never spoke about the empty houses, and the farm workers did so with lowered voices and quick glances at the Andersons to make sure they were out of earshot.⁸²

Later, Emily found out that the shamrock and flowered cuffs had been a gift from a distant cousin in Canada, long-since dead.⁸³ As she began to read the newspaper and listen to her fellow students' talk of improvements

⁸⁰ Later in this chapter, I will discuss the division of morning (primarily middle-class, often amateur) and evening (artisan) classes in South Kensington-affiliated Schools of Art.

⁸¹ A map of the buildings and land surrounding Mount Corbett, Emily Anderson's childhood home, photocopied from the original, is among the items in Patricia Anderson's collection. It shows small houses distributed around various named fields. Though the legend includes a symbol for "empty houses", it is almost indistinguishable from the symbol for "houses," so it is difficult to tell how many would have been uninhabited at the time Emily lived there. I am working on the assumption that these empty houses were rural vernacular dwellings (which would have been referred to as 'cottages' or 'cabins'), abandoned during the Famine, as so many were. Collection of Patricia Anderson.

⁸² The Anderson family's relationship with their tenants and neighbours was likely quite complex. Emily's father was a member of the British military who purchased Mount Corbett (also known as Mount Corbitt, previously known as Mount Glover) after discharge (probably in the 1850s), and her mother was from Canada. Emily's brother Neville married the Catholic daughter of the family's farm foreman, and took on the care of her extended family, ruining the family's finances in the process. Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, October 5, 2021.

⁸³ Emily Anderson's mother, Mary Elizabeth Parker, was born in New Brunswick. Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, October 5, 2021.

in industry and bettering the lot of the Irish people, she wondered if it was homesickness and bereavement she saw in her mother's eyes, or sadness for the women who made the lace, starving perhaps even on the land they now owned, almost a decade before Emily was born. She couldn't ask, of course, and she tucked the thought away.

Michael drew caricatures in the margins of his notebooks.⁸⁴ Mr. Brennan, perched primly on wildly curling acanthus scroll, and the earnest wife of Lord so-an-so who made incomprehensible, muddy watercolours and always tried to sit with them while they ate their sandwiches in the studio (squinting up at him, brush brandished like a sword).⁸⁵ When she had finished her work, a study of a plaster cast or vase of flowers, Emily drew birds and stylized floral borders that sometimes burst their frames to meld with her looping, open script.⁸⁶

* * *

In 1865, the Cork philanthropist Susanna Meredith published *The Lacemakers*, which weaves together first-hand accounts, recent history, and fiction to tell the story of the mid-century growth and subsequent decline of the lacemaking industry in Ireland.⁸⁷ Upon opening the book, the reader is met with an excerpt from Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt":

Work, work, work
In the dull December light,
And work, work, work,
When the weather is warm and bright,
While underneath the eves,
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show their sunny backs,
And twit me with their spring.⁸⁸

Before Meredith's narrative begins, the reader is faced with a picture of unrelenting toil, the inability to go outside, the eyestrain and possible blindness of work in 'dull December light.' This is one reality of the lacemaking trade, which – like that of the seamstress – required close concentration on fine work and resulted in eye strain, neck pain, and long periods of time sitting indoors. However, the inclusion of this excerpt from Thomas Hood's poem, published in 1843, also suggests that nineteenth-century audiences were interested in the work and working conditions of needlewomen.

⁸⁴ Michael Holland's notebook, in the collection of the Cork City and County Archives, contains figure studies, caricatures, and small sketches. The material in the book was collected over a period of many years, but some of it dates to his days as an art student at Cork School of Art (Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives).

⁸⁵ This type of interaction was reported at the School, which doesn't surprise me, given its character as a space of learning, creativity and a passable level of gentility. The Cork School of Art Committee Meeting Minutes for March 12, 1896 note that Countess Arabella O'Loughman – not a student of the School – had been banned from the premises for hanging about and bothering the students (Art Committee Minutes October 1883-June 1899 (VEC06/56), Cork City and County Archives).

⁸⁶ The illustrations and floral borders that Emily drew for *The Mount Corbett Magazine*, which she produced with her siblings as a child, show an early interest in patterning, decoration, flowers and leaves. Collection of Patricia Anderson.

⁸⁷ Susanna Meredith, *The Lacemakers: sketches of Irish character with some account of the effort to establish lacemaking in Ireland* (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder: 1865), <https://archive.org/details/Lacemakers>.

⁸⁸ Thomas Hood's 'Song of the Shirt,' first published in *Punch* (1843) quoted in Meredith, n.p.

It was a topic that warranted a poem, and this poem became famous: it was reproduced here more than twenty years after its initial publication in *Punch*.

Middle and upper-class interest in the plight of working women, and needlewomen in particular, had direct repercussions on the development of lacemaking in Ireland. Most of these concerned consumers, patrons, businesspeople and philanthropists were British, which inflected the relationship with an uneven dynamic of class-based and colonial power. In this chapter, I will weave together a brief history of lacemaking in Ireland with a closer examination of the cultural imagination surrounding women and needlework during the early to mid-nineteenth century.⁸⁹ Susanna Meredith was only one of many women – Protestant and Catholic, laywomen and nuns – who started lace workshops and schools in an attempt to alleviate poverty, following a tradition with roots in the eighteenth century. Drawing from the work of literary scholars Melissa Fegan, Elaine Freedgood, and Lynn Alexander, among others, I will argue that these women’s perception of lace as textile and lacemakers as moral, spiritual, and gendered beings had a direct impact on the nineteenth-century Irish lace industry’s existence and structure.

Though they had little impact on lace during this early period, the structures and methods of design education in Ireland and the United Kingdom also changed and developed in significant ways in the mid-nineteenth century. The Royal Dublin Society (RDS), which had functioned as an arbiter of taste and educating body in Irish design, art and industry, began to give way to the United Kingdom’s Department of Science and Art (DSA), which sought increasing control over all aspects of design and art education. A series of institutions, including the Cork (later Crawford) School of Art, formed as a result of local interest in art and design education and the Department’s push to educate designers for industry in alignment with the ‘South Kensington System.’

Focusing on these two contexts, I will discuss the networks that supported lacemaking and design – philanthropic, educational and governmental – up until the time of the Mansion House Exhibition and Cork Exhibition of 1883. This intersection of philanthropic sentiment and governmental policy on design education is not unique to Ireland, however. British design educators and theorists used design education, and the conversation surrounding the meaning of good design and how to achieve it, as a way to engage with the slippery boundary between colonizer and colonized, between ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized.’ Using as comparative material the work of design

⁸⁹ The history of Irish lace as presented in this chapter is adapted from a forthcoming encyclopedia entry. See: Molly-Claire Gillett, “Irish Lace,” *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of World Textiles Vol. 6: Trade and Industry*, eds. Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Mariachiara Gasparini, and Brenda Mondragon Toledo (London: Bloomsbury: forthcoming 2023).

historian Arindam Dutta, among others, I will consider the relationship – and often conflict – between the DSA’s centralized and hegemonic model of education and the distinct regional identities of the Irish Art and Design Schools in the mid-nineteenth century.

1.1 Lacemaking in Ireland before the Famine

Mairead Dunlevy, the Irish costume and decorative arts historian and long-time Keeper of the Art and Industrial Division at the NMI, has argued that the first instance of what could be considered ‘Irish lace’ can be traced to the “macramé style fringes” that appear on Irish garments around 800 BC, and from thence to the “sprang or knotted hairnets worn particularly in the eleventh-twelfth centuries AD.”⁹⁰ Historian and folklorist Elizabeth Boyle’s *The Irish Flowerers*, which remains the most comprehensive history of Irish lace to date, notes the prevalence of needlework more broadly in early Irish myth and history. In the Ulster Cycle, a collection of epics composed in the early-medieval period, heroines demonstrate their virtue and intelligence through skill in needlework. The *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (or Cattle Raid of Cooley), describes the elite of society wearing embroidered garments; in another story, the hero Cú Chulainn’s intended bride Emer is notable for her needlework, which she teaches to other women.⁹¹ When Cú Chulainn describes the attractions of a fairy woman, he lists the fact that she is “skilled in handicraft, can do fine needlework” alongside her beauty and purity.⁹² The high value placed on skill in needlework also translated into the sacred sphere. Some names of craftswomen in the church survive, such as that of St. Ercnait (or Coca), who was recorded as “the embroideress, cutter and sewer of clothes” in the service of St. Columkille (or Columba), the sixth century Irish monastic and founder of the monastic settlement at Iona.⁹³ These stories suggest a strong tradition of both secular and ecclesiastical embroidery, and an association between womanly virtue and needlework.

Plentiful, and perhaps even ostentatious, embroidery seems to have been typical of native Irish garb into the mid-sixteenth century, to the point that a government act, passed under Henry VIII to prevent English colonists from adopting the dress of the colonized Irish, “comes almost to the point of giving a working description of embroidered clothes ‘after the Irish fashion’,”

⁹⁰ Mairead Dunlevy, “Irish Lace – a Beautiful Craft Revived,” *Ireland of the Welcomes* Vol. 38 No. 1 (1989): 22, quoted in Janice Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 99-100.

⁹¹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 2.

⁹² Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 2.

⁹³ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 2.

demanding that “no woman use or wear any *kyrtell* [skirt] or coat tucked up, or embroidered or garnished with silk, nor couched, nor laid with *usker* [jewel or ornament].”⁹⁴ This ruling is indicative of the deep societal changes caused by the consolidation of England’s colonial power in Ireland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The plantation system, which moved English and Scottish settlers onto prime agricultural land, and the passing of Penal Laws, which restricted Catholics from holding public office and owning land, served to definitively shift political and economic power into the hands of a small group of wealthy Protestant landowners, professionals, political officials and clergy. A series of military campaigns to quash rebellion and enforce land seizures made for a tumultuous period with little opportunity for sustained economic growth or the development of new industries.⁹⁵ However, during this period lace was imported from abroad for the English elite,⁹⁶ and metallic lace, made of gold and silver threads by ‘lacemen,’ began to appear in urban centers.⁹⁷

The relative political stability of the eighteenth century saw a growth in production and demand for luxury textiles, including lace. The stability and prosperity of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy during this period provided a base of wealthy consumers eager to demonstrate their social status through lavish dress, as well as costly decorative items such as silver.⁹⁸ Elizabeth Boyle notes that this did not necessarily equate with a desire to promote local industries; she describes a bustling trade in smuggled French and Belgian lace, and quotes Jonathan Swift, who in 1727 wrote that “Both sexes, but especially the women, despise and abhor to wear any of their own manufactures.”⁹⁹ Nonetheless, the Irish silk and poplin industries saw unprecedented expansion during this period, and both textiles were exported in large quantities to Europe.¹⁰⁰ Huguenots, Protestant refugees that fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, arrived in Britain and Ireland in the late-seventeenth century,

⁹⁴ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 1-2; “An Act for the English Order, Habit and Language (28 Hen. VIII. c.15),” reproduced in Constantia Maxwell, *Irish History from Contemporary Sources (1509-1610)* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., n.d.), 113.

⁹⁵ In *The Irish Flowerers*, Elizabeth Boyle provides an overview of textile and clothing industries and imports in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Ireland. The most important of these were linen and wool, though the wool trade was hindered by a number of restrictions placed on it in the attempt to ensure the primacy of the English wool trade. See: “Chapter One: Embroiderers and Lacemakers Before 1800,” 1-16.

⁹⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 1.

⁹⁷ Dunlevy, “Irish Lace – a Beautiful Craft Revived,” quoted in Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 100.

⁹⁸ For more on conspicuous consumption and the cultural role of silver in Georgian Dublin, see the proceedings of ‘Silver in Georgian Ireland,’ a conference held at the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, on May 30, 2018. This conference also resulted in an edited volume: Alison Fitzgerald, ed. *Studies in Irish Georgian Silver* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2021). See also: Alison Fitzgerald, *Silver in Georgian Dublin; making, selling, consuming* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁹⁹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 8.

¹⁰⁰ See: Mairead Dunlevy, *Pomp and Poverty: a History of Silk in Ireland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

bringing with them expertise in fine textile work.¹⁰¹ Dunlevy and Boyle both point out that the Huguenots have been given too much credit for creating the Irish silk industry; in fact, they brought new skills and French sensibilities to pre-existing guilds and a thriving home-weaving industry.¹⁰² The Huguenots also found work in the metallic lace industry, which – as a way to both store and signal wealth – thrived in this period of wealth and excess.¹⁰³ In fact, in a 1738 essay, the Irish author and philanthropist Dr. Samuel Madden (1686-1765) complained that the Irish gentry was too fond of “gold, and silver lace, and plate buttons.”¹⁰⁴ However, this comment was made in the context of Madden’s plan to improve Irish manufacturing, which was increasingly becoming a concern in the mid-eighteenth century. In another section of the same essay, he wrote that: “[f]ine threads, lace, and cambrics are manufactures which cost us great sums every year to foreigners, and which, if proper funds could be assigned them, we might improve, and work enough of, to send abroad to our great advantage.”¹⁰⁵

Such sentiment among the ascendancy crystallized in 1731, with the founding of the Dublin Society (later the Royal Dublin Society, or RDS). Its mandate was to promote Irish agriculture and industry, and its membership was primarily Anglo-Irish, from the nobility and upper-middle class. The RDS facilitated parliamentary grants and privately funded premiums to agriculture and industries, including lacemaking. As early as 1741, they awarded premiums to the foreman of a small lace workshop and two teachers of bobbin lace.¹⁰⁶ Records of the small premiums awarded to lacemakers throughout the eighteenth century reveal a remarkable diversity in both the varieties of lace produced and the backgrounds of lacemakers. Elizabeth Boyle has examined these records in detail; for a premium donated by Dr. Madden and disbursed from 1739-1756, she lists submissions

¹⁰¹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xv; Many of these Huguenots came to Ireland by way of the Netherlands, as members of William of Orange’s Irish campaign during the Williamite War of 1688-1691. For more on Irish Huguenots and the Dublin silk weaving industry, see Kathleen Breathnach, “The last of the Dublin Silk Weavers,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1990/1991): 134-143, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20492638>.

¹⁰² By 1730, there were about 3000 weavers and 800 looms working in the Dublin silk industry (Dunlevy, *Pomp and Poverty*, 47); Boyle, 9.

¹⁰³ In a presentation at the Textiles Society of America 17th Biennial Symposium (2020), Patricia Wilson Nguyen pointed out that lace, because it is a detachable edging and not stitched or woven into another material, was a particularly effective way of storing gold and silver thread. She has examined the stitches used to attach gold and silver lace to seventeenth-century English garments, and found that they were designed to be particularly easy to remove (in order to melt down the lace for another purpose). Patricia Wilson Nguyen, “Scandal and Imprisonment: Gold Spinners of Seventeenth-Century England” (presentation, Textiles Society of America 17th Biennial Symposium: Hidden Stories, Human Lives, Virtual Attendance, October 15-17, 2020).

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Madden, *Reflections and resolutions proper for the gentlemen of Ireland* (Dublin: R. Reilly, 1816), 189, <https://archive.org/details/reflectionsandr00maddgoog>.

¹⁰⁵ Madden, *Reflections*, 177.

¹⁰⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 11.

in imitation Mechelin and Brussels bobbin lace, Dresden work (drawn thread work and embroidery) and needlepoint lace, from women living “in every kind of district in Dublin – fashionable Grafton Street, or Castle Street where the Society established a woolen warehouse in 1773, or Fishamble Street, known for its music hall as well as for its industries,” as well as other counties.¹⁰⁷

The RDS played a quasi-philanthropic role in eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Ireland, disbursing these prizes and grants to makers, designers and industries in what the design historian John Turpin terms a spirit of *noblesse oblige*.¹⁰⁸ Lady Arabella (or Arbella) Denny (1707-1792), elected as an Honorary Member of the RDS on the 7th of August, 1766, is particularly associated with the history of Irish lacemaking.¹⁰⁹ Daughter of Lord and Lady Kerry, widowed in her thirties and “moderately well off,” Lady Denny was by all accounts resourceful, intelligent, and deeply concerned with both industrial and philanthropic means of alleviating poverty in her country. In this way, her philanthropic career foreshadows those of the nineteenth-century patronesses, and points to the push and pull between industrial and charitable ways of thinking and organizing that would confound the lace industry throughout the next century.

Lady Denny’s election to the RDS – as likely the first woman member – followed years of involvement in Irish industry. She is said to have introduced carpet weaving and silkworms to Ireland, and she was elected a patroness of the RDS Silk Warehouse in 1765.¹¹⁰ After 1758, she became involved in improving the conditions at the Dublin Foundling Hospital, which was notorious for the ill-treatment of children who had been abandoned at birth to the care of the institution.¹¹¹ She funded improvements to the buildings, reorganized food and medical services, and following a similar model of reward for excellence set forth by the RDS, she offered premiums to nurses who presented their charges “healthy and well cared-for upon inspection.”¹¹² Older children in the institution produced bobbin lace and knitting, which Lady Denny arranged to have displayed for sale in the Silk Warehouse.¹¹³ In April 1767, the RDS voted that £34 2s. 6d. be given to Lady

¹⁰⁷ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ John Turpin, “A School of Design in Victorian Dublin,” *Journal of Design History* Vol. 2 No. 4 (1989): 250, DOI:10.1093/JDH/2.4.243.

¹⁰⁹ Beatrice Bayley Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny, 1707-1792,” *Dublin Historical Record* Vol. 9 No. 1 (Dec. 1946 – Feb. 1947): 1-20, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30079325>.

¹¹⁰ Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 14.

¹¹¹ Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 6-7. Butler suggests that the Foundling Hospital’s report of 1758 may have prompted Lady Denny to take action. It revealed horrible conditions: maggots were found in the children’s food, staff were at a minimum, death rates were high, and the Hospital’s burial plot overflowed to the point that a heavy rain would wash open recent graves.

¹¹² Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 7.

¹¹³ Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 7; Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 12.

Denny to distribute among the children at the Foundling Hospital who had achieved special excellence in making ‘bone lace,’ or bobbin lace.¹¹⁴ What the children were able to do with this money is unclear; equally obscure is how, if at all, their lacemaking labour was more regularly remunerated or served to improve their conditions. In 1773-4, the Foundling Hospital inmates produced £160 4s. 10½d. worth of bobbin lace.¹¹⁵ However, making lace was considered vocational training rather than work,¹¹⁶ so if this money benefitted the children at all, it is more likely that it did so through improvements to the institution’s conditions and facilities.¹¹⁷ It is also worth noting that Lady Denny established the first Irish Magdalen asylum – another institution which was to have a long history of exploitative labour practices – on Dublin’s Leeson Street in 1766.¹¹⁸

The RDS distributed funds to a number of other lace patrons and teachers, many of whom would have had a more direct relationship with the design and quality of products than Lady Denny, who is the best known only because of her many other philanthropic activities. However, these small and scattered lacemaking enterprises were short-lived, and the RDS would not exhibit Irish lace until 1888.¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Boyle attributes this “failure” of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century lace – and embroidery – industry to the lack of design expertise, organized teaching, or a ready market, especially in England.¹²⁰

1.1.1 Carrickmacross and Limerick Lace before the Famine

Two important lacemaking ventures took root in the early-nineteenth century, making use of a new textile-production technology: machine-made net. In 1815, a Devon inventor by the name of Heathcote invented a machine to produce unadorned lace netting quickly and cheaply. Prior to this, lace net or *reseau* was made by hand using bobbin-lace techniques, which was time consuming and

¹¹⁴ Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 7.

¹¹⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 12.

¹¹⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Statistics do show that Lady Denny’s period of involvement at the Foundling Hospital did see tremendous improvements to quality of life: for example, from 1760-70, 23% of infants admitted were reported dead or missing; Lady Denny left in 1778, and from 1780-90, a tragic 88% percent of infants admitted were reported dead or missing. An inquiry prompted by an attempt to prove that those numbers were a falsification uncovered “conditions in the Hospital which were quite as bad as, in not worse than, when Lady Denny began her work.” The Foundling Hospital finally closed in the 1840s (Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 8-9).

¹¹⁸ Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 110; Butler, “Lady Arbella Denny,” 9-14.

¹¹⁹ Henry F. Berry, *A History of the Royal Dublin Society* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915), 320, <https://archive.org/details/historyofroyaldu00berr>.

¹²⁰ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 15-16.

costly.¹²¹ By providing an inexpensive matrix on which to embroider or appliqué, Heathcote's machine offered new possibilities to the lace industry. In 1823 his patent expired, making the material even more widely accessible – a boon to both the newly-established Carrickmacross and Limerick lace industries.¹²²

Carrickmacross lace is the name given to two distinctive methods of lacemaking, which both make use of cambric or muslin, as well as net ground and needle lace stitches. Lacemaking was introduced to the town of Carrickmacross and its environs in County Monaghan by Margaret Grey Porter, wife of the rector of Donaghmoyne, in 1820.¹²³ Associated in particular with the appliqué variety of Carrickmacross lace, which involves stitching cambric to a machine made net then cutting away the excess cambric to reveal the pattern, Grey Porter taught one of her servants, Ann Steadman, to make the lace based on a specimen she had procured in Italy.¹²⁴ Elizabeth Boyle writes that “according to tradition, it was Anne Steadman who actually conducted the new classes.”¹²⁵ Though dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, a handkerchief edged with Carrickmacross lace now in the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) collection shows this appliqué technique in the cambric floral motifs which stand out against the net background (fig. 1.1). A Miss Reid, from the nearby town of Rahans, followed suit and started a larger workshop for local young women, eventually building a school house in Culloville. Miss Reid was the unmarried sister of landowner, and Elizabeth Boyle notes that unlike Mrs. Grey Porter, Reid's lack of family duties may have been what enabled her to “undertake the practical work necessary to make appliqué a trade.”¹²⁶ She and her sister Dora ran the school together, and according to a later-nineteenth-century account of her activities, it passed into the care of her niece when she died.¹²⁷ The British Royal Collection contains a baby bonnet in Carrickmacross lace, acquired in the 1820s, however supply exceeded demand in the early days of the industry and Royal patronage would not favour Carrickmacross, or indeed any of the other Irish laces, until the time of the Famine.¹²⁸

¹²¹ Ó Cléirigh, *Carrickmacross Lace*, 10.

¹²² Ó Cléirigh and Rowe, *Limerick Lace*, 11.

¹²³ Ó Cléirigh, *Carrickmacross Lace*, 9. Ó Cléirigh and Boyle do not include Mrs. Grey Porter's first name, but Limerick Lace historian Matthew Potter uses the name 'Margaret' (Potter, *Amazing Lace*, 13).

¹²⁴ Ó Cléirigh, *Carrickmacross Lace*, 9. Elizabeth Boyle spells Steadman's name 'Anne' and notes that she also went by the name Mary (Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 31).

¹²⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 31.

¹²⁶ Ó Cléirigh, *Carrickmacross Lace*, 10. Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 31.

¹²⁷ C. Harry Biddle and Ben Lindsey, *Mansion House Exhibition, 1883. Irish Lace, a history of the industry with illustrations and a map showing the districts where the lace is produced* (London: 1883), 2, <https://archive.org/details/mansionhouseexh00housgoog/mode/2up>.

¹²⁸ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 16.

Another lacemaking centre of significance dates to the 1820s, unique in the fact that it was founded as a commercial enterprise rather than in a spirit of philanthropy. On August 14, 1829, the English businessman Charles Walker opened a lace factory at Mount Kennett, Limerick.¹²⁹ With him, Walker brought twenty-four lace embroiderers from Nottingham and Coggeshall to teach the skill to young women in Limerick.¹³⁰ What would become known as Limerick lace consisted of two techniques, which were often combined: chain stitching with a tambour hook, or darning with a needle, onto machine-made net (fig. 1.2). Walker had been in the lace business since his marriage to “the daughter of a lace manufacturer” who was also “mistress of an extensive lace manufactory in Essex.”¹³¹ The Catalogue of the 1853 Irish Industrial Exhibition describes the Limerick lace industry in glowing terms, noting its business strategy: “persons of capital entered into the lace trade as a commercial speculation; and while the excellence of many of the productions in the Exhibition bore testimony to the admirable quality of the work, the fact that there being now over 1500 individuals so employed in that city shows the progress it has made.”¹³² Pamela Sharpe and Stanley Chapman also suggest that in de-industrializing Limerick Walker found a particularly inexpensive workforce.¹³³ However, even this initiative had to be revived after a slump in sales and technique, and in the later-nineteenth century Florence Vere O’Brien (1854-1936) stepped in as patroness, bringing it into line with other lace industries organized and supported by wealthy benefactors.

1.2 Lacemaking and philanthropy during and after the Famine

Charles Walker’s limerick lace workshop was unique in the Irish lacemaking milieu precisely because of the fact that it was not a philanthropic enterprise. Lady Denny’s bobbin lacemaking at the Foundling Hospital and Mrs. Grey Porter’s Carrickmacross lace workshop were early examples of a trend that would come to characterize Irish lacemaking throughout the nineteenth century: they were the results of women’s philanthropic work.

The mid-nineteenth century saw an explosion in philanthropic work in Ireland, during and

¹²⁹ Potter, *Amazing Lace*, 26. Nellie Ó Cléirigh and Veronica Rowe give the industry’s date of foundation as 1828, perhaps based on information about when Walker came to Limerick or began seeking employees (see: *Limerick Lace*, 11). An 1853 Exhibition Catalogue dates the foundation of Walker’s enterprise to 1824, but I have found no other evidence of this much earlier date (John Sproule, ed. *The Irish Industrial Exhibition of 1853* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1854), 335, <https://archive.org/details/irishindustrial00sproogooq>).

¹³⁰ Potter, *Amazing Lace*, 26.

¹³¹ Ó Cléirigh and Rowe, *Limerick Lace*, 11.

¹³² Sproule, ed., *The Irish Industrial Exhibition of 1853*, 335.

¹³³ Chapman and Sharpe, “Women’s employment and industrial organization,” 333.

after the Irish Famine, or the Great Famine – *an Gorta Mór* in Irish – of 1845-1852, which historical geographer Kevin Whelan has called “the single most important event in Ireland in the modern period.”¹³⁴ During this period, more than one million people died, and over the next ten years approximately two million emigrated.¹³⁵ Though poor and absent landlords and *laissez-faire* government policies exacerbated the effects of the potato famine, the tremendous suffering caused by starvation and disease did arouse a strong desire among many members of the Irish middle and landowning classes to *do something*. This desire manifested itself in a startling variety of philanthropic activities.

In a 1966 book review which highlights the importance of taking a holistic perspective of nineteenth-century philanthropy, social and political historian Brian Harrison defines philanthropy as “any organization devoting money, time, thought, or energy to relieving the miseries of the poor, the neglected, or the oppressed.”¹³⁶ The study of nineteenth-century benevolence has expanded considerably since 1966, but Harrison’s call to consider philanthropy in all of its complexity, from the small to large scale, private to political, and secular to religious, as well as complications of class relationships, power and motives, and notions of deserving and undeserving poor, remains particularly relevant to the complicated context and enormous relief efforts of the Famine. In *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: Kindness of Strangers*, Irish historian Christine Kinealy draws on Brian Harrison’s multi-faceted definition of philanthropy, discussing interventions throughout the ‘hungry forties’ as diverse as Quaker relief, programs and fundraising by women’s associations, monetary aid from the United States – most famously from the Choctaw Nation – and the role of the Catholic clergy in aid work.¹³⁷ She writes that the Irish Famine prompted a “response [that] was unprecedented in terms of its diversity, magnitude, and geographic extent,” with “donations [...] raised in every continent, cutting across national boundaries and economic, political, and gender divisions.”¹³⁸

This inclusion of the work of secular women’s associations and the Catholic Church is

¹³⁴ Kevin Whelan, “The cultural effects of the Famine” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, eds. J. Cleary and C. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 137. See also: John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy, eds., *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* (New York: University Press, 2012).

¹³⁵ Whelan, “The cultural effects of the Famine,” 137.

¹³⁶ Brian Harrison, “Philanthropy and the Victorians,” *Victorian Studies* Vol. 9 No. 4 (1966): 356, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3825816>.

¹³⁷ Christine Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 1-2. See also “Chapter 3: Philanthropy and Private Donations” in Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology and Rebellion* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

¹³⁸ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger*, 1.

particularly relevant in the context of lacemaking. In *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, Irish social historian Maria Luddy outlines the ways in which women could become involved in charitable work – one of the few avenues available for them to work outside the home – according to their religious identity.¹³⁹ Protestant women were more likely to form or join secular organizations, perhaps religious in leaning but not administered by their denomination’s hierarchy.¹⁴⁰ The British and Irish Ladies Society for the Promotion of the Welfare of the Female Peasantry in Ireland, founded in London in 1822 and disbanded in 1830, is an example of such an organization.¹⁴¹ The Belfast Ladies Relief Association for Connaught,¹⁴² and the Ladies Industrial Society of Ireland, both established in 1847, were secular – though with a strong Protestant ethos – philanthropic responses to the famine more specifically.¹⁴³ For Catholic women, however, the opportunity to engage in philanthropy lay in a religious vocation; becoming a nun gave wealthy single women a chance to engage in philanthropic work that they would have been denied outside the walls of the convent.¹⁴⁴ The Catholic hierarchy discouraged lay women from becoming involved in charitable work, because it would bring them into contact with corruption and vice; nuns’ vocation protected them from such dangers, and they were already trained for these roles, so lay women were both unequipped and unneeded in the field.¹⁴⁵ As with Protestant women’s organizations, the nuns who tended to engage in more intellectual, artistic and charitable work came from wealthier backgrounds, with working-class nuns taking care of domestic work.¹⁴⁶ As such, Luddy frames nuns as collectives of philanthropic women bound by religious vows and governed by Catholic hierarchy, and considers their work alongside that of laywomen. I will follow suit.

1.2.1 Youghal and other needlepoint laces

Convents were important centres for lace production as a philanthropic intervention during the Famine. The Presentation Convent at Youghal established a lace industry that would remain

¹³⁹ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*.

¹⁴⁰ Margaret Ward argues that Maria Luddy’s study privileges the work of Protestant women too much, and that more attention should be given to Catholic lay women’s involvement with political causes such as the Ladies Land League. For the purposes of this discussion, however, which focuses on philanthropy and lace, Protestant women and nuns do form the majority. See: Margaret Ward, “The Ladies’ Land League and the Irish Land War 1881/1882: Defining the Relationship between Women and Nation,” in *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Ida Bloom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall (New York: Berg, 2000): 230.

¹⁴¹ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 183.

¹⁴² Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 187.

¹⁴³ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 189.

¹⁴⁴ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 24.

¹⁴⁵ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 44.

¹⁴⁶ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 32.

successful, though relatively small, for many decades after this period.¹⁴⁷ Around the time of the Famine, Mother Mary Anne Smith became interested in the possibility of lacemaking as a source of employment for local young women. Having unpicked a piece of antique Italian lace from the convent's collection to see how it was made, she was able to get a sense of the needlepoint technique and developed enough skill to start teaching some of the women already engaged in fine needlework. By 1852, the convent had a fully functioning lace school.¹⁴⁸ The nuns and lacemakers at the Presentation Convent designed their own patterns, and even their own stitches; they also taught Youghal needlepoint techniques at other convents and schools (fig. 1.3).¹⁴⁹

Needlepoint lace industries were also established at Inishmacsaint, County Fermanagh, and Cappoquin, County Waterford. Both made lace in the style of Venetian *Gros Point*, which featured dense, stylized floral motifs accentuated by thick cording (fig. 1.4). The Belfast Normal School also produced needlepoint lace at this time, though the venture seems to have been short-lived. A border of silk needlepoint, from between 1850-1854, features a rose, passionflower, tulip and leaf, demonstrating technique “similar to that of Italian 17th century needle-point lace” (fig. 1.5).¹⁵⁰ Though complex, passages of the design are awkward and stiff – needlepoint lace would reach much higher levels of finesse and sophistication in Youghal and later in Kenmare.

1.2.2 Crochet Lace in Cork, Kildare and Monaghan

Emily Anderson's lace collection, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 5, contains a cap made of crochet lace in poor condition and labelled “Early Irish Crochet, Probably 1810-1820” (fig. 1.6).

¹⁴⁷ Pat Earnshaw, *Youghal and Other Irish Laces* (Shamley Green, Guilford, Surrey: Gorse Publications, 1988). See also: Pat Earnshaw, *Youghal Lace: the Craft and the Cream* (Shamley Green, Guilford, Surrey: Gorse Publications, 1990).

¹⁴⁸ James Coleman, “Youghal Convent and Youghal Lace,” *The Irish Monthly* Vol. 24 No. 281 (November 1896), 591, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20499048>. The Presentation Convent's needlepoint lace does not seem to have been immediately successful. J.F. Maguire's account of Irish women's industries, published in 1852, makes only passing reference to lace production at Youghal, focusing instead on Convent's feather flower-making (Maguire, John Francis Maguire, *The Industrial Movement in Ireland, As Illustrated by the National Exhibition of 1852* (Cork: John O'Brien, 1853), 244, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=EQ8HAAAAQAAJ&pg=GBS.PA288&printsec=frontcover>). Lindsey and Biddle's catalogue for the 1883 Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace states that the Presentation Convent sent a lace handkerchief trimming to the Cork Exhibition of 1852, where it received high praise and commanded a good price (Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 9), but none of the entries in the Exhibition catalogue's lace section make reference to the Convent (*Official Catalogue of the National Exhibition of the Arts, Manufactures, and Products of Ireland held in Cork, 1852* (Cork: John O'Brien Booksellers and Stationers, 1852), 8-10, <https://archive.org/details/officialcatalogu00cork/mode/2up?q=cork+exhibition+1852>). The handkerchief trimming may have been submitted through one of the larger suppliers.

¹⁴⁹ Coleman, “Youghal Convent and Youghal Lace,” 592.

¹⁵⁰ Mrs. Bury Palliser, *Descriptive catalogue of the Collection of Lace in the South Kensington Museum. Third Edition, revised and Enlarged by Alan S. Cole, 1881* (London: George E Eyre and Williams Pottiswoode, 1881), 90, https://archive.org/details/descriptivecatal00pall_0.

However, no other information is provided to indicate why Anderson assigned this early date. The Presentation Convent at Blackrock, County Cork, began to teach crochet to low-income children in 1845.¹⁵¹ This was the first recorded instance of crochet lace production in Ireland.¹⁵² In a 2011 doctoral thesis on Irish crochet, Heather Castles gives four reasons for the suitability of crochet to the mid-nineteenth century Irish context. First of all, it did not require “complicated or expensive tools,” simply a hook – which could be made using household items – and thread.¹⁵³ It also did not require extensive space for a frame or work surface, and it could be laundered, ideal for production in “overcrowded and peat-smoke-filled homes.”¹⁵⁴ Finally, the process of making a single piece of lace could accommodate a variety of skill levels and specializations, from the making of the individual motifs (often of differing complexities), to arranging them in a pattern, to connecting them together with a ‘filling’ or ‘ground.’¹⁵⁵

Cork writer and politician John Francis Maguire (1815-1872) reported that in 1845, the children making lace at Blackrock collectively received £90 for their work; the number of children and success of the industry grew, and by 1852 that sum was above £1200.¹⁵⁶ He notes that though the children learn quickly, their “talent” is not “purely mechanical,” but instead “they exhibit a readiness of invention” and “a facility of design” by changing and adding to the patterns.¹⁵⁷ The stylistic model for the crochet produced in Cork during this period is unclear, though in its early form it resembled ‘plain’ crochet made in Britain and circulated through pattern books.¹⁵⁸ Castles suggests that, beginning with simple edgings, the Cork style gradually became more complex as makers experimented with the development of new motifs and became more specialized in particular aspects of production (fig. 1.7).¹⁵⁹ Many other crochet industries sprang up in the Cork area at this time, including Susanna Meredith’s Adelaide School. Meredith writes that wages from crochet in the Cork area were at their highest in 1857, and in the three years previous “weekly earning at crochet

¹⁵¹ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 204.

¹⁵² Heather Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art: contemporary interpretations of mid-nineteenth-century Irish Crochet lace making,” (PhD diss. University of Ulster, 2011), 71. Castles notes that Elizabeth Boyle, Eithne D’Arcy, Lis Paludan, Catherine Amoroso Leslie and a Lacis Museum catalogue of 2005 all give an earlier date to crochet’s arrival in Ireland, but that there is no documentary evidence for this.

¹⁵³ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 54.

¹⁵⁴ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 54.

¹⁵⁵ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 54.

¹⁵⁶ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 205.

¹⁵⁷ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 206.

¹⁵⁸ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 77.

¹⁵⁹ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 90-96.

ranged from 6s. to 10s. and 15s.”¹⁶⁰ The trade in the Cork area “began to decline” in 1857,¹⁶¹ but Meredith presents ample evidence that crochet did alleviate suffering during the Famine years, whether by supplementing family income or, as was frequently the case, by allowing a woman to save enough money to emigrate.¹⁶²

Heather Castles describes Irish crochet as a hybrid of the crochet style developed in Cork, and Kilcullen lace, introduced to Kildare by Mrs. Roberts, whom I will discuss below.¹⁶³ Some histories of Irish crochet claim that it was invented by Mademoiselle Eléonore Riego de la Branchardière (1828-1887), a Parisian-born pattern designer based in London.¹⁶⁴ Mlle. Riego de la Branchardière herself claimed to have developed the style in her crochet pattern books, of which she published many, and when she died, she left nearly £6000 to “poor Irish female workers”.¹⁶⁵ This gift cemented her place in the history of Irish lace; it would be used to establish lacemaking prizes and funds, which I will discuss further in Chapter 3. However, Castles contends that contemporary sources, namely Maguire, Meredith, and Lindsey, do not mention Mlle. Riego de la Branchardière in their discussions of crochet lace production and design, and her history of litigation over copyright infringement and plagiarism make it unlikely she would have tolerated the sale of work made using her patterns.¹⁶⁶ She did not publish a design using the distinctive Irish crochet technique of working over padding cord until 1856, and Castles suggest that this may have been after she saw an example of Kilcullen-style Irish crochet, which began almost a decade earlier.¹⁶⁷

Kilcullen crochet owes its foundation to Mrs. Roberts, the wife of a Church of England Rector based in Thornton, County Kildare, who introduced crochet to her area when a previous attempt to alleviate poverty through knitting failed.¹⁶⁸ She copied a piece of old lace – likely the Spanish version of Venetian lace, or Venetian *Gros Point* – which she described as “inferior in design,” like a series of “crabs and spiders,” but when she passed on the skill to a group of local

¹⁶⁰ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 9.

¹⁶¹ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 14.

¹⁶² In particular: Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 41-46. Heather Castles makes the distinction between (temporary) famine relief and the establishment of a permanent industry, and argues that if considered in terms of the former, the mid-nineteenth-century Irish lace industry was very successful (“Hybrid stitched textile art,” 113).

¹⁶³ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 34.

¹⁶⁴ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 101.

¹⁶⁵ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 101.

¹⁶⁶ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 102, 104.

¹⁶⁷ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 111, 104. Castles suggests that Mlle. Riego de la Branchardière may in fact have designed her pattern for ‘raised Spanish point,’ which used padding cord (111).

¹⁶⁸ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 6.

women, they adapted it to better suit the style of the day (fig. 1.8).¹⁶⁹ In a letter to Susanna Meredith, Mrs. Roberts wrote that “of their own ingenuity, they brought it to its present perfection.”¹⁷⁰ A lace collar now in the V&A, made at Killeshandra, County Cavan, in the early 1850s, is the earliest dated example of this variety of crochet (fig 1.9). In the London International Exhibition of 1872 catalogue, the lace division included the “first piece of Crochet Guipure ever done in Ireland,” attributed to “A Poor Woman” and lent by Mrs. Cramer Roberts.¹⁷¹ However, the crochet industry in Kildare did not last long. In 1883, lace experts Ben Lindsey and C. Harry Biddle wrote that “Time works great changes; only a few months since an inquiry was being made in Dublin for a competent person to go into Kildare, to teach the young people how to do crochet work.”¹⁷²

Though the industry faded in Kildare, Mrs. Roberts had sent successful students to various other locations in Ireland to teach the skill. It took root most famously in County Monaghan, especially around Clones town, for which reason it became known as Clones crochet or Clones lace.¹⁷³ Cassandra Hand (d. 1868), also wife to a rector in the Church of Ireland, requested that Mrs. Roberts send her a teacher in 1847.¹⁷⁴ By 1854, approximately 1500 women earned “a respectable living” making lace in Clones.¹⁷⁵ Hand’s high standards and good business sense, combined with the talent and inventiveness of local women made for a successful and lucrative industry with lace characterized by “good designs and correctness of finish.”¹⁷⁶ Lindsey and Biddle’s catalogue for the 1883 Mansion House Exhibition shows that the Clones area produced a variety of laces in this early period, even a ‘Greek Lace’ akin to seventeenth-century Italian *reticello* lace (fig. 1.10). However, Clones would become known for lace composed of a small motifs connected by small bars of filling stitch ornamented by ‘Clones knots’ (fig. 0.2) and plain, dense ‘guipure’ organized around repeating motifs of roses, shamrocks or horseshoes often referred to as ‘baby Irish’ – later constructed in square units known as ‘rose and shamrock squares’ (fig. 1.11).¹⁷⁷ In 1854, Hand attempted to retire

¹⁶⁹ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 371; Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 89.

¹⁷⁰ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 371.

¹⁷¹ *London Exhibition of 1872: popular edition of the official catalogue. Fine arts department* (London: J.M. Johnson and Sons, 1872), 115, https://archive.org/details/londoninternatio00lond_0.

¹⁷² Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 7.

¹⁷³ Treanor, *Clones Lace*.

¹⁷⁴ Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 80; Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 7.

¹⁷⁵ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 20.

¹⁷⁶ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 23; Máire Treanor emphasizes the fact that Cassandra Hand was known for her high standards in finished lace; that “she wouldn’t let any rubbish through” (Máire Treanor, in discussion with the author, online on Zoom, October 22, 2020).

¹⁷⁷ Lindsey and Biddle use the term ‘guipure’ to describe this variety of Clones lace (*Mansion House*, 7). Máire Treanor uses the term ‘rose and shamrock squares’ to describe the similarly textured crochet that in the 20th century came to be made

from the business, but the crochet workers wrote her a letter imploring her to stay, which they presented to her along with a valuable Belleek vase.¹⁷⁸ Hand stayed for a few more years, and Susanna Meredith notes that even after the lace industry declined in Cork, it continued to flourish in Clones. She mentions “an accomplished lady, who had been trained in the best schools of art,” that Cassandra Hand invited to Clones to continue the business when she finally did retire.¹⁷⁹ However, she may not have stayed long, or been an effective businesswoman. Máire Treanor writes that when Cassandra Hand died in 1868, there was no natural successor to organize the Clones crochet industry, and it faded until later in the century when it was revived again by Isabella Madden.¹⁸⁰

1.2.3 Carrickmacross and Limerick Lace

The Carrickmacross and Limerick lace industries also continued to grow at this time. During the Famine and years following, lacemaking at Carrickmacross continued, but with new resources and organization spurred on by the growing need in the district. In 1846, Tristram Kennedy (1805-1885), manager of the Bath estate, received a £100 relief grant from the British Government to build seven schools on the estate grounds, and the manager of the neighboring Shirley estate, Captain Morant, arranged for a vacant building in Carrickmacross town to be set up as a central school.¹⁸¹ This appears to have been a successful experiment in using the pre-existing National School system as a basis for industrial education – the Bath and Shirley estates paid for one third of the schools, and the Education Board for the rest.¹⁸² Kennedy brought samples of Belgian lace to the school, where the teacher, Mrs. Keilar, taught students to replicate them using the applique technique that had been introduced by Mrs. Grey Porter.¹⁸³ John Francis Maguire even references Kennedy’s attempt to start a drawing school in Carrickmacross, in the interest of “secur[ing] sufficient patterns at home, and to train the children in the knowledge of design.”¹⁸⁴ Elizabeth Boyle points out that the delicate lace made with white cambric and netting was not washed before sale, which meant that the women and girls had to maintain an extreme level of cleanliness while making it – an impressive feat given the

in small units which were then stitched together to form larger items (Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020. For examples see Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 20)

¹⁷⁸ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 23. Meredith reproduces the letter and its reply in *Lacemakers*, 19-22. Belleek is a manufacturer of ceramics in Fermanagh, not far from Clones. See: Sean McCrum, “The Belleek Industry,” *Irish Arts Review* Vol. 4 No. 1 (Spring 1987): 17-21, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20491946>.

¹⁷⁹ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 23.

¹⁸⁰ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 24, 25; Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹⁸¹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 41.

¹⁸² Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 274.

¹⁸³ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 41.

¹⁸⁴ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 274.

“desperate conditions” of the famine years.¹⁸⁵ In 1852, work from the schools received commendation from the Royal Dublin Society, and in 1855, Queen Victoria ordered one of the pieces of lace which had been displayed to acclaim at the Paris Exhibition of that year.¹⁸⁶ In 1862, Tristram Kennedy married Sarah Graham, and the people of Carrickmacross gifted her with a lace shawl, which is now in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland.¹⁸⁷ In 1872, work from the Bath and Shirley Schools won a medal at the Dublin Exhibition; it was only after this that the work became commonly known as ‘Carrickmacross Lace.’¹⁸⁸

The Limerick lace industry also continued on, though during this mid-century period it was characterized by falling standards of quality and design. In John Francis Maguire’s 1853 report on Irish women’s industries, he wrote that two thousand girls were at that time employed in making Limerick lace, split between several employers: Lambert and Bury (who had succeeded Charles Walker), Messrs. Forrest, Mr. McClure, Mr. Rolf, and Mrs. Leicester Greaves, as well as approximately thirty others who operated small workshops in their own homes.¹⁸⁹ Elizabeth Boyle notes that the emphasis seems to be on the price, rather than artistic merit of the lace; in the catalogue for the London Exhibition of 1862, the entry for Hayward’s, the pre-eminent lace supplier in London, listed Limerick among the “inexpensive laces.”¹⁹⁰

1.2.4 The Irish Lace Dépôt

Irish lace was marketed, not only in London directly, or through personal social networks, but also through an initiative known as the Irish Lace Dépôt, established in 1847 by Ben Lindsey (d. 1893) and located at 76 Grafton Street, in Dublin.¹⁹¹ The Lace Dépôt functioned as a liaison between the rural convents and workshops, as well as individual lacemakers, and the wealthy urban women who wore lace.¹⁹² Curiously, Lindsey does not mention the Lace Dépôt in the catalogue that he wrote with C. Harry Biddle for the Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace in 1883. The catalogue – which I

¹⁸⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 41.

¹⁸⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 41-42.

¹⁸⁷ Colum Kenny, “Kennedy, Tristram Edward,” *Cambridge Dictionary of Irish Biography*, October 2009, <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.004494.v1>.

¹⁸⁸ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 42.

¹⁸⁹ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 189.

¹⁹⁰ *London Exhibition of 1862: The Illustrated Catalogue of the Industrial Department* (London: Printed for Her Majesty’s Commissioners, 1862), 70, <https://archive.org/details/internationalexh01lond>; Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 46.

¹⁹¹ “Irish Lace Dépôt Ltd. (THE),” Whitaker’s Red Book of Commerce, or Who’s Who in Business (London: J. Whitaker and Sons, Ltd., 1914), n.p., https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/1914_Who's_Who_in_Business:_Company_I.

¹⁹² William P. Coyne, ed. *Ireland: Industrial and Agricultural* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1902), 433, Internet Archive.

will discuss in detail in the next chapter – does however point to the Famine years as the impetus for development in the Irish lace industry, and lists the worst years as 1846-1848.¹⁹³ As such, Lindsey's decision to establish the Lace Depôt in 1847 must have been a result of both a sound business sense and a philanthropic impulse. Lady Ishbel Aberdeen of the Irish Industries Association, who I will discuss further in Chapter 4, took over the Irish Lace Depot in 1893, after Ben Lindsey's death.¹⁹⁴

1.3 Lacemaking in the mid-nineteenth-century cultural imagination

Far too many lace industries sprung up in the years during and following the Famine for me to treat them all in depth here. John Francis Maguire's 1853 essay on "The Female Industrial Movement in Ireland" examines several more lace industries, and Elizabeth Boyle's *The Irish Flowerers* (1971) remains the most comprehensive source for this history. Heather Castles' 2011 PhD dissertation at Ulster University provides an in-depth history of Irish crochet.¹⁹⁵ For the purposes of this study, however, I am interested in the discourse surrounding Irish lace during this mid-century period, which would impact lacemaking in the later-nineteenth and twentieth century period on which I will focus for the majority of this thesis. Those who organized lacemaking enterprises, who wrote and thought about lace and lacemaking, and who wore lace all participated in creating an idea of what lace was, and what it meant. Lace existed in its material 'thingness' as well as in the cultural imagination, and these seemingly opposed worlds were (and are) in fact deeply connected. Historian Sarah Richardson points out that the tendency to focus on nineteenth-century women's practical acts of charity "emphasizes the notion of the individual heroine tackling poverty and deprivation by direct action and underplays the intellectual and political contexts in which these women were operating."¹⁹⁶ This statement is meant, I think, to direct scholarship away from a hagiographical study of charitable individuals and encourage the consideration of how their work interacted with a variety of social forces. Such a reorientation also challenges the nineteenth-century notion that women's philanthropy springs from an innate sense of feminine charity.

However, shifting the narrative away from what exactly these women did to why and in

¹⁹³ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Helland, "Caprices," 214. Frances Carruthers discusses the Irish Lace Depôt in more detail in "The Organisational Work of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair (1857-1939)" (PhD. diss. National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2001): 89-92.

¹⁹⁵ Castles, "Hybrid stitched textile art."

¹⁹⁶ Sarah Richardson, "Women, Philanthropy, and Imperialism in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and its Legacies*, eds. Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 91.

response to what they did it runs the risk of obscuring the material reality of their actions. A British woman who bought an Irish crochet lace collar, made at Cassandra Hand's workshop in Clones, wore the work of Monaghan women around her neck, even over her heart. She sipped her tea carefully, thinking of the spotless white so easy to stain; if she received a letter with hard news, she might have put her hand to her neck in an age-old gesture of grief, clutching at the roses and shamrocks, a handful of stiff, smooth motifs peppered with Clones knots. The materials, the landscape, and the bodies associated with lacemaking in Ireland had a great deal to do with the discourse surrounding Irish lace, and with lace and needlework more broadly. Pre-existing ideas about women, work, charity, and the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom informed how and why philanthropic lacemaking projects functioned, or indeed began. And the material actuality of the lace, the feelings and spaces of making it, fed back into these discourses. These are themes that I will continue to explore in the following chapters. However, it is important to begin with how they emerge in this mid-century Famine period, which would go on to cast a very long shadow. Lacemaking in Ireland would always be associated with the Famine times.

Susanna Meredith's *The Irish Lacemakers* provides an excellent starting point in an investigation of lace in the mid-nineteenth century cultural imagination. It is used extensively in histories of Irish lace as a record of lacemaking during the Famine, but it also includes passages of fiction. *Lacemakers* consists of two chapters on lacemaking in Ireland, accompanied by three fictional accounts of the impact of the lace industry on women of different social standing, personality and family background. In the preface, Meredith describes these stories in an almost riddling fashion: "the events they narrate are facts, but the plots are fictitious."¹⁹⁷ She notes that all names have been changed, and that some of the information was not experienced first hand, but rather "obtained from other sources."¹⁹⁸ The historical segments are written in a sentimental style that at times feels just as fanciful: "Their tears are all their own, their smiles are forced from them."¹⁹⁹ This structure points to the fact that during this period, fiction was an important platform for working through and raising public awareness of social issues. This is exemplified in the work of novelists Charles Dickens or Thomas Hardy, for example. In fact, Meredith introduces the book by decrying the use of "dry

¹⁹⁷ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, xi.

¹⁹⁸ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, xi.

¹⁹⁹ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, ix. The edition of Meredith's *The Lacemakers* that I used for this research is a scanned and digitized version of the copy in the Ingalls Library at the Cleveland Museum of Art, archived online by Internet Archive. Someone – perhaps Barbara Agnes Harvey, to whom it was inscribed in 1868 – had altered this sentence in pencil to read: "Their smiles are all their own, their tears are forced from them."

statistical statements” to educate the British about Ireland, concluding that “Fiction, decidedly, has done more than anything else to make known this *terra incognita*.”²⁰⁰

Meredith’s inclusion of Thomas Hood’s “Song of the Shirt,” quoted in the introduction, as an epigraph, links her discussion of lacemaking in Ireland to a broader discussion of women and labor. Hood’s poem, first published in the Christmas 1843 edition of *Punch*, described the poverty and physical suffering of an overworked and underpaid needlewoman. It was taken up as a rallying cry for the improvement of labor conditions, reproduced extensively, and inspired paintings and engravings. Richard Redgrave’s *The Sempstress* was one of the most popular of these (fig. 1.12). Though the poem had been based on a real, working class woman, Redgrave portrays a middle class woman who has fallen on hard times and turned to needlework to survive, a theme found in many novels of the period.²⁰¹ In analysing novels of the 1840s, literary scholar Lynn Alexander has found that the seamstress “is shown as an illustration of or a spokesperson for the suffering of those around her, rather than in terms of her own suffering [...] her condition had become a representation of the condition of all workers.”²⁰² This is exemplified in *Punch*’s inclusion of a distressed needlewoman under a bell jar in a cartoon depicting specimens displayed at ‘Mr. Punch’s Industrial Exhibition of 1850,’ drawing attention to the labor behind products that would be displayed in the Great Exhibition the following year (fig. 1.13).²⁰³

In a discussion of Famine-era literary depictions of Irish needlewomen, Irish literature scholar Melissa Fegan notes that Meredith’s choice of epigraph is strange, given the fact that her book is primarily concerned with how lacemaking – a close cousin of needlework – acts as a force for the alleviation of suffering in the Irish context.²⁰⁴ She writes that during the nineteenth century, “the national costume of the Irish was generally assumed to be rags,” and as such “the ability and desire to sew was therefore a key indicator of the capacity and desire of the Irish – specifically Irish women – to improve.”²⁰⁵ However, I would argue that Meredith’s inclusion of Hood’s poem is indicative of just how ubiquitous and flexible the trope of the ‘suffering needlewoman’ was during this period. She signified ‘suffering’ in a holistic, all-encompassing way – in this case, suffering from

²⁰⁰ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, viii, x.

²⁰¹ Lynn M. Alexander, *Women, Work, and Representation: Needlewomen in Victorian Art and Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 59-60.

²⁰² Alexander, *Women, Work and Representation*, 57.

²⁰³ Kriegel, *Grand designs*, 93.

²⁰⁴ Melissa Fegan, “‘This most humane commerce’: Lace-making during the Famine,” in *The Great Irish Famine: Visual and Material Culture* eds. Marguerite Corporaal, Oona Frawley, and Emily Mark-Fitzgerald (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 147.

²⁰⁵ Fegan, “This most humane commerce,” 141.

famine and disease – even as the needle in her hand and her willingness to work signified her status as a member of the ‘deserving poor,’ with the possibility of improving her lot. As such, the needlewoman – and closely-aligned lacemaker – was an ideal object of philanthropy: a symbol of suffering imbued with the promise of industrious morality. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how the Irish lacemaker’s femininity inflected this portrait of an ideal candidate for assistance from British philanthropists.

Literary scholars Christine Bayles Kortsch and Elaine Freedgood have expanded this discussion of the cultural meaning of needlewomen to include the meaning of textiles themselves.²⁰⁶ Bayles Kortsch has argued that nineteenth century women of all classes possessed ‘textile literacy’: that they ‘read’ textiles in terms of learning about the technicalities of making, ornamenting, altering, and wearing them, but also in terms of their “cultural meaning.”²⁰⁷ Discussing lace more specifically, Freedgood shows how nineteenth-century lace books, such as Mrs. Bury Palliser’s famous *The History of Lace* (first published in 1865), demonstrate an interest in the aesthetic of the hand-made during an era of increasing industrialization.²⁰⁸ Lace books celebrated idiosyncrasies precisely because the encroachment of machine-made lace signaled the imminent loss of such individuality.²⁰⁹ Craft theorist Glenn Adamson has made a similar argument about craft in the age of industrialization more broadly in *The Invention of Craft*: that craft as we know it today was ‘invented’ during this period as an antidote to industrialization.²¹⁰ Handmade lace therefore becomes a signifier of allegiance to quality and to a history of textile production. Indeed, many lace books took the form of histories, often charting a path from lacemaking in royal courts to convents to idyllic rural locations, drawing lace makers into an idealized picture of ‘gender unity’ that blurred needlework for leisure and the much more common reality of needlework for survival.²¹¹ As such, lacemaking could easily be framed in non-industrial, non-commoditized terms, which had deep implications for its marketing and consumption. I will discuss this further in Chapter 3 as it relates specifically to the Irish lace industry in the later-nineteenth century.

²⁰⁶ Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women’s Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Freedgood, “Fine Fingers.”

²⁰⁷ Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, 9.

²⁰⁸ *Mrs. Bury Palliser, A History of Lace* (3rd Ed.) (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1875), <https://archive.org/details/historyoflace1875pall>.

²⁰⁹ Freedgood, “Fine Fingers,” 631. Talia Schaffer discusses this differentiated meaning of the handmade, even when it attempted to mimic the machine made, in relation to paper crafts, in “Craft, Authorial Anxiety, and “the Cranford Papers,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* Vol. 38 No. 2 (Summer 2005): 221-223, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20084063>.

²¹⁰ Adamson, *Invention of Craft*.

²¹¹ Freedgood, “Fine Fingers,” 633-635.

Freedgood also notes that lace books separate the hands that made lace from the bodies and minds of lacemakers, following a trend in writing about labour that began in the eighteenth century; labourers became known as ‘hands,’ and these hands become the tools of whomever employs them, rather than autonomous expressions of the labourer’s own creativity.²¹² Glenn Adamson highlights Irish lace in particular as an example of this phenomenon, writing that “the case of Irish lace is fascinating because of its makers’ combination of extreme skill and equally extreme lack of agency.”²¹³ It is important to recognize the *conceptual* significance of this imagined separation of hand and mind, which, as Elaine Freedgood argues, offers “moments of succor” from the “state of dismemberment that our idea of the ‘hand made’ has long required.”²¹⁴ However, the issue of creative training for lacemakers themselves *was* a concern in this mid-century period. As discussed above, John Francis Maguire noticed incredible creativity and faculty for design in the children at the Blackrock School, and Tristram Kennedy brought drawing classes to Carrickmacross. Susanna Meredith explicitly linked the “elaborating hand” and “designing human head” in her discussion of lacemakers in Cork.²¹⁵ In the preface to *The Lacemakers*, she laments that the women about whom she writes “will soon exist only on paper,” and that “the girls of Ireland have no longer this wholesome, genial work to do.”²¹⁶ This circumstance she credits not to any lack of skill or lack of demand for the product, but to the fact that the state has not successfully intervened in order to improve design.²¹⁷

1.4 Design education in nineteenth-century Ireland

J.F. Maguire’s *The Industrial Movement in Ireland, As Illustrated by the National Exhibition of 1852*, which I referenced above in my discussion of lace during and immediately following the Famine, transitions seamlessly from ‘Women’s Industries’ to the newly founded Schools of Art and Design in Ireland’s urban centers.²¹⁸ Though they may have seemed far from the lacemakers plying their needles and

²¹² Freedgood, “Fine Fingers,” 629.

²¹³ Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, 221.

²¹⁴ Freedgood, “Fine Fingers,” 644.

²¹⁵ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 37.

²¹⁶ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, xiii.

²¹⁷ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, xii.

²¹⁸ It is worth noting that J.F. Maguire was a suffragist and advocate for the expansion of women’s rights, even writing a novel on the subject: *The next generation* (1871). It may be due to his own broadmindedness and interest in women’s activities that his account of the lace industry is so extensive, and that he includes a great deal of information about female students in his discussion of the Design Schools (Stephanie P. Jones, “John Francis Maguire,” *Cambridge Dictionary of Irish Biography*, October 2009, <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005360.v1>).

crochet hooks to ward off hunger, these institutions of design and design education were also undergoing a series of changes during this mid-nineteenth-century period. These changes were a result of new British Government policies and directives, but they also reflected increased local desire for industry, for art education with direct application to manufacturing. In fact, like the lace industry, the establishment of design, or ‘practical art’ schools was directly linked to the Famine. Design historian John Turpin, who has written extensively about design education in nineteenth-century Ireland, notes that for the Irish, an increasing “awareness of the importance of industrial development and technical training” was linked to the failure of Ireland’s “traditional agricultural economy,” during the Famine years of 1845-1847.²¹⁹ The preface to Maguire’s book on Ireland’s industry declares that: “agriculture, alone and unassisted, is not equal to the emergency; and that the aid of [the] manufacturing industry must be called in, if this people is to be rescued from destruction...”²²⁰

In Britain, the turn towards improving design education had begun earlier, as educators and designers turned their eyes towards the well-established practical art schools on the European continent, and particularly in France.²²¹ In 1836, a Select Committee of the House of Commons presented a report on “Arts and Principles of Design and their Connexion with Manufactures,” highlighted the necessity of practical art, or design education in the United Kingdom:

In many despotic countries far more development has been given to genius, and greater encouragement to industry, by a more liberal diffusion of the enlightening influence of the Arts. Yet, to us, a peculiarly manufacturing nation, the connexion [sic] between art and manufactures is most important; – and for this merely economical reason (were there no higher motive), it equally imports us to encourage art in its loftier attributes; since it is admitted that the cultivation of the more exalted of art with manufacture has often developed the genius of the greatest masters in design.²²²

The report brought forth evidence from members of the silk and china trades, ribbon manufacturers, architects and artists and beyond to demonstrate a “scanty supply of instruction” – though curiously it made no mention of the RDS, and its pre-existing school of ornament in Dublin.²²³ The instruction required was not that of an ‘Academy’ or a ‘School of Fine Art,’ but instead ‘design for

²¹⁹ John Turpin, “Irish Art and Design Education,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* Vol. 10 (1994): 212, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20492791>.

²²⁰ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 10.

²²¹ Ranald Lawrence, “The Evolution of the Victorian Art School,” *Journal of Architecture* Vol. 19 No. 1 (2014): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2014.884842>.

²²² Report from the Select Committee on Arts and their Connexion with Manufactures; with the minutes of evidence, appendices and index., 1836, C. 568, at iii. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²²³ Report from the Select Committee on Arts, 1836, C. 568, at iii.

industry,' 'art for manufacturing'. The report recommended the establishment of new schools of design, and the opening of museums to expose citizens to approved objects of beauty and virtue.²²⁴

In 1837, in accordance with the report's recommendations, the first Government School of Design was established at Somerset House in London.²²⁵ A school in the London silk manufacturing center of Spitalfields followed shortly after.²²⁶ By 1842-1843, Government Schools of Design were in the process of development in eight other British cities: Manchester, Birmingham, York, Coventry, Norwich, Sheffield, Nottingham, and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Some of these cities had design schools already, in which case they were required to raise local funds to match the government grant, and adhere to a list of guidelines.²²⁷ These guidelines seemed to encourage a balance of power between the provincial schools and their London hub, specifying that "a sufficient number of inhabitants...should cooperate with the Council in the establishment and maintenance of the School," but also stating that the "subject, course, and method of instruction should be prescribed."²²⁸ The report of that year also noted that Dublin, Belfast and Cork, as well as Liverpool, Paisley and Glasgow, had applied for schools, but that the Council did not yet have the resources to supervise such distant locations.²²⁹

In 1849, another Select Committee report concluded that although the Schools of Design were making progress, they left much to be desired. They did not seem to be having the impact on British industry that it was initially hoped they would. In fact, when surveyed, British industrial firms reported that "only 20% of designers had been trained at a School of Design."²³⁰ The Committee also highlighted the discrepancy between the Schools' intended function to train designers for manufacturing, and the fact that many of the students seemed to be amateurs interested in "art as a pastime."²³¹ Only four years later, the DSA came into being and reshaped the art education curriculum for the entire United Kingdom. But it was into this unfocused yet optimistic educational milieu that the Irish Government Schools of Design were born.

²²⁴ Lawrence, "The Evolution," 82.

²²⁵ Lawrence, "The Evolution," 82; First Report of the Department of Practical Art, 1852-1853, C. 1615, at 377. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²²⁶ Report of the Council of the School of Design, 1842-1843, C. 454, at 7-8. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²²⁷ The Council outlined the conditions of assistance the Provincial Schools using a letter written to the School in Coventry, which is reproduced in Report of the Council of the School of Design, 1842-1843, C. 454, at 13-14.

²²⁸ Report of the Council of the School of Design, 1842-1843, C. 454, at 13.

²²⁹ Report of the Council of the School of Design, 1842-1843, C. 454, at 15.

²³⁰ Lawrence, "The Evolution," 82

²³¹ Lawrence, "The Evolution," 82.

1.4.1 The Royal Dublin Society and the founding of the Dublin Government School of Design

The Dublin Government School of Design emerged from the RDS's longstanding tradition of art education. At the same time that the RDS encouraged new industries and excellence in those already existing through exhibitions and cash premiums awarded to makers, it functioned as the foremost educator of artists and designers in Ireland. Towards the end of the century, these two functions would converge, with both lacemakers and lace designers submitting work – completed pieces of lace, or designs – to the yearly RDS competitions, and the RDS's school evolving into the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, which produced a number of successful lace designers. In 1968, the RDS began once again to offer prizes for craft, a development which I will discuss further in Chapter 6 in relation to the twentieth-century lacemaking community in Ireland.

From the mid-eighteenth century, the Society operated four drawing schools, each with a particular specialty: figure, landscape and ornament, architecture, and modelling.²³² They held classes on alternate days, for artists and craftsmen alike, and functioned somewhat like the departments of a School of Fine Art.²³³ In the 1840s, the RDS schools were swept up in a United Kingdom-wide push to expand and standardize design education, in order to compete better with industry in countries such as France and Germany, which had by that time implemented sophisticated design education schemes that were already having an impact on manufacture.²³⁴ However, some prominent members of the RDS did not entirely agree with the new British model in design education, which they felt to be divorced from the fine arts, to its detriment. The 1849 Select Committee Report discussed above noted that many felt the Government Design Schools were not “sufficiently practical,” and suggested that much could be done to make the schools more directly relevant to industry.²³⁵ Lundy Foot, RDS Secretary, felt that the Society's School was more akin to those in France, where ‘fine art’ and ‘design’ were taught in conversation with each other.²³⁶ Isaac Weld, Lundy's successor, also argued that design was “no mere mechanical pursuit,” citing French fabric designers who draw flowers from nature and Dublin poplin manufactures where “weaver, chemist, and artist”

²³² John Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society and its School of Art, 1849-1877,” *Dublin Historical Record* Vol. 36 No. 1 (Dec. 1982): 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30100717>.

²³³ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 2.

²³⁴ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 2.

²³⁵ Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix, and index, 1849, C. 576, at iv. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²³⁶ Turpin, “School of Design,” 249.

collaborate.²³⁷ Lundy and Weld were concerned not only about the separation of ‘fine art’ and ‘practical art,’ or art and design, but about the importation of a British design education system into the much different – namely unindustrialized – Irish context. This tension separation of ‘fine’ and ‘applied’ art, of artist and maker, would arise again in the 1880s, prompting the Irish Schools of Art to teach drawing to lacemakers themselves, rather than just the designers. However, both issues remained points of contention in the rhetoric surrounding lacemaking, lace design, and technical education more broadly, well into the twentieth century.

Regardless of this resistance, the Board of Trade determined that a Government School of Design would open in Dublin, though it would look very much like the RDS’s original drawing schools, with the Society functioning as “a local managing committee.”²³⁸ The RDS began operating under the new system in 1849, but when they presented their estimates for the upcoming school year to Dublin Castle in 1848, their ambiguous position as a privately-operated society caused consternation. The RDS was not accountable to the British government, and as such, the government could not be expected to pay for its School in full. Ultimately, the Board of Trade and the Treasury approved the RDS drawing schools as a Government School of Design, but on the condition that the RDS raise funds to supplement those from the Parliamentary Vote. This was accomplished in part by charging fees to students for the first time.²³⁹ A single Headmaster to preside over all four schools would be appointed by the Board of Trade.²⁴⁰

‘The Government School of Design in connection with the RDS,’ as it was officially styled, open under the headmastership of the County Monaghan artist and previous Headmaster of the Glasgow School of Design Harry MacManus (c. 1810-1878) on October 1st, 1849.²⁴¹ The classes were extended from a few days a week to every day from 9-12 a.m. and 7-9:30 p.m., and further staff were employed to assist in teaching the body of approximately four hundred students, a large portion of which were women.²⁴² The curriculum remained more or less the same:

under Figure came ‘Principles of light and shade, drawing from casts and anatomical drawing’. Under Ornament came ‘Drawing from flowers and plants, landscape, painting in watercolours and tempera’. Under Modelling came ‘Elementary figure drawing, modelling the figure, modelling ornament and modelling flowers and nature’. Finally, under Architecture came ‘Elementary ornament, use of instruments, descriptive geometry as applied to masons

²³⁷ Turpin, “School of Design,” 249.

²³⁸ Turpin, “School of Design,” 250.

²³⁹ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 3.

²⁴⁰ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 4.

²⁴¹ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 4-5.

²⁴² Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 6.

and carpenters work, working drawings, perspective and isometric projection, shading architectural detail, projection of shadows, architecture as a Fine Art’.²⁴³

Though the School of Design’s purpose was to encourage design for industry, to train “art workmen, rather than artists or teachers,” an 1851 survey of the students’ future goals shows a somewhat different reality.²⁴⁴ Of the male students, many planned to become architects, civil or working engineers, supplementing their professional studies at other institutions with drawing classes. Of the female students, sixty-nine intended to become teachers, with only ten hoping to pursue a career in design, and a great deal of others with undetermined goals.²⁴⁵ These women may have intended to marry rather than pursue a career; in a society that discouraged women from working outside of the home, they may also have been encouraged to attend the School as an amateur, with no intention of pursuing remunerative employment afterwards.

1.4.2 The founding of the Cork Government School of Design

Though the Dublin School of Design, later to become the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, has a longer history, its counterpart in Cork city will take a more central role in this study. Emily Anderson attended the Cork School, and later in the nineteenth century it would become a hub for Irish lace design. John Francis Maguire describes the founding of the Cork (Government) School of Design in 1850 with all the pride of a Cork native, noting that the city “had always been famous for its men of genius in the Arts.”²⁴⁶ As was the case in Dublin, the Cork School was a product of pre-existing local resources and Government organization and funding. In 1819, a set of Graeco-Roman and Neoclassical plaster casts had been presented to the Cork Society of Fine Arts, and these had formed the nucleus of an art collection that was later moved to the eighteenth-century Custom House Building, under the care of the Royal Cork Institute.²⁴⁷ In 1849, a committee of Cork citizens invited a representative of the School of Design at Somerset House, in London, to visit Cork and discuss the

²⁴³ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 6.

²⁴⁴ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 7.

²⁴⁵ Turpin, “The Royal Dublin Society,” 7.

²⁴⁶ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 287.

²⁴⁷ The casts had been presented to the Prince Regent by Pope Pius VII, and the Cork art collector Lord Ennismore had petitioned to bring them to Cork. John Turpin gives the date at which they were first displayed in Cork (in the Apollo Theatre) as 1818 (Turpin, “Irish Art and Design Education,” 211). The Royal Cork Institute was founded along the same lines as the Royal Dublin Society, and leaves its primary legacy in the foundation of Queen’s College Cork (now University College Cork) and the Cork School of Design (now the Cork Institute of Technology Crawford College of Art and Design) (“History,” Crawford Art Gallery, accessed November 30, 2021, <https://crawfordartgallery.ie/history/>). For more on the Royal Cork Institute’s history and groundbreaking scientific research, see: Margaret MacSweeney and Joseph Reilly, “The Royal Cork Institution,” *Journal of Chemical Education* Vol. 32 No. 7 (1955): 348-352.

possibility of opening a Government School of Design. In particular, they were concerned that the collection of plaster casts was not being used to its full potential as a teaching aid. Somerset House obliged by sending a representative, who met with the committee to outline the conditions necessary for the British Government to fund the school: a local subscription would have to be raised, equal to the government grant of £200.²⁴⁸ Concerned that a private subscription would not be sustainable, the committee approached the Town Council, who voted unanimously to provide the grant. It was later agreed that the Custom House Building would provide a suitable location for the new School. The Royal Cork Institute offered to provide £500 to cover the cost of the required renovations, and on the 7th of January, the School was “publicly inaugurated at a respectable and numerous meeting,” under the Headmastership of William Willes (c.1775-1851).²⁴⁹ It opened to students on the 8th of January, and even before this date, the Board of Trade increased the Government grant to £500, surely a sign of confidence in its success.²⁵⁰

Writing only about three years after the School’s founding, Maguire reported that one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy students attended the school each quarter, “males consisting chiefly of the mechanic and artizan [sic] classes, and the females of governesses, teachers, jappanners, and girls engaged in embroidery and lace schools.”²⁵¹ Even at this early date, Maguire notes that this training has had a positive impact on the lace industry, by teaching the female students to work in “closer imitation of the beauty of natural forms,” and “by training up a class of female artizans [sic], who will be enabled hereafter to supply patterns and designs suited to the character of the material.”²⁵² Maguire’s glowing praise of the Cork School’s burgeoning lace design expertise in 1853 begs the question of what happened during the next thirty years; in 1883 James Brenan and Alan Cole would see such a dearth of design excellence that they propose starting a new lace design class at the School. Even in 1865, Susanna Meredith would lament the poor design standards in the Irish lace industry, writing that “no government care fosters the development of its tastes.”²⁵³

1.4.3 The founding of the Belfast, Limerick, Waterford, Clonmel, and Derry Schools

²⁴⁸ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 287.

²⁴⁹ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 287. William Willes was a native of Cork, who had studied in London and assisted in organizing the first Munster Exhibition in 1815. He suffered from a “prolonged illness” and died after only a year as headmaster (Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 288-289).

²⁵⁰ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 288.

²⁵¹ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 289.

²⁵² Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 289.

²⁵³ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 47.

As the center of the linen industry and, arguably, the only industrial city in Ireland, Belfast was another logical location for a school of design.²⁵⁴ Founded in 1849 with a focus on design for the linen industry, including damask patterns and paper packaging, the Belfast school differed from the other Irish institutions in that it taught “design for industrial mass production.”²⁵⁵ However, the School did have a wider portfolio. In 1883, the Headmaster of the School would write to an article in the Belfast Newsletter, asking if any schools teach lacemaking, and reproducing the memorandum on lacemaking in Ireland which authorized Alan Cole to visit the Cork Exhibition in that year.²⁵⁶ The Belfast School suffered from a lack of “local interest,” and had to close until 1870, when it reopened as a Government School of Art.²⁵⁷

The Limerick School of Design, or Limerick School of Ornamental Art, opened on November 2, 1852, with twenty six students in attendance on the first day.²⁵⁸ Earlier that year, a committee of Limerick residents had collected the £1256 necessary to purchase a building, in the interest of “promot[ing] Literature, Science, Art and Music.”²⁵⁹ They then applied for a grant from the Board of Trade, which they received, along with the appointment of a Headmaster, David W. Rainsbach, who had been second master at the School in Belfast. Maguire noted that as of 1853, the average daily attendance was above 130, and “almost every trade and occupation is represented among the students.”²⁶⁰ Though “only a few of the young persons connected with the lace factories of the city have attended,” Maguire expressed hope that that industry would soon feel the benefit of more accessible design education.²⁶¹ This certainly did seem to be one of the School’s early intentions; the institution administered its own small design competition, and in 1853 one of the

²⁵⁴ George Trobridge, “Belfast School of Art,” in *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural*, ed. W.P. Coyne (Dublin: Brown and Nolan Ltd., 1902), 148-152, <https://archive.org/details/irelandindustria00irelrich/page/148/mode/2up?q=%27belfast+school+of+art%27>. See also: Mike Catto, *A School of Design for Belfast, 1849-1960* (Belfast: University of Ulster, 2009).

²⁵⁵ Turpin, “Irish Art and Design Education,” 213. Turpin gives 1850 as the year of foundation for the Belfast School, however a Glasgow University online resource, Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland, 1851-1951, writes that it was founded in 1849 and opened to the public in 1850 (“Belfast School of Art,” Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, 2011, http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/organization.php?id=ann_1232658851 (Accessed December 10, 2021). The 1849 Select Committee Report lists C.L. Nursey as the Headmaster of the Belfast School of Art as of May 1, 1849 (Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design, 1849, C. 576, at 428).

²⁵⁶ “Correspondence: Lace-Making,” *Belfast Newsletter*, October 18, 1883, 6. Irish Newspaper Archive.

²⁵⁷ Trobridge, “Belfast School of Art,” 150.

²⁵⁸ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 304.

²⁵⁹ Mark Tierney, “The Limerick School of Art and Design, 1852-1854,” *The Old Limerick Journal* (1996): 46, <http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/Media,4105,en.pdf>.

²⁶⁰ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 304.

²⁶¹ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 304.

categories was “design for a lace handkerchief.”²⁶²

The Waterford School seems to exist largely due to the efforts of a single man, Mr. Blake, who visited the Cork School of Art and became so convinced of its benefit to the local industries that he began campaigning to establish a similar institution in Waterford. The process by which this eventually occurred is a fascinating example of the exchange between center and periphery, and the dependence of such institutions on the actions of interested individuals. Mr. Blake sought the assistance of the Dean of Waterford, Edward Hoare (1802-1877), who wrote to Lord Clarendon, asking him to petition the Board of Trade.²⁶³ Further prominent citizens of Waterford continued to petition the Board of Trade, until finally, Henry Cole, Head of the Department of Practical Art, was sent to review the case. In July 1852, Cole spoke at a meeting in the Town Hall, explaining that Waterford would be the first school established under the Department’s new system, which meant a smaller grant of £50 from the government, for the Headmaster’s salary, with any additional funds provided by the city itself – whether from rates or private donations.²⁶⁴ The local committee did raise the funds needed, “being determined to have their school, at any sacrifice.”²⁶⁵ The Waterford School of Practical Art, designated as such because of its smaller grant, opened in October 1852, under Mr. J.D. Croome.²⁶⁶ In 1853, there were 146 pupils – 63 men and 83 women – which was a large number of students in relation to the town’s population of 25,000.²⁶⁷ Maguire highlighted the mixing of social classes in the School, which seems to have been a characteristic of these institutions more broadly: “Young ladies of the first family and fortune (of which there are several) study side by side with girls of lowly rank and means [...] some gentlemen of the highest respectability draw at the same desk with the humble, though intelligent, mechanic.”²⁶⁸

The Clonmel School, founded in 1854, was short-lived.²⁶⁹ Located in Clonmel because of its reputation as a centre for coach-building, the school was held in the Mechanic’s Institute.²⁷⁰ James A.

²⁶² Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 306.

²⁶³ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 307.

²⁶⁴ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 308.

²⁶⁵ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 308.

²⁶⁶ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 308. A description of the alternate system under which the School was designated a School of Practical Art can be found at: First Report of the Department of Practical Art, 1852-1853, C. 1615, at 74. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²⁶⁷ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 308.

²⁶⁸ Maguire, *Industrial Movement*, 309.

²⁶⁹ Second Report of the Department of Science and Art, 1855, C. 1962, at 74. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²⁷⁰ Turpin, “Irish Art and Design Education,” 212.

Healy, who had previously been assistant to Harry MacManus in Dublin, served as headmaster.²⁷¹ Clonmel was located in the center of a triangle made up of Limerick, Cork, and Waterford, and the success of these schools rendered it unnecessary. The Derry School was the last to be founded in Ireland. Established in 1874, its first headmaster was J Poole Abbey, a painter that had been educated in Cork, and later went on to teach in Dublin.²⁷²

1.5 The Department of Science and Art: a ‘bureaucracy of beauty’

The Irish design schools detailed above emerged at the beginning of the 1850s as a result of both local interest and recognition of need, and changing sentiment around education for manufacturing in London. However, even more changes were to come. The Great Exhibition of 1851 took place in London’s Crystal Palace and ignited the imagination of British citizens with new possibilities for manufacturing, design, and the arts, while simultaneously indicating to many that Britain was behind other nations in this regard.²⁷³ Ireland was quick to follow suit, perhaps already primed for this culture of display by the Royal Dublin Society’s triennial exhibitions of arts and industries.²⁷⁴ The first Cork Exhibition took place in 1852,²⁷⁵ followed by the first Dublin Exhibitions in 1853, sponsored by the railway magnate William Dargan.²⁷⁶ These exhibitions gave a platform to the display of Irish design for industry, and highlighted the importance of further development in the field. Exhibitions in other countries or cities within the United Kingdom provided comparative material and inspiration. The next chapter will examine the Cork Exhibition of 1883’s impact on the lace industry more specifically.

At this same time, the United Kingdom’s government bodies responsible for design education in Britain and Ireland were evolving at a rapid pace.²⁷⁷ The Board of Trade, which had overseen the founding of the Dublin and Cork schools, recommended the establishment of a

²⁷¹ Turpin, “Irish Art and Design Education,” 212.

²⁷² Turpin, “Irish Art and Design Education,” 213.

²⁷³ Many critics commented on the superior nature of India’s decorative arts in particular (Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 25).

²⁷⁴ John Turpin, “Exhibitions of Art and Industries in Victorian Ireland: Part 1: The Irish Arts and Industries Exhibition Movement 1834-1864,” *Dublin Historical Record* Vol. 35 No. 1 (1981): 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30105456>.

²⁷⁵ *Official Catalogue of the National Exhibition of the Arts, Manufactures, and Products of Ireland held in Cork, 1852* (Cork: John O’Brien Booksellers and Stationers, 1852), <https://archive.org/details/officialcatalogu00cork/mode/2up?q=cork+exhibition+1852>.

²⁷⁶ *Official Catalogue of the Great Industrial Exhibition, in Connection with the Royal Dublin Society, 1853* (Dublin: Printed and Published for the Committee by John Falconer, 1853), <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=19Q-AAAAcAAJ&hl=en>.

²⁷⁷ For a detailed description of the political machinations surrounding the formation of the Department of Science and Art, see: Harry Butterworth, “The Science and Art Department, 1853-1900” (PhD. diss., University of Sheffield, 1968), White Rose eTheses Online, <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/12801/>.

Department to supervise design education, and in February 1852, the Department of Practical Art was born.²⁷⁸ Limerick and Waterford were founded under this Department's administration. It was renamed and expanded in March 1853 to become the Department of Science and Art (DSA), under which name it would operate until the turn of the twentieth century.²⁷⁹ As established in the Department's first annual report, one of its primary functions was to supply high quality models, equipment, and examples to schools and classes throughout the United Kingdom, both for scientific and artistic purposes.²⁸⁰

Henry Cole (1808-1882), who had been the Director of the Department of Practical Art, as well as the organizer of the Great Exhibition in 1851, spearheaded the Department's establishment and the ensuing rewriting of the design curriculum. Cole was one third of what art historian Christopher Whitehead terms "the South Kensington triumvirate"; along with Richard Redgrave and John Charles Robinson he advocated for the establishment of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria & Albert Museum, or V&A) as a museum of decorative arts.²⁸¹ He was a bureaucrat, public figure, and a polymath with his finger in many pies (he supervised the publication of the Handbook of the National Training School for Cookery in 1873).²⁸² His son, Alan Cole (1846-1934), was a lace and textile expert for the DSA, and will play an important role in the next two chapters.

Largely responsible for driving the formation of the Department and developing its design curriculum, Cole was also instrumental in reorganizing the DSA's finances so that the Schools would be self-sufficient. In support of a fee structure, he argued that "no one values what may be had for nothing, especially those who can afford to pay."²⁸³ However, this logic faltered when faced with the difficulty of catering to the Schools' diverse study body, as exemplified in the Waterford School discussed above. Middle class students could afford to pay substantial fees, whereas 'artisan class' students could not. Eventually, the DSA developed a schedule that would encourage middle class

²⁷⁸ First Report of the Department of Practical Art, 1853, C. 1615, at 377.

²⁷⁹ Henry Cole did not approve of this name, arguing unsuccessfully that 'Art' should be placed before 'Science.' (Butterworth, *The Science and Art Department*, 26). First Report of the Department of Science and Art, 1854, C. 1783. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²⁸⁰ First Report of the Department of Science and Art, 1854, C. 1783, at xvi.

²⁸¹ Christopher Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth Century Britain: The Development of the National Gallery* (London: Routledge, 2016), 163.

²⁸² Henry Cole, *Fifty years of public work of Sir Henry Cole, K. C. B., accounted for in his deeds, speeches and writings Vol. 1* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884), 396, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924098820883>. Arindam Dutta gives a concise summary of Cole's activities (and conflicts) during the mid-nineteenth century in *Bureaucracy*, 17-23.

²⁸³ From an address presented on the 24 of November, 1852, quoted in Butterworth, "The Science and Art Department," 30.

amateurs, or those training to be teachers and governesses, to attend smaller and more expensive classes in the morning, with the less expensive and larger classes in the evening, after most labourers were finished their daily work.²⁸⁴ As such, when Emily Anderson attended the Cork School of Art about twenty years later, she likely attended morning classes. By 1857, fees paid at all of the Government Schools were equal to the amount of grant aid provided.²⁸⁵

In the 1860s, the DSA introduced the system of “payment on results,” which distributed funds to schools based on the excellence of their students’ work.²⁸⁶ This cemented the already-centralized nature of the Department: in order to receive funding, the Schools had to produce work that catered to the DSA’s preferences. Cole and Redgrave recognized that art schools, unlike the science schools for which this scheme was originally developed, would have more difficulty evaluating students’ work. In order to do so, the DSA established an increasingly complicated and specified curriculum: the standard course of instruction involved twenty-three sections, subdivided into sixty-one more.²⁸⁷ The educational goals shifted from a focus only on educating artisans to drawing and the development of taste more broadly.²⁸⁸ Arindam Dutta highlights this system as an example of how the DSA was able to “dissemble what was an increased level of centralization in the running of the schools with an appearance of decentralization.”²⁸⁹ Rafael Cardoso Denis refers to the DSA’s expansion at this time as “bureaucracy by stealth.”²⁹⁰ Schools depended less on the Government for financial support, but were increasingly pressured to bend to the DSA’s standards of design and definition of ‘good taste.’

Both Dutta and Cardoso Denis have shown how the DSA functioned as an agent of empire, disseminating London’s methods and standards of design with military efficiency as far afield as India. In fact, Cardoso Denis writes that “the history of the DSA, like that of the Crimea, is one of expansion and conquest.”²⁹¹ Focusing on India, Dutta has explored how the teaching of drawing played an important role in shaping British conceptions of the indigenous artisan. Representatives of

²⁸⁴ Butterworth, “The Science and Art Department,” 30.

²⁸⁵ Butterworth, “The Science and Art Department,” 34.

²⁸⁶ Butterworth, “The Science and Art Department,” 67-68.

²⁸⁷ Report from the Select Committee on Schools of Art; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix, and index, 1864, C. 466, at vi. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

²⁸⁸ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 22.

²⁸⁹ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 20.

²⁹⁰ Quoted in Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 20.

²⁹¹ Rafael Cardoso Denis, “The Brompton Barracks: War, Peace, and the rise of Victorian Art Education,” *Journal of Design History* Vol. 8 No. 1 (1995): 11, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1315907>. Cardoso Denis in fact argues that the climate of war in the mid-1850’s in fact galvanized the DSA to early success.

the DSA saw drawing instruction as a way to free such artisans from the “conceptually blind but corporeally productive” methods of traditional craft skills, and at the same time diagnosed a native “unwillingness” to learn.²⁹² Teaching drawing, therefore, was just one more way to mould Indian students into British subjects. Standardized classroom design concretized the hierarchical structure of the DSA’s teaching methods: a teacher, replicating the DSA’s standardized lessons, at the front of the classroom with an elevated, flat board containing a sample patterns for students to copy at their own parallel vertical drawing boards.²⁹³ In the following chapters, I will consider how the circulation of photographs and specimens of lace both replicated and complicated this rigid structure of seeing and copying.

Promoting ‘good taste’ in artisans and consumers alike further served to spread ‘British’ values throughout the empire. DSA promoted a conception of beauty inherited from the Kantian tradition, a “post-Kantian organicism” which emphasised the natural world as a source of inspiration.²⁹⁴ It drew from German natural philosophy, which had begun to become increasingly available in Britain in the 1830s and encouraged design educators to look to biology and anatomy for order and patterning.²⁹⁵ It is important to note that whether or not the DSA’s notion of taste was thoroughly ‘British’ is up for debate in more ways than one. The DSA saw itself as a ‘civilizing influence’ on working class artisans in London or Manchester just as much as those of Ireland or India. In fact, historian Lara Kriegel writes that early critics of the South Kensington Museum even found it threatening to the taste of English “provincial masculinity” – epitomized by stolid John Bull – because it included French and Asian design.²⁹⁶ In particular, the DSA looked to India and Persia for models of effective geometric patterning.²⁹⁷

The DSA’s rigid framing of ‘good taste’ could also bump up against the unavoidable materiality of the designed objects, which adorned bodies, homes, and machines, moving and being moved. Richard Redgrave discussed the tension between textile design as a practice based on flat patterning, and tailoring as a practice that cuts and drapes these flat, pattern-covered surfaces, disrupting the textile designer’s work. He advocated for vertical stripes and smaller units of

²⁹² Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 140.

²⁹³ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 135.

²⁹⁴ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 6.

²⁹⁵ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 103.

²⁹⁶ Kriegel, *Grand designs*, 151.

²⁹⁷ Artists of the Arab world were considered to have achieved such excellence in patterning because of their religious prohibition of representation art. Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 84-85.

patterning in designs meant for clothing, in order to accommodate for tailoring.²⁹⁸ However, trends in tailoring and fashion more broadly changed drastically throughout the second half of the nineteenth century – consider the shift from the massive crinolines of the 1860s to the more modest bustles of the 1890s, for example. Redgrave would likely not have approved of the notion that, according to his logic, good taste in pattern design should evolve along with changes in the (evanescent, feminine and thus inherently suspicious) realm of women’s fashion. The DSA’s taste is particularly relevant to the historiography of Irish lace: on several occasions I have noticed that specimens of crochet lace from the late-nineteenth-century era of DSA design reform are held in low regard – even referred to as “soulless” – by contemporary practitioners.²⁹⁹

In the wider context of market forces and changing fashions, even the use of the term ‘design’ merits further interrogation. The term comes into increased use at this time, with the establishment of ‘Government Schools of Design,’ and publication of Cole’s *Journal of Design*, and Redgrave’s *Manual of Design*.³⁰⁰ Earlier in this chapter, I equated ‘design’ with ‘art for manufacture,’ and it is in this sense that I will use the term throughout this thesis. However, in the discourse of the DSA, it is used in two distinct ways, the linking of which is of great conceptual importance. Dutta writes that ‘design’ is used to signify “a comprehensive, rationalizing, future-oriented intention on one hand, and, on the other, the quite prosaic description of the (received) pattern or motif on your clothes.”³⁰¹ This linking of the close, personal and concrete with broader, forward-rushing, and alienating economic forces is industrial capitalism in action; indeed, we might view “the term *design* as a mark of modernity.”³⁰² In Chapter 3, I will explore how the discourse surrounding Irish lace allowed marketers and consumers to sidestep the uncomfortable implications of inequality and poor labour conditions by ignoring this aspect of lace’s object biography – sidestepping its status as something *designed* – in favour of romanticizing its maker and locus of production.

1.6 Conclusion: philanthropy and bureaucracy converge in a County Cork cottage

Ireland – and its network of design schools – was geographically very close to Britain, but conceptually ambiguous in this period as both a part of the United Kingdom and an island, another

²⁹⁸ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 112.

²⁹⁹ See for example: Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art,” 117.

³⁰⁰ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 5.

³⁰¹ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 5-6.

³⁰² Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 6.

country with its own distinct cultural expression and history of dissent. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the tension between Ireland's closeness and 'otherness' during the late-nineteenth century as it played out in discussions of lacemaking. This notion is equally relevant in relation to education during Union, a context within which Ireland's provincial cities may not have felt that different from those in the north of England or Scotland. John Turpin points out that staff moved a great deal between the design schools throughout the United Kingdom during this period.³⁰³ This is evidenced in the founding of the Irish schools discussed above.

I will conclude this chapter by introducing James Brenan (1837-1907), who will play an important role in the next chapter as one of the key players in the 'renaissance' of Irish lace. Brenan was, in the words of John Turpin, "a complete product of the South Kensington system, imbued with all its earnest idealism to improve design for local industry."³⁰⁴ He would bring the vast resources of the DSA into contact with lace design in Ireland, uniting the two contexts that I have discussed in this chapter. Brenan began his long career in Dublin, as a student of the RDS School of Design, and then continued his design education at the South Kensington Training School.³⁰⁵ Like so many other design educators and reformers of his time, he was involved with the Great Exhibition of 1851. He worked with Owen Jones, author of the influential designer's handbook *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), on the decoration of the Crystal Palace.³⁰⁶ Afterwards, he taught in a number of British cities before returning to Ireland to become headmaster of the Cork School of Art in 1860. He would remain there until 1889, at which point he was hired as headmaster at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art.³⁰⁷

In the catalogue for the 2017 exhibition 'Made in Cork: the Arts and Crafts Movement 1880s-1920s,' Vera Ryan uses *The Committee of Inspection*, a painting that James Brenan completed in 1877, while Headmaster of the Cork School of Art, as a window into his involvement with local industry, and his almost "ethnographic" understanding of local, rural craftspeople's concerns (fig. 1.14).³⁰⁸ This was certainly an aspect of Brenan's work at the Cork School of Art. As discussed above, the DSA's schools were expressly intended to have an impact on local industry. In *The Irish*

³⁰³ Turpin, "Irish Art and Design Education," 213.

³⁰⁴ John Turpin, "The South Kensington System and Dublin Metropolitan School of Art," *Dublin Historical Record* Vol. 36 No. 2 (March 1983): 44.

³⁰⁵ Turpin "The South Kensington System," 44.

³⁰⁶ Turpin "The South Kensington System," 44.

³⁰⁷ Turpin, "The South Kensington System," 44.

³⁰⁸ Vera Ryan, *Made in Cork: the Arts and Crafts Movement 1880s - 1920s, an Essay and Exhibition Guide* (Crawford Art Gallery, 2017), 9.

Lacemakers, Susanna Meredith called for better education, improved designs, and female inspectors for the Irish lace industry, and bemoaned the fact that “no government care fosters the development of its tastes.”³⁰⁹ In Chapters 2 and 3, I will discuss how James Brenan, and later Alan Cole of the South Kensington Museum, leveraged both the lace industry’s philanthropic roots and the DSA’s resources to encourage growth and development in Irish lace design and production.

But the painting also catches on one of the problems to which I will continue to return throughout my writing. Brenan depicts the inspector standing up, straight-backed and suited, amidst a family that is – with the exception of one woman – seated, hunched over, and small. The composition is static, creating a triangle with the inspector – Brenan – at the apex. The painter’s rendering of the household may be detailed, his portrayal of the family as “apprehensive” may be “sympathetic,”³¹⁰ but the inspector is still dominant, central, and (as the sharp contrast between his clothing and theirs suggests) a bastion of respectability, taste, and even modernity in the rural home. Brenan, as a “complete product of the South Kensington system,”³¹¹ is a representative of Britain’s ‘bureaucracy of beauty,’ monitoring craft production in rural Irish homes and enforcing the aesthetics and methods of the urban (and imperial) centre. In the next two chapters I will consider the lace design education program that emerged from James Brenan and Alan Cole’s collaboration, in which Emily Anderson trained. In Chapter 5, I will revisit this tension between *inspector* and *inspected* as I trace Anderson’s own lace inspection work for the DATI, informed by her education at the Cork School of Art.

³⁰⁹ Meredith, *Lacemakers*, 47.

³¹⁰ Ryan, *Made in Cork*, 9.

³¹¹ Turpin, “The South Kensington System and Dublin Metropolitan School of Art,” 44.

Figures: Chapter 1



Figure 1-1 Carrickmacross Lace Specimens, collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Top: handkerchief, in applique style, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century (I.79-1939). Bottom: portion of a flounce, in guipure style, mid-nineteenth c. (847A-1883). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 1-2 Limerick lace flounce (needle run technique), 1850-1875. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (852-1883). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

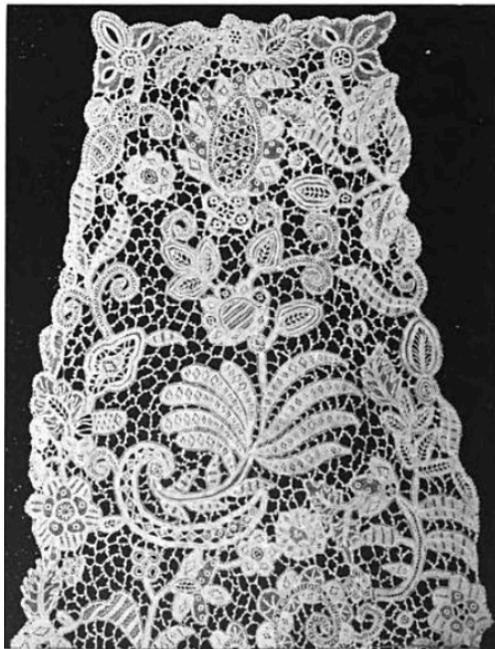


Figure 1-3 'Old Flat Point' made at the Presentation Convent, Youghal. In James Brenan, "The Modern Irish Lace Industry," in W.P. Coyne ed., *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1902), 422. Source: Google Books, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=WAUtAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA418-IA10&hl=en> (Accessed November 26, 2021).



Figure 1-4 Inishmacsaint needle lace cuff, c. 1875. Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 1880.798). Photo by the author.



Figure 1-5 Border of needlepoint lace from Belfast Normal School, 1850-1854. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (1356-1854). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 1-6 Ladies cap or headdress (with detail) in Southern Irish crochet, dated by Emily Anderson to c. 1810-1820, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.59). Photo by the author.



Figure 1-7 Cork-style crochet lace lappet (or possibly part of a collar), 1850s. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (1095&A-1854). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 1-8 Raised crochet in ‘debased’ Venetian style, mid-nineteenth century, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.57). Photo by the author.



Figure 1-9 Kilcullen Style crochet collar from Killeshandra, County Cavan, c. 1850-1855. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (1159-1855). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

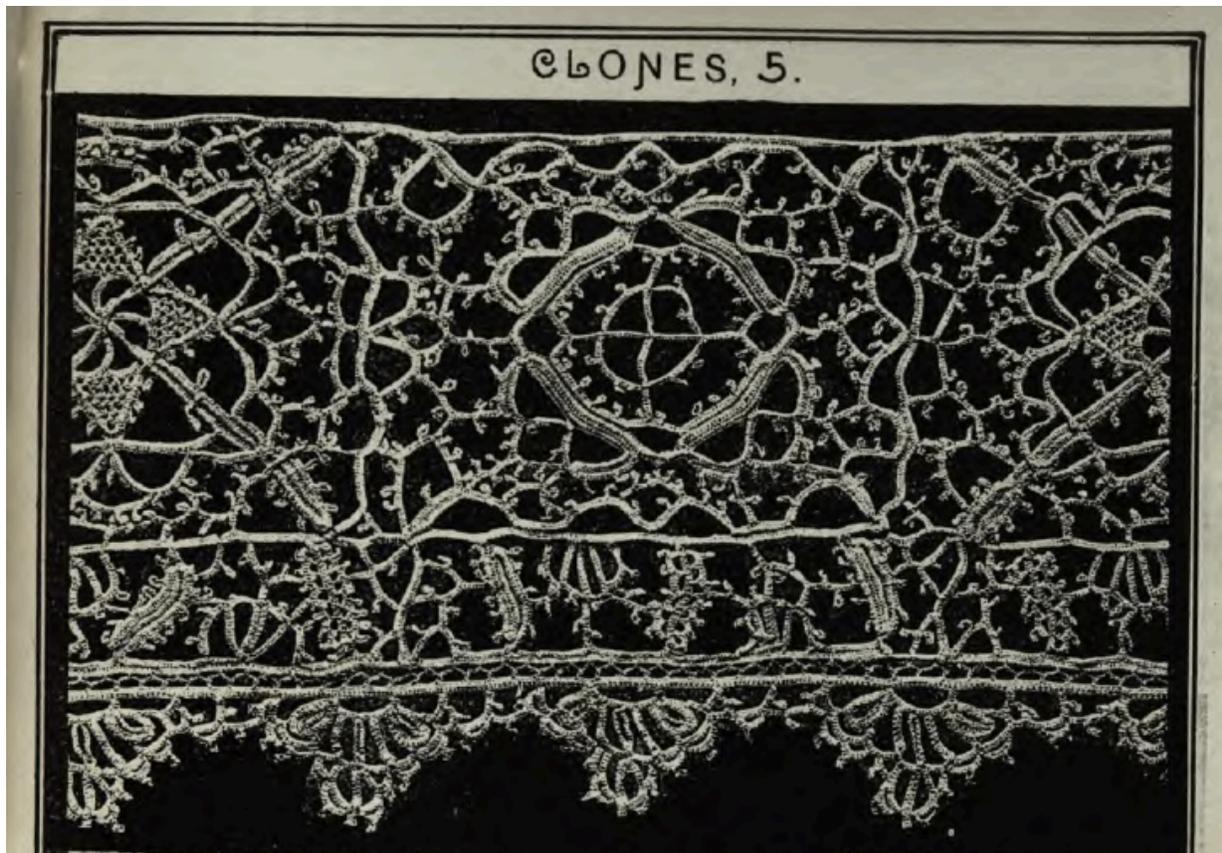


Figure 1-10 Photograph of 'Greek Lace' made in Clones, second half of the nineteenth century. In C. Harry Biddle and Ben Lindsey, *Mansion House Exhibition, 1883. Irish Lace, a history of the industry with illustrations and a map showing the districts where the lace is produced.* (London: 1883), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/mansionhouseexh00housgoog/page/n30/mode/2up> (Accessed November 30, 2021).



Figure 1-11 Clones lace in rose and shamrock square style (trellis pattern), Co. Cavan or Fermanagh, c. 1905-1910, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.52 1). Photo by the author.



