

‘VOTELESS ALAS’

*Suffragist protest and the census of Ireland in 1911*¹

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On 24 April 1911 Patrick Smith, officer in the Dublin Metropolitan Police and census enumerator, made his way to Hollybank Avenue in the Dublin suburb of Ranelagh. His purpose was to collect the census forms that he had delivered to the 60 houses on that road several weeks earlier. Hollybank Avenue was home to accountants, commercial travellers, civil service clerks, widows, engineers, solicitors, bank officials, insurance agents, Catholics and Protestants. Generally, these were biddable subjects who took their census duty seriously and completed their forms on 2 April, census night. If there was one household that concerned Smith it was surely that of Maude Townshend and Karolina Bart at number 32. Townshend and Bart were committed to the cause of female suffrage and suffragist groups had called on such women to evade the census as a protest against their continuing exclusion from the parliamentary franchise. If Townshend and Bart had responded to this call, then Smith was facing a minor confrontation. The choice before Townshend and Bart and the task before Smith were shared by suffragists and enumerators across Ireland that April. This chapter explores the response.

In recent decades, the Irish suffragist movement and, in particular, militant suffragism of the years before the Great War has received considerable scholarly attention, but the census boycott has not. This is not because scholars have thought it unimportant. Cliona Murphy has argued that the ‘census evasion was not just an exercise in undermining the machinery of the state but was also of profound psychological and symbolic importance to the women involved.’² Study of the census boycott had foundered, however, on a mundane impediment: a lack of relevant, useable sources. In early 1911 the Irish suffrage movement did not have a newspaper with which to promote a census boycott: the establishment of the *Irish Citizen* was still more than a year away. At the time, that hampered the potential of the evasion campaign. Today, it ensures that the historian of Ireland will not find an opening onto contemporary public debate of the boycott

that is as convenient as *Votes for Women* or *The Vote* in the case of Great Britain. Secondly, until recently it was very difficult to trace the actions of Irish suffragists systematically. The key evidence – the census returns – was available on microfilm, but that format meant that if one wanted to examine an individual's census return one had to know their address or at the very least have sufficient information to narrow a search to a manageable cluster of streets or townlands. This has changed because the digitisation of the census has transformed it into a much more flexible research tool, searchable under a range of additional fields including name, profession, religion, age, or a series of specified illnesses. With this development, suddenly, charting the responses of individual suffragists has become comparatively easy. Although it is not the primary purpose of this chapter to highlight this development, it illustrates that the digitisation of historical sources can make certain projects possible by transforming the questions that scholars can ask of the source material.³ Consequently, having explored the origins of the census boycott and the build up to it in Ireland, this chapter will analyse suffragists' varying reactions, place these within the history and the historiography of the Irish suffrage movement, and compare the Irish boycott to the simultaneous boycott in England. The evidence of the census returns will be parsed so as to offer a taxonomy of protest while these actions – and the debates around the protest – will be probed for what they tell us about Irish suffragists, their organisations, and the attitude of the state at the moment when militant suffragism emerged as an active force in Ireland.

I

In the early years of the twentieth century in Britain, and in Ireland, an element within the campaign for female suffrage, dissatisfied by the limited progress achieved through 40 years of temperate campaigning, was radicalised. A new phenomenon emerged: militant suffrage groups whose members came to be referred to as suffragettes. In Britain, the most famous of these organisations was the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), led by the Pankhursts, Emmeline and her daughters. From 1905 the WSPU was at the forefront of a steadily escalating campaign of militancy in which the disruption of political meetings and public protests gave way to the breaking of windows in public buildings, politicians' homes and shops. These actions led to the imprisonment of suffragettes and, beginning in 1909, these women embarked upon a campaign of hunger strike, demanding treatment as political prisoners.⁴ Initially, Irish suffragism did not respond to this development, continuing to be comparatively moderate. The most important organisation remained the 'long established, constitutional, law-abiding' Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association (IWSLGA).⁵ In November 1908, however, the Dublin-centred Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) emerged to pursue a more assertive suffrage

policy. It was led by two former members of the IWSLGA, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Margaret Cousins. In Belfast too, in 1909, a group containing moderates and more militantly-minded women split from the IWSLGA, establishing the Irish Women's Suffrage Society (IWSS).⁶

The IWFL and IWSS did not embark immediately upon militant activity. Gradually, a small vanguard of committed activists cohered under their banners, but for most of 1910 militant activity in Britain was suspended in reaction to an initiative which held out the prospect of the enactment of a limited female franchise through a bill which became known as the Conciliation Bill. In November, hostilities resumed when it became evident that parliament would dissolve without passing that bill. Six IWFL members, including Margaret Cousins, were imprisoned when they participated in resultant protests in London organised by the WSPU.⁷ Soon after, the census of April 1911 provided an occasion for the as yet tentatively militant suffragists of the IWFL and IWSS to press their case through a concerted protest which was a significant, yet genteel, advance on the moderate methods employed in Ireland to that point. The census-taking was an exercise in state power, conducted by employees of the state and bringing with it the threat of sanction for those who did not co-operate. Yet, the state, in the person of the enumerator, was heavily dependent upon the co-operation of its subjects, particularly the head of each family whose duty it was to accurately complete the census return. This provided individuals with considerable leeway to register a protest, a fact recognised by the suffragists. A census form was not a ballot paper, but a message could be delivered to government through it. As Margaret Cousins's husband, James, put it, the census presented 'a prime opportunity of throwing metaphorical spanners into official machinery'.⁸