Figure 1-12 Richard Redgrave, *The Sempstress*, 1846. A version of this painting, now lost, was displayed at the Royal Academy alongside Thomas Hood's poem in 1844. Collection of the Tate (Image released under Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND (3.0 Unported). Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/redgrave-the-sempstress-t14166> (Accessed November 30, 2021).



SPECIMENS FROM MR. PUNCH'S INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION OF 1850.
(TO BE IMPROVED IN 1851).

Figure 1-13 “Specimens from Mr. Punch’s Industrial Exhibition of 1850 (to be improved in 1851)” *Punch, or the London Charivari*, Vol. 18 (1850), 146. Source: Google Books, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=IwYDAAAIAAJ&pg=GBS.RA2-PA144&printsec=frontcover> (Accessed November 30, 2021).



Figure 1-14 James Brenan, *Committee of Inspection (Weaving, County Cork)*, 1877, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm. Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.

Chapter 2

The Mansion House and Cork Exhibitions of 1883

Imaginary Emily

1883 is the year in which I imagine Emily Anderson's career began. She would have been in her mid-twenties, and had probably been a student at the Cork School of Art for a couple of years by that point. Perhaps she had intended to become a teacher of drawing, or enrolled in the School because her mother was a painter, and had dreams for her, and she didn't want to disappoint. Or perhaps she had dreams of her own. Daniel Maclise had studied at the Cork School of Art, and he had died famous in London.³¹² Maclise had painted a portrait of Charles Dickens; Maclise had been friends with Charles Dickens.

But – I imagine – Emily's life changes course in the summer of 1883, when she stepped into the darkened Fine Art Gallery of the Cork Exhibition for a lecture on lace.³¹³ The lectures, two of them, had been announced in all of the newspapers, to be "Illustrated with Diagrams and enlarged Photographs of specimens of Lace projected by oxy-hydrogen light upon a screen."³¹⁴ She will look back on that moment in many years (in the next century) and remember with sharp accuracy the feeling of being surrounded by so many strangers' bodies, packed in lines like sardines on cane chairs, the intimacy of all that warm closeness in the manufactured midday dark. The dust motes in the few brave rays of light that found their way between the canvas tarpaulins smothering the glass ceiling. The smell of coal and the muffled hum of machinery and loud, proud men in the next building. And the man in a black coat pontificating on ornament while lantern slides glowed and wavered on a sheet stretched between two beams at the front of the room: Venetian Gros Point, Rose Point, lace from Bruges and Alençon. She won't recall exactly what he said, though he used a great deal of mystifying technical jargon; instead she was caught in the curves and blossomings, busy tracing the tracks of needle and thread through vines and along borders.

Mostly, she will remember the fizz of excitement that rose to rest under her ribcage, and stayed all afternoon. I could do this, she thought. I could make something beautiful, properly beautiful, and it could be serious. It would be taken seriously.

* * *

By the beginning of the 1880s, the Department of Science and Art had very little to do with Irish lacemaking, which was in a "serious decline."³¹⁵ Of the hundreds of students listed in the National Art Competition records for 1882, less than ten were from Ireland, and none of them received prizes

³¹² Daniel Maclise's *The Marriage of Aoife and Strongbow* hangs in the background of a Covid-19 relief concert for the Pete McVerry Trust, streamed live from the National Gallery of Ireland. Iarla Ó Lionáird and Steve Cooney, two meters apart, are singing about being far from home (May 19, 2020).

³¹³ I do not have any documentary evidence that Emily attended either of the lectures, though I think it reasonable to assume she did, given her status as a female student at the Cork School of Art. My imagining of this event is based on: James Brenan, "The Modern Irish Lace Industry," *Journal and Proceedings of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland* (1898): 69-103; Alan S. Cole, "The Irish Lace Industry, Lecture presented to the Society of Arts, February 27, 1889, including discussion," *Journal of the Society of Arts* (March 1, 1889): 317-328, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41327892>.

³¹⁴ "Technical Education: Lectures on Lacemaking," *Irish Examiner*, July 17, 1883, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

³¹⁵ Paul Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Ireland* (Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1992), 11.

for lace designs.³¹⁶ Irish lace was not mentioned in the Department's annual report for that year. However, by 1886 Emily Anderson was sending lace designs to the National Competition, and in an 1898 South Kensington National Competition Retrospective Catalogue, twenty-five of the forty lace designs reproduced were the work of Irish designers.³¹⁷ This is remarkable, given that the population of Ireland in relation to that of the rest of the United Kingdom. It is also worth noting that all of the designers in the retrospective catalogue were women.

In this chapter, I will focus on two events that occurred in 1883, the year that marks a shift in all aspects of the Irish lace industry, from the public perception and consumption of Irish lace to its production and design. The Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace, held in London in the summer of 1883, drew fashionable London's attention to Irish lace as both a luxury commodity and a way into the genteel philanthropy of 'buying Irish.' Janice Helland has used the Mansion House Exhibition to mark the beginning of a period of increased consumption of Irish lace, in the United Kingdom and abroad.³¹⁸ This is certainly the case, and I will also suggest that the increased media coverage and print discussion of Irish lace prompted by the exhibition provides an opportunity to begin thinking about the ideological significance of lacemaking in Ireland, and of Irish lacemakers themselves. The Cork Exhibition, also held during the summer and early autumn of 1883, would have a much larger impact on Irish lace, even though less of the actual product was on show. It was because of this event that an extensive study and reconstruction of the industry by the DSA began. Unlike the Mansion House Exhibition, the Cork Exhibition was held on Irish soil, and driven by Irish businessmen and cultural leaders. Compared to the Mansion House Exhibition, it was geographically peripheral, but still deeply connected to the sprawling bureaucracy of British industrial and design education. In this chapter, I will describe how the 1883 Cork Exhibition and the preceding events participated in the reconstruction of the lace industry – and, arguably, design as a practice – in Ireland, anticipating the technical instruction reforms at the turn of the century. I will also continue the line of analysis with which I began, untangling writings and images produced in relation to these Irish lace exhibitions to explore the conceptual and ideological nuances of lace and lacemaking in Ireland.

³¹⁶ Twenty-ninth report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1882, Cmnd. 3271, at 468-476. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

³¹⁷ John Fisher, ed., *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Retrospective Exhibition Held at South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675.

³¹⁸ Helland, "'Caprices.'"

2.1 The 1883 Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace

The Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace opened on the 25th of June, 1883, under the soaring barrel vaults of Mansion House's Egyptian Hall. It would remain open to the public for approximately two weeks, until July 7th. The exhibition was organized by a group of tradesmen, in a committee chaired by the Lord Mayor of London and Sir Phillip Cunliffe Owen, director of the South Kensington Museum. Though this committee of tradesmen certainly saw the exhibition as an opportunity to show off their wares and secure commissions, it also had a strong philanthropic thrust. An *Irish Times* article remarked that "unlike the majority of trade exhibitions [it] has a direct practical object in view ... to resuscitate an industry which will relieve an unoccupied population from distress."³¹⁹ The organizers hoped that the exhibition would raise the profile of Irish lace, and demonstrate the lace industry's potential for development. Additionally, they intended for all of the proceeds from the exhibition to be put towards the establishment of "a school for the supply of designs specially applicable to the manufacture of lace."³²⁰ However, I have yet to find any evidence that this occurred, or that proceeds from this exhibition funded later lace design education schemes.

The Duke and Duchess of Connaught performed the opening ceremony, expressing "the earnest hope that it might result in benefitting the lace industry of Ireland."³²¹ A wood engraving from *The Illustrated London News* depicts this scene, with the Duchess wearing a high, ruffled collar (fig. 2.1). Though it is impossible to tell from the image, she would likely have been wearing Irish lace, as a gesture of support to the Exhibition and to Ireland itself. During the Royal party's perambulations through the Exhibition, she purchased a Carrickmacross lace-edged handkerchief.³²²

The displays included Youghal, Carrickmacross, Limerick, Crochet, and Inishmacsaint lace. Loan collections from aristocratic lace enthusiasts took centre stage, surrounded by displays from drapers and milliners. Of these commercial displays, there were sixteen from London, and only one from Ireland, a clear indicator of where the market for such a prohibitively expensive material lay.³²³ The Irish Lace Dépôt seems not to have been represented. Businesses displayed their finest products; Messrs. Forrest and Sons of Dublin displayed lace and crochet, and Messrs. Howell and James presented a display of "fine specimens of nearly every kind of Irish lace," some of which had

³¹⁹ "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *The Irish Times*, June 26, 1883. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³²⁰ "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *The Irish Times*, June 26, 1883. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³²¹ "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *Penny Illustrated Paper*, June 30, 1883, 403. British Library Newspapers.

³²² "Exhibition of Irish Lace at the Mansion House," *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, 658. Gale Primary Sources.

³²³ "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *The Irish Times*, June 26, 1883. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

been purchased by the Queen.³²⁴ The centrepieces of the exhibition, placed on either side of the chairs provided for the Duke and Duchess of Connaught at the exhibition opening, were cases containing laces from the collections of the Princess of Wales and Princess Christian. The Princess of Wales' display consisted of Irish lace that had been given to her on the occasion of her wedding, twenty years earlier. This likely included Youghal needle lace trimmings, which had been presented to Alexandra in 1863 by the "women of Erin."³²⁵ However, the centrepiece of the case was a Youghal lace shawl, which was reproduced in *The Illustrated London News* on June 30th, 1883 (fig. 2.2). A large photograph of the shawl took up almost half of the back page, flanked by smaller images of other specimens and captioned: "Shawl of fine Irish Point Lace, presented to H.R.H. the Princess of Wales by Irish ladies about the time of her marriage. It was made at Youghal, and was pronounced by competent judges to be the finest specimen of work and the most elegant design then produced by Irish women."³²⁶ Though neither the caption nor article share information about the design, the shawl shares many characteristics with Brussels lace: the variety of filling stitches, combination of almost architectural borders with ribbons and organic floral motifs, and the uniform lightness of texture.

It is not surprising that the Princess of Wales, and her lace collection, would take the spotlight in such an exhibition. Historian Shawn McCarthy has demonstrated that Alexandra enjoyed a special relationship with Ireland almost from the moment she married into the British royal family.³²⁷ She was represented in the press as particularly sympathetic to the Irish cause, and purchased a great deal of Irish textiles and clothing. From her first visit to Ireland in 1863, papers commented on her wearing of Irish poplin.³²⁸ Years later, an 1899 issue of *Lady's Realm* referred to her as a "great connoisseur" of lace, noting that for the wedding of her eldest daughter in 1889, she purchased fine Irish crochet (which was, after the wedding, exhibited in Paris), Youghal needlepoint lace, and a needlepoint *tabliér* from Clones.³²⁹ Other members and associates of the royal family also

³²⁴ "The Mansion House Irish Lace Exhibition," *Penny Illustrated Paper*, June 30, 1883, 407. British Library Newspapers.

³²⁵ "The Princess of Wales' Wedding Presents," *The London Journal* Vol. 37 (April 4, 1863), 214, https://www.google.ca/books/edition/The_London_Journal_and_Weekly_Record_of/UnoAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=princess+of+wales+wedding+1863+london+journal&pg=PA214&printsec=frontcover.

³²⁶ "Specimens of Irish Lace at the Exhibition Held in the Egyptian Hall, Mansion House," *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, 668. Gale Primary Sources.

³²⁷ Shawn McCarthy, "The Happy Secret: Alexandra of Denmark and Ireland, 1863-1925," (PhD diss., Western University, 2017).

³²⁸ McCarthy, "Happy Secret," 124.

³²⁹ "Royal Trousseaux," *The Lady's Realm* Vol. 6 (May-October 1899), 574, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=LG4-AAAAYAAJ&pg=GBS.PA574&hl=en>.

took a lively interest in Irish lace; the exhibition included pieces lent by the Duchesses of Roxburghe and St. Albans, the Marchionesses of Bath and Waterford, and Viscountess Clifden.³³⁰

Not all of the Exhibition's patrons came from royalty, however. The other specimens of Youghal lace reproduced on the back of *the Illustrated London News* were from the collection of Mabel Morrison (1847-1933). Referred to in most publications as Mrs. Alfred Morrison, she was a lace connoisseur and collector, based at Fonthill, in Wiltshire, England. A Youghal lace flounce from her collection was exhibited in the Hayward's display, and reproduced in the Exhibition catalogue (fig. 2.3). It was likely commissioned through Hayward's, and the *Illustrated London News* article notes that it was an exact copy of an antique *point de Metz* flounce from her collection.³³¹ In fact, it is a copy of a seventeenth century *point de Venise a brides* flounce, which was reproduced in Alan Cole's 1875 *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace*.³³² Below the Princess of Wales' shawl in *The Illustrated London News* was an image of the handkerchief produced to match the flounce (fig. 2.2). It is unclear who adapted the design to fit the handkerchief, though it may have been Morrison herself. She was an established collector that sought out specimens of lace from all over the world; a 1903 article detailing highlights of her "well known" collection lists lace from Venice, Honiton, Ireland, Russia, Brussels, and Turkey, among other places, and notes that she "has in many cases supplied designs, or suggestions for design" to lacemaking centres.³³³ A Youghal lace apron, now in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks, also exhibits the same pattern, modified to fit its shape.³³⁴ The other two images reproduced on the same page are also copies of antique lace, made at Youghal:

³³⁰ "Exhibition of Irish Lace at the Mansion House," *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, 658. Gale Primary Sources.

³³¹ "Exhibition of Irish Lace at the Mansion House," *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, p. 658. Gale Primary Sources.

³³² Alan Cole, *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace: with notes on the history of lace-making and descriptions of thirty examples* (London: Chiswick Press, 1875), plate No. 8., <https://archive.org/details/AncientNeedlepoint>. Pat Earnshaw has suggested that the NMI catalogue wrongly identifies the apron as a copy from antique Venetian lace, and it is more likely to be Point de France (*Youghal and Other Irish Laces*, 2). However, Cole points out that during this period lace-makers in Venice and Alençon were in direct competition and making very similar work, many of the latter having been transplanted from Venice in order to revive the French lace industry (Cole, *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace*, n.p.).

³³³ Margaret Jourdain, "Lace in the Collection of Mrs. Alfred Morrison at Fonthill," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 2:4 (June 1903), 95-103, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/855655>. Morrison's other needlework-related activities also suggest she may have engaged in lace design. In 1875, three years after its founding, Morrison became a council member for the Royal School of Art Needlework in London, for which William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and other prominent designers of the day provided designs (Caroline Dakers, *A Genius for Money* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 243. ProQuest Ebook Central). An 1882 book recounting a tour through the homes of collectors and designers, notes that she designed the wallpaper for one of the rooms in the house she shared with Alfred Morrison at Carleton House Terrace in London (Mary Eliza Joy Hawels, *Beautiful Houses: Being a Description of Certain Well-known Artistic Houses* (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1882), 59, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044033357393>).

³³⁴ An 1881 report on a lace exhibition held at Hayward's, in London, references an apron in lacet point which was a copy of a "fine specimen of point de Venise à brides picotées," both in Morrison's collection ("Local Exhibition of Ancient Lace," *Nottinghamshire Guardian* May 13, 1881, 4. British Library Newspapers).

a lappet, made for a Mrs. Bolckow after “a piece of very old point lace” belonging to Sir William Drake, and a piece of trimming, also copied from a piece of lace in Drake’s collection.³³⁵

2.1.1 Lace in print

That such large, highly-detailed images of lace from the Exhibition were published on the back cover of *The Illustrated London News* is, in itself, worthy of further consideration. Unlike a length of fine silk, or a parcel of pearl buttons, lace is a luxury wearable that can be reproduced and disseminated quite effectively in print. Its complex patterning can be appreciated without touch, and without colour reproduction. In fact, black ink on white paper reproduces an image of white lace on a black background most faithfully. Some of William Henry Fox Talbot’s first ‘photographs,’ taken in the 1830s and 40s, depict scraps of lace, their small-scale, detailed patterning the perfect opportunity to test and display his early, experimental method’s ability to capture a crisp image (fig. 2.4). Benefitting from the same sharp contrast of positive and negative space, the lantern slides that Alan Cole used to illustrate his lace lectures – which I will discuss in the next chapter – turned priceless collections of antique lace into flickering shadows on a screen – a ‘picture show’.

A less-privileged woman poring over images of Youghal lace on the back page of *The Illustrated London News* might not be able to experience and enjoy the fall of soft lace over her wrists or around her shoulders. But the Mansion House Exhibition’s display of white laces, pinned flat on dark backgrounds in glass cases, indicates that lace was understood and appreciated at this time also as a visual phenomenon. As such, illustrated material relating to this and other displays of lace are important sources in the study of lace during this period. They indicate that although *consumption* of handmade lace was limited to the wealthy, its *audience* was extensive. Framed as a ‘picture,’ lace could be viewed more widely, and folded into discussions about art, design, and ornament.

These images also have their own materiality. Illustrations from periodicals found their way into scrapbooks, lined dresser drawers, were framed and hung on walls.³³⁶ Pictures of lace were not limited to white lace photographed on a black background, either; relatively accurate, though sketchy,

³³⁵ “Specimens of Irish Lace at the Exhibition Held in the Egyptian Hall, Mansion House,” *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, p. 668. Gale Primary Sources. Sir William Drake (1817-1890) was a British collector of nineteenth century prints and fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. See: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG85341>.

³³⁶ Brian Maidment argues that the desire for images to be used in scrapbooks contributed to the expansion of illustration in early nineteenth-century British periodicals. See: Brian Maidment, “Scraps and Sketches: Miscellaneity, Commodity Culture and Comic Prints, 1820-40”, *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* Vol. 19 No. 5 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.462>. For images of nineteenth-century women’s scrapbooks, some containing women’s fashion, see: Alexis Easley, “Scrapbooks and Women’s Leisure Reading Practices, 1825-1860,” *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies* Vol. 15 No. 2 (2019), <https://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue152/easley.html>.

lace adorned the dresses of beautiful models and aristocratic women in the pages of fashion periodicals such as *Lady's Pictorial* and *Queen*.³³⁷ Handmade lace was a synonym for wealth and privilege. But it was also the highest test of a skill that all women were expected to practice – needlework – and so examination of these images may have been, for some, an expression of ‘professional interest,’ predicated on understanding, from the inked lines, a complex and three dimensional pattern.

A woman of lesser means might have amassed a collection of lace, like Mabel Morrison’s, but in paper facsimile. Perhaps it was housed in a scrapbook, rather than silk lined boxes, with each item painstakingly labelled and any relevant snippets of text pinned to the facing page. *The Queen Lace Book*, published in 1874, encouraged women with collections of small lace specimens to tack them into an album of black-glazed paper pages – it is not difficult to imagine the same being done with images of lace.³³⁸ Such a papery lace collection may be a product of my own speculation, but it remains that a lack of access to purchasing handmade lace or visiting lace exhibitions did not preclude an active and informed interest in lace, a knowledge of what it looked like, and where it came from. I will return to this discussion of lace and print culture later on, in relation to the *Penny Illustrated Paper’s* ‘coverage’ of the event.

2.1.2 The Mansion House Exhibition Catalogue

The Mansion House Exhibition’s heavily-illustrated exhibition catalogue also participated in this dissemination of lace beyond the confines of the exhibition. In doing so, it both documented the nature and quality of the exhibits on display, and propagated a distinctly British, and colonial, perspective on the craft – and craftswomen – in question. The catalogue included an essay by C. Harry Biddle (1846-1912) of Hayward’s, an apparel company in London, and Ben Lindsey (d. 1893), of the Irish Lace Dépôt. The *Illustrated London News* coverage of the event refers to Biddle, Honorary Secretary of the Mansion House Committee, as “the labouring oar,” a source of knowledge and connections, and credits him with the idea for the exhibition, which he successfully pitched to the Lord Mayor of London.³³⁹ As a lace expert and senior figure at Hayward’s, he may have been involved with the production of Mabel Morrison’s Youghal lace, which was likely commissioned through the company. Ben Lindsey also possessed a great deal of industry knowledge, as well as

³³⁷ See: Helland, “‘Caprices.’”

³³⁸ *The Queen Lace Book* (London: published by the offices of ‘The Queen,’ 1874), 38.

³³⁹ “Exhibition of Irish Lace at the Mansion House,” *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, 658. Gale Primary Sources.

geographical proximity to the centres of production. He had been operator of the Irish Lace Depot since 1847, and had seen it through the period of decline that the Mansion House Exhibition sought to put to an end.³⁴⁰ However, Lindsey's co-authorship does not necessarily lead to an 'Irish perspective' on the lace industry. He was firmly ensconced in the networks of British philanthropy as practiced by the Irish Industries Association and others. As such, Biddle and Lindsey's catalogue represents the perspective of the concerned, philanthropic British man of business.

Prefaced by a map of lacemaking districts in Ireland (fig. 2.5), Biddle and Lindsey's essay outlines brief histories of the various Irish laces on display at the Exhibition, noting that all of them have been founded by philanthropists, with the exception of the lace industry in Limerick. With only brief descriptions of technique, and little discussion of design, or of typical motifs and iconography, the catalogue instead appeals to the reader's knowledge of Ireland's struggles throughout the nineteenth century. The authors make several references to the Famine years of 1846-1848, noting that all of the lace industries with the exception of Limerick and Carrickmacross, were founded at that point.³⁴¹

Biddle and Lindsey are surprisingly honest about the quality of work on show; and their matter-of-fact tone echoes their opening statement that the exhibition is meant to highlight the potential of the Irish lace industry rather than show off its successes. They write that in Limerick, Cork and Ardee "the work has so far degenerated as to be of little market or trade value," and that in Carrickmacross and Clones, "there has been little or no improvement for years."³⁴² The images included in the catalogue show this to be the case. The lack of sophistication in design and execution is particularly noticeable in the samples of Carrickmacross and Limerick lace, not only because they are easier to photograph clearly, but because they tend to bear larger scale, clean-edged designs in which it is easier to spot the defects which would have been immediately evident to a DSA-trained and informed eye. Most of these show cramped, unimaginative patterns, with small inconsistencies and asymmetries in construction. Lack of consistency in either drawing or following the patterns is particularly evident in the half scroll motifs on both the Carrickmacross and Limerick specimens reproduced on the first plate of the exhibition catalogue (fig. 2.6). The scrolls vary in width and proportion. In both designs they awkwardly interrupt, rather than accentuate, an undulating border. The ornament on the specimen of Limerick lace is particularly compressed, with very little breathing

³⁴⁰ Janice Helland, "Caprices," 214.

³⁴¹ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 4.

³⁴² Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 10.

space between motifs, and the upward thrust of the bunches of flowers are curtailed by the straight line of static, and disproportionately large, groups of leaves. In the next chapter's discussion of the pattern reform that occurred in the years following 1883, I will show how such characteristics were highlighted and remedied.

Biddle and Lindsey's discussion of Inishmacsaint and Youghal lace is more positive. The Countess Spencer had commissioned from Forrest and Sons a copy of a seventeenth-century *Point de Venise* lace, in Inishmacsaint needlepoint, earlier in the year, and given them permission to display it at the Exhibition.³⁴³ They refer to Miss Keane's school, in Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, which produces some very fine Inishmacsaint lace and is "deserving of more encouragement than it has hitherto received."³⁴⁴ Mabel Morrison's Youghal lace flounce they describe as "magnificent," a sentiment echoed in relation to all Youghal lace in the newspaper coverage.³⁴⁵ The Princess of Wales' Youghal lace shawl, and the flounce and handkerchief commissioned by Mabel Morrison, received glowing reviews in newspaper coverage of the event. A writer for *The Irish Times* praised a specimen of Youghal lace in the Forrest and Sons display as "one of the finest in the whole exhibition, both in design and work."³⁴⁶ However, this praise is tempered by the fact that the same newspaper, the day before, had noted that connoisseurs of lace would be disappointed to find that there were no examples of antique English and continental laces on display with which to compare and contrast the contemporary Irish specimens.³⁴⁷

This lack of comparative material is echoed in the exhibition catalogue. The above critique of the Limerick and Carrickmacross specimens is my own; beyond mention of the need for better designs and art education, Lindsey and Biddle are largely silent on the strengths and weaknesses of each variety of lace, on how exactly they might be improved. In fact, they write that it is "the public" who must now "judge the various productions by their merits."³⁴⁸ However, despite this ostensible unwillingness to take the role of educators of taste, Lindsey and Biddle are still contributing to an educational initiative. Two aspects of the Exhibition in particular point to its didactic role. Lindsey curated a small collection of laces, in a single case, meant to show how lace had developed over time in Ireland. They ranged from a seventeenth-century "scrap of old discoloured lace" which had been

³⁴³ "Irish Lace Exhibition in London," *Freeman's Journal*, March 10, 1883. British Library Newspapers.

³⁴⁴ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 8.

³⁴⁵ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 9.

³⁴⁶ "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *The Irish Times*, June 26, 1883. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³⁴⁷ "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *The Irish Times*, June 25, 1883. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³⁴⁸ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 10.

buried during the siege of Derry, to the first lace – a veil – made by Mary Steadman at Carrickmacross in 1820, to “a small butterfly, designed and worked by Anne Logan, which is a triumph of both taste, skill and delicacy.”³⁴⁹ This display points to the interest in classification and chronology that characterized art and design education in nineteenth-century Britain. In addition, the Director of the South Kensington Museum was one of the chairs of the Exhibition Committee, and the display cases holding the lace were “black and gold showcases of the South Kensington pattern.”³⁵⁰ These component of the Exhibition’s infrastructure indicate how, even without the comparisons with antique laces and visual analysis of design experts, the Mansion House Exhibition participated in the DSA and South Kensington Museum’s parsing and evaluating of design, a subject to which I will return later in this chapter.

Lindsey and Biddle were tradesmen; their essay highlights issues within the marketing and consumption of Irish lace that would remain at the forefront during the following decades. They tie the relative success of the lace industries in Inishmacsaint and Youghal directly to the intervention of business, rather than philanthropy, and market demand. In both cases, and using exactly the same phrase, the authors refer to “irregularity and uncertainty of orders” as a hindrance to the industries during the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century.³⁵¹ However, in both cases, business intervened. In 1869, Inishmacsaint lace found favour with a lace dealer who then proceeded to order steadily from the workers,³⁵² and in 1868 a businessman arranged to buy up all of Youghal’s lace production each year.³⁵³ These business arrangements are what allow production and quality to increase, while also being a great encouragement to the workers. Lindsey and Biddle’s essay ends with an exhortation for “trade” to step up and second the efforts of the exhibition’s patrons, asserting that it is “[the] agency *best* calculated to advance a cause such as this.”³⁵⁴ They also take an optimistic view on the relationship between hand-made and machine-made lace, arguing that machine lace has more to lose than to gain from the decline of handmade lace. The upper echelons of society purchasing and wearing high quality, well-designed ‘real lace,’ will only raise the demand for cheaper approximations in machine lace.³⁵⁵ Finally, they discuss an issue that will fade from view in the following decades, only to return with a vengeance in the early years of the twentieth century,

³⁴⁹ “Exhibition of Irish Lace at the Mansion House,” *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883, 658. Gale Primary Sources.

³⁵⁰ “The Irish Lace Exhibition,” *The Irish Times*, June 26, 1883. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³⁵¹ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 8, 9.

³⁵² Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 8.

³⁵³ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 9.

³⁵⁴ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 11.

³⁵⁵ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 1.

an issue I will discuss in Chapter 5. The authors write that the new designs which they hope will emerge as more artists and designers become interested in the potential of lace in Ireland need to be protected by law.³⁵⁶ These designs will be useless to the workers if they are replicated elsewhere using cheaper labour and time-saving short cuts.

Though Lindsey and Biddle's common-sense discussions of 'trade' and 'the market' obscure the fact, their rhetoric is, like the philanthropic efforts of aristocrats such as Ishbel Aberdeen and Theresa Londonderry, deeply political. Their discussions of sales and product quality intrude on the homes of the Irish lacemakers, and comment on their morals and 'national character.' They quote a commentator on Clones lace, who states that lack of perfection in that lace is a result of the "natural carelessness of the poor Irish," giving this reason for the willingness to do quick, and thus inferior work, rather than citing grinding poverty as a perfectly good reason to prefer prompt, small payments to those that arrive after many months of labour on a more detailed, perfect work.³⁵⁷ They attribute "defects of taste" and other shortcomings to the lacemakers' training, which occurs "in the home with its laxity."³⁵⁸ This phrasing is carried over into at least one newspaper report on the exhibition, but further clarified in terms of class and region: "the *peasant* home with its laxity."³⁵⁹

Lindsey and Biddle conclude the exhibition catalogue by stating that the lace industry in Ireland has "taught the peasantry to see in their rulers their friends," and that the Mansion House Exhibition will revive this friendship, showing the Irish that "their friends," including the Lord Mayor of London and the Queen, are still willing to encourage and reward their effort.³⁶⁰ Not all of 'the Irish' were convinced, however. The Irish nationalist newspaper, *Freeman's Journal*, though approving of the initiative on the whole, commented wryly that: "if it were desirable to look for flaws in yesterday's proceedings, perhaps the Lord Mayor's allusions to the Exhibition being promoted to alleviate Irish distress would afford an opportunity. Big gatherings at the Mansion House and distinguished patronage of the lace exhibit will scarcely feed the famished families of the West of Ireland."³⁶¹

2.1.3 "The Best Irish Lace Exhibition: on an Irish Bride – bedad!"

³⁵⁶ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 11.

³⁵⁷ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 8.

³⁵⁸ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 10.

³⁵⁹ Emphasis mine. "The Irish Lace Exhibition," *The Irish Times* June 26, 1883, 7. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³⁶⁰ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 11.

³⁶¹ No Title, *Freeman's Journal* June 26, 1883, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

The Penny Illustrated Paper covered the Mansion House Exhibition on the Saturday following its opening, further suggesting both the wide appeal of lace and its link to British presence and policy in Ireland. The paper included three short articles and two, large format images relating to the exhibition. The only news story more heavily illustrated – with a centrefold wood engraving – was the Sunderland tragedy of earlier that month, during which 183 children had died in a theatre accident. The Exhibition’s coverage in *The Penny Illustrated Paper* is worth noting firstly because of its extent. Three separate mentions in text and two large images is a lot of space to give to what was essentially a medium-sized display of millinery, and indicates the social and cultural pull of its patrons, as well as the public interest in lace, and in supporting Ireland through industry. It also points to a particular framing of Irish lace and lacemakers as a synecdoche for the relationship between Britain and Ireland, one that will become increasingly prevalent in the next decades, and which I will explore further in Chapter 3.

The first image shows two women at a lace pillow, working on a piece of bobbin lace (fig. 2.7). The Exhibition catalogue makes no mention of bobbin lace; indeed, such lace was not commonly made in Ireland at the time.³⁶² Instead, this is a stock image of English lacemakers, used to evoke *the idea* of lacemaking and lacemakers rather than to represent a specific worker or workshop. It is, in fact, a reprint of a wood engraving published in *The Illustrated London News* in April of 1882, on a page titled “Lace.” Labelled “The Makers,” it was paired with an image of a bride in white lace, a servant fussing over her and two other women watching her with smiling faces (fig. 2.8). This second image was captioned “The Wearer,” and together the two formed a gentle social commentary. However, after the cartoons of the mid-nineteenth century, inspired by Thomas Hood’s *Song of the Shirt* (1843), these images barely seem to be ‘making a point’ at all. Unlike the sickly, fainting seamstress in the famous *Punch* cartoon ‘The Ghost in the Looking Glass,’ the – likely English – lacemakers in their charming cottage with flower pots on the windowsill look well fed and happy.³⁶³ The illustration reproduced in *The Penny Illustrated Paper* is thus twice removed from the reality of Irish lacemaking at the time of the Mansion House Exhibition. The image seems more concerned with a romanticized notion of the Irish lace industry – a scene of women in a cottage –

³⁶² Though there were scattered bobbin lace industries in Ireland at the time of the Famine - the bobbin lace industry in Headford, County Galway, employed “several hundred” lacemakers in 1847 (Fiona Harrington, “Curator’s Foreword,” in *The Space Between: an international exhibition of contemporary handmade lace curated by Fiona Harrington for the Headford Lace Project*, 5 (Published by the Headford Lace Project, 2020).

³⁶³ ‘The Ghost in the Looking Glass,’ a cartoon by John Tenniel published in *Punch* on June 4, 1863, shows a woman trying on a full-skirted gown in front of a large mirror, and catching a glimpse in the reflection of the seamstress who made it, swooning from exhaustion and hunger.

than with the reality of Irish life or material actuality of the textile. As a repurposed ‘stock image,’ it also suggests that the lacemaker’s body and occupation could be made to function as a symbol, as part of a code.

The second lace image published in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* on June 30th, 1883 is more explicit in its use of the lacemaker – and this time, the *Irish* lacemaker – as symbol in a visual code. It adopts the idea of lace, and of the lacemaker herself, into a ‘humorous’ narrative that functions as a metaphor for the relationship between Britain and Ireland (fig. 2.9). A young woman ensconced in lace, from her two-tiered, lace-edged skirt to her shamrock topped veil, peers coyly out at the viewer, accompanied by a caption reading: “The Best Irish Lace Exhibition: on an Irish Bride – bedad!” The accompanying text features a character called ‘The Showman,’ speaking in an exaggerated ‘stage Irish’ accent, recommending a trip to the Mansion House exhibition: “most illigant ye will find the beautiful specimens of Irish industry and skill...”³⁶⁴ The Showman goes on to suggest that even better than the Mansion House display is the sight of Irish lace worn by an Irish bride, describing this idealized woman as “purty,” “sweet,” with a “soft brogue,” a “blue-eyed colleen.”³⁶⁵

Here, the Showman neatly pivots from a discussion of lace exhibitions to one about ‘The Irish Difficulty’...or perhaps that is what he was talking about all along. He writes that “the Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace may be all very well for ‘your sisters and your cousins and your aunts’; but I counsel every English Benedick who would study Irish lace to perfection to pack up his portmanteau and make for the Cork Exhibition...he will meet more than one witching Irish Beatrice.”³⁶⁶ The Showman masculinizes the – English – reader, while painting a picture of an idealized Irish woman, and of Ireland itself, feminized. Referencing Shakespeare’s comedy *As You Like It*, in which the argumentative Beatrice and Benedick are tricked into falling in love, he uses a trip to see the lace at the Cork Exhibition as a setting for a humorous courtship between England and Ireland, one that will ultimately end in marriage: the lace-clad “colleen,” Ireland, submitting to her English Benedick’s rule in exchange for care and protection. This, the Showman says, is his “oft-repeated solution of the Irish Difficulty.”³⁶⁷ He concludes with doubt as to whether or not “Mistress Erin will receive this bold hint,” though he is assured that the support for their craft shown at the Mansion House Exhibition will give Irish women a reason to feel kindly towards England.³⁶⁸ The

³⁶⁴ Codlin, “The Showman,” *The Penny Illustrated Paper* June 30, 1883, 413. British Library Newspapers.

³⁶⁵ Codlin, “The Showman,” 413.

³⁶⁶ Codlin, “The Showman,” 413.

³⁶⁷ Codlin, “The Showman,” 413.

³⁶⁸ Codlin, “The Showman,” 414.

cartoon and its accompanying text blur the line between the living, lace-making women of Ireland and the nebulous, allegorical notion of ‘Mistress Erin,’ or Ireland itself. In doing so, it references the stock character Hibernia, used in nineteenth-century political cartoons in satirical periodicals such as *Punch* to symbolize Ireland. Hibernia was pictured as a beautiful, young, and passive girl, often seeking protection in the strong embrace of Britannia, symbolizing a powerful and matronly Britain (fig. 2.10). She was also often contrasted with a violent and animalistic male character symbolizing Irish political unrest: Paddy.³⁶⁹ As such, the lacemaker elides with Hibernia as a symbol of a biddable and ultimately acceptable version of Ireland, ready to seek guidance from British power – whether symbolized by Britannia or, in the case of the *Penny Illustrated Paper* cartoons, ‘her English Benedick’.³⁷⁰

In the next chapter, I will return to this use of lace, and referencing of the lace industry, as a means to feminize Ireland in discussions of the country’s role in the United Kingdom, and the British Empire more broadly. I have already discussed how philanthropic projects, such as lacemaking industries, could confuse the root causes of poverty, focusing on, as Lindsey and Biddle put it ‘teaching the peasants to see the rulers as their friends’ rather than questioning the role that those rulers play in creating oppressive and limiting circumstances. However, contemporary commentators also recognized the potential of these amazing displays of art and industry to overshadow and obscure other political issues altogether.

The Cork Exhibition, to which *The Penny Illustrated Paper*’s cartoon directs the reader, was in session in Cork during the same summer as the Mansion House Exhibition. As the Showman points out, it also featured a display of Irish lace. A *Weekly Irish Times* cartoon of May 1883, this time in sole reference to the Cork Exhibition, draws out another political resonance in such a display of art and industry, powered by the logic (and resources) of the South Kensington System. The cartoon features a top-hatted man leading a woman with a distaff and cornucopia labelled ‘abundance,’ and a boy carrying a book titled ‘Science and Art,’ towards the Cork Exhibition, which sprouts with flags bearing slogans such as ‘Work for All’ (fig. 2.11). Vera Ryan suggests that the man striding towards

³⁶⁹ For more on the Irish in political cartoons, see: L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels* (London and Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Michael De Nie, *The eternal Paddy: Irish identity and the British press, 1798-1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

³⁷⁰ In his analysis of Sydney Owenson’s 1806 novel *The Wild Irish Girl*, Joep Leerssen points out that this story of romance between an Englishman and ‘exotic’ Irish girl is standard in Irish literature of the nineteenth century, and also creates a situation in which the woman will “convert, indeed to seduce, [the man] into a more appreciative attitude [towards Ireland]” (Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: patterns in the historical and literary representation of Ireland in the nineteenth century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 36).

the Exhibition Hall, following the ‘Science and Art’ guidebook and pursuing ‘work for all,’ is James Brennan who, beginning with the Cork Exhibition of 1883, would become a key player in the ‘renaissance’ of Irish lace.³⁷¹ The jaunty group bypasses a group of men, one of whom holds a pamphlet bearing the words ‘The Great Reform Bill 150 Clauses.’ The central figure in the group bears the distinctive facial profile of Joseph Biggar, M.P. for Cavan and famous at the time for his filibustering and obstructionism in aid of land rights in Ireland. The caption below reads: “*Pat to the Leaguers: Oh! The back of my hand to ye! I’m on another tack now altogether!*”³⁷²

The cartoon emphasizes the Cork Exhibition’s optimism and faith in industry. The man in the top hat is giving the back of his hand to the men on the other side of the crossroads, representing the Land League, and the – often violent – fight for tenant’s rights. Instead, he pursues what the cartoon’s explanatory text describes in glowing terms as “science and art and peace and industry.”³⁷³ The *Illustrated London News* announced the Cork exhibition with the same celebration of this ‘new path’: “In that Southern City, where also agrarian crime and disorder have been suppressed, all classes are heartily co-operating in organizing an exhibition...”³⁷⁴ Ireland, this cartoon suggests, is shifting its attention from political maneuvering and conflict with Britain (‘her British Benedick’), to moving forward into a bright, industrial future (and a peaceful relationship with her British suitor).

However, there is a counter-narrative here that the cartoon cannot entirely obscure. At the same time that it celebrates the notion that ‘Irish feeling’ is focused on the Cork Exhibition – and the forward march of art and industry that it represents – it recognizes the existence and reality of the conflict, unrest, and ultimately violence caused by systemic rural inequality. In a similar manner, the ‘Irish Bride’ cartoon renders Ireland humorous and unthreatening by representing the country as a lace-bedecked ‘colleen’ resisting her suitor’s advances, in doing so revealing anxiety about whether Ireland ever will accept Britain’s protection and dominance. Both instances are a reminder that there was a reason the Irish lace industry had risen to prominence: the Famine, exacerbated by poor land management, irresponsible landlordism, poverty, and *laissez-faire* governance. Lindsey and Biddle write that the Mansion House Exhibition might ‘revive the friendship’ between Ireland and Britain precisely because that ‘friendship’ was flagging, and it had been enforced by Britain from the beginning.

³⁷¹ Ryan, *Made in Cork*, 39.

³⁷² “Our Cartoon,” *Weekly Irish Times*, June 16, 1883, 4. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³⁷³ “Our Cartoon,” *Weekly Irish Times*, June 16, 1883, 4. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

³⁷⁴ “London: Saturday June 30, 1883,” *Illustrated London News* June 30, 1883, 646. Gale Primary Sources.

I will now cross the Irish sea to visit the Cork Exhibition: that celebration of ‘science and art and peace and industry,’ bristling with flapping pennants and overflowing with abundance. It is here that Alan Cole, lace expert and representative of the South Kensington Museum, enters the scene. In Chapter 3, as I discuss Cole’s role in the ‘renaissance’ of Irish lace, exploring it primarily through his reports, lectures and newspaper articles, I will continue to keep this notion of the counter-narrative, or under-story, close at hand. Like the cartoon of the coy Irish bride, enveloped in filmy white, Cole’s writings – and indeed the whole endeavour to transform the lace industry in Ireland, dreamed up in 1883 – are not just about lace.

2.2 The Cork Industrial Exhibition of 1883

The Dublin Industrial Exhibition of 1882 inspired both Cork and Limerick to host their own Industrial Exhibitions in 1883.³⁷⁵ The Cork Exhibition of Manufactures, Arts, Products and Industries was organized by a committee that included the Earl of Bandon, the Mayor of Cork, James Brenan of the Cork School of Art, and the brewing magnate L.A. Beamish. Housed in a series of repurposed buildings on Albert Quay, in the centre of Cork City, it featured displays ranging from farming machinery to food to painting to hosiery (fig. 2.12). Lace was only a small part of the programme.

But Emily Anderson was almost certainly there, in her capacity as a student at the Cork School of Art, and as local invested in the opportunity and excitement of such an event. Both she and her sister Elizabeth exhibited work in the Exhibition’s Fine Arts section, which allowed amateur artists and professionals alike to display and sell a dizzying array of production from woodworking and watercolours to painted china. Emily, who would have been in her mid-twenties at the time, displayed nine pieces, all of which were listed under the heading ‘Hand Painted China, Terracotta, Porcelain, and Chrystoleum Work.’³⁷⁶ The titles are eclectic, especially when one imagines their contents painted on ceramics: ‘Wayside Weeds’ £1 5s., ‘Head of Mozart’ 15s., ‘Ladies Hunting – Etching from a MS. of the 13th Century’ £1 1s., ‘Head of Raphael’ 15s., ‘Ladies Hawking’ £1 1s.,

³⁷⁵ Juliana Adelman states that there is no evidence the Limerick Exhibition went ahead (Juliana Adelman, *Communities of Science in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 128), however, Limerick still requested Alan Cole to deliver lectures on lacemaking in the summer of 1883, and Matthew Potter states that “Alan Cole’s lecture tour included Limerick” (Potter, *Amazing Lace*, 51).

³⁷⁶ Chrystoleum (or Crystoleum) work refers to a method of hand-painting photographs on a glass surface, popular in the late-nineteenth century. See: E.E. Cadett, “Crystoleum Painting,” *Scientific American* Vol. XLIX No. 4 (July 28, 1883): 55, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=7bkzAQAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA54&hl=en>.

‘Dessert Plate – Violets and Daisies’ £1 1s., ‘Head of Grattan’ 12s. 6d., ‘Head of Daniel O’Connell’ 12s. 6d., and ‘Tête a tête tea service, 8 pieces’ £5 5s.³⁷⁷

Elizabeth displayed work in the same category: ‘Betty’ and ‘An Immigrant’s Sister,’ both of which were listed at 10s.³⁷⁸ Betty is, of course, a short form of Elizabeth, and I imagine the eponymous submission to be a plate painted with her own, slightly mischievous face, which I’ve seen in photographs sent to me by members of her family. They call her ‘the artist of the family,’ which is surprising to me, given this early display of Emily’s extensive (and in this instance more economically valuable) artistic output, and continuing career in design.³⁷⁹ Perhaps Emily was the confident and competent artist of the two, and Elizabeth the genius, producing brilliant work in fits and starts. Or perhaps she was simply memorialized that way after her early death, just ten years later at the age of thirty-seven.³⁸⁰ Lizzie Perry, whose name would come to be associated specifically with crochet lace design, also exhibited alongside Emily and Elizabeth: a dessert service designed on the theme of *Moore’s Irish Melodies*, a popular songbook published in ten volumes from 1807-1834. It was listed at £10 10s, and must have been quite something to behold if it shared any characteristics with the ornate illustrated covers often found on contemporary editions of the *Melodies*.³⁸¹

Though the Fine Art section, filled primarily with the work of local amateurs and students, might indicate that the Cork Exhibition was a parochial affair, this is certainly not the case. Manufacturers, inventors and producers from throughout Ireland and Great Britain, and as far away as New York displayed their wares. The Exhibition Catalogue, listing the displays categorized into sections A through K, is more than three hundred pages long. Historian of science Juliana Adelman notes that the trade journal *Irish Builder* spoke highly of the Cork Exhibition as an improvement upon the event held in Dublin the previous year.³⁸² No doubt it bolstered both the pride and the industry of the South of Ireland, but its effect on lacemaking in Ireland was transformational. Both Cork and Limerick requested that the DSA send a representative to lecture on lacemaking during their exhibitions.³⁸³ The Department responded by sending Alan Cole to give two lectures in each city,

³⁷⁷ *Cork Industrial Exhibition 1883 Official Catalogue* (Dublin: W. Leckie and Co., 1883), 284-288.

³⁷⁸ *Cork Industrial Exhibition 1883 Official Catalogue*, 287-288.

³⁷⁹ Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, phone, May 27, 2019.

³⁸⁰ Elizabeth Anderson’s date of death was May 20, 1893 (City of Cork Death Registry for 1893, 98, photocopy supplied by Patrick Nicholson).

³⁸¹ *Cork Industrial Exhibition 1883 Official Catalogue*, 284.

³⁸² Adelman, *Communities of Science*, 128.

³⁸³ Thirty-first report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1884, Cmnd. 4008, at xxv.

which marked the beginning of a long relationship between the South Kensington Museum's lace expert and the lace industry of Ireland.

Early in 1883, representatives of the Cork Exhibition Committee paid a visit to Colonel Donnelly, the Secretary of the DSA, requesting specimens from the South Kensington Museum be sent to the exhibition. In response, South Kensington sent six cases of objects from the museum collection, including metalwork and pottery.³⁸⁴ They also sent samples of antique Belgian, Flemish, French and Venetian lace, which were displayed in frames alongside the other artefacts.³⁸⁵ Even more importantly, Donnelly suggested to the Committee that they apply to the Department "to allow Mr. Alan S. Cole to deliver two lectures upon lace and lace making."³⁸⁶ Such a scheme, proposed by the Secretary of the Department himself, was sure to succeed; Alan Cole was promptly approved to attend the exhibition, and his lectures, given in the Fine Art Gallery of the Exhibition Hall were reportedly "very well attended."³⁸⁷

2.2.1 Alan Cole at the Cork Exhibition

Alan Cole (1836-1954) was a textiles expert employed by the South Kensington Museum. He was also heir to Britain's first family of industrial design, a son of Henry Cole, who had been instrumental in planning the Great Exhibition of 1851, establishing the DSA, and advocating for the establishment of the South Kensington Museum. With such a father, Alan Cole must have grown up surrounded by design, and it is no surprise that, likely in the mid-1870s, he secured a position at the DSA. From the first mentions of his name in Department reports, he seems to have specialized in lace. In 1878, he assisted the Director of the Science and Art Museum in Dublin to acquire a collection of specimens of antique lace, for which he also wrote a catalogue.³⁸⁸ This was a significant task; the 81 specimens of chiefly continental lace cost £145 18s. 9d.³⁸⁹ In 1881, he wrote the revised, third edition of the *Catalogue of Lace* at the South Kensington Museum, and also presented 'The Cantor Lectures on Lacemaking' to the Society of Arts in London, in April and May of that year.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁴ *Cork Industrial Exhibition, 1883: Report of the Executive Committee, Awards of Jurors, and Statement of Accounts* (Cork: Purcell and Co., 1886), 274.

³⁸⁵ "The Cork Exhibition," *Freeman's Journal*, 2 July 1883. British Library Newspapers.

³⁸⁶ *Cork Industrial Exhibition Report*, 274.

³⁸⁷ *Cork Industrial Exhibition Report*, 274.

³⁸⁸ See: Alan S. Cole, *Catalogue of Lace, with an introduction (Science and Art Museum, Leinster House, Dublin, Science and Art Department)* (Dublin: Printed by Alex. Thom, 1878).

³⁸⁹ Twenty-sixth report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1878-1879, Cmnd. 2384, at 650. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

³⁹⁰ See: Mrs. Bury Palliser, *Descriptive catalogue of the Collection of Lace in the South Kensington Museum. Third Edition, revised and Enlarged by Alan S. Cole, 1881* (London: George E Eyre and Williams Pottiswoode, 1881), <https://archive.org/details/>

By 1908, the editor of the luxury goods magazine *Connoisseur* referred to him as “the best known authority on Real Lace in the Kingdom.”³⁹¹

The two lectures that Alan Cole delivered at the Cork Exhibition in July 1883 were an important impetus for what Cole would later refer to in his 1888 catalogue of new Irish lace as the ‘renaissance’ of Irish lacemaking. The lectures were not, to my knowledge, published, but their syllabus-length titles give a clear idea of content. On Saturday, July 21, Cole lectured on:

Review of Methods of Making Lace; a Definition of Lace; the Three Classes of Lace—Needlepoint, Pillow, and Machine-Made Lace; Cork, Youghal, and other Irish Laces; Needlepoint Lace and its development, from Cut and Drawn work; Pillow Lace and its development from twisted and plaited threads; Machine-Made Lace; invention of Frame for knitting; Modifications of the Stocking Machine to make nets, and imitate patterns of hand-made Laces; observation of technical features of productions leads to an appreciation of methods of workmanship involved.³⁹²

And on Monday, July 23:

Review of Patterns produced in Lace. Design as a guide to the character of laces; principles deducible from designs; various works of art supply; means for making a historical review of patterns; original designs for lace; circumstances which seem to have led to the making of lace, and preparations of designs; early lace makers in Italy and Flanders; phases of design from 1560 to 1881; effects of skilled workmanship upon the inventiveness of pattern-makers, and *vice versa*; characteristics common to designs, worked by peasants in European countries; some account of the way in which designs were supplied and continue to be supplied to lace workers.³⁹³

Cole also provided an outline of their contents and impact on the industry in an 1889 lecture on ‘The Irish Lace Industry’ for the Society of Arts in London. Cole recounts how he used slides to compare contemporary Irish laces with the continental (Italian, Flemish, and French) models in which he could see their inspirations or prototypes. The Irish lace did not hold up well in comparison, and Cole’s evaluation was far from flattering. With the benefit of hindsight, he admitted rather sheepishly in his 1889 lecture that “comparisons, as Dogberry says, are odorous, and certainly those I ventured to make, together with the remarks they entitled me to offer, were found so in certain quarters.”³⁹⁴

Cole was fond of making literary references in his lace lectures, some of which are disarmingly

Palliser 1881; Alan Cole, *Cantor Lectures on the Art of Lace-Making*, by Alan S. Cole. Delivered before The Society of Arts, April and May 1881 (London: William Trowne, 1881), https://archive.org/details/Cantor_201606/page/n3/mode/2up.

³⁹¹ Edited by J.T. Herbert Baily, *Catalogue of the Daily Mail Exhibition of British and Irish Lace held at the Royal Horticultural Hall, Vincent Square, Westminster, March 9th-14th, 1908*.

³⁹² “Technical Education: Lectures on Lacemaking,” *Irish Examiner*, July 17, 1883, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

³⁹³ “Technical Education: Lectures on Lacemaking,” *Irish Examiner*, July 17, 1883, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

³⁹⁴ Cole, “The Irish Lace Industry,” 317.

humorous: the lacemaking beaver from Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* makes an appearance in one of his 1881 Cantor Lectures, and he muses on “[the] strange poem, which may not enlighten us much on the art of lace-making.”³⁹⁵

Though there were those who found Cole's comments to be insulting – or in his words, ‘odorous’ – Exhibition's Executive Committee seems, for the most part, to have agreed with him. Dr. W.K. Sullivan, President of Queen's College, Cork, approved of Cole's evaluation of the lace on display at the exhibition. His remarks in the Executive Report of 1886 are scathing: skill in needlework had been “thrown away” on “wretched patterns,” with larger items designed from patterns that were “fragmentary, meaningless, and incapable of giving full effect to the work.”³⁹⁶ He also, somewhat dramatically, called out the “evil influences,” of the motifs associated with Ireland: the shamrock, harp, wolfhound, and round tower.³⁹⁷ Mr. Bagwell, an MP from Clonmel, described the modern Irish work on display at both Mansion House and Cork as “a tragic spectacle [...] of patient labour and great manual dexterity wasted upon the elaboration of monstrosities.”³⁹⁸ He was so struck by this contrast that he proposed, along with Lady Waterford, a plan to reform the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework. However, it was James Brenan who would ultimately partner with Alan Cole to enact the change for which Cole called. Brenan later described the lectures in an almost mythologizing way in an 1897 lecture for the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland, painting a picture of logistical disaster which created a moment of peace for the two design experts to survey the collection together and hatch a plan for the reinvention of Irish lace.

According to Brenan's account, the first lecture went on without any issues, the glass roof of the Fine Art Gallery having been darkened for the lantern slide presentation by heavy tarpaulins. The second lecture was delayed by tarpaulin troubles. The day was windy and workers struggled to keep their balance and secure the tarpaulins; “...after an hour spent in fruitless efforts, and the appearance of a man's leg through the skylight, followed by a shower of glass, it was decided to postpone the lecture until the following day.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ By ‘Dogberry,’ Cole is here referring to the comical character from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Alan S. Cole, “Lecture IV. - Delivered Monday, May 9, 1881,” *Cantor Lectures on the Art of Lace-Making, by Alan S. Cole. Delivered before The Society of Arts, April and May 1881* (London: William Trousce, 1881), 39, https://archive.org/details/Cantor_201606/page/n3/mode/2up.

³⁹⁶ *Cork Industrial Exhibition, 1883*, 269.

³⁹⁷ *Cork Industrial Exhibition, 1883*, 264.

³⁹⁸ “Irish Lacemaking,” *Nottingham Evening Post* Wednesday, January 23, 1884, 2. British Library Newspapers.

³⁹⁹ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 77.

The dramatic postponement of Alan Cole's second lecture left the two men free for the afternoon, and they decided to view the Irish lace on display. Brennan recounts that they "noticed the excellence of the work, so far as the needle was concerned, and found it combined with poverty of design and very bad drawing."⁴⁰⁰ This evaluation mirrors W.K. Sullivan's comments, and Alan Cole made the same comments in his Society of Arts lecture years later. He stated that Irish lace was of particularly high-quality execution, that better-quality materials should be employed to match the workmanship, and that "its methods were suited to render a greater variety of patterns than those usually attempted."⁴⁰¹ By this he could mean two different things. It is possible that he refers to the excellence of technique upon which Brennan and W.K. Sullivan had also commented, indicating that such skill would allow for more complex and painstaking work than is usually expected of lacemakers. Cole could also be referring to the techniques of production that differentiated Ireland from other lacemaking centres. Limerick lace in particular was a feature of the Cork Exhibition lace displays; both Limerick and Carrickmacross lace were unique to Ireland at the time, and their use of machine-made net as a ground upon which to embroider and appliqué did allow for novel patterning.

In Brennan's retelling of that fateful afternoon, this was the moment when he and Cole hit upon the idea that propelled the Irish lace industry's transformation. They decided that the most important priority was to "improve the character of the design and the quality of the drawing," and in order to do so they would seek an audience with the convents that had displayed lace in the exhibition, to discuss the possibility of starting classes in design and drawing at these centres.⁴⁰² Many of the convents agreed. The DSA sent Alan Cole to visit prominent lacemaking centres in Belgium and France and learn how they functioned, so that he might bring this knowledge to Ireland, just as the Commission on Technical Instruction had done a couple of years before.⁴⁰³ It also gave £200 toward the purchasing of a set of lace samples for the Crawford Municipal School of Art.⁴⁰⁴ The Cork School of Art had been renamed after the death of its benefactor, Henry Crawford, in 1885, but was throughout the 1880s referred to interchangeably as the Crawford School of Art and Cork School of Art.⁴⁰⁵ In spring 1884, Cole and Brennan travelled to lace workshops and convents in the

⁴⁰⁰ Brennan, "The Modern Irish Lace Industry," *Arts and Crafts Society*, 77.

⁴⁰¹ Cole, "The Irish Lace Industry," 317.

⁴⁰² Brennan, "The Modern Irish Lace Industry," *Arts and Crafts Society*, 77.

⁴⁰³ 31st Report of the Science and Art Department, at xxv.

⁴⁰⁴ *Cork Industrial Exhibition, 1883*, 269.

⁴⁰⁵ See also: "History: Art School," Crawford Art Gallery, <https://crawfordartgallery.ie/history/> (Accessed December 6, 2021).

south of Ireland that were engaged with lacemaking at the time: Limerick, Killarney, Kenmare, Cork, Parsonstown, Cappoquin, Clonakilty, Kinsale, Drimoleague, and Youghal.⁴⁰⁶ Cole repeated his Cork Exhibition lectures, displayed “good examples of antique lace,” and discussed the importance of good design.⁴⁰⁷ The Cork Industrial Exhibition executive report, published three years later in 1886, notes that as a result of Cole’s visit, displays and lecture at the Exhibition, many convents applied to start affiliated branch classes of the Cork School of Art in their workshops, to gain teaching certification and teach drawing to local students, thus improving standards of design. The Poor Clares at Kenmare, Presentation Convent in Killarney, and Convent of Mercy in Kinsale formed branch classes in 1884.⁴⁰⁸ The Convent of Poor Clares in particular would become known for excellence in lace design; this is likely due to their early start in drawing instruction. By 1888, there were branch classes in more locations, including Tralee, Skibbereen, and Youghal.⁴⁰⁹

2.2.2 The branch classes

These branch classes, and the central hub of lace design programming at the Cork School of Art, were the most fruitful and enduring legacies of Alan Cole and James Brenan’s serendipitous stroll around the Cork Exhibition and first tour of the lacemaking centres of Ireland. Even before the Cork Exhibition closed, Brenan started “a small class of designers” within the art school, to prepare a group of students to make designs for the convents and branch classes that had not yet received the training to make their own.⁴¹⁰ Emily Anderson was almost certainly one of this first class of lace designers, as by 1886 she was already receiving prizes for her work.⁴¹¹ The students began by making drawings of the South Kensington Museum’s lace specimens on display at the Exhibition. South Kensington also granted the Exhibition Committee £200 to acquire lace specimens for the Cork School of Art’s own collection, selected by Alan Cole.⁴¹² The School published a catalogue of their lace collection in 1884.⁴¹³ Their training extended beyond mere aesthetic understanding and draughtsmanship, however; Brenan stressed the importance of knowing the “technicality of lace-

⁴⁰⁶ 31st Report of the Science and Art Department, at xxv.

⁴⁰⁷ *Cork Industrial Exhibition, 1883*, 275.

⁴⁰⁸ Thirty-third report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1886, C.4707, at 380. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online. See also: Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 11.

⁴⁰⁹ Ryan, *Made in Cork*, 12.

⁴¹⁰ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79; 31st Report of the Science and Art Department, xxv.

⁴¹¹ “Crawford Municipal School of Art,” *Irish Examiner* Wednesday September 1, 1886. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁴¹² *Cork Industrial Exhibition, 1883*, 269.

⁴¹³ Alan Cole, *Catalogue of Antique Lace* (Cork: Francis Guy, 1884).

making” and the “limitations of the material,” and some of the students learned how to make the types of laces that they were designing.⁴¹⁴

Seeing examples of well-designed contemporary lace, and of the historic laces from Italy, Belgium and France that were held as the highest standards of excellence, formed the backbone of lace design at the Cork School of Art and its branch classes. For obvious reasons, valuable laces from the South Kensington Museum – or, increasingly, private commissions from prize-winning designs – could not be toured around to each branch class. Here, lace’s suitability to photographic reproduction proved serendipitous. The South Kensington Museum had an in-house photographer, who photographed artefacts and artworks for educational purposes.⁴¹⁵ From 1868-1891, Isabel Agnes Cowper held this role, and so it is possible that many of the photographs from the South Kensington Museum that Cole circulated are her work. Some became lantern slides to illustrate his lectures, and some would have been produced in larger numbers and bundled into parcels shown to or sent out to the relevant training centres and designers. In 1883, Cole brought photographs of Queen Victoria’s lace collection to show at the various lace design classes, and in 1884 he supplied the Cork, Dublin and Belfast Schools of Art, as well as several convents, with a set of photographs from the South Kensington’s lace collection.⁴¹⁶ These photographs are, to the best of my knowledge, no longer extant, but they must have had a tremendous impact on the iconography and composition of Irish lace design during the 1880s.

A photograph taken by Lady Colomb in 1889 of six Poor Clares in their Kenmare Convent’s lacemaking workshop shows six women in a cluttered interior, lit by low sunlight streaming through a window behind them (fig. 2.13). The light bleaches out the contrast, rendering the white linen on their habits blindingly bright and obscuring the detail on their faces. One of them seems to be smiling. Scattered on the table in front of them are photographs of lace; they are large format and show a tremendous amount of detail in the contrast between white lace and black background. Even in Lady Colomb’s slightly out-of-focus photograph, one can make out the pattern on each specimen. The scene is posed, but it gives an indication of how the photographs would be used: they are propped up or lain on the table for closer inspection, and three of the nuns hold pencils as if they are

⁴¹⁴ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79. See also: Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 11.

⁴¹⁵ Erika Lederman, “Isabel Agnes Cowper: Still Life, 1880,” Victoria and Albert Museum, October 7 2019, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/caring-for-our-collections/isabel-agnes-cowper-still-life-1880> (Accessed December 4, 2021).

⁴¹⁶ 31st Report of the Science and Art Department, xxv-xxvi; Thirty-second report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1884-1885, C. 4352, at xxv-xxvi. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

sketching or tracing the images. One in particular is propped up in the foreground, facing away from the nuns and toward the photographer. It is ‘Plastron and Collar for a Dress,’ plate number one in Alan Cole’s *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (fig. 2.14). The plastron (ornamental bodice front) and collar were designed by one of the Poor Clares, likely M. Courtenay, who submitted a prize-winning design for a ‘ladies’ plastron and cuffs’ to an 1886 lace design competition.⁴¹⁷ They were also made at the convent, a double source of pride for a community who, at the time this photograph was taken, had only been involved with Cole and Brenan’s initiative for about five years. After such a short time, one of their designs had been selected to circulate throughout the country, educating those at other Irish lacemaking centres and representing the finest of Irish lace work in Cole’s 1888 publication.

With the Cork School of Art as a central hub, James Brenan travelled out to the branch classes each month to survey their work, and give them assignments and recommendations to complete before his next visit. Drawing classes were not limited to future lace designers, but were considered useful training for all workers. The Carmelite Convent at News Ross’s branch class, established in 1885 with Mr. Murphy of the Waterford School of Art as teacher, counted among its students nuns from the convent, children from the National School, and local gentry.⁴¹⁸ In their early years, some of the branch classes only taught ‘elementary drawing,’ only attempting lace design when the classes were more advanced, and, presumably, when the nuns teaching them had more experience. The Poor Clares at Kenmare held a class for boys in ‘geometrical drawing,’ and in 1890, the convent even considered starting an art school, one of the sisters having received her 3rd Class Art Master’s certificate.⁴¹⁹ Cole reports that some of the younger nuns at the Presentation Convent in Killarney were studying for their Art Master’s certificates as early as 1885.⁴²⁰ By 1891, 32 convents held classes for “drawing and ornamental design,” growing from twenty six the preceding year, and none at all, only eight years previously.⁴²¹

Training in drawing also had a direct impact on the performance of lacemakers who had little, if anything, to do with the process of lace design. Brenan recounts a conversation with a

⁴¹⁷ Cole, *Renaissance*, plate 1; Alan Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits to Convents, Classes, and Schools Where Lace-Making and Designing for Lace are Taught* [...] (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 3, <https://archive.org/details/IrishLace/mode/2up>.

⁴¹⁸ 33rd Report of the Science and Art Department, 383.

⁴¹⁹ Thirty-eighth report of the department of science and art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1891, C. 6393, at 31. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁴²⁰ 33rd Report of the Science and Art Department, 384.

⁴²¹ Thirty-ninth report of the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1892, C. 6721, at lv. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

lacemaking teacher in Kinsale, who had been taught to make lace many years earlier, as a child. She had never been taught to draw, and saw no value in teaching the girls in her care. Instead, she proposed to teach them using the method used when she was a child, which involved giving each child a piece of calico to “stab” with a needle, over and over again, in the outline of a pattern.⁴²² However, the girls in her class had been taught to draw, and Brenan reports – with a hint of triumph – that “she discovered that the children could follow a pattern rather better than she could.”⁴²³

The accessibility of the convent branch classes did allow for at least one student from a less-privileged background to rise to prominence. One of the nuns of the Kinsale Convent of Mercy, Mother Patrick, was an early graduate of the branch class formed there, and she in turn began to teach. Her most successful student was Cecilia Keyes (d. 1936). Born into poverty, possibly an orphan, and burdened with the social stigma of “lameness,” Keyes nonetheless excelled at the convent school.⁴²⁴ In 1897, she was granted a scholarship to study at the School of Art in South Kensington for three years, after which she designed patterns for the Convent of Mercy Industrial School in Kinsale for almost forty years.⁴²⁵ At the time of writing *The Irish Flowerers*, Elizabeth Boyle reported that many of her patterns and botanical drawings from this period were still archived in a girl’s high school in Kinsale; it was said locally that she sketched – and presumably designed patterns based on – “every flower in nature.”⁴²⁶

Though they were accessible to a wide range of students, the unusualness of convents filling the role of art schools did cause problems at times. In 1886, the Presentation Convents in Youghal and Tralee submitted grant applications for funds to build better workspaces for their art classes. The Treasury denied their requests because they were not able to comply with the rules of the grant, despite the fact that the Department was willing to make a special recommendation in their favour.⁴²⁷ Though Alan Cole’s report does not specify why the grant application was rejected, the DSA’s rules for grants are extensive, and specify among many other parameters that funds are for “Elementary Schools,” “Training Schools,” “Schools of Art and Art Classes,” that grants to teach girls should not be given unless the girls are also learning “English, Needlework, and Cookery,” and that building grants should be used “in aid of a new building, or of the adaptation of an existing building into a

⁴²² Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 80.

⁴²³ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 80.

⁴²⁴ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 48.

⁴²⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 48.

⁴²⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 48.

⁴²⁷ Thirty-fifth report of the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1888, C. 5279, at xliv. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

School of Art.”⁴²⁸ With these parameters in place, a convent teaching drawing to mostly girls, and looking to adapt a pre-existing space for better art instruction was at a serious disadvantage.

Though the branch classes emerged from an attempt to improve the quality of lace design in Ireland, they also grew to encompass a broader education in drawing and design. Alan Cole’s report for 1890 paints a picture of a burgeoning technical education movement, growing organically across Ireland’s south. In 1885, there were six convent classes with a total of 223 students; in 1890, only five years later, there twenty-six with 1132 students.⁴²⁹ By 1891, thirty-two convents held classes in drawing and ornamental design. The classes were not only numerous, but successful – in the 1890 DSA exams, ten of the convents “obtained higher percentage of success in Art than the average for the United Kingdom, both in the 3rd and 2nd grade examinations in Art”.⁴³⁰ Reflecting on these statistics, Cole reflected that they were a testament to the success of this “somewhat new departure” in technical education.⁴³¹

2.3 Conclusion: art for industry

The expanding design education system centred around the Cork School of Art was not without its detractors. The criticism offered by one student in particular – and its resulting rebuff by another – are indicative of a tension between centre and periphery, and between art and industry, that will remain relevant in the following chapters. In 1888, Russell Martin of the Cork School of Art, wrote an anonymous letter to *Southern Industry*, complaining that an education in art was useless to him; a waste of the many years spent at the School.⁴³² He complained with particular bitterness about lace design:

[A student] has one opening, however; he can enter the department for designing lace, where, if he be fortunate, he may gain a twenty pound prize for a year’s work; or his lace designs may sell, for a brisk demand has of late been created, owing largely to the meritorious exertions of the present master; yet it seems very doubtful if the results would be at all adequate to the amount of labour bestowed in acquiring the necessary proficiency. Lace designing is, doubtless, an excellent outlet for the benevolence of ladies who prefer the rôle of Lady Bountiful to that of Lady Clara de Vere de Vere, or it may serve to add a trifle to

⁴²⁸ Calendar and General Directory of Science and Art Department (Supplement to Thirty-fifth Report), 1888, C. 5246, at 16, 17, 20. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁴²⁹ 38th Report of the Department of Science and Art, lv.

⁴³⁰ 38th Report of the Department of Science and Art, lv.

⁴³¹ 38th Report of the Department of Science and Art, lv.

⁴³² Russell Martin, “Art in Cork: A Criticism, BY A STUDENT,” annotated by Matthew Holland with the name Russell Martin, heading “Southern Industry,” and date April 1888, newspaper clipping included in the Holland manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

one's income. But the question remains— What does the school do for the earnest votary of art, who has given many of his best years to its study? And the reply must be — absolutely nothing.⁴³³

Martin's comments are warranted, and hint at disappointed dreams. It must have been frustrating to study so diligently, only to find that the job opportunities for those with a sound knowledge of painting, drawing and sculpture were limited.

His fellow student, Matthew Holland, responded to his comments in another anonymous letter to the same periodical the next month. Holland gently rebukes his colleague, writing that “the School of Art was never intended as an institution for providing employment for those whom taste or caprice led to take lessons under its roof, but as an adjunct to civil and commercial life, by diffusing its knowledge among the masses for their benefit.”⁴³⁴ He argues that knowledge of the principles of art aids workers in all fields, especially in manufacturing. The benefit of art education is clear in Belfast, which focuses on linen designs, Manchester (cotton prints), Birmingham (jewelry), and Nottingham (machine lace and lithography), and so why should Cork not focus on lace design, which is a local industry?⁴³⁵ Even an interest in the aesthetics of mundane things can propel industry. Holland points out that Flemish and Danish butter overshadowed Irish butter because it was packaged in “dainty packing and neat tubs,” and boot companies in Switzerland and France dominated because of their precision, “finish” and “accuracy” which were “the twin result of artistic training among the working classes of those countries.”⁴³⁶ He argues that James Brenan understands this, and as Headmaster of the Cork School of Art, his aims seem to be towards teaching the principles of art to students who will then take them to “commerce,” to local opportunity and industry.⁴³⁷ This is a break from the past, in which a more traditional education in Fine Art had the effect of “training artists for foreign markets” – students left Ireland upon completion of their studies because there simply was not enough opportunity at home.⁴³⁸ The editorial remarks printed with the letter second much of Holland's argument. They note that James Brenan is an excellent headmaster, but that he has taken on too great a task in teaching at the Crawford and also

⁴³³ Martin, “Art in Cork: A Criticism.”

⁴³⁴ Matthew Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student,” annotated by Matthew Holland with his own name, heading “Southern Industry,” and date May 1888, newspaper clipping included in the Holland manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁴³⁵ Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

⁴³⁶ Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

⁴³⁷ Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

⁴³⁸ Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

coordinating and teaching branch classes at convents. The editor is in agreement with Holland: “No one, we take it, questions the zeal or ability of Mr. Brennan [sic], or the importance of the Schools of Art working in harmony with the Industries of the country...”⁴³⁹ Despite the fact that Brennan himself was steeped in the South Kensington system, and the DSA, at least ostensibly, *was* focused on ‘art for industry,’ Holland’s final comments indicate frustration with its policies as they played out in reality, in his Irish context: “The policy of South Kensington and its branches being a training ground for landscape and fine art is about extinguished. The nation wants more practical work.”⁴⁴⁰ This tension between the governance of South Kensington and the needs of the Cork students is not unique to the Irish, or colonial context. Architectural historian Ranald Lawrence has argued that the Victorian art school “represent[s] built evidence of the late-nineteenth century struggle of the provincial city for cultural independence from the capital”.⁴⁴¹ Though in Ireland – and perhaps especially in Cork, ‘the Rebel County’ – any resistance to the imposition of methods and ideology from London must be considered with the added nuance of resistance to imperial power, schools throughout the United Kingdom balked at South Kensington’s control and expressed this through architecture and other means.

Matthew Holland’s signature is just as significant as his eloquent arguments, and points toward the tension between design as ‘art’ and design as ‘art for industry’ that will play out over the next few chapters as makers, designers, and experts take varied stances on the relationship between aesthetics, saleability, and feasibility of construction. He signs off as ‘An Industrial Student,’ distancing himself from the notion of ‘art’ as it is described in Martin’s letter. Holland is proud to be a student of industry, rather than a student of fine art. We will meet Matthew Holland again in the next chapter, when he is winning awards for crochet designs and working as a foreman at Dwyer’s, the crochet producer. Holland, Emily Anderson and Lizzie Perry may have studied together in the first lace design class; perhaps this is the reason for his letter’s kindness towards “the ladies of the designing class,” who, he points out, are not necessarily working only in a spirit of benevolence.⁴⁴² Russell Martin had highlighted lace design as an area of study that did hold the promise of future usefulness, but only to a limited extent. He was right – there was only work for so many designers. However, as we will see in the next chapter, Holland, Anderson, Perry, and other students of the

⁴³⁹ Editorial comments accompanying Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

⁴⁴⁰ Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

⁴⁴¹ Lawrence, “Evolution,” 81.

⁴⁴² Holland, “Art in Cork: A Reply to Student.”

Cork School of Art and its branch classes did continue to design lace after completing their education, a practice that they balanced with other duties such as teaching, business management, and even running a household. Their career paths demonstrate how the same education led to work on lines dictated by gender and class.

The same arguments that Holland makes for the usefulness and continuance of the School of Art and its branch classes as educators in design for industry were also motivating factors in the passing of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) for Ireland Bill in 1899, which I will discuss in Chapter 5. Holland is, in effect, arguing for a system of technical instruction, like that which W. Mulligan, Brennan's successor as Headmaster of the Cork School of Art, described in 1902 as: "the increase of useful knowledge, but especially the development of *practical intelligence*, of *manual skill*, and of an *enlightened attitude* toward industrial and commercial problems."⁴⁴³ Such manual skill in drawing, composition, and fine handiwork – combined with an enlightened attitude and knowledge of Ireland's place in a competitive market, of product and packaging design – is exactly what would make Irish products competitive with Danish butter and Swiss boots. And this is what Brennan and Cole hope to develop in the lace industry: in his 1891 report, Cole recommends "direct aid to encourage technical education."⁴⁴⁴ However, as we will see in Chapter 5, some lacemakers resented the DATI's continued emphasis on drawing and design, preferring to focus on the more lucrative task of simply making lace. And material evidence of Emily Anderson's inspection practice suggests that she prioritized encouraging skill in traditional, 'classic' designs rather than developing new ones.

In the next chapter, I will investigate the visual and material evidence of Alan Cole's schemes to improve the lace industry in Ireland, focusing in particular on Emily Anderson's lace designs produced in the 1880s and 1890s and published alongside Cole's writings as examples of 'good design.' It is likely on the strength of these designs, along with her teaching at the Cork (later Crawford) School of Art, that Anderson became known as an expert on Irish lace and secured a position at the DATI. I will also continue to trace the colonial, classed and gendered perspectives that I introduced in this chapter in my analysis of the Mansion House Catalogue and cartoons related

⁴⁴³ W. Mulligan, "Science Teaching and Technical Instruction," in *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural* ed. W.P. Coyne (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1902), 161, <https://archive.org/details/irelandindustria00irelrich/page/160/mode/2up>. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁴⁴ 39th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 29.

to both exhibitions, arguing that Alan Cole's writings reveal a characterization of the Irish lacemaker calculated to appeal to and appease British consumers.

Figures: Chapter 2

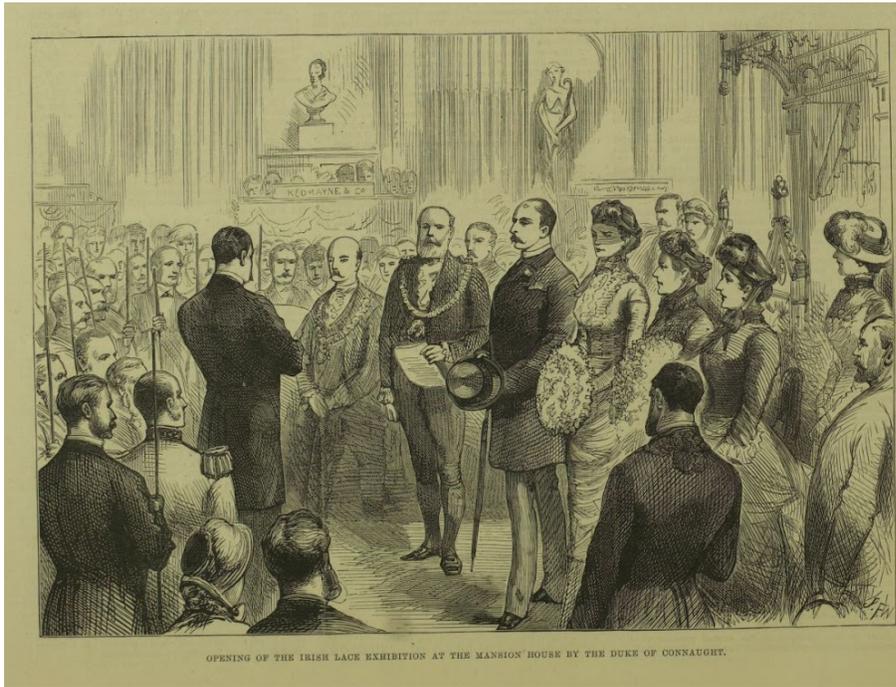


Figure 2-1 “Opening of the Irish Lace Exhibition at the Mansion House by the Duke of Connaught,” *Illustrated London News* June 30, 1883 (656). Source: Gale Primary Sources: The Illustrated London News Historical Archive.

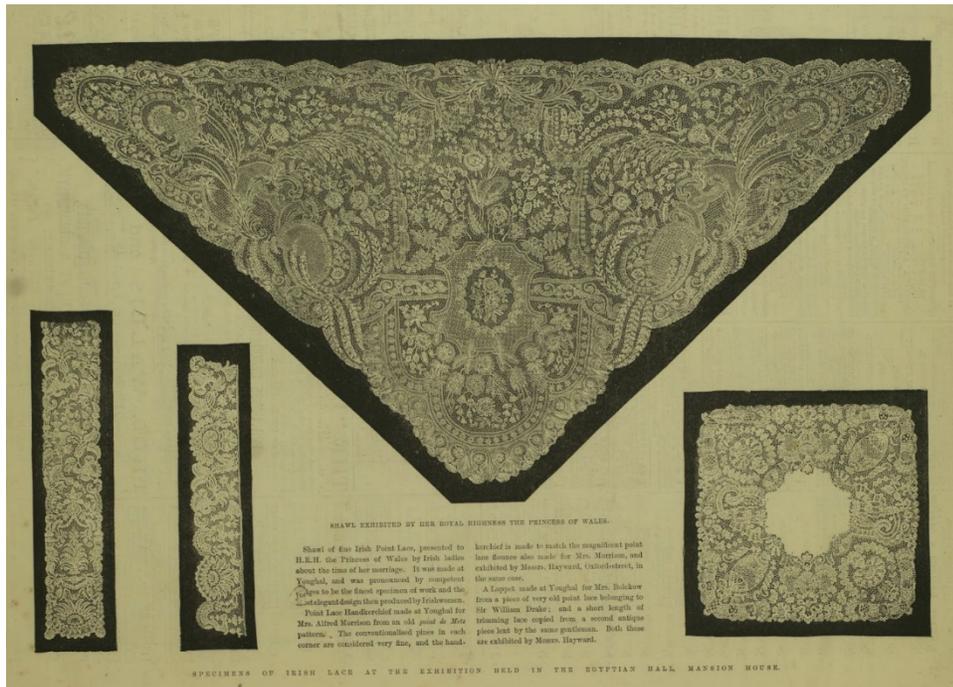


Figure 2-2 “Specimens of Irish Lace Held at the Exhibition Held in the Egyptian Hall, Mansion House” *Illustrated London News*, June 30, 1883 (668). Source: Gale Primary Sources: The Illustrated London News Historical Archive.



Figure 2-3 “Irish Point Lace, Youghal.” C. Harry Biddle and Ben Lindsey, *Mansion House Exhibition, 1883. Irish Lace, a history of the industry with illustrations and a map showing the districts where the lace is produced* (London, 1883), 11. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/mansionhouseexh00housgoog/page/n38/mode/2up> (Accessed November 30, 2021).

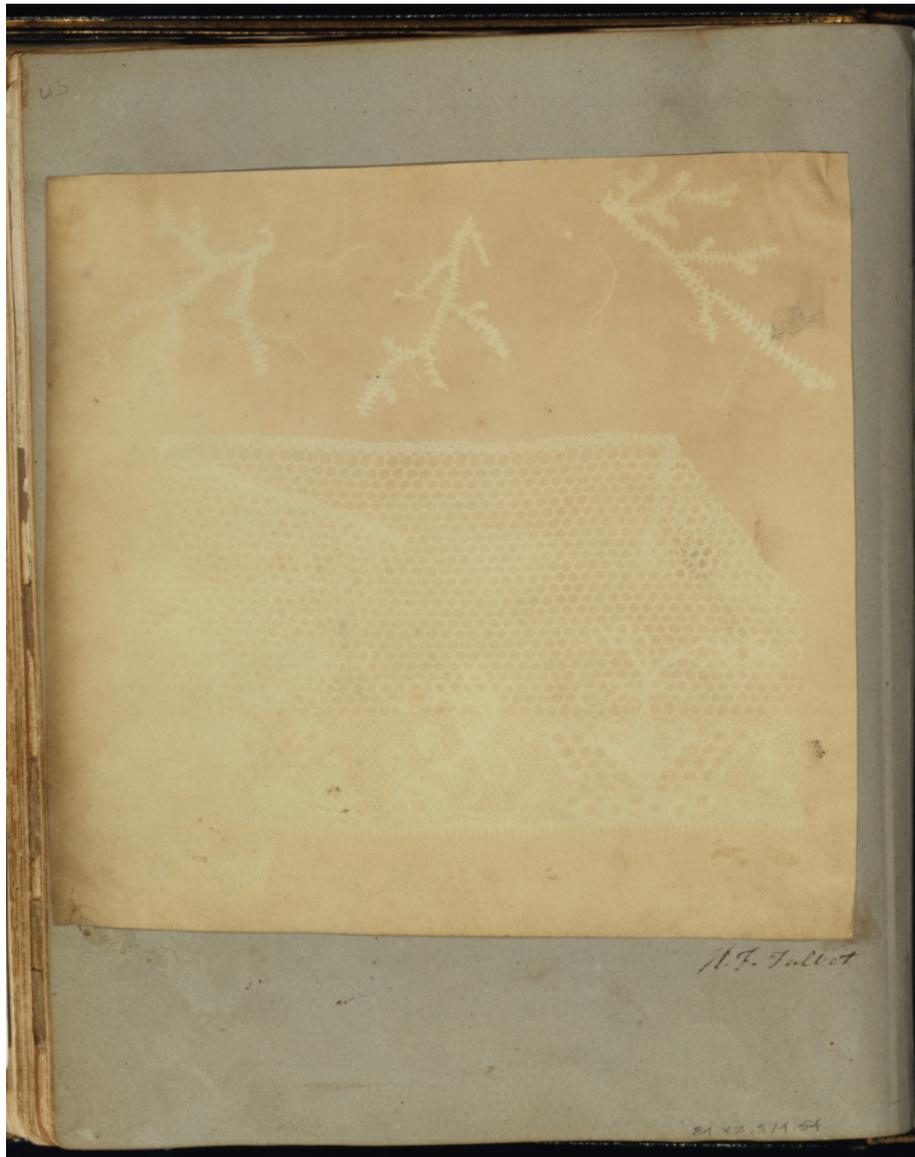


Figure 2-4 William Henry Fox Talbot, “A Fragment of Lace with Three Sprigs of Moss.” Photogenic drawing negative, 1839. Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum (digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program). Source: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/63233/william-henry-fox-talbot-a-fragment-of-lace-with-three-sprigs-of-moss-british-1839/> (Accessed November 30, 2021).



Figure 2-5 “Map of Ireland Shewing the Districts and Towns Where Lace is Made.” In C. Harry Biddle and Ben Lindsey, *Mansion House Exhibition, 1883. Irish Lace, a history of the industry with illustrations and a map showing the districts where the lace is produced* (London, 1883), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/mansionhouseexh00housgoog/page/n10/mode/2up> (Accessed November 30, 2021).



Figure 2-6 “No. 1. Applique Lace, Carrickmacross” and “No. 2. Applique Lace, Limerick.” In C. Harry Biddle and Ben Lindsey, *Mansion House Exhibition, 1883. Irish Lace, a history of the industry with illustrations and a map showing the districts where the lace is produced* (London, 1883), 5. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/mansionhouseexh00housgoog/page/n18/mode/2up> (Accessed November 30, 2021).



A LACEMAKER.—SEE "THE IRISH LACE EXHIBITION."

Figure 2-7 Unknown artist. "A Lacemaker. — See "The Irish Lace Exhibition." *The Penny Illustrated Paper* June 30, 1883 (405). Source: British Library Newspapers.



Figure 2-8 Unknown artist. "Lace." *Illustrated London News* August 29, 1882 (401). Source: Gale Primary Sources: The Illustrated London News Historical Archive.



THE SHOWMAN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

Ye are bidden by Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress Knight to the finest Show of Irish Lace that has ever been seen in the City of London. And most diligent ye will find the beautiful specimens of Irish industry and skill arrayed in the handsome Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House. But give me leave to say by far the best Exhibition of Irish Lace anyone can come across is that to be seen on an Irish Bride, the purty darlin'! Aye, soft as the sweet brogue of yonder blue-eyed colleen falls the lace of Ould Ireland, more power to her! Well, and what then? Why, just this, my friends. A

visit to the Mansion House Exhibition of Irish Lace may be all very well for your "sisters and your cousins and your aunts"; but I counsel every English Benedick who would study Irish Lace to perfection to pack up his portmanteau, and make for the Cork Exhibition, en route to which I'll back he will meet more than one witching Irish Bristice to make him long to hasten the wedding. Admire the home-made lace of Ireland as it's worn by "Arrah-na-Fogue"! Give up your heart to her—if she'll take it. Trust me, you'll never find a truer mate than an Irish maid. And that's my oft-repeated solution of the Irish Difficulty—a welcome

Figure 2-9 "The Best Irish Lace Exhibition, on an Irish Bride – Bedad!" *The Penny Illustrated Paper* June 30, 1883 (413). Source: British Library Newspapers.



TWO FORCES.

Figure 2-10 John Tenniel, "Two Forces," *Punch* Vol. 81 (October 29, 1881): 199. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/sim_punch_1881_81/page/198/mode/2up (Accessed December 7, 2021).

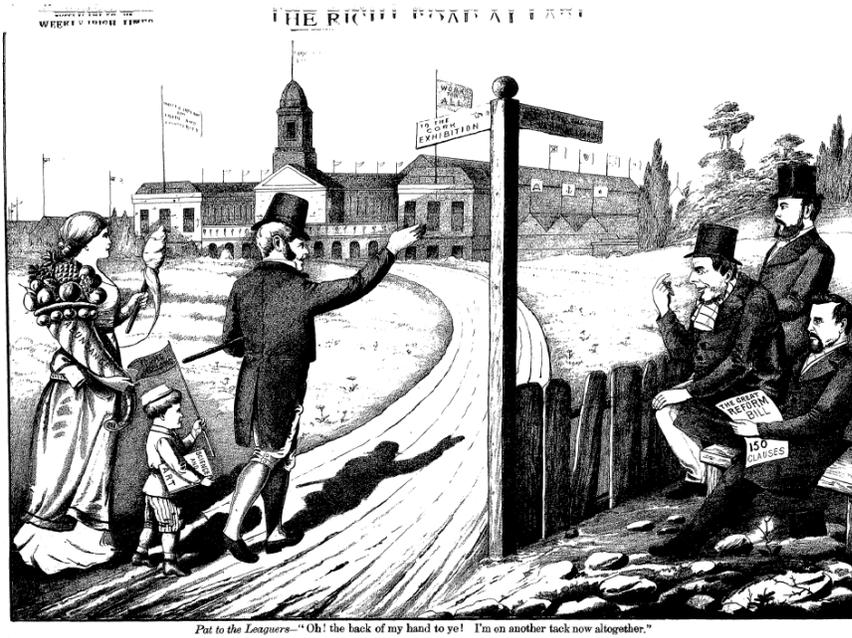


Figure 2-11 “The Rich Road Ahead (?)” (title obscured). *The Weekly Irish Times* July 16, 1883 (n.p.). Source: Proquest Historical Newspapers.



Figure 2-12 A cross-section of the Cork Exhibition buildings, with the fine art section, where Alan Cole delivered his lectures, on the right. “The Cork Industrial Exhibition.” *Illustrated London News* September 8, 1883 (236). Source: Gale Primary Sources: The Illustrated London News Historical Archive.



Figure 2-13 Members of the community of Poor Clares, Kenmare (including Bonaventure Smith, Angela Trappes, Clare Guisanni, Theresa and Gertrude Courtney and Sr. Joseph McCarthy), with lace designs. Photograph by Lady Colomb, 1889. Reproduced in a convent centenary celebration booklet, 1961, and on the Guild of Irish Lacemakers website, http://www.irishlaceguild.com/?page_id=188 (accessed January 8, 2022).

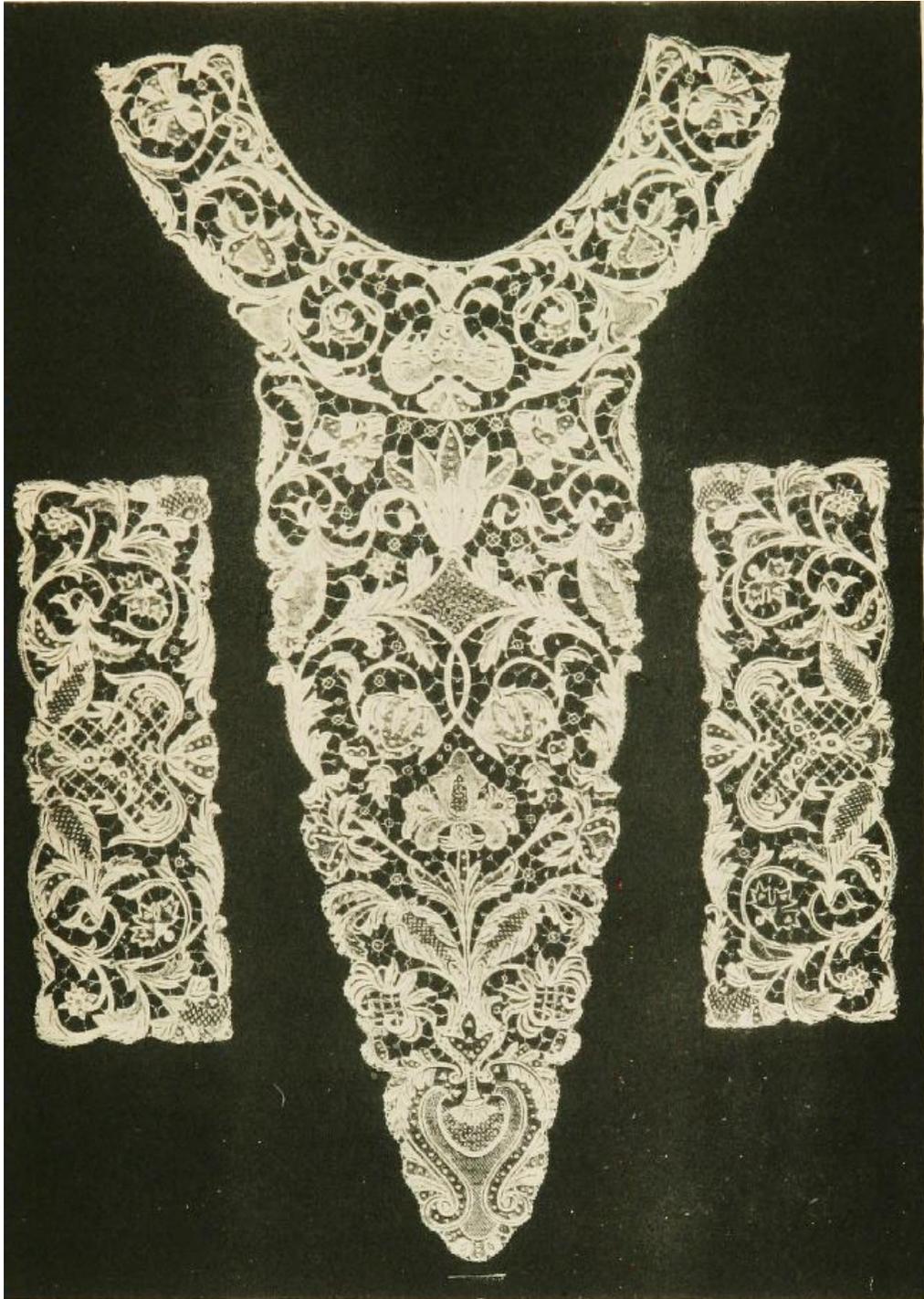


Figure 2-14 Plastron and collar for a dress, in Kenmare needlepoint, designed by one of the nuns (possibly M. Courtenay) and made by workers at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare. Plate No. 1 in Alan Cole, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924014557130/page/n17/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

Chapter 3

‘The Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making’

Imaginary Emily

Emily Anderson and Caroline Beatson were awarded scholarships in September 1888 to travel to London and study in the South Kensington Museum collection during the summer term. They would have been there in the summer of 1889, I'm not sure for how long. Patricia Anderson sent me photos of pages from her sketchbook – intricate watercolours of Italian and French lace, Egyptian hieroglyphics, medieval jewellery, costume – all annotated in the same script I saw in her DATI reports of decades later.

I imagine them coming home at the end of the day to a boarding house in the suburbs, and it is difficult for me to separate that picture from my own remembering of trips with my friend and fellow student, on the hunt, parting for the day to converge in the evening buzzing with news of newspaper articles and startling curatorial revelations. Shaney and I would take long walks – out to the Salthill diving tower or up into the hills south of Dublin – which gave our brains a rhythm to sort through words and pictures – often resulting in a sudden thought that derailed another, rambling conversation. Our work and walking were punctuated by moments that I remember now like snapshots: the freezing dips in the Atlantic, an extra pizza given by mistake and shared with a chance-met fellow-Canadian by the canal.

This is the version of the story that I want for Emily: two keen-eyed young women travelling to a city they have been to before, but this time with purpose. They sketch the collections in the South Kensington Museum and attend lectures; they are proud of what they have accomplished in Cork, the long hours in the studio and the meticulously rendered designs sent off to the National Art Competition, the weeks spent trying not to think about the results. Emily and Caroline are happy to be there together, though each of them knows it would also be an adventure to be in London alone, with only their thoughts and their sketchbooks as company. In the evenings they walk down to Hyde Park and sketch the gardens, the lawns, the Albert Memorial's intricate tracery.⁴⁴⁵ Emily thinks, I am not just here as a tourist. I am a designer. I am here to hone my craft. Someday, something sprung from my mind, from my pen, might be held in this collection for a student, a century from now, to sketch, and label neatly, and take home to study.

* * *

James Brenan and Alan Cole's lace designing program at the Cork School of Art, and the branch classes in drawing and design at its affiliated lacemaking centres, were only part of their solution to the problem of poor design in the Irish lace industry. In 1884, a committee which included Alan Cole gathered to propose a series of competitions that would encourage excellence in Irish lace design with cash prizes funded by a public subscription. The competitions were a great success, and prize-winning designs were commissioned to be made up at various lace centres across Ireland for patronesses such as Mabel Morrison and Ishbel Aberdeen. At least one was ordered by Queen

⁴⁴⁵This list of scenes and things that a nineteenth-century woman might sketch on a summer evening, based on proximity to the South Kensington Museum, respectability of area, and interest to a student of art, emerged from a conversation with a serial sketcher and regular visitor to London, my dad (Personal communication with David Gillett, email, October 5, 2020).

Victoria. Many of the prize-winning designs were published together in an 1888 book, *The Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making*, providing a record of both the designs and the committee's aesthetic preferences. Examining the results of these and the DSA's yearly National Art Competition and examinations alongside Alan Cole's reports on the development of Irish lace paints a picture of how quickly South Kensington system-aligned lace design and production flowered in Ireland after 1883. Though few of the specimens that were made up from the designs are extant, many were photographed, providing a visual documentation of how lace designs changed during this period of reform.

In this chapter, I will discuss the phenomenon of lace design competitions, and look more closely at the designs produced for them in the 1880s and 90s – both for the Lace Committee's competitions and South Kensington's National Art Competitions. What constituted a 'good' lace design during this period? To which precedents were designers encouraged to look? Design historians such as Paul Larmour have tended to see late-nineteenth-century Irish lace design as uninspired and derivative, but I will argue that a broader study of lace designs from this period reveals tremendous variety, inventiveness, and the ability to translate designs from one lace technique to another. Even within the smaller collection of work attributable to a single designer – Emily Anderson – there is a great deal of diversity, suggesting an ability to adapt and experiment with a variety of historical precedents, while also taking into account the needs of the market.

Emily Anderson's name is ubiquitous in records of competition results, which has led numerous writers on Irish lace to cite her as an example of a nineteenth-century lace designer.⁴⁴⁶ Her success during this early period is not surprising, given the fact that she was one of the first group of students to advance through the newly-formed lace classes at the Cork School of Art. However, other names reappear in Alan Cole's reports on his tours of Ireland, the records of competition results, and catalogues of lace and lace designs. There is Michael Hayes, the Limerick man who studied at South Kensington and on the Continent, designing lace alongside furniture and metalwork. Michael Holland, who spoke so eloquently for technical education in the last chapter, studied at the School to improve his qualifications as a designer of crochet lace and workshop foreman. And of course, Emily Anderson went on to teach, and then work as a lace inspector for the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI), which I will discuss further in the next chapters. These and other students' and designers' trajectories give an indication of who was

⁴⁴⁶ See, for example: Helland, "Caprices," 201; Potter, *Amazing Lace*, 56; Pat Earnshaw, *Youghal and Other Irish Laces*, 11.

shaping the aesthetic of Irish lace in this period, and what was possible – or practical – to do with an education in lace design. Each one’s path was also dependent on the affordances of their gender, class, and social connections.

To conclude this chapter, I will shift from a discussion of design and designers to look more closely at lacemaking and lacemakers, using British Government-commissioned reports on the Irish lace industry. I will introduce Mary Power Lalor, a landowning Irish woman who was appointed for a short period as the Lace Inspector for Ireland by the DSA, and examine the writings that she and Alan Cole produced during the period from 1884-1897. As in most cases involving women’s labour, particularly in impoverished rural areas, there is very little documentation from the perspective of the late-nineteenth-century lacemaker. This is one of the reasons why this project engages with the oral history of contemporary Irish lacemaking groups, which I will discuss in Chapter 6. I do not claim that Alan Cole’s reports, for example, present a nuanced and accurate depiction of the life, work, and motivations of a rural Irish lacemaker. However, reports and articles written by government officials about lacemaking and makers are useful sources for examining the ways in which the lace industry intersected with discussions surrounding politics, gender, and class. As I suggested in Chapter 2, handmade lace and lace design held a surprisingly important place in nineteenth-century design discourse. Among the crafts, it was uniquely suited to display, reproduction on paper, and understanding as a visual phenomenon; accessible through print media, while simultaneously inaccessible and aspirational to most, because of its tremendous cost. Positioned at the crux of art, design, and economics, with the added complexity of the politics of Union, Irish lace and the Irish lacemaker continued to be a potent symbol of more than simply a rural handicraft.

3.1 The lace competitions

In 1884, Alan Cole formed a committee with the intention of providing an incentive for Irish lace designers to produce more and better work. That year, the committee issued a “Proposal for the Maintenance of the Domestic Industry of Lace-Making in Ireland,” which outlined a plan to create a subscription to raise prize money for a series of lace design competitions.⁴⁴⁷ The proposal defined Irish lacemaking as a domestic industry, which had been introduced by philanthropists to the country earlier in the nineteenth century and developed “to rest upon excellent workmanship applied to a

⁴⁴⁷ The Committee and competitions are referenced briefly in several texts on Irish lace, see for example: Earnshaw, *Yonghal and Other Irish Laces*, 3; Helland, “Caprices of Fashion,” 220; Potter, *Amazing Lace*, 51.

few forms of somewhat stereotyped and poor design.”⁴⁴⁸ Cole points out that the market depended on the sentiment rather than good taste of consumers; they purchase Irish lace because it is “quaint” or because they wish to support “National production,” rather than because it is a superior product.⁴⁴⁹

Cole’s summary of the Irish lace industry is a generalization, and perhaps not an entirely fair one. In the previous chapter, I discussed the poor state of the Irish lace industry in 1883, as evidenced by the Cork and Mansion House Exhibitions, but I also referenced several positive reports. Newspaper outlets celebrated the displays of Youghal lace, in particular. However, on the whole, and especially in comparison to its thriving, mid-century state, the industry was suffering, and dependence on purely philanthropic consumers – motivated by a wish to ‘buy Irish’ – was not sustainable.

The proposal states that “the absence of a regulated supply of well-drawn and composed patterns seems to prevent the industry from becoming established upon either an artistic or a sound commercial basis.”⁴⁵⁰ This highlighting – but also separating – of the artistic and commercial aspects of lace is an issue that I will return to at the end of this chapter. The proposal suggests that the means to remedy this deficit already existed, in the designers currently training at the Schools of Art throughout the United Kingdom. However, “an incentive is necessary to call those means into operation and to induce the lace-makers to feel that it is to their interest to adopt improved designs.”⁴⁵¹ The system of competitions would thus function as a double incentive, to both lace designers and lacemakers. Prizes would be offered for designs in Irish lace, which the proposal defines as: “Needlepoint Lace (from Youghal, Innishmacsaint, Cappoquin, Kenmare, Killarney); 2, Pillow Lace (from Parsonstown); 3, Drawn Linen Embroidery (Newton Barry, Cappoquin); 4, Cut Linen Work (Carrickmacross); 5, Crochet (Co. Cork, Clones); 6, Braid and Cord Lace (Ardee); 7, Embroidery on Net (Limerick); 8, Cambric Embroidery (Donegal).”⁴⁵² From the submitted patterns, a panel of experts would choose “a dozen or more suitable patterns,” and commission lacemakers to make specimens from the designs, with payment guaranteed. The specimens would then be exhibited and photographed for “circulation to subscribers to the fund and to dealers in lace.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁸ Cole, *Renascence*, 37.

⁴⁴⁹ Cole, *Renascence*, 37.

⁴⁵⁰ Cole, *Renascence*, 37.

⁴⁵¹ Cole, *Renascence*, 37.

⁴⁵² Cole, *Renascence*, 38.

⁴⁵³ Cole, *Renascence*, 38.

The list of subscribers to the fund, published as an appendix in *Renascence*, includes philanthropists, collectors, aristocrats, businesspeople, and a few already working in proximity with the Irish lace industry. Robert Vere O'Brien, Esq. donated £2, presumably on behalf of Florence Vere O'Brien, who, during this period, was in the process of restoring the Limerick lace industry to its former glory.⁴⁵⁴ Her lace school completed many of the competition's commissions, and she submitted at least one design. At the bottom of the list was Miss Keane, who donated 10s in "various small subscriptions."⁴⁵⁵ As the organiser of a needlepoint lace workshop in Cappoquin, it is possible that she gathered the small subscriptions from the lacemakers themselves, or from locals moved to support her and her workers through donating to the competition fund. Mabel Morrison donated a staggering £25 to the subscription, topped only by £50 donations from The Draper's Company – which had an obvious commercial interest in the scheme – and Member of Parliament J.T. Bruner on behalf of the Countess of Aberdeen.⁴⁵⁶ These donations, which flowed in from 1884 through to 1888, allowed for a generous prize fund that could be spread out over several competitions. The National Art Competition administered by South Kensington was still an important incentive to produce high-quality work, and many of the designers who submitted work to the Committee competed in both. However, the committee's competition was exclusively for lace, and prizewinning designs were more likely to be made up by commission of one of the industry's prominent patrons.

3.1.1 The first lace competitions

In May 1884, the competition was announced, and submissions flooded in from around Ireland, from England, and as far away as Karlsruhe and Hamburg: more than three hundred designs in total, from over one hundred designers.⁴⁵⁷ When the competition concluded in the summer of 1885, forty nine designs were judged to be appropriate for lace work, then working drawings were made and sent out to lace centres for production.⁴⁵⁸ The fact that fewer than one sixth of the submitted designs were suitable for making lace indicates just how specialized the lace designer's work was. Designers of wallpapers and textiles, for example, might have sent in sketches of swirling foliage and flowers,

⁴⁵⁴ For detailed studies of Florence Vere O'Brien's patronage of the Limerick Lace industry, see: Potter, *Amazing Lace*; Ó Cléirigh and Rowe, *Limerick Lace*.

⁴⁵⁵ Cole, *Renascence*, 40.

⁴⁵⁶ Cole, *Renascence*, 39.

⁴⁵⁷ "The Irish Lace Industry," *The Irish Examiner*, August 18, 1885, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁴⁵⁸ "The Irish Lace Industry," *The Irish Examiner*, August 18, 1885, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

unaware of the way that lace moves, of how most laces are built up out of nothing, and that they cannot rely on colour or shading to define form.

Many of the prize-winners in the 1885 competition were Irish, which, as *The Irish Examiner* remarked, was “a satisfactory sign.”⁴⁵⁹ Michael Hayes, originally from Limerick but educated at the National Art Training School in South Kensington, won seventeen prizes, and the Convent of Poor Clares in Kenmare won four.⁴⁶⁰ In the same year, Queen Victoria commissioned a fichu in a design by a student of the Convent of the Poor Clares, likely Lizzie Trappes, who won first prize for a fichu design in needlepoint lace; it was made up at the convent and its photograph appeared in Cole’s 1887 report (fig. 3.1).⁴⁶¹ The design is not particularly distinguished; the meandering ribbon that borders fields of various filling stiches is awkward rather than whimsical, and the use of so many disparate motifs in the border is jarring. However, it is clearly aspiring to a particular tradition in lace design, that of late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century Alençon and Argentan needlepoint, with its characteristic garlands of floral motifs, creating small open spaces to show off filling stitches. Three examples of this style appear as plates in Alan Cole’s catalogue of lace at the Cork School of Art; perhaps the designer drew directly from the lace in the School’s collection, or from one of the plates themselves, which would have been circulated through the branch classes (fig. 3.2). However, when Cole visited the Poor Clares in October of 1886, he noted that “the demand for lace from this convent is stronger and more regular than it has been for some time,” and that the lace workshop had enough orders to keep them busy until March 1887.⁴⁶² Lace was exclusively made from new designs – presumably drawn in the two years since the branch class had been established – a few of which had become quite popular.⁴⁶³

In 1886, the Private Committee for Promoting the Irish Lace Fund held a second competition, with 64*l.* 5*s.* in prize money for the winning designs.⁴⁶⁴ Lady Dorothy Nevill, Mrs. Albert Petre, Mabel Morrison, and T. Armstrong judged more than two hundred designs submitted

⁴⁵⁹ “The Irish Lace Industry,” *The Irish Examiner*, August 18, 1885, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁴⁶⁰ “The Irish Lace Industry,” *The Irish Examiner*, August 18, 1885, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁴⁶¹ “Lace Making in the South,” *Kerry Evening Post*, October 21, 1885, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

Cole’s Department of Science and Art report for 1885 lists ‘I. Trappes’ of the Kenmare Poor Clares as having won a prize for a fichu design in the 1885 competition. I believe the ‘I’ to be a misprint, as the full name ‘Lizzie Trappes’ appears elsewhere in lace competition records, but to my knowledge ‘I. Trappes’ does not appear again. Because the fichu commissioned for Queen Victoria was after a prize-winning patterns by one of the Kenmare Poor Clares, it follows that it must have been this design.

⁴⁶² Thirty-fourth report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1887, Cmnd. 5076, at xli. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁴⁶³ 34th Report of the Science and Art Department, xli.

⁴⁶⁴ Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits*, 3.

by sixty-seven competitors. They concluded that none of the designs was worthy of the original cash prizes, and though they still awarded entries in each class, the amount of money was significantly reduced.⁴⁶⁵ Emily Anderson won two prizes of 2*l.* (reduced from 3*l.*) for handkerchief trimmings and borders, having also received, in 1886, a third grade prize for “designs for Irish lace,” and a pass in second-grade geometry examinations at the National Art Competition.⁴⁶⁶ Once again, Michael Hayes and the Convent of the Poor Clares at Kenmare made a good showing. This time, the list of competitors includes the names of individual members of the Kenmare community, indicating that L. Guisani, M. Courtenay, G. Smith, and Lizzie Trappes were all producing lace designs at the time.⁴⁶⁷ Twelve of these designs were sent out to be worked at various convents and lace workshops, which Cole in his report rather ominously stated was “at their own risk.”⁴⁶⁸ Presumably there was a danger of the finished product not finding a buyer, given the prohibitive expense of most well-crafted lace. However, in his 1887 report, Alan Cole was able to include photographs of several of these designs, expertly made up at various lace centres for such prestigious patrons as Queen Victoria, the Marchioness of Londonderry, and Mable Morrison. Less prestigious but more commercially important was the fact that Messrs. Haywards, lace merchants in London, commissioned six of the designs.⁴⁶⁹ Cole proposed that these designs, and those from the previous year’s competition, might “form the nucleus of a collection for an exhibition of Irish lace at some future date.”⁴⁷⁰ It is unclear whether this group of laces in particular ‘formed the nucleus’ of a later exhibition, though doubtless many of these specimens did find their way into exhibitions of Irish lace in the years that followed. However, eight of the specimens almost immediately entered the public sphere, as figures in Alan Cole’s 1887 report on Irish lace, which was published commercially by Eyre and Spottiswoode.

Four of the five photographed specimens were designed by Michael Hayes. Though originally from Limerick, Hayes worked primarily in London and designed for needlepoint, Limerick and Carrickmacross lace.⁴⁷¹ One of these, now in the V&A collection, exhibits Hayes’ characteristic stylized floral motifs – static and formal, but perfectly balanced (figs 3.3 and 3.4). Hayes trained as a National Scholar at South Kensington from 1879 to 1881, where he received prizes for furniture,

⁴⁶⁵ Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits*, 3.

⁴⁶⁶ “Crawford Municipal School of Art,” *Irish Examiner*, Wednesday September 1, 1886, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁴⁶⁷ Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits*, 3-4.

⁴⁶⁸ Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits*, 2.

⁴⁶⁹ Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits*, 2.

⁴⁷⁰ Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits*, 2.

⁴⁷¹ Rowe, “Two Forgotten Talents,” 61-70.

metalwork, and ceiling decoration designs.⁴⁷² He seems to have been a jack-of-all-trades designer; after graduating he worked for a decorating firm and entered competitions in goldsmithing, even receiving a scholarship to study “art on the continent of Europe” from the Goldsmith’s Company in 1883.⁴⁷³ Hayes’ extensive training and experience in designing patterns for a variety of surfaces – inlaid tables, wall paintings, gold and silver objects – meant that he was able to produce large amounts of consistently high-quality designs that aligned with prevailing taste. The portion of a border discussed above, for example, could almost be an expression in lace of his neoclassical decorative wall paintings at South Hill House, in Limerick (c. 1886). Lace historian Veronica Rowe attributes Hayes’ design sensibility to “old Italian models,” and to the aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts Movement, in particular the work of William Morris.⁴⁷⁴

A striking parasol cover in cut linen embroidery, after an 1886 design by Michael Hayes, was commissioned by Mabel Morrison and completed at the Bath and Shirley Schools in County Monaghan. It is designed in a complex radial symmetry, with stylized acanthus leaves and chrysanthemums emerging from a central, sunflower-like form (fig. 3.5). The parasol cover’s curving leaves and intricately intertwined stems that reflect like mirror-images along a repeating series of axes, as well as its mixing of stylized flora – such as acanthus leaves – with more naturalistic representations of specific flowers, bear many similarities to Morris’s textile and wallpaper designs of the 1870s (fig. 3.6). Though demonstrating the same formal symmetry and density of patterning, another of Hayes’ prize designs, an alb in braid and needlepoint stitches produced at the St. Martha’s Industrial School (fig. 3.7), seems to borrow more from antique Italian models. The bulk of the ornament and small areas of plain ground, as well as the almost total abstraction of floral forms are comparable to Venetian needlepoint of the seventeenth century (fig. 3.8).

Hayes was not alone in turning to antique Italian lace for inspiration; as I discussed in Chapter 1, some of the women who started lace industries in Ireland based their first designs on scraps of old lace, and Italian – especially Venetian – lace was most highly prized. A prize-winning design adapted by Miss Keane, of Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, for her needlepoint lace workshop, was also featured among the illustrations for Cole’s 1887 report (fig. 3.9). The construction and arrangement of curving lines bears a striking resemblance to the centre of three specimens of Venetian needle lace borders, c. 1650, reproduced in Cole’s *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Laces* (fig.

⁴⁷² Rowe, “Two Forgotten Talents,” 63.

⁴⁷³ Rowe, “Two Forgotten Talents,” 63.

⁴⁷⁴ Rowe, “Two Forgotten Talents,” 64.

3.10), and indeed the label on a photograph of this specimen, now in the NMI's Decorative Arts Division, notes that it is "a design adapted by Miss Keane from that of an Italian Needlepoint Lace of the 16th century."⁴⁷⁵

Michael Hayes had a tremendous impact on shaping the aesthetic of Irish lace design in the first years of its 'renaissance.' He came to lace as an experienced designer, trained in the methods and aesthetic preferences of the South Kensington system and familiar with the styles favoured by consumers in London. However, unlike Emily Anderson and the other students of the lace design classes, Michael Hayes had little knowledge of the demands and limitations of the medium, and this could prove a shortcoming. In an April 1889 lecture called "Designing Patterns for Various Irish Laces," presumably delivered to Irish lace design students, Alan Cole tells the story of a design Michael Hayes completed for the Merrion Industrial School. Cole writes that it: "...was a handsome pattern of itself. But unfortunately Mr. Hayes did not know much, if anything, concerning the method of making the lace, and further than this when the lace-makers got the pattern they were more or less staggered by its complexity. The result therefore is not a success."⁴⁷⁶ Cole went on to state that the lacemakers rose to the occasion and used it as an opportunity to improve their skill, effectively by attempting the impossible.

Many of Hayes' designs have passages that would have been incredibly difficult to render in lace. One of Hayes' designs, a decorative panel for dress, was commissioned by Messrs. Haywards of London, and reportedly occasioned several other commissions due to its great popularity (fig. 3.11).⁴⁷⁷ The design features long vines that curve around and connect a series of flowers. In Irish crochet, the technique used for this piece, the motifs are made first, and then connected together with chain stitches that form the ground, or netting between them. It requires great skill and care to maintain the integrity of such thin lines, whether curving or straight, as the lines of chain stitch tend to pull on the motif where they attach to it, creating a crooked or zig-zag effect (fig. 3.12).⁴⁷⁸ However, in this specimen at least, the makers replicated the design admirably – only a few of the curves are slightly cramped or crooked. Like the students at the Merrion Industrial School, the

⁴⁷⁵ Folder of 'Photographs of Irish Laces, 1880s,' collection of the National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts Division (DT1995.118), National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁴⁷⁶ Alan Cole, *Lecture by Mr. Alan Cole on Designing Patterns for Various Irish Laces* (April 1889), 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Rowe, "Two Forgotten Talents," 64.

⁴⁷⁸ I found this to be the case in my own crocheting; it is also referenced in James Brenan (?), "Lace Designs. XIII. - Design for a Crochet Border," *The Irish Homestead* Vol.6 No.2 (September 8, 1900): 588.

crochet lace makers from “the South of Ireland,” as the image’s caption states, received the design as a challenge and learning opportunity, rather than as an impossibility.

It didn’t take long for the competition results to be used in teaching lace design classes at the Schools of Art. On the 29th of October, 1886, Cole lectured at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, using photos taken of the laces produced for the 1885 and 1886 competitions, compared with older specimens, to illustrate the improved use of ornament, and conducted the students through the Dublin Science and Art Museum’s lace collection.⁴⁷⁹ Cole would have used a collection of photographs similar or identical to those now in the National Museum of Ireland’s Decorative Arts Division: a set of large photographs of prize-winning Irish lace designs, many of which were also reproduced in Cole’s *Renasceance* or 1887 Report, the originals of which were produced for South Kensington.⁴⁸⁰

After Cole’s lecture, the Marchioness of Londonderry announced a competition to design a border and flounce in Carrickmacross Lace, presumably for her own use.⁴⁸¹ The winning design, by Z.A. Inman of Halstead, Essex, is unique among the other Carrickmacross – or indeed, Irish – laces photographed around that time (fig. 3.13). Rather than the stylized floral motifs of the French and Italian point laces and twisting ribbons and garlands typical of Flemish and French pillow laces from which many of the Irish designs drew, Inman’s design takes its inspiration from nature. The competition guidelines had specified that the design should involve “floral forms, intermingled with willow leaves,” but presumably many of the submissions produced garlands of willow with bunches of flowers at regular intervals.⁴⁸² Far from this schematic standard, Inman’s design is dense in composition, but the naturalism of the forms and evenness of spacing creates a sense of harmonious balance. It is a beautiful design, and reflects the contemporary interest in drawing and deriving ornament from nature, encouraged by John Ruskin and William Morris, that would creep into Irish lace design late, and little, at the turn of the century. It is difficult to tell from the photograph, which is likely all that survives of the commission, but Inman’s field of wildflowers seems to be designed after real plants or botanical illustrations, and one could likely identify them by name. It is possible that the Marchioness of Londonderry judged the submissions herself, and that we have her own

⁴⁷⁹ “Dublin Metropolitan School of Art,” *Freeman’s Journal*, March 28, 1887, 7. Irish Newspaper Archive; Thirty-fourth report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1887, Cmnd. 5076, at xlii. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁴⁸⁰ Folder of ‘Photographs of Irish Laces, 1880s,’ collection of the National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts Division (DT1995.118), National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁴⁸¹ 34th Report of the Science and Art Department, xlii.

⁴⁸² *The Irish Times*, 6 November 1886, 5, quoted in Helland, “Caprices,” 197.

personal taste to thank for the fact that Inman's design was made up at the Bath and Shirley Schools, then photographed for Alan Cole's collection of lace images and published in *The Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lacemaking* in 1888.

In 1887, a third competition took place, with prizes amounting to £35 10s, and a further £108 from the Committee to commission designs to be made up at the various lacemaking centres.⁴⁸³ By this point, the Committee seems to have achieved their goal of demonstrating what was economically possible for the Irish lace industry if it could pair its already fine needlework with good design. Cole reported that: "the use of better patterns is accepted by all the convents without exception as the first step by which the condition of the lace industry can be materially improved."⁴⁸⁴ The RDS, whose important role in the early development of Irish lace I discussed in Chapter 1, instituted a fund of £50 annually to award in prizes for pieces of lace from new designs.⁴⁸⁵ In the same year, students from the branch classes at the Convent of the Poor Clares in Kenmare, Presentation Convent in Tralee, and Presentation Convent in Killarney won prizes in South Kensington's National Art Competition.⁴⁸⁶ Caroline Beatson and Emily Anderson won silver and bronze medals respectively.⁴⁸⁷

3.1.2 'The Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lacemaking' and Emily Anderson's early designs

Though I have been unable to find an illustrated report of the 1887 competition, it is likely that some of the prizewinning designs appear as finished pieces of lace in Alan Cole's 1888 book, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making*. *Renaissance* is a remarkable book, when one considers the fact that it was published just five years after the Cork and Mansion House Exhibitions, held in 1883. As I discussed in the previous chapter, both of these exhibitions shone a light on the excellent quality of Irish needlework, but also pointed to the lack of expertise or creativity in design. None of the art schools in Ireland seems to have had lace design programs at that point. Nevertheless, five years later, Alan Cole was able to publish a book of photographs of completed lace commissions, after designs almost exclusively by Irish designers. This was a remarkably quick turnaround, since, depending on technique and size, the lace commissions could have taken many months to complete and, in addition, each piece had had to be photographed. This strongly suggests that the designs must have

⁴⁸³ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁴⁸⁴ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁴⁸⁵ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁴⁸⁶ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁴⁸⁷ December 7, 1887, Art Committee Minutes October 1883-June 1899 (VEC06/56), Cork City and County Archives.

been produced at least a year, or perhaps more, before publication, and attests to the early success of the lace design programs.

As such, the finished pieces of lace produced after Emily Anderson's designs and published in *The Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lacemaking* are the earliest evidence of her work as a designer, and best indications of what was happening in the early lace design classes at the Cork School of Art. Based on the year when the lace design class began – 1884 – and the fact that the designs were likely completed at least a year in advance of the book's publication, they can be dated to c. 1884-1887. The earliest designs are likely those for a matched Limerick lace flounce and border. The specimens made after the design, photographed for *Renaissance*, were produced at the Convent of Mercy in Kinsale (fig. 3.14). The flounce design bears a vertically-oriented, repeating pattern of two double acanthus leaf motifs stacked one on top of the other, topped by a single chrysanthemum-like flower. Vines trailing leaves and flowers emerge from either side of the arrangement, which resembles a vase composed of stylized flora. A border of two lines that cross over each other at regular intervals to create oval-shaped openings, intersects with the bottom of the 'vase,' and rises between the repeating motifs to create an inverted fan shape bordered with large daisy-like flowers and filled with decorative stitches. The matching border repeats the pattern in miniature, replacing the acanthus formation with a bouquet of flowers.

The corpus of Anderson's designs demonstrates that she could draw from the rigid verticality and repetition of work by, for example, Michael Hayes, and also gesture towards a more organic and rhythmic mode. However, at this early stage, it seems that she was trying to blend the two, and is not always entirely successful. In an 1898 lecture for the Society of Arts in London, accompanied by lantern slides, Alan Cole references "Limerick tambour lace, made at the Convent of Mercy, Kinsale," which he describes as "one of Miss Anderson's earlier attempts."⁴⁸⁸ The article does not provide an illustration of the slide, but he is likely referencing this set, as many of the other specimens he describes match those in *Renaissance*. It also seems logical that this would be one of Anderson's earlier designs, because it seems tentative, even transitional. There is also some awkwardness in the floral forms, which seems to be a result of the pattern rather than the workmanship. The flowers with seven long and thin leaves on either side of the acanthus formation are crooked and cramped. The small flowers in the floating sprigs are also irregular and crooked. Anderson seems to have attempted a blowsy naturalism in these flowers, one that is not well suited

⁴⁸⁸ Cole, "The Irish Lace Industry," 323.

to the medium and instead looks poorly made. Another piece of Limerick lace after Anderson's design was produced at Vere O'Brien's lace school (fig. 3.15). Like the design above, it is also vertically-oriented and repetitive, however it more successfully achieves a sense of harmony and balance between the areas of denser patterning and the sprigged ground above. The ribbons, chains of beads, and palm-like foliate motifs give the specimen a Rococo character.

For a set of three Limerick lace borders made at St. Vincent's Convent in Cork (fig. 3.16), Anderson is clearly looking to a historical specimen for inspiration. All three of the designs feature garlands of leaves which encase small ovoid areas of ornamental filling stitches, punctuated by flowers. At regular intervals, the garland splits, reaching in up in a straight diagonal line which terminates abruptly at the top of the piece. In the two thinner borders, vines trail off the ends of these diagonal lines, somewhat softening the rigid effect. In these specimens, the space between the diagonal garlands is filled with alternating small sprays of flowers and diagonal lines of stylized flowers marching up to cross under the garland. In the wider specimen, the sprays are replaced by wreaths.

Alan Cole's comments, both in *Renascence* and a decade later, indicate that a piece of *Point d'Alençon* or *Point d'Argentan* – which were often mistaken for each other – formed a model for Anderson's trio of designs. The accompanying text in *Renascence* notes similar motifs in the “eighteenth century laces of France and Belgium [...] especially the *Points d'Alençon*,” and directs the reader to the areas of filling stitch, which give the lacemaker “opportunities of displaying her skill.”⁴⁸⁹ In a lecture for the Society of Arts, he claims that the matching borders are adapted from an eighteenth-century *Point d'Alençon* design, noting the open spaces within the bordering and diagonal garlands, which allow for the use of various ornamental filling stitches.⁴⁹⁰

By acknowledging the link between Anderson's designs and their historical precedents, Cole is underscoring the validity of her work and working methods. As discussed in Chapter 3, both Alan Cole and James Brenan placed great importance on learning from pre-existing specimens of lace, either through photographs or examination of the physical object. This was of such importance that by 1884, the Cork School of Art had already built up a teaching collection of lace, and published a *Catalogue of Antique Lace* documenting the collection.⁴⁹¹ A needlepoint lappet reproduced in the 1884 *Catalogue* (fig. 3.17) exhibits many similar characteristics to Anderson's lace borders described above,

⁴⁸⁹ Cole, *Renascence*, n.p. (description of Plate No. 9).

⁴⁹⁰ Cole, “The Irish Lace Industry,” 322.

⁴⁹¹ Cole, *Catalogue of Antique Lace* (Cork: Francis Guy, 1884).

and could be a source of inspiration for Anderson's designs. No. 19 in the catalogue, it is a late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth specimen of *Point d'Alençon* or *Point d'Argentan*. In the catalogue entry, Alan Cole directs attention to the "arrangement of the design [which] is more remarkable than the drawing of the floral details."⁴⁹² And indeed, the floral details in Anderson's design are nothing like those of this needlepoint lappet, but the arrangement of the garlands in stiff, repeating diagonal lines and the use of undulating vines punctuated with flowers to outline ovoid spaces filled with ornamental stitches is very similar. A Mechlin lace lappet, No. 43 in the catalogue and reproduced next to No. 19, also makes use of diagonally-oriented garlands, however the forms are more undulating and the overall effect heavier.

Important as a familiarity with historical precedents was argued to be, creating these designs, even those based directly on historical examples – as the set of three borders were – was not a case of simple copying. James Brenan would have encouraged his students to study and reproduce pre-existing specimens of lace, but as a product of the South Kensington system he would also have required his students to exhibit good draughtsmanship and a sound knowledge of geometrical drawing. In an 1897 lecture delivered to the Irish Arts and Crafts Society, Brenan described the technicalities of making lace designs, illustrating his comments with an image of a design in progress (fig. 3.18). The fan, designed by Alice Jacobs at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin, features a pattern of three urns alternating with vertical arrangements of stylized vegetal forms. Brenan describes how the designer must first establish the shape of the object, and then sketch out the "leading lines" in charcoal – in this case the sinuous curving lines that carry through from the urn to plant forms.⁴⁹³ Finally, the designer adds detail with sepia or kaolinite and a brush. Comparison with the finished fan, produced for the Irish Lace Depôt in Dublin, shows that the design translates well into the medium of appliqué and guipure, with the lacemakers altering it only slightly (fig. 3.19). They have added filling stitches in the space between the ribs of the urn, and have included more 'bars' in the guipure portions. Though the addition of filling stitches is a stylistic choice, and may even have been added by Jacob herself in the final version of the drawing, the increased density of bars in the guipure is a technical requirement, for stability. The lacemakers likely shifted and augmented the arrangement of bars while the work was in progress.

⁴⁹² Cole, *Catalogue of Antique Lace*, 14.

⁴⁹³ Brenan, "The Modern Irish Lace Industry," *Arts and Crafts Society*, 93.

Brenan used the story of two sisters who studied together at the Cork School of Art to argue that “like a poet, a good designer cannot be made.”⁴⁹⁴ The story also presents a glimpse of his own pedagogical practice. Lace design was not, he made clear, a task for a beginning student, but one that required a thorough grounding in drawing and an understanding of lace’s construction and material affordances. Brenan recounts that the sisters had both already learned to draw “from the cast and from nature, and had passed through all of the elementary work creditably.”⁴⁹⁵ He then set the sisters to “make working drawings from photos of old lace,” and to study the technical side of the designs – “the construction of the patterns.”⁴⁹⁶ At this point, the photograph stepped in as a substitute for the physical specimen, but this substitution was not meant to undermine or displace a study of the lace’s materiality. Brenan stresses learning “the limitations of the material”; later in the same lecture, he references his lace design students learning to make the laces that they drew on paper.⁴⁹⁷ Finally, Brenan gives the sisters “a space of two inches wide between two horizontal lines, and told them to make a design for a border for needle-point lace, using any arrangement they pleased.”⁴⁹⁸ Brenan concludes the story by proving his point: one sister had a “good design” completed in no time at all, whereas the other sat for days in front of a blank piece of paper, and eventually gave up on designing altogether.⁴⁹⁹

It is tempting to speculate that the sisters might have been Emily and Elizabeth Anderson, both of whom did study at the school, but only one of whom became a lace designer. However, regardless of who the sisters were, the story of their education in lace design is illuminating inasmuch as it shows how Brenan taught designers. Emily Anderson’s design for a needle lace handkerchief, now in the collection of the V&A, also documents this methodical way of laying out a design, with attention to the formal elements of draughtsmanship as well as the requirements and limitations of lace as a medium for artistic production (fig. 3.20). The drawing evidences how Anderson divided the handkerchief design into quadrants, and then further subdivided them with diagonal lines running from corner to corner of the square. A dot at the point where these four lines meet show that she used a compass to delineate the two faint circles that establish the inner and outer bounds of linen portion of the handkerchief. Other lines that were not quite erased show that she divided the

⁴⁹⁴ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79.

⁴⁹⁵ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79.

⁴⁹⁶ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79.

⁴⁹⁷ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79.

⁴⁹⁸ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79.

⁴⁹⁹ Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Arts and Crafts Society*, 79.

outer edges of each quadrant into thirds – the ribbon-like motifs that meanders through the design touches the edge at these marked intervals. Despite – or perhaps because of – this careful, almost mathematical planning, the design does not feel static or symmetrical. Each quadrant is different and varied within itself, but all are balanced.

A more fully-developed illustration of the handkerchief design (fig. 3.21), more polished than the preparatory drawing, is rendered in ‘Chinese white’ or kaolinite on brown card, to better imitate the effect of white lace. Anderson has transferred the design with very few alterations, but in this version she has provided for the material needs and limitations of needlepoint lace. A fine hexagonal ground fills the space between the pattern’s elements, and the motifs are either a flat white colour to indicate dense, unadorned stitching, or crosshatched to indicate a mesh filling. Decorative filling stitches are drawn along the ribbon and in small defined fields around the outer edge of the pattern. If a handkerchief was indeed made after this design, it would likely have differed, at least slightly, from Anderson’s drawing. As was the case with the guipure bars in Jacob’s design for the fan, Anderson has arranged the hexagonal ground in regular pattern which would not fully account for the needs of the medium. There are places where small, sharply pointed leaves emerge into the centre of these small hexagons, which would result in them curling up or down. The maker would have to adapt the pattern of the ground to ensure that these sharp edges are firmly fixed into the ground’s structure. The handkerchief design is roughly contemporary with the publication of *The Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lacemaking* in 1888. It was later donated to the V&A by Alan Cole, who likely acquired it for teaching and display. If that is the case, it would have circulated widely, and may have influenced lace design technique in other areas of the United Kingdom.

3.1.3 Emily Anderson and Caroline Beatson at South Kensington

1888 proved to be a year of unprecedented success in Emily Anderson’s nascent career as a lace designer. She received a first in the DSA examinations for ‘Model Drawing’ and ‘Ornamental Design,’ and a silver medal for designs for the lace borders and flounces submitted to the National Art Competition. In the same competition, the Covent of Mercy in Kinsale, Presentation Convent in Killarney, and Convent of the Poor Clares in Kenmare all received prizes, and Michael Holland received a book prize for lappet ends and insertions in crochet.⁵⁰⁰ Based on the competition results,

⁵⁰⁰ “Crawford Municipal School of Art” *Irish Examiner*, Thursday September 6, 1888, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

Anderson – along with her fellow Cork student Caroline Beatson – was selected to attend “vacation courses of lectures on design, and to study in the museum at South Kensington.”⁵⁰¹

Anderson’s sketchbooks, now in the collection of her great-niece Patricia Anderson, show evidence of this trip to the South Kensington Museum, where she would have been exposed to a dizzying array of objects: lace, of course, but also textiles, sculpture and architectural remnants, antiquities, metalwork, and ceramics. I have not been able to trace any of Anderson’s lace sketches to specimens in the V&A collection,⁵⁰² but a study of a sixteenth-century ring that was once thought to belong to Charles I is more easily traceable (figs. 3.22 and 3.23). Its close proximity to the lace sketches suggests that they were all completed at the same time. Beside it on the page is a watercolour sketch of a seventeenth-century enamelled ring bearing a portrait of Anne of Austria. A similar ring is in the V&A collection, but the band is enamelled in pale pink chevrons.⁵⁰³ Though it could be a different ring, the sketch may also suggest that some of Anderson’s drawings were not from the objects themselves, but from black and white lantern slides displayed during a lecture. The notes around the objects, about their dates and histories, as well as notable design features, might also indicate that they were displayed during a lecture.

Anderson and Beatson’s designs submitted to the 1888 National Art Competition were reproduced in a retrospective catalogue published at South Kensington in 1898, alongside reproductions of their work submitted in the following years (and in 1887, in the case of Caroline Beatson). In fact, with six pages of her work included, Emily Anderson is only matched for the amount of work in the catalogue by A. Walker, a carpet and stained-glass designer from Glasgow. The Dublin lace designer Alice Jacob comes in second, with five pages of designs. Irish design historian Paul Larmour has written that although lace design in Ireland did improve as a result of the new education schemes implemented in the 1880s, designers still depended on antique models for their inspiration.⁵⁰⁴ However, Anderson and Beatson’s designs for these competitions in the late 1880s and early 1890s show clear departures from the antique continental laces collected in the 1884

⁵⁰¹ “Crawford Municipal School of Art” *Irish Examiner*, Thursday September 6, 1888, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁵⁰² An examination of the sketchbooks alongside the V&A’s collection of lace specimens would likely remedy this. Pandemic-related travel restrictions have prevented me from returning to the V&A to study the lace collection, a limited quantity of which is photographed and/or archived online. Such concerns also prevented me from viewing Emily Anderson’s sketchbooks in person, at Patricia Anderson’s home on Vancouver Island, until October 2021, long after the time of writing this chapter.

⁵⁰³ “Ring,” Victoria and Albert Museum, March 27, 2003, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77393/ring-unknown/> (Accessed December 6, 2021).

⁵⁰⁴ Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 12.

Cork School of Art Catalogue. Though some are more traditional, the corpus taken as a whole shows great versatility and invention.

Beatson's design for a cut linen curtain, which won a gold medal in 1888, depicts long-legged cranes or herons surrounded by a swirling mass of oversized, stylized flowers and vines (fig. 3.24). The design is bold and dynamic, with very little negative space. This a product of the medium, because in cut linen or guipure the pattern is created by removal rather than addition, but it is also characteristic of Beatson's work more broadly. The birds seem almost part of the floral design, which twines around them, and in two cases appears to spring directly from their feathered backs. A cluster of cattails above and behind the bird on the right hand side is a gesture to their natural environment, but otherwise, the design is pure fantasy – the birds become part of the pattern. Beatson's design is astonishingly complex, and it would have presented a great deal of difficulty to the makers, had it been commissioned. However, the cut linen parasol cover that I discussed earlier in the chapter, made at the Bath and Shirley Schools after Michael Hayes' design, demonstrates that such complexity *could* be rendered in the medium (see fig. 3.5). In 1887, Beatson had submitted similarly complex, dense, and whimsical designs to the National Art Competition, for which she received a silver medal (figs. 3.25 and 3.26). In a design for a flounce, presumably in Limerick or Carrickmacross lace, Beatson combines willow boughs and honeysuckle in all the blowsy naturalism of Z. A. Inman's willow design (see fig. 3.13), with a scalloped border that weaves in and out among them, bringing a sense of structure to the riot of greenery and delineating the edge of the piece (fig. 3.26). This design and Beatson's curtain in cut linen both feature birds, which is unusual among lace designs of this period.⁵⁰⁵

Anderson's silver-medal designs for the 1888 National Art Competition are very different from those reproduced in *Renascence*, though they almost contemporary. A set of two flounces in Carrickmacross appliqué, they feature thin, undulating vines, sprouting with large stylized flowers (fig. 3.27). Along the top of the flounces run borders of alternating flowers and leaves, bound by parallel lines. In the wider flounce, the small sprigs of vines and flowers emerge from this border to mingle with the larger vine below. Like Beatson's designs from 1887-1888, they are dense and dynamic, with a sense of swirling motion created by the graceful curves of the vines and the sheer

⁵⁰⁵ In a 1913 article on Irish lace, Emily Anderson references “a popular prejudice against the use of birds or other animal forms in designs for lace that is intended for personal wear – an exception is made in favor of butterflies.” (Emily Anderson, “Notes on the Irish Lace and Crochet Industry,” *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland* Vol. 14 (1913): 56).

number of stylized flowers that convey a real sense of lightness – in the case of the small buds reaching upwards – and weight – in the drooping honeysuckles and large, six-leaved blossoms. They lack the ordered symmetry and the airy effect of the large amounts of negative space in Anderson’s earlier designs – the wide expanse of net sprinkled with regular sprigs of flowers in the Limerick lace flounces, for example (fig. 3.14 and 3.15). These designs are a clear departure from the formal, symmetrical, and stylized work of Michael Hayes, but their careful compositional balance hints at the skilled draughtsmanship – as demonstrated in the handkerchief design above – required to produce a design of such seemingly effortless harmony.

Similar designs also translated very well into finished Carrickmacross appliqué lace. Two specimens after designs by Emily Anderson were made at the Bath and Shirley Schools and reproduced in an 1890 article by Alan Cole for the *English Illustrated Magazine* (figs. 3.28 and 3.29). They feature the same composition of undulating vines sending off shoots of leaves and varied flowers, and the distinctive border that at regular intervals breaks its bounds to merge with the central pattern. The flower types in the four specimens match as well. In the two wider flounces, even the distinctive passionflower motif is repeated, modelled with cutting-out on its three leaves and in two ridges on its blossom. Given these details, I date these designs to 1888 and the finished specimens to 1889. They were likely acquired by Alan Cole for teaching and display, because he donated them to the V&A in 1913 along with a number of lace designs, including Anderson’s handkerchief design and another for a Limerick lace border (fig. 3.30).⁵⁰⁶ Still in the V&A collection they are two of three extant pieces of lace, the designs for which I have been able to attribute to Emily Anderson (figs. 3.31 and 3.32).

In her submissions to the 1889 National Art Competition, for which she received a silver medal, Anderson employed similar motifs: the dense, six and seven-leaved flowers, and the gently curving stems with a mix of small, oval leaves and larger toothed leaves, often with a cut out mid-vein or with one half cut out (figs. 3.33 and 3.34). However, these designs gesture more clearly to historical precedents. The set of three borders for Limerick lace (fig. 3.33) recall the meandering floral garlands of the Point d’Alençon lappets in the Cork School of Art collection, and the cartouches delineating triangular fields of filling stitches recall some of the almost architectural

⁵⁰⁶ My knowledge of the contents of the V&A’s lace collection is based on their digitized collection and unillustrated catalogues, due to the pandemic travel restrictions. A useful path for further study would be to examine the collection of appliqué and embroidery on net in more detail, in the interest of finding further specimens of lace that match Emily Anderson’s designs. It might also be fruitful to search for the records of Alan Cole’s 1913 gift, then gather together and study the group of designs and lace specimens in its entirety.

features in designs by Michael Hayes (see, for example, fig. 3.3). The set of two similar borders, adapted for Carrickmacross appliqué (fig. 3.34), feature small sprigs of flowers and leaves that break out of the border to enliven the negative space between the regular masses of ornament. As seen in the finished specimens above (figs. 3.31 & 3.32), this is a very effective design when rendered in appliqué. The flounce in appliqué work (fig. 3.33), while drawing some of the same floral forms and the dynamism of sprawling vines from the 1888 designs, is more regulated, with each cluster of flowers separate from the next. The clusters repeat in an alternating pattern, and large flowers create a border along the edge of the flounce. This border is a representational – and much more whimsical – version of the compositional device used in lace designs in the tradition of *Point d'Alençon* and *Point d'Argentan*, consisting of a border of regular, repeating lozenge shapes or ovoid floral forms (see, for example, figs. 2.2, 2.3, 2.6). And the handkerchief in needlepoint lace (fig. 3.34), one of the few needlepoint lace designs that Anderson created, is even more formal and stylized, without the use of vines as central organizational devices, and bearing none of the distinctive six- and seven-leaved flowers or toothed leaves that characterize her other 1889 designs and those of the previous year. This is primarily a product of the medium, as needlepoint lace does not allow for a large amount of negative space in a design and during this period tended to be more conservative in design, perhaps because of its time consuming and costly nature. If experimentation was unsuccessful, it was a much greater loss to the makers.

A piece of Carrickmacross appliqué lace was made after one of Anderson's 1889 competition designs, likely at the Bath and Shirley Schools (fig. 3.35). Donated to the V&A by Alan Cole in 1913, the specimen was likely made up as an educational sample. Appearing in the centre of the three 1889 designs for borders in Limerick lace reproduced in the South Kensington catalogue, it has been rendered instead in Carrickmacross appliqué, a process that we know did occur, as two of Anderson's designs for 1889 are labelled 'adapted for Carrickmacross Appliqué.' The design's size and the lack of space between the motifs make it less effective as a finished piece. Anderson's design depended on variety in the central garland of flowers and leaves, and such variety would be incredibly difficult, if not impossible, working in appliqué on such a small scale.⁵⁰⁷ Though Alan Cole did not, to my knowledge, leave notes about each specimen gathered for his collection, I wonder if

⁵⁰⁷ Carrickmacross lace is constructed by outlining the individual motifs with couched thread, and then cutting out the remaining fabric to reveal the pattern. This means that very small pattern elements and sharp corners cause the couching thread to crowd the surface.

he would have used this border as an illustration of what can go wrong when translating a design from one variety of lace to another.

3.1.4 Lace design students as teachers and industry experts

At the same time that Emily Anderson's designs were being made up to use as educational specimens, she was beginning her own career as a teacher. In June 1890, she was once again invited to study at the South Kensington Museum during the summer vacation, this time along with her fellow Cork School of Art student Edith M. Breton.⁵⁰⁸ Breton went on in 1892 to study at the National Art Training School in South Kensington,⁵⁰⁹ and her *Coolgrena* design for an embroidered cushion cover won honourable mention in *The Studio Magazine's* 1896 prize competition.⁵¹⁰ Caroline Beatson, who had travelled to South Kensington with Anderson in 1888, married at about this time, changing her name to Caroline Edgar and moving to Newry, in County Down. However, she was still able to use her education in lace design, becoming an instructor for a drawing class at the Newry Convent of Mercy in 1891.⁵¹¹ Anderson received her first formal teaching qualifications in 1890, when her work was accepted for an 'Art Class Teacher's Certificate,' though she seems to have been assisting with design classes in some capacity before this; Mr. Mulligan's Headmaster's report for the academic year ending June 1890 thanks her for her assistance throughout the year in the "design room."⁵¹² Anderson then received an 'Art Mistresses Certificate' in 1892.⁵¹³ A January 1894 article mentions that Emily Anderson was teaching at the Crawford School of Art that year.⁵¹⁴

However, it seems that by 1889, Emily Anderson was already teaching in another context, specifically drawing for lace design at one of the branch classes. In 1889, Cole reported on a visit to the Lace School at the Convent of Mercy in Killarney, formed only recently and taught by a "Miss Anderson," surely Emily. He noted that the drawing was coarse in character, but that the students had improved in their sense of proportion, width and spacing. Their patterns, though imperfect, were popular with lace instructors, who had used them to make lace for sale, and sold it successfully. He asked Miss Anderson to "insist on neater drawing" and as much as she could to prevent "rough

⁵⁰⁸ *Irish Examiner*, December 27, 1890, 4. Irish News Archive.

⁵⁰⁹ Fortieth report of the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, Cmnd. 6905, at 203. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁵¹⁰ "Awards in the 'The Studio' Prize Competitions," *The Studio: an Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art* Vol. 7 (1896): 251, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=FUnrAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA250&hl=en>.

⁵¹¹ 39th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 28.

⁵¹² *Irish Examiner*, December 12, 1890, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁵¹³ *Irish Examiner*, February 6, 1893. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁵¹⁴ *Irish Examiner*, January 31, 1894. Irish Newspaper Archive.

and ready” patterns going to the lacemakers, suggesting a book on ornament might be useful for the students.⁵¹⁵ Here, Cole may have been referring to one of the Irish educator and philanthropist Vere Foster’s drawing books, which were used in Irish primary schools to teach basic drawing of landscapes, people, and floral forms. W.K. Sullivan references the use of Foster’s books in his testimony for the 1884 Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, and it is likely that these inexpensive books would have found their way into the branch classes.⁵¹⁶ A Vere Foster book on ‘Plants from Nature,’ for example, would have helped students to develop an understanding of floral forms, the most common motifs in lace design (fig. 3.36).⁵¹⁷

Students from the branch classes could also become proficient designers, though most of the names listed in competition results were students from the art schools in Cork and Dublin. Designs by Alice Bailly, Alice Jacob, and Lizzie Perry appear in the 1898 South Kensington Retrospective catalogue, and in 1889, Minnie Nagle of Cork won a scholarship – instituted by the DSA and Committee of the Cork Exhibition to aid Irish students in design studies – to study at the National Art Training School in South Kensington. Mr. Mulligan’s 1888-1889 Headmaster’s report noted that she was the first lace designer to win this scholarship, and proposed opening the competition to students of the branch classes the following year, “with the object of encouraging the lace industry in the South of Ireland.”⁵¹⁸ During Alan Cole’s 1889 visit to Ireland, he inspected the lace school at the Presentation Convent in Killarney, and spoke favourably of “the daughter of the boots at the hotel,” a fifteen-year-old girl whose lace designs “seemed to have originality and character, besides being quite practicable from a lace maker’s point of view.”⁵¹⁹ This young designer in training does not appear in Cole’s reports again, though it is tempting to speculate that she went on to study in Cork or Dublin. It is equally possible that she left the class, or had to find another occupation when all classes and lace production at the Presentation Convent came to halt in 1892 because of an influenza

⁵¹⁵ 38th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 38.

⁵¹⁶ Second Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction (Vol. IV). Evidence, &c. relating to Ireland, 1884, C. 3981-III, at 251. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online; Second Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction (Vol. III), 1884, C. 3981-II, at cvii. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁵¹⁷ Vere Foster, *Vere Foster’s Drawing Book: Plants from Nature (in two books)* (London: Blackie and Sons, n.d.), <https://archive.org/details/plantsfromnature00fost/page/n13/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021). A useful path for further inquiry would be to assemble a collection of Vere Foster’s drawing books relating to ornament and plant forms, and then compare them to late-nineteenth-century lace designs, to see if students did indeed draw from the books.

⁵¹⁸ *Irish Examiner*, December 27, 1890, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁵¹⁹ Thirty-seventh report of the department of science and art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1890, C. 6053, at 13-14. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

outbreak.⁵²⁰ In an 1891 Letter to the Editor of *The Freeman's Journal*, Matthew Holland used this excerpt from Cole's report to criticize the DSA's schemes for improving lace design. He quotes Cole's report and concludes that: "We have, therefore, the fact that the artistic improvement of designs in lace required by the industry in Ireland was being affected by "competition" drawings and attempts by a girl of 15."⁵²¹ Holland's derisive comment might be attributed to his low estimation of the intelligence of young girls, but also picks up on an issue that I will examine in more detail in the next chapter. To what extent was the creation of aesthetically beautiful but incredibly complex 'competition designs' actually useful for the commercial interests of the Irish lace industry? Holland studied drawing and design at the Cork School of Art, at the same time as and perhaps even with Anderson and Beatson, though, as I discussed in Chapter 2, the Schools of Art under the South Kensington System did have separate classes targeted to middle-class (and primarily female) students during the day and working-class students in the evenings. Holland was certainly not an amateur or person of leisure; in conjunction with his studies, he worked as a foreman at Messrs. Dwyer and Co., a Cork crochet company.⁵²²

Matthew Holland's career path demonstrates how opportunities for lace design students diverged along gendered lines: rather than designing lace and teaching, he designed lace and held management roles in the industry, as a workshop foreman and frequent commentator on lace in the public press. In 1880, at the age of twenty-two, Holland received a pass in freehand drawing in the DSA examinations at the Cork School of Art.⁵²³ In 1889, Alan Cole's report mentions visiting with Mr. Holland, a student of the School "and also foreman of the crochet workers employed by Messrs. Dwyer."⁵²⁴ Cole praises the new designs that Holland has been giving to his workers, and notes that five hundred workers have found consistent employment at Dwyer and Co. in the past ten months, whereas in the five years previous there was not even enough work for one hundred.⁵²⁵ Holland designed patterns for crochet based on antique Italian models, rather than adapting the 'freestyle'

⁵²⁰ 40th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 15.

⁵²¹ Matthew Holland, Letter to the Editor of March 15, 1891, "Irish Lace Making," *The Freeman's Journal*, newspaper clipping included in The Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵²² I have not been able to establish a precise chronology for Holland's employment at Dwyers, though he must have been working there in the mid-1880s, as a photograph of "Crochet Work for Chair Cover" in the NMI collection is labelled "Made from a Prize Design (Competition 1885) by Michael Hayes, by workers under the superintendence of Mr. Michael Holland, Cork" (Folder of 'Photographs of Irish Laces, 1880s,' collection of the National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts Division (DT1995.118).

⁵²³ Clipping entitled "Cork School of Art' (annotated 1880), newspaper clipping included in The Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵²⁴ 37th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 14.

⁵²⁵ 37th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 14.

technique of joining together motifs that I discussed in Chapter 1, and that informed my own learning and making in Chapter 6. He would have also been influenced by the pattern books of Mlle. Riego de la Branchardière, with whom Dwyer and Co. had a working relationship, in at least one case licensing a collection of her designs for production by their workers.⁵²⁶ A report on the Messrs. Dwyer and Co. display at the Manchester Exhibition of 1887 highlights “the exquisite bit of Vandyke edging in the centre [sic] of this case, of a pattern which reminds one of Cesare Vecellio’s designs for ‘Reticella’ or ‘Punt in Aria,’ in the South Kensington collection, is one of the latest designs of Mr. Holland, the firm’s assistant in this department, under whose direction all their crochet work is produced.”⁵²⁷ Cesare Vecellio’s designs were also republished on at least one occasion, in 1880, so they would have been available even outside of the Museum collection (fig. 3.37).⁵²⁸ A set of three crochet borders, produced under the supervision of Michael Holland, were reproduced in *Renascence*, and their alignment with this description of Holland’s designs suggests that they were not only produced under his supervision, but designed by him as well (fig. 3.38).

Holland left Dwyer and Co. in late 1888 or 1889, but continued to design for crochet and contribute to the discussion in print surrounding the art and industry of Irish lace.⁵²⁹ The newspaper articles and trade ephemera that he collected and wrote during the 1880s, while studying at the Cork School of Art and working for a crochet firm, already begin to hint at some of the political and even moral discourse surrounding lace production in Ireland. A Dwyer and Co. trade letter advertising a line of crochet lace goods after the patterns of Mlle. Riego de la Branchardière states that “the greatest possible care will be taken to preserve the correct working of the patterns, and the materials used; *a circumstance hitherto much neglected* in the manufacture of Irish Lace generally.”⁵³⁰ The description of the Dwyer and Co. display at the Manchester Exhibition quoted above also noted that the firm had been working hard to “reform the cottage workers” – exactly what sort of reform is not

⁵²⁶ Trade letter, dated March 1887, concerning new patterns from Mlle de Riego de la Branchardière, included in the Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives. For more on Riego de la Branchardière, her pattern books, and copyright, see Castles, “Hybrid stitched textile art.”

⁵²⁷ No title, 1887, newspaper clipping included in The Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵²⁸ An 1880 exact facsimile of *Corona della Nobile* is lodged in the library of the Clark Institute (Williamstown, Massachusetts), however because it is an exact facsimile, additional publication details are not included in the text. It is also included in the Clark Institute’s digitized collection on Internet Archive. See: https://archive.org/details/MAB.31962000791503Images_20130628/page/n7/mode/2up.

⁵²⁹ A newspaper clipping with no title and dated May 4, 1889, is annotated in Holland’s writing to indicate that he was not – as the article claims – a current but former employee of Dwyer and Co., newspaper clipping included in The Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵³⁰ Trade letter, dated March 1887, concerning new patterns from Mlle de Riego de la Branchardière, included in the Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives. Emphasis mine.

specified.⁵³¹ And a clipping from an article reporting on a meeting of the Cork Young Men’s Society highlights a speech by Mr. Edward Holland – perhaps a brother or cousin – which “attributed the present condition of our commersial [sic] industries to the want of Home Government.”⁵³² These seemingly disconnected snippets of advertisements and newspaper articles point to a broader issue: the establishment of inspection and regulation in the Irish lace industry, and the entanglement of design, industry, and politics.

3.2 Mary Power Lalor, Lady Inspector for Irish Lace

At the same time that Emily Anderson, Michael Holland, and the other students at the Cork School of Art experimented with lace design, government oversight of the industry continued to evolve. In 1886, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland recommended that a Lady Inspector for the Irish lace industry be appointed, to assist in improving both production and marketing. It was important that the inspector be a woman, and not just for the reasons of propriety, fellow-feeling, and hoped-for gender solidarity that drove the establishment of the British Woman Factory Inspectors, whom I will discuss further in Chapter 5. Much of Irish lacemaking at the time occurred in convents, and though different Catholic orders practised varying degrees of enclosure, a woman would have greater access to the physical space of the convents and likely be a more welcome visitor to the nuns.

On the 18th of January 1887, Mary Power Lalor was offered the position of Lace Inspector for Ireland, a year-long appointment under the DSA; she accepted.⁵³³ Born into the Ryans family, of Tipperary, Mary Power Lalor married the landowner Edmund James Power Lalor of Long Orchard, Tipperary in 1858, and spent most of her life thereafter travelling between her home in Tipperary, Dublin and London.⁵³⁴ Power Lalor was a Unionist, and a member of the Viceregal court in Dublin, however like many in her circle she was an enthusiast for ‘traditional’ Irish Gaelic culture and believed that celebrating Ireland’s “strength and distinctiveness” would serve the best interests of the United Kingdom as a whole.⁵³⁵ By 1887, she had a history of involvement in philanthropic activity in

⁵³¹ No title, 1887, newspaper clipping included in The Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵³² “Cork Young Men’s Society,” n.d., newspaper clipping included in The Holland Manuscript (U136/3), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵³³ 34th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xli.

⁵³⁴ Andrew G. Newby, “On Their Behalf No Agitator Raises His Voice?: The Irish Distressed Ladies Fund: Gender, Politics and Urban Philanthropy in Victorian Ireland,” in *Gender in Urban Europe: Sites of Political Activity and Citizenship, 1750-1900*, eds. Krista Cowman, Nina Javette Koefoed and Åsa Karlsson Sjögren (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 183.

⁵³⁵ Newby, “On Their Behalf,” 183.

Ireland. She had taken a tour of Donegal in 1883 to raise awareness of the plight of school children in the area, and as founder in 1886 of the Irish Distressed Ladies Fund, she worked alongside other bourgeois and aristocratic women to fundraise, and provide housing and employment for women in penury, especially members of the gentry who had fallen from fortune during the Land Wars due to non-payment of rent.⁵³⁶ A letter published in the *Liberal Unionist* in July 1887 and describing a meeting of the Fund, illustrates how diverse its membership and activities were: John Aird Paddington, Esquire, M.P. had just been appointed treasurer, Miss Craigie was collecting “old clothes and calico for underlinens,” and Miss Ogle More had “consented to act as Employment correspondent,” to whom were directed inquiries regarding the hiring of servants and adopting of “destitute children.”⁵³⁷ The writer also describes Mary Power Lalor’s address, which, flavoured with a definite political stance, described “heartrending cases of distress amongst Irish ladies, old and young, who are the victims of revolution, chiefly in the South of the island.”⁵³⁸

The meeting discussed above took place in July of 1887, six months after Mary Power Lalor was appointed Lace Inspector for Ireland. In the same month, the Irish Distressed Ladies Fund published an appeal in the London newspaper *Morning Post*, asking for donations from “the wealthy Ladies of England” for their “less fortunate sisters” in Ireland, and advertising a sale of family heirlooms such as “jewels, family plate, and old lace” at the American Exhibition in West Brompton, London.⁵³⁹ This is the same Exhibition that saw William Cody’s ‘Wild West Show’ first come to London, and however much Power Lalor’s description of these landowning women’s suffering as a result of ‘revolution’ ignores the justness of their much more impoverished tenants’ cause, there is a sense of pathos in this picture of treasured family heirlooms being offered up for sale in a place of spectacle and spectatorship.

New lace was likely sold alongside the old, as the article also advertises “most beautiful” work produced by distressed ladies in Ireland for sale at the exhibition, “which seeks a market, and which promises independence to the workers if one such market can be found.”⁵⁴⁰ ‘Seeking a market’ was exactly what Mary Power Lalor had been appointed to do as Lace Inspector for Ireland, and her activities at the American Exhibition in July 1887 demonstrate how she balanced and blended this

⁵³⁶ Newby, “On Their Behalf,” 183.

⁵³⁷ George Scott Manning, Letter to the Editor, “The Irish Distressed Ladies Fund,” *The Liberal Unionist* Vol. 1 No. 18 (July 21, 1887): 284, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=WPffAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA284&hl=en>.

⁵³⁸ Manning, Letter to the Editor, “The Irish Distressed Ladies Fund,” 284.

⁵³⁹ “Distressed Irish Ladies,” *Morning Post* [London] July 25, 1887, 3. Gale Primary Sources: British Library Newspapers.

⁵⁴⁰ “Distressed Irish Ladies,” *Morning Post* [London] July 25, 1887, 3. Gale Primary Sources: British Library Newspapers.

duty with her other philanthropic activities. Like Theresa Londonderry and Ishbel Aberdeen of the Irish Industries Association, whom I will discuss in the next chapter, Mary Power Lalor made use of a vast social network that was both a product of and resource for genteel charitable work, to advance the cause of Irish women's industries.⁵⁴¹ In that next chapter, I will discuss criticisms of this top-down, bourgeois and aristocratic class driven model, one that was very much the standard at the time. Though the Department's reports do not specify what sort of technical qualifications she possessed, it is likely that, like Mabel Morrison, Power Lalor was a lace connoisseur with her own private collection and a sound knowledge of continental and British laces. Rather than overlapping duties with Alan Cole, whose activities and reports focused on the propagation of good design, Power Lalor focused on "the technical and commercial sides of the industry."⁵⁴² She inspected completed lace, checked it for accuracy in adherence to patterns, and assisted lace workshops in finding markets for sale.⁵⁴³

Despite Alan Cole's success in promoting lace design reform, Mary Power Lalor's first report, for the year 1887, is scathing in its evaluation of the mechanics of the Irish lace industry. She writes that "the defective points in the Irish lace industry are serious, and strike at the very foundation of its providing a lasting gain to the commercial interests of the country."⁵⁴⁴ Her biggest critique was that the lace industry on the whole was the product of philanthropy rather than industrial development, so it depended on the efforts of individuals, who could not be relied upon to support it forever. These philanthropists may be deeply committed to their local lace industries during their lifetime, but when they die, it is entirely likely that their work will die with them. Even in convents, the lace workshop depended on the favour of the superioress at any given time. If she were to be succeeded by one who "considers the lace work rather out of the sphere of the nuns' duties," it would be "relegated to an inferior lay mistress, and inefficiently looked after."⁵⁴⁵

Power Lalor also criticized the lack of business acumen in the lace industry. The 1887 report noted that the concepts of wholesale and retail were not understood at the lace centres, and that the administration at those centres did not know how to organize the purchasing of supplies at wholesale

⁵⁴¹ For example, on the 24th of April 1886, Queen reported that Mary Power Lalor worked with Alice Hart to organize an exhibition in the Sherburne Hotel, Dublin, which was attended by Princess Saxe-Weimar, Lady Guinness, Lady Martin, Lady Hamilton, and the Lady Mayoress. See: Janice Helland, "Exhibiting Ireland," 46 (note 97).

⁵⁴² 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁵⁴³ HC Deb 16 November 1888, Vol. 330 Col. 1416.

⁵⁴⁴ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁵⁴⁵ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

prices – a definite financial disadvantage.⁵⁴⁶ This was yet another result of the industry’s disjointed and patron-supported character. Ladies looking to start lace industries tended to come to the table with knowledge about fashion and needlework, but not business experience. And a series of scattered small industries could not necessarily purchase enough supplies to demand bulk discounts, especially when those communicating with suppliers were not used to buying products in large quantities or at wholesale prices.

However, in a presentation to the Ladies Industrial Committee in October of 1887 at Mansion House, Dublin, Power Lalor painted a brighter picture. She reported that the number of lacemakers continued to increase, and also that their work was improving. She noted that lacemakers were now working from better designs, likely as a result of the influence of Alan Cole. Consequently, cottage lacemakers were now able to earn from approximately 4s to 10s a week.⁵⁴⁷ Like Alan Cole, Mary Power Lalor describes improvement in the practical skills required for lacemaking in the language of personal development and morality: not only were the women making better lace, they were also becoming better women. Helen Blackburn’s report for *The Englishwomen’s Review* on Power Lalor’s presentation to the Ladies Industrial Committee notes that “Mrs. Power Lalor dwelt on the valuable education influences of the work, which necessitated patience, cleanliness, and accuracy.”⁵⁴⁸ It is also worth noting here that Power Lalor seems to have been considered an expert on other textile industries as well. The event at Mansion House involved presentations by other women about other Irish Industries, such as Galway flannel and the knitting of saddle pads for race horses. Power Lalor weighed in on consistency of production standards and marketing for flannel as well as lacemaking. In 1887, the *Englishwoman’s Review* also listed Power Lalor as “the agent for receiving orders for the various kinds of lace made in Ireland.”⁵⁴⁹ She was by no means the only, or even the primary agent for Irish lace at this time; the Irish Lace Depôt was active in taking orders and making sales, and Ishbel Aberdeen had founded the Irish Industries Association (IIA) one year earlier in 1886. Instead, the fact that Power Lalor’s duties included receiving orders, along with involvement in other textile industries, suggests that her role was less that of a specialized government inspector, and more like that of an institutionalized and professionalized aristocratic patroness.

⁵⁴⁶ 35th Report of the Department of Science and Art, xlv.

⁵⁴⁷ Helen Blackburn, “Art III. - Irish Industries,” *Englishwoman’s Review of Social and Industrial Questions* (November 15, 1887): 492, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=O-rs5Pjdo64C&pg=GBS.PA492&hl=en>.

⁵⁴⁸ Helen Blackburn, “Art III. - Irish Industries,” 493.

⁵⁴⁹ “Irish Jubilee Offering,” *Englishwoman’s Review of Social and Industrial Questions* (June 15, 1887): 279. Google Books, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=O-rs5Pjdo64C&pg=GBS.PA278&hl=en>.

Mary Power Lalor's appointment as Lace Inspector was extended for an additional year, to the end of 1888, upon the recommendation of the Marquess of Londonderry, the same Lord Lieutenant who had originally suggested her for the post. This is not surprising, given the fact that his wife, Theresa Londonderry, was a patron of the Irish Distressed Ladies Fund and may have influenced Lalor's initial appointment the previous year.⁵⁵⁰ In 1888, Power Lalor supervised the most high-profile lacemaking project of her short career as inspector: a set of lace commissioned by the Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland to be given the Pope Leo XIII in celebration of his fiftieth year on the papal throne. 'The Papal Jubilee Lace,' consisting of trimming for an altar cloth and an alb or rochet, was universally considered to be a masterpiece, and a source of great pride for the Irish lace industry (figs 3.39 & 3.40).

The Papal Jubilee lace was the product of a competition held among the art schools of Ireland. Seventeen students or classes submitted designs, and the branch class at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare took first prize. Second prize went to Emily Barney, of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, and third to Emily Anderson.⁵⁵¹ Their designs were not published, but the winning designs were worked at the Presentation Convent in Youghal, and photographed for reproduction in *The Magazine of Art* (figs. 3.39 & 3.40). In the accompanying article, Power Lalor describes the Kenmare design: "in point of artistic completeness, [it] surpassed the others in the beauty of its curves and the great variety of leaves and flowers, while it suggested an extraordinary number of different lace stitches, requiring skilful and delicate workmanship, being used with good effect."⁵⁵² The Irish bishops who had commissioned the piece approved it, and Power Lalor also noted that it had caught the attention of "some of our most fastidious lace connoisseurs"; it would seem that the commission drummed up more business for Youghal and Kenmare's lace industries.⁵⁵³ And if that did not sufficiently highlight the achievement of Irish lacemakers, Power Lalor concludes the article with another push for British consumers to turn their attention to Irish lace. She writes that over one million pounds were spent on foreign-made lace every year in Britain, and that if the British consumer were to redirect even half of that money to Ireland, it "would bring comfort and plenty to the homes of these poor but skilful people."⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ Newby, "On Their Behalf," 188.

⁵⁵¹ Mary Power Lalor, "The Irish Papal Jubilee Lace," *Magazine of Art* Vol. 11 (1888): 200. ProQuest.

⁵⁵² Power Lalor, "Papal Jubilee Lace," 200.

⁵⁵³ Power Lalor, "Papal Jubilee Lace," 201.

⁵⁵⁴ Power Lalor, "Papal Jubilee Lace," 201.

Despite Power Lalor's success in coordinating and promoting this high-profile project, 1888 also saw at least one expression of protest against her ongoing appointment. Power Lalor's work as Lace Inspector for Ireland was justification for the DSA to curtail Alan Cole's visits to Ireland, which caused concern among those with an eye to the industry. Though Mary Power Lalor's appointment had occurred at the behest of the Lord Lieutenant, not the DSA, the Department had agreed to pay her £200 per annum salary.⁵⁵⁵ Understandably, the Treasury assumed that this rendered Cole's visits unnecessary, and it was only by the petitioning of concerned stakeholders that he returned. In December 1887, a number of convents sent letters to the DSA in support of the continuance of Cole's visits.⁵⁵⁶ In April 1888, James Brennan wrote to two members of Parliament, asking them to use their influence with the Lord Lieutenant to ensure Cole's return to Ireland.⁵⁵⁷

Other voices were raised in support of Alan Cole's visits to Ireland. William Lane, a butter merchant and member of the Committee of Cork School of Art, spoke at length on this subject in the House of Commons on November 16th, 1888. He described the success of Cole's work in Ireland: "the result had been something marvellous, considering the short time the system was in operation, and such an impetus had been given to the making of Irish lace in the last five years as, but for Mr. Cole's efforts, it would probably not have received, if it had been left to local effort, in the next twenty years."⁵⁵⁸ Lane suggested that Power Lalor might be better employed – and paid – by the National Board of Irish Education, as an Inspector of Needlework more broadly.⁵⁵⁹ This is a reasonable request, as Lalor did have an interest in other needlework and textile industries – flannel, for example. Although Lane's speech in the House of Commons was productive in bringing crucial attention to the achievements in Irish lacemaking that Cole had helped engender, it also demonstrates a problematic conceptual bifurcation of the art and economics of lacemaking that, as we will see, was concurrently playing out as a discrepancy in the expectations of various lace stakeholders. He defined Mary Power Lalor's interests as concerned with "the commercial department of the lace-making industry," and Alan Cole's as "purely technical and artistic."⁵⁶⁰ It seems that Lane felt that these two categories ought to be kept separate, and it is clear which he esteemed most. Even though Cole's visits had made a tremendous difference in the industry, it

⁵⁵⁵ HC Deb 16 November 1888, Vol. 330 Col. 1415.

⁵⁵⁶ December 7th, 1887, Art Committee Minutes October 1883-June 1899 (VEC06/56), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵⁵⁷ April 20th, 1888, Art Committee Minutes October 1883-June 1899 (VEC06/56), Cork City and County Archives.

⁵⁵⁸ HC Deb 16 November 1888, Vol. 330 Col. 1415.

⁵⁵⁹ HC Deb 16 November 1888, Vol. 330 Col. 1418.

⁵⁶⁰ HC Deb 16 November 1888, Vol. 330 Col. 1417.

remained that many of the buyers and patrons supporting the Irish lace industry were wealthy upper-middle class and aristocratic women, like Power Lalor. Later on in this chapter, I will revisit this tension between the business of fashion and good design, which might also be seen as the tension between (feminine) fashion and (masculine) art, with lace caught squarely in the middle.

In the end, both Mary Power Lalor and Alan Cole continued on in their work for several years. Mention of Power Lalor's reports on Irish lace continue to appear in the DSA's Annual Reports until 1891, at which point her name disappears. However, this is also the point at which Alan Cole's visits begin to come to an end; the 1891 report states that "the time has arrived when Mr. Cole's visits and lectures may very shortly cease, and the organisation which has resulted from them being sufficiently established no longer to require such special supervision."⁵⁶¹ His last extensive visit was in the fall of 1891, though he did return briefly in 1897, only recording an inspection of the Garryhill Embroidery Industry in Carlow, established by Lady Duncannon, on the 21st of October.⁵⁶² During the period from 1883 to 1897, Alan Cole made eleven official visits to Ireland, inspecting over fifty lacemaking workshops, museums and design schools.

3.3 Hibernia the lacemaker: politicizing the late-nineteenth-century discourse of Irish lace

To conclude this chapter, I will revisit some of the themes that emerged in Cole and Power Lalor's reports and articles from the 1880s and 90s, such as the notion of lace production in the Irish home, of lacemakers as both physical and moral beings, and of issues surrounding machine-made lace and industrialization.⁵⁶³ These are not neutral concepts, and a closer look at their late-century writings reveals contradictions, omissions and ambivalence. What did it mean to produce a craft by hand at a time when it could be adequately replicated by machines, which were growing ever more sophisticated? How could this white, delicate fabric emerge from the rural Irish cottages characterized throughout Britain as places of squalor and suffering? And how could the philanthropic desire to help these impoverished people co-exist with sound industrial judgment?

⁵⁶¹ 39th Report of the Department of Science and Art, lv.

⁵⁶² Forty-fifth report of the department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1898, C. 8791, at 93. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁵⁶³ An earlier version of this section was presented at the Canadian Association for Irish Studies Conference at Concordia University (May 29 - June 1, 2019), entitled "'Fairy-like textures wrought by the hands of dwellers in mud cabins': women and their homes in the discourse of 19th-century Irish lace design." Another version, focusing specifically on British perspectives on rural Irish homes, was presented as "Lacemaking 'by the turf fire': gendered labour in the late-19th century Irish home," at The Home in Modern History and Culture conference at the University of Nottingham, England (January 27, 2020).

In this investigation I will draw on the literary methodology that I discussed in Chapter 1, and in particular on the work of Elaine Freedgood. Freedgood's analysis of widely-published nineteenth-century lace books focuses on the text, unpacking the way such books framed the making and makers of lace, ultimately revealing how these texts separated the hand from the body and imagined a utopian space where lace was free from associations with difficult labour. Lace books celebrated idiosyncrasies in homemade lace, contrasting such evidence of the human maker's hand with the soulless perfection of machine-made lace, borne on the encroaching tide of industrialization.⁵⁶⁴ This literary methodology is particularly useful in relation to Irish lace, which was produced for and discussed at length by the upper-middle and aristocratic classes of the United Kingdom, during a time when print media was widely circulated and accessible. In Chapter 2, a series of photographs taken for the *Illustrated London News* illustrated how lace was particularly suited to reproduction in black and white, and thus to illustration and discussion in newspapers, books and periodicals. For roughly a decade, Alan Cole's inspection and reporting were the primary sources of information regarding Irish lace supplied to British governmental and educational authorities, as well as the general public.⁵⁶⁵ Though not to the same extent, Mary Power Lalor also participated in generating this stream of information and opinion. Their articles appeared in the leading art magazines of the day, and their reports were commissioned to be read before British Parliament.⁵⁶⁶ The extensive and public nature of their writings provide a valuable context in which to situate an investigation of the intersection of design, colonialism, class, and gender.

Alan Cole conducted his survey of lacemaking in Ireland during a unique period in the history of Great Britain and Ireland's tempestuous relationship. The Act of Union had occurred in 1801, making Ireland part of the United Kingdom after more than five centuries of varying degrees of colonial occupation. Ireland was thus no longer a colony, like India, but it remained fundamentally different in the eyes of the British people. Not only did the Irish Sea separate the country from the rest of Great Britain, the prevalence of Catholicism cast a shade of 'otherness' over the majority of the population. And many Irish people – Catholics and Protestants alike – reacted against this second-class citizenship, advocating throughout the century for political causes as diverse as Catholic

⁵⁶⁴ Freedgood, "Fine Fingers," 631.

⁵⁶⁵ Consider, for example, the commercial publication of *Renascence*, Cole's articles for *The English Illustrated Magazine* and *Magazine of Art*, and the frequent referencing and reproducing of his reports in newspaper articles on the topic.

⁵⁶⁶ Cole's reports formed part of the Department of Science and Art's Command Papers, and he referenced these "blue-books" in his 1888 article for the *Magazine of Art*. See: Alan Cole, "Word on the Outlook of Lace-Making in Ireland," *Magazine of Art* Vol. 11 (1888): 203. ProQuest.

Emancipation, Home Rule, and Land Reform. The Irish were in turn feared, resented, pitied, made the object of imperial benevolence, and represented as a distinct and inferior race in cartoons like those discussed in Chapter 2. The uneven power dynamic in the relationship between Britain and Ireland also translated into philanthropic projects—such as the lace industry—carried out by wealthy English men and women in Ireland. Such benevolence was already fraught territory; in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and its Legacies*, Chris Tiffin and Helen Gilbert write that “virtually all forms of personal benevolence, even the most apparently altruistic, involve a structural relationship that situates the donor as a dominant, self-approving figure.”⁵⁶⁷

In ‘England’s oldest colony,’ as Ireland has sometimes been called, this ‘structural relationship’ was compounded by a complex colonial past. In Chapter 1, I introduced DSA design education schemes in India as a comparative case study in South Kensington’s ‘bureaucracy of beauty.’ In fact, as a result of imperial economic networks, craft production from both Ireland and India were sometimes combined in a single garment, bringing together the production of two colonial spaces and people groups on a single body. For example, a tea gown now in the V&A’s costume collection is made of Indian silk damask, embellished with glass and beads, and features a Limerick lace overdress (fig. 3.41). Janice Helland refers to this type of pastiche as an expression of “impervious imperialism,” in a discussion of Ishbel Aberdeen’s dress for an 1888 garden party, which combined medieval and stereotypical Irish motifs with a diamond adorned “Indian ornament.”⁵⁶⁸

Arindam Dutta has argued that local craft production was a fundamental aspect of imperialism, giving shape and form to colonized peoples’ ‘traditional’ way of life and placing them firmly in the past. It also made exploitation of colonized labour much more palatable, as it synthesised productivity with the maintenance of a ‘traditional,’ ‘untainted’ way of life.⁵⁶⁹ Writing about the Indian context, Dutta argues that “had colonial officials found no artisanry in the vast territories under imperial control, it would have become necessary to *invent some*.”⁵⁷⁰ There was no need to invent artisan crafts in India; a tradition of excellence in textiles alive and well far before British colonial presence. But in a way, the lace industry in Ireland *was* invented: Alan Cole wrote that

⁵⁶⁷ Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin, “Introduction: What’s Wrong with Benevolence?” in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and its Legacies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 4.

⁵⁶⁸ Helland, “The performative art of court dress,” 100.

⁵⁶⁹ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 32.

⁵⁷⁰ Dutta, *Bureaucracy*, 77.

it was “introduced to the country through the efforts of Philanthropists,” and indeed it was.⁵⁷¹

Though needlework had a long history in Ireland, and some lace was produced in earlier years, most of the major lace centres were founded during the Famine and supported by British philanthropy, a story outlined in Chapter 1. As such, lace also played a role in mediating the relationship between British subjects and the products and politics of another country. Though Indian and Irish textile workers lived very different lives, the British consumer could use the same framework to conceptualize their work and workplace as geographically, culturally, and even temporally different. Cole’s travels throughout Ireland and his reports presented to the South Kensington Museum and British Parliament thus acquire nuances of both philanthropy and imperialism. I will return to the racialized and geographically-distanced nature of this labour later on, but what Cole emphasises right at the beginning of *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* is that ‘good lace’ is a product of hand labour, not the labour of machines.

3.3.1 Irish bodies: aesthetics, economics and morality

Alan Cole’s writings position the craftsperson in opposition to the machine. By the 1880s, the British Arts and Crafts Movement was in full swing, advocating for the hand-made over machine- or factory-made items, and attempting to remedy the decline of skilled handicrafts. Though this narrative of decline is not as straightforward as it may seem, it held much currency in the late-nineteenth century.⁵⁷² Reformists such as William Morris published extensively on these issues, inspired by John Ruskin’s *Stones of Venice*, which lauded the achievements and imperfections of gothic architecture as evidence of the creative and spiritual freedom of the craftsman.⁵⁷³ Similarly, lace books guided the reader in finding small flaws in their lace which would prove its handmade origin, declaring that handmade lace had soul and beauty far superior to its machine-made counterpart.⁵⁷⁴

The history of lace that Alan Cole provides in *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* aligns with Arts and Crafts rhetoric in its glorification of the handmade and teleological slant leading to, of

⁵⁷¹ Cole, *Renaissance*, 37.

⁵⁷² Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, xv. A chat about how crafts are dying (not my words). The young people don’t want to make crochet anymore (when I walked in the door I was greeted with a “well you’re young”). I volunteer that perhaps the younger people (people like me) want fast, easy crafts – like learning to knit, making a stocking stitch scarf, and voilà, you can knit. Maybe. Maybe they just want to buy things. Nowadays people just want things they can buy, and lace takes too long. But there’s you (me) and the other young lady and a few young ones that just joined (from ‘field notes’ taken at the Roslea Lace Group, Roslea, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, June 5, 2019).

⁵⁷³ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London: Collins, 1960). Alan Cole contributed a chapter on lace and needlepoint techniques to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s 1893 publication, *Arts and Crafts Essays*.

⁵⁷⁴ Freedgood, “Fine Fingers,” 630.

course, a renaissance. Lace's story begins in the aristocratic circles of Europe, produced by noble women. However, as laces became more complicated and delicate – “fairylike tissues” – the labour involved became too great, and shifted to the peasant classes and the female religious in convents.⁵⁷⁵ Aristocrats thus became patrons and designers, “gifted with intelligence” and able to transform lacemaking into “an artistic industry.”⁵⁷⁶ However, over time taste degraded and lacemakers became little more than automatons, lace lost its status as an art form, and the spectre of industrialization reared its head. Machine-made laces flooded the market: “miles and miles of machine weaving called lace, totally different in nature and structure from hand-made laces.”⁵⁷⁷

Here, Cole reveals an anxiety that surely many of the business people and philanthropists, not to mention lacemakers, active in Ireland would have felt. How to compete with the increasing efficiency and delicacy of machine lace production? Even in 1865, Mrs. Bury Palliser's *History of Lace* had stated “Almost every description of lace is now fabricated by machinery, and it is often no easy task, even for the practised eye, to detect the difference”; twenty years later, lace machines continued to improve.⁵⁷⁸ Unlike Lindsey and Biddle, who in 1883 advocated for the coexistence of hand and machine-made lace, Cole positions himself in vehement opposition to machine-made lace from the very beginning, crediting it with the degradation of public taste and an almost immoral character. It is a “flippant frothiness of fancy,” deceptive and lacking in depth.⁵⁷⁹ However, Cole cannot wish lace machines away, and so he frames his argument in such a way as to elevate the worker above the machine. In an 1891 article for the *Magazine of Art*, Cole cites an image depicting a ‘Corner of a Curtain, Limerick Lace (Embroidery on Net),’ made by workers at Mrs. Vere O’Brien’s school in Limerick, as an example of lace far superior to that produced by a machine (fig. 3.42). Cole points the reader’s attention to the intricacies of ornament, “the like of which it would be difficult for the machine to reproduce.”⁵⁸⁰ These machine-defying complexities are of utmost importance for the lace maker by hand, and should guide her use of patterning: “...with these hand-made laces which machinery is successful in counterfeiting, the secret of their commanding first favour is very largely one of frequent change of pattern.”⁵⁸¹ Should mechanization catch up with this technique, however, the lacemakers must be able to advance to a new pattern, one that cannot be replicated at that

⁵⁷⁵ Cole, *Renascence*, v.

⁵⁷⁶ Cole, *Renascence*, vi.

⁵⁷⁷ Cole, *Renascence*, viii.

⁵⁷⁸ Bury Palliser, *A History of Lace*, 425.

⁵⁷⁹ Cole, *Renascence*, viii.

⁵⁸⁰ Alan S. Cole, “Some Recent Irish Laces,” *Magazine of Art* Vol. 15 (1891): 212. ProQuest.

⁵⁸¹ Cole, “Some Recent Irish Laces,” 212.

moment by machine. This process is described in the language of competition, as a race: a new pattern will enable handmade lace to “so again take the lead.”⁵⁸²

In the Indian context, similar rhetoric surrounding aesthetics and industry took shape at the beginning of the twentieth century. British colonial officials, witnessing the economic failure of the very handicrafts they had sought to promote, reshaped the discussion to focus on aesthetics rather than colonial economic policy. Abigail McGowan argues that British design educators in India pinned the blame for economic failure on the Indian artisan’s ‘inability’ to change and adapt, and ultimately on their inadequate skill.⁵⁸³ This reframing of the story after the fact mirrors Cole’s writing in many ways, but with a temporal twist. Cole is pre-assigning blame for the *possibility* of economic failure on the group of women and girls who laboured in the Irish lace industry by framing the continued success of the industry as a race between the skill of maker and machine. In addition, the emphasis on constantly-changing patterns in order to keep ahead of mechanization is problematic in light of the fact that the lace industry was first and foremost a philanthropic endeavour. This discussion obscures the lived experience of labour in the lace industry: in fact, the women making lace are in competition with machines to keep their livelihood. And this livelihood is one that was introduced to them in a spirit of benevolence by British businessmen and women a few decades earlier. The possibility that this philanthropic endeavour was not sustainable haunts Cole’s discussion of mechanization, but with a subtle reframing of the story he shifts the blame for any possibility of failure from the benevolent to the recipient of benevolence.

The image of the lacemaker racing against the machine is one of the few scenarios in Cole’s writing where she is portrayed as having agency of her own: the winner of a race wins because they ran fast enough, because they trained and performed with single minded determination. Cole writes that “...frequent change of pattern is important to the lace-maker. In consequence of it her attention and skill are kept on the alert...”⁵⁸⁴ The lacemaker’s body and moral character enter the equation; she must be alert, she and her work must maintain “freshness.”⁵⁸⁵ The word evokes cleanliness, and indeed the process of making lace required an absolutely spotless environment; a speck of coal dust or a drop of tea could ruin months of work. Finished work was covered immediately to prevent

⁵⁸² Cole, “Some Recent Irish Laces,” 212.

⁵⁸³ Abigail McGowan, “All that is rare, characteristic or beautiful: Design and the Defense of Tradition in Colonial India, 1851-1903,” *Journal of Material Culture* Vol. 10 No. 3 (2005): 277, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183505057152>.

⁵⁸⁴ Cole, “Some Recent Irish Laces,” 212.

⁵⁸⁵ Cole, “Some Recent Irish Laces,” 212.

accidental sully⁵⁸⁶. Cleanliness was not only required in the lace's surroundings, but also in its maker. In 1868 the French Minister of Education, Jules Simon, bemoaned the poor organization and hygiene of lacemaking schools in his own country, writing that "lace is so delicate that even the lace maker's breath can bring down its value, so that one has to be in good health in order to make beautiful lace."⁵⁸⁷ That bad teeth or sickness could compromise the lace maker's ability to produce pure white lace – as a concept, even if it was not entirely true – creates between the lace and its maker an intimate relationship predicated on purity, physical and moral.

The link between bad hygiene and bad morals is particularly relevant in the Irish context. It found tragic expression during the Famine when the British Treasury Secretary Charles Trevelyn declared Irish hunger to be a result of their uncivilized nature, stating that the "domestic habits" of the Irish were "of the most degrading kind."⁵⁸⁸ This perceived 'lack of civilization' was racialized by Trevelyn and others, to the extent that the Irish were parodied and despaired as a lesser race, closer to the apes than to the Anglo-Saxon British ideal.⁵⁸⁹ This sentiment was also held in more general terms and extended from household hygiene to poverty; the Victorian imagination linked indigence with "moral failing," and as such the relief of poverty was fundamentally connected with the maintenance of good moral character.⁵⁹⁰ The lacemaker that did well in her craft and helped to elevate her family out of poverty gained a moral stamp of approval, particularly because her work required her to stay indoors for long periods of time, keeping her out of the public eye and out of 'trouble.'⁵⁹¹ Here, Cole's discussion of mechanization and the lacemaker reveals a troubling subtext – that success in the craft is tied to the craftswoman's physical and moral purity, and that the design reformer or philanthropist has the right to investigate and evaluate these factors according to their own criteria.

3.3.2 Irish homes: 'fairy-like textures wrought by the hands of dwellers in mud cabins'

⁵⁸⁶ Power Lalor, "Papal Jubilee Lace," 200. This was not the case for all laces. Crochet could be, and was, washed before sale. It is possible that this affordance of crochet lace – along with the fact that it allowed for more mobility in the maker – is one of the reasons that Cole seems to have viewed it with suspicion, an attitude I will discuss further in the next section.

⁵⁸⁷ Mick Fouriscot et al., *Lace the elegant web*, trans. Anthony Zielonka (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 145-146.

⁵⁸⁸ Patrick Brantzlinger, "A Short History of (Imperial) Benevolence," in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and its Legacies* eds. Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 22.

⁵⁸⁹ See: Curtis, *Apes and Angels*.

⁵⁹⁰ Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 7.

⁵⁹¹ Fouriscot et al., *Lace the elegant web*, 146.

Alan Cole's writings about the Irish lace industry also express a complicated, and often contradicting, set of assumptions and recommendations for the locus of lace production. In the "Proposal for the Maintenance of the Domestic Industry of Lace-Making in Ireland," which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Alan Cole begins by describing lacemaking as a "domestic industry," practiced by peasant women "in their homes."⁵⁹² Yet in *Renascence* and its contemporary articles, Cole shows inconsistency and ambivalence in discussing this notion. He writes that "Irish lace-making has somehow pressed itself upon the public consideration as being a home or cottage industry," while in another text of the same year he confidently states that "the mass of the lace-makers work in their own homes – cabins for the most part of rough stone whitewashed, and thatched often most rudely."⁵⁹³ Cole's inconsistency reveals a gulf emerging between the idealized image of young rural women making lace as they stir their potatoes in humble cabins – that image that would be so effectively leveraged for commercial purposes at the Columbian Exposition, discussed in the next chapter – and the equally unrealistic image of women working in ever more technical modes as they race against lacemaking machines in workshops of complete physical and moral cleanliness. Like the discourse surrounding the lacemakers themselves, this rhetoric is entangled with economics, aesthetics, colonialism, class, and gender.

The traditional setting for Irish lacemaking was the rural home – after all, it was a cottage industry. Lacemaking existed in the popular imagination as a domestic handicraft, to the point that, as I will discuss further in Chapter 4, the Chicago Columbian Exposition's Irish Industrial Village featured young women making lace in reproduction cottages, thatch roofed and bedecked with flowers. The *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village and Blarney Castle*, produced for the Irish Industries Association display at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, describes nimble-fingered Irish maidens – one of whom "talks real Irish" – making lace in cottages, "by the turf fire over which the potato-pot is hanging."⁵⁹⁴ Of course, this is a form of staged Irish rural existence, one that has been commoditized and packaged for an American audience with financial gain in mind. Even so, it points to the conceptual link between the Irish cottage and the making of lace, despite the fact that mere sentences later the author states that Ellen Aher, the maker of Youghal lace, had trained at the Presentation Convent in Youghal County.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² Cole, *Renascence*, 37.

⁵⁹³ Cole, "Word on the Outlook," 202.

⁵⁹⁴ *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village and Blarney Castle, the Exhibit of the Irish Industries Association* (Chicago: The Irish Village Bookstore, 1893), 12, <https://archive.org/details/guidetoirishindu00iris>.

⁵⁹⁵ *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village*, 12.

Lace books also waxed lyrical about lace production in rural cottages, and Elaine Freedgood has suggested that one of the reasons they did so was because work that took place in the home could be romanticized, represented in non-industrial and non-commoditized terms.⁵⁹⁶ Working in their homes allowed rural Irish maidens – that potent symbol of true ‘indigenous,’ ‘uncorrupted’ Irishness – to remain in their ‘proper place,’ both physically, and in the cultural imagination. Alan Cole perpetuated this characterization. In an 1888 article written for the women’s readership periodical *The Queen*, he described the lace items at the Olympia Irish Industries Exhibition in London as “samples of the fairy-like textures wrought by the hands of dwellers in mud cabins.”⁵⁹⁷ The ethereal, delicate white lace is contrasted with the darkness and dirtiness of the ‘cabin,’ giving the lace an almost miraculous – or magical, given the use of the term ‘fairy-like’ – quality of paradox and impossibility. Cole could have used the word ‘cottage,’ much less associated with the squalid poverty of mid-nineteenth-century rural Ireland, with the Famine and, ultimately, with death.⁵⁹⁸ Instead, he exoticizes the locus of production, rendering it that much more amazing that such a textile could come out of such a location, and pulling at the heartstrings of those who may wish to purchase it. Ironically, at the same time that Cole and others perpetuated this notion of production within the home, lacemaking was increasingly carried out in lacemaking schools and convents, due to the desire of industry experts to more closely monitor the work – and bodies and minds – of their workers.

In 1888, Alan Cole credited the degradation of lace patterns to production in the home, which meant poor standards and patterns that would “deteriorate in the course of repetition.”⁵⁹⁹ Five years earlier, in the Mansion House Exhibition catalogue, Lindsey and Biddle bemoaned the “laxity” of the home environment, comparing it to the “discipline” of the lace-making school.⁶⁰⁰ The notion of the lower-class home as a haven for questionable morals was not new. In the early-nineteenth century, organizations such as the British and Irish Ladies’ Society for the Promotion of the Welfare of the Female Peasantry in Ireland conducted visits to rural cottages, bringing supplies, teaching skills, and in doing so seeking to bring middle-class values to their ‘less fortunate sisters’ and their

⁵⁹⁶ Freedgood, “Fine Fingers,” 635.

⁵⁹⁷ A. C. [Alan S. Cole], “Women’s Industries at the Irish Exhibition,” *Queen* (23 June 1888): 793, as cited in Helland, “Caprices,” 219.

⁵⁹⁸ Rhona Richman Kenneally points out that the term “cottage” is still more representative of the Irish vernacular dwelling as an “icon” than as an inhabited space, and in the nineteenth century it was a term “used disparagingly by outsiders” (Rhona Richman Kenneally, “Cooking at the Hearth: The “Irish Cottage” and Women’s Lived Experience,” in *Memory Ireland: Diaspora and Memory Practices*, Vol. 2, ed. Oona Frawley (Syracuse University Press, 2012), 124).

⁵⁹⁹ Cole, “Word on the Outlook,” 202.

⁶⁰⁰ Biddle and Lindsey, *Mansion House*, 10.

families.⁶⁰¹ The home was seen as the setting of one's moral and spiritual formation, and in their dual-purpose charitable home visits middle and upper-class women revealed their conceptual linking of poverty and bad morals. This was the same concept that led many British politicians to view the Famine as a direct result of the Irish peasant's poor moral character.

However, worries about questionable moral behavior conducted in the privacy of the lower-class home were not only projected onto the *Irish* peasant. In another late-nineteenth-century rural context – the Lake District textile workshops inspired by John Ruskin and coordinated by Marion Twelves – discomfort with the lack of control that accompanies unsupervised labour away from a communal workshop troubled those in supervisory roles. The workshops encouraged spinning rather than knitting, as it was a less portable activity and thus easier to supervise and less conducive to “gossip.”⁶⁰² Though Marion Twelves hoped to make the labour social and thus enjoyable for the women involved – mostly the elderly who had been left to fend for themselves as their young migrated to the cities in search of work – she did so in a spirit of true Victorian benevolence, gathering the ladies for tea parties at which long extracts of Ruskin's ‘uplifting’ and ‘inspiring’ prose would be read aloud.⁶⁰³ This is in direct parallel to Alan Cole's discomfort with crochet lace, and the mobile sociability that it allowed, being much more portable than the other varieties of Irish lace.⁶⁰⁴ In one article, he refers to rural crochet workers in their homes as “‘wanton-eyed’ women standing at their doors, and chattering with anyone who would stop and talk.”⁶⁰⁵ This confluence in the way that Twelves and Cole conceptualized the ideal workplace as one of supervision and control complicates the notion that this is simply a reflection of Cole's misogyny or disdain for the Irish, instead suggesting that it is just as much a product of class-based prejudice.

Cole's writings make it clear that he believed the ideal place for lace production was, like Marion Twelves' workshop, one that could be monitored – both for quality of workmanship and for moral lassitude. At first glance, the convent may appear to fit this requirement implicitly. However, it

⁶⁰¹ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 185.

⁶⁰² Susan Luckman, *Locating Cultural Work: the Politics and Poetics of Rural, Regional, and Remote Creativity* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 69.

⁶⁰³ Luckman, *Locating Cultural Work*, 69.

⁶⁰⁴ I found crochet to be the only Irish lace technique I learned that was really portable. My lace ‘field notes’ from April 2019 include a completed dahlia motif from Eithne D’Arcy’s book, with the note: “Saturday of Easter weekend while helping with breakfast for about 24...proof that crochet can be walked-around-with and tucked away quickly to jump up and make a new pot of coffee.” Máire Treanor remarked that the women in Eastern Europe who began to make Irish crochet style lace in the more recent past enjoyed it precisely for this reason – they could make lace on the bus on their way to work, for example (Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020).

⁶⁰⁵ Alan Cole, “Lacemaking in Ireland,” *English Illustrated Magazine* Vol. 7 (June 1890): 663, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000066656012?urlappend=%3Bseq=671%3Bownerid=13510798902678162-703>.

is also important to remember that for the nuns involved in lacemaking instruction, the convent was both a place of work and a home. Inspection of the workspace constituted an invasion of their home. Though it concerns a laundry, a letter from the nuns at the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick gives an indication of the way a religious community might respond to official inspection. Drafted in a letter addressed to British Parliament is the complaint that inspection constitutes “a violation of the religious feeling and home privacy” of the convent.⁶⁰⁶ By this logic, many convents that employed poor lay women, in laundries, textile production, shirt-making, and a number of other tasks went without inspection.⁶⁰⁷ Of course, there are a number of reasons that a convent might desire privacy. It is possible the sisters of the Good Shepherd feared that they might not pass inspection, or resented the meddling of secular bureaucracy.

However, what matters here is the distinction between the domestic, private sphere and the workshop as a public, observable space that allows inspection and evaluation. The convent needed to align itself with the latter category in order to ensure its status as a setting for ‘good design’ and ‘good labour,’ in which taste and production could be watched closely. It is worth noting that in *Renascence*, five of the twelve lace specimens were worked under the supervision of nuns in various convents, and five in schools (the Bath and Shirley School in Carrickmacross and Vere O’Brien’s lace training school in Limerick). For Limerick lace, this was likely also a matter of practicality; the technique involved stitching in white linen thread on a net ground, which required a larger workspace both for the material and the multiple workers needed to make any sort of progress on such a large, but minutely detailed project. Only two lace specimens in the book were not sourced from a centralized work environment, though they are still stated to have been completed under the supervision of Michael Holland and Ben Lindsey in Cork and Inishmacsaint respectively. The convents and schools that Cole deemed most successful conformed to the regulations and recommendations set out in 1884, and all submitted to the DSA’s inspection.⁶⁰⁸ Though the emphasis on drawing and design at the branch classes appears to indicate a greater appreciation of the creative agency of individual lacemakers, this potential was curtailed by an emphasis on centralization, inspection, and evaluation. The lace designers, who seem rarely to have been lacemakers, were not to indulge in unbridled creative expression. Instead, through a series of inspections and competitions, they were encouraged to develop their skills in line with taste prescribed by South Kensington.

⁶⁰⁶ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 53.

⁶⁰⁷ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 53.

⁶⁰⁸ Cole, “A Word on the Outlook,” 203.

Though in reality they favoured the easily-supervised settings of convent workshops and lace classes, the ambivalence in Cole and Power Lalor's writing allows readers to conceptualize lacemaking as occurring in the rural Irish home. Romanticising the locus of lace production as the quaint and distant rural Irish cottage served to counteract the embodied reality of low-paid but intensely-skilled labour that often left craftswomen arthritic and blinded by middle-age. Elaine Freedgood also notes that conceptualizing lacemaking as occurring in the home was important for philanthropists and consumers who felt the home was where a woman wanted (or should want) to spend her time.⁶⁰⁹ Labour in the home was not really labour, and thus lace was washed clean from associations with tales of suffering and dehumanization that emerged from factories to influence design and labour reformers, some of them upper-class philanthropists. Just like the thatched and ivy bedecked cabin with its distinctly Irish potato pot, lacemaking could be conceptualized as a static, time honoured craft, true to a 'traditional' way of life. Imagining a 'traditional' Ireland that needed saving by a wiser and well-equipped Britain was a key aspect of imperialist policy. I have already shown how this framing of Ireland manifested in one contemporary cartoon, with Ireland portrayed as a young woman dressed in lace, awaiting the attentions of her British suitor (fig. 2.9). As I also suggested in Chapter 2, an even clearer evocation of this Ireland found visual representation in cartoons throughout the second half of the nineteenth century: Hibernia, the beautiful Gaelic (read: from the rural south or west) Irish maiden cowering in her mother Britannia's strong embrace (fig. 2.10). Synonymous with womanhood and the rural Irish cottage, dependent on British philanthropy – as a force for founding lace industries as well as purchasing and wearing products from them – Irish lace and lacemakers aligned with this characterization of Ireland feminine: weak but essentially biddable and in need of protection by her imperial mother, Britannia, with more wisdom and intellectual capacity than herself. Here, the DSA, and Cole and Power Lalor as its envoys, stepped in. In Chapter 1, I showed how design education in Ireland formed part of what Arindam Dutta calls the British Empire's 'bureaucracy of beauty.' Reports and various other writings such as those produced by Cole and Power Lalor formed the backbone of this bureaucracy, and a close reading of these texts shows just how tightly bound perceptions of beauty, skill and power could be.

⁶⁰⁹ Freedgood, "Fine Fingers," 640.

3.4 Conclusion: the ‘Outlook of Lacemaking in Ireland’

In an 1888 article for the *Magazine of Art*, Cole discusses the results of a program of competitions, instated after the 1884 “Proposal,” which had precipitated the collection of funds for prize-money. The results of the Papal Jubilee Lace competition in particular caught Alan Cole’s attention. It was clearly an important event; Power Lalor’s article about the Papal Jubilee lace was in the same issue, only a few pages before. Cole’s article is entitled “A Word on the Outlook of Lacemaking in Ireland,” but the heading on the following page reads “Papal Jubilee Lace,” eliding the two concepts. The Papal Jubilee lace *is* the ‘outlook of lacemaking in Ireland,’ and this is clear in both Cole and Lalor’s articles. It was one of many gifts sent to the Pope, and though its breathless excitement should be taken with a grain of salt, the Irish Ecclesiastical Review’s segment on the gifts indicates their international importance:

Newspapers and periodicals, irrespective of creed, race, or politics they represent, have, during the past month, been teeming with interesting news of the doings in Rome. The letters from crowned heads and princes, effusive in their expression of kindly wishes towards his holiness, the valuable gifts accompanying them, and the probably future relations between the Vatican and various powers, have been viewed from every standpoint, and discussed with ability and fullness, by writers of all shades of opinion or prejudice.⁶¹⁰

The Papal Jubilee lace was far removed from the world of women’s fashion, and the Irish Ecclesiastical Review article shows that it may have even functioned as a political pawn, a token of allegiance from the Catholic clergy of Ireland sent to the Vatican. Cole’s positive perception of the Papal Jubilee lace is actually quite surprising, given this political nuance. At a time when Irish Ultramontanist threatened British imperial control, one might expect that a British commentator would downplay the importance of a gift so clearly intended to strengthen the relationship between Ireland and the Vatican. However, both Cole and Lalor seem to sidestep this issue by focusing on the lace as a piece of art, elevating and discussing its formal aesthetic elements. Both hold up the lace as the ideal marriage of technical skill and aesthetic judgement, and the details of the items, photographed against a black background, are laid out for the viewer to examine and admire. The lace becomes a visual phenomenon rather than a tactile one. Both authors extol the lace designer’s and makers’ skill, and explain the complex theological iconography, including a triangle to symbolize the Holy Trinity, which St. Patrick famously explained with a shamrock. In impossibly fine detail, the lacemakers also stitched flaxen images of a papal crown, chalices, and floral motifs symbolizing the

⁶¹⁰ E. Maguire, “Leo the Thirteenth,” *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (February 1888): 98, <https://archive.org/details/IrishEcclesiasticalRecordV09-1888/page/97/mode/2up>.

Eucharist. Lalor and Cole both describe lace as a visual art, referencing iconography, composition, and detail, both using the word “artistic.”⁶¹¹ It seems this lace is the future not only because of its fine detail and stunning technique, but because of the way it fits into Cole’s discourse on design and artistic merit: its iconography and crisp detail lends itself particularly well to a connoisseur’s visual analysis. Cole links these characteristics to its economic value, as well, concluding his article with the reminder that Kenmare and Youghal do take orders for lace commissions, if one is: “willing to pay for it as a work of art.”⁶¹²

However, such a framework of binary loses its efficacy beyond the pages of a magazine. The lace that Emily Anderson and her fellow students designed was not made to be appreciated within the pages of an art periodical, but to be worn on women’s bodies, conforming to the shape of their garments and activated by their movement. Imagine, for example, the tea gown introduced earlier in this chapter, made of Indian silk and adorned with Limerick lace (3.41). The gown’s extravagant display of lace complicates the bifurcation of sensual and visual. The ruffles gathered around the neck and pleats on the upper arms disguise the intricate patterns stitched onto the lace netting. This pleating and gathering is a display of excess, it indicates wealth rather than technical prowess, it is sensual and soft. However, the designer of the blue tea gown also made sure that its wearer could show off her lace in a subtler way. The cuffs that emerge from just below the elbow float over the forearm, which provides a contrasting backdrop for the fine white stitches. One can imagine the lace falling forward to display itself when the woman poured tea for a guest or raised a glass to her lips—in such a moment the ‘fairylike’ detail of her Limerick lace would be unmistakable. In contrast with Cole’s writings, the dress demonstrates how lace can be both visual and sensual, moving fluidly between the two as the body itself moves. The lace is activated in social ritual and physical display.

As such, the material lives of the lace specimens discussed in this and the preceding chapter serve to complicate Alan Cole’s division of the visual and the sensual, and of fashion and art. The ‘outlook on lacemaking in Ireland’ was not a future in religious vestments, politically motivated gifts between powerful men, or iconographic lace designs that warranted decoding in art magazines. Instead, the turn of the twentieth century would see an explosion of the demand for lace in women’s

⁶¹¹ Cole, “A Word on the Outlook,” 203; Lalor, “Papal Jubilee Lace,” 200.

⁶¹² Cole, “A Word on the Outlook,” 204

fashion, and the most prestigious commissions of the next decade were for queens, princesses, and wealthy connoisseurs.