As with suffrage militancy in general, a boycott of the census was not an idea indigenous to Ireland. The proposal emerged in Britain where census night was also fixed for 2 April. There the boycott campaign originated with an organisation known as the Women's Freedom League (WFL). Its leaders had broken from the WSPU in 1907 because of their dissatisfaction at the extent to which the Pankhursts dominated that organisation.⁹ As early as June 1910 the possibility of a census boycott had been discussed at the executive of WFL and a campaign to encourage such a boycott officially began in the pages of their newspaper, *The Vote*, on 11 February 1911. In an article in that issue, Edith How Martyn outlined the basic logic of the boycott when she wrote, 'any Government which refuses to recognize women must be met by women's refusal to recognize the Government.'¹⁰ The campaign was taken up by the WSPU, and its slogan became 'No Vote, No Census'.¹¹

Apart from suffragists' general and growing disgruntlement at the failure to grant the vote, there were particular factors encouraging protest in April 1911. When the new parliament met in February the government had not included any provision for female suffrage – such as a revived Conciliation Bill – in the King's

speech which outlined their legislative programme. This angered suffragists. Further, the 1911 census form itself included a series of new questions focused on the fertility of women and these drew objections from some women. The head of family in a household that included a married woman (usually her husband) was required to record the number of years that woman had been married, how many children she had given birth to, and how many of these were 'still living'. These questions were prompted by the desire to accumulate data that might inform contemporary debates surrounding the assumed differences in fertility rates and infant mortality rates between classes, and the alleged affects that these differences were having upon the overall health of society. These debates had grown out of contested ideas about welfare, public health, and eugenics; ideas that were then current in Britain.¹² Some women regarded the new questions as an unjustified intrusion into private matters by the state, while others worried about the conclusions that might be drawn from the collected data: would it, for instance, be used to exclude women from certain jobs or professions? Jill Liddington and Elizabeth Crawford have argued that once debate about the census boycott began in England a clear divide emerged. On one side stood militant suffragists, including the leadership of the WFL, the WSPU and the Women's Tax Resistance League. These women justified the boycott on the grounds of advancing the cause of female liberty. On the other, stood many moderate suffragists – including the leadership of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies – and non-suffragists who opposed the boycott. Although holding opposing positions on the vote for women, they agreed that women, despite their votelessness, had obligations to the state, one of which was to participate in the census as a scientific exercise conducted for the civic good.¹³

Irish suffragists were slow to moot publicly the possibility of a census boycott, but the *Freeman's Journal* of 15 March did note that it had been discussed at a meeting of the IWFL on the previous evening. On the 24 March, the WSPU newspaper, *Votes for Women*, reported that the IWFL and Belfast suffragists were to co-operate in encouraging a boycott.¹⁴ Because it was only in the final days of March that Irish suffragists began to campaign for a boycott, the resultant public debate was truncated compared to that conducted in England. Nonetheless, such debate as did occur in Ireland reveals divisions that mirror those identified by Liddington and Crawford in their study of the English census boycott. At a meeting on 9 March, the committee of the moderate IWFLGA decided 'not to give any support to the movement for refusing to fill up the census as such action would vitiate the returns for the next ten years'.¹⁵ On 30 March, the *Irish Times* and *Freeman's Journal* published a letter from a correspondent from Clontarf calling himself or herself 'Arjapim' who complained that 'census evasion is an attempt to diminish the value of an undertaking of immense importance and social value' and asked 'will the Irish Women's Franchise

League explain how they are able to justify such a crime against society as Census evasion?¹⁶

Arjapim's view was endorsed by the editor of the *Irish Times*,¹⁷ but the letter also prompted several responses justifying the boycott, including one from Mary F. Earl, a leading member of the IWFL. She outlined the thinking that under-pinned boycotters' actions:

Women have not votes, and therefore, are unable to bring influence of this sort to bear. Hence they are forced to adopt a method less conventional than that used by men. The Census is a numbering of the people. We are considered part of the people by the Government when it wants to tax us or to count us. We are quite willing to be part of the people as regards the Census when we are allowed to be part of the people as regards the Parliamentary vote.

Earl continued:

We quite recognize the importance of the Census, but we are sure that the statistics obtained by it will be used as a basis of legislation, on matters affecting women, by a House of Commons consisting of men only and elected by men only. As laws passed by such a body can hardly fail to be unjust to women, we consider we are quite justified in our refusal to supply information for statistics.¹⁸

Earl's response was evidently modelled on a letter that Emmeline Pankhurst wrote to the London *Times*, defending the proposed boycott following a critical editorial in that paper.¹⁹

In the days leading up to the census, the press and the authorities in Ireland were curious as to the methods that those Irish suffragists committed to resisting the census would adopt. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that in Dublin speculation as to the suffragists' approach had 'imported an element of mild excitement' into the census-taking. This speculation was sustained, the patronising reporter for the *Freeman* continued, because 'in refutation of the popular belief that a lady cannot keep a secret, they seem to have guarded their plans successfully.' When a policeman called upon a committee meeting of the IWFL on the day before the census and asked if they intended holding a meeting on the following evening, he was informed that they did not, but had instead 'requisitioned a number of aeroplanes and submarines' for the occasion.²⁰ When interviewed on the day of the census, Marguerite Palmer, honorary secretary of the IWFL, told the *Irish Times* that she 'could not divulge any of their plans, but their scheme was entirely different to that employed in England' where the evasion strategies planned included collective public protest. Instead, she said, Irish suffragists intended to be 'conspicuous by their absence'.²¹

II

On the morning of 3 April 1911, the *Irish Times* expressed the hope that an accurate census had been completed, but admitted 'we do not know how far this aim has been frustrated by the campaign of the militant women suffragists.'²² It was never likely that the suffragists' influence upon the accuracy of the census process would be significant. Some 910,748 separate family returns were made during the 1911 census and 2,198,171 females were enumerated,²³ while the numbers of active suffragists were few. In 1912, for example, the membership of the IWFL, by then the largest suffragist organisation in the country, stood at around 1,000²⁴ and the sum of these who were active members was a good deal lower. Despite the digitisation of the census records, the precise response of Irish suffragists remains unclear. It is possible, however, to begin to assess their actions on census night. As revealed by the census returns, these actions seem to fall into five broad categories. Firstly, there were those suffragists who did not use the census to assert their suffragist identity. Either these women filled in the form or the head of their family filled in the detail for them. On the other hand, there were women who responded to the campaign and took the opportunity to express their suffragist identity. The actions of these women fall into at least four categories. Those who sought to avoid the recording of their details in the census fall into two groups that might be labelled evaders and refusers. Two further groups emerge: these women, while not participating in evasion of the census, availed of the census form to register their views. They might be called protestors and identifiers.

Among those suffragists who do not appear to have made any effort to avoid enumeration or to register a protest were prominent members of moderate suffrage groups. Mary Hayden, a well-known history lecturer at University College Dublin, had chaired the IWSLGA committee meeting that decided against supporting the census boycott, and she completed her form.²⁵ Other regular attendees at IWSLGA committee meetings also appear in the census, including Nanno Keatinge and Beatrice Townshend. In Keatinge's case the form was completed by her husband, but Townshend assumed primary responsibility for completing the form as 'head of family'.²⁶ Census returns are also extant for prominent, yet moderate, northern suffragists such as Dora Mellone and L. A. Walkington²⁷ (both from Co. Down) who would be involved later that year in establishing an umbrella suffrage organisation called the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation.²⁸

1911 also saw the establishment of the Munster Women's Franchise League (MWFL). Cliona Murphy has characterised it as 'a vague talking shop for writers and society women'²⁹ and so it is not a surprise to find census returns for its Cork-based founders, Susanne (Susan) Day and the literary cousins Edith Somerville and Violet Martin.³⁰ The Connacht Women's Franchise League,

based in Galway city, would not be established until 1913.³¹ In 1911, four future leading lights of that organisation Mary Donovan, Mary Fleetwood Berry, Florence Moon, and Edith Young can be found among the census returns.³² However, the feminist tendencies of these moderate suffragists are sometimes hinted at in their census returns. Somerville proudly proclaimed herself 'Author, Artist, Dairy Farmer'. An inclination to record their educational achievements is also noticeable in suffragists' returns. The return of Mabel Dodds, a Limerick-based member of the IWSLGA, records that she had a BA.³³ Those of Hayden and Donovan, both of whom would become professors of history, state that they held MAs. Suffragists were not alone, of course, in recording their university qualifications. Olive Purser, the first female student awarded a Trinity College Dublin College Scholarship,³⁴ was enumerated as 'BA, University Teacher' by her proud father, but he also noted that Olive's brother, John, held an MSc and was 'Assistant to Professor of Engineering'.³⁵ Nonetheless, female graduates were then few in number, had a keen sense of a shared identity (expressed in the establishment of the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG) in 1902), and were prominently involved in suffragism. Hayden was the first vice-president of the IAWGCG which campaigned for equity for women within third level education.³⁶ It is surely significant that she filled in her household's census form as 'head of family' rather than her older brother, John, who she described as a 'barrister (not in practice)'.³⁷

It is somewhat more surprising to find census returns for known associates, even leading members, of the IWFL, given that organisation's advocacy of the boycott. Among those to feature in census returns for Dublin is Katharina (Kathë) Oldham, the first president of the organisation.³⁸ Jane Gibson and Helen Morony, Limerick-based adherents of the IWFL in 1911 can also be found.³⁹ In the cases of Oldham and Morony this can almost certainly be explained by a discomfort with militancy despite their association with the IWFL. Margaret Ward has suggested that Oldham was selected as the first figurehead of the IWFL precisely because she was respectable and somewhat conservative. She, and her husband Professor Charles Hubert Oldham, continued to attend IWSLGA meetings during this period.⁴⁰ As for Morony, she would abandon the IWFL for the more moderate MWFL in December 1912 as militancy became a reality in Ireland.⁴¹

The same cannot be said of Kathleen Emerson and Lucy (Mabel) Purser. They would go to prison for militant acts carried out under the IWFL banner in 1912 and 1913.⁴² Yet census returns are available for both.⁴³ This may indicate that these women had not radicalised by April 1911 or that they disagreed in principle with the census boycott. In the cases of Emerson – a recently widowed 26-year-old who had returned to live with her parents – and Purser it is also possible that they were enumerated against their will by their father and husband respectively. In his work on nineteenth-century censuses, Edward Higgs has illustrated the

extent to which men dominated the census-taking process. Men framed the questions, acted as enumerators, processed the information and, perhaps most importantly in this context, men were expected to act as head of family and fill out the form.⁴⁴ This gave a male head of family a good deal of control over the capacity of his suffragist relatives to protest using the census. In one English case, Liddington and Crawford have been able to prove definitively that a suffragist was enumerated against her will by her husband.⁴⁵ Evidence for this – whether it be diaries, letters or a clear statement on the census form – is for obvious reasons difficult to find.