There would also be a subtle shift in governance and organization of the lace industry in Ireland, as South Kensington ceded administrative power to organizations and government bodies based in Ireland. The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society's (IAOS) Co-operative Home Industries Societies flourished briefly in the early years of the twentieth century, formed in a spirit of grassroots self-governance and leaving a lasting impact on community craft in rural areas. In the next chapter, I will argue that these Home Industries Societies present an opportunity to consider the impact that craft production had on women in rural Ireland – not just in economic terms, but in fostering new ideas about work, community, and identity. I will also present a final case study in the circulation of lace patterns in print, this time through the IAOS's publication *The Irish Homestead*, which made patterns by Irish designers widely available to Home Industries Societies and, I speculate, interested amateurs. At the government level, the DATI was founded in 1899 and began to administer the DSA's Science and Art and Technical Instruction grants in 1901. In Chapter 5, I will consider how the 'indigenous' nature of this Department, the first to be based in Dublin, may have impacted the practice and reception of inspection in the lace industry. It is here where Emily Anderson will return to play a pivotal role in the narrative. In August of 1900, the Crawford Institute held a meeting to approve the temporary hire of a Miss Whitelegge, to take the place of their Art Mistress, Emily Anderson. Miss Anderson had received an offer of employment from the DATI, and was off to Dublin to become an "Inspector of Lace Classes."⁶¹³

This change of employment, from Art Mistress at the Crawford Institute –where Anderson had been a student of James Brenan and submitted designs to both Alan Cole and South Kensington's competitions – to Lace Inspector for Ireland's own technical instruction program, might be seen as a change of allegiance. And certainly, Emily Anderson's writings and inspection activities are a departure from those of Alan Cole. She was Irish, and a woman, like those she inspected. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, her reporting on the industry is characterized by a concern for both design and protecting the livelihoods of workers, and material traces of her inspection practice indicate a deep engagement with the mechanics of lacemaking as well as a closer relationship with the makers themselves. It is also likely that Emily Anderson's work was deeply influenced by the co-operative ideals of the IAOS, of which she was a keen supporter, and for which her brother

⁶¹³ 29 August 1900, Cork County Archives School of Art Committee Minute Book, 1899 – 1901 [VEC06/8]

Robin worked as secretary for thirty years. Further discussion of the IAOS in the next chapter will illuminate some of these ideals, and suggest their impact on lacemakers. However, these factors do not negate the intertwined nature of design, education, class, and power, themes that I will continue to explore in the next two chapters as I discuss the lace design and making schemes of the IAOS and DATI.

Figures: Chapter 3

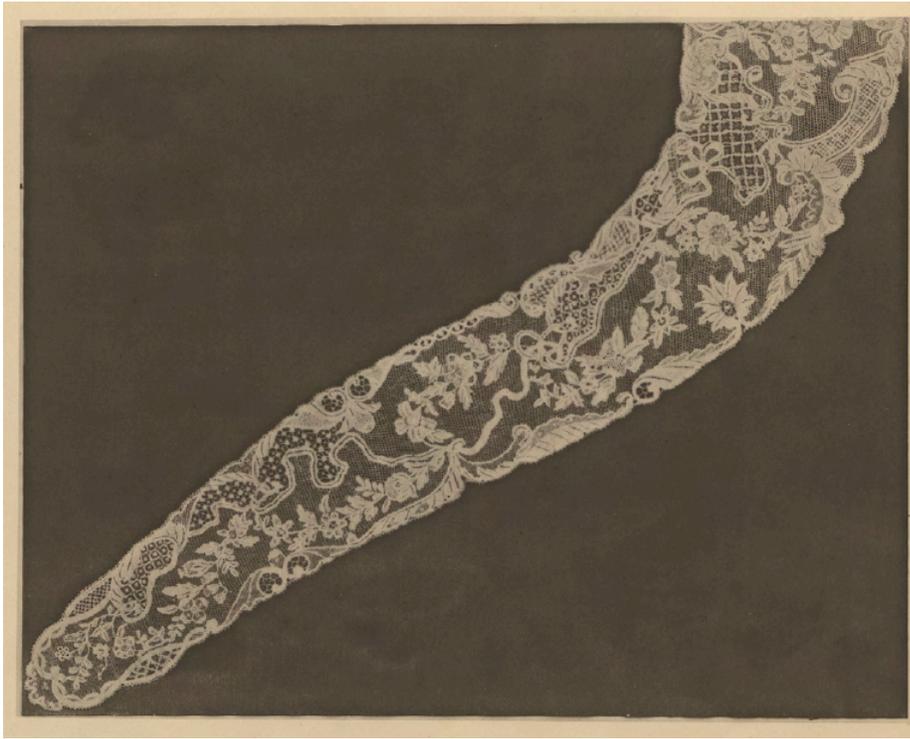


Figure 3-1 Part of a fichu in flat needlepoint lace made and designed at the Convent of Poor Clares in Kenmare, 1885 (likely after a design by Lizzie Trappes). Purchased by Queen Victoria. In Alan Cole, *Report on Visit to Convents, Classes and Schools Where Lace-Making and Designing for Lace are Taught [...]* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/IrishLace/page/n13/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

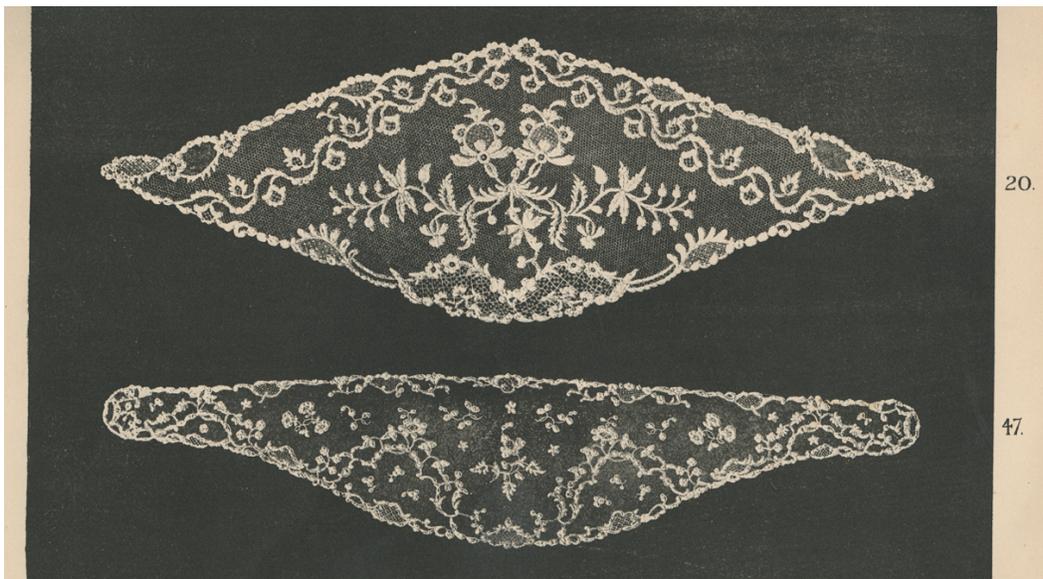


Figure 3-2 Needlepoint lace cap, early 18th c. French: Argentan or Alençon (fig. 20) and pillow lace cap, 18th c. Flemish: in the style of Argentan or Alençon (fig. 47). In Alan Cole, *Catalogue of Antique Lace* (Cork School of Art, 1884). Collection of the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL), NCAD, Dublin.

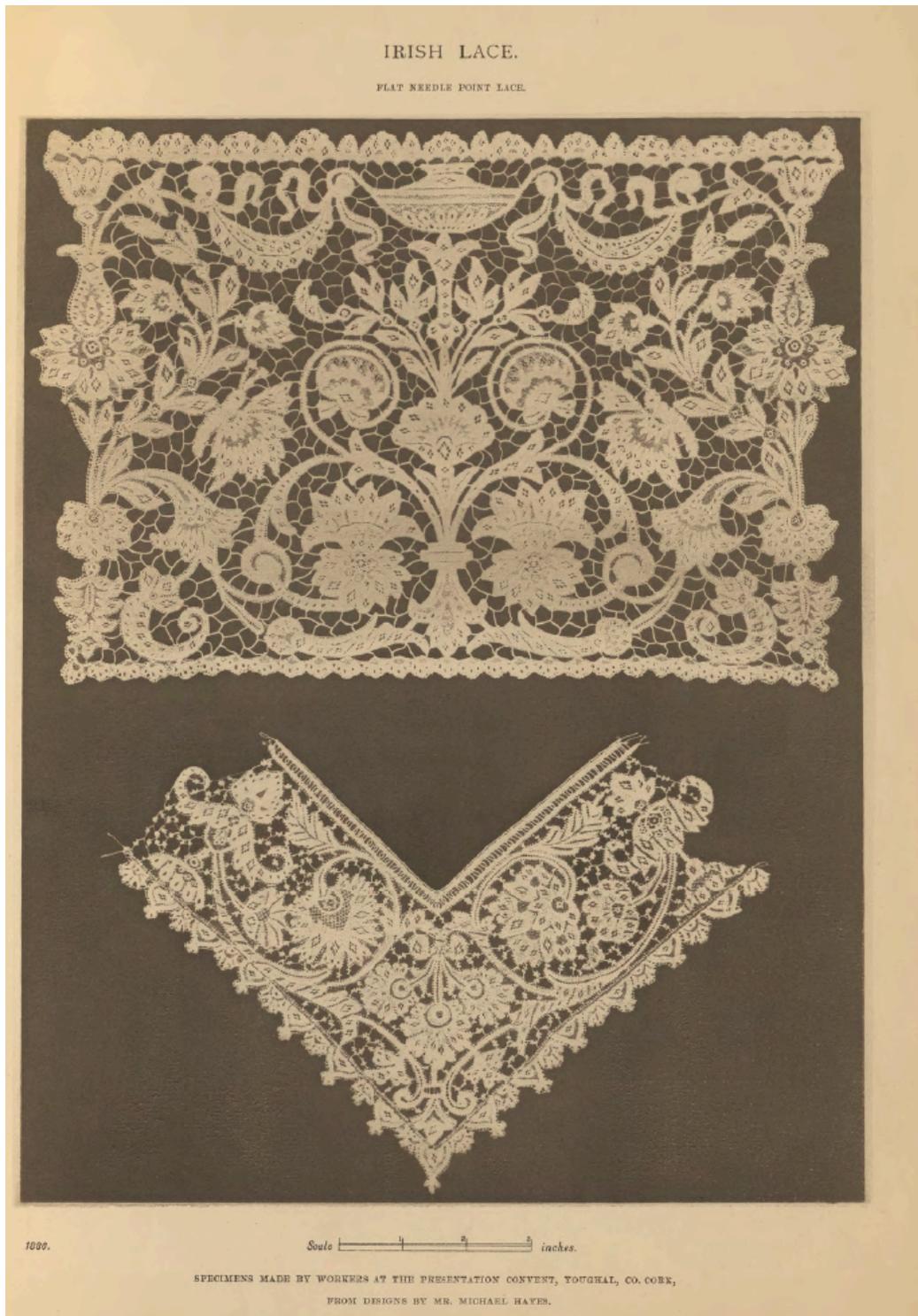


Figure 3-3 Flat Needlepoint Lace, made at the Presentation Convent in Youghal, 1886, after a design by Michael Hayes. In Alan Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits to Convents, Classes, and Schools Where Lace-Making and Designing for Lace are Taught [...]* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/IrishLace/page/n15/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-4 Flat Needlepoint Lace, made at the Presentation Convent in Youghal, 1886, after a design by Michael Hayes. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (T.18 – 1913). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

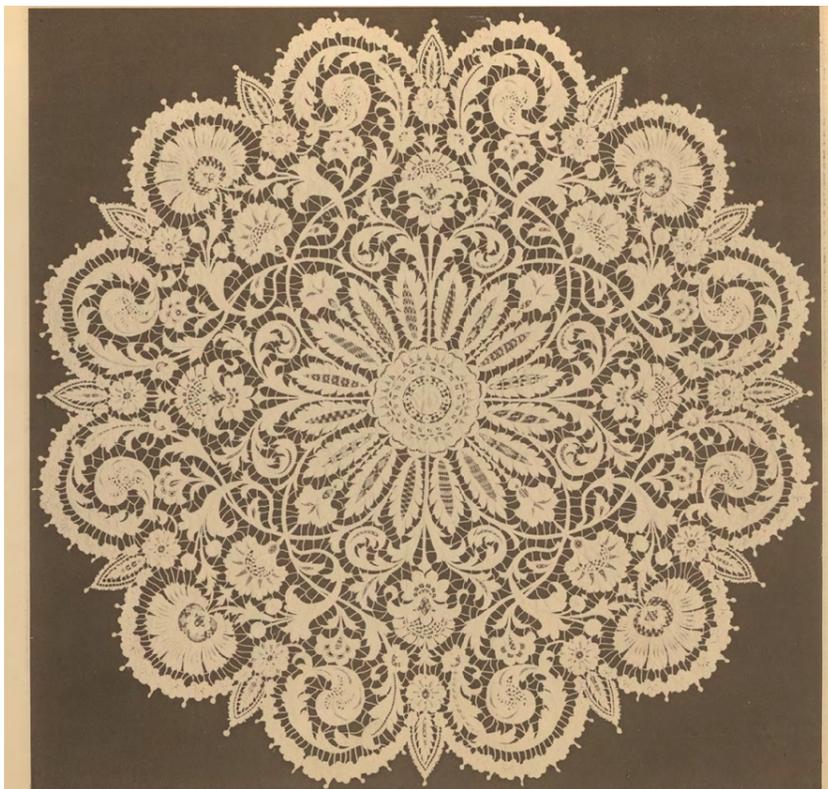


Figure 3-5 Parasol cover in cut linen, made at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross 1887, after a design by Michael Hayes. In Alan Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits to Convents, Classes, and Schools Where Lace-Making and Designing for Lace are Taught [...]* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/IrishLace/page/n17/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



L.1959 "CHRYSANTHEMUM". Hand-printed wallpaper designed by William Morris. No. 802-1915. ENGLAND; 1877.

L.1960 "SUNFLOWER". Hand-painted wallpaper designed by William Morris. No. 817-1915. ENGLAND; 1879.

Figure 3-6 Chrysanthemum (top) and Sunflower (bottom) designs. Part of a pattern book of Morris & Co. patterns. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.633-858-1915). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-7 Detail of an alb in lacet work (braid and needlepoint), made at the St. Martha's Industrial School, Dublin, 1886, after a design by Michael Hayes. In Alan Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits to Convents, Classes, and Schools Where Lace-Making and Designing for Lace are Taught [...]* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/IrishLace/page/n23/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-8 A piece of *Point de Venise a Reseau*, c. 1650. Plate No. 7 in Alan Cole, *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace: with notes on the history of lace-making and descriptions of thirty examples* (London: Chiswick Press, 1875), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/AncientNeedlepoint/page/n51/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

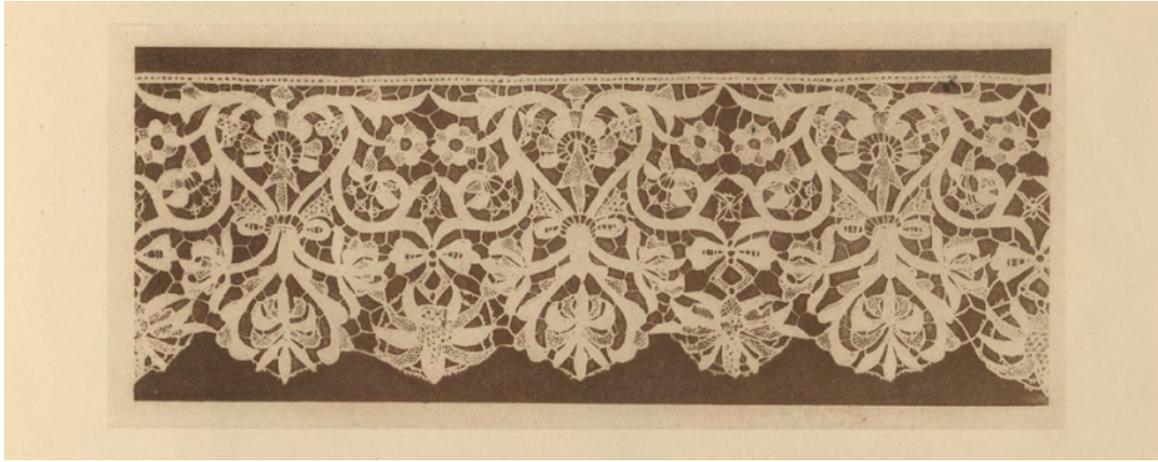


Figure 3-9 Border in needlepoint lace, made by workers at Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, 1886, after a design adapted by Miss Keane. In Alan Cole, *Irish Lace: Report upon Visits to Convents, Classes, and Schools Where Lace-Making and Designing for Lace are Taught [...]* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/IrishLace/page/n19/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



No. 2.
THREE PIECES OF PUNTO IN ARIA.
ITALIAN. LATE 16TH CENTURY.
The property of Mrs. MacCallum.

Figure 3-10 Three borders in *Punto in Aria*, late-16th century. Plate No. 2 in Alan Cole, *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace: with notes on the history of lace-making and descriptions of thirty examples* (London: Chiswick Press, 1875), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/AncientNeedlepoint/page/n31/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-11 Panel for a ladies' dress in silk crochet work, made in the South of Ireland, 1886, design by Michael Hayes and supplied by Hayward's of London. From folder of 'Photographs of Irish Laces.' Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (DT:1995.118). Photograph by the author.



Figure 3-12 Clones crochet lace in progress, 2020. Note the wiggly stem on the rose, caused by the thin motif being pulled to each side by the chain stitches of the ground. Photograph by author.

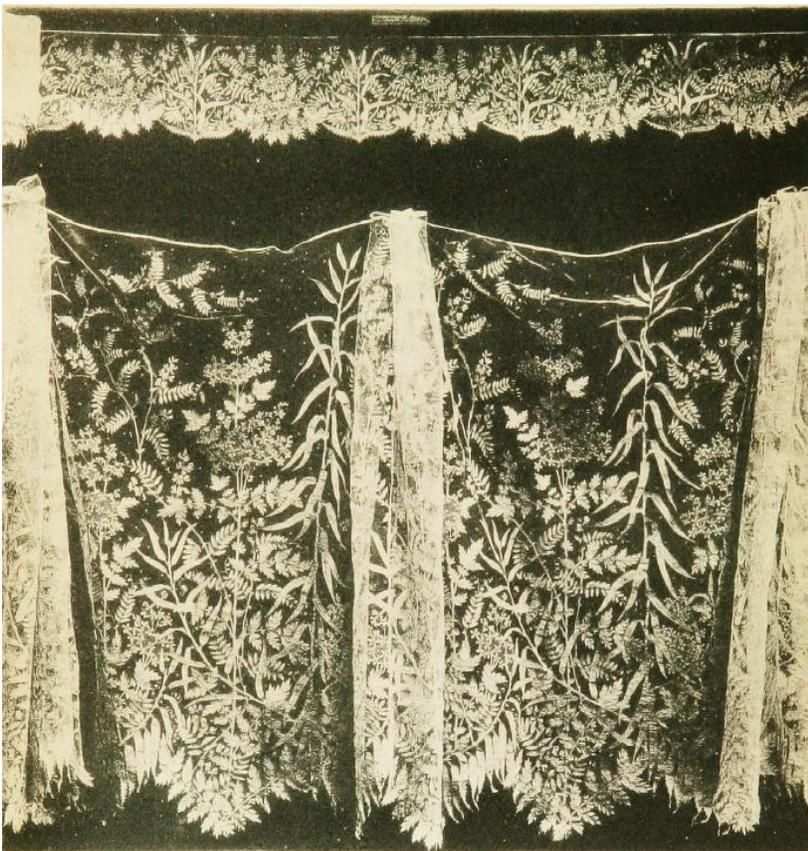


Figure 3-13 Flounce and border in Carrickmacross applique lace, designed by Miss Z. A. Inman (Halstead, Essex), and made at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross. Plate No. 6 in Alan Cole, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/renascenceirisha00cole/page/n21/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

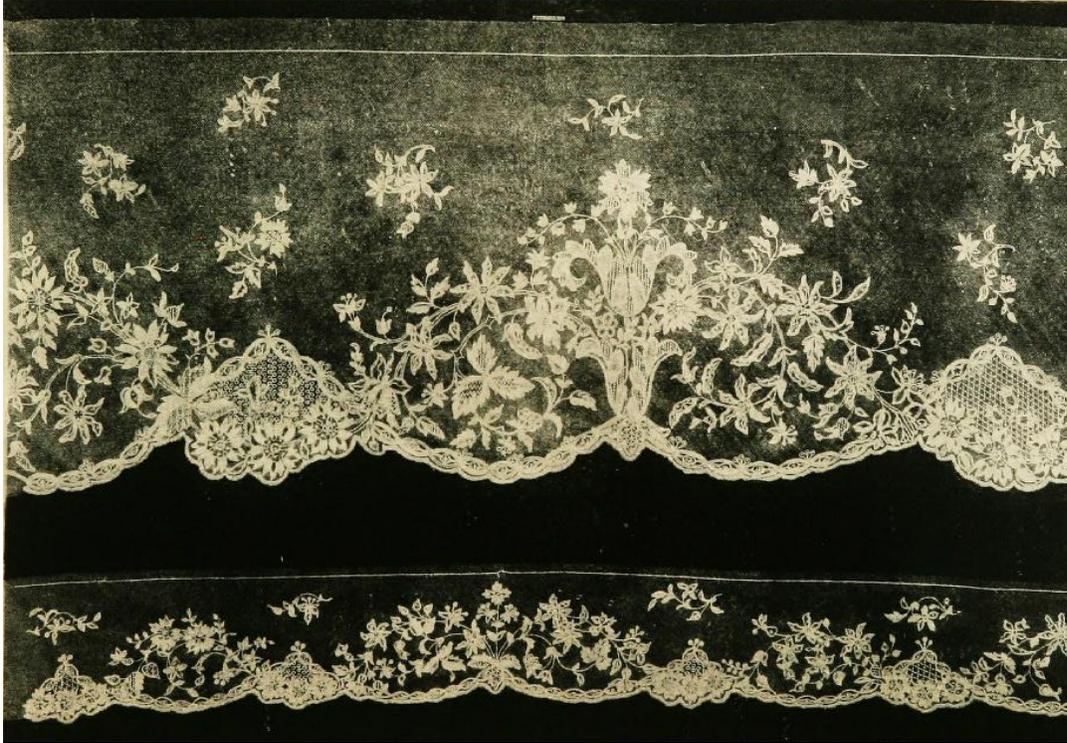


Figure 3-14 Limerick Lace Flounce and Border, designed by Emily Anderson and made at Convent of Mercy in Kinsale. Selected by Queen Victoria in 1886. Plate No. 10 in Alan Cole, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/renaissanceirisha00cole/page/n29/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-15 Limerick Lace Flounce, made at Vere O'Brien's School, Limerick, after a design by Emily Anderson, c. 1884-1887. Plate No. 7 in Alan Cole, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/renaissanceirisha00cole/page/n23/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

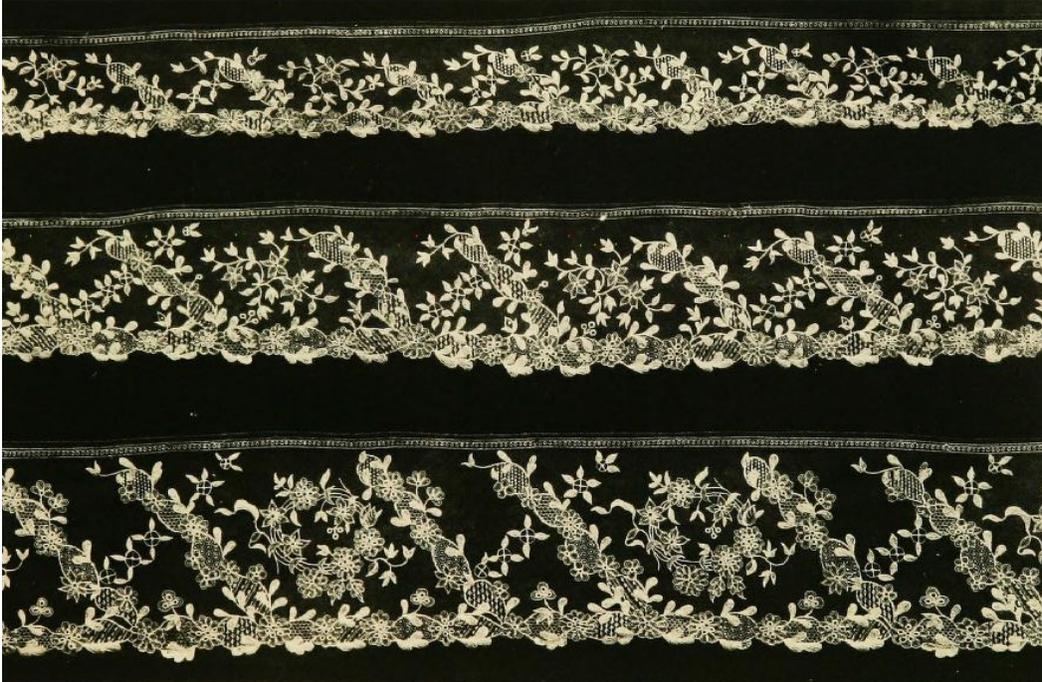


Figure 3-16 Limerick Lace borders, made at St. Vincent's Convent, Cork, after designs by Emily Anderson, c.1884-1887. Plate No. 9 in Alan Cole, *A Renaissance of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/renaissanceirisha00cole/page/n27/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-17 Lappet in *Point d'Alençon* or *Point Argentan* needle lace, late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth c. (fig. 19) and lappet in Mechlin pillow lace, eighteenth c. (fig. 43). In Alan Cole, *Catalogue of Antique Lace* (Cork School of Art, 1884). Collection of the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL), NCAD, Dublin.



Figure 3-18 Sketch of a fan design, by Alice Jacob. Fig. 18 in James Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Journal and Proceedings of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland* (1898): 94. Photo by the author.



Figure 3-19 Fan in Carrickmacross applique and guipure, after a design by Alice Jacob. Fig. 19 in James Brenan, “The Modern Irish Lace Industry,” *Journal and Proceedings of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland* (1898): 95. Photo by the author.

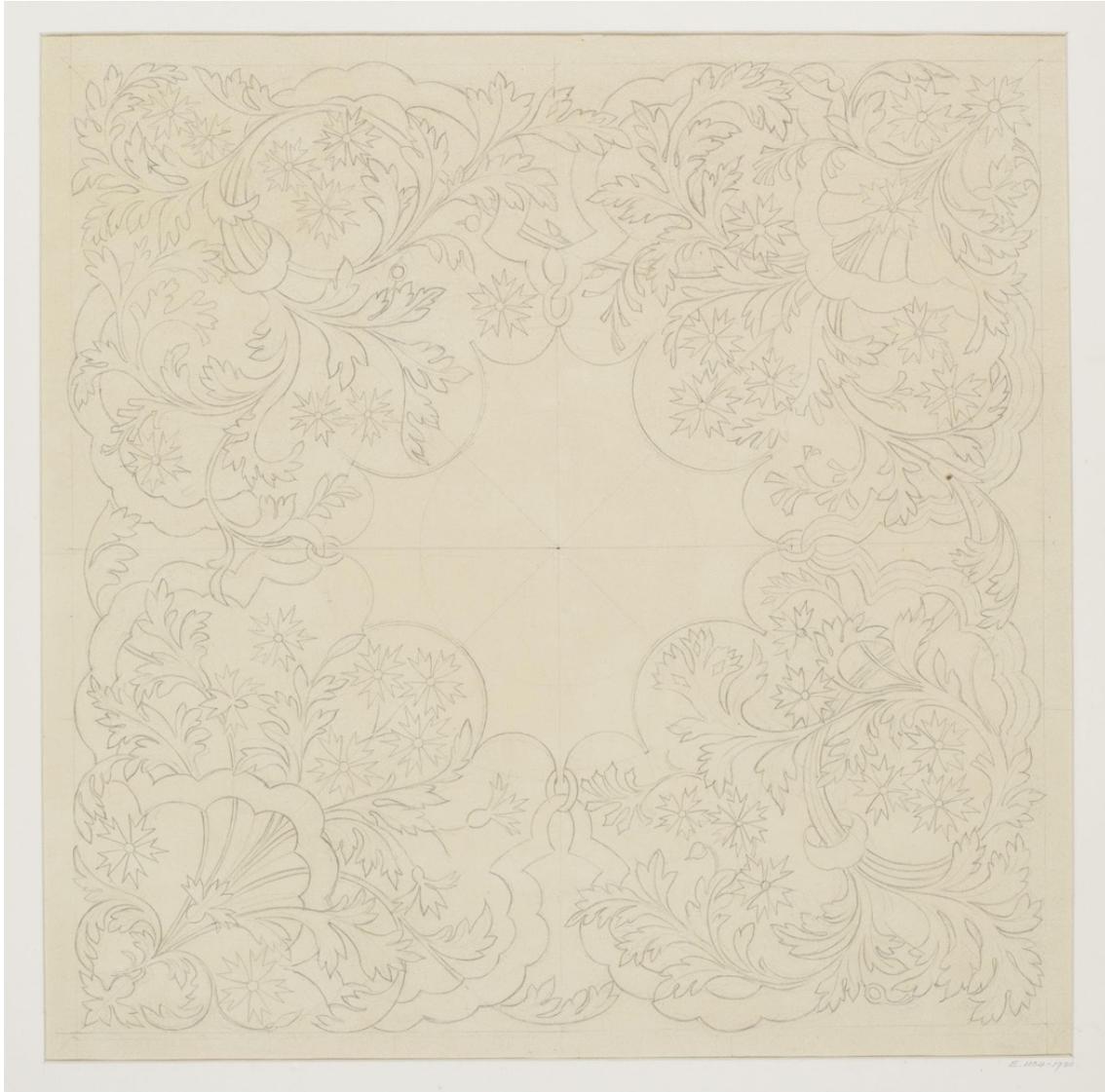


Figure 3-20 Emily Anderson, design for a needle lace handkerchief, c. 1888. Donated by Alan Cole. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.1104-1920). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-21 Emily Anderson, design for a needle lace handkerchief, c. 1888. Donated by Alan Cole. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.1105-1920). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-22 Emily Anderson, sketch of a ring (English, 16th c.). In Emily Anderson's sketchbook, collection of Patricia Anderson. Photo by the author.



Figure 3-23 Gold and enamel memento mori ring inscribed 'BE HOLD THE ENDE' and 'RATHER DEATH THAN FALS FAYTH,' England, about 1550-1600. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (13-1888). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-24 Design for a curtain in cut linen, by Caroline Beatson. Awarded a Gold Medal in the National Art Competition, 1888. In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 19. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n55/mode/2up (Accessed 24, 2021).

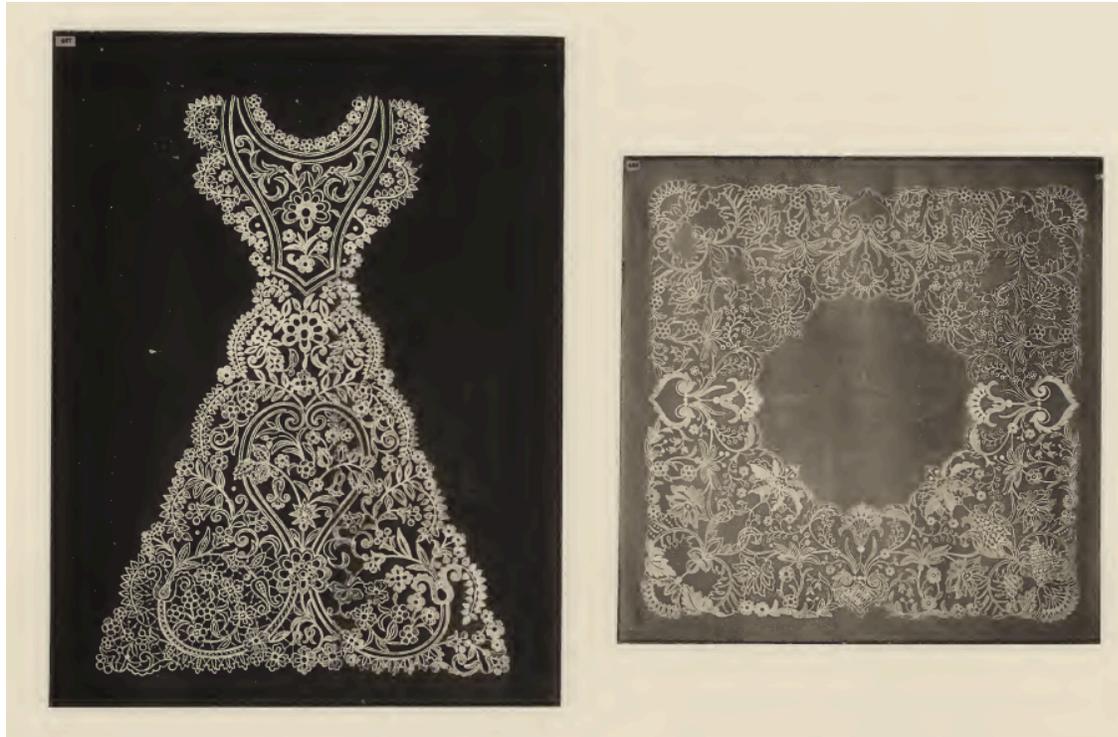


Figure 3-25 Design for a child's dress in Carrickmacross guipure, and a handkerchief in Limerick tambour lace, by Caroline Beatson. Awarded a silver medal in the 1887 National Art Competition. In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 12. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n41/mode/2up (Accessed November 24, 2021).

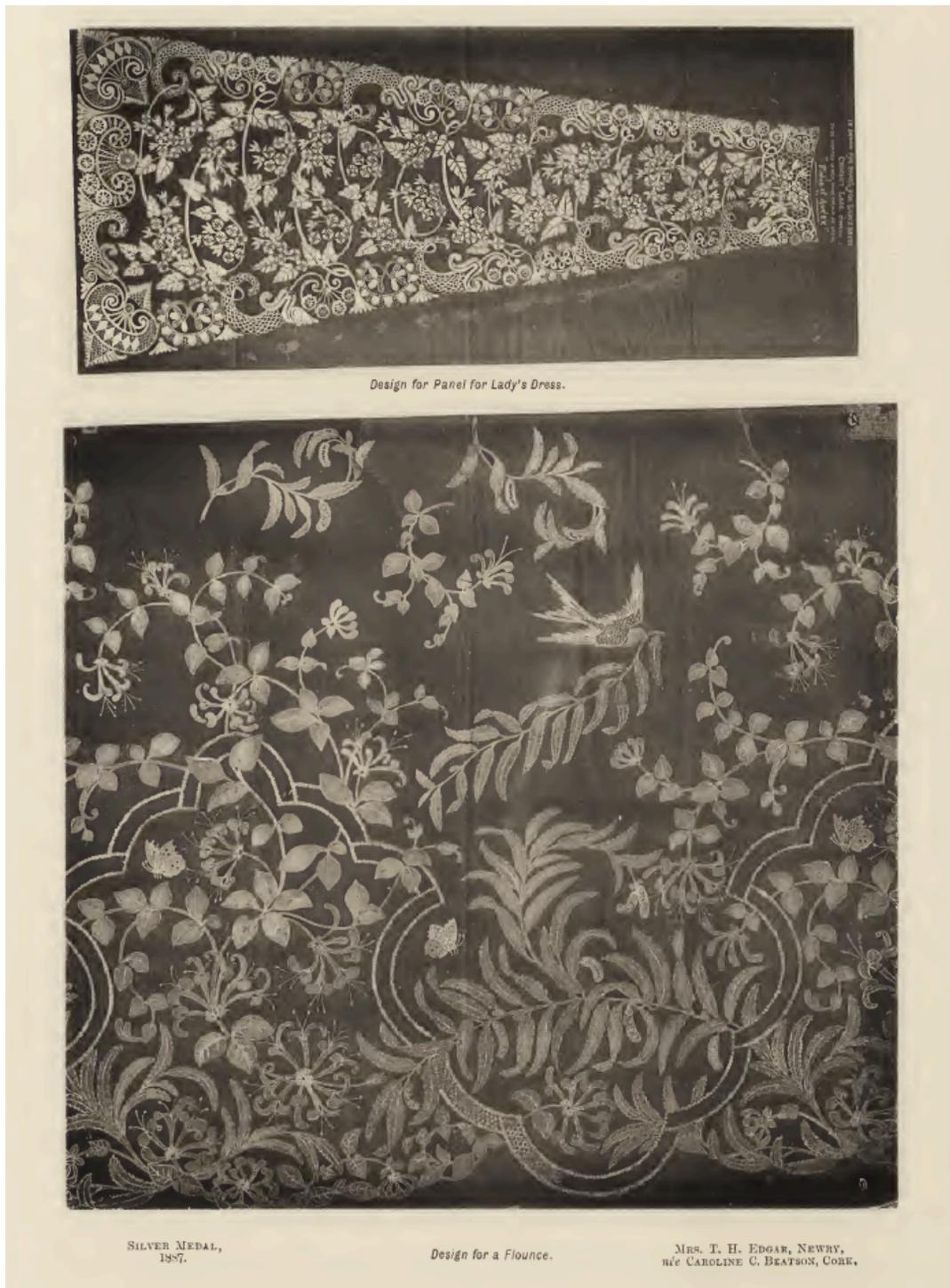


Figure 3-26 Design for a dress panel and design for a flounce, by Caroline Beatson. Awarded a silver medal in the 1887 National Art Competition. In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 13. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n43/mode/2up (November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-27 Designs for flounces in Carrickmacross lace (with detail of passionflower motif), by Emily Anderson. Awarded a Silver Medal in the 1888 National Art Competition. In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 4. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n25/mode/2up (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-28 Insertion of Carrickmacross applique, made at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, after a design by Emily Anderson. Figure 1 in Alan Cole, “Lacemaking in Ireland,” *English Illustrated Magazine* (June 1890): 655. Source: Hathi Trust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000093210635&view=page&seq=669&skin=2021&q1=lace> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-29 Flounce of Carrickmacross applique (with detail of passionflower motif), made at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, after a design by Emily Anderson. Figure 3 in Alan Cole, “Lacemaking in Ireland,” *English Illustrated Magazine* (June 1890): 657. Source: Hathi Trust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000093210635&view=page&seq=671&skin=2021&q1=lace> (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-30 Emily Anderson, design for Limerick lace border, c.1888. Donated by Alan Cole. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.1103-1920). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-31 Insertion in Carrickmacross applique, made at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, after a design by Emily Anderson. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (CIRC.515-1913). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-32 Flounce of Carrickmacross applique, made at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, after a design by Emily Anderson. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (CIRC.516-1913). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

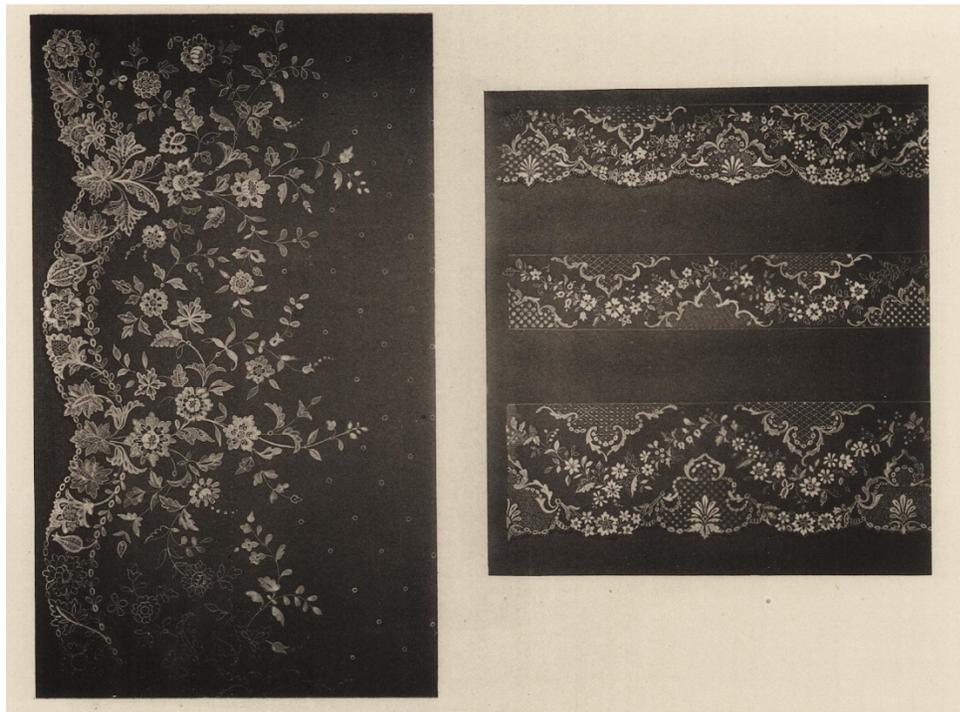


Figure 3-33 Design for a flounce in applique work and borders in Limerick lace, by Emily Anderson. Awarded a silver Medal in the National Art Competition, 1889. In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 7. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n31/mode/2up (Accessed November 24, 2021).

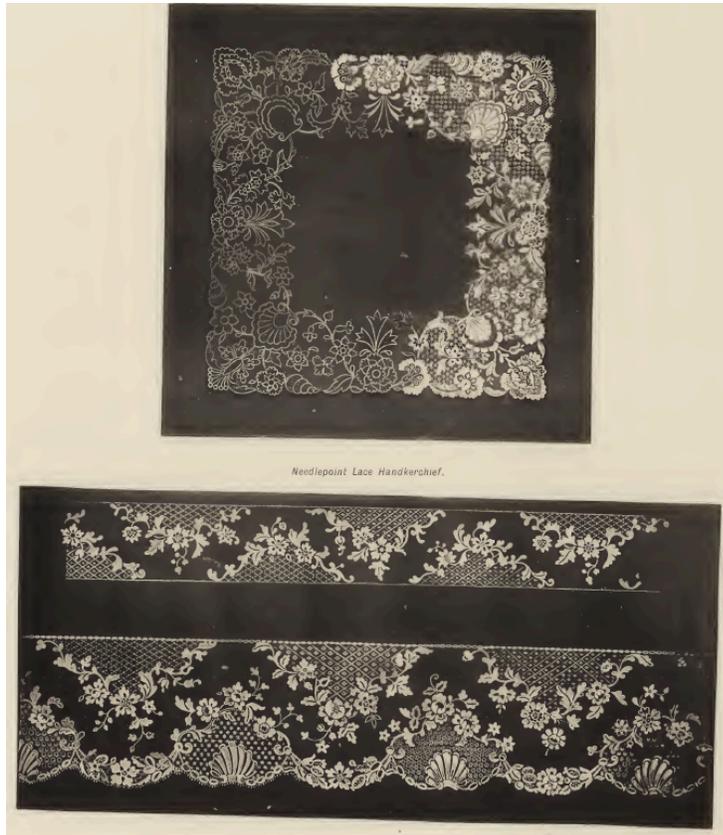


Figure 3-34 Designs for a needlepoint handkerchief and design for borders adapted for Carrickmacross applique, by Emily Anderson. Awarded a silver Medal in the National Art Competition, 1889. In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 5. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n27/mode/2up (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 3-35 Border in Carrickmacross applique, after a design by Emily Anderson. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (T.11-1913). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3-36 ‘Clematis.’ In *Vere Foster’s Drawing Book: Plants from Nature (in two books)* (London: Blackie and Sons, n.d.), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/plantsfromnature00fost/page/n13/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

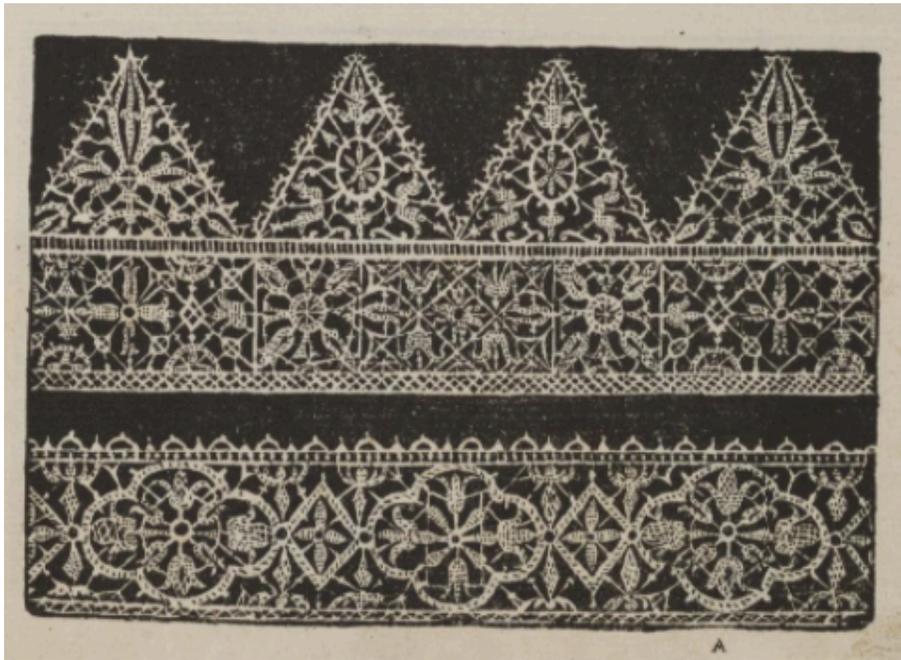


Figure 3-37 Design for Reticella Lace, by Cesare Vecellio (Venice), 1592. In *Corona delle nobili, et virtuose donne. Libro [primo] : nel quale si dimostra in varij disegni molte sorti di mostre di punti in aria, punti tagliati, punti a reticello, & ristampa la quarta volta* (1592), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/Vecellio15961597CoronaV14BNFbtv1b105480431/page/n45/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

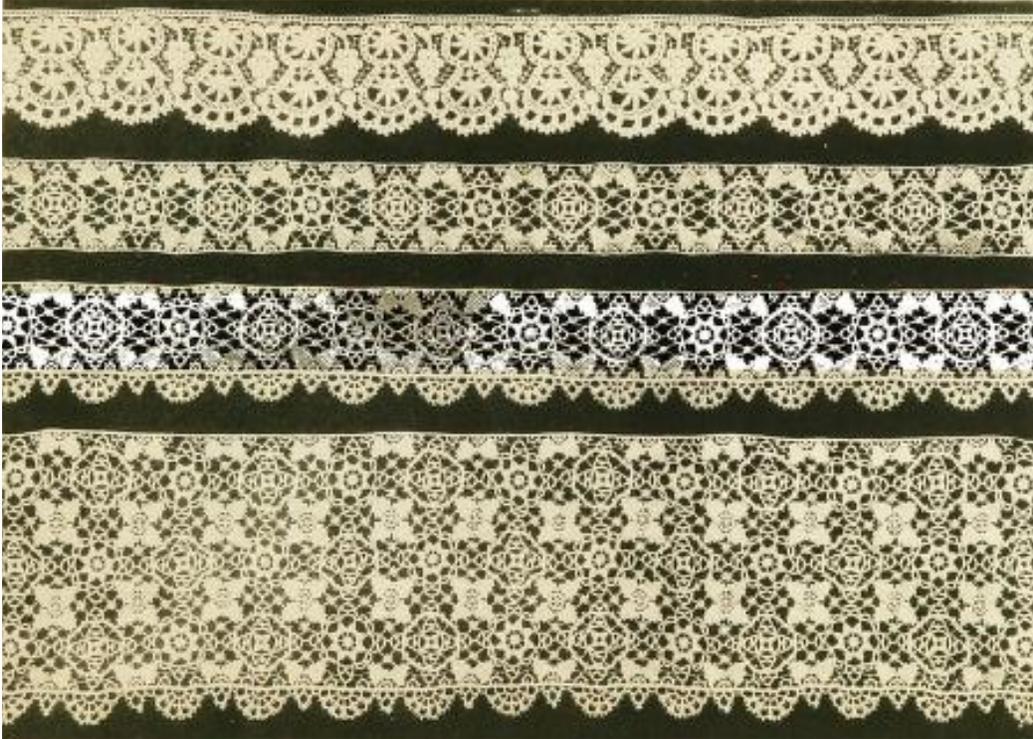


Figure 3-38 Crochet borders, made in Cork, under the supervision of Michael Holland (Dwyer and Co.), likely after a design by Michael Holland. Plate No. 5 in Alan Cole, *A Renascence of the Irish Art of Lace-Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), n.p. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/renascenceirisha00cole/page/n19/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

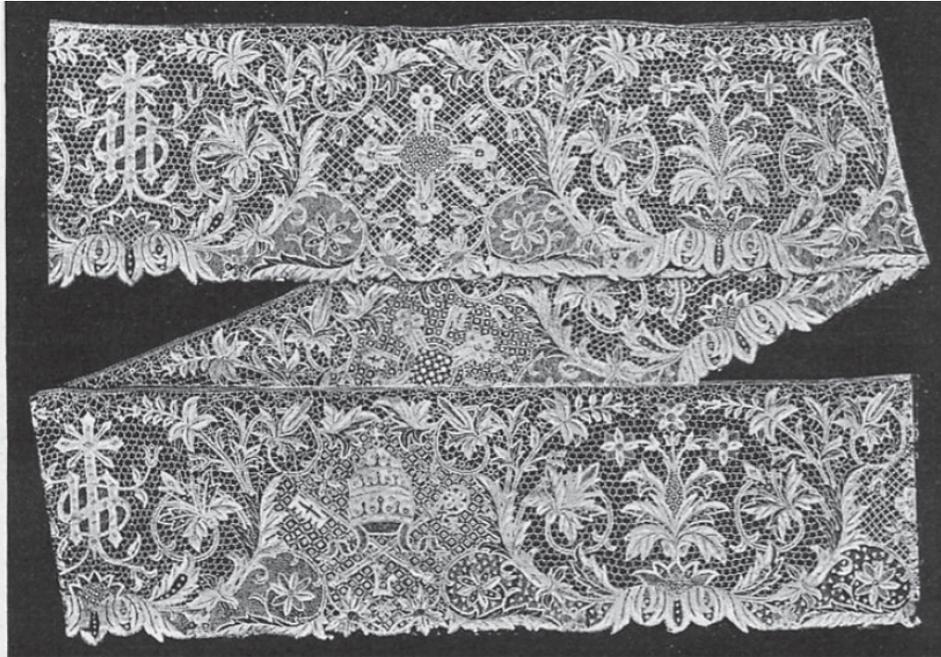


Figure 3-39 Border of Needlepoint lace for an alb or rochet, component of the Papal Jubilee Lace (1887). Designed by the branch class at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare, and made at the Presentation Convent, Youghal. In Mary Power Lalor, "The Irish Papal Jubilee Lace," *Magazine of Art* 11 (1888): 201. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/magazineofart11unse/page/200/mode/2up?q=%22power+lalor%22> (Accessed December 7, 2021).



Figure 3-40 Cuff of Needlepoint lace for an alb or rochet, component of the Papal Jubilee Lace. Designed by the branch class at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare, and made at the Presentation Convent, Youghal. In Mary Power Lalor, "The Irish Papal Jubilee Lace," *Magazine of Art* 11 (1888): 200. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/magazineofart11unse/page/200/mode/2up?q=%22power+lalor%22> (Accessed December 7, 2021).



Figure 3-41 Tea gown designed by the House of Rouff (Paris) c. 1900. Indian silk damask embroidered with glass, metal threads and beads, and Limerick lace. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (T.87-1991). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

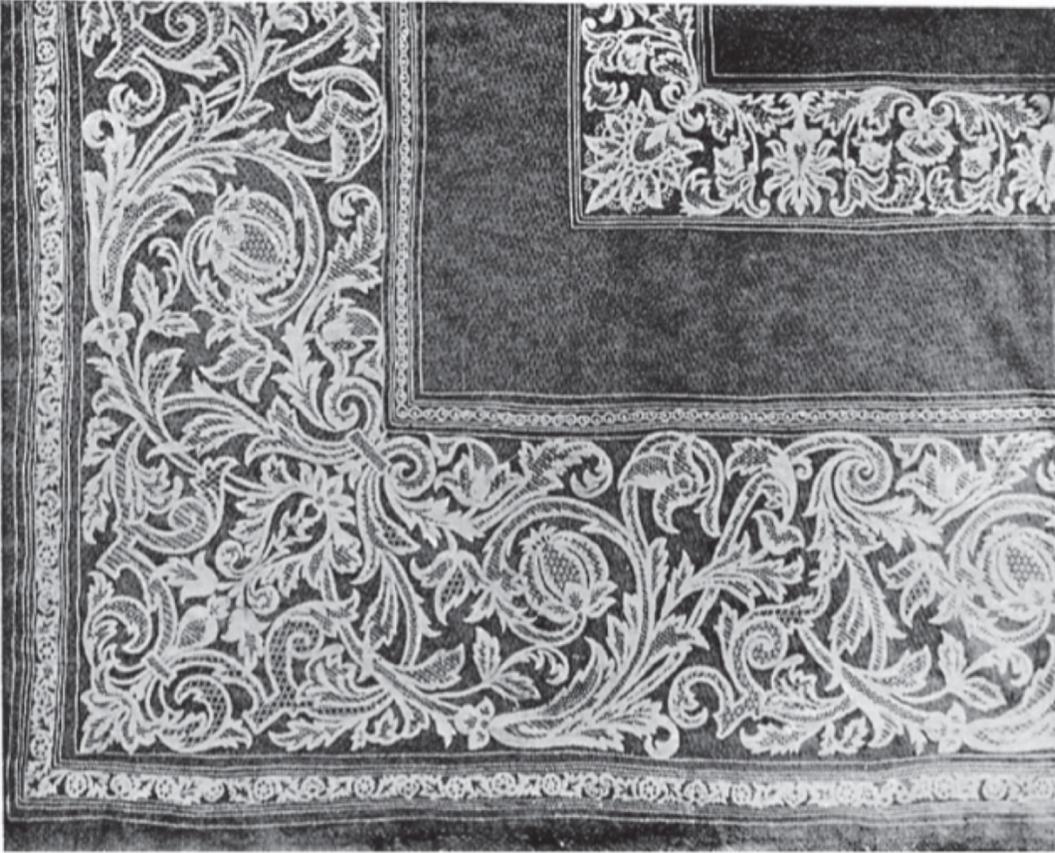


Figure 3-42 Corner of a Curtain, Limerick Lace (embroidery on net). Made at Vere O'Brien's school in Limerick. In Alan Cole, "Some Recent Irish Laces." *Magazine of Art* Vol. 14 (1891): 211. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/sim_magazine-of-art-1878_1891_14/page/210/mode/2up (Accessed December 7, 2021).

Chapter 4

Co-operation and Community: The IAOS Home Industries Societies

Imaginary Emily

In August, 1896, Emily travelled from Cork to visit her brother, Robin, at his home in Blackrock.⁶¹⁴ Years later, she would look back on this trip, this time with him and her nephews, and wonder if it was the last time she saw him truly well. He was buzzing with ideas for the Society's new plan to organize home industries in the villages where they had started creameries. He wanted to know what she thought – what it really took to make good lace, saleable lace and embroidery and other such things which he and the men of the co-ops until very recently blithely assumed the women would just know how to do, instinctively. It felt sometimes as if all they ever spoke of together was work: his work with the co-ops, her work teaching and designing. A cup of tea in the garden became a seminar on what was happening in Denmark or how crochet designs might be simplified for easy instruction to dairy farmers' wives. But Emily didn't mind this, because it was time spent together, and when he spoke his eyes lit up, and he seemed happy.⁶¹⁵ In these moments it felt like the two of them were threads in a vast web that spread across the south of Ireland and was beginning to lift the countryside up and up, out of the mire of the nineteenth century and into a brighter future. A fanciful thought. But they felt useful, and that was something. And they enjoyed each other's company. There had been death in the family these past few years, first their sister, then their father.⁶¹⁶ It was a comfort to sit and inhabit the world of thought and action together, both in their forties, but scheming as they had when they were children planning the next issues of the Mount Corbett Magazine.⁶¹⁷

Plunkett cycled over late in the month and joined them at the table in the garden, talking co-ops and gesturing wildly with his Belleek teacup until Emily, alarmed, gathered the tea things and took them into the house. The kitchen was cool, and quiet. She didn't know what to say to Plunkett, who seemed to think that lace and crochet classes could just be dropped from the sky into the towns where he and Robin had started creameries, that the women of the village would simply sit down and start making good lace, and good profits. If her experience in the Branch classes had taught her anything, it was just how much work went into training lacemakers. Perhaps it would be better to encourage existing lace workshops to adopt co-operative principles? She was certain some of them would be interested in the idea. The sisters at Youghal, for example. But it was difficult to get a word in edgewise with the two of them and Plunkett didn't want to bear of slowing down or starting small – he was running on enthusiasm and an almost militant optimism. So Emily had pursed her lips and nodded, and offered concise answers when asked, and listened closely to Robin, noting when he spoke in words that were hers, from their conversations hours and days earlier. When she opened the door into the garden she heard Plunkett say to her brother 'she's shy, isn't she, your sister,' and Robin

⁶¹⁴ Patricia Anderson refers to R.A. Anderson as Robin; this seems to have been a family nickname. Plunkett's diaries recount a visit to R.A. Anderson at Blackrock, and note that his sister was there with him (Diary of Horace Plunkett, Friday, August 28, 1896, transcribed, annotated and indexed by Kate Targett (2012), National Library of Ireland, Dublin). Because Emily was at that time teaching in Cork, I assume a visit to Blackrock (near Dublin) would last a couple of days. Even now, the journey from Cork to Dublin and back is not a comfortable day trip.

⁶¹⁵ Plunkett's diaries note that in the next year, R.A. Anderson disclosed to him that his wife had borne another man's child and was now living with this man "in extravagance" (Diary of Horace Plunkett, Tuesday, October 5, 1897). The diaries thereafter make many references to R.A.'s ill-health and domestic troubles.

⁶¹⁶ Emily and R.A. Anderson's sister Elizabeth (Betsy) died on May 20, 1893 (City of Cork Death Registry for 1893, 98, photocopy supplied by Patrick Nicholson), and their father died in early December, 1895 (Diary of Horace Plunkett, December 17, 1895).

⁶¹⁷ Patricia Anderson's collection contains *The Mount Corbett Magazine*, written and illustrated by Emily and her siblings when they were children.

nodded, saying something she couldn't quite make out.⁶¹⁸ She put the new tea tray on the table – not the good cups this time – and he looked up at her with a barely perceptible grimace of apology. She smiled. They understood each other. They would dissect this conversation later, she would point out the strengths and weaknesses of Plunkett's home industries scheme, and Robin would go to his next meeting prepared.⁶¹⁹

* * *

Alan Cole's reports to the DSA on lacemaking in Ireland mention more than fifty distinct lace workshops and design classes, distributed mainly throughout the south and east of the island (fig. 4.1). However, Alan Cole and other proponents of the South Kensington System model in design education and lace production were not the only voices weighing in on lace, cottage industries, and rural life in Ireland. In 1894, a new organization with a distinctly different mandate and form of governance entered the scene. The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) was founded in April 1894 in order to unite and provide leadership for existing agricultural co-ops and encourage the growth of the co-operative movement in Ireland.⁶²⁰ Focusing in particular on Ireland's largest rural industry, the production of dairy products, the IAOS looked to successful co-operative movements in Britain, Germany, and especially Denmark. At its helm was Horace Plunkett, an Anglo-Irish proponent of agricultural reform who moved between co-operative meetings and the homes of the aristocracy with seeming ease.

Though an organization that promoted co-operation in the dairy industry may seem far from the lacemaking workshops in the convents of Cork, two threads tie it to this project's narrative. In 1897, the IAOS began enrolling co-operative Home Industries Societies, collectives of women engaged in making lace, embroidery, carpets, and other decorative arts. And almost from the IAOS's beginning, Emily Anderson's brother, Robert Andrew Anderson (who went by Robin, to his family, and R.A. Anderson professionally), worked closely with Horace Plunkett, acting as Secretary from 1894-1924. It is tempting to speculate that Emily, as R.A.'s sister and an increasingly respected expert

⁶¹⁸ Plunkett's diary entry recounting this tea with the Andersons notes that he spoke to Emily about home industries, but she was shy (Diary of Horace Plunkett, Friday, August 28, 1896)

⁶¹⁹ One of the cross-currents in this chapter is the working relationship between brothers and sisters: Emily and Robin, and later Lily and Elizabeth Yeats, and their brothers W.B. and Jack. The Yeats family is better documented, and we know that the siblings collaborated, conflicted, and influenced each other's work. I have no evidence that this occurred among the Andersons, but I speculate based on Plunkett's August 1896 diary entry, and family history I have received from Patricia Anderson – that the siblings collaborated on projects when they were young, that Emily was close with her nephews. My own younger brother came to stay with me when I was writing this chapter. My imagining of Emily's experience could be based on either of us – we take turns being the shy one who gathers the dishes as an excuse to escape to a quiet kitchen.

⁶²⁰ Patrick Doyle, *Civilizing Rural Ireland: the co-operative movement, development and the nation-state, 1889-1939* (Manchester University Press, 2019), 13.

in needlework design and production, must have been involved somehow with the IAOS Home Industries Societies.⁶²¹ She attended several IAOS Annual General Meetings, and paid a substantial subscription to the Society for more than 10 years.⁶²² Horace Plunkett's diaries mention two meetings with her, though they do not give details as to what was discussed. Though I cannot place Emily Anderson definitely within the IAOS's ranks at any point in time, its story is intertwined with hers, and with that of lacemaking in Ireland. Her family connection to the Society and these meetings with Horace Plunkett – in addition to a well-informed mind and interest in needlework in Ireland – do indicate that she was aware of its activities before she became an inspector for the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (DATI). In the next chapter, I will discuss how, in this capacity, she interacted with the pre-existing Home Industries Societies that began to come under the purview of the DATI.

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the most successful philanthropic initiatives to encourage rural craft in Ireland, the Donegal Industrial Fund (DIF) and the Irish Industries Association (IIA). Janice Helland has written extensively about both, and as such I will consider them primarily as they relate to the IAOS Home Industries Societies and lace design. I will then introduce the Congested Districts Board, which sought to alleviate poverty in the west of Ireland by introducing handicrafts and other industries, but unlike the DIF and IIA, was an arm of the British Government.

I will then go on to discuss the IAOS Home Industries Societies, which, as I will demonstrate, intersected with lace design education at the Schools of Art, lace workshops already discussed in the previous chapters, and the above-mentioned philanthropic and government bodies. The IAOS's intervention into lacemaking and other 'home industries' – which as we will see, did not always occur in the home – differed fundamentally from these initiatives in that it sought to be co-operative and self-governing. Historian Joanna Bourke is one of the few scholars to take a closer look at the IAOS's Home Industries Societies.⁶²³ Evaluating them within an economic framework, she judges them to have been a failure, as most were short-lived and achieved limited financial success. However, I contend that the Societies were more than simply elements of a rural Irish

⁶²¹ I have a suspicion that an examination of the documents relating to Emily and her family in Pat Anderson's collection would reveal this to be the case. But I am writing on April 7, 2021, with news of Covid-19 variants spreading and case counts rising again, and the possibility of a visit to Vancouver Island to see Pat and her papers – or to Kamloops, to see my nephew who has already grown far too big for his Clones lace bonnet – is receding like a mirage, again.

⁶²² A "Miss Anderson" is recorded in attendance at the I.A.O.S. Annual General Meeting in the years 1904, 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1910, and "Miss E. Anderson" is included on a list of Individual Subscribers from 1909-1920. This data retrieved from a review of IAOS Annual reports for 1904-1920.

⁶²³ Bourke, "Home Industries."

economy. They played a role in the development of Irish lace design, prompting the dispersal of patterns and discussions about how to promote good design among workers outside of the Schools of Art branch classes and convents. This is particularly evident in the IAOS's publication, *The Irish Homestead*, which published a series of lace designs between the years 1900-1902. Using the Dun Emer Guild, Youghal, and Naas Co-operative Home Industries Societies as case studies, I will also argue that as co-operatives, the Societies sowed the seeds for new imaginings of work and workplace, particularly for rural Irish women and girls. They participated in a network of craft workshops and formed communities of craft that, although ultimately not financially lucrative, impacted later developments in rural expressions of 'Irish womanhood,' through the Irish Countrywomen's Association, for example. The life and death of the IAOS Home Industries Societies also points toward an idea that I will discuss further in Chapter 6, namely that lace, when no longer needed or practicable in a cash economy, moved into a relational economy: used for community-building, self-expression, and to materialize care.

4.1 Philanthropy and lace in 'post-renascence' Ireland

As the branch classes and lace workshops that I discussed in the previous two chapters spread across the country in the 1880s and early 1890s, two important philanthropic organizations formed to support them. The Donegal Industrial Fund (DIF) was founded by the middle class British philanthropist Alice Hart (1848-1931), and first exhibited in London in 1883.⁶²⁴ The Irish Industries Association (IIA) was founded in 1886 by Ishbel Aberdeen (1847-1939), who was at that point (from February-August 1886) Vicereine of Ireland, one of the most powerful women among Ireland's social elite.⁶²⁵ Both the DIF and the IIA primarily supported pre-existing industries, using social networks in England and among the Anglo-Irish elite to aid in marketing Irish craft, particularly through organizing exhibitions.⁶²⁶ They emerged at around the same time as Irish-born Eglantyne Jebb's (1845-1925) Cottage Arts Association, which would later become the Home Arts and Industries Association, and functioned as the cottage industries arm of the Arts and Crafts Movement.⁶²⁷ Unlike educators and designers such as Alan Cole and James Brenan, who saw improved morals and living conditions as a positive side effect of design reform, these philanthropic

⁶²⁴ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 7.

⁶²⁵ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 77.

⁶²⁶ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 10.

⁶²⁷ For more on the Home Arts and Industries Association, see: Helland, "Good Work and Clever Design."

organizations focused on craft work's ability to alleviate poverty. However, like proponents of the South Kensington system, they sought to “[inspire] in workers a desire for beauty and an understanding of taste, and concomitantly, of civilization.”⁶²⁸

4.1.1 Alice Hart and the Donegal Industrial Fund

Like Emily Anderson, Alice Hart, née Rowland, was born into a middle-class family with members interested in both art and social reform. Her father was an artist, and her sister worked with the famous London social reformer Octavia Hill, and was involved in the establishment of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London's impoverished East End.⁶²⁹ She married the Jewish physician and philanthropist, Ernest Hart (1835-1898), in 1872. Ernest Hart was active in campaigning for the rights of Jewish people in Britain, and their shared interest in social activism led the couple to travel to Ireland in 1883, to investigate reports of poverty and hunger. Immediately after this trip, Hart began planning for the DIF, proposing that “the most practical thing to do would be to revive the old cottage industries and to develop and improve the ancient arts of spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing, and embroidery.”⁶³⁰ Though the DIF focused more on weaving, knitting and embroidery than lace, this rhetoric of revival mirrors that which arose out of the Mansion House and Cork Exhibitions in Chapter 2. The DIF also drew on other ‘ancient’ Irish art forms, borrowing motifs and compositions from the Book of Kells and other early Irish manuscripts to reproduce in Irish linen thread as ‘Kells Embroidery.’⁶³¹

The DIF did not focus on lace, though Hart did send two young women from Donegal to England to train in Torchon lacemaking. They were successful in their studies, and upon returning taught daily classes in Knockostolar, Bunbeg, and Derrybeg.⁶³² The DIF's 1888 Irish Village display at Olympia, in London, featured a Limerick lacemaker, Mrs. Glynn, who reportedly entranced the crowds with her skill and speed. Mrs. Glynn completed commissions for Princess Christian and Mrs. Gladstone (wife of the British Prime Minister).⁶³³ It also had a relationship with Florence Vere O'Brien's lace school in Limerick, displaying work from the School at Olympia and acting as a depot

⁶²⁸ Helland, “Good Work and Clever Design,” 31.

⁶²⁹ Helland, “Exhibiting Ireland,” 30.

⁶³⁰ Alice Hart, *The Cottage Industries of Ireland, with an Account of the Work of the Donegal Industrial Fund* (London, 1887), 3, quoted in Helland, “Working Bodies,” 30.

⁶³¹ Paul Larmour provides an overview of this iconography and technique. See: Paul Larmour, “The Donegal Industrial Fund,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1990/1991): 128-133, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20492637>.

⁶³² Larmour, “The Donegal Industrial Fund,” 129.

⁶³³ Helland, “Good Work and Clever Design,” 35.

for its products.⁶³⁴ The Fund's Irish Village at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, composed of replica Irish cottages and a miniature Donegal Castle, devoted a whole cottage to lacemaking.

Janice Helland has highlighted the incredibly complex nature of Alice Hart's philanthropic activities.⁶³⁵ On one hand, Hart critiqued the violence and oppression of the British colonial presence in Ireland, which she felt to be responsible for the decline of Irish industry.⁶³⁶ The DIF taught classes in Irish to Irish-speaking communities, and Hart lectured about rural poverty and unrest, using lantern slides of evictions to illustrate her points.⁶³⁷ Irish actress and activist Maude Gonne would later do the same, projecting the images onto buildings as an act of protest during the 1897 Jubilee celebrations in Dublin.⁶³⁸ However, Hart replicated this erasure in a diagram which depicted a sponge, labelled to indicate that it represented the DIF, wiping away an image of rural poverty, and thus erasing a home and its inhabitants.⁶³⁹ She also inserted the craftswomen who produced work through and for the DIF into the narratives discussed in the previous chapter: narratives around the morality and improving nature of work and busy hands, and of placing craft and craftspeople in a pre-industrial past. In this case, it was a medieval past, as Hart deftly adapted the Arts and Crafts rhetoric of John Ruskin and William Morris to market the DIF's products.⁶⁴⁰ Helland describes the name of Hart's 'Ye Rose and Ye Shamrock' display at the 1885 London International Inventions Exhibition as particularly illustrative of "the contradictions always present in Hart's work – she sought to alleviate poverty as she criticized the history of the English in Ireland, and at the same time, she promoted a harmony that was only partially authentic."⁶⁴¹

4.1.2 Ishbel Aberdeen and the Irish Industries Association

Ishbel Aberdeen founded the IIA during the short period in which her husband accepted the position of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the couple spent February through August of 1886 living in Dublin. In March of 1886, Aberdeen held a ball at Dublin Castle, encouraging the guests to wear Irish-made clothing. She announced the founding of the IIA at the Edinburgh Exhibition that

⁶³⁴ Helland, "Good Work and Clever Design," 35.

⁶³⁵ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 15.

⁶³⁶ Helland, "Working Bodies," 137-138.

⁶³⁷ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 29, 65.

⁶³⁸ See: Fintan Cullen, "Marketing National Sentiment: Lantern Slides of Evictions in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *History Workshop Journal* No. 54 (Autumn 2002): 162-179, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4289805>.

⁶³⁹ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 29.

⁶⁴⁰ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 35, 54-56.

⁶⁴¹ Helland, "Exhibiting Ireland," 33.

summer, and by 1888 had depots in Dublin and London.⁶⁴² Though their initial stay was short, Aberdeen remained president of the IIA for the next eleven years, and resumed the position when her husband became Lord Lieutenant for another term in 1906. The organization's aim was to "stimulate the production of home industries, provide information to workers, establish depots from which goods could be sold, find markets, and promote 'the use of all Irish manufactures'."⁶⁴³ Aberdeen used her presence and considerable influence among the Dublin and London elite to achieve these goals, wearing Irish-made poplin, tweed, lace, and embroidery to society events. Janice Helland has argued that the rise of fashion periodicals played an important role in the IIA's success – images of Aberdeen's dress and information on where and by whom it was made were published widely.⁶⁴⁴

The IIA's exhibitions usually included work by the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework, which opened in February 1877, holding its first exhibition in March of that year.⁶⁴⁵ In the early 1880s, under the patronage of Queen Victoria, Princess Christian, and the Vicereine of Ireland Countess Cowper, its constitution was adapted "to replicate even more closely the by now firmly established Royal School of Art Needlework in London."⁶⁴⁶ For the first ten years of the School's existence, Baroness Pauline Prochazka (1842-1930) acted as manager and chief designer, drawing inspiration from Renaissance, "Moorish," and Celtic art.⁶⁴⁷ Prochazka was an accomplished artist, who won prizes for her designs and later founded the Water Colour Society of Ireland.⁶⁴⁸ In 1894, the School was forced to close because of financial difficulties, but it was reopened in the same year by the Countess of Mayo, under the management of Susan Beresford.⁶⁴⁹ The 1880s also saw the founding of the Belfast School of Art Needlework, by Miss E.T. Brook. It employed middle- and

⁶⁴² Helland, "A Delightful Change," 38.

⁶⁴³ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 77.

⁶⁴⁴ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 81.

⁶⁴⁵ Helland, "Ishbel Aberdeen's 'Irish' Dresses," 157.

⁶⁴⁶ Helland, "Ishbel Aberdeen's 'Irish' Dresses," 157. Slightly older sources place the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework's foundation date in the 1880s, under Countess Cowper, but they are likely interpreting this change in the constitution as the foundation of the institution. See: Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 93-94; Paul Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 12; Anthony Symondson, "Art Needlework in Ireland," *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* Vol.10 (1994): 126, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20492778>.

⁶⁴⁷ Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 12.

⁶⁴⁸ Helland, Janice, "The Craft and Design of Dressmaking, 1880-1907," 95. Prochazka and several other women founded the Irish Amateur Drawing Society in 1870, it became the Irish Fine Art Society in 1878, and finally the Water Colour Society of Ireland in 1887 (Cyril Barrett and Jeanne Sheehy, "Visual Arts and Society: 1850-1900," in *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union 1870-1921* (3rd Ed.) ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford University Press, 2012), 449).

⁶⁴⁹ Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 13.

working-class women, and Paul Larmour notes that although their style has not been recorded, they did exhibit their work at least once, at the Ladies Industrial Exhibition in Belfast in 1891.⁶⁵⁰

The IIA also built an Irish village at the 1893 World Colombian Exposition, or ‘World’s Fair.’ In 1892, Alan Cole attended a meeting of the IIA Committee “to settle what commissions should be given to different Convents and lace-making centers for specimens to be exhibited in the Association’s Section of the Chicago Exhibition.”⁶⁵¹ However, the Poor Clares in Kenmare were preparing for the Chicago Exhibition as early as October 1891, because needlepoint lace required such an extensive amount of time.⁶⁵² The lace class at the Dominican Convent in Cabra, near Dublin, also started work that October, and Cole noted that “[the] convent hopes to be specially distinguished for its ecclesiastical laces” at the Exhibition.⁶⁵³ The Presentation Convent in Youghal must have had plans for their Exhibition work in 1891, as Cole reported that they are to be “well represented” there.⁶⁵⁴ The nuns showed Cole a collection of lace designs which would be made up for the exhibition when he returned in April 1892: some deep flounces, a panel, and trimming borders.⁶⁵⁵ Cole’s reports also mention the Convent of Mercy, Kinsale, and the Carmelite Convent in New Ross preparing for the Exhibition.⁶⁵⁶ The Convent of Mercy’s work was eventually displayed in the Exhibition’s Women’s Building.⁶⁵⁷

The *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village* gives the names of several lacemakers who had been brought to Chicago to demonstrate their craft in the Village’s lace cottage:

Ellen Aher trained at the Presentation Convent at Youghal County, makes the beautiful needle-point lace which is so highly prized by those who are its happy possessors; Kate Kennedy illustrates the making of *appliqué* lace as it is done in the cottage homes of Carrickmacross, and Mary Flynn does the same for the much admired fine crochet work made by the poor women around Clones, in County Monaghan, and which is already much appreciated in America; Ellen Murphy shows how the pretty light Limerick lace is made, which is regaining its popularity since Mrs. Vere O’Brien and other ladies and gentlemen have set to work to improve the designs...⁶⁵⁸

The guidebook also includes an account of Ishbel Aberdeen’s journey through Ireland to inspect the various lacemaking, embroidery and knitting centers associated with the IIA, and choose the workers

⁶⁵⁰ Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 14.

⁶⁵¹ 40th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 15.

⁶⁵² 39th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 27.

⁶⁵³ 39th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 28.

⁶⁵⁴ 39th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 27.

⁶⁵⁵ 40th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 15.

⁶⁵⁶ 40th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 14, 15.

⁶⁵⁷ *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village*, 39.

⁶⁵⁸ *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village*, 11.

who would accompany her to Chicago. Even this tour to select workers for the Irish Village was an exercise in branding. The account is illustrated with photographs, presumably from Aberdeen's own Kodak, as the text mentions her being compelled to photograph the "beautiful Loughine" inlet near Baltimore, Co. Cork, and photographing "lace-makers at their work."⁶⁵⁹ Aberdeen's itinerary maps roughly onto that of Alan Cole's tours of Ireland in the previous decade, though she is less interested in the lace design classes or branch schools, and more in the picturesque scenes of lacemakers working in their cottages (fig. 4.2). Both Hart and Aberdeen's work to market Irish industries through their villages at the Chicago Exhibition paid off, at least in relation to the lace industry. The 1893 DSA Annual Report noted the Exhibition had increased the demand for new designs in lace.⁶⁶⁰

In the previous chapter, I referenced Ishbel Aberdeen's guidebook written for the Irish Village, which featured a replica of Blarney Castle, in County Cork, and was meant to evoke the South of Ireland. Janice Helland has pointed out that these choices map onto Aberdeen and Hart's political differences – Aberdeen chose to include a castle that had been conquered by Cromwell and that was by the nineteenth century a massively popular tourist destination, and her model cottage was from Queenstown (the English name for Cobh, in County Cork), whereas Hart replicated the sights of the landscape in which her workers lived.⁶⁶¹ Despite the fact that its village received far more positive press – and an article in *Queen* noted that its "permanence" and "success" were guaranteed because it was "established on sound commercial lines" – the DIF declined in the years following the 1893 Chicago Exhibition.⁶⁶² However, the IIA continued its work, and as I will discuss later on in this chapter, came to play an important role in the IAOS's Home Industries Societies.

4.1.3 The Congested Districts Board

The Congested Districts Board (1891-1923) was founded to encourage development and alleviate poverty in the 'congested districts' of Ireland's western seaboard. During the second half of the nineteenth century, these districts were never far from famine; with poor land and inefficient

⁶⁵⁹ *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village*, 38, 33. Ishbel Aberdeen was known for travelling with a Kodak camera, and published a book in 1893 called *Through Canada with a Kodak* (Edinburgh: W.H. White and Co., 1893).

⁶⁶⁰ Fortieth report of the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1894, C.6905, at 307. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁶⁶¹ Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 101. The fact that there were two villages was also indicative of differences, and tensions, between the two women and their organizations. They had initially planned to collaborate on a single village (Helland, "Exhibiting Ireland," 38). James O'Leary discusses the tensions evident in the two Irish Villages in "Chapter Three: 'Inventing Irish': Philanthropy, Progress and Performance," 120-183, of "Manufacturing Reality: the Display of the Irish at World's Fairs and Exhibitions 1893-1965," PhD. diss., Kent State University, 2015.

⁶⁶² Helland, *Home Arts and Industries*, 63; Helland, "Exhibiting Ireland," 40.

agricultural practices, they were dependent on income from migratory labour. Creating a government body to gather information about, then propose and carry out improvements in these districts was one aspect of the late-nineteenth century Conservative Government's attempt to use a combination of coercion and conciliation to pacify the Irish people, often referred to as "Constructive Unionism."⁶⁶³ Believing that the root cause of Irish rebellion was economic, and thus that it could be averted by economic means, Arthur Balfour (1848-1930), Chief Secretary of Ireland from 1887-1891, spearheaded the initiative.⁶⁶⁴ However, historian Ciara Breathnach points out that Balfour was also acting in line with recommendations from travellers and philanthropists who reported on the west of Ireland's poverty years before his term as Chief Secretary. Most notable was the Quaker philanthropist and reformer James Hack Tuke, who, after a trip to the west in 1845, wrote newspaper articles and pamphlets drawing attention to the distress of the region and specifically calling for a legislative body to address it.⁶⁶⁵ Though not a member of the CDB, he would play an unofficial advisory role, conducting preliminary research among his local connections in Donegal, and helping to develop the list of questions for the Board's 'baseline reports.'⁶⁶⁶

The Board functioned autonomously in every way except for in relation to salaries for its ten members, who were selected from diverse backgrounds for their "expertise" and familiarity with "Irish social and economic issues."⁶⁶⁷ Their experience ranged from farming to fisheries to financial management to brewing, and they were well connected: to the Land Commission, the RDS, the Great Northern Railway Company, and the world of philanthropy. Among them was Horace Plunkett, who was already active in establishing dairying co-ops and would found the IAOS three years later.⁶⁶⁸ Funding came from Ireland, from the sale of church property after the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 (The Church Surplus Grant), the Irish Loan Reproductive Fund, and the Sea and Coast Fisheries Fund.⁶⁶⁹

Falling under the Board's purview were Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, and Cork's West Riding. In these courties, "more than 20 percent of the population (except in the case of Co. Cork, which was divided into East and West Riding) lived in congested electoral

⁶⁶³ L.P. Curtis, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland 1880-1892* (Princeton University Press, 1963), 428, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183ppgd>.

⁶⁶⁴ Ciara Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board of Ireland, 1891-1923: poverty and development in the west of Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 20.

⁶⁶⁵ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 21-22.

⁶⁶⁶ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 22; 36.

⁶⁶⁷ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 31.

⁶⁶⁸ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 31-32.

⁶⁶⁹ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 32.

divisions.”⁶⁷⁰ One of the CDB’s first activities was to compile ‘baseline reports’ on the districts, in order to establish a sense of where to begin, and what had to be done. The reports, which took more than a year to complete, consisted of the answers to thirty-two questions – ‘headings of inquiry’ – relating to land, industry, agriculture, fishing, and the concerns of daily life, such as housing and family budgets.⁶⁷¹

These reports are fascinating windows into the lives of Irish people living in these districts at the end of the nineteenth century. They also revealed how “industrious” the women of the congested districts were, caring for households and children, supplementing family income with eggs or knitting, and tending to the crops when men were away.⁶⁷² This seemed to bode well for the development of cottage industries. The CDB initiated poultry rearing and egg production schemes, as well as training in lacemaking, weaving, knitting, and sprigging (embroidery on linen). Some of these enterprises were very successful, such as the Foxford woollen factory and the Benada lace school, which were both administered by convents.⁶⁷³ This was unusual however. Unlike in the south of Ireland, where many lace industries began in convents during the Famine and continued to be associated with those communities, most of the CDB classes were administered by the Board itself. The IIA collaborated with the CDB in developing the Donegal homespun industry, though their efforts met with limited success.⁶⁷⁴

More successful was the CDB and IIA’s collaboration in creating lace classes. The first were founded in Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo, in 1894. County Donegal had the highest number of women’s cottage industries. Donegal historian Sean Beattie uses the lace school – a thatched cottage – at Carromena, Moville Parish, to illustrate a typical Donegal cottage industry system, with women and girls learning crochet, but also sprigging and sewing skills. New shipments of supplies or finished work would travel by horse and cart to and from a depot in nearby Cardonagh, from which agents in Derry or Belfast would buy up stock.⁶⁷⁵ By 1900, the CDB administered twenty-seven lace classes,

⁶⁷⁰ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 29.

⁶⁷¹ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 36-37.

⁶⁷² Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 48.

⁶⁷³ One of the only substantial entries related to lace in the Irish Folklore Collection’s Schools Project is a song collected by a pupil at the Banada School in Sligo. See: Seán Ó hÉanacháin (collected by, from an unidentified informant), “Banada Lace Song,” *The Schools’ Collection*, Volume 0173, Page 064. Irish Folklore Collection, University College Dublin. Digitized by the Duchas Project, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4672118/4671825/4682300> (Accessed December 7, 2021).

⁶⁷⁴ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 60. Ciara Breathnach notes that some correspondence about this collaboration is held at the Library of the Department of Agriculture, in Dublin. This would likely be a useful source for further study.

⁶⁷⁵ Seán Beattie, “Cottage Industries: Arts and Crafts in Donegal, 1880-1920,” *Donegal Annual* (n.d.): 69.

with an average attendance of thirty women and girls, who were paid according to experiencing and consistency of attendance.⁶⁷⁶ Most of the lace produced was sold through the Irish Lace Depot, which continued to play an important role in helping lace from rural areas in Ireland to reach British buyers, even fifty years after its founding during the Famine. In 1899, the profits from all of the lace classes came to £4814, and the Irish Lace Depot “sent a cheque for £124 out of its profits to be divided among the girls.”⁶⁷⁷ Over the next decade and a half, the amount of profit to be made from lace fluctuated widely, because of shifts in both supply and demand. In 1903, as a result of a shortage of workers, many of whom had emigrated using the proceeds of their first few years of lace work, orders could not be fulfilled and the industry slumped. However, the fashion industry’s demand for Irish crochet in 1906 revived it again, and in that year, the earnings from lace classes in “seven districts of Northwest Mayo exceeded the total poor law valuation” for that region.⁶⁷⁸

Given that the CDB worked closely with the DATI after it was established in 1899, these lace classes will re-emerge in Chapter 5. Many of them produced crochet, and so they were impacted by the rise of cheap imitations. In the next chapter, I will discuss how Emily Anderson, as an employee of the DATI, sought to protect Irish crochet against poorly-produced and falsely-advertised crochet from other countries, advocating for stricter copyright and even appearing as a witness in a copyright trial. Like the rest of the Irish lace industry, the CDB classes could not weather the outbreak of war. The total earnings for all of the thirty-three classes in 1914-1915 were £11,680.⁶⁷⁹ They had been £25,300 in 1908.⁶⁸⁰ They were closed, and the Board focused on developing new industries in the same locations, having learned that it was not wise to focus such attention on one industry, especially one so subject to the whim of fashion. Though they were ultimately proven to be economically unsustainable, the CDB lace classes would go on to play an important role particularly in the development of Clones crochet lace, which I will discuss further in the next chapters.

⁶⁷⁶ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 64.

⁶⁷⁷ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 64.

⁶⁷⁸ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 66.

⁶⁷⁹ Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 68.

⁶⁸⁰ Beattie, “Cottage Industries,” 69.

4.2 The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society and its Home Industries Societies

The IAOS was founded in Dublin in April 1894, to provide structure and governance for pre-existing agricultural co-operatives and aid in the formation of new ones. Horace Plunkett (1854-1932), the Anglo-Irish Unionist MP for South Dublin and erstwhile Wyoming rancher, led the movement, promoting “a hopeful vision for the IAOS that saw people of all political and religious stripes united.”⁶⁸¹ He remained President of the IAOS from 1894 until he died in 1932, with the exception of a period during which he was Vice-President of the DATI.⁶⁸² Though Plunkett was the organization’s figurehead, he collaborated with a group of men whose diversity of background and focus would serve to broaden the co-operative movement’s influence and appeal.

Emily Anderson’s younger brother, R.A. Anderson (1860-1942), was IAOS secretary from 1894-1924, after which he became Vice-President, a “largely symbolic post.”⁶⁸³ Anderson had been an agent for the Castletown Estate in Kildare, and administered properties at Granston Manor and Doneraile Court, as well as serving as a clerk for Doneraile petty sessions.⁶⁸⁴ An article published after his death described his unremarkable early career: “to all appearances he was destined to spend his life in the County Cork Village – unless something unusual or unexpected happened.”⁶⁸⁵ In July 1889, he met Horace Plunkett, and shortly after became Plunkett’s part-time employee, then in 1891 the first full-time IAOS Organiser.⁶⁸⁶ In 1894 he became Secretary. The Jesuit economist Fr. Thomas Finlay was Vice-President, linking the IAOS to the Catholic Church – an important association for the Catholic majority rural Ireland.⁶⁸⁷ George William Russell, also known as Æ, edited the IAOS’s weekly publication, *The Irish Homestead*. This periodical combined agricultural news and advice with Æ’s quasi-spiritual ideology of rural revival and published work that brought the IAOS into conversation with the Irish literary and artistic revival occurring in the early-twentieth century. As such, the organization was founded to promote co-operation in the dairy industry, but grew to encompass many other aspects of rural life and work, including cottage industries. In *Civilising rural*

⁶⁸¹ Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 13.

⁶⁸² Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 43. For more on Horace Plunkett see also: James Kennelly, “The ‘Dawn of the Practical’: Horace Plunkett and the Co-operative Movement,” *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* Vol. 12 No. 1 (Spring 2008): 62-81, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25660755>.

⁶⁸³ James Kennelly, “Normal Courage: Robert A. Anderson and the Irish Co-operative Movement,” *Studies: an Irish Quarterly Review* Vol. 100 No. 399 (Autumn 2011): 326, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23059676>.

⁶⁸⁴ Kennelly, “Normal Courage,” 321.

⁶⁸⁵ “A Peaceful Revolutionary Passes,” *The Cork Examiner* December 29, 1942. Quoted in Kennelly, “Normal Courage,” 321.

⁶⁸⁶ Kennelly, “Normal Courage,” 321.

⁶⁸⁷ Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 25.

Ireland: the co-operative movement, development and the nation-state, 1889-1939, historian Patrick Doyle demonstrates how the co-operative movement also played an important role in shaping an idea of what rural Ireland could become: “The IAOS promoted a vision of idealized community based on reciprocity and mutual concern.”⁶⁸⁸

In 1897, the IAOS announced a new class of society that would provide employment for rural women whose traditional work in the creamery had been taken away by the larger, co-operative creameries. Dairying had traditionally been the realm of women of rural Ireland. In 1884, when the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction published their recommendations for technical education in Ireland, they had suggested that “conferences of farmers’ wives and daughters” should be educated in the most up-to-date dairy and butter-making practices, as well as poultry rearing and general domestic work.⁶⁸⁹ More specifically, their recommendation was that schoolmistresses should expand their field of expertise to include the agricultural along with the literary, in order to fulfill this duty. The 1884 Commission likely would have been surprised at the way in which, almost exactly ten years later, the IAOS upended the strict gendering of the dairy and butter-making industries, and created an expansive and powerful series of co-operatives run predominately by men out of scattered, single-family, women-led production.

The new societies formed to help remedy this situation were known as ‘Home Industries Societies.’ These collectives of craftspeople – mostly, though not exclusively, women – operated on a co-operative model where members purchased a 5s share (only one fourth of which they were required to pay at the time of joining), and then participated in the profits. Each co-operative was managed by a committee, consisting primarily of women.⁶⁹⁰ Two such co-operatives had already begun operations in the previous year: the Ballingagleragh Co-operative Home Industries Society, Ltd., at Dowra, Carrick-on-Shannon, in Co. Leitrim (July 1896) and the Irish Co-operative Embroidery and Needlework Society, Ltd., at the Loreto Convent in Dalkey, Co. Dublin (October 1896).⁶⁹¹ In 1897, the same year that the new class of society was announced, three more workshops joined the ranks: Crossmaglen Home Industries in Armagh, Carrickmacross Home Industries in

⁶⁸⁸ Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 10.

⁶⁸⁹ Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, Second Report: Volume III, 1884, C. 3981-II, at cxiv. Proquest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁶⁹⁰ Irish Agricultural Organization Society, Ltd. Annual Report, 1898, With Appendices (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1898), 15.

⁶⁹¹ Irish Agricultural Organization Society, Ltd. Annual Report, 1897, With Appendices (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1897), 27.

Monaghan, and the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society in Co. Cork.⁶⁹² In 1900, seventeen Societies enrolled, including the Clones Home Industries Society, in Monaghan, which was engaged in making Clones crochet lace (fig. 4.3).⁶⁹³

It is possible that Emily Anderson advised on the formation of the Home Industries Societies. In a diary entry of August 1896, Horace Plunkett wrote about a meeting with R.A. Anderson and his “clever sister” at Blackrock in County Dublin.⁶⁹⁴ The Andersons’ sister Betsy had died a few years earlier, and so this comment must refer to Emily. He noted that they “talked about the artistic side of the Irish as regards industrial possibilities”; she was “shy,” but Plunkett concluded that she “will I think give us some useful information later.”⁶⁹⁵ If Plunkett recognized Emily Anderson’s expertise in a discussion of art industries, her brother must surely have done so as well, and it is likely that through conversations with R.A., her experience and perspective would have influenced the IAOS’s conception of the Home Industries Societies. If she did give Plunkett himself ‘useful’ information at a later date, he did not record it in his diary. Another possibility is that they spoke a few years later; in January 1900, he mentions a visit to the Cork School of Art, with Mr. Beamish and Miss Anderson as his guides.⁶⁹⁶ Emily Anderson also wrote at least one article on craft for *The Irish Homestead*. An article on Belleek Pottery, published in February 1898 and bearing her name, makes confident assessments of Belleek’s designs and suggests strategies for marketing as well as the retention of skilled labour.⁶⁹⁷ Once employed by the DATI, Anderson visited and inspected Home Industries Societies regularly; I will discuss her visit to the Castlebellingham Home Industries Society, among others, in Chapter 5 (fig. 4.4).

Lady Betty Balfour, writing about the co-operatives for *The Irish Homestead* in February 1897, described a visit she had taken to an IAOS creamery in the west of Ireland, during which one of her fellow visitors had raised the issue of co-operation’s effect on rural women: “they had robbed the farmers’ daughters of their home employment...the actual butter-making which was formerly carried on in each individual farmhouse being now transferred to the creamery, the girls must sit at home with idle hands.”⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹² Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for eighteen months ending 30th June, 1904 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker (Middle Abbey Street), 1904), 58-59.

⁶⁹³ “The Clones District Conference Committee,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 11 No. 1 (November 18, 1905): 849-850.

⁶⁹⁴ Diary of Horace Plunkett, 28 August 1896.

⁶⁹⁵ Diary of Horace Plunkett, 28 August 1896.

⁶⁹⁶ Diary of Horace Plunkett, 3 January 1900.

⁶⁹⁷ Emily Anderson, “Belleek Pottery,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 4 No. 1 Iss. 153 (February 5, 1898): 120-121.

⁶⁹⁸ Lady Betty Balfour, “The Dalkey Co-operative Embroidery Society,” *Some Irish Industries: Irish Homestead Special (January 1897)*, 39, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=OpjXAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA38&hl=en>.

Her understanding of the logical response to this concern is indicative of the optimism – but also naiveté – with which the first Home Industries Societies were founded:

The reply seemed obvious. If the fathers had found the methods of co-operation unfailingly successful in the industries of butter-making, bacon-curing, the cultivation of flax, &c., why should not the daughters pronounce for themselves this ‘open sesame,’ and co-operate on similar principles for such industries as dressmaking, embroidery, needlework, millinery, artificial flower-making, basket work, lace work, &c.⁶⁹⁹

The IAOS Annual Report for 1897 referenced Lady Balfour’s article, pointing out that according to the logic of her argument, it would be “most desirable” to ensure that there is a Home Industries Society in all of the districts where Creameries and Agricultural Societies exist.⁷⁰⁰ In places where occupation had been taken from rural women, it was especially important that societies be provided. In reality, the alignment was not exact, with Creameries and Agricultural Societies dotting the map heavily in every province but Leinster, and the Home Industries Societies concentrated in a belt across the southern border of Ulster into the north of Connacht, and in Dublin and East Leinster (see fig. 4.3).

Patrick Doyle and Joanna Bourke both emphasize the role that the IAOS played in reducing employment for rural women. This occurred in dairying and poultry-raising, both traditionally female domains. Like Lady Balfour, the IAOS leadership was aware of the co-operative movement’s problematic relationship with women’s labour. R.A. Anderson noted in 1911 that in promoting poultry societies, the IAOS had been “stupid enough to ignore the women and to attempt to secure an egg supply to a society composed of ‘mere men’.”⁷⁰¹ Patrick Doyle describes Fr. Terence Connolly of Manorhamilton’s testimony given at a 1908 Royal Inquiry, “in which he apologised for his role in starting co-operative creameries, on account of the fact he and others who supported the creamery failed to provide an alternative source of employment [for girls].”⁷⁰² Connolly recounts that the organizers had simply assumed the displaced dairymaids would “be turned over at once to a cottage industry,” but that “the issue [had] not been sufficiently followed up.”⁷⁰³ However, Manorhamilton did have a Co-operative Home Industries Society, founded in 1900, which in 1908 had a

⁶⁹⁹ Balfour, “Dalkey Co-operative,” 39.

⁷⁰⁰ IAOS Annual Report 1897, 12.

⁷⁰¹ Speech delivered at the DATI Poultry Conference, 1911, quoted in Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 50.

⁷⁰² Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 50.

⁷⁰³ Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 50.

membership of sixty-eight.⁷⁰⁴ Did Fr. Connolly's neglect to mention the co-operative indicate that its impact on the community was so slight it did not even warrant discussion? In *Civilising rural Ireland*, Doyle makes no mention of the Co-operative Home Industries Societies, even in a section detailing the role of women in co-operation and the founding of the United Irishwomen.⁷⁰⁵ This is surprising, as at their peak, the Home Industries Societies provided some type of employment for over 4000 people, mostly women, in rural Ireland.⁷⁰⁶ Diarmid Ferriter's history of the Irish Countrywomen's Association makes brief reference to home industries, referencing Joanna Bourke's work on the topic and stating that "...the instability prevalent in much of Irish rural life mitigated against long-term success."⁷⁰⁷

Joanna Bourke's *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914* examines late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Irish home industries predominately through an economic lens, with brief references to the Home Industries Societies, which were "comparatively neglected" by the IAOS.⁷⁰⁸ Bourke conducts an analysis of finances in a variety of home industries, including lacemaking, as organized by the IAOS, CDB, and DATI.⁷⁰⁹ As a whole, the IAOS Home Industries Societies experienced fluctuating fortunes: "sales of the co-operative home industries societies increased from 1900 to 1903, declined suddenly in 1904, then slowly increased again until 1906."⁷¹⁰ After 1906, they suffered again, and in 1909, the sales were less than they had been a decade earlier.⁷¹¹ Bourke does not include an analysis of wages in the co-operatives. The financial records of the Home Industries Societies as included in the IAOS Annual Reports are full of gaps, and it is difficult to get a sense of differences between the Societies' earnings and their fluctuations from year to year. The records do not specify how much of each Society's net profit was returned to the workers as wages. However, the IAOS had established early on that the Home Industries Societies were not meant to provide a "living wage" for their workers, but instead "to find them pleasant and profitable employment in their own homes, and to supplement such scanty and

⁷⁰⁴ IAOS Report for eighteen months ending 30th June, 1904; *Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for the year ending 30th June, 1910* (Athlone: Athlone Printing Works Co., Limited, 1911).

⁷⁰⁵ Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 49-53.

⁷⁰⁶ IAOS Report for eighteen months ending 30th June, 1904, 98.

⁷⁰⁷ Diarmid Ferriter, *Mothers, Maidens and Myths: a History of the Irish Countrywomen's Association* (Foras Aiseanna Saothair Training and Employment Authority, 1995), 9.

⁷⁰⁸ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 114.

⁷⁰⁹ Ciara Breathnach is critical of Joanna Bourke's analysis of the CDB Home Industries finances, and demonstrates how in many cases they earned considerably more than Bourke claims. See: Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 72.

⁷¹⁰ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 120.

⁷¹¹ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 120.

precarious earnings or income as the population in poor districts have hitherto been forced to subsist upon.”⁷¹²

Further research in the records of individual Home Industries Societies – if they still remain extant, which many surely do not – might provide more quantitative data to determine what effect such employment had on the lives and communities of their members. However, the IAOS’s assertion that the Societies were not meant to provide a living wage begs the question of what other purposes they were meant to fulfill. Though Bourke’s analysis of home industries paints the schemes and *workers* as failures – “Irish women failed home industries” – she acknowledges that economic factors were not the only ones at play, that craftswomen may have wanted to express creativity, feel a sense of accomplishment, and an enjoyment of textile work as leisure.⁷¹³ Bourke also links the interest in establishing and maintaining home industries on the part of rural and industrial reformers to a desire to prevent emigration, keep Irish women on the land and shape their role in the home and family. Ultimately, home industries aligned with the conception that “women’s economic role in the rebuilding of Ireland was located within the household.”⁷¹⁴ In the rhetoric of design reformers such as Alan Cole and Mary Power Lalor, the rural Irish household and the women who worked within it became a space in which to work out questions of political allegiance and morality. Though the IAOS had different goals, it too participated in a discourse that sought to create an idealized rural womanhood located within the home. This would become even more clear in the establishment of the United Irishwomen in 1911, which I will discuss in more detail at the end of this chapter. However, I will also suggest that the Home Industries Societies functioned as networked communities of craft, with the potential to promote artistic development and circulate new ideas about the nature of work and identity.

4.2.1 The IAOS and the Irish Industries Association

In the late 1890s the IAOS’s interest in home industries was not limited to the few societies that had been founded in the years following 1896. Horace Plunkett was a member of the Irish Industries Association, and saw a potential for the IIA and IAOS to collaborate in supporting the Home Industries Societies. He knew that the IAOS as a governing body did not have the knowledge of fashion and high-society connections needed to improve production and sales, nor the finances to

⁷¹² IAOS Report, 1898, 15.

⁷¹³ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 138, 129.

⁷¹⁴ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 117.

hire a full-time home industries expert. Plunkett was also critical of the IIA's philanthropic model, which he knew would not be sustainable in the long run, as patrons moved, died, or simply lost interest. As of 1898, the Irish Lace Depôt was already working in tandem with the IAOS, purchasing product from the Societies, contributing to the cost of training, and paying commissions for sales to the Society committees.⁷¹⁵

On the 19th of March, 1898, Plunkett addressed the London Council of the IIA on how co-operation might benefit Irish Industries. He was not hopeful that his words were well received; in a diary entry of that day he describes the crowd of "ladies" as "large & horribly fashionable," and concludes that "[he] was not strong enough to do good."⁷¹⁶ There is irony in Plunkett's reportage of the IIA; he disdains the 'horribly fashionable' – whether he means the women's social standing or their ostentatious clothing – but it is precisely this class of society and their preferred type of adornment that fueled home industries, needlework in particular. Despite his misgivings, it seems that his ideas did strike a chord with the IIA members present at the meeting, who requested that he write a memorandum outlining his ideas for consideration by the Council. He obliged.

Plunkett's 'Memorandum on the Future Work of the Irish Industries Association,' which was presented to the London Council in 1898 and also published in that year's IAOS Annual Report, presents a picture of what the co-operative Home Industries Societies looked like at the end of the nineteenth century, and outlines a vision for how the IAOS and IIA could work together to improve them. The Memorandum begins by explaining the basic tenets of the co-operative movement. Plunkett highlights the success of the IAOS's work in agriculture, inferring that the same methods are sure to benefit 'feminine industries.' Co-operation – the "voluntary association of workers for industrial purposes" – benefits workers, and here Plunkett specifies "the poorer of our fellow countrymen," in three primary ways.⁷¹⁷ It gathers them together to benefit from instruction, to more easily and cost effectively procure materials, to secure good prices for their products, and to gain "permanence and security."⁷¹⁸

Plunkett acknowledges that the IIA had done a great deal to help market Irish products, but that it had not impacted the actual production of these goods. He establishes a link between quality products and "the methods and habits of the workers themselves," as Alan Cole had done in his

⁷¹⁵ IAOS Report, 1898, 22.

⁷¹⁶ Diary of Horace Plunkett, 19 March 1898.

⁷¹⁷ IAOS Report, 1898, 86.

⁷¹⁸ IAOS Report, 1898, 86.

reports focused on design.⁷¹⁹ Cole framed his discussion of the relationship between good lace workers and good lace in terms of morality – lazy or ‘wanton’ women made bad lace – but Plunkett frames it in the language of self-help and self-sufficiency:

Depend upon it, the problem with which we have to deal is mainly a human problem. A spirit of self-reliance, industrial habits, and trading instincts are the main factors in industrial and commercial progress. In its own sphere, and in its own country, the Irish Industries Association can engender all these qualities.⁷²⁰

Increased sense of ownership and understanding of the industry would improve the quality of work and general morale, both within each society and outside of it. In Chapters 2 and 3, I showed how lace design reformers used drawing classes to broaden lace makers’ understanding of artistic principles, which would then impact their more specialized work. Here, Plunkett is suggesting the same sort of contextualization of the worker’s tasks, but within the sphere of industry.

After outlining the history of co-operation and its benefits home industries, Plunkett presents a series of suggestions for how the IIA might integrate co-operative principles. He begins this section with a statement that carries a hint of revolution: “A new relationship would have to be established between the persons and classes who are to co-operate, and between the workers and their work.”⁷²¹ In order for workers to be empowered to take a more active role in home industries, patrons will by necessity be required to give up some of their control of business operations. It is important to note that this suggestion did not constitute a call to revolutionize the relationship between classes. Patrick Doyle points out that Plunkett’s work at the IAOS cannot be seen as true ‘grassroots’ organizing, that he saw the landlord class as having an important role in rural reform, with a responsibility to use the “special advantages” of their class – “education and wealth” – to benefit rural society.⁷²² That the IAOS chose to collaborate with the IIA emphasizes this fact. However, as I will suggest in my discussion of the Youghal, Dun Emer, and Naas Societies, the co-operative model does seem to have shaped the work ethos of the Home Industries Societies, perhaps to an extent beyond that which Plunkett would have anticipated.

Plunkett does allow that some industries are “entirely dependent for [their] designs, material, and sometimes even for [their] market, upon the special talent or position of a philanthropic promoter”; these would not benefit from co-operation and should be allowed to continue as they

⁷¹⁹ IAOS Report, 1898, 87.

⁷²⁰ IAOS Report, 1898, 88.

⁷²¹ IAOS Report, 1898, 87.

⁷²² Doyle, *Civilising rural Ireland*, 44.

are.⁷²³ However, as the IIA expands and forms new industries, they should use co-operative principles wherever possible. An article in *The Irish Homestead* later summarized Plunkett's proposal, concluding that "instead of working through the instrumentality of philanthropic individuals engaged in the promotion of industries as it does now, [the IIA] would endeavour to maintain its objects as far as possible by means of associations of workers."⁷²⁴

On April 7, 1898, the IIA passed a series of resolutions, some of which were direct responses to Plunkett's suggestions. The IIA committed to establishing a depot at 21 Lincoln Place in Dublin, for "good produced by workers connected with the I.I.A.," and wholesale agency, "on strict business lines," to sell the goods.⁷²⁵ The IIA was prompt in carrying out the resolution and remained at that location well into the twentieth century; the 1907 Irish International Exhibition Catalogue lists the 'Royal Irish Industries Association' at the same address.⁷²⁶

I am particularly interested in the fourth and fifth resolutions passed on that day, in which the IIA commits to fulfilling the roles of teacher and tastemaker for the Home Industries Societies. The fourth resolution states: "That grants be made from the funds of the I.I.A. for technical teaching and other initial expenses, to local committees or associations which, upon inquiry, shall be found able and willing to establish or develop an industry that will contribute supplies of suitable goods to the depot of the I.I.A."⁷²⁷ If the IIA was ready to send technical instructors to new home industries, who were they? Perhaps they were students trained in the Schools of Art and their branch classes. It is also possible that the IIA never ended up needing to provide technical instruction. By 1900, the DATI was already offering technical instruction for home industries.⁷²⁸

The fifth resolution states "That the I.I.A. shall provide for the workers supplying its depot patterns of the goods most in demand, and, as far as possible, keep them informed of the quality of goods for which there is ready sale, and that it shall, by the orders issued from its depot, direct the efforts of the workers to the production of those articles which shall be found suitable to the market."⁷²⁹ This is one resolution which the IIA did carry out, and which it was uniquely suited to, given the fact that its members were mostly made up of the 'horribly fashionable' women who had

⁷²³ IAOS Report, 1898, 87.

⁷²⁴ "The Development of Home Industries," *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 4 Iss. 1 (May 28, 1898): 464.

⁷²⁵ IAOS Report, 1898, 88.

⁷²⁶ *Irish International Exhibition, 1907. The Official Catalogue* (Dublin: Healy's Limited, 1907), 48, <http://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl%3A138208>.

⁷²⁷ IAOS Annual Report, 1898, 88.

⁷²⁸ Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, from 31st March, 1899 to 31st Decr., 1900 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker (Middle Abbey Street), 1901), 21.

⁷²⁹ IAOS Annual Report, 1898, 88-89.

the resources to participate in the fashion market as consumers. In the next section, I will discuss the collection of designs that the IIA arranged to have published in the *Irish Homestead*. Though James Brenan, a key player in the design reforms and educational institutions detailed in Chapters 2 and 3, wrote the commentary on the designs, I think it very likely that members of the IIA chose which ones to publish, based on their intimate knowledge of current fashions.

The reports following 1898 show that the IIA had intermittent success in maximizing the Home Industries Societies' potential. 1899 was a year of bad sales, and the Societies reported difficulty finding the appropriate technical training for workers, or a market for their work. However, there were some positive developments. The Killian Home Industries Society, which manufactured cloth, received positive feedback from a customer who had been unable to find cloth of the same type and quality anywhere else. The Irish Co-operative Needlework Depôt was established as “a Society [...] with the express object of instructing [the Home Industries Societies] in needlework, crochet, lace-making, etc., and of subsequently disposing of their goods on their behalf.”⁷³⁰ The Depôt made “a substantial net profit” during its first nine months in operation at 33 Dawson Street, Dublin.⁷³¹

1899 also saw the passing of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act, which marked the founding of the DATI, for which Emily Anderson would spend the majority of her career working as a lace and home industries inspector. In the next chapter, I will discuss the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act in more detail and explore how the DATI and IAOS interacted, supported one another's work, and sometimes conflicted. At this point, however, it is enough to say that the IAOS saw that DATI as a government body that would both aid and benefit from the work that they were doing. The 1899 IAOS annual report refers to the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act as “the great legislative event of the year” which will put Irish agriculture “on a par with the agricultural industry of its foreign competitors,” and it encouraged the societies to think about how they could best make use of the new Department's resources.⁷³²

The following years saw tremendous growth in both the number and the success of the societies. Seventeen new societies were formed in 1900, seven in 1901, twelve in 1902, and five in 1903, at which point the total membership for all societies was 4101.⁷³³ In just five years,

⁷³⁰ Irish Agricultural Organization Society, Ltd. Annual Report, 1899, With Appendices (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1899), 26.

⁷³¹ IAOS Annual Report, 1899, 26.

⁷³² IAOS Annual Report, 1899, 33.

⁷³³ IAOS Report for eighteen months ending 30th June, 1904, 98-101.

membership had more than quadrupled.⁷³⁴ The IAOS reported that they were achieving the goal of keeping women in rural areas and preventing them from emigrating, despite the fact that wages were not high enough to “altogether support” workers.⁷³⁵ In one case, a young woman was able to purchase a cow for her father, “a small farmer in very poor circumstances,” with the £9 that she earned from lacemaking.⁷³⁶ A Miss Reynolds was appointed inspector and organiser for home industries, perhaps an early indicator that the IIA could not fulfill the task appointed to it (fig. 4.5).⁷³⁷ By 1903, the IAOS reported that the societies were still having issues finding training for workers and a market for their products, and neither the DATI or IIA was of much help – “the Irish Industries Association, while valuable, is too spasmodic in its character to really solve the problem.”⁷³⁸

Even when reporting the societies’ successes, the IAOS Annual Reports during this period are tempered with caution, as if in anticipation of the eventual bursting of the home industries ‘bubble.’ They note that there is a danger of the market for lace and crochet work becoming saturated, and stress the importance of forming societies that produce other crafts. They also make many references to the uncertainty of a market based on fashion, which can change in the blink of an eye, leaving craftswomen without any buyers for their products or encouraging poor quality work during periods of high demand. A 1901 report notes that a recent period of increased demand for Irish lace, buyers had paid full price for “hasty and ill-finished work,” “defective in design and execution,” in an attempt to secure as much product as possible.⁷³⁹ This had encouraged poor workmanship – very understandably, given the fact that the women making the lace were doing so in order to feed and clothe their families. Many would have felt obliged to be less meticulous in order to make money more quickly and efficiently. The same issue would occupy Emily Anderson in her reports for the DATI, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Design reformers were happy to discuss the pride in workmanship and almost spiritual nature of artistic expression in craft – as exemplified in John Ruskin’s writings – but when it came down to harsh reality of maximizing earnings in order to guarantee the welfare of her family, a lacemaker did not always have the luxury

⁷³⁴ The Home Industries Societies numbered 19 and had a membership of approximately 963 in 1899 (IAOS Report, from 31st March, 1899 to 31st Decr., 1900, 36.

⁷³⁵ IAOS Report, from 31st March, 1899 to 31st Decr., 1900, 17.

⁷³⁶ Seventh Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited. For year ending 31st December 1901 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1902), 30.

⁷³⁷ 7th IAOS Report, for year ending 31st December 1901, 29.

⁷³⁸ IAOS Report for eighteen months ending 30th June, 1904, 21.

⁷³⁹ 7th IAOS Report, for year ending 31st December 1901, 30, 32.

of indulging in such a conception of her work. Consequently, the fallout of the ‘boom’ gave Irish lace a bad name in foreign markets.

After 1904, the market for crochet and Carrickmacross lace picked up once again.⁷⁴⁰ But the number of societies and society members decreased steadily from that year onward. By 1909, the IAOS was recommending that no further Home Industries Societies be founded, though they emphasized that the societies had “served their purpose,” in preventing emigration and improving the habits and home lives of the workers.⁷⁴¹ In 1911, the IAOS suggested handing over the Home Industries Societies to the newly formed United Irishwomen, the home industries organizer, Miss Reynolds, having already transferred to their employ.⁷⁴² However, they were occupied with other priorities, and by 1913, the IAOS Committee recommended that home industries “should be excluded from the scope of the Society’s work,” with the caveat that “it was hoped that the United Irishwomen might have seen their way to take these societies over and infuse some life into them, but they seem to have regarded the task as hopeless.”⁷⁴³ In 1913, the total membership of the twelve remaining Societies was 1152.⁷⁴⁴ The 1914-1915 Annual Report did not provide a report on home industries, and the related statistics in the IAOS financial reports become increasingly scarce until they disappear altogether in 1921.

This picture of disappearance is misleading in two particulars, however, which I will explore later in this chapter. First of all, disassociation from the IAOS did not necessarily mean that a given industry ceased operations. Some industries passed into the care of convents or “local committees”; in other words, the IAOS aided in the establishment of an industry which then became a thoroughly local affair, with no need of IAOS oversight or guidance.⁷⁴⁵ This was the case with the Naas Home Industries Society, which became the Kildare Carpet Company, Ltd. Secondly, the IAOS’s attempt to foist home industries on the United Irishwomen suggests that their economic viability was increasingly side-lined by their association with a conception of rural womanhood and even Irish national identity. The United Irishwomen were not co-operative industry organizers, but thought

⁷⁴⁰ Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for the year ending 30th June, 1905 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker (Middle Abbey Street), 1905), 10.

⁷⁴¹ The IAOS does not provide any statistics in this report to back up the statement (IAOS Report for the year ending 30th June, 1910, 16).

⁷⁴² Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for the year ending 30th June, 1911 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker (Middle Abbey Street), 1912), 18.

⁷⁴³ Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for the year ending 30th June, 1914 (Dublin: The Sackville Press, Findlater Place, 1915), 23.

⁷⁴⁴ IAOS Report for the year ending 30th June, 1914, 126-129.

⁷⁴⁵ IAOS Report for the year ending 30th June, 1910, 16.

leaders, practicing a sort of conservative activism based in domesticity and national identity.⁷⁴⁶ As I demonstrated in the previous chapters, needlework – and lacemaking in particular – had long been a deeply symbolic occupation for women in the Irish context. However, I think that this is the moment when lace – and home industries more broadly – begin the transition from making money to making meaning. In the following sections, I will transition from an examination of the working methods, organization, and financial success or failure of the IAOS Co-operative Home Industries Societies, to a consideration of how the Societies interacted with the overarching narrative threads of this thesis. How did they impact or benefit from the lace design reforms that I detailed in the preceding chapters? And how might they have shaped that elusive experience that I have been attempting to access throughout this project, through historical research and my own making – that of being a craftswoman in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century?

4.3 *The Irish Homestead Lace Designs Series, 1900-1902*⁷⁴⁷

In 1900, the IAOS announced that: “The Irish Industries Association, as Trustees of the Branchardière Trust, have arranged to furnish the *Homestead* with lace designs for publication, and have contributed £10 to the cost of blocks [to print the images]. These designs are very useful to the Home Industries Societies.”⁷⁴⁸ In providing the designs, the IIA was fulfilling one of the resolutions they had made in 1898, to provide patterns for workers that would guide production to align with contemporary fashions and standards of quality.⁷⁴⁹ From June 9th, 1900, until November 22nd, 1902, the *Irish Homestead* published images of lace designs accompanied by a descriptive text pointing out how the design might be improved or adapted, which passages might be difficult for the workers, and for what purpose the finished product might be suitable. Despite the fact that they are quite small, a quarter of a page in size at most, the images stand out in the sparsely illustrated publication. Lace’s unique suitability for reproduction in print means that the details of each specimen stand out on the page, white on a black background. Like the images of lace published during the Mansion House Exhibition, these designs lend themselves to being cut out and collected. Their regular

⁷⁴⁶ See: “The United Irishwomen,” in D.A.J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation: Gender, Culture, and Irish Identity, 1890-1914* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012): 51-86.

⁷⁴⁷ A version of this section was published as “The Irish Homestead Lace Designs Series: 1900-1902,” Blog post for ‘Lace in Context,’ edited by David Hopkin and Nicolette Macovicky (Oxford University), March 18, 2020, <https://laceincontext.com/category/lacemaking-in-ireland/>.

⁷⁴⁸ 7th IAOS Report, for year ending 31st December 1901, 24.

⁷⁴⁹ IAOS Annual Report, 1898, 88-89.

occurrence in *The Irish Homestead* only would have increased the sense that they were to be collected and compiled. The IAOS's official weekly publication was by 1900 the agricultural periodical with the largest circulation in Ireland.⁷⁵⁰ In *The Irish Homestead's* early days, articles catering to women had focused on fashion and beauty, but letters from readers requested more practical information, and by the late 1890s much of this content related to home industries and household matters.⁷⁵¹ Publishing lace designs here meant that they were remarkably accessible – a flounce designed by the top student at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin and an expert's analysis of its design could be printed beside recipes for curried rabbit and methods for preserving eggs.⁷⁵²

The Irish Homestead's lace designs embody the complexity of discussions surrounding education, design and taste in this turn-of-the-century Irish context. Selected for publication by members of the IIA, they are a product of aristocratic philanthropy and taste-making, what Janice Helland has called a “complicated form of colonialism” as it played out in the Irish sphere.⁷⁵³ Chosen for their saleability, they are embedded in the context of women's fashion, which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, was viewed with some suspicion by representatives of South Kensington. As if to counter-balance this association with fashion's ‘evanescence’ and ‘flights of fancy,’ the commentary by James Brenan uses the vocabulary of art criticism to underscore each design's status as a work of art, in a way reminiscent of commentary on the Papal Jubilee Lace discussed in the last chapter. Unlike Alan Cole, Brenan devotes much of his commentary to the practicality of the designs – how easy or efficient they would be for workers to make. Both he and the members of the IIA are concerned with the sustainability of the industry, and thus the welfare of makers. Nevertheless, Brenan's commentary reveals a bias against the lacemakers who might use the patterns, expressing doubt of their ability to create good work without ample guidance.

And yet many – perhaps all – of the designers that sketched out the curling floral forms in chalk or pencil and then carefully finalized their designs with India ink to create the innately photogenic lace designs were Irish women. Some would have been educated at the convent branch classes, which enabled young working-class women with diligence and exceptional artistic skill to become lace designers. Such was the case for Cecilia Keyes, discussed in Chapter 2. They were meant to be used in contexts which, as I will discuss later in this chapter, promoted self-help and co-operation, and

⁷⁵⁰ IAOS Report, 31st March, 1899 to 31st Decr., 1900, 24.

⁷⁵¹ MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation*, 35.

⁷⁵² The lace designs often shared a page with the *Irish Homestead's* ‘Household Hints’ column, which provided recipes and tips for housekeeping and husbandry.

⁷⁵³ Helland, “Caprices,” 200.

had the potential to propagate new ideas about women's work and Irish nationhood. And finally, published widely in *The Irish Homestead*, they were consumed in close proximity to ideas about rural co-operation and the Irish literary and cultural revival, available to cut out, keep, copy or alter.

The first design appeared in *The Irish Homestead* on June 9th, 1900. The large, crisp image was accompanied by a descriptive text and a note that “working drawings, full size, can be obtained from the Secretary, Irish Industries Association, 21 Lincoln Place, Dublin, at a cost of three shillings each.”⁷⁵⁴ Though some of the designs were more expensive, most were 3 or 4 shillings – quite affordable for a Society to purchase, given fact that they guided weeks or even months of work, and in some cases could have been reused.⁷⁵⁵ Presumably, the use of these designs also improved quality of work, which would have boosted sales. It is also possible that some lacemakers – whether individual or members of a Home Industries Society – cheated the system by simply copying directly from the pages of the magazine. Though it would have been difficult to copy the forms and motifs exactly while also enlarging them to the proper size, it would not have been impossible, especially with the sort of education in geometrical drawing offered by the branch classes of the Cork School of Art, discussed in Chapter 2.

Design I was a ‘Flounce in Carrickmacross Guipure,’ ten inches deep, and ornamented with ribbons, floral and foliate motifs (fig. 4.6). Though no designer is specified, it bears a resemblance to the work of Alice Jacob, whose prize-winning designs for Carrickmacross lace are similarly dense and vertically oriented, though more sophisticated in their use of varied floral forms, rather than ribbons and schematized acanthus leaves, to unite the composition (fig. 4.7). In 1898, she had received a gold medal in the National Art Competition for designs in Carrickmacross lace, the only gold medal to be awarded for lace in the competition. In the same year, she was appointed teacher of Ornament and Design at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, upon the recommendation of James Brenan and G.T. Plunkett.⁷⁵⁶ Her class produced designs for the CDB, the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework, and Vere O’Brien, as well as crochet designs for a Monsieur Marescot, of Paris, and students from the Dublin school took home nineteen prizes for lace at the 1898 RDS Art Industries

⁷⁵⁴ *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 1 (June 9, 1900): 373.

⁷⁵⁵ Using patterns multiple times is still a common practice. I received some Carrickmacross lace patterns drawn on tissue paper and pricked with pin holes from one of the lacemakers at the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland. They had been used at least once already, and I suspect that many contemporary lace makers share patterns through reusing the original paper or tracing the design.

⁷⁵⁶ Forty-sixth report of the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1899, C. 9191, at 268. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

Exhibition.⁷⁵⁷ The flounce is likely the work of one of Jacob's students. The accompanying text, signed J.B., was almost certainly written by James Brenan, onetime Headmaster at the Cork School of Art, Headmaster at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, and expert on lace design.⁷⁵⁸ Brenan's comments on this pattern, and on the forty-five other designs published between June 1900 and November 1902, are a window into the mind of a turn of the century Irish lace designer, and, to a certain extent, maker. He describes the strengths and weaknesses of the patterns, and points out passages that might be difficult for the lacemaker to complete. He discusses the results of lace competitions, and which designs might fetch a higher price at market.

I am particularly interested in how Brenan describes what 'good lace' looks like, a theme that I will pick up again in Chapter 5 as I discuss Emily Anderson's lace collection. Brenan's commentary describes features considered desirable in great detail. Of Design I, he writes: "the design has good construction and drawing, and possesses evenness of distribution, three important necessities in every design."⁷⁵⁹ The balance between evenness and variety is particularly important. Though it appears to be symmetrical, the pattern is in fact slightly different on each side of the vertical line around which it is constructed; "the two sides will be seen to balance carefully, without being an exact repetition of each other."⁷⁶⁰ The designer alternates full views of the flowers with three quarter views, and uses odd numbered groups of motifs; "odd numbers compose better, as a rule, than even numbers."⁷⁶¹ Another design in Carrickmacross Guipure received almost the same commentary a couple of months later (fig. 4.8). Though the designs are quite different, Brenan commends the designer of the border, who "very properly made the two sides of the pattern to balance, without insisting on absolute symmetry, or, as it were, turning over the pattern to form each side; to do this would result in a mechanical appearance, which would ill accord with the characteristics of Carrickmacross lace."⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁷ 46th Report of the Department of Science and Art, 275.

⁷⁵⁸ In January 1901, the lace patterns are interrupted by a pair of longer articles about lace entitled "Occupation for Winter Evenings.—Lace Work" and signed J. Brennan (this is a common spelling of his name, though most sources use 'Brenan'). The first lace design is replicated here, and they are written in a tone similar to that of the lace design articles. As such, I conclude that they were written by James Brenan, who was at that point Headmaster at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (from 1889-1904).

⁷⁵⁹ James Brenan, "Lace Designs. 1.—Flounce in Carrickmacross Guipure," *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 1 (June 9, 1900): 373.

⁷⁶⁰ Brenan, "Lace Designs. 1.," 373.

⁷⁶¹ Brenan, "Lace Designs. 1.," 373.

⁷⁶² James Brenan, "X.—Design for a Border in Carrickmacross Guipure," *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (August 11, 1900): 523.

‘Good design’ does not always look the same across the varieties of lace, because different materials and methods offer different opportunities and challenges. No. XIII, ‘Design for a Crochet Border,’ is commended for its simplicity and the ease with which it could be copied (fig. 4.9). Brenan points out the small circular motifs that the designer has incorporated into the sweeping curves of vine on either side of the central flower.⁷⁶³ Long, sinuous curves are difficult to render in crochet, as they are likely to be pulled in one direction or another by even the slightest change in tension, as I discovered in my own crochet lacemaking (fig. 3.12). This pattern is designed to reduce the amount of difficulty presented by curving lines, like those in Michael Hayes’ panel in silk crochet work from Chapter 3 (fig. 3.11). The circles – likely ‘buttonies,’ formed by crocheting over thread wrapped several times around a crochet hook – would disguise any wavering in the vine, making it easier and faster to faithfully replicate the design even without perfect tension.⁷⁶⁴ By August 11th, 1900, Brenan was able to report that the designs were well received by their intended audience: “numerous workers throughout the country are applying to the Secretary [of the IIA] for full-sized drawings.”⁷⁶⁵

The IAOS had specified that: “the designs also should have certain common characteristics, which are necessary if the work is to be marketed as a definitely national product, and for this, if no other reason, it is better that the designs should come from one source with the best available inventive talent to create or guide in the designs.”⁷⁶⁶ They, and other proponents of Irish lace, hoped that quality of design, but also a group of recognizable ‘Irish’ features and motifs, would come to characterize the lace; it was an exercise in branding. Some common motifs do repeat in the patterns: conventional foliage and curved forms, lots of roses. But the shamrocks, ribbons and harps that I associate with these types of lace – crochet and Carrickmacross lace in particular – as they are made now are scarce. The patterns reflect the Irish lace industry’s origins in producing copies of continental lace; the design published on July 7th is a ‘Border in Innishmacsaint [sic] Raised Needle-

⁷⁶³ James Brenan, “Lace Designs. XIII. - Design for a Crochet Border,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (September 8, 1900): 588.

⁷⁶⁴ Máire Treanor teaches her students to make buttonies with plastic straws, because the flexibility of the plastic allows the maker to push the crochet hook into the buttony and make the first few double crochets without first removing it from the cylindrical form (and risking it unwinding). I don’t have plastic straws, so in making buttonies for my bonnet motifs in summer 2020, I used thick stems of flowers or dried grass, which had the same flexibility as a straw, though sometimes they left a green or brown residue on the white thread. I wonder if makers at this time might have used thick pieces of well-dried straw, the shiny golden surface of which would have been a much cleaner option than my flower stalks and grass.

⁷⁶⁵ James Brenan, “X.–Design for a Border in Carrickmacross Guipure,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (August 11, 1900): 523.

⁷⁶⁶ Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for 1902 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker (Middle Abbey Street), 1903), 25-26.

point Lace’ which is “a reproduction of the Venetian Rose Point of the seventeenth century” (fig. 4.10).⁷⁶⁷ Sometimes, the designs featured motifs with origins even further afield. The following week, the design was a ‘Flounce in Limerick Lace (Tambour)’, and Brenan writes that “the designer has selected as the *motif* a flower resembling a French marigold. It is a favourite flower of many Persian designs” (fig. 4.11).⁷⁶⁸

Many of the designs were selected from the RDS Art Industries Exhibitions.⁷⁶⁹ Lace designers submitted to the RDS competition in droves, and these submissions would have provided a useful pool of quality designs. However, the fact that a given design had won a prize at the RDS Exhibition, or been selected by the IIA, did not guarantee that Brenan’s commentary would be entirely positive. The text accompanying No. XVIII, ‘Design for a Limerick Lace Flounce,’ is critical, and gives a sense of how Brenan, a design educator, conceived of the relationship between designer, design, and worker (fig. 4.12). The design was published on November 27th, 1900 after it won first prize at the Art Industries Exhibition in late August, 1900 at the Royal Dublin Society. It appears to be the work of Emily Anderson, who is listed in the Exhibition catalogue as winning a £1 prize for her ‘Deep Flounce or Alb.’⁷⁷⁰ Alan Cole had judged the competition for lace designs, while James Brenan had judged the lace itself, along with C. Harry Biddle.⁷⁷¹ In the *The Irish Homestead*, however, Brenan is able to make his own judgement on the design, and he is not impressed. Though he commends it for “a considerable grace of arrangement,” “sufficiently large” motifs, and “satisfactory” balance, Brenan critiques the designer for not paying enough attention to the needs of the worker.⁷⁷² Too much of the design is left up to chance: the beaded strings that loop over the vines (how exactly this is supposed to translate into lace is not specified), the scroll along the border (which could not be worked successfully the way it is). However, this concern for the maker might be more accurately described as concern for the lace – Brenan explains that “the question of expense

⁷⁶⁷ James Brenan, “Lace Designs. V.–Border in Innishmacsaint Raised Needle-point Lace,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (July 7, 1900): 443.

⁷⁶⁸ James Brenan, “Lace Designs. VI.–Flounce in Limerick Lace (Tambour),” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (July 14, 1900): 462.

⁷⁶⁹ Brenan himself was for several years involved in judging lace at the RDS Art Industries Exhibition. It is difficult to tell from the RDS catalogues where these designers were trained, or if they were associated with a particular institution or workshop. Though some designers are listed accompanied by the name of a school or convent, they are most often accompanied by a – presumably home – address. Many of the names in the catalogue are familiar to me from other sources, but a useful path for further investigation may be to trace the names of all successful entrants.

⁷⁷⁰ *Royal Dublin Society, Catalogue of the Art Industries Exhibition, held at Balls Bridge, Dublin, August 28, 29, 30, and 31, 1900* (Dublin: Brown and Nolan, 1900), 3.

⁷⁷¹ *Royal Dublin Society, Catalogue of the Art Industries Exhibition, 1900*, 1, 3.

⁷⁷² James Brenan, “Lace Designs. No. XVIII. –Design for a Limerick Lace Flounce,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (October 27, 1900): 700.

alone precludes the idea of leaving anything in the rendering of the design to the caprice of the worker.”⁷⁷³ He does not trust that the lacemaker is capable of making good stylistic decisions on her own. At the end of the article, he notes that working drawings of the design may be purchased, but that they have “the modifications referred to inserted.”⁷⁷⁴

In June 1901, *Irish Homestead* published a design for a collar in crochet (fig. 4.13). Of all the crochet designs in the series, this is the only one that looks anything like what we would now refer to as ‘Irish Crochet.’⁷⁷⁵ Lace designers and those concerned with ‘elevating’ the crochet industry in particular had been trying to change the character of Irish crochet for years. Successful Irish submissions to the South Kensington competition in the mid-1890s exhibited continuous patterning connected by corded vines and borders, and variations in size of motif. Crochet lace designs by Lizzie Perry, of Cork, for example, lead the eye around the piece by employing larger, or concentrated gatherings of motifs at regular intervals (fig. 4.14). However, despite this focus in the design sphere, it seems that both crochet workers and customers preferred the Irish Crochet that Alan Cole had critiqued during his tours of Ireland in the 1880s and 90s.

The collar design published in *Irish Homestead* was a reworking of a pre-existing design. A couple of weeks later, what must surely have been the same collar was mentioned at an Irish Industries Association meeting, where the committee circulated a photograph of the original collar and “the design produced from the rearrangements of the units of the crochet collar.”⁷⁷⁶ This report also notes that the collar was sent to the IIA by a worker, but does not mention why or from where exactly it was sent. However, it is possible that the worker sent it in response to the Branchardière Trust’s competition for lace made up from new designs, the adjudication of which had concluded two months earlier, in April.⁷⁷⁷ If the three-looped edging, which is the same edging Máire Treanor teaches to her beginner Clones lace students – the same edging that I used on my Clones lace bonnets, discussed in Chapter 6 – and the Clones knots adorning the bars in the collar’s ground, have been carried over from the original specimen, I believe it to have been from the Clones area, perhaps from the Clones Home Industries Society (fig. 4.15).

⁷⁷³ Brenan, “Lace Designs. No. XVIII,” 700.

⁷⁷⁴ Brenan, “Lace Designs. No. XVIII,” 700.

⁷⁷⁵ I sent some of the other photographs of crochet designs from the *Irish Homestead* to Máire Treanor, and she responded by asking if they were, in fact, Irish crochet at all. They were nothing like the designs she has collected and produced in Monaghan.

⁷⁷⁶ “Irish Industries,” *Evening Herald* July 6, 1901, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁷⁷⁷ “Irish Industries Association,” *Evening Herald* April 5, 1901, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

Brenan describes the original as “a collar [...] containing a quite chaotic collection of forms jumbled together.”⁷⁷⁸ Unusually for the lace designs series, he goes on to explain how such a piece of lace would have been made. This was much in the same way that Irish crochet is still made today. Motifs are completed by the workers and then attached to a paper pattern and connected by a crocheted ground. Brenan’s disdain and disapproval in describing this process could not be more clear. The motifs are “degraded copies of flowers and leaves, used heretofore in raised needlepoint lace,” and “they are planted – as one might plant potatoes – without any regard to arrangement”.⁷⁷⁹ The reference to potatoes is particularly cutting, given the fact that at this time the potato carried associations of rural poverty, and, even more insidiously, of the ‘peasant’: uneducated, backwards, and morally suspect. In Celtic Revival Ireland, the ‘peasant’ stereotype could also be an idealization, but in this case it is obvious that Brenan’s casual comparison to planting potatoes is a slight. For all of this critique, Brenan notes that this type of lace is “said to be saleable.”⁷⁸⁰ He seems utterly amazed that the market would demand this kind of work, but notes that it is indeed popular, due to its “character,” so much so that “many buyers will not look at any other description.”⁷⁸¹ Here, Brenan grapples with an issue that seems to have been particularly relevant in relation to crochet lace. How can design reformers and educators, like him, encourage better design if the market demand for a ‘poorly designed’ product is high?

The *Irish Homestead* design was composed using the same motifs featured in the original “crazy” collar.⁷⁸² However, they have been reorganized and rejoined to create “an orderly arrangement.”⁷⁸³ This task had been initiated by the Branchardière Trust committee, who resolved to have a collar made up from the newly arranged pattern, and then to have it photographed. The photograph of the new “properly arranged design” and original “work with no attention paid to systematic arrangement” would be kept at the IIA offices in Dublin, so that workers could see them side by side and learn to appreciate the difference.⁷⁸⁴ Did crochet lacemakers – many of whom lived in remote areas – really come to Dublin to examine the collars side by side? It seems unlikely, although how exactly these lace patterns were employed would be a useful subject for further

⁷⁷⁸ James Brenan, “Lace Designs, No. XXX. –Design for a Collar in Crochet,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 7 Iss. 1 (June 22, 1901): 424.

⁷⁷⁹ Brenan, “Lace Designs, No. XXX.,” 424.

⁷⁸⁰ Brenan, “Lace Designs, No. XXX.,” 424.

⁷⁸¹ Brenan, “Lace Designs, No. XXX.,” 424.

⁷⁸² Brenan, “Lace Designs, No. XXX.,” 424.

⁷⁸³ Brenan, “Lace Designs, No. XXX.,” 424.

⁷⁸⁴ “Irish Industries,” *Evening Herald* July 6, 1901, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

investigation. Might the records of individual Home Industries Societies show transactions for the purchase of patterns, or note which ones were used, and when?

Without this information, it is impossible to determine the impact of *The Irish Homestead's* lace designs series. However, the designs and their accompanying texts prompt a consideration of the accessibility of 'design education,' and speculation on how workers and interested amateurs may have engaged with lace design during this period. At the beginning of this section, I suggested that lace makers may have simply taken the designs directly from the pages of *The Irish Homestead*. I think this very likely, especially in the case of the crochet lace designs, which remind me of the detailed images provided in the pattern books that I used for my own learning and making of Clones crochet lace. Once the basic techniques have been mastered, the image, and an understanding of scale, are all that is needed to complete the design. In Chapter 6, I will suggest that as the Irish lace industry declined, lacemaking transitioned from an activity conducted to for financial gain to one conducted both for leisure and community-building purposes. Perhaps these lace designs, published ostensibly for lacemaking Home Industries Societies to improve production and maximize profit, but also perused by farmer's wives and reform-minded middle-class women, served as an early bridge between these two spheres of making.

4.4 The Home Industries Societies as communities of craft

The Home Industries Societies that did achieve success – whether through financial stability or a celebration of the quality and artistic value their work – are rarely referred to by that name or linked to the IAOS in scholarly literature. As such, it is easy to overlook their link to the co-operative movement and the implications this might have for their business structure, aesthetic, and ethos in production. In this section, I will take a brief look at three Home Industries Societies: the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society, the Dun Emer Guild, and the Naas Home Industries Society, later known as Kildare Carpet Company Ltd. Two of these industries – Dun Emer and Naas – focused on weaving and carpets. I have chosen them for reasons of access – the Dun Emer Guild is relatively well studied, and the Naas Home Industries Society was chronicled in county newspapers. I do not wish to equate the daily operations of a lacemaking workshop and a carpet factory, or suggest that lacemakers at the Youghal Presentation Convent would have had the same sentiments about co-operative principles as Dun Emer's middle-class and cosmopolitan Evelyn Gleeson. Instead, I employ these case studies as a way to explore the work, motivations, and ambitions of the

craftswomen themselves, and raise questions about how they may have been inflected or impacted by association with the IAOS.⁷⁸⁵

4.4.1 The Youghal Co-operative Lace Society

The lace workshop at the Presentation Convent in Youghal, which as I discussed in Chapter 1, dates to the time of the Famine, became a co-operative in association with the IAOS in 1897, adopting the name Youghal Co-operative Lace Society.⁷⁸⁶ Youghal was by this point a byword for excellence in Irish lace. Ishbel Aberdeen's "Cottage Industries in Scotland and Ireland," an article written for the 1893 Chicago Exhibition Women's Building Guide, is entirely illustrated with "the far-famed beautiful [Youghal] point lace" (figs. 4.16, 4.17, 4.18).⁷⁸⁷ The Youghal Co-operative Lace Society's story is certainly one of great skill and success in both design and production. However, it also suggests that such a Society could provide a space for the circulation of ideas about work, solidarity, and a burgeoning sense of Irish national identity.

An article published in *The Irish Homestead* chronicled the first meeting of the new co-operative, at which Fr. Thomas Finlay of the IAOS presented a speech to much applause. He credited the fact that "Youghal brains and Youghal fingers [were] famous the world over" to the Presentation Nuns, who now "proposed to make over absolutely and entirely to the workers the industry as it now stood, and make the workers the absolute owners of it all, so that henceforth it should be legally their property, and that every penny which it produced in the shape of wages or profits, or in any other way whatever, should be wholly theirs."⁷⁸⁸ This statement was greeted with applause. Fr. Finlay was a seasoned orator and IAOS Organiser, practiced in using passionate rhetoric to convince farmers to join the co-operative movement. I can only speculate on how his audience – a group of skilled rural women, teenaged girls living in their parents' homes and contemplating marriage or emigration, elderly widows making lace to defray the cost of their keeping – must have responded to this rousing call to ownership, autonomy, and pride in good work.

⁷⁸⁵ Eleanor Flegg has written a case study in how one woman's craft was impacted by association with the IAOS. Mabel O'Brien (1868-1942) began making and selling cheese, as well as writing about it for *The Irish Homestead* in the early-twentieth century, inciting a short-lived 'farmhouse cheese movement' (Eleanor Flegg, "Blessed are the Cheesemakers: A Cultural History of Cheese in Early-Twentieth Century Ireland," in *Craft and Heritage: Intersections in Critical Studies and Practice*, eds. Elaine Cheasley Paterson and Susan Surette, 115-126 (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

⁷⁸⁶ IAOS Report for eighteen months ending 30th June, 1904, 58.

⁷⁸⁷ Ishbel Aberdeen, "Cottage Industries in Scotland and Ireland," in *Art and handicraft in the Women's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, ed. Maud Howe Elliott (Paris and New York: Goupil and Co., 1893), 189, <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/elliott/art/219.html>.

⁷⁸⁸ "Another Convent Industry Becomes Co-operative," *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 3 Iss. 2 (September 11, 1897): 555.

There were more than fifty lacemakers associated with the workshop in 1897.⁷⁸⁹ The co-operative maintained a steady membership of between twenty-six and thirty-three from 1899 until 1911, with the exception of an unexplained spike in membership to seventy-six in 1901 and reduction to twenty-one in 1904. The relatively small number of members for a Society formed around a pre-existing industry with more than fifty associated workers likely indicates the membership was composed primarily of the lacemakers themselves, and that some chose to – or had the resources to – join, while others did not. Their profits fluctuated, but increased during the co-operative’s first several years.⁷⁹⁰ A 1902 article in *The Irish Homestead* listed the Youghal co-operative’s average earnings per year at approximately £800 - £900.⁷⁹¹ In 1911, the co-operative achieved a peak turnover of £1536.⁷⁹²

Janice Helland suggests that the increase in sales in 1911 is likely due to the completion of a massive commission, a court train produced for Queen Mary.⁷⁹³ It is this commission, and the circumstances surrounding its completion, that I wish to consider as a case study in how the Youghal workshop may have interacted with the currents of cultural revival and national identity circulating in the co-operative movement, and other women’s co-operatives. The train was commissioned by ‘The Ladies of Belfast,’ a centre of Unionist sentiment. It was meant to be a gift that would be “specifically and identifiably Irish, while, at the same time, proclaiming their Irish loyalty to the crown.”⁷⁹⁴ And it was certainly an expensive one, costing up to £800.⁷⁹⁵

Mother Albeus, a Presentation nun from Youghal who was present while the train was being made at the convent, described the lacemakers “proudly” adding the words *Déanta i nÉirinn* to the train.⁷⁹⁶ The phrase, which means ‘Made in Ireland,’ was a trademark of the Irish Industrial Development Association, indicating the Irish origin of a given product, in an attempt to encourage consumers to ‘buy Irish.’⁷⁹⁷ Ishbel Aberdeen was photographed in a poplin and lace dress bearing

⁷⁸⁹ “Another Convent Industry,” 555.

⁷⁹⁰ IAOS Annual Reports list no data for 1898, but a profit of £88 in 1899, £231 in 1900, and £687 in 1901.

⁷⁹¹ “Youghal Co-operative Home Industries Society,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 8 Iss. 1 (February 1, 1902): 92. The IAOS Annual Report financial records for the Home Industries are so full of gaps that it is difficult to verify this estimate. In 1901, the profit was £687, but no data is recorded after that until 1907, at which point the turnover was £712.

⁷⁹² Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for the year ending 30th June, 1912 (Dublin: The Sackville Press, Findlater Place, 1913), 115.

⁷⁹³ Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 103.

⁷⁹⁴ Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 105.

⁷⁹⁵ Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 105.

⁷⁹⁶ Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 103.

⁷⁹⁷ For more on the *Déanta i nÉirinn* trademark’s use in the fashion industry see: Alex Ward, “Dress and National Identity: Women’s Clothing and the Celtic Revival,” *Costume* Vol. 48 No. 2 (2014): 193-212, <https://doi.org/10.1179/0590887614Z.00000000050>.

the trademark in 1909.⁷⁹⁸ But in 1907, the Nationalist newspaper *Sinn Féin* had adopted the phrase into its masthead, giving it a clear political meaning aligned with the Nationalist cause.⁷⁹⁹ We cannot know the precise nature of the Youghal lacemakers' sentiments in painstakingly, and 'proudly,' adding this trademark to the train. Were they proud to be 'Irish,' in a time of cultural revivalism and a new sense of distinct national – and perhaps Nationalist – identity? Were they proud to be expressing this in the Irish language, which, though it had experienced a decline after the Famine, was once again being taken up as an expression of Irish cultural revival? Were they simply proud that they, as lacemakers of Youghal, County Cork, Ireland, had completed such a wonder of technical virtuosity and stamina? We cannot know with certainty. But the fact that lacemakers from Youghal travelled to Belfast – a journey of over 200 miles – to “rip out the words,” indicates that the *Déanta i nÉirinn* trademark was rendered in needlepoint lace, as part of the fabric of the train.⁸⁰⁰ If it had been an attached label or embroidered panel, a skilled needlewoman in Belfast likely could have removed the stitches attaching it to the delicate lace. That Youghal women were needed to alter the train strongly suggests that the actual structure of the lace was at risk from the removal, and new stitches would need to replace the old. As such, it appears that several women at the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society spent days rendering a textual expression of pride in Irish identity and industry in miniscule needle lace stitches.

Queen Mary's court train was the co-operative's last substantial commission, as the market for quality handmade lace declined in the years following.⁸⁰¹ After 1911, the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society no longer appears in the IAOS Annual Reports. The Youghal lace industry's decline align with that of the industry as a whole, which I will discuss further in the next chapter. But until this period it was the most successful Irish lace industry. Janice Helland cautions against accepting as fact *Studio's* 1903 glowing report that “so profitable has the [Youghal] industry proved that many not only support themselves, but also clothe their children on their earnings.”⁸⁰² However, Elizabeth Boyle describes the Youghal convent lace school as the largest in Ireland, and the Society as “highly successful,” noting that it “paid maximum salaries,” and “even gave pensions to old workers.”⁸⁰³ Without a closer look at the industry's records – if indeed they still exist – it is difficult to ascertain

⁷⁹⁸ Helland, “Ishbel Aberdeen's ‘Irish’ Dresses,” 163.

⁷⁹⁹ Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 103.

⁸⁰⁰ Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 104.

⁸⁰¹ Earnshaw, *Youghal and Other Irish Laces*, 7; Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 104.

⁸⁰² Helland, “A Gift of Lace,” 103.

⁸⁰³ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xxi.

how its patterns of remuneration differed from those at other convents where workers did not have control of profits. However, the Youghal co-operative's pension system is one hint that finances were handled differently here, likely as a result of financial success and a co-operative ethos. Along with the two incidents described above – the first co-operative meeting, and the completion and then removal of the Irish trademark on Queen Mary's train – it provides fodder for speculation on the impact and experience of making lace in a co-operative Home Industries Society, linking the workshop and its work to the political sphere, to expressions of Irish identity and conversations surrounding the rights and responsibilities of workers.

4.4.2 The Dun Emer Co-operative Home Industries Society

The Dun Emer Guild was founded in 1902, and became a co-operative associated with the IAOS in 1904. It was based in a house in Dundrum, Dublin, and specialized in embroidery, weaving, and printing.⁸⁰⁴ Evelyn Gleeson (1855-1944), a middle class woman with connections in feminist and Irish nationalist circles – she was a member of the Ladies Land League and the suffragist Pioneer Club of London – was the animating force behind the Guild's foundation, and “responsible for the astounding success of its weaving department.”⁸⁰⁵ Evelyn Gleeson was cousin to DATI Secretary T.P. Gill,⁸⁰⁶ and corresponded with the DATI about textiles during Emily Anderson's time there; the two women were the same age and occupied positions of expertise and authority in the sphere of Irish home industries. Though I have not found any evidence that they met or corresponded, it seems almost impossible that they would not have, which raises the – for now unanswerable – question of Anderson's possible connections to these spheres of activism.⁸⁰⁷ Does the fact that Emily Anderson was an educated single woman working for the Civil Service, with family connections to the Irish co-operative movement and Anglican overseas mission and relief work (via her cousin, Mary Cornwall Legh, a medical missionary in Japan) mean that she would have been interested in women's suffrage? Or indeed any given political issue? Not necessarily. Anderson's own brother's career is an illustration of the fluid nature of action and identity during this early-twentieth-century

⁸⁰⁴ Cheasley Paterson, “Crafting Empire,” 246.

⁸⁰⁵ Cheasley Paterson, “Crafting Empire,” 245-246.

⁸⁰⁶ Nicola Gordon Bowe, “Two Early Twentieth-Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context: An Túr Gloine and the Dun Emer Guild and Industries,” *Journal of Design History* Vol. 2 No. 2/3 (1989): 195, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1315808>.

⁸⁰⁷ Patricia Anderson speculates about Emily Anderson's possible connection to the suffrage movement: “I have to believe a strong woman like Emily would have been influenced by the women's movement. I wonder if she ever attended the women's meetings” (Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, email, April 1, 2021).

period in Ireland. R.A. Anderson, a Protestant Unionist of Scottish background, who was shot at for wearing a British Army uniform during the Easter Rising, worked tirelessly for a cause that would come to be seen as foundational in the development of the Irish state and an Irish national identity rooted in rural life and agriculture.⁸⁰⁸ Evelyn Gleeson was joined by Lily (1866-1949) and Elizabeth (1868-1940) Yeats, sisters of the poet W.B. Yeats and artist Jack Yeats, both key figures in twentieth century Irish literary and artistic spheres. The Yeats sisters eventually broke with Evelyn Gleeson to form their own Cuala Industries in 1908. They registered as a Home Industries Society that same year, indicating that they recognized the value of association with the IAOS.

Design and craft historians Nicola Gordon Bowe, Paul Larmour and Elaine Cheasley Paterson have written extensively about the Dun Emer Guild's structure, operations, and artistic output.⁸⁰⁹ However, for the purposes of this study, I am most interested in how the Guild intersected with the broader narrative of Irish cultural revival, as well as how it prioritized training and mentorship. Without close examination of individual IAOS Home Industries Society records, it is impossible to know how much these characteristics carried over into other Societies, or emerged from the ethos of the co-operative movement. The fact that IAOS Home Industries Societies are not mentioned in scholarship on the Guild suggests that if that was the case, it was largely undocumented, or occurred within a conceptual realm, unremarked in records of employment, sales, and meeting minutes. However, my intention is not to prove that the Dun Emer Guild was shaped by the co-operative movement, but to highlight some characteristics of this particularly well-documented Home Industry Society which seem to be shared by others – namely the Youghal and Naas Societies – and present a series of questions for further research beyond the confines of this project.

The Dun Emer Guild (and later Cuala Industries) stand out from the other IAOS Home Industries Societies in that we know a great deal about them, in part because of the quality of their

⁸⁰⁸ In 1916, Anderson was involved in organizing a group of British Army volunteers in the Dublin area. They were all too old for military duty, and called by some “The Methuseliens” or the “gorgeous wrecks” after the red band on their uniform sleeve that read G.R. (George Rex). Anderson himself was wounded in the attack on Beggar’s Bush Barracks (R.A. Anderson, *With Horace Plunkett in Ireland* (MacMillan and Co. London, 1935), 196-197).

⁸⁰⁹ For more on the Dun Emer Guild, see: Cheasley Paterson, “Crafting a National Identity”; Andrew A. Kuhn, “The Irish Arts and Crafts Edition: Printing at Dun Emer and Cuala,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement: Making it Irish* ed. Vera Kreilkamp (University of Chicago Press, 2016): 153-163; Paul Larmour, “The Dun Emer Guild,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* Vol. 1 No. 4 (Winter 1984): 24-28, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20491681>; Larmour, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*; Robin Skelton, “Twentieth-Century Irish Literature and the Private Press Tradition: Dun Emer, Cuala, & Dolmen Presses 1902-1963,” *The Massachusetts Review* Vol. 5 No. 2 (Winter 1964): 368-377, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25087118>.

work, but also because of their connections to important cultural figures and movements of the time. However, even a preliminary examination of other Societies shows that many were founded by groups of culturally-aware middle-class people – the Naas Home Industries, discussed below, was founded by members of the Naas Gaelic League – who, though not as well-connected, and less famous in both their time and ours, likely shared many ideals with Evelyn Gleeson, and Lily and Elizabeth Yeats. The three women were deeply influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, as expressed by John Ruskin and William Morris. They were also part of a network of artists, writers and craftspeople who sought to forge a new Irish identity through the arts, and turned for their inspiration to a ‘purer’ rural life – particularly in the west – and ancient Irish myth and legend.

The Yeats family knew William Morris, and Lily Yeats worked in May Morris’s embroidery workshop for several years, working on important commissions and training new workers.⁸¹⁰ Lily and Elizabeth’s brother, W.B. Yeats, felt that Ireland offered a unique testing ground for the Arts and Crafts philosophy of William Morris, because it had never been industrialized.⁸¹¹ Unlike Britain, it would not have to dismantle one hundred years of industry to achieve the bucolic utopia of craftsmen and women in harmony with nature as evoked in Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. Evelyn Gleeson’s writings about the Guild reflect this view of craft’s potential. In the 1903 Dun Emer Guild winter prospectus, Gleeson writes that the Guild is to “employ ‘village girls as workers,’ to ‘make beautiful things’ out of Irish ‘materials honest and true’ with ‘deftness of hand, brightness of colour, and cleverness of design’ in the ‘spirit and tradition of the country’,” and that this training will make “their brains and fingers [...] more active and understanding.”⁸¹² Such a description could just have easily come from a lecture on home industries by George Russell or Horace Plunkett, and shows how much cross-pollination occurred between social movements during this period.

Gleeson’s emphasis on Irishness – Irish materials ‘honest and true’ and Irish ‘spirit and tradition’ – points to another intellectual thread that seems to weave through all three of these case studies: that of Irish national identity. Even the Dun Emer Guild’s name points to this preoccupation. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Emer was the wife of the ancient Irish hero Cú Chulainn, and a famed needlewoman. The legends of the Ulster Cycle, and of Cú Chulainn in particular, were popular literary and visual motifs for Celtic revival writers – such as W.B. Yeats –

⁸¹⁰ Gordon Bowe, “Two Early Twentieth Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context,” 201.

⁸¹¹ Nicola Gordon Bowe, “The Arts and Crafts Movement in Dublin,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Dublin and Edinburgh: 1885-1925*, ed. Elizabeth Cumming and Nicola Gordon Bowe (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 83.

⁸¹² Gordon Bowe, “Two Early Twentieth Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context,” 196.

and artists who looked to the ancient past as they worked to build a new Irish cultural – and political – identity. In describing George Russell’s work with *The Irish Homestead*, historian James Kennelly writes that:

Russell recognized the necessity of marrying “the dairies of Plunkett” with “the faeries of Yeats,” of connecting the hardheaded, practical, materialistic realism of the cooperative agricultural movement with the work of the writers and idealists of the Irish literary renaissance, the artists who were quickening the pulse of the people with their portraits of a heroic past and a vibrant, national future.⁸¹³

Nicola Gordon Bowe has written that George Russell was an “early mentor” of the Dun Emer Guild, but at this point I am unable to determine how, or to what extent, Russell involved himself in the Guild’s development.⁸¹⁴ Regardless, Gleeson and Yeats sisters achieved the same goal in operating the Dun Emer Guild, producing work that hearkened to an ancient past and emphasising their reliance on labour and materials from rural Ireland, but also providing very real employment and training opportunities for women, which “could indeed have had a significant impact on a family’s income.”⁸¹⁵

Evelyn Gleeson and the Yeats sisters prioritized mentorship and education, employing large numbers of assistants, some of whom went on to start their own workshops after training at Dun Emer. Nicola Gordon Bowe notes that in this regard they differed from another prominent early-twentieth-century Arts and Crafts workshop, Sarah Purser’s (1848-1943) an Túr Gloine (The Glass Tower), which valued the expression of a single artistic vision in its stained glass commissions.⁸¹⁶ In 1905, Gleeson’s guild report “proposed to offer skilled artistic training to women weavers so they might ‘become teachers to others’ and be ‘of material help to their families.’”⁸¹⁷ As of 1904, Lily Yeats had seven embroidery assistants, Elizabeth Yeats had two printing assistants, and Gleeson had twelve trainee weavers, two teachers in training, and six weavers. All employees were women, with the exception of the boys apprenticing in book-binding.⁸¹⁸ The Guild offered craftswomen the ability to gain “skill mobility,” which some took to other ventures; May Kerley trained with Evelyn Gleeson in weaving and designing and then went on to manage Glenbeigh Industries in Co. Kerry.⁸¹⁹

⁸¹³ Kennelly, “The Dawn of the Practical,” 76.

⁸¹⁴ Gordon Bowe, “Two Early Twentieth Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context,” 195.

⁸¹⁵ Cheasley Paterson, “Crafting Empire,” 248.

⁸¹⁶ Gordon Bowe, “Two Early Twentieth-Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context,” 196.

⁸¹⁷ Elaine Cheasley Paterson, “Tracing Craft – Labour, Creativity and Sustainability in the Home Arts Movement,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* Vol. 39/40 No. 1/2 (2018/2019): 52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26911880>.

⁸¹⁸ Gordon Bowe, “Two Early Twentieth Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context,” 201.

⁸¹⁹ Cheasley Paterson, “Tracing Craft,” 52.

Gleeson's own nieces, Grace and Katherine MacCormack trained at Dun Emer, with Katherine going on to become one of its lead designers and eventually assist in management.⁸²⁰ Elaine Cheasley Paterson describes the Dun Emer Guild as: "a site of cultural formation and exchange, where meaning and purpose were constantly shifting as workers were given more authority in the design and production of the works, were paid higher wages according to merit, became involved in the daily operation of the industry, and branched off to start other artistic ventures."⁸²¹

The emphasis on collectivism balanced with the dignity and worth of individual craftspeople aligns just as much with William Morris's Arts and Crafts socialism as it does with the ethos of co-operation. Might this similarity in values have been one of the factors that drew Gleeson and the Yeats sisters to become affiliated with the IAOS? To what extent might this focus on education and mentorship have been shared with other Home Industries Societies? Would a more comprehensive examination of the Home Industries Societies' records reveal a similar circulation of teachers, designers and workers between workshops? The Dun Emer Guild is one, well documented, example of this 'cultural formation and exchange' in action. Yet even a preliminary study of the Kildare Carpet Company – the next and last of these three case studies – shows similar collaboration between workshops in industry development and education, as well as an interaction with the sort of political and cultural ideas discussed above.

4.4.3 The Naas Co-operative Home Industries Society

The Naas Co-operative Home Industries Society is another case study in how the Home Industries Societies were more than simply actors in an economic sphere. Though I have not been able to access any archives related to the Society, it was reasonably well documented in newspapers of the time. Like many organizations and individuals in this story, it can also be illuminated by connections, its place in a vast network of craft, social reform, and political events. Because its history is not as widely known as that of the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society and the Dun Emer Guild, I will begin by providing a more detailed sketch of its activities. Then I will consider its role in the IAOS and broader milieu of Irish art and industry, focusing in particular on its connection to other workshops outside of Ireland and the Dublin lockouts of 1913, both of which provide fodder for

⁸²⁰ Cheasley Paterson, "Tracing Craft," 52.

⁸²¹ Cheasley Paterson, "Crafting Empire," 248.

speculation on the Society's role in circulating an Arts and Crafts ethos and nurturing ideas about solidarity and political agency.⁸²²

The Naas Co-operative Home Industries Society was founded in 1902 by members of the Naas Gaelic League, who formed a sub-committee to handle industrial matters in the area. One of the committee's duties was to devise a plan to provide employment for young women in the area, many of whom were members of the League themselves.⁸²³ In concert with the IAOS, the Committee spearheaded the formation of the Naas Co-operative Home Industries Society. The society formed without a clear intention of what exactly its members would make; it wasn't until the IAOS sent a 'lady organizer,' likely Miss Reynolds, to discuss the matter with them that they decided to open a carpet workshop.⁸²⁴ The organizers were not able to find a teacher in Ireland, so they established contact with the Canterbury Weavers, an Arts and Crafts carpet workshop in the south of England, founded in 1901.⁸²⁵ The Canterbury Weavers provided teaching and mentorship, and were also invited to the Cork International Exhibition in 1902 to give a demonstration in weaving.⁸²⁶ In 1906, *The Studio Yearbook* reported that the factory began production with only six young women, in the convent at Naas, using Swedish looms to weave carpets, using wool "dyed with native dyes," "cut and prepared on the premises."⁸²⁷

Less than a year after its formation, the Society was producing high-quality carpets, and had become a limited company.⁸²⁸ They were even able to send carpets to the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, to be displayed in the 'Artistic Handicrafts' section of the Industries display, alongside embroideries and tapestries from the Dun Emer Guild among others.⁸²⁹ However, finances were still unsteady. In a May 1903 letter to *Leinster Leader*, the President, David Gorry, called for more members of the public to buy 5s shares: "With a little more capital we can equip many young girls in

⁸²² *Irish Rural Life and Industry* contains a short description of the Kildare Carpet Company (p. 156). Nicola Gordon Bowe makes passing reference to the Kildare Carpet Company and Abbeyleix carpet factory (without mentioning their amalgamation) in Gordon Bowe, "Two Early Twentieth Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context," 200. Mairead M. Johnston's *Hidden in the Pile: the Abbey Leix Carpet Factory 1904-1912* (Abbeyleix Heritage Company Ltd. and the Leinster Express, 1997) is the most extensive source of information about the two factories.

⁸²³ "Naas Home Industries Society," *Leinster Leader* May 16, 1903, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸²⁴ "Naas Home Industries Society," *Leinster Leader* May 16, 1903, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸²⁵ "Naas Home Industries Society," *Leinster Leader* May 16, 1903, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive. For more on the Canterbury Weavers, see Malcolm Haslam, *Arts and Crafts Carpets* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 171-174.

⁸²⁶ Haslam, *Arts and Crafts Carpets*, 179. The Canterbury Weavers' booth at the Exhibition is detailed in "Cork Industrial Supplement," *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 8 Iss. 2 (July 19, 1902): v.

⁸²⁷ "Textile Fabrics," *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1906): 198, https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/studio_yearbook1906/0211/scroll.

⁸²⁸ "Naas Home Industries Society," *Leinster Leader* May 16, 1903, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸²⁹ Homan Potterton, "Letters from St. Louis," *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* Vol. 10 (1994): 245, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20492796>.

and about Naas for the work they are only too anxious to engage in.”⁸³⁰ His appeal appears to have been answered: from 1902-1903, the Society had fourteen members; in 1904 that number jumped to 105, and in 1905 to 136.⁸³¹ The Society also benefitted from a connection with another English carpet workshop: Reginald Brinton of Brinton’s carpet manufacturers in Kidderminster, England, assisted with the acquisition and installation of “more sophisticated looms” for large scale work, also providing designs.⁸³² These looms were installed and put into use in April 1905, with approximately twenty-three women and girls working, and by May of that year “the first products were consigned [...] to one of the palaces in England.”⁸³³ Such high-profile clientele was likely a result of Lady Geraldine Mayo’s appointment as President of the Society. Her husband, the Earl of Mayo, had founded the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland in 1894, the same year in which she had re-established the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework.⁸³⁴ Lady Mayo was a well-connected and seemingly-inexhaustible champion of Irish craft, and her involvement throughout the next decade of the Naas carpet factory’s existence underscores the often-blurry line between philanthropy and sound business practices during this period.

The *Studio Yearbook* article of 1906 included two images of carpets labelled “Kildare handmade carpets designed and executed by Brinton’s Ltd.” (fig. 4.19).⁸³⁵ Though the caption implies that the carpets may have even been made by Brinton’s, the accompanying text clearly indicates that the images depict carpets made at the factory in Naas. A 1910 report on the factory published in the *Kildare Observer* noted that up until that year, the carpets had been “sheared,” or finished, in Kidderminster, and that Brinton’s had been in charge of “selling arrangements.”⁸³⁶ However, as of 1910, the factory had recently won first prize at the RDS show, was selling carpets to customers directly, had about thirty workers and an in-house team of “locally trained designers,” and its own highly sophisticated shearing machine – “the only one in Ireland.”⁸³⁷ The factory also won a prize at the RDS show that year.⁸³⁸ In the following years, the company completed more prestigious

⁸³⁰ “Naas Home Industries Society,” *Leinster Leader* May 16, 1903, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸³¹ IAOS Annual Reports, 1903-1920.

⁸³² Haslam, *Arts and Crafts Carpets*, 179.

⁸³³ “Naas Home Industries Society,” *Leinster Leader* February 24, 1906, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸³⁴ Gordon Bowe, “The Arts and Crafts Movement in Dublin,” 80.

⁸³⁵ “Textile Fabrics,” *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1906): 195, https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/studio_yearbook1906/0211/scroll.

⁸³⁶ “A Prominent Naas industry: Visit to Carpet Factory,” *Kildare Observer* October 29, 1910, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸³⁷ “A Prominent Naas industry: Visit to Carpet Factory,” *Kildare Observer* October 29, 1910, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸³⁸ £10 for a “Fine Hand-made Axminster Carpet,” *Catalogue of the Art Industries Exhibition held at Ball’s Bridge, Dublin, August 23, 24, 25 and 26, 1910* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1910), 48. Apart from on this one occasion in 1910, the

commissions; most famously they made carpets for a group of White Star Lines ships, including the Titanic.⁸³⁹ Evelyn Gleeson, of the Dun Emer Guild, provided designs for the company; in her history of the Abbeyleix Carpet Factory, Mairead M. Johnson suggests that Gleeson may have designed some of the smaller carpets for the Titanic and another White Star Line ship, the Olympia.⁸⁴⁰ Johnson also notes that in 1907 promotional images of the Abbeyleix Carpet Factory, which would later amalgamate with the Naas factory, many of the workers wear crochet-lace collars.⁸⁴¹ This small detail hints at possible collaboration between industries (were the women asked to wear products from a nearby lace class as a form of advertisement?), or perhaps a sense of personal pride and success expressed through wearing lace of their own manufacture or purchased with the extra money from their work at the factory.

In 1910, 1912, and 1913-1917, the Naas Co-operative Home Industries Society is listed in the IAOS Annual Reports as “not working.”⁸⁴² However, it remains on the list of societies, with a steady membership of 136,⁸⁴³ until the last report to include home industries statistics in 1918. The IAOS reports may seem to signal failure or intermittent and surprisingly prolonged success, but the reality was more complicated. In 1909, the co-operative did not cease working, but amalgamated with Abbeyleix Carpet Factory, about 70 miles away in County Laois.⁸⁴⁴ The two companies were henceforth known as the Kildare Carpet Company Ltd. With the amalgamation came a reorganization of governance, and without an examination of the company records it is difficult to tell whether the factory continued to operate as a co-operative. A 1910 newspaper article states somewhat vaguely that “the factory became in truth a self-contained local industry, the directors forming a new board of management and becoming absolute owners of the concern.”⁸⁴⁵

Regardless of the business model that it came to employ after 1909, I am interested in how the Kildare Carpet Company may have maintained many of the characteristics and an overarching ethos of an IAOS co-operative model. In sketching a brief history of the factory, based primarily on newspaper articles published in county papers, I will demonstrate that the principles and methods of

Kildare Carpet Company Ltd. is not listed among the competitors at the RDS Art Industries Exhibitions from 1903-1913.

⁸³⁹ Johnston, *Hidden in the Pile*, 120.

⁸⁴⁰ Johnston, *Hidden in the Pile*, 16.

⁸⁴¹ Johnston, *Hidden in the Pile*, 96.

⁸⁴² IAOS Report, for the year ending 30th June, 1911, 111.

⁸⁴³ With the exception of 1906, where it is listed as having 138 members (IAOS Report, for the year ending 30th June, 1907, n.p.).

⁸⁴⁴ Johnston, *Hidden in the Pile*, 115.

⁸⁴⁵ “A Prominent Naas industry: Visit to carpet Factory,” *Kildare Observer* October 29, 1910, 2. Irish Newspaper Archive.

co-operation had the potential to affect both the workers and overseers of a craft industry even beyond its association with the IAOS.

In December 1912, the Kildare Carpet Company published an advertisement seeking girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen to train in carpet weaving.⁸⁴⁶ In January 1913, Lady Geraldine Mayo published a letter in the *Leinster Leader*, alerting the public to the fact that the carpet factory might leave Naas if more workers could not be found in the locality. There were sixty women working at the factory, but the demand for carpets was so high that the factory directors required at least one hundred workers to fulfil their orders. Lady Mayo encouraged girls interested in a job to contact her directly, and proposed a scheme to start a hostel for workers who travelled from outside of Naas to seek employment at the Kildare Carpet Company.⁸⁴⁷ Less than a month later, Lady Mayo was able to report a generous response to her request for aid, ranging from a £100 donation (the Duke of Leinster), to “chairs, tables and looking glasses” (the Earl of Mayo), to “two dozen spoons” (Miss Gray).⁸⁴⁸ Lady Mayo’s continued involvement with the factory, and in particular her recognition of the need to keep the carpet industry in Naas rather than moving it to another, larger town, is characteristic of Plunkett’s vision of a landlording class exerting their influence to encourage greater self-sufficiency among the rural (or in this case, semi-rural) working classes.⁸⁴⁹ The Naas Co-operative Home Industries Society had been founded ten years earlier with the specific intention of providing employment for Naas women and girls, and this remained a priority to the extent that Lady Mayo was willing to create more housing to keep the industry local.

In 1913 and 1914, the factory felt the effects of the Dublin Lockouts, “a chain reaction of strikes and lockouts” initiated by the labour organizer James (Jim) Larkin (1874-1947), founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union (ITGWU).⁸⁵⁰ The lockouts delayed at least one

⁸⁴⁶ “Kildare Carpet Factory,” *Leinster Leader* December 21, 1912, 1. Irish Newspaper Archive. The Abbeyleix Carpet Factory closed in 1912 (Johnston, *Hidden in the Pile*, 128). In reference to the remaining enterprise, Mairead M. Johnston states that in 1913, the Kildare Carpet Co. became the Irish Lace Depôt in 1913, and was bought by the Maguire family in 1922 (*Hidden in the Pile*, 156). Further research may illuminate the precise relationship between the Kildare Carpet Co. and the Irish Lace Depôt, as they certainly collaborated and shared management (in the person of R. Martin), but I have not found any evidence that they amalgamated. Frances Carruthers makes no mention of the carpet factory in her discussion of R. Martin as the Lace Depôt manager (Carruthers, “The Organisational work of Ishbel Aberdeen,” 90).

⁸⁴⁷ “The Carpet Factory, Naas,” *Leinster Leader* January 18, 1913, 10. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸⁴⁸ “Naas Carpet Factory,” *Leinster Leader* February 18, 1913, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸⁴⁹ The Kildare Carpet Co. was connected with the network of patronage discussed earlier in this chapter: it exhibited work in at least one Irish Industries Association display (at Cutler’s Hall, Sheffield, 1907), and the Managing Director, R. Martin, worked with the Irish Lace Depôt (Johnston, *Hidden in the Pile*, 117-118; 122).

⁸⁵⁰ F.S.L. Lyons, “The Developing Crisis, 1907-14,” in *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union 1870-1921* (3rd Ed.) ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford University Press, 2012), 139.

shipment of carpets – in this case commissioned by a client in Philadelphia – from making its way out of Dublin.⁸⁵¹ Despite their negative impact on the factory's shipments, a substantial number of the Kildare Carpet Company's employees supported Larkin and the ITGWU. On a Tuesday evening in November 1913, the young women from the carpet factory left the building at six o'clock, after a day's work, cheering for Larkin:

the girls ran wildly through New Row in the direction of their homes, they continued to cheer, and their cheers were answered by residents who appeared at their doors, by counter cries of "Down with Larkin," whereat the girls indulged in vociferous shouts of "Up with Larkin." The incident ended with the arrival of the girls at their respective homes, and no further Larkinite demonstration took place.⁸⁵²

This evocative story raises questions about the values and ideas about labour, class, and political agency circulating at the Naas Home Industries Association and Kildare Carpet Company. Historian Colm Murphy highlights the complicated nature of the allegiances and discourses surrounding the lockouts at the time they occurred.⁸⁵³ The fact that Jim Larkin was a founding member of the Irish Citizen Army does not mean that all 'Larkinites' were Nationalists. In fact, the Nationalist and Socialist causes were often seen in opposition to each other, which was to the labour movement's detriment in twentieth-century Ireland. This expression of support for the lockouts may have been a product of the factory's connections with British workshops and the socialist ethos of the Arts and Crafts Movement. But even without parsing the specifics, the fact that these young women worked at a factory originally founded by members of the Gaelic League and organized by the IAOS – both breeding grounds for reform and deeply involved in the creation of Irish national identity – and also expressed support for a contentious expression of labour reform calls for further investigation of how the Naas carpet factory, and the Home Industries Societies more broadly may have provided opportunities for rural Irish women to discuss, develop, and express new political and national identities in the tumultuous years of early-twentieth-century Ireland.

⁸⁵¹ James Durney, "Lockout 1913: the effect of the great lockout on Co. Kildare," *County Kildare Online Electronic History Journal* (September 18, 2013), <https://kildare.ie/ehistory/index.php/lockout-1913-the-effect-of-the-great-lockout-on-co-kildare/>.

⁸⁵² "Cheers for Larkin: Scene in Naas," *Leinster Leader* November 22, 1913, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive. The girls' demonstrated may have been prompted by Larkin's release from prison, which had occurred on November 13, 1913.

⁸⁵³ Colm Murphy, "Rival Imagined Communities in the Dublin Lockout of 1913," *History Workshop Journal* Vol. 86 (July 2018): 184-204, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dby027>.

Lady Mayo's hostel closed in December 1913, "owing to the general unrest and difficulties that must ensue to all industries in Ireland," surely referring to the lockouts.⁸⁵⁴ However, in April 1914, *The Kildare Observer* published an extended report on the "flourishing Naas industry," detailing the expensive, state-of-the-art machinery in use at the factory and noting that it employed eighty hands in Naas, twenty at an "auxiliary weaving department" in Abbylax, and four women designers under the supervision of a head designer, Mr. Wilde.⁸⁵⁵ The writer emphasized the factory's extensive and international market: one of the carpets on the looms was "of Chinese design" and "destined for Montreal, Canada."⁸⁵⁶

Such success ultimately came to an end with the onset of the First World War in July 1914, only months after *The Kildare Observer's* glowing report. The conflict, with its disruption of marketing and trade, and – crucially – its diversion of funds from luxury goods to more practical needs, sounded the death knell for many cottage industries, including lace, which I will discuss further in the next chapters. At first, local bureaucracy attempted to remedy the sudden lack of employment. In January 1915, the Secretary of the County Kildare Technical Committee reported that he had found positions in domestic service for six of the girls that had been working at the factory, but they would not take the jobs.⁸⁵⁷ It seems likely that they found domestic service to be undesirable after experiencing the sociability and collective creative expression of the carpet factory. Though the war reduced the demand for carpets, as well as the company's ability to safely and efficiently ship supplies and products around the world, there is evidence that it continued working, colloquially known as 'the Naas carpet factory.' In February 1917, the *Leinster Leader* reported on an explosion at the Naas carpet factory, in which two girls, Maggie Quinn and Maggie Kelly, were seriously injured.⁸⁵⁸ In October 1918, the girls from the Naas carpet factory went on strike. A short report on the situation listed Morton Manufacturing Co., Stirling, as the owner of the factory.⁸⁵⁹ This company name likely points to the Scottish textile manufacturer Alexander Morton, who, along with his son, collaborated with the Congested Districts Board to train workers at Killybegs, County Donegal, in carpet

⁸⁵⁴ "Correspondence: Naas Hostel Closed Owing to the General Unrest," *Kildare Observer* December 13, 1913, transcribed by John O'Byrne for Co. Kildare Online Electronic History Journal, <https://kildare.ie/ehistory/index.php/letter-from-lady-mayo-naas-hostel-closed/>.

⁸⁵⁵ "A Flourishing Naas Industry," *Kildare Observer* April 18, 1914, transcribed by John O'Byrne for Co. Kildare Electronic History Journal, https://www.kildare.ie/library/ehistory/2011/04/a_flourishing_naas_industry.asp.

⁸⁵⁶ "A Flourishing Naas Industry."

⁸⁵⁷ "County Kildare Technical Committee," *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, January 16, 1915, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸⁵⁸ "Explosion at Naas Carpet Factory. Several Girl Employees Injured," *Leinster Leader*, February 10, 1917, 6. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁸⁵⁹ "No Action," *Leinster Leader*, October 26, 1918, 4. Irish Newspaper Archive.

weaving.⁸⁶⁰ This was the same area in which Alice Hart promoted cottage industries with the Donegal Industrial Fund, and skill in weaving was already highly developed; some local girls had even been taught to follow point-paper patterns, pricked with small holes to form a stencil-like guide.⁸⁶¹ The Morton family's enterprise met with success in the late-1890s and expanded quickly, becoming Donegal Carpets, the best known of the Irish carpet weaving workshops. The Naas carpet factory's eventual absorption into the Morton Manufacturing Co. – if indeed this is Alexander Morton's company, which seems very likely – is a fitting end to the story. It knits together the many organizations and individuals that collaborated in the business and ideology of home industries in Ireland, demonstrating just how interconnected they were, and how moveable the distinction between philanthropy, business, and co-operation could be.

As such, even an incomplete history of the Naas Home Industries Society, or Kildare Carpets Ltd., points to the interconnected nature of the Home Industries Societies, of their potential to function as nodes in a network of Arts and Crafts workshops, and the possibility that they nurtured new ideas about labour, ownership, and unionization. In *From Husbandry to Housewifery*, Joanna Bourke counted the IAOS Home Industries Societies, among other home industries schemes, as a failure.⁸⁶² In purely economic terms, most of the co-operatives did indeed fail. However, the story of the Naas Home Industries Society points to the tantalizing possibility that other Home Industries Societies which appear to have 'failed' in fact simply left the fold, and went by another name. Like the Dun Emer Guild, it also demonstrates that the co-operatives could make connections and share resources with other workshops and companies that held similar values throughout the United Kingdom. Like both Dun Emer and the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society, it shows how membership in a co-operative had the potential to shape worker's sense of national identity, community and solidarity – though in Naas, this manifested in more radical ways.

⁸⁶⁰ For more on Morton's role in the development of Donegal Carpets, see: Elaine Cheasley Paterson, "Handcrafting a National Industry: the Production and Patronage of Alexander Morton and Company's Donegal Carpets" (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1999).

⁸⁶¹ Haslam, *Arts and Crafts Carpets*, 99. Haslam presents Alice Hart as a displaced – and resentful – competitor of Morton's, a characterization that Elaine Cheasley Paterson points out has little to do with contemporary accounts of Hart and her work in Donegal. See: Cheasley Paterson, "Handcrafting a National Industry," 27.

⁸⁶² Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 109-141.

4.5 Conclusion: from ‘better business’ to ‘better living’

In the next chapter, I will discuss the DATI, which co-operated and sometimes conflicted with the IAOS, and also owed its foundation in large part to Horace Plunkett. As an inspector for the DATI, Emily Anderson would visit many of the IAOS Home Industries Societies, sometimes overlapping in her duties with Miss Reynolds, the IAOS organizer. Though only one of the three case studies discussed above involves lacemaking, they hint at what the Home Industries Societies could have been like, the role they could have played in the lives of Irish lacemakers and other craftspeople. They also point to other ‘reasons’ ‘values,’ and ‘uses’ associated with craft production, beyond the economic. They demonstrate how craft can build community and a collective sense of identity, facilitating artistic expression, mentorship and education. All three contexts of making seem to have encouraged women to see themselves as a collective, to identify with and support co-operative organization or the nascent Irish labour movement. Further research into how the Home Industries Societies interacted with each other and their counterparts elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe, as well as how members used their training in other contexts – to become teachers or work for other businesses, for example – would give a fuller understanding of how the co-operatives impacted women’s lives. In Chapter 6, I will return to this notion of craft as something that happens, as an embodied practice with the potential to shape community and identity, rather than as a material good that can be bought and sold.

Another strand running through this project is the linking of lacemaking with national identity and conceptions of idealized womanhood. When the IAOS handed responsibility for the Home Industries Societies to the United Irishwomen in 1913, they were subsumed into the United Irishwomen’s broader goal of improving rural domestic and community life. Ellice Pilkington’s essay on the role of the United Irishwomen, published in 1911, lists home industries as a sphere of rural life ripe for improvement alongside dairying, pig keeping, beekeeping, and gardening. She writes that “A woman’s place in connection with agriculture and industries is to encourage the farmer to make use of his own agricultural organization, to support his co-operative societies, and to assist him when these societies touch on woman’s domain.”⁸⁶³ The following year, the IAOS Annual Report’s brief paragraph on the progress of the United Irishwomen began as follows: “As is well known, the United Irishwomen exist to work upon the “better living” aspect of the three-fold movement in

⁸⁶³ Ellice Pilkington, “The United Irishwomen – Their Work,” in *The United Irishwomen: their Place, Work and Ideals* eds. Ellice Pilkington, Horace Plunkett and George Russell (Dublin: Maunsell and Co., 1911), 27-28, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924014045698>.

which “better business” is the special concern of the IAOS.”⁸⁶⁴ I would suggest that this signals a conceptual shift on the part of the IAOS and United Irishwomen, from thinking of the Home Industries Societies as valuable for their – albeit limited – earning potential (and thus their potential to curb emigration and improve rural life), to thinking of skill in traditional crafts more broadly as an aspect of ideal rural Irish womanhood. Later in the twentieth century, members of United Irishwomen – renamed the Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA) in 1935 – would advocate for practicing traditional crafts as a way of encouraging creative expression, building relationships, connecting with the past, and practicing an embodied form of Irish identity. In Chapter 6, I will discuss the work of ICA members Muriel Gahan and Mamo MacDonald in more detail. Mamo MacDonald was a key figure in Máire Treanor’s development as a Clones lace historian, maker and teacher, and as such plays a part in my own story as a student and maker of Irish crochet.

In the next chapter, I will consider Emily Anderson’s inspection activities, her role in Irish crochet copyright cases, and her collection of teaching specimens, as well as the DATP’s attempts to improve lacemaking and lace design education, much of which occurred contemporaneously to the events discussed in this chapter. Indeed, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, it is difficult to imagine that Anderson was not somehow involved in the development of the Home Industries Societies. However, the United Irishwomen’s takeover of these craft co-operatives foreshadows the path that lacemaking and other traditional crafts would take in Ireland as the twentieth century went on, a path that I will discuss in the final chapter: from an industry – ‘better business’ – to a builder of community, relationships, and identity – ‘better living’.

⁸⁶⁴ Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited, for the period from 1st July 1914 to the 31st March, 1915 (Dublin: The Sackville Press, Findlater Place, 1916), 27.

Figures: Chapter 4



Figure 4-1 Map showing the distribution of lacemaking centers in Alan Cole's Reports (1884-1898). Map by the author. Source: Google Maps, https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=13vDoVQoRieqHe4_XrOWSWHgIwioMOIS2&ll=53.215429150274474%2C-8.097066750000014&z=7 (Accessed November 22, 2021).



Figure 4-2 “Where a Bridal set of Carrickmacross Lace was Made” (photograph likely by Ishbel Aberdeen). In *Guide to the Irish Industrial Village and Blarney Castle, the Exhibit of the Irish Industries Association* (Chicago: The Irish Village Bookstore, 1893), 34. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/guidetoirishindu00iris_0/page/34/mode/2up (Accessed November 22, 2021).



Figure 4-3 Map showing the distribution of the IAOS Home Industries Societies (from IAOS Annual Reports, 1904-1911). Map by the author. Source: Google Maps, https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=13vDoVQoRieqHe4_XrOWSWHgIwioMOIS2&ll=53.215429150274474%2C-8.097066750000014&z=7 (Accessed November 22, 2021).



Figure 4-4 “Castlebellingham Home Industries Society - a group of workers”. In *Seventh Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited. For year ending 31st December 1901* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1902), 30. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-5 “A Group of Beechmount Lace Workers” (The cameo portrait showing Miss Reynolds, the IAOS Home Industries Societies Organizer). In *Seventh Report of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, Limited. For year ending 31st December 1901* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1902), 31. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-6 Copyright Design for Flounce in Carrickmacross Guipure. In *The Irish Homestead* 6.1 (June 9, 1900): 373. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-7 Designs for Flounces in Carrickmacross Guipure, by Alice Jacob (awarded a silver medal in the National Art Competition, 1895). In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 15. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n47/mode/2up (Accessed November 22, 2021).

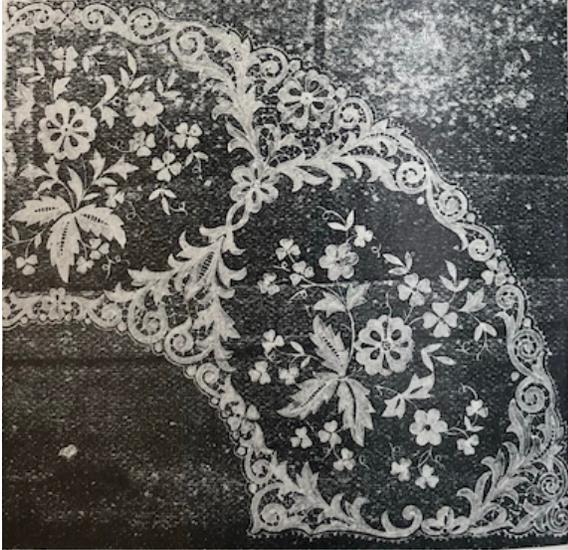


Figure 4-8 Copyright Design for Fan-cover in Carrickmacross Lace. In *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 1 (June 9, 1900): 373. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-9 Design for a Crochet Border. In *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (September 8, 1900): 588. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-10 Copyright Design for a Border in Innishmacsaint Lace. In *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (July 7, 1900): 443. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-11 Copyright Design for a Flounce in Limerick Lace (Tambour). In *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (July 14, 1900): 462. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-12 Design for a Limerick Lace Flounce. In *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 6 Iss. 2 (October 27, 1900): 700. Photo by the author.

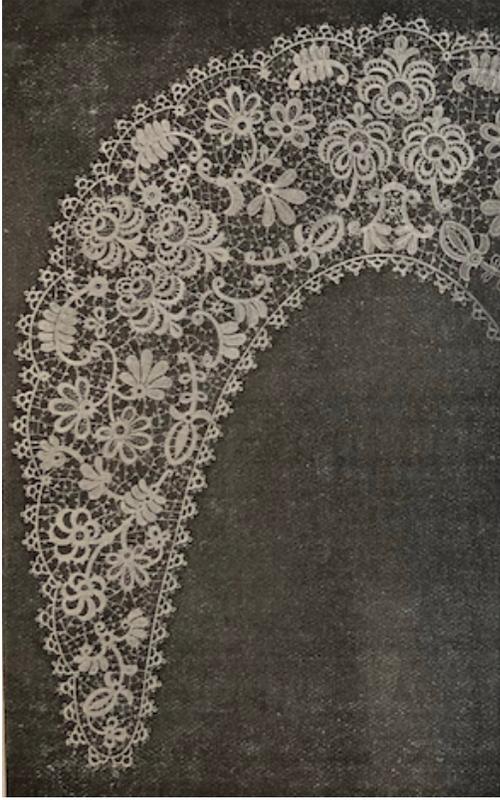


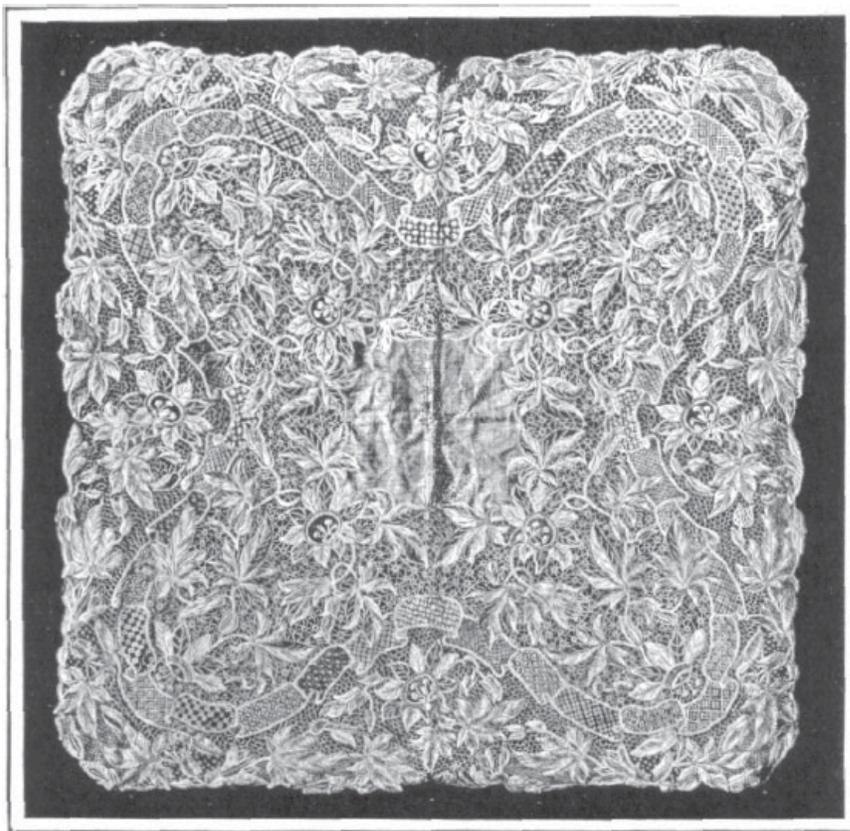
Figure 4-13 Design for a Collar in Crochet. In *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 7 Iss. 1 (June 22, 1901): 424. Photo by the author.



Figure 4-14 Design for a Fichu in Crochet Lace, by Lizzie Perry (awarded a silver medal in the National Art Competition, 1895). In *An Illustrated of the Retrospective Exhibition Held At South Kensington, 1896* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 9. Source: Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125001330675/page/n35/mode/2up (Accessed November 22, 2021).



Figure 4-15 Detail of three-looped edging on Rose Cottage bonnet, April 2021. Photo by the author.



CORPORAL VEIL, FLAT NEEDLE-POINT LACE.
PRESENTATION CONVENT INDUSTRY, YOUGHAL, COUNTY CORK. IRELAND.

Figure 4-16 Corporal veil in flat needlepoint lace, made by members of the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society. In Ishbel Aberdeen, "Cottage Industries in Scotland and Ireland," in *Art and Handicraft in the Women's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, Maud Howe Elliot, ed. (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 219. Source: University of Pennsylvania Digital Library, <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/elliott/art/219.html> (Accessed November 22, 2021).

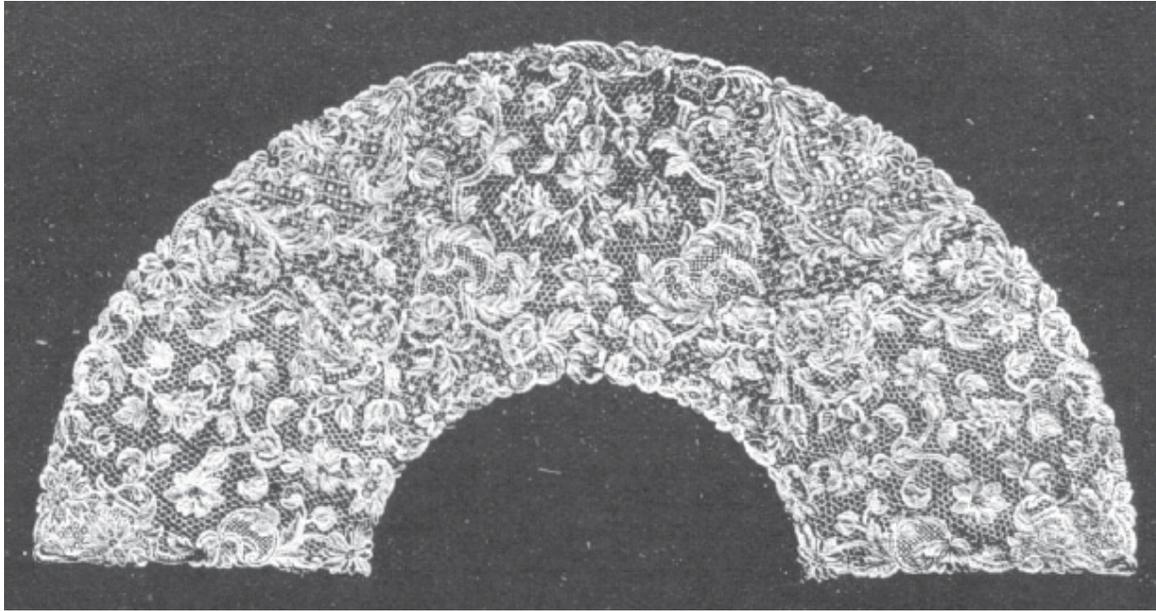


Figure 4-17 Flat needlepoint lace fan cover, made by members of the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society. In Ishbel Aberdeen, “Cottage Industries in Scotland and Ireland,” in *Art and Handicraft in the Women’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, Maud Howe Elliot, ed. (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 221. Source: University of Pennsylvania Digital Library, <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/elliott/art/219.html> (Accessed November 22, 2021).

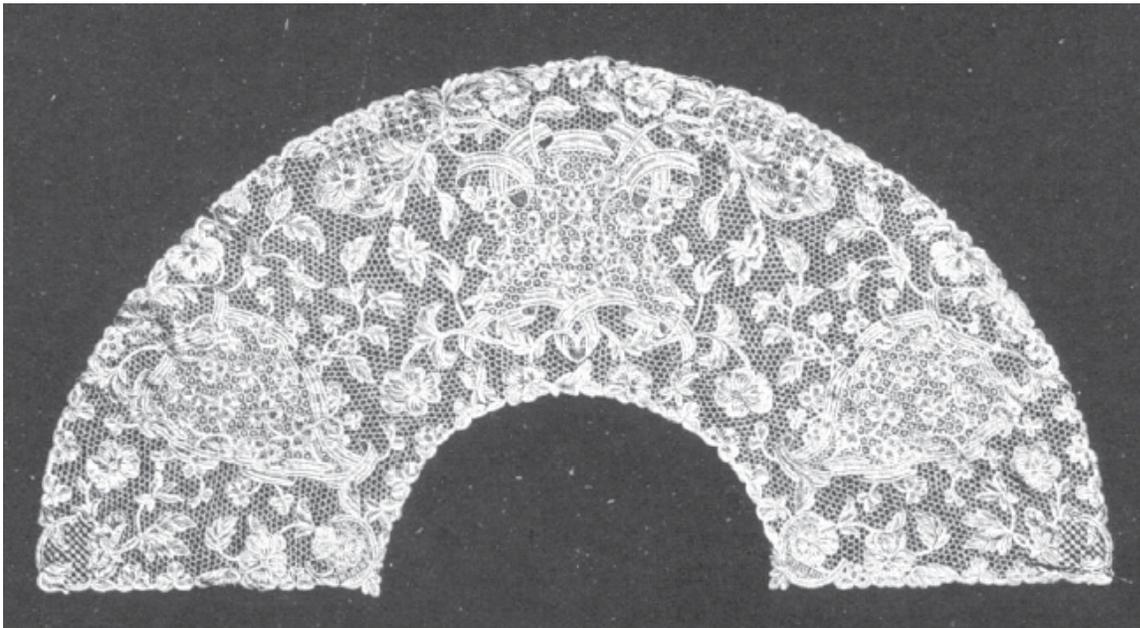


Figure 4-18 Flat needlepoint lace fan cover, made by members of the Youghal Co-operative Lace Society. In Ishbel Aberdeen, “Cottage Industries in Scotland and Ireland,” in *Art and Handicraft in the Women’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, Maud Howe Elliot, ed. (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 225. Source: University of Pennsylvania Digital Library, <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/elliott/art/219.html> (Accessed November 22, 2021).

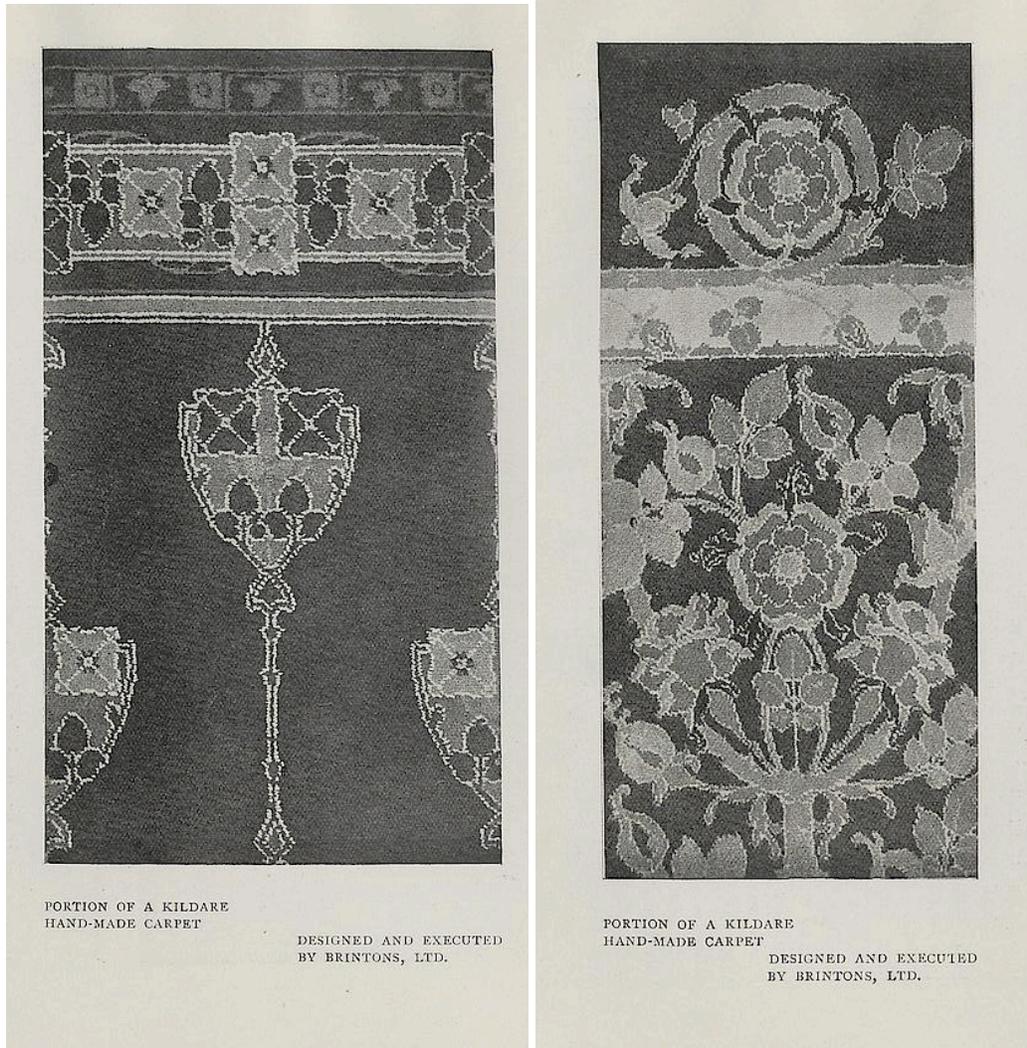


Figure 4-19 Two details of carpets made by the Kildare Carpet Company, and designed by Brinton's Ltd. (Kidderminster, England) c. 1906. In "Textile Fabrics," *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Arts* (1906): 195. Source: Heidelberg Digital Library, https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/studio_yearbook1906/0211/scroll (Accessed November 22, 2021).

Chapter 5

Emily Anderson at the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction

Imaginary Emily

It is 1915 and Emily is in Donegal. She is fifty-nine, and although she has never really thought about her age, much less felt her age, she is tired. So much that she cared for – lived for – had unravelled with the coming of war. Two of Robin's three sons were killed, one after the other in quick succession.⁸⁶⁵ She had loved them, and she worried for Robin, who was shattered by their deaths.⁸⁶⁶ I wonder if she spoke of it, or if she anticipated a note of disdain, a falseness to the words of comfort or a shoulder turned away at the news that the death in her family was in the trenches, fighting for the British Army.

The lace industry, too, was suffering. Many of the crochet classes she had visited just last year were closed. Some were trying to make a go of it, but with only their best lacemakers.⁸⁶⁷ Her reports from the 1910s document waves of depression and boom in the industry, with the different varieties of lace fluctuating in quality and demand at different rates and for different reasons. Did she feel as if she had failed the women in these remote communities, who looked to lacemaking as a way to improve their circumstances, and sat through the design classes in the hopes of earning a scholarship to study in Enniskillen?

These questions weren't particularly useful to dwell on, and she tried to focus instead on what was next, what she could do to help. This meant taking notes, making suggestions, buying teaching specimens from talented makers at a fair price. She bought boxes of soap in Dublin to distribute to the classes that didn't have it.⁸⁶⁸

Her subsistence allowance was 17s 6d a night, with 5s for the days, and at that rate it was always more economical to stay in a rented room than in a hotel – few and far between in this area.⁸⁶⁹ Warm hospitality was a comfort, and she was always happy to return to this house, whitewashed and tucked behind a stone wall. That evening, she played charades with the landlady's two boys while their mother made dinner. They reminded her of her nephews as children, and when the eldest cocked his head to the side in concentration just as Alan had, she ducked under a wave of

⁸⁶⁵ Alan James Ramsey Anderson, who had been on staff at the I.A.O.S. before he went to war, died on October 20, 1914 (age 21) and is remembered at the Le Touret Memorial in France, plaques 11 & 12. Philip Maurice Ramsey Anderson died on February 24, 1915 (age 26), and is remembered at the Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord, F.10. (Commonwealth War Graves Commission, "Alan James Ramsay (sic.) Anderson," <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/823376/alan-james-ramsay-anderson/>; "Philip Maurice Ramsay Anderson," <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/197411/philip-maurice-ramsay-anderson/> (Accessed December 10, 2021). R.A. Anderson (and presumably his family and friends) learned of Alan's death on the 11 of December, 1914 (R.A. Anderson, *With Horace Plunkett in Ireland* (MacMillan and Co. London, 1935), 193).

⁸⁶⁶ Horace Plunkett's 1915 diary makes mention of R.A. Anderson's difficulty after the death of his sons on two occasions (Diary of Horace Plunkett, August 27 and September 19, 1915).

⁸⁶⁷ Fifteenth Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1916, Cd. 8299, at 84-85. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁸⁶⁸ Anderson mentions supplying soap to a class in Donegal, and I imagine that she did so elsewhere, and it was more economical to buy soap in bulk (Letter from Emily Anderson to the Donegal County Technical Instruction Committee, September 25, 1912 (CDCA 1/19: Letters to the County Committee and Department 1912), Donegal County Archives, Lifford).

⁸⁶⁹ Officers Subsistence Allowance, October 1915 (AG/92/1/1311), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

grief at the thought of him and Phillip – her shining lads – drowned in French mud, blank postcards in their pockets.⁸⁷⁰ The war had already gone on longer than they had said it would.⁸⁷¹ Would these boys have to go someday?

It was a private sadness. She wouldn't have said as much, but she was proud that her shoulders bore up under the weight of it, that she kept steady and did her work well. She was nothing if not dependable.