Suffragists with militant records were also enumerated by female heads of family. It is impossible to be certain whether Violet Jameson, who would be a regular speaker on IWFL platforms from the second half of 1911,⁴⁶ and Georgina Manning, who would be fined in 1913 for defacing a bust of John Redmond on display at the Royal Hibernian Academy,⁴⁷ were willingly or reluctantly enumerated by their mother and sister respectively.⁴⁸ In all these cases it is possible that the suffragists acquiesced in their enumeration because they did not want to expose their relatives to legal sanction. A head of family who did not complete the form was liable to prosecution and a £5 fine. Like Emerson and Purser, the artist Maud Lloyd would later go to jail for her militant activity. Unlike Emerson and Purser, as the sole occupant of 122.4 St. Stephen's Green, it is certain that she was not constrained by another family member in her capacity to protest using the form. Nonetheless, she completed it.⁴⁹ It should be noted that, despite her imprisonment, Lloyd was a comparatively cautious militant, refusing to participate in or support hunger strike.⁵⁰

The clash of loyalties, or contest for precedence, that a commitment to both female suffrage and Irish nationalism involved for some women is a central theme in the historiography of first wave Irish feminism.⁵¹ A shadow of this dilemma can be discerned in the census return of Rosamond Jacob. Jacob, a Waterford Quaker, was sympathetic to militant suffragism and advanced nationalism. In the estimation of her biographer Leeann Lane, when nationalism and suffragism came into conflict Jacob prioritised nationalism, although 'this was an uneasy choice for her.'⁵² Her census return confirms this assessment as she, and her brother, made a point of filling out the form in Irish, using it to assert their cultural nationalism, while she made no mark to register her resentment at not having the vote.⁵³ Similarly, Mary MacSwiney, a founder member of the MWFL, made her return in Irish, as Máire Nic Suibhne. She too did not register a suffragist protest, although interestingly she returned the form as head of family rather than either of her younger brothers, Terence and Seán.⁵⁴

The primary method employed to find the census returns of these women was straightforward. I compiled as comprehensive a list as possible of suffragists known to be active in Ireland during the period (along with relevant biographical

detail) using the extant secondary literature, subscription lists, committee minutes, contemporary correspondence, and newspaper reports. This information was then used to search the digitised census records. This search of the census did reveal notable absences, indicating that a boycott took place and that a group that might be labelled 'evaders' did act on census night. There is no return, for instance, for a Marguerite or Margaret Palmer, matching the known biographical detail of the honorary secretary of the IWFL. It seems a reasonable assumption that Palmer successfully evaded the census (given that she was interviewed that day promising that suffragists would be 'conspicuous by their absence'). Similarly, it is very likely that suffragists, perhaps numbering in the dozens and including women such as Margaret Connery and Eva Wilkins, are absent from the record due to the boycott. All such absences cannot, however, be accounted for definitively. In the days after census night, when the enumerators began collecting the forms, the *Freeman's Journal* reported that they had been 'not unnaturally suspicious' when informed that the lady of the house was absent on the night of 2 April. The *Freeman* acknowledged at least one case where suspicions were aroused by a perfectly innocent absence.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, using the extant digitised returns, it was possible to identify with certainty a number of women who attempted to evade the census. Among these were the co-founders of the IWFL, Cousins and Sheehy Skeffington. They adopted a strategy used by some English boycotters, collecting in groups at houses which, for various reasons, were not due to be enumerated. This increased the suffragists' chances of not being counted, while their heads of family could truthfully omit their details from the household form.⁵⁶ In later years, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington claimed that she spent census night at a cottage in Wicklow made available to her and some other boycotters by Countess Markievicz.⁵⁷ In 1950, James Cousins recalled that Margaret and Lizzie Duffy, their domestic servant, left to stay at a nearby house that had been vacant for some time and was therefore 'not on the enumeration list'. He remembered that he was suffering from scarlatina fever and so was left at home, in his bed, with the form, a pen, an envelope, and some disinfectant. He stated:

When the official hour came, I wrote on the declaration form a note to the effect that I could not give a true enumeration of my household as its 'female' members were absent in protest against being officially classed with children, criminals, lunatics and such like. I added that I had filled the paper while laid up in scarlatina, but had duly disinfected it and the envelope.⁵⁸

His actions appear to have acquired colour with time and telling. The census return for the Cousins' household at 35 Strand Road, near Sandymount in Dublin, reveals no explanatory note or health report while, despite his claims to

the contrary, James Cousins provided Lizzie Duffy's details. It is also evident that the enumerator, Patrick O'Connell, sought to foil the protest by amending the form. Firstly, he crossed out Lizzie Duffy's details, then he attempted to record some basic details for Margaret Cousins – the sparse entry is largely inaccurate as he named her Gertrude and recorded her age as 38 (she was 32) – and below these he re-recorded Lizzie Duffy's details. He noted at the bottom of the form that 'Mrs Cousins who is a suffragette enumerated from enquiries made.'⁵⁹

Like James Cousins, Francis Sheehy Skeffington did not enter his wife's details on the form at their home, 11 Grosvenor Place, near Rathmines. Again, the enumerator, James Crozier, attempted to mitigate the boycott by recording Sheehy Skeffington's details, but he was even less effective than Patrick O'Connell. Almost all of the information was incorrect. Crozier entered Sheehy Skeffington's given name as Emily (she was Hanna or Johanna), he recorded her age as 28 (she was 33), he accurately noted that she was married but stated that she had been married for three years (the Sheehy Skeffingtons had married in 1903), he was correct in recording that they had had one child and that this child was alive, before concluding that Emily (Hanna) was born in Dublin city (she was born in Kanturk, Co. Cork).⁶⁰

The enumerators had extensive powers to make enquiries about those who did not comply with their obligations under the census.⁶¹ That the enumerators in Ireland, unlike those in Britain, were drawn from the ranks of the local police enhanced their abilities to acquire information. The deployment of the police in this manner is typical of a process that Lowe and Malcolm have characterised as the 'domestication' of the Royal Irish Constabulary.⁶² This does not appear to have brought uniformity to their response to evaders however, as different enumerators collected information on these women with different degrees of enthusiasm and success. While Crozier attempted (albeit poorly) to make a full return for Sheehy Skeffington, Hugh Roddy was satisfied with a good deal less in the case of Florence Ball, an IWFL member. She attempted to boycott by absencing herself from her residence at 17.3 Lower Sherrard Street, Dublin. In response, Roddy recorded Ball's name and an age, 40, before noting 'Left address and cannot be traced. Further particulars unknown.'⁶³ Lilly Gait's effort to evade the census was thwarted, but her census return raises a series of questions about the attitudes and agency of suffragists, heads of family, and enumerators. Gait was a boarder at the home of Emma Halpin at 3.1 Cliff Terrace, Kingstown, and Halpin recorded Gait's details before noting that she was 'absent'. It seems likely that Halpin was unwilling to assist Gait's boycott, but was willing to indicate Gait's intentions and actions. This may have been the result of an agreed compromise between Halpin and Gait or may have been done against Gait's wishes. Then, interestingly, someone drew a line through Gait's details as if to strike them from the record. It is possible that this was an act by Halpin or Gait,

but it seems just as likely that it was that of the enumerator, Richard Grant, who may have believed that in doing so he was ensuring an accurate census return.⁶⁴ Gait was absent, therefore her return should be struck out.

In addition to those who evaded the census there were those women who 'refused' to fill in a form or part of a form. These women were heads of family and as such they were often forced to have a conversation with the returning enumerator during which they explicitly refused co-operation, although in some cases the task fell to a servant. One of these heads of family was Mary F. Earl. Michael Barry, the enumerator, recorded on the form for 39 Raglan Road, Ballsbridge, that it had been 'Filled as a result of enquiries made by the enumerator. Mrs Earl having refused to give any information.'⁶⁵ This is further confirmed by the fact that the space provided for the signature of the head of family is blank. It seems likely that the information was elicited from the household servant, Mary Dunne, because she is the only member of the household for whom Barry records a religious affiliation. This was certainly the case at 15 Highfield Road, Rathgar. In that instance the enumerator recorded 'This paper filled on information received from the servant (Julia Flynn) as the head of the family (Marie Hilles) is a "Suffragette" and refused information.'⁶⁶ It may have been the absence of a servant that so markedly hampered the capacity of one enumerator, James Marrinan, to complete a census return for 54.2 Willowbank Street, Belfast, when the female residents informed him that they were "'militant" suffragettes and refused to give information.' Although Marrinan managed to collect some accurate information on Mabel Small, a well-known northern-based suffragette who lived at that address, he was less successful in ascertaining the details for her colleague and housemate. Her surname, it seems, was Morris, although Marrinan failed to discover her first name. She could, he believed, read and write, was '(about) 43', and was born in England.⁶⁷

Dr Mary Strangman of 17 Parnell Street, Waterford city, was another head of family who refused to provide her own details. Strangman would become a member of Waterford Corporation in early 1912; while in suffragist circles she associated with the MWFL.⁶⁸ It is clear that Strangman had a conversation with the enumerator, Maurice Kelleher, when he called to collect the form on 13 April because he noted that 'Head of family is a suffragette and states she did not sleep in the house on 2nd April but in Enumerator's opinion she did and probably was not enumerated elsewhere that night.' As a consequence, he recorded her details on the form.⁶⁹

Clara Moser, who lived in Sandymount, Dublin, also refused to give her details. In addition, when, on 8 April, she returned her form she had written 'no vote no census' across it.⁷⁰ The census returns reveal a good many women who were not willing (or able) to join Moser in her boycott, but who, like her, desired to deliver a message of dissent through the form. These women might be

described as 'protestors'. In some instances they were joined or facilitated by a male head of family in making their point. Adeline Tickell was a regular on suffragist platforms at this time, but rather than boycott she chose to protest using the form.⁷¹ The last column on the census form provided a space where the head of family was expected to note those in the household who were either 'Deaf and Dumb; Dumb only; Blind; Imbecile or Idiot; or Lunatic' by writing 'the respective infirmities opposite the name of the afflicted person.' And it is in this column that Adeline Tickell was enumerated as 'voteless'.⁷² This (or variants thereof) was the most common type of suffragist protest in the 1911 census of Ireland. Ellen Jane Bell and her cousin Maud Joynt, a suffragist activist, lived at 21 Annesley Park, Dublin. They were among those to describe themselves as 'unenfranchised'. Ellen Gregg Osborne of 23 Sandhurst Drive, Belfast was similarly described by her landlord, John James Smith, a 'Socialist (Unitarian)', who wrote in the infirmity column opposite his own name, 'none only bad tempered'.⁷³ The McClelland women, Elizabeth, Jane and Margaret, of 2 Woosley Street, Belfast, preferred 'Dis-enfranchised'.⁷⁴ Elizabeth Swanton and her daughter, Mary Beatrice Swanton, were originally from Cork, but lived at 10 Park Drive, Dublin. Under profession on the census form, Mary Beatrice noted that she was a vendor of *Votes for Women*, the newspaper of the WSPU, while she and her mother recorded that they were 'Voteless Alas, classed with Imbeciles having no vote'.⁷⁵ Kathleen Shannon, a former secretary of the IWFL who lived at Lower Lesson Street, wrote that she was 'Not naturally but legally classified with imbecile on account of sex'.⁷⁶