All the while sitting straight-backed and dignified on her chair, she mimed a postman, a sloth, a stork, a baker, and – they guessed this one right away – a lacemaker with her crochet hook. After dinner, she sketched caricatures for each of the children, and little houses for mice, hidden by delicate webs of mosses and vines, in the stone wall that stretched from their home along the pebbled track towards the hill.⁸⁷²

* * *

In the previous chapter, I explored the intersecting philanthropic, co-operative, and government bodies that sought to organize Irish lacemaking and other crafts towards the end of the nineteenth century. In 1899, they were joined by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (DATI). The Department quickly became the most important administrator of funds and teaching in home industries. It is also where Emily Anderson spent most of her career. She was hired as an Inspector of Home Industries immediately after the DATI began operations, and stayed in the role into the mid-1920s, acquiring a reputation as an expert in lace and needlework.⁸⁷³ In this role, Anderson used the education in lace design that she had acquired under James Brenan at the Cork School of Art, as well as her teaching experience at the School and its branch classes, to establish and promote high standards of lace design and production throughout the country. She travelled, inspected workshops and classes, wrote reports, advised on museum acquisitions, appeared in court, and judged home industries displays at fairs. She also amassed an extensive collection of lace samples, which she donated to the National Museum of Ireland in 1926.

In this chapter, I will introduce the DATI, locating it within a history of attempts at industrial education reform and the struggle to attain a distinctly Irish administration for technical instruction. The fact that the DATI was located in Dublin and committed to *Irish* concerns, coloured the effectiveness of its work and the perception of its employees and inspectors. Historian James

⁸⁷⁰ George Russell (editor of *The Irish Homestead*) wrote a poem mourning Irish men who lost their lives in the Easter Rising and WWI, called “To the Memory of Some I Knew Who Are Dead and Who Loved Ireland” (published in *The Irish Times*, December 1917), which featured Alan Anderson by name, calling him “shining lad”.

⁸⁷¹ Patricia Anderson has postcards written to Emily from a soldier, or soldiers, at the front – likely her nephews, though I haven’t seen them. I can only imagine that at the beginning, like so many others, they said they missed her and would be home soon.

⁸⁷² This imaginary account of hospitality in Donegal is based on the warm welcome (and some fantastic games of charades) I experienced when invited to stay at a whitewashed home by a stone-walled track near Galway, in January 2020.

⁸⁷³ I have been unable to determine a precise end date for Anderson’s employment at the DATI, though I believe she retired in late 1925 or early 1926. I will discuss evidence for this hypothesis later on in this chapter.

Kennelly refers to the DATI as “the first truly indigenous ministry of Irish government.”⁸⁷⁴ In this, it stood in contrast to the DSA’s centralized South Kensington System. However, this does not mean that all sense of conflict between centre and periphery disappeared – it simply shifted into a distinctly Irish context. In order to develop technical instruction schemes, the DATI co-operated – and sometimes conflicted – with the new County Councils formed by the Local Governments Act of 1898 (fig. 5.1). Emily Anderson’s inspection work also overlapped with that of the IAOS organizers, who maintained an active role in the Home Industries Societies even as the co-operatives began to apply to the DATI for grants.

Emily Anderson’s career at the DATI is only hinted in the Department’s archive, which is itself full of gaps. A thorough investigation of county archives is outside of the scope of this project.⁸⁷⁵ However, Anderson did make reports, and her activities were commented on in newspaper articles about home industries, Irish lace, and craft displays at regional fairs. Information about her work appears in evidence presented at the 1907 Digby Committee of Inquiry into the Working of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, though she was never called as a witness. I will use the British Home Office’s Board of Woman Factory Inspectors, founded in 1893, as a comparative case study in approaching this material. The ‘Woman Inspectors’ as they became known, monitored labour law infractions in Ireland as well, leaving documentation of their professional activities – and personal journals and memoirs. Both the Woman Inspectors and Emily Anderson also appeared in court, but for very different reasons. As such, Anderson’s itinerant – and female – inspection work was not without precedent, but differences in portfolio and government affiliation prompt questions of how she may have interacted differently with those that she inspected.

There are also traces of Emily Anderson’s work at the DATI in the National Museum of Ireland’s Decorative Arts Division. Anderson advised on at least one acquisition: a tabernacle veil in Kenmare needlepoint lace, now celebrated as one of the most iconic pieces of ‘golden age’ Irish lace. In 1926, around the time of her retirement, she also donated a series of small lace specimens from her own collection. Many of these remain in their original folders, accompanied by labels indicating their place of origin and a series of lists that Anderson drew up to facilitate cataloguing. The selection, organization, and storage of the specimens provide evidence of how they would have been

⁸⁷⁴ Kennelly, “Dawn of the Practical,” 71-72.

⁸⁷⁵ Consulting a series of county archives was my original intention, however I was only able to access the Donegal County Archive before these plans were sidelined by COVID-19 travel restrictions.

used in Anderson's inspecting and, it seems, teaching. Much of the collection consists of crochet lace, and in this chapter I will begin to focus increasingly on crochet design and production. This is partly because of the material available to me. Crochet lace makes up the majority of the 1926 donation, and Anderson wrote most about crochet because of the unique circumstances it faced in the early-twentieth century: copyright infringements, dispersed production, and massive fluctuations in quality and demand.

This increased emphasis on crochet in Emily Anderson's teaching and inspection work mirrors my own lace learning and making practice, which became focused on crochet lace during the course of my research and writing. Several aspects of Anderson's work reach forward into the later-twentieth century, and, I speculate, bridge the gap between her inspection and my own 'lace inspecting' and lacemaking. The first of these is her work in the Congested Districts, where Elizabeth Quigley, who taught Máire Treanor's first lace teacher, Nan Caulfield (née Quigley), trained and taught. Emily Anderson would have had an impact on the style and quality of lace emerging from these areas, even if she never interacted directly with Elizabeth Quigley. It is very likely that pieces of crochet in the 1926 donation were made by ancestors or teachers of the women involved in forming the Clones Lace Guild, an organization co-founded by Máire Treanor. Later in her career, Anderson also increasingly acted as judge of home industries displays and competitions at regional fairs – or *Feis* – which suggests a slow shift to lace production on a smaller scale, as amateur craft. This occurred alongside the the IAOS's handover of the Co-operative Home Industries Societies to the United Irishwomen, who would later become the Irish Countrywomen's Association, a force for education in Irish 'heritage crafts' from the mid-century period onward. In Chapter 6, I will explore how these lineages and changing contexts for craft production, with their roots in this early-twentieth-century period when Emily Anderson travelled throughout Ireland working for the DATI, evolved in meaning and purpose in the decades that followed.

5.1 The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction

In 1868, the British Government appointed a commission to investigate the possibility of creating a Department of Science and Art for Ireland. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, art and design education had been for the most part administered by the United Kingdom's DSA, based in London. However, the commission's report recommended that no new department be created, as such a step would be detrimental to the development of the arts in Ireland. One of the issues it foresaw was that

such a move would “involve the severance of the Science and Art Schools of that country from those of England and Scotland; and would thereby deprive the students of the Irish Schools of the great advantage of Imperial competition, and so tend to restrict their prospects to the comparatively narrow field afforded by their own country which would undoubtedly be a disadvantage.”⁸⁷⁶

The report also highlighted the lack of manufacturing in Ireland at the time. There was simply no reason to obtain an education in art and design, because there was no outlet for such skill. This is the same issue that Russell Martin and Matthew Holland debated in 1888 in relation to the Cork School of Art, in Chapter 2. The commissioners reported that: “an art school even when established has great difficulties to contend with in Ireland. There are but few manufactures in Ireland. There is scarcely any opportunity for an artisan to turn his acquired powers of drawing or designing to account. It is therefore very difficult to persuade him to learn.”⁸⁷⁷ The report gives the short-lived Dublin Normal Lace school as an example of an enterprise that failed for exactly this reason. The school had received a grant from the Department, and had taught a number of women to design and make lace in the 1850s. However, no market could be found for the lace that the school produced, and despite the interventions of philanthropists, it had to be closed.⁸⁷⁸

In 1881, Queen Victoria issued a Royal Commission to investigate methods in technical instruction on the Continent, and compare them to methods currently employed in workplaces, schools, museums, and libraries in the United Kingdom.⁸⁷⁹ This research was to be fed back into British and Irish manufacturing and education, and it was wildly diverse: the commission’s many reports include information about the age required for school attendance in Paris, the chemical laboratories at Oxford University, calico printing in the Alsace, mining in Saxony, and the School of Art Embroidery in Vienna. They consulted an array of experts, including William Morris. The Commission’s second report included an “Outline of a Scheme for Technical Instruction in Ireland” devised by William Kirby Sullivan (1821-1890), President of Queen’s College Cork.⁸⁸⁰ Sullivan’s scheme was divided into four sections – Art, Science, Agriculture, and Trades – and considered both theoretical training in schools and practical training in workshops. It outlined how pre-existing

⁸⁷⁶ Thirtieth report of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices, 1883, C. 3618, at xcii. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁸⁷⁷ 30th Report of the Science and Art Department, xciii.

⁸⁷⁸ 30th Report of the Science and Art Department, xciii.

⁸⁷⁹ First Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction, 1882, C. 3171, at 3-4. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁸⁸⁰ Second Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction (Vol. III), 1884, C. 3981-II, at cvii-cxix. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

government bodies and educational institutions could expand their duties to better promote technical education. Towns could, for example, form committees to establish an art class under the authority of the DSA; a similar method was used to create the branch classes discussed in Chapter 2. Sullivan also highlighted the importance of both scientific and technical education for agriculture, arguing that “no matter how handicrafts may hereafter be developed, or whatever large manufacturing workshops may grow up, it must, for obvious reasons, always be the main occupation of the people of Ireland.”⁸⁸¹ Though Sullivan’s suggestions were adapted piecemeal – for example, in expanding branch classes associated with the Cork School of Art – his scheme did not have a great or lasting impact on the state of technical education in Ireland. The Royal Commission did lead to the passing of the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, which applied to England, Wales, and Ireland. It allowed counties and boroughs to raise funds for technical instruction by taxation. Nevertheless, Ireland’s Local Governments Act would not be passed until 1898, so only municipal governments could take advantage of this new ability, and they still had to abide by the centralized and standardized regulations of the DSA.⁸⁸²

5.1.1 Horace Plunkett and the Recess Committee

Ultimately, the impetus to reform Ireland’s system of Technical Instruction would come from closer to home. It would be a part of a much bigger scheme to reform Irish agriculture and industry, through the establishment of a new government body, the DATI. In his history of the Department, DATI employee and historian Daniel Hoctor credits Horace Plunkett and Thomas P. Gill (1858-1931) as “the two principal architects of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.”⁸⁸³ Plunkett and Gill worked together to establish a basis from which to gather information and outline a plan for the new Department, forming a committee for this purpose and leveraging their very different social and political alignments to recruit a diverse membership.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, Plunkett was a Unionist with connections in the Viceregal Court – demonstrated by his collaboration with the IIA – who believed that landlords had an important

⁸⁸¹ Second Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction (Vol. III), cxii.

⁸⁸² Kieran R. Byrne, “Approaches to Technical Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland,” in *Technical Education: Essays Dedicated to the Memory of Michael Clune*, ed. Kieran Byrne (Dublin Institute of Technology Publications, 1983), 19-20.

⁸⁸³ Daniel Hoctor, *The Department’s Story: a History of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1971), 28. Hoctor (1900-1971) was a longtime employee of the DATI and experienced much of what he describes in the book first-hand. He began working as an Agricultural Instructor in Co. Cork in 1923, became an Inspector in 1933, and Chief Agricultural Inspector in 1953 (see Hoctor, xiii-xiv for further biographical information). He may have crossed paths with Emily Anderson, but almost certainly met her brother, R.A.

role to play in agricultural reform. Gill was a perfect foil to Plunkett's Anglo-Irish Unionism. From North Tipperary, his family had long been involved in Nationalist journalism and politics, and as a young man he had worked for land reform and tenant rights, even before the foundation of the Land League.⁸⁸⁴ Gill also was widely-travelled and linguistically-gifted, and his career as a newspaper editor brought him into contact with members of the Irish literary and revivalist circles. Irish writer and critic Seán Ó Faoláin (1900-1991) later recognized Gill for using his position at the *Dublin Daily Express* to promote Irish Literary Theatre in its early days; in it he published work by George Moore and W.B. Yeats, who praised his editorial "brilliance."⁸⁸⁵ Despite their differences, Plunkett and Gill worked well together, and as was the case with the IAOS – with its land agent, Catholic priest, Celtic-R revival writer, and Tory MP – the diversity of political and religious opinion embodied in their leadership increased the appeal of their cause.

In August 1895, Plunkett wrote an open letter to be published in Irish newspapers, calling for "any practical Irishman whose opinion is of value" to join a committee which would research, develop, and propose a Board of Agriculture and Technical Instruction Bill for Ireland.⁸⁸⁶ The Recess Committee, of which Plunkett was Chairman and T.P. Gill Honorary Secretary, was formed shortly after and consisted of a diverse array of politicians, landlords, and experts from various counties (though some important political figures refused to join and work with their opponents, namely Justin McCarthy of the Nationalist Anti-Parnellites and the Unionist and Orange Leader Colonel Saunderson).⁸⁸⁷ As had been the case for the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction in 1881, representatives of the Committee chiefly travelled to continental Europe to gather research. T.P. Gill toured France and Denmark – the latter had long been a rival and model to the Irish dairy industry – and the statistician Michael G. Mulhall travelled through Belgium, Holland, Bavaria, Wurtenburg, Austria, Hungary, and Switzerland.⁸⁸⁸

The Recess Committee presented its findings in a report to Chief Secretary of Ireland, Gerald Balfour, on August 1, 1896, less than a year after Plunkett had written a letter to Irish newspapers suggesting the scheme.⁸⁸⁹ It was extensive, detailing the relationship between government and industry in Ireland's past as well as its future: "British legislation in the past had crippled Irish

⁸⁸⁴ Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 26.

⁸⁸⁵ Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 27.

⁸⁸⁶ 27 August 1895, quoted in Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 29.

⁸⁸⁷ Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 30.

⁸⁸⁸ Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 30.

⁸⁸⁹ Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 29, 31.

industry and commerce and had led to a diminishing population without industrial habits or technical skill.”⁸⁹⁰ As was the case in the mid-nineteenth-century calls for increased industry and design education in Chapter 1, the Famine haunted these statements as an example of what could happen in a non-industrialized country too dependent on a single form of agriculture. Many of the most talented Irish workers had emigrated, taking their skills with them – this was certainly an issue in the lace industry, as evidenced in Chapter 4 by IAOS reports celebrating the *lack* of emigration in areas with Home Industries Societies. The Recess Committee proposed that the remedy for these ills lay in the development of agriculture and natural resources, such as fishing, water power, and afforestation, but also in better government intervention into education.⁸⁹¹ In the sphere of education in ‘art for industry,’ it suggested that the new Department take over from the DSA in administering art and design education. The Report stipulated that “local freedom and applied design” should govern educational structures, pointing to the Lambeth potteries and Nottingham lace industry, which established their own design schools – separate from South Kensington – for the products they specialized in making.⁸⁹²

However much it advocated for local autonomy, the Recess Committee acknowledged the role of expertise. T.W. Rolleston (1857-1920), managing director and secretary of the IIA from 1894-1897 and Honorary Secretary of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland from 1898-1908, wrote a Memorandum on Technical Instruction and artistic handicrafts for the Recess Committee, which cited Alan Cole’s visits to Ireland as an example of how occasional visits from authorities in the field might benefit industries:

Visits of this kind were paid some years ago (repeated at the strong desire of the centres in question in December, 1895) to the lace-making centres in Ireland, by Mr. Alan Cole, of the Science and Arts Department, South Kensington; and their vivifying effect very remarkable. I have seen at a certain convent, where point-lace is made, a series of specimens of lace arranged in chronological order, to show the progress of the work from the beginning; and I found that it was possible to put one’s finger on the very spot where the influence of Mr. Alan Cole’s visits began to be felt; so much did the designs from that period onwards gain in

⁸⁹⁰ Hoctor, *The Department’s Story*, 31.

⁸⁹¹ Keiran Byrne notes that in this emphasis on education, the Recess Committee was continuing in the same tradition of the 1881 Royal Commission on Technical Instruction and the Belmore (1898) and Palles (1899) Commissions, which recommended practical education in National Schools and Intermediate Schools (Byrne, “Approaches to Technical Education,” 235).

⁸⁹² Report of the Recess Committee on the Establishment of a Department of Agriculture and Industries for Ireland, with appendices (Dublin, Browne and Nolan, 1896), 104, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=ujjXAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PA104&hl=en>.

freedom and grace.⁸⁹³

The Report also referenced the findings of the 1881 Royal Commission on Technical Instruction discussed above, concurring that the people of Ireland seem well suited to artistic handicrafts.⁸⁹⁴ However, its findings had shown that the market in Britain was saturated with products from cottage industries in more distant places such as Bavaria, Switzerland, and Russia.⁸⁹⁵ Some of these industries had been established within the last twenty to fifty years, and most by co-operation between government and commercial bodies, and local associations of workers, and it was this model that the committee proposed.⁸⁹⁶ It referenced the success of the convent lace schools at Youghal, Kenmare, and Kinsale, and suggests that even more could be accomplished “if the fostering action of the State is brought into play.”⁸⁹⁷ It is important to note, however, that this use of continental European models for craft development was not limited to such bureaucratic channels; design historian Joseph McBrinn has shown how Russian cottage industries in particular influenced communities of craft in Ulster during this turn-of-the-century period.⁸⁹⁸ The Recess Committee Report replicated the vision of home industries as contributing to domestic comfort – as enjoyable and improving labour – that we have seen in the previous chapters, remarking that “a small farmer’s or cottier’s family” should soon be able to supplement their income “while, at the same time, adding greatly to the enjoyment of life by filling their idle time in the long winter evenings with an attractive occupation which keeps the family circle together.”⁸⁹⁹ This focus on applied design was also in contrast to the DSA’s mandate for the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. At the time that the DATI took responsibility for the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, the general feeling was that applied design was not enough of a priority in the institution.⁹⁰⁰ Matthew Holland echoed this sentiment in relation to the Cork School of Art in Chapter 2. The DSA had been more focused on the fine arts, even despite the large numbers of

⁸⁹³ T.W. Rolleston, “Memorandum on Technical Education Applied to Artistic Handicrafts in Ireland” in Report of the Recess Committee, 417. Rolleston was also a supported of the co-operative movement and later an employee of the DATI. He organized lectures from 1900-1905, and organized the DATI’s contribution to the St. Louis Exhibition in 1904 (William Murphy, “Rolleston, Thomas William Hazen (T. W.),” Cambridge Dictionary of Irish Biography Online, October 2009, <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.007782.v1>).

⁸⁹⁴ Report of the Recess Committee, 36.

⁸⁹⁵ Report of the Recess Committee, 37.

⁸⁹⁶ Report of the Recess Committee, 39.

⁸⁹⁷ Report of the Recess Committee, 80.

⁸⁹⁸ Joseph McBrinn, “The peasant and folk art revival in Ireland, 1890-1920: with special reference to Ulster,” *Ulster Folklife* Vol. 48 (2002): 14-61.

⁸⁹⁹ Report of the Recess Committee, 40.

⁹⁰⁰ James Brenan, “Art Instruction in Ireland,” in *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural* ed. W.P. Coyne (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1902), 147, <https://archive.org/details/irelandindustria00irelrich/page/n193/mode/2up>.

needlework and lacemaking competitions discussed in earlier chapters. In fact, lacemaking was one of the few applied arts in Ireland that received this focused and sustained attention from the DSA during the period from 1883, after the Cork Exhibition, to the formation of the DATI in 1899.

The Recess Committee submitted their report in August 1896, and in the following years, Plunkett and Gill worked tirelessly to keep it in the public eye so that it would not simply be forgotten. Plunkett wrote letters to newspapers, and Gill promoted the new Department as Editor of the *Dublin Daily Express*.⁹⁰¹ The Bill was first read in Parliament on May 9, 1899, and debated both in Parliament and in the press for much of that summer. Critics attacked its financial provisions and management structure. Nationalists felt that it was part of the British government's attempt to "kill Home Rule with kindness," and Chief Secretary of Ireland Gerald Balfour, who had coined the phrase four years earlier, did nothing to counter this impression.⁹⁰² Indeed, it *was* an aspect of the British Government's attempt to conciliate Ireland, as the establishment of the Congested Districts Board in 1891 and passing of the Local Governments Acts in 1898 had been.⁹⁰³ But it also had the potential to do tremendous good. It was a bold experiment: "a Department, which for the first time in the history not only of Irish but also of British administration, was to be directly advised and influenced by representatives of the people with whom its work was concerned."⁹⁰⁴ The Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act was passed in 1899, with the stipulation that the DATI should begin its work on April 1, 1900.

5.1.2 Technical Instruction at the DATI

Many of the new department's staff had been directly involved with the Recess Committee. Horace Plunkett was appointed Vice-President, and T.P. Gill Secretary, despite some opposition from influential Unionists who mistrusted him for his record of involvement in Nationalist politics.⁹⁰⁵ R.A. Anderson's autobiography recounts his family and colleagues encouraging him to apply for the position of Secretary, which Plunkett offered to him if he wanted it. However, Anderson did not feel cut out for "the tortuous problems" of work in the civil service, and Plunkett had offered the position merely out of courtesy, with Gill already in mind.⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰¹ Hoor, *The Department's Story*, 34.

⁹⁰² Hoor, *The Department's Story*, 36.

⁹⁰³ Byrne, "Approaches to Technical Education," 235.

⁹⁰⁴ Hoor, *The Department's Story*, 34.

⁹⁰⁵ Hoor, *The Department's Story*, 41.

⁹⁰⁶ Hoor, *The Department's Story*, 42. This account is drawn from Anderson's memoir, *With Horace Plunkett in Ireland*.

The DATI was divided into two branches: the Agricultural Branch, and the smaller Technical Instruction Branch. Both were governed by boards that advised the Department on all actions relevant to their portfolio. The DATI was authorized to collect information, conduct research and experiments, and inquire into any issues pertaining to agriculture and rural industries in Ireland, and to employ any staff they required: inspectors, secretaries, officers and servants.⁹⁰⁷ Much of the DATI's resources and energy were invested in the Agricultural Branch, but for the purposes of this study, I will focus on the Technical Instruction Branch, and the characteristics thereof that had the greatest impact on Emily Anderson's work as a lace inspector.⁹⁰⁸

The Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act of 1899 stipulated that administration of the Science and Art grant for Ireland (previously administered by South Kensington) and the Technical Instruction grant that had been established by the Technical Instruction Act (Ireland) of 1889 would pass to the DATI on April 1, 1901.⁹⁰⁹ On the same date, the South Kensington Museum's Board of Education's Irish duties transferred to the DATI; these included administration of the Science and Art grant, the Technical Education grant, and the Science and Art Institutions, namely the National Museum of Ireland, the Royal College of Science, the Metropolitan School of Art, the National Library of Ireland, and the Royal Botanic Gardens.⁹¹⁰ Though the DATI's technical instruction work also overlapped with that of the CDB, the new Department did not supplant it. Section 18 of the 1899 Act refers explicitly to the CDB, stipulating that the DATI can carry out the Board's duties in congested districts, but only if the Board or some other local authorities cover the cost. The Bill states that "no money placed at the disposal of the Department by this part of the Act shall be applied in or in relation to a congested districts county."⁹¹¹

As the Recess Committee had suggested, the DATI attempted to balance central authority and the development of higher education and expertise with local concerns. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this characteristic. Historian Kieran Byrne has argued that: "the structure and administrative mode of the Department were based on the principle of decentralization. Therefore,

⁹⁰⁷ Bill for establishing a Dept. of Agriculture and other Industries, and Technical Instruction, in Ireland, H.C. 1899 (180) 62 Vict., at 3.

⁹⁰⁸ For a more detailed analysis of the 1899 Act, see Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 38-41. Kieran Byrne provides a detailed analysis of the Department's structure in Byrne, "The department of agriculture and technical instruction: Administrative structure and educational policy, 1900-1906," *Irish Educational Studies* Vol. 2 No. 1 (1982): 233-252.

⁹⁰⁹ First Annual General Report for the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1901, Cd. 838, at 52. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹¹⁰ 1st DATI Annual General Report, 10.

⁹¹¹ Bill for establishing a Dept. of Agriculture and other Industries, 8.

to fully appreciate the impact of the Department, one must examine its performance at both central and local levels.”⁹¹² The First DATI Annual report stated that: “from the Science and Art Institutions in Dublin, down to the secondary school in a little semi-rural town in the provinces, the agricultural and the industrial features of technical instruction are continuously interwoven, and must be considered with a common thought for both.”⁹¹³ Municipal regions created by the Local Governments Act of 1898 called County Boroughs were encouraged to create their own schemes for industrial development and education, which would then be supported by DATI expertise and funds. The Technical Instruction Branch received £55,000 a year, which was divided into two portions: one for approved schemes in the County Boroughs, and one for schemes elsewhere.⁹¹⁴ Outside of the Boroughs, the DATI liaised with County and Urban Committees for Technical Instruction. Such a system meant that the DATI could stay in touch with local concerns, and support communities in developing industries according to the resources and skills available in their region. In a surprising revelation of administrative cunning, the DATI also stated that taking responsibility for their own technical instruction schemes would engender in the counties a “sympathetic understanding of the necessarily tedious process by which sound reforms of this kind are accomplished.”⁹¹⁵ As I will show later in this chapter, some counties were more sympathetic and understanding than others.

Inspectors were important links in this sprawling network of classes and schools administered by County Boroughs and County and Urban Committees, with the DATI offices – at least ostensibly – in the center of it all. Emily Anderson’s job as Inspector of Lace was to “create a human link between the Department and the local bodies, [to] keep the Department itself, as no other method could, in intimate touch with the actual conditions of the country.”⁹¹⁶ The DATI began its work in offices on Upper Merrion Street, Dublin, in April 1900, and Emily Anderson was hired that summer. Horace Plunkett’s influence in the hiring process, knowledge of Emily Anderson’s expertise, and friendship with her brother cumulatively suggest that he was responsible for selecting her for the position. She left the Crawford School of Art in Cork to take up the post in

⁹¹² Byrne, “The department of agriculture and technical instruction,” 236-237.

⁹¹³ 1st DATI Annual General Report, 14.

⁹¹⁴ 1st DATI Annual General Report, 12.

⁹¹⁵ 1st DATI Annual General Report, 17.

⁹¹⁶ 1st DATI Annual General Report, 18.

August 1900.⁹¹⁷ Amy Whitelegge and Minnie Nagle were hired to teach the design classes after her departure.⁹¹⁸

DATI reports and newspaper articles that reference Anderson's work as a DATI employee often use different titles: Inspectress of Lace, Inspectress of Lace Schools and Classes, Special Junior Inspector, Superintendent. She is also sometimes referred to as an expert in needlework or home industries. I will refer to Anderson primarily as an Inspector of Lace, but when drawing from a particular document will defer to the title it uses, because I think that these inconsistencies are telling. They show a new Department in motion, organizing and developing its employee roster and their portfolios from nothing, as well as a press adjusting to reporting on the actions of these civil servants who were, all of a sudden, everywhere. Her position may also have been somewhat tenuous and changeable – as of 1905, she made a respectable £200 per annum, but her contract was still classified as 'temporary,' and renewable every six months.⁹¹⁹

Anderson's first year at the DATI was devoted to acquainting herself with the state of the lace and crochet industry in Ireland outside of County Cork, where she had gone to school and worked for about twenty years.⁹²⁰ She likely spent much of the year travelling to see workshops and schools further north and west, and conducting research on best practices in organizing the lace industry, reading government reports and the accounts of the members of the Recess Committee. The DATI began to supply direct aid to lace and crochet classes in the autumn of 1900, and soon after began to require that instructors for the classes met their standards of practice.⁹²¹ Only one year into the job, Anderson began evaluating and selecting instructors for the DATI's classes in technical instruction for women. In November 1901, she was sent to County Carlow to attend a meeting of

⁹¹⁷ August 29, 1900, School of Art Committee Minute Book 1899-1901 (VEC06/8), Cork City and County Archives; HC Deb 7 March 1905, Vol. 142 Col. 589-90; *Irish Examiner* December 15, 1902. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹¹⁸ Whitelegge was hired to teach the daytime classes, three days a week at a salary of £30 per annum, and Nagle the evening classes, at £20 per annum (January 30, 1901, School of Art Committee Minute Book 1899-1901 (VEC06/8), Cork City and County Archives).

⁹¹⁹ HC Deb 7 March 1905, Vol. 142 Col. 589-90. The only other record I have found of specific, employment related information is from 1908, when Anderson's wages as "Inspectress of Lace Schools and Classes" remained at £200 per annum. This wage seems to take into account her extensive education and seniority. In comparison, temporary clerks received between £40 and £50, Inspectresses of Domestic Economy received £150, G.H. Pethybridge PhD, a "teacher of Agricultural Biology" received £250, and a fisheries engineer received £600 (DATI Salaries of Employees (1908) (AGO/92/1/80), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin).

⁹²⁰ The DATI's First Annual Report states that: "...during the first year of their existence, the Department were largely occupied in constructing and organizing their machinery, and planning and laying down the principles of their future action" (1st DATI Annual General Report, 16).

⁹²¹ Third Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1904, Cd.1919, at 86. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

the county's Agriculture and Technical Instruction Committee and interview candidates not only in lace and crochet, but in needlework, dressmaking, and knitting.⁹²²

Because the DATI supported existing industries, many of the first workshops and classes that Emily Anderson inspected were those of the IAOS Co-operative Home Industries, which could apply to the DATI for grants. In June 1901, she visited the Cruagh Home Industries Society in south County Dublin, congratulating the members on the quality of their work and suggesting that the workers also train in freehand and blackboard drawing to improve their lacemaking. The DATI had granted £42 15s to the Society up to the previous September, which suggests that Anderson had likely visited it to assess its suitability for a grant the previous year.⁹²³ In 1902, she made a speech to the Castlebellingham Co-operative Home Industries Society, congratulating them on their good work and pointed out “several useful matters of technique in lacemaking.”⁹²⁴ After a successful showing at the RDS and the Glasgow Exhibition the year before, as well as at sales in London, Liverpool and Manchester, the Society had been able to reduce the amount of their DATI grant, and were closer to complete self-sufficiency. Anderson and Miss Reynolds, of the IAOS, inspected the lace class at Clogherhead, County Louth, within days of each other in October 1904. They both praised the class's teacher, Miss (Ellen) Marron, who must have been very talented – Reynolds called her “the best in Ireland,” and she taught at the first DATI summer course in lace and crochet.⁹²⁵ Their reports were both favorable, but what if that had not been the case? Anderson and Reynolds must have been aware that they were, in effect, competing inspectors, needing to represent their organization well – and stay on the good side of the county committees and Home Industries Societies – while also fulfilling their roles as inspectors.⁹²⁶ By 1911, Anderson's “usual” duties included: “Inspection duty,

⁹²² “Carlow Agriculture and Technical Instruction Committee,” *Nationalist and Leinster Times* November 16, 1901, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹²³ “Cruagh (Home Industries),” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 7 Iss. 2 (November 9, 1901): 751.

⁹²⁴ “Castlebellingham (Co-operative Home Industries Ltd.),” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 8 Iss. 1 (March 28, 1902): 246.

⁹²⁵ “Meeting in Support of Lacemaking at Clogherhead,” *Drogheda Argus and Leinster Journal* October 22, 1904, 5. Irish News Archive. ‘Ellen Marron’ appears in the list of teachers for the 1903 DATI summer course in lace and crochet (3rd DATI Annual General Report, 86), this is not a common last name, so I hypothesize that it is the same person.

⁹²⁶ In 1910/1911, the IAOS reported that their Home Industries Organizer, Miss Reynolds, had gone to work for the United Irishwomen (IAOS Annual Report 1910/1911, 18), and in 1912/1913, the IAOS reported that they no longer had a Home Industries Societies organizer on staff (IAOS Annual Report 1912/1913, 25). In his history of the ICA, Diarmaid Ferriter states that: “In terms of their relationship with the male bastion that was the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, the society requested that the department provide instructresses, and if possible pay for them. But they were anxious to avoid being tied to the state.” He does not, however, indicate which industries sought instructresses, or if inspectors from the DATI attended classes (Ferriter, *Mothers, Maidens, and Myths*, 8).

test examinations, visits of enquiry, office work, correspondence, with occasional attendance as a judge of home industries in some of the more important County Shows.’⁹²⁷

5.2 Emily Anderson, Inspectress: traces in text

Emily Anderson’s primary role at the DATI was to inspect lace and crochet classes, evaluate their progress and make suggestions for improvement. After 1908, she also wielded considerable power in determining which classes should qualify for financial support from the Department, inspection having been substituted for examination in assessing schools of Technical Instruction. The fact that the Department relied so heavily on inspection and reporting for the regulation of its grant system would seem to indicate the existence of a plethora of records, but the DATI archive is full of gaps, and Emily Anderson a mere shadow within it. Inspectors regularly submitted reports to the Department, but I have only been able to track down a very few of these – in Donegal. The DATI records in the National Archives of Ireland make tantalizing reference to the submission of ‘Inspector’s travelling accounts,’ but I have not been able to find any, and certainly none submitted by Emily Anderson.⁹²⁸ However, Anderson’s interactions with those she inspected left traces outside of the DATI archive – in newspapers and even in the British Parliamentary debates. Her work also overlapped with that of a much better-documented group of professional women inspectors. In this section, I will introduce the British Home Office’s Women Factory Inspectors as a comparative case study, and consider how Anderson’s inspection activities would have been received by those in the communities to which she travelled.

5.2.1 The Women Factory Inspectors in Ireland

The Board of Woman Factory Inspectors was founded in 1893 by the British Home Office to conduct inspections of women’s industries, which at that time meant primarily textiles, as well as tailoring, and late-stage production roles such as ceramic painting. In Ireland, ‘Woman Inspectors’ –

⁹²⁷ Eleventh Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1912, Cc. 6107, at 138. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹²⁸ Officer’s Subsistence Allowance (AG/92/1/1311), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin. Archivists at the NAI noted on several occasions that the DATI archives seem incomplete, perhaps even because of the fire at Four Courts in 1922, which destroyed many Irish government documents. My suspicion is that the DATI jettisoned documents relating to Technical Instruction once it was no longer in its portfolio, and that much of the remaining material is spread throughout smaller local archives, collected by the County Committees. Further research in these archives would likely prove useful in determining how the inspectors did their work. The Department in its current iteration may also have uncatalogued records, though my inquiry about this resulted in being directed to the NAI.

as they came to be known – primarily investigated the sprigging (or embroidery) industry, a close relation to lacemaking. The fact that they were women, and focused on the wellbeing of workers rather than the improvement of product quality, sets their inspection activities apart from those of Alan Cole. However, the Woman Inspectors’ activities in Ireland still demonstrate the impact of class and nationality on the practice and reception of labour and design inspection. As a case study, the Woman Inspectors offer an example of how the identity and positionality of the inspector as an individual and representative of a government body inflects their relationship with those they observe, and attempt to assist and educate.

The first two Women Factory Inspectors to be appointed, in the spring of 1893, were May Abraham (later Mrs. H.J. Tennant, C.H., 1869-1946), and Mary Paterson (1864-1941).⁹²⁹ Their good work affirmed the value of such a scheme, and in 1894 Lucy Deane (1865-1950) and Adelaide Mary Anderson (1863-1936) joined them, followed by others over the next few years.⁹³⁰ Adelaide Anderson’s account of her long career as a Woman Inspector, from 1893-1921, paints a vivid picture of the wit and spunk these women demonstrated in the field. They travelled extensively throughout mainland Britain and Ireland; in an average year they inspected 6,000-7,000 factories, 3,000-4,000 workshops, visited workers in their homes (both factory workers and outworkers who completed tasks a home), as well as hospitals and courts.⁹³¹ One Woman Inspector remarked that it was no wonder the inspectors did not like to have picnics on their holidays, because they were always eating their lunch in the most inconvenient places.⁹³² Sometimes they used surprise visits to catch suspicious employers in the act. A letter Anderson received from a Mrs. Drury (Miss Whitworth), former Woman Inspector, recounts a tale of darkness, gaslight and subterfuge, reminiscent of a Sherlock Holmes story. In this case the villain is an employer causing underage employees to work overtime in garment manufacture:

After such a day’s work I once found a wire waiting for me at home from my Senior, ‘Meet me at Aldgate East Station midnight for overtime inspection.’ This was thrilling, for a Junior Inspector is always ready for an expedition of that kind...and I went to the appointed spot. We then walked to a tailor’s house in a street full of these workshops, having a borrowed lamp.... I went to the basement with my lamp, and my Senior went upstairs to an empty dark workroom, then we met together in the sitting-room, where there was a mass of unfinished

⁹²⁹ Adelaide Mary Anderson, *Women in the Factory: an Administrative Adventure, 1893 to 1921* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922), 9. Other ‘Lady Inspectors’ also wrote memoirs about their unusual careers. See: Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation to Another, 1839-1944* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1944); Rose Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service: an Industrial Retrospect* (London: Nisbet, 1927).

⁹³⁰ Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, 9.

⁹³¹ Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, 216.

⁹³² Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, 220.

coats and trousers evidently thrown down in a hurry; then in the bedroom we found, in bed, fully dressed, a little girl of fourteen I had seen before.... Proceedings followed, but these entailed more than a days' [sic] work, for the employer disappeared, and was traced with much difficulty....⁹³³

As this account shows, the Inspectors were intrepid women; they were also trained and knowledgeable. They reported to the British Home Office, and also appeared in court, where they shocked the male-dominated legal sphere with their self-possession and thorough knowledge of labor law, health and hygiene.

The fact that the Inspectors were women changed their relationship with those whom they were sent to inspect. In Chapters 1 and 3, I discussed the utopian form of gender solidarity in which wealthy British women could imaginatively participate by wearing lace made by their less fortunate 'sisters.' As Elaine Freedgood argues, nineteenth-century lace consumers were able to take the perspective that "lace making is its own reward" because of the "excellent qualities" the act of making it promotes.⁹³⁴ Philanthropists such as Ishbel Aberdeen emphasized the importance of women helping women, through purchasing and wearing the work of rural Irish women's hands.

The Woman Factory Inspectors embodied this 'solidarity' in a different way in their inspection work. It is important to note that although the inspectors were civil servants, rather than private philanthropists, their work was also informed by class distinction and the uneven power dynamics of benevolence. In fact, historians Ruth Livesey and Helen Jones argue that their activities served to emphasize and "consolidat[e] existing class and patriarchal relations."⁹³⁵ In Ireland, the inspectors also participated in the enforcement of British governance during Union. Their ability to advocate for the the welfare of women and children was therefore predicated on a flawed system, which was partly to blame for the suffering they sought to ameliorate.⁹³⁶ However, it does seem that the women they inspected found them more approachable than their male counterparts. Though class distinctions distanced them from, for example, a porcelain painter at a factory in England or a

⁹³³ Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, 221.

⁹³⁴ Freedgood, "Fine Fingers," 636.

⁹³⁵ Helen Jones, "Women Health Workers: the case of the first women factory inspectors in Britain," *Social History of Medicine* Vol. 1(1988):171, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/1.2.165>; Ruth Livesey, "The Politics of Work: feminism, professionalization and women inspectors of factories and workshops," *Women's History Review* Vol. 13 No. 2 (2004): 233-262, DOI: 10.1080/09612020400200391.

⁹³⁶ For more on this complicated dynamic in nineteenth-century social work, see: Margot Hillel and Shurlee Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada, and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester University Press, 2010). For an examination of this dynamic in another colonial context, see: Barbara Harrison and Melanie Nolan, "Reflections in colonial glass? women factory inspectors in Britain and New Zealand 1893-1921," *Women's History Review* Vol. 13 No. 2 (2004): 263-288, DOI: 10.1080/09612020400200392.

rural outworker embroidering handkerchiefs in Donegal, they had a more nuanced understanding of how a woman's work intersected with family and community responsibilities. Adelaide Anderson's memoir recounts the sort of comments inspectors heard on the job: "Girls, it is a lady this time, come and tell her everything she wants to know;" or (in Ireland), "We had a gentleman inspector here last month, and he said we must take dinner at the same hour every day: now a lady like you will know *that* is impossible!"⁹³⁷

Despite often strong opposition from businesses, the Inspectors were able to effect positive and practical change in factories and other work environments that employed women – sometime in court, and sometimes by simply drawing attention to the issue. Adelaide Anderson wrote to Horace Plunkett of Inspector Mary Paterson's work at the Donegal Fishing Co. (or Sayers and Co.), a herring kippering outfit on Edernish Island, about 7 kilometres northwest of Dungloe. Many of the fishery's employees were women, and the working conditions were very bad. Paterson reported insufficient sleeping accommodations and a general lack of sanitation, likely due to the fact that water had to be carried over from the mainland for use in both the factory and employee barracks.⁹³⁸ She instituted a prosecution against Donegal Fishing Co. in 1899, however the case was dismissed in court without prejudice. Adelaide Anderson attributed this to "the partisan action of the Dungloe Branch," and this seems an accurate reading of the situation; the case was brought forward once again, and dismissed in the same way.⁹³⁹ Though it seems that Donegal Fishing Co. was never successfully held to account *in court* for their failure to provide a healthy and safe workplace on Edernish Island, they did in the years after the lawsuits improve their practice and move into compliance with legal requirements.⁹⁴⁰ Adelaide Anderson's correspondence with Horace Plunkett is another demonstration of how interconnected these government bodies were – Plunkett was likely gathering information for his work with the DATI, which would be founded the next year.

Though the Women Factory Inspectors worked for positive change in women's work environments, they were not always welcomed with open arms. Their inspection activities often resulted in the loss of profit for employers, as well as parents, who sometimes saw no option but to send young children into illegal employment. In Ireland, the threat they posed to profit was further

⁹³⁷ Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, 2.

⁹³⁸ Letter from Dame Adelaide Anderson to Horace Plunkett. n.d. (TAOIS/97/70/3 1/1), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

⁹³⁹ Letter from Dame Adelaide Anderson to Horace Plunkett. n.d. (TAOIS/97/70/3 1/1), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

⁹⁴⁰ Letter from Dame Adelaide Anderson to Horace Plunkett. n.d. (TAOIS/97/70/3 1/1), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

informed by a history of colonial violence and current political tensions. In *Lady Inspectors: the Campaign for a Better Workplace, 1893-1921*, historian Mary Drake McFeely remarks that while in Ireland, “the inspectors were increasingly sure that they were battling not only for the welfare of poor workers but also for the whole concept of British law in Ireland.”⁹⁴¹ The inspectors were often seen as agents of a distant – and deeply resented – government, and community solidarity sometimes took precedence over cooperating with them to improve labour conditions or remuneration systems. Inspector Lucy Deane’s (later Streatfeild) experiences in Donegal in 1897 present a case study in this ambivalent relationship, and prompt a consideration of how Emily Anderson, as an employee of the DATI, may have been received differently in the same region several years later.

Lucy Deane was one of several inspectors who travelled throughout the United Kingdom – it was not until 1905 that her colleague Hilda Martindale was appointed the first Lady Inspector for Ireland.⁹⁴² Deane had been assigned to the region in order to investigate offences against the Truck Act of 1896, which legally abolished the practice of paying workers in goods or credits rather than in ‘the coin of the realm.’ This practice enabled the agent that dispensed supplies and orders for home work such as embroidery – known as sprigging – or crochet, who was also often the proprietor of the local shop, to keep outworkers in perpetual debt and ensure their custom.⁹⁴³ Deane solicited the assistance of the CDB’s Ardara embroidery and crochet class teacher, Miss Tierney, in her investigation. Tierney agreed to help, concerned for her students, who, once they finished their course of instruction in the class, would begin working for the local agent. She introduced Deane to Annie Mooney, who did sprigging work for Teresa Boyle, the local shopkeeper and agent. Mooney was able to give her some information, but she and the majority of other locals were suspicious of Deane, and cautious of playing the role of informer, no matter how cognizant they were of Boyle’s illegal business practices.⁹⁴⁴ Eventually, Deane asked her fellow inspector Mary Paterson to go undercover to gather information from the workers, but when the trial occurred, it was without need for this evidence – the workers surprised Deane by testifying, and Boyle was fined £40.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴¹ Mary Drake McFeely, *Lady Inspectors: the Campaign for a Better Workplace, 1893-1921* (New York and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 87.

⁹⁴² McFeely outlines Martindale’s activities as Lady Inspector for Ireland in *Lady Inspectors*, see: “Chapter 12: A Resident Lady Inspector for Ireland,” 93-107.

⁹⁴³ McFeely, *Lady Inspectors*, 76. Deane’s experiences in Donegal are detailed in her 1897 diary. Mary Drake McFeely summarizes them in *Lady Inspectors*, see: “Chapter 10: The Gombeen Man,” 76-86.

⁹⁴⁴ Lucy Deane Streatfeild diary, October 25, 1897 (Streatfeild/1/21/12), London School of Economics Archives and Special Collections.

⁹⁴⁵ McFeely, *Lady Inspectors*, 82.

Rather than focusing on improving labour conditions so as to improve the economic viability of a product, Deane was, at least ostensibly, focused solely on the wellbeing of workers. However, Deane could not escape her prejudice against the Irish. When she tried to uncover evidence of truck practices and the women covered it up, protecting the exploitative shopkeeper, Deane grew angry, and saw their silence as evidence of their contrary Irish nature. “One would think that *I* was the illegal conspirator instead of Mrs. Boyle!” she wrote on October 25, 1897, “Am depressed at the terrible fecklessness and terrorism of this country, the want of truth and independence...”⁹⁴⁶ Writing about Deane’s prosecutions in Donegal, historian Kevin James argues that Deane’s emphasis on the workers’ ‘conspiracy of silence’ renders them voiceless. In doing so, it places Deane and the other inspectors in the position of advocate, and characterized the outworkers as “pitiable and obdurate.”⁹⁴⁷ However, the workers were not voiceless, as their testimony in the case against Teresa Boyle shows. Put in the difficult position of having to decide which exploitative entity to side with (Boyle, or the British Government as represented by Deane), and what the consequences of their actions might be (would Boyle simply cease to give out orders, leaving them with no work?), they chose when and how to speak, taking a risk that ultimately led to reward. Emily Slocock, Deane’s friend and fellow inspector, wrote to her from Donegal in March 1914 to say that she had met some of the women outworkers, that they remembered Deane and were thankful to her for ending the truck system in their region.⁹⁴⁸ This is a complicated story, one that offers a window into the ambivalent relationship between *inspector* and *inspected*. It also prompts a consideration of how Emily Anderson’s roughly contemporaneous inspection activities may have been received in these same communities.

5.2.2 Emily Anderson, Inspectress

Lucy Deane and her fellow women inspectors present a case study that highlights some of the issues surrounding the practice of inspection. These concerns would have been equally relevant for Emily

⁹⁴⁶ Lucy Deane Streatfeild diary, October 25, 1897 (Streatfeild/1/21/12), London School of Economics Archives and Special Collections.

⁹⁴⁷ Kevin J. James, “Outwork, Truck, and the Lady Inspector: Lucy Deane in Londonderry and Donegal, 1897,” in *Essays in Irish Labour History: a Festschrift for Elizabeth and John W. Boyle*, eds. Francis Devine, Fintan Lane, and Niamh Puirseil (Dublin and Portland: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 115. A notable exception to this silence is the series of letters that Hilda Martindale received from workers at Irish institutional laundries that she inspected during her time as Lady Inspector for Ireland. The anonymous women wrote to report issues such as poor ventilation, and the danger of a pregnant woman standing to iron sheets all day. Mary Drake McFeely references these letters briefly, but they would be a valuable source for further study into the history of Irish institutionalization. See McFeely, *Lady Inspectors*, 101.

⁹⁴⁸ Letter from Emily J. Slocock to Lucy Deane Streatfeild. March 1, 1914 (Streatfield/1/25), London School of Economics Archives and Special Collections.

Anderson, though her background in design and position as an employee of the DATI changed her relationship to the workers she visited. Would Anderson, as a representative of an Irish government department, have been more welcome in rural communities than the British Home Office's inspectors? How might Anderson's priorities, as a designer, be different than those of the women inspectors, who were concerned with workplace safety and fairness in employment? What was her relationship like with the teachers and students of the classes she inspected? What changes did she suggest, and were they carried out?

Though I have been unable to find correspondence, diaries or inspector's reports, like those that Lucy Deane left behind, there is some documentary and material evidence of how Anderson carried out her work. And, of course, the unique character and organization of the DATI itself had an impact on both her work and its reception in rural communities. At the beginning of this chapter, I highlighted the fact that the DATI was Ireland's first 'indigenous' government body, and that it was organized on the principle of decentralization, relying heavily on County Councils. The system ensured that DATI inspectors had a point of contact in each county, and encouraged education and training specific to regional needs. This was in marked contrast to the South Kensington system, which, as I described in Chapter 1, used a universal curriculum and accorded grants to schools based on results in standard examinations.

During the 1908/1909 academic year, the DATI's Technical Instruction Branch began a process of "consolidation" and organization, bringing their many classes and schools into line with one another under a set of common guidelines, while also recognizing regional diversity.⁹⁴⁹ The Department substituted inspection for examination as a method by which to determine the effectiveness of teaching and the necessity of financial aid for each project, and made a renewed effort to ensure proper training for teachers.⁹⁵⁰ The logic behind substituting inspection for examination lay in an increasing recognition of the Department's need to provide flexible programming that adapted to regional needs. Freed from the need to prepare students for a set of standard examinations, the DATI's 9th Annual Report states that "each school has been free to develop itself in consonance with the needs of the locality and in accordance with changing

⁹⁴⁹ Ninth Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (1908-1909), 1910, Cd. 5128, at 77. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹⁵⁰ 9th DATI Annual General Report, 78.

opportunities and conditions.”⁹⁵¹ Many of the schools, however, still elected to hold examinations, as they recognized that this was a vital tool in advancing the prospects of their students.⁹⁵²

The same DATI Report describes examinations as “impersonal,” and inspection as “personal,” placing the inspector in the role of liaison between the Department and schools.⁹⁵³ However, it also acknowledges that in this capacity the inspector becomes a liability; with the responsibility to represent the Department comes increased pressure to maintain a good relationship with schools, workshops, students and teachers. Luckily, the Department is able to claim that “almost without exception inspection has been cordially welcomed by the schools, even where the Inspector’s reports have been adverse.”⁹⁵⁴ It is very unlikely that this was entirely true. Managers of a class in Howth, County Dublin, felt they had experienced “vexatious inspection and unjust criticism” from the Department’s Inspector.⁹⁵⁵ And it isn’t difficult to imagine the hardworking teacher of a rural lacemaking class feeling frustration with the big city inspectress using the terminology of the art college to critique her students’ hard work. There must have been moments of conflict, condescension, and misunderstanding. But the DATI reports likely would not have claimed that all of the inspectors were ‘cordially welcomed’ if in fact their presence had always been greeted with hostility. In all likelihood, the situation must have been somewhere in the middle, and dependent on many other factors, from personality to political and religious stances.

Anderson made decisions based on her priorities as an inspector – the growth and improvement of the Irish lace industry – rather than on individual county interests, which sometimes made her unpopular. In one case, her recommendations for the Monaghan County Committee’s lace classes met vehement opposition, to the point that it seems there must have been a subtext of poor communication or a clash of personalities. Rev. T. Maguire, in attendance at the February 1906 Committee meeting during which the issue was discussed, rather ominously stated that: “arising out of some remarks made by her he intended to write to the Department about her.”⁹⁵⁶ Anderson gave a poor review of the lace class at Aghabog, and recommended closing the smaller lace classes at Dooskey that only received teaching one day a week, in favor of focusing on educating girls who

⁹⁵¹ 9th DATI Annual General Report, 78.

⁹⁵² 9th DATI Annual General Report, 78.

⁹⁵³ 9th DATI Annual General Report, 78.

⁹⁵⁴ 9th DATI Annual General Report, 78.

⁹⁵⁵ “Evidence of Mr. Joseph Mooney, J.P., Dublin County Council Member,” Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Departmental Committee of Inquiry, 1907, Cd. 3574, at 662. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹⁵⁶ “Monaghan County Committee – Department Criticized,” *Anglo-Celt* February 17, 1906, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive.

could give more time to learning the skill – “a person must spend a lot of time at learning crochet or none at all.”⁹⁵⁷ The instructress of the classes, T.A. Leonard, had sent a favorable report to the committee, noting that she had some very promising students at Dooskey, and they had earned £30 in the months preceding.⁹⁵⁸ However, the central conflict between Anderson and the county committee was one that will emerge again later in this chapter, namely that most members of the committee saw crochet as something that local women and girls could do alongside their other daily work. The women did not have much time to devote to skill development, but that was not a problem, because they were already earning money from the quickly-made work (described by their teacher as “loose”) they did complete.⁹⁵⁹

The DATI’s stance on the matter was based on experience. Small classes in lace, crochet and sprigging had begun in the past and then faded away when interest waned, sometimes in a matter of months.⁹⁶⁰ Anderson also repeatedly expressed concern that the industry be safeguarded by ensuring high-quality products. If lacemakers could not devote the time to perfecting their craft, they should not be selling their work, which would likely be inferior. The consequence of this particular conflict over the nature of lace education is difficult to ascertain. Only the Newbliss class is listed in the 1906-1907 DATI Report, but students from the Aghabog and Dooskey classes may have simply continued making and selling crochet lace without the DATI’s support.⁹⁶¹

Anderson’s judgment was questioned in a much more public way on at least one occasion. In January 1905, she submitted a report to the Department on the knitting and hosiery industry in Limerick. Based on the response it received, the report seems to have been negative. On February 27th, Mr. Joyce, M.P. and Mayor of Limerick, questioned her employment status, credentials and expertise in the industry, arguing that businessmen in the city disagreed with her evaluation of the knitting and hosiery classes.⁹⁶² George Wyndham, Chief Secretary for Ireland, responded, clarifying that although Anderson was not a permanent officer – her contract was renewable every six months

⁹⁵⁷ “Monaghan County Committee – Department Criticized,” *Anglo-Celt* February 17, 1906, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁵⁸ “Monaghan County Committee – Department Criticized,” *Anglo-Celt* February 17, 1906, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive. One of Máire Treanor’s lacemaking mentors was Tessie Leonard – could this be a relative?

⁹⁵⁹ “Monaghan County Committee – Department Criticized,” *Anglo-Celt* February 17, 1906, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁶⁰ Eighth Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (1907-1908), 1909, Cd. 4430, at 79. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹⁶¹ Seventh Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (1906-1907), 1908, Cd. 4148, at 507. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online. Anderson was not alone in receiving such criticism. The Directress of Needlework for National Schools (under the Board of Education) also came under scrutiny in the House of Commons in February 1905, with Mr. Sloan of Belfast asking what her qualifications were and whether her judgments could be appealed (HC Deb 22 February 1905 Vol. 141 Col. 887).

⁹⁶² HC Deb 27 February 1905 Vol. 141 Col. 1332-3.

– she had been working for the Department for five years, and had previously been Principal Art Mistress at the Crawford School of Art. She had the necessary qualifications, as well as a history of winning medals and experience in the field – the Department was “satisfied as to the fairness of the report.”⁹⁶³

On March 7th, Joyce again raised the issue in the House of Commons, asking for more information about her role at the DATI and the authority of her report: would the teachers be required to change because of it? Did the DATI have any other sources of information about the industry, or were they depending entirely on Anderson for the evaluation? John Atkinson, Attorney General for Ireland, responded. He expressed confidence in “the fairness of [the] report,” and clarified that they had “many sources of information as to the condition and progress of the hosiery knitting industry in Ireland, including special reports of experts in the trade.”⁹⁶⁴ Atkinson’s remarks show that inspectors did not have the final say on the state of an industry, but gathered information from other experts to corroborate their evaluations.

The episode is also indicative of the interconnected factors at play in the *reception* of inspection. Joyce’s indignation at the content of Anderson’s report, and his immediate questioning of her credentials, might signal his lack of regard for the work of a female civil servant. The women factory inspectors certainly experienced this kind of negative bias when they appeared in court. However, it could also be attributed to the fact that Anderson’s report was bad for business; it meant improvements to be made, the possible loss of grant money, and perhaps even bad press for the local manufacturers. Joyce’s questioning of Anderson’s expertise is also an expression of mistrust in the DATI itself, probably related to an incident of the previous year. In the 1907 Departmental Inquiry, George Fletcher, Assistant Secretary for Technical Instruction, testified that some years earlier he had received a complaint about Anderson’s inspection activities from a member of the Limerick Committee. He felt her work to be fair and reasonable, and attributed the complaints to the “want of confidence” in the Department, caused by a 1904 DATI meeting known locally as the “Secret Conclave.”⁹⁶⁵ The DATI had called the principals of all technical schools to a meeting in Dublin, which involved the circulation of financial information relating to a Treasury grant application, and marked ‘confidential.’ Perhaps because of this, the Limerick principal had returned home to tell the local committee that the meeting itself was confidential – that he was “bound to

⁹⁶³ HC Deb 27 February 1905 Vol. 141 Col. 1332-3.

⁹⁶⁴ HC Deb 7 March 1905 Vol. 142 Col. 589-90.

⁹⁶⁵ “Evidence of George Fletcher, Assistant Secretary for Technical Instruction, DATI,” 1907 DATI Inquiry, 940.

secrecy” – leaving them in the dark about the Department’s activities, creating a sense of mistrust.⁹⁶⁶ Fletcher also references a suspicion on the part of the Limerick Technical Instruction Committee that an unnamed inspector “work[ed] in an underground way to persuade this principal to turn against the advice of the Committee.”⁹⁶⁷

Usually, these disputes were much less dramatic – and did not merit their own code names – but they still impeded teaching and learning, directly impacting local industries. In County Kerry, the CDB and DATI could not co-operate in carrying out their respective schemes, resulting in inefficient replication of services. In Glenbeigh, as of 1907, the CDB ran a weaving and dyeing operation and the DATI ran a hosiery school; they each employed separate crochet instructors in Caherciveen.⁹⁶⁸ In Lissan, near Cookstown, County Tyrone, a Home Industries Society that specialized in lacemaking applied to the County Technical Instruction Committee for a grant to hire a teacher. The Committee would not give the grant unless they could hire the teacher themselves – which probably would have meant Emily Anderson evaluating the candidates and making the selection, as she had done in County Carlow.⁹⁶⁹ A similar scenario played out in Howth, County Dublin, where the DATI would not pay the class’s crochet instructor because she had not been approved, despite the fact that the class’s work was selling well in Paris.⁹⁷⁰ In Clones, County Monaghan, a Home Industries Society requested a crochet teacher from their County Committee. The Committee agreed to do so, and sent a list of possible teachers from the locality to the Department, so that they could make the selection. The DATI delayed for more than a month, and at a meeting of the Home Industry, Mr. Whelan reported that “one hundred girls in Killeevan await the instructress in order to become efficient in the manufacture and laundrying of the industry.”⁹⁷¹ In fact, Joanna Bourke highlights the DATI’s rigidity and its conflict with the IAOS and local home industries organizations as one of the primary reasons for the ‘failure’ of home industries in Ireland.⁹⁷²

In addition to the clunky, slow-moving nature of its extensive bureaucracy, the Department struggled with issues of identity – national, political, and religious.⁹⁷³ Its status as the first ‘indigenous’

⁹⁶⁶ “Evidence of George Fletcher,” 940.

⁹⁶⁷ “Evidence of George Fletcher,” 939.

⁹⁶⁸ “Evidence of the Very Reverend Canon Denis J. O’Riordan,” 1907 DATI Inquiry, 257.

⁹⁶⁹ “Evidence of Mr. L. Bradley, Secretary to the Tyrone Committee for Technical Education” 1907 DATI Inquiry, 460.

⁹⁷⁰ “Evidence of Mr. Joseph Mooney,” 662.

⁹⁷¹ “Clones Lace District Conference Committee,” *The Irish Homestead* Vol. 11 Iss. 1 (November 18, 1905): 850.

⁹⁷² Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 130.

⁹⁷³ Irish historian F.S.L. Lyons refers to this as: “bureaucratic elephantiasis, which in turn led to complaints of delay, rigidity, and conservatism”; however, like Hoctor, he concludes that during this early period the DATI made

“commendable efforts,” and was successful in some respects (F.S.L. Lyons, “The aftermath of Parnell, 1891-1903,” in *A*

Irish government department was not as straightforward as it sounds. The lack of higher education for agriculture and industry in Ireland meant that many of their staff had to be sources from England, Wales and Scotland, much to the ire of Irish farmers.⁹⁷⁴ On the same date that Anderson reviewed applicants to teach home industries classes in County Carlow, another expert interviewed three candidates for an agricultural instructor position – from Durham, Yorkshire, and Leicestershire.⁹⁷⁵ Plunkett specifically was accused of discrimination against Irish and Catholic applicants to positions within the department. These charges were officially investigated and it does seem that Plunkett chose based on qualifications.⁹⁷⁶ That said, there was a reason that Anglo-Irish and British Protestants tended to have higher levels of education. Though Emily Anderson would have been considered an Irish hire, because she had grown up in County Cork and taught at the Crawford School of Art, her surname, mannerisms and habits of devotion would have marked her as belonging to a different social, religious and political group than the rural, poor, Catholic majority of the women she inspected.

A letter that Emily Anderson wrote to the Donegal County Committee in September 1912 complicates this picture of distance and difference, even as it appears to confirm it.⁹⁷⁷ Anderson is responding to a question in her earlier report about the use of aprons in classes, to ensure cleanliness.⁹⁷⁸ The letter confirms that she had made that recommendation, and emphasizes the importance of the practice; I assume this indicates the Committee had pushed back against her recommendations, feeling that they were too strict or unnecessary. However, Anderson goes on to say that she had sometimes been purchasing soap and washing supplies for the classes with her own money, out of concern for the cleanliness (and therefore saleable nature) of their work. This interaction is only one small piece of the puzzle. I do not know the specificities of her relationship with the County Committee, much less of her relationship with the women and girls learning to make crochet lace in the class. But this short letter provides a glimpse into a complicated relationship where Anderson is both representative of a distant – and perhaps demanding – government body,

New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union 1870-1921 (3rd Ed.) ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford University Press, 2012), 90).

⁹⁷⁴ *Nationalist and Leinster Times* November 16, 1901, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁷⁵ “Carlow Agriculture and Technical Instruction Committee,” *Nationalist and Leinster Times* November 16, 1901, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁷⁶ Hoctor, *The Department's Story*, 44, 90.

⁹⁷⁷ Letter from Emily Anderson to the Donegal County Technical Instruction Committee, September 25, 1912 (CDCA 1/19: Letters to the County Committee and Department 1912), Donegal County Archives, Lifford.

⁹⁷⁸ The report in question is probably that of September 13, 1912, which mentions aprons. (Report dated September 13, 1912 (CDCA 1/19: Letters to the County Committee and Department 1912), Donegal County Archives, Lifford).

and a person making personal financial sacrifices for the good of an industry about which she cares a great deal.

5.2.3 Crochet and copyright

In the capacity of Inspectress of Home Industries, Emily Anderson also appeared in court to testify in a case relating to Irish industry. However, unlike Mary Paterson or Lucy Deane, she was defending the lace itself. In Chapter 3, I described how Alan Cole's writings placed lacemakers in competition with lacemaking machines, and the onus on makers to outpace the machines by regular change of pattern and high quality of work. However, lacemakers were also in competition with their human counterparts in other countries.

Irish crochet, in particular, was threatened by the rise of a government-supported program of craft schools, or 'Fachschulen,' in Austria.⁹⁷⁹ As in Ireland, they trained rural women and girls in lacemaking; crochet in particular became a popular medium because of the speed at which it could be produced. Austrian crochet copied Irish crochet, because it was in fashion and in demand: a 1906 *Studio International* article on the Austrian lace schools states that "at the present date Irish lace happens to be the mode, but the Austrian Irish lace has a peculiar technique of its own, and the patterns are widely different than the real Irish."⁹⁸⁰ The Austrian Irish crochet reproduced alongside the article can easily be distinguished from Irish crochet by a trained eye (fig. 5.2). It uses motifs not found in Irish crochet, and tends to be constructed with more of an attention to composition than its Irish counterpart. However, it does share many of the same characteristics and some of the specimens would be more difficult to distinguish from 'the real Irish' than others; for example, one of the Austrian crocheted borders features the same three-looped edging seen in *The Irish Homestead's* crochet lace collar pattern (fig. 4.13), rose motifs similar to those still taught by Máire Treanor, and what appear to be a version of Clones knots peppering the ground at irregular intervals (fig. 5.3). Government support of the Austrian industry brought it to such a level of excellence and efficiency in the early years of the twentieth century that it flooded the market, causing a depression in the Irish crochet industry in 1903 and 1904.

⁹⁷⁹ Barbara Ballantyne has gathered a collection of French and Austrian imitation 'Irish crochet' in Ballantyne, *Irish Crochet Lace in Austria and France* (Published in Australia by Barbara Ballantyne, 2012).

⁹⁸⁰ "Austrian Lace Schools," *Studio International* Vol. 36 (1906): 27, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.20713.6>.

Many of the teachers in these Austrian workshops were from Ireland; they brought patterns and techniques with them.⁹⁸¹ The emigration of lacemakers was not just a matter of rural depopulation and demoralization – it could create a threat to the Irish lace industry. In a 1913 article for the DATI journal, Emily Anderson notes that Italian women and children in New York City make ‘Irish crochet’. It is easy to imagine that their teachers were recent immigrants from Ireland, women who shared their poverty and precarity in this early-twentieth-century period. Anderson also lists Switzerland, Italy, Lebanon, Syria, China, Japan, and the Philippines as locations for the production of ‘Irish crochet.’⁹⁸² Crochet lace had been introduced to some of these places by Irish nuns, travelling as missionaries and replicating abroad the cottage industries for rural women that they had helped to establish in Ireland during the famine.⁹⁸³ The fact that they were seen as such a threat contrasts sharply with the international networks of teaching and pattern-sharing that exist today, which I will discuss in the next chapter. It indicates that during this period, crochet lace was an important source of income. One reason that present-day Irish crochet experts such as Máire Treanor can celebrate the evolution of ‘Irish crochet’ in Russia and Ukraine, for example, is because they do not depend on lace sales for their income.⁹⁸⁴

In 1908, the Irish Industrial Development Association of Cork brought “La Samaritame,” a London clothing shop located at 99 Regent’s Street, to court over infractions against the Merchandise Marks Act of 1887. The alleged infraction involved “(1) unlawfully exposing for sale a blouse to which the false trade description ‘Irish Lace’ was applied, (2) selling a blouse for £3 16s as Irish Lace, and (3) applying the false trade description Irish lace to the blouse.”⁹⁸⁵ The blouse had been on display with a label reading “Irish lace,” though the lady sent to buy it was told by the clerk that the motifs were made in Ireland, and the filling in France. The store’s proprietor finally admitted in court that the entire blouse had been made in France. Emily Anderson, who travelled to London to appear as an expert witness, testified that the thread used was “far too coarse,” and would not have been used for a blouse in Ireland, but instead for the thick, stiff lace made for furniture.⁹⁸⁶ The

⁹⁸¹ Emily Anderson, “Notes on the Irish Lace and Crochet Industry,” *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction* Vol. 14 (1913): 57.

⁹⁸² Anderson, “Notes on the Irish Lace and Crochet Industry,” 57.

⁹⁸³ Earnshaw, *Yonghal and Other Irish Laces*, 31. For an in-depth study of one of these industries as it survived into the twentieth century, see: Maria Mies, *The Lacemakers of Narsapur*. 2nd Ed. (Chicago: Spinifex Press, 2012).

⁹⁸⁴ That said, others using their patterns and teaching traditional techniques without proper attribution are an issue for these contemporary Irish makers. What is at stake does not seem to be the money, but the cultural, artistic and intellectual property (Máire Treanor, in discussion with the author, online on Zoom, October 29, 2020).

⁹⁸⁵ “Irish Lace Trademark Prosecution. Smart Penalty,” *Evening Echo* March 27, 1908. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁸⁶ “Irish Lace Trademark Prosecution. Smart Penalty,” *Evening Echo* March 27, 1908. Irish Newspaper Archive.

design, she noted, also belied its foreign origin; it was “more artistic than the Irish.”⁹⁸⁷ I can imagine her saying this with some regret, having spent her career creating and teaching ‘artistic designs’ for lace. However, as the crochet lace collar pattern and its accompanying text in *The Irish Homestead*, discussed in Chapter 4, showed, Irish crochet had by this point an established style – freestyle and sometimes haphazard. That is what customers expected, and wanted, to the despair of designers such as James Brenan. On the strength of Anderson’s testimony alongside that of another lace expert, Mr. Hughes, La Samaritame’s proprietor was fined £20.

Shortly after the trial, the issue arose in the British House of Commons. One Mr. Boland, of Co. Kerry, asked the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland if he was aware of the details of the La Samaritame case, and if so, what he intended to do about the problem it presented. Boland emphasized the importance of the lace classes administered by the Congested Districts Board, and wondered “steps he proposes to take in order to acquaint those classes with the unfair competition by which they are being menaced, and in order to safeguard the interests of the Irish lace industry.”⁹⁸⁸ Responding on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant, T.W. Russell, the Vice-President of the DATI, shifted the responsibility for protecting against fraud from the workshops and classes to the government and trade bodies that, he believed, should be monitoring and prosecuting such cases.⁹⁸⁹

The DATI focused more attention on the issue in the years following. A 1909 amendment to the 1887 Merchandise Marks Act made the DATI directly responsible for prosecutions under the Act.⁹⁹⁰ Emily Anderson’s DATI report on home industries for 1909-1910 noted that workers on the continent were adopting “Irish patterns and Irish motifs – such as the rose, shamrock, etc.”⁹⁹¹ This issue, she wrote, demands “serious attention” and should be “closely watched.”⁹⁹² At the 1911 Tralee Feis (a festival of traditional music, arts and handicrafts),⁹⁹³ Anderson found that many of the

⁹⁸⁷ “Irish Lace Trademark Prosecution. Smart Penalty,” *Evening Echo* March 27, 1908. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁸⁸ HC Deb 1 April 1908 Vol. 187 Col. 514-515.

⁹⁸⁹ HC Deb 1 April 1908 Vol. 187 Col. 514-515.

⁹⁹⁰ “Merchandise Trademarks Act. Prosecution at Killarney,” *Irish Examiner* September 13, 1912, 10. Irish Newspaper Archive. Crochet lace fraud was only one of the DATI’s issues in this regard. Butter, eggs, and bacon were all sold under fraudulent Irish trademarks, and in 1906 the DATI appointed Lord Ikkerin (later the Earl of Carrick) to monitor fraudulent representation of goods in British markets (Sixth Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1907, Cd. 3543, at 123. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online).

⁹⁹¹ “Miss Anderson (Inspectress of Home Industries) Reports”, Tenth Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1911, Cd. 5611, at 118. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹⁹² “Miss Anderson (Inspectress of Home Industries) Reports”, 10th DATI Annual General Report, 118.

⁹⁹³ The Feis were encouraged by the Gaelic League among others, as part of the revival of ‘ancient’ Irish culture and traditions. They involved “music, dance, poetry, art and handicraft”. McBrinn, “The Peasant and Folk Art Revival in Ireland,” 36-38.

displays claiming to sell Irish lace were in fact selling continental copies, likely from Austria. This was the case not only in Tralee but also in Kenmare, Killarney, Caherciveen, “and almost every tourist resort throughout Ireland.”⁹⁹⁴ Anderson also reported seeing lace labelled ‘Irish,’ but consisting of “two specimens, foreign and Irish, [...] combined in one piece.”⁹⁹⁵ It is unlikely that crochet lacemakers in Ireland would, for example, join motifs made in Austria, knowing that they were engaged in work that is undercutting their own industry. So this patchworking of crochet to create an ‘Irish’ product was likely the work of sellers, hoping to catch tourists unawares.

In May 1912, the DATI published new regulations for prosecutions under the Merchandise Marks Act, which outlined the situations in which they would intervene, and allowed local committees to apply to the Department to undertake a prosecution on their behalf.⁹⁹⁶ In September of that year, Anderson again appeared as an expert witness at the Killarney Petty Sessions, this time for a case that the DATI itself brought against Miss Reardon, the owner of a Killarney lace and linens shop. Responding to applications from the Killarney Boards of Guardians, County and Urban Councils, the DATI sent an inspector, Mr. O’Donnell, accompanied by Taylor Hughes, a lace expert from Messrs. Atkinson and Co. of College Green, Dublin, to catch fraudulent lace sellers in the act. The two men masqueraded – the judge did not know whether they used “the twang or the square boot” – as Americans, the typical victims. Keen to take home a souvenir – “especially bits of Irish lace” – Americans would buy the false ‘Irish lace’, and by the time they returned home and had a chance to look closely, it would be too late.⁹⁹⁷ This narrative, and the fact that the DATI sent two men to pose as American buyers, indicates that the victims tended to be men taking lace home as a gift for mothers, wives and sisters – far from home, with money to spend and little knowledge of the intricacies of lace connoisseurship. At Miss Reardon’s shop, the men asked to see Irish lace, and upon purchasing a collar described as such, asked the seller to write ‘Irish lace’ on the receipt so that friends at home would know it had been bought in Ireland. The seller became suspicious, and tried to take the collar back, but having already paid for it and received a receipt, the undercover inspectors left the shop. Miss Reardon’s lawyer attempted to defend his client by indicating that they had entrapped the seller into misrepresentation, snatched the lace, and left at a run, leaving an

⁹⁹⁴ “Irish Lace and Crochet,” *Kerry Sentinel* June 17, 1911, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁹⁵ “Irish Lace and Crochet,” *Kerry Sentinel* June 17, 1911, 3. Irish Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁹⁶ “Statutory Rules and Orders, 1912. No. 865. Merchandise Marks. Official Prosecutions,” Twelfth Annual General report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1913, Cd. 6647, at 302-303. ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁹⁹⁷ “Merchandise Trademarks Act. Prosecution at Killarney,” *Irish Examiner* September 13, 1912, 10. Irish Newspaper Archive.

umbrella and some bog oak souvenirs behind. It is a humorous scene to imagine: two undercover lace experts masquerading as cowboys and tripping over their square-toed boots as they flee a shop full of lace and linens, triumphantly grasping a crocheted collar and a slip of paper bearing the words ‘Irish lace.’ The judge was not receptive to this argument, nor the claim that Taylor Hughes wanted to misalign Miss Reardon in order to remove some – lace dealing – competition. Emily Anderson testified that she had inspected the collar and thought it to be Austrian work – it was certainly not Irish. Cliborn Hill, who had been a textile expert at the DATI for ten years, testified that he had inspected the lace under a microscope, and determined it to be Austrian based on its “slack and uncertain” character.⁹⁹⁸ In the end, Miss Reardon was found to be guilty, but fined only 21s because of her good reputation as a businesswoman in Killarney.

Though this case was successful, the following year saw another depression in the crochet lace industry, after which came the war, and the gradual collapse of the entire Irish lace industry.⁹⁹⁹ However, these trials show Emily Anderson and other DATI inspectors playing an active role in enforcing trademark laws and attempting to protect Irish industry from foreign competition. They also show the DATI struggling to define and protect ‘Irish crochet,’ which is still an evasive and shifting category of production. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which competition and contestation around Irish crochet designs and techniques has moved from one geographical region to another, and what this might be able to tell us about the role of crochet in Ireland today.

5.3 Emily Anderson, Inspectress: traces in lace

Emily Anderson also left material traces of her inspection activities and orientation towards issues of design and industry development, in a collection of lace specimens that she donated to the National Museum of Ireland. In fact, these pieces of lace are what prompted this entire investigation. In this section, I will briefly consider Anderson’s role in advising the Museum on acquisitions, proposing that she played a role in the early-twentieth-century development of the Museum’s display collection, and then go on to examine her own collection, which lay in storage, unstudied, for many years. Though the lace specimens in the display collection were used for educational purposes – studied and sketched by lace design students – I will suggest that Emily Anderson’s own collection played an

⁹⁹⁸ “Merchandise Trademarks Act. Prosecution at Killarney,” *Irish Examiner* September 13, 1912, 10. Irish Newspaper Archive. I have not been able to find any additional references to a textile expert at the DATI by the name of Cliborn Hill.

⁹⁹⁹ Anderson, “Notes on the Irish Lace and Crochet Industry,” 57.

active role in her inspection and education activities throughout Ireland, travelling with her and accumulating evidence of daily practices in teaching, learning and making.

5.3.1 Emily Anderson and lace acquisitions at the National Museum of Ireland

In the spring of 1911, the Poor Clares at Kenmare sent a tabernacle veil to the Museum, offering it for sale at the price of thirty-seven guineas, or close to £39.¹⁰⁰⁰ It featured a design of Christ crowned and enthroned between two angels, surrounded by dense floral motifs, designed by a member of the community and worked by Mary Jane and Katie Leahy (fig. 5.4).¹⁰⁰¹ The Kenmare tabernacle veil is one of the most enduringly popular specimens of Irish lace, and is often reproduced. In *The Irish Flowerers*, Elizabeth Boyle writes that the tabernacle veil might be “the single most beautiful object of applied art to have been produced for a hundred years and more in Ireland,” and it appears on the cover of the 1982 edition of Ada Longfield’s *Guide to the Collection of Lace*, as well as in her 1978 Irish Heritage Series pamphlet *Irish Lace*.¹⁰⁰² One reason why it has such an appeal is because it features human figures, which was very rare in lace of the time, and Irish lace in particular. NMI Director George Noble Count Plunkett remarked upon this in his correspondence with the DATI about the specimen: “it would form a most valuable addition to the Museum Lace collection, the piece being of striking character and illustrating a new feature in the manufacture of Irish lace, viz: the introduction of figure work.”¹⁰⁰³ Here, he directly quoted J.J. Buckley, who had also offered his opinion on the lace, emphasizing the novelty and striking character of the figure work.¹⁰⁰⁴

The Museum sent the veil to the DATI for an examination by Emily Anderson, who was the Inspector most qualified to evaluate a specimen of needlework. Her report on the tabernacle veil balanced praise with critique. She pointed out that while the technique was “excellent,” “the texture is remarkably good,” and the use of ornamental fillings was “finely executed,” the design was wanting.¹⁰⁰⁵ Anderson judged the figures to be “affected,” the acanthus leaves and vases of flowers to

¹⁰⁰⁰ Letter from George Noble Count Plunkett (Director, NMI) to the DATI Secretary, May 26, 1911 (DFA/92/1/365), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

¹⁰⁰¹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xxi; Ada Longfield, *Irish Lace* (Dublin: Eason and Son, 1978), n.p.

A Facebook post published by the National Museum of Ireland on June 6, 2020, gives the names of the makers as Mary Jane (age 27, ‘dressmaker’) and Katie (age 21, ‘dressmaker’) Leahy, and references the 1911 Census which listed their ages and occupations.

¹⁰⁰² Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xxi.

¹⁰⁰³ Letter from George Noble Count Plunkett (Director, NMI) to the DATI Secretary, May 26, 1911.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Letter from J.J. Buckley to George Noble Count Plunkett (Director, NMI), May 26, 1911.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Report on ‘Specimen of Needlepoint Lace’ by Emily Anderson, DATI, July 1, 1911 (DFA 92/1/365), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

be “poorly constructed,” and the lettering to be “lack[ing] in ornamental effect.”¹⁰⁰⁶ Instead of purchasing this specimen, she suggested, the DATI should choose a design and send it to Kenmare to be made up: “[a] really artistic design would display the fine qualities of the lace to much better advantage”.¹⁰⁰⁷ Mr. Riordan of the Lace Depôt also weighed in on the matter, and stated that despite Anderson’s comments on the design, the lace was still remarkable, and would be worth purchasing for the museum.¹⁰⁰⁸ With that, she was overruled, and the DATI authorized the purchase on July 20th, 1911.¹⁰⁰⁹ It seems that the very features which Anderson felt detracted from the lace’s excellence – in particular the figures – were the novelty that convinced Count Plunkett and Riordan of its excellence. However, it must have been a relief for Sister Angela, who had sent the lace to the NMI, and the community of Poor Clares and lacemakers at Kenmare. It does not seem as if the NMI commissioned the specimen. What would they have done with this intricate liturgical textile that took months to make? Perhaps a group of wealthy locals might have banded together to purchase it for a local church, or it may have stayed in their own community forever.

Evelyn Gleeson, of the Dun Emer Guild, also consulted on at least one museum acquisition. In April 1914, she wrote to Count Plunkett regarding a tapestry offered for sale by Morris and Co.¹⁰¹⁰ The tapestry, called “Flora,” was after a design by Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), and featured a woman against a floral background designed by J.H. Dearle (1859-1932), a pupil of Morris. The design had been woven several times before, and Gleeson noted that on one occasion the background had been designed by Morris himself; Dearle’s background is “a very beautiful one, the flowers being charmingly treated in a slightly conventionalized way, quite in the best spirit of the old ‘Verdures’.”¹⁰¹¹ Gleeson recommended that the Museum purchase the tapestry, so that “such a fine example of modern weaving should be available for students of the applied arts in Dublin.”¹⁰¹² There was very little tapestry in the Museum at the time, despite the fact that it was an industry under development in Ireland. Gleeson’s own students and workers at the Dun Emer Guild would be

¹⁰⁰⁶ Report on ‘Specimen of Needlepoint Lace’ by Emily Anderson.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Report on ‘Specimen of Needlepoint Lace’ by Emily Anderson.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Letter from George Fletcher to the DATI Secretary, July 3, 1911 (DFA/92/1/365), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Letter from JWW Foster(?) to the NMI Director, July 20, 1911 (DFA/92/1/365), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin. The purchase is also mentioned in the NMI Acquisitions report for 1911-1912 (12th DATI Annual General Report, 313).

¹⁰¹⁰ Letter from Evelyn Gleeson (Dun Emer Guild Ltd.) to the Director of the National Museum of Ireland, April 8, 1914 (NAI/92/1/758), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

¹⁰¹¹ Letter from Evelyn Gleeson (Dun Emer Guild Ltd.) to the Director of the National Museum of Ireland.

¹⁰¹² Letter from Evelyn Gleeson (Dun Emer Guild Ltd.) to the Director of the National Museum of Ireland.

among the first to benefit from the tapestry's acquisition. The DATI heeded Gleeson's advice, and authorized the tapestry's purchase for £75 on May 30, 1914.¹⁰¹³

Gleeson's comments about the Burne-Jones tapestry point to the purpose of these acquisitions, and the reason why Emily Anderson would have been concerned about the Kenmare Tabernacle Veil's design specifically. Like the South Kensington Museum, the NMI was meant to function in part as a teaching tool for students of the fine and applied arts. Objects in its collection were there to be studied, even copied. Even in 1902, George Noble Plunkett wrote of the Museum's lace collection that "it is essential, if a high standard is to be maintained in beauty of design and workmanship, that the designers and students should constantly study the finest specimens procurable of every variety."¹⁰¹⁴ It was much more likely that a student of lace design from one of the Schools of Art would consult the lace collection than would a needle lacemaker from County Kerry. Therefore, it was important that the designs be worthy of imitation, perhaps even more important than whether or not the lace itself was particularly fine.

At the time that the NMI acquired the Kenmare tabernacle veil, a purchase of over £50 required a referee.¹⁰¹⁵ However, the veil was purchased for approximately £39, so it is likely that most costly purchases – even those slightly below £50 – warranted consultation with an expert. As such, it is likely that Anderson consulted on a number of lace purchases around this time, as she did for another specimen that has remained popular to this day: a Youghal lace apron. In 1912-1913, the Museum purchased the needlepoint lace apron, which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, had been made at the Youghal Presentation Convent along with the copy of Mabel Morrison's antique flounce and displayed at the Mansion House Exhibition in 1883 (fig. 2.3).¹⁰¹⁶

As I have shown, advising the NMI on which lace specimens to buy was part of Emily Anderson's portfolio as a DATI inspector. However, around this time Anderson seems also to have begun donating lace from her own personal collection. In 1912, she donated two specimens of "modern Irish crochet" – from Manorhamilton, County Leitrim and Brookboro, County Fermanagh – to the NMI.¹⁰¹⁷ In 1915, she donated a further five pieces of Irish crochet, from Derrylin (County

¹⁰¹³ DATI Memo addressed to Mr. Walsh, attached to a letter written by G. Mount Plunkett, April 9, 1914 (NAI/92/1/758), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

¹⁰¹⁴ Colonel Plunkett, "The Dublin Museum of Science and Art," in *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural* ed. W.P. Coyne (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1902), 297, <https://archive.org/details/irelandindustria00irelrich/page/n367/mode/2up>.

¹⁰¹⁵ Rules for acquisition, stated on the back of "Proposal for Purchase," National Museum, Dublin, July 15, 1911 (DFA/92/1/365), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

¹⁰¹⁶ 12th DATI Annual General Report, 322.

¹⁰¹⁷ 12th DATI Annual General Report, 325 (DT:1912.374, Border, crochet, "branch lace". Made at Brookeboro (Co. Fermanagh). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1912; DT:1912.375 Border, crochet; "rose and shamrock" pattern. Made at

Fermanagh), Arvagh (County Cavan), the Convent of Mercy in Bantry (County Cork), and the crochet school in Newport, County Mayo.¹⁰¹⁸ It is unlikely that this collection was developed using DATI funds, because if it had belonged to the Department, the donation would not have been registered as having come from Emily Anderson, sent from her home address at 66 Leeson St. Dublin. The lace would have already belonged to the DATI, and simply been shifted from its stockpile of educational materials to the Museum collection. One may conclude, then, that Anderson must have gathered the specimens while travelling from class to class performing inspections, and that she really did like lace; that when she viewed the finished pieces submitted to her for inspection – maybe for a teaching appointment, or to evaluate candidates for DATI scholarships – she felt an impulse to collect. Extraordinarily wealthy lace collectors such as Mabel Morrison and Sir William Drake assembled collections of antique lace and costly custom commissions, but Anderson apparently gathered more quotidian pieces, creating a collection of the kind of work upon which the majority of makers spent their time. And along with her purchase of washing supplies for the classes in Donegal, Anderson’s acquisition of lace from the classes she inspected implies that she was willing to use her own personal finances to both support the industry and do her work as an inspector and educator.

Even if it was a personal collection, Anderson’s lace was clearly organized and intended for educational purposes. Its folders and tags, and the lace itself, provides material evidence of how Anderson worked, and how lace inspection and education would have been experienced by both the *inspector* and *inspected*. In February 1926, Anderson wrote to J.J. Buckley at the NMI, confirming delivery of the specimens and expressing her hope for the collection: “I shall be very glad if the collection proves helpful to our Irish students, and to our Lace and Embroidery Industries.”¹⁰¹⁹

5.3.2 Materializing Emily Anderson’s lace inspection and teaching

Manorhamilton (Co. Leitrim). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1912. NMI cataloguing information courtesy of Alex Ward, NMI Collins Barracks).

¹⁰¹⁸ The NMI reports (included in the DATI Annual General Reports) for 1914-1915 and 1915-1916 are brief, the staff having been reduced significantly due to the war, and these acquisitions are not mentioned. (DT:1915.253, Band of Clones Crochet, Made at the Crochet School, Newport Co. Mayo, c. 1910, 17 1/2" x 2". Given by Miss E. Anderson; DT:1915.254, Band of Clones Crochet, Made at the Crochet School, Newport Co. Mayo, c. 1910. 17" x 2". Given by Miss E. Anderson; DT:1915.255, border of fine crochet; vandykes with rosettes and spirals alternately. Made at the Crochet Class, Arvagh, Co. Cavan, 17" x 1 5/8". Given by Miss E. Anderson; DT:1915.256, Border of fine crochet; vandykes with rosettes and shamrocks alternately, Made at the Lace School, Convent of Mercy, Bantry. 27" x 2". Given by Miss E. Anderson; DT:1915.257, Doiley, Clones Crochet. Made at the Lace School, Derrylinn (Co. Fermanagh). Diam. 7 ". Given by Miss E. Anderson. Catalogue information courtesy of Alex Ward, NMI Collins Barracks).

¹⁰¹⁹ Letter from Emily Anderson to J.J. Buckley (NMI), February 13, 1926 (emphasis original), Collection of National Museum of Ireland Decorative Arts Division, Collins Barracks, Dublin (Courtesy of Alex Ward, NMI Collins Barracks).

The NMI's records do not give any indication that Emily Anderson's collection was "helpful for Irish students" once acquisitioned. In fact, it is more likely that the collection was boxed up and placed in storage indefinitely – it would not be catalogued until 2009. However, the collection can provide useful insight into Anderson's own teaching and inspection methods. In making the donation, Emily Anderson was effectively handing over the tools of her trade, the material objects that enabled her to communicate ideas about design and technique to the classes she visited. The way the lace specimens have been selected, stored, and labelled provides evidence of how they functioned as a central part of her pedagogical methods. Beyond this, they present material evidence of a relationship between Emily Anderson, the makers she was sent to inspect and instruct, and the lace itself. In my own detailed discussion of the lace specimens, and in the inclusion of many images and a full list of items in the collection (see Appendix B), I hope to contribute to making the collection known to contemporary Irish lacemakers. In Chapter 6, I will discuss how studying antique Clones crochet informed Máire Treanor's lacemaking practice, which in turn shaped mine. As a record of lace technique and design in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the specimens still have the potential to prove of use to contemporary students of lacemaking, who visit the NMI and other museums to study lace on display, just as their counterparts did a century earlier.

The collection that Emily Anderson donated to the NMI from 1912-1926 consists of small specimens of crochet, Limerick, Carrickmacross, and needlepoint lace, as well as some samples of embroidery and 'sprigged' handkerchiefs (see Appendix B).¹⁰²⁰ A few were very old at the time Anderson acquired them – the 'Lady's Cap or Headdress, Early Irish Crochet, c. 1810-1820' and the 'Old Raised Crochet, debased Venetian style' referenced in Chapter 1, for example (figs. 1.6 and 1.8). There are several samples of Austrian and French imitations of Irish crochet. However, the majority are fine crochet lace, produced during the time that Anderson worked for the DATI. I believe Emily Anderson to have donated the collection when she retired – in February 1926 she would have been sixty-nine years old, turning seventy in August of that year. A newspaper article of 1925 lists her as a judge representing the DATI for the Industrial Display at the Tipperary Agricultural and Industrial Society, but I have not been able to find any references to her in the capacity of Inspector or DATI employee after that date.¹⁰²¹ Her career was certainly a long one, and recognized as such. In a 1938

¹⁰²⁰ The collection was not fully catalogued until 2009. Emily Anderson had included with the donation lists identifying the specimens (originally stored in envelopes) by number or letter, and indicating their place of origin and – sometimes – date. The cataloguer labelled most undated specimens 'c.1920-1925,' but this is not original to Anderson's lists.

¹⁰²¹ "Tipperary Show. Opening Day," *Irish Examiner* September 10, 1925, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive. Anderson may have already retired by this point, and been referenced as "Miss Anderson, Department of Agriculture and Technical

notice that R.A. Anderson had retired from the I.A.O.S., almost one third of the short text is given to his sister's career: "His sister, Miss Emily Anderson, was for years in the Civil Service in Ireland, and was recognized as a great authority on Irish lace. Her work was to advise those who made it, not only as to design, but also as to the training of girls and women in the craft."¹⁰²²

The specimens themselves, the way that they are categorized and stored, offers evidence of this work. One folder, lined with green paper, contains five pieces of crochet lace in size one hundred thread – three insertions and two cuffs or short samples of border – from Newport, County Mayo (fig. 5.5). The specimens have been mounted on colored paper, using tacking stitches, the way that *The Queen Lace Book* encouraged owners of small lace collections to display their specimens as discussed in Chapter 2. However, long lengths of thread between the stitches mark the outside of the folder with zig zags and crooked lines – this is no lace book, made with painstaking care for display purposes, but a utilitarian object. This lace is for demonstration purpose; it is, like Anderson herself, 'at work'. The thick card bears a crease down the middle, where it would have been folded up to protect the lace specimens inside. All of this suggests that they were used for teaching and demonstration, during Anderson's trips around to the various lacemaking centers that she inspected. The collection was a portable one, that must have been taken from class to class, probably wrapped carefully in oilcloth to protect it from damp and dirt, to be unpacked on a table by the window with the brightest light in each workroom.

Another folder contains a collar in Clones-style crochet from East Mayo, with alternating roses and shamrocks in horseshoes bordering floral motifs centered in x-shaped 'trellis' formations (fig. 5.6). Once again, the specimen is mounted on a colored background, which ensures the pattern is more visible than it would be against a background of white paper. This time, the folder is a repurposed piece of official stationery, presumably from the DATI (fig. 5.7). One side reads "This page is NOT to be written on," and the other looks like a form for sending internal mail, with "TO: _____" repeated from the top to the bottom. Anderson's repurposing of official stationery to house lace specimens suggests that this was a make-do situation; she was developing ways to store and display the collection while in transit, without a precedent or funds for more permanent solutions. Several different materials – including waxed linen, paper, satin, and velvet – are used for backing, some of the specimens are mounted and some are not. This suggests the use of scraps and

Instruction" in error. However, it seems logical that her retirement and donation of the lace collection would have occurred around the same time.

¹⁰²² "Sunday Survey: I.A.O.S. President," *Sunday Independent*, Sunday November 6, 1938, 8. Irish Newspaper Archive.

leftovers in developing a working method for lace storage and display.

As indicated in Chapters 2 and 3, Alan Cole had travelled throughout the south of Ireland with books, photographs and lantern slides, often presenting slide-illustrated lectures to large crowds. Anderson had more, smaller, and more remote classes to visit. She would have been travelling alone, perhaps even by bicycle, so the size and weight of her display materials would have been a concern.¹⁰²³ Photography and printing was expensive; for small crochet specimens it was much more cost effective to simply buy them, to bring along and display the real thing. The fact that Anderson brought the specimens of lace with her rather than (or perhaps in addition to) photos, designs, and drawings, also indicates that she and the women she visited were interested in construction, materials and quality, rather than simply aesthetics and design. Indeed, Anderson's tags and notes sometimes indicate the thread number and fibre, details that would be missed in reproduction. Though these details are sparse, they raise questions about the source of materials for these lace classes and teaching specimens acquired from other contexts.¹⁰²⁴ Much of the thread used in the crochet specimens appears to be linen, and most of Anderson's notes related to materials point out variations in linen thread.¹⁰²⁵ For example, a set of motifs from Blarney, County Cork (c. 1910), are labelled "unbleached linen," and are a distinctive golden colour.¹⁰²⁶ Máire Treanor notes that in County Monaghan, Clones lacemakers sometimes used silk thread, though it is thick and difficult to work with. They started using cotton thread after the nearby factory that manufactured linen thread was bombed in the Second World War, though "it isn't as strong as linen thread and doesn't have the

¹⁰²³ The use of bicycles by the British Woman Inspectors was sanctioned as early as 1896 (McFeely, *Lady Inspectors*, 79), and in 1921 a DATI Poultry and Butter overseer called Mary Quinn wrote to the Department to ask for a travel allowance raise, explaining that she would usually travel by bicycle, but they were banned in her area at the time by the military (Letter from J. Quinn to Mr. Campbell, 25 May 1921 (AGF/92/2/964-travel allowances), National Archives of Ireland, Dublin).

¹⁰²⁴ It is worth noting that Anderson does not discuss materials for lacemaking in her 1913 article for the DATI journal, though she gives detailed information about design, supply and demand. Most contemporary sources on Irish lace make few references to the sources, quality, or even fibre content of lacemaking materials. This may suggest that materials used were so standard as to be taken for granted in primary materials, and glossed over in favour of a discussion of design in both primary and secondary sources. However, there was at least some experimentation with materials for lacemaking in the nineteenth century. In the 1850s, Letitia Veevers (under the patronage of May Doneraile), produced a parasol cover of lace made with the fibres of Solomon's Seal (*polygonatum*) which Lady Doneraile sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Veevers also appears to have made other pieces of lace with unusual plant fibres. See: Mairé Dunlevy and Charles E. Nelson, "Sir William's Irish Lace Gifts from an Irish Viscountess," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* Vol. 12 Pt. 4 (1995): 220-236.

¹⁰²⁵ Given the fact that linen production was one of the North of Ireland's thriving industries throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it seems likely that much of the thread used in lacemaking was linen. In the early-twentieth century, the Belfast linen industry was still active, though the raw flax was primarily supplied from Europe. See: T.W. Rolleston, "The Belfast Linen Industry," in *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural*, ed. William P. Coyne, 413-416 (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1902).

¹⁰²⁶ NMIDT 2009.37 & NMIDT 2009.28 (1-5). See Appendix B for a full catalogue description.

same crisp feel,” strongly suggesting that before this occurred they had used primarily linen.¹⁰²⁷ The Austrian crochet lace in the collection is made of cotton, though the fact that materials are not mentioned in the crochet copyright cases discussed above or in Anderson’s article for the DATI journal (which features a substantial section on crochet copying), suggests that this may not have been a defining factor in determining whether crochet lace was ‘Irish’ or not. The Limerick and Carrickmacross lace pieces were constructed using materials from various locations: machine-made net, likely of cotton and manufactured in England, cotton or silk thread, and for the opaque appliqué of Carrickmacross lace, cambric (linen or cotton), muslin or lawn (cotton).¹⁰²⁸ One early-nineteenth-century embroidered insertion, given to Anderson by the Countess of Dudley, is labelled “embroidery on India Muslin,” a highly-prized gossamer-thin muslin produced in what was then Bengal, Western India.¹⁰²⁹ As discussed in Chapter 3, this pastiche of materials from Ireland, India, and in the case of cotton, possibly the United States, points to the interconnected forces of imperialism, capitalism, and exploitative labour practices with which Irish lacemaking was inextricably linked, even when it occurred in small villages and rural households.

Some women from these remote areas were able to study in more centralized locations, with a bigger group of colleagues and access to a study collection. In 1903, the DATI began special summer courses for teachers of lace and crochet.¹⁰³⁰ The first course was held at the Crawford School of Art, and thirty-eight teachers attended. It covered Limerick Lace, Carrickmacross Lace, Clones Lace and Raised Crochet Lace, and included: “instruction in technique, including the use of suitable materials; drawing, including the preparation of working tracings; and, in the case of those capable of profiting by such form of instruction, practice in design.”¹⁰³¹ By 1905, Carrickmacross lace

¹⁰²⁷ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 37.

¹⁰²⁸ Ghanaian artist Godfried Donkor’s ‘Once Upon a Time in the West, There Was Lace’ installation at Wollaton Hall, Nottingham (2008), highlighted the links between the Nottingham lace industry, which used cotton thread, and the labour of enslaved people and legacy of the Atlantic slave trade. See: <https://www.michaelforbes.org.uk/curatorial-project-once-upon-at-time>. Donkor further explored this theme in his ‘Rebel Madonna Lace’ installation at the 2016 EVA International Festival in Limerick. See: <https://www.eva.ie/artist/godfried-donkor/>.

¹⁰²⁹ The full NMI catalogue entry for this piece is as follows: NMIDT 2009.85 Embroidery specimen, Irish, early C19th. Section of border or insertion of fine muslin with delicate embroidery in ecru colour; floral pattern, accompanying note that reads “embroidery on India muslin” given to Miss Anderson by the Countess of Dudley (L: 24cm x W: 9cm). See: Prasannan Parthasarathi and Giorgio Riello, *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, Pasold Studies in Textile History, 16 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰³⁰ 3rd DATI Annual General Report, 210. There was a precedent to such special summer courses, with students (such as Emily Anderson) travelling to South Kensington for summer lectures and study. In July 1899, before the DATI began operations, the DMSA held summer courses for twenty-six teachers from National Schools and lacemaking centers in “freehand and geometrical drawing and elementary design suitable to lace and embroidery workers” (1st DATI Annual General Report, 245).

¹⁰³¹ 3rd DATI Annual General Report, 86.

had been replaced with sprigging and drawn threadwork, and special attention was given to arranging motifs for fine crochet.¹⁰³² These changes were direct responses to the market; that same year, the DATI published a memorandum on the lace industry stating that Carrickmacross lace “suffered from over-production, and the placing on the market of inferior work,” but that quality embroidery would be in demand in the upcoming year, and Clones crochet, or “fine crochet” was at the time “the most important branch of the Irish Lace and Crochet Industry.”¹⁰³³ Attendees of the course were asked to bring “their usual working material,” as well as technical drawing supplies and, for those specializing in crochet, “sets of such details as they are accustomed to work for the trade, as for example, the ‘Scroll,’ ‘Lily,’ ‘Hawthorn,’ ‘Shamrock,’ ‘Stem,’ ‘Branch,’ Rosettes of various forms &c.”¹⁰³⁴ The summer courses did not only teach lacemaking technique. Increasingly, they educated the teachers – who were also in charge of purchasing supplies, keeping accounts, and arranging sales – in business principles and the management of finances.¹⁰³⁵

These classes, and lace design and teaching education more broadly, were aspirational for rural lacemakers. Máire Treanor writes that for women in the Clones area in the early-twentieth century, crochet “was seen as a way to travel to Dublin to study design, and then teach it in various parts of the country”.¹⁰³⁶ This was the experience of Margaret Lynham (née Maguire), whose story, as told by Elizabeth Boyle in *The Irish Flowerers*, I will explore in the next chapter. Between 1910 and 1915, the DATI also offered three yearly Sprigging and Crochet Scholarships, which enabled the best students of regional schools to train as lace and sprigging teachers at the Enniskillen Technical School. Applicants were required to send in specimens of their work along with their application, two finished and two in progress. If they were deemed adequate, the student was invited to sit an exam in English, Arithmetic, Drawing, and crochet or sprigging, at either Enniskillen or Dublin.¹⁰³⁷

¹⁰³² 5th DATI Annual General Report, 228.

¹⁰³³ “Memorandum as to Trade Requirements of the Lace and Crochet Industry, and Suggestions for 1905,” 5th DATI Annual General Report, 252. In one way, the summer courses seem to have ignored the needs of the market – in a report for the 1907 DATI Inquiry, P. Whelan of Monaghan complained that they took the teachers away from their classes at precisely the time of year the demand for lace was highest (P. Whelan’s evidence summarized in 1907 DATI Inquiry, xlv).

¹⁰³⁴ 5th DATI Annual General Report, 229.

¹⁰³⁵ As of 1907, the Enniskillen Technical School offered day classes for lace teachers in “Book-keeping, Business Methods, and Design” (8th DATI Annual General Report, 94). Commercial subjects were taught at the summer course in Cork and Enniskillen (9th DATI Annual General Report, 83). Instructional materials from these classes may provide more insight into how and from where tools and supplies were purchased for the lace industry.