Tom Kettle, journalist, academic and former Irish Party MP, and his wife, Mary Sheehy Kettle, sister of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, also used their form to make a point. On their wedding day in 1909, Mary had 'worn a "Votes for Women" badge pinned to her white gown and another mounted in her floral wreath'.⁷⁷ She regularly appeared on suffragist platforms during this period. In the immediate aftermath of the census, on 6 April, she told a meeting at Kingstown, attended by Emmeline Pankhurst, that 'they had never got anything in Ireland from a hostile Government except by militant methods'.⁷⁸ A breach would open between Tom Kettle and the IWFL in 1912 when he argued that 'Home Rule comes first and everything else second', but he was an early associate member of the organisation and he would remain a believer in female suffrage.⁷⁹ Yet, at first glance, the Kettles' census form appears to have been filled out without fuss. A closer examination, however, reveals a modest if telling alteration. Tom Kettle signed the form, but either he, or his wife, amended this section from the official 'Signature of the Head of Family' to 'Signature of one of the Heads of the Family'.⁸⁰

Those to fall into the fifth category of response described here are women who used the 'Rank, Profession or Occupation' column or the 'Religion' column

to identify themselves as suffragists. For example, the religion of Helen Lawler and her sister, Louisa, of 15 Sherrard Street, Dublin, was initially recorded as 'suffragette', although this was crossed out and replaced by 'R Catholic', presumably by the enumerator.⁸¹ Edith Colwill, of 21 Simmonscourt Road, Donnybrook, indicated that she was a 'suffragette', using the occupation column.⁸² Blanche Emma Bennett of Skegoniel Avenue, Belfast, was more specific describing her occupation as 'Sec of Irish Women's Suffrage Sty'.⁸³ Sometimes individuals both protested in the infirmity column and insisted on their suffragist identity in other columns. Susan Manning and Elizabeth Duggan at Dartmouth Square, Dublin, described themselves as 'legally unfit to vote', leaving the enumerator in no doubt as to their reasons for doing so by giving their religion as 'militant suffragette'.⁸⁴ Finally, on Hollybank Avenue, Townshend and Bart did not boycott, instead they too declared themselves 'Unenfranchised' in the infirmity column while describing their occupation as 'suffragist'.⁸⁵

III

Margaret Ward, a biographer of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and perhaps the foremost historian of the IWFL, has suggested that evading or resisting the 1911 census was a matter upon which militant and non-militant suffragists agreed.⁸⁶ In this she is echoing some writing on the census boycott in Britain, although more recent historiography has tended to emphasise the link between the boycott and militancy of different varieties.⁸⁷ In the case of Ireland, Ward's claim seems to ignore the IWSLGA's official rejection of the proposed boycott and it is contradicted by the evidence offered here of widespread completion of the census by moderate suffragists and their heads of family. As Liddington and Crawford rightly point out, however, the census returns offer 'individuality rather than uniformity'.⁸⁸ Suffragists associated with moderate organisations such as Marie Hilles – who attended the IWSLGA committee meeting that rejected the boycott – and Mary Strangman participated fully in the boycott, while Adeline Tickell, who was also at that IWSLGA meeting, made a protest on the form.⁸⁹ On the other hand, some women declared themselves 'militants' on the census form even as they filled it, while other associates of 'militant' organisations did not use the census to register the suffrage agenda at all.

Ireland's suffragist organisations, whether moderate or militant, were not rigidly disciplined groups. Adherents drifted between groups and did not always view membership of groups as mutually exclusive. Such movement was encouraged by the fact that the policies and positions of the organisations – particularly the newly formed militant organisations – were mutable, adapting to the unstable political environment. In some cases adherence to a particular group may have been an accident of geography rather than an indication of philosophical

compatibility. Strangman, for instance, would probably have joined a branch of the IWFL if this option had been available to her in Waterford. All of this is reflected in the variety of responses to the census. Neither does participation in the census boycott (or failure to do so) seem to be a strong predictor of an individual's future militant activity: the overlap between census boycotters and those suffragists jailed in Ireland between 1912 and 1914 is not particularly striking. Sheehy Skeffington, Cousins, and Mabel Small attempted to boycott the census and all would hunger strike in prison, but, as noted earlier, there are future hunger strikers who do not appear to have attempted any census protest.

The limited number of activists involved in these groups is also reflected in the response in Ireland. In London, the WFL and the WSPU planned very public resistance. They organised a series of collective public protests on census night, facilitating suffragists' absence from any residence where they might be counted. The Pankhursts attended a concert at WSPU Hall, followed by a protest march at Trafalgar Square organised by the WFL and attended by around 1,000 women, succeeded by further entertainments laid on at the Scala Theatre, before concluding the night by going to a WSPU event at Aldwych Skating Rink between 3.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m.⁹⁰ The IWFL or IWSS did not organise similar public demonstrations, most likely because they would not have been able to rally large numbers in either Dublin or Belfast. Even if moderates and militants had been united in their attitude to the census it is unlikely that a sizeable protest could have been mustered while neither Dublin nor Belfast offered the range of public spaces that London suffragists had available to them, especially at night. Such a protest would inevitably have drawn considerable criticism from those who were then still discomfited by the sight of women independently organising themselves (whether collectively or as individuals) to occupy the public space.⁹¹ Indeed, the organisers of the boycott almost certainly hoped that, by avoiding this, a less demonstrative approach would facilitate the participation of moderates in census evasion. A suffragette correspondent to the *Freeman's Journal*, on 1 April, wrote that 'several of our friends have recently congratulated us on the constitutional and eminently ladylike nature of Census resistance. In fact it is on that very account being very widely adopted in Ireland.'⁹²

At the time, the lack of public demonstrations raised an obvious question, one which Arjapim noted in his/her letter to the newspapers. Arjapim had argued that silent evasion of the census was a pointlessly narrow form of protest as it 'cannot be a very successful method of advertisement, since, though militant, it is quiet, unostentatious, and incapable of proper estimation of its effects.'⁹³ The publication of Arjapim's own letter undermined this argument somewhat, as did the press coverage that the boycott received, although Arjapim was correct to this extent: it is extremely difficult, even now, to assess the extent of the

boycott because it is very difficult to measure and analyse an absence. It seems quite clear, however, that the number of suffragists who attempted to evade enumeration in Ireland was very small indeed and the number that succeeded was even smaller. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington admitted in her memoir that 'our numbers abstaining did not greatly throw out the census figures.'⁹⁴

At best we can speculate, with varying degrees of certainty, about the names and numbers of those who succeeded in evading the census. In most cases these protests remain lost to us: the consequence of a successful boycott is absence from the record. On the other hand, this analysis of the digitised census records has revealed 31 separate household returns in which a woman's or several women's suffragism was recorded because an enumerator noted an attempt to evade the census or a refusal to supply information, or because a suffragist declared her beliefs using the form.⁹⁵ In total this involved 47 individual women. The supportive networks created by Irish suffragists may have been small and may have lacked discipline, but these returns demonstrate that a woman who expressed a suffragist identity using the census was likely to have access to, and to have engaged with, such networks. Perhaps the most significant indication of this is the concentration of protestors in the cities of Belfast and Dublin where the militant and, indeed, non-militant suffrage organisations were strongest. 27 of the 31 households identified were in Dublin or Belfast. Of four provincial protestors, two – Mary Strangman and Elizabeth A. McCracken⁹⁶ – were active in suffragist circles despite their comparative isolation in Waterford and Bangor.

It is surely no accident that protestors Florence Ball, and Helen and Louisa Lawler lived two doors from each other on Dublin's Sherrard Street, although, as northsiders, all three lived slightly at a remove from Rathmines, Rathgar and Pembroke, the centres of suffragist census protest in the city. Ellen Gregg Osborne and Sarah Hegarty Stewart⁹⁷ belonged to the small but growing network of female undergraduates at Queen's University Belfast. The suffragists among these undergraduates had become markedly more active in early 1911. In January, Margaret Cousins had addressed them on her prison experiences in England and, in February, the University's Literary and Scientific Society had debated female suffrage.⁹⁸ In organisations, educational institutions and neighbourhoods women supported each other to protest, but more than that they did so in households. It is striking that a woman was head of the family in 21 of the 31 households that registered a recorded suffragist protest, while 15 of these households were exclusively female. These included households such as those of Small and Morris in Belfast and Townshend and Bart in Dublin where it seems likely that these women chose to live with each other precisely because of their shared female suffragist views. It is noteworthy that no suffragist protestor resided in a household where her father was head of family. This very likely

militated against younger women registering suffragist sentiments on the form, although those in the age bracket 20–9 years-of-age still constituted the largest cohort (32 per cent) of identified protestors.

Husbands seem to have been somewhat more sympathetic than fathers as eight identified women were assisted or facilitated in protest by a spouse who was head or joint-head of the family. In total 13 (27.6 per cent) of the 47 identified protestors were married while 28 (59.6 per cent) were single and three (6.4 per cent) were widowed. These figures may give a somewhat distorted impression because it seems likely that a married boycotter who had her husband's support had a better chance of escaping enumeration without any questions from, or comments by, the enumerator and is therefore more likely to have left no trace at all on the census record.

As addresses in Rathmines, Rathgar, Ranelagh, and Donnybrook suggest, the census protestors in Dublin were predominantly middle-class (even upper-middle-class) women. This was, for the most part, true of census protestors in Belfast and elsewhere in Ireland. The census returns reveal that all but one of the women registering a protest resided in first- or second-class housing stock; the exception was Bridget Nugent of Aghogan, Co. Tyrone.⁹⁹ It might be argued that the primary methodology employed here – to search the census for known suffragists, women whose actions have been documented – would tend toward creating a middle-class bias in the results. However, it should be noted that a secondary methodology emerged which was free of this bias. It is possible to search the digitised census returns of every woman whose enumeration included an entry in the 'infirmity column' that did not conform to the standard, expected, answers suggested on the form; deaf, dumb, deaf and dumb, blind, idiot, lunatic or imbecile. There were 4,048 such women and each entry was checked for returns such as 'voteless' or 'unenfranchised'. The protestors revealed in this way shared the class origins of those revealed using the primary method, that of seeking out known suffragists. Liddington and Crawford, commenting on similar findings in England, make the reasonable point that the danger of receiving a £5 fine was a greater disincentive to protest for poorer women.¹⁰⁰ However, the fact that the suffragist movement in Ireland was at that time willing to settle for some form of limited female suffrage based on a property qualification, such as that offered by the Conciliation Bill, hardly encouraged working-class women to participate.¹⁰¹