¹⁰³⁶ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 37.

¹⁰³⁷ “Training of Teachers of Crochet-work and Sprigging,” 12th DATI Annual General Report, 173. The DMSA also offered Branchardière Scholarships to students training to teach and make lace and crochet (12th DATI Annual General Report, 252).

There is no documentation indicating that any of the pieces of lace in Anderson's collection were sent in for scholarship examination, but it is a possibility, given the fact that such specimens would have been the work of the most promising and advanced students (see Appendix A for a list of scholarship recipients). There are also several unfinished – in-progress – pieces in the collection, such as a partially finished collar in Carrickmacross guipure from Castlebellingham, Co. Louth (fig. 5.8). It was likely made by the Castlebellingham Home Industries Society (fig. 4.4), which ran lace classes in Castlebellingham and Annagassan and seems to have specialized in Carrickmacross lace.¹⁰³⁸ Whoever the designer and/or makers may have been, the knowledge that the DATI Lace Inspectress had acquired a piece of their work to use for teaching and demonstration must have been a source of great personal and regional pride.

The materiality of the lace specimens and their cloth covered folders also presents evidence of how Anderson and the students or teachers in places to which she travelled would have interacted. In Chapter 2, I described how images of lace circulated in newspapers and periodicals, providing an opportunity for private, at home consumption and 'collecting'. For those who could afford real lace, *The Queen Lace Book* explained how to mount a small collection of lace specimens using tacking stitches on dark paper. Moving from the private and small-scale to the public and large-scale, Alan Cole used lantern slides to project images of lace on a screen, allowing a whole crowd to see each specimen in glowing magnification without moving from their seats. Anderson's collected lace is both public – gathered and displayed for educational purposes – and small scale. In order to see and discuss the detail, Anderson and the students of the lace classes she visited would have had to gather around, lean in, occupy the same space. There is no way to examine the specimens without closeness; the necessity of keeping them clean means it is unlikely they would have been passed around.¹⁰³⁹ This picture of Anderson gathered around a table, peering at a lace specimen with the

¹⁰³⁸ The 3rd annual DATI report lists Lace Schools at Castlebellingham and Annagassan under 'Castlebellingham Co-operative Home Industries' (304). In the 1900 RDS Art Industries Exhibition Catalogue, all of the five entries from the Society are in Class 6, Carrickmacross appliqué and guipure (Royal Dublin Society, *Catalogue of the Art Industries Exhibition, 1900*, 33).

¹⁰³⁹ Because its construction is so small and intricate, I have noticed that lace – both in the making and the studying – creates closeness. In order for two or more people to examine a specimen at once, those people have to be comfortable with physical proximity. In the formal atmosphere of a museum, this creates a dance of advance and retreat, in order to give space to the other. In contrast, my experience of lacemaking workshops – almost entirely taught and attended by women, who often come from the same community and/or have known each other for years – has been one of closeness, of the feeling of a teacher leaning over my shoulder to check my work or reaching around me to demonstrate a stitch from my perspective, the smell of perfume and hairspray. It has at times taken me a while to get used to, accustomed as I am to the more formal, former context.

teacher and students of a rural lace class is in stark contrast to Alan Cole's lantern slide lectures or a South Kensington System art class, like those I described in Chapter 1, with the pupils neatly arranged in rows and their drawing boards aligned with that of the instructor, at the front.

Despite this departure in form from her South Kensington System education, Emily Anderson was still deeply concerned about design. In her 1901 report for the Department, she noted that in the first year of operations the DATI had sent teachers with “a knowledge of drawing and design” to lace classes, with particular emphasis on educating crochet makers in drawing – this would entail composition of forms, ensuring balance and harmony – because “the crochet-worker has often to form her own pattern, and may join her details to fit into certain shapes, as best she may, without plan or guidance.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Perhaps this is why there are so many samples of crochet in collection – Limerick and Carrickmacross lacemakers could use patterns supplied by designers, but crochet makers even at that time often worked in a style that today Máire Treanor calls ‘free form.’ In 1909, Anderson was able to report that the training in drawing and design at the summer courses for crochet teachers were improving crochet design, and that “these new designs command[ed] higher prices than the stereotyped pattern common to the trade”.¹⁰⁴¹ However, the following year, she cautioned that despite this progress “the artistic side of the industry will need more general attention if we are to maintain our market against the increasing competition from continental centers.”¹⁰⁴² Two specimens of imitation ‘Irish crochet’ from Austria included in the collection point to her involvement with protecting Irish crochet, in particular (figs. 5.9 and 5.10). Indeed, it is possible that one of the collars was that sold by Miss Reardon, of Killarney, prompting the prosecution detailed earlier in this chapter. After all, representatives of the DATI had purchased it fair and square, and they wouldn't have had much use for it themselves!

Despite the threat they posed to the Irish lace industry, Anderson's collection does show an engagement with continental laces as models for Irish designs, a way of working – and a perception of continental laces as superior – that she had learned as a student at the Cork School of Art and during her trips to study at South Kensington. A lappet from Florence Vere O'Brien's lace school is an interpretation of a piece of Flemish bobbin lace, in Limerick tambour (fig. 5.11). The design translates well into the new medium, it is dense and complex, but still would have been much more efficient to reproduce in tambour on net. A portion of crochet border, made in Ireland after a

¹⁰⁴⁰ 1st DATI Annual General Report, 71.

¹⁰⁴¹ 9th DATI Annual General Report, 108.

¹⁰⁴² 10th DATI Annual General Report, 118.

French design in c. 1910, shows how effective a repeating and inter-related floral design can be in crochet (fig. 5.12). However, Anderson and her fellow designers were also looking to historic *Irish* lace for inspiration. A small crochet specimen in the shape of a five-leafed flower, labelled “Modern Work,” c. 1905 (fig. 5.13), was filed in an envelope with the early-nineteenth-century ladies cap referenced in Chapter 1 (fig. 1.6). It appears to be a demonstration of the same technique of heavy rolled dots reinterpreted to adorn a more modern floral shape, as it is accompanied by a label bearing the text: “II Modern Work cir. 1905 showing same treatment of rolled dots on details.” A 1905 memorandum on the lace market recommended that Limerick lace classes produce work in the style of the 1840s and 1850s as well as in modern designs, in order to fulfill the needs of the trade.¹⁰⁴³ In 1907, Anderson reported on “a return to the delicate details of early 19th century crochet,” and the “closely allied” “Crochet Point” from South Munster.¹⁰⁴⁴

Many of the specimens in the collection demonstrate high-quality rehearsals of the same classic motifs. A folder lined with blue cloth, for example, contains seven specimens of Clones-style crochet lace, each bearing a distinctive treatment of the horseshoe motifs (fig. 5.14). There are numerous insertion bands and borders in the same ‘rose and shamrock square’ style still used today in Irish crochet (fig. 6.11), though it has become less popular than the ‘free form’ style taught by Máire Treanor. However, both Emily Anderson’s writing on the lace industry and her collection show that she was not averse to experimentation with new styles and designs. The Flemish and French-inspired pieces discussed above attest to this, but so do some more unexpected elements of the collection. An unusual set of ‘sea weed’ motifs (fig. 5.15) and a sample of border in a ‘bell or fan’ pattern (fig. 5.16), both from County Westmeath, show regional centres experimenting with design and patterning to create their own distinct style of crochet lace. A handkerchief, made in Glenties, County Donegal in 1924, bears a brightly colored, abstracted floral motif in each corner – Anderson has labelled it “Jazz” embroidery (fig. 5.17). The design is charming, but feels off-kilter and tentative, as if it were a trial piece demonstrating different possible configurations of color and form, but not quite able to depart entirely from a traditional ‘sprigging’ of flowers. One of the motifs, however, is almost fully abstracted, emphatic in form and boldly colored in yellow, orange, grey and green (detail, fig. 5.17). It is the only sample of such embroidery in the collection, or that I have seen elsewhere, but it prompts speculation on the life of jazz embroidery – was there a demand for such

¹⁰⁴³ “Memorandum as to Trade Requirements of the Lace and Crochet Industry, and Suggestions for 1905,” 5th DATI Annual General Report, 252.

¹⁰⁴⁴ 7th DATI Annual General Report, 75.

‘adventurous’ handkerchiefs? Did this design, like Jazz music, originate in the United States – perhaps based on motifs decorating an item sent by a family member across the Atlantic? Did it spark a trend?

Three small pieces of lace mounted on claret-colored velvet show experimentation in construction rather than aesthetic, using combinations of cut lawn, tape lace, and crochet and needlepoint stitches. One is a portion of a border or insertion of tape lace in a dense floral design, with crochet and additions (fig. 5.18). The other two specimens are early Venetian needlepoint-inspired floral sprays. The more harmonious and confidently composed specimen of the two is labelled with a tag that reads ‘Miss Percival,’ probably Edith Percival, who taught at the DATI special summer course in lace, crochet and sprigging for ten years, from 1903 until 1912.¹⁰⁴⁵ Percival employs fields of cut and embroidered lawn (similar to Carrickmacross lace’s use of appliqué) for leaves and petals, tape lace for stems, needle lace stitches for infilling, and crochet for texture and embellishment (fig. 5.19).¹⁰⁴⁶ Though the result is beautiful, a much more time-effective way of making rich, needlepoint lace-style work, it is easy to see why such methods did not catch on. Lacemakers with three distinct skill sets would have had to work on a single piece.

5.4 Conclusion: towards amateur practice

Though Emily Anderson continued to fulfill her duties as a lace inspector up until the time of her retirement, these lace specimens remain some of the only evidence of her work in the latter part of her career. Many mentions in Irish newspapers of Emily Anderson’s work as a DATI Inspectress from about 1910 onwards refer to her role as a judge at county fairs. She seems to have evaluated the ‘Home Industries’ or ‘Needlework’ displays at these fairs just as rigorously as she inspected lace classes; her few published reports contain criticism and encouragement alike. However, it is unclear who exactly the competitors were. Though some names are linked to a convent class or industrial school, most are simply qualified by the competitor’s home town. Where were these women taught to make lace? Did they make it for money? Did they make the pieces submitted to these competitions during leisure time, or were they produced in a workshop or class setting? I will explore

¹⁰⁴⁵ DATI Annual General Reports, 3-12.

¹⁰⁴⁶ The catalogue record for this piece (NMIDT2009.68(3)- labelled Miss Percival) describes it simply as braid lace with crochet – the record seems to be confused with that of NMIDT2009.68(1), described as “cut and embroidered lawn with crochet details and needlework enrichments”.

some possible answers to these questions in the next chapter as I consider lacemaking's transition from a way to earn money and supplement rural incomes to a popular amateur craft.

Anderson's emphasis on design principles in lacemaking as well as in the Schools of Art was not necessarily popular. Joanna Bourke notes that after 1909, attendance in lace and crochet classes decreased because of a new requirement to take design classes once a week; some women found the extra training cut into their household duties, or "resented being treated as school children sitting at desks with pen and pad."¹⁰⁴⁷ However, this does not indicate backwardness or lack of intelligence, as Bourke seems to imply in writing that "Irish women failed home industries."¹⁰⁴⁸ Many rural Irish women made great sacrifices to study design and learn to teach. Máire Treanor writes that in the early-twentieth century, developing skill in crochet was seen as a ticket to studying in Dublin and then teaching the craft. In the next chapter, I will explore Elizabeth Boyle's telling of the story of Margaret Lynham (née Maguire), who did exactly that.¹⁰⁴⁹ Even in 1884, the Royal Commission on Technical instruction reported that lace designers were going to the larger firms in Britain – Nottingham, for example – where they could earn much more than they did producing designs for small schools in Ireland.¹⁰⁵⁰ The industry simply was not set up to reward wide-scale innovation.

Hesitation on the part of makers to invest time in skill-building was also caused by a loss of earnings. When students of the lace class in Youghal were asked to leave their lace work to attend classes in Domestic Economy, they complained that this took them away from their "ordinary" work and cut into their earnings.¹⁰⁵¹ Lacemakers in County Monaghan also eschewed Domestic Economy training in favor of more lucrative lace work.¹⁰⁵² Commercial firms in Monaghan cared more about quantity than quality; in one case a company started its own classes, which rushed training and resulted in poor quality work – and children leaving school to enroll in the classes and make money.¹⁰⁵³ This adherence to older, well known models that could be completed – and remunerated – more quickly, presents a financial impetus for the lack of interest in developing and producing new, potentially more complicated designs. In the next chapter, I will use my own experience making

¹⁰⁴⁷ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 130.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 138.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 37.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, Second Report: Volume III, 77.

¹⁰⁵¹ "Evidence of Right Rev. Monsignor Keller P.P V.G. Dean of Cloyne," 1907 DATI Inquiry, 264. Keller's evidence includes the information that 300 girls were employed in lacemaking at Youghal, and in the previous year they had been paid £3400 in wages (p. 267). These are likely estimates, but if divided evenly would work out to just over £11 in yearly pay for each worker.

¹⁰⁵² "Evidence of Mr. D.C. Rushe, Secretary of Monaghan County Council," 1907 DATI Inquiry, 564.

¹⁰⁵³ "Evidence of Mr. D.C. Rushe, Secretary of Monaghan County Council," 1907 DATI Inquiry, 564.

crochet lace alongside contemporary Irish makers to speculate on another reason for maintaining consistency in practice – namely that it allows for a mental and physical state of that might be called ‘flow’.

Emily Anderson’s reports show an industry on the decline because of changes in fashion, technology, and politics. Perhaps most indicative of the lace industry’s precarious nature is that in 1910, the death of King Edward VII caused a depression in the industry, as the British elite went into mourning.¹⁰⁵⁴ The partition of Ireland in 1921 left the home industries of the six counties of Northern Ireland – Fermanagh, Armagh, Tyrone, Derry, Down, and Antrim – under-resourced. In February 1923, the Fermanagh Technical Instruction Committee reported that “there was no special Industrial Inspector since Miss Anderson severed her connection with that part of the country.”¹⁰⁵⁵ Fermanagh, in particular, had been a center for lace and crochet, with the Enniskillen Technical School providing local education for lace teachers. In 1923, the new Department of Education took over the Technical Instruction Branch, along with the Metropolitan School of Art.¹⁰⁵⁶ The fact that the Irish Department of Education took responsibility for technical instruction in the years following 1923 also points to the further absorption of craft education into the National School system. Though outside the purview of this project, an investigation of craft in Irish primary and secondary school education would be a fruitful area of inquiry.

This decline of the lacemaking industry should not, however, be read as a disappearance of the craft. In the next and final chapter, I will go on to consider how the lace industry remained active in pockets throughout Ireland, receded to be revived again by contemporary practitioners, and like other tradition crafts found a place in vibrant communities of amateurs. In examining Elizabeth Boyle’s *The Irish Flowerers* as a record of mid-twentieth-century Irish lacemaking, outlining the craft-related work of the Irish Countrywomen’s Association, and presenting the case study of Clones crochet, I will suggest that it shifted from holding a place in a financial economy to a relational economy, taking a central role in the building of communities and relationships in Ireland and abroad.

The lace collection at the National Museum of Ireland is still used by lacemakers as a source of education and inspiration. Lacemaking groups throughout Ireland schedule field trips to Collins Barracks to see specimens brought out of storage by curators of the Art and Industrial Division.

¹⁰⁵⁴ 10th DATI Annual General Report, 117.

¹⁰⁵⁵ “Sprigging Industry in County Fermanagh,” *Fermanagh Herald* February 6, 1923, 5. Irish Newspaper Archive.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Hoctor, *The Department’s Story*, 132.

Emily Anderson's specimens, tacked to colorful paper in their annotated folders, have not, to my knowledge, been part of these tours. But they are a rich resource, and perhaps this project, in highlighting them, will help restore them to their original purpose: not as inert, archival evidence, but as designed and constructed objects, active teaching aids and sources of design inspiration.

Figures: Chapter 5

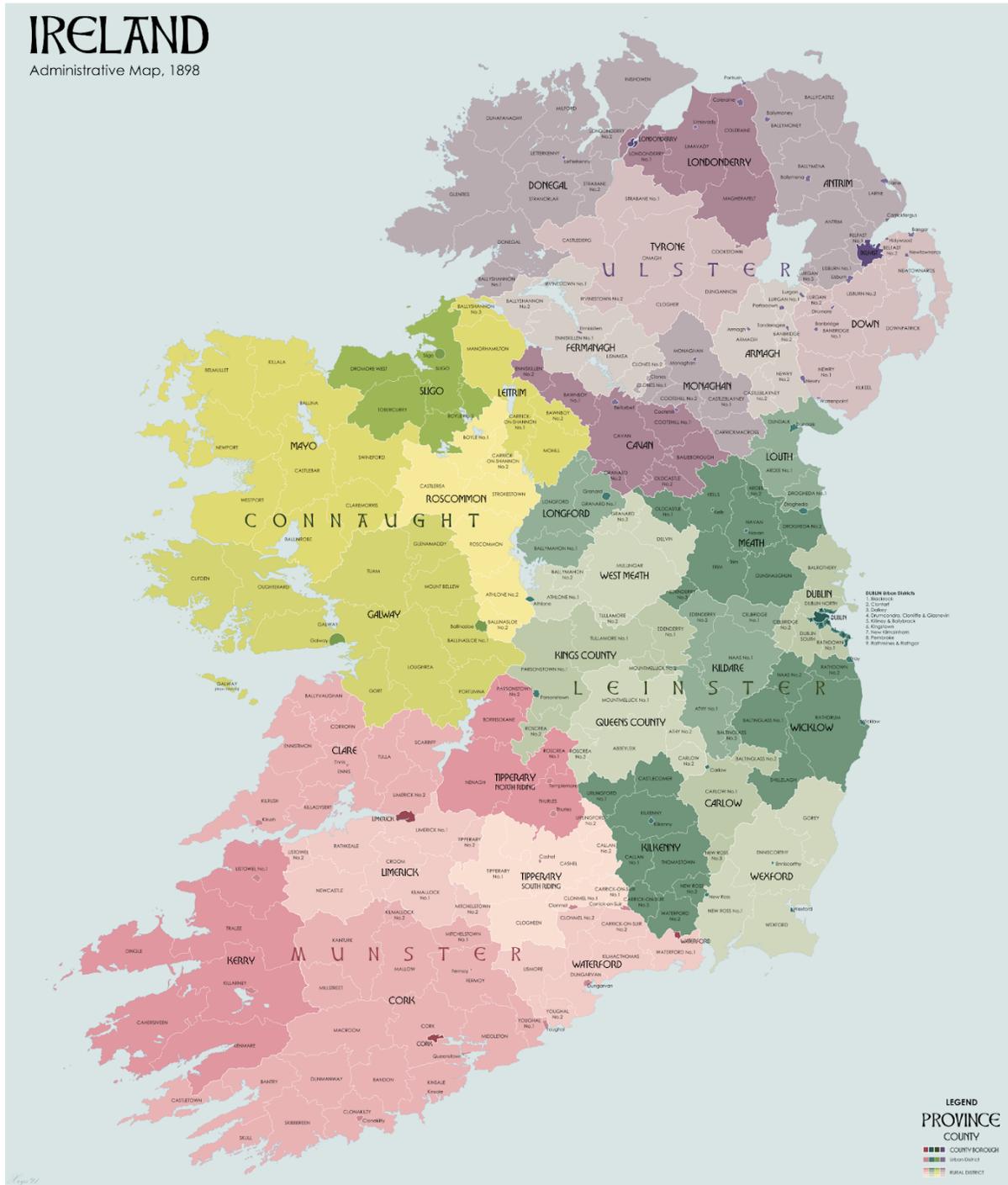


Figure 5-1 Administrative Map of Ireland in 1898, showing County Boroughs, Urban and Rural Districts. By XrySD (CC BY-SA 3.0). Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21892786> (Accessed November 23, 2021).

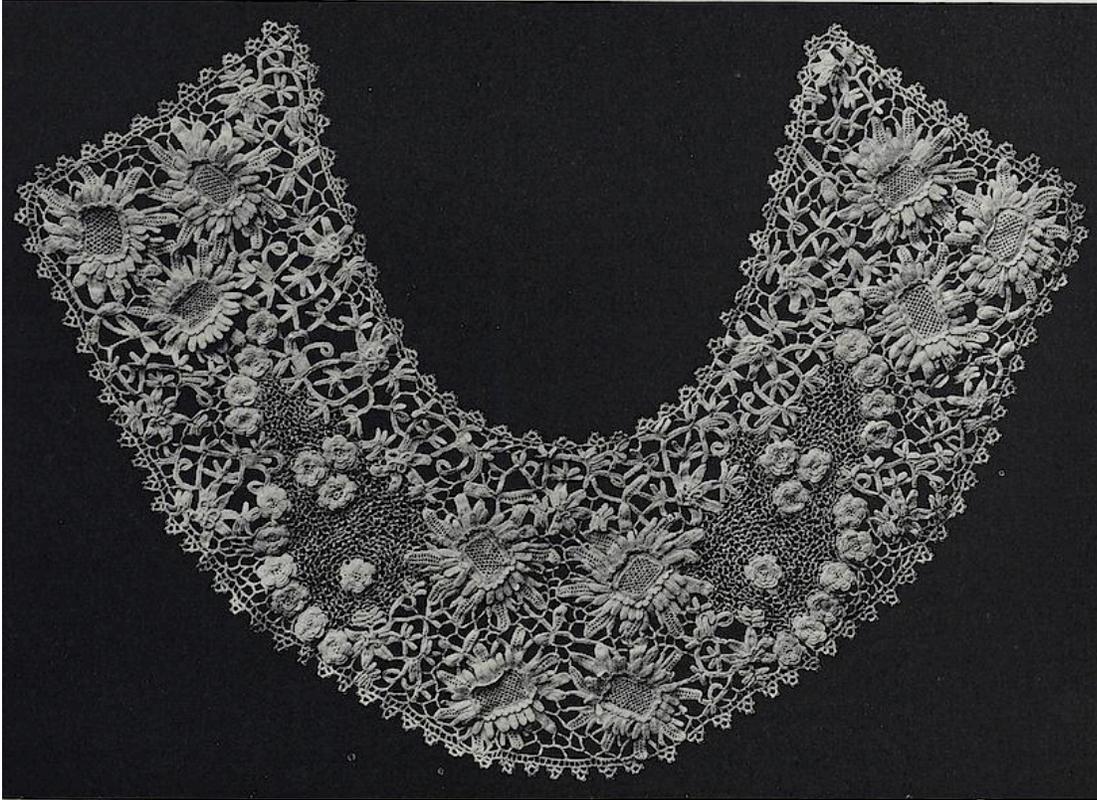


Figure 5-2 Austrian Crochet Collar, designed by Fraulein Hofmanninger and executed in various Austrian lace schools. In *The Studio* Vol. 36 (1906), 19. Source: <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/studio1906/0046/scroll> (Accessed November 23, 2021).

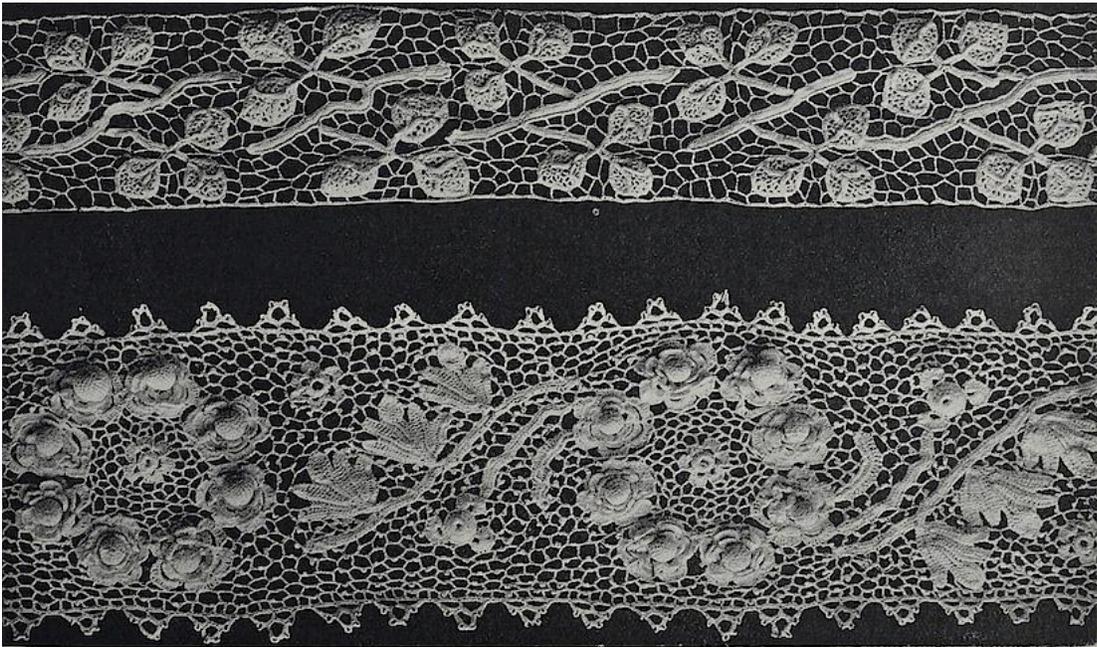


Figure 5-3 Austrian Crochet Work, designed by Frauleins Anna Pleyer and Hofmanninger and executed in various Austrian lace schools. In *The Studio* Vol. 36 (1906), 29. Source: <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/studio1906/0046/scroll> (Accessed November 23, 2021).



Figure 5-4 Tabernacle veil in needlepoint lace, made by Mary Jane and Katie Leahy at the Convent of the Poor Clares, Kenmare, 1911. Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tabernacle_veil_of_Kenmare_Lace_1911_%E2%80%93_National_museum.jpg (Accessed November 23, 2021).



Figure 5-5 Folder with 5 specimens of crochet lace, 3 insertions and two border samples, made in Newport, Co. Mayo, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.50). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-6 Clones-style crochet collar, made in East Mayo, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.25). Photo by the author.

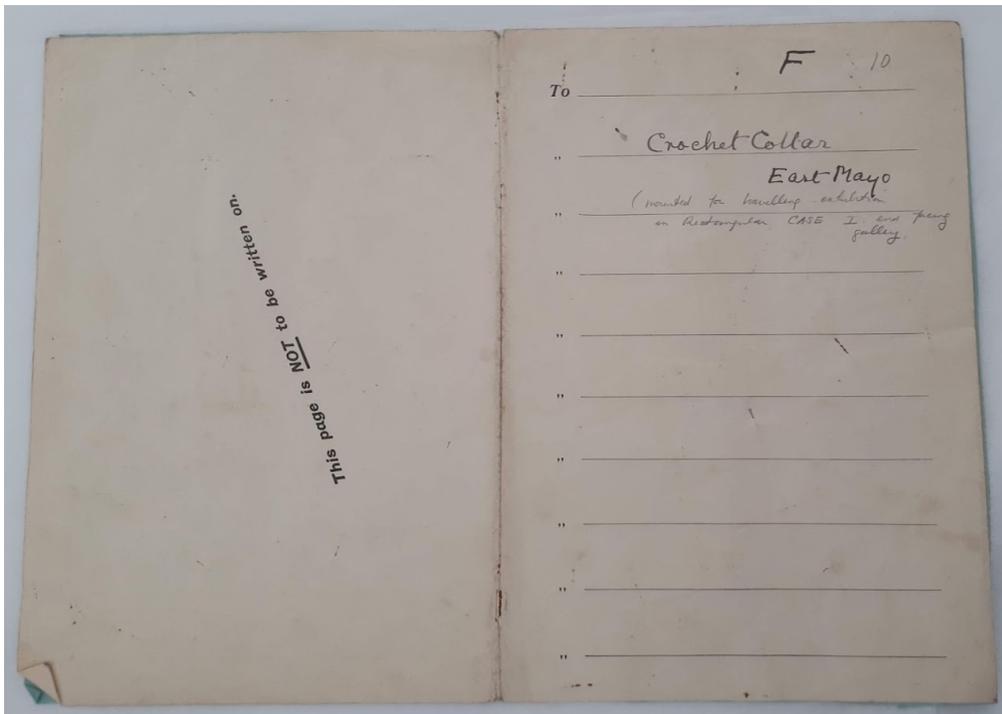


Figure 5-7 Outside of folder 'F', containing Clones-style crochet collar, made in East Mayo, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.25). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-8 Collar in Carrickmacross guipure lace, one half almost finished (detail on brown background) and the other partly worked with the outline of the pattern in muslin over net, made at Castlebellingham (Home Industries Society?), c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.74). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-9 Detail of cotton crochet collar, Austrian imitation of Irish crochet, c. 1920-1925 (contrast increased to show detail), from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.32). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-10 Detail of cotton crochet collar, Austrian imitation of Irish crochet, c. 1920-1925 (contrast increased to show detail) from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.33). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-11 Lappet of Limerick tambour lace, after a Flemish pillow lace pattern, made at Florence Vere O'Brien's Lace School, Limerick, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.65). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-12 Piece of crochet border with a chrysanthemum pattern and scalloped edge, Irish after a French design, c. 1915, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.61). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-13 Motif in raised crochet, embellished with rolled dots and Clones knots on the mesh work, found in an envelope with the ladies cap (2009.59), c. 1905, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.60). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-14 Specimens of Clones crochet lace from various districts, with horseshoe motifs, Co. Monaghan and other districts, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.51 6-12). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-15 Crochet motifs in a 'Sea Wee' pattern (labelled 'details from a border,' Co. Westmeath, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.55 1-2). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-16 Crochet trimming in a “Bell or Fan” pattern, with scalloped edge and padded rings, Co. Westmeath, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.54). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-17 Cotton handkerchief embroidered in coloured threads in a “Jazz” style, with drawn thread work at the border, Glenties, Co. Donegal, c. 1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.81 3). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-18 Specimen of tape lace with additions in crochet, one of three samples of experimental lace made at the Crawford School of Art, Cork, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMID'T 2009.68 3 - note: the cataloguing information for 2009.68 may be slightly incorrect, as medium and measurements indicate this is item 3, but it does not bear the name Miss Percival). Photo by the author.



Figure 5-19 Specimen of lace in cut and embroidered lawn, with additions in crochet and needlework, one of three samples of experimental lace made at the Crawford School of Art, Cork, c. 1899-1925, from the collection of Emily Anderson (see Appendix B for a full catalogue description). Collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMIDT 2009.68 1 - note: the cataloguing information for 2009.68 may be slightly incorrect, as medium and measurements indicate this is item 1, but bears the name Miss Percival). Photo by the author.

Chapter 6

Three Bonnets: Making, Speculating and Learning New Questions

Imaginary Emily

When I imagine Emily teaching lace design and visiting lace classes, I picture her circulating through the room and stopping at each chair, standing just behind the student to look over her shoulder and down at her hands, inspecting the work from the same perspective as the maker herself. That's how it was for me, when I was the student, and the one under inspection.¹⁰⁵⁷

Sitting at the mixed-laces table at the Nemo Sports Complex, nervous because I don't know anyone, and I didn't bring enough money to pay for my lunch and supplies (was there a cash machine at the gas station I walked by on the way out here? I can't remember). I'm glad to have a task to work at, so that I can be there, quietly listening to talk of lace teaching certificates and local news and not saying very much at all. One of the women checks my work on a regular basis (she says it's very good!) and another offers to lend me her cutting out scissors, because they're impossible to find in the shops – I can drop them at her son's bank in Cork the following week.¹⁰⁵⁸

Sitting by the window in the Kenmare Lace and Design Centre, the light coming in over my left shoulder, the way Nora Finnegan told me to sit so the sun could best illuminate the tiny white stitches. It's a bank holiday Monday, and there's a concert on the radio: Conor O'Brien with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra.¹⁰⁵⁹ A group of tourists come in to look at the collection, and stop to watch me working at my sampler for a moment. Luckily I'm working on the simplest, loose buttonhole stitch, so I seem to know what I'm doing. Perhaps they think I'm part of the display, like Ellen Abern making Youghal lace at the Columbian Exhibition. When they turn away, I glance up at Nora and she gives me a conspiratorial smile.

Sitting at the beginner's table in the basement of the Ulster Canal Stores, trying to crochet a straight row, pillar row, and three-looped edging in the half hour before I have to leave and catch a bus (the only bus) to Galway. Máire stands over my shoulder, watching my slow progress, until finally she takes the work out of my hands to finish it

¹⁰⁵⁷ Not just in Ireland. The first entry in my book of 'field notes,' from April 2019, reads: before I could make any sense of the patterns in my crochet lace book I needed to remember how to crochet, and for this I enlisted the help of my friend Christa who taught me how to crochet, and also how to knit (again) – probably about fifteen years ago now – and is largely responsible for the way that I feel comfortable (and also curious and omnivorous) when it comes to needlework. We ran through the basics, single crochet, double crochet, chain, while she played an after-dinner board game with her son and my mom, splitting her attention between the two tasks (and I remembered it all again quite quickly).

¹⁰⁵⁸ The teacher at the mixed laces table that day was Marion, and she helped me to get started on a small Carrickmacross sampler, using #50 white sewing thread to couch #60 crochet cotton, following the pattern of a wild rose on organdy over netting over a tissue paper pattern. A member of the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland sitting beside me at the table, Bridie, later shipped a parcel of Carrickmacross lace supplies to my address in Canada, with a note of encouragement.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Listening to a concert on the radio felt quaint at the time for me, a lover and frequent attender of live music. A year later, streamed and recorded concerts (often performed by socially-distanced or solo artists) would become a vital way to experience creative work, and, I think, collective emotional expression during the pandemic lockdowns. Artists often included messages of courage and togetherness, as well as grief, a notable example from the Irish context being the 'Courage' concerts streamed live from the National Museum of Ireland. For more about the 'Courage' series hosted by Other Voices at the National Museum of Ireland, see: <https://www.nationalgallery.ie/national-gallery-ireland-at-home/other-voices-courage>. The 2019 RTÉ Concert Orchestra and Conor O'Brien (Villagers) concert is available in full to listen online: <https://www.rte.ie/culture/2019/0503/1047345-villagers-with-the-rte-concert-orchestra-watch-a-preview/>.

herself, explaining that at least then I will have something to copy. In less than ten minutes, she's done it all, holding the sampler down in front of me so I can see every step, and chatting to me and the others at the table the whole time.

Emily Anderson retired from the DATI in or around 1926, and died in 1948, at the age of 91.¹⁰⁶⁰ If this project uses her career as a map to chart a path through lace design, education and production in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Ireland, her retirement, or even the date of her death, seems a good place to stop. And yet, there are threads still to be explored – if not to be tied off and tucked in. In this final chapter, I will consider how many of the contexts for design, making and teaching discussed in earlier chapters evolved as lacemaking found new relevance in Irish women's lives throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, and conclude with an exploration of my own lace learning and making. I will begin by presenting three case studies in the persistence of lacemaking and other craft practices, long after World War I, the period usually cited as the end of the Irish lace industry. Each one is worthy of further study, and suggests how the educational and organizational structures put in place to support the lace industry by the networked actors explored throughout this thesis adapted to the new economic, social, and cultural realities of the twentieth century, even as skill in lacemaking moved to occupy different spaces, both conceptual and physical.

Elizabeth Boyle's *The Irish Flowerers*, published in 1971 by the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, includes information from interviews conducted in the 1960s with women who recalled earlier practices in the industry. Though Boyle primarily uses the interviews for their early-twentieth-century content, they also paint a picture of lacemaking in 1960s Ireland. In Chapter 4, I discussed how the IAOS handed governance of the Home Industries Societies to the United Irishwomen. Though the United Irishwomen did not prioritise the Societies, which began to decline around the same time, the United Irishwomen, renamed the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) would later become a vital force for Irish craft. During much of the twentieth century, the ICA was led in this endeavour by Muriel Gahan, whose father had written baseline reports for the CDB. And finally, I will consider Máire Treanor's teaching practice and work with the Clones Lace Guild, which was

¹⁰⁶⁰ Emily Anderson died February 29, 1948, at Woodside, a house on Bird Avenue, Clonskeagh, in South Dublin. Her age is listed as 90, but if she was born in August 1856, as her birth record indicates, she would have been 91 (Schedule of assets - Emily Anderson, 29.4.48, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin; Dundrum Death Registry for 1948, 515, photocopy supplied by Patrick Nicholson; Churchtown Townland, Co. Waterford Birth Registry Extracts, transcribed by Rosemary ffolliot, provided by Patrick Nicholson).

guided by women who had made crochet lace with their families as children in the early-twentieth-century period I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

I do not claim that the lace industry was a serious economic force during this mid- to late-twentieth-century period. In fact, throughout this thesis I have pointed to the continual precarity of the industry, and to the non-economic roles that lace, lacemaking, and other crafts played in Irish women's lives. Instead, I will suggest that these contexts show a continuation of the lacemaking tradition, a lineage of craft skill, and Irish lace's shift from production for economic reasons, to reasons of cultural identity, community building, care and self-care. As design historian Fiona Hackney writes in her discussion of amateur craft as "quiet activism": "As many knitters and sewers of all ages have told me, this kind of craft practice is not undergoing a revival because, in their experience, *it never went away* – a further reason for paying attention to the hybrid spaces of domestic activity."¹⁰⁶¹

Perhaps the most compelling argument for this perspective is the fact that my lacemaking practice with lace groups and teachers in Ireland created a direct connection between me as a maker and contexts for teaching and making that I have explored in the previous chapters, and will point towards in the following sections. Woven into the text of this chapter are excerpts from the 'field notes' I kept while taking online Clones crochet classes with Máire Treanor, and completing three Clones lace baby bonnets. In the introduction, I described how the Covid-19 lockdowns pushed this the chronological focus of this project further into the past, and into the present (or even future) at the same time. The necessity of using online archival resources, such as British parliamentary papers and digitized newspapers, led me to focus more than I had originally intended on the structural, bureaucratic aspects of lace production and design education. My inability to attend lace classes in person, as I had in 2019, led me to take online classes with Máire Treanor, an early adopter of the online format, and eventually interview her on Zoom. As a result, my lacemaking practice came to be centered on Clones crochet lace, and, in a similar way, concerned with both the past and future. As I gathered information from classes and interviews with Máire Treanor, and from my own experience making Clones lace bonnets for three babies born in November 2020, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the continued relevance and use of lacemaking in contemporary Ireland and beyond. It also enabled me to speculate backwards, using the embodied knowledge gained from *being*

¹⁰⁶¹ Fiona Hackney, "Quiet Activism and the New Amateur: the power of home and hobby crafts," *Design and Culture* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2013): 17, DOI:10.2752/175470813X13638640370733. Emphasis mine.

a student, *designing* patterns, *making* lace, and *giving* the objects away to guide my understanding of the historical and material sources, which is evidenced in the contextual footnotes throughout the previous chapters. The second half of this chapter will offer a closer look at the more conceptual and future-oriented elements of my own designing, making and giving of the three Clones crochet lace bonnets, under Máire Treanor's tutelage.

6.1 Elizabeth Boyle's *The Irish Flowerers* as a snapshot of mid-century lacemaking

Published by the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in 1971, Elizabeth Boyle's *The Irish Flowerers* is the only book-length scholarly study of lacemaking and embroidery in Ireland.¹⁰⁶² Whenever possible, Boyle attempts to highlight the experiences of individual lacemakers, and much of her source material consists of interviews and conversations with makers, teachers, and designers that remembered the 'old days' of the Irish lace industry in the early-twentieth century.¹⁰⁶³ Conducting interviews in the 1960s, Elizabeth Boyle was able to gather stories from women who had learned, taught, and designed for the turn-of-the-century lace classes and workshops that I discussed in the last two chapters. In *The Irish Flowerers*, women whose names go unremarked in the historical record, or appear on a list in a DATI report, are vibrant individuals who speak of the pride, pain, long hours, friendship, and local traditions of their lacemaking.¹⁰⁶⁴

Mrs. M. (Maggie) Lynam (née Maguire) of Fermanagh recalled the DATI's crochet lace class in her area, saying "that industry was the first help the people ever had."¹⁰⁶⁵ Her sister Annie Maguire had studied at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, and both taught crochet in their home county. Lynam herself was one of the instructors on the DATI summer courses referenced in the previous chapter, and went on to teach in Lady Erne's classes at Derrylin when her sister died.¹⁰⁶⁶ Though she

¹⁰⁶² Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*.

¹⁰⁶³ Elizabeth Boyle and her husband, labor historian John Boyle, moved to Canada in the 1960s. The *Irish Flowerers* was published when the Boyles were living in Sackville, New Brunswick. They eventually moved to Guelph, Ontario, where John taught at Guelph University. I am still attempting to determine where John and Elizabeth's papers were left, if indeed they were lodged in a library or archive after their deaths – her research notes would likely be an invaluable source in the continuing study of Irish lace and Irish women's labour history.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Elizabeth Boyle refers to her interviewees by their married name, only including their first initial in the appendices, and occasionally referring to their younger self by a first name or nickname. No doubt this is out of respect and perhaps a desire to maintain a level of anonymity, however it makes it very difficult to find the women in official documentation (especially because their teaching activities usually took place before marriage). When possible, I have tried to trace the women's given and family names, in order to facilitate connections between sources that provide a fuller picture of their role as teachers, designers, and makers in the lace industry.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 61.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 61.

is sure to point out that Lynam did not make a great deal of money in the industry, Elizabeth Boyle describes her career achievements in glowing terms: “She herself went from triumph to triumph in those years antedating war and revolution, teaching art school summer courses, teaching in Enniskillen town hall weekly for a period, winning an award for her crochet in the county show. She was gallant and successful, though she cannot be said to have made large profits from her work.”¹⁰⁶⁷

Elsewhere in the text, Boyle’s stance on the lace industry as a force for women’s empowerment and social good is ambivalent, so such a positive description of Lynam’s career need not be taken as simple romanticization on the part of the author. In describing the dwindling of the Inishmacsaint needle lace industry, Boyle quotes lacemakers who recounted that they did not get much money for most of their designs, and that the thread – “like the finest hair on our head” – was difficult to use, but she also includes an excerpt from a letter written to her by lace maker Mrs. E.A. Johnston: “I have worked so much at lace I am very interested in some of its memories. The workers were very sorry it finished up. I missed it very much myself, and many a long thought do I give it.”¹⁰⁶⁸ It is also important to note that Boyle’s interviewees *chose* to make lace, even if that choice was motivated by economic hardship. In writing about the Limerick lace gifted to American President John F. Kennedy during his visit to Ireland in 1963, Fintan O’Toole notes that the lace was made by inmates at the Good Shepherd Convent’s Magdalen laundry.¹⁰⁶⁹ The women of this Limerick institution – and likely of others – made lace to sell to American tourists well into the 1970s, working for no pay contemporaneously to Elizabeth Boyle’s interviewees further north.¹⁰⁷⁰

Boyle uses her interviewees’ remembrances primarily to elucidate an earlier-twentieth-century history. For example, she discusses the work of Cecilia Keyes, a Limerick lace designer who won a scholarship to study at the South Kensington School of Art in 1897, and continued to design patterns for the Convent of Mercy industrial school until she died in 1936.¹⁰⁷¹ However, Boyle’s interviews also point to a surprising amount of continuity between the lace industry at the turn-of-the-century and that of the 1960s, especially in the lacemaking centres of the north-west and border region. At the time of writing, Boyle was able to report that:

Both governments, north and south, have given grants for the encouragement of fine work. To-day there are technical-school lace classes in Carrickmacross and in nearby Crossmaglen (where the local member of parliament stimulated interest in appliqué-making)

¹⁰⁶⁷ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 61.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 66.

¹⁰⁶⁹ O’Toole, “Exquisite Lace and Dirty Linen,” 181.

¹⁰⁷⁰ O’Toole, “Exquisite Lace and Dirty Linen,” 181.

¹⁰⁷¹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 48.

and technical school crochet classes in county Fermanagh. The publicly-owned factory of Gaeltarra Éireann, in Bruckless, County Donegal, has inside its walls twenty full-time employees, who ‘finish’ the table linens embroidered by over 350 registered out-workers.¹⁰⁷²

Two hundred of those out-workers worked full-time in the summer months, which is remarkable given the fact that home industries such as crochet had even in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries been considered supplementary labour. The factory in Bruckless was managed by Mrs. Gillespie, having been started by Miss Gunn, who developed “a modern household linen concern by amalgamating embroidery and crochet.”¹⁰⁷³ Some of the workers had learned the craft in CDB classes. More than thirty of the workers based in Cliffony, Co. Sligo, had learned at Miss Cosgrove’s class, and Boyle cites Lizzie Ritchie of Lough Hill as a student of Miss O’Connor’s class.¹⁰⁷⁴

Women in Donegal would also sell crochet individually, by placing a specimen of their work in a glass-fronted box at the end of their lane, an advertisement for passing tourists.¹⁰⁷⁵ As well, they produced a great deal of crochet for personal use. Boyle writes that up until the Second World War it was “an almost necessary decoration in a farmer’s house, and was popular, too, in many suburban dwellings.”¹⁰⁷⁶ Families might own any number of crocheted doilies, mats, table covers, and bedspreads, though Boyle notes that large crocheted bedspreads were more likely to date from earlier in the century.¹⁰⁷⁷ My own experience attests to this. While travelling for research, I had only to mention that I was studying Irish lace for a host or new acquaintance to disappear from the room and return with a box of crocheted doilies, edged tea cloths, or even a bedspread. Sometimes, such a show-and-tell was accompanied by a palpable sense of guilt; the owner of the crocheted items didn’t use them, but was acutely aware of the labour that had produced them and the family history of craft skill and household pride they contained.¹⁰⁷⁸

¹⁰⁷² Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xxix. Gaeltarra Éireann was a government body established in 1957 to encourage the development of industry in Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) regions, and dissolved in 1979. As many Gaeltacht regions map onto the congested districts, the Gaeltarra Éireann’s projects impacted many of the same communities as had the earlier work of the CDB (see, for a list of government Acts relating to the Gaeltarra Éireann: <http://www.isad.ie/units/view/id/470>).

¹⁰⁷³ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 59.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 59.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xxix.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 59.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 59.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Michelle and Joe, hosts of my AirBnB room in Cork, gave me some crochet lace made by Joe’s aunt, Sis Finnegan, in Ardee, nr. Carrickmacross, in the 40s, 50s, and 60s (lace book, summer 2019).

Boyle does point out that other industries drew young women away from needlework as a way to supplement family income. She describes how Janie Woods, who learned to make Carrickmacross lace at the St. Louis Convent lace school in the early-twentieth century, remembered her pride in completing “her first three yards of appliqué on net, one foot deep” (fig. 6.1).¹⁰⁷⁹ Woods referred to the young women with relatives or ancestors who had been lacemakers as having “the nature in them,” but though some may have this almost spiritual connection to the craft she concluded that “[modern girls] try it a couple days, and then off to the jam factory.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Yet Boyle’s account of Carrickmacross lacemaking in the Armagh-Monaghan area in the 1960s paints a picture of a vibrant, though small, local industry and a great deal of pride and knowledge among local women.¹⁰⁸¹ There were seventy outworkers associated with the St. Louis Convent’s lace school, for which one of the sisters designed patterns, a Saturday morning “commercial class” in Carrickmacross with twenty-five students, and day and evening classes taught by Rose Feeney in Crossmaglen, each attended by approximately twelve students. Children in Cullaville and Carrickmacross could elect to learn lacemaking in school, and though none of the children seemed to want to become lacemakers, they may have aspired to become teachers and designers. A local teacher and lace designer, Miss E. Hughes, worked on couture commissions and also taught “for twenty-seven hours a week.”¹⁰⁸² Boyle also notes the presence of “experienced workers throughout this lace area who undertake commissions for favourite lace agents only, and whose reputation brings them enigmatic orders from afar, orders addressed to ‘Wedding veil maker, Crossmaglen/Cullaville’, for instance.”¹⁰⁸³ It was around this time that the Irish fashion designer Sybil Connolly commissioned Carrickmacross lace from Irish makers for couture dresses such as the ‘Pink Ice’ gown (fig. 6.2).

Lacemakers also had other reasons for learning the craft. An attendee of the Crossmaglen technical school’s appliqué (Carrickmacross) lace class during the 1960s remarked that “all the workers enjoyed them (the appliqué classes) very much. The general impression I got was that they came to the classes because they were interested to learn the craft rather than to make money.”¹⁰⁸⁴ Younger women in the school learned in order to make a very specific item: “as they tell enquirers,

¹⁰⁷⁹ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 45.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 45.

¹⁰⁸¹ Carrickmacross lace was a popular souvenir for American tourists, which also indicates the presence of an active (if small-scale) industry. Eric Zuelow notes that a 1955 Bord Fáilte (Irish Tourism Board) survey revealed Carrickmacross lace to be just as desirable a souvenir for Americans as Waterford Crystal (Eric Zuelow, *Making Ireland Irish: Tourism and National Identity Since the Irish Civil War* (Syracuse University Press 2009), 27).

¹⁰⁸² Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 45.

¹⁰⁸³ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 45.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, xxx.

every bride wants a Carrickmacross veil.”¹⁰⁸⁵ To this day, women who make Carrickmacross lace tend to make three items, all of which relate to coming-of-age rituals within the Catholic Church: christening gowns, first communion veils, and wedding veils. They are usually made for family members rather than for sale.

While Elizabeth Boyle’s interviews do reveal that commercial lacemaking carried on into the 1960s, they also show that women who did not work, or were able to make more money in other industries, still saw lacemaking as an enjoyable craft to learn, and lace as a desirable possession that played an important role in life cycle and ritual. They indicate the co-existence of lace production as a component of a local economy *and* as a craft practiced outside of an economic context, with connections to regional heritage and community identity. In many cases, two states of making would have co-existed in the same household: women who could now afford to buy lacemaking supplies to make items – such as wedding veils – for family members could have done so, even as they completed commissions for agents or sold small pieces from boxes at the end of the lane. As I will discuss later in this chapter in relation to Clones crochet lace, the later-twentieth-century saw the scale continue to tip in favour of lacemaking as leisure, for personal use, and gifting among family and friends. First, I will briefly consider the United Irishwomen and ICA as another context for this mid-century shift from lace, and craft more broadly, as an economic consideration to craft as a cultural identifier, enjoyable activity and force for community-building.

6.2 Muriel Gahan and the Irish Countrywomen’s Association

In Chapter 4, I introduced the United Irishwomen as successors to the IAOS’s Co-operative Home Industries Societies, taking responsibility for the Societies from the IAOS in 1913. The Home Industries Societies died out shortly after, though as I argued in Chapter 4, this narrative of disappearance is not so straightforward as it seems. Some Societies disassociated from the IAOS to pursue business independently, and, I contend, the methods, ideals, and skills acquired in the co-operatives did not disappear, but simply *went elsewhere*. In my discussion of the *Irish Homestead* lace design series, I suggested that the designs, published in the widely read periodical, may have bridged the gap between commercial production in the Home Industries Societies and amateur production in the homes of women who recreated the patterns for family members or for themselves. In this, they

¹⁰⁸⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 45.

point to the pattern books that would spread Irish crochet techniques around the world, which I will discuss later in this chapter. The IAOS and IIA's publication of lace designs in *The Irish Homestead* is also indicative of the difficulty in parsing out a line between economically-motivated lacemaking and making for cultural, relational, and artistic reasons, a line which became increasingly blurred throughout the twentieth century.

Elizabeth Boyle's *The Irish Flowerers* gave an indication of the shifting importance of lacemaking in the rural Irish imagination. The young Monaghan women who decided to work in the higher-paying jam factory but took lace classes in the evenings still understood the mechanics of making Carrickmacross lace. They saw it as a beautiful work of art, part of their regional identity, and they wanted to learn how to make it so that someday they could have a Carrickmacross lace wedding veil. In this section, I will trace the craft-related activities of the United Irishwomen and ICA to outline what I suggest was a similar shift in one of the primary structures promoting, educating, and supervising skill in traditional crafts – including lace – in twentieth-century Ireland. Central to this process was Muriel Gahan (1897-1995), a woman of middle-class Anglo-Irish background and whose father had worked for the CDB, and who acted as a sort of successor to the IAOS's Horace Plunkett, working on a dizzying array of schemes for rural women, craftspeople, and the arts more broadly.¹⁰⁸⁶ Though a thorough investigation of Gahan and the ICA's role in craft promotion and education throughout the twentieth century is beyond the bounds of this project, this section will sketch out a line from the United Irishwomen through the ICA to the present day. I will suggest that the Association and its affiliate groups, such as the Country Workers Ltd. and Country Markets, served to carry forward many of the values and methods of the Co-operative Home Industries Societies, and build a bureaucracy of craft education and promotion that echoed the DATT's earlier structure, but with a different focus: craft not as an economic asset but as a component of Irish identity, a builder of community, and a vehicle for self-expression and accomplishment.

The United Irishwomen struggled to find a footing during the early years of the Free State. A history of the United Irishwomen/ICA from 1910-1970 states that: "In 1926, there was little more than a handful of almost lifeless branches of the United Irishwomen. It is to Miss Lucy Franks, of Castletown, Leix, that the Society owes its revival."¹⁰⁸⁷ Franks (1878-1964) had been a member of the

¹⁰⁸⁶ Geraldine Mitchell's biography of Muriel Gahan includes an uncited quote referring to Gahan as "Horace Plunkett's heir" (Geraldine Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words: the Life and Work of Muriel Gahan* (Dublin: Town House and Country House, 1997), 13).

¹⁰⁸⁷ Muriel Gahan, "Bantracht na Tuaithe: 1910-1970," *Irish Countrywoman* December 1970: 25.

United Irishwomen since 1917, but had spent time abroad. In 1926, she returned, with the intention of making the United Irishwomen an organization that would be “immediately *useful* to Irish women.”¹⁰⁸⁸ One of the first things she did was to start basket-weaving and tray-making classes for United Irishwomen members, and the following year went on to become a member of the RDS so that she could sell the women’s work at the RDS Spring Show, under the name ‘Countryside Workers.’¹⁰⁸⁹ In 1928 and 1929, an entire gallery of the exhibition hall was given to various ‘Countryside Workers’ displays. The description of the United Irishwomen stand in the 1929 catalogue reads: “*United Irishwomen Society*: the Society of United Irishwomen, established in 1910, in connection with the IAOS to promote co-operation among rural women for social and industrial betterment, and to revive rural craftsmanship.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Involved in designing and decorating the display were Irish modernist painter Mainie Jellett (1897-1944) and a young Anglo-Irish woman working as a painter decorator, Muriel Gahan.¹⁰⁹¹ Gahan joined the United Irishwomen that year, and would go on to play a vital role in its continuing support of Irish craft.

Muriel Gahan grew up surrounded by the currents of rural economic and cultural revival discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. As a teenager in Dublin, she was neighbours with Susan Mitchell (1866-1926), the writer, poet and assistant editor of *The Irish Homestead* with George Russell, as well as early United Irishwomen Executive Committee Member.¹⁰⁹² Gahan’s father, Townsend Gahan (1866-1955), had been one of the first civil engineers appointed to work for the Congested Districts Board, first carrying out baseline reports in Donegal and then supervising engineering works in Mayo. He was the first engineer promoted to Senior Inspector, and held the post until the dissolution of the CDB in 1923, at which point he transferred to the Land Commission.¹⁰⁹³ The young Muriel travelled with her father on inspection visits throughout Mayo, and she may have interacted with the children in those remote communities, many of whom would have been involved in the CDB’s handicraft production initiatives.¹⁰⁹⁴

Gahan brought this interest and experience in rural life and handicrafts, together with her social connections and a tremendous amount of organizing energy, immediately to bear in the United

¹⁰⁸⁸ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 59.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 59.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 61.

¹⁰⁹¹ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 61.

¹⁰⁹² Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 31. Gahan, “Bantracht na Tuaithe,” 25.

¹⁰⁹³ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 47-48. In her biography of Muriel Gahan, Geraldine Mitchell compares Townsend Gahan’s baseline reports to those of his colleagues, noting a more curious, detail-oriented, and sympathetic tone (49-50).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 51.

Irishwomen. For the 1930 RDS Spring Show, she found a homespun weaver, Patrick Madden (d. 1968), to give demonstrations, and in the same year became managing director of a new sales outlet for craft: Country Workers Ltd. The organization's aim was to "[encourage] and [support] Home Industries" in "the poor districts in the West," "encourage individual craftworkers," and "to promote and assist the work of the United Irishwomen in the country."¹⁰⁹⁵ Later that year, they opened The Country Shop at 23 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, to provide a hub for sales (as well as a restaurant) in Ireland's urban centre. The Country Shop stayed in business until 1978, and the premises soon came to house *An Cumann Sniombachain*, the Irish Homespun Society (started in 1935) and Country Markets Ltd. (started in 1946), as well as acting as the headquarters, from 1937-1964 of the renamed Irish Countrywomen's Association.¹⁰⁹⁶ Muriel Gahan had a hand in the founding and operations of them all.

Though the co-operative principles and desire to promote rural thriving of the IAOS seemed to permeate these initiatives, Gahan and other United Irishwomen of the 1920s were not aware of their organization's ties to Plunkett and the co-operative creameries, which even earlier in the century had been nominal. In 1935, the United Irishwomen changed their name to the Irish Countrywomen's Association, and gave up their affiliation with the IAOS, in order to put in place "a more democratic constitution" based on a system of Guilds and Guild councils.¹⁰⁹⁷ However, just over ten years later, the ICA re-established connection with the IAOS by founding Country Markets Ltd. as "a co-operative society of small producers and craftworkers."¹⁰⁹⁸ One of the country markets became so successful that it was able to register with the IAOS as a co-operative society in its own right: the Slieve Bawn Co-operative Handcraft Market in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon.¹⁰⁹⁹ Gahan also steered the RDS towards increased support of local craft. She became an RDS member in 1946, in 1948 was appointed to its industries, arts, and general purposes committee, and in 1951 helped found the County Craftsmanship Scheme to promote local craft development through exhibitions and competitions.¹¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁹⁵ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 73.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 74.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Gahan, "Bantracht na Tuaithe," 28. Gahan also recalls that Society President Lady Fingall made a speech at a United Irishwomen meeting a few months after Plunkett's death in 1932, highlighting his early role in their organization.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Gahan, "Bantracht na Tuaithe," 27. The ICA had to form a separate co-operative enterprise, because they could not function as both an educational and trading society.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Gahan, "Bantracht na Tuaithe," 27.

¹¹⁰⁰ Frances Clarke, "Gahan (Winifred) Muriel Françoise," *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, October 2009, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/gahan-winifred-muriel-francoise-a3399> (Accessed July 27, 2021).

Gahan and her circle's advocacy for makers reached beyond the bounds of traditional Irish handicrafts, and outlines a network of friendship and collaboration, worthy of further study beyond the bounds of this project. The Country Shop restaurant became a meeting place for artist and intellectuals, as well as a place of employment for a mix of long-term cooks and waitresses and young middle-class women looking to do something with their time before marriage.¹¹⁰¹ Its premises at 23 St. Stephen's Green contained a gallery space, in which the Belfast-based painter Gerard Dillon (1916-1971) had his first exhibition in 1942. It was opened by his friend, by then well-established painter Mainie Jellett – who was also cousin of Gahan's close friend and fellow ICA member Olivia 'Livie' Hughes (née Cruikshank, d. 1989). Paintings by Jellett and stained-glass artist Evie Hone (1854-1955) hung permanently in the gallery space. The directors of Country Workers Ltd. commissioned a series of drawings of Irish craftspeople from Elizabeth Rivers (1903-1964), an English artist, and collaborator and friend of Evie Hone.¹¹⁰² Jellett and Rivers both assisted with Country Workers and Irish Homespun Society displays at the RDS.¹¹⁰³ In 1952, Gahan was recognized for her work on the behalf of Irish craftspeople and appointed to the newly-formed Irish Arts Council, *An Chomhairle Ealaíon*, of which she was a member until her resignation in 1961.¹¹⁰⁴ In 1968, the RDS once again began to award prizes for craft at its annual exhibition, a further recognition of the presence of a thriving craft tradition and its value to Irish culture. Sister Mary Polycarp (now Sister Rosaleen McCabe), won the first prize for lace, with a “washable gold yarn [...] copy of a museum treasure, a golden collar of about 650 B.C., labelled ‘Kenmare point lace’.”¹¹⁰⁵ From then on, the RDS would provide an exhibition space and much-deserved recognition for Irish lacemakers, many of whom were associated with the ICA and local lace guilds.¹¹⁰⁶

The ICA's commitment to education in craft, as well as horticulture and a number of other subjects, was not centred around a Dublin intellectual and artistic elite.¹¹⁰⁷ Summer courses in various

¹¹⁰¹ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 99.

¹¹⁰² Gahan, “Bantracht na Tuaithe,” 103; National Library of Ireland, “Collection List No. 136: Elizabeth Rivers Papers” (compiled by Harriet Wheelock, 2008), https://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss%20lists/136_ElizabethRivers.pdf (Accessed July 27, 2021).

¹¹⁰³ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 111.

¹¹⁰⁴ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 171-172.

¹¹⁰⁵ Boyle, *Irish Flowerers*, 65.

¹¹⁰⁶ In 2021, the RDS and Design and Crafts Council Ireland inaugurated the RDS Branchardière Lace Bursary to fund work by contemporary lacemakers. The first winner was needlepoint lace maker Fiona Harrington. See: “Winner of €8,000 Branchardière bursary destined to stitch new life into Irish Lace,” Design and Crafts Council Ireland, April 27 2021, <https://www.dcci.ie/about/media/press-releases/winner-of-8000-branchardiere-bursary-destined-to-stitch-new-life-into-irish> (Accessed december 13, 2021).

¹¹⁰⁷ On Muriel Gahan's suggestion, the Homespun Society commissioned Chrissie O'Gorman to conduct a survey of traditional craft throughout Ireland, which she did between March 1943 and November 1947. Geraldine Mitchell

subjects were held as early as 1929, and in 1953, Muriel Gahan played an instrumental role in securing the donation of An Grianán, a stately home in Co. Louth, from the American W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to use as an “adult residential college.”¹¹⁰⁸ *The Farmer’s Gazette* described it as “a centre where seekers after traditional crafts will always find examples and instruction, and provide a spring of inspiration and skill which will keep the crafts alive and renewed.”¹¹⁰⁹ An Grianán continues to hold classes in a variety of crafts and now includes a restaurant, event venue, garden centre, and accommodation. Each ICA guild also appointed a Crafts Representative to supervise the crafts groups within the guild, promote the work of local talent and especially skilled members, stay abreast of current training opportunities and demonstrations, and encourage guild members to pursue accreditation in their chosen craft.¹¹¹⁰ *Branarraí* tests, so called after the traditional Donegal bread-iron shaped badge awarded to successful learners, were administered by Country Markets Ltd. In 1952, 16 *brannra* badges were awarded in various crafts; in 1956 there were 260, and in 1966 there were 434.¹¹¹¹ When I visited the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland in 2019, the chat at the ‘mixed laces’ table included discussions of who had gained which levels of qualification in the various Irish laces, presumably through *Branarraí*, which are still offered today.¹¹¹² Each ICA Federation (consisting of all of the guilds in a county) also had a Crafts Promoter, responsible for organizing craft schools, demonstrations and examinations, and acting as a liaison between the guilds in their county and the ICA National Crafts Committee.¹¹¹³

The ICA’s system of examination in craft is perhaps one of the clearest indicators of their role in encouraging and preserving excellence in craft skill among amateur makers.¹¹¹⁴ In fact, I would suggest that it created a bureaucracy for education in craft not unlike that of the DATI. The

discusses this survey and quotes extensively from O’Gorman in “Chapter 11: Putting Craft on the Map” (*Deeds Not Words*, 126-135), but the quotations are uncited and it is unclear whether they come from reports or letters to Gahan. The Catalogue of Muriel Gahan papers at the National Library of Ireland contain a short (4 page) report by Chrissie O’Gorman, but no mention of her more extensive reports, which, if they could be located, would be a valuable source in the study of mid-century Irish craft.

¹¹⁰⁸ Gahan, “Bantracht na Tuaithe,” 26, 38.

¹¹⁰⁹ *The Farmer’s Gazette*, 12 November 1953. Quoted in Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 136. The Farmer’s Gazette seems to have been for the ICA what The Irish Homestead was to the IAOS and early United Irishwomen. A full run of the publication from 1850-1962 is held in the NLI, and would no doubt be a valuable source for further study of the ICA’s role in promoting craft.

¹¹¹⁰ *Irish Countrywomen’s Association Handbook* (Kilkenny: Modern Printers, Sept. 1999), 41-42.

¹¹¹¹ Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 155.

¹¹¹² The ICA Handbook and Facebook page include information about where to find test booklets and information about dates and locations of examinations, though I have not been able to access any study or test materials.

¹¹¹³ *Irish Countrywomen’s Association Handbook*, 53.

¹¹¹⁴ In using the term amateur here, I am pointing not to skill level but to pursuit of craft skill as an end unto itself, rather than for remuneration. However, further research into the ICA’s examination system may problematize this construction, as it is possible that women who pass the exams are paid to teach classes and give demonstrations.

DATI struggled to make lace and other crafts economically sustainable earlier in the century. But at the time An Grianán opened its doors in 1954 and the *Brannraí* tests began in 1951, focus had shifted to their cultural, artistic, and even therapeutic value, alongside or even above their potential to supplement incomes. In a 1950 lecture entitled *The Countrywoman and Adult Education*, Muriel Gahan spoke of “Nancy O’Sullivan raising chickens in Waterford, her fingers itching to make something pretty for her home, but she doesn’t know how” and “Mrs. Clogherly sitting – just sitting, as I saw her in her little house in Kerry not so long ago; an empty room, no sign of food, no belongings except her spinning wheel, idle in the corner, because she was without the means to buy wool.”¹¹¹⁵ She urged the audience to consider adult education, as something more than “just the phrase of the moment, but something to do, something to see, something to hear and experience, that will unloose the gift of hands, and heart, and mind and spirit, that are locked up in the Mrs. Conneelys, the Mary McBrides and the rest, and if they were freed would change the face of Ireland.”¹¹¹⁶

Further study may reveal the extent to which the crafts promoters of the ICA and Country Markets Ltd. considered their focus on crafts research, training, and accreditation to be directly related to members’ income, versus their participation in a community of craft and cultural heritage, and personal accomplishment. However, I propose that the network of markets, tests, teaching certificates, summer schools and demonstrations that Gahan and others built from the 1940’s-1960’s, served as a receptacle and protective mechanism for craft skill in twentieth-century Ireland. Like a basket woven of many constituent parts, it carried skill in traditional crafts from a period in which they were valued for their economic potential to one in which they came to be seen as valuable expressions of Irish culture and pathways to purpose, community, and artistic expression among rural women.¹¹¹⁷

The ICA and its associated organizations also provided a continuing outlet for the spirit of co-operation, self-help, and community nurtured by the Home Industries Societies. This is particularly evident in the Country Markets Ltd., which became a registered Co-operative Society with the IAOS (renamed the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society in 1979). The Scheme’s guiding principles, as laid out in the ICA Handbook, could be those of a Home Industries Society a century earlier: “All Country Markets’ activities are based on the co-operative principles of self help and

¹¹¹⁵ Quoted in Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 161.

¹¹¹⁶ Quoted in Mitchell, *Deeds Not Words*, 161.

¹¹¹⁷ In articulating this concept, I am influenced by Ursula K. Leguin’s essay “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,” which can be found in its entirety on The Anarchist Library: <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ursula-k-le-guin-the-carrier-bag-theory-of-fiction> (Accessed December 8, 2021).

mutual help, sharing of skills and knowledge, individual responsibility and community development.”¹¹¹⁸ In their oral history of Irish women’s work in the mid-twentieth century, Elizabeth Kiely and Máire Leane identified the ICA as an important force for belonging and change in the lives of interviewees involved with the organization. It contributed to “the empowerment of rural women, who through its nurturance, gained the confidence and skills to move forward and to raise their concerns in public life and to alleviate some of the drudgery associated with their domestic lives.”¹¹¹⁹ Though not radical in their politics, the ICA encouraged women to advocate for themselves and their communities, and provided opportunities to hold leadership positions, organize committees, handle finances, and plan events. In recounting her own mother’s experience of involvement with the organization, Irish sociologist Ethel Crowley proposes that the ICA’s social action constitutes a sort of ‘indigenous feminism,’ one that is “attractive to ordinary women and does not necessarily follow in the well-trodden path of Western liberal feminism.”¹¹²⁰ In this, it carried on the work that, in Chapter 4, I suggested the IAOS Home Industries Societies did in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Ireland, exposing women to co-operative ideals, giving them a space in which to be leaders, learn about finances and business organization, and feel pride in self-determination and teamwork. In a study of the organization’s activities in Kerry, Rhona Richman Kenneally has similarly linked the ICA’s empowerment of Irish women to community and action, arguing that it functioned during the mid-century period as: “a wide social and cultural network that championed and privileged women’s work and traditional skills as worthy ways to assert women’s authority and agency.”¹¹²¹

Mamo McDonald (1929-2021), President of the ICA from 1982-1985, told the story of her life and work with the Association in a 1998 interview with Melissa Thomas. Her experience with the ICA began with craft and led to community and empowerment (and, eventually, Clones lace):

I joined originally, like most women joined, to learn crafts and to meet other women in the town I had moved into [...] and there I discovered opportunities not just for interaction with

¹¹¹⁸ *Irish Countrywomen’s Association Handbook*, 66.

¹¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Kiely and Máire Leane, *Irish Women at Work, 1930-1960: an Oral History* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2012), 172.

¹¹²⁰ Ethel Crowley, “An Irish Matrilineal Story, A Century of Change,” in *Women’s Lifeworlds: Women’s Narratives on Shaping their Realities*, ed. Edith Sizoo (London: Routledge, 1997), 160. In her discussion of the ICA, economist Finola Kennedy phrases the role of adjacent, differential form of feminism thus: “Traditional voices were gradually added to the dissenting voices of the intellectual women” (Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche: Family Change in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2001), 88).

¹¹²¹ Rhona Richman Kenneally, “Much more than ‘a group of women who drank tea with their hats on’: The Irish Countrywomen’s Association and women’s empowerment in mid-twentieth century Kerry,” in *Kerry: History and Society*, ed. Maurice Bric (Dublin: Geography Publications), 544.

other women, but also opportunities for voicing opinions about things that were dear to my heart. And then I began to notice that through working within the ICA, you could bring something about which you felt very passionately, and you could finish by walking into the office of a government minister about that cause.¹¹²²

McDonald, who passed away in June 2021, cited Muriel Gahan as “[her] great heroine.” Mamo McDonald herself became a ‘great heroine’ to a younger generation, as a self-described “born again feminist” who straddled the words of conservative and radical feminist activism, and promoted the recognition of Clones lace and lacemakers in Monaghan.¹¹²³ Her involvement with the ICA attests to its role in promoting skill in traditional crafts and building communities in which to explore ideas about work, agency, and national identity.

Mamo MacDonald also plays an important role in this thesis, as an early advocate for Clones crochet lace. She saw the craft as crucial aspect of the region’s heritage, and in its history a narrative of the resilience, skill and creativity of local women. One of the younger women that McDonald mentored during her long career was Máire Treanor, a teacher, maker, and historian of Clones crochet lace. As I will discuss in the next section, MacDonald encouraged Treanor to learn to crochet, and then to write the book that cemented her place in the Clones community and made her reputation as a teacher, designer, and collector of Clones lace’s oral history and patterns. Even from the brief quotation above, it is clear that MacDonald found her stride in both craft and community activism at the ICA. Her story is also part of Máire Treanor’s story, and thus of my own.

June 4, 2020

By sheer coincidence, the classes align almost perfectly with my period of quarantine from my family, after travelling from Montreal to their home in Ontario. So I’m living in a little cabin behind the drive shed on my family farm, right on the edge of the field, this year planted with soybeans. Last night, stepping out the door, I caught a doe nibbling on the new plants, about 30 meters away from me. We both stayed perfectly still for a very long time.

The cabin doesn’t have any running water, so I’m washing my hands with sanitizer and water from a cooler on the front porch. It’s hard to get a good hand wash in with such a cold trickle. Hand sanitizer, too, leaves a greasy residue that picks up and holds dirt on my skin. So my hands are grubby, no matter how much I wash them, and the little rose I finished yesterday afternoon is slightly grey. I’m going to have to learn how to wash crochet lace, like the grandmother of the woman that I stayed with while attending the lace school in Clones last summer. She told me that when she was a child, her grandmother’s kitchen was heaped with crochet lace, waiting to be washed, or draped and drying.

¹¹²² “Interview with Mamo McDonald, October 16, 1998,” Melissa Thompson’s ‘The Way of Women Project,’ last updated July 12, 2006, <http://www.tallgirlshorts.net/marymary/mamotext.html> (Accessed December 8, 2021).

¹¹²³ “Interview with Mamo McDonald”; Aileen Heverin, *The Irish Countrywomen’s Association: a History, 1910-2000* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2000), 227.

6.3 Máire Treanor and Clones Lace¹¹²⁴

My planned visits to the Headford Lace Project, Carrickmacross Lace Centre, and Guild of Irish Lacemakers, as well as return visits to the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland, Kenmare Lace and Design Centre and the Clones Lace Summer School, were prevented by the travel restrictions put in place to curb the the spread of COVID-19 in early 2020. As a result, I shifted my investigation of contemporary Irish lacemaking to focus specifically on Clones crochet lace. Máire Treanor was an early adopter of online teaching, pivoting her plans for the 2020 International Clones Lace Summer School with remarkable speed to be delivered as a series of online classes through the Sunnyvale Lace Museum in California. This meant that I could still attend, even from the back porch of my family's farmhouse in Ontario, where I spent the summer of 2020.

The decision was made out of necessity, but it also made sense in light of my historical findings. As evidenced in the last chapter, Emily Anderson's work for the DATI became increasingly focused on the crochet industry toward the end of her career, with the collection that she donated to the National Museum of Ireland consisting primarily of crochet specimens. In my interviews with Máire Treanor, I also found that she could trace a direct lineage of teaching back to the early-twentieth-century crochet schools, which she believes is unique to Clones, the only place in Ireland where significant quantities of Irish crochet lace were still, until quite recently, made for sale.¹¹²⁵ And so, with my visit to the Clones Lace Summer School in 2019, and my online classes and conversations with Máire Treanor throughout 2020 and 2021, I became a part of that lineage, tracing back through the crochet making and teaching practices of three women – Máire Treanor, Nan Caulfield (née Quigley), Elizabeth Quigley - to the time when Emily Anderson travelled rural Ireland with her folders of specimens, and training in crochet “was seen as a way to travel to Dublin to study design, and then teach it in various parts of the country.”¹¹²⁶

¹¹²⁴ Many of the themes and quotations that appear in this section and the next were also included in a video that I edited (with the invaluable assistance of my brother, Sam Gillett) from my more extensive conversations with Máire Treanor, to show at the event ‘A Conversation with Máire Treanor: designer, maker, teacher and historian of Clones Irish crochet lace,’ hosted on Zoom on February 17, 2021, and supported by the Concordia Textiles and Materiality Cluster (Milieux Institute) and School of Irish Studies. The video is now property of Máire Treanor, to use for her own teaching activities.

¹¹²⁵ Treanor pointed out that in Cork, another area known for Irish crochet production, most makers transitioned to filet crochet, because it was more visually striking, faster, and easier. As far as she knows, there is no one in Cork who was taught by elders in the old ‘freeform’ style (Máire Treanor, discussion October 22, 2020).

¹¹²⁶ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 37. See this book for a more detailed history of Clones lace and Treanor's story.

Máire Treanor's story might be seen as a case study in how craft skill and a widespread tradition of making can continue quietly in a region even when the structures that once supported it seem to have disappeared. Originally from Armagh, Treanor moved to Clones in 1988, and met Mamo McDonald, who told her about the tradition of lacemaking in the area. Treanor recalls that its association with Famine relief surprised her: "at the time I would have associated lacemaking with middle class people, or with the gentry in the nineteenth century, you know, sitting around, you know, doing their lace, but then she told me about how it was done during Famine times, and I got *hooked*."¹¹²⁷ She was very interested in the historical and cultural aspects of the tradition, having done a degree in Irish Studies at the University of Ulster, in Coleraine.

In 1988, Treanor and other Clones women set up a Clones lace training program, and then the Clones Lace Guild, which used a system similar to that of the previous century to produce lace for sale and operated as a co-operative. Makers employed by the Guild worked in groups to finish commissions and ready-made pieces for sale. Some specialized in making rose and shamrock squares, while others made motifs that Treanor (on behalf of the Guild) would then buy and join together into a design.¹¹²⁸ The Guild followed this model not out of nostalgia or a desire for historical continuity, but out of necessity. Treanor recalls that: "I was trying to do it in the old way, and it was the only way you could do it really, for speed you'd get their motifs and I would put them into the design."¹¹²⁹

When Máire Treanor arrived in Clones, crocheters made only the rose and shamrock squares (fig. 5.5). Treanor was more interested in the 'freeform style' of construction using individual motifs joined by a chained groundwork and Clones knots (fig. 4.13). Old pieces of lace from the region provided models for Treanor's experimentation in recreating this 'freeform' Clones lace. Mamo McDonald gave her a piece of lace made by Mary Ann Doran (later Dunwoody) in 1912. According to family memory, Doran had joined the motifs together to create a doily behind a shed on St. Patrick's Day, when she was 12 years old. Using this doily, along with the recollections of older makers Elizabeth Monahan, Nan Caulfield, and Mary Beggan, as well as Eithne D'Arcy's book of motifs, Treanor figured out how to use the Clones knot as a filling stitch and create Clones lace in the 'freeform' style.¹¹³⁰ Other pieces of lace in local collections inspired Treanor's designs for the

¹¹²⁷ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹²⁸ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 43-44.

¹¹²⁹ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹³⁰ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 43.

Guild – a bishop’s alb adorned with flowers inspired her Wild Rose Garden design, one of the earliest and most popular.¹¹³¹ Though she acted an organizing and invigorating force for the craft, and revived the use of the Clones knot as a filling stitch, Treanor emphasises the fact that before the Guild and summer school, Clones crochet was a “living tradition” in the region, with many active lacemakers, and “old pieces [of lace], many of which are precious family heirlooms” in homes.¹¹³² Lacemakers Vera Reilley, Annie Kerr, Rosina Sweeney, and Treanor’s mentor Elizabeth Monahan also taught Clones lace at the local ICA branch, which Treanor writes “did a lot of work in the preservation of Clones lace over the years, before the modern Clones Lace Guild was established.”¹¹³³

The Clones Lace Guild’s heyday was in the early 1990s, at which point it had fifteen members.¹¹³⁴ It sold small items through the Ulster Canal Stores in Clones, received orders for edged handkerchiefs and even a few complete wedding dresses.¹¹³⁵ It created a social network, with crocheters on both sides of the border working on projects together throughout the Troubles.¹¹³⁶ Treanor’s visits to pick up motifs (or supplies shipped to ‘the North’ to save on shipping fees) offered social sustenance to women in rural areas; Treanor recalls that Tessie Leonard, living in Newtonbutler: “was always full of the news, and she always loved the news, and she loved to see me coming because I had news for her too.”¹¹³⁷ Using grant money, the Guild hired a young art student to market Clones lace in the United States. She took Treanor’s design for a christening robe, which had taken three pregnancies to finish (with a little added for each new baby’s christening), and

¹¹³¹ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020; Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 44.

¹¹³² Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 38-39. Clones Lace also includes images from family collections of women in the Clones area making lace in the early-twentieth century and 1960s (41).

¹¹³³ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 39.

¹¹³⁴ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹³⁵ In her analysis of rural creative economies, Susan Luckman notes the importance of place in consumption of handmade goods produced by regional craftspeople, giving them a “perceived albeit fraught aura of authenticity” (Luckman, *Locating Cultural Work: the Politics and Poetics of Rural, Regional, and Remote Creativity* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 161). It is worth noting that despite its small size and relative isolation, the Ulster Canal Stores (a historic building in Clones town) remains the most successful seller of Clones lace, to tourists who come looking for lace from this place.

¹¹³⁶ The cross-border nature of the Clones Lace Guild and other lacemaking initiatives is in itself worthy of further study. Treanor notes that when she would travel to Fermanagh to visit Eithne D’Arcy, she and her children would always be stopped and ordered to get out of the car at the border checkpoint, so the journey took a very long time. However, other women from the North had ways to get their motifs to Clones (in the Republic of Ireland) on unapproved roads. Despite the Troubles’ impact on daily life in the 1980s and early 1990s, and the border’s role in the Guild’s operations, Treanor remembers that members did not discuss politics: “if you wanted to be friends, you just don’t talk about politics” (Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020).

Treanor also noted that a new initiative to revive Carrickmacross lace has recently been rebranded ‘South Armagh Lace,’ because Carrickmacross is in the Republic of Ireland, but the group hopes to get U.K. funding, and therefore needs to associate with a county in the North (Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020).

¹¹³⁷ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

simplified it so that it could be made more quickly and sold more cheaply, as “there was so much work in it and [Máire Treanor] couldn’t see [her]self ever doing that again.”¹¹³⁸ Treanor tells the story of how her original christening robe and bonnet were taken to the United States for advertising purposes, though they were not for sale. The art student left the robe with their wholesaler, who sold it, and “when she came home she had no christening robe. And like, I nearly died! What could I do?”¹¹³⁹ Treanor besieged the wholesaler with threatening letters, and managed to get the robe back. The Guild did not end up establishing a market in the United States, though Treanor notes that it wouldn’t have worked anyhow, as “[they] didn’t make enough stuff for it to be viable.”¹¹⁴⁰

In 1990, Máire Treanor and Mamo McDonald also started the Clones Lace Summer School with members of the Clones Lace Guild. The school was a community endeavour, officially opened by Eithne D’Arcy for its first years, and taught by Máire Treanor, Eileen McAleer and Elizabeth Monahan, with tours of Clones’ lace history by Mamo McDonald. Guest speakers included Mairéad Dunlevey, renowned lace expert and textile curator at the NMI, and the Irish fashion designer Sybil Connolly.¹¹⁴¹ Though it was later rebranded the ‘International Clones Lace Summer School’ because of the addition of guest tutors from abroad, it was international in spirit from the beginning. An American student attended the first year, joined by a growing group of students from abroad, from whom “it became part of their life to come to Clones every year.”¹¹⁴²

After about ten years of voluntary work co-ordinating the Clones Lace Guild, Máire Treanor decided to retire. The work she had done for the Guild and Summer School had all been extensive, exhausting, and unpaid.¹¹⁴³ Though the Guild budget had factored in a percentage for packaging and shipping, it had never covered payment the labour of the person doing that work, as well as liaising with stockists, ordering supplies, and organizing the yearly summer school.¹¹⁴⁴ In addition, her marriage had ended, and she wanted to leave Clones and return to live near her family in Armagh. However, like Cassandra Hand, who had organized the industry in the nineteenth century and been asked by the workers to return when she tried to retire, Treanor didn’t escape quite so easily. She also wanted to write a book, and was encouraged in this endeavor by Mamo MacDonald: “I had all this

¹¹³⁸ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹³⁹ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹⁴⁰ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹⁴¹ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 46.

¹¹⁴² Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁴³ Nora Finnegan of the Kenmare Lace and Design Centre has a similar story of unpaid labour and burnout as a co-operative organizer, followed by a return to fill the role of teacher, collector and historian (Nora Finnegan, *The Lace Story: Kenmare and Other Irish Laces* (Printed in Co. Kerry by KC Print, Killarney, n.d.), 12).

¹¹⁴⁴ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

information in me and Mamo would have been saying ‘you should write a book about it all!’.”¹¹⁴⁵ When she retired from the Guild, “the whole thing fell apart,” but the process of writing the book had made her more part of the Clones community, and her children wanted to stay.¹¹⁴⁶ So she did, giving up the Guild work but continuing to teach and organize the summer school as a standalone yearly event.

June 9th, 2020

We were asked to have three roses and three shamrocks done for today’s lesson, but I banked on the clematis flower and leaf taking the whole two hours and only finished three roses. The first two were backwards, with the petals curling upwards rather than down and back (though technically incorrect, I like them this way! They look more realistic), but by the third I figured out how to work around the petals from the back side. I remember doing this bit wrong last summer, and Máire correcting me, but telling me she liked my backwards roses too.

The roses are varying shades of grey. I’ve really been struggling to keep my hands clean while I work; I spent yesterday afternoon making hills for squash and zucchini, fixing the trellises, moving the wire fence, planting rows of beets, swiss chard and beans, and my fingernails are ringed with brown. I’ve got some raw scratches and calluses too. I have a little water tank that I fill at the tap to bring back to the front step of the cabin, and even though the tap isn’t very far away, I find myself scrimping on water so that I don’t have to fill it as often. Every couple good hand scrubs with soap is a trip to the tap to refill it again. It gets me thinking about water, access to water, carrying water, water buckets and soap – what this all means to a woman making lace at home in rural Monaghan at the turn of the century.

Anyways, the class today focuses on making a clematis flower, which Máire designed herself based on the clematis flowers in her garden. There are some pretty crazy tech glitches at the beginning: a deep, reverberating echo like a dubstep track gone wrong, and then some people leaving and coming back, presumably to try and fix it. Eventually it’s sorted, and we begin. It turns out that everyone has been following the instructions in Máire’s book as well as the video, all along. I don’t have the book yet (or my thread and other sizes of crochet hooks; the mail, like everything else, is delayed here due to the pandemic), so I have to stumble along following just the video. Luckily, this pattern is pretty intuitive and follows a similar logic to the rose, so I’m able to track with Máire’s blurry blue size three thread on the screen. When other students ask her to slow down so that they can catch up with the netting in the petals, I begin to feel rather smug, being caught up myself. I want a chance to show what I’ve done so that the ladies will be impressed by me, the youngster of the group. But of course, my mic and camera are off so I have to content myself with taking a little break, and by the time we get to adding the packing cord around the edges of each petal I’ve fallen a bit behind again. I’ll have to watch the recorded video again to figure out how she did the picots on the tip of each petal; I totally missed that part, and I don’t feel comfortable asking questions. Every time I type something into the chat bar on the side, I second guess myself and worry that it will be disruptive to the flow. And in the time it takes me to type, I always fall further behind, so it’s better to just follow along as best I can and muddle through the bits I don’t understand.

At the end, Máire shows us a water lily pattern she is copying from some antique pieces of lace. I can see a little tag on the old lace, and she mentions that it’s from a museum. I’m not sure which one (which museum would lend out artefacts?). The ladies in the class ooh and ahh over the pieces of lace but to me they look like cream-coloured blurs. I can make out something that looks a bit like a flower, but perhaps we’ll be sent pictures later, so that we can see clearly. It’s around this time that the organizer pipes up and asks one of the participants if she can mute her mic,

¹¹⁴⁵ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁴⁶ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

because the sounds of radio or tv and playing grandkids are coming through. She apologized and muted it right away, but I liked it. It made me feel like I knew what it was like to be in her home in that moment. One thing I wish we could do is all introduce ourselves, explain where we are, and what its like in the places where we're sitting in front of our computer screens on Google Meet following along with a pair of disembodied hands, wearing rings, crocheting a clematis flower in blue thread in Clones (and taking a break to take dinner out of the fridge, because it's evening there).

After the Clones Lace Guild dissolved and Máire Treanor published her book, she began to spend more time teaching. The Summer School had always attracted international participation, but in 2012 Treanor began to invite guest tutors from other countries, working in traditions inspired by Irish crochet. The guests gave the school “a new spark of life,” and allowed Treanor to spend time with – and introduce to her pupils – makers that she had met on Ravelry and Facebook, or during her own travels.¹¹⁴⁷

For the first couple years, the guest tutors were makers from Eastern Europe who designed, made and sold ‘Modern Irish Crochet.’ Using the same construction method and many of the same motifs, but characterized by its thickness, bright colours, and use of Romanian cord, Modern Irish Crochet is primarily produced in Russia and Ukraine.¹¹⁴⁸ Though old white and ecru doilies can be found in markets in these countries, the use of vibrant colours is a more recent phenomenon: “when the Berlin Wall fell, and the whole thing started opening up, they became, they started doing their own designs – they couldn’t get over the colour, you know, because they had had no colours for so long.”¹¹⁴⁹ Treanor believes that Irish crochet technique and motifs reached Eastern Europe through early-twentieth-century needlecraft books and magazines such as *Priscilla*. They then exploded in popularity with the help of *Duplet* and *Mod* magazines, which reproduced designs with no concern for copyright and distributed them to a massive readership.¹¹⁵⁰

Olga Krivenko Olgemini, from Moscow, was the first international tutor to attend the summer school, followed by Antonina Kuznetsova (Ukraine) and Alyona Salimova (Azerbaijan).¹¹⁵¹ When I attended the summer school in 2019, the guest tutors were Maria Vittoria Ovidi and Alessandra Polleggioni, teaching Merletto di Orvieto, a fine crochet produced in Orvieto, Italy, using

¹¹⁴⁷ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁴⁸ For examples of Modern Irish Crochet, see Antonina Kuznetsova’s online Etsy shop: https://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/AntoninaCrochet?ref=simple-shop-header-name&listing_id=839154545 (Accessed December 8, 2021).

¹¹⁴⁹ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁵⁰ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁵¹ Slideshow presented by Máire Treanor on Google Meet, as part of the online International Clones Lace Summer School, June 30, 2020.

Irish crochet techniques imported in the early-twentieth century. Laura Czegledi, a maker of Hungarian Csetnek crochet and needle lace, and Simone Fuentana, a maker of Picot Bigouden, from Brittany, presented at the online summer school in 2020. Both varieties of lace evolved from Irish crochet, which had been introduced to supplement rural incomes in the early-twentieth century, just as it had in Ireland. Using antique and newly-commissioned pieces from these traditions, Treanor constructed a Wild Grapevine pattern collar, which she often wears while teaching. All of the five laces are inspired by Irish crochet, and have been taught at the summer school.¹¹⁵²

Though teaching online in summer 2020 was product of necessity rather than a planned extension of her teaching practice, Treanor has had an online presence for many years, having connected with Eastern European makers of Modern Irish Crochet through Ravelry, “a Facebook for crocheters and knitters.”¹¹⁵³ She also wrote a blog about Clones lace and maintains a Facebook page for the Summer School.¹¹⁵⁴ Videos of her hands making a Clones knot have received over a million views on YouTube. As of October 2020, Treanor reported that online classes were enabling her to teach more students than usual. She had settled into a method for online teaching – using thick blue thread to improve visibility on camera, for example (fig. 6.3). Though she misses the dynamic of students with varying skill levels around a table, the more advanced helping the beginners and everyone working at their own pace, she recognizes that each context has its strengths: “it’s just a different style of teaching, really, you know?”¹¹⁵⁵ Though unplanned, and precipitated by an unforeseen global catastrophe that prevented travel and gave many people an increased amount of spare time, this foray into online teaching has served to increase international interest in Clones lace, which is directly in line with Treanor’s teaching philosophy: “it was better to teach it because then it’s spreading that way, you know, like more people are learning how to do it than if I make it and few people help me there. It’s like, it’s going to die when I die, the whole thing will die. Whereas if I have the book, it’s going to keep going, it won’t die.”¹¹⁵⁶ In August 2021, Clones crochet lace was added to Ireland’s National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, with Máire Treanor recognized as a teacher and researcher responsible for spreading the skill and “the story” around the world.¹¹⁵⁷

¹¹⁵² Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁵³ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁵⁴ Máire Treanor’s blog can be found here: <https://cloneslace.wordpress.com/> (not active since 2014).

¹¹⁵⁵ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹⁵⁶ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁵⁷ “Minister Martin Announces State Recognition of Key Practices of Ireland’s Living Cultural Heritage,” Ireland’s National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, updated August 4, 2021, <https://nationalinventoryich.chg.gov.ie/minister-martin-announces-state-recognition-of-key-practices-of-irelands-living-cultural-heritage/> (Accessed December 8, 2021); “Clones Crochet Lace Making,” Ireland’s National Inventory of Intangible

June 11, 2020

A note at 10 a.m.: the power went out at about 8:30 this morning, and we're still waiting for it to come back on. There was a storm last night, but it was the wind this morning that did it in the end. Without power I have no wifi, and thus no crochet class, though I can watch the recorded video later.

[Power back on at 11!] Today we work on the clematis leaf. It's incredibly tricky, and though the organizer sends me the instructions to follow on my phone as I watch Máire's hands and follow her spoken instructions, I still get stuck and find myself pulling the work apart to start again (frogging, as the Americans in the course call it, because it is rip-rip-ripping). This time, I do respond when we're asked if we've got it. I say that I'm having trouble at the very beginning, but all Máire can really do is recommend that I watch the recording later to catch up. By the time everyone else is finishing up the motif, I'm feeling like I have a sense of how it works, but it's too late. I will have to go back and watch the recording, though I feel like I probably won't ever end up doing that. I'll probably just keep trying with the written instructions. I go get a snack.

After finishing the clematis leaf, we chain Clones knots around the various motifs that we've already finished, to prepare them for the ground that will eventually connect them together.¹¹⁵⁸ Even though I know I'll have to pull it apart afterwards (I still haven't received my parcel of supplies, so I don't have the size 80 thread needed to make the ground), I follow along and ring one of my finished roses with five chain, Clones knot, five chain – it looks like the collar of a Pierrot. Máire shows us how to tack our motifs onto the mask that we are supposed to be decorating, so that in the next, extra, class we can start filling in the space between them. I won't be making a mask, so my task for next Tuesday is to finish enough motifs to get started on one of my baby caps, and figure out how I am going to design them.

6.4 Three bonnets

At the same time that I reoriented my contemporary Irish lacemaking research to focus on Máire Treanor and the continuing story of Clones lace, I also reoriented my lacemaking practice. I didn't have access to the research facilities that I had been using to experiment with large-scale Carrickmacross lace designs rendered on a commercial embroidery machine to test their suitability for hand-stitching (figs. 6.4). The inability to travel abroad or gather with groups shattered my original plans to continue learning from lacemakers in Ireland and then create a design for a Carrickmacross lace flounce that would be hand-stitched by my crafting community in Ontario. I needed instead to make something small, portable, something less overwhelming to finish alone.

The announcements that three women very close to me were pregnant, and due later in Fall 2020, came one by one throughout those spring months. I was delighted, but also worried for them.

Cultural Heritage, n.d., <https://nationalinventoryich.chg.gov.ie/clones-crochet-lace-making/> (Accessed December 8, 2021).

¹¹⁵⁸ Máire Treanor learned the trick of chaining Clones knots around each motif from an older woman down the road who would take orders for Clones crochet blouses when she was visiting her son in New York (online class with Máire Treanor, June 11, 2020).

In all three cases, it was their first child. I wondered what it would be like to experience in isolation a time that seemed – from what I had seen in my family and community – so characterized by communality and practical, proximate support. I felt very far away, though my geographical distance from each varied greatly: Kamloops in British Columbia, Oro-Medonte in Ontario, and the Plateau, in Montreal.¹¹⁵⁹ The decision to make lace baby bonnets came first from my desire to do something, however symbolic, to let them know that I was thinking about them. Making three bonnets was a big commitment, so taking into account the fact that I was taking classes with Máire Treanor and becoming increasingly focused on crochet in a historical context, it seemed logical to make this the long-term lace project, the context for the *making* that accompanied the *writing*.

In the introduction, and throughout the text, I have already demonstrated how learning to make the various Irish laces, and perhaps especially crochet, inflected my understanding of the lace specimens and lace designs that I studied. Being a student of lace technique, meeting lacemakers, making designs, and adjacent experiences such as washing lace, wearing it, even ruining it, reoriented my focus and gave me new questions to investigate. However, the process of designing, making, and gifting the bonnets prompted reflection of a more conceptual nature that is not immediately evidenced in the preceding chapters. In this section, I will discuss each bonnet as a case study to explore concepts that arose during the process of learning – both techniques and history – and making, that don't fit so cleanly into the historical portion of this text. These observations 'do not fit' because they relate more to what Clones lace, or lace, or craft, might mean or do in a contemporary context. When they address the past, they do so with imagination and speculation. I do not have the space to discuss each issue in detail, or the ability to answer every question I raise. However, I think it fitting to end with these new questions offered by my lacemaking practice, offering, as they do, a space to speculate both backwards and forwards, anchored in the motion of hand and hook, and the looping of white cotton thread.¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵⁹ Restrictions on travel and gathering evolved throughout the next nine months (and beyond), impacting my proximity to each family differently. In Montreal, I was able to meet with my friend outside, and as a person living alone was legally able to freely visit her and her husband even during the heaviest restrictions (in Canada this has become known as 'bubbling'). Travel between provinces was heavily discouraged throughout 2020 and into 2021, and the border between Quebec and Ontario was closed to non-essential travel at various points in 2020 and 2021. The desire to give practical help and express care through physical proximity acquired the weight of ethical responsibility and the risk of penalty and judgment.

¹¹⁶⁰ All of the bonnets were made with Lizbeth mercerized cotton thread in 'Snow White,' size 20 for motifs (with a size 1.25 hook), and size 80 for the ground (with a size .5 hook). I ordered my thread from the Sunnyvale Lace Museum, in California, in an effort to support the Museum (which was struggling during the Covid-19 lockdowns), though when I needed to stock up on supplies for the final bonnet I ordered through Etsy, from Custom Cotton Inc. in Edmonton, Alberta.

6.4.1 Design: wild grapevine pattern (after Máire Treanor), for Thomas

I began work on the first bonnet in June 2020, in Máire’s online classes.¹¹⁶¹ It was for my brother and sister-in-law’s baby, to be born in British Columbia in November. I thought I had all the time in the world to finish it, as well as the others, by the end of the year. In the end, it was finished just in time, and posted to British Columbia to arrive days after the baby was born (fig. 6.5).

Máire Treanor’s christening bonnet design, as published in *Clones Lace*, is made in two parts, with a long rectangle to wrap over the top of the head sewn to a square with a curved top to cover the back. It features shamrock, harp, thistle, and rose motifs.¹¹⁶² I wanted to design a bonnet that featured the flora of my home region, so I took my inspiration from the wild grape vine that covered the cabin where I was staying, using motifs adapted from Máire’s ‘Vine Garden’ design.¹¹⁶³ During the weeks that I stayed in the cabin, the wild grape vine grew to shade, then shadow, and then completely obscure the windows, leaving the interior bathed in an underwater green light (fig. 6.6). I wanted the bonnet design to be unruly, like this mischievous plant, which finds its way stealthily into the raised beds of the garden, smothers even the sumac trees, and pulls at the eaves if it is not cut back every couple of years.

I planned to construct the bonnet without visible joins, and include longer sections of vine to join the grape clusters and leaves, giving a sense of continuity and rhythm. I learned as I went along that this was in fact an exercise in testing the limits of the medium, and may shed light on why the long sinuous lines of early prize-winning crochet designs never caught on in mass production. Unless my tension was absolutely perfect, chaining the ground around the motifs pulled the vine this way and that, creating a zig-zag effect. This is no doubt due mostly to my lack of skill. But when groups of crocheters were working together to finish pieces as quickly as possible, the extra time and care it would have taken to correctly complete this aspect of the design would have rendered it undesirable. Likewise, in attempting to form the bonnet on a three-dimensional mold, I had been fighting against its construction (fig. 6.7). It was possible, but it was not the most efficient way. Unlike traditional knitting or crochet, in which increasing or decreasing stitches can create a three-dimensional effect, Irish crochet is assembled on a flat plane; multi layered or padded motifs may give a sense of three-dimensionality, but the piece of lace is flat, like cloth. For the next two bonnets, I followed Máire’s

¹¹⁶¹ In this and the following sections, I will refer to Máire Treanor by her first name, as we did in lace classes both online and at the Summer School, in order to better convey their personal, reflective nature.

¹¹⁶² Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 119-120.

¹¹⁶³ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 117-118.

original pattern, connecting two flat pieces, though I obscured the joining seam by connecting the Clones knot-adorned ground of one piece to the other, without a straight row to divide them.

Despite my attempts to create something new, the demands of the medium (paired with my lack of experience and need to keep the project do-able) continued to push me towards a more traditional aesthetic and construction, closer to Máire's original design. Textile artist Jen Pack has noted this effect in her discussion of the complicated dynamics of appropriation in textiles. She points out how the very nature of textiles and their associated production processes often govern form and aesthetic of finished pieces. For example, the structure of cloth and sewing techniques encourage the maker towards "stripes and patchwork patterns [which] are dictated by a material's natural inclination and physical properties" and do not require the maker to "fight against the material's disposition."¹¹⁶⁴ Materials and tools also have the potential to shape form; for example, my 'buttonies,' or rounds of double crocheted packing cord, tend to be smaller than Máire's, because I don't use plastic straws but instead rolls of paper (or even sometimes stems of grass) (fig. 6.8). Pack asks: "is perceived "influence" based only in viewing the work of other artists, or is it also the result of a process itself?"¹¹⁶⁵ Here, the textile's 'vibrant materiality' asserts itself, shaping process, aesthetics and ultimately cultural conversation and debate.

I asked Máire several times how she felt about me copying and altering her original design, concerned about issues of appropriation and even copyright. In my mind were the crochet copying incidents I discussed in Chapter 5, and myself, as a Canadian with no Irish heritage or connection to Clones, absorbing the techniques of her regional craft then adapting and inventing with wild abandon. At first she didn't seem very concerned about it, responding "to me, it's all the same thing, you know?"¹¹⁶⁶ However, Máire's accumulated responses to this question – asked and answered multiple times in different ways – reveal what I see as an ethos of making and teaching that is firmly located in a narrative – stretching back in time – and a network of relationships – extending around the world. Adapting, experimenting, innovating, and even copying are welcome, as long as they are accompanied by a recognition of one's place in this narrative and network.

Even the title of Máire's first book, *Clones Lace: the story and patterns of an Irish crochet* emphasizes the importance she gives to locating her making practice within a 'story.' The stories and

¹¹⁶⁴ Jen Pack, "Appropriation and Authenticity: An Artist's Assessment," *Textile* Vol. 13 No. 3 (2015): 260, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759756.2015.1084735>.

¹¹⁶⁵ Pack, "Appropriation and Authenticity," 261.

¹¹⁶⁶ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

patterns give each other life: they need each other. Of course, Máire’s writing about the history of Clones lace contributes to this sense of interwoven history and technique, but I see it most clearly in the pattern section of her book and the way she speaks when she is teaching. Motifs are named according to the person who made them most often, or taught them: Mary Beggan’s Small Rose, Annetta Hughes’ Small Vine Leaf, Miriam’s Flower or Auntie’s Flower, Aileen McAleer’s Three-Button Shamrock.¹¹⁶⁷ In the book, interspersed with patterns, are profiles of crocheters that Máire has known and learned from, crediting them for passing on certain techniques or motifs, and giving a sense of their place in the story of Clones crochet. They are often accompanied by images, and I notice the prevalence of hands at work, the figure-8 shape of two hands bunched up and meeting at the extended index fingers, a hook in one meeting white thread wrapped around the other. *Around the wee finger, under two then over one.* Few lacemakers are named in the historical record, and in Chapter 3, I discussed the way in which nineteenth-century texts about labour, and needlework in particular, separated the hand from the body, presenting a soothing – and deceptive – picture of lacemaking disassociated from the maker and thus free from difficult labour. These, however, are *named* hands, hands that learned from their elders, adorned with sparkly rings and plain wedding bands, that ache when they’ve crocheted too long.

Though not as immediately evident from her written work, Máire Treanor also situates herself and her practice within a network of lacemakers that stretches around the world. Participating in this international community, formed by the spreading of Irish crochet techniques over the past two centuries, as well as new connections through Ravelry, Facebook, and the International Clones Lace Summer School, has been a positive experience for Máire: “I like to be able to invite them and go over there [...] It’s a great way of life, isn’t it?”¹¹⁶⁸ Makers from around the world share patterns and techniques, but it is important to respect others’ work with correct and clear attribution. Other teachers have used Máire’s designs to teach classes. She doesn’t mind, as long as they tell their students that she developed the design originally: “you do like to be sort of credited when you have a design like that.”¹¹⁶⁹ However, she noted with disappointment cases of blatant copying and misattribution. In one case, a crocheter passed a design off as her own, though the lace community was well aware that this particular design had been developed by another. In an act of solidarity with

¹¹⁶⁷ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 75, 84, 91, 90.

¹¹⁶⁸ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁶⁹ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

the original designer, Máire decided to include both in her new book, so readers in the know will see that “[she is] not getting into the middle of a row, but [she] know[s] about it.”¹¹⁷⁰

In the past, Treanor has had issues with publications reproducing her work and mislabelling it as ‘antique,’ when in fact it is a recent design of her own. A few of these incidents have resulted from a slideshow of antique lace that the Lacis Museum posted online. The slideshow included some of Treanor’s recently-produced designs, which were then reproduced in *Duplet* and *Mod* magazines without attribution. In one case, a designer used one of Treanor’s images in a magazine article, referring to it as traditional Irish crochet, which was an inaccuracy – but also an honour. Treanor recounted that “in one way I was sort of chuffed that she called it a traditional design, but it was mine!”¹¹⁷¹ The popular crochet designer Margaret Hubert made the same mistake in one of her books, but Treanor wrote to correct her, and she ensured it was properly attributed in the later editions.

Treanor also points out that when a maker is participating in a tradition – especially one like Irish crochet, which has spread and evolved – ownership of designs is not always so straightforward. She notes that “when something’s traditional like that, you can’t claim it as your own design, sure you can’t.”¹¹⁷² Instead, she emphasizes the importance of both claiming and sharing one’s creative work. In the heyday of Irish crochet, families kept motifs secret, so that they couldn’t be copied by the competition. When I asked Treanor about secrets and hidden techniques nowadays, she emphasized the fact that the culture of crochet has changed since those days, and that the women who taught her would have shared everything they knew.¹¹⁷³ She cautioned me against feeling proprietary about my own designs, while at the same time reminding me who I learned from, and who *I* need to credit in my story:

I sort of feel that because people have, like, you would have learned that from me, from my book, and you would have been inspired, and I don’t have a thing that I wouldn’t share, so I would be very annoyed if somebody else who learned from me, had that attitude [...] I wouldn’t like you to have that idea, that notion, that it’s *your* design [...] there’s so few people doing it that you can’t afford to do that.¹¹⁷⁴

¹¹⁷⁰ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹⁷¹ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹⁷² Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹¹⁷³ Treanor contrasted this culture of teaching and sharing as it exists now in Ireland (and by extension, North America, where Treanor does most of her out-of-country teaching) with the secrecy and competition she sees in Eastern Europe, where makers of Irish crochet depend on sales of crocheted items and patterns for their income, as they did in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Ireland (Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020).

¹¹⁷⁴ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

This balance between claiming one's own creative work and recognizing the breadth and organic growth of tradition also seems to be reflected in Máire's conception of tradition and innovation, though we did not discuss this in great detail. In order to *be* Clones Irish crochet, or Irish crochet more broadly, the technique and aesthetic must conform to a set of guidelines, or else it becomes something else altogether. Máire encouraged my experimentation with designing new motifs and attempting to model the cap in the round – this is *experimentation in design* – but gently discouraged me from using the same sized thread for my motifs and ground or leaving my sampler without a three-looped edging - that would something different, a case of *not making Clones lace properly*.¹¹⁷⁵

6.4.2 Time and Work: dandelion pattern, for Léon

If the first bonnet was an exercise in – time-consuming, frustrating – innovation, guided by a vision of twining wild grapevine, the second was an exercise in going back to basics to finish as quickly as possible (fig. 6.8). I had completed the wild grapevine bonnet just in time, and hadn't even started on the next when Léon was born. His name provided the seed of an idea for the bonnet's design – Léon, lion, dandy-lion – but so too did the need for speed and simplicity. I used the clematis flower motif that I had learned and made in Máire's summer online class for the back panel, and three 'dandelion' motifs adapted from the 'Original Rose Motif' in Eithne D'Arcy's *Irish Crochet Lace*.¹¹⁷⁶ I thought that D'Arcy's rose motif without its petals looked like a dandelion gone to seed, and from there added one or two layers of petals to indicate earlier stages in the flower's life cycle (fig. 6.9). The flowers are schematic and geometric, like Mennonite *fraktur* motifs, reflecting Léon's mother's ancestry and preferred aesthetic.¹¹⁷⁷ The simplicity and repetitive nature of the motifs, which were also much easier to join now that I had decided to construct each bonnet in two flat pieces, made working on the dandelion bonnet a meditative experience.

I had intended to journal about the process of making the bonnets, to sketch out the designs and record what I thought and did as I was making them. I did this for some time during the wild

¹¹⁷⁵ I wonder if this distinction also has to do with motives (as well as motifs). Completing the ground in the same sized thread as the motifs obscures the design, but it is also faster, it cuts corners, it is – dare I say it – lazy. Máire added edging to my sampler herself at the Summer School in 2019, rather than see me run off to the bus station with it unfinished. I almost missed my bus – the only bus that would have taken me from Clones to Galway that day. But edging or not edging the piece was not a stylistic decision, it was the difference between the piece being unfinished or finished (even though it was only a sampler, and didn't look very finished in the first place!). To leave it un-edged would have been to leave a job undone.

¹¹⁷⁶ D'Arcy, *Irish Crochet Lace*, 32.

¹¹⁷⁷ Fraktur is a Mennonite folk art tradition that emerged from painting imagery on certificates and registries, and in bibles and hymnals. For examples, see: <http://mhep.org/exhibits/fraktur-gallery/>.

grapevine bonnet's production, but the design itself was so complex that I shifted to focusing on simply figuring how to make it work. I hadn't reckoned with the need for something to do to rest my mind and let it wander, while my hands stayed busy.¹¹⁷⁸ I worked on the dandelion bonnet in late-November and December 2020, starting the simple rose motifs for the next in January 2021. That was a difficult time, with the fatigue of nearly a year of pandemic uncertainty, the strange and exhausting combination of constant online communication and a deep sense of physical isolation, and a fog of writer's block which left me stranded, producing nothing, in a project that was feeling too big to grasp. Crocheting was work I *could* do. It was useful, and it contributed somehow to the project, so it gave me a space in which to work without having to do what at the time felt like a superhuman feat of mental energy and focus: write.

Máire Treanor watches TV while she crochets. I listened to music, setting up a bright lamp on the table beside the turntable. I listened to all of the old blues albums my uncle had given me the last Christmas my family spent together, to an album based on field recordings from an abandoned Arctic outpost by the Danish band Efterklang, to harpist Joanna Newsom again and again. These among others were just what I happened to have, but they were all stories, or evoked stories, and they made being trapped and alone a source of narrative power and aestheticized melancholy. The simplicity of what I was making allowed me to drift away and inhabit the music, which itself shaped my working pattern: twenty minutes or so of concentrated work, break to change sides, twenty minutes more, break to change again or pick something else. I became different lacemakers with each change: a character from a legend, trapped in a tower with my tangles of string (Joanna Newsom); a hard-working woman keeping it all afloat, with troubles on my mind (Blues); myself, chaining Clones knots and drifting on a glittering, icy wave of orchestral strings (Efterklang). Time passed differently.

This state of engagement with an activity corresponds with psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow,' developed during research with creatives, but later extended to encompass sport and even writing. Entering a 'flow state' requires an activity that is challenging enough to ensure engagement, but not so challenging as to cause frustration. It is characterized by intense concentration, a sense of control, "loss of reflective self-consciousness," a sense that the process or action itself is of more value than the end product, and "temporal

¹¹⁷⁸ There was a hold-up on a train on the continent, and the hostages were going wild with boredom, so they asked for knitting supplies. They were given, and the hostages stayed busy knitting until they were rescued (a story told at the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland, May 4, 2019, Cork).

distortion” that typically makes time seem to pass more quickly.¹¹⁷⁹ The notion of a ‘state of flow’ – desirable, rewarding, and even healing – permeates discussions about making, even if it is not cited to the body of research originating in Csikszentmihalyi’s study.¹¹⁸⁰ Co-opted by craft and design history, it also aligns with the romanticization of craftsmanship and nostalgia for a pre-industrial past seen in the work of William Morris and John Ruskin and critiqued most thoroughly by craft theorist Glenn Adamson in *The Invention of Craft*.¹¹⁸¹ As I discussed in Chapter 3, this location of the crafts(wo)man in a pre-industrial past was also a strategy of the colonial project, allowing design officials to view them as blank canvases for an education in taste, while also capitalizing on what was seen as ‘innate’ – ‘flow state’ – indigenous skill. Adamson critiques the emphasis placed on something like flow in descriptions of nineteenth-century craft, arguing that they painted craft as an activity conducted with an empty mind – craft as an instinctive, spiritual act – when in fact “prior to the early nineteenth century, workmanship was usually considered a very conscious, and even self-conscious, endeavour.”¹¹⁸² In discussing the space and time of amateur craft practices, craft historian Stephen Knott also highlights Csikszentmihalyi’s predication of the ‘flow state’ on a series of goals and achievements that subject play and creativity to “dominant paradigms of capitalist temporality.”¹¹⁸³

As such, rather than romanticizing ‘flow’ as a distinctively spiritual, pre-industrial, even utopian temporality, I will follow Stephen Knott’s lead in considering it a *differential* temporality, dependent on the structures that both create and contain it. In my own making practice, achieving a state of play or ‘flow,’ in which I was carried away by music and the rhythmic pierce and pull of the crochet hook, was both enabled by and dependent on the constraints of my daily life. As I mentioned earlier, the work was differentiated from my writing, and thus a welcome change. It was also *work*, and thus allowed me to experience this simultaneously restful and energizing state without feeling any guilt about ‘wasting time’ or ‘not being productive.’ I had always been afraid of falling

¹¹⁷⁹ J. Nakamura and M. Csikszentmihalyi, “The Concept of Flow,” in *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 240, https://doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8_16.

¹¹⁸⁰ See for example: “Junko Mori on Metal,” Material Matters with Grant Gibson, March 4, 2020, podcast, <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/junko-mori-on-metal/id1450375359?i=1000467523501>. I am thankful to Kathleen Vaughan for bringing this podcast, and episode, to my attention.

¹¹⁸¹ Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, 138-139; 196.

¹¹⁸² Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, 139.

¹¹⁸³ Stephen Knott, *Amateur Craft: history and theory* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 94. Stephen Knott addresses Flow Theory as a psychological or phenomenological theory. However, more recent developments in neuroscience have corresponded with Csikszentmihalyi’s research and extended the conceptualization of flow activities to include workplace tasks and leisure activities such as gaming. See: Arnold B. Bakker, Dimitri van der Linden, and Mattie Tops, “The Neuroscience of the Flow State: Involvement of the Locus Coeruleus Norepinephrine System,” *Frontiers in Psychology* April 14, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.645498>.

into a mid-dissertation black hole (having heard too many stories of year three *ennui*), and so I built a strict working regimen. I was on the clock from nine to five, and I watched myself with the eagle eye of a micro-managing employer. For many, the pandemic lockdowns and resulting work-from-home mandates that blurred the lines between work and leisure intersected with a recent culture of side-hustles and monetization of every spare moment, making all hours of the day feel like time ‘at work.’ Though no doubt inflected by lockdown life, my desire to structure time and work came from another place. Trained in the much clichéd school of ‘rural upbringing’ and ‘good old-fashioned Protestant work ethic,’ anxious to make good use of my funding, and perpetually insecure about my reading and writing work not being taken seriously, or even considered ‘real work,’ I was a much harder taskmaster than any employer or authority figure would have been. The ‘flow’ of crochet may have created a differential and restorative experience of time, but it was enabled and encouraged by this commitment to scheduling and productivity.

My ability to experience crocheting as a differential time was also dependent on the dandelion bonnet’s balance of challenge and simplicity – I had to concentrate and *try* to do good work, but I knew what I was doing and did not have to problem-solve consciously. When I noted this to the bonnet’s recipient, she reported a similar experience. She started embroidering during her pregnancy, and after the baby’s birth found that she resorted to simpler and more familiar techniques and designs. She still needed the work, the feeling of accomplishment, but as an exhausted new parent could not handle the intellectual work of designing and perfecting new techniques.

Emily Anderson’s lace specimen collection seems to show a broad lack of interest in innovating in crochet design – though not exclusively so, new designs tended to be from the schools in Austria and the Irish art colleges. Instead, most of her crochet specimens show high levels of expertise in the same types of patterns: rose and shamrock squares, for example. Constant attempts by the IAOS, IIA and DATI to encourage new designs in crochet seem to indicate a lack of interest in innovation on the part of most makers. In Monaghan, entire families would specialize in perfecting a single motif, to the point that some were nicknamed based on their area of expertise: the ‘Lily Quigleys’ or the ‘Rosey McMahons.’¹¹⁸⁴ Speculating backwards from my own experiences, I

¹¹⁸⁴ Máire Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020. Wanting to work on familiar motifs is likely linked to protecting eyesight as well. In *Clones Lace*, Máire Treanor also notes that blind men sometimes crocheted, and many of the older workers told her that motifs with too much detailed work over packing cord (‘lifting’) were unpleasant to make because they were hard on the eyes, especially when working by oil lamps. Mary Beggan emphasized the importance of making something “by the feel of it,” and Máire Treanor cautions that “it is important not to stare into your work” (*Clones Lace*, 38).

wonder if this satisfaction with perfecting single motifs and using standard patterns reflected not a lack of skill or energy, but a desire on the part of most makers to experience their crochet work as a differential time, a time when their hands could be busy but their mind focused on the newspaper being read aloud at a *ceilidh* with other lacemakers, for example.¹¹⁸⁵ Perhaps crocheting provided a moment of peace at the end of a long day, when safe under the cloak of ‘doing work,’ they could sit down and let their thoughts drift for a moment. Nineteenth-century literature points to a similar phenomenon in needlework more broadly. Literary scholar Christine Bayles Kortsch highlights instances in novels where sewing is depicted as an activity during which women could be alone with their own thoughts.¹¹⁸⁶ Design historian Fiona Hackney has used Michel de Certeau’s analysis of *la perruque* (the wig), in which a worker uses their employer’s time for their own ends, to argue that needlework and other amateur crafts can be a form of “quiet activism.”¹¹⁸⁷ She uses the example of Major Alexis Casdagli, who as a prisoner of war in Germany embroidered works for exhibition in camp, including pro-British messages in Morse code. I wonder if it could be much simpler than that, that in crocheting a handful of rose motifs alone, a maker could be practicing a kind of *perruque*: completing work for the agent, showing herself to be a hard working member of the family, but also experiencing a state of ‘flow,’ or thinking, dreaming or planning in the quiet of her own mind.¹¹⁸⁸ In my own crocheting, perhaps I was both the employer and the employee, tricking my anxious and productivity-driven self by cloaking a chance to rest, drift, and imagine in the guise of work.

Using my own experience as fodder for speculation, and drawing from an analysis of making and time from the study of amateur craft may seem unsuitable for considering the Irish lace *industry*, and indeed in many cases it would be. However, in the case of crochet more specifically, much of production did occur in the home, in ‘spare time,’ similar to amateur handicraft. Stephen Knott’s analysis of amateur time concludes with the suggestion that for many professional craftspeople, their making practice is in fact sidelined to spare moments – amateur time – on evenings and weekends, as they diversify their work and teach, write, or conduct voluntary work.¹¹⁸⁹ This is the case for Máire

¹¹⁸⁵ Crochet lace makers in Monaghan would sometimes gather together to work, listen to stories and music, or have the newspaper read aloud (Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020).

¹¹⁸⁶ Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women’s Fiction*, 50.

¹¹⁸⁷ Hackney, “Quiet Activism,” 172; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 25.

¹¹⁸⁸ Feminist art historian Roszika Parker writes that “embroidery signifies both self-containments and submission,” pointing to the fact that the silence and focus of the craft promote “self-containment, a kind of autonomy,” and in fact Sigmund Freud linked embroidery to hysteria because it encouraged day-dreaming (Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: embroidery and the making of the feminine* (London: The Women’s Press, 1989), 10-11).

¹¹⁸⁹ Knott, *Amateur Craft*, 125.

Treanor, who is a schoolteacher, writer and crochet teacher, and during the peak days of the Clones Lace Guild was occupied not only with making but with the massive workload of Guild business operations. In fact, Irish crochet lacemakers have worked in their ‘spare time’ since the nineteenth century. Women and children in rural areas would often make motifs when they were finished their daily household and farm tasks.¹¹⁹⁰ It is for precisely this reason that Emily Anderson conflicted with the Monaghan County Committee in Chapter 5: women wanted to make lace in their spare time, not devote their days to lace classes. Women I met at the Roslea Lace Group recalled their mothers and grandmothers crocheting in the moments when they were finished their household tasks and were alone in the house. One recalled her mother putting the crochet away when someone came in the door; she never saw her crochet, but despite this, her mother still finished ninety-four fine rose and shamrock square blouses during her adult life (fig. 6.10).¹¹⁹¹ Máire Treanor also noted this characteristic of the work pattern in her region’s history. Crochet happened at a *ceilidh*, where makers gathered to be entertained as they worked, or alone, in the quiet.¹¹⁹²

The relationship between time and work leads me to another, more immediately-ascertainable way that time inflected the bonnet project. When I asked Máire why the people who come to her classes want to learn to make lace, she responded: “Well, you’re making that because you’re doing something very special for your niece, and you know nobody else is going to make that. Nobody else could do that. So you’re doing something very special.”¹¹⁹³ *Nobody else could do that.* Maybe nobody else *would* do that. In one case, the bonnet recipient responded with pure delight in its aesthetic possibilities, resulting in a photo shoot, and the bonnet worn on various occasions with vintage-style baby clothes. However, in all three cases, the recipients expressed amazement and gratitude at how much *time* had gone into the making.

When I was attending lacemaking groups in Ireland in the summer of 2019, I met Mary Starr, a member of the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland. She had decided to learn Carrickmacross lace, and wanted to start with a substantial project, rather than making samplers that would be of little use

¹¹⁹⁰ Ciara Breathnach notes in her study of the CDB that several baseline reports remark upon the diversity of tasks performed by the women in regions they visited: “Practically all household work, cooking, baking, cleaning and whitewashing, was undertaken by women and, when the men migrated for the harvest season, women reaped the crops at home” while also supplementing the family income with money from eggs and handiwork (Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board*, 48).

¹¹⁹¹ For such a blouse, the maker would have to complete about 126 rose and shamrock squares, and then an additional sixteen for the yoke, meaning 142 squares at minimum (Members of the Roslea Lace Group, in discussion with the author, Roslea, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, June 5, 2019).

¹¹⁹² Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

¹¹⁹³ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

to her. So she embarked upon a twelve-foot wedding veil for her daughter, who was not even planning a wedding at the time.¹¹⁹⁴ She worked on the understanding that if her daughter wanted it, it would be there, and if she didn't, someone else in the family would find a use for it eventually. Her daughter did end up marrying, and the timing worked out well: she wore the veil at the end of three years of increasingly rushed work at the dining room table of Starr's home near Nenagh, Co. Tipperary (fig. 6.11).¹¹⁹⁵ The veil is a beautiful specimen of finely executed Carrickmacross lace, but it is also testament to a tremendous feat of focus and endurance. Starr chronicled her work in a journal, and logged 136 hours on the tacking alone – a fellow lacemaker calculated that with labour and supplies factored in, the veil should be worth about €80 000.¹¹⁹⁶ Women throughout the Irish lacemaking community were aware of her project, and always referenced the size of the veil, and the fact that she was making it alone, with an air of amazement. Though the fine couching stitches used to affix the opaque fabric to the netting and outline the pattern components were time-consuming, the most agonizing task was 'cutting out,' when she cut the fine cotton away from the netting to outline each flower (fig. 6.12). The risk of slipping and cutting the net itself is ever-present, and it is often difficult to decipher between the white pattern paper, white netting, white cotton, white couching thread, and thinner white stitching thread (fig. 6.13). And the cutting out happens at the end. After countless hours of consistent, familiar, and perhaps meditative stitching, the maker is faced with a task that progresses through time in a different way: shoulder-tensing and sharply-focused.¹¹⁹⁷

The painstaking and time-consuming nature of lacemaking, remarked upon in the nineteenth century and rendering Mary Starr's veil such an impressive solo feat, continues to hold conceptual significance. Theresa Kelly, a Carrickmacross lacemaker and textile artist, was commissioned to make sleeves for a wedding dress to be featured in the Monaghan-born fashion designer Natalie B. Coleman's Autumn/Winter 2019 collection, in collaboration with the United Nations Population

¹¹⁹⁴ The veil was designed by P.J. McCabe of Carrickmacross, after a lace wedding veil in the Ulster Museum, Belfast. Mary Starr reported that McCabe has an extensive collection of Carrickmacross lace patterns going back 200 years, has copied patterns from the nuns in Carrickmacross and designed more of his own (Mary Starr, in discussion with the author, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Ireland, May 9, 2019).

¹¹⁹⁵ Mary Starr, discussion, May 9, 2019.

¹¹⁹⁶ Mary Starr, discussion, May 9, 2019. I am grateful to Mary Starr for welcoming me into her home, allowing me to look at this journal, and telling me about the trials and triumphs of working on this ambitious project. Mary Starr's records of the project (which include samples of fabrics, information about the pattern designed for her by a local pattern designer, hours spent on each task, and more) would be a valuable source for further study on the technical aspects of Carrickmacross lacemaking.

¹¹⁹⁷ It must be noted that as I sitting here finishing my Carrickmacross sampler (in a back garden in Dolphin's Barn) I can hear: a) very loud EDM, in fits and starts b) a gang of kids screaming incoherently c) hoofbeats (!) (May 2019).

Fund. Coleman has long considered herself a feminist fashion designer, and the collection sought to draw attention to women’s sexual and reproductive health. In an interview for *Irish Tatler*, Natalie B Coleman highlighted the time spent in making the Carrickmacross lace sleeves, as representative of the detailed and time-consuming nature of many women’s crafts. She describes the collection as “featuring traditional female-centric skills such as lacemaking, embroidery, hand knit, [and] beading,” and notes that “The female reproductive system is made in Carrickmacross lace on the sleeves of the wedding dress, one ovary took 32 hours to make.”¹¹⁹⁸ *Fashionista* also cites this figure, without even mentioning Theresa Kelly. The article thus obscures the maker – who is easy to find, in an age of Google searches and Instagram! – in favour of emphasizing, and perhaps even mythologizing the time and labour involved in making Carrickmacross lace.¹¹⁹⁹ Time, it seems, is lace’s most distinctive characteristic.

August 2020: letters and string

On one afternoon I write four letters to friends in Belfast and Donegal. I send sprigs of lavender and paper napkins decorated with 1950s and 1960s floral patterns that I found, never used, in a box in the basement of my parents’ house. I write cheerful letters, about the strawberry freezer jam I’ve made and the way that the garden distracts me from my writing. How I’ll go back to Montreal soon; how it’s good to be home. A friend in Belfast, whom I miss dearly, wrote that writing a letter to someone is like saying a prayer for them; it’s a time of intentional focus on that person, thinking of their future (the moment when they open and read the letter), spending time on them in their absence.¹²⁰⁰

I see this in my letter writing and my lacemaking, both of which are conducted in isolation, so far from their intended recipients. There might even be a stronger precedent for such a notion in relation to crochet, with its endless looping and knotting. The English psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott wrote that “string can be looked upon as an extension of all other techniques of communication. String joins, just as it also helps in the wrapping up of objects and in the holding of unintegrated material. In this respect, string has a symbolic meaning for everyone.”¹²⁰¹ This is abundantly clear in myth and folklore. There is the East Asian legend of the ‘Red Thread of Fate,’ which connects the pinky fingers of two people destined to change each other’s lives. In Greek and Roman mythology, the three fates weave

¹¹⁹⁸ Kate Demolder, “Natalie B. Coleman Collaborates with UN to Donate 10% of its Proceeds to Charity,” *Irish Tatler*, February 18 2019, <https://irishtatler.com/fashion/natalie-b-coleman-s-strong-feminist-rhetoric-informs-aw19-collection> (Accessed December 9, 2021). See also: Ruth O’Connor, “Natalie B. Coleman on her Collaboration with the UN Population Fund,” *Irish Examiner*, March 21, 2019, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/fashionandbeauty/arid-30911453.html> (Accessed December 9, 2021); Deirdre McQuillan, “London Fashion Week: Victoria Beckham’s family turn out to see her best show yet,” *The Irish Times*, February 17, 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/fashion/london-fashion-week-victoria-beckham-s-family-turn-out-to-see-her-best-show-yet-1.3797089> (Accessed December 9, 2021).

¹¹⁹⁹ Paul McLauchlan, “The United Nations Partnered with an Irish Designer for Fashion Week,” *Fashionista*, February 15, 2019, <https://fashionista.com/2019/02/natalie-b-coleman-united-nations-population-fund-fall-2019-collaboration> (Accessed December 9, 2021).

¹²⁰⁰ Personal communication with Susan Hughes, letter, July 2020.

¹²⁰¹ D.W. Winnicott quoted in Olivia Laing, *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* (New York: Picador, 2016), 263.

*with the threads of human lives, threads that they cut at the moment of each life's end. And Ariadne saves Theseus from an eternity spent wandering the Minotaur's labyrinth by giving him a ball of thread.*¹²⁰²

The bonnets have been a way to stay connected, stay talking when the digital communication of pandemic-era social isolation left us all tired, with nothing to say. But there is also the sense that the labour of lace and letters becomes a different type of communication. It is, after all, possible that I am chalking up points on a ledger that exists somewhere in the space between us, visible not only, but mostly, to me. I am saying: I love you this much work, so please remember me.

6.4.3 Care: rose garden pattern, for Kit

The third bonnet wasn't delivered until its wearer was already four months old (fig. 6.14). Her mother was the one who I knew would most appreciate the bonnet as a wearable for her baby. We grew up together, and are united by a love of gardening, floral dresses and chintzy china. She lives in a stone cottage surrounded by peonies and miniature roses that she found bedraggled and half-price at the supermarket checkout and managed to coax into blooming longevity. So this was the 'rose garden' bonnet, composed of two rose motifs: the Small Rose, which is "the most common flower in Irish crochet" and "the first motif that most crochet workers learn," and the Wild Rose, another of the most common Clones motifs and once crocheted by Tessie McMahan of the 'rosy McMahans' for the Clones Lace Guild.¹²⁰³ I also included one Miriam's Flower or Auntie's Flower motif that I had left from a previous project, and single units of Anetta Hughes' Small Vine Leaf motif as rose leaves (fig. 6.15). Having learned my lesson from the wild grapevine, I made very short portions of chaining over packing cord for stems. Máire said that you can identify the lace made for sale by the density of the motifs. The ground takes so long, is such fine work with a thinner thread, that when makers are pressed for time they try to do as little of it as possible.¹²⁰⁴ Though the density of motifs in this bonnet was a design decision – I wanted it to be full and blooming – I enjoyed the simplicity and repetition of the rose motifs much more than the painstaking ground, and I was already working far behind schedule.

Though her due-date was the latest of the three, and she was therefore last on the bonnet-making schedule, this baby had been born first. Premature and medically complex, she spent the first

¹²⁰² Groundbreaking early Irish women's historian (as well as activist and Dominican sister) Margaret Mac Curtain (1929-2020) used Ariadne's thread as "a metaphor for the project of women's history as it attempts to find recognition within the academic study of Irish history," encouraging historians to search for "the hidden thread" of clues about women's lives ("Introduction," *Ariadne's Thread: Writing Women into Irish History* (Galway: Arlen House, 2008), 55-56).

¹²⁰³ Treanor, *Clones Lace*, 74, 76.

¹²⁰⁴ Treanor, discussion, October 22, 2020.

months of her life in and out of the hospital for check-ups, procedures, and multiple operations. I had been on the phone almost daily with her mother in the weeks leading up to her birth, but afterwards our communication petered out as a busy schedule of hospital visits and the exhaustion of new parenthood rendered her mother's every free moment an opportunity to sleep. There was no way for me to be present, or help. Even when I travelled to Ontario for Christmas, I couldn't go inside her house more than a few times because of lockdown restrictions paired with the need to quarantine the baby for her hospital visits. Crocheting her bonnet felt increasingly important, as a way to show care and symbolize my desire to be present and helpful, even if I couldn't in reality. It was also a form of self-care, allowing me to detach from my helpless worry for this baby and her parents and, as I discussed in the previous section, lose myself instead in the process of making.

Though making the wild grapevine bonnet for a baby I could not visit because of pandemic travel restrictions was also symbolic of care, my experience making the dandelion bonnet was in direct contrast. In accordance with the Montreal lockdown restrictions of late fall and winter 2020/2021, I was able to have and be a 'designated visitor' because I lived alone. To use further Covid-era parlance, I 'bubbled' with my friend's household – the only person able to visit, to hold the baby, to wash dishes and make dinner for the tired new parents. In this case, my caring was practical, proximate. The dandelion bonnet as a process and symbol was thus rendered less important. Such a contrast serves to emphasize the role of bonnet-making as an act of care – symbolic, but also embodied and material. This is, of course, not unique to my experience. In their extensive study of contemporary American women who engage in textile handcrafts, Joyce Starr Johnson and Laurel E. Wilson concluded that "textile handcrafts, whether given as gifts to loved ones or to complete strangers, are, stitch by stitch, created and given with a deep sense of care and concern for the well-being of the recipient."¹²⁰⁵

¹²⁰⁵ Joyce Starr Johnson and Laurel E. Wilson, "'It Says You Really Care': Motivational Factors of Contemporary Female Handcrafters," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* Vol. 23 No. 2 (2005): 126, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X0502300205>. This equation of hand-making and care has drawn criticism. For example, in her psychoanalytic reading of knitting as practiced by mothers for their children, design historian Jo Turney argues that hand-knitted garments have a "smothering" effect on children, and symbolize the mother's "compensat[ion] for her destructive feelings through guilt and over-protection" (Jo Turney, "(S)mother's Love," in *Love Objects: Emotion, Design, and Material Culture* eds. Anna Moran and Sorcha O'Brien (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 28). Such a framing may ring true in some circumstances, but it assumes a single motivation on the part of the maker, and privileges finished product over process. Irish artist Pauline Cummins' installation *Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance* (1985) highlights another facet of the link between hand-making garments, bodies, and love by pairing slides depicting naked male torsos overlaid with Aran knitting stitches with an explicitly sexual narration that turns the act of knitting a garment into an expression of desire (For the Irish Museum of Modern Art catalogue record, see: <https://imma.ie/collection/inis-toirr-aran-dance/>).

However, making and giving can look both inward and outward, encompass both care for another and self-care. Máire gives ‘therapy’ or ‘self-care’ as one of the primary reasons people come to her classes: “they would be doing it for therapeutic reasons. It’s slow and it gives them something to do at night, and they’re interested in crafts, and they’re interested in lace.”¹²⁰⁶ Though it took place in a different context of making, I found a similar mix of motives in a study on voluntary Covid-19 home mask-making conducted with Kathleen Vaughan in 2020.¹²⁰⁷ We found that the participants we interviewed saw their mask-making as a way to help out and get involved, in a form of care for medical professionals (for whom the masks were intended). Almost all participants reflected that sewing the masks (on a sewing machine, in their home or studio) benefitted their mental health in some way, either through providing a feeling of control and contribution during a time when many felt helpless, through the meditative process of sewing the same thing again and again, or through the sense of community created by participating in the project and feeling connected to other mask-makers. The notion of textile crafts as therapeutic has been widely studied by scholars of craft and education, mental health and rehabilitation.¹²⁰⁸ It is a trope in popular culture, promoted most recently by the British Olympic diver Tom Daley who took up knitting to deal with anxiety during the Covid-19 lockdowns, then continued to work on projects in the bleachers at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, even knitting a small Union Jack ‘medal cozy’ for his team gold.¹²⁰⁹

Just as there are many reasons to practice making as self-care, demonstrating care through making something for another person, can hold many meanings at once.¹²¹⁰ When I think about the

¹²⁰⁶ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹²⁰⁷ An encyclopedia entry incorporating this research is forthcoming in *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of World Textiles Volume 7: Textiles and the Everyday* under the title “Facing pandemics: Conceptualizing homemade masks as an everyday textile in response to COVID-19.”

¹²⁰⁸ See for example: Gail Kenning, “‘Fiddling with Thread’: Craft-Based Textile Activities and Positive Well-Being,” *Textile: the Journal of Cloth and Culture* Vol. 13 No. 1 (2015): 50–65, DOI: 10.2752/175183515x14235680035304; Jeannine L.M. Liddle, Lynne Parinson, and David W. Sibbritt, “Purpose and Pleasure in Late Life: Conceptualising Older Women’s Participation in Art and Craft Activities,” *Journal of Aging Studies* Vol. 27 No. 4 (2013): 330–38, DOI: 10.1016/j.jaging.2013.08.002; Selma MacFarlane and Jane Maidment, “Older Women and Craft: Extending Educational Horizons in Considering Wellbeing,” *Social Work Education* Vol. 30 No. 6 (2011): 700–11, DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2011.586568; Hester Parr, “Mental Health, the Arts and Belongings,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* Vol. 31 No. 2 (2006): 150–66, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3804378>; Sinikka Pöllänen, “Elements of Crafts that Enhance Well-Being,” *Journal of Leisure Research* Vol. 47 No. 1 (2015): 58–78, DOI: 10.1080/00222216.2015.11950351; Sarah Prior, Frances Reynolds, and Bella Vivat, “Women’s Experiences of Increasing Subjective Well-Being in CFS/ME through Leisure-Based Arts and Crafts Activities: A Qualitative Study,” *Disability & Rehabilitation* Vol. 30 No. 17 (2008): 1279–88, DOI: 10.1080/09638280701654518.

¹²⁰⁹ Dipa Shivaram, “Tom Daley is knitting his way through the Olympics,” NPR, August 2, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/tokyo-olympics-live-updates/2021/08/02/1023738433/tom-daley-knitting-olympics> (Accessed December 9, 2021).

¹²¹⁰ Johnson and Wilson, “It Says You Really Care,” 125–126.

three adornments traditionally made from Carrickmacross Lace – a panel for a christening gown, a first communion dress, and a wedding veil – I wonder how the gifting of such items within families placed the pressure of strong societal norms on women and girls (and on both parents of a child about to be christened or given first communion). Though Elizabeth Boyle’s interviews show that for many young Irish women in the 1960s, a Carrickmacross wedding veil was a desirable item, this was also a period of rigid heteronormativity and restrictive gender roles during which the marriage bar required women – such as Mamo McDonald – to give up employment in public service after marriage.¹²¹¹ Mary Starr told me multiple times that when she started her Carrickmacross wedding veil she had reassured her daughter that there was no pressure to marry, that she simply wanted to work on a big project and a veil fit the bill. Starr prioritized process: learning a new skill and challenging herself with a big project.¹²¹² That she felt the need to emphasize this so strongly seems to indicate that making a veil did, in her experience, typically carry the weight of expectation. I wonder about the equations of care and expectation or obligation in my care-ful gifts. There *was* an expectation of use and thanks, though I tried to downplay my wish for the parents to actually *use* the bonnets, especially for the two boys; the frilly white certainly did not match their other clothing or their parents’ aesthetic. When I think about the bonnets as an expression of care, I also realize that they reflected an anxiety that in being physically isolated from the babies and their families I might also be left out of their story. Perhaps the bonnets were gifts, but also evidence: for me and for the recipients, that I was *there*, in their lives, even if I was in fact very far away.

6.4.4 Crochet as noun and verb: future lives

When I asked Máire Treanor why her students want to learn to make lace – was it for artistic reasons, to give gifts, to unwind? – she responded: “I think it’s all of those things.”¹²¹³ In “Knitting after making: what we do with what we make,” textile scholar Jessica Hemmings explores the life cycle of ten pieces produced as part of durational public knitting projects, after the knitting (verb) has come to an end.¹²¹⁴ Drawing from Tim Ingold’s process-based way of thinking that gives primacy to the flux and flow of materials in constant change – EWO, or Environment Without Objects – Hemmings shifts attention from knitting as a noun to knitting as a verb. In some cases, the piece no

¹²¹¹ “Interview with Mamo McDonald, October 16, 1998.”

¹²¹² Mary Starr, discussion, May 9, 2019.

¹²¹³ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

¹²¹⁴ Jessica Hemmings, “Knitting after making: what we do with what we make,” in *Textiles, Community and Controversy: the Knitting Map*, eds. Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat, 77-94 (London and New York: Bloomsbury 2019).

longer exists, or has been ‘unmade.’ Some pieces are on display in permanent collections, while many are in mothproof bags in storage. Hemmings demonstrates how many of the projects show the importance of “social connections over practical making.”¹²¹⁵ They were communal and collaborative, or drew audiences into engagement with the knitter(s). Though Hemmings’ analysis is based on knitting as part of a formal artistic practice, it is a useful reference point for thinking about the future life of the crocheting and crochet that was part of this project. It was both process-focused (using learning and making as a way to understand lace techniques and history, making as connecting, as therapy, as care) and object-focused (the bonnets as gifts, as worn by their recipients).

The bonnets are outgrown and packed away now, in British Columbia, Ontario and Montreal. Léon’s mother intends to display his in a shadow box on the wall of their home, but she hasn’t figured out the best way to mount it yet. They are sturdily-made, and though they may yellow with age, a good soaking in warm water and laundry powder will remedy that. I don’t think they will be given away, at least not for a good long while, because they are so small and easy to store. Thomas’s fit in a birthday card envelope, and didn’t even incur extra charges to send across the country. They may be worn again, by younger siblings, or even future generations. But I wonder why, and how, they will be worn. After all, they were made based on a christening bonnet design, and none of these babies was christened. All of the parents were aware that I was crocheting for their baby as part of my studies, and were bemused at the thought of sending me photos of the bonnet in use for my doctoral thesis (in fact, one recipient requested I use one of the second group of photos she sent along, because they were “way cuter”). They also demonstrated that the bonnet could be worn backwards! See fig. 6.16). Perhaps in the future, however, the bonnets will be worn in ways closer to their original purpose: to mark special occasions and celebrations. The significance of the rose garden bonnet shifted slightly when the baby’s parents asked me to be her godmother in the spring of 2021 – a role that holds great significance for their family. Somehow this seems to make the bonnet more *hers* than her family’s, and when she looks at it years from now, it will be ‘the bonnet from her fairy godmother.’ It strikes me that what this means to her will depend on what *I* come to mean to her.

The bonnets’ histories and futures as objects are already a study in fluidity and process: travelling across the country, shifting in meaning and purpose, photographed and shared on social media, dirtied, washed, and eventually falling apart from use or the passing of time. My crocheting

¹²¹⁵ Hemmings, “Knitting after making,” 79.

itself, as a process of learning and doing, also has future implications. Perhaps most evidently, it has transformed the historical research that forms the body of this thesis, and which may in time find new outlets in other projects and publications. Learning lacemaking techniques also drew me into dialogue with lacemaking groups and lacemakers throughout Ireland, the United States and Canada. I looked at the material not just as a researcher but as a (beginning) maker and sojourner in the Irish lace community. Máire gave me her blessing to pass on the techniques that I learned from her, although she requested that I direct new students first to her online classes as long as they are still happening. I have included such a large number of lace specimens and appendices because I hope they will make this document useful to these makers and enthusiasts as well as future researchers. And then, of course, there is the fact that we don't know the future. When I asked Máire what Clones lacemaking will look like fifty years from now, she responded with a laugh: "I don't know what *the world* will look like fifty years from now!"¹²¹⁶ It's true. Emily Anderson could never have known that the crochet designs she fought to protect would be copied in rainbow hues by makers in Eastern Europe who would then be celebrated in Ireland and paid to come and teach their 'modern' crochet techniques in Clones. The women who taught Máire would never have guessed, when they were young, that they would pass the craft on to a woman from Armagh who would teach students in the United States and Canada, during a global pandemic, using video-calling software on her computer, and demonstrating the Clones knot with thick blue thread.

¹²¹⁶ Treanor, discussion, October 29, 2020.

Figures: Chapter 6

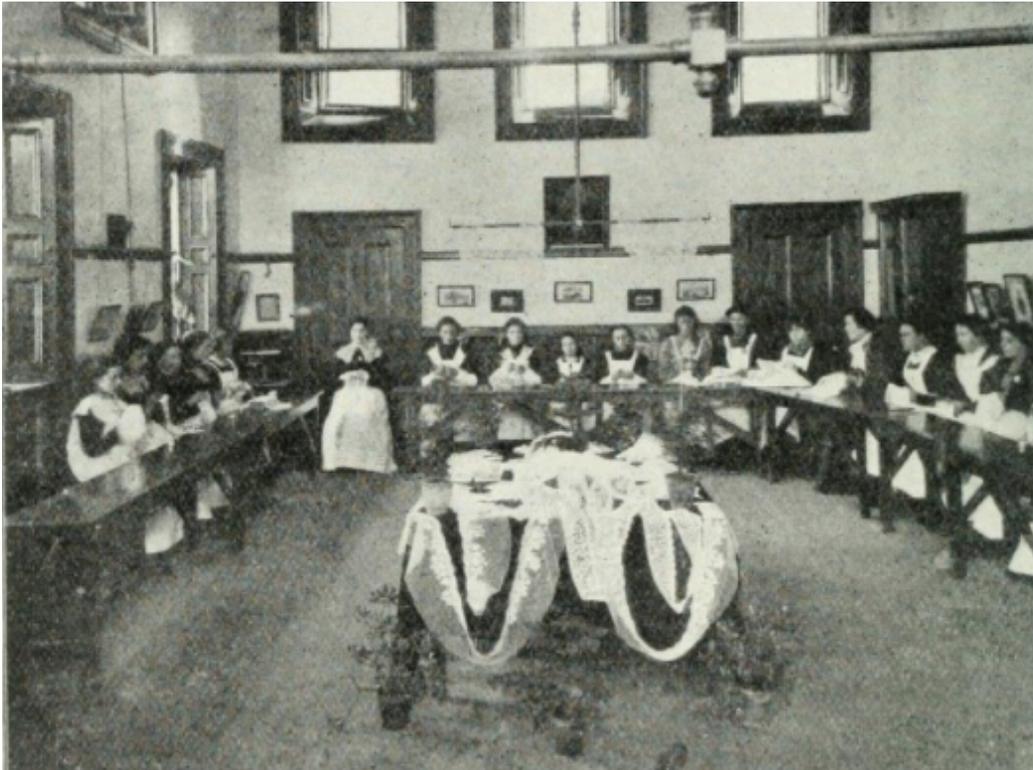


Figure 6-1 Appliqué and guipure workers at the Convent of St. Louis, Carrickmacross, c. 1907. This is the class in which Janie Woods learned to make Carrickmacross lace. In *Irish Rural Life and Industry* (Irish International Exhibition, 1907), 138. Source: Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/irishrurallifein00irisuoft/page/138/mode/2up> (Accessed November 24, 2021).

Note: Nellie Ó Cléirigh writes that this class was taught by Bridget O'Brien, and that this image shows her with her pupils – presumably she is the woman seated without a frame in front of her, at the back left (Nellie Ó Cléirigh, *Carrickmacross Lace: Irish Embroidered Net Lace* (2nd Ed.) (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990), 15).



Figure 6-2 Pink Ice Gown (with detail of Carrickmacross lace flower appliqué), designed by Sybil Connolly, c. 1956. Collection of the Hunt Museum, Limerick. Photos by Eamonn O'Mahon, and made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Licence. Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pink_Ice_Gown_by_Sybil_Connolly.jpg, and https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Carrickmacross_lace#/media/File:Pink_Ice'_Gown_by_Sybil_Connolly_-_Lace_Detail.jpg (Accessed November 24, 2021).



Figure 6-3 Author attending Máire Treanor's online Clones lace classes (facilitated by the Sunnyvale Lace Museum) in June 2020. Photo by Sam Gillett.



Figure 6-4 Sample of the willow motif, designed by author and embroidered on the Tajima machine at the Textiles and Materiality Cluster (Milieux Institute, Concordia University) in Winter 2020 (with thanks to Geneviève Moisan). Photo by the author.



Figure 6-5 Thomas wearing the wild grapevine bonnet, November 2020. Photo by Christi Gillett.



Figure 6-6 Wild grapevine growing on the cabin, July 2020. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-7 Joining the back, top and sides of the wild grapevine bonnet, with chains and Clones knots, on a three dimensional form, October 2020. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-8 The author constructing a button around a roll of scrap paper, October 2020. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-9 Léon wearing the dandelion bonnet, December 2020. Photo by Alanna Harms-Weibe.



Figure 6-10 Dandelion bonnet, top panel, under construction (note that the motifs are stitched to the backing with white thread), December 2020. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-11 Shamrock square blouse made by Sarah Jane McMahon, c. 1969. Photographed with permission at the Roslea Lace Group, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, June 5, 2019. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-12 Mary Starr's veil under construction, on the dining room table at her home, May 9, 2019. Photo by the author.

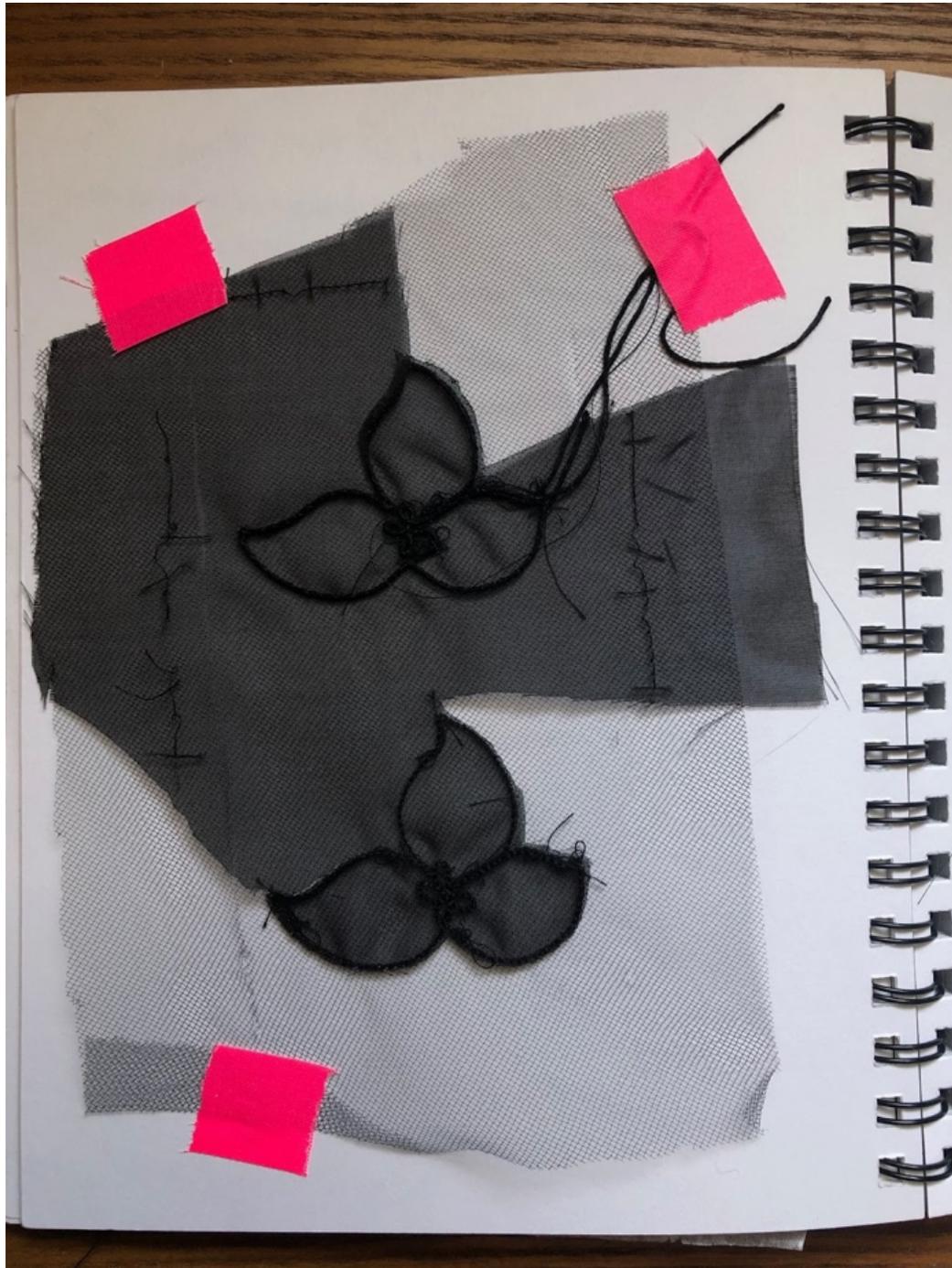


Figure 6-13 ‘Cutting out’ in process, on samples of the trillium motif embroidered on the Tajima machine at the Textiles and Materiality Cluster (Milieux Institute, Concordia University) in Winter 2020 (with thanks to Geneviève Moisan). Photo by the author.



Figure 6-14 Mary Starr's veil under construction, detail of the couching stitches, May 9, 2019. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-15 Kit wearing the rose garden bonnet, March 2021. Photo by Amy Langman.



Figure 6-16 The top panel of the rose garden bonnet under construction. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-17 Thomas wearing the wild grapevine bonnet, December 2020. Photo by Christi Gillett.

Conclusion

Emily

Woodside Bird Avenue, Clonskea, Co Dublin June '18

My dear Niece Ruth,¹²¹⁷

Many thanks for your pleasant and welcome letter, with all your home news – I hope that this will find you, and Himself, as they say in Munster, and little Ruth in the best of health. Before going further, I must ask my kind niece to excuse the services of lead pencil in place of ink. The fact is that our war time ink is also *Waur*¹²¹⁸ Time, and very pale – I am interested very much in your pleasant domestic news. And I should much like to have a good game with your little Ruth. Maisie has given me a very pleasant account of the little lassie, and of the games that are carried on by the two wee nieces. I am sure that they must be a great amusement to Grandpa. Both Ruth and Penny show plenty of character, young as they are!¹²¹⁹

I hope that your new house will prove thoroughly satisfactory. There must be a brisk demand for houses these times, now that soldiers are returning to civilian life. Let us hope that there will be many years peace now that the war is over. But of course, things will be unsettled for some time yet.

These weekly drives are a capital plan for dear Father's health and I'm sure that he enjoys them very much. It is a very practical plan of Andrew's, and I'm glad that Maisie was one of the driving party recently. I can quite realize the dependence of dear father on the library for his books. Certainly reading is a grand resource, when you cannot get out of doors: and even when you can, also. I'm sure that Fred is very good as a purveyor of really readable books. I find them a splendid recourse in my idle hours and a grand recreation from very plain needle work. By the way, there is a great variety in the illustrations of the U.S. and Canadian papers and magazines; and a much higher level in the merits(?) generally (with some notable exceptions) than there was, some years ago. Do you not think so.

I am glad to hear such good reports of Sybil's health, and that Baby is turning out such a good and healthy youngster. I am also much interested in hearing of our young M.D. engagement. I trust it will be a very happy marriage D.V.¹²²⁰ It will be pleasant for Rob to have his son so near him – I had a very nice letter from Rob's 2nd lassie, Sallie, she seems to be such a bright girl – I expect she will do well in this bustling age!

Nothing specially personal to report. No particularly interesting details. Just jogging along, like an ordinary antique: I should be grateful to Heaven, for fair intervals.

I'll close now, with love and very best wishes

Believe me, dear Ruth, with hearty good wishes for you and yours, and for all the family circle (including Fred & Daughter)

Your aff^e old Aunt EA¹²²¹

¹²¹⁷ Ruth here refers to Patricia Anderson's mother, who was the daughter-in-law of Emily's brother Neville. Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, email, November 12, 2021.

¹²¹⁸ Possibly a pun, in reference to an old Scottish term for 'worse'.

¹²¹⁹ The 'Ruth' that Emily refers to in this sentence is Patricia Anderson – Ruth is her middle name – and Penny is her first cousin. Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, email, November 12, 2021.

¹²²⁰ D.V. may be shorthand for 'Deo volente' or 'God willing.'

¹²²¹ Letter from Emily Anderson to her niece Ruth Anderson, Collection of Patricia Anderson.

In early October 2021, I was finally able to travel to British Columbia to see my – now no longer newborn – nephew and meet Patricia Anderson, Emily Anderson’s great-niece, with whom I had been in touch since spring 2019. Both visits served to collapse a distance that had come to define the final stages of this project. In Chapter 6, I described how the desire to establish connection and express care despite distance (both geographical and created by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions) came to characterize my Clones crochet lacemaking. In visiting Patricia Anderson, I was finally able to view her collection of Emily Anderson-related documents – postcards, childhood magazines, a sketchbook, some letters – primarily gathered from other family members by Patricia Anderson’s father, Emily’s nephew, who had been interested in family history.¹²²² The contents of these documents are by necessity a postscript to this project, arriving as they did at the end of my research and writing process. They neither contradict nor add substantially to the historical content of this thesis. However, along with family stories shared during and after my visit, they do add substance to the shadowy character about whom I have speculated, sometimes aligning with my imaginings and hypotheses.

The letter transcribed above serves to answer (in part) a question that had needed me throughout this entire project – did Emily Anderson actually make lace? It appears that she did at least engage in plain needlework in leisure time. A family member also remembered that Emily would visit her nieces and nephews at Mount Corbett with toys she had made – surely stitched?¹²²³ Patricia Anderson told me that Emily was known as a prolific letter writer, and the few letters that remain attest to this: she seems conversant in the household news of family members far away, she expresses curiosity and satisfaction about the details of their lives, no matter how trivial. She references hearing from other family members, especially the children, for whom she appears to have great affection. I can imagine her playing charades with the children of her landlady in Donegal even more clearly now, and the one letter written to a member of the IAOS strengthens my suspicion that she was involved in their activities. In a 1943 letter addressed to Mr. Rudolf, she references the return of some incorrectly-written cheques, her happiness that the IAOS is “showing such life” despite the “little set-back” of war, and writes that: “I wish that I could have attended Thursday’s meeting of the I.A.O.S. and heard the interesting speeches given. Will you kindly give my hearty

¹²²² Patricia Anderson has passed these documents into my care, with the hope that they will eventually be lodged in regional archives in Cork or with her collection in the National Museum of Ireland, two possibilities that I am currently investigating. I am also in the process of photographing the documents, so that the Anderson family has access to them in digital form.

¹²²³ Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, email, November 13, 2021.

good wishes to old friends and sincere hopes for the future as well as my congratulations on the present healthy state of the I.A.O.S. – due in great measure to the loyalty of members like yourself.”¹²²⁴ In this letter, Emily Anderson implies regular attendance at IAOS events (even after her brother Robin’s death in 1942), friendship with its members, and perhaps even a sense of ownership over its activities, thanking Mr. Rudolf for his loyalty.

The letters in Patricia Anderson’s collection are mostly to Robin, or to Neville’s family in Canada, though the postcards are almost entirely addressed to Emily. I wonder if she gave them to her nieces and nephews for a collection, or if they were sent after her death as a memento of “Aunt Millie,” as they called her.¹²²⁵ It appears that Emily stayed close to her family in Canada. In fact, I found a postcard postmarked September 2, 1909, and addressed to her on the S.S. Dominion, a ship harboured in Montreal.¹²²⁶ She likely paid a brief visit to her brother Neville’s family in Hamilton, as the S.S. Dominion’s manifest lists Miss E. Anderson as a passenger on the voyage from Liverpool to Montreal departing on August 19 of that year.¹²²⁷

These documents also suggest other strategies for researching Emily Anderson’s work as a lace designer and inspector. Anderson’s cousin, Mary Cornwall Legh, was a missionary in Japan who founded a hospital for patients suffering from leprosy and is commemorated fondly in the region of Kusatsu. Though at the time of writing I have not been able to secure permission to reproduce it, a small archive in Kusatsu, in the custody of the North-Kanto Diocese of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, contains a picture of Emily Anderson. One of the postcards in the Anderson collection is from Mary Cornwall Legh, and the two cousins were known to have corresponded – could this diocesan archive contain letters from Anderson to Cornwall Legh, describing her daily work and life? Likewise, her correspondence with Mr. Rudolf of the IAOS with reference to missing a meeting (which surely means she usually attended) and friends in the organization suggests that there may be other traces of her expertise and input at the IAOS/ICOS archives in Plunkett House. Emily Anderson’s navy blue, leather bound sketchbook, which as I established in Chapter 5 accompanied her to the South Kensington Museum, is filled with detailed watercolour sketches of European and Irish lace (fig. 7.1). A close analysis of these sketches alongside her own designs might reveal which elements of

¹²²⁴ Letter from Emily Anderson to Mr. Rudolph, May 8. Photocopied and dated to 1943 by Frederick Anderson, with the note “Found with Riddall papers,” Collection of Patricia Anderson.

¹²²⁵ Personal communication with Patricia Anderson, email, November 12, 2021.

¹²²⁶ Postcard from Neville Anderson to Emily Anderson, dates September 2, 1909, Collection of Patricia Anderson.

¹²²⁷ “RMS Dominion Passenger List – 19 August 1909,” <https://www.gjenvick.com/Passengers/DominionLine/Dominion-PassengerList-1909-08-19.html> (Accessed November 25, 2021).

these specimens in the South Kensington Museum collection she adapted for use in her own designs. The collection also includes a single small folder, made of scrap paper and lined with pink fabric, that contains a crocheted rose motif and sample of Carrickmacross guipure lace (fig. 7.2). I wonder if Emily Anderson kept these samples for sentimental reasons when she donated the rest of the collection, if she sent them as gifts to a niece in Canada, or if they were simply forgotten, tucked in with her letters and passed on to the family when she died.

In this text I have used Emily Anderson's career to chart a path through a network of institutions, organizations, and government bodies, but there are still more to be investigated. The story of DATI and IAOS involvement in lace education, inspection, and making could also be pursued in individual county archives, a strategy I had begun in County Donegal and intended to pursue before being prevented by the pandemic. Further archival research may also reveal the extent to which the DATI contributed to technical education in the National School System. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Northern Ireland has a small collection of needlework books that were used to teach girls embroidery, shirt-making, mending, and crochet, and functioned as a record of their work – perhaps even to show potential employers. One of the women at the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland, in Cork, told me how her school teacher would ask the girls to put their thimbles on their fingers with a theatrical flourish before they began sewing; the needlework skill she now practises was acquired as a child in school.

The story of Irish lace is also deeply entangled with Ireland's history of institutionalization. I gestured toward this reality in discussing Elizabeth Boyle's work with lacemakers in the 1960s in Chapter 6. At the same time that Boyle's interviewees began transitioning to lacemaking for gifting and identity-building and the ICA championed training in traditional crafts, many of the women making lace and other needlework for sale in mid-twentieth-century Ireland did so without pay, behind the walls of institutions like the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick.¹²²⁸ Specimens of lace referenced in my discussion have included those made in industrial schools and convents that administered asylums and laundries. As the public conversation around institutionalization in Ireland – in particular the mother and baby homes and Magdalen laundries – continues to evolve, more information concerning the nature of lacemaking in these spaces is sure to come to light.¹²²⁹ I suspect

¹²²⁸ O'Toole, "Exquisite Lace and Dirty Linen," 181.

¹²²⁹ A report compiled by the advocacy group Justice for Magdalenes includes a short summary of evidence for lacemaking in Magdalene laundries, which specifically references the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Limerick (No. 232), and a (presumably not exhaustive) list of newspaper articles referencing lacemaking in Magdalene laundries (No. 286) (Raymond Hill, Claire McGetterick, Maeve O'Rourke, and James M. Smith, *State Involvement in Magdalene*

that as lacemaking became a less financially-lucrative occupation for Irish women, institutions stepped in to supplement lace production for the tourist market with work produced by institutionalized women.

My own lace learning and making has also suggested multiple paths down which I could pursue an investigation of more recent and contemporary Irish lacemaking practices. I am curious about the role of the ICA in promoting lacemaking as a traditional Irish craft, and the ways in which members of other community lace groups, such as the Traditional Lacemakers of Ireland, may have learned their craft through the ICA, in school, or through family networks. How have these communities used the lace collection at the NMI – much of which originates from the time that Emily Anderson was working for the DATI and advising on acquisitions – in their own learning and making? How might Anderson’s teaching collection be made similarly accessible and useful?

Events outside my control conspired to focus my own lacemaking practice – material and social – on Clones lace, and the international community of makers taught, mentored, and befriended by Máire Treanor. My conversations with Treanor and experiences of the Clones Lace Summer School both in person and online generated more material than could be included in this study, as well as a considerable amount of questions. Mamo MacDonald’s involvement in the ICA and the Summer School again indicates a link between that organization and the maintenance of regional lacemaking traditions. The fact that both Máire Treanor and Nora Finnegan of the Kenmare Lace and Design Centre ‘revived’ a regional lace tradition and started their co-operatives during the economic recession of the late 1980s hints at the continued role of lacemaking as a source of income and community for rural women. Perhaps most promising – both for the future of the Clones lace tradition and for further research – is the fact that Treanor’s teaching activities and online presence, and the networking of makers working in traditions inspired by Irish crochet around the world (North America, Ukraine, Russia, France, Italy, and beyond), suggest Irish crochet as a way and a space for participating in Irish identity that is both deeply rooted in place, story, and community, but also open, inclusive and diverse.

When I finished the last of the bonnets – the rose garden bonnet, for Kit – my hands felt bereft. They were used to doing something, fussing with something while my brain travelled elsewhere. Máire recommended that I simply make motifs, with no particular project in mind, just to

Laundries (Justice for Magdalenes, 2013), 106, 165, http://jfmresearch.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/03/State_Involvement_in_the_Magdalene_Laundries_public.pdf (Accessed November 25, 2021).

stay in practice and keep my hands busy. So I've been making tiny leaves, with a size 0.5 hook in size 80 thread, which is what I would usually use for the ground. If I do join these motifs together, I'll have to find size 100 thread – so fine it could be used in a sewing machine.

The middle knuckle of my right hand has been sore for a few months now, and I'm not sure why. There is a history of severe arthritis on my mother's side of the family, and though some people say that knitting and crochet helps ward it off, an equal number warn that the repetitive movement makes it worse. I've been cautioned to hold my knitting needles and crochet hook loosely. I still find that difficult, especially at the end of a long day when the teasing out and parsing of worries sinks from my head into my hands, and I find myself clenching the hook in a pincer grip. I note it, loosen my hold, and start again.

The little pile of simple white leaves is growing, and the more I make the more perfect they become. I find this deeply satisfying. When I decide to join them up, there will be lots to work with.

Figures: Conclusion

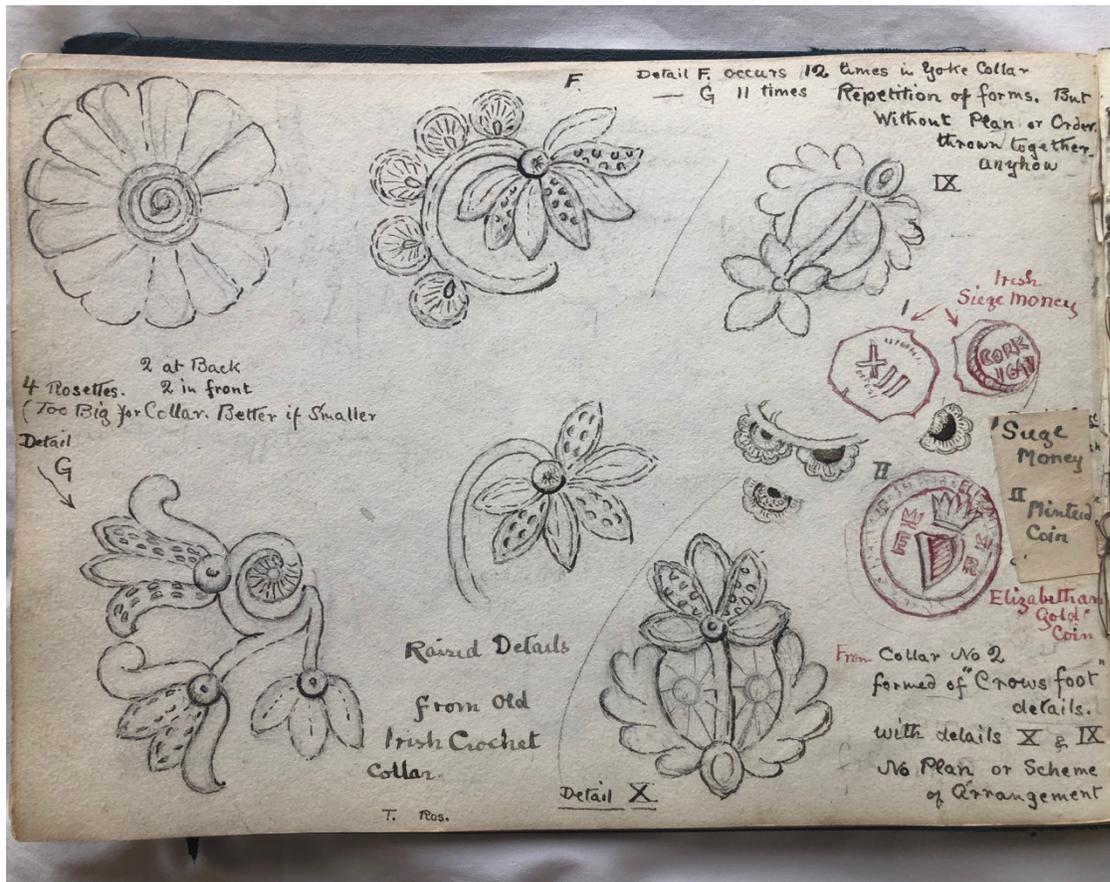


Figure 7-1 Emily Anderson, sketches of old Irish crochet motifs and coins. In Emily Anderson's sketchbook, collection of Patricia Anderson. Photo by the author.



Figure 7-2 Carrickmacross guipure lace fragment and Irish crochet rose motif, in a cloth and paper folder, collected by Emily Anderson (the paper folder bears one of her watercolor sketches of Italian lace and is likely recycled from a sketchbook), collection of Patricia Anderson. Photo by the author.

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Archives and Special Collections

Collection of Patricia Anderson (Emily Anderson's great-niece)

- Assorted letters and papers, both original and photocopied
- A folder of two lace specimens
- Postcards sent to Emily Anderson
- The Mount Corbett Magazine*
- Two sketchbooks, belonging to Emily Anderson

Cork City and County Archives, Cork

Art Committee Minutes October 1883-June 1899 (VEC06/56), Crawford Collection
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Kildare Observer (Irish Newspaper Archive)
Leinster Leader (Irish Newspaper Archive)
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Appendix A
DATI Scholarship Recipients

| Year | Number of applicants | Sprigging Scholarship | Crochet Scholarship |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1909-1910 (10 th DATI Report, 321) | 19 | Bridget McMEnamin (Ballybofey, Co. Donegal) | Mary J. O'Brien (Bandon, Co. Cork) Maggie Martin (Clones, Co. Monaghan) |
| 1910-1911 (11 th DATI Report, 349) | 10 | Mary Ellen Ward (Letterbarrow, Co. Donegal) | Agnes J. O'Callaghan (Bantry, Co. Cork) Annie McElroy (Clones, Co. Monaghan) |
| 1911-1912 (12 th DATI Report, 174) | 19 | Brigid C. Keenan (Belleek, Co. Fermanagh) Mary Sharkey (Sligo) | Ellen McHugh (Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim) |
| 1912-1913 (13 th DATI Report, 189) | 12 | Maggie Gallagher (Killybegs, Donegal) | Christina Redmond (Bantry, Co. Cork) Elizabeth McCorry (Carrick-on-Shannon, Leitrim) |
| 1919-1914 (14 th DATI Report, 188) | 10 | | Mary J. Wall (Howth, Co. Dublin) Kittie O'Gorman (Kilrush, Co. Clare) Mary O'Gibbons (Louisburgh, Co. Mayo) |
| 1914-1915 (15 th DATI Report, 208) | 11 | Delia Hannigan (Ballybofey, Co. Donegal) | Kathleen J. Farrell (Rush, Co. Dublin) Bridget Lunn (Newport, Co. Mayo) |
| 1915-1916 (16 th DATI Report, 193) | 8 | From this year on, the scholarship is for "Embroidery and Sprigging" | |

Appendix B

Emily Anderson Lace Collection at the National Museum of Ireland

The following information is adapted from the NMI catalogue of the collection, courtesy of Alex Ward, Acting Keeper of the Art and Industrial Division. The numbers and letters in bold type preceding each description are accession numbers, used to reference items in the collection.

Lace donated to the National Museum of Ireland by Emily Anderson, 1912 and 1915

DT:1915.253 Band of Clones Crochet. Made at the Crochet School, Newport Co. Mayo, c. 1910 (L17 1/2" x W2"). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1915.

DT:1915.254 Band of Clones Crochet, Made at the Crochet School, Newport Co. Mayo, c. 1910 (L17" x W2"). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1915.

DT:1915.255 Border of fine crochet; vandykes with rosettes and spirals alternately. Made at the Crochet Class, Arvagh, Co. Cavan (L17" x W1 5/8"). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1915.

DT:1915.256 Border of fine crochet; vandykes with rosettes and shamrocks alternately. Made at the Lace School, Convent of Mercy, Bantry (L27" x W2"). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1915.

DT:1915.257 Doiley, Clones Crochet. Made at the Lace School, Derrylinn (Co. Fermanagh). (D. 7"). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1915.

DT:1912.374 Border, crochet; "branch lace". Made at Brookeboro (Co. Fermanagh). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1912.

DT:1912.375 Border, crochet; "rose and shamrock" pattern. Made at Manorhamilton (Co. Leitrim). Given by Miss E. Anderson, 1912.

Lace donated to the National Museum of Ireland by Emily Anderson (of 66 Lower Leeson St., Dublin), February 1926

Note: records dated c. 1920-1925 were labelled as such by the NMI cataloguer, these dates are not original to Anderson's notes and are likely in many cases to be inaccurate.

NMIDT 2009.24(1&2) Collar & Cuff, Westport, Co. Mayo, c.1920 – 1925.

(1) Collar of raised crochet work, floral design with shamrock mesh; double loop edging with picot loops (L: 72cm x approx W: 8.2cm)

(2) Matching pointed cuff of raised crochet, floral design with shamrock mesh; double loop edging with picot loops. (L:27cm x W:12cm)

These two pieces are lightly stitched to a piece of card covered in dusty pink cotton sateen. Card is marked A on the reverse. From the collection of Miss E. Anderson, Lace Inspector at the Dept. of Agriculture.

NMIDT 2009.25 Collar, East Mayo, c.1920 – 1925.

Collar of Clones style crochet, floral design with raised horseshoe details and scalloped edge (L: 74cm x approx W: 12cm).

This piece of lace is loose on a piece of card covered in blue waxed linen paper, the card is marked F on the reverse.

NMIDT 2009.26 Jabot, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, c.1920 – 1925.

Jabot of Clones style crochet and white cotton; two pieces of crochet form a bow shape at the top from which is suspended two tiny crochet bells (L: 29cm x W: 18.5cm).

From an envelope marked "G".

NMIDT 2009.27 Modesty vest, Co. Monaghan, c.1920 – 1925.

Modesty vest or guimpe of raised crochet in the shape of a v-shaped piece of crochet with a high neck; floral pattern with oak leaf motifs (L: 28cm x W: 38cm).

From an envelope marked “D”.

NMIDT 2009.28(1&2) Collar, Co. Monaghan, c.1920 – 1925.

Collar of raised crochet in two parts; floral design with “rolled – dot” meshwork. The collar has two long pointed sections to front (one of which is detached) and a square shaped back (L: 43cm x W: 39cm / L: 36cm x W: 15.5cm).

From two envelopes marked “H” and “No. 20”,

NMIDT 2009.29(1&2) Jabot, Bantry, Co. Cork, c.1920 – 1925.

(1) Jabot of fine crochet “point”; double bow at the top with raised shamrock at the centre from which hangs three crochet pompoms; double teardrop shaped layers form the bottom part; elaborate edging of fine cartwheel shapes (L: 25cm x W: 10.5cm).

(2) Specimen of similar fine crochet “point”, partially worked and showing method, stitched to a piece of blue glazed cotton (L: 14.5cm x W: 13cm).

From envelope marked “I”.

NMIDT 2009.30 Jabot, Kenmare, Co. Kerry, c.1920 – 1925.

Jabot of raised crochet; in the shape of two pendant pieces attached to a collar band; floral pattern with knots (shamrocks?) on the mesh (L: 27cm x W: 34cm).

From envelope marked “J”.

NMIDT 2009.31 Jabot, Co. Monaghan or East Fermanagh, c.1920 – 1925.

Jabot of raised crochet in the shape of a double pointed pendant piece attached to a collar band; Symmetrical stylised floral pattern with clones knots on the meshwork; elaborate looped edging with tiny picot loops (L:25cm x W: 30.5cm).

From envelope marked “K”.

NMIDT 2009.32 Collar, Austria, c.1920 – 1925.

Collar of cotton crochet, an Austrian imitation of Irish crochet; floral pattern with a dense pattern to the inner part which is worked with a smaller mesh; the van dyked line between the inner and outer parts is marked by a line of small daisy shaped, motifs (L: 44.5cm x W:13.5cm).

From envelope marked “L” & “M”.

NMIDT 2009.33 Collar, Austria, c.1920 – 1925.

Collar of cotton crochet, an Austrian imitation of Irish crochet; floral design incorporating a continuous line of daisy shaped motifs and with knots on the meshwork (L: 48.5cm x W: 9.5cm).

From envelope marked “L” & “M”.

NMIDT 2009.34(1&2) Cuffs, Co. Clare, c.1920 – 1925.

Pair of crochet cuffs, with a trellis pattern and a plaited crochet edging; some motifs with a pattern of delicate interlacing (L: 12.2cm x W:20.4cm).

From envelope marked “N”.

NMIDT 2009.35 Cuff, Kenmare, Co. Kerry c.1920 – 25.

One cuff of raised crochet; floral and shamrock motifs (L: 20.6cm x W: 7.5cm)

From envelope marked “(1) Kenmare, Co. Kerry”.

NMIDT 2009.36 Crochet specimen, Kenmare, c.1903.

Length of raised crochet trim with a repeat pattern of floral motifs, very unusual edging of angular trefoil shapes; raw edge at one end (L: 36cm x W: 10cm).

Found in envelope marked “(1) Kenmare, Co. Kerry”, but quite unlike the cuff numbered 2009.35 above.

NMIDT 2009.37 Crochet trimming, Blarney, Co. Cork, c. 1910.

Length of crochet trimming of unbleached linen thread; the pattern consists of circular motifs with a floral shape at the centre linked together by a smaller circular motif (L: 117cm x W: 7cm).

From envelope marked (2).

NMIDT 2009.38(1-5) Specimens of crochet trim, Blarney, Co. Cork, c.1910.

(1) Crochet trimming in the shape of a spray of leaves, worked in unbleached linen thread (L: 14.5cm x W: 10.5cm)

(2) Length of crochet trimming with a raised floral design, scalloped along one edge, worked in unbleached linen thread (L: 20cm x W: 5cm).

(3) Length of crochet trimming with a repeat pattern of radial motifs, worked in unbleached thread (L: 16cm x W: 5.2cm).

(4) Narrow length of crochet trimming with a simple mesh design and looped edge (L: 20cm x W: 2cm.)

(5) Two specimens of crochet trimming in the shape of a spray of flowers, worked in unbleached thread and stitched to a piece of card covered in lilac paper (L: 9.5cm x W: 8.2cm).

From envelope marked (2).

NMIDT 2009.39(1&2) Crochet specimens, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, 1920 – 1925.

(1) Piece of raised crochet work imitating Venetian needlepoint lace; floral design with knots on the meshwork; the piece is possibly part of a collar (L: 29cm x W: 13.5cm):

(2) Piece of crochet trim, cobweb motif with shamrocks, scalloped edge on one side (L: 23cm x W: 5.5cm).

From envelope marked (4).

NMIDT 2009.40 Trimming band, Kinsale, Co. Cork, early C20th.

Length of crochet trim, made in South Cork, Kinsale area; unusual stylized floral design (L: 26cm x W: 6.5cm).

From envelope marked (3).

NMIDT 2009.41 Crochet insertion, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, 1920 – 1925.

Long length of crochet insertion or trimming, Clones style crochet with a trellis pattern incorporating rose and shamrock motifs (L: 88cm x W: 6cm).

From envelope marked (5).

NMIDT 2009.42 Trimming band, Co. Galway, c.1920 – 1925.

Length of crochet trimming, Clones style crochet with horseshoe shapes, flowers and shamrocks (L: 33cm x W: 5.8cm).

From envelope marked “(5) Clones Crochet from various districts”.

NMIDT 2009.43 Crochet insertion, Clones, Co. Monaghan, c.1920 – 1925.

Length of Clones crochet insertion or trimming, block pattern with roses and shamrocks (L: 30cm x W: 5cm).

From envelope marked “(5) Clones Crochet from various districts”.

NMIDT 2009.44(1&2) Crochet trimmings, Co. Cavan, c.1920 – 1925.

(1) Short length of crochet trimming, Clones style crochet with “Rose and Ring” pattern (L: 14.2cm x W: 4.5cm).

(2) Square shaped motif of Clones style crochet trimming, trellis pattern (L: 10cm x W: 10.5cm).

From envelope marked “(5) Clones Crochet from various districts”.

NMIDT 2009.45 Crochet border, Bundoran, Co. Donegal, early C20th.

Length of crochet border worked in flax thread; “Water Lily” pattern, with deep scalloped edge (L: 44cm x W: 13.5cm).

From envelope marked (6).

NMIDT 2009.46 Crochet trimming, Moan's Cross, Co. Fermanagh, early C20th.

Length of crochet trimming or border; Clones style crochet in "Ring Pattern" with rose and shamrock motifs, deep scalloped edge (L: 55cm x W: 8cm).

From envelope marked (6).

NMIDT 2009.47(1&2) Crochet trimmings, Co. Cavan, c.1920 – 1925.

(1) Length of crochet trimming, Clones style crochet with rose and shamrock motifs, scalloped edge (L: 87cm x W: 5cm).

(2) Length of crochet trimming, Clones style crochet with a horseshoe pattern with rose and shamrock motifs, scalloped edge (L: 30cm x W: 4.6cm).

From envelope marked (7).

NMIDT 2009.48 Crochet insertion, Co. Roscommon, c.1920 – 1925.

Length of crochet insertion, Clones style crochet with rose and shamrock motifs (L: 26.6cm x W: 6.5cm).

From envelope marked (8).

NMIDT 2009.49 Crochet trimming, Westport, Co. Mayo, c.1920 – 1925.

Length of crochet insertion, Clones style crochet with shamrock motifs, scalloped edge (L: 29cm x W: 7cm).

From envelope marked (8).

NMIDT 2009.50 (1-4) Crochet insertions, Newport, Co. Mayo, c.1920 – 1925.

(1) Length of crochet insertion, Clones style crochet, worked in 80 thread, with slits for running ribbon, rose motif (L: 43.6cm x W: 3.4cm).

(2) Length of crochet insertion, Clones style, trellis pattern with spiral motif, worked in 80 thread (L: 44cm x W: 5.5cm).

(3) Length of crochet insertion, Clones style with floral motifs (L: 43cm x W: 6cm).

(4) Piece of green paper to which is stitched 5 pieces of crochet, (3 pieces of insertion and 2 pieces of trimming), worked in 100 thread, a detached green tag gives prices per yard, 4/6 for Ins (Insertions) and 4/10 for Lace (trimming) (L: 26.5cm x W: 38.3cm).

From envelope marked (9).

NMIDT 2009.51(1-12) Crochet trimmings & insertions, Ireland, c.1920 – 1925.

Several examples of "Horseshoe Lace" from various centres (not listed).

(1) Length of crochet trimming, "horseshoe" pattern with shamrock motifs, scalloped edge (L: 37cm x W: 6.2cm).

(2) Length of crochet trimming, tiered "horseshoe" pattern, scalloped edge (L: 19.5cm W: x 12.5cm).

(3) Length of crochet trimming, "horseshoe" pattern (horseshoes quite widely spaced apart) (L: 16cm x W: 7.5cm).

(4) Length of crochet trimming, "horseshoe" pattern (shallow horseshoe motifs) (L: 20cm x W: 5.3cm).

(5) Length of crochet trimming, scalloped edge "horseshoe" pattern with floral motifs (L: 25cm x W: 7.5cm).

(6) Length of crochet trimming, "horseshoe" pattern with shamrocks, the horseshoes formed with padded rings (L: 23cm x W: 6cm).

(7) Length of crochet insertion, "horseshoe" pattern (L: 23cm x W: 5.5cm).

(8) Circular crochet insertion; "horseshoe" pattern with raised rose at the centre (D: 5.4cm).

(9) Circular crochet insertion; "horseshoe" pattern with shells, raised rose at the centre (D: 9cm).

(10) Circular crochet insertion; "horseshoe" pattern with shamrock (upside down) in the centre (D: 5.2cm).

(11) Circular crochet insertion, "horseshoe pattern", the horseshoe formed by shell shapes (D: 6cm).

(12) End section of crochet border; “horseshoe” pattern, one edge scalloped (L: 10cm x W: 6cm).
From envelope marked (10).

NMIDT 2009.52(1-4) Crochet borders, Cavan and Fermanagh, 1905 – 1910.

(1) Length of Clones style crochet border, “Trellis” pattern with rose and shamrock motifs and padded rings (L: 70cm x W: 8.4cm).

(2) Length of Clones style crochet border, “Trellis” pattern with rose, shamrock and spiral motifs and padded rings (L: 76.5cm x W:8.3cm).

(3) Square Clones style crochet insertion, “Trellis” pattern with a rose in the centre (L: 7cm x W: 7cm).

(4) Small section of Clones style crochet border, “Trellis” pattern, shamrock and rose motifs (L: 8cm x W: 5.5cm).

From envelope marked (11).

NMIDT 2009.53 Crochet trim, Co. Galway, early C20th.

Length of crochet trim, “Rings and Buttons” pattern; unusual design with padded ring motifs and round button like motifs (L: 21.5cm x W: 6.4cm).

From envelope marked (13).

NMIDT 2009.54 Crochet trimming, Co. Westmeath, early C20th.

Short length of crochet trim or border, “Bell or Fan” pattern, scalloped edge and padded rings (L: 9cm x W:5cm).

From envelope marked (13).

NMIDT 2009.55(1-2) Crochet motifs, Co. Westmeath, early C20th.

Two crochet motifs: “Sea Weed” pattern, details from a border; vaguely leaf or frond like shapes (L: 8cm).

From envelope marked (13).

NMIDT 2009.56(1-2) Crochet specimens, Westport, Co. Mayo, early C20th.

(1) Piece of raised crochet border in the style of Venetian needlepoint; design with bell shaped flowers and scrolled edge (L: 11cm x W: 12.2cm)

(2) Piece of raised crochet border in the style of Venetian needlepoint; design of shamrocks (L: 19cm x W: 15cm).

From envelope marked (14)

NMIDT 2009.57 Crochet specimen, Co. Kildare or Carlow, C19th(?).

Specimen of old raised crochet worked in very coarse thread, in a debased Venetian style, (very chunky) (L: 38cm x W: 18cm).

From envelope marked (15).

NMIDT 2009.58 Crochet border, Co. Kildare or Carlow, C19th(?).

Length of crochet in a Venetian style, some raised and padded details, made in the same centre as the specimen above (2009.57) (L:38cm x W:7cm)

From envelope marked (16).

NMIDT 2009.59 Lady’s Cap or Headdress, Southern Ireland, c.1810 – 1820(?).

Remnants of a woman’s cap or headdress of coarse crochet; triangular shaped piece of crochet with floral and trefoil motifs which are heavily worked with rolled dots; (large holes in the work) (L: 64cm x W: 25.5cm).

From envelope marked (17) “Early Irish Crochet”.

NMIDT 2009.60 Crochet Motif, Ireland, 1905.

Single motif of raised crochet, floral shape embellished with rolled dots: Clones knots on the meshwork, found in the envelope with the lady's cap (2009.59) and perhaps copied from it (L: 11cm x W: 11cm).

From envelope marked (17).

NMIDT 2009.61 Crochet specimen, France, c.1905-1910.

Piece of crochet border with raised details; floral design with a chrysanthemum motif; the centres of some of the flowers are heavily padded; deeply scalloped edge, the scallops of different lengths (L: 28cm x W: 30cm)

From envelope marked (18).

NMIDT 2009.62 Crochet specimen, Ireland, c.1910.

Piece of crochet border, from a French design; stylized floral shapes, scrolls and trefoils; Scalloped edge (L: 16cm x W: 19.5cm).

From envelope marked (19).

NMIDT 2009.63(1-5) Crochet specimens, Ireland?, early C20th (note: these pieces of crochet were found with the Anderson collection but are not listed in the files)

(1) Shamrock shaped crochet motif of raised work with cording (L: 6.5cm).

(2) Floral shaped crochet motif of raised work with cording (L: 9cm).

(3) Floral shaped crochet motif (lily) of raised work with cording and a padded ring (L: 10cm).

(4) Piece of raised crochet with some guipure and drawn thread work; raised details and cording (L:19cm).

(5) Specimen of partially worked mixed lace, guipure and crochet, muslin ground with raised and padded crochet (L: 21cm)

NMIDT 2009.64 Crochet collar, Ireland, c.1920 – 1925 (note: this collar was found in a envelope with the Anderson collection, it may be the collarette from envelope “E” made in West Cork, with “crazy filling”).

Collar of fine crochet, floral design with roses, shamrocks and numerous padded rings; shallow scalloped edge with loops, stitched to a piece of tissue which is stuck on orange card (L: 26cm x W: 20.5cm).

NMIDT 2009.65 Lace Lappet, Limerick, c.1920 – 25.

Lappet of Limerick tambour lace, based on a Flemish pattern in pillow lace; floral design; made in Mrs. Vere O'Brien's lace school (L: 31cm x W: 11cm).

NMIDT 2009.66(1&2) Lace borders, Limerick, c.1920 – 1925.

Two pieces of Limerick lace showing the same design in tambour and run work, made in Mrs. Vere O'Brien's lace school.

(1) Section of a border of Limerick tambour lace; design of flowers and leaves with filling stitches (L: 42cm x W: 22.3cm)

(2) Section of a border of Limerick needlerun lace; design of flowers and leaves with filling stitches (L: 42cm x W: 27cm).

NMIDT 2009.67 Specimen of lace, Limerick, c.1920 – 1925

Specimen of blonde lace, needlerun on machine net; with a large spray of flowers and leaves; made in Mrs. Vere O'Brien's lace school (L: 33cm x W: 20cm).

NMIDT 2009.68(1-3) Specimens of mixed lace, Cork, c.1920 – 1925.

Note: the cataloguing information for 2009.68 may be slightly incorrect, as medium and measurements indicate that item 1 is the specimen bearing the note reading “A' Miss Percival.”

3 specimens of experimental lace made at the Crawford School of Art, Cork, each piece is fixed to a piece of claret coloured velvet.

- (1) Specimen of lace with cut and embroidered lawn with crochet details and needlework enrichments; floral design (L: 19cm x W: 18cm).
- (2) Specimen of mixed lace, braid lace with crochet details and embellishments; floral design (L:20cm x W:8.2cm).
- (3) Specimen of braid lace with crochet enrichments; a note reading “‘A’ Miss Percival” is pinned to the back (L:18.5cm x W: 10cm).

NMIDT 2009.69 Lace collar, prob. Kells, Co. Meath, mid C19th.

Lace collar of needlerun stitches on net; floral design in two tiers; from envelope marked ‘not Limerick probably Kells’ (L: 41.5cm x W: 25cm).

NMIDT 2009.70 Lace collar, Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh, c.1920 – 1925.

Half of a collar of Carrickmacross guipure lace; flower and leaf motifs in fine lawn with needlework embellishments (L: 64cm x W: 17cm).

NMIDT 2009.71 Handkerchief border, Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh, c.1920 – 1925.

Corner of a handkerchief border in Carrickmacross guipure lace; flower and shamrock motifs in lawn with needlepoint embellishments (L: 23cm x W: 17cm).

NMIDT 2009.72 Part of collar, Castlebellingham, Co. Louth, c. 1920 – 1925.

Section of an unfinished collar of Carrickmacross appliqué lace; floral motifs with foliage; and some filling stitches, picot loops on the edges (L: 33.5cm x W:15cm).

NMIDT 2009.73 Part of collar, Castlebellingham, Co. Louth, c. 1920 – 1925.

Section of a collar of Carrickmacross guipure lace; flower and leaf motifs with padded rings and picot loops on the edges (L: 34.3cm x W:17.5cm).

NMIDT 2009.74 Unfinished collar, Castlebellingham, Co. Louth, c. 1920 – 1925.

Large collar or fichu of Carrickmacross mixed lace (appliqué and guipure); one half of the collar is nearly finished, though without many filling stitches; the other consists of a layer of muslin over net partly worked with an outline of the pattern; floral design with padded rings; not many filling stitches. Good example of work in progress (L: 66cm x W: 55cm).

NMIDT 2009.75 Handkerchief border, Co. Sligo, c. 1920 – 1925.

Corner of a handkerchief border in Carrickmacross guipure lace; flower and leaf motifs; picot loops on the outer edge (L: 24cm x W: 21cm).

NMIDT 2009.76 Lappet, Co. Sligo, 1920- 1925.

Section of a lappet of Carrickmacross guipure lace; foliage motifs with needlework embellishments; picot loops on the edges (L:23cm x W: 7.5cm).

NMIDT 2009.77 Whitework collar, North Donegal, c. 1912.

Whitework collar; cotton collar, embroidered in white with a floral design of sprays of flowers and leaves, scalloped edge (L: 33cm x W: 8cm).

NMIDT 2009.78 Unfinished collar, Ireland(?), c.1850.

Unfinished whitework collar; of very fine muslin with delicate Ayrshire style embroidery with needlepoint embellishments; the collar has not been cut out of the background muslin which is stamped with the letters D. TE (L: 29cm x W: 18cm).

NMIDT 2009.79(1&2) Cap & Collar, France or Belgium, early – mid C19th.

(1) Section of a woman’s cap of very fine muslin with delicate whitework embroidery in a floral pattern; quite worn with some darning; stitched to a piece of glazed cotton paper (L: 23cm x W: 20cm)

(2) Unpicked collar of very fine muslin, with delicate whitework embroidery in a floral pattern which matches the cap above (2009.79.1) (L: 44cm x W: 11cm).

From an envelope marked Flemish or French.

NMIDT 2009.80(1-2) Cap and Collar, Belgium, early – mid C19th.

(1) Section of a woman's cap of fine muslin with delicate whitework embroidery in a floral pattern; some patches of darning (L: 21cm x W: 22cm).

(2) Unpicked collar of fine muslin with delicate embroidery to match the cap (L: 37cm x W: 6cm). The two pieces of whitework are attached to light card covered in blue cotton sateen.

NMIDT 2009.81(1-7) Handkerchiefs, Glenties, Co. Donegal c.1925.

7 hand embroidered handkerchiefs, showing Donegal sprigging

(1) Cotton handkerchief hand embroidered with a different floral design in each corner in coloured threads (L: 33cm x W: 33cm).

(2) Cotton handkerchief embroidered in coloured threads, with a single flower in 3 corners and a group of 3 flowers in the 4th corner (L: 33cm x W: 33cm)

(3) Cotton handkerchief embroidered in coloured threads in a "Jazz" style, with drawn thread work at the border (L: 27.5cm x W: 27cm).

(4) Half of a cotton handkerchief embroidered in coloured threads; same floral design in each corner but worked in different colours; design number stamped in blue on the fabric (L: 32cm x W: 16.5cm).

(5) Unfinished cotton handkerchief partially embroidered in white thread; same floral design, as (4) above; unworked design printed in blue, along with design number (L: 31.5cm x W: 32.5cm)

(6) Unfinished cotton handkerchief partially embroidered in white thread; shamrock design, unworked design printed in blue, along with design number (L: 32.5cm x W: 32.5cm).

(7) Unfinished cotton handkerchief partially embroidered in white thread; floral design, unworked design printed in blue, along with design number (L: 32cm x W: 32cm).

NMIDT 2009.82 Handkerchief, France, early C20th.

Muslin handkerchief hand embroidered with a floral design and lace enrichments; scalloped embroidered edge; the printed design has not been washed out and can be seen under the embroidery (L:31cm x W:31cm).

NMIDT 2009.83(1&2)Handkerchiefs, Switzerland, early C20th.

(1) Muslin handkerchief hand embroidered with a floral design in one corner; the underlying printed design is visible beneath the embroidery (L: 30.5cm x W: 31cm).

(2) Muslin handkerchief hand embroidered and with drawn thread work in one corner; the underlying printed design is visible beneath the embroidery (L: 30cm x W:31cm).

NMIDT 2009.84 Fichu/Collar, Irish, early C19th.

Fichu or collar of fine muslin, with delicate Ayshire style embroidery; floral design with sprigs; quite worn with patches of darning; accompanying note that reads "fine embroidery on India muslin" given to Miss Anderson by the Countess of Dudley (L: 42cm x W: 46cm).

NMIDT 2009.85 Embroidery specimen, Irish, early C19th.

Section of border or insertion of fine muslin with delicate embroidery in ecru colour; floral pattern, accompanying note that reads "embroidery on India muslin" given to Miss Anderson by the Countess of Dudley (L: 24cm x W: 9cm).

Appendix C

Consent Form for Research with Lace Groups (2019)



INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Tangled in lace: the changing contexts of Irish lace production, 19th century and now

Researcher: Molly-Claire Gillett, PhD Candidate Individualized Program

Researcher's Contact Information: mcgillett@live.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Elaine Cheasley Paterson

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: Elaine.paterson@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: n/a

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to supplement a historical study of 19th century Irish lace with an understanding of how lace is made in contemporary Irish lacemaking groups. I am making a notebook of patterns, samples of my lacemaking attempts, and snippets of stories and historical information, which I will incorporate into my interdisciplinary PhD thesis in Art History, Design and Irish Studies at Concordia University, in Montreal.

B. PROCEDURES

If you consent to participate, I will take notes about lacemaking information you choose to share with me: lacemaking techniques, as well as any tips, tricks, or supplementary information (where you learned a technique or pattern, where you learned to make lace, interesting stories or information about Irish lace) in a notebook. I will not record your voice. If you wish, you may take a look at my notes and cross out or annotate what I have written pertaining to you. Anything you cross out, or ask me not to use, will not be use in my thesis or any other publications.

Participating in this study will take as long as I am in attendance at the group, though you may ask to withdraw at any time, or ask me to stop taking notes for a while at any time.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Participation in this research is low-risk, though, as always, conversations may bring up troubling feelings or memories. You don't have to talk about anything that you don't wish to, and you can ask me not to write something down if it distresses you.

This research is not intended to benefit you personally.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

I will gather the following information as part of this research: notes about lacemaking techniques, as well as any tips, tricks, or supplementary information (where you learned this a technique or pattern, where you learned to make lace, interesting stories or information about Irish lace).

I will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research (my supervisors, for example). I will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be identifiable. That means it will have your name directly on it, if you choose to give me your name and consent to having it written down in my notes. You can give your full name, your first name, or request not to have your name written down at all. You can ask me to remove your name from my notes at any time. If you would like your comments to remain anonymous, I will refer to you simply as 'a member' or 'an attendee' of the lacemaking group or class.

I will protect the information by keeping my notebook on my person or in a locked location.

I intend to publish the results of this research, and I might include your name along with the information you provide in the publication.

Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell me before May 1, 2020.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE

DATE

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page I. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix D

Consent Form and Interview Questions for Máire Treanor (2020)



INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Tangled in lace: the changing contexts of Irish lace production, 19th century and now

Researcher: Molly-Claire Gillett, PhD Candidate Individualized Program

Researcher's Contact Information: mcgillett@live.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Elaine Cheasley Paterson

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: Elaine.paterson@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: n/a

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to supplement a historical study of 19th century Irish lace with an understanding of how lace is made in contemporary Irish lacemaking groups.

B. PROCEDURES

If you consent to participate, we will meet via Zoom, and I will ask you questions about Irish lace and your experiences with it (for example: notes about lacemaking techniques, as well as any tips, tricks, or supplementary information, information about how you learned to make lace, your journey with the Clones Lace Workshops, and your opinions on the place of hand made lace in Irish culture). You can choose to skip any questions, and to make your answers as long or as short as you like. I will record the audio and video, for my own reference, and with the intention of editing it into a shorter, cleaner format that I will then send to you to use in teaching or as you wish. You will have final say on the content of this file (I will send it to you to approve before finalizing the editing), and I will not share it publicly, outside of the context of my PhD thesis (ie. my supervisors and examiners, or attendees at my thesis defence/thesis exhibition may see clips from it), without your written permission.

Participating in this study will take as long as you wish. I anticipate that the interview might last 45 mins-2 hrs, but it all depends on what is comfortable for you. We can also separate it into two or more sessions, if you wish.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Participation in this research is low-risk, though, as always, conversations may bring up troubling feelings or memories. You don't have to talk about anything that makes you uncomfortable, and you can ask me to skip any question.

I hope this interview will be useful to you in your teaching. Because we will be conducting it via Zoom, I will record the video and audio, and edit it into a shorter, cleaner format that I will then send to you to use in teaching or as you wish.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

I will gather the following information as part of this research: video and audio recordings of our interview(s), transcriptions from said recordings, and notes about lacemaking techniques, as well as any tips, tricks, or supplementary information, information about how you learned to make lace, your journey with the Clones Lace Workshops, and your opinions on the place of hand made lace in Irish culture.

I will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. I will not share any audio or video publicly, outside of the context of my PhD thesis (ie. my supervisors and examiners, or attendees at my defence/final exhibition may see clips from it), without your written permission. I will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

My notebook, transcriptions, and the final, edited video will be archived indefinitely, but I will delete any Zoom recordings by November 1, 2025. I will protect the information by keeping my computer and notebook on my person or in a locked location.

The information gathered will be identifiable. That means it will have your name directly on it.

I intend to publish the results of this research, and will include your name along with the information you provide in the publication.

Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time.

You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want me to use your information, you must tell the researcher (Molly-Claire Gillett) before May 1, 2021.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE

DATE

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Interview questions for Máire Treanor

Though further questions may be developed during my research and preparation for this interview, they will all relate to the interviewee's experiences making lace and being part of the lacemaking community in Ireland (ie. notes about lacemaking techniques, as well as any tips, tricks, or supplementary information, information about how the interviewee learned to make lace, her journey with the Clones Lace Guild and Workshops, and opinions on the place of hand made lace in Irish culture).

They will include questions such as:

Learning and Teaching

Do you remember anyone in your family making lace when you were a child? Did your family have bits of lace in use or in storage?

How did it feel the first time you completed a project in Clones crochet?

When you were learning, how did your teachers feel about your enthusiasm and determination to make Clones Lace? Were they worried about the craft's future?

You have been such a key player in teaching Clones Lace all around the world, through your books and workshops. But were you taught any techniques or patterns that were secret, or usually kept within a family, that you could not share more widely?

The Clones Lace Guild and Workshops

What would you say was the average demographic of clients purchasing from the Clones Lace Guild?

In the old days the crochet used to be gathered up and washed before being sent out to sell. How did the Guild deal with washing and preparing for sale?

Can you tell me a bit more about the woman hired to market Clones Lace in the U.S. that you mention in your book? Were there any other marketing schemes around that time?

Were there women from both sides of the border involved with the Guild? What was that like?

Community and Culture of Clones Crochet Lace

In your book you mentioned that having children gave you time to work on projects at home. Do you think many women in your lacemaking community share(d) this experience?

I remember one of the women at the Roslea lace group saying that her mother would only crochet when there was no one else in the home – is this something you've heard others of the older generation say? Why do you think this is?

Last summer at the Summer School, I remember some of the women talking about how the women who made lace in the old days were very poor, but they worked very hard to supplement their income with crochet. I came away with the idea that lace is associated with poverty, but also with pride in hard work and skill. What do you think about that? What do you think Clones lace represents to people in modern day Monaghan, or modern day Ireland?

In your book you include lots of pictures of Clones crochet wedding dresses. What reason did these women give for commissioning or wearing the dresses? For example, did they make lace, or did they have a family connection to the craft?