That the Irish female suffrage movement was, for the most part, class-bound is reflected in the attitudes toward female servants suggested in the census returns of these middle-class households. Despite his revisionist account of 1950, James Cousins enumerated his female servant, Lizzie Duffy. Similarly, Francis Sheehy Skeffington provided full details for his household's domestic servants Philomena Morrissey and Mary Butler. In contrast, all four women,

including two servants, residing at the Lindsay household at 1 Marlborough Park, Belfast, were described as 'unenfranchised'.¹⁰² Mary Walshe (who was domestic servant to Emily and Josephine Webb at 12 Brighton Square, Dublin) was also, with her employers, recorded as 'unenfranchised'.¹⁰³ In the Webbs' case this may reflect a democratic ethos informed by their Quaker background. Interestingly, although Mary Strangman refused to give her own details, she provided those of her servant, Julia Gibbons. She did protest, however, that Julia was 'unenfranchised' using the infirmity column. It is impossible to be certain whether the servants who provided details of their 'refusing' female employers to enumerators did so with the explicit or tacit consent of those employers. So too it is impossible to know the extent to which female servants in suffragist households had a voice in the manner of their enumeration. It seems likely that often they had none.

The Webbs' Quakerism raises the question of the religious affiliations of census protestors. Two further Quakers, Margaret Bulla and Catherine Jane Quayle, were among the Belfast-based protestors,¹⁰⁴ so that members of the Society of Friends constitute a very high percentage (8.5 per cent) of census protestors identified here when compared to their presence in the general population. Quakers, including Anna and Thomas Haslam, had consistently taken a leading role in suffrage movements in Ireland and elsewhere, influenced by their sect's emphasis on equality.¹⁰⁵ Ward has characterised IWFL activists as 'a mixed lot of Quakers, Unitarians, Church of Ireland, Methodists and Roman Catholics as well as non-believers'.¹⁰⁶ The profile of Dublin-based census protestors seems to confirm this. Of the 29 identified, eight described themselves as Catholics, eight as Church of Ireland, two as Methodist, two as Quaker, two refused to give information, a religious affiliation was not recorded in one case, one woman described herself as having 'no church', and five described their religion as 'suffragette' or 'militant suffragette'. This suggests that although these activists were a 'mixed lot', Catholics were significantly under-represented among suffragist activists. In Dublin, Catholics constituted 83 per cent of the city's population in 1911, but only 28 per cent of identified census protestors. Among the 14 identified census protestors in Belfast and environs there was not a single Catholic, although Catholics constituted 24 per cent of that city's population. Presbyterians were over-represented, on the other hand, contributing just under half of the identified census protestors while 34 per cent of the city's population was Presbyterian.¹⁰⁷

Sheehy Skeffington's subsequent admission that the protest was unlikely to have influenced greatly the accuracy of the census was also the confident view of the officials at the time.¹⁰⁸ The number of activists was small and the actions of the enumerators in collecting some information on some would-be-boycotters mitigated the impact further. In Britain, where evasion was more widespread,

the President of the Local Government Board claimed in parliament that the number of successful evaders was 'altogether negligible'.¹⁰⁹ It was in government's interest, of course, to minimise the effectiveness of the boycott and this informed their decision not to prosecute those heads of family who had failed to record the details of suffragist protestors.¹¹⁰ This was sensible: although the numbers involved were small, the suffragist census campaign had already drawn a good deal of attention to their cause and the publicity attendant upon a series of court cases, fines, and perhaps even imprisonments would have benefited the suffragists more than the authorities.

When a subject or a citizen in a modern state is faced with an official form, especially a census form, she is imposed upon but she has opportunity to express her identity. The suffragist protestors of 1911 knew this. Some refused to recognise the legitimacy of any duty enforced by a state that refused to recognise them as full citizens. It is an irony that the identities of many successful boycotters are almost certainly now lost to us because they stridently asserted their suffragist identity through boycott. Others were certainly denied the opportunity to express their suffragist identity by their heads of family, while some women willingly submerged their suffragist identity, instead choosing to prioritise other aspects of their personalities; that of the dutiful citizen or Irish nationalist for instance. Perhaps most interestingly, a good many sought to balance their identity as suffragists with other identities: responsible citizen, considerate wife, obedient daughter, or moderate individual. Inventively, these women combined enumeration with protest.¹¹¹ As a consequence they emerge as complex individuals even through a medium as apparently limited in its potential to express personality as a census return. Similarly, the Irish suffragist movement as revealed by the census protest is an absorbing phenomenon, at once confined in its geographic and class base, yet fascinatingly complex, fluid, and various.

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'Voteless Alas': Suffragist Protest and the Census of Ireland in 1911

- 1 In preparing this chapter I have been encouraged, or directed toward valuable census entries, by Catherine Cox, Catriona Crowe, Leeann Lane, Mary McAuliffe and Paul Rouse. In particular, however, I want to thank Nicole Jackson, who generously alerted me to several suffragist census entries that I would otherwise have missed.
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Sport and War: The 1915 All-Ireland Hurling Championship

- 1 This chapter has been written in the knowledge that Michael's interest in sport might best be described as non-existent. Nonetheless, hope springs eternal that a belated conversion might still be possible.
